

# THE ELDER SCROLLS

BETHESDA



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# The Elder Scrolls

BETHESDA

The Elder Scrolls Collected Works

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In addition this Ebook is broken down by each installment.

1. Daggerfall
2. Battlespire
3. Redguard
4. Morrowind
5. Shadowkey
6. Oblivion
7. Skyrim
8. Online—is contained in a separate ebook

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# Daggerfall Codexes

# A Compilation Of Redguard History

*Anonymous*

This document is written like it is a draft of a scholarly book written as a historical analysis exploring the myths and tales as history.

Redguard history prior to coming to Hammerfell. This sets the stage for some color and texture of the people. Creates a context and some terminology. Creates concept of thought sword quasi magic "spirit sword". Explanation of names Hammerfell and Redguards.

Redguard history about 300 years after coming to Hammerfell pure heroic stuff - concept memory stone that can be used to record memories of a person. Also follow up concept of a pure thought weapon a spirit sword - used by only special warriors like these two heroes. Sets context for a conflict with a local lord in High Rock who tries to invade through Wrothgarian mountain pass - The Bangkorai pass.

Hunding's son, takes Hammerfell as the new land of the Redguards from giant goblins. He combines the spirit sword and a conventional magic sword to create 5 great magical swords to defeating the giant goblins. The Arena goblins are short little yellow guys, kind of woosy fighters, a foe just a



notch above a sewer rat. Hammerfell was first occupied by Dwarves. They were a sparse population with just a few riches filled cities. Over night (from another dimension) a new breed of goblins invades - a huge army of fighters appears in the middle of the province, and pillages, raises towns to the ground and drives the surviving Dwarves out. The Dwarves flee through a lone surviving port city and are gone by the time the Redguards cross the ocean. Hunding and Divad arrive thinking the abandoned port city is vacant, and Hunding is cowardly killed. Divad leads the battle to wrest the land from the giant goblins and needs to resort to magic (5 great magical swords) to defeat them. The 5 combined cast a mighty spell that literally diminishes the goblins to the size and temperament we find in current Arena, and they flee to caves and wilderness, leaving Hammerfell. The Redguards to inherit the province.

He lives in later years when Redguards have mostly forgotten their own heritage. They face a great peril from the giant goblins again, who have managed to open the path from the other dimension. Divad after the battle for Hammerfell decided the 5 swords were too powerful to leave just lying around so he hid them in succeedingly dangerous and tricky caves in the mountains. Derik quests to find them and defeat goblins. He does so, and the swords are destroyed and lost for good (but with just a tickle could maybe come back to be found in modern times). This last hero's story happened about 1000 years from Daggerfall times.

Each story is cast in a bit different way. Frandar, as pure clinical history; Makela as her own memories being played back, Divad as a scholarly assessment followed by a poem translated into prose, and Derik as a recorded campfire tale.

Maybe this will give your tech writers something to work with. I know it was fun for me to write. Hope this is helpful for creating some background for Daggerfall. Derik's story can be fleshed out more instead of taking the outline for the editors copy out. If you would like me to detail this out, I will, I just went with wherever the overall book theme took me.

Unless I hear more from you all (a good southern word for an Atlanta boy) I will assume that you have all you need on the Redguards and enough heroes.

-Dave (Ryder Bloc)

This is a publisher's proof of the initial draft of my book,

**"REDGUARDS, THEIR HISTORY AND THEIR HEROES"**.

The following is a collection of the tales, myths and history of the Redguards. Much of their history is shrouded in mystery and in the mists of time. It is hard to distinguish between myths, and real history. I believe, however, that Frandar Hunding, Divad The Singer, Makela Leki, and Derik Hallin were real people and their stories are real.

The memory stone mentioned in the second chapter may not be familiar to all readers. It is a stone whose mineral content makes it only found in the far north of High Rock, and there are few of them to begin with. At one time, there was a Mage that lived in the vastness and wastes of that region, and he in practicing enchantment spells, imbued several hundreds of them with the ability to hold and record one's thoughts. They are extremely valuable and can be used to record only once. Most city museums hold a dozen or so of these stones, and if you take one in your hand, you can receive the thoughts of the

original owner as clear and fresh as if they were speaking to you. Now days un-recorded stones are very rare, and worth far more than in Makela's day. Imagine she paid only 25,000 gold crowns for hers!

I have placed Makela's story before Divad's even through chronologically she came many years after his death. The choice was based on my desire to contrast the stories of the principle heroes of the Redguard people. Locating the story titled the Dragon's Toe last was because it illustrates the final use that Redguard Sword Singers made of the Five Magical Swords that Divad The Singer constructed to drive the Goblins from Hammerfell.

Below are the first chapters of the draft.

Author's note as translated into the Modern Tongue of Hammerfell:

Frandar Hunding was born in 2356 in the old way of reckoning, in our beloved deserts of the old land. The traditional rule of emperors had been overthrown in 2012, and although each successive emperor remained the figurehead of the empire, his powers were very much reduced. Since that time, our people saw 300 years of almost continuous civil war between the provincial lords, warrior monks and brigands, all fighting each other for land and power. Our people once were artisans, poets, and scholars, but the ever evolving strife made the way the sword inevitable - the song of the blade through the air, through flesh and bone, its ring against armor; an answer to our prayers.

In the time of Lord Frandar the first warrior Prince, lords called Yokeda, built huge stone castles to protect themselves and their

lands; and castle towns outside the walls begin to grow up. In 2245, however, one man Mansel Sesnit, came to the fore. He became the Elden Yokeda, or military dictator, and for eight years succeeded in gaining control of almost the whole empire. When Sesnit was assassinated in 2253, a commoner took over the government. Randic Torn continued the work of unifying the Empire which Sesnit had begun, ruthlessly putting down any traces of insurrection. He revived the old gulf between the warriors - the sword singers - and the commoners by introducing restrictions on the wearing of swords. "Torn's Sword-hunt", as it was known, meant that only the singers were allowed to wear swords, which distinguished them from the rest of the population.

Although Torn did much to settle the empire into its pre-strife ways, by the time of his death in 2373 internal disturbances still had not been completely eliminated. Upon his death civil war broke out in earnest; war that made the prior 300 year turmoil pale in comparison. It was in this period that Frandar Hunding grew up.

Hunding belonged to the sword-singers. This element of empire society grew from the desert artisans and was initially recruited from the young sons and daughters of the high families. They built the first temple to the unknown gods of War and build a training hall "The Hall of the Virtues of War". Within a few generations the way of the sword - the song of the blade - had become their life. The people of the blade kept their poetry and artisanship in building beautiful swords woven with magic and powers from the unknown gods. The greatest among them became known as Ansei or "Saints of the Sword". Each of these began their own training schools teaching their individual way of the sword. Those Ansei of the highest virtue

wandered the country side engaging in battle, righting wrongs, and seeking to end the strife.

To sum it up. Hunding, was a sword-singer, a master, no, a Master Ansei at a time when the peak of the strife was reborn out of the chaos of Torn's death. Many singers put up their swords and became artists, for the pull of the artisan heritage was strong; but others, like Hunding pursued the ideal of the warrior searching for enlightenment through the perilous paths of the Sword. Duels of revenge and tests of skill were common place, and fencing schools multiplied.

Frandar do Hunding Hel Ansei No Shira, or as he is commonly known Frandar Hunding, was born in the far desert marches in the province of High Desert. Hunding is the name of the High Desert region near where he was born. No Shira means noble person or person of noble birth and Hel Ansei is his title of Sword Sainthood.

Hunding's ancestors reach back to the beginning of recorded time in the high desert and were artisans and mystics, his grandfather was a retainer of the Elden Yokeda, Mansel Sesnit, and lead many of the battles of unification prior to Sesnit's assassination.

When he was 14, Hunding's father died in the one of the many insurrections, and he was left to support his mother and four brothers. His prowess with the sword however, made his life both difficult and easy. Easy in that his services came in great demand as a guardian and escort. Hard in that his reputation preceded him, and many awaited their turn to face him in battle and gain instant fame through his defeat.

By the time Hunding was 30 he had fought and won more than 90 duels killing all his opponents. He became virtually invincible with the sword, gaining such skill and mastery that he finally stopped using the real swords created through the artisanship of his people and began using the Shehai or “way of the spirit sword”.

All sword singers learn through their intense training and devotion to the gods of war and way of the sword, the forms of discipline that allow the creation of the spirit sword. This is a simple form of magic or mind mastery where by a image of a sword is formed from pure thought. The sword singer forms the sword by concentrating, and it takes shape in his hand - usually a pale thing of light, misty and insubstantial, a thing of beauty perhaps, a symbol of devotion to the Way and the gods, but no weapon. However, those Ansei of the highest level and sensitivity and those with talent in magic, can at times of stress, form a spirit sword, the Shehai which is far more than light and air - it is an unstoppable weapon of great might, a weapon which can never be taken from the owner without also taking his mind.

The Shehai became Hunding’s weapon, and with this he slew bands of brigands and wandering monsters than infested the land. Finally upon finishing his 90th duel, defeating the evil Lord Janic and his seven liche followers, he was satisfied that he was indeed invincible. Hunding then turned to formulating his philosophy of “the Way of the Sword”. He wrote his Learnings down in the BOOK OF CIRCLES while living as a hermit in a cave in the mountains of high desert in his sixtieth year.

In that year Hunding having enlisted in the many battles of the empire, defeating all opponents, had thought himself ready for death and retired to his cave to capture his strategy and mystical visions to share with other Sword Singers. It was after his completion of the scroll of the Circle that the Singers found him composing his death poem and preparing to join the gods of war in final rest.

At sixty he was a vigorous man, who thought himself through with life, but his people, the sword-singers needed him. They needed him as never before. Torn's Sword Hunt, had separated the Singers from the common people, and the rise of the Last Emperor began the last great strife of the desert empire. This strife was Emperor Hira and his consort Elisa's final effort to wrest control of the empire from the people by destroying the sword-singers. Hira vowed to search out every Singer and with his Brigand army composed of Orcs and castoffs of the wars of the empire, scourge them from the face of the earth.

The Sword Singers were never a numerous people. The harsh desert kept the births few, and growing up in the unforgiving wastes eliminated all but those of iron spirit and will. Thus the final strife which became known as the "War of the Singers" found the people of the sword unprepared and unready to join together their individually great skills into an army that could defend their home and lives.

Frandar Hunding was sought out, his death poem interrupted, and unceremoniously command of the singers was thrust upon him. To the unknown gods of war great thanks is owed that Hunding had had the time in his cave to write down his years of accumulated wisdom, of strategy, of the way of the Shehai. The singers fled from their camps up into the desert

hills and mountains. Fled to the foot of Hattu “the father of Mountains” where Hunding had gone to write in peace and to die, and there these remnants formed into the Army of the Circle - they learned Hunding’s Way, his strategies his tactics, and the final great vision for a master stroke.

Hunding devised a plan of seven battles leading the Armies of Hira further and further into the wilderness to the foot of Hattu, where the final battle could be fought. Hunding called his plan the “Hammer and the Anvil”. With each battle Hunding’s Singers would further learn his strategies and tactics, grow strong in the use of the Shehai, and be ready to defeat their opponents in the seventh battle. And thus it was, the six first battles were waged, each neither victory or defeat, each leading to the next. The larger armies of Hira following the small army of Hunding. Outnumbered thirty to one, the singers never faltered from the Way. The stage was set, Hira and his Army maneuvered to the base of Hattu Mountain, where the hammer blow was delivered. The battle was pitched, and many singers fell that day. Hunding knew, that the singers who lived would be few, but Hira and his empire of evil would not live to ravage the empire and so it went.

At the end Hunding and less that twenty thousand Singers survived the day, but no army of evil was left to pillage and murder, more than three hundred thousand fell that day an Hattu. Of those who were left to run and live, all were scattered to the four winds, and organized force no more.

The singers packed their lives, folded their tents, mourned their dead, and followed Hunding to the great port city or Arch, in the province of Seawind. There Hunding had a flotilla of ships waiting. The Singers left their desert for a new land. No



longer welcome in the desert empire, they to be sung about and spoken of in legend. The final great warrior, the singers of Shehai, the Book of Circles, all leaving that land where their virtue was unappreciated. Red, red with blood they were in the eyes of the gentle citizenry, never mind that they had saved them from a great evil.

The singers vowed to learn new ways as they traveled across the great ocean to their new land. To adopt a new name, but to honor the past. In honor of their final battle, they named their new land Hammerfell and adopted the name Redguards. In honor to Hunding the great warrior prince, each household in Hammerfell has a place by the hearth an alcove really, just a niche, big enough to hold the scroll - The Book Circles.

What follows is a modern version of our great book of heritage.

I have been many years training in the Way of strategy, called Shehai Shen She Ru, and now I think I will explain it in writing for the first time. It is now during the first ten days of the tenth month in the twentieth year of the Fox. I have climbed mountain Hattu to pay homage to the song of the sword and to the unknown gods of war and kneel before the spirit of the mountain. I am a warrior of High Desert province, Frandar do Hunding Hel Ansei No Shira age sixty years.

From youth my heart has been inclined toward the Way of strategy. My first duel was when I was fourteen, I struck down.....

This is a faithful reproduction of the thoughts recorded in Makela Leki's memory stone, found in the Bankorai pass, in the year of reckoning 2776. Almost all of this is in the first person, as Makela was unfamiliar with the protocols and scholarly

formalities of recording herself into a memory stone. None the less, her heroism and heroic deeds live on, her memories fresh in the stone for all to feel and hear.

“??!!..... muuu uhh, I wonder if this will really work.....?”  
The Mages guild took me for 25,000 gold crowns if it doesn’t!  
Imagine?! This stone will record my thoughts,.....?? What did they say? Just unwrap it from the silver foil and leather bag and as soon as it touches my flesh it will begin to record.

“Ahhhh, the pain, I must block it out, no one would want to hold my stone and hear my thoughts if I let it record my pain....!” Thank the unknown gods of war and the training I received in The Hall of the Virtues of War ..... I CAN block out this pain! “Ummm just, ah, there, it’s walled off!” Yes I can still see it there just beyond my consciousness lurking like a hungry wolf - a wolf what will soon consume me. I see also my inevitable death from these dammed wounds. No potions left, the healing crystal and ring are used up, and me, with not even magic enough to light a candle! Oh but the gods did give me other gifts, the gift of sword singing, the thrill of battle, Frandar Hunding’s Book of Circles, THE WAY OF THE SWORD!! ..... ah but then that is my story, I get ahead of myself.

I am Makela Leki a warrior, a sword-singer, a second level Ansei. In my cradle I could form the Shehai, the spirit sword - The mystical blade, mine formed of pure thought serpents intertwined with vines of roses to form the blade, as beautiful as.....

Ah, but I’m about to tell you all about that, to tell you my story, a story of valiant battle, of my loves, of my wars, of... of betrayal and of this last glorious victory. To tell you of how I came to this distant lonely lpass me and five companions, to

fight these men and monsters to defeat the army that would fall on my people like cowards in the night..... but again I get ahead of myself.

I am a simple warrior. I grew up as a Maiden of the Spirit Blade. As early as I can remember I wanted to be a Singer, to feel the hunger of the blade in my hands, to feel it come alive and take my enemies. I am told our people were artisans and poets long ago in our desert homes. Here in new home now known as Hammerfell, many of us have returned to those ancient ways, but to me there is but ONE WAY!! THE WAY of the SWORD!!!

Ah this is hard to tell. I grew up in my noble family, the only one of three brothers and two sisters that felt the calling, the Song of the Sword. Father understood, for he too had felt the call. He had become a master, and Ansei long before settling down with in our estate to raise a family. At eleven, I entered the Hall of the Virtues of War and joined the Maidens of the Spirit Sword. In my band there were six of us. Daring Julia, solid Patia, big Kati, svelte Cecil, wise Zell, and me - all are gone now, save me, and soon I will join them,... join them in the halls of the unknown gods of war. We drank together, we fought, we wept, we grew in the way of the sword. We joined in our learnings in the Hall with our Bothers of the Blade. Learning from each other, we all sat at the feet of the Hall Master striving to learn the depths of the Shehai - making the spirit blade into a real weapon as Frandar Hunding had! Only a few have the purity of heart and virtue to be able to take the step and learn the mysteries of Ansei... Sword Sainthood.

Somehow, of all the Brothers and the Maidens, I only possessed the unique qualities, the faint but strong enough flicker of magic to be able to call forth the Shehai. Many times I called it,

seldom would it become substantial enough to be a weapon. To be a Ansei, of the first level you just need to be able to call it, and that I could, so I became the first Ansei from our local hall in two generations.

Oh I have so much to tell, so many memories, so many treasures to share with you , my unknown companion..... How do I start? Umhhh, the pain is still out there lurking hungry, slowly consuming what's left of me. I guess I had better tell of the final battle, the one that has left me here, and then if I have the will left tell you of my life, of my love Raliph... OH what a lad he was! What times we shared..... Forgive me, my mind wanders..... Let me go to the Final Battle!

Umm to start, in the middle humm. Yes! We Maidens grew, learned, mastered the Way, and upon completing the Walk-About. To you who are not Singers, this is a wilderness trek emulating the times of Frandar Hunding - where we each wander the country side righting wrongs, defeating monsters, performing quests in the name of virtue. Some of us in our Hall took years to finish! Always there is danger, we six Maidens each returned in our own good time, but many are they who do not live to return from the Walk About!

We returned , each to our own lives, to meet in the hall once a week to tell our stories to the new Maidens and Brothers, and to perform as instructors in the Way of the sword. All was well till the night of the (fill in a festival from the list). All our people were reveling and enjoying the repast, but for we six Maidens. It happened that the festival day fell on our day of meeting in the hall, our day of prayer and fasting and honor to the Way of the Sword.

As we met, late into the night, a knocking rang on our door. When I opened, it there was a guardian the Bankorai Pass in the Wrothgarian Mountains, wounded and near death. He told us of betrayal from the north, an invasion sponsored by the Crystal Tower of High Rock, lead by its Lord an army filled with evil minions, Orcs and sundry coming to fall upon our unsuspecting people. Quickly we used up a crystal of healing in restoring him to vitality. We sent him on to the king, while we six grabbed our weapons and armor of power, and as many potions, marks, and crystals and rings as we could carry.

We flew to the pass hoping upon hope that we would not be too late! Our journey was not in vain, for we arrived just at the very point where the last three guardians were overwhelmed by the horde! Into the pass we ran forming the old battle line, six abreast. OH did we FIGHT! The Song of the Sword was a joyous noise slicing through the ranks of evil. We fought for hours. Julia was the first to fall, a cowardly poisoned dagger finding a rent in her armor. Then one by one all fell, save me. Then my beloved sword, the sword of my father, the one with the serpent's crest, fashioned by the master sword smith Singer Tansal broke in my hands! All was lost, our six lives spent in vain. Now, many many of Them would pour through the pass! I would be easy prey for them, like a newborn child! I wept in frustration!

Then I remembered the hearth in our home - the book! Frandar Hunding's Book of Circles, the Way of Strategy. I reached for the Shehai the spirit sword,...that which I could never reliably form when I needed it, and behold it was alive! Alive with fire! It formed in my hand! Ablaze with power -- OH I slew mightily, right and left, like a scythe through wheat! All the way to the Lord of the Tower I fought. With one blow I cut his magical

armor asunder, one more took his head! But to do that deed cost me dearly, wounds by the dozen, for although I had magical armor, it was not formed of spirit like my blade, it was not as invincible as my blade or my own spirit, and I was sorely wounded.

With the felling of the Tower Lord, his army crumbled. They fled before my wrath! They ran back through the pass not even pausing to collect their dead and wounded. All who could stand ran for their lives, and I slew all I could reach, but my breath was coming short, and the pain.... Finally I rested, on this rock where you find me now. I don't know why I chanced to bring this stone along. I bought it on a whim really, with the loot from..... ah well I guess I need to really stop and tell my story in order. I feel able to go on to tell you more...the eternal night is descending more slowly than I thought. Not just yet, am I ready to compose my death poem. A little sip of water and..... well I think I will go back and tell you of my life, maybe some details about the battle. And Oh yes! about Raliph and our children, humm where will I start.....

I am a simple warrior. I grew up as a Maiden of the Spirit Blade. As early as I can remember .....

Divad The Singer is in one body, two unique and distinct people. Divad is the most well known of the Redguard heroes. Frandar Hunding's, son, probably the most accomplished Ansei who ever lived. Yet early in his life, Divad appeared to thoroughly have rejected The way of the sword.

Divad was the only son of Frandar Hunding, and was born late in Hunding's life (2396), when he was away most of the time fighting the last of his duels and engaging in the many battles and insurrections of the period. At eleven, Divad entered the

Hall of the Virtues of War and began training, but at 16, he appears to have finally let his anger at growing up essentially fatherless get the better of him, and he broke his swords and left the Hall to become an acrobat in a traveling circus.

The life in the circus was unsatisfying to Divad, and after two years, his innate artisan heritage drove him to become a musician and finally a Bard. For two more years he traveled composing and quite literally singing in the cities of the empire - gaining no small amount of fame and recognition for his stirring and popular songs and music.

Although Divad had forsaken the Way of the sword in public, it would appear that he continued to practice the compulsory forms of training he was taught in the Hall. He carried no sword, but in the late evening, bright lights could be often be seen in his tent, which was later learned to be his practice of the form of the way known as Shehai Shen She Ru - the Way of the spirit sword, or simply the Shehai.

Divad was very popular with the people of the empire, and his music and concerts well attended, but he could not escape his heritage of the sword. When the last Emperor ascended to power, and began to persecute the sword-singers, Divad was among the first to attract his attention.

Once the Emperor Hira and his consort decided to go to war with the Singers for control of the empire, he moved swiftly against those Singers who were visibly a part of empire society. Most he had killed or assassinated, but Divad's music and fame were so wide spread, that he sent a team of his personal guards to arrest him.

The Emperor's men were either very lucky or very unlucky depending on how you choose to view it. Being no fool, Hira sent 100 of his best guards, for even an unarmed Singer was a very dangerous foe. The luck came in that they were able to capture Divad and place him in chains, as they came at him as he sat dining with his elderly mother. The disaster came in that as he surrendered, they haughtily killed her as an after thought.

That single thoughtless deed, as is often the case in war, was the one pivotal factor causing their eventual defeat. That act ignited in Divad the spirit of the Way. Up till that careless ax stroke, Divad was a ordinary artisan, no to be fair, an artist, a great artist, but no warrior.

The moment of her death, Divad rose from his seat, took his chains between his two hands and lay about him in the confines of the dining hall swinging the heavy chain in a deadly arc. He slew four of the guards, gaining enough space to run and dive through the window and into the river on who's banks the house stood. He disappeared in the dark and wet of the night.

From that point, Divad was spotted numerous times and told of in numerous rumors all across the empire - far more places than a mere mortal man could have ever been. At every point where Mira's men gathered to do mischief, the resistance was attributed to Divad.

As Mira moved against the Singers and began forming his army to invade High Desert, it was Divad who carried the news to the Singers. Divad was among those who climbed Hattu to find Hunding in his cave. What is not well known is that Hunding, at first refused to take leadership of the Singers. The first



attempt to interrupt him at his death poem cause him to drive the elders from his cave, he even formed the Shehai in his anger. It was Divad who re-entered the cave alone to speak with Hunding. To this day, no one knows what was said, what happened in that cave, for there were bright flashes of light, and angry voices. Five long hours came and went, then both emerged from the cave, Divad, at Hunding's side. The rest as they say, is history.....

Divad, who had not completed training in the Hall of the Virtues of War, became an adviser to Hunding, and spent his time reading the newly completed Book of Circles, but his role in the Hammer and Anvil strategy was as a simple sword-singer and fighter. It was not till the Singers landed In New Land that his story truly begins.

In that land, he learned to combine the artisanship of his people in smithing swords of great beauty and strength with the Shehai and build the Five great magical swords of the Redguard, but let me tell it in Divad's own words.

The chapter following this preface is a modern translation of Divad's heroic feats in wresting the land of Hammerfell from the Goblins. Many find it interesting that this is Divad's own work, He composed the saga in a Brads song. I am sorry that I am a mere scholar and not myself a poet. I can not do his beautiful verses justice, thus I have merely rendered his epic saga in prose.

We thousands traveled the Great Ocean deep. We of the high desert, ah to be surrounded by so much water! All saw the new land rise from the water in the east. A land of richness and great beauty it was, and it gladdened our hearts.

A great city we saw, and a great port. We traveled close to see streets deserted., buildings pulled down and falling , a city filled with only bones and ghosts of the past, and it saddened our hearts.

Great Lord Prince Hunding landed with his generals and we Singers to claim the New Land - it was empty of man. Unknown to us there were others there - they were to break our hearts!

Dwarves were those who had been there first, but now no sign save bones and dust. To the High Temple of the city Hunding came to pray, no weapon or armor upon his breast - no helm upon his brow did rest.

In the silence out of the dark, was a heinous act committed, a dagger as he kneeled in prayer. The healers too late were summoned. An all out battle from the emptyness came..

Surrounded we were upon the shore, our army still in the ships so far away. To the boats our men raced and rowed, and soon two great armies in battle were met!

From whence appeared this mighty horde, we could not guess, but wave upon wave of Yellow Warriors came and dashed themselves upon our Rock. Not for Nothing did we send the evil Hira to his early grave.

It seemed the sun rose and descended to its evening home, and the battle did continue. Soon the yellow horde was stacked upon itself body upon body, and still they did come. But not for Nothing did we send the evil Hirato his grave.

A break! A break within their lines, and then all were gone save those few who upon the ground did lay and moan. The silence was deafening, and our battle victory cry did ring out! The day is ours! Another valiant victory for the people of the blade.

A new land was ours, and Hunding to mourn. In his honor we did swear. His book to hold close. In his honor the land we did name after his last great battle and the Hammer blow we called it Hammerfell. A new name for us, the Singers, Red guards - no Redguards.

The battle over we did seek to rest, and the land so rich to settle and dwell. To peace, to rest, to have a home! Oh this land of Hammerfell, and it gladdened our hearts.

We thought we were home at peace, but the battle had just begun. For with the morning sun, did come again the Yellow Horde. And fight again we must, and again and again and again - and it saddened our hearts.

The council was called, for day after day the fight went on, and no end in sight. From whence do these Goblins come? We can not endure their endless coming - and our hearts did break.

A new hope, a plan was Divad's role, and he sent out sixty to spy our foe. To learn their secret. To learn from whence they come.

They told of a mighty rent in the sky, a mighty gate-way in the air it did hang. Like a door in the Hall of virtue, and from it they did spring, in an endless line. And of it, the mages could powerful magic sense.

Oh to close that door and staunch the flow. Divad to see him self did go. In him the warrior blood was pure, but magic was a

companion too. For Divad did sense the power, and in him the plan did grow.

Of Singers our army was built, but few there were with Ansei power, and fewer yet could wield the Shehai. But Shehai was all that could close the door, but Shehai of power and purity above mortal man.

But Divad did have a plan. For lifetimes the Singers did make blades of power. All warriors to wield and use the magic within. Much more magic and power was needed.

But Divad did have a plan. He the Singer swordsmiths did call, and with them he joined the Shehai with the forging of the steel and power. Five mighty swords alive with power. The spirit of Divad within each blade he did pour.

So weak he was when blades were done - a newborn babe he could hardly match in strength. But the blades they were alive with his power - and we had hope - for Divad did have a plan.

Our five Ansei each did hold one of the blades The five of Magic. With them did surround the gate and call upon the Shehai. Oh unknown gods of war, oh beauty beyond our mortal eyes. The blaze of power did the five blind.

The fire down the blades poured, it devoured the ground, the Goblins, the gates, the rent in the sky - all it consumed. Of the Goblin army, non did stand as before. Every living yellow warrior now Stood small. As small as a child they were.

Unable to wield the weapons of gown men, unable to wear armor too large, they fled, fled to the caves and under the earth to disturb our peace no more. The gate it was gone from sight!

Divad, one more task did have. The five swords to lay to rest. Too powerful they would be for man. Tempting to use, yet a great danger to all Hammerfell.

Divad and the five Ansei did climb the mountains to the north. Divad and the five blind Ansei. Only Divad did return, the swords lost to mortal man. Our hearts were gladdened.

But Divad's spirit had left him too and upon his bed did lie. To compose this poem for his people to learn and know. And our hearts were saddened.

On the twelfth day Divad did die, his spirit all had gone. And all was left was our beloved land, the land of Hammerfell. And our hearts were broken.

Destri Melarg has translated this song, which began as Divad's death poem, but notes that he believes that it ends at this point, with the following six phrases (not published in this translation) being added by a later Bard. Melarg notes that Divad did return from the mountains and his daughter Cinsel heard him speaking in his sleep of placing the five great magical swords in the depths of the mountain caves. Each Ansei who came with him stayed with their sword, somehow she believed that they derived immortality of a sort from the magic in the blades. Thus the tale has grown about the five caves and the guardians of the swords. Although Divad was a living man and helped found Hammerfell, there is no scholarly evidence for the magical swords, the giant goblins or the mountain caves. Most modern scholars believe that this is simply embellishment of the original death poem. The wresting of the land from the Goblins and how they were banished seems farfetched, since any who enter a cave or dungeon today can attest that goblins are a mere four feet tall.

As told to me around the campfires of Dendle Fragar., I faithfully give you the story titled “The Dragon’s Toe”. It may be noted that this is really the story of Derik Hallin and the quest for the Five swords of Divad. In fairness to the modern history of Hammerfell, the events of this story appear to have actually happened. A thousand years have passed since this story took place, so it too may contain “extras” like the last six phrases in The Song of Divad.

The evidence for the destruction of the Great Goblin Lord and the Army of Fear however, may be found in the huge field of bones on the Plane of Tear. To this day, campers and visitors will visit the site, and on occasion find a gold coin or bit of strangely shaped metal. History recounts a great destruction, but has no details, so we must turn to a campfire tale to learn of Hallin.

On hearing the title “The Dragon’s Toe” one’s mind turns to flying monsters and the romance of rescuing maidens, but alas the story is one of a man. The Dragon’s Toe is a terrain feature of the Wrothgarian mountains that separate High Rock and Hammerfell. This apparently was the region of the Caves of Divad, where he hid the five swords.

I located this story last in my anthology of Heroes, since you need to have learned of Divad, Makela, and Frandar Hunding to understand Derik Hallin’s quest. Derek’s story takes place two hundred years after the times on Makela Leki. In another time of strife and stress in Hammerfell.

In Hallin’s time, sword-singing had fallen from prominence in the families of Hammerfell, and only a vigilant few came to The Hall of the Virtues of War. Most of the Brothers and Maidens in the local Halls saw their learnings of the Way as a

social event or perhaps as a quaint club. Few indeed, actually read the Book of Circles, and fewer yet attempted the learnings of the Way. Derik, was one of these precious few.

It was fortunate that Derik was raised in the back country, and was able to avoid the sophistication of the cities. His Hall of the Virtues of War had stuck closely to the old ways, and the Brothers and Maidens could actually teach the forms of the Way. The once-a-week sitting at the feet of the master in that Hall contained real wisdom, and discussion of the Book of Circles. On festival and feast days they sang the old Bard songs of Divad.

Derek was small of stature, but agile of mind and body. His skills in all things set him apart from the would-be Signers of his time. Had his Hall been located in one of the large cities, jealousy and envy of his prowess would certainly have limited his progress - it is uncertain if he could have risen to the Ansei level there.

Like Makelia, he too could form the Shehai as a child, and on assention in the Hall to his manhood, he alone in the entire province of Hammerfell possessed the virtue and skill to become an Ansei. It is at this point that we pick up his story, in the campfire tale, The Dragon's Toe.

Dendle the story teller, chants this story after dinner, to both children and adults. She is a story teller of some renowned, and will stand and act out some of the portions of the tale, as well as pitch her voice appropriately for the speaking of each character. I especially like the voice she used for the Ansei Master of the Shem Pit, the last cave of the quest.

It was a dark and stormy night. Derik Hallin later to become known as Lord Hallin, had left the Hall of Virtue beginning his Walk-About when he spied the campfire and shelter of a grove of trees.

“Welcome to my fire, young man”. Called the hooded stranger in a thin and cracking voice. “I would welcome company on a night like this.”

Editors, this is the outline of my final chapter for this book on Hammerfell heroes. I condensed Dendle’s story telling. I have my notes, but the story gets long with all the quotes. She puts a lot of dialog in her story telling. I am amazed that the old stories about the 5 swords keeps cropping up. It’s been a thousand years since Hellion’s time, yet people continue to believe in the stories.

The wagon master sat with me after listening to her story and smoked a pipe with me. In discussing the story, he says that his story teller used to say that one of the five swords survived the closing of the Goblin gate, and is yet hidden here in Hammerfell. It was the least of the five, but the story has it that it exceeds and modern blade magical or ebony by several orders of magnitude.

Of course I take this with a grain of salt, since a ebony weapon is unparalleled in it’s keen cutting ability and personally I can’t imagine a weapon doing more damage than a Claymore of Firestorm or a saber of life steal. Dendle even believes that out in the country side in one of the Halls of the Virtues of War there are still people who follow the old ways, and can from a Shehai or spirit sword.



In collecting these stories I once through I was seeing a Shehai being formed, by an old Hall master, but the thing if it was a spirit sword was so faint, that even the sword shape was questionable. I didn't want to insult the old man so I claimed I saw it too, but if that was a Shehai, I can't imagine it possible to be used as a real weapon.

Here's my outline of this story:

At the time of this story, Hammerfell is fully occupied by Redguards. All the old cities of the Dwarves (but one - the Ghost City of Dwarfhome) are now the cities of today's modern Hammerfell. A second invasion of the giant goblins comes. Hammerfell is unprepared, except for a few faithful followers, all youths in the rural Halls of virtue.

Hallin being the only Ansei rallies the army of Hammerfell, after a defeat, He brings back the old ways by leading each warrior to read the Book of Circles that is in each home. The army fights the Goblins to a standstill, but things look bleak, just as in Divad's song. Somehow the goblins keep being re-supplied both with arms and troops. Eventually the Army of Hammerfell will lose.

The old master of Hallin's Hall of the Virtues of War has an ancient copy of Divad's will and testament, and reads it to Hallin - it tells him that the 5 swords aren't lost, just hidden and well guarded in 5 caves. Each cave is home to a master guardian, one of the old blind Ansei - and also a maze.

According to the will, Derik must, along with a virtuous companion of pure heart enter the cave, defeat each Ansei Master and retrieve their sword. Dendle goes into great detail here. It seems that each Master had an outstanding trait - one

Katrice, possessed feline grace, and had become very cat like, another, who had icy calm was something much like an Ice Golem.

On each blade is inscribed part of an intricate message on how to use the power of the swords combined. Derik scours the rural Halls for Brothers of the Blade and Maidens of the Spirit Sword to accompany him in the quests. He finally one by one searches out his companions, and wins each sword.

They learn from the blades how to use them and together wield the force of the 5 swords in sealing the rent in space time that the Goblins have made and from which springs their invasion. Hallin's companions avoided blinding by the magic swords by hurling the swords together into the void, and sealing forever the giant Goblins in the void between their world and ours.

The land is saved and Hallin and his companions (3 women and 2 men) become Ansei and restore the teachings of Frandar Hunding to Hammerfell.

THE END

# A Dubious Tale Of The Crystal Tower

*Bibenus Geon*

Interestingly enough, the Crystal Tower of the Summerset Isle is featured in Arena, and it indeed has a menagerie with a Snow Wolf.

This story was first told to me when I was a neonate, newly studying in the Crystal Tower of Sumurset. I was admiring the famous animal pens of the Tower when I was approached by an older student. The fellow who told me this tale seemed very trustworthy at first, but, as the reader will soon discover, the tale is very dubious indeed. Of course, I have told it since to other neonates of the Tower in the same spirit.

I offer the following for your august consideration, gentle reader.

Many, many years back, a talented but poor bard was passing through Sumurset, looking for work. He could sing, he could dance, he could act, but no one had any use for his performances. The poor bard was lugubrious, but he still visited the taverns and palaces, day after day, begging for a chance to showcase his talents.

One day, dejected from more bad luck, he was approached by a tall elf in a long robe. A Magister of the Crystal Tower, in charge

of the animal pens. The elf tells the bard of the white ape they made a cell for at the Tower, how it had died en route. There was a royal party from Firsthold visiting who had been promised a glimpse at the rare white ape. The Magister had a costume for the bard if he would deign to act out the part of the ape for the visitors. The bard had promised himself to take the first part that came his way, no matter how minor, so he agreed. The elf promised that the charade would last no longer than a fortnight, when the visitors left.

For the first several days of the masquerade, the bard did nothing more than sit in the back of the pen. He was afraid to move and show the possible imperfections of the ape costume. In time, he became bored and began walking around. He suddenly noticed that the royal party was watching, fascinated. Happy that the ruse was working, he decided to enliven the act.

Soon he had both a performance and a crowd. Instead of dancing a traditional elven jig, he would swing around the cell with every acrobatic trick he knew. Instead of singing a ballad, he would roar a roar he imagined a rare white ape might roar. The crowd loved it. The party outside his cell grew larger and larger every day.

One day, he was performing for the crowd—his finest work to date. He swung himself round and round, roaring and bleating. His hand slipped and he went flying through the bar and into the cell next door, where a Snow Wolf was in residence. Hackling its back and growling, the Snow Wolf began to inch toward the bard.

Seeing no other way out, the bard screamed, “Help! Help!”

The Snow Wolf whispered, “Shut up or you’ll get us all fired.”

# A History Of Daggerfall

*Odiva Gallwood*

There is sufficient archaeological evidence for the modern historian to believe that there has been some variety of human settlement in the city-state of Daggerfall starting at least a thousand years before recorded history. The first use of the name Daggerfall to refer to the area around the current capitol was most probably in the 246th year of the 1st Era. The north half of the Iliac Bay, in fact all of the current province of High Rock, was conquered by invading Nords who brought a rough sort of civilization with them. One of the first civilized acts the Nords performed was a census—the so-called Book of Life. Listed on page 933 of the Book is this entry:

“North of the Highest bluffs, south of the moors, west of the hills, and east of the sea is called DAGGERFALL. 110 men, 93 women, 13 children under 8 years of age, 58 cows, 7 bulls, 63 chickens, 11 cocks, 38 hogs live here.”

Nearly four thousand years after this census was taken, we can see that these two hundred and sixteen people have multiplied heartily. The last census, in the year 3E 401, lists the population at over 110,000. It is always difficult to find an exact number, but the capitol city of Daggerfall certainly outnumbers her rivals, Sentinel and Wayrest.

It has been a consistent, if not actually helpful amusement of historians to find the origin of placenames. Daggerfall, by tradition, is said to refer to the knife the first chieftain threw to form the borders of his lands. But there are other legends that may have equal validity.

The Daggerfall entry from the Book of Life actually supports one theory about the reason for Daggerfall's longevity. The people were coastal fishermen, but they also found the land itself sufficiently rich to support raising livestock. This inclination of the early citizenry toward reinforcing their principal products brought stability to a fickle land.

Daggerfall thrived during the years of the Skyrim occupancy. When the Wild Hunt killed King Borgas of Winterhold in 1E 369, the northlands engaged in the War of Succession and Skyrim, greatly weakened, lost her holdings in High Rock and Morrowind. The Iliac Bay had become important strategically, and Daggerfall began to expand her military.

There were multiple opportunities for her to exercise this army and navy during the Direnni conflicts with the force of the Alessian Reform. The Dirennis were native Bretons, and Bretons are hardly ever given to excessive religion. Daggerfall became a minor base of operations for the Dirennis and their allies. Raven Direnni, the enchantress whose magic helped secure the final victory over the Alessians in the Glenumbria Moors, was one of the earliest occupants of Castle Daggerfall.

Over the centuries that followed, the Dirennis fell into obscurity, but Daggerfall continued her growth. In 1E 609, King Thagore of Daggerfall defeated the army of Glenpoint and became the preeminent economic, cultural, and military force

in southern High Rock. A position the kingdom has precariously kept ever since.

Ironically, it was another successful military exercise three hundred and seventy years later that ended Daggerfall's monopoly of Bay trade: the annihilation of the orcish capitol Orsinium by a joint effort of Daggerfall, the new kingdom of Sentinel, and the now extinct Order of Diagna. The scattering of the orcs from southeastern High Rock made the river route to the Bay more accessible. The tiny village of Wayrest grew like a flower that no longer feared the mow. In twenty years, Wayrest's trade profits equalled Daggerfall's. In forty years, Wayrest was the acknowledged master of Iliac Bay trade. In one hundred and twenty years, Wayrest became the Kingdom of Wayrest.

The Kingdom of Sentinel did not exhibit Wayrest's aggrandizement during the First Era. The Redguards were warriors learning the ways of the merchants, and their land was enemy enough to keep their population checked. Indeed, the number of people in all areas of the Iliac Bay was halved once in the First Era by the Thrassian Plague, once again by the War of Righteousness, and a third time by the invading Akavari. If Daggerfall had not spent its first thousand years preparing for the battles of the next thousand years, it is indeed conceivable that the Iliac Bay today might be Akavarian.

The Second Era, like the latter part of the First Era, is a tapestry of wars, insurrections, and plagues. Daggerfall, Sentinel, and Wayrest continued to expand and improve their military and economic positions in the Bay. Daggerfall and Wayrest would transpose positions as major trading center of the Bay, and



Daggerfall and Sentinel likewise banded over which was the superior military power.

The Iliac Bay has continued to hold an important position in the Imperial government of the Third Era. Rarely allies (though the combined armies in opposition to the Camoran Usurper in the 3rd century of the 3rd Era is a notable exception), but not always enemies, Daggerfall, Sentinel, and Wayrest have weathered the storms of contention, plague, famine, and pestilence. The recent War of Betony was typical of Iliac Bay warfare: sincere, frighteningly violent, and peaceably resolved.

# A Scholar's Guide To Nymphs

*Vondham Barres*

I grew up a scholar, an ascetic devoted to knowledge, with eyes that saw beauty in a fascinating passage in a dusty tome, love in the candle that allowed me to study on starless nights, passion in a well-reasoned argument of a long dead issue. I was a student who never graduated and was never expelled.

Though I am not defending myself, I should further define myself. I am not what you would call a prude. In fact, I can speak of subjects in a detached way that would make the most debauched strumpet in Skyhawk blush with discovered modesty. I wrote an essay the House of Dibella as a scholar should, analysing the cult of beauty and physical relations as one might study crop rotation or the digestive system of an orc. The acquaintances of mine who were inclined to wink and giggle I tolerated, but barely.

With all that said, the reader will understand that when I decided to study the language of the nymphs in order to study their character and culture, it was not a decision I made on account of prurience or lust. Scholars have historically neglected the nymph as a subject worthy of research, and this neglect I attribute to prejudice. The sages with whom I have spoken on the subject have eloquently and intelligently formed sentences which, boiled down, can be translated as: "Nymphs look like beautiful, naked women who skip along tra-la-la and

like to have indiscriminate sex. What could they have to say that would be of any interest?”

So here I was faced with the most daunting of projects—to study and research a species unstudied is a potentially rewarding challenge. If the subject was unstudied because the scientific community had deemed it beneath interest, a potentially rewarding but decidedly frustrating challenge. If I spent months in serious study of their language and culture and additional time in their company, and discovered nothing more than that the common prejudice is correct, the term “laughing stock” would not do me justice.

So, excited and nervous for reasons unrelated to the notoriously promiscuous behavior of my subjects, I began my studies. I mastered the language, a melodious tongue that sounds like wild elf and faerie but share no vocabulary with them. I studied the lore, and found it to be on the whole, little more than pornography and crude conjecture.

I next had to find a nymph.

From my centralized location in the Imperial City, I found it easy to send word around to several wellknown temples and guilds devoted to study in all the provinces. Not all replies back were serious in nature, but one, from the School of Julianos in Sentinel helped me considerably. To Magister Oitos and his disciples, I here offer my sincere gratitude.

Nymphs are extremely shy creatures, no matter what the more obscene stories will tell you. No one who I’ve spoken with has had one seek him or her out. Thus to speak with a nymph requires energy and patience.

Out of courtesy for her privacy, I will not here give the location of the little grotto off the coast of Hammerfell where I found the nymph. It took three months of patient waiting, leaving presents where I knew the nymph would be, before the nymph stood still at my approach.

I remember I was carrying a bouquet of purple and white tetias, and she looked at them and then at me, and smiled. The effect of her smile was truly magical, I'm convinced. Her body was, of course, perfect; her face lovely and serene; her hair like silk flame. But until she smiled, she was beautiful in the abstract, a perfect statue by a master. The smile made her approachable and, thus, terrifying.

"For you," I said, attempting my first utterance of Nymph to a real nymph.

Her smile grew into a grin which became a giggle and then a laugh. The reader has doubtless heard of the silver laughter of the elves. The nymph's laugh is earthy and spontaneous, and very...suggestive.

"And what do you want from me in return, mortal?" she asked.

"I am," There is no, I should say, known word in the Nymph language for scholar, "I am a man who likes to learn things. I want to learn things about you."

And I did.

Nymphs are the wisest, most wonderful creatures in Tamriel. My nymph, her name is Ayalea (a poor phonetic transcription of a word that sounds more like a light wind blowing through a small crack in a hollow chamber) and she knows more about

the behavior and varieties of the deep woodland creatures than the greatest wood elf scholar I ever met. She taught me of flowers and ghosts and creatures too fast and timid to have ever been seen by man.

Ayalea taught me how to learn for the very first time. How to open my mind to all of the possibilities of life and how to use that knowledge, not just to hold in my cramped brain like a dragon's horde.

If you ever meet a nymph, speak to her.

\* \* \*

Editor's note: the writer Vondham Barres is no longer a scholar at the Imperial University. He deposited this manuscript and disappeared from the civilized world. His current whereabouts are unknown.

# A Tale Of Kieran

## *Vegepythicus*

### A Tale of Kieran, Part I

Kieran was on the road from Wren to Fairtree, when he grew weary from the midday sun. His boots were tight and he thought to remove them for a bit in the shade of a nearby oak (oaks being a favourite of bards). This particular oak was venerable and gnarled, with sturdy branches that dipped and swooped, nearly touching the ground in spots. From its shade Kieran watched the forest creatures playing in the warm sun. But for the rustling of leaves, high above, the only sounds were of butterfly wings and birdsong.

“What a peaceful day,” Kieran thought as he watched a butterfly drift by, “What a beautiful day! In truth, since bards first told tales, has there ever been a day more peaceful and beautiful than this?”

He drank from his waterskin and, taking his lute from its sack, cleared his throat and began to sing:

“Oh, the maidens of Wren are passing fair...

...with breasts like melons, and flaxen hair ...”

He had just taken a deep breath to bellow the lusty chorus when a small, feminine voice said, “Kind sir ...”

He leaped to his stockinged feet, his face flaming red. "Who's there?" he cried.

The small voice repeated, "Please, sir, if you will be so kind ..."

Kieran looked about but saw no person or creature addressing him.

"Pray thee," he cried. "Show thyself or have cause to fear my dagger." (He tried desperately to remember where he had last seen it.) "Whether thee be friend or foe, pray thee show thyself now."

The small voice replied from above him, "Kind sir, thou hast no cause to fear me, and I am in need of help. Can thou find it in thy heart to aid me?"

He looked up and saw naught but a small robin's nest, three branches above him. Climbing swiftly, he found a robin with three tiny robinlings, their mouths open wide.

"Good mother robin," he asked, "Can it be thee who addresses me thus?"

"Kind sir," she replied, "I have hurt my wing and it will be at least a day before I might fly. If my children do not eat soon, they will die. Would you be so kind as to bring a fat, juicy meal? Would you find a caterpillar or earthworm or grub for my children?"

Now, Kieran was kind of heart and it was not within him to refuse a plea such as this, so off he went into the forest. Searching under some mulberry leaves, he soon found a small green caterpillar. It seemed a perfect meal for young robins.

Plucking it from the leaf upon which it fed, he prepared to hurry back to the oak when he heard a tiny voice. He opened his hand and the caterpillar looked up at him with her big brown eyes wide with fear. "Kind sir," she said, "wouldst thou kill me so thoughtlessly?"

Kieran scratched his head in puzzlement and the caterpillar continued: "When thou cooled thy feet beneath the oak, didst thou not find joy in my parents' beauty as they danced before thee in the sun? I, too, am soon to change. Wouldst thou deny thy successors the joy of my dancing? And if I do not live to have children, how will thine own children find such joy? Please, sir, would not an earthworm serve the needs of the robinlings just as well?"

Kieran looked into the eyes of the caterpillar and knew that he could not feed her to the robins. Carefully, he placed her beneath her mulberry bush and continued his search.

Near a rushing brook, Kieran found a flat stone that, when moved, revealed a juicy earthworm enjoying the cool moist earth. "Aha." he thought. "As nice as the caterpillar may have been, this truly seems a more fitting meal for young robins."

He had no sooner plucked the earthworm from its cool abode (where it had been frantically trying to burrow away from him), when he heard a voice so faint he might have imagined it:

"Kind sir," he thought he heard, and Kieran looked in his hand. The worm continued: "I am but a lowly creature, it's true, but might I plead such case that I have?"

Kieran rolled his eyes skyward as the worm sat up and seized its chance. "I am not a lowborn worm like others you might



find. No, I am a prince among earthworms. I come from an ancient lineage. My ancestors burrowed the earth when fires belched from black pits throughout these lands. I command millions like myself. Were it not for my loyal followers, you, good sir, would be up to your neck in leaves, tree trunks and mouldy carcasses. I'll make a bargain with you. If you release me and choose, instead, a pathetic grub for the robinlings, I will dispatch an entire clan of earthworms to keep your foreyard clean and sweet-smelling for as long as ye shall live." The earthworm looked hopefully at Kieran (while calculating the distance to the ground). "Good sir, what say ye?"

Kieran was beginning to lose his patience, but, seeing the value of the earthworm's offer, decided that a grub would, indeed, make a tasty morsel for the young robins. He returned the earthworm to its moist haven and carefully replaced the flat stone above it. And, true to his desire, a short while later, in a forest glade, beneath a wide slab of discarded bark, Kieran chanced upon that which he sought: a fat white grub that would grow the robinlings into beautiful songsters. He plucked it from its hiding place and set forth. It was a beautiful day, indeed.

## A Tale of Kieran, Part II

Nearby, in stately Trowbridge, King Caladan did live with his lovely daughter, Einlea. The princess was the apple of the old man's eye and the crown jewel of his small kingdom. He looked upon her with the blind pride of a doting father, and she, for her part, did naught but bask and flourish in his bounty.

Trowbridge was quiet now, the chief sounds being the clatter of cart wheels and the cries of street vendors, but it was not always so. Three years earlier there had been trouble with

Carthan to the west. It was not much, a border dispute, but the king persuaded a wizard named Loziard to come to Trowbridge in his employ, to aid him in the contest. Loziard was unknown by all in Trowbridge and kept to himself within the palace, coming and going as he pleased. When Trowbridge prevailed, with almost no loss of life, there was joyous celebration for days and weeks thereafter. Time passed, yet Loziard remained. The King, not wanting to seem ungrateful, said nothing, but became increasingly discomfited with the wizard's presence and wished for his departure.

On Einlea's twentieth birthday, King Caladan called for a celebration and holiday through all his land. Unknown to his subjects, he intended to proclaim his retirement and the transference of his crown to his beautiful daughter. Out of politeness, and nothing more, he invited the wizard Loziard to aid him in devising a proper speech.

Loziard was furious. He paced his chamber, his black brows knitted with intensity that would have soured any cow's milk. "Why," he cried aloud, "am I treated so unjustly by the old buffoon? Were it not for my skills, the border contest, mayhaps even the kingdom itself, might have been lost. I deserve more. I deserve the crown. To give it to that primping simpering daughter of his, who thinks naught of more than her own whim, is a slap more stinging than that of gauntlet. I will have justice. I will demonstrate, amply, for all to see, wherein lies true power."

Thereupon, Loziard made his preparations.

Princess Einlea's birthday came on a summer morning. Everyone within the city, and from the farms without, gathered to the palace for the festival. Banners waved from

every rooftop. Fiddlers fiddled and dancers danced. Bakers baked wonderful sweets for the occasion. It was a day long to be remembered.

At noon, precisely, King Caladan and Princess Einlea emerged onto the main balcony to the cheers of the kingdom. “Good citizens of Trowbridge,” called the King, “We are but a tiny kingdom, but we prosper, do we not?”

Loud hails (mostly) erupted from the crowd below. Encouraged, Caladan continued, “But now I am an old man. The day has arrived when younger blood can better attend to the needs and events of the kingdom. My subjects...My loyal subjects and friends...It is with honour ...and pride ...and the greatest of expectations ...that I transfer my kingdom and my crown to my loving daughter. To one and all, I give you” (a long pause here) “Einlea.”

As cheers filled the air, Caladan made a grand, sweeping gesture with his arm, intending to make the presentation as spectacular as the pride that filled him. His robe went “swoooosh” and his hand pointed to...nobody. What was this? Where had she gone? Where Einlea had been, moments earlier, there now was naught but vacant air.

“Er ...Einlea ...?” he called, uncertainly. But there was no response. Silence fell over park and courtyard. People glanced at each other nervously.

Old Loziard clapped his hands in glee. He danced. He hugged himself with uncontained laughter. “How wonderful ...” he cried. “What a breathtakingly stunning and talented a wizard I am..” For what he had done, of course, was to rid himself of Einlea for once and for all. With one stroke, crafty and evil, he

had removed the vain creature from the palace. Nought else remained between him and that which he desired.

Now, magic is a tricky thing. Like all forces in the world, it must be kept in balance. As surely as day balances night and summer balances winter, so too must positive magic balance negative. For every hurtful or destructive spell, there must be an act of equal goodness or charity lest trouble overflow into the world. For every black wizard, there must be a white. For every spell of combat destruction, there must be healing. Know ye this ...if all who practice magic cast naught but healing or protective spells, dark, horrible forces would build up until chaos and ruin would burst forth and rain our doom down upon us. Thus may spells of healing be broken by harm, and the worst of spells be broken by charity.

Knowing this, Loziard planned well his act of vengeance. To permanently rid himself of Einlea (short of killing her outright) he must devise a spell so cunning that no act of kindness would ever break it. He was pulling lice out of his long beard, late one evening, when he burst into laughter. He would make her into something ...disgusting.

“I will make her into a frog.” he laughed, then frowned. No... that had been done. People might expect it and go around, like mindless idiots, seeking frogs, hoping to earn a kings ransom.

And then, a brilliant plan occurred to him.

“I will make her into a bug, an insect, a WORM ...” He almost choked on his wine. “Oh. How perfect.. I will make her into something so truly loathsome that she will spend the rest of her little bug life in terror of being squashed by the first person who sees her.” He squealed and his rings jangled and his fat

jiggled and he snorted wine out his nose in laughter. “Oh, how absolutely delicious ...”

And that’s exactly what he did. While King Caladan and his subjects scratched their heads in puzzlement, nobody saw a small fat white tree grub plop to the cobblestones beneath the main balcony and immediately curl up, glistening and quivering.

### A Tale of Kieran, Part III

Einlea was terrified. What had happened? Well, she had seen enough of Loziard’s magic to know what had happened. But why? Why would he do this to her? She didn’t have long to ponder the question. A huge black hound, hundreds of times her size, ran to the cobblestone where she lay, and almost gobbled her with one slurp of his tongue. From somewhere, she found the wherewithal to roll out of his way and into the crevice between the stones. His HUGE slurpy tongue followed her, drooling and panting great hurricanes of hot awful breath down at her. But just as the tongue was about to lick her into the waiting stomach, the hound’s owner yanked his massive chain and pulled the beast toward home.

It is true that Einlea, in her life as a human, was self indulgent and not inclined to effort or resource, but that was merely because she had no need of either. In the following days, she had cause to discover plenty of both within her. After the incident with the hound, she knew she must go far away from people and dogs. And she knew what kinds of creatures dined on grubs, too. She slept out of sight under leaves, in places where grubs would not likely be sought.

Even so, Einlea's days were filled with terror and adventure. There were circling hawks by day and owls by night. A bear, tearing at a rotting tree trunk, gobbled grubs, indistinguishable from Einlea, by the hundreds, as she watched in horror from behind a nearby rock. The smallest stream was now an enormous, gushing torrent, to be crossed in a nutshell under the greatest of peril. Einlea passed these tests, along with many others, and she passed them well.

It was on her tenth such day that a clumsy boot kicked aside the piece of bark under which she had sought shelter from the sun. Blinded by the sudden light, she heard an exclamation from high above. Then, before she could react, two fingers dropped from the sky and plucked her up and deposited her firmly inside a huge fist.

Ten days ago, Einlea would have been paralysed with terror. But that was ten days ago. Her mind raced. "Who is this clumsy idiot, anyway??" she thought, "and what on earth does he want with a tree grub? At least he didn't squash me on the spot. That's encouraging, isn't it? So he must be here to rescue me.."

She wriggled and squirmed in his fist until she could see his face, high above her, between two of his fingers. "Ugh. A beard. If I'm going to be rescued, why can't it be by a fine young prince?" But it then occurred to her that she was speaking from old habit. "I wonder how many of those foppish boys could have survived these past ten days?" She laughed, thinking of them. "Not many, I bet. Those who wouldn't have curled up and died immediately would, by now, be whimpering and crying for their mothers." She looked at Kieran again. "Well...maybe he would look better if I wasn't looking straight up his nostrils. Ouch.. Why isn't he more careful with me??"

And then it occurred to Einlea that, if this oaf were truly rescuing her, he probably would have said something to her.

“Uh-oh.” Einlea’s heart raced and she started wriggling furiously, imagining the worst of all possible deaths. “He must be going fishing.”

Einlea couldn’t do much in her current state, but she could spit. And spit she did. In quantities unimaginable for so small a grub. She spit and spit and spit until her tiny grub mouth was too dry to spit another drop. She felt Kieran’s hand squirming and thought, “It’s working..”

#### A Tale of Kieran, Part IV

Kieran was fair disgusted. It was bad enough that he had to touch the slimy thing, but now it was oozing something and becoming truly revolting. Finally, just before he reached the robin’s oak, he could take it no longer. He stopped and examined the creature in his hand. White and plump and glistening, it was, in truth, a repellent creature. Yet the poor thing was obviously terrified. It gazed up at him with what he imagined to be minuscule grub eyes, pleading. Kieran thought of the caterpillar and the earthworm, and his heart gave in. Heaving a great resigned sigh, he found a nice clean root and placed the grub upon it.

And thus was Loziard’s spell broken.

None could have been more astonished than Einlea when she unexpectedly grew to her former size, except, perhaps for Kieran, who nearly died of fright. He was no more than catching his breath when Einlea regained her wits. Raising her index finger, warning Kieran not to say even ONE word, Einlea

snatched Kieran's coat to cover herself. Then, with fire in her eyes, and as much dignity as she could muster, she was off to Trowbridge, leaving Kieran to stare, open-mouthed, at her departing figure.

Einlea knew she could not simply enter the city and confront Loziard. The moment he saw her, he would but cast another enchantment upon her. So, disguising herself as a shepherd, she found an abandoned house on the moors and began to make her plans. What happened next is a tale worth hearing. But it is a tale for another evening. Indeed, it is a tale to be told over many an evening, and many a good pot of ale.

And what of the baby robins? Having no alternative, Kieran climbed the tree and took from his pack his last piece of fatty mutton. Tearing it into small shreds, he gave it to the grateful mother robin, who fed it to her family.

Upon returning to the ground, Kieran looked first toward Fairtree, his former destination, then, grinning, set off after the most surprising young lady, for whom he now had many questions. "Who knows ..." he called back to the robins, "It may be fate. And besides, I need my coat."

He was heard, late that evening, far down the road, singing:

"Oh, the maidens of Trowbridge are passing fair...

...with breasts like melons, and flaxen hair ..."



# An Overview Of Gods And Worship In Tamriel

*Brother Hetchfeld*

Editor's Note:

Brother Hetchfeld is an Associate Scribe at the Imperial University, Office of Introductory Studies

Gods are commonly viewed by the evidence of their interest in worldly matters. A central belief in the active participation of Deities in mundane matters can be challenged by the evidence of apathy on the part of Gods during times of plague or famine.

From intervention in legendary quests to manifestations in common daily life, no pattern for the Gods of Tamriel activities is readily apparent. The concerns of Gods in many ways may seem unrelated or at best unconcerned with the daily trials of the mortal realm. The exceptions do exist, however.

Many historical records and legends point to the direct intervention of one or more gods at times of great need. Many heroic tales recount blessings of the divinity bestowed upon heroic figures who worked or quested for the good of a Deity or the Deity's temple. Some of the more powerful artifacts in the known world were originally bestowed upon their owners through such reward. It has also been reported that priests of high ranking in their temples may on occasion call upon their

Deity for blessings or help in time of need. The exact nature of such contact and the blessings bestowed is given to much speculation, as the temples hold such associations secret and holy. This direct contact gives weight to the belief that the Gods are aware of the mortal realm. In many circumstances, however, these same Gods will do nothing in the face of suffering and death, seeming to feel no need to interfere. It is thus possible to conclude that we, as mortals, may not be capable of understanding more than a small fraction of the reasoning and logic such beings use.

One defining characteristic of all Gods and Goddesses is their interest in worship and deeds. Deeds in the form of holy quests are just one of the many things that bring the attention of a Deity. Deeds in everyday life, by conforming to the statutes and obligations of individual temples are commonly supposed to please a Deity. Performance of ceremony in a temple may also bring a Deity's attention. Ceremonies vary according to the individual Deity. The results are not always apparent but sacrifice and offerings are usually required to have any hope of gaining a Deity's attention.

While direct intervention in daily temple life has been recorded, the exact nature of the presence of a God in daily mundane life is up to great speculation. A traditional saying of the Wood Elves goes "One mans miracle is another mans accident." While some gods are believed to take an active part of daily life, others are well known for their lack of interest in temporal affairs.

It has been theorized that gods do in fact gain strength from such things as worship through praise, sacrifice and deed. It may even be theorized that the number of worshippers a given

Deity has may reflect on His overall position among the other Gods. This my own conjecture, garnered from the apparent ability of the larger temples to attain blessings and assistance from their God with greater ease than smaller religious institutions.

There are reports of the existence of spirits in our world that have the same capacity to use the actions and deeds of mortals to strengthen themselves as do the Gods. The understanding of the exact nature of such creatures would allow us to understand with more clarity the connection between a Deity and the Deity's worshipers.

The implication of the existence of such spirits leads to the speculation that these spirits may even be capable of raising themselves to the level of a God or Goddess. Motusuo of the Imperial Seminary has suggested that these spirits may be the remains of Gods and Goddesses who through time lost all or most of their following, reverting to their earliest most basic form. Practioners of the Old Ways say that there are no Gods, just greater and lesser spirits. Perhaps it is possible for all three theories to be true.

# Ark'ay The God

## *Mymophonus the Scribe*

So be it known that the gods were once as we.

Ark'ay, the god of death and birth, was an ordinary shopkeeper whose only unusual characteristic was a passion for knowledge. To indulge his hobby he became an avid collector of books on almost any subject he could find in print.

One day he stumbled across a tome which purported to tell the secrets of life, death, and the purpose of existence. After months of studying the convoluted logic, written in opaque language, he thought that he was finally beginning to understand what the author was saying.

During this time he became so intent on understanding the book that he ignored everything else: his business started to slide towards bankruptcy, his few friends stopped visiting him, he ignored the plague which was ravaging the town, and his family were ready to leave him.

Just as he felt that the book was opening visions of new worlds, the plague brought him low. His family tended his illness out of a sense of duty, but he slowly sank towards death. So, as a last resort, he prayed to Mara the mother-goddess to allow him enough time to complete his studies of the book.

“Why should I make an exception for you, Ark `ay?” asked Mara.

“Mother Mara, I am finally beginning to understand this book and the meaning of life and death” he answered, “and with a little more time to study and think, I should be able to teach others”.

“Hmmm, it sounds to me like that `teaching others’ is an afterthought to appeal to me”, she replied. “What is the reason for death and birth?”

“There are far more souls in the Universe than there is room for in the physical world. But it is in the physical world that a soul has an opportunity to learn and progress. Without birth, souls would not be able to acquire that experience, and without death there would be no room for birth.”

“Not a very good explanation, but it does have elements of truth. Maybe with more study you could improve it,” she mused. “I cannot give you `a little more time.’ I can only condemn you to Eternal labor in the field you have chosen. How say you to that?”

“I do not understand, mother,” said Ark’ay.

“Your choice is to either accept the death that is so close or to become a god with us. But a god is not an easy nor pleasant thing to be. As the god of death and birth you will spend eternity making sure that deaths and births stay in proper balance in the physical world. And, in spite of what you believe you understand, you will always agonize over whether your decisions are truly correct. How do you decide?”

Ark'ay spent what seemed to him as an eternity in thought before answering. "Mother, if my studies are not completely wrong, my only choice is to accept the burden and try to transmit the reasons for death and birth to humanity."

"So be it, Arkay, God of Birth and Death."

# Banker's Bet

*Porbert Lyttumly*

It was a perfectly ordinary day at the main office of the Bank of Daggerfall. Normal transactions took place: deposits were deposited, withdrawals were withdrawn, house mortgages were collected, letters of credit were golded. When a teller named Clyton J. Wifflington saw the little old lady approaching him, dragging two large sacks, each nearly as large as her, he changed his mind. It was not to be a perfectly ordinary day at the Bank of Daggerfall after all.

"I would like you to take the thirty million gold pieces I have in these sacks and open me an account," croaked the little old biddy.

"Certainly, madam," Wifflington said, eagerly. He counted the gold in the sacks and found that it was thirty million gold exactly.

"One moment, sonny," the little old lady chirruped. "Before I open the account, I would like to meet the man I'm trusting it to. I'd like to talk to the president of the bank."

Wifflington wanted the president to know that he was the teller who had taken the largest single deposit that year, so eagerly sent word to the president's secretary. As it turned out, the president was equally eager to meet such a wealthy woman, so the old lady was brought to his office that very day.

“Pleased to make your acquaintance, milady. I am Gerander P. Baggedon,” said the president, Gerander P. Baggedon.

“My name,” said the little old lady. “Is Petuva Smuthworthy.” That was, in fact, her real name. “Thank you for seeing me. I like to conduct my business in a more personal way.”

“I can certainly appreciate that,” said Baggedon chucklingly. “It is an appreciable sum of gold. Would it be rude of me to ask how you came by it?”

“Not at all,” said Mrs. Smuthworthy.

“How came you by it?” asked Baggedon.

“I’ll let you guess,” replied Mrs. Smuthworthy, with a trace of unattractive girlish flirtation.

Baggedon was a man of enormous imagination, for a banker. He guessed inheritance and longtime thrift, but Mrs. Smuthworthy coyly shook her head. Perhaps she had sold a large, old mansion? No. In a moment of chumminess, Baggedon asked if the gold came as a result of plunder or thievery. Mrs. Smuthworthy took no offense, but said no. Finally, he admitted defeat.

“I’m a gambler,” she said.

“In arena fights?” he asked, interested.

“No, no, dearie. Different things. For example, I’d be willing to wager twenty five thousand gold pieces that at this time tomorrow morning, your testicles will be covered with feathers.”



Mr. Baggledon was somewhat taken aback by the old woman's words. Could she be mad? Could she be a witch? He eliminated the latter possibility, for he had a sense for such things. If she were mad, she was still a rich madwoman. And he could use twenty five thousand gold pieces. So he took her wager.

For the next twenty-four hours, Mr. Baggledon obsessed over his testicles. He checked his pants so often that afternoon, his subordinates feared the worse and suggested that he not touch anything and go home for the rest of the afternoon. He spent the night seated, his pants around his ankles, his beady banker's eyes focused on his scrotum. Every time he started to doze off, his vision was filled with images of Mrs. Smethworthy plucking feathers from his balls, cackling.

Mr. Baggledon arrived at the bank late the next day—only moments before Mrs. Smethworthy's arrival. Accompanying her was a lean, bespeckled fellow she introduced as a barrister from the court. Her son, it turned out. Young Mr. Smethworthy always accompanied his mother when there was money involved, she explained.

“Enough banter,” she crowed. “Our bet, dearie?”

“My dear, dear madam, I can tell you that your gold will be quite safe at the Bank of Daggerfall. I hope it will not cause you distress to discover that your gold will be safer here than in your own hands. My family jewels are quite, shall we say, featherless. And you owe me a sum equally twenty five thousand gold.”

Poor Mrs. Smethworthy's face fell when she heard this. “Are you sure?”

“Quite, madam.”

“Not even one feather?” Her voice suggested doubt. Mr. Baggedon could tell she thought he might be lying.

“Not one, I fear, madam.”

“It’s not that I don’t trust you, Mr. Baggedon, but it is quite a lot of gold. Might I—would you—could I possibly see for myself?”

As he knew he was soon to be a twenty five thousand gold pieces richer, and he was still a bit punchy from lack of sleep, Mr. Baggedon merely smiled and dropped his breeches to the floor. Mrs. Smethworthy examined his testicles very carefully, under, to the left, to the right. At last, she was satisfied that there was not so much as a down feather anywhere in the region. While she was looking under them one last time, Mr. Baggedon heard a thwacking noise across the office. Young Mr. Smethworthy was banging his head against the stone wall.

“What in the Lady’s name is wrong with your son, Mrs. Smethworthy?” he asked.

“Nothing, dear,” she said. “I merely bet him one hundred thousand gold pieces that by this time I would have the president of the Bank of Daggerfall by the balls.”

# Bothdorji Scroll

*Anonymous*

Breathe candent smoke on the veil of Oblivion

And force the line dispelled

Awaken the sleepless, unquiet Princes

And bid Their standing servants rise

It is the night when frost will burn

When flame will freeze the lamplit lake

When clouds of bats devour clouds of birds

When boils and sores afflict the rich

When a boy with wings doth curse the land

If knowing lies fester on my tongue

And such whens are but whispers in the night

These words form a sentence of death

But if the Day of Oblivion is indeed at hand

Servants of the Dark, obey me

# Broken Diamonds

*Ryston Baylor*

I remember as a young lad in Glenumbra Moors my first Broken Diamonds holiday. The big noisy festivals I remember very well—Harvests' End, Mid Year, New Year, the Emperor's Day.

All of these I have memories of that stretch back before I became truly aware of the meaning of our celebrating. On the 19th of Frost Fall, every year, my family and I would walk to a ruined castle in the middle of the wilderness, together with everyone else we knew in the Moors. Hands clasped in hands, we would form an enormous circle around the ruins, and head reverently bowed we would sing a song, the Sepharve.

For years, we did this and I never asked why. It is an odd thing that normally curious children, from my experience, never ask questions about Broken Diamonds, and adults seldom volunteer information. Gradually, as we learn about our homeland through university or the prattling of ancient relatives, we come to guess and then know the meaning of Broken Diamonds.

I cannot be objective as a native of Glenumbra Moors, but visitors have told me that the sorrow—more often they use the word shame—of the natives is almost overwhelming. There is a sense that a great and ancient crime still burns in the

conscience of the people of the Moors. Though it did not happen in our lifetimes, we know that the debt is not yet paid.

I refer, of course, to the murder of Her Terrible Majesty, Kintyra II, Emperess of Tamriel, on the frozen morning of the 23rd of Frost Fall, in the year 3E 123.

We do not know the name of the castle where she was held; we do not know the name of her murderer (though the man who ordered the murder was her cousin and usurper, Uriel III); we do not know where she was buried. But our ancestors knew that their rightful ruler was imprisoned somewhere in their land, and did nothing to help her. For that, we bear their shame.

On that morning, when our great-great grandparents heard of Kintyra's death, all were stricken with horror and regret at their lack of action. All the people of Glenpoint and Glenumbra Moors searched out those responsible in every Imperial castle. They formed barriers with their bodies to hold the killer within. Flags bearing the Red Diamond of the Septim family were torn and scattered, and broken diamonds littered the snow.

The song we sing every Broken Diamonds, as I mentioned before, is the Sephavre. I asked everyone in Glenumbra Moor what the meaning of the song is, for it is in Old Bretic, and each generation only knows it because they were taught by their parents. No one knew the exact meaning of the words, not even the tone and emotion the words can be easily translated. When I later talked to a scholar who gave me an accurate translation of the Sephavre, I began to understand both why our ancestors chose it as the anthem for the great injustice of the murder of

Kintyra II and the sorrow that still prevades Glenumbra Moors  
since that dark morn.

The Sephavre

Souls of our fathers, suffer deeply,  
For you have led us to the dark time,  
When our own souls, filled with air,  
Allowed ignorance and villiany to thrive  
In what used to be our land.

Howl, ancestors, howl and bring us  
Memories of our conformance with evil.  
We do anything we can to survive,  
Giving up our minds and hearts and bodies  
We will not fight, and we will be torn  
And like flotsam in a whirling tide  
We will be forever the agents of injustice  
But we will mourn it forever.

# Confessions Of A Thief

*Anonymous*

I'm a thief. Now, don't get me wrong. I ain't saying this out of pride, but I ain't ashamed of my occupation neither. Thieves got a perfect right to exist in the Empire. People say we're dishonest. Of course, those people are usually either merchants or priests, which really slays me. Sort of the snake calling the worm legless.

Rulers like us. Crime in moderation is good for the economy. The trick is to keep it at a good even pace, with a well timed lull and a minor wave to keep the fat bottoms from becoming compacent. Of course, stupid, but talented thieves will keep stealing, empty their pockets, and steal some more. This ain't good for no one. That's where the guilds come in.

A thieves guild is what they call a crime regulator. We protect each other and punish the clumsy and greedy. The kings depend on us to keep the amateurs out of business.

Yeah, occasionally, a king will come down on us. I've even seen my Thieves Guildmaster get himself stuck in prison once or twice. Some cohort of mine said her first Guildmaster got himself hanged. Then the Thieves Guild has to get foul on the king, and, let someone who knows tell you, the results ain't pretty.

I got into the guild, the way I've seen most thieves do it. It was a few years back, when that bully Jagar Tharn was sitting on the throne only everyone thought he was the Emperor. My parents farm turned into eight acres of dust and rock, and they threw me and my brothers out. I was always a skinny thing, but by the time I made it to the closest town, I was a good deal more skinnier.

Just cause the town had some dirt that plants could grow on didn't make them that much richer than my folks were. I tried to get all kinds of jobs, but the hungrier and more raggedier I got, the quicker anyone who might have work would kick me out. When the rainy season finally came, it came like a sea, and I didn't have nowhere to stay. Lucky I found the unlocked cellar door.

Turns out that the owners of the house slept like old dogs, cause I robbed them blind (and tripped into things like I was the blind one) and they never woke up. I sold all the stuff at a dirty pawnshop I knew and spent the next two days living like a potentate. Then I got my first visit from the local thieves guild.

I remember what the guy looked like, but not exactly what he said. Something like, "Hey, kid, if you want to steal in these parts, you're going to have to join the Guild. Otherwise, I or someone like me is going to break your skinny arms so you can't steal."

I've know some people who've refused membership in the Guild and kept on stealing anyhow.

I've broken someone of their arms. As for me, this was the first offer I'd had for a career since my pa told me that if I didn't milk



the cow, he'd rip my head off. In comparison, this guy at the tavern was almost a gentleman. I agreed right away.

Sure, I had to prove my worth to the Guild before I could join and even now. But having two working arms is only part of the benefit. They trained me, taught me, and kept me out of prison. How many other guilds can boast a forgery expert on the premises?

So the next time you're calling some swindling merchant or usurious priest a thief, think about it. There is honor among thieves—I should know.

# Divad The Singer

*Destri Melarg*

Divad The Singer is in one body, two unique and distinct people. Divad is the most well known of the Redguard heroes. Frandar Hunding's son, probably the most accomplished Ansei who ever lived. Yet early in his life, Divad appeared to thoroughly have rejected The Way of the Sword.

Divad was the only son of Frandar Hunding, and was born late in Hunding's life (2396 in the old way of reckoning, probably about 1E 760 by the Tamrielic calendar), when he was away most of the time fighting the last of his duels and engaging in the many battles and insurrections of the period. At eleven, Divad entered the Hall of the Virtues of War and began training, but at 16, he finally let his anger at growing up essentially fatherless get the better of him. Divad broke his swords and left the Hall to become an acrobat in a traveling circus.

The life in the circus was unsatisfying to Divad, and after two years, his innate artisan heritage drove him to become a musician and finally a Bard. For two more years he traveled, singing in the cities of the empire—gaining no small amount of fame and recognition for his stirring and popular songs and music.

Although Divad had publicly forsaken the Way of the sword, it would appear that he continued to practice the compulsory forms of training he was taught in the Hall. He carried no sword, but in the late evening, bright lights could be often be seen in his tent (my source says nothing more about this, but it may be assumed that the writer was suggesting that Divad was practicing the form of the Way known as Shehai Shen She Ru—the Way of the Spirit Sword, or simply the Shehai).

Divad was very popular with the people of the empire, and his music and concerts were well attended. Still he could not escape his heritage of the sword. When the Last Emperor ascended to power and began to persecute the sword-singers, Divad was among the first to attract his attention.

Once the Emperor Hira and his consort decided to go to war with the Singers for control of the empire, he moved swiftly against those Singers who were visibly a part of empire society. Most he had killed, but Divad's music and fame were so wide spread that he sent a team of his personal guards to arrest him.

The Emperor's men were either very lucky or very unlucky depending on how you choose to view it. Being no fool, Hira sent 100 of his best guards, for even an unarmed Singer was a very dangerous foe. The luck was that they were able to capture Divad and place him in chains, for they came at him as he sat dining with his elderly mother. The disaster was that as he surrendered, they rashly struck the pleading old woman. Too hard, it would seem, for she fell dead with that single blow.

That single thoughtless deed, as is often the case in war, was the one pivotal factor causing their eventual defeat. That act ignited in Divad the spirit of the Way. Up until that careless

stroke, Divad was an ordinary artisan, no, an artist, a great artist, but no warrior.

The moment of her death, Divad rose from his seat, took his chains between his two hands and began swinging the heavy chain in a deadly arc. He slew four of the guards, gaining enough space to run and dive through the window and into the river. He disappeared into the night.

From that point, Divad was spotted many times and told of in many more rumors all across the empire—far more places than a mere mortal man could have ever been. At every point where Hira's men gathered to do mischief, the resistance was attributed to Divad.

As Hira moved against the Singers and began forming his army to invade High Desert, it was Divad who carried the news to the Singers. Divad was among those who climbed Hattu to find Hunding in his cave. What is not well known is that Hunding, at first refused to take leadership of the Singers. The first attempt to interrupt him at his death poem caused him to drive the elders from his cave, he even formed the Shehai in his anger. It was Divad who reentered the cave alone to speak with Hunding. To this day, no one knows what was said, what happened in that cave. Scribes of the time reported bright flashes of light and angry voices. Five long hours came and went, then both emerged from the cave, Divad, at Hunding's side. The rest, as they say, is history...

Divad, who had not completed training in the Hall of the Virtues of War, became an adviser to Hunding and spent his time reading the newly completed Book of Circles, but his role in the Hammer and Anvil strategy was as a simple sword-

singer and fighter. It was not till the Singers fled their native empire and landed In New Land that his story truly begins.

# Etiquette With Rulers

*Erystera Ligen*

Because the rules are so complex and the stakes are so high, many people blanch at the thought of speaking with a noble with a title. For starters, it is important to address them correctly, for just as no one likes to be misnamed, no one likes to be mistitled. The problem is that in High Rock, traditions of the peerage differ slightly from region to region. The base rules follow:

There are eight kingdoms in High Rock in the following regions: Northpoint, Daggerfall, Shornhelm, Camlorn, Farrun, Evermore, Wayrest, and Jehanna. If a woman is ruling one of these areas, she is called the Queen. The husband of a Queen and the wife of a King is not necessarily of equal rank—they may not be Kings and Queens themselves. Their children are Princes and Princesses. Their grandchildren are also Princes and Princesses. If a male ruler dies, his wife takes the title Dowager Queen, providing there is not a Dowager Queen already. Like all rules, there are exceptions. One noted exception took place recently in Daggerfall, when King Lysandus died. In most regions, his wife Mynisera would not have become Dowager Queen of Daggerfall, because Lysandus' mother, the widow Nulfaga, still lived. In Daggerfall, however, it is permissible for there to be two persons with the same title. Thus, both Nulfaga and Mynisera have the title Dowager Queen.

If a female ruler, who does not share rank with her husband, dies, there is no male equivalent to the word Dowager.

Widowers of Queens usually take another title, either a lesser family title or one given by their children. There have been a few men in the history of High Rock who have fallen from being addressed as King to being addressed as Mister at the death of their wife.

Other regions are ruled by Dukes and Duchesses, Marquises (or Marquesses) and Marquises (or Marchionesses), Counts and Countesses, Viscounts or Viscountesses, Barons or Baronesses, and Lords or Ladies. This list is theoretically listed from highest to lowest rank, but the ruler of a territory outranks all other nobles, regardless of title. Dwynnen, for example, is a Barony, and the Baron or Baroness of Dwynnen outrank any other noble in that territory, even Dukes and Counts.

In theory, (again, this may not be the case according to local custom) the eldest son or daughter of a noble takes their parents highest family title below their parents. Thus, the Duke of Northmoor, who is also the Marquis of Calder, had a daughter who became the Marchioness of Calder.

Kings and Queens are always addressed as “Your Majesty” in conversation; Dukes and Duchesses, “Your Grace”. All other rulers may be addressed with their title and name, or Lord or Lady and their name.

A few hints may be needed to determine exactly who rules a territory. You may rely on people on the streets to make reference to their ruler, but that may not be enough. After all, if the gossip involved Lord Bemmish and Viscountess Byrd, neither or both could be the ruler of the territory. I have found that a more predictable method is to pay some attention to the

names of taverns and shops in a region. By tradition, many of these are called “The Duke’s Fox” or “The Lady’s Provisions.” This, more often than not, is the name of the ruler. If the shop’s name is “Lady Annisa’s Provisions” or “Lord Boxworth’s Fox,” that is probably the name of a local titled merchant, not the ruler. A store with a unnamed ruler’s title has probably been around for some time, and does not bother to change its name with the new name of the ruler.

In speaking with any person, a ruler or not, it is best to know what sort of a person they are first. Rulers tend to stand on ceremony, and prefer that people addressing them speak politely and deferentially. There are, of course, exceptions to this, particularly among younger rulers, or rulers new to their positions. They may prefer a bolder, slangy style. If you are unsure, or unsure of your ability to adopt the vocabulary of either an aristocrat or a criminal, choose to speak as plainly and directly as possible. You will seldom charm someone by plain talk, but you will also not alienate by mangled politesse or dated slang. Alienating a ruler, I need not tell you, can be the last mistake one can make.



# Fools' Ebony

*Frincheps*

Fools' Ebony, Part The Oneth

Concerning Priests and Nackles As related at length by two Priests of Akatosh to the Adventurer, who at the time was not having an adventure, and had nothing better to do. In which some (probably unwanted) light is shed upon the Priesthood and its members, and upon an old peasant myth of some significance, especially common in High Rock. And in which the mysterious Fools' Ebony appears, that strange material that could bring either drastic cultural change for the many, or just great profit for a few, or death for a bunch, or have no result whatsoever.

Daggerfall and Environs in the Doldrums of the 3rd Era

Early in the month of Frostfall. The Dead Daedra Inn. Enter Prologue

PROLOGUE: Our poor players will try and remember their lines and not trip over our meager set. I beg you, the audience, not to heckle, badger, or throw rotten foodstuffs. You will only make this short play last longer. The Guild of Playwrites, Actors, and Dramatists wish any of you who are sensitive or allergic to rambling dialogue, wooden acting, incomprehensible exposition, or unsatisfying endings that leave one confused and unhappy to exit the theatre immediately. Your gold will,

alas, not be refunded. As a saving grace, this series of vignettes contains gratuitous references to all pleasures of the flesh. You may enjoy it. Ah, here comes our hero, the roguish Dark Elf called the Adventurer. It is time for Prologue to trip merrily away.

Exit Prologue

Enter the ADVENTURER

ADVENTURER: What an odd conversation I just heard between those two mages. It is best not to speak of such matters next to privy hedges.

Enter 2 Priests of Akatosh (LHEBAN, KOMON)

LHEBAN: Mind if we join you, fellow?...Good, need some company ourselves. I am named Lheban, my fellow priest here is Komon. We both serve Akatosh, all in our own ways, of course...

ADVENTURER: Make yourselves at home, it's not my bench. But I thought that priests...didn't go to...er...places like this, Inns. I mean...unless on duty?

LHEBAN: Oh, we're not on duty. Got to regenerate our internal vital energies, so we can go on blessing and curing...

KOMON: We often come here, hike up our robes, kick up our heels, as it were. Fill up with some bottled energy...

(Komon snickers)

LHEBAN: Looking for those in need of comfort and blessing, of course...

KOMON: Oh, yes, Oh yes...like that young girl outside the other evening...

(Lheban kicks Komon)

KOMON:...and anyway our High Priest told us to get lost...

LHEBAN: He means told us to get some air. We've been having visions, you see...

KOMON: Yes, sort of weird, really...and we hadn't even been taking any of that...

(Lheban kicks Komon)

LHEBAN: Both of us been having the same visions - real odd.

ADVENTURER: Do tell, I'm not going anywhere in a hurry.

LHEBAN: Well, we've both been hearing sort of...words...for a start. Like 'Sir Nich' or 'Sain Nack'...

ADVENTURER: You said 'Nick' or 'Nack'? Just a minute...let me have a swig from your bottle, Brother...Ah! That's better - high-class stuff you fellows drink! Yes, I recall - some story or old legend about an elf, name of Nuckle, I think—from Morrowind?

LHEBAN: You know, maybe you're on to something there—there is a old legend around these parts, comes from deep in High Rock I think...hmmmm...Nackles, that's it!

ADVENTURER: Nackles, eh! Seems that several Dark Elves use that name...particularly the...more peculiar ones...

KOMON: Yes, I guess that the bad ones are into all that weapons magicka stuff...very nasty fellows...

LHEBAN: (to Komon) Komon! This fellow's got pointy ears and red eyes...

KOMON: Pardon me, friend...it's sort of dark, and I didn't...uh...

ADVENTURER: Oh, that's fine. These are strange times. You know, live and let live—or die—as the case may be. Now... suppose you tell me about this Nackles myth? Here, let me help you with that bottle...Ah! Thanks.

LHEBAN: Er...sure, if you want to put it that way...Here, have another swig! Sure, we've got the time, and I recall it clearly now.

KOMON: Yes, we've a couple hours 'til that little blonde shows up at her lamp...

(Lheban kicks Komon)

LHEBAN: (to Komon) Quiet! Remember, we had to tell the High Priest her address, so she won't be around for a while!

(to all) Very well, here's the story, best as I can recall it. This is a tale the peasants up in High Rock tell their kids to scare them into being good for a while, I guess. They tell it, let me see... either on Tales and Tallows, or is it Witches' Festival?—just before the kids are sent out to the barn or pigsty to sleep.

KOMON: Nasty cruel peasants! But then, I'd send them all out to the midden...

LHEBAN: Really, Komon! Remember, those poor souls need our compassion and blessing, we are their salvation!

KOMON: Now who's in Old High Mucky-Mucks' study?

LHEBAN: Er...anyway. It goes a bit like this. If the kids have been real good during the year—filched enough in the market, mucked out the stables every day, not gone playing with goblins, left the sheep alone, and so on. If they have been real good, they've nothing to worry about. But if they haven't been real good then there is this nasty, horrid Dark Elf spirit called Nackles. Doesn't look like your typical Dark Elf—thinner, taller. Pasty white face, long as your arm. Walks like his knees and elbows bend the wrong way. Snickers like when you drag your fingernails across slate. Wears a tight black suit (not Khajiit, more like a formal suit with buttons) but too tight and small. He visits the bad girls and—

KOMON: Why are you talking about Old High Mucky again, Lheban?

(Komon hiccoughs) (Lheban kicks Komon)

LHEBAN: You really must excuse Komon here: overwork, you know. Too many curings and conversions...Anyway, Old Nasty Nackles is supposed to wander under our Tamriel, in dirty deep dark dwarven tunnels. Everywhere under the lands, if you can believe that! Rides in a rusty squeaky old mine cart, on old mine tracks...

ADVENTURER: I saw some of those in Fang Lair once, down in Hammerfell a long long while ago...

KOMON: (to Lheban) What the Sheogorath was he doing in Fang Lair!?

LHEBAN: (to Komon) Hush! If he's who I think he is, you do not want to know! (to all) Um, yes. Well, Nackles gets pulled all around these deep tunnels by goblins—not your usual dirty yellow ones, but nasty black things. Anyway, they pull Nackles round and through these dark tunnels, and then, late at night, he stops below each and every bad child's hovel or house or castle - makes no difference. Then he slides up the drainage pipes...

KOMON: Creeps up cracks...crawls through holes...

LHEBAN: Oozes up oubliettes...

KOMON: Climbs giggling up garderobes...

LHEBAN: Right into the kid's place! Then, if the kid's only been sort of bad, Nackles will just mess things up in general, so the kid gets blamed. Make greasy dirty marks everywhere (more than usual, anyway), break some things, steal some things, so on and so forth. Maybe take the sugar sweets, leave some lumps of fools' ebony instead...

ADVENTURER: Fools' Ebony - what's that? Heard mention of that, oh, a few hours ago...Some Mages...

LHEBAN: You did now? Interesting...Very...Well, lets talk of that in a bit...just let me finish this Nackles thing. Where was I—Oh yes...Now, if the little brat has been real bad—then all the little brat's toys get taken. The copper dagger, the wooden sword, the little whip, and so on. All the usual favorite kids things.

KOMON: Whips? I like those.

(Komon hiccoughs) (Lheban kicks Komon)

LHEBAN: Now if that little brat has been very, very bad then Nackles grabs the brat. Pops him or her in his dirty great sack. Hauls the sack off down the holes and cracks, down to his rusty old mine cart! And away they go!

KOMON: Hope he leaves some bad little girls behind.

(Lheban kicks Komon)

LHEBAN: Er...so we can save them, of course, friend...Well. Sometimes, so I've heard tell, the brat never comes back. No great loss, I guess, peasants just breed another.

KOMON: Know 'bout that, I do, I do...

(Lheban pinches Komon's nose)

LHEBAN: But, as the story goes round here anyway, often the brat is just put to work, digging out lumps of Fools' Ebony, shoveling dirt, bagging it. Extending the tunnels of the Nackles. After a while, Brat is pushed back up to where it came from. Seems that Brat might think it's spent a year down there, but only a day has passed up top...Brat comes back real thin and dirty though, covered in black mess...You know, come to think of it—on the day past Witches' Festival, I've often seen some little brats, scrawny, real dirty black mess on them, looking terrified, too. Parents drag them into Temples to get blessed and cured, if they have the gold. By the Beard of Sheogorath, the wailing and noise! Enough to drive a priest to...er...well, never mind...that's our problem...

KOMON: Nah...it's a problem with our suppliers, I tell you...

(Lheben throws Komon through a screen)

LHEBAN: Anyway, that's the short of it, this Nackles legend up around here. I recall now, it's widespread all over Tamriel...and knowing the place, probably more than a grain of truth in the tale, much, much more...

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ADVENTURER: That's a very interesting tale, gentlemen. Say, let me repay you with another bottle—what's that you're drinking? Ah, thought so - Innkeep! More holy wine for these holy men!

LHEBAN: A blessing on you for that kind gesture, friend.

ADVENTURER: I thank you, I sure could use one or three... Anyway, this 'Fools' Ebony', I've heard mutters and murmurs about that of late—mostly eavesdropping...pardon me...



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LHEBAN: Well, we're not supposed to tell outsiders...but then, you seem to know something already. And if you have been hearing Mage gossip...Why, maybe we can do some business. Profit all round! Well...for the Akatosh Chantry, of course, and your fee, good Sir.

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(Komon staggers to feet) (Komon hiccoughs)

KOMON: Time for me to go convert that little lamppost girl... no, no, no - not last night's one, but the blonde...

(Exit Komon) (Female squeals from offstage)

LHEBAN: Friend, you'll have to excuse Komon. He's a bit...you know strange...Got these...

ADVENTURER: Oh, that's all right, we've all got our own...

(Exeunt Lheben and the Adventurer) (Enter EPILOGUE)

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(Flourish) (Exit Epilogue)

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knowing the place, probably more than a grain of truth in the tale, much, much more...

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(Komon hiccoughs) (Lheban breaks a bottle over Komon's head)

(Komon falls unconscious)

ADVENTURER: That's a very interesting tale, gentlemen. Say, let me repay you with another bottle—what's that you're drinking? Ah, thought so - Innkeep! More holy wine for these holy men!

LHEBAN: A blessing on you for that kind gesture, friend.

ADVENTURER: I thank you, I sure could use one or three... Anyway, this 'Fools' Ebony', I've heard mutters and murmurs about that of late—mostly eavesdropping...pardon me... listening...to Mages and the like. What's with this stuff? Here, have another swig...good!

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Profit all round! Well...for the Akatosh Chantry, of course, and your fee, good Sir.

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(Komon staggers to feet) (Komon hiccoughs)

KOMON: Time for me to go convert that little lamppost girl... no, no, no - not last nights one, but the blonde...

(Exit Komon) (Female squeals from offstage)

LHEBAN: Friend, you'll have to excuse Komon. He's a bit...you know strange...Got these...

ADVENTURER: Oh, that's all right, we've all got our own...

(Exeunt Lheben and the Adventurer) (Enter EPILOGUE)

EPILOGUE: Our apologies for the quality of this drama so far. If those of you still present will wait for a few minutes while our bard plays "Silence Implies Consent," we will change the set for the next act, Part the Twoth. Please don't forget to tip your wench. Do you believe there's such a thing as Fools' Ebony? Maybe we'll find out in Part the Twoth. Or maybe not.

(Flourish) (Exit Epilogue)

End of Part the Oneth, Being Mostly Concerned with The Legend of Nackles.

Fools' Ebony, Part The Twoth

Bearing Mostly on Fools' Ebony and Temples

Same place, same Inn, A bottle or two later. Enter Prologue, the Adventurer, and Lheben

PROLOGUE: Little has occurred so far in our comedic drama. The Adventurer, our Dark Elf rascal, has bought drinks for two priests of Akatosh. All have drunk considerably. One of the priests has rushed off in pursuit of his lamp girl. And, unless I've forgotten something or something happened when I was paying attention to something else, that's a complete synopsis of Part the Oneth. Ah, here come two more priests. Humble Prologue must depart.

(Enter RAIC and STETE)

RAIC: Evening Lheban! Evening stranger. My fellow priest here is Stete, I am Raic. We are honored to serve Julianos.

ADVENTURER: What is this, anyway - Priests night out? And... I thought that your Temples - Akatosh, Julianos, the rest...I thought them all cut-throat competitors. In theology and gold, if you will forgive my bluntness. Yet you all seem the best of friends ..? Come to think of it, didn't I have words with Stete earlier, you said you were of the Temple of Stendarr?

RAIC: A common misconception, friend...

LHEBAN:...but one that we...encourage...

RAIC: Really, we all work together closely, move between the Temples as needs dictate...

LHEBAN:...exchange information...

RAIC:...share funds...

STETE:...swap our sisters...

(Lheben kicks Stete) (Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: Sorry to interrupt the merry slapstick, but I neglected to mention earlier that the Fools' Gold saga—if that is the word—contains gratuitous reference to priestly misdeeds and sexual excess. I hope those of you in the audience of peevish, prudish, sullen, frumpy, or grumpy demeanors are not offended. Now then, on with the entertainment.

(Exit Prologue)

LHEBAN:...and all that...

RAIC: But it helps in our...holy work, if we are perceived as separate and, uh, competitive...

LHEBAN: Mind you, there are one or two, er...religious organizations...well, sort of...that we do not have anything to do with...

RAIC: Nothing at all, nothing at all...animals, just animals...

ADVENTURER: Such as ..?

LHEBAN: Weeell—the Dark Brotherhood for one...nasty bunch of thugs...and then there's the Afterdark Society...

(aside to Raic)

This fellow, seems a decent sort of chap...seems to know something about Mages and Fools' Ebony...

RAIC: (aside to Lheban) Really now...how interesting...

(to all) Hey fellow, have another bottle—this will bless you throat. My, my, yes indeed it will...

ADVENTURER: Thanks Raic, don't mind a bit...

LHEBAN: But let me continue—I was explaining about this Fools' Ebony to you...

RAIC: Yes, Fools' Ebony...

LHEBAN: Well. Fools' Ebony now. Well, you know about ordinary Ebony, how it's rare, only some dwarven clans dig it and sell it. And not too many, these days and times...

STETE: How's that popular song go ..? (singing)

Where have all the Old Dwarves gone, Long time ago...

(Lheben throws Innkeep at Stete) (Raic breaks chair on Innkeep and Stete) (Innkeep loses consciousness)

LHEBAN: There's a pile of real ebony up in the Wrothgarians somewhere north, I hear tell. You know how that dullish black ebony gets worked over by Mages, by some skilled armorers, made into all kinds of potent weapons, amulets, belts, what have you. All fetch a huge price, when you can find any. And how the best was made long ago, by those old dwarves...

(Stete rises to his feet) (Lheban kicks Stete back down) (The Adventurer loosens his tunic)

LHEBAN: Oh my! Oh, my apologies, friend, Sir! I see you have—what's that? An ebony torc? Oh my, and an ebony katana! Oh My! Oh My, My! So, of course, you know all that, sir.

ADVENTURER: Oh, that's all right, you didn't know. Here, have another bottle...

LHEBAN: Many thanks, kind Sir. Well, then you know how every adventurer, even snotty kids, all the dungeon-delvers, are always looking for ebony artifacts, weapons, whatnot. But what you may not know, some of the more experienced delvers hunt for raw ebony lodes, piles, dwarven leavings. That stuff, the raw ebony, is far more valuable.

ADVENTURER: The raw unshaped material that provides work...and power...for so few? Apparently just loaded with negative magicka?

RAIC: Right, right!

LHEBAN: Yes, right so! Quite so! Well, Fools' Ebony now. Looks just about like the real raw stuff. Runs in veins in the deep rocks. Feels the same, smells almost the same. But the big difference: it's not real ebony. No power at all. If you pick some up, it gets you hands a bit dirty. Softer too, by all accounts. But sort of shiny too. But who can tell all that, deep in some old mine, maybe a ghoul breathing down your neck! So it's just grab and run, I guess, down in those nasty holes. So the fools, the kids, the crazy delvers, are always hauling up a bag, a sack, of Fools' Ebony. And getting laughed at by the merchants, dealers, mages, us...hence the Fools' part. Stuff just gets thrown into the Bay...

ADVENTURER: Yeah, that's sort of what I...er...heard from some Mages. But I heard something else, too...

LHEBAN: And just what was that, friend...if you want to tell us, of course...Sir.

ADVENTURER: Oh, of course! I think that we can come to...er... an arrangement?

LHEBAN and RAIC (Together): Certainly, Oh Yes!

ADVENTURER: So, yeah, so these mages—Shub and Shub, they are always called Shub, aren't they?—anyway, these old guys were saying how this Fools' Ebony can burn. Not magically, but like an ordinary piece of wood. But the flame lasts far longer, gives off lots more heat, makes no smoke to speak of, no noise...very interesting...Mages were saying as how the alchemists want it, to heat the retorts and flasks...How the Mages Guild wants it, to make and sell...er...fake amulets and the like...rotten trick that! And especially the Armorers, they want it bad, for their forges, I guess. And the Alchemists, for their alembics...

LHEBAN: Precisely my information! Now... gets cold up here in the winter, doesn't it? And everyone is cutting down all those trees, making siege engines, boats, all that evil war machinery! All those rich royals and merchants got to heat their great big piles of homes. So their Contessas can run around in next to nothing, instead of furs...

STETE:...just like my sister...

(Lheben bites Stete's arm) (Stete shrieks and falls unconscious)

ADVENTURER: All those armorers got to keep their hearths and furnaces running...

LHEBAN:...All the Mages got to keep their familiars warm...

RAIC:...All those royals got to keep the contessas running...

LHEBAN:...All those peasants got to keep their animals warm...

ADVENTURER: And To Sheogorath with the wife and kids, right? Ha! And, I guess, its sort of hard for you Priests to give blessings and cures, when your fingers are all cold and stiff ..? Makes getting corks out a tad hard, to say nothing of opening those little twists of parchment ..?

RAIC: You speak truly, indeed!

LHEBAN: A man of wisdom, indeed! Yes!

ADVENTURER: So, where do we find this Fools' Ebony—in quantity?

LHEBAN: You put your finger (you have six, I note—oh, excuse me, Sir) on the crux of the matter. I have heard rumors, just rumors, mind you, that there are huge enormous veins of this stuff, at one place on the surface, far up in the Wrothgarians. Bad, bad place to go. But, if you can get there and back, cartloads of the stuff!

ADVENTURER: Thats just what I overheard from those Mages—far up there in the Wrothgarians—orcs, dragonlings, daedra, Sheogorath only knows what...Those Mages seemed to know the spot, though. Mages wanted someone to...

RAIC: You didn't...talk...to the Mages. I mean, you haven't...

ADVENTURER: Oh no. They didn't even know I was there...

(aside) Not yet, anyway...



LHEBAN: Good, good - can't trust those Mages, you know...old fossils would turn their own mothers into sludge-toads, just for a bit of gold! Gold-mad, power-mad, Mad-mad, the whole rotten lot of them! But then they don't have mothers!

RAIC: Excellent. Seems to me, friend—or, can we call you partner? Yes? Excellent. Seems tome, partner, that my brother priests and you should do some digging and poking around - see if we can get to those veins, those deposits, eh!

ADVENTURER: Yes indeed, partners! But it would cost a fair pile of gold to get up there—weapons, spells, women, clothing, carts and horses, women, food, potions...Best go well-prepared, up there.

LHEBAN: No problem, partner. Our Temples have...certain resources, such that if we were guaranteed...sole access, sole knowledge of the location, then we could finance someone... someone with the requisite skills, such as yourself? Just by happenstance, I am Keeper of the Books...you see the opportunity?

ADVENTURER: Oh yes! Oh yes! Well—lets split a last bottle, and shake on an agreement?

LHEBAN: Indeed, let us! We first need information—who knows about the site up there, where it is, how to reach it... Why don't we meet back here in, say, a week, to the hour. And see what we can learn, meanwhile?

RAIC: We need to find a merchant, too. Someone who can handle it for us...warehouses, distribution...

LHEBAN: And keep a shut mouth!

ADVENTURER: I'll make some inquiries about merchants...got a contact or two...Trouble is—well, you know how these things go—few golds here, few there, before you know it you've bribed half the town, or so it seems. Now, as luck would have it, I don't have much—got swindled by a wretched Mage, some town south of here, and lost most of my belongings in a shipwreck...

LHEBAN: Ah Yes! You need some...seed money as it were.

RAIC: (To Lheban) Let me lift old Stete's purse, he made a lot renting out his sister last week...

LHEBAN: Thank you, Raic. Here, about 100 gold—enough ?

ADVENTURER: Oh yes, more than enough for a start, Gentlemen. Good, good, good...so we have a deal?

ADVENTURER: Yes! It's agreed. One week!

(Exit Lheban, Raic dragging Stete) (Exit the Adventurer)

(Enter Epilogue)

EPILOGUE: Ah, things are happening now, I doubt it not. Patrons, I request that you recall that this is a work of fiction created by one of the finest writers of the asylum, Frinchepts, Archprince of All Sumurset. There is no such thing as Fools' Ebony. Furthermore, Ebony is not mined as the priests have described the process. Grasp that please. If you can still enjoy the play as a rude work of fiction, stay with us for Part the Threeth. If you can't, farewell. And don't forget to tip the wenches.

And so endeth Part the Twoth

## Fools' Ebony, Part The Threeth

In The Mages' Guild, One to Three Days Later

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: We are now at the halfway point of our disjointed epic. If you are just arriving, you have missed little. The Adventurer, our rogue Dark Elf, has joined with a quadripartite (that's a triumvirate plus one) of priests intent on discovering a burning metal called Fools' Ebony and becoming wealthy. The priests have given our hero some gold for bribing merchants, but the only people who know where the Fools' Ebony is are the mages of the Mages' Guild. As the Epilogue pointed out at the end of Part the Twoth, there is no such thing as Fools' Ebony and real Ebony is not mined. Something our playwright apparently did not research. Well, accept it as high fantasy, if you will. Or whatever. Hark, here comes our hero now. Imagine the miasma (if that's the word I want) of magical elixirs, bubbling cauldrons, hovering balls of sparkling whatnot. And now, the Prologue must depart.

(Enter the Adventurer and SHUB)

ADVENTURER: Ho! Anyone around?

SHUB: Over here, young man, in the corner...

ADVENTURER: Morning. Do I call you...Shub ..?

SHUB: Oh yes, Shub is my name, Shub it is...How on Tamriel did you know?

ADVENTURER: Can we have some...privacy...I have a somewhat...er...delicate matter to discuss..?

SHUB: No need for privacy here! We Mages do not hide anything!

ADVENTURER: Fools' Ebony?

SHUB: Quick through this door ..! Turn right...Turn left...Ah... just let me throw a privacy spell around us...

(Loud zap sounds) (Enter SHUB)

Good! Now Sir—Oh, by the way, meet my fellow Mage, Shub.

SHUB: Mmmm.

SHUB: Now, you mentioned Fools' Ebony ..?

ADVENTURER: Well, I fancy myself a bit of an expert in ebony. Had quite a bit come and go through my hands in my time, I have...

SHUB: We notice that you have an ebony amulet, and an ebony katana—Of Lightning, no less! And an ebony belt.....  
mmmm...

ADVENTURER: Hands off the toys, gentlemen, please!

SHUB: Forgive us—but we so appreciate such fine items...

SHUB:...collect them too...

ADVENTURER: Well, the other day, just by chance of course, I just happened to hear two priests of the Temple of...er... Stendarr, I think it was...They were a bit high in their cups, I think, a bit loud, and never noticed me skulking—I mean, standing—there. They were going on about this Fools' Ebony -

stuff like the real thing, only no magicka at all. None. But it burns like wood, only longer, hotter, no smoke, nice even heat.

SHUB: Yes...we have heard similar rumors. Seen a bit of that stuff—lumps from a sack or two that some crazed delver dragged up, that kind of thing. Right, Shub?

SHUB: Oh - Oh yes, right, that kind of thing...right...

(aside) I must remember to keep the secret, whatever it is.

ADVENTURER: Well, these fool priests seemed to talk as if they knew a location for lots, I mean piles, of that stuff—somewhere up in the Wrothgarians...

SHUB and SHUB (Together): Where! Who! Did they say? How? When? Where?

SHUB: You didn't let them know you were listening, did you?

ADVENTURER: Of course not! What do you take me for, a priest lover?

SHUB: Calm yourself, my lord...that's better... just don't go fiddling with that katana so much. Makes us nervous.

SHUB: Yes, nervous, very...

SHUB: Here, sit down. There. Want some mulled wine? No? Oh well, just have to finish it myself.

SHUB: So they seemed to know the location.

(aside) Hmmmm. This means we have to act fast, quickly, speedily, and with great rapidity.

ADVENTURER: Oh yes! They were talking like they were going to get a load in a few weeks or so...

SHUB: Oh My! Oh Dear Me! Ohhh...

SHUB: Now then. Seems you know a fair amount about this Fools' Ebony. And you realize the potential—just think, big warm fires in all our study rooms...

SHUB and SHUB (Together):...Selling it to the Palace... selling it to those stupid Alchemists...the Armorer's Guild would be good for a lot..... keep out familiars nice and warm..... and our posteriors ..!...just think how Daedra Seducers love a nice warm fire...Giving smoldering lumps to the peasants to warm their hovels with - in return for some gold, of course...

SHUB: ...just think of all that gold...

SHUB: Trouble is, son - we would like to get that stuff by the cartload, bring it down here...

SHUB: Have some trustworthy merchant...

SHUB: Put a spell on him!

SHUB:...Have some merchant act as sort of, middleman, for us...

ADVENTURER: But...then why the delay, gentlemen?

SHUB: You seem like an honest fellow. We'll tell you—mind you, you let out a word of this, and there will be a Fire Daedra in your bed...but no threats between gentlemen, right!

ADVENTURER: Very well—I shall be the very soul of discretion.

SHUB: You see, we know where the stuff is, cartloads and cartloads of it. But we can't get there and back...

SHUB: We are not the outdoorsy types.

SHUB: Far safer here in town.

SHUB: Much warmer too.

SHUB: Think of all the supplies we would have to take.

SHUB: All those nasty things out there.

SHUB: Did you know that seducers won't come to us in the wilderness?

SHUB: We'd have to hire guards, to keep those awful priests away.

SHUB: And the strain of dealing with all those coarse types... the Merchants.

SHUB: The Armorers.

SHUB: The Royals.

ADVENTURER: Mmm. I think I comprehend. You want some—experienced explorer-hero type, someone used to the wilderness - to go get it for you, set up a supply line, so on ..?

SHUB: Exactly. And find us a nice, useable merchant. Someone we can control.

SHUB: With a big, big warehouse, delivery service, that kind of thing...

ADVENTURER: Well, gentlemen. Let me volunteer my services! I have always admired you Mage gentlemen—so clever, so sharp. No fooling you in anything, is there?

SHUB: No, no fooling us...

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: This, ladies and gentlemen, is irony.

(Exit Prologue)

ADVENTURER: Tell you what, I can probably arrange a suitable merchant or you. Take some gold though—those thieves know the value of a gold piece! As luck would have it, my last gold was swindled off me by a thieving priest, in some little town south of here. And I lost a lot of good stuff in a shipwreck just before that...

SHUB: Well...since you have agreed to help us...we can spare some gold from the treasury, can't we, Shub?

SHUB: Oh! Oh yes, lots there...always make more...

ADVENTURER: Now, I do need to know roughly where this site is, got to pick the right breed of horse, calculate my supplies to the last drop, figure out what weapons I might need...supplies, like food, little things like that...diameter of the cart wheels in square yurts...ambush points for the priests, in case they try to get up there...mmmmm...

SHUB: Tell you what - here is 500 gold. Go get things started.

SHUB: Yes...we can always make some more.



SHUB: (aside, to Shub) Shut up!

(Shub fires a spell at Shub that burns him to a cinder and then reconstitutes him)

(to all) Excuse us...where was I...Oh...get a merchant, guards, carts, whatever you think it will take. Come back if you need more.

SHUB: But what about those priests?

ADVENTURER: I've an idea or two there. Let me get friendly with them - maybe hire a couple of good lamppost girls, lay in a few cases of holy wine...I'll have them eating out of my hand in no time. And if you show me where this Fools' Ebony is...why, I can misdirect them, send them straight into an trolls' den or something.

SHUB: You're the expert! Here, let me show you on a map...and I don't need to mention Fire Daedras, do I?

ADVENTURER: So...seems to be...hmmmm...only thirty days there, this time of year. Maybe forty back, with the loads. Let me study this a bit more...

SHUB: Can't take it with you, of course...don't want this getting out now...

ADVENTURER: Oh no. That's fine. Look, let me have a bit more gold. Going to need some heavy-duty carts. See here, this section...cut by all these washes...hmmmm...the flummox there will be something terrible...Oh, and these ruins, full of ghosts, I bet...hmmmm...and this pass, just full of willies too...

SHUB: If you say so...My, seems that we picked the right man, right, Shub!

SHUB: Oh yes, indeed.

ADVENTURER: So—why don't I make arrangements, get back to you in...er...say a week? Say—sure that you don't want to come with me. After all, there's nothing like the wilderness life. Waking up with the sun, shaking off the frost. Catching an orc for breakfast - ever have orc guts fried over stinkwood? Oh, that's a treat! Checking each stream for dead giant spiders - or live ones! Imp jerky for lunch! Scanning the ridges for dragonlings! Standing guard against Ice Daedra in a blinding snowstorm! Oh, what a life!

SHUB and SHUB (Together): No, no...we, we better stay here at the Guild. Got our duties after all...someones got to mind the store...someones got to get the word out to selected customers...No, thank you kind Sir, it does sound such a lovely life, but I think we best be here...yes, indeed...

ADVENTURER: A pity, gentlemen. Well, I'll be about it then. And don't worry if you see me with those priests—got to mislead and misdirect them, haven't I!

SHUB: One week, then!

(Exeunt Shub, the Adventurer, and Shub) (Enter Epilogue)

EPILOGUE: Shub and Shub, ladies and gentlemen. Implausibly retarded mages, yes, but perhaps there's something more to them than this act suggests. Do you think so, maybe? Well, if you are not in the theater for Part the Fourth, you won't know

for certain, will you? Don't forget to tip your wenches and think on that while we change the set.

So Endeth Part the Three

Fools' Ebony, Part The Fourth

Mercantile Dealings, The Armorers Involve Themselves. After some general discussion and verbal dancing around, finally the topic of Fools' Ebony is explored...

Somewhere near the market, in the back of a store called "Nephron's General Mercantile".

The day after.

(Enter Prologue, the Adventurer, and NEPHRON)

PROLOGUE: Whilst the actors playing the Adventurer and the merchant Nephron dramatically move their mouths to pantomime a conversation, it is on poor Prologue's shoulders to update the audience on the play's actions in its first three acts. The Adventurer, a rogue of a Dark Elf, has been hired two different groups—four inebriated priests and two greedy mages—to delay the other group, and find the lost cache of Fools' Ebony in the Wrothgarian Mountains. Now, picture this clownishly decorated set as the back room at a prosperous merchant's shop. And before the Adventurer and Nephron develop lockjaw, Prologue will leave you thus.

ADVENTURER: So you see, friend Nephron, just what an opportunity we have here. We have this new commodity, for which you agree there will be a huge demand.

NEPHRON: Especially from the Royals—once one of them has something new, they all want it, of course.

ADVENTURER: And do not forget the Armorers for their forges, and the Alchemists for their retorts and whatnots...

NEPHRON: You seem to have the Mages lined up nicely, got their location, memorized the access map, and so on - you know, we merchants have had a suspicion for quite some time that those old twits had some deep dark secret of interest to us... Now, the priests - the School of Julianos we already work well with, hand and glove, you might say. But of course we shall cut them out of the major profits—maybe let them distribute some to their flocks? And their Temples make good, how can I say?—storehouses? But the Akatosh Chantry is a problem, always running off and doing things on their own initiative, no cooperation, just crazy people...we really need to do something about them, to...er...ensure their cooperation...

ADVENTURER: I have a suggestion that might help...you recall how old Komon left and apparently dragged off some little blonde lamppost girl...just suppose, that just by chance, in his state of...befuddlement...he dragged off someone important by mistake..? Might be a lot of trouble for the Chantry, if word got out?

NEPHRON: Hmmm. Indeed...there's this silly little blonde Royal who's all excited by the 'real life' down in these parts of town. Disguises herself (or so she thinks), comes on down here and plays at being poor. Stupid little twit...Komon is still in hiding with his blonde, right?

ADVENTURER: Yes, in that 'retreat' the Priests have, down near the waterfront.

NEPHRON: Oh yes, I know that place - often sell them some 'spiritual powders' and so on...Good...you see, just imagine what would happen if Komon, by mistake, had grabbed this slumming little Contessa...Akatosh Chantry would have no end of trouble from the palace if something nasty happened to her...and then we could move in, offer to 'help' the Chantry during their hard times...Hmmm. Yes! Leave it to me, I shall contact a few of my...er...business associates, as it were...make some arrangements.

ADVENTURER: And I'll keep up chatting with the priests, get them to support our little business venture?

NEPHRON: Right! And I should introduce you to some of the more senior members of our Brotherhood...excuse me, Guild. Let me contact you in a few days, when everything is all set. You are here every evening?

ADVENTURER: Yes, not particularly safe outside after dark these days.

NEPHRON: I see. We shall have to arrange some...protection for you. Well, in a few days, then.

(Exit Nephron, inconspicuously) (Enter FIVE ARMORERS)

(Armorers and the Adventurer fight) (The Adventurer falls)

(The Armorers tie the Adventurer up and then wake him up)

ARMORER 1: OK, fellow. Lets not spriggen-foot around! We know about this Fools' Ebony thing. And about the Mages who apparently discovered the location. And we have been watching you dance around with the Priests, the Mages, the Merchants. Just about everyone with two feet!

ARMORER 2: And how you are really working with Nephron.

ARMORER 3: And how you are double-crossing the Priests and Mages...

ARMORER 2: You and Nephron are really doing a good job on the Akatosh Chantry, we must admit.

ARMORER 1: But now, we want that Fool's Ebony supply. We need it to increase our production, our quality—and our prices. We can work with Nephron and his gang, we need warehouses and distribution anyway.

ARMORER 4: We could torture it out of you...

ARMORER 3: We could let the Priests know about your plans—they would throw you to the Afterdark Society in a flash!

ARMORER 5: We could let the Mages know—they would send you to Oblivion for a very, very long time!

ARMORER 1: But we would rather you 'joined' our Guild. We cannot afford to leave Daggerfall for some hairy wilderness trip. Too much demand these days, for our services.

ARMORER 2: But we can send a group of our apprentices along to keep you company.

ARMORER 4: Our apprentices usually test all our products... and will be just itching to test out there.

ADVENTURER: Gentlemen, gentlemen! Please - I really was going to give the whole deal to you, once I had gotten gold from everyone else.

(Armorer 5 slaps the Adventurer with a hot poker)

Ohhh...well, I thought of it...

ARMORER 5: Sure! And I'm a Nymph!

ADVENTURER: Yes, Yes, Yes, you are very persuasive. I would welcome an...er...escort and guard of such tough gentlemen. Be very handy out there.

ARMORER 1: Good. Thought you would see it our way! Some of our other members are presently having a little...chat with Nephron. We can handle him. And from now on, two of our bigger apprentices will always be close at hand. Protection, of course - this town can be quite dangerous at night...

ARMORER 3: So continue with your arrangements, work with Nephron. You can always leave word about your departure date with any weapons shop. And about any problems you may have...

ADVENTURER: Certainly, gentlemen. Yes, you are indeed very persuasive. I shall keep you up to date. And, er... thanks for the protection.

(Enter ORTHO, the very large apprentice) (The Adventurer is untied) (Exeunt Five Armorerers)

ADVENTURER: Hello, who are you?

ORTHO: Me am Ortho!

ADVENTURER: My...protection?

ORTHO: Me am Ortho!

ADVENTURER: You look very familiar to me for some reason. Have you every been to Morrowind?

ORTHO: Me am Ortho!

ADVENTURER: Fine then. (aside) My old man used to say the very worst thing that can happen to a fellow is an evening spent in the company of an earnest politician. This, I think, is a close second.

(Exeunt the Adventurer and Ortho) (Enter Epilogue)

EPILOGUE: Our play has six parts, and we've just finished the fourth. It's interesting I think that the Lusty Contessa has not made an appearance yet. You don't suppose our playwright forgot he put her in the Dramatis Personae, do you? Well, you'll only know if you come back for The Fools' Ebony, Part the Fiveth. And if your neighbor decides not to return, don't tell him what happened. We actors have to make a living too, you know. Don't forget to tip your wenches while we change the scene.

(Exit Epilogue)

So Endeth Part The Fourth

Fools' Ebony, Part The Fiveth

Back With The Priests, Final Plans, and a Killing or Two is Reported...

Nearer the middle of the Month of Frostfall, The Inn of the Pink Nymph.



(Enter Prologue, the Adventurer, Ortho, Nephron, the Five Armorers, and Prologue)

PROLOGUE: Our roguish Dark Elf, the Adventurer has plummeted before our stunned eyes, from the king of the spider web of intrigue to a pathetic, crawling lump of Argonian excrement. In the quest for Fools' Ebony, that substance that all would kill for, the Adventurer attempted to play Mage against Priest with the help of the merchant Nephron. Alas, that is to say, alackaday, the five armorers have trapped Nephron and the Adventurer and taken over their scheme. The hulking Ortho now watches the Adventurer's every move. But I get the feeling—to be honest, don't you?—that beneath the Adventurer's defeated quivering jelly lurks a jungle cat of such cunning and resource to shatter all his enemies when the time is right. Of course, I could be wrong. Ah, I see one of the priests of Akatosh who believes himself a friend of the Adventurer. I, Prologue must away.

(Exit Prologue) (Enter Lheban, a Priest of Akatosh.)

LHEBAN: Evening there, mind if I join you?

ADVENTURER: Well...since you already have - no. And where is our esteemed brother Komon this chill evening?

LHEBAN: You mean you haven't heard—Oh, I guess you have been busy with the...preparations?

ADVENTURER: Right, right, very busy...

LHEBAN: Then let me tell you—Oh, what a bad business. What trouble...Oh Dear...Well...you doubtless recall that poor Komon had this...er...problem—overwork of course!

ADVENTURER: Oh yes—you fellows do work exceeding hard, seems to me.

LHEBAN: Well...recall how Komon left, somewhat erratically as it were, and...er...made off with that young blondie under the lamppost outside? Well—in his...er...state of confusion - he grabbed the wrong blondie - Oh My, indeed the wrong one...

ADVENTURER: They all look pretty much the same to me, but of course, I do not look too hard!

LHEBAN: Oh My! Well, to cut a short tale to the bone, old Komon grabbed a Contessa, who had thought to 'disguise herself.' Oh Dear!

ADVENTURER: Well—did she get away? Did they catch Komon? What happened?

LHEBAN: Well, old Komon, tipsy as he was, was quick as spit in a gale. Eluded all pursuit, took the lady to a small private... retreat house that we have. Oh Dear Me! Well, the City Guards, Palace guards, half a dozen Royals, all caught up with Komon 3 days later. One day too late for the poor Contessa—I hear that they had a hard time locating all the...er...bits and pieces. Komon was there, passed out cold. And another body, some common blond lamppost girl. And by now he is cold— permanently, most likely at the bottom of the Bay.

ADVENTURER: Oh well. Serves the Contessa right, coming down to this area. But I suppose that there are repercussions?

(Enter two more Priests, Raic and Stete of Julianos, and four armed City Guards.)

RAIC: Evening, Lheban. Evening, Adventurer. And—

ORTHO: Me am Ortho.

RAIC: Yesss. Charmed. And Lheban, you indeed have my sympathies...if there is anything we can do to help—our Temple of Julianos, that is ..? But really, you should have kept Komon on a tighter leash - or preferably a noose!

ADVENTURER: Hello Raic. And hello to you, Stete - how's your sister?

STETE: Oh, she's great.

(Raic sets Stete on fire, but it goes out)

LHEBAN: Yes, I know I know. Oh the repercussions! Do you know that the Priests of Akatosh to Daggerfall Castle, Wayrest Palace and just about everywhere else have all been thrown out? That the Royal tax exemption for the Chantry has been revoked? That the Akatosh Chantry has just received a 'past due taxes' bill? Oh My!

ADVENTURER: Well...I suppose that we could help somewhat, maybe? Maybe a small loan from Julianos for that tax bill? With, say, a Temple as security? Oh—are not the taxes based on the number of the Priests of Akatosh? So, maybe...the School of Julianos could take over a...significant number? Reduce your tax bill? You realize that this is not the best time for this—just as we need a lot of funds for that expedition that I am arranging for you.

LHEBAN: Oh, I am so sorry about Komon! But, yes, maybe if good brother Raic could—I hate to say this—take over a greater share of the financial burden ..? In return, of course, for...er... considerations ..?

RAIC: Hmm. Like a good number of 'permanently' loaned priests? A long look at your books? At your cellar? Your name-lists? A Temple as security on our loan? And, of course, a bigger cut in the proceeds of this...expedition? Names of your...er... suppliers ..?

LHEBAN: Oh. I foresaw something like this, talked a bit about it with old Mucky-Muck - livid, he was. But, as I am a Senior Brother, he finally authorized me to 'take care of it.' Those weren't his exact words, mind you, which were quite a bit ... longer, more explicit...but the gist, at least.

ADVENTURER: Of course, Lheban. If—and note I say 'if'—if we are successful, why then you can easily get back into good graces at the Palace. Merely sell them the goods, as a good low rate! With first refusal on any shipment you have? What's one Contessa to them, anyway?

LHEBAN: Yes, yes! That could work! Worth a try. But how? Royals will not talk to anyone from the Akatosh Chantry now.

ADVENTURER: Leave that to me, I can make...approaches to certain ones. Yes, I can probably persuade them to let up on the Chantry, in return for... future favors...

LHEBAN: Oh, Oh how can I thank you?

ADVENTURER: Well, I need a fair amount of gold to finish setting up my little trip. Maybe 10,000? Special horses, reinforced carts, cartiers, guards...the list goes on and on. And the cost of keeping our little trip quiet is really quite high.

LHEBAN: Well, yes, we can afford it, I guess—you do have the map now, don't you? I know we can afford 8,000 gold. Given

the potential profits...

ADVENTURER: Rest easy! - it's all here in my cloak—show you in a bit. I've also managed to...hire some good young hefty fellows, like old Ortho here, to manage the carts, dig and load, act as guards, and so on...

LHEBAN: Good, good - I can relax a bit. Oh my, the fellows back at the Chantry will be so relieved. We really owe you, the Brotherhood does—Oh, I mean the Akatosh Chantry, of course!

STETE: Brotherhood ..? What about our sisterhood, eh?

(Raic grapples Stete, allowing Lheban to hit Stete with a large mallet)

ADVENTURER: Well, Raic, what about you and the School? How much are you good for, the extra 2000? And maybe some more - always lots of last minute expenses on a trip like this, you know.

RAIC: Well now. Since we seem to getting a whole extra sect of Priests, and...other considerations...Certainly!

ADVENTURER: Well, gentlemen—Oh, and Stete—here it is!

(The Adventurer pulls out a map, gives it to Raic)

Oh, by the Arms of Zenithar, did I ever have to work hard for this! Those cagey Mages! But, in the end, just greedy old fools!... Oh, just in case you or your, er, Head Priest, hasn't seen the goods—here's a sample. Play with it.

(The Adventurer hands Raic a small leather bag)

RAIC: Thank you, thank you. I must admit, I had some...well, some doubts. You know - dealing with a stranger, so on...No more. Partner!

ADVENTURER: Good, good!

(Stete hiccoughs)

STETE: Say, you fellows ever hear this one—what's a Priest keep under his robe? Haha—His sister! Haheheha!

(The Adventurer, Lheban, and Raic beat Stete into unconsciousness)

RAIC: You know, I fear that we really have to do something about young Stete here...his sister thing...ugh!

ADVENTURER: Yes, he could be another Komon—just what don't need!

LHEBAN: Hmmmm. This sister of his—does she really—exist?

RAIC: Oh yes. My. Oh yes. We know her well - I mean, we have often seen her...

LHEBAN: I think, Brother, that she should be made to see the errors of her ways. So she is no longer an influence on Stete...

RAIC: Yes, most certainly...Hmmmm...

LHEBAN: A somewhat Dibelytical theological point—Oh, please excuse the technical discussion here - Raic, if we are to make her see the errors—well, how shall I put it—we first have to know just what the...ways...are, correct?

RAIC: Indeed, an astute observation! Hmmm...so you are suggesting that...in a nut, we should first determine her...ways, so as to be able to then show her the...er...errors?

LHEBAN: Precisely! Mind you, a difficult, arduous, tiring project, I fear. One that will take all our...will and energy.

RAIC: Hmmm, true. But challenging, eh? Take all our time - but then, we shall have some time, while friend the Adventurer here is off hauling and carting.

LHEBAN: And...I personally, would feel far safer if we were...in retreat maybe. Studying the ways ..?

ADVENTURER: Yeah—be a good idea for you two to, maybe, disappear? For a while, of course. Cut down on the chances of a...rival faction catching on? Or catching you?

RAIC: Very well! Lheban, why don't you and I take his sister off with us on a...theological retreat, as it were? Study the ways in details, and so on...

LHEBAN: We could go to that unused little Temple, up on that shoulder of Edward's Mountain...out of the way, quiet...

RAIC: Door has locks...

LHEBAN: Thick walls...

RAIC: A big cellar...

LHEBAN: Good! It's settled then. A theological retreat! Oh goody!

RAIC: Of course, once we know the...er...ways in detail, we can of course tell old High Mucky-Muck, and let him take care of the...er...showing of the errors ..? Yes, that would improve his mood quite a bit...

LHEBAN: Then it's agreed. Let's start, say, day after tomorrow?

RAIC: Yes! Adventurer, why don't I meet you at, oh, that horrid ugly statue of...what on Tamriel is it? - a harpy and a gargoyle? Called something silly like 'Vendigao and Her Lover' or some such? Up in the north west corner of the town. Oh, and can I keep the map?

ADVENTURER: Sure, keep it, I have a copy. And you will pass me a small bag, there at that nasty statue?

RAIC: Have it all ready for you—say, ten o'clock sharp? Oh, Lheban, another thought about young Stete here. He really needs some...seasoning in the field, one might say ...?

LHEBAN: Hmmm. Good point...I know! The priest who handles field assignments is coming by tomorrow. We could arrange an...educational ...assignment for Stete?

RAIC: Very good! But where...hmmm...Winter's coming soon now. There's a vacancy up in Solitude, far north Skyrim, I believe. Night collections at street corners, or some such. Very Good! Come on, Lheban. We have accounts to work on. Good night to you then, Adventurer. Ten tomorrow morning!  
(Lheban, Raic rise to leave, picking up Stete)

Lheban and Raic (Together):...have to arrange some supplies..... leather, rope...holy wine .....lots of that pink powder...I prefer the green, myself...



(Exeunt Lheban, Raic dragging Stete, and City Guard)

NEPHRON: Well?

ADVENTURER: Excellent. Went just as I said it would. Got 5000 gold from them. And, thanks to your work with that Contessa...we have the screws on the Chantry. And the School of Julianos is going to be...otherwise engaged...on a theological retreat. More like a Sanguine retreat!

NEPHRON: And those Mages Shub and Shub seem to have disappeared...

ADVENTURER: So we are set?

NEPHRON: Yes, you can come by my warehouse tomorrow afternoon. Have the heavy carts waiting.

ORTHO: And Ortho...

NEPHRON: Oh yes, must not forget you fellows. How kind of you to...volunteer your services...

ADVENTURER: Tomorrow, then!

(Exeunt omnes) (Last person to leave looks just like a Royal in disguise ...) (Enter Epilogue)

EPILOGUE: Well, we only have one part left to this play and I've run out counting the number of loose strings. Either Part the Sixth is going to be eight hours long, or we're going to leave some parts unsolved. I for one hope that they don't chose to drop the character of the Wanton Contessa. For Jephre's sake, she's been on the Dramatis Personae since Part the Oneth. Ah, well. Nobody leave your seat. Your gold will not be refunded.

Any gold you can spare to tip your friendly wenches will be greatly appreciated. We just have a quick costume change and a set to put together and we'll be back. In the meanwhile, enjoy our bard's rendition of the Nordic classic "Alas, The Fleeting Years Glide By."

So Endeth Part The Five

Fools' Ebony, Part the Sixth

Daggerfall and Environs in the Doldrums of the 3rd Era

Scene 1: In The Adventurer's suite at the Dead Daedra Inn.

(Enter Prologue, the Adventurer, and Ortho. Ortho climbs into bed.)

PROLOGUE: Thank you for allowing us the time to change the meager set, while our bard sang that old favorite, "Hail and Farewell." Now then, imagine, if you will, the luxuriant and langorous suite of that Dark Elven rogue, the Adventurer, at the Dead Daedra Inn. The time is shortly after the last scene, which if you've forgotten, ended with our hero and his partner-in-crime, Nephron, making some arrangements to swindle from the mages, priests, and armorers. All are interested in getting their hands on a lode of Fools' Ebony, a miraculous burning mineral, and the priests and mages each consider the Adventurer their ally. The Armorers know better and have assigned one of their apprentices, Ortho, to watch the Adventurer's movements. Now, as Ortho slumbers, the Adventurer has his first moment of peace in days. I should mention that in the interest of common decency, this scene has been abbreviated from the original by order of the Guild of Playwrites, Actors, and Dramatists. It now contains little

material of relevance. A full copy may be obtained from the playwright after the show for a mere 50 g.p. copying fee. Now is the time for poor Prologue to shuffle away.

(Exit Prologue) (The Adventurer begins to get undressed)

(Tap-tap at the door. Adventurer jumps, startled) (Snore from Ortho)

ADVENTURER: Who's there? I'm coming!

(Opens door - carefully) (Enter CONTESSA)

ADVENTURER: Er, well...er...Come In! Please.

(The Adventurer steps back, tripping over his trousers around his ankles ...)

CONTESSA: So sorry to surprise you, but I thought that we might find something in common...Oh! You poor man, you have a wound! Here, let me fix that bandage...it looks very fresh.

(Fixing bandage, properly this time)

ADVENTURER: Well, I...just opened it up again. Evening exercises, calisthenics, so on...

CONTESSA: How did you get this cut - if you do not mind me asking?

ADVENTURER: No, not at all. I was...in a fight, earlier. These three crazy people jumped me.

CONTESSA: Really? This cloth looks like part of a Mage's robe.

ADVENTURER: Well, yes, two of them were Mages.

CONTESSA: Oh My! You must have been very good, to defeat them.

ADVENTURER: Oh, ah, well, I've been in one or two fights. Not to be rude, but who are you?

CONTESSA: Oh, I am so sorry, I quite forgot the proper introductions. I am the Contessa Aveet Videspreed—call me Ave. From the Court at Daggerfall.

ADVENTURER (aside): By Oblivion, what now?

CONTESSA: Here, help me off with this robe, these inn rooms are always...so hot. And let me check that bandage again, poor man. Ooh, you are wearing an ebony belt of stamina, and bracers of strength. Ooh, a bracelet of endurance. This is my lucky night.

ADVENTURER (aside): Help.

CONTESSA: Here, let me help you off with that old shirt - got to check you for any more cuts - they can go bad so easily, you know.

ADVENTURER (aside): Well, its not the Armorers this time. Maybe my luck has turned.

CONTESSA: Well, everything seems all right... very all right, in fact...

ADVENTURER: Er... well, Ave - tell me about...er...yourself.

CONTESSA: If you want - just for a bit -

ADVENTURER: Here, have some wine...

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: Here our worthy playwright's speech has been heavily edited by the Guild of Playwrites, Actors, and Dramatists. I will endeavor to fill in those removed passages. I should first mention that the Contessa is not meant to be a relative of any noble currently in Castle Daggerfall. The Contessa Aveet regales the Adventurer with tales of the peculiar and hearty members of her royal family. She has many brothers and sisters. They are all very—close.

CONTESSA: I think I must have been a bastard. I was the only one with red hair, and an affinity for magicka. Everyone else tried to hide this skill of mine. I remember one spanking very well...

PROLOGUE: The Contessa relates further differences between her siblings.

CONTESSA: While my sisters were learning to curtsy in ten different modes, and my brothers were learning flower-arranging, I used to sneak off into the woods or town. I soon learnt how to get what I wanted, from just about anyone. Just for example, there was this merchant who had three sons...

PROLOGUE: The Contessa goes into detail about her training.

CONTESSA: I became quite good at the school of illusion. You never noticed me, downstairs, did you?. I also learned how to use some weapons. Let me tell you how I learned hand-to-hand...

PROLOGUE: The Contessa relates an amusing anecdote, and then continues.

CONTESSA: And on bad days, I used to dig in my father's library. He had a marvelous collection of old texts. I was fascinated by Old Dwarvish, managed to learn it quite well, I think. Of course, no one has seen or spoken to one in years and years. So its probably perfectly useless knowledge. But I've always had an interest in collecting new knowledge. At the Mages Guild, they taught me an old High Elven tradition. You spread this potion all over your body...

PROLOGUE: The Contessa relates her current state of boredom.

CONTESSA: The life up at the Palace bores me so. My sisters...

PROLOGUE: The Contessa's sisters are entertaining some visitors.

CONTESSA: And my brothers are now studying Advanced Floral Theory, so I come down here, do a little...er...business. I keep all my relations supplied with their favorite vices—so I can blackmail the whole rotten lot.

ADVENTURER: But isn't it dangerous, down here? Did I not hear that some young Contessa got killed, recently?

CONTESSA: That little twit was my cousin, and as far as I'm concerned, she got what she deserved. She thought she could just borrow a maids dress, muss up her hair, and pass for commoner. She was spotted the first minute she left the Palace gates. Now, I use illusion, craft, guile—and I carry weaponry. By the way, that was a neat scheme you and Neph cooked up.

ADVENTURER: Well, lets change the subject, can we?...Just what do you carry? I can't see anything...like a weapon, I mean...

CONTESSA: Here, let me show you...

ADVENTURER: Oh my, those are nice...knives...

CONTESSA: And there're more...

ADVENTURER: Oh yes...

CONTESSA: But we don't need these silly nasty weapons now, do we?

ADVENTURER: My, my—now those are what I call weapons... Oh yes...heavy duty, high class ones too, my...

CONTESSA: I think its time that we put that ebony to the test... to say nothing of your Mages Staff...

PROLOGUE: At this point, extensive material has been removed. However, please remember that any scholar who truly wishes to peruse this material can obtain a copy for only 50 g.p. - hand-drawn illustrations are of course extra. The Contessa, after a bit of fun, volunteers to be a part of the Adventurer's party to find the fools' ebony lode. I know, I know. It didn't make much sense in the original draft either, if you want to know the truth.

(Exit Prologue)

ADVENTURER: Sure you want to go out there in the wilds?

CONTESSA: Oh, yes. I am so bored here. Well, not right here and now, but generally. And I can really be of assistance. I'm pretty good with woods survival, knife work, hand-to-hand...and it gets cold out there at night, even for big ebony-wearing men like you...

ADVENTURER: All right, then. Do you know where and why we are going?

CONTESSA: Oh, of course. It's all over Daggerfall. Everyone is watching and waiting to see what happens. There is even a lottery or two running...

ADVENTURER: On what ..?

CONTESSA: Oh, your life.

ADVENTURER: Oh dear Oh dear! Oh my!

CONTESSA: Look, don't worry—I know all about the double-dealings with mages, priests, merchants, those crude armorers. And I intend that we come out on top. I love being on top. With the goods and the profits. I'll have yet another vice to sell to my stupid relatives in their boring palaces.

ADVENTURER: But won't it be us two against hordes?

CONTESSA: Oh no. Most everyone is waiting here in town to see what and who comes back. And I will have a surprise arranged for our 'escorts' - Ortho included. Out in the wilderness, they can be dealt with easily.

(Ortho snores)

ADVENTURER: Tell me more.



CONTESSA: Certainly. But first...lets see how many uses you have left in that ebony. Mmm, your Mages' Staff is in good shape...

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: Exactly. Sorry to interrupt again, but we're going to have to stop this scene right here. After a frenzied night comes the placid dawn, tripping onto the sky like a budding rose. And then another day doth dawn, and then another. Ten dawns and ten frenzied nights pass as our wily Adventurer, the wanton Contessa, the clever and naughty Nephron, the loutish Ortho, and an assemblage of randy armorers and backsliding maidens take to the road. Imagine now that we are in the wildy wilderness of High Rock near the Wrothgarian Mountains.

Scene 2

(Enter Nephron and assorted lads and lasses) (Exit Prologue)

CONTESSA: I do so love a bucolic frolic.

ADVENTURER: It's getting pretty wild now. I guess the dangerous part is coming up tomorrow...?

CONTESSA: Yes, one last stop tonight, at that old inn up here—Minnie's Inn.

ADVENTURER: Minnie's Inn? Oh, those two old scholars who gave it all up, came to run the inn out here. they must get all of two customers a year.

CONTESSA: I think they like the solitude. It gives them time to study. They know a lot about old Dwarvish stuff - get them started on that, they will wear you ears out.

ADVENTURER: Er...when does your surprise happen? I should probably know.

CONTESSA: Don't fret, dear. At the Inn tonight. Just sit back and enjoy the show.

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: Time passes, the carts roll, things happen in the backs of the carts. And there are strange furtive movements unnoticed by all, on the high ridges around. When next we see our players, they are at Minnie's Inn, home of Minnie and Crunn, the philosopher-innkeepers. Imagine, if you will, the rather dusty dining room of Minnie's Inn.

(Enter MINNIE, CRUNN, and GURNSEY) (Exit Prologue)  
(Gurnsey goes to Orthos' table with more ale for him. She sits down suddenly. She stares into Orthos' eyes, Ortho stares into hers. Mouths drop open.)

MINNIE:...er...Crunn...

CRUNN:...yes...Minnie...

MINNIE:...I was thinking...

CRUNN:...yes, you were thinking, Minnie...

MINNIE:...er .... thinking...

CRUNN:...yes ...so was I ....

MINNIE:...can't remember now...

CRUNN:...yes, Minnie...Minnie...

MINNIE:...Yes ..?

CRUNN:...Shut up...

GURNSEY and ORTHO (Together): Moo...oooh...moo.

ADVENTURER: Moo?

CONTESSA: See, Adventurer, Ortho's fixed.

ADVENTURER: Is he?

CONTESSA: You just watch.

ADVENTURER: And what about the other armorers?

CONTESSA: Any minute now.

(Ortho and serving girl arise, approach Adventurers' table. The floor shakes.)

ORTHO: This Gurnsey. Ortho love Gurnsey, oooh.

GURNSEY: Gurnsey love Ortho...moo...

ORTHO: We go get marry, we is.

ADVENTURER: Well, congratulations! And that was a fine long speech, Ortho!

ORTHO: We go raise piggies.

GURNSEY: Grows animals too, farmers be we.

(Exit Ortho and Gurnsey)

ADVENTURER: Extraordinary. Ave, I think that you must have been up here before.

CONTESSA: Oh yes. I often come up here to get away from the Palace and talk dwarves with Minnie and Crunn.

ADVENTURER: You mean that these two ancient...er, Scholar-InnKeeps can actually talk and about dwarves?

(All but Adventurer, Contessa, Minnie, and Crunn fall asleep in their meat pies.)

CONTESSA: Oh yes, you must just be very patient. But look over at our other escorts...

ADVENTURER: By the Lady!

CONTESSA: Minnie was an Alchemist before she met Crunn, and knows a lot of old forgotten Dwarvish potions.

ADVENTURER: But what do we do with the bodies?

CONTESSA: Wait...

(Enter MAJOR)

CONTESSA: Adventurer, meet Major Bloodnok, head of my own ...private little bodyguard. He's been with me since I was a mere girl. Served me very well, haven't you, Major?

MAJOR: We give our all, milady.

ADVENTURER: Pleased to meet you, Major.

CONTESSA: How are my other men?

ADVENTURER: (aside) Other men?

(Enter Other Men in Khajiit suits)

MAJOR: All present and accounted for, milady. Had a spot of bother with what looked like a party of Merchants following you. But they are out of the picture now, down a ravine. Only one thing.

CONTESSA: Yes?

MAJOR: Me and my men, we've been noticing sort of furtive movements, up on cliffs, on ridges—always just out of the corners of our eyes. And we keep getting this feeling of being watched. Now, me and my men, we're the best but there's something out there. Don't like it, not one bit.

CONTESSA: Oh Dear - and just when it was getting to be fun.

MAJOR: Its not anything human. Not Mages, Armorers, Priests. And its not the usual werewolves, harpies, orcs, daedra. Nothing like that, not at all.

MINNIE: Dwarves!

CRUNN: Where?...oh...Minnie...you mean...up...there...here...

MINNIE:...Dwarves, up there...

CRUNN:...How exciting...mmmm...

MINNIE:...There, there, Crunn, calm down...just dwarves...I knew that one day they would...

CRUNN:...Wake up ..?

MINNIE:...Come back...

CRUNN:...But...I didn't go anywhere...

MINNIE:...The dwarves, Crunn...

CRUNN:...Oooh...Back...So excited...Dwarves!...oooh...

CONTESSA: Well Major, is it possible?

MAJOR: Anything's possible, especially up here. Dwarves? I don't know. Me and my men, we'll get rid of this lot. There's a good deep mine shaft out back.

(Exit All, but the Adventurer and Contessa)

ADVENTURER: Dwarves, Ave! Is that trouble? I mean, they sort of own all the ebony down here, don't they?

CONTESSA: Maybe. I guess we just have to push on, see what develops. I can try to talk to them, maybe? Oh, and Adventurer, you'll have to drive the first cart. I'll take old Nephron's. We'll leave the other here—Spares for later.

ADVENTURER: What, no more bucolic frolics?

CONTESSA: Sorry, but we've got to get to the site and out again before the weather goes bad.

ADVENTURER: Can't your Major and his men, handle the carts?

CONTESSA: Oh, no. They will cover us from all sides and make certain there are no surprises.

ADVENTURER: Oh well. All good things end, I guess.

CONTESSA: Not quite. If you have any charges left in your bracelets of endurance, we can go upstairs and see what develops.

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: Well, I guess we all saw that coming. Scene 3 takes place some time later at the site. Flanked by the Major's men, the Adventurer and the Wanton Contessa successfully follow the map of the dear, departed mages. Imagine great veins of glistening ebonyesque material piercing the surface of the ground, and a nice warm fire of Fools Ebony where the Adventurer and the Contessa sprawl. To the west are signs that the weather is turning and the first major snowstorm of the year is coming. For some time, they have been mining and the Adventurer is beginning to feel the strain of actual labor.

(Exit Prologue)

Scene 3

ADVENTURER: I've got blisters on my hands from shovelling that black rot, blisters on my rear from that cart bench, and we are running out of ale. My bracelet is running down and my fingers are getting frostbite.

CONTESSA: What, your bracelet is running down? Oh, now that is serious.

(Enter Major, running)

MAJOR: Dwarves! Milady, dwarves, dozens of the little buggers caught my men! I'm sorry, milady.

(The Contessa jumps to her feet)

CONTESSA: Major, get out of here now. If you get away, you can maybe help us later. I'll try to talk to them.

(Exit Major) (Enter DWARVES)

CONTESSA: Hhjgys jjvvu klpss Jjqqx zzyzx.

DWARVES (Together): Jjpoo Kalagloo gashnoo bibloo franoo  
Xxnadoo

CONTESSA: Jnik? Balpo?

DWARVES (Together) :Gabloo! Wazzikoo! Eppapupu!

CONTESSA: Glooky, glooky, glooky.

ADVENTURER: Ave, whats going on?

CONTESSA: Relax. I think I've impressed them by talking their language. I don't understand everything, but it seems that they have only just 'woken up' or something. And that they will not let us take any of this Fool's Ebony—it's somehow related to the real stuff or something. And it really belongs to the Lords of Oblivion—the Dwarves are just care or something.

ADVENTURER: Very interesting. Now, what about us?

CONTESSA: I made a deal with them the only way I could see. I told them about Minnie and Crunn, how those two old ones know lots of dwarven tales and legends. The dwarves tells me that, having just 'woken up' or something, they want three things—ale, women, and us to leave the Fools' Ebony alone.

ADVENTURER: Ah, flog my log.



CONTESSA: Well, I told them about all the ale down at Minnie's Inn. And about the 2 redheads there. They are going there, leaving right now. We may take one empty cart, 2 horses. And they will keep us guarded all the way there. They also said that they will—I don't know how—destroy all the Fool's Ebony here. It shouldn't be on the surface like this, they say. (aside)  
Dwarvish is a remarkably compact language.

ADVENTURER: By the great roaring buttocks of Sheogorath! All these blisters and backache for nothing! Ah well. At least we are still alive. For now...

(Exeunt) (Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: Farnoo Lickety Kanoo Gadfloo. Oh, I'm terribly sorry. As Scene 4 begins, we are back at Minnie's Inn, where the dwarves appear to be on holiday.

(Enter the Adventurer, the Wanton Contessa, Minnie, Crunn, and Dwarves)

(Exit Prologue)

Scene 4

MINNIE:...ga...sszx...spnoo?...

CRUNN:...glurky...

DWARVES (Together): Jotcha potchka lazzo lanni joopy hoopy qui me amat, amat et canem meam

ADVENTURER: Ave, any ideas? I can't seem to work my magical items. And when the ale runs out...

CONTESSA: Your ebony material is useless against them. Dwarves fashion the ebony, so I guess they can suppress it or something. Don't worry - just think, these dwarves have been asleep or something for hundreds of years. And Minnie has a huge stock of ale. Not many customers come this way, and she knows how to salt the ale just right to keep from spoiling for decades.

ADVENTURER: Oh, that's why my tongue always looks like a chunk of leather after a pint or two.

CONTESSA: Dwarves apparently love ale. I expect them all to pass out in an hour or so.

(Dwarves fall into comas)

CONTESSA: If not sooner. Come on, Adventurer. Grab a sack and start collecting! When the dwarves wake up, they'll finish the ale, and then us.

(The Wanton Contessa and Adventurer pillage the dwarves)

ADVENTURER: South, as fast as our horses will take us in this weather.

CONTESSA: If we make enough distance before they wake up, we'll be all right - I don't think that they will leave their precious mountains. I hope not.

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: The wailing wintery wind whirled wickedly, wafts whipping, wading waist-high, oh never mind. The Adventurer and the Contessa get lost in the snow storm. Several days later, we find them desperate for warmth and exhausted.

(Exit Prologue)

ADVENTURER: The horses have had it. They can't go another step and its going to snow again. No ale left, and just one loaf.

CONTESSA: It will have to do.

(Suddenly, a party of giants leaps on our hero and heroine. But after some quick work with Bracers of Firestorm, really dead giants lie around in heaps)

ADVENTURER: Anything left, Ave?

CONTESSA: No, no more fire anything - just my daggers

ADVENTURER: Same here, just a common shortsword. Curse Shegorath for those dwarves! Those oafs chewed up our horses! Do you think the Major made it out?

CONTESSA: If anyone can, it's him. Guess we'll find out in town. Interesting thought just occurred to me. Don't giants hunt in several groups? Is that more I hear?

(sound of grumbling and gargling offstage)

ADVENTURER: Yes, there are more giants out there. Quick, Ave. Help me with this one.

(The Adventurer starts to disembowel a giant's body)

CONTESSA: What on Tamriel are you doing? This is not the time for studying anatomy!

ADVENTURER: Don't argue, climb inside!

CONTESSA: Poppydash and Baldercock! Inside that smelly dead giant? My dear Adventurer, I'm a Lady.

ADVENTURER: It's our only hope! The giant smell will hide our scent, and live giants never touch dead ones. Quick!

(The Adventurer and the Contessa climb inside the steaming giant's body)

ADVENTURER: Here, help me pull the skin shut - and try not to throw up. Don't make a sound.

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: A few hour pass.

(Exit Prologue) (The Adventurer and the Wanton Contessa poke their heads out of the giant's belly.)

ADVENTURER: They've all left, but it's snowing hard. Definitely getting real cold. We better stay here.

CONTESSA: It indeed is warm.

ADVENTURER: It will keep us warm, safe from the storm and giants, for a day or so if we can stand the smell. Here, want some bread?

(The Contessa falls victim to nausea)

(Enter Prologue)

PROLOGUE: For this, the last scene of the play, please forgive us, but we need to change the set. Remove the "giant corpses" and whatnot. Please be patient while our bard performs the timeless classic "Whither Goest Thou?"

(Bard plays “Whither Goest Thou?” If the scenarists take too long, he also plays “For Further Consideration.”)

PROLOGUE: Ah, here we are, back at the Dead Daedra Inn. The Contessa and the Adventurer made it, after all. They had to pay three times the normal rate, for they were very dirty and stinky. Now poor Prologue will bid you farewell, goodly people.

## Scene 6

CONTESSA: Thank the Gods for hot water and soap! I thought I would smell like a giant forever.

ADVENTURER: Me too. Where did you go while I was bathing? And why no mages, priests, armorers, or merchants outside yelling for our blood?

CONTESSA: I took a quick trip to the Palace. I’ve fixed it so some cousins have told the armorers and merchants that we don’t have cartloads of the Fools’ Ebony.

ADVENTURER: Pity that that’s actually true.

CONTESSA: But at least no one’s interested in us anymore. Seems that some priests turned up dead in an old temple, up on Edward’s Mountain. They were found with some girl, all dead from ‘bad green powder’ or something. And some old mages named Shub have gone missing...

ADVENTURER: Now then, what did you stuff in those sacks that’s so important?

CONTESSA: Here, dump them out, take a look.

ADVENTURER: By the Gods, just look at that!

CONTESSA: Yes, those dwarves were just loaded with ebony. Look. Rings, torcs, bracers, belts, helms All solid old ebony.

ADVENTURER: And this stuff feels just loaded with magicka. Why, I bet that this ring alone has a thousand uses... whatever it does.

CONTESSA: Ooh! Look! Bracers of Extreme Endurance and a Belt of Strength! Put them on, Adventurer, let's celebrate!

ADVENTURER (aside): Help!

(Enter Epilogue)

EPILOGUE: As I feared, all the loose threads of the play were ended by wholesale slaughter. More of the adventures of the Adventurer will follow, unless, of course, they don't. We thank you for your tempered patience. Don't forget to tip your worthy wenches on your way out this evening, and enjoy our bard's rendition of the Khajiiti classic, "It's A Matter of Luck." Goodnight.

(Flourish)

(Exeunt Omnes)

# Fragment: On Artaeum

*Taurce il-Anselma*

By Taurce il-Anselma, 3E 400

The Isle of Artaeum (ar-TAY-um) is the third largest island in the Sumurset archipelago, located south of the Moridunon village of Potansa and west of the mainland village of Runcibae. It is best known for being the home to the Psijic Order, perhaps the oldest monastic group in Tamriel.

The earliest written record of Psijics is from the twentieth year of the first era and tells the tale of the author, the renowned Breton sage Voernet, travelling to the Isle of Artaeum to meet with the Rite Master of the Psijics, Iachesis. Even then, the Psijics were the counselors of kings and proponents of the “Elder Way,” taught to them by the original people of Tamriel. The Elder Way is a philosophy of meditation and study said to bind the forces of nature to the individual will. It differs from magicka in origin, but the effects are much the same.

That being said, it is perhaps more than coincidence that the Isle of Artaeum literally vanished from the shores of Sumurset at the beginning of the second era at about the time of the founding of the Mages Guild of Tamriel. Various historians and scholars have published theories about this, but perhaps none but Iachesis and his own could shed light on this.

Five hundred years passed and Artaeum returned. The Psijics on the Isle consisted of persons, mostly elves, who had disappeared and were presumed dead over the second era. They could not or would not offer an explanation for Artaeum's whereabouts during that time or the fate of Iachesis and the original council of Artaeum.

Currently, the Psijics are led by the Lore Master Celarus who has presided over the Council of Artaeum for the last two hundred and fifty years. The Council's influence in world politics is tidal: the kings of Sumurset, particularly those of Moridunon, have often sought the Psijics' opinion; Uriel V was much influenced by the Council in the early, most glorious part of his reign, before his disastrous attack on Akavir; it has even been suggested that the fleet of King Orghum of Pyandonea was destroyed by a joint effort of Emperor Antiochus and the Psijic Order. The last four emperors, Uriel VI, Morihatha, Pelagius IV, and Uriel VII, have been suspicious of the Psijics, even enough to refuse ambassadors for the Isle of Artaeum in the Imperial City.

The Isle of Artaeum is difficult to chart geographically. It is said that parts of it exist simultaneously in multiple dimensions and continuously shift either at random or by decree of Council. Visitors to the island are so rare to be almost unheard of. Anyone desirous of a meeting with a Psijic may find contacts in Potansa and Runcibae as well as many of the kingdoms of Sumurset.

Were it more accessible, Artaeum would be a favored destination for travellers. I have been to the Isle once and still dream of the idyllic orchards and pastures, the still and silent lagoons, the misty woodlands, and the unique Psijic



architecture that seems to be as natural but wondrous as the surroundings. The Ceporah Tower in particular I would study, for it is a ruin from a civilization that predates the High Elves by several hundred years and is still used in certain rites by the Psijics.

Perhaps one day I might return.

\* \* \* \* \*

Note:

The author is currently on the Isle of Artaeum by gracious consent of Master Sargenius of the Council of Artaeum.

# Ghraewaj And The Harpies

## *Tidasus*

On the twelfth of Hearth Fire every year, the people of the Hammerfell township and barony of Lainlyn celebrate Riglametha. Riglametha in the Banthan dialect of the ancient Redguard tongue means “grateful-offering” and is a festival of the graces the gods have granted the people of Lainlyn over the centuries. Tradition dictates the performance of a number of plays about the great moments from Lainlyn’s past, and one of the most popular is Ghraewaj, which may be translated as “The Crows Who Were Punished” or “The Crows Who Punish.” Old Redguard is somewhat vague with its objective case.

The story of Ghraewaj, as any Lainlyn child will tell you, is of the wicked sisterhood of daedra worshippers who craft lies, curses, murders, and suicides to hurt the people of Lainlyn. Most of all, they use their beauty as a weapon to drive men to mayhem. Their leader, the temptress Noctyr-a, seduces the unnamed baron of Lainlyn and is about to force him to commit suicide to prove his love, when the baroness arrives. The baroness tricks Noctyr-a into wearing a beautiful white robe from the baroness’ closet: “See how the robe glows with the lumniscience of pearl, but the inside is soft, feathered with down.” Noctyr-a puts on the robe and the trap is sprung: the robe is magical and transforms Noctyr-a into an giant black bird. The baron, no longer enchanted, slays the great bird and calls in his cook.

The sisterhood has, by this time, taken over Lainlyn castle and turned it into a orgy-filled den of decadence. At the height of their frenzied debauch, the cook arrives with an enormous roast to keep their energy high. They dig into the deliciously prepared meal, and at the crescendo of their gorging, the baron and baroness appear to tell them all that they have just devoured their leader, Noctyr-a. The women scream and caw and suddenly they too are transformed by the magic of the robe, into harpies, vicious half-bird creatures.

The interesting thing about Ghraewaj from a scholarly perspective is how much the story has changed and continues to change over the years. In some versions of the story, Noctyr-a is an innocent peasant seamstress and it is the baroness who is the cruel and wicked leader of the harpies. Noctyr-a prays to Dibella and is given the charm to make the magical robe, and she and the baron live happily ever after once the harpies have feasted on the transformed baroness. During the long reign of the virgin baroness of Lainlyn, Viana the Pure (2E 120 - 2E 148), the baron was portrayed as a willing conspirator of Noctyr-a. The harpies thus have two birds to dine on.

It is unlikely that trying to find the truth in the story is profitable research. Harpies are indeed a common nuisance in the Iliac Bay, particularly around Lainlyn. They do have their own tongue, and the few who have mastered it and not been devoured by their interviewees suggest that the harpies have no more idea about their origins than we do. In a different vein, one of the best known of the Daedra Princes is named Nocturnal, who is often portrayed as a beautiful dark woman holding two black crows. It is not a difficult etymologic trick to derive the name Noctyr-a from Nocturnal, or vice-versa.

# Healer's Tale

*Anonymous*

For over twenty years, I have been a healer at the Temple of Stendarr. As the reader is doubtless aware, we are the only temple in the Iliac Bay that offers wound healing and illness curing for both the faithful and the heathen alike, for Stendarr is the God of Mercy. I have faced people at their most miserable and their most terrified. I have seen brave knights weep and strong peasants scream. I like to think that I've watched the masks drop from faces, and seen people as they truly are.

A healer's job, after all, is more than simply binding wounds and stopping the flows of poison and disease. We are counselors and comforters for those who have given up all hope. Sometimes, it seems like our kind words and sympathy do more for our patients than our spells.

I am reminded of a very sick young man who came to the temple, suffering from a variety of maladies. Once I had given him an examination, I told him the results, careful not to alarm him. I let him decide how he wanted to be told the news.

"I have some good news and some bad news, my child," I said.

"I better hear the bad news first," he said.

"Well," I said, gripping his shoulder in case he should faint.

"The bad news is that, unless I am wrong, you will sicken even

more over the next day or two. And unless Stendarr choses to be merciful to you, you will pass from this existance. I am sorry, my child.”

As soft as the blow was, it stung nonetheless. The boy was, after all, very young. He thought he had his whole life ahead of him. Tears streaming down his face, he asked, “And what is the good news?”

I smiled: “When you came in, did you notice our proselytizer? She was the enchanting, voluptuous blonde in the antechamber by the foyer?”

Color returned to the young man’s face. He had noticed her indeed. “Yes?”

“I’m sleeping with her,” I said.

If more of the healers of Tamriel would consider their patients’ feelings, not just the quickest way to heal them up and get them out, we would have a far, far healthier society. I truly believe that.

# Holidays Of The Iliac Bay

## *Theth-i*

The Daggerfall Chronicles lists Chil'a as taking place on the 24th of Evening Star.

The region of the Iliac Bay has a rich history, and not surprisingly, a number of holidays unique to it because of this history. The Breton and the Redguard cultures have many similarities, but just as many distinctions. An analysis of the holidays is one way to study the people.

As any schoolchild could tell you, the Redguards are a relatively new culture to Tamriel. Their arrival from their homeland is actually well recorded, though it occurred several thousand years ago, in the 808th year of the 1st Era. Hammerfell was a great desert encompassed by almost impassable mountains—unclaimed and unwanted. Many of the holidays extant in modern Hammerfell seem to be direct translations of older Redguard festivals before their migration to Tamriel.

The orgiastic seasonal celebrations seem unusual in a province with few changes in the weather from month to month. Yet on the 28th of Suns Dawn, the Redguards of the Banthan jungle celebrate Aduros Nau to relieve the wintertide lethargy; on the 1st of Mid Year, the people of Abibon-Gora celebrate Drigh R'Zimb in honor of the sun, which no normal Redguard worships in this day; similarly, on the 29th of Suns Height, the

festival in the Desert called Fiery Night, seems almost perverse in such an environment; the Koomu Alezer'i on the 11th of Last Seed in Sentinel has been translated as a harvest thanksgiving, though many scholars have suggested that it was once a springtide holiday; similarly, the Feast of the Tiger in the Bantha on the 14th of Last Seed was probably once a religious holiday to a Tiger God, instead of a thanksgiving.

Other old Redguard holidays have either been acknowledged as part of the old culture or adjusted to fit with the climate of Hammerfell. The Serpent's Dance, for example, of Satakalaam is patently an old festival honoring a Serpent God of the homeland who evidently did not survive the journey to Hammerfell. The significance of the date, the 3rd of Suns Dusk, has been lost with the Serpent Priests. Baranth Do, on the 18th of Evening Star, and Chil'a, on the 24th of the same month, are both New Years festivals. Most likely, they have been moved from their original dates to correspond with the notion of the year defined in Tamriel.

The Bretons have been in Tamriel since before recorded history. Their holidays have remained almost unchanged since primitive times, though new holidays have been created to replace those which have lost popularity.

The oldest holidays still observed in High Rock must include Waking Day, on the 18th of Morning Star, when the people of the Yeorth Burrowland wake the spirits of nature after the winter, very nearly in the tradition of their more reverential ancestors. Flower Day, held on the 25th of First Seed in the smaller villages of High Rock is most likely just as older or older. The old cult of the flower is also remembered as Gardtide in Tamarilyn Point on the 1st of Rains Hand. Daggerfall's Day

of the Dead, on the 13th of Rains Hand, suggests the ancestor worship that marked the Breton religion of antiquity. Finally, the ancient goddess of the moons, Secunda, is remembered in the Moon Festival in Glenumbra Moors on the 8th of Suns Dusk, just as the nights begin to grow longer.

The more recently created holidays of High Rock are those like Tibedetha, "Tibers Day," celebrated every 24th of Mid Year in honor of Alcaire's most famous, son, Tiber Septim. Likewise, Othroktide on the 5th of Suns Dawn is held in honor of the first and most illustrious Baron of Dwynnen. In quite extreme contrast, Marukh's Day on the 9th of Second Seed, is a solemn holiday, immortalizing the lessons of the equally solemn 1st Era prophet Marukh. My favorite of the modern Breton festivals has to be Mad Pelagius, held in mock honor of the most eccentric of the Septim Emperors. Pelagius was, after all, a prince of Wayrest before he became King of Solitude, and then Emperor of Tamriel. The Bretons like to boast that it was his time in High Rock that drove him mad.



# Ius, Animal God

## *Buljursoma*

Here's what Ted "Teddies" Peterson has to say about this text: "I actually wrote it for the amusement of the patch testers for Arena, one of whom noticed that in the town of Rockcreek, there was a shop placed directly in front of the town entrance. You could still get in and out of the town, since you didn't have to be right at the door to click on it, but they wanted to know how it came to be there. The right answer is that the towns were randomly generated, and this one just came up screwy. But I felt a legend needed to be created just for that. There are goofy little statues in Arena of a guy with scales, so I elected him to be the fella behind the myth.

I don't know why we decided to put it in the game to be honest, except that I thought it was kinda funny and I thought you couldn't have too many books in the game, and here was a story already written. You can't go to Rockcreek from the environs of Daggerfall which made the book not only peculiar but totally worthless."

The statues one sees throughout Valenwood and parts of Hammerfell and Elsweyr that seem to be of a misshapen humanoid carrying a rod are of Ius, the God of Animals.

The rod He carries has its origin in the tale of The Ox and The Evil Farmer. It seems that one day an evil farmer decided to kill

all of his animals and have a big party. As The story unfolds, animal after animal is killed and prepared for a big meal. Lastly the farmer comes to the ox and prepares to slit its throat. The ox, not wishing to be anybody's dinner, prayed very vocally to Ius. This came out as a loud Moo, of course.

At that very instant Ius appeared carrying a rather large set of balance weights. Without explanation, Ius ate the farmer and vanished. Ever since that day Ius The Extremely Agitated, has always been portrayed as carrying a large set of scales with him. The local Ius worshippers have no idea why and do not seem to care. Although this story has been called fanciful at best, I personally know a racoon who had actually talked to The Ox. That is, before the Ox became filler for the local inn's larder.

I do not have any information one way or the other about the validity of this second myth. It is, however, quite traditional.

It seems that many, many years ago, before the reign of Uriel Septim VII, before the reign of Cephorus Septim II, yes, even before the age of Pelagius Septim III (long may his name be praised!), there lived a wombat who was the pet of Lady Greelina, daughter of the Lord Prufrock of Rockcreek. Lady Greelina loved her wombat so, and it loved her too with all the passionate intensity a marsupial can muster.

Unfortunately, it was a time of great sorrow in Rockcreek. A pestilence had come through the town, destroying all their cash crops (which consisted of raspberries and a few scraggly odd weeds that caused Argonian women to look very attractive to those who partook); Then a plague had come, inflicting nearly every cobbler with chronic hiccoughs; finally a witch had cursed the townspeople so the only words any could utter

were “Hmmm. Precisely.” All the businesses, stores, and guilds fled from the town faster than an extremely fast thing.

Lady Greelina saw her father despairing the loss the town was suffering, so she brought her wombat in and told him, “Father, my wombat can save us all, for it is sacred to the god Ius, God of Animals. The only reason I didn’t tell you earlier is because I am an early adolescent going through that period when I don’t like to communicate. But please, ask a wish of my wombat, and Ius will fulfill it, for my wombat loves me.”

The king thought this was fairly flakey, but he had nothing to lose so he uttered a modest wish to the wombat, “All I want is for one business to come to Rockcreek that will never leave no matter the calamity.”

I probably should have mentioned before that the king had always been cruel to the wombat (he used to lick it and try to make it stick to walls), so the wombat had Ius create an equipment store in front of the palace gate that would never go away. The royal family ended up going mad and eating one another (and ironically, the wombat was one of the first to go). But that is why there is to this day an equipment store blocking the palace gate in Rockcreek. If you don’t believe me, go there and see.

# Jokes

## *Butha Sunhous*

“How is your wife,” asked Zalither. “She’s in bed with laryngitis,” replied Harlyth. “Is that Argonian bastard back in town again?”

“I keep seeing spots before my eyes.” “Have you seen a healer?”  
“No, just spots.”

A big Nord named Julgen was set on by a gang of thieves. He fought them furiously, but in the end, they beat him into semiconsciousness. They searched his pockets and discovered that he only had three gold pieces on him.

“Do you mean to tell us you fought us like a mad lupe for three lousy gold pieces?” sneered one of the thieves.

“No,” answered Julgen. “I was afraid you were after the four hundred gold pieces in my boot.”

During the War of Betony, the Bretons in the Isle of Craghold were under siege for several days. After the island was liberated, Lord Bridwell found the ruins of the castle where a crowd of survivors were hidden away in the dark. It was going to be a difficult job freeing them, as part of the roof had collapsed trapping them all within. Bridwell stuck his head in the only opening and shouted to the Bretons below: “Are there any expectant mothers down there?”

“It’s hard to say, your Lordship,” said a young woman. “We’ve only been down here for a few days.”

An elderly Breton met with an contemporary of his at a guild meeting. “Harryston, old man, I wanted to express my sympathy. I hear that you buried your wife last week.”

“Had to, old boy,” replied Harryston. “Dead, you know.”

Why was the Sentinel army so useless during the War of Betony?

The cannons were too heavy, so all three garbage scows sunk.

What does a new Sentinel private learn first as a combat technique?

How to retreat.

What is the thinnest book in the world?

Redguard Heroes of the War of Betony.

A Dark Elf man killed his wife after catching her making love with another man. When the magistrate asked him why he killed her instead of her lover, the man replied, “I considered it better to kill one woman than a different man every week.”

A Dark Elf woman was being shown around Daggerfall. When she was shown the magnificent Castle Daggerfall, she smiled sweetly to her guild and whispered, “It reminds me of sex.”

“That’s odd,” said her guild. “Why does our Castle Daggerfall remind you of sex?”

The Dark Elf sighed, “Everything does.”

Yelithah told Vathysah that she was having dinner with a Dark Elf named Morleth that night.

“I hear he’s an animal,” said Vathysah. “He’ll rip your dress right off you.”

“Thank you for telling me,” said Yelithah, “I’ll be sure to wear an old dress.”

How do separate sailors in the Khajiiti navy?

With a hammer and tongs.

“This orchard has sentimental value to me,” said Mojhad, the Khajiit, to his friend, Hasillid. “Under that tree, for example, is where I first made love. And that tree, is where her mother stood, watching us.”

“She watched you while you made love to her daughter?” said Hasillid, clearly impressed. “Didn’t she say anything?”

“Meow.”

What do you call a Wood Elf who doesn’t lie or cheat or steal?

A dead Wood Elf.

# King Edward

*Anonymous*

King Edward, Part I

Chapter One: Departure from Daggerfall

Long, long ago, when the world was in its springtime, before the Redguards came and the glorious Septim Empire was formed, but after the goblins had driven the dwarves out of Hammerfell, a son, Edward, was born to King Corcyr I of Daggerfall and his Queen, Alieria of Wayrest.

The young boy lay drowsing in the palace orchard, high on a breezy hill overlooking the deep blue bay of Daggerfall. The constant autumn fog of Daggerfall had blown away for the nonce and the sky was a deep endless blue. Moments like this were rare for young Prince Edward; this afternoon was the result of days of scheming, for he craved solitude as the other nobles he knew craved companionship. Now his tutor believed him engaged in extra arms practice, the master of arms believed him to be chasing deer with the huntmaster, who thought he was studying Elvish. His father had no idea where he was and didn't care, being occupied with his young wife and their sons and other pleasures of noble life.

At the plop of an apple barely missing his head, he opened his pale grey eyes; there was a sweet rotten smell in his nostrils. He sighed and stared up into the blue. Why should things fall

down instead of up? If you stared at the sky long enough you could feel as if you were falling into it his eyes glazed and the pupils grew huge as the dark-ringed irises dilated. He was weightless, drifting another apple fell, grazing his ear, and he thudded to earth, crying out as first his rump struck and then his head. A silvery laugh sounded. Edward sat up abruptly and stared around, jaw hanging slack.

Two mounted men stood ten feet away, still as if they were carved from stone, regarding him intently. Princes are not easily intimidated, not even the gentle souled kind, but Edward had never seen or imagined anything like this pair. One had golden skin and eyes, was clad in white cloth trimmed with gold and rode a (Edward blinked. It is was still there) a unicorn! Beside the unicorn was a golden dragon, wings neatly folded. And on his back was a man clad in dark chain mail, a long sword at his side. He was bareheaded; his eyes glowed red in his dark face and his pointed ears “You’re elves! What!”

“He’s a clever child.” The dark elf’s voice was sardonic. He spoke perfect Bretic, Edward noticed, his mind still working, although something seemed to have gone wrong with the rest of him.

“So it would seem. He did that mostly of himself. Remarkable for an untrained child. I merely helped him to concentrate.” The high elf also spoke Bretic, but hesitantly and with a slight singing accent. Edward’s tutor said that elves were incapable of human speech.

Edward’s gaze shifted rapidly over the four beings in front of him, unable to find a comfortable resting place. He hoped briefly, fervently, that he was dreaming. His mind seethed with questions and demands, then quite suddenly his tongue came



unstuck. “But I wasn’t concentrating at all! My masters all say I’m incapable.” Edward clamped his jaw down hard, suddenly realizing that it might be unwise to argue with beings such as these.

But the golden elf smiled broadly, showing perfect white teeth, “Exactly.” He radiated such warm approval, that Edward felt his skin tingle pleasantly. It was a feeling that he’d only known with his long-gone mother. But the other elf’s face was expressionless; the red eyes bored into Edward as if they would pierce his soul.

“Moraelyn! You’re Moraelyn! The witch-king!” He jumped to his feet and faced the dark elf. “You stole my mother! My father will kill you.”

“I am. I did. Will he? Shall we call him and find out?” The dark elf straightened and his eyes glowed deeper. A tiny puff of steam escaped the dragon’s nostrils. A glowing aura appeared around his companion. Edward knew he wasn’t going to call the guard. Why should they be slaughtered? These two looked capable of anything. Quite suddenly he was no longer afraid. If they were here to hurt him, they’d have done it by now. But a feeling of impotent rage remained. They’d taken his mother. And now.

“Why are you here?” he demanded.

“Edward, will you come with us?” The high elf spoke. Hearing him was like hearing a harp, cool as a breeze, warm as a fireside.

The boy stood very still. He wanted very much to say yes, to his own amazement. He wanted to ask if he would see his mother,

but instead: “My father...” he croaked.

“Will miss you no doubt.” The irony was back in Moraelyn’s voice, a voice that make Edward think of icicles sparkling and dripping in winter sun. But there was a sort of hunger in his glowing eyes, a longing?

His father wouldn’t miss him and he knew it. Shame ran through the boy, but he looked up at the broad-shouldered elf defiantly. “Are you my father?” Edward had meant the question to match the elf’s sarcasm, but his hand crept to his ear as if of itself. He wasn’t anything like his short-tempered, hearty, red-haired father and Roane often said he had an elfin look.

There was a heavy silence and Edward sensed that Moraelyn was taking the question at face value but that truth had nothing to do with what Moraelyn would say next. He would give the expedient answer. Still.

“No.” It came reluctantly. He might be lying, of course, but Edward felt a deep wave of relief.

“Does my mother have other sons?” Suddenly Edward knew she did not and that the question would hurt the dark elf. And was glad.

“Your mother might be dead, for all you know. Or care, it seems.” The dark elf’s narrow nostrils twitched as if Edward stank, and the lines around his mouth deepened. She was not dead. Edward would have known. The bitter injustice of Moraelyn’s contempt stung. “Did she send you to me?”

“Do you take me for an errand boy!” he snapped, and spoke to his companion: “Let us take him now and be gone; we may

discuss it at leisure.”

The golden elf held up his hand, “Patience, my cousin.” and, to Edward, “Well, youngling, will you come?”

Dark tales were told of human children kidnapped by elves, who hungered for young humans

“I don’t know your name,” Edward temporized.

“Do you love your life here so much?”

Edward looked at the palace in the distance, the banners floating lazily above the town below, the sparkling bay, the distant mountains. “I love Daggerfall.”

“Ah. And you shall return to hold it, Prince Edward. I, I’ric Harad Egun the ArchMagister, swear it to you.” Moraelyn swung about, protesting sharply in Elvish. The dragon spat a bit of flame, but the unicorn did not move; its golden eyes regarded Edward steadily. “Unicorns do not abide any sort of falsity.” The words floated through his mind in his mother’s voice.

“I’ric Harad Egun the ArchMagister, I will come with you.”

“You must ride with Moraelyn. The Lord Akatosh has consented to this—necessity. The elf made a sweeping gesture toward the dragon.”

He wasn’t fit to touch a unicorn, of course. “Very well, then. I... I don’t suppose I could bring my dog?” Where was he? Shag was always with him. Asleep in the grass! Shag, the ever-alert? Edward knelt to touch him. A heated discussion in Elvish ensued, during which the dragon scorched the grass. Moraelyn

swung down and picked Shag up with distaste. “Very well, then, but I warn you that Akatosh is at the limit of his patience. Mount, then.”

“Lord Akatosh, I am most deeply obliged by your indulgence. If ever I may repay it.”

“You will,” Moraelyn interrupted; he seized Edward by the belt and tossed him up onto the dragon. Edward settled himself between the dragon’s neck and wings and the sleeping Shag was draped limply in front of him. “There isn’t room for...” Edward began, and jerked in astonishment as the dragon shifted beneath him and grew larger. Much, much, much larger. Moraelyn vaulted up behind with a prodigious leap for one in armor. The unicorn jumped the nine foot wall, clearing it neatly. The dragon’s great wings stretched; he crouched, then leapt into the air. His riders swayed wildly. The dark elf muttered something Edward couldn’t understand in elvish and they steadied. The wings beat strongly and the dragon circled low over the Keep, gaining altitude slowly. People were running about now, shouting and pointing. Edward saw his old nurse and waved and shouted, “Goodbye! Goodbye! I’ll be back sometime...” Arrows flew through the air as bowmen shot, while the nurse screamed and clutched at the arms of those nearest. King Corcyr ran naked onto the battlements, screaming and waving his fists. “Child of a demon, come back and I’ll thrash you within an inch of your worthless life. Moraelyn, come down and fight, like the man you aren’t.”

Moraelyn’s loud laughter rang clear as temple bells, cascading over the Keep. He shouted, “Be glad I don’t, little King of the Small Cock!” The dragon circled almost lazily and let out a huge gout of flame. Arrows clinked harmlessly off his golden scales.

“I’m off to see my mother!” Edward screamed down, noting the upturned faces of his stepmother and her red-haired sons. Roane had a fur-trimmed robe clutched round her, but her long hair floated wildly. Four pairs of eyes fastened on him, not Moraelyn, glittering with fury and hatred. Edward stopped waving and clutched Shag tightly with both hands. Moraelyn’s mail clad arm was securely about his waist. Edward slumped against him, feeling quite safe for the first time in a very long while. The bowmen had stopped shooting; most of them were looking at the royal family. The king danced with rage. The great dragon’s wings beat harder now and they headed due south out over the water.

“Aren’t we going to Ebonheart?” the boy twisted round and looked up at Moraelyn. “Your mother awaits you at Firsthold in Sumurset, little Prince.”

“Why did you wait so long to fetch me?”

“Querulous child, do you think dragons and unicorns do the bidding of elves or men? Your mother came to me full willing, but she could not bring you; you were too closely guarded by your father’s men. Would you have had us lay waste your land to take you by force? She thought you would be safe and cared for and she was desperate. No, this was the dragon’s plan.”

Of all the astonishing events of the afternoon, this was the most surprising: the notion that a dragon should take an interest in him, when not even his own family did. But, willing, the elf said, full willing!

“You are the focus of large events, youngling. Your task is to prepare yourself to be a king; a king such as your people have never known. Our task is to aid you. Sleep now.”

Waves of sleep assaulted Edward's mind, one after another. "But..." he meant to ask Moraelyn about his mother, but the last wave was too big; it crashed right over him and he slipped into dark firehot dreams.

## King Edward, Part II

### Chapter 2: Reunion at Firsthold

Edward woke to a red sky. The sun was just peeking over the western mountains. They were nearing a glittering tower, fire flashing from every facet. The dragon veered to fly nearer and shot a long blast of flame. A light flashed several times from the tower's top as they dropped suddenly. Edward's stomach felt very peculiar. He sighed and stirred and felt Moraelyn shift so that his right arm now held Edward. He stretched and yawned.

"Not much longer now. It's several days by horse from the Crystal Tower to Firsthold but I judge that Akatosh will have us there within the hour."

"We're not stopping at the Tower? I'ric..."

"Do not use that name so lightly, not even to me. The ArchMagister will not return for days yet. Unicorns are brothers to the wind and travel as fast, even burdened, but not as fast as dragons fly. You see the Elven homeland at dawn from the back of a dragon. Count yourself fortunate among men."

Edward's gaze roamed the deep green woods and rugged hills. There was no sign of habitation. "It's lovely," he said politely, "but not so beautiful as High Rock," he added out of loyalty and truth. "Are there no towns or villages or farms?"

“The Firstborn live nestled deep in the trees. And they do not tear up the earth and plant anew, but take gladly what Auriel offers, and make return. Ahhh, the green smell of growing things.”

Indeed, the air was as heady as the wine Edward used to sip from his father’s cup, before... “I’m hungry.”

“I expect so.” A bit of shifting and Moraelyn’s left hand produced a small leaf-wrapped package. The dusky hand was large and strong and looked neither human nor animal. Edward stared at it with revulsion, then took the package gingerly so as not to touch the hand. He felt Moraelyn stiffen and the hand that held Edward relaxed its grasp a bit. Edward felt ashamed of his reaction. It was neither kind nor wise to give offense in the circumstances. Moraelyn could quite easily drop him overboard. “I need to bathe, but so do you,” he said stiffly. Moraelyn was deliberately misinterpreting the reaction, Edward knew. “Yes, I’m very dirty,” Edward bit into the cake which proved much better than it looked. “My lady mother’s used to seeing me like this, at least she used to be. But perhaps I should bathe first?”

“I think you will not be offered that choice. Ah, at last!” The dragon spread his wings, sent a huge gout of flame soaring skyward and dropped to earth in a large clearing. The landing was abrupt and jarring. Elves appeared quite suddenly and arms reached up to take him and Shag, who woke at last, ran frantically in circles, and then sat panting at Edward’s feet.

A tall elf with fiery hair like copper greeted them formally. “Greetings, my lord King. Your lady wife awaits you. Prince Edward, I welcome you to the land of the Firstborn on behalf of

all its people. May your stay here prove pleasant and productive.”

Moraelyn nodded deferentially. “Thank you, my host. My Queen has waited long enough; we will go to her now.” Moraelyn’s hand on his shoulder steered Edward toward the largest tree he’d ever seen. The trunk was hollow; steps inside led up; openings gave out onto more steps and bridges along and among the mighty branches. They proceeded along these until they reached a large canopied platform, furnished with seats and chests as if it were a room. A golden skinned woman smiled at them and waved them in, then left. A tall slender, pale-skinned, dark-haired human woman paced toward them, her eyes on Edward. Only Edward.

“Why did you leave us!” The cry came from deep inside, ringing through him. It stopped her several paces from him. Now her eyes lifted to Moraelyn, who said in a harsher tone than Edward had yet heard from him. “Thou wilt address thy Mother with respect, cub!” A glancing blow made his eyes water.

Alera crossed quickly to Moraelyn and placed her hands on his chest. “Greeting, my husband. All praise to Notorgo for bringing you and my son safely to me.”

“Thank also the Lord of the Dragons and the Bandit, who could not have lifted the boy more neatly himself. The ArchMagister had somewhat to do with it as well.” Moraelyn’s dusky hands came up to hold her bare arms lightly and tenderly. He laughed, looking relaxed and happy. But the hands against his chest formed a barrier as much as a caress.



“I am blessed indeed. But it has been long since my son and I have spoken. We may find words more easily if we seek them alone together.”

Moraelyn’s smile vanished instantly. “Are words then a thing which two can find more easily than three? Well. Perhaps. At times. Wife.” He turned on his heel and left. The bridge swung and creaked, but his feet made no sound at all.

Aliera watched after him, but he did not look back. Edward felt again the curious mix of satisfaction and regret that came with giving pain to his enemy. “Edward, my son, come and sit by me.”

Edward stood where he was, “Madam mother, I have waited many years and travelled many leagues to have an answer. I will wait no longer, nor go one step further.”

“What have you been told?”

“That you were most treacherously kidnapped by night with the aid of magic, while my father slept, trusting in the honor of his guest.”

“Your father told you that. And Moraelyn?”

“Said that you came full willing. I would hear what you say.”

“Would you hear why I left your father or why I did not take you with me, having chosen to go.”

Edward paused, thinking, “Madam, I would hear the truth, therefore I must give the truth. I would hear why you left me behind. The other, I think I know, as much as I can or would know, unless you wish to tell me more or other.”

“The truth? Truth is not a single thing existing apart from those who apprehend it. But I will tell you my truth and perhaps then you may arrive at your truth.

Aliera walked back to a softly pillowed chair and composed herself. Nearby a small ruby colored bird settled on a branch and trilled an accompaniment to her soft voice.

“My parents arranged my marriage as is the custom of our homeland. I did not love Corcyr, but in the beginning I respected him and tried to be a good wife. He did not care for me, nor did he take care. And so he lost my respect and I died a little each day, withering like an untended plant. I was happy only with you, but Corcyr thought I was making you too soft. “Womanish,” he said, and so, after your third birthday I was allowed to spend only an hour each day with you. I listened to your cries and sat weeping, without heart for anything. Finally, you ceased crying and asking for me, and my heart was left empty. I formed the habit of walking and riding much of the time, alone save for a guard or two. Then Moraelyn came. He wanted to mine for ebony in the Wrothgarian Mountains. The land he wanted to use was part of my dowry. He was willing to train our people in the arts of its use and even to give them weapons of Dark Elf making. In return our people were to aid him in keeping the goblins away, and allow him to form a colony of his people in High Rock. Corcyr had no use for the land and he wanted the weapons very much indeed—there are none better—so he favored the proposal. There were many details to be discussed and arranged and it fell to me to conduct these negotiations. Corcyr despises Dark Elves and he was jealous of Moraelyn, who was already famed as the finest fighter in all Tamriel.

“But Moraelyn is more than a skilled fighter; he’s well-read and interested in everything under the sun. He sang and played as if taught by Jeh Free and Jhim Sei both. He was a companion such as I’d only dreamed of... that and no more, I swear. We both love to be outside, so our discussions took place while riding and walking, but always accompanied by his men and Corcyr’s. When all was arranged, Corcyr gave a great feast to celebrate the treaty. All of High Rock nobility came and many from other provinces. At the end Corcyr was deep in his cups and let fall an insult that could only be washed out in blood. I had long since retired with the other ladies so I know not what it was, but I’d heard enough in private to know that Corcyr had a store of such to choose from. Moraelyn gave the challenge and gave Corcyr until noon, that he might recover such wits as he had.

“Then Moraelyn came to me, alone in my chamber, and told me what had befallen. ‘Milady, I think he will choose your brother as his champion; in any case there will be a river of blood between us that may not be crossed in this life or any other. I can live without your love, but I would not have your enmity. Come with me now, as wife or honored guest, as you choose. And you shall serve as blood price in stead of your kith or kin.’

“And there, in the moonlight, in my terror, with my ladies sleeping about me, I knew I loved him. Doubted that I could live without him. And yet, I loved you more! ‘My son,’ I whispered. ‘I can’t’. ‘Milady, you must choose. I am sorry.’ You see, don’t you, Edward? If I stayed, it meant my brother’s death his innocent young blood. Or your father’s! Or possibly that of the man I loved, though I counted that most unlikely. Moraelyn’s fighting skills alone were supreme, and in an affair of this sort he would be entitled to call on magic aid as well. ‘We could take him with

us.' But Moraelyn shook his head sadly, 'That I will not do. It would go against my honor to part father and son.'

"Leaving love alone, I am trained to duty", Alera said proudly. "Should I have robbed you of your father or your loving uncle? And I thought it likely that Corcyr, should he survive, would somehow blame me for the affair and use it as an excuse to put me away. I thought that Corcyr would be pleased to have me gone. I knew he wanted the weapons very much. I could trade them for time with you, I thought." All this passed through my mind while Moraelyn stood waiting, not looking at me.

"Lady Mara, help me to choose wisely, I prayed. 'You truly want me as wife? I could bring you nothing but trouble.'

"Alera, I would have you to wife. And I want nothing but yourself.' He shed his cloak and wrapped it round my body, pulling the bedclothes away."

"Moraelyn, wait is this right, what I do?"

"Milady, if I thought this wrong, I should not be standing here! Of the choices you are given, this one seems to me most right.' He swung me up in his arms and carried me to his horse. And so I left your father's house, clad only in his cloak and riding before him. And wild joy mixed with my sorrow, so that I scarce knew how I felt. That is my truth."

Edward said quietly, "But he has parted my father and me in the end."

"With great reluctance. And only because the dragon says that you and your father were in truth already parted in heart. It is only a matter of more leagues. Which provide a measure of

safety for you. Moraelyn insisted that you should freely consent to come. You are as free to return any time you wish.”

“Moraelyn would have just taken me! It was I’r... I mean, the ArchMagister, who insisted that I must consent.”

“He’s not a patient man by nature. And he is anxious to do Corcyr no harm. Doubtless he felt the discussion could be carried on as well elsewhere.”

“He called him King of the Small Cock. And laughed. Why? Are Daggerfall cockerels smaller than Ebonheart birds? And what does it matter, anyway? My father was very angry; I think he would have liked to fight. But it’s true he hates me. I knew that, but I didn’t want to know, so I pretended not to. I don’t suppose Moraelyn would do that.”

“No.”

“He’d lie, though. He thought about telling me he was my father. I could see it.”

Aliera threw back her head and laughed her pretty rippling laugh; he remembered it from long ago, and it sent shivers down his back. “He must have wanted to claim it very badly indeed if he let you see it; he’s usually quicker than that. And he does not lie under oath, or to hurt those he loves.”

“He doesn’t love me; he doesn’t even like me.”

“But I do, my dear son. You...” Edward thought she was going to say he’d grown; adults always remarked on his growth, even if he’d just seen them a week ago. Very strange, since he was small for his age. Instead she said, “You’re just as I thought you’d be,” with deep maternal satisfaction.

“And he loves you. But he said he was no one’s errand boy. Yet you dismissed him as if he were.”

Aliera’s face and neck burned a deep crimson.

“Nay, though I am reduced to serving man, it seems.” Moraelyn had entered silently, bearing a huge tray piled high with food. “Get me a stool, boy, you can play page if I can play server. You must be famished and I thought I’d best return before my wife gets round to the rest of my faults. Could take her most of the day listing them.” He’d shed the mail and bathed and dressed in fresh black jerkin and hose with a silvery sash tied round his narrow waist. But the black sword still swung by his side.

“Mara help us, you’ve enough food for a small army. And I’ve broken my fast.” Aliera’s small hand reached for the elf’s arm, slid down it caressingly, then clasped his hand and squeezed it, lifting it to her still hot cheek, brushing it with her lips. Edward looked away quickly, discomfited by the sight of his dusky skin against her fairness.

“This’s for me, and a bit for the boy. But pray join us, my dear. You’ve grown thin. Pining for me, no doubt.” He wrapped a lock of her dark curly hair around a finger and tugged at it, grinning, then fell on the food like a starving wolf, attacking it with small silvery weapons instead of eating with his fingers as humans did. The food was wonderful. Edward ate until he could eat no more.

“Eavesdropping,” he murmured thoughtfully. He’d been mulling over a list of Moraelyn’s faults while he ate, and realized too late that he’d spoken aloud.

“By Zenithar, boy, if you humans will shout your privy conversation all over the tree, d’ye

expect me to shut my ears with wool?” He tapped one of his large pointed ears. Edward hurriedly tried to remember what they’d said. What he’d said. Lying. Oh dear. Maybe he hadn’t heard.

“So I’m a liar, am I, boy?” Vir Gil help him, Edward felt he was drowning. Could the Elf read minds? He hoped that wasn’t the insult his father had used! “I... I meant I thought that you were thinking about it. You did hesitate,” Edward gulped. He was making matters worse.

“Possibly, I was trying to remember.” the sardonic tone was back.

“You don’t even like me!” Edward burst out.

“That doesn’t seem to have stopped your true father from claiming you.”

“Moraelyn! Don’t!” Alera interrupted, but the Elf held up his hand to quiet her.

“I’m not so sure.” Edward flashed.

“Why do you say that?”

“I don’t know... Roane says... things... and I’m not at all like him. Everyone remarks on it. And then stops talking.”

“What things? Speak, boy!”

“About how fond Mother was of her brother when they were young. How sad and angry he was when she was carried off. More like a lover, she said, than a brother. She says it very sweetly, but like she means something by it. Something too dirty to say. Other times she talks about how elfin I look. And how quickly after marriage I came. Not as quickly as her first son, though.”

Moraelyn leaped up. “By the Avenger, I will go back and wring the vixen’s neck! The human”, he bit off the insult, but his red eyes flamed rage; his muscles swelled and his hair stood on end. “You do not look half-elven. I never met your mother until four years after your conception. Roane, it seems, cannot decide which lie she wishes to use. But incest! May Kel strike her down if I may not.” The tall elf paced furiously about the room, lithe as a Khajiit, hand fondling his sword hilt. The platform swayed and dipped.

“She’s ambitious for her sons, at Edward’s expense. The question is, how many will believe her. Not enough if she was planning to have him killed instead.” Alier’s smooth brow wrinkled a bit.

“I never disliked her, you know. Nor she me. She wanted my place and I was glad enough to let her have it save for Edward.”

“You want me to be king so I’ll let you have the ebon mines.” Edward had just worked out the puzzle.

“Oh, devil take the ebon, which he probably will. I’ve a better chance of getting co-operation from Roane’s boys once your father’s dead. They’d have reason for gratitude and the bargain’s a good one. Although the chances they could keep a



civil tongue long enough to sign a contract seem poor, given their parentage.”

“Then why? You don’t even like me.”

“Mara, help me! ‘Liking’ a person is a human concept. One day they like you, the next day they don’t. On Tirdas they’re back to liking you again. My own wife does this to me, but claims to love me even when she doesn’t like me. Except of course on the days when she doesn’t do either, and talks about joining the Order of Riana. Fortunately that only happens once a year or so. I go hunting until she comes to her senses.”

“You exaggerate; that only happened once, and well you know it.”

“I remember enjoying the recovery period. Maybe it should happen more often.” They grinned at each other.

“But why do you want me to be King?” Edward persisted.

“I told you; it’s Akatosh’s notion. And the ArchMagister’s. I just came along for the ride. Ask them.”

“I shall ask the ArchMagister when I see him.”

“An excellent plan. You’ll spend a few weeks at the Tower before heading north with us.”

“Only that?”

“Does the prospect of spending the winter with your mother and me displease you so much?”

“No... no, sir. But I agreed to go with I’ric.” Not you. The words hung unsaid between them.

“You will, in time. A few weeks there now will fit you to begin your training in magic; I can teach you spells. But you need hardening; your body must catch up to your mind. It is the ArchMagister’s will.”

“Fighting magic? I want to learn other things. How to call beasts. How to heal. And float...”

“You’ll learn that, I doubt not. And d’ye think a fighter can’t Heal? It’s the first spell you’ll learn. But a King must know how to fight.”

“I’m not good at it.”

“Dragon’s Teeth, boy! Exactly why you must learn!”

“If I cannot?”

“You’ve courage and a clear head and the potential to learn magic; that’s more than most people ever have. I can teach you the rest.”

Edward’s head whirled with the unaccustomed praise. “I do? I have? You can?”

“D’ye think any of your father’s fool court would stand naked before a dragon, a unicorn, the ArchMagister, and the Champion of Tamriel and demand justice of them? Justice! Faced with such, they might have managed to beg for mercy, if they could speak at all, which is doubtful.”

“I did that? I did, didn’t I?” Edward was astonished; he wanted to add that he hadn’t known, hadn’t thought about it.

“Aye, you did. And it’s a deed that shall be sung from here to Morrowind; I’ll compose the ballad myself—as soon as I have a nap. I don’t sleep as sound as some on dragon’s backs.”

“You enchanted me and Shag asleep!”

“And the rest of the castle, with the help of my friends.”

“Oooooohhhh. Can you levitate? Will you show me?”

“Not so fast. I kept a holding spell on us all night to keep us on the dragon’s back. Until I’m rested I couldn’t light a candle with the aid of a match.”

“Oh. Well, I’d still rather be like the ArchMagister than be a fighter.”

“Hah! It’ll be news to the ArchMagister that he cannot fight! I hope he’ll find time to show you how to wield a staff. No better weapon for early training. And no better trainer. Now, of the four you saw before you, which would you say could best the others?”

Edward thought carefully for several minutes. “Sir, my judgement is poor indeed, but if you would still have my answer, it would seem that the one who claims the title Champion of Tamriel must be the best. Yet must not the ArchMagister be your master in magic? And trained to arms as well, it seems. So which should prevail? Could any mortal stand against the dragon’s fire and claws and teeth? And I know naught of the unicorn, save that it is fleet and has a very sharp horn, and hooves as well. So I will guess the unicorn; it had the

mildest manner. And since you asked the question it seems the unlikely answer may be correct.”

“Well answered, youngling! The unicorn would win easily in any single close combat. No mortal or even dragon can move quickly enough to land a blow and it cannot be burned or touched by any magic or elemental power. It’s hooves are deadly and a single touch of its horn will kill any enemy, although the horn itself will burn away. The most powerful can regenerate it within moments, however.”

“And of the four the Champion of Tamriel would probably be the loser against any of the others, although the title is no idle boast!” Moraelyn is not accustomed to being so outclassed. “My manners may have suffered in consequence.”

“Milord King, I am most deeply in your debt. You have done me great honor and service. If ever

I can repay you, I will. Forgive my brash words and ill manners. I have dwelt among the rude and boorish. And it seems I have no father, unless I may call you so?” The elf held his hands out to the boy, who placed his own in them. Edward’s feeling of distaste was quite gone as if by magic the thought drifted through his mind and then he released his hands and clasped Moraelyn about his waist. The elf’s hands stroked the dark hair and clasped the thin shoulders.

“I thank you, my wife. After only five years of marriage, you have presented me with a fine son, nine years of age. Remarkable. In fact... magical.”

King Edward, Part III

### Chapter 3: Lessons

The golden days passed swiftly. Edward spent most of his time in the company of his parents. He saw few other children. None at all lived in 'their' tree, only their wood elf host and Moraelyn's six Companions, an oddly assorted, cheerful lot. Disrespectful, Edward thought. None of the Daggerfall court or servants would dared have addressed his father as these did Moraelyn and Alieria with their constant raillery. But these weren't servants or courtiers. Just Companions. Only one was a Dark Elf. There were a Khajiit woman, two wood elves, brother and sister, a Nordic man, even bigger than Moraelyn and a strange looking lizardlike man, who spoke with such a hissing accent that Edward couldn't understand him at all. The Nord man was called "Slave of Moraelyn" or just "Slave" for short, although Moraelyn usually called him "Mats" or "My-slave." Mats tended the group's weapons and gathered wood for the evening fires. But it wasn't unusual for the others to bring wood; Moraelyn himself often borrowed Mats' axe and fetched and split wood if there was need, or if he just felt like it.

They spent much of their time roaming the woods and fields, hunting and gathering produce, in twos and threes. Usually Moraelyn, Alieria and Edward and Shade went off together. They carried bows for hunting. When Edward asked Moraelyn to teach him to shoot better, he was told to ask his mother, as she was the better shot. And it was Alieria's arrow that brought down a handsome buck, although both arrows had struck, and they quarrelled over who's arrow had killed as they ran toward the buck.

"Bah!" Moraelyn exclaimed as he pulled his black fletched arrow from the hindquarters. "I don't know how I managed to

feed myself before I married you.”

“You had the Companions.”

“Aye. Mats, Mith and I starved together, before we met Beech and Willow.” Moraelyn pulled out his black dagger, Tooth, and began to skin the animal’s body, calling Edward to come and watch. “You want to learn about animals, don’t you?”

“Live ones.” Edward said with distaste. His dainty mother was ripping the skin away with enthusiasm.

“Such make tough eating,” the dark elf said. “Give me your cloak; I’ll make a package for you to carry.”

“I am a Prince, not a pack horse!”

“You’ll carry your share or you’ll be a hungry prince this night.” The elf had lost his good humor.

“I won’t. I don’t want any. You can’t make me.”

Moraelyn stood erect and appeared to think this over. “Can’t I?” he taunted.

“Edward, please...” Alera appealed to him.

“Tell me, Lord Prince, how then does one get the meat to one’s table if one may not carry it. If Princes may not carry meat then certainly Kings and Queens may not, or do Princes grow out of the incapacity when they become Kings?”

“They have servants!”

“Serve ants? What a clever idea. Only a human could think of that! Ants are excellent at carrying, I have noted, although I

have not the trick of commanding them. Perhaps you can teach me.”

“Servants! Like Mats here,” Edward shouted. He hated being teased. Mats and the other companions had come up, having heard their shouts over the kill.

“Mats? You think I cannot make you carry deer meat, yet I could command Mats to do so?” Moraelyn stared up at the blond giant. “Well, one never knows until one tries. Mats, carry the deer.”

The blond scratched his head and jaw thoughtfully. “Highness, nothing would please me more but it is a large deer and my old wound is troubling my back, perhaps if you kill a smaller one.”

“Well, Prince, what now?”

“You beat him.”

“At what? I can outrun him. Mats, if I reach that oak first, will you carry the deer.” Mats shook his head slowly.

“You beat him with a stick!” Edward yelled.

“What promise you show as a Healer, my Prince. You will forgive me if I refrain from consulting you until you have further training. It is my judgement that beating with a stick will not improve Mats’ back. Of course, I may be in error.

“Silk, you carry the deer.”

“Me, milord? I am sorry, but I have just remembered that I am fourth cousin to the fifth house of Dibella, Queen of Heaven. My dignity forbids that I carry anything at all.”

Willow and Beech claimed that a mage had forbidden either of them from carrying any part of an animal while the moon Jone was risen.

“Prince, are you truly certain about this rule? It seems to make life most inconvenient. We could bring the wood to the deer, which will take many hours and leave us benighted here. We could consume the meat raw on the spot, but I own my belly is not yet empty enough to make that option attractive. Alera, can you help us? How do the High Rock folk get meat to table?”

“Milord, when I lived there it was my firm belief that it appeared by magic. There were servants, but they were an irritating, lazy lot, more trouble than they were worth. Edward, my son, is it possible that this rule applies only in High Rock?”

“I suppose so...”

Edward carried a share of meat that bent his back, but he did not complain. And so it was settled, and the meal that night was a merry one. But for several days after, if the Companions caught him carrying anything at all they would inquire anxiously as to whether a High Rock Prince might do so.

“If Mats is not a servant, then why do they call him ‘Moraelyn’s Slave’?” Edward asked one drowsy afternoon.

“Well, he is my slave. I paid gold for him, all that Mith and I had. We came on a man beating him near Reich Parthkeep. He looked near death; when Mith and I tried to stop the beating, the man said Mats was a runaway slave, and he’d do as he liked with him. So I threw down the gold and told him he could take it and leave, else I would kill him out of hand. He chose the latter, so I told Mats to take the gold as his master’s heir and go



where he would. He chose to come with us, so we buried the gold with his master and Mats has been with us since.”

“Could he leave if he wanted to?”

“Of course.”

“May I go pick some of those berries over there?” Edward asked, and Moraelyn nodded.

Alera was sleeping curled on her side. Moraelyn sat next to her, leaning back against a tree, his hand playing with her long dark curls. His eyes and skin were sensitive to the bright sun. Shade slept stretched in the sun nearby, his dark fur glinting with silver in the light. Edward wandered over to the bushes and picked the bright glowberries, so called because they glowed at night, although right now they were a rather dull gray. But they tasted very good. If he ate enough, would he glow at night, he wondered. Or if he smashed them and collected the juice, the bushes caught at him, then he found a sort of tunnel through them and trotted along it, wondering where it led.

It ended in a small clearing before a pile of rocks. There was a hole and something in it. Edward stepped back, making a small noise in his throat. The something heaved and presented a tusky snarling face and hooves that pawed at the earth.

The boy backed away slowly. The beast’s head went down, the shoulders heaved and the immense bulk lumbered into a charge. Edward tried to throw himself into the bushes - there was no room - and then, incredibly, Moraelyn was in front of him, between him and the beast. There was a flash and a crash, and the elf seemed to leap backwards for several feet, landing crouched just in front of Edward’s face. The air whistled as his

blade seemed to jump out of the sheath of its own accord. There was a sparkle in the air around him, and a burnt smell. Silence.

“Get out of here, boy! Now!”

Edward fled, yelling for his mother, who was running toward the bushes and calling him. She clasped him to her, and began shouting for Moraelyn instead. There was no answer, then, somehow the elf was there, unharmed, his blade sheathed again. But he was breathing hard.

“Did you kill it? Are you hurt?”

“No and no. I was shielded. Barely. You disturbed a sow in her den with her litter. Fortunately, she thought she’d had enough after the first impact. I daresay she’s unaccustomed to finding her enemies still standing afterwards.”

“Why didn’t you kill her?” Edward demanded, feeling bloodthirsty after his fright.

“A katana, even the Ebony Blade, is not the weapon I’d choose against a mother sow. A spear, maybe. The longer the better. Besides, if we leave her be, there’ll be six pigs here next year, with luck.”

“You made a magic shield,” Edward said, wide-eyed.

“Aye, barring the shield, she’d have left a few marks even on a tough old dark elf.”

“Edward, it would be gracious to thank your rescuer.” His mother prompted.

“Thank you,” Edward said automatically, his mind busy with more questions. How had the elf known of his danger? How did he get there so quickly?

“There is scarcely need to thank me for saving my son’s life. Thank Shade,” Moraelyn said. “The cat told me there was trouble.”

Edward knelt and hugged the smug purring cat. “Good old Shade. I can always count on him.”

“My son”. “Our son”. The words rang proudly out at the least excuse. Edward puzzled over this for awhile; it wanted an explanation. The one he favored was that Moraelyn simply didn’t know him very well yet, and was prone to give the benefit of the doubt to strangers. Eventually, but in the meantime he might as well enjoy it. It was nice. Having a father that was proud of you, that liked being with you, took you places, talked to you, listened to you. And most remarkably of all, let you alone when you needed to be. Moraelyn only really liked being alone when he was composing a ballad.

Edward told Beech and Willow about the mother pig. “I ran when he told me to. Would you? Because he said to. I couldn’t think of any way to help, but...” Willow and Beech listened carefully, exchanged glances, and said they’d think about the problem.

After supper around the evening fire, Willow took up her small harp and began to sing about the joys of an autumn afternoon and berries... except that Moraelyn sent the boy off to pick berries. They’d got that part wrong. Moraelyn sat up sharply and looked around, but the others had slipped away into the darkness and Willow wasn’t looking at him.

Mith strolled into the firelight, taking mincing steps, picking pantomime berries and eating them noisily. Moraelyn put his head down and groaned. Mith pantomimed finding something then skipped along in delight. Mats' head and shoulders lurched into the firelight. Mith reached a hand to pat him, then leapt back with a squeal as Mats tried to rip him with a tusk. Huge tusks and a pig nose adorned his face. Mith crouched, hands to his face in exaggerated horror. And Silk, clad in black, leaped between Mith and Mats with a shower of sparks, jerkin backwards, hose about its knees, shoeless. It reached for its sword, but Mats charged and knocked it flying; it spun out of sight. Mats, scrambling on all fours, missed Mith, but tore his hose. Mith scampered around the fire with Mats after him. Silk, sword in one hand, the other tugging at the hose chased after Mats, beating him with the sword.

Another figure appeared, clad in Alera's blue gown with Beech's head sticking out above wearing a long dark wig. Mith cowered behind her skirts. She glared at Mats and he froze. Silk tripped and sprawled behind him. Beech tossed his hair back, patted Mith reassuringly on the head, wet one finger and smoothed an eyebrow, then leisurely picked up his bow, aimed and twanged.

Mats leaped backwards, collapsing on top of Silk with a very realistic death rattle. Beech and Mith embraced, ignoring Silk, still flat beneath Mats.

Moraelyn had begun laughing when Silk first leaped out. Alera had waited for Beech's appearance. Now tears were running down her cheeks. Moraelyn was doubled over, pounding his fist against a tree. Ripples and giggles of silvery laughter sounded all around and showers of gold coins fell into the circle. The

Companions gathered themselves together and bowed, as humans did.

“Again, do it again!”

“Nooooo!” Moraelyn gasped, still laughing. “Ah, you came nearer killing me than the sow did! I beg mercy!”

“Another night, gentle persons... our king has had a very long day. We thank you all.”

“Gods, had the entire town seen?” Edward stared behind him, but they were all melting away into the dark. “That’s not what happened.” he yelled. “You were a hero. They made fun of you.”

“Yes, yes and yes. Especially the last. By Jephre himself, that was funny!”

“They all saw that! And you’re going to let them do it again?” Edward was scandalized. They had all looked ridiculous.

“Let them? It’ll be done all over Tamriel for centuries to come, I doubt not. But never again so well.”

“But it didn’t happen like that at all.”

“It would have if Mats... I mean the sow had charged again. Ariana’s bow would have been far more effective than my poor blade. And she’d have seen Moraelyn leap like a khajiit!” His finger smoothed an eyebrow in a gesture typical of Alieria and he went off again into a long laugh. “Aye, she’d have slain the beast with a look, if she couldn’t find an arrow. Mats, you were more like the sow than she like herself. Bigger, too, I swear! Mith, you old rogue, only you could look so innocent.”

“Buuut, it’s not true!” Edward protested.

“Boy, you think there’s only one truth? Was what you saw today truth? Did you see all the truth? Even of what did happen? What you saw here tonight will light up truths unseen, if you allow it, you could spend a lifetime reflecting on it and yet not see it whole, for it goes ever further and deeper, spreading like ripples in a pool, beyond us all and out into the deep stillness of forever. What happens is only a tiny part of truth... maybe the least part. And what you see is smaller yet.”

Edward still thought that a king really ought to have more dignity. But he didn’t say so.

King Edward, Part IV

Chapter 4: Stories

Edward faced his mother defiantly. “I’m not sick and I’m not a baby. I can stay here by myself. I don’t need Mith.” There was a dangerous glint in Moraelyn’s eyes. Alier’s lips thinned. “You will mind him, Edward.”

“Yes, madam,” Edward said sulkily.

“Come on, wife. Mith knows how to deal with princes who don’t want his company.” The three adults laughed a bit in their irritating way at a joke he didn’t understand.

The weather was drizzly and Edward had the sniffles. His mother had decided that he shouldn’t go out, even though they were only going visiting. Moraelyn had taken his side, but threw out his hands and raised his brows at Edward in a helpless gesture when Alier insisted that he stay behind. Mith, whom Edward liked the least of the Companions, had

volunteered to stay with him. Even Ssa'ass would have been better. Mith was scruffy looking. Like a stableboy. And cheeky, even for a Companion. Edward sulked silently for awhile longer. Mith had fetched a broom and was sweeping the house out, brushing dirt from the room above into the room Edward was in. What on earth was the use of staying in when there wasn't really any 'in' to stay in? Edward got tired of sulking, fetched a broom and went up to help sweep.

"Mith", Edward said. "have you ever been to the Crystal Tower?"

"I have. It's an unchancy place at first, but you'll grow used to it." Mith was applying his broom with energy and whistling. "Sweeping was kind of fun here. There weren't any sides to the platforms so all you had to do was brush the dirt and leaves over the side. You started at the top and worked your way down."

"You're quick with the broom, Mith. I haven't half finished my side yet. Will there be others there like me?"

"Oh, some children, I'd think. Most'll be somewhat older. I should be quick with a broom. My father had me sweeping out the king's stables when I was your age. I used to dream and talk too much like you; he beat me for it. So I learned to be quick."

Edward swept faster, stirring up dust. "Not like that, boy. Watch me. Anyway, there's no hurry; it's just habit with me. Moraelyn'd serve me my head on a platter if I touched you. My father, heh, he was always... well, he was a hard man to please. He was a Nord."

"Your father?" Edward stared at Mith, but Mith looked much like the other Dark Elves he'd seen. Not many. Dark elves didn't

come to Daggerfall; Gerald had banned them. But he'd seen some on his rare trips to other courts. And there were some in Firsthold besides Moraelyn and Mith. "Did he have red hair?" Mith's hair was a dark red. Gerald had red hair. "He tended the stables for Moraelyn?" No wonder Mith looked like a stableboy. But Edward kept his tone polite. Mith had a sharp tongue... and Edward knew that neither of his parents would be sympathetic if he complained that Mith had been impertinent.

"He did have red hair. Maybe I got mine from him... but mostly mixed elf and human children come out dark elf. No, Moraelyn wasn't a king then or expecting to be... 'sides this was in Blacklight, where I was born. Moraelyn's brother was king in Ebonheart in those days. He came up to visit our King and brought Moraelyn along. To keep him out of trouble, he said." Mith grinned. "I grinned when I heard him say that, and I saw the boy looking at me out of the tail of his eye, but he wouldn't take notice. Like I was the dirt or something worse. His brother tossed him a pouch and told him to go into town and get his knife mended. Jerked his thumb at me and told me to show him the way."

"Moraelyn said he didn't need an escort to find a store and stalked off like princes do." Mith grinned knowingly at Edward. But the grin wasn't unfriendly. Edward smiled back a bit, and Mith went on. "Our king eyeballed me, so I took off after him. Moraelyn didn't spare me so much as a glance. Went four blocks out of his way, down by the wharfs, and when I tried to tell him where the store was he shoved me right off the pier. I could Levitate, of course, but he caught me by surprise and I went in with a big splash, and everyone laughing like jackasses. I got myself out and went straight to the store and waited for him - but not so he could see me - and when he finally showed



up, I lifted the pouch right off him. He didn't even know it was gone. So in he goes and tosses the knife on the counter and tells the smith to fix it right off. Which he does. Only then Moraelyn can't pay him, tells the smith he's the King of Ebonheart's brother, the smith just laughs and says, 'And I'm the Archmagister.' Then the smith calls the guard and three of them show up. Well, Moraelyn wasn't what he is now - three guards wouldn't even warm him up nowadays - but he was even faster then. He was out of there so fast he nearly knocked me over at the door. He lost the guards pretty quick; all that armor slows 'em down. I found him crouching in one of those hedge mazes in the park. He was doubled over out of breath but still I stood a good ways off while I asked him real nasty if he needed an escort back to the Palace. Not that I was planning to go back! I was gonna take the money and run and never look back, I tell you! But I had to have the last word. I wasn't born high but I was born proud."

"He glared at me for a minute or so, catching his breath, then he just rolled over and started to laugh that laugh of his. Prince or no, I started to like him then. When we'd finished laughing, more or less, we started talking. I told him I didn't want to go back. Nor dared to. 'Princes don't get blamed, Prince,' I said, 'Stableboys do.' He said that wasn't entirely the case, but he saw my point. Then he said that as I was his escort then he must obey his brother and come with me. And that his name was Moraelyn, not Prince. We've been together ever since....more or less."

Edward smiled politely. He could see why Mith had run away, but not why Moraelyn had gone with him. Unless he was afraid to face his brother about the stolen money. Edward tried to

imagine Moraelyn being afraid to face anyone and failed. “I wish I was brave. Like you and Moraelyn.”

“Why, you are brave. And your courage will grow with the rest of you.”

“Are there only High Elf boys at the Tower?”

“There’ll be other sorts, too, most likely. A few Dark Elves, for sure. D’ye miss your own kind?”

Edward shook his head. “Human boys don’t like me much anyway. Nor High Elf boys...” His eyes filled suddenly and he turned his head away. But Mith’s voice was unexpectedly gentle. “I thought you wanted to go to the Tower.”

“I do. But...”

“You’ll be lonely.”

Edward nodded.

“That’s a hard thing to face.”

“Did you go there alone, Mith?”

“No. Moraelyn did, but he was older than you, by a good bit. A grown man, in fact. They didn’t take any but High Elf students in those days, you know. But Moraelyn heard of them and said he wanted to go there. We were together already, the seven of us, save for Alieria, and a handy bunch in a fight. Moraelyn had already gotten that Dragon’s Blade he wears, and the Dragon’s Tooth to go with it - remind me to tell you about that sometime - and he was a famous fighter already. And the rest of us aren’t slackers. But he thought we could be better at the spellcasting

and the Tower was the place to learn that. Well, no one goes near the Tower without an invitation. No one! No one would even tell you where it was. But they'd tell you where NOT to go. So he went there. Alone. One morning he was gone and there a note saying for us to wait for him. So we did, here in Firsthold. He was gone two weeks, then he came back one night, rowing across with the tide. He just said they'd accepted him, but he couldn't say anything more about it. But he asked me to come back with him."

"'They want me?' 'Well, they've accepted one Dark Elf,' he said. 'One more shouldn't bother them too much.' So we go there, and bless me if the Archmagister himself didn't meet us at the door and demand to know the meaning of this. I wanted to turn myself into a rock! I was wishing hard that I was stable dung! And figured I was like to get my wish soon. But Moraelyn speaks up real polite that this is the friend he'd mentioned and the Archmagister had expressed an interest in his abilities, and naturally he'd want to see for himself."

"But the Archmagister was real interested. See, they don't wear armor or carry anything but a staff and a dagger. They think it interferes with their spellcasting, all that metal. But Moraelyn could cast pretty well even with chain and with any one-hand weapon at all. And I could cast wearing leather and as much as a saber, though it's an unwieldy weapon; I like my short sword better. Truth, they didn't think that much of me, but Moraelyn... he'd camped outside their door. And when they tried to move him he just sat there! They threw all the spells they had at him, the troll guards, everything. Nothing. He laid the trolls out flat and left 'em to regenerate. If they tried to beat him with their staves he'd ward them off with his blade and the spells didn't turn him a hair."

Edward's mouth gaped open. "How'd he do that!?!” He said.

“Well, it was a trick, in a way. He'd picked up something that came natural to Willow. See, Willow is different.”

“I didn't know Willow could cast!”

“Well, she doesn't have any mana, ordinarily....but she can absorb it if you cast a spell at her, see. O'course it wasn't much use to her, since she'd never been able to learn what t'do with it once she got it. Couldn't get it back once it was gone, so she couldn't practice. Until Morelyn got hold of her and trained her. Well, Moraelyn had figured out pretty much how Willow did what she did....though it cost Moraelyn mana to do what came natural to Willow. So Moraelyn sat there absorbing everything they threw at him and burning it off into a big shield. Drove 'em wild.”

“He said the Archmagister could best him, though.” Edward suspected that Mith was making up the whole story.

“Well, so he did, when he finally came. But all the rest of 'em together couldn't do it. And all Moraelyn wanted was to study with them. We were a sight, the two of us dark elves in our battle gear among all that white and gold. I felt like a fish out of water, but Moraelyn was interested in what they had to say....and you can bet they hung on every word he said. Not too many words at first. After a fortnight or so, he told me one night to tell the Archmagister that he'd be back in a couple of days. And he shows up with Silk! 'Course he'd been telling 'em about the Khajiits... and they'd been asking questions.”

“The Archmagister's no fool. He just stared at Silk, and she purred real loud and rubbed up against him and asked 'How ya

doin', Archmagister, baby?' The Archmagister kinda pushes Silk away and says in a whisper, 'How many more?'"

"Just two, sir."

"What are they?"

"Wood elves, sir."

"Just wood elves. Plain ordinary wood elves. No horns, hooves or tails."

"Yes sir. Ah, one of them has an extraordinary Absorb ability with some very unusual features. The other's just a Bard."

"Very well. You may bring the one with the Absorb. We don't want a Bard! They are not true mages."

"Well, that's most generous of you, sir, but the Bard's her brother, sir and I swore to their parents that I wouldn't separate them. So it'll just be the three of us."

"Her brother."

"Aye, a pair of twins."

"You may bring them both."

"So three days later he's back with the twins AND Ssa'ass AND Slave. The Archmagister looks at them and sort of bobs up and down, but he speaks real quiet. 'Dark Elf, by pair of twins, did you mean TWO SETS of twins? Are you going to tell me that these... these are twins???' Well, I could see that Moraelyn was kinda sorry he hadn't thought of trying that, but he said, 'No sir, the twins are Beech and Willow. The Argonian and the Nord

are not prospective initiates. They are specimens. For your collection. You don't have any like them so I thought..."

"You thought. I do not have a dragon either! Are you going to think to bring me that next?"

"Oh, aye, I could. Would you like one?"

"Tell me you are not serious."

"Well, I couldn't promise. And it would take quite a long time, a year maybe, but..."

"The Archmagister's eyes rolled up toward heaven. 'Thank you, All-Mother, I have at least a year to prepare.' he whispered."

"I don't think Mats and Ssa'ass should have been made specimens. They're people. Even if they aren't elves."

"Oh, they made Ssa'ass an initiate when they found out that he had some interesting Heal spells."

"But Mats?"

"Mats never minds anything. He hasn't a bit of magic; he couldn't be an initiate. Anyway he'd have hated it. He spent his time gaming with the guards. When he wasn't being studied. Seems he has some interesting magic resistances. Anyway, since then, the initiates aren't just High Elves. And they don't all follow the Mage way."

"I shall. I shall be just like the Archmagister."

"Oh, aye, exactly," Moraelyn's voice sounded lightly behind him. "I'll cut the ears off a donkey for thee and dye thy skin

with saffron. Bleach thy hair white and stretch thee a foot”  
Moraelyn swung him high. “Art well, son? I told thee so, Alieria.  
He’s not ill at all. Good, because the Archmagister’s returned.  
We go to the Tower tomorrow.”

‘We’ was just Moraelyn and Edward. Alieria had caught Edward’s cold and they took some pleasure in insisting she remain in bed. Moraelyn rowed them across the river in a small boat and they walked for most of the day, resting a little at midday. It was evening when they reached the tower and the setting sun was glinting off it. Even the sea far below looked red. There was a hush over the countryside.

“It’s tall, isn’t it?” Edward paused to look.

“Towers generally are.”

“Did you really...” Edward broke off. Questions starting in that fashion did not draw satisfactory answers from the elf.

“Has Mith been telling thee tales? He’s had ten years to polish that one. I doubt not it glistens like the Tower.”

“He told me how you met, too.”

“I thought he would.”

“I didn’t understand why you went off with him? He was a thief and a stableboy and you were a prince.”

“You have just named three excellent reasons, Prince.”

“You never give me serious answers.”

“A serious charge. Very well, then. I saw myself through Mith’s eyes and misliked what I saw: a callous bully and a coward, fit to be neither boy nor man nor prince. Why did you run off, Prince?”

Edward hung his head mutely. “Nay, I do not require answers. Come, it grows late.” Moraelyn reached his hand for Edward’s, but Edward shook him off. If Moraelyn was a coward what did that make Edward? He looked at the Tower door where Moraelyn had demanded and won entrance, though all would shut him out. Edward could never do anything like that, but at least he could walk in on his own as an invited guest.

King Edward, Part V

## Chapter 5: In the Crystal Tower

Inside the Tower, Edward’s first impression was of whiteness. Floors, walls, ceiling, all were white and radiated light. Their footsteps made soft crunching noises on the rough floor surface. Except for that, it was very still, with occasional soft, unrecognizable far-off sounds. Moraelyn moved confidently through winding halls and long rooms. He seemed very black in all that white. They passed long pools of water with fountains that sparkled in the light.

“Where is everyone?” Edward whispered.

“At table, I hope. I’m hungry. Aren’t you?”

“No.” Abruptly a big, broad ugly shape appeared in front of them and roared a challenge. Edward grabbed for Moraelyn’s arm with both hands. Moraelyn shook him off irritably. “Gods, boy, don’t grab my sword arm if ever you do spot a monster.



Stay clear!" But Moraelyn didn't reach for his blade. He stood still while the monster wrapped its long arms around him and pounded on his back, still roaring. Moraelyn roared back and pounded on the monster's chest. Then he introduced Edward to the Captain of the Archmagister's guard.

"Don't hug him," Moraelyn warned the troll, who grinned at Edward showing pointy teeth. "He'll break."

"I thought trolls were dangerous!" Edward gasped as they ascended a long winding stairway.

"They are. I'll have bruises for a fortnight. I'd have shielded, but I didn't like to hurt his feelings."

"He likes you?!"

"Oh, aye, it can be done, you see."

"Why does the Archmagister keep troll guards?"

"They keep the rats down."

More trolls, but these paid them little heed. Another long stairway. More corridors. A sort of guardroom where three trolls appeared to be gaming with bones. One of them shambled to his feet and led them down a shadowy passage. A row of cages with huge rats, then some with small odd creatures that looked rather like elves seen in a badly distorted mirror (though Edward kept this observation to himself). They gobbled and squeaked as the elf and boy paced quickly by.

"Goblins," Moraelyn said with distaste. They turned a corner and went past two cages that held only large stone statues. There seemed to be more cages off down other hallways. The

troll unlocked a huge black metal door. It clanged shut behind them. A very large green and yellow hooved creature sat man-like in one corner. Its unwinking eyes didn't flicker as they passed quickly and climbed still another stair. More white halls. These were patrolled by huge black dogs that sniffed at them as they passed. Edward stretched a hand to pet one, but it snarled at him.

"I wouldn't." Moraelyn said.

"Yes Sir."

They came to another massive black metal door. A voice sounded. "What is black and white, has one body, two heads, four arms, four legs, two red eyes and two brown?"

"That's disgusting!" Moraelyn yelled at the door, hands on hips.

"You are correct, mortal. You may pass." The door swung slowly open, creaking. There was no one behind it, just a narrow stairway that wound sharply. It seemed dark above. Moraelyn raced up the stairs, leaving Edward clinging to the bottom rail, shaking. There was not a thing to do but follow.

"Welcome, Edward." The Archmagister stood white and gold in the center of a large dim room. Huge windows looked out on the purple twilit sea below. "Come here, child. Give me your hands."

Edward put his hands in the Archmagister's who smiled down at him. Edward's fatigue and fear vanished instantly. He smiled back at the Archmagister, who said softly. "It is well. You may go," to the furious dark elf who stood glowering to one side.

Edward was barely aware of him, his whole attention occupied by the Archmagister.

“Goodbye, Edward.”

“Bye.” Edward didn’t take his eyes off the Archmagister. From far away he heard the dark elf go down the stairs.

“He calls you son,” the Archmagister said.

“Yes sir. I asked him if I might call him father.”

“But you are not entirely comfortable about it.”

Edward sighed. “No sir.”

“That may be as well. You will return to Daggerfall one day. And then you must be Corcyr’s son. So let the claim be on Moraelyn’s side.” The Archmagister moved companionably to the windows with him. The dusk was fast gathering as Edward stared out over the hill through which they’d journeyed. A dark figure appeared below and strode swiftly off into the night.

“That’s Moraelyn! I thought he was going to stay the night. It’s dangerous out there alone in the dark. There are evil things out there. Can’t you...”

“Dangerous for any evil that meets Moraelyn in his present mood. He will go safely, I promise you.”

“Oh. But I haven’t thanked him. He’s been very kind, really. Why was he so angry about the door? It was just a silly question. The answer was him and my mother, when they’re asleep and I’m not there. How do you make a door talk? Is it an illusion?”

“That’s three questions. Which of them do you want answered? Aren’t you hungry? Would you like a bowl of stew?”

“Yes, please. I’d like to hear about the door, please.”

“Ah. You think the talking door may prove more comprehensible than a surly dark elf? More interesting? Or safer?” The Archmagister’s large golden eyes regarded the boy thoughtfully.

“I don’t know if I, uh, like him. Sometimes I think I... and then other times I... do you understand about liking? He said he didn’t.”

“You would be more comfortable if you felt the same way about him at all times, yet you do not.”

“Yes, that’s it, exactly. You do understand.”

“Moraelyn is not a comfortable man.”

“Well, I don’t mean that exactly. Sometimes he is. Like when we rode the dragon.”

The Archmagister laughed aloud. His laughter reminded Edward of chimes. “Yes, yes. I find comfort myself in having Moraelyn near at hand when dragons are about.”

A young high elf brought in a bowl of stew and set it down on the table. Edward felt a bit disappointed that the stew had come in such an ordinary way. Until he remembered that the Archmagister hadn’t sent for the stew.

“The priest at home in Daggerfall said it was a mark of evil things, that they cannot bear the light,” Edward said between

mouthfuls. “Moraelyn doesn’t like sunlight. And he’s black.”

“I see. Do you know what evil is?”

“Um, well, if you do bad things, then you’re evil?”

“I see. If the cook had burnt the stew, would he then be evil?”

Edward grinned. “No, just a bad cook. But if he did it on purpose, then I guess he’d have done an evil thing... but maybe he wouldn’t be altogether evil. Maybe he was just angry about something.”

“Or perhaps the sort of person who is pleased by spoiling others’ pleasure?”

“I guess that’d make my little brothers evil. They sure like to spoil my fun.”

“And you?”

Edward felt his face redden. “I don’t take any notice of them,” he said quickly. The Archmagister’s large golden eyes regarded him steadily. To his own dismay, Edward began to cry. He bawled like a baby. “I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” he gasped. “I never cry, really, I don’t... hardly ever...”

“Why ever not?” Edward looked up. His tears had blurred his sight, but there seemed to be tears on the Archmagister’s face. His hand reached up to feel the wetness. “You have been very alone, have you not?” the Archmagister said.

“Yes. Until you brought the unicorn for me, I was all alone. They endure no evil,” Edward sighed with satisfaction, feeling relaxed and comfortable. The Archmagister was wonderful.

“We summoned the unicorn, Moraelyn and the dragon and I and others. It’s a great magic and one no single man or woman may command. But don’t trouble yourself overmuch with judging good and evil. That’s a human notion. Life is complex; I know of nothing that is wholly good or wholly evil. Not even the unicorn.”

Edward’s time in the Tower passed quickly. There were few other novices and the youngest of these was several years older than Edward. The boy spent several hours each day with the Archmagister. He learned to cast a few spells and to open his mind so that he could renew his magicka quickly while he slept. But often they just talked. Sometimes Edward was given a book to read. Other times he was allowed to choose one from the thousands in the library. He usually tired of them quickly. He didn’t read Elvish script easily; his tutor had taught him the letters, but their few books were in Bretic.

Spellcasting was more fun. Fire spells came easily to him and he learned to shield himself readily, but to his chagrin, he couldn’t Heal at all. He invariably made things worse for the unlucky rats he was allowed to practice on.

“I don’t know what I’m doing wrong!” Edward cried out in frustration. He sent a dart of fire at the writhing rat and it turned into a charred corpse.

“Edward, it will be well if you let the Heal spells wait awhile yet.”

“Moraelyn said Light Heal is the first spell anybody learns,” Edward said sulkily.

“Did he? Well, he is a practitioner of magic, not a theorist. Even I would hesitate to say what a Breton might or might not learn, and when he might learn it. You are the first of your people with whom I have worked. Certainly Moraelyn has had no experience with your race, except for your mother, of course.”

“My mother can’t do magic.”

“No, but we think the ability lies within her. She has not been able to learn to master it, possibly because she was too old when she first tried. If you want my opinion it is your thoughts and not your hands which are causing your difficulty. Weeping might help.”

“I don’t feel like crying,” Edward said rather sullenly. He felt more like kicking something, although incinerating the rat had helped relieve some of that.

“Meditation might help, then.”

King Edward, Part VI

Chapter 6: Training

The day Edward was to leave the Archmagister summoned him, presented him with a mithril staff and bade him farewell.

Back in his small cell Edward removed his novitiate robe and donned the grey shirt, black pants and red sash he’d worn to the Tower. He fingered the sash lovingly. His mother had purchased the shirt and pants, saying they looked sturdy and maybe wouldn’t show the dirt from the journey. Moraelyn had given him the silk sash with its embroidery of twined leaves and flowers, birds and butterflies in mithril, dwarven and elven metallic threads. But he’d waited until they were across the

channel. Alera had said it cost too dear; she'd suggested cutting down one of Moraelyn's old ones to fit, but the elf had adamantly refused to let her have any of them. Edward smiled, remembering, and wrapped the sash twice round his waist then knotted the ends carefully. He took the staff and ran down to meet his parents.

He'd meant to fling himself at them, but Moraelyn was alone and Edward stopped still. "Where's my mother? Is she...?"

"She wanted to stay and choose a horse for you. Didn't trust it to Beech."

"A horse? For me! Really?"

"Of course. You can't walk all the way to Morrowind."

"I thought I'd have to ride behind... someone. Look, the Archmagister gave me... my staff! Isn't it beautiful?"

The elf took it and hefted it, trying a few swings and feints. "Good balance and weight for thee, I think. Light for me. Show me how you use it. Suppose I attack you." He used his bare hands and Edward fell into a defensive position, blocked him, then thrust the staff toward Moraelyn's ribs. He danced easily aside, but praised the boy.

"A mage should have a dagger, too. I thought you might like to have Tooth here." Edward's eye popped. Tooth had an ebony blade and a hilt made from a real dragon's tooth. The elf slid it from its sheath and handed it to Edward who took it carefully. The blade had a wicked point and the edge was sharp enough to shave with. Mats borrowed it sometimes. He'd carved the hilt, too.



“Are you sure Mats doesn’t mind?”

“Quite sure.” Moraelyn unbuckled his belt and slid the sheath off it. There was a new belt for

Edward of snakeskin, soft and pliable and a buckle with the black rose of Morrowind on it, just like Moraelyn’s. “It’s from the Companions.” He knelt to fit the belt and dagger and the sash over it properly, and Edward threw his arms about his neck. “It’s wonderful. I do thank thee and them, too! And oh, I’ve missed all of thee so much.”

“We missed you, too, son. Let’s go or we’ll miss our tide.”

“I wouldn’t want to worry mother,” he said, trying to sound casual about having a mother that would worry about him.

“No fear; I told her not to look for us until tomorrow night....just in case. But we’ll surprise her.”

“Good thinking.”

They made good speed and reached the inlet before the tide was full.

“Shall I show you how to use Tooth, or would you rather rest?”

“Tooth! I can rest in the boat while you work.”

Moraelyn shielded himself and Edward too, saying that Tooth’s bite was no joke. “I could have shielded myself,” Edward said proudly. “I’m good at that. But my Heals go all wrong.”

“It’ll come. Give it time.”

Evidently Tooth wanted time too. Try as he might, he couldn't get near the elf with the blade, even though Moraelyn kept his feet planted and simply swerved his body, ducking and weaving... and laughing. Frustrated, Edward sheathed Tooth and picked up the staff and whacked at him, swinging it with both hands. It wasn't doing any harm, but it made satisfying sounds as it thwacked against the spell shield. Moraelyn let him hit, but stopped the staff easily when the spell had been used up. Edward threw it on the ground and turned away; the elf reached for him in consolation. Edward snatched Tooth from the sheath and thrust it straight at the elf's heart. The blade was knocked spinning from his hand. Edward had braced to stop the thrust and hold it and he felt the shock even through his shield. Then Moraelyn was kneeling before him, nursing his left hand across his right knee, his face grey with shock and disbelief. Blood was gushing from his wrist like a fountain. "Give me thy sash!"

"I... I didn't..." Edward's teeth were rattling in his head. He felt sick and dizzy. Bile washed up in his mouth. "D-d-didn't—m-m-mean." So much blood.

"Boy, don't faint now. I need thy aid. The sash. Now, Edward! Pack it into the wound. Gods, what a mess!" The hand was half severed at the wrist. Edward sat down abruptly, shaking all over, but his hands packed the sash into the open wound, then he wrapped the rest round the hand and wrist.

"Take my sash and make a sling." Moraelyn eased the injured limb into the sling and then released his other hand. He took the water bottle from his belt and drank it down. "I need more water. Where's thy staff? There's a well two miles back. Where's Tooth? Go find it and don't cut yourself on it."

“I don’t want it.”

“Not many blades have bathed in Moraelyn’s blood. ‘Twill bring you luck. Do as I say.”

“The tide’s in.”

“Aye and Firsthold could be on Jone for all the good it does us. I can’t row one handed.”

“I could...”

“No, you cannot. You haven’t the strength. The current’s swift here. I prefer to die on land. Edward, we cannot stay here. The blood smell will draw beasts. If I faint, get well away and climb a tree. And pray.” He climbed to his feet and leaned on the staff, breathing hard. “Stay close, but don’t grab at me, no matter what happens.” He took a small step, then another.

“I’m sorry.”

“Doubtless. You picked a poor time and place to turn assassin. A good assassin always has an escape planned.”

“Yessir.” Edward sniffed back his tears. “Sir, I cannot Heal you, but I can restore some vigor.”

“Can you? ‘T’would be of great help.” The spell Edward cast shook the elf; he gasped, but stood straighter and firmer after the shock wore off. “I can do it again,” Edward offered eagerly.

“Nay. You have plenty of power but want finesse. But ‘tis much better, now.”

Moraelyn was walking better; he sounded better too. Edward tried to blot the picture of the injury out of his mind. They moved slowly, Moraelyn leaning against a tree from time to time to rest. Nothing molested them. After an interminable time of silent travelling they reached the old well. Moraelyn drained the first bottle and Edward refilled it, drank himself, then filled it yet again.

“We’ll spend the night in there.” ‘There’ was a large ramshackle building, apparently deserted. The elf kicked the locked door open. Inside it was pitch dark. “Light?” Edward offered.

“Nay. I can see. Save your power and stay by me.” There was a skittering noise. Rats! Edward shielded them both without thinking, pulled Tooth out, and placed his back to the elf’s. A rat leaped and drove itself onto the blade. Moraelyn swung the staff and laid out two more. Others scurried off.

“Well done, lad!” They found a small windowless room and shut the door behind them. There

seemed to be some wood about; probably it had been some sort of storage room off the kitchen. Moraelyn sat down against the wall.

“So. You can use a knife. Was all that pretense? To put me off my guard?”

Edward was appalled. He burst into tears, protesting that he’d never harm Moraelyn willingly. “I meant it for jest; I thought it’d make you laugh... I was angry, at first, but at myself, my clumsiness, not you... it was a sudden thought....I love you dear!”

The elf reached out with his good arm and pulled Edward down to him. "That's worth a hand, then, any day."

Edward sobbed against his shoulder while Moraelyn soothed him with pats. "You are my real father."

"Edward, I am not..."

"Nay, thou art. Thee puts my well-being ahead of thine and loves me when I least deserve it. Thee's been kind and generous and never asked anything of me save to my own profit. Thee'd give thy very life for mine. That's what real fathers do. And I've given thee naught but pain. He who sired me despises me and my mother because we are unlike him. We are not like you either, and yet you love us well. I will do better by you, dear Father."

"I gave thee cause enough for offense. I took thy mother from thee."

"You risked losing her because you would not part me from my father. You did not know me and my father was your bitter enemy. And yet you took thought for us. You could not know how unnatural he is. It isn't in you."

"Granted. And yet the offense and your anger at it remain."

"I love you!" Edward protested. But he heard an angry edge in his voice.

"And hate me." Moraelyn's voice was so calm and quiet that they might have been discussing the weather.

"I can't do both....can I?"

“Can you?”

“I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

“I believe you.”

“Am I... am I, evil? I was sorry; I’d give anything if it hadn’t happened, but... I..”.

“Took some measure of satisfaction in it.”

Edward’s throat was choked with sobs; he couldn’t speak, but nodded into Moraelyn’s shoulder. The elf’s hand stroked him gently.

“Did I’ric tell you of the Daedra?”

“The demons? No. Is it a demon makes me do such things? I am evil, then.”

“No, you are not. But the daedra feed on actions such as that. They encourage them. And your anger draws them. But they can’t make you do anything. And they or it’s not inside you. But it is connected to you.”

“I don’t want it. I want it to go away. How can I make it go away?”

“Why don’t you want it? You draw power from it. That’s what let you shield us both with the rats attacked.”

“Mana? That doesn’t come from demons.”

“No, but the ability to use it can. Look, some of your deeds feed the daedra. But you draw power from it at the same time. Then the power’s yours, to use as you choose.”

“Do you have a daedra?”

“I do and it’s a big one, too, but I think everyone has one or more. Some are stronger than others, that’s all. But don’t go around asking after them. It’s not polite.”

“I want mine to go away!” Edward wailed.

“So you say. But pretending it isn’t there will not accomplish that. Having a daedra is a bit like riding a horse. You must keep control. The daedra do not care for you. It would as lief feed off your pain or injury or death as any other, and find a new host. They do not think or plan as we can and I do not think they experience time as we do. So acts that feed the daedra take place in the moment and while you are caught up in them, past and future cease to exist for you too. It is an intensely pleasurable experience, but it can also be very dangerous. And very addictive, so that you begin to think only of feeding your daedra. You cease to think of the gods and those you love and even yourself. When you have walked too far along that path, you lose the will to choose another.”

“How terrible! What must I do then?”

“It is terrible, the worst that can befall a person. Remember this night. How you felt. Learn to recognize the daedra’s hunger for what it is, and think about what you do. You are young and this is heavy for you, but you are at risk. Ah!” The elf’s body stiffened and he caught his breath. Edward guessed that the wound was paining him.

Moraelyn said that he must sleep a bit, and could Edward keep watch and wake him in an hour’s time. Then he could set a lock on the door and they could both rest.

“Aye, sir... and I might do somewhat more. I cannot set a lock, but...” The door would not latch, nor would it stay open, but would swing nearly shut. Edward felt about near the wall behind it and found a wedge. He shut the door and drove the wedge home with a chunk of wood. “I thought so. ‘Tis awkward to pass such a door with both arms full of wood. We have such at ho... in Gerald’s palace. Now anything trying to come in will rouse you; you can use your power to cast heal instead of lock.”

“Why, well thought of, indeed.” He freed his blade and laid it on the floor beside him. “We may as well both sleep then.”

They slept fitfully. There were often scrabblings at the door and in the walls, but nothing entered their small closet. Moraelyn cast Heal several time during the night. By morning he pronounced himself as fit “as a one-handed man can be.” He unwrapped the sash-bandage and inspected the wound. The bleeding was stopped; the hand was still warm to the touch; it no longer hurt him nor was it swollen or discolored. But the wound was still open and the hand useless. Nerves and muscles had been severed and some of the small bones broken. Such repair was beyond his skill. Edward, feeling the daedra feed on the sight, turned quickly away.

Moraelyn grinned. “You may as well let it feed; it’s a harmless sort of feeding. The damage is done.”

“I mean to starve it,” Edward said firmly.

“You can try to do that or you can learn to control it instead, and still walk with the gods. I think we’d best go back to the Tower.”

“Aye, they’ll be able to heal you there, will they not?”



“I know not. At the least they’ll be able to attach it more firmly than it is at present. Ah, do not look so downcast. The skill to mend it is somewhere, if not in the Tower. Ssa’ass is good with battle injuries and there are Temples which know more of the healing arts than the Tower mages. Besides, it’s only my left hand.” He held up the wadded sash, stiff with his dried blood. “The color’s more practical than thy mother thought. Let’s see if we can wash it out a bit. Never have I come so ill-equipped on a journey. I might have been strolling down the main street in Ebonheart. Thy mother will kill me.”

“Right after she kills me,” Edward sighed. “At least returning to the Tower will delay that.” They came out into the bright courtyard. The morning sun was already high in the western sky.

“Not so. Edward, the Companions are coming now! I hear them. Mara, let me think of a real good lie!”

Mith trotted into the courtyard. “Here they are!” he called back to the others. “By Torgo, you ARE injured. Let me see that. We thought to row across to meet you; we saw the blood on the shore and tracked you here. What attacked you?”

“A demon.”

“A demon! What!? In the open like that in daylight? Gods, what was it carrying, an ebony dai-katana?” Mith whistled as he inspected the injury. Alieria and the others ran up. She hugged Edward, “Are you all right, darling? I was worried.” then paled as she saw her husband’s hand.

“You must be slowing down. How’d you let a demon do that to you?” Mith demanded.

“It was the boy... he grabbed at my arm in fright and my shield spell failed. It wasn't his fault; it was an accident. Ali, don't look at it. Edward, why don't you take thy mother to see the rat you killed?”

“I want to watch Ssa'ass,” Edward objected, then remembered that it would feed his daedra. But he might learn something about healing if he watched, which would be a good thing. This was going to be more complicated than he'd thought.

“Oh, Edward,” Alieria said. “You must keep clear in a fight.”

“He killed a rat in the old inn there, after. Did right well. Kept his head, put his back to mine, shielded us both. Anyone's apt to panic in his first fight. Especially if he isn't expecting it.”

Ssa'ass came up last, as usual, elbowed the others aside and inspected the injury, hissing. “I cann fixxxx thissss. It'ss cleann.” He looked it over carefully, bending the hand back to open the wound. Then he brought the hand forward, so that the edges of the tissue met. He was very particular about getting it aligned just so. Then he had Mats hold it in place while he cast spells over it. All outer traces of the injury vanished, leaving not even a scar. Moraelyn swung it with satisfaction, twitching his fingers. “Thanks, Ssa'ass. It's stiff, but...”

“Tomorrow, I ffinisshhh.”

“My poor baby,” Alieria fussed over Edward. “You must have been so frightened. And you spent the whole night in that awful house?”

“I'm not a baby. I wasn't afraid; my father was there.”

## King Edward, Part VII

### Chapter 7: Dragon

“So you saw a demon? And killed a rat with Tooth? That’s a fine ebony dagger, Tooth is. They’re rare so you want to take real good care of it,” Mith said. “I can’t tell you about the blade except it came from Moraelyn’s father. It’s the one his brother sent him to repair just before we ran away. Would you like to hear about how they got the dragon’s tooth that Mats carved the hilt from?”

Edward nodded, caressing the curved hilt with its lightly carved intertwined roses, thorns and leaves. It was well after supper and everyone but him and Mith had left the fire for one reason or another. Alera and Moraelyn had gone for a walk hand in hand, Alera holding Moraelyn’s newly healed left hand in both of hers. They’d laughed and shaken their heads when he’d offered to come along, “Not tonight,” Alera had said. “Go to sleep soon. We’ll be leaving before dawn.” Willow had gone to visit a High Elf friend. Beech, Ssa’ass, Mats and the Khajiit woman, Silk, had also gone off together, laughing. They’d invited Mith to come along, but Mith had declined.

“Khajiits! They’re all turning into a bunch of shameless Khajiits,” Mith said. The short Dark Elf sat close to the glowing embers, knees to chest. His hair and eyes glowed in the dim light. “If you’re going to pair, you should pair, not turn it into an tourney. They’ll be selling tickets next. But each to his own. Khajiits think we’re weird because we like eating as a group. Silk says it put her right off her food at first, listening to everybody chew. Well, having a bunch of watchers puts me off. I s’pose you’re too young for this kind of talk.”

Edward shrugged. It was a beautiful night, crisply cool, no moon, but the stars were very large and bright.

“Anyway, it was just a few months after Mats had joined up with us. We were up in Skyrim, travelling from town to town. Just three kids seeing the country a bit, picking up odd jobs where we could. Moraelyn entered tournaments if we heard about them, but he wasn’t winning that much... just about enough to cover healing him up afterwards. You can get beat up pretty bad fighting Skyrim style - that’s without shielding spells, or any other spells for that matter, no magic allowed - even if it isn’t to the death. And he drew a few types that didn’t mind seeing a little dark elf blood spilled in the sand. Or a lot. And the crowds were against him at first. It can get pretty lonely in the arena, especially if you’re beating the home town favorite. And it’s even worse if he’s beating you. “Mats and me ‘ud be the only ones for him, and sometimes we didn’t dare cheer too loud. They’d look real funny at a Nord boy cheering a Dark Elf back then. ‘Course Mats was so big, not many wanted to start anything with him. That was a long time ago. Moraelyn’s the favorite now if things get tough. ‘Course the crowds will cheer for a good match, but hardly anyone really wants to see him lose now. They like seeing the best, even if it comes wrapped in a dark elf hide. And when he walks into an arena you know you’re seeing the best. Not but what they’d like seeing a Nord that’s better. And Mats may get there soon. He doesn’t fight his best against Moraelyn, though. Maybe he doesn’t want to, or maybe Moraelyn just knows him too well. Oh, well, you want to hear about the dragon...”

“So Moraelyn was gambling with this Nord in a tavern one night, trying to pick up a little easy gold. The pot’s pretty big, and the man can’t match his bet, so he says he’ll put this map

on the pile and tap Moraelyn. Says it's a map to the hiding place of the best blade ever made. Says there's a spell on it so that if you hit your opponent, you get as much heal as he gets hurt. That some Mage hid it just before he died so's only someone worthy of it can get to it."

"And you think I look worthy?' Moraelyn says, grinning. We were young and dumb, but not all that dumb."

"The Nord grins back and says 'I saw you fight in Falcreath, kid. You look like you'd take a chance.'"

"Why not? The story alone is worth the gold. You ought to be a Bard.' So anyway Moraelyn wins the pot and tosses the man enough back to keep his throat wet all evening. Just for laughs we look at the map. It showed the Dragon's Teeth Mountains down in Hammerfell. Real wild country. And there's an 'X' and some writing saying 'Fang Lair'. Mats gets excited and says he's heard of the place, but he'd never known just where it was."

"And you still don't,' I say. 'Any fool can draw a map, just as any fool can look at one. I could do as much myself.'"

"Mats says Fang Lair is an old dwarf mine, but there's supposed to be a dragon there now, and the dwarves are gone. Moraelyn looks real interested at the mention of a mine, and asks what they mined there. Mats says mithril and gold."

"Moraelyn says, 'HmMMMM.'"

"The mithril had him interested. We couldn't afford really good weapons. And mithril's scarce, but it's light to carry for its worth, and easy to mine and work if you know how; and he did. He didn't believe in the magic blade or the dragon, but he

thought the mine might be real. Mining's in his blood, as it is in all the R'Aathim, the royal Kin of Ebonheart."

"It took us a couple of months to get there. We couldn't afford horses. We never would have found it without the map. It's tricky country, full of canyons and hidden valleys. We sure never expected what we saw when we did get there. You could see the towers from the canyon mouth, way back in there. Dark elves live right in caverns if they mine, but the dwarves had built a hall over the top of their mines. It's a pretty thing on the outside. Narrow towers, and arched bridges between them. Delicate looking; you wouldn't expect work like that from Dwarves. Merged right into the rocks too. And there was a big stone dragon mounted above the gate."

"'There's your dragon, Mats,' I said. The inside wasn't much to look at, just rock wall. The doorway was enormous, but the doors were gone. There was a balcony running right around a big open pit, probably the start of the mine, turned into a hall. And right in the middle was more treasure than you can imagine piled up almost like a haystack that'd been flattened out. And what had flattened it was a golden dragon curled right over it; we didn't even see him at first, 'cause he blended with the rest of the gold. Well, we just froze in place. We hadn't seen a sign of live dragon outside. The place smelled of brimstone, but most mines do. And there that dragon was, just lying there. And it's gotta be two miles to any kind of shelter."

"'I told you there was a dragon,' Mats whispers."

"'Shhhhh,' Moraelyn says. 'Look what's in front of his nose.'"

"I'd been busy looking at his nose, believe you me. But there was a sword lying right there naked, sure enough... and the

blade was dark metal that looked just like his dagger.”

“‘You two start back,’ Moraelyn says, ‘I’m going to try for that blade, anyway. If that’s not ebony, I’m a wood elf. Maybe the dragon’s dead, or asleep for the winter, or maybe it’s not alive at all. Just something the dwarves made to guard their treasure. Like the scarecrows the Nord farmers put in their grain fields. At worst, I’ll distract him long enough for you to get clear.’”

“I’d a mind to take him up on it, but Mats just shook his head, and I was kinda ashamed to go back alone.”

“‘Let’s all just clear out,’ I said. That thing looked real enough to scare me away. But Moraelyn casts Invisibility and heads on down the stair, not making a sound that even I could hear. I could see Mats hated letting him go down alone, but Mats couldn’t sneak past a blind, deaf beggar in a fish market. So we strung our bows and figured we could try to get off a couple of shots and maybe get lucky and take out the eyes if the dragon woke up and went for Moraelyn. Mats and I move around to where we can get onto a tower stair fast if we have to, figuring the dragon can’t get in there. Then we scrunch down and peer between the railings. Not that there was anything to see except the dragon lying there. Which really is a lot to see, at that.’”

“Then those dragon eyes popped open and my heart gave one big jump and then seemed to quit entirely.”

“‘Ahhhhh! Dinner comes to me today,’ the dragon says. ‘Take a good look at my hoard, dark elf. You will not steal it nor even view it long, but your bones will keep it company... forever.’”

“‘I don’t want your hoard, dragon, just the sword you guard. I’ll trade you mine for it; mine’s bigger.’ I couldn’t see Moraelyn,

but his voice was coming from right near where the sword was. Which was practically in the dragon's mouth!"

"I get a meal and both swords. Why should I settle for just your poor sword?"

"Let me pass and I'll get you more gold from below."

"I have gold enough.' The dragon yawned and I thought he was going to swallow Moraelyn right then, but he turned his head away, away from us, too. Mats was looking to get a shot, but it was really dark in there for Nord eyes and he was scared of hitting Moraelyn, since he couldn't locate him that well by sound. 'Course Moraelyn's too smart to get between us and the dragon, but Mats wasn't smart enough then to think that far along. Slavery dulls the wits in some ways, Mats says, and he hadn't been free very long. I could see well enough, and I could tell by sound exactly where Moraelyn was, but the shot was clean out of my range."

"The dragon goes on, 'But there is something you can do for me, elf, and prolong your life a few more minutes.'"

"A few more minutes sound pretty good just now, dragon. What would you ask of me?' Moraelyn's voice sounded as calm and easy as if he was asking if there would be rain tomorrow. He can keep his head in a tight spot, I'll give him that."

"I have a toothache. It's too far back for me to reach it with my claws. Canst see it, elf?' The dragon gapes his jaws to bare his teeth."

"Moraelyn's invisibility spell wore off about then, and I could see him standing there staring up into that cavern of a mouth.



'Lower your head a bit so I can get a good look.' He puts out his hand and pulls the upper lip aside, cool as you please, and examines the inner gum carefully. Damndest thing I ever saw."

"It's abscessed. Thy gum wants lancing, and the tooth should come out. I can lance it if you trust me in there with a sword."

"And why should I trust you, dark elf? I hear no good of your kind."

"You must be spending too much time with Nords, then. I wouldn't be able to kill you before you killed me. Why should I even try? Listen, I have some friends up above. Suppose they hunt you up a nice fat deer. I'll lance your gum and you can let me go and eat the deer. Else you can just eat me now, toothache and all."

"Hsssssss. What makes you think your friends will return once they're away?"

"They're not very smart. I think for them. They'd be lost without me. Good hunting, guys! Uh, if they can't find a deer, is there anything else you'd like? Pig, maybe? A few rabbits? Nuts? Berries? Hurry up, will you?' But we had hand signals and his hands said to get out of there and stay out! I'd a been glad to; I mean I'm fond of Moraelyn but I didn't see my dying alongside would bring him any comfort. I'd a been glad to see him clear if it was me that was on the menu, and I figured he felt the same way. But that thick-skulled Nord wouldn't listen to me! Said if dying beside him was all we could do, then that's what we'd do. Nord nonsense. Sounds good in a song, though."

"So we took a couple hours getting a deer and headed back with it. I figured Moraelyn was filling the dragon's belly by now, and

the dragon would be happy to add a deer, another Dark Elf and a Nord to round out his day's rations. But Moraelyn was still sitting there, chatting with the dragon. He didn't look that pleased to see us, either. Told us to leave the deer and go and he'd lance the abcess once we're away. But Mats says he's been thinking. Oh, brother, I thought. Mats doesn't think too often, and that's a good thing, really. He's decided he can get a chain round that bad tooth, fasten down the end to the floor, and then the dragon can give it a good yank himself."

"The dragon likes the idea, so Moraelyn lances that abcess to take the swelling down to where the dragon can gulp the deer with some comfort. And then they rig up a chain and get that tooth out. Made a hell of a mess, that. Blood and pus everywhere. And Moraelyn's got us casting Heal spells on this dragon to stop the bleeding and close up the wound."

"Ah, hum, good, very good. All right, Moraelyn, you've proven yourself. Take the sword and go."

"Moraelyn looks at him. 'You mean this was some kind of test?' he says. 'How long have you had that toothache?'"

"Long indeed, as you measure time, mortal, yet not very long at all for dragonkind. Hear my story then: a scraggly young mage came along, hoping to steal my gold. I caught him at it; we had increasingly harsh words, and he attempted a spell aimed at me. His pitiful spell affected me little, and I killed him. But ummmm...' The dragon looked away briefly, then resumed his tale. 'The little runt had apparently cast a home-made Curse spell upon himself, and when I crunched him...' The dragon scowled fiercely, remembering, then continued, 'Anyway, the ache only came on bad when someone came along to try for the sword. The sharpest pain went away if I ate the intruder... but I

usually didn't, though I've singed a few in self-defense; heh, waft a bit of fire and most of them fled. Deer are plentiful; there is something er, ah, unpleasant about eating someone you've talked to. That greasy mage gave me indigestion for days. Cramps and runny bowels and too much gas, even for a dragon. So that toothache never did completely go away. And the people who've come along haven't been very pleasant either... all in all one of the most unpleasant stretches in my life. I couldn't stay away from the vicinity of the sword for very long of course. Part of the curse.”

“We could stay on for awhile, if you like. We're good company. I'm Moraelyn; my red-headed friend is Mith, and the big guy is Mats. I'd still like to look for mithril below and I've never had a dragon friend before.”

“I might like that. You have good friends, and even though you have said that you must do the thinking for them. I think that they can do some thinking on their own, and it would appear that they have decided that you are a worthwhile fellow,' The dragon hesitated for a second and actually managed to look shy! 'You can call me Akatosh.”

“So we stayed for a couple of weeks. Hunted with the dragon; now that's an experience! Searched the mines... didn't find much down there. But the dragon gave us the jewels from his hoard. Said he only needed the metal; they absorb it into their scales while they lie on it. So we did pretty well out of it after all. Moraelyn tried to give Mats the sword. Claimed that he'd have sure tried to kill that dragon if we hadn't come back, and would have been toasted. But Mats wouldn't take it. Said the dragon gave it to Moraelyn so that was clearly who was supposed to get it. Mats took the tooth, but he made the hilt

you've got now and gave Moraelyn that, too. Told me he'd never had anything worth giving before, and it made him feel good. He's real pleased Moraelyn chose to give it to you."

"I think Mats should have got the sword," Edward said. "He didn't try to steal anything. It was really brave of him to come back, even when he didn't think it'd do any good. Moraelyn tried to steal, got caught and then just tried to talk his way out of it. You could all have been killed because of him."

"That's just what Moraelyn said. Ah, well, Mats likes that big axe of his better than a blade anyway."

Edward sighed. "I wish I was brave like Mats. I guess I'm more like you."

"Aye," Moraelyn's voice sounded behind him, startling the boy. "Tart tongued, like Mith. No matter. I'll be well pleased if you're as brave as Mith. And if once I'm gone they say no more of me than 'he did what he had to do', my spirit will be at peace."

King Edward, Part VIII

Chapter 8: Wilderland

The journey through Valenwood was pleasant. The weather held fair for the most part, with sunny days and cool nights. Bright leaves of scarlet, crimson, gold and green drifted down to form a carpet beneath their horses' feet. Valenwood was very different from the somber, steep forests of High Rock. When they reached the northern border, Edward, looking back, saw that the trees were mostly bare, shorn of their glory. Before them lay a wide green land of rolling hills with only a few stands of trees. It seemed to spread on forever.

“This is Wilderland, Edward,” Moraelyn said. “Be on your guard. It seems a pleasant land, but no king’s writ runs here. Each man’s hand is against every other’s and there are worse than men. All the races of Tamriel meet here, and clash, save thine, perhaps.”

They journeyed for some days more with small incident, save one for a band of Khajiit raiders that crept up on their camp by night. These were easily repelled. Silk slew one and the rest ran off yowling. The gentle wood elf girl, Willow, lobbed fireballs after them. There were no roads, just small paths that criss-crossed one another and seemingly led nowhere.

After two weeks of steady riding they came to a bowl shaped place in the hills where the land was tilled. The fields looked fair and were stacked with harvest, but the folk were dispirited, ragged, and unfriendly. Questions about inns got only shrugs and puzzled looks. Armed bands challenged them at times and demanded to know their business. When Moraelyn said they were bound for Morrowind, they were told to pass through quickly and mind they stole nothing.

“Passage is all we wish,” Moraelyn said quietly.

“Someone should teach these folk manners,” the usually placid Mats growled.

“Thou mayst stay and open a school of etiquette, if it pleases thee,” Moraelyn said, “I fear my life’s too short to teach the lessons these villains require. Still, I like not the look of the sky; it looks even more evil than the folk. I think we’ll try our luck in the town.”

The town was surrounded by a palisade of wood and had a stout gate. Guards looked them over and refused them entrance. “None but humans enter here, elf. Take thy rabble and begone.”

“I see. Ali, Mats, Edward, thou seemst to qualify for the hospitality here. The rest of us will shelter elsewhere.”

Aliera announced that she would see them all blown back to Firsthold by the storm before she'd step within these gates. So they circled the town, passing a moat with stone walls within and a keep of some sort within that. A track north took them past a small house with a large barn nearby. Both looked in poor repair, but Moraelyn sent Aliera and Edward to knock at the door and ask if they might sleep in the barn. The rest waited in the road.

An elderly woman answered their knock; she looked pleased to see them. “Stay? Aye, I'd be glad of the company. No need to sleep in the barn, though, lady. I've a room to spare. My name's Ora Engelsdottir.” Aliera gestured toward the waiting Companions. The woman squinted toward them. “Thy man's there and some friends? Aye, we'll all squeeze together then. T'will be warmer so. I've a pot of soup on the fire; made it to last me a week but you're welcome to it. I can make more.”

“My husband's an elf.”

“Is he so? He looks to take good care of thee and thy son. Thou's fat as pigs. Bring them in. I wish my grand-daughter had such a one to care for her.”

Ora refused payment, saying she was not yet at such a pass that her guests must pay for her hospitality. She said tales and song

and an evening's merriment would be payment enough. Pots and dishes were set out to catch the worst of the leaks; she knew them all well. They gathered around the hearth and made very merry while the storm raged, banging the shutters and doors and threatening to blow the roof away altogether.

"Tell me, my lady," Ora whispered apart to Alieria, "He's truly good to thee? He's so big and so black."

"Truly good," Alieria said keeping her mouth serious while her eyes laughed.

"Aye, 'tis well, then. He put me a bit in mind of our baron, who's big and dark... oh, not so dark as thy elf. He took my granddaughter, Caron, and he does not treat her well. He... he hurts her, my lady. And she dare not run away. Where would she go?" Tears gathered in Ora's eyes and followed worn familiar tracks down her cheeks.

When their hostess had gone to sleep in her own room, Alieria repeated what she had been told.

"Let's rescue the girl," Beech said, "we grow stale with inaction."

"Aye!" said Silk and Willow at once.

Mats growled an agreement. Mith and Ssa'ass looked interested.

Moraelyn looked doubtful. "We cannot right every wrong in Tamriel. This baron offers his folk shelter of a kind. They could leave if they liked it better outside."

"Aye," Mith said, "he keeps the bandits off so he may rob the folk at leisure."

“And we pull him down? There’ll be another to take his place. Or else the outside will come in and there’ll be nothing left at all.”

“Nothing would be better than this filthy something,” Mats said.

“There’s that.” The storm seemed to have moved away. Alieria went to the door and stared up into the sky where clouds raced past the eastern moon. A single large brilliant blue star hung near the moon. “Zenithar hangs near Tamriel tonight. Moraelyn?”

“I’d thought to mend her roofs tomorrow if it’s fair,” he said as she returned to the fireside. “We’ll do so much at least. As for the rest, Alieria?”

“She asked for my help, in a way and I... I think I hear Zenithar’s voice in the wind and feel his hand in the rain on this night.”

“Thy quest, then, wife.”

Alieria nodded, unsmiling. She curled up with Moraelyn in the chimney corner and they whispered and laughed together for awhile. Edward fell asleep. In the morning he was sent up on the roof to help Beech and Willow place new shingles. Moraelyn wrote a letter which he gave to Mats, telling him to take it to the baron, to arrive at the castle around dinnertime and to go afoot.

“You’re going to challenge him for the girl!” Edward grinned. “But will he fight? And wouldn’t he take her back again once we’re gone?”



“Mmm. Since he wouldn’t let me in his town, thy mother thought to invite him to our house instead.” Moraelyn stamped the letter with his sealing ring and handed it to Mats.

“Oh. It’s a long way to your house still, isn’t it?” Edward felt a bit of disappointment that no rescue seemed imminent, but he supposed it really was not reasonable to expect eight people to take a keep, even if they were Moraelyn’s Companions. Probably the songs exaggerated their deeds.

Moraelyn grinned, ruffled Edward’s hair and told him to cease his questions, get up on the roof, and mind his mother. Moraelyn and Mith set off together on foot. Alera said they were going hunting. They did not return even at suppertime. Alera told Edward not to worry; they’d meet later.

It was well after sundown when she bid their hostess farewell. They took all the horses with them and left them in a grove near the north wall of the keep. Alera asked Edward if he wanted to wait for them with the horses. Edward asked where they were going.

“We have to enter the keep to get Ora’s grandchild out. No questions, Edward. If you’re coming, then stay with me and do exactly as I say. Levitate across the moat: I must swim. Once across we’ll scale the wall. Once inside, just follow me and be as silent as you can.”

Edward gaped at his mother and the other Companions. How could the six of them possibly storm a keep? Three women, two men and a boy? There would be guards up on the wall and a lot more inside. Mats would be inside too, though, he guessed. But where were Moraelyn and Mith?

There were fearsome things in the moat. Edward began a protest, then thought better of it. Ssa'ass slid into the moat first. There was some splashing and hissing, then the water went quiet. Alera entered the water. The others levitated.

“Here’s the ropes,” Beech said, feeling along the wall. There were three ropes. Edward, Beech and Ssa'ass went up first; Alera, Willow and Silk followed. Moraelyn and Mith were waiting above. Two guards were snoring softly in a heap.

“How...” Edward began, and found his mother’s hand clapped over his mouth. A guard from another wall section called out and Edward’s heart stopped beating. Mith called something back to him and tramping footsteps moved away.

The Companions went silently down the stairs and slipped across the yard like shadows. There was no guard on the door to the keep itself. Inside the passages were eerily quiet. They stopped at an imposing door and flattened themselves against the wall beside it. They could hear voices within. A thin chilling wail sounded and died away. Moraelyn whistled a snatch of song into the silence that followed. The door swung open and they raced inside, falling on the startled guards like furies.

Edward was last inside, Tooth in his hand; he stabbed the nearest guard in the side, and Beech finished him with a blow to the head. Mats had been inside; it was he who had opened the door. His axe clove the head of one guard, then swung against the inner door. Alera and Willow had barred the strong outer door. Moraelyn’s opponent was a very young man. He’d taken one look at the big dark elf, dropped his sword and fallen to his knees, praying for mercy.

Moraelyn eyed him with disgust and said, "Greet Zenithar for me; tell him Moraelyn of Ebonheart commends you to his mercy. I have none for such as you." He slashed the young guard's throat. Blood sprayed over Moraelyn's leathers. His victim fell over, gurgling horribly. A burning acid rose in Edward's throat; he swallowed hard and looked away.

The guards inside the anteroom had been dispatched, but outside the door shouts and footfalls thundered and there was pounding on the door. Edward followed his mother into the inner chamber, which was empty save for a naked girl tied spreadeagle on the enormous bed, her eyes starting from her head.

The Companions cut her free while Alieria caught her shoulders. "Thy grandmother sent us, child. Where's the baron?"

The girl pointed at a bookcase, then clung to Alieria. She was no bigger than Edward and seemed not much older. Her breasts were just beginning. She was covered with welts and blood and purple-yellow bruises. Alieria flung her own cloak over the girl. Beech picked her up. Mith's fingers were feeling over the bookcase; there was a click and a section slid aside. He went through cautiously. The others followed and the secret door closed after them.

"I think it's just a bolt hole," Mith said, "but there'll be traps, no doubt."

"Go warily, then, friend," Alieria said. "There's no hurry. I think the baron plans to show his departing guests the door, as a good host should."

A narrow passage opened to the left. Mith sent a bolt of light down it. The floor was littered with bones. Human bones. Small skulls stared eyelessly. "I'm going to enjoy killing him," Moraelyn said.

"No!" Alieria protested. "My quest, my kill!"

Moraelyn swung to face her. "Alieria..."

"I want it sung that he died by Alieria's hand! I claim my right to face him, king."

"Leave him to me and we'll sing it your way! He's twice your size. D'you want to fight me for the right?" The elf leaned over her, a full head taller.

"If I must." Alieria brushed past him, slinging her shield on her arm, and drawing her short sword as she ran. Moraelyn grabbed at her, missed, and ran after her. His size hampered him in the low, narrow passage. Sparks flew from his spell shield as he caroomed recklessly off the walls.

"Come on, you two," Mith yelled from ahead. "I'm not promising to save him for you."

"Moraelyn," Edward gasped, running after him. "You're not going to let her!"

"Let her! How d'ye propose I stop her? I'm open to suggestions, short of actually fighting her myself." He seemed half-angry, half-amused.

"M-maybe he's gone by now."

“Nay, he’s locked in here with us; we found the exit earlier from the other side and Mith set a lock the baron will not undo.”

“Well, paralyze her. You can carry her.”

“She’s activated her shield; it reflects spells, among other things. I’d only paralyze myself and I’d be inconvenient to carry. She’ll be all right. It’s an excellent shield. It casts a very powerful protective spell. I’ric himself devised it.”

“Having a spot of trouble with your locks tonight, baron?” Mith’s voice came clearly from ahead. They emerged into a larger space where the baron had been clawing vainly at switches beside a massive door. “Shoddy work. You should get another smith.”

“He won’t be needing one,” Alera snarled. The Companions spread around her in a semi-circle. The baron set his back to the door and set himself in a fighting stance. He was a big man, as big as Mats, and he was holding an axe as big as the one Mats wielded, and wearing a breastplate and helm. He addressed Moraelyn.

“Nine against one. I’d expect odds like that from you black devils,” Moraelyn was at the back of the group, yet the baron had singled him out as the leader. People did, somehow.

“You prefer the advantage of weight, do you not? But my wife wants you to herself. She cannot resist your charms it seems. Nor can I; I could not wait for you to respond to my invitation, so I came to you instead.”

“I beat her and the rest of you kill me? Hah! It might be worth it at that,” he added, staring at Alera with cold dark eyes.

Aliera smiled a terrible smile. Her dark hair swung free about her shoulders and she seemed to glow. "You will not beat this woman, baron, but if you do, then you go free. You are mine alone tonight. Swear it all, by Zenithar! If he haps to kill me, my ghost will hound him to his grave and beyond." She sounded rather pleased at the prospect. Edward began to shiver.

"By Zenithar!"

The baron laughed, "I don't believe you, but one last female for my collection then. Are you so wearied of her, elf?"

"Are you so afraid of her that you'd rather face me instead?" Somewhere deep in his mind Edward realized that the elf was right. Despite the baron's bravado, he was afraid of Aliera. Edward hadn't sworn with the others. He clutched his staff tightly but his feet seemed rooted to the floor.

The baron laughed again and swung a mighty blow at Aliera in answer, but it deflected harmlessly off her shield. His eyes widened as he realized she was spell shielded. Aliera danced aside and cut his arm. She was nimble, but he managed to land many blows. If her shield went... Edward did not finish the thought.

But he was leaving himself somewhat open in the hope of wearing her shield down and she was scoring hits against his limbs. She kept her blows low, trying to cost him the use of his legs and drain him of blood. All the while she taunted him about his manhood, saying she would geld him ere he died. A great blow knocked her back; her shield flashed and was gone.

The baron raised his axe high to cleave her skull with a single blow. Her arm drew back and she threw her slender short

sword straight into her enemy's eye. He dropped the axe and fell screaming to his knees, hands clawing at his face. Alieria stepped forward and thrust the sword home, piercing deep within the brain. The body fell over, twitching and jerking.

"Well fought, wife!"

"I had a master trainer, and a better armorer!" Alieria laughed, then she threw back her head and shouted wordlessly in triumph, raising her arms, fists clenched.

"That you did!" Moraelyn grabbed Silk in a rough hug and kissed her noisily. "It's a neat trick you taught her, Silk."

"I'll thank you to cease flirting with my trainer, husband!" Alieria said, wiping her slender adamantium blade carefully.

"Me flirt? Not while thy blood's up, and thy shield's still charged. I'm just thanking her. I'll kiss I'ric too when next I see him."

"Is he truly dead?" Caron had clung to Beech throughout the fight with her eyes closed. Now she regarded Alieria with Awe, Edward thought was the right word. Edward felt something of the same, although it was akin to horror.

"Dead enough," Alieria said, regarding the still faintly twitching form, with satisfaction. The girl drew closer, then knelt beside him. She picked up a stone and smashed it into the face again and again, sobbing. When she had done, Ssa'ass cast some healing spells on her. Mith unlocked the door. They'd come out quite near to where they had left the horses.

They took the girl back to her mother's house and left her there, instructing her to tell anyone that ventured to molest

her, that Zenithar's servants would return if she were harmed. The bewildered old woman clasped her granddaughter to her. As she bade them farewell, she whispered to Alieria to look after that man of hers.

"Oh, I do," Alieria said. "I do."

\* \* \* \* \*

When they stopped for rest Alieria came over to Edward to talk to him, but he protested that he was very tired and just wanted to sleep. Moraelyn tugged her away, saying that if her son did not need her then she could see to her man, who did. They moved out of the circle of firelight. Edward lay wakeful, listening to their small, stifled sounds. That was not unusual. It had troubled him at first. "I can't sleep; you're too noisy," he'd protested one night. "What are you doing, anyway?" That had drawn giggles from the Companions. "Can't you at least pretend you're sleeping?" Moraelyn had asked plaintively. "Now I know why dark elves seldom have more than one child. What I do not understand is how humans manage to get so many." Moraelyn and Alieria had come back to lie by him that night, but after that he had pretended to sleep, like the others.

And the noises were too familiar now to keep images of the night's adventures from flashing through his mind, as vivid as if they were happening again in truth. He could feel his daedra feeding and could not stop it. It just wasn't fair, he thought, but now he was beginning to see what Moraelyn meant by feeding his daedra and yet walking with the gods. With Zenithar.

Moraelyn came back, carrying Alieria. He set her gently down, then stretched himself out between Edward and her.



“It must be difficult, being a woman,” he said softly. “It was hard, watching her. Just watching.”

Edward nodded.

“I’ve asked it often enough, of her,” Moraelyn continued. “She told me how hard it is, but I never knew until tonight. I knew she’d win. Zenithar was with her, and all the baron had was his daedra. And still it was very hard to watch. She makes that cast nine tries out of ten, and there were more uses on the shield if she missed, he’d have dropped of exhaustion before he wore it out entirely.”

“I keep thinking about it, too... and the guard you... he asked for mercy?”

“I know. And yet, he listened to that night after night. And still he remained the baron’s man.”

“Most men are not as strong as you are. Maybe he couldn’t help himself?” Why was he pleading for a man already dead? His mind kept replaying the night’s events as if they might yet come out differently, for better or for worse.

“Even to witness evil such as that corrupts the soul. To watch and do nothing, Mats would have stayed my hand had there been anything there worth keeping. And it’s worse for the young; I am sorry you had to pass through this night.”

“Is my soul corrupted now?”

“You feel the acid’s bite, as do we all, but you’ll heal.”

“Can you Heal me now?”

“Aye.” Moraelyn gathered the boy in his arms, then rolled over so that Edward lay between his parents. Alera put her arms around him without really waking. Her strong woman smell mingled with Moraelyn’s musky dark spice odor in Edward’s nostrils.

“She was so angry,” Edward whispered. He’d wondered if he would ever really feel the same toward her again and yet her arms were still as comforting as before. Maybe Moraelyn too had needed that reassurance and had been wise enough to ask for it.

“She’s a woman. That sort of injury to another touches her near,” he said.

How near? The boy looked the question he dared not put.

“Thy father’s not a monster. But she was wed to a man who did not care for her, and she could not leave him. It’s common enough among thy race, which makes it none the easier to bear, I think.”

“She has a daedra, too, then?” Edward asked sadly.

“You must speak with her about that.”

“It wasn’t really a fair fight, her shielded and not him.”

“Fair fighting’s for the arena, boy. Would you fight a wolf or hell hound without weapons, spells and armor, though they have none? I would not.”

“What will become of Caron and Ora? And the other folk, now that the baron’s dead?”

“Do I look like the prophet Marukh? How should I know? We can stop here in the spring and see what’s been planted in the field we burned tonight. I’ve no mind to stay and plow it. I’ve my own fields to tend, listen to me, I sound like a Nord farmer. Mines to dig is more like it.” He yawned.

“The others didn’t think about afterwards. You did.”

“I’m a king; it’s what we do.”

King Edward, Part IX

Chapter 9: Luck

Edward knelt behind Moraelyn, leaning over his shoulder so that he could see the cards the elf held. He was sitting away from the fire, so it was dark for human eyes, but Moraelyn was the only one of the group who would allow Edward to see his hand. The other players, Beech, Mith and Mats said Edward brought them bad luck. Moraelyn said that it was not really a question of luck, but that their hands were reflected in Edward’s face for those that had the eyes to see such images. It was too dark for Beech and Mats to see Edward now, and Moraelyn blocked him from Mith’s view. And yet, the pile of coins in front of Moraelyn had grown smaller since Edward had taken a place behind him. But this time he had been dealt a good hand. Edward could see that. It was Mats’ turn. He was cogitating.

“You’re shivering, son,” Moraelyn said, “Have you no warmer clothing? We must find something for you. Here, come share my cloak, then. You can hold the cards if you like.” The wind was chill; there was a bite to it now that they were farther north and the year had grown older. Edward accepted the

shelter of Moraelyn's arm and warm fur cloak and sat close against his side.

"I think I'll just play the cards I hold," Mats said at last, and pushed a pile of coins into the pot, then with sudden resolve, added a few more. "There."

"Throw the hand down, Edward, we're through."

"But there aren't many better hands than what we've got!" Edward protested.

"Edward!" Moraelyn growled.

"Well, how'm I s'posed to learn?" Mats didn't have to show his cards unless they matched his bet.

"By watching. Silently. Oh, very well. No one ever told me that fatherhood came cheaply." He shoved most of his coins into the pot to match Mats' bet and Edward laid the hand down.

"Ah," Mats said, "you needn't do that, my friend. I'll show the boy my cards for free."

"You filthy Nord," Moraelyn said in disgust, "put down your cards and take my gold, if you can beat my hand. Let's see if I'm the one who needs educating on how to play this game."

"You don't," Mats grinned. "Except that you could have accepted my generous offer instead of throwing an insult at me." Mats laid down the perfect hand called The Ladies.

"A taunt like that rates an insult. Mats, that hand is almost worth the viewing price. Five beautiful Ladies! You don't see

them together every day; they're not that fond of one another's company."

"How'd you know?" Edward demanded.

"Ah, that'd be telling," Moraelyn grinned. "Some things you're supposed to learn for yourself. That's part of the game. But remember that a good hand's worthless if someone else holds a better."

"I'm sorry." Edward looked ruefully at the few remaining coins.

"No matter. It's foolish to play with Mats on those nights when the God of Luck himself stands at his shoulder and all I have at mine is a runaway Breton prince who should be in his bed. He'd have had that money off me i' the end. This way we'll get a bit of sleep."

"Spoilsport," Mats grumped. "It's not every night Sai visits me and I do enjoy his presence."

"He can leave as quickly as he comes. Sai's not someone you want to get overfond of, Mats."

"Who should know that better than I? Nay, do not apologize. I appreciate your concern for me, my friend. It's not altogether unwarranted, but I am mindful of the temptation. I know how undependable Sai's favor is, and how capricious. I play only among my friends, whom I do trust."

"Goodnight, then." Moraelyn and Mith went off to join those who were already asleep, leaving Mats and Beech and Edward by the fire. The dark elves' natural sleep pattern was a period of five or six hours during the day, and a short nap of two or three hours after midnight. Now that they were travelling, they were

sleeping only at night, which was a difficult adjustment for Mith and Moraelyn, who had to use spells to cope with it. Edward had slept a bit as soon as they had stopped for the night, while the others prepared supper. In consequence he was now wide awake. Beech was yawning. Mats seemed to require less sleep than the rest.

“Tell me about Sai, Mats. I’ve never heard of him before. I didn’t know there was a god of luck. I thought luck just happened.”

“Being as you’re Breton, I can understand that. Bretons like things explained, clear and

reasonable, in sequence, so one thing follows from another, and you know where you are. Most gods are like that. They lay down rules and if you obey them and pay homage to the god, why then he or she grants you favor. And the better you keep the rules and the more you worship the god, the higher you rise in his favor. Those rules aren’t always easy to keep, and one god’s rules may require you to violate another’s but you know where you are. Well, Sai’s not like that. He’s not a daedra, but he’s got a daedric side to him, for sure. One thing, if you worship him too much, he’ll abandon you altogether. They call it ‘Sai’s Affliction’. It’s an overwhelming desire for the god’s constant presence. My father suffered from it, poor man. The disease is more than just a desire for the god’s presence. The sufferers require continual proof of the god’s favor. So they gamble incessantly. Not to win, for all they do with winnings is keep on gambling until they lose. Then they do what they must to raise a stake so they can gamble again.

“Oh, it’s a terrible thing. Terrible. My father sold me as a slave because of it. Later he sold my oldest sister. Then, when he was in debt yet again, he killed himself in one of his rare lucid

moments when he could see what was happening to him. What he was doing to his family, himself. 'Course I was just a kid when I was sold. I didn't understand. I thought it was because of some fault of mine that I'd been sent away, laziness or stupidity or disobedience, and that if I'd only been a better son it wouldn't a happened. That's Auriel's way. It's intended that children should respect their parents and learn from them, but some parents aren't deserving of respect. Well, it was a sickness in him, so my mother says. I don't know that he should be blamed for it, any more than if he had red plague or leprosy. I believe her, yet sometimes I still feel it was my fault. Well, that was bad luck you might say. But Sai sent me Moraelyn and that was a lucky day indeed.

“What other god would put it into his head to stop one human from beating on another? Any other elf in Tamriel would have turned away in disgust or stopped to watch and laugh at the stupid humans. Two dark elf kids against four grown Nords, and for all they knew I deserved what I was getting. I could have been a thief or murderer. I suppose I was a thief. I'd stolen myself, so to speak.”

“Moraelyn can't say himself why he did it. He says he was spoiling for a fight that day and seeing slavecatchers on Morrowind soil did nothing to ease his temper. That's why I say: it was Sai. But it was Moraelyn that listened to the god.

“There's no doubt it's a grand thing to feel Sai's hand on your shoulder. It's like riding the finest horse, like love itself. You're one with the world, and everything goes your way, everything's on your side, instead of being the constant struggle that life really is. You don't have to be smart or handsome or kind or witty. Things just go your way. If you do

something dumb it doesn't matter. It'll turn out to be the right thing to have done. Lucky. Some folks do seem to be born lucky, others unlucky. I don't know why. Most everyone feels Sai's presence sometimes, I guess. You have, haven't you?"

Edward shook his head. He'd no idea what Mats was talking about.

"Well, it's a kind of greed, I guess, this Sai's Affliction. You see, there's only so much luck to spread around, and if a few folks got it all, there'd be none left for the rest. Like tonight, I won that last pot, but the others had to lose it. Everyone can't win with Sai. That's not true with other gods, not necessarily. You still don't understand, do you? Would you like to hear a story about Sai?"

Edward nodded. Mats was a good-natured fellow, but usually quite silent. Edward had thought him rather stupid. Mats' luck at cards seemed to have loosened his tongue, and now Edward saw that he thought a lot more than he talked.

\* \* \* \* \*

Long, long ago, when people were fewer and wolves more numerous than now a young widow named Josea lived smack in the middle of what is now the province of Skyrim. She was an ordinary sort of woman, neither plain nor pretty. She had smooth brown hair, warm brown eyes, a short nose, a full round face, and body to match. She'd been born the only child of peasant farmers. Her parents had been carried off by typhoid when she was seventeen. Shortly afterwards she had married Tom, a strong young woodcutter with a cheerful disposition and a roving eye. He'd gotten her pregnant quickly, then turned his attentions elsewhere. Shortly before the babe was due he'd



been killed by the local goldsmith who'd come home unexpectedly, found the handsome woodcutter in bed with his wife, and stuck a knife in his back.

Tom's death had occurred on Heart's Day. The babe, a boy, was born four months later during Mid Year. Two neighbor women came to help her birth him and one stayed a few days. After that she was left to cope with caring for child and smallholding as best she could.

One evening in the next Morningstar, Josea went out to the small barn to do the evening chores, leaving the babe asleep in his crib. The wind was howling. She had to clutch her cloak tightly around her. She milked and fed the cow, fed the pigs and chickens. When she left the barn she walked out into a fierce blizzard. The wind had risen so that the barn door was wrenched from her hand and slammed back against the side of the barn. She couldn't even see the house, which was near the road, and some little distance from the barn, but she set off toward it with confidence.

She'd lived here all her life and knew every inch of ground, although she'd never seen a storm quite this fierce and sudden. Already there were two inches of snow beneath her feet. She struggled against the wind for some time, until at last she realized that she must somehow have gone past the house. She turned back and tried to follow her own footprints, reasoning that at least she'd warm herself in the barn before setting out again. But the snow was falling so thickly that her footprints vanished before her eyes, and she was quite lost, and cold.

Josea struggled on, hoping to come across something recognizable, a boulder or a tree or the road if not house or barn. Her hands and feet were wet and numb. She hadn't

dressed heavily and was now chilled to the bone, with ice forming on her eyebrows and lashes.

“Timmy! Tiimmmeee!” She cried her child’s name, hoping against hope that the babe would wake and cry and that she might follow the sound to him. She stood and listened, gasping the cold air into her lungs, but there was only the howling of the wind. The wind, or something more? A grey shape took form in front of her, staring at her with slitted yellow eyes. A great grey wolf.

Her heart seemed to stop. Her eyes filled with tears as she thought of her child lying helpless in the house alone, and his mother dead outside. How unlucky, to die so close to shelter! Unlucky. But she had always been unlucky, the unluckiest woman she knew. It might be days before any thought to visit her. She sank down to her knees, exhausted. The wolf sat before her, threw back its head and voiced its dreadful howl.

Her frozen hands scrabbled in the snow, looking for stone or stick, anything with which to defend herself against the pack. Another dark shadow appeared from the whirling white snow. She scrambled backwards in a panic. This one was also gray, but tall and two-legged, gray cloaked and hooded. Its gloved hand reached for the wolf’s head and patted it. Her scream died in her throat.

“No need to fear, lass. We’ll not bring you harm, nay quite otherwise. Be you the mother of yon child?”

She nodded dumbly. His voice was deep and kind, clear in the high whistling of the wind,

but her eyes went to his dread companion.

“No need to fear,” he repeated. “My friend Grellan here will lead us back to safety. Unless

you indeed do wish to spend the night here.” His hands reached for hers and pulled her up, and she leaned on his arm and hobbled alongside him.

When at last they reached her door, he said, “I stopped here hoping for shelter from the storm. I hope you don’t mind?”

How could she refuse? Men too could be wolves, but if he were it wasn’t likely he’d take no for an answer anyway. “P-p-please come in. I l-left the k-kettle on the boil but I expect it’s empty by now,” she said inanely.

“I did go in, when there was no response to my knock, and found the babe asleep and alone, and the kettle boiling away. I took the kettle from the fire, but left the babe be. I knew his mother would not be far, and sent Grellan to find you. Lucky for you, but then I have always brought luck to those around me.”

He threw back his hood and she saw that he was tall and pale, with silver hair and eyes, but a young face. His countenance was grim, but the silver eyes were kind and his mouth gentle. “My horse too will want shelter on this night. Have you a shed to offer him?”

While he stabled his horse she changed out of her wet clothing and fixed a bit of supper for them: soup and bread and cheese, and elmroot tea. As she dished it up she apologized meekly for the meager fare.

“Why, ‘tis a feast compared to my efforts!” He smiled, and fell to, hungrily. Grellan lay by the fire, his eyes fixed on his master, who occasionally flung him a morsel. “He ate well yesterday, luckily for your chickens, else I’d have to buy one from you.”

“Nay, nay,” she protested. “I’m deep in your debt and glad to share anything I have with you.” The babe stirred and cried then, and she picked him up, changed his wet diaper, and put him to her breast.

“Where’s your husband, lady?”

She hesitated a moment - the thought flashed that she should not tell this stranger how alone and unprotected she was - then told him the truth.

“A sad tale, truly,” he said, “but he’s left you a handsome child, and you seem quite comfortable here.” His eyes went round the humble one room cottage, crib and feather bed at one end, covered with a quilt of her mother’s making, and stone hearth at the other, table and chairs made by her father in the middle. A ladder led to the loft where she’d slept as a child. Suddenly the simple room seemed a palace to her. They were warm and dry and well fed, and indeed what could be better?

“Why, you’re right, stranger. I am lucky after all. Now, will you tell me something of yourself?”

“I am less fortunate than you in some ways. I am a wanderer, and born to wanderers, a tinker by trade, though I can turn my hand to most things. I have never been married and have no children, nor have I ever had a home other than the wagon my horse pulls. I’ve never stayed long in one place. My parents named me Sai, but most folks call me Lucky.”

“Lucky is what I will call you then, for you have indeed been lucky for me.”

He stood and stretched, and began clearing the remnants of their meal from the table. He poured water from the copper kettle into the basin and washed and dried the dishes, something she had never seen a man do before. After the babe was fed they played with him on the hearthrug while he told her of some of the odd and wonderful places and peoples he had met with on his journeys, and once again her life seemed very narrow and dull. After an hour or two the babe grew tired and cranky, and she took him on her lap and sang to him until he fell asleep. She laid him in his crib and wrapped him warmly in a rabbit fur bunting.

When she went back to the fire, Lucky reached for her hand and held it for a moment, without a word, then they were in one another's arms and kissing hungrily. They shed their clothing and lay together shamelessly, enjoying each others bodies in the flickering rosy firelight. He loved the roundness of her breasts and thighs, belly and buttocks, and said she was as juicy as an apple. His bleached lean muscular body and silken hair fascinated her as much. She had loved Tom and known pleasant moments with him, but nothing like she felt with this stranger.

She woke in bed in the morning, to the baby's crying as usual. Lucky wasn't there and she thought he must have been a vivid dream. Then the door opened and shut, and he was striding toward her, fully dressed, and motioning her to stay where she was. He kissed her lips, then brought the babe to her and stood watching as he suckled. “What a pity that we remember not the pleasure we once knew.”

“Yet we have pleasures still that we will remember,” she said, and felt her cheeks redden at her boldness. What a wanton he must think her!

“Indeed,” he said, and laid his cold hand against her hot cheek.

The storm had stopped during the night, but the snow was deep on the road, and it was clear that it would be days before the horse could pull Lucky’s small wagon along the road. That wagon was brightly painted with leaves and vines and flowers in red and blue and green and yellow. The wheels were red with yellow spokes. It had a canvas top, also painted, blue with white fleecy clouds. Josea loved the wagon but it sorted oddly with Lucky’s quiet greyness.

Lucky did small jobs for her, mending tools, hinges, and utensils. He cut more wood for her, saying that if she did not need it this year, there would be another. He stayed a week and a thaw came and then a freeze, and the road was rutted but fit for travel. They looked at one another in the morning light, and he said that it couldn’t hurt to stay another day, or maybe two, if she was not yet tired of him. She wasn’t.

After another week, Lucky asked her if she would come with him. Her heart leaped at the question, but she looked around the little house where she’d spent all her life, thought of her land and village and her babe, and said, “I can’t go. I’ve no desire to travel, and I don’t want to bring my babe up as a homeless waif.”

Pain flashed across Lucky’s pale face, but he only nodded, harnessed up his horse, and kissed her goodbye. Tears clouded her eyes and blurred the gay wagon colors.

Sun's Dawn passed very slowly, with rain and sleet and snow, but nothing like the storm that had brought Lucky to her. Occasionally there was a knock at her door, which started her heart pounding, but always it was just a villager, come to buy the dried herbs she sold. Then, on the first night of First Seed, she heard the creak of a wagon and knew. She flew to the door, her face alight and flung herself into his arms.

"I can't stay," he said. "I'm just passing through..." and that was all the talking they did for quite awhile.

Spring came and crocuses poked their noses up through the snow. Lucky spaded up her garden. Curious neighbors came to call, but found out no more about him than she knew. She sold them eggs - her chickens were laying very well - and dried herbs and an elixir she made from her grandmother's recipe, which was sovereign for headache and rheumatism. They hired Lucky for odd jobs, despite their suspicion of him.

Lucky continued to come and go, never saying where or when he'd be back, but he seldom stayed away more than a few days. He spoke no words of love, but loved her fiercely all the same. Josea's round belly grew rounder, and she weaned Timmy to cow's milk. Lucky's trips became shorter and less frequent. All around the land prospered. Even the oldest could not recall a better harvest. In Hearthfire Josea birthed a beautiful baby girl with silver hair, but eyes of cornflower blue. Lucky held his child and joy radiated from him, so that he seemed to burn with a white fire.

King Edward, Part X

Chapter 10: Josea and Lucky, Part II

Mats continued his story of Lucky and Josea.

\* \* \* \* \*

The years passed, twenty of them. More children came. Timmy took a bride. The land continued to prosper. Few died, so there were many people now, and much of the forest was cleared for farms. Others became soldiers or sailors. Their voyages and battles all prospered, and they returned home laden with booty. The gods were with them, people said, for they were virtuous and deserving folk. Skyrim was united now under King Vrage the Gifted, second and noblest son of the legendary Harald of Ysgramoor, thus Josea's king was high king of all Skyrim. The Nords under Vrage's leadership spread into Morrowind and High Rock, conquering some of the sly and thievish dark elves and the weak and superstitious Bretons.

Josea and Lucky had opened a store and built a fine big house for their family. One night Josea awoke alone, and heard voices in the hall. She left her bed and crept to see. The voices sounded angry!

Lucky was standing there in his nightshirt; the passing years had changed him little. He looked no older, but he had grown leaner and paler, and somehow less substantial. Standing with him were a tall matronly woman, dark haired, and clad in a fine blue robe, a knight in black armor, carrying a black sword and a handsome blond man, greenclad, with a bow. Two elves were there as well, one fair and one with golden skin; one had a harp, the other a lute. Elves had not been seen in Skyrim in years! How did quiet simple Lucky come to know such grand people?

“Is this how you keep your pact with us? Did we not make the rules clear to you?”



The woman was shouting at Lucky, who only muttered, "Lady Mara, I didn't realize it had been so long. It was only for a few days, and then a few days more. And then there were the children and Josea needed me. I thought no harm. Things seemed to go well for everyone. It hasn't been so long. Tamriel did well enough without me before." Lucky spoke softly, yet his face was set and Josea knew how stubborn he could be.

"Everyone! What of the Bretons? What of the dark elves? And the wood elves. Of the ice elves I say nothing. They are gone, gone altogether and forever."

"Such shy folk... I tried," Lucky faltered. "I did try. The ice elves were very hard to find, and not that friendly when I did find them."

"Are all the elves to follow them, and the Bretons, and then the other races?"

"I'll go; I will go. But High Rock and Morrowind are so far from here. And how can I leave my children? Surely, I am entitled to children? And my woman..."

"You could have arranged matters as I did," said the green clad ranger. "Now it's too late for that. Matters have gone too far. We trusted you. It was a simple assignment. Yet we should have watched him." This last sentence was addressed to the black knight.

"I did watch him," the knight snapped, waving his sword, which Josea now saw was actually a part of his arm. "Yet alone I could do nothing! I'd few devotees in either High Rock or Morrowind. Once I realized I knew I had to find the rest of you; alone I could do little. What I could, I did. They're halted for

now, yet the damage must be repaired, and he who caused it must do the fixing, Tinker! It won't be easy. You'll have to avoid the Skyrim folk altogether for a couple of hundred years, I think."

"No! My Lord Ebonarm, no!" The cry was wrenched from Lucky's heart. "I cannot. I implore you. Do not ask it of me... leave me something of my own! Why must I always give it all to others? I'm tired of it! You promised me a life, and what you gave me, that endless wandering, was not a life!" The black knight Ebonarm scowled back at Lucky.

"We are a gentle folk," the wood elf bard said in his musical voice, "yet Zenithar can no longer be restrained. And if he wars against you, the other elven gods stand with him! If the gods war, Tamriel itself may be destroyed. You may find daedra to stand with you; they love chaos. But I think you will find that not even Springseed, Ebonarm and Mara will fight for you if you defy them further."

"Jephre speaks truth, as ever. Let us not speak of war among ourselves, my friend. We wished your folk no ill. We deeply regret what has happened and will labor to repair our fault. I regret our long absence, yet it was necessary. Raen and I were needed... elsewhere." Mara said. "And not even a god, or a goddess, can be everywhere at once."

"As for you, Sai," she said, turning to Lucky, "One night a year with your woman and your children I will grant you. But not in the flesh. The temptations are too strong for you, I see. It was a mistake to let you hold the flesh so long. I apologize to the rest of you. Now, go and make your farewells. You are dismissed."

The knight and ranger vanished, but the elves remained. The golden skinned one spoke to Mara, "Watch these new folk of yours more carefully, Lady Mara. We are a patient people, and kindly disposed to other sentient races, yet there are limits to our patience. Take warning." Then the elves too were gone.

Lucky fell to his knees, clutching at Mara's robe, his face a mask of anguish, "Lady, wait! I implore you. Am I never to feel again? Never? It is more than I can bear. The rest of you can assume mortal form on occasion. Better I should have died naturally, and gone to rest," he added bitterly.

Mara considered, frowning. "Others have paid dearly for the life you have stolen. Their spirits are not at rest; they too will exact payment. And yet... very well. If you will labor to repair the damage you have done, then you may on occasion assume bodily form, but not as human. Wolf shape shall be yours, in return for the kindness you showed Grellan."

And she was gone, leaving Lucky standing alone, barefoot. Josea ran to him and clasped him... oh, how thin and cold he was!

"What is it, dearest? Who were they? What does it mean? Oh, don't leave us!"

"I must," he said, shivering. "I have stayed far too long. My dearest, I am Luck itself. I was born with the talent, though mortal as yourself. My lord took me for a soldier. I was killed in my first battle, even as the battle was won. I ever brought luck to others, never to myself, never. Ebonarm appeared to me, said I had an interesting talent and offered me immortality if I would agree to spread my luck about."

“He said the gods were overworked, seeing to events, and constantly quarreling over what should happen. He thought that I could balance things out naturally with my inborn talent. I was young. I’d barely lived. I didn’t want to die, so I agreed, and Ebonarm said that I could keep my body for a time. I wouldn’t age or die, but I would fade slowly, as you have seen. I am nearly eighty now. I did as he bade for many years. Then I met you, and found myself trapped by your need, I think. I was your Luck, you see, what you needed. And truth is, I needed you, too, my dear love.

“Yet while I’ve stayed here, my luck has spread like ripples, strongest in the center, weak along the edges until there’s none at all in Morrowind and High Rock and the Wilderness to the south, and the folk are dead or chained in slavery. Also I’ve brought luck only to the Nords among whom I’ve lived, so that the wood elves have fled and the ice elves have died. Now I must go, and bring Luck back to them and redress the balance, as it should have been.”

He went to the children’s rooms and kissed them as they slept, while his tears fell on them. Then he said, “I’ll be with you one night each year, though you will not see me. Yet you will feel my presence, dearest. Oh, and I could never speak of love or marriage... but know I love you, as no man or god loved woman.” Then he kissed her one last time, and was gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mats stopped talking at last. The fire had burned down to ashes. Edward drew a long breath.

“That’s some story,” Edward said. “Is it true?”

“Are you calling my grandmother a liar? I know she used to leave a bit of food and a bowl of milk out on winter nights. ‘For the Wolf,’ she said. And we Nords hold it very unlucky to attack a wolf unless it attacks you. It just might be Sai!

“My grandmother said she got the tale from her great-grandmother, and her great was Josea herself. So she said. Or maybe it was her great-great-grandmother. I get lost there. Anyway it happened during the reign of King Vrage the Gifted, like I said, when the Nords invaded Morrowind and High Rock. It took Sai a hundred and fifty years to get things set right again, and he needed a lot of help. From Moraelyn’s brothers and father, among others. The dark elves and Bretons have been lucky to get their lands back, you see, and it’s been hard times for Skyrim folk, although once your luck builds up the way theirs did, it takes a long time to really run out altogether. And Sai didn’t make the same mistake again. He’s been spreading luck around ever since. Otherwise folk get arrogant and start thinking they’re entitled to more than others. Yet he’s kept his promise. You see, I’m his descendant and once a year I feel his presence. That was tonight.”

“I thought being a god means you can do just as you please,” Edward said.

“Well, they can, you see. Sai did, for awhile, but he and his fellow gods weren’t pleased with the results. There’s rules to being a god, it seems, just as there are rules to being a man or a boy.”

“Who makes the rules then?” Edward demanded.

Mats laughed. “Best save that question up for the Archmagister. It’s much too deep for me! Well, I don’t know about you, but I’m

going to have a drink. I'm parched after so much talking and then rouse Mith, so I can sleep myself."

"Mats, I was taught that Moraelyn's father and brothers were just raiders and that the Nords were the real owners of the lands they took. That the dark elves come up out of the ground and raid for meanness and profit."

"Moraelyn's father, Kronin, and his brothers, Cruethys and Ephen, took to raiding after the Nords drove them out of Ebonheart. Guerilla warfare isn't pretty, but neither is losing your homeland. Human memories of that time are faded hand-me-downs, but there's a fair number of dark elves who lived through it still around. Moraelyn's aunt Yoriss for one, she who rules in Kragenmoor. Oh, there's some dark elves still, along the borderland in Blacklight, who are just thieves and kidnappers, no question. They have holds up in the mountain caverns and raid farms and villages in east Skyrim. But Moraelyn's folk have naught to do with them, leastways not since they regained their own lands in Morrowind. Moraelyn hates the raiding. He'd stop it if he could." Mats sighed.

"Why can't he?"

Mats yawned widely. "That's a matter of politics and power, boy. You ask him about it, and you'll likely get more answer than you want, for once. Me, I'm off to bed. Good night."

King Edward, Part XI

The Companions stayed the night at a crude but comfortable inn at a tiny village that called itself Raven Spring, located in the foothills of the Wrothgarian Mountains. The next morning they resumed their journey eastward, moving through rolling

hills towards the Skyrim and Hammerfell borders, and camping the next two nights under clear early summer skies. When they resumed traveling the third morning, Moraelyn told everyone to watch the slopes north of the road for a notch opening to a high meadow that faced to the southwest. Shortly afterward everyone spotted it almost simultaneously when the group completed a bend around a rocky outcrop.

Silk and Beech went ahead to scout a good route, and to look for a campsite for the evening ahead. By dusk they had covered most of the distance to the meadow, but still faced some stiff climbing the next morning. They agreed that it was time to camp once again, but happily a lunchtime picnic seemed very likely the next day.

By mid-day the next day, which was Loredas the 5th of Mid Year, the Companions were sprawled across a grassy slope within the Dragon Village, having been joined by Akatosh and one other dragon. This second dragon was smaller than Akatosh, and seemed to be a female, although characteristically Akatosh had just introduced the dragon as Debudjen, with no further explanations being forthcoming. The two dragons politely chatted with the humanoids as they enjoyed their repast, though Debudjen flew off afterwards, to arc gracefully above, and then swoop down upon a steer in a grassy field some distance away.

Akatosh had been watching Edward's reaction to this, and asked: "Why did you flinch, Edward? Debudjen had not eaten recently, and really behaved no differently than you just have."

Edward replied with a small smile, "I don't think that our meal was quite that violent in nature."

Akatosh returned the smile, but then responded. “A good reminder then, that we are only similar, rather than the same.”

Edward paused, squinting into the mid-afternoon sun, and then turned to the golden dragon: “Akatosh, why did you choose this spot for your village?”

“Well, it was high enough up into the mountains to suit us, but flat enough for raising the cattle with trees for the deer and it is very defensible for all of us. There is plenty of room for the humans to build their ranches and farms, and the elves are quite comfortable in the dense trees along the cliff edges. The adits in the surrounding cliff faces provide us the access to our lairs, which we have located within the mining tunnel system. All in all, an ideal site for such an experiment involving this many races of beings. It even opens to the southwest, providing reasonable warmth for the smaller beings, with some protection from the elements during the colder months.”

Edward responded, “It is difficult for me to get used to the notion of a village without some central concentration of buildings, but perhaps these will be developed in the future; at least, a few buildings for meetings and socializing. And, I suppose that there are also some beautiful sunsets to be seen.”

The dragon smiled again, but replied “Quite so, but I am the only one of the dragonkind to show any interest, and that was not a legitimate consideration when we chose this site.” Then wistfully: “I wish that I could assemble the words to describe some of them. I have attempted this many, many times, but the results just are not... very admirable.” More briskly: “And by the way, we do intend to erect a meeting hall for the humanoids, and also some stores for barter and other exchanges of goods.”



Moraelyn had wandered over and seated himself, and he asked, with a notable absence of the usual humanoid respect for dragons, “Whatever possessed you to attempt such a crazy experiment, Akatosh?”

The dragon paused thoughtfully, and then replied “As is my wont I had been analyzing, in this case one might say the history of dragon behavior. Clearly our lengthy contest of resistance to these new Aurielian gods was futile, but it took many of our generations for us to realize and accept this. Then, our next pattern was to isolate ourselves, even from each other, and to resist intrusion from any and all beings. The exception of course was to mate among ourselves and procreate our race. However, aside from that one activity, we fought any and all for our precious privacy, and really for no good reason except that we can be an especially stubborn race.”

Edward said, “Then you maintained a pattern of behavior long after the reason for it was gone?”

Akatosh looked a bit embarrassed. He said stiffly, “I believe that is what I just said. We are not the only sentient race to fall prey to that.”

Edward said, “The Archmagister has told me that much behavior is inborn.”

Moraelyn smiled at him, “And inborn behavior patterns are a particular problem for long-lived species who change slowly as conditions change. We elves suffer from it even more than you short-lived humans, which is why we like to keep things as they are, though life is change and to resist it utterly is death. Dragons live far, far longer than even elves, and, in consequence, breed even more slowly. Still, who can say what

alterations being born into a social setting may produce, for good or ill, in dragon behavior.”

Aliera had by this time joined the conversation, and observed: “The Daedra must have been long pleased with dragon behavior.”

Akatosh responded, “Perhaps so, but I approached our queen with this suggestion moreso because it seemed clear to me that as a race we had fallen into a stasis, and we needed to break this shell in order to invigorate ourselves. She didn’t quite agree with me, but, perhaps because of my reputation, she told me to go ahead and make this attempt.”

By this point, all of the Companions were sitting within hearing range, and Mats asked: “Did you have to get your queen’s permission? And have there been many difficulties among the various races?”

“Permission is not quite accurate in this case, Mats; being the beings that we are, it was moreso that I was obliged to tell her of this so that she would have the information. For example, other dragons regularly come to me with potential military intelligence, following this same philosophy of preparedness.”

Mats grinned and said, “You mean ‘just in case’, right? But what about these elves and humans?”

“Ah, our humanoid Lord and Lady do set a most remarkable example of tolerance and respect for differing shapes and customs. I owe a debt of gratitude to Moraelyn for the loan of his smiths and miners, who have been most generous in sharing their knowledge and skills with the Bretons that my young friend Edward and I have, ah, persuaded to attempt

settlement here. It is my experience that Bretons, well, many Bretons, will do virtually anything so long as it is profitable and they gain skill and knowledge from it. The Nordic lust for individual honor and glory makes the mithril armor and weapons produced here extremely profitable - t'was sheer genius that inspired Alera to insist that we sell only to the nobility while the delving opens new tunnels and provides access to - that which we dragons require." Akatosh smiled a little slyly. He was very reticent on the subject of exactly what dragons required. "Beech and Willow have made it known among their people that wood elves are welcome here, so those who have long missed their ancient High Rock homes have returned to these hills."

"Fortunate for me that I'm now a Duke, and thus qualified to wear and carry mithril. If only I could afford more than a piece or two! But for the cost I might retire." Mats said.

"If you retired you would not require the mithril," Moraelyn pointed out.

"And what of my son and daughter? Thinkst thou I will beg from thee for them?" Mats said indignantly. "My knees and wind may not be what once they were, I grant you. I'fact I'm somewhat tempted to remain up here, now I am here, yet I can still swing my axe with any!"

Mith grinned delightedly, "Nords can't count. It's why they seek honor and glory, not profit. Honor and glory are not amenable to enumeration much past what one can tally on the fingers. Mats, if thou art but thirty-nine, thou wert the largest ten year old humanoid I ever met or hope to meet!"

“But what then are these benefits to those who neither delve nor smith?” Mats persisted, ignoring his old friend. “I would think that many would be terrified to live so close to such... formidable beings” Mats spoke the last of this with a sly grin.

“Well, on the other hand, the presence of the ‘formidable beings’ means that they are certainly well-protected. And this area is surprisingly fertile, so the crops seem to be growing well, and although they provide the meat for us, we allocate one fifth of each herd to them for their own consumption. We’ve also been finding out what I have long suspected - the three sets of races, when combined, fight much more effectively than the sum of each when considered in isolation - that is, each race covers or cancels weaknesses of the others. At least it is certainly true that the local goblin population has been drastically reduced in a very short period of time.”

“Aye,” Edward responded, “so Moraelyn proved in Morrowind.”

“With a bit of help from his friends,” Moraelyn acknowledged. “I reap the praise, but in truth I’m little more than the standard they wave—and at times I feel more like the target they set up!”

A wave of laughter greeted this remark. Edward persisted, “With you and the others up here, Akatosh, I feel my borders are well guarded, should Skyrim ever feel the urge to move its borders west again.”

Alera asked: “Was it easy to convince the other dragons to move to here?”

“Actually, the most difficult part of that was moving our hoards to our new lairs” Akatosh responded with a lazy smile, “although once it was known that we had no use for the

metals, gems and jewelry that we accumulate, everything went much more smoothly.” But then more seriously: “Essentially I had to approach each dragon personally, and convince them that this idea had merit. Again, once I had persuaded a couple of our especially independent specimens, things went much more smoothly. However, there are only nine of us living in this area and there is really only room for two or three more of us. We shall have to see what develops hereafter.”

Aliera now observed: “I think that now the gods and goddesses might look very favorably indeed on dragon behavior.”

“That may be so, Aliera, but again that was not really why this was done. Besides, they still may remember and resent our long opposition to them.”

Beech asked deferentially “But what is the name of this village?”

Akatosh sighed, and then responded “I fear that we shall never reach a decision, since each race has decided opinions in that regard. Perhaps once the initial building phase is completed, we will be able to be more contemplative about such matters.”

Beech replied “That just doesn’t seem right; everywhere should have a name, shouldn’t it?”

Willow chuckled and then said “Perhaps to us this is so, but who knows how dragons think; and I’m sure that the humans and elves will squabble over the style of the name, besides the specifics of it.”

Moraelyn interrupted with great drama, “Surely you don’t mean to imply that an elf can be overly stubborn!?” and the

discussion dissolved into a period of laughter and teasing amongst the group.

Presently, Akatosh said, "I favor the name 'Section 22.'"

Beech stared at him, "Akatosh, I see what thou dost mean about thy difficulties with the poetic. If you will allow my frank opinion? That is the single worst village name I have ever heard."

Akatosh sighed gustily, then pardoned himself hastily to Beech - humanoids found dragon sighs quite unpleasant and sometimes actually hazardous. "Then thou seest what I mean by differences. To me, it is very meaningful, and most appropriate. Is 'Section 16' any better as a name? Not? Then is it the word 'Section' that offends you? In what way is it inferior to 'Keep' or 'Reich' or 'Glen' or 'Hold'?"

Edward said, "But Akatosh, a name should make some sense. At least humans think so. You should have 21 other sections first, if you're going to name this place '22'."

"Really?" Akatosh said, "Why is that? Are not all numbers equally valid? They serve well to distinguish one place from another. There could be many 'Greenvales' for instance. I myself know of four such villages. The number 'Twenty-two' does appeal to me...aesthetically, as well as possessing some 'sense' - at least to me," he smiled secretively.

Moraelyn said, "I think Lord Akatosh is enjoying what some call an 'in-joke'. Were I so rash as to instruct a dragon in manners."

"Who," Silk said, "would e'er accuse Moraelyn of being rash?"

A bit later, Edward asked Akatosh: “Do you think that we could play a game or two of Battle? I brought the board and playing pieces with me.”

Moraelyn interrupted “I’m afraid that Akatosh and I must discuss some matters this evening - and you’d only lose again anyway” he added with a fond smile.

Edward replied “But I can beat everyone else. Akatosh, will I ever win a game with you?”

“No, Edward, you won’t”, and Akatosh was slightly bemused by Edward’s startled expression, and then the hearty laugh that quickly followed it.

“That wasn’t very diplomatic of you, Akatosh. But why won’t I ever win?”

“Because I have been playing for much longer than you have Edward, and so long as I continue to play, you will not be able to catch up to me. Besides, this game is what I am starting to think of as a ‘bounded problem’, and that sort is most easily dealt with.”

“What do you mean by ‘a bounded problem’, Akatosh?” asked Mats.

“That is a problem that has a countable number of possible actions and results, Mats. There are only 81 squares on the board, and each side has exactly 27 playing pieces, each piece moves in a specific way, and so on.”

“But the game is like a real battle, isn’t it?” asked Ssa’ass.

“No, it is very good practice for learning, and for thinking about how to execute a battle - but my Elven Archers never become tired or demoralized, and my Master Mage always does what I want. Such things seldom happen in a real battle.”

Moraelyn nodded in agreement, and asked with mock slyness “Then what is an example of an unbounded problem?”

“Certainly a real battle... but also, to me a poem is an unbounded problem”

“But any poem can be analyzed, Akatosh” Alieria said chidingly.

“Of course - but only after it is written. I am unable to define, or bound, the act of writing it, though... that is, the act of creating it. If I start to write a poem... there are so many possibilities” and then wryly “I never get beyond the first line, because I start imagining all the things that I could put into the beginning and....”

King Edward, Part XII

The dragon had paused, so Edward interjected, “Mother and I have been discussing the nature of the gods recently, Akatosh, and she thinks that poetry would be a godly activity. What do you think about that notion?”

“I am not so certain that one can attribute anything to the gods, Edward. They are another example of an unbounded problem, of course, but also, their characteristics are just not very well known to us.”

“But surely one can determine things about any being that is a god?”



Akatosh replied, "I do not think that we can, at present; they are not like the Daedra, who have a nature that is with them at their birth. That is, the Daedra capabilities are inherent in them, and not are the result of any changes that have occurred to them."

Willow interrupted: "Akatosh, we can determine that the gods have a few basic characteristics, can't we?"

Edward added "Of course, Akatosh - they are powerful beings who can perform acts that are incomprehensible to us. That in itself must signify their difference."

Akatosh nodded and replied "I understand your point of view, but to a farming community on Tamriel in our southern lands, that could also describe how they would perceive me. Perhaps this is attributable to the fact that they seldom see a dragon nowadays, but it also does not mean that I am a god...neither does it mean that I am not a god."

Willow giggled, and said "Of course you're not a god, Akatosh" and Edward, smiling, nodded agreement.

Akatosh replied "How do you know, Willow? I can understand that you would guess that I am not a god, particularly since I am a dragon." He grinned, and then continued "But how can you know that I am not a god?"

Edward scoffingly replied "Well, I know that I'm not a god anyway. And I've certainly never seen you perform any godly acts, Akatosh - you also don't seem to have any worshippers about either."

The Companions were smiling and generally agreeing with this, but Akatosh responded “But that does not mean that I have no worshippers, nor does it mean that I cannot perform any godly acts - it just means that you have not seen either of these. I am not yet certain that gods and goddesses require worshippers to maintain their existence. And as I said, I can perform magic that would look like ‘godly acts’ to many Tamrielians.”

“But the gods must have worshippers, Akatosh” said Alieria, “That’s how they get their...sustenance, or whatever it is that allows them to continue...to be godly. Husband, you must know more about this subject. After all, you made a god of your brother S’ephen.”

“I did no such thing!” Moraelyn responded, with a touch of indignation. “His godhood is between him and his worshippers, among whom I am numbered. I did establish a temple cult in his memory. Anyone with the worldly means could do as much for anyone, living or dead. That alone is not enough. Maybe it helps—facilitate matters, but I think it’s not really necessary. I know no more of it, but if you want my opinion—” he paused politely for confirmation that it was indeed still solicited, as elven etiquette demanded if one were giving opinion at length.

He continued. “There must be something, well, godly, in the person’s soul or essence or whatever part it is that does not die with the body. I know not whether that capacity is innate in the person, from birth or conception, or quickening...whene’er it is that soul and body are wedded for a life span, or whether great deeds and great generosity might breed it, enlarging the soul and transmuting it, so to speak. We all change and grow

with each passing day, with every breath, some more than others. What else is life about?”

He went on without pausing for an answer to his rhetorical question, probably for fear that he might get one. “In other cases, gods seem to arise from a locality, a mountain, or a spring, or wood, or a collection of localities, such as Tamriel itself. Places, like persons have souls, some greater than others. This place might produce a god or a daedra—or maybe it already has one or more. As it changes, so do its gods and daedra, I think. Maybe they can choose to resist the change or aid it, if propitiated.”

He looked at Akatosh inquiringly. The dragon had stopped fighting the new gods, he said, but would he go so far as to worship them? “That speaks to the question of whence gods arise, but source is not nature: of that I know as little as the rest of you, maybe less, since the question does not truly interest me. The gods are; my worship of them benefits me and mine. It is sufficient.”

Akatosh did not respond immediately and Alieria refused to be distracted, “But suppose such a cult were established and worshippers provided for one of small and mean spirit. Would that spirit not become a god?”

“I suppose it might be done, if one were determined enough and had a sufficiency of means to pay worshippers to perform rituals without—spirit—behind them. Maybe that’s where small, mean gods come from, wife. Or maybe daedra? Maybe I’ll raise a cult to thee and see what happens.”

“Are you calling my spirit small and mean?” Ali glared at him.

“Only by comparison—you don’t fancy yourself a goddess, do you? You might make a daedra,

though. The experiment might be a bit too chancy. Could I just mourn you for a century or two instead?”

“Mm. I’ll think on it. What about you? You’ve deeds enough already to qualify for godhood, surely...although if you plan on many more such you may not outlive me.”

“I’m doomed to be R’Aathim, living and dead. It’s godhood of a sort, but what a sort! Don’t begrudge me my long life span. Think of me doomed to eternity in the gloomy Ebonheart council chamber listening to the eternal wrangles...small wonder the dead R’Aathim pulled the place down on the live ones twenty years ago, thus causing my brother and my mother to join their number. The dead R’Aathim must have welcomed the century and a half of respite while the Nords held Ebonheart.”

“But your brother S’ephen was killed too, as well as your brother King Cruethys, and S’ephen wasn’t R’Aathim, being your mother’s son and not your father’s, if I have the story straight—that’s why he got his own temple,” Edward said. “So why did they kill him, too? The story sounds very daedric to me.”

“You’d have me justify the ways of the gods to you, would you? I think they act for ends we cannot see, and slay the just and the unjust together—not that I’d label any of my Kin as either—not altogether. We see only the means—how can we judge? Gods too face choices; I do not think their power supreme. They can overrule nature on occasion, as can any Mage, yet they, like Mages, are in the end bound by it—and their overrule

must answer other rules still—and in those rules, whatever they be, I think lies the answer to your questions. I think it's not something men and women may know while living.”

Akatosh smiled and replied “It is not so easy to describe the gods, is it? This is true even though, myself included, each of us thinks that we have a mental picture of what godliness means. On the other hand, the gods and goddesses certainly do exist - and I also believe that there is a connection of some sort between them and the Daedra, and another connection between these entities and the power associated with performing magic.”

“The priests of Julianos have been calling this power ‘Magicka’” said a stranger who had joined the group.

Akatosh replied “Greetings bard. Please allow me to introduce...Geoffrey, a...wandering poet who has been visiting our village for these last few days.” The Companions greeted the wood elf newcomer, some rising to their feet to do so according to their individual customs, and then all resumed sitting (actually sprawling about) and conversing.

“A number of priests are theorizing that the gods and goddesses live on another plane, as do the Daedra - there is some debate amongst these priests as to whether they share the same plane of existence, or whether each has their own. And some of the Alessian priests are claiming that we can visit these alternate planes in our nightly dreams” added Beech.

Edward asked “Why doesn't someone just ask a goddess or a Daedra about this?”

Geoffrey chuckled and replied “Most of us are not able to be so thoughtful when confronted by one of these beings, Edward. Also, there is a common belief that the gods and Daedra are as reluctant to discuss their own natures as dragons are to reveal anyone’s True Name.”

Edward looked quizzically at Akatosh, but Beech stated to Geoffrey “Well said, Bard”...and that pair shared the slightest of smiles.

Beech then said, “Do you know what the Resolutions of Zenithar has been saying about the gods and magic? This magic power, or Magicka, is just the power generated by the existence of, well, existence itself. When it becomes focused by living beings through natural processes, then it becomes accessible to the gods and goddesses as worship power, which is the next level of Magicka. After receiving some from their worshippers, the gods can then concentrate it up to god-level power - the true Magicka. The gods themselves can’t generate the mid-level Magicka, since they are dependent on it for their own existence, but they can ‘convert it’ to Magicka, which can then be used by mortals to cast spells. This Magicka is usually dispersed widely across the planes but there are areas of greater and lesser concentration due to interferences with the dispersion process.”

“When a goddess loses worshippers, her inflow of mid-level Magicka is decreased, so she in turn produces less god-level Magicka. With less Magicka under her control (for providing to worshippers, or dispersion), her influence is decreased in the mortal planes - of course the converse is also true. In the extreme, she receives nothing, and is relegated to a state of Stasis, barely existing from the ordinary Magicka generated by

her few remaining Consecrated lands, zones of influence, and so on.”

Beech continued, “On the other hand, Daedra receive very specific, or ‘modified’ mid-level Magicka from a few mortals with specific areas of interest, and these Daedra are normally tied to very specific circumstances. Because of their nature, they gain much more power from their small worship base, but the gods, with their much broader base, generally have greater overall power, even though the amount of concentrated worship that they receive from any one source is much less than a Daedra’s. Most of the Magicka that the gods ‘process’ is dispersed into and throughout the universe, no longer under their control, thereby making it available for everyone. It’s not really something they do consciously, but as a natural process that happens automatically - in other words...just because they are divine.”

Alera said, “I would think that Magicka is simply available to sentient beings, although the gods and Daedra could facilitate its usage. I would think that the gods and Daedra have other influences on us as well, because not everyone has spellcasting ability! Maybe in those ‘alternate planes’ it’s actually existence, and not sentient entities, that radiates Magicka, just as the stars give off light in our dimension. I just assume that Magicka is ‘out there’ in the ether, or maybe sentient consciousnesses automatically tap into an alternate plane as they sleep. I think that everyone has some supply of Magicka, but most don’t know how to use it very well, or else they adopt a way of life that inhibits or forbids its use. Maybe certain gods and Daedra serve as facilitators for the entire process; that is, both obtaining and using Magicka? But how do priests heal and cure

and bless? Is Magicka involved at all or do they invoke their goddesses directly?”

Ssa’ass said, “I am not ssssure that Magicka isss ussed; perhaps there isss yet another capability involved here. Thisss capability would be unknown at thisss time, and maybe even unsssenssssed... but I feel fairly certain that sssomewhat it is a godly ‘force’ that they are employing.”

Then Geoffrey responded: “Ssa’ass, I believe that Magicka fills the universe of planes. All things are infused with Magicka to one extent or another. In this regard Magicka is attracted to some people and things over others, and some people with talent or training can control and even release Magicka in new forms. There may be other sources of Magicka available by tapping into alternate and otherworldly planes. There is also the possibility of alternate planes that are entirely void of Magicka. Regardless, certain beings of great power, such as the gods and Daedra, can not only control Magicka, but can see, absorb, and transfuse Magicka to and from objects and people. By employing this ability, worshippers of these beings are sometimes capable of greater acts of Magic than they could accomplish otherwise. Also in this way, some items sacred to powerful beings can be said to be holy, with additional amounts of directed Magicka provided by gods or goddesses.”

“Magic items fall into two main categories by definition. Items that draw on the surrounding Magicka to create spell-like effects, and items that hold Magicka in reserve for their own internal effects. Normally magic items which absorb Magicka, giving increased abilities to their wielders, only affect themselves and are considered to use internal Magicka. In some areas where great amounts of Magicka have been used,



the surroundings may be completely devoid of it. This of course negates the ability of beings to produce magic effects in these areas, although gods and Daedra carry their own supplies of Magicka, as do magic items that do not depend on the use of surrounding Magicka.”

Aliera said, “We’ve been investigating some rumors and stories concerning something that might be called anti-Magicka. I think the presence of a powerful Daedra with whom you weren’t in ‘tune’ could cause interference with spellcasting - maybe even cancel out existing spells. Perhaps particular Daedra simply favor thief or warrior types. Or some goddesses, and their priests, might frown on ‘competing’ magic in certain areas, for example in locations dedicated to them. So then unauthorized spells could interfere with their rituals.”

Willow asked, “Can Daedra supply Magicka? And how about both a god and a Daedra being nearby? - wouldn’t they sort of nullify each other’s powers? This might be the cause of the anti-Magicka effect.”

“I’ve experienced an anti-Magicka zone myself” inserted Mith. “It felt a lot like the effect of casting a spell like Dispel Magicka. At the time, I thought that a truly powerful spellcaster could still effectively cast spells, but their resulting power would have been much reduced. I didn’t get a chance to test this out though” added Mith with a smile.

“We can also assume that certain powerful spells, creatures and even magic items might actually drain the surrounding area of Magicka,” replied Geoffrey. “This could be extended to places where great amounts of magic energy were once gathered and expended, for example in ancient temples where great spells were cast, or battlefields where powerful mages

contested. Perhaps certain metals or stones could act as absorbers of Magicka, allowing for whole structures of anti-Magicka zones. If so, you might be able to wear a amulet made out of anti-Magicka material and gain a good advantage against spellcasters. Perhaps the purity of the material used would allow for better and better magic resistance”.

Akatosh spoke: “Dragons have long been interested in the anti-Magicka effect, naturally enough. We have found some amulets that appear to act as Magicka absorbers. They might contain something like Negative Magicka, in which case they would attract any ‘stray’ Magicka floating free in the local area. They are made of a stone, or mineral, resembling marble - it is very rare, but could be extracted, and shaped by skilled craftsmen. For example, I’m sure that the dwarves could have worked with this material. They might have made these amulets - or even that statue that I once saw...it was taller than any of you humanoids. Regardless, in these mountains we have found deposits scattered throughout the halls and tunnels at random, sometimes deep within the walls. Consequently, one appears to go in and out of these anti-Magicka zones of varying intensities, with little or no warning. I have been imagining that this material works almost automatically; it seems to ‘reflexively’ absorb Magicka if given a chance to. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that they have been magically charged somehow - perhaps this happened long ago, but the charge has somehow remained.”

Moraelyn asked, “Would the amulet affect its wearer, or would he be immune?”

“Maybe a blocking spell could be developed, and then cast, to shield the wearer from the effects of the substance.”

Moraelyn then asked, "But Akatosh, getting back to our earlier discussions - what do you think of the speculations concerning the connections between the gods and goddesses, Daedra and Magicka?"

Akatosh replied, "I think that there are many truths that we do not know, and perhaps there are some truths that we are not meant to know."

Moraelyn asked with a smile, "All right then, I've always wanted to know this - considering the shape of your mouth and teeth, how do dragons manage to speak the humanoid languages so clearly?"

Akatosh paused, and then carefully responded, "Why, in much the same way that we can fly, even though our wings are not naturally strong enough to support such heavy torsos."

"Speaking of dragon flight and sunsets..." Mith said, rising to his feet and squinting into the red-gold eastern sky, "We have a visitor, Dragon Lord. That's not a bird."

Akatosh's head came up and he too scanned the sky. Tension grew in him, and one by one the Companions rose, watching as the distant dot grew nearer and resolved itself into the largest dragon they'd seen yet.

"Ma-Tylda!" Akatosh exclaimed, "She deigns to bestow her presence on us!" His wings lifted and unfurled, and the Companions broke and ran for cover as he took flight. The two dragons wheeled through the sky, spouting great gouts of flame against the purpling sky.

“They’re fighting,” Edward cried, “what does it mean. Who is Ma-Tyllda?”

“I don’t know who she is, son,” Moraelyn replied, “but they do not fight. You behold a dragon greeting ceremony.” The pair alit beyond a rock outcropping out of sight.

“Should we go greet the stranger, too?” Edward asked.

“Nay,” Mith said. “They’ll let us know if our presence is wanted—look, even the other dragons stay away.” It was true. Dragon heads had poked from the caverns to witness the event, but none of them had taken wing, and now they were retreating to their hoards within.

The Companions ambled back into the meadow together and built a fire as a chill wind had sprung up. The elves sang an evening hymn to the stars, deftly weaving the dark elf version with the wood elf form. Alieria added her voice to theirs, but Mats and Edward and Silk and Ssa’ass sat listening silently. They couldn’t manage elven music of this kind. Geoffrey had a particularly clear sweet voice, Edward thought.

Akatosh returned presently, smiling in satisfaction. “Ma-Tyllda’s going to join us here, at least for awhile,” he said. He was actually glowing in the dusk, each scale giving off a golden radiance.

“Is she your queen?” Edward asked, feeling very small and human.

“She—just is. Maybe she’ll want to meet you all some day. I hope so. Until then, well, I don’t talk about other dragons, you know.”

To which Edward blinked in surprise and then surmise, and the discussion dissolved into jokes and songs for the remainder of that clear and beautiful evening.

# Legal Basics

*Anchivius M.Z.F.*

Ignorance of the law is no defense. Be forewarned that the following are but the most universal of Tamrielan laws and regulations. Your own local province or principality may have unique laws of its own. As a citizen of Empire, it is your right and responsibility to know and follow these laws of the land.

This refers to any act including, but not limited to opening, breaking, incinerating, magically transporting, or in any way causing a door, window, or other portal that has been magically or mundanely locked or which a reasonable person would assume to be so restricted to be passable, and the act (though the act is not required for the definition) of entering the house, business, or public location through said defined portal. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration. The fine and incarceration, or both, or neither, may be less in a crime of Attempted Breaking and Entering. A crime of Attempted Breaking and Entering is defined as an any act that a reasonable person would perceive as the preparation for, an attempt (whether successful or not, or perceived to be possibly successful or not) to bring about the opening, breaking, incinerating, magically transporting, or in any way causing a door, window, or other portal that has been magically or mundanely locked or which a reasonable person would assume to be so restricted to be passable, and the act (though the act is

not required for the definition) of preparing or attempting (whether successful or not, perceived to be possibly successful or not) entering the house, business, or public location through said defined portal.

This refers to walking, flying, riding, teleporting, floating, or in any way moving or existing on a property without the explicit written or spoken permission (or permission a reasonable person might infer) of the owner or caretaker of the property. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration.

Any threat or attempt (whether successful or not) to do physical, emotional, mental, or magical harm or injury to another person, group of persons, or entity a reasonable person might assume to be sentient. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration.

Any act of premeditated or malicious or premeditated and malicious (or an act that a reasonable person would call premeditated and malicious or premeditated or malicious) or accidental but criminally intended (or what a reasonable person would call criminally intended) purpose that results directly in the death (or destruction with implied death) of a person, group of persons, or entity a reasonable person might assume to be sentient. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration.

Any meeting, communication, or encounter with the purpose (or which a reasonable person might assume had the purpose) of preparing or arranging a crime of any kind (or crimes of any kind) to be committed or caused to be committed. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration.

Any act of idleness, disorder, begging, or conduct unbecoming a person with occupation, gold, or a home, (or occupation, gold, and a home, or occupation or gold and home, or occupation and gold or home, or occupation and home or gold), or what a reasonable person would consider idle, disorderly, beggarly, or unbecoming. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration.

Any act of bringing in, taking out, teleporting, or causing to be brought in, taken out, or teleported an object considered illegal or, if not illegal, requiring an import or export tax which is not paid. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration, and will include confiscation of the offensive or illegal object. It may also include, but not be restricted to, execution or banishment, or execution and banishment.

Any act against (whether directly or indirectly, or any nonaction which results in circumstances, directly or indirectly, against) a allegiated sovereign or by a vassal to a liege, resulting (or what a reasonable person would assume would result) in physical, emotional, mental, or magical harm or injury in said sovereign or liege. The punishment for this crime will be death.

Any act of stealing, taking, or, without explicit written or verbal permission (or what a reasonable person would infer as implied permission) an item or items a person, group of persons, or entity a reasonable person might assume to be sentient has on his, her, its, or their own person. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration.



Any act of stealing, taking, or, without explicit written or verbal permission (or what a reasonable person would infer as implied permission) an item or items from a person, group of persons, or entity a reasonable person might assume to be sentient's place of residence, business, person, or other location a reasonable person would assume is secured from looting. The punishment for this crime may include a fine or incarceration, or a fine and incarceration.

These are the usual, day-to-day definitions used by legal experts (like myself), but both the definitions and punishments may fluctuate wildly according to location and situation. In the Imperial City, legal counsel is available by persons like myself, but the provinces have no such system in place. Perhaps that will change in time. We can all hope so.

As a final note:

The Tamriel legal system has its basis in the civilized, reasonable credo uttered by the prophet Marukh in the first era: "All are guilty until they have proven themselves innocent." Were truer word ever spoke?

# Mara's Tear

*Zhen*

Well, children, if you all gather round, and sit quietly, I'll tell you the story of Mara's Tear and Shandar's Sorrow...

Long, long ago, long before your grandmother and I were born, long ago, there were two young children growing up in a village far, far from here. They played together, and ran through the woods together, exploring their little world and learning to see things through each other's eyes. This was very different from their parents because Shandar was the son of Maldor, who was captured in a war and forced to work as a slave for the village baron. Their village and another both needed the land between them to feed the villagers, and fought and fought, until many of the villagers died. Maldor was wounded in battle, and left for dead by his fellows. He was captured and forced to work in the fields as punishment. Shandar was not allowed to play with Mara, but she was very small and the other children didn't like to play with her, so she played with Shandar against her father's command. And they learned that they were really not very different at all. They couldn't understand why their parents hated each other so.

Well, Shandar and Mara played together for many years, and learned to love each other as they grew up. They knew that they couldn't let their parents know, because it was forbidden for them ever to marry, since they were from different villages

and the war was still going on. They tried and tried to figure out how they could be happy together, and finally decided that they must run away from their village. They would try to make a new life for themselves in another village, far, far away from where they grew up.

One night, while planning their escape, they were discovered by the town guards. Shandar tried to fight them, but they tied him up and dragged him away to the prison inside town. Mara was taken home, and her father was very angry with her, and told her that she could not leave their home again. He went to the house of another farmer, and asked if their son would marry Mara, so that she could never see Shandar again. The marriage was planned for the next week.

Shandar, meanwhile, was to be killed for daring to be with Mara. He was beaten, and placed in a stockade. He was placed in a stockade, and they were to hang him the next day. When Mara found out that Shandar was to be killed, she knew that she could never live without him, and climbed out her window and ran into the woods, crying and crying. She ran and ran, and soon was lost. It was very dark, because back then they did not have any moons in the sky back then to make it safe for little boys and girls. Soon she found herself in a part of the woods she had never been before, and sat down on a rock since she was very tired.

Well, the rock was a secret entrance to a cave where a very mean orc lived. When he came back from his hunting, he found Mara curled up asleep on his rock, and thought to himself, "Hmmm, a tasty little girl. I shall save her for my breakfast!"

He grabbed her and took her into his cave, moving the rock back so that she could not escape. She was sure to die, and tried

to escape, but the evil orc just laughed and laughed at her, until she finally gave up.

When the villagers found out that Mara had run off, they were very worried. No one knew the woods very well, and all were afraid of the evil orc that lived there. Only Shandar was not afraid, and he begged and begged for the baron to set him free, so that he could go look for Mara. The Baron finally decided to let Shandar go, for no one else was brave enough to go and rescue Mara. So Shandar was set free, and he set off into the woods to go and rescue her.

Shandar searched and searched, but could not find poor Mara. Finally, he sat down on a rock to rest for a moment, and as he sat down, he noticed a piece of cloth under the rock. It was a piece from Mara's cloak! He realized that she must be under the rock somehow, and knew that the orc had captured her. He pushed and pushed on the rock, and finally was able to roll it aside. He climbed down into the orc's cave, but it was very dark, and he could not see anything. The evil orc, when he heard his front door moving, hid in the shadows to see what was coming into his home. When he saw that it was just a little man-boy, he grinned to himself and thought, "Now I have lunch, TOO!"

When Shandar came near, the orc grabbed him, and began to squeeze the life out of him.

Back in the village, the people soon realized that they were foolish to let a young man go off into the woods by himself. They gathered all of their weapons, and set off to find the two lost children. When they finally came upon the clearing near the orcs' cave, they saw a strange and wondrous sight: A slain orc near the entrance to the cave, and Mara holding the head of

poor Shandar in her lap. Shandar had killed the orc, but not before the it gave Shandar a mortal wound.

Mara's tears flowed freely from her eyes and splashed upon Shandar's face, reflecting the light from the villager's torches. Shandar was filled with sorrow at the thought that he had saved Mara, only to lose her because of his own impending death from the battle with the orc. He cried out to Mara's namesake, the goddess of love, to help them.

The Goddess Mara recognized their true love and wept at their loss. Not having power over death, she could do nothing to save Shandar, but she knew that she could not let their love die. She reached down from the heavens and picked up Mara and Shandar in her arms, and placed them high in the heavens. They could be together always, and provide light in the dark night to others so that they may be safe from the evils in the world. The villagers were amazed at this sight, and vowed to honor the love of Shandar and Mara by learning more about themselves and their neighbors, so that the war that had been going on as long as anyone could remember would end. Shandar's sacrifice for the one he loved showed them that he was worthy of their respect, and that those from his village were just as proud and worthy as themselves.

And, that's why, children, every night we can see Mara's Tear and Shandar's Sorrow spending their lives together high in the heavens, lighting the way for all the little boys and girls like you.

# Notes For Redguard History

*Destri Melarg*

Biographical Note: Destri Melarg was a well-known historian and translator of old Redguard verse, born as simply Destri in the city-state of Rihad in the 20th year of the 3rd Era. At the age of nineteen, he went to the Imperial City to study. There were few Redguards who had been to the Imperial Province at the time, and it may be that he took the last name Melarg in order to assimilate with the Breton, Nordic, and Dark Elf cultures he encountered there.

When he died ninety-four years later, he left numerous unfinished histories and untranslated verse. Very few of this fragmented work has found its way out of collections. What follows is an unmailed letter to Melarg's publishers in the Imperial City. The insights into the man who put the oral traditions of the Redguards to paper impressed me enough to seek its publication.

Melius, it should be noted, was Melius Kane, Melarg's publisher in the Imperial City.

—Vune,

Redguardic First Scholar Imperial University

\* \* \*

Melius,

This is the outline of my final chapter for the series on Hammerfell heroes. I condensed Dendle's storytelling. I have my notes, but the story gets long with all the quotes. She puts a lot of dialog in her storytelling. I am amazed that the old stories about the 5 swords keeps cropping up. It's been a thousand years since Hellion's time, yet people continue to believe in the stories.

The wagon master sat with me after listening to her story and smoked a pipe with me. In discussing the story, he said that his storyteller used to say that one of the five swords survived the closing of the Goblin gate, and is yet hidden here in Hammerfell. It was the least of the five, but the story has it that it exceeds and modern blade magical or ebony by several orders of magnitude.

Of course I take this with a grain of salt, since a ebony weapon is unparalleled in its keen cutting ability and personally I can't imagine a weapon doing more damage than a Claymore of Firestorm or a Saber of Life Steal. Dendle even believes that out in the countryside outside of Skaven in one of the Halls of the Virtues of War, there are still people who follow the old ways and can form a Shehai or spirit sword.

In collecting these stories, I once thought I was seeing a Shehai being formed, by an old Hall master, but the thing, if it was a spirit sword was so faint that even the sword shape was questionable. I didn't want to insult the old man so I claimed I saw it too. But if that was a Shehai, I can't imagine it possibly used as a real weapon.

Here's my outline of the new story:

At the time of this story, Hammerfell is fully occupied by Redguards. All the old cities of the Dwarves (but one - the Ghost City of Dwarfhome) are now the cities of today's modern Hammerfell. A second invasion of the giant goblins comes. Hammerfell is unprepared, except for a few faithful followers, all youths in the rural Halls of Virtue.

Hallin, being the only Ansei, rallies the armies of Hammerfell. After a defeat, he brings back the old ways by telling each warrior to read the Book of Circles. The army fights the Goblins to a standstill, but things look bleak, just as in Divad's song. Somehow the goblins keep being resupplied both with arms and troops. Eventually the Army of Hammerfell will lose.

The old master of Hallin's Hall of the Virtues of War has an ancient copy of Divad's will and testament, and reads it to Hallin. It tells him that the 5 swords aren't lost, just hidden and well guarded in 5 caves. Each cave is home to a master guardian, one of the old blind Ansei—and also a maze.

According to the will, Derik must, along with a virtuous companion of pure heart enter the cave, defeat each Ansei Master and retrieve their sword.

Dendle went into great detail here. It seems that each Master had an outstanding trait—one Katrice, possessed feline grace, and had become very catlike; another, who had icy calm was something much like an Ice Golem.

On each blade is inscribed part of an intricate message on how to use the power of the swords combined. Derik scours the rural Halls for Brothers of the Blade and Maidens of the Spirit Sword to accompany him in the quests. He finally one by one finds his companions, and wins each sword.



They learn from the blades and together wield the force of the 5 swords to seal the rent in space time that the Goblins have made and from which springs their invasion. Hallin's companions avoided blinding by the magic swords by hurling the swords together into the void, and sealing forever the giant Goblins in the void between their world and ours.

The land is saved and Hallin and his companions (3 women and 2 men) become Ansei and restore the teachings of Frandar Hunding to Hammerfell.

That's the story in brief. I welcome any comments from you or one of the other editors.

One other concern of mine. I understand that you are considering using a better known writer, Uthilla Abuhk or Casmyr Kreestrom, to write the stories I've researched. I can understand that a better known writer may mean that a few more copies of the books will be sold, but that should not be your only concern. Abuhk and Kreestrom, while fine writers and poets, will need to be lectured on the true history of the Redguards. Even if you are willing to pay me to do that, you will have to acknowledge that the books will take longer to write than if you just allowed me to do it. Just something to consider when you make the decision.

I hope this letter finds you, your consort, and children to good health and humor.

Yours faithfully,

Destri Melarg

# Oelander's Hammer: An Instructive Tale For Children

*Krowle*

The two children, Froedwig and his younger sister Silvanda, had been exploring all morning. The noon sun was directly overhead and everything was warm and bright. They had left their Redguard village, Granitsta, early that morning for a day in the wilderness, a picnic, and with a stern warning from their father to be home before dark. They crossed a huge field that was bare save a single rose bush right in the middle.

The little girl asked Froedwig about it.

“Well,” he said, “according to father a great battle was fought in this place many years ago. The battle was visited by the God of all warriors, Reymon Ebonarm, who caused the leaders to end the battle and return to their homes. It is said that the rose bush grows where he stood that day.”

“Oh, how exciting,” giggled Silvanda.

The children continued their trek approaching some woods. As they entered the forest the air became very cool and a deep quiet seemed to envelope them.

“What is that?”

Silvanda pointed to a large hole in the ground from which protruded a long, thick pole. Around the hole thorny plants had grown into an impenetrable wall.

“I don’t know,” said Froedwig, “but let’s see if we can get a closer look.”

“Stop!”

They did.

Looking beyond the hole, the children saw an elderly Redguard of many years. His gray beard, scraggly hair and stooped shoulders certainly did not support the authoritarian command he gave. But the children stopped just the same as he approached.

“Who are you?” stammered Froedwig as Silvanda carefully tucked herself behind her brother’s back.

“My name is Hoennig Groevinger, and I live in these woods.”

“Why can’t we examine yon hole, Master Groevinger?” asked Froedwig.

“Because, my dear children, it and what it holds are cursed. Now just wh-h-h-o are you?” he stuttered, mimicing Froedwig.

Finally gaining his composure, Froedwig said, “I am Froedwig-aj- Murr of the village Granitsta. This is my sister Silvanda. We are on an outing. Can you tell us about this mysterious hole?”

“Well,” said the old man as he slowly settled to the ground, “Why don’t you sit here with me for a while and I will tell you

about Oelander's Hammer. That's the handle of the fabled weapon sticking out from yonder chasm."

With this the children also settled into sitting positions in front of the old Redguard ranger.

Groevinger began, "Many year's ago there was a huge battle fought in this very field ..."

"Oh, yes, I know," said Silvanda, interrupting the old man. "It was ended by the Warrior God Reymon Ebonarm, and the magic rose bush grows where he stood that day..." she continued breathlessly.

The old man sternly cleared his throat causing the little girl to again shrink behind her brother.

"Now, if I may continue without interruption... On the day that battle ended, a young Redguard soldier stopped in this spot as he was leaving to go to his home. He carried the equipment he had used on the field which included a marvelously fashioned war hammer that had been given to him by his father. The weapon was beautifully made and unknown to the young warrior carried an enchantment that had protected him through the vicious battle just ended."

"The young man, Oelander by name, rested by this very tree. Suddenly he was confronted by a wizard dressed all in black from head to toe. Without so much as a how-do-you-do, the wizard demanded that Oelander give him his hammer. Still flushed from the battle, the young man just looked at the dark man and laughed. The wizard shaking with rage raised his hands to cast a horrible spell against the soldier. However, the young man was quicker. The huge war hammer whistled

through the air smiting the wizard a mortal blow just as the spell left his fingers. There was a loud explosion.”

The children stared at the old man. He suppressed a grin and continued.

“Clouds of dusk and smoke covered the forest clearing, and when the air settled, yon hole was there with the hammer’s handle protruding from it. Oelander and the wizard had vanished! The thorny vines you see grew up immediately around the hole, and to this day no one has been able to approach it close enough to remove that marvelous weapon. Many have tried and all have failed. It is said that only someone of tremendous merit can take it.”

All of a sudden, both children in unison stood and shouted, “Oh, look how the day has gone. We must go. If we are late getting home, our father will be most unhappy with us.”

As they turned to leave, Froedwig said to the old man, “Thank you, Master Groevinger, for telling us of Oelander’s Hammer. You know, I may just come back one day and try to retrieve it!”

As they disappeared from his view, the old man said to himself, “Ah, yes, Master Froedrig aj-Murr, you just might do that.”

# Of Jephre

*Anonymous*

When the elven folk walked the land alone and sang songs of power amongst the trees and stars, Jephre the Singer walked with them. Jephre gave heed to the nature of the forests and delighted in the gurgling streams and brooks. It was Jephre who taught the birds to sing their songs of the seasons and He that taught the streams the tinkling ethereal tune. The very trees are said to have moved close to hear him sing on the warm summer nights of those elder days. It was in this time that the first great ballads of the elves were made, crafted from the songs that Jephre taught to the sylvan youth who frolicked to his lively tunes and ballads of nature and the unspoiled forest. In truth, He is worshipped as god of song and forest.

In Valenwood, Jephre is considered one of the Major Sylvan gods with temples and altars in the deep woodland places. Elven tradition holds that children with a gift for song have been blessed by Jephre himself. Legend has it he blessed the Wood Elves with a natural affinity for nature and particularly the forest. Most Wood Elven Rangers worship Jephre.

It was his great eagerness for natural beauty that led him to the Isle of Sumurset. He taught the great sea birds to sing and molded the crash of wave against beach into a song of whispers and power. It is said by the high elves that Jephre hears and sees all within distance of water, whether it be beach, brook, stream

or fall. It is further said that the very birds keep watch for Jephre, in repayment for the songs he taught them. It is further said he blessed the high elves with a beauty to match the beauty of their island home.

The dark elves have a legend that Jephre walked the earth before the first day, and in the light of the stars weaved a song so beautiful that the very stars moved to its sway. Some of the stars to this very day still wink and blink in memory of the song of night and darkness. Due to his influence most if not all Elven Bards pay homage to Jephre.

The natural order of things is the basis for Jephre's temples in Valenwood and the Sumurset Isle. The one thing Jephre will not tolerate is the harmful manipulation of the natural order of things.

# On Lycanthropy

*Varnard Karessen*

How does one become interested in studying the disease lycanthropy? I have interviewed a number of my peers, and discovered that to a man, they have all entered the field after a horrifying encounter with a lycanthrope of some variety. I am no exception.

In Skyrim, it is an old tradition to rub canis root on the trees surrounding your house as a ward against werebears. When I was young and stupid (as opposed, I guess, to being old and stupid as I am now), I always had hoped to meet a werebear to see if they were as impressive as legend suggested. I would follow strange tracks in the woods until they disappeared, with no fear or even thought about what I would do after I had found my quarry. By Thorig's beard, I was lucky that my investigations were fruitless.

When I did finally see a lycanthrope, it was not a werebear. It was a werewolf, the "common" lycanthrope, which can be found in every part of Tamriel. My father was a priest and during the coldest part of the winter, he allowed the beggars and riffraff of Falcrenth to stay in the relative warmth of the cellar of his temple. We would even supply warm barley stew. My sisters and brothers and I actually enjoyed this bit of philanthropy, for in the cellars during the winter, it seemed there was a constant party. There were always travellers with interesting stories and



eccentricities, and the atmosphere in the cellars was always light and friendly. Until that night.

By an established tradition, the beggars who were sick or wanted rest more than food and companionship would go to the cots at the farthest, darkest end of the cellar when they could be assured at least relative quiet. We were enjoying a song, and my sister Gethessa was dancing to the amusement of all. The song ended, but a chorus continued from the darkness at the far end of the cellar. As drunk and incomprehensible as most of the carolers were, it took a minute for us to realize that the sound we were hearing was not singing, but screaming.

No one was too concerned, for some of the older tramps often suffered from vivid nightmares. Nevertheless, one of father's priests went to silence the screamer and the moment he disappeared into the murk, we heard another sound. The snarl of a wolf. Then we heard the priest screaming as the original scream died off.

"Werewolf!" cried the old bard who had been leading the song. The cellar exploded into chaos.

I was pushed out the cellar door into the snow with the first wave of panic, but I could see that some of the more brave (or more drunk) hobos were rushing into the darkness to do battle with the lycanthrope. They were all, of course, almost instantly killed.

My father, upon hearing of his unwelcome visitor, sealed off the cellar after the last survivor of the carnage had left. A seasoned battlemage from the Falcrenth Mages Guild, who owed father a favor, went into the cellar and slew the beast.

“Not too tough,” he said as he emerged, carrying the carcass with him. “Winter must have been tough on him too.” Despite his bold words, the blood on his face and chest did not only come from his foe.

Werewolves do not revert to their human forms upon death, despite what legends will tell you. I had the opportunity to look at the monster’s steaming body out in the snow before it was carried away to be burned. The teeth, clotted with the flesh of the beggars, were horrifying, but the claws shocked me even more. I have since seen live lycanthropes battle golems, atronachs, and other beings not harmed by mundane weapons, and concluded that they act as naturally enchanted weapons.

Because the werewolf is the most ubiquitous of lycanthropes, the term lycanthropy has been used since ancient days to describe the disease that transforms men into half-beast, although lycanthrope only strictly should refer to men who change into werewolves. But that is semantics. There are certainly differences between the seven documented forms of lycanthropy in Tamriel, but more similarities.

In Black Marsh and southern Morrowind, werecrocodiles stalk the swamps. Black Marsh also shares with the Imperial Province and the wetter parts of Elsweyr the vile presence of werelions. Valenwood’s werevultures are not found in any other province. The wereboar has found both the climates of High Rock and Hammerfell amenable. As I mentioned before, the werebear is the most common lycanthrope in Skyrim, and is also found in the northern parts of High Rock, the Imperial Province, and Morrowind. The werewolf can be found in every province. The seventh lycanthrope, which I have never seen but

my trusted peers have assured me exists, is a wereshark that roams the oceans around Tamriel.

I have spent my life categorizing and observing lycanthropes, but I sometimes feel that I am still a child trapped in a cellar in my attempts to understand them. I know, for example, that lycanthropy can be cured shortly after infection, but after that time, the victim is doomed. No one of my acquaintance has cured themselves after undergoing the first transformation. On the other hand, I have a colleague investigating a coven of witches in the Glenpoint foothills of High Rock who are rumored to have a cure. I remain dubious.

Perhaps it is because they are doomed that makes lycanthropes so aggressive. I have removed the contents of a werewolf's stomach and found more remnants of roots and berries than animal flesh. My conclusion is that they do not need to attack and devour humans to survive. Yet, for some reason they do. Does lycanthropy drive them mad, or do lycanthropes feel the need to spread the disease as a form of procreation? I do not know. I am not certain that any of us who are not lycanthropes ourselves will ever know. And then, of course, it's too late.

# Rude Song

*Anonymous*

In the spring of the year  
Doth propriety disappear  
In the courts and the ports  
Of the Bay.

Drinking new beer,  
Everybody feels queer  
And the Earls and the churls  
Go astray.

The bee and the bird  
Don't have to tell us a word.  
Our bodies for naughties  
Are prime.

If you haven't heard,  
You can let yourself be lured

For the youth, for things uncouth,

It is time.

Oh, it's lovely to sit in a field, harvested into rows

It's lovelier still to do the same not wearing any clothes.

People of the Bay bless

The flowered court of Wayrest

For showing us the gentle way of sin

The bonny Dark Elf queen

Likes to see and to be seen

With cobblers, thieves,

And tavernkeeps,

And slaves, and fish-er-men.

In the court of Lainlyn,

Right upon the mainland

With sex, the whole place is in a whirl.

The Baroness likes to play

With men who come her way,

While the Baron likes the little boys and girls.

Oh, it's lovely to give your lady a kiss upon her nose

It's lovelier still to do the same not wearing any clothes.

In Daggerfall, they hold a ball

And all of society indulges in a variety

Of scandal, they can handle—

A lot.

The Captain of the Guard

Has to search very hard

For a bean that the Queen Has in her pants.

And the Court Sorceress

Will grant you a wish

To cause the King to fling

About his lance.

Oh, it's lovely to give your love a single perfect rose

It's lovelier still to do the same not wearing any clothes.

Oh, it's lovely to abandon all your cares and fears and woes

It's lovelier still to do the same not wearing any clothes.

Yes sir, it's lovely not wear any clothes!

# Special Flora Of Tamriel

## *Hardin*

Poppies, both black and white, can be found growing wild in the mountains of Hammerfell. Their succulent pods are often the only nourishment of adventurers who find themselves in the wilderness without rations. It is said that the black and white poppies together have magical properties. When they are crushed and mixed with the milk of the agile footed mountain goat, a potion that allows the user to glide safely above the ground can be made.

Fire Fern, a perennial herb, native to Morrowind. The flowers are inconspicuous and often hidden. The glossy, evergreen foliage and flowers are resistant to the conditions of high heat and bright light. A petal from this plant placed under an adventurer's tongue will provide protection from the heat and fire found in the lava pits and streams found around Dagoth-Ur.

Dragon's-Tongue, common name for a fern like herb found in Black Marsh. It is especially prolific around the area of Utherus Swamp. It is a beautiful wildflower. Its name comes from the fire red fronds that protect its golden flower. As pretty as it is, it is a deadly poison to most living beings and needs to be avoided by adventurers. It is said, however, that Argonians can pick the plant and use the sap derived from its roots as an enhancement to their endurance.

Domica Redwort is a herb grown by many residents of Valenwood for their beautiful and showy flowers. They attain a height of about three feet and have feathery leaves; the flowers are usually bright red. In addition to their beauty, they are said to have magical abilities to enhance the appearance of anyone who carries or wears one of the flowers.

Ironwood Nut, this rare nut comes from the Ironwood trees which grow deep in the forests of Skyrim. The wood from these trees is as hard as the metal for which they are named. The very rare black ironwood tree is said to produce a nut which is very succulent and is believed to enhance the strength of the adventurer who is able to crack its shell.

The Ginko leaves which are found along the banks of rivers and lakes in Hammerfell are most inconspicuous, only its peculiar halfmoon shape makes it noticeable. It is very sweet and tasty. Legend has it that when mixed properly with the pulp of the Aloe plant, the potion has the ability to increase one's stamina for a short while.

The Somnalius Fern can be found in the swamps of Black Marsh. The fronds from this plant are light green and quite delicate. Picking a frond can be very difficult, but once retrieved it can be used to put an enemy to sleep for a short while by passing it under his nose.

Arrowroot is a thick, rubbery tuber that can be found in the Province of Valenwood. The plant is very difficult to find as its above ground foliage is very meager and scrawny. But the Arrowroot itself can be most beneficial to the gatherer as it has magical properties. The paste made from grinding the root is very tasty and can improve the user's accuracy with a bow and arrow.



Nightshade is reputed to be a very poisonous herb. However the variety found in many parts of Elsweyr is cherished by Khajiits who have followed the career path of thievery. Many Khajiits will tuck a piece of Nightshade inside their armor to increase their abilities to skulk, hide and become invisible.

# The Alik'r

*Enric Milres*

I might never have gone to the Alik'r Desert had I not met Weltan in a little tavern in Sentinel. Weltan is a Redguard poet whose verse I had read, but only in translation. He chooses to write in the old language of the Redguards, not in Tamrielic. I once asked him why.

“The Tamrielic word for the divinely rich child of rot, silky, pressed sour milk is...cheese,” said Weltan, a huge smile spreading like a tide over his lampblack face. “The Old Redguard word for it is mluo. Tell me, if you were a poet fluent in both languages, which word would you use?”

I am a child of the cities, and I would tell him tales of the noise and corruption, wild nights and energy, culture and decadence. He listened with awed appreciation of the city of my birth: white-marbled Imperial City where all the citizenry are convinced of their importance because of the proximity of the Emperor and the lustration of the streets. They say that a beggar on the boulevards of the Imperial City is a man living in a palace. Over spiced ale, I regaled Weltan with descriptions of the swarming marketplace of Riverhold; of dark, brooding Mournhold; of the mold-encrusted villas of Lilmoth; the wonderful, dangerous alleys of Helstrom; the stately avenues of grand old Solitude. For all this, he marvelled, inquired, and commented.

“I feel as if I know your home, the Alik’r Desert, from your poems even though I’ve never been there.” I told him.

“Oh, but you don’t. No poem can express the Alik’r. It may prepare you for a visit far better than the best guide book can. But if you want to know Tamriel and be a true citizen of the planet, you must go and feel the desert yourself.”

It took me a little over a year to break off engagements, save money (my greatest challenge), and leave the urban life for the Alik’r Desert. I brought several books of Weltan’s poems as my travel guide.

“A sacred flame rises above the fire, The ghosts of great men and women without names, Cities long dead rise and fall in the flame, The Dioscori Song of Revelation, Bursting walls and deathless rock, Fiery sand that heals and destroys.”

These first six lines from my friend’s “On the Immortality of Dust” prepared me for my first image of the Alik’r Desert, though they hardly do it justice. My poor pen cannot duplicate the severity, grandeur, ephemera and permanence of the Alik’r.

All the principalities and boundaries the nations have placed on the land dissolve under the moving sand in the desert. I could never tell if I was in Antiphyllus or Bergama, and few of the inhabitants could tell me. For them, and so it came to me, we were simply in the Alik’r. No. We are part of the Alik’r. That is closer to the philosophy of the desert people.

I saw the sacred flame of which Weltan wrote on my first morning in the desert: a vast, red mist that seemed to come from the deep mystery of Tamriel. Long before the noon sun, the mist had disappeared. Then I saw the cities of Weltan. The

ruins of the Alik'r rise from the sand by one blast of the unbounded wind and are covered by the next. Nothing in the desert lasts, but nothing dies forever.

At daylight, I hid myself in tents, and thought about the central character of the Redguards that would cause them to adopt this savage, eternal land. They are warriors by nature. As a group, there are none better. Nothing for them has worth unless they have struggled for it. No one fought them for the desert, but the Alik'r is a great foe. The battle goes on. It is a war without rancor, a holy war in the sense the phrase should always imply.

By night, I could contemplate the land itself in its relative serenity. But the serenity was superficial. The stones themselves burned with a heat and a light that comes not from the sun, nor the moons Jone and Jode. The power of the stones comes from the beat of the heart of Tamriel itself.

Two years I spent in the Alik'r.

As write this, I am back in Sentinel. We are at war with the kingdom of Daggerfall for the possession of a grass-covered rock that belongs to the water of the Iliac Bay. All my fellow poets, writers, and artists are despondent for the greed and pride that brought these people into battle. It is a low point, a tragedy. In the words of Old Redguard, an ajcea, a spiral down.

Yet, I cannot be sorrowful. In the years I spent in the glories of the Alik'r, I have seen the eternal stones that live on while men go dead. I have found my inner eye in the tractless, formless, changeless and changeable land. Inspiration and hope, like the stones of the desert, are eternal though men be not.

# The Arrowshot Woman

*Anonymous*

I heard this story on good authority from a good and honest friend, whose friend was witness to the incident. I do truly believe it happened, as fantastical as it may seem.

My friend's friend, Terron, was visiting the Elsweyr citystate of Riverhold during a very hot summer and went to the marketplace there. If you have never been to Riverhold, the marketplace is very crowded, much more than in comparably sized city states. People from the countryside flock to the marketplace daily in their wagons and carriages.

Terron was passing one such carriage, and noticed that the sole occupant was a woman, seated with her eyes closed and her hands behind her head. An odd sight, to be sure, but he assumed she must be sleeping. Terron continued on.

A little while later, after Terron had finished shopping in the marketplace, he passed the same carriage. The same woman was sitting in it. Her eyes were open now, but her hands were still behind her head.

"Are you all right, my lady?" he asked.

"An arrow shot me in my head and I'm holding my brains in," came the woman's reply.

Terron did not know what to do. He ran into the marketplace and literally bumped into a healer and his knight companion. They were good people and agreed to help.

The carriage door had to be torn off its hinges, as the lady had locked it and feared to move to unlock it. What they found when they finally could get into the carriage was this: the woman was holding barley dough on the back of her head with her hands.

Apparently, in the heat of the day, a jar of barley dough had exploded with the thwang of an arrowshot and struck the woman in the back of her head. When she reached back to feel what had hit her, she felt the dough and reasoned that she was feeling her brains.

# The Asylum Ball

*Waughin Jarth*

My great great uncle was a warder at an asylum in Torval (maybe he was my great great great uncle—it was quite a long time ago), and this is the story that has been passed down in my family from his generation to mine. Perhaps it is purely apocryphal, but when I was told it, it was whispered in such a way that it was meant to be taken seriously. Not having any children of my own to whisper to, and being in need of some gold, I have elected to publish my story.

The asylum my great great uncle worked in was apparently very posh. Only the right class of lunatics were admitted. Eccentric dukes, mad baronesses, touched lords, and daft ladies filled the asylums tapestried and gilded halls. Still, it was a time of great excitement when the rumor began that the unhinged Emperor of Tamriel, Pelagius III, was transferring there from a resort in Valenwood. When the rumor became a reality, the asylum went into nice, calm, restive chaos. Pelagius was given an entire wing of the asylum for his own use, for, though he was madder than a jackal, he was still His Terrible Majesty, the Emperor of Tamriel.

The Emperor was remarkably well behaved, my great great uncle supposedly asserted. Of course, he did not have to face the commoners who came on all sorts of pretenses to gawk at their overlord, the loon. When one of the warders (not, I have

been assured, my uncle) forgot himself and let His Terrible Majesty know that people had been there to see him, the Emperor grew very excited. He made up his mind right there and then to have a ball. A huge party with musicians, dancing, and dinner, right at the lunatic asylum. Or precisely, in his wing of the asylum.

Rumors of the Emperor's interest in holding a ball spread throughout Torval and eventually it reached the ears of the Emperess Regent Katariah, Pelagius' dear wife, in the Imperial City. Eager to make her husband happy, she sent a caravan laden with gold to the asylum so a ball might be held befitting the Imperial dignity.

The Emperor picked a date for the ball, and preparations began immediately. The old asylum walls were beautifully decorated, but needed cleaning. A pit had to be constructed to house the orchestra; servants for cooking and serving the food had to be hired; gold and ebony candelabras and matching chandeliers were ordered; the old rugs were destroyed, and new rugs embroidered with gems were weaved; lists of guests had to be compiled, reconsidered and recompiled. The Emperor knew that the guest list had to be very exclusive, and he relied on his advisors to tell him who was alive, who was dead, and who was imaginary.

The party was set to begin at nine o'clock. At six, the hairdresser he had hired from Torval finished his Imperial coiffure. At seven, he was fully dressed in the robes he had ordered for the ball: voluminous black silk and piled velvet crusted with red diamonds. At eight, he walked down the newly reconstructed staircase to supervise the final preparations—the lighting of the candles, the opening of the



wine, the murder of the first course. At nine o'clock, he took his seat at the facsimile throne he had ordered and awaited the first guests.

At nine thirty, his advisor, seeing the royal eyes beginning to glaze over with madness, said, "Your Terrible Majesty surely knows that it is not fashionable to arrive at any ball for at least an hour after the desired time, yes?"

The Emperor just stared.

At ten thirty, the Emperor called for some food and wine, and sat at his throne, looking at the open door, eating. Thirty minutes later, he ordered the orchestra to begin playing. For the next three hours, they played gaily for the empty, candlelit ballroom.

At one o'clock, the Emperor announced his intention to retire for the evening. My uncle was one of the warders who assisted His Terrible Majesty up the staircase. Halfway to his room, Pelagius threw himself on the floor in a hysteria, screaming and laughing, ordering more wine (my mother was good at this part of the story, rolling her eyes and shrieking, "More wine! More wine! Wine!"), and, in short, imagining that he was possessed by all the revellers at his party that never was.

Two days later, he was still not better. He had cut himself and those who tried to grapple him horribly with the red diamonds of his robe. Eventually it was decided that the Torval asylum was not equipped to deal with a lunatic of his severity, and he was sent to a more secure location in Black Marsh. It was only three months later, my uncle heard that the Emperor had died.

One of my uncle's duties was to clear out the personal property of the inmates after their death. Being primarily landed nobility, the personal property was often quite extensive. Several years after the asylum ball, my uncle was called to clear out the apartment of a duchess whose chief eccentricity was a propensity to pilfer. Kleptomania, I believe it's called. Locked away in a secret door in her desk, protected by a trap armed with a barbed needle, was a variety of jewels, piles of gold, and a five large stacks of beautifully engraved invitations signed in the Emperor's childlike handwriting.

# The Ebon Arm

*Witten Rol*

There are in-game shrines devoted to Ebonarm, and he's mentioned in other books. I've heard a rumor about the unjoinable faction called "The Citadel of Ebonarm".

Mara (AKA Marilyn Wasserman) had this to say about the book: "I believe Reymon Ebonarm was pictured as a Nord. He was worshipped as a minor deity, or hero saint if you prefer, in the Iliac Bay area. There's at least one shrine to him in TES: Daggerfall. Daggerfall was the last city that the Nords ruled during the First Era."

"Ebonarm is another of the Daggerfall beta testers' alter egos, in this case that of Raymond Whit Crowley, who wrote 'Ebon Arm'. His online handle was Barak Halfhand at that time, but that name came from a book so could not be used in TES."

The ground shakes. The great armies continue to wage their unrelenting battle. The battlefield is red, the rivers flow crimson, the sky reflects a deep pink. In the distance lightning flashes, and thunder sounds. Two huge ravens begin circling the field; their blackness is vibrant against the various shades of red in this vista of death and suffering. The bright flashes of light and rumbling begin to increase. The redness surrounding the battlefield begins giving way to a golden glow from the east, almost like a summer's setting sun. From the false sunset

a massive golden stallion and single rider approach. All become suddenly still on the field of battle as both sides recognize Reymon Ebonarm, God of War, and the companion and protector of all warriors, also known as the Black Knight and his mighty steed War Master.

He rides into the middle of the blood soaked field and dismounts. He is a very imposing figure. His very tall and heavily muscled body is encased in ebony armor. His ebony helmet does not hide the flowing reddish blonde hair and beard which appear almost as shimmering gold, nor does it shield the steel blue eyes that seem to pierce all they fall upon. In his left hand he carries a massive ebony tower shield on which is emblazoned a fiery red rose. As he raises his right arm, all see an arm and a magnificent ebony blade which are extensions of each other. The fused arm and sword are a result and symbol of the wounds suffered by this god during titanic battles in the youth of this world.

The ravens come to rest on his shoulders. And, as the point of the ebony blade seemingly touches the sky, lightning flashes, thunder roars. Then total quiet descends and a shudder rolls through both armies.

The leaders of both armies approach Reymon Ebonarm and kneel. In turn they tell their reasons for this war. Each asks for the favor of the Black Knight for their cause. Reymon Ebonarm listens, but there is no acknowledgment that he has chosen to favor one side or the other in this fight. However, each of the leaders has heard the other state his position. And, each now knows that this war is baseless. They embrace and turn to their armies. They instruct their forces to bury their dead, tend their wounded and return to their homes.

Reymon Ebonarm mounts his great golden stallion, War Master, and again raises the ebony blade skyward and extends the huge rose emblazoned ebony shield to both armies. A massive chorus of cheers rises from the armies. The ravens again take to the air. Lightning and thunder follow him as he rides into the sunset followed by the two birds.

The armies do as they have been bidden. They care for their wounded and bury their dead. As they retreat towards their homes each warrior is sure that the great God Reymon Ebonarm, the Black Knight, has responded to their individual prayers for intervention. Each side has won, neither has lost.

As the armies depart the field, the rivers begin to run clear, and a single red rose begins to bloom near the grave of a fallen hero.

# The Epic Of The Grey Falcon

*Anido Jhone*

As uncovered and translated by Anido Jhone, Royal Archaeologist, from an ancient tome:

This tale comes from sometime in the 2nd Era, most probably after the time of the Knahaten Flu, or at least I have so surmised due to reasons in the text. Whether or not the tale is true, it remains an interesting story of survival.

The reader will, I trust, forgive me if I translated the epic somewhat informally. The message, I think, is universal, and should not be misread.

Enjoy, gentle reader.

A.J.J.

The Grey Falcon , a small warship of the Sumurset Isle, Was patrolling deep in the ocean for a pirate That had been looting the coast. The first three weeks out were uneventful. Two hours after sunset, on the 22nd day out of port, The lookout spotted a top of a sail in the moonlight, Just on the horizon. "Sail! To starboard, forward quarter!" The lookout of the Grey Falcon cried. The crew and captain of the Grey Falcon were quickly roused, And stumbled to the deck. "'Tis the ship we're looking for, Captain," said the lookout.

“All hands to battle stations! All archers to their posts,” The Captain yelled, “Full ahead!” The two ships closed, And a dark figure stepped out onto the forecastle of the pirate ship. The figure made a gesture with his hands, And a giant ball of fire streaked towards the Grey Falcon. The ball of fire struck the Grey Falcon in her sails, Quickly catching them aflame.

The figure made another gesture. Large bolts of ice streaked out from his hands, And hit the Grey Falcon just above and below the water line, Gouging large holes in her hull. The Grey Falcon was mortally wounded. The Captain cried, “All hands abandon shi-” As he was cut off by a pirate’s arrow shot into his throat.

As the Grey Falcon, aflame and listing badly, plunged into the sea, One of her sailors, Darik Seaspit, Managed avoid the pirate arrows and spells to make his way to a lifeboat, And lowered it into the darkness below. Just as the lifeboat entered the water, a quick grey shape jumped into it. Darik looked, and saw it was Helnor Snarlbane, A Khajiit mercenary assigned to the ship. The two rowed the small boat away, As the Grey Falcon finished her descent into the sea. In the darkness, the Pirate ship missed their small craft. After the two rowed well out of the pirates possible view, They both collapsed from exhaustion.

Early morning the next day, They took an inventory of the lifeboats stores. Normally the lifeboat carries enough food and water To supply seven people for at least ten days.

In place of the food, though, Helnor found a note: “The food in this lifeboat was found to be in violation of Sumerset Navy regulation during inspection. In accordance to that article, the food was taken away and destroyed. A replacement may be obtained by redeeming this letter at the Port Supply Office. Signed, Lt. Inspector Windhollow” Helnor read aloud.

Said Darik, to his Khajiit Companion, "We have plenty of water, but we are out of food. I don't know what we're going to do. I suppose we could try fishing, but we have no bait. "There's no chance we can make it back to land Before we starve to death - 'twill be over a month in this craft" "Wait, I have an idea" said Helnor, with a gleam in his catlike eye.

Six weeks later, the lifeboat entered the port of Corwich. As it was tethered to the dock, a solitary figure was pulled out, Looking weather beaten and thin. One of the dock workers peered into the life raft, After the figure was taken away to the port healer for treatment. "Hmm, what's this", a worker said to himself, As he picked up a large bone from the boat, A bone bleached white by the sun.

After the sole survivor of the Grey Falcon recovered from his ordeal, He was taken to the inquest for the death of Darik Seaspit, And placed on a chair before the magistrate. "We here in High Rock have a dim view of cannibalism. You'd better have a good reason for your actions," The inquisitor boomed at Helnor Snarlsbane.

"By the Lady, do you?" Helnor stood, and said, "Your Honor, I had no choice. There was no food, and it was at least two months to the closest port. We both decided this was the only way someone would make it" "Well, then , I suppose that is understandable, If somewhat distasteful," the inquisitor said. "You think it was distasteful?," Helnor muttered to himself, "I didn't have any seasoning."

"One final thing, Mr. Snarlsbane, How was it decided that you would be the one that would dine on the other? The toss of a coin?" Helnor drew himself up and said, "Your honor, it was very simple. Darik Seaspit was a vegetarian" "Case dismissed!"



# The Faerie

## *Szun Triop*

Faerie have been on Tamriel, in all probability, long before recorded history, perhaps since or before the days of the Elder Ones. The tales of their mischief are found in every culture, in most every village, town, and city-states in the Empire. Alternately they are called Faerie, Fey, Illyadi, Sprites, Pixies, and Sylphim, and their natures seem to flit from one story to the next with the same variation. It could almost be said that Faeries are anything unpredictable in nature.

The noted scholar Ahrtabazus studying at the time in the Crystal Tower of Sumurset Isle developed an interesting if controversial theory about Faerie. He organized the Fey variants on a chain, beginning with the glimmering sparks called Pixies or Whilloki by the Redguards at one end and the godlike beings such as Gheateus, Chonus, and Sygria at the other. In the middle are human and semi-human beings generating up to intelligent trees, brooks, rocks, even mountains. All of this was a new and completely original theory and would have prompted enthusiastic, if somewhat skeptical response had Ahrtabazus not added this footnote: "It may be that elves as a whole are part of this chain, above whilloki and below nephrine. They certainly have similar features and propensities for magicka as the other Faerie." (Ahrtabazus, "The Faerie Chain" Firsthold, 2E 456)

No elf liked to be put in a hierarchy slightly above whimsical pranksters like the whilloki, and Ahrtabazus was challenged on his assumptions based on very slight coincidences. Nevertheless, with modification, his Fairie Chain theory has gained wider and wider acceptance since its publication.

The hierarchial chain is not, in the strictest sense, an order of command. While Gheateus and Sygria are said to be surrounded by a host of minor Sylphim, faerie on the whole are not followers nor leaders. Their plans and schemes are not governed by a higher purpose, simply by their own whim.

To this most faerie scholars agree. Because it is based on coincidental evidence and supported by auxiliary theories, it may very well be wrong.

# The Fall Of The Usurper

*Palaux Illthre*

The people of Dwynnen celebrate Othroktide every 5th of Suns Dawn, the date when, according to legend, a man emerged from the wilderness of High Rock and defeated the undead of Castle Wightmoor to become the first Baron of Dwynnen. Few people believe the legend anymore, but there most certainly was a Baron Othrok of Dwynnen who was destined to become one of true heroes of High Rock, if not all Tamriel.

The legend, as most any Dwynnen child will tell you, is that years and years ago (archivists have agreed to the year 3E253), the people of Dwynnen were ruled by a lich and its armies of zombies, ghosts, vampires, and skeletons. Othrok was blessed with by gods and given an army of men and animals to destroy the dead. He brought peace and prosperity to the land, growing more powerful as the land improved. Years later, he led the tiny barony against the Camoran Usurper, and saved all of Tamriel.

How much credit the Baron ought to receive for the defeat of the Camoran Usurper has been debated, but it is an uncontestable fact that in the year 3E 267, the Camoran Usurper's relentless move north through High Rock was halted around the area of contemporary Dwynnen. Dwynnen is actually larger than it was in the first Baron's day—it did not, in fact, have a sea port—but the Battle of Firewaves was a coastal battle. The fact that the battle probably did not occur in

Dwynnen does not in itself belittle the Baron's participation in it.

The Camoran Usurper had conquered Hammerfell and Valenwood by means of a large army, which by legend consisted entirely of undead and daedra, but was mostly composed of Redguards and Wood Elves. In all probability, the Usurper summoned the daedra and undead in Arenthia and slowly replaced the original summoned creatures with the armies of his conquered territories. Most armies of Valenwood have been historically mercenary.

Word of the Usurper's conquests reached High Rock in early 266, but preparations to repel the invasion did not begin until early the following year. Historians attribute two factors to High Rock's hesitancy. The primary powers of the Bay were ruled by particularly inept monarchs—Wayrest and Sentinel both had kings in their minority, and Daggerfall was torn by contention between Helena and her cousin Jilathe. The Lord of Reich Gradkeep (now Anticlere) was deathly ill through 266 and finally died at the end of the year. There were, in short, no leaders to unite the province against the Usurper. Of the leaders with any influence, at least eight (the "Eight Traitors" of legend) made secret allegiances with the Usurper to protect their lands.

The secondary reason for the lethargy of High Rock had to do with the depth of relations between the province and the Septim Empire. For the first time since the beginning of the Dynasty, an Emperor ruled Tamriel who was neither Breton nor had spent any of his childhood in High Rock. The difference between Cephorus II and his cousin Uriel IV who preceded him was appalling to the people of High Rock. Even

mad Emperors like Pelagius III revered the Bretons over all other races, and cousins and younger siblings of the Emperors have ruled in High Rock since the foundation of the Empire. Cephorus was a Nord, with Skyrim and Morrowind sympathies. The attitude of the common men of High Rock was sympathetic toward the Camoran Usurper as an archfoe of this hated Emperor.

The Baron and his less legendary allies, the rulers of Ykalon, Phrygia, and Kambria, changed this favorable perception. News of the Usurper's barbaric treatment of captives and abuse of conquered lands, mostly true, spread rapidly through their territories, and then to other neutral lands. Within a few months, the greatest navy ever combined organized along the High Rock edge of the Iliac Bay. Only the navy of Uriel V's illfated invasion of Akavir was comparable.

How the combined forces of High Rock defeated the endless army of the Camoran Usurper is certainly worthy of a lengthy book in itself. And perhaps, it is best left to the public imagination. Certainly the weather worked against the Usurper, which is reason in itself to attribute divine intervention.

Baron Othrok's divine purpose is the central theme to Othroktide, after all. And as the poet Braeloque wrote, "To find the facts, the wisest always look first to the fiction."

# The First Scroll Of Baan Dar

*Arkan*

What follows is a translation of the first fragment from a series of vellum scrolls found in 3 Alabaster jars sealed in a cave. The discoverer was a nomad wanderer somewhere on the shores of Lake Vread in the Province of Elswyer. I can neither vouch for nor deny its authenticity or veracity - only that the scrolls, as such, DO exist. Read and judge for yourself:

Baan Dar, The Legend... Thief, Warlock, ShadowMaster, Ruthless Assassin, Undying Avenger, Dark God, Robber Baron, MasterMind of Nefarious Plots. All these things and more are the Legendary Baan Dar, he who is called The Bandit God. But what is the Truth?

Baan Dar, The Man is a much more simple and complex being. I pen this tale as I slowly die of old age and a mortifying arrow wound. I cannot decide if the truth will add to or subtract from the legend that is Baan Dar, nor if the original Baan Dar would want the truth to be known. Therefore, I will leave this tale hidden when I am done and gone, and let Fate (which was ever Baan Dar's true master and motivator) decide.

I was a child of 12 Seasons when I first met Baan Dar. Orphan of a Slaver raid during one of the many inter-provincial border wars. Living by my quick wits, nimble fingers, and the grace of Lady Luck in the back alleys and byways of my birth city. I had

just “liberated” a loaf of bread and a few small apples from a local street vendor in the Bazaar on the edge of the city near the tumbled outer wall, and had withdrawn down an ill-lit alley to feast on my bounty when I was beset by an older band of my ilk. The older and lazier variety which were want to engage in the easier and less dangerous art of stealing from the stealers.

There were 5 of the bully boys who had decided they were more deserving of my booty than I, and they were beating me half to death with staves in between bites and laughter at the time. Lying on the ground curled up into as tight a ball as I could manage, trying to protect my head and groin, I heard a quiet voice ask if they were not “more suited to go down to the wharf and take food from your brother rats, or would you care to try your tricks on game a bit more your size and number?”

Since my “companions” had become otherwise engaged with the newcomer and had for the nonce ceased thumping, kicking and cuffing at me, I looked up to see a dark shadow of boots, cloak, and chainmail hood leaning against the wall at the end of the alleyway.

The others, being what they were, took this as a challenge to their manhood - and easy prey to their superior number with a promise of coin of the realm as added reward (else the first part would have been overlooked). The leader of my band of playmates suggested that the stranger take a leap off the mentioned wharf unless he wished to join me there when they were done with their evening meal.

Having drawn chuckles and courage from his underlings, he then proceeded forward with staff at high port. I’m not quite sure exactly what followed, but within a short space of time, Lead Bully was lying in the dirt with a thrown dagger in his

chest, number two bully had lost three teeth to a boot (I still carry them in a leather pouch as a keepsake), and number three bully was brought short by his own staff applied forcefully up between his toes (the two big ones!). Bullies four and five thought better of the entertainment and departed rapidly for parts unknown.

Baan Dar picked me up, dusted me off, and dragged me round to a near tavern where we shared a meal and a mug. I attempted to thank him for saving my life. How can I ever repay this favor, I asked? His reply was short, to the point, and has driven my actions in life ever since...

“THE PROPER WAY TO REPAY A FAVOR, IS NOT TO - PASS IT ON INSTEAD.”

Things having not progressed well along the lines of health, wealth and welfare for me until that point in my life came upon a sudden change that night. I later learned (along with MANY other things) that Baan Dar had decided to take a direct and immediate interest in me because my situation reminded him very much of the bad start his own life had taken, and the odds he had faced to survive it. On that night he took me under his wing as a kind of apprentice. He saw to it that I learned weaponcraft and stealth, that I learned to read and write! He took me along when he traveled for the next year. I served as messenger, valet, packmule, lookout, cook - many things. I saw other towns, cities, races, provinces, and broadened my view and knowledge of the world far beyond belief. He taught me both morals and coldhearted ruthlessness - and when and how to apply each as the ethics of the situation required.

At the end of the year, he gave me good dagger, and decent horse, the 3 teeth, and leave (nay, Command) to make my own



way in the world from that day forward - but to remember all I had been given, and to attempt to pass such a gift to another when and where I should find need and opportunity. That I have done, several times... as I assume he has also, and as I hope my various charges have after me (and they theirs).

Thus has the Legendary Baan Dar been seen time and again in various lands of our world at numerous and the same times in days of need. Thus also is the description so very hard to obtain and track - for in truth, there have been, and continue to be, many Baan Dars in the world. The most valuable lesson he ever taught me was that "for Evil to triumph required not so much that many bad men to do wrong, as for One good man to fail to do what was right." We only hope that our combined and concatenated efforts have produced enough single men and women that will not fail to do the right thing, regardless of current local, morals, laws, religion, creed, or lure of coin of the realm.

The Legend grows still. Of the Dark Avenging Blade on the Wings of Night that make no sound. The Patron Saint of the Lone Wolf. The Thousand Eyes and Ears, the Hundred Arms disrespectful of Time or Distance. Undying, Master of Disguise, Man of a Thousand Faces, Shapes and Sizes, Gentle, Rough-Edged, Gay, Stern. All the Mystery of the "Man Unknown and Undying"... not a single man nor God at all, but a string of seeds sown upon the land and left to grow into a forest. How to reconcile this truth with the tales of cruelty and the gangs of "Baan Dars" or "Bandits"? Some are jealous Thieves who take the name only for the cloak of mystery and hope of hiding in it's Shadow. Others are tales twisted to reverse by those justly served by Baan Dar's unfettered by technicalities of law and custom. Some are backsliders drawn of the true path by

temptation and returning to their old ways. Many are the things that any one Baan Dar cannot answer for, as others did the deeds in the same name. Some are tales of fishwives, made up to scare the child into doing what is wanted. Some are left as part of the “Mystery” that is both cloak and shield to the hidden purposes - a case where the fear of the tale serves to save the need of arms or action.

But, by and large, the true Baan Dar is a string of beings taught to act upon what they believe in, and stand to take the yoke of needed action upon their own shoulders.

Don't fight if you can avoid blood or war, But if you must make War, do so with all your Heart and Might. Leave it at Threats if Threats be enough - but never make threats you are unwilling to carry to conclusion if required. Use all the arts at hand. But ever keep the true purpose in mind. Stand Tall, but never forget how to bend your knee to help another.

Note:

The rest of the scrolls are tales and tellings of various parts of the Legend, some as passed from Bard to Bard, some as the true tales underlying the Ballads. These fragments are still to be translated and debated. This fragment, however, contains the kernel of the Revelation and the true source of the questions surrounding the Baan Dar Legend. What Say You, Reader? For myself, I do not know... but God or unrelated string of linked souls as laid out here... I do know that Baan Dar IS a force in our Land and Lives, and one that gives Hope to many that need it, and pause to many I despise.

- Arkan, Scribe of Daggerfall in the year 2E24

# The Legend Of Lovers Lament

*Croll Baumoval*

The night is very dark. Wind gently ruffles the willow trees. All is quiet, or it so appears, around the shores of the small lake. Tamriel's moons reflect in the slightly rippling surface of the water. An owl's questioning call echoes. No lights are shining from the castle nearby; it appears deserted.

As the night wears on and the planet's satellites moves across the heavens, a faint glow appears near the castle. The light slowly moves towards the lake, and upon reaching the shore, stops. A figure, a beautiful woman by any measure, stands looking wistfully into the dark water. Her lantern flickers in the breeze, and illuminates her. Tears are streaming down her cheeks; her gown, once beautiful, is now tattered and stained.

The surface of the lake becomes agitated, but not from a wind as the night has become as still as it is dark. Slowly from the water emerges the figure of a man, a warrior, fully adorned in the armor of a knight on the field of battle. He seems to float over the water towards the woman and stop just short of her.

"Madylina," the ghostly warrior intones.

"My Lord, Gerthland," whispers the lovely Madylina as she kneels. "You have come to me again."

“Yes,” Gerthland responds, “My days are long waiting for the night in which I can see my love.”

The lovers stand looking wistfully at each other, unable to touch, unable to kiss, unable to satisfy their unrequited love until the first tinges of dawn start to color the western sky. Gerthland drops something to the ground as does Madylina as each depart. The waters of the lake again take possession of the handsome knight and the beautiful maiden walks slowly back to the castle. As the waters of the lake settle into a gentle ripple and the light of Madylina’s lantern disappears, dawn breaks over the lake.

On the shore are two beautiful roses—one crimson and the other white as fresh cream. Ripples from the lake overtake the two flowers and pull them into the lake leaving the shore bare as it was in the hours before darkness fell.

\* \* \*

The townfolk around Gerthland Manor tell often of seeing these lovers in their nightly meeting. The Boar’s Bristle Inn is always rumbling with conversation about them. Lord Gerthland and Lady Madylina who were betrothed. Lord Gerthland called to battle to defend the land. Hergen, the castle’s resident sorcerer, becoming enflamed with love and lust for Madylina only to be rebuked by her. Lord Gerthland’s death on the field of battle. Lady Madylina’s death by her own hand at the news. Hergen’s curse on both their souls that will not allow them to rest until Madylina will agree to become Hergen’s consort even in death.

Hergen, to this day, wanders the deserted halls of Gerthland Manor hoping that Madylina will agree to his demands. And

the lovers continue to meet for a few moments each night on the shores of the lake now known as Lover's Lament.

# The Light And The Dark

*Irek Unterge*

“Yes, children, it is no accident that this land of Tamriel has been called ‘The Arena.’” The old man altered his position on the large rock that bore his weight, and straightened his long gray robe. Rheumy eyes lost their focus as they gazed out over the sun-warmed valley in the mountains of High Rock. For a moment he saw a vision of ancient horrors instead of the fresh greenery of spring. A chill washed over his aged bones.

“Is this a suitable topic for the young and innocent?” he asked himself. The young must be taught, but must they learn of such things now, when they should be playing in the sunlight? This is a tale for the dreary winter, with the wind howling outside a walled town and the doors and windows closed and bolted against the blast and cold and—other things.

He glanced with affection at his two grandchildren: the little towheaded boy with a hint of mischief dancing in his eyes even on those rare occasions when sitting quietly, and his older sister. A serene lass, the old man thought. Her hair like a dark flame and her slightly pointed ears were the only obvious signs of elven blood. So like her grandmother, the old man thought. The past is past, and I’shira had brought him so much peace and happiness after a lifetime of battle. He forced his thoughts back to the present.

“Sorry, children. I was remembering things. Old people do that, you know.”

“Are you going to tell us the story of Jagar Tharn and the Emperor and the Eternal Champion?” His grandson asked.  
“That’s my favorite!”

“Not exactly, son. They were a part of it, in a way. As are I’ric and Moraelyn and Edward and Reymon and many others. Even the gods play a part. This is a far older story, and even the priests won’t tell it my way. They have their own interpretations, and their fears as well. I’m too old and have seen too much to have any fear left, except that our people will forget. And forgetting is dangerous. So I, and a few others, carry this tale and try to spread it among the younger generations. You aren’t really old enough to understand it all, but I can feel that my end is not far off. I must ask you to remember anyway. In a few years, perhaps, if I still live, we can discuss it again. If not, well, you must seek out others who know, and compare notes.”

“You talk as if you are going to die, Granther,” his granddaughter spoke up. “That can’t happen. You will live forever!”

Chuckling, “I’m afraid not, dear. But I have a little while left, enough for the story”.

The children settled back against the bole of a large oak, knowing that the old man could not be hurried. Leaning forward, he began:

“Long, long ago, before there were any people at all; even before the gods, Tamriel was chosen as a battleground by two—

things. It is difficult to find words that fit them well. I call them the Light and the Dark. Others use different names. Good and Evil, Bird and Serpent, Order and Chaos. None of these names really apply. It suffices that they are opposites, and totally antithetical. Neither is really good or evil, as we know the words. They are immortal since they do not really live, but they do exist. Even the gods and their daedric enemies are pale reflections of the eternal conflict between them. It's as though their struggle creates energies that distort their surroundings, and those energies are so powerful that life can appear, like an eddy in a stream."

"Do demons and trolls come from the Dark, Grandpa?"

"Not exactly, son. The undead evils we know, and the demons that live on Oblivion tend to align with the Dark. Their natures are more akin to it. Humans and the other peoples of Tamriel, even the misunderstood Dark Elves, are more aligned with the Light. Our evils are not always of the Dark, but some are, and these are the truly dangerous ones. Jagar Tharn was almost wholly aligned with the Dark, and that is really why he was so monstrous. It was not because he was a black mage, as some would have it."

"Did his magic come from the Dark, Granther?" The girl's interest was piqued by mention of magic. Her heritage is beginning to show itself, thought the old man.

"No, magic power comes directly from the energies swirling about both entities. These energies are impersonal and all mixed up. Black magic is more a matter of intent than effect. The Mages' Guild holds that a fireball, say, directed against a creature intent on causing harm, is not black magic; but the same spell directed at one seeking peace is. In this, they are



right. Destruction of a fire daedra strengthens the Light and weakens the Dark just a little. In the same manner, destruction of a unicorn strengthens the Dark.”

“What about the gods? Do they come from the Light?” The boy’s eyes were animated, but tinged with apprehension. He adored stories of the gods and goddesses of Tamriel’s pantheon, and the heroes who served them.

The old man chuckled. “The gods have an unusual origin, if some of the oldest tales are true. The oldest inhabitants of this world—no one seems to be sure what race they were—had a system of myths that they believed in for a thousand years. The people of et’Ada believed for so long and so well, that their beliefs may, just may, have drawn upon the energies surrounding Tamriel to bring the gods themselves into being. If that is so, the conflict between the Light and the Dark provided the energy, and the et’Adans the structure, that created the gods of Tamriel. No one really knows since it was so long ago and so little survives from that time. It no longer matters; the gods have their own existence now, and mostly align with the Light, except for a few who are, shall we say, a little ambiguous.”

“Why do we have to remember, Granther? What is the danger you spoke of? If the Light and Dark are so big and powerful, can we influence them? Should we try? What should we fight for?”

“I see that your critical faculties are developing, Solara. That is good. The answer is simple, but quite large enough for mere mortals like us. The Light and Dark are evenly matched, and perhaps will never resolve their conflict. Mortals and the beings of the Aetherius sometimes can perceive traces of them. Therein lies the danger; to most of us the Light is more

congenial, even inspiring, and moves us to behavior that we would call good. To creatures like us, the Dark is—horrible. Those who have visions of it are often driven mad, and the ones who are not would be better dead. The Dark is to us a monstrous emptiness, an emptiness that sucks the soul toward it—to be twisted, maimed, and ultimately destroyed. What we can see of it seems utterly evil. Perhaps somewhere else this would not be so, but in our world, it is.”

The old man paused to gather his thoughts, gazing once more at the fresh new life of spring.

“What we must do is never to forget that the Dark is always there, beckoning to the weak-souled among us. Should it gain ascendancy over Tamriel, through agents perverted by its awful attraction, terrible things could happen. All that we hold beautiful or desirable, even love itself, would be swept away. Peace and hope would be no more. For Tamriel, that would be the worst possible disaster. What I saw during Jagar’s reign nearly killed me, almost destroyed my mind. When he was destroyed, I thought the worst was over, but it was not. The forces of the Dark are on the march again, and new heroes must rise to join the Eternal Champion in the fight against them.”

The old man and the two children sat in silence for several minutes. Finally, the children assisted their grandfather to his feet, and they walked slowly away. Toward home, and hearth, and lunch.

# The Memory Stone

*Makela Leki*

From The Memory Stone of Makela Leki

This is a faithful reproduction of the thoughts recorded in Makela Leki's memory stone, found in the Bankorai pass, in the year of reckoning 1E 973. Seven years before the fall of Orsinium due to the combined efforts of the armies of Daggerfall, Sentinel, and the Order of Diagna.

Almost all of this is in the first person, as Makela was unfamiliar with the protocols and scholarly formalities of recording herself into a memory stone. None the less, her heroism and heroic deeds live on, her memories fresh in the stone for all to feel and hear.

\* \* \*

"... muuu uhh, I wonder if this will really work?"

"The Mages guild took me for 25,000 gold crowns if it doesn't. Imagine? This stone will record my thoughts? What did they say? Just unwrap it from the silver foil and leather bag and as soon as it touches my flesh it will begin to record.

"Ahhhh, the pain, I must block it out, no one would want to hold my stone and hear my thoughts if I let it record my pain. Thank the Ebonarm and the training I received in The Hall of

the Virtues of War. I CAN block out this pain. Ummm just, ah, there, it's walled off.

“Yes I can still see it there just beyond my consciousness lurking like a hungry wolf - a wolf that will soon consume me. I see also my inevitable death from these damned wounds. No potions left, the healing crystal and ring are used up, and me, with not even magic enough to light a candle. Oh but the gods did give me other gifts, the gift of sword singing, the thrill of battle, Frandar Hunding's Book of Circles, THE WAY OF THE SWORD. Ah but then that is my story, I get ahead of myself.

I am Makela Leki a warrior, a sword-singer, a second level Ansei. In my cradle I could form the Shehai, the spirit sword - The mystical blade, mine formed of pure thought serpents intertwined with vines of roses to form the blade, as beautiful as...

Ah, but I'm about to tell you all about that, to tell you my story, a story of valiant battle, of my loves, of my wars, of betrayal and of this last glorious victory. To tell you of how I came to this distant lonely pass me and five companions, to fight these men and monsters to defeat the army that would fall on my people like cowards in the night, but again I get ahead of myself.

I am a simple warrior. I grew up as a Maiden of the Spirit Blade. As early as I can remember I wanted to be a Singer, to feel the hunger of the blade in my hands, to feel it come alive and take my enemies. I am told our people were artisans and poets long ago in our desert homes. Here in new home now known as Hammerfell, many of us have returned to those ancient ways, but to me there is but ONE WAY. THE WAY of the SWORD.

Ah this is hard to tell. I grew up in my noble family, the only one of three brothers and two sisters that felt the calling, the Song of the Sword. Father understood, for he too had felt the call. He had become a master, and Ansei long before settling down with in our estate to raise a family. At eleven, I entered the Hall of the Virtues of War and joined the Maidens of the Spirit Sword. In my band there were six of us. Daring Julia, solid Patia, big Kati, svelte Cegila, wise Zell, and me - all are gone now, save me, and soon I will join them....Join them in the halls of the unknown gods of war.

We drank together, we fought, we wept, we grew in the way of the sword. We joined in our learnings in the Hall with our Brothers of the Blade. Learning from each other, we all sat at the feet of the Hall Master striving to learn the depths of the Shehai - making the spirit blade into a real weapon as Frandar Hunding had. Only a few have the purity of heart and virtue to be able to take the step and learn the mysteries of Ansei. Sword Sainthood.

Somehow, of all the Brothers and the Maidens, I only possessed the unique qualities, the faint but strong enough flicker of magicka to call forth the Shehai. Many times I called it, seldom would it become substantial enough to be a weapon. To be a Ansei of the first level you just need to be able to call it, and that I could, so I became the first Ansei from our local hall in two generations.

Oh I have so much to tell, so many memories, so many treasures to share with you, my unknown companion. How do I start?

Umhhh, the pain is still out there lurking hungry, slowly consuming what's left of me. I guess I had better tell of the final

battle, the one that has left me here, and then if I have the will left tell you of my life, of my love Raliph. Oh what a lad he was. What times we shared...Ebonarm...Forgive me, my mind wanders...Let me go to the Final Battle.

Umm to start, in the middle humm. Yes. We Maidens grew, learned, mastered the Way, and upon completing the Walk-About. To you who are not Singers, this is a wilderness trek emulating the times of Frandar Hunding - where we each wander the country side righting wrongs, defeating monsters, performing quests in the name of virtue. Some of us in our Hall took years to finish. Always there is danger, we six Maidens each returned in our own good time, but many are they who do not live to return from the Walk About.

We returned, each to our own lives, to meet in the hall once a week to tell our stories to the new Maidens and Brothers, and to perform as instructors in the Way of the sword. All was well till the night of the MidYear Festival.

All our people were reveling and...excuse...enjoying the repast, but for we six Maidens. It happened that the festival day fell on our day of meeting in the hall, our day of prayer and fasting and honor to the Way of the Sword.

As we met, late into the night, a knocking rang on our door. When I opened, it there was a guardian the Bankorai Pass in the Wrothgarian Mountains, wounded and near death...He told us of betrayal from the north, an invasion sponsored by the Crystal Tower of High Rock, led by King Joile of Daggerfall—our ally in the war with Orsinium!

Quickly we used up a crystal of healing in restoring him to vitality. We sent him on to the king, while we six grabbed our

weapons and armor of power, and as many potions, marks, and crystals and rings as we could carry.

We flew to the pass hoping upon hope that we would not be too late. Our journey was not in vain, for we arrived just at the very point where the last three guardians were overwhelmed by the horde. Into the pass we ran forming the old battle line, six abreast.

Oh did we FIGHT.

The Song of the Sword was a joyous noise slicing through the ranks of evil. We fought for hours. Julia was the first to fall, a cowardly poisoned dagger finding a rent in her armor. Then one by one all fell, save me.

... oh cruel Ebonarm...Then my beloved sword, the sword of my father, the one with the serpent's crest, fashioned by the master sword smith Singer Tansal broke in my hands. All was lost, our six lives spent in vain. Now, many many of them would pour through the pass. I would be easy prey for them, like a newborn child. I wept in frustration.

Then I remembered the hearth in our home - the book. Frandar Hunding's Book of Circles, the Way of Strategy. I reached for the Shehai the spirit sword, that which I could never reliably form when I needed it, and behold...it was alive. Alive with fire. It formed in my hand. Ablaze with power -

Oh I slew mightily, right and left, like a scythe through wheat. All the way to the Lord of the Tower I fought. With one blow I cut his magical armor asunder, one more took his head.

But to do that deed cost me dearly, wounds by the dozen, for although I had magical armor, it was not formed of spirit like my blade, it was not as invincible as my blade or my own spirit, and I was sorely wounded.

With the felling of King Joile, his army crumbled. They fled before my wrath. All ran back through the pass not even pausing to collect their dead and wounded. All who could stand ran for their lives, and I slew all I could reach, but my breath was coming short, and the pain...

Finally I rested, on this rock where you find me now. I don't know why I chanced to bring this stone along. I bought it on a whim really, with the loot from...ah well I guess I need to really stop and tell my story in order. I feel able to go on to tell you more...the eternal night is descending more slowly than I thought.

Not just yet, am I ready to compose my death poem. A little sip of water and...well I think I will go back and tell you of my life, maybe some details about the battle. And Oh yes. About Raliph and our children, humm where will I start.

... oh...rrr...

I am...a simple warrior...I grew up as a, a Maiden of the Spirit Blade...As early...as early as I can...remember...



# The Origin Of The Mages Guild

*Salarth*

The idea of a collection of Mages, Sorcerors, and assorted Mystics pooling their resources and talents for the purpose of research and public charity was a revolutionary concept in the early years of the 2nd era. The closest organization to what we today know as the Mages Guild was the Psijic Order of the Isle of Artaeum. Magic was something to be learned by individuals, or, at most, in intimate covens; mages were, if not actual hermits, usually quite solitary.

The Psijic Order served the rulers of the Sumurset Isle as counselors, and chose its members by a complex, ritualized method not understood by the common people. Its purposes and goals were likewise unpublished, and its detractors attributed the worst evil as the source of its power. The religion of the old order could be described as ancestor worship, an increasingly unfashionable philosophy in the 2nd Era.

When Vanus Galerion, a Psijic of Artaeum and student of the famed Iachesis, began collecting mages from around Sumurset Isle, he attracted the animosity of all. He was operating out of Firsthold, and there was a common (and not entirely unsensible) attitude that magical experiments should be conducted only in unpopulated areas. Even more shocking, Galerion proposed to make magical items, potions, and even spells available to any member of the general public who could

pay. No longer was magic to be limited either to the aristocracy or intelligensia.

Galerion was brought before Iachesis and the King of Firsthold, Rilis XII, and made to state the intentions of the guild he was forming. The fact that Galerion's speech to Rilis and Iachesis was not recorded for posterity is a tragedy, though it does allow the opportunity for historians to amuse one another with lies and persuasions Galerion might have used to found the ubiquitous organization. The charter was approved.

Almost immediately after the guild was formed, the question of security had to be answered. The Isle of Artaeum did not have to have a force of arms to shield it from invaders interested in stealing its treasures—when the Psijic Order does not wish someone to land on the island, the island and all on it become insubstantial. The new Mages Guild had to hire guards. Galerion soon discovered what nobles have known for thousands of years: money alone does not buy loyalty. The knightly Order of the Lamp was formed the following year.

Like a tree from an acorn, the Mages Guild grew branches all over Sumurset Isle and then to the mainland of Tamriel. There are many records of superstitious or sensibly fearful rulers forbidding the Guild in their kingdom, but their heirs or their heirs' heirs recognized the wisdom of allowing the Guild to practice. The Mages Guild was a powerful force in Tamriel, a dangerous foe if a somewhat disinterested ally. There have been only a few rare incidents of the Mages Guild actually becoming involved in local political struggles. On these occasions, the Guild's participation has been the ultimate decider in the conflict.

By tradition begun by Vanus Galerion, the Mages Guild as a singular institution is presided over by a council of six Archmagisters. Each guild location is run by a Guildmagister, assisted by a counsel of two, the Master of Incunubula and the Master at Arms. The Master of Incunubula presides over a counsel of an additional two mages: the Master of Academia and the Master of the Scrye. The Master at Arms also has a counsel of two: the Master of Initiates and the Palatinus, the leader of the Order of the Lamp.

One need not be a member of the Mages Guild to know that this carefully constructed order is often nothing more than an illusion. As Vanus Galerion himself said bitterly, leaving Tamriel to travel to other lands, "The Guild has become nothing more than an intricate morass of political infighting."

# The Real Barenziah (Complete)

*Plitinius Mero*

## The Real Barenziah, Part 1

Five hundred years ago in Mournhold, city of gems, there lived a blind widow woman and her only child, a strapping young man. He was a miner, as was his father before him, a common laborer in the king's mines, for his magicka ability was but small. The work was honorable, but poorly paid. His mother made and sold small wildenberry cakes in the market to help make out their living. They did well enough, his mother said. They had enough to fill their bellies, no one could wear more than one suit of clothing at a time and the roof only leaked when it rained. Symmachus would have liked more. He hoped for a lucky strike in the mines, which would garner him a large bonus. In his free hours he enjoyed hoisting a glass of ale in the tavern with his friends, and gambling with them at cards, and he drew the eyes and sighs of more than one pretty elven girl, although none held his interest for long. In short, Symmachus was a typical young dark elf man, remarkable only for his size. It was rumored that he had a bit of Nord blood in him.

In Symmachus' thirtieth year there was great rejoicing in Mournhold for a girl child was born to their lord and his lady. A queen, the people sang, a queen is born to us! For among the people of Mournhold, the birth of a female heir is a sure sign of peace and prosperity to come.

When the time came for royal child's Rite of Naming, the mines were closed and Symmachus rushed home to bathe and dress in his best.

"I'll come straight home and tell you all about it," he promised his mother, who was not to attend. She had been ailing; besides, there would be a great crush of people as all Mournhold would be there, and being blind she would be unable to see anything anyway.

"My son," she said. "Go, fetch me a priest or healer, else I may pass from the mortal plane when you return."

Symmachus crossed to her bed at once and noted anxiously that her head was very hot and her breathing shallow. He pried up the loose floorboard where their small hoard of savings was kept. There wasn't nearly enough to pay a priest for healing. He would have to give what they had and owe the rest. Symmachus snatched up his cloak and rushed away. The streets were full of folk hurrying to the sacred grove, but the mage guild and the temples were locked and barred. "Closed for the ceremony" read the signs. Symmachus elbowed his way through the crowd and managed to overtake a brown-robed monk.

"After the rite, brother," the monk said, "if you have gold I shall gladly attend your mother. My lord has bade all clerics to attend and I shall not offend him."

"My mother's desperately ill," Symmachus pled. "Surely, my lord will not miss just one lowly monk."

"The father abbot will," the monk said nervously, tearing his robe loose from Symmachus' grip and vanishing into the

crowd.

Symmachus tried other monks and mages, too, but with no better result. Armored guards came through the street and pushed him aside with their lances and Symmachus realized that the royal procession was approaching. As the royal carriage drew abreast, Symmachus rushed out from the crowd and shouted, “My lord, my mother’s dying—”

“I forbid her to do so on this glorious night!” the lord shouted, laughing and scattering coin into the throng. Symmachus was close enough to smell wine on the royal breath. On the other side of the carriage his lady clutched her babe to her breast, and stared wide-eyed at Symmachus, her nostrils flared in disdain.

“Guards!” she cried. “Remove this oaf.” Rough hands seized Symmachus. He was beaten and left dazed by the side of the road.

Symmachus, head aching, followed in the wake of the crowd and watched the Rite of Naming from the top of the hill. He could see the brown robed clerics and blue robed mages gathered near the royal folk far below.

Barenziah. The name came dim to Symmachus ears as the High Priest lifted the naked babe and showed her to the twin moons on either side of the horizon: Jone rising, Jode setting. “Behold the Lady Barenziah, born to the rule of Mournhold! Grant her thy blessings and thy counsel ever that she rule to Mournhold’s weal.”

“Blessings, blessings...” all the people murmured with their lord and lady, hands upraised. Only Symmachus stood silent, head bowed, knowing in his heart that his dear mother was

gone. And in his silence he swore a mighty oath, that he should be his lord's bane and in vengeance for his mother's needless death, the child Barenziah he would have as his own bride, that his mother's grandchildren should be born to rule Mournhold.

After the ceremony he watched impassively as the royal procession returned to the palace. He saw the monk to whom he'd spoken first. The man came gladly enough now in return for the gold Symmachus had and a promise of more later.

They found his mother dead, as he had feared. The monk sighed and tucked the bag away. "I'm sorry, brother. Well, you can forget the rest of the gold, as there's naught I can do here. Likely—"

"Give me back my gold!" Symmachus snarled. "You've done naught to earn it!" He lifted his right arm threateningly. The priest backed away, beginning a curse, but Symmachus struck him before more than three words had left his mouth. He went down heavily, striking his head sharply on one of the stones that formed the firepit. He died instantly.

Symmachus took the gold back and fled the city, muttering the name "Barenziah".

## The Real Barenziah, Part 2

The child Barenziah stood on the upper balcony of the palace, staring down into the courtyard where soldiers milled, splendid in their armor. Presently they formed into ordered ranks and cheered as her parents, the lord and lady emerged from the palace, clad head to toe in ebony armor, long purple-dyed fur cloaks flowing behind. Splendidly caparisoned

shining black horses were brought for them and they mounted and rode to the courtyard gates, then turned to salute her.

“Barenziah!” they cried. “Barenziah, farewell!”

The little girl blinked back tears and waved bravely with one hand, her favorite stuffed toy animal, a gray wolf cub she called Wuffen, clutched to her breast with the other. She had never been parted from her parents before and had no idea what it meant, save that there was war in the west and the names Tiber Septim and Symmachus were on everyone’s lips, spoken with hate and dread.

“Barenziah!” The soldiers cried, lifting their lances and swords and bows. Then her dear parents turned and rode away, soldiers trailing in their wake until the palace was near emptied.

Some time after came a day when Barenziah was shaken awake by her nurse, dressed hurriedly and carried from the palace. All she remembered of that dreadful time was seeing a huge shadow with burning eyes that filled the sky.

She was passed from hand to hand. Foreign soldiers appeared. Her nurse vanished and was replaced by strangers, some more strange than others. There were days, or was it weeks?, of travel. One morning she woke to step from the coach into a cold place with a large gray stone house set amid endless empty gray-green and hills patchily covered with gray-white snow. She clutched Wuffen to her breast with both hands and stood blinking and shivering in the gray dawn, feeling very small and very black in all this endless space gray-white space.



A large gray-white woman was staring at her with dreadful bright blue eyes. “She’s very—black, isn’t she?” the woman remarked to her companion, a brown skinned, black-haired woman named Hana who had been travelling with Barenziah for several days. “I’ve never seen a dark elf before.”

“I don’t know much about them myself,” Hana said. “This one’s got red hair and a temper to match, I can tell you that. Take care. She bites. And worse.”

“I’ll soon train her out of that,” the other woman sniffed, “And what’s that filthy thing she’s got? Ugh!” The woman snatched Wuffen away and cast him into the fire blazing in the hearth. Barenziah shrieked and would have flung herself into the fire after him, but was forcibly restrained, despite her attempts to bite and claw her oppressors while poor Wuffen was reduced to a little heap of charred ash.

### The Real Barenziah, Part 3

Barenziah grew like a weed transplanted to a Skyrim garden, a ward of Count Sven and his wife Lady Inga. Outwardly she thrived but there was a cold and empty place within.

“I’ve raised her as my own daughter,” Lady Inga was wont to sigh when she sat gossiping with neighboring ladies come to visit, “But she’s a dark elf. What can you expect?”

Barenziah was not meant to overhear these words. At least she thought she was not. Her hearing was far keener than that of her Nord hosts. Other, less desirable dark elf traits included pilfering, lying and a little magic, just a small fire spell and a little levitation. And, as she grew older, a keen interest in boys and men, who could provide very pleasant sensations and, to

her astonishment, gifts as well. Inga disapproved of this activity for reasons incomprehensible to Barenziah, so she was careful to keep it as secret as possible.

“She’s wonderful with the children,” Inga added, meaning her five sons, all younger than Barenziah. “She’d never see them come to harm.”

A tutor was hired when Jonny was six and Barenziah eight, and she studied academic lessons along with him. She would have liked arms training as well, but the very idea of a girl training to arms scandalized Inga and Sven. Barenziah was given a bow and allowed to practice target shooting with the boys. She watched them at arms practice when she could, practiced with them when no grown folk were about, and knew she was as good or better than they.

“She’s very proud, isn’t she?” the neighbor ladies would whisper, and Barenziah, pretending not to hear, would nod in agreement. She could not help but feel superior to the Count and Countess. There was something about them that encouraged this disdain in her.

She grew to learn that Sven and Inga were distant cousins of the last rulers of Darkmoon, and then she began to understand. They were poseurs, imposters, not rulers at all. At least, they were not raised to rule. This thought made her strangely furious at them, a good clean hatred detached from resentment. Barenziah came to see them as disgusting and corrupted insects who could be despised, but never feared.

Once a month a courier came from the emperor, bringing a small bag of gold for Inga and Sven and a large bag of dried mushrooms from Morrowind for Barenziah’s consumption.

She was always made presentable, as presentable as a skinny dark elf girl could be made to look in Inga's eyes, and summoned into the courier's presence for a brief interview. The same courier seldom came twice, but all looked her over rather as a farmer looks over a pig he's readying for market. In the spring of her sixteenth year Barenziah thought the courier looked as if she were at last ready for market.

Upon reflection Barenziah decided that she did not wish to be marketed. The stable-boy, Straw, a big blond boy, clumsy, gentle, affectionate and rather simple, had been urging her to run off with him for some weeks. Barenziah stole the bag of gold the courier had left, took the mushrooms from the storeroom, dressed herself as a boy in some of twelve year old Timmy's casual clothing, and one fine spring night they took the two best horses and rode hard through the night toward Whiterun, the nearest city of any size, which was where Straw wanted to go.

But Morrowind also lay east and it drew Barenziah as a lodestone does iron. In the morning they abandoned the horses at Barenziah's insistence. She knew they would be missed and tracked, and she hoped to throw pursuers off the trail. They continued afoot until late afternoon, keeping to side roads, then slept for several hours in an abandoned hut. They went on at dusk and came to the Whiterun city gates just before dawn.

Barenziah had prepared a pass for Straw, stating an errand to a temple in the city for a local village lord. She herself sneaked over the wall with the help of her levitation spell. She had reasoned that by now the gate guards would have been alerted to look for a young dark elf and a Nord boy traveling together,

but country boys like Straw were common enough. Alone and with papers, he would be unlikely to draw their attention.

Her simple plan went smoothly. She met Straw at the temple, which was not far from the gate. She had been to Whiterun on a few previous occasions. Straw, however, had never been more than a few miles from Sven's estate, his birthplace. Together they made their way to a run-down inn in the poor quarter of Whiterun. Gloved, cloaked and hooded against the chill of the morning, her dark skin and red eyes were not apparent and no one paid any attention to them. They entered the inn separately. Sven paid the host for a single room, a large meal and a jug of ale, and Barenziah sneaked in a few minutes later. They ate and drank together gleefully, celebrating their escape, made love vigorously on the narrow bed, then fell into an exhausted sleep.

They stayed a week in Whiterun. Straw earned a bit of money running errands and Barenziah robbed a few houses at night. Barenziah continued to dress as a boy. She cut her hair short and dyed her flame-red tresses jet black as a further disguise, and kept out of sight as much as possible for there were few dark elves in Whiterun. Then Straw got them places as guards for a merchant caravan that was traveling east. The sergeant looked her over dubiously.

"Heh," he chuckled, "dark elf, ain'tcha? Like setting a wolf to guard the sheep, that is. Still, I need arms, and we ain't going near enough to Morrowind that ye can betray us to yer brothers. Our home-grown bandits will as lief cut yer throat as mine."

The sergeant gave Straw an appraising look, then abruptly spun back to Barenziah, whipping out his short sword. But she had

her knife out and was in a defensive stance. Straw drew his own knife and circled to the man's rear. The sergeant dropped his blade and chuckled again, "Not bad, kids, not bad. How are ye with that bow, dark elf?" Barenziah demonstrated her prowess. "Aye, not bad, not bad a'tall. And ye'll be keen of eye by night and of hearing at all times. A trusty dark elf makes as good a fightin' man as any could ask for. I know. I served under Symmachus himself before I lost this arm and got invalidated out of the Emperor's forces."

"We could betray them. I know folk who'd pay well," Straw said later, as they bedded down for their last night in the old inn, "Or rob them ourselves. They're very rich, those merchants are, Berry."

Barenziah chuckled, "What ever would we do with so much money? And we need their protection for traveling quite as much as they need ours."

"We could buy a little farm and settle down."

Peasant! Barenziah thought scornfully. Straw was a peasant and had peasant dreams. But all she said was, "Not here, Straw, we're too close to Darkmoor still. We'll have more chances farther east."

The caravan went only as far east as Sunguard. Tiber Septim had done much in the way of building relatively safe patrolled highways, but his tolls were steep, and this particular caravan kept to the side roads as much as possible to avoid them. This exposed them to the hazards of robber barons, both human and orcish, and roving bands of brigands of various races, but such were the perils of trade and profit.

They had two such encounters before reaching Sunguard, an ambush which Barenziah's keen ears detected in plenty of time for them to circle about and surprise the lurkers, and a night attack by a mixed band of Khajiiti, humans and wood elves. The latter were a skilled band and even Barenziah did not hear them sneaking up in time to give much warning.

The fighting was fierce. The attackers were driven off, but two of the caravan's guards were killed, and Straw got a nasty cut on his thigh before he and Barenziah killed his Khajiit assailant.

Barenziah rather enjoyed the life. The garrulous sergeant had taken a liking to her, and she spent most of her evenings sitting around a campfire listening to his tales of campaigning in Morrowind with Tiber Septim and Symmachus. Symmachus had been made a general after Mournhold fell, the sergeant said. "He's a fine soldier, Symmachus is, but there was more than soldiery involved in Morrowind, if you take my drift. Well, you know about that, I expect."

"I don't remember," Barenziah said, "I've mostly lived in Skyrim. My mother married a Skyrim man. They're both dead, though. What happened to the lord and lady of Mournhold?"

The sergeant shrugged, "I never heard. Dead, I expect. All Morrowind's under military rule now. It's pretty quiet. Maybe too quiet. Like a calm before a storm. You going back there?"

"Maybe," Barenziah said. The truth was that she was drawn to Morrowind like a magnet. Straw sensed it and was unhappy about it. He was unhappy anyway, since they could not bed together, as she was supposed to be a boy. Barenziah rather missed it too, but not as much as Straw did, seemingly. The

sergeant wanted them to sign on for the return trip, but gave them a bonus when they parted and letters of recommendation.

Straw wanted to settle permanently near Sunguard, but Barenziah insisted on continuing to travel east. "I'm the queen of Mournhold by rights," she said, unsure whether it was true, or it was a story she had made up as a child. "I want to go home. I need to go home."

That at least was true. She had run out of mushrooms and was very hungry for them. She found a few for sale in the Sunguard marketplace, but they were not as good or satisfying as the ones the courier had brought. After a few weeks they managed to get places in a caravan heading east.

By early winter, they were in Riften, and near the Morrowind border, but the weather had grown severe and they were told no merchant caravans would set forth until mid-spring.

Barenziah stood atop the city walls and stared across the deep gorge that separated Riften from the snow-clad mountain wall of Morrowind beyond. "Berry," Straw said gently, "Mournhold's a long way off yet, nearly as far as we've come already, and the lands between are wild, full of wolves and bandits and orcs and still worse creatures. We'll have to wait for spring."

"There's Silgrod Tower," Berry said, referring to the Dark Elf town that had grown up around the ancient tower that guarded the border between Skyrim and Morrowind.

"The bridge guards won't let me across, Berry. They're crack Imperial troops. They can't be bribed. If you go, you go alone. I won't try to stop you. But what will you do? Silgrod Tower is

full of Imperial troops. Will you become a washerwoman for them? A camp follower?"

"No," Barenziah said thoughtfully. Actually the idea was not entirely unappealing. She was sure that she could earn a modest living by sleeping with the soldiers for money. She'd had a few adventures of that sort as they crossed Skyrim, when she'd dressed as a woman and slipped away from Straw. She'd only been looking for a bit of variety. Straw was sweet but dull. She'd been startled, but pleased when the men she picked up offered her money afterwards.

Straw had been unhappy about it though and would shout for awhile, then sulk for days afterwards if he caught her at it. He was very jealous. He'd even threatened to leave her.

But the Imperial Guards were a tough and brutal lot by all accounts and Barenziah had heard some very ugly stories during her travels. The ugliest stories had come from the lips of ex-veterans around the caravan campfire and were proudly recounted. They'd been trying to shock her and Straw, she realized, but she also realized that there was some truth behind the wild tales. Straw hated that kind of talk and hated having her hear it, but there was a part of him that was fascinated by it.

Barenziah had encouraged Straw to seek out other women, but he said he didn't want anyone but her. She told him she didn't feel that way, but she did like him better than anyone else.

"Then why do you go with other men?"

"I don't know, dear."



Straw sighed. “They say dark elf women are like that.”

Barenziah smiled and shrugged. “I know. I guess that’s all the explanation there is.”

#### The Real Barenziah, Part 4

They settled into Rifton for the winter, taking a cheap room in the slums. Barenziah joined the Thieves’ Guild, knowing there would be trouble if she were caught free-lancing. One day in the barroom she caught the eye of a known member of the guild, a bold young Khajiit named Therris. She offered to bed with him if he would sponsor her for membership. He looked her over, grinning, and agreed, but said she’d still have to pass a test.

“What sort of test?”

“Ah,” Therris said. “Payment first, sweet thing.” He put an arm around her, leaned over and kissed her, thrusting his tongue deep into her mouth and his free hand into her shirt.

“Nice,” he said presently, withdrawing his tongue, but not his hand. His other hand slid down inside her waistband and fondled her buttocks.

“Let’s go upstairs. We can use my room,” Barenziah felt both embarrassed and excited by his boldness.

Therris grinned insolently. “Why bother? You want me, don’t you? I’ll bet you’d pay me, wouldn’t you?”

“No,” Barenziah said. She did want him, but not that badly.

“No? Well, a bargain’s a bargain and Therris keeps his word. But here. Now.” He hiked her skirt up and pulled her onto his lap so she sat astride, facing him. He opened her shirt and pulled it down on her shoulders so that her breasts were exposed.

“Nice pair, kid.” She was facing the wall but she could feel the stares of the other patrons. A hush had fallen over the place. Even the bard had stilled. She felt both nausea and a hot burning desire. Her hands released his turgid penis and then it was inside her and she was screaming in both pain and ecstasy. Then everything went black.

When she came to herself again she was sitting beside Therris, who was buttoning her shirt. “That hurt!” she said indignantly.

“Always does, kid. Didn’t anyone ever tell you about Khajiit men? It hurts good though, now doesn’t it?” Barenziah scowled at him. She was still smarting. His penis had tiny little barbs on it.

“Well, the deal’s off, if you like,” he shrugged.

“No, I didn’t say that. Only I prefer privacy, and I want to wait awhile, like a day or so before the next time.”

Therris laughed. “You’re OK, kid.”

Straw was going to kill her, and maybe Therris too. What in Tamriel had possessed her to do such a thing? She cast an anxious look around the room, but the other patrons had lost interest and gone back to their own business. She did not recognize any of them; this wasn’t the inn where she lived. With luck it’d be awhile, or never, before Straw found out. But

Therris was by far the most exciting and attractive man she'd yet met.

He not only told her about the skills needed to be a member of the Thieves' Guild, but trained her in them himself or introduced her to people who could teach her. Among these was a Nord woman who knew something about magic. Katisha was plump and matronly. She was married to a smith, had two teen aged children and was perfectly ordinary and respectable except that she was very fond of cats, had a gift for certain kinds of magic, and cultivated rather odd friends.

She taught Barenziah an Invisibility spell and trained her in other forms of stealth and disguise. Katisha mingled magical and non-magical talents freely, using one to enhance the other. She was not a member of the Thieves' Guild but was fond of Therris in a motherly sort of fashion.

Barenziah warmed to her as she never had to any woman, and over the next few weeks she told Katisha all about herself. She brought Straw there, too. Straw approved of Katisha but not of Therris. Therris found Straw amusing and suggested to Barenziah that they arrange what he called a threesome.

"Indeed not," Barenziah said, grateful that Therris had broached the subject in private. "He wouldn't like it. I wouldn't like it!"

Therris smiled his charming triangular cat-smile and sprawled lazily back in his chair, curling his tail. "You might both be surprised. Pairing is so boring. Well, would you mind if I brought a friend?"

“Yes. If you’re bored with me you and your friend can find someone else.” She was a member of the Thieves’ Guild now. She found Therris useful but not essential. Maybe she was a bit bored with him, too.

She talked to Katisha about her men problems. Katisha shook her head and told her she was looking for love, not sex, that she’d know the right man when she found him, and that neither Straw nor Therris was the right one for her.

Barenziah cocked her head to one side quizzically. “They say dark elf women are pro- pro- something. Prostitutes?”

“You mean promiscuous, although some do become prostitutes, I suppose. Elf women are promiscuous when they’re young. You’ll outgrow it. Perhaps you’re beginning to already,” Katisha said hopefully. “You ought to meet some nice elven boys, though. If you keep on keeping company with Khajiits and humans you’ll find yourself pregnant soon.”

Barenziah smiled involuntarily at the thought. “I’d like that. But it would be inconvenient, wouldn’t it? Babies are a lot of trouble, and I don’t even have a home yet.”

“How old are you? Seventeen? Well, you’ve a year or two yet before you’ll be fertile, unless you’re very unlucky. Elves don’t have children readily with other elves even after that, so you’ll be all right if you stick with them.”

“Straw wants to buy a farm and marry me.”

“Is that what you want?”

“No. Not yet. Maybe some day, if I can’t be a queen.”

“I think Straw will be a very old man before “some day” comes, Berry. Elves live a very long time.” Katisha’s face briefly wore the wistful look humans got when contemplating the thousand year life span that elves were entitled to by nature. True, few ever actually lived that long, as disease and violence took a toll, but they could.

“I like old men, too,” Berry said.

### The Real Barenziah, Part 5

Barenziah fidgeted impatiently while Therris sorted through the papers in the desk. He was being meticulous and methodical, careful to replace everything just as he’d found it. They’d entered a nobleman’s house, leaving Straw outside as a lookout. Therris had said it was a simple job but very secret. He hadn’t even wanted to bring any other Guild members along. He said he knew he could trust Berry and Straw.

“Tell me what you’re looking for and I’ll find it,” Berry whispered. Therris’ night sight wasn’t as good as hers and he didn’t want to make a light. Berry had never been in such a luxurious place. She gazed around with wonder as they’d made their way through the huge echoing downstairs rooms, but Therris didn’t seem interested in anything but the desk in the small book-lined study on the upper floor.

“Ssss’t,” he hissed angrily.

“Someone’s coming!” Berry said, a moment before the door opened and two dark figures appeared. Therris gave her a violent shove toward them and sprang away toward the window. Barenziah’s muscles went rigid; she couldn’t move or even speak. She watched helplessly as a dark figure leaped after

Therris. There were two quick, silent blue flares of light, then Therris folded in a still heap. Outside the study the house had come alive with footsteps and voices calling and the clank of armor.

The big man, a dark elf, half lifted, half dragged Therris to the door and thrust him into waiting arms. A jerk of the elf's head sent his robed companion after him. The elf came over to inspect Barenziah, who was once again able to move, although her head throbbed maddeningly when she did so.

"Open your shirt, Barenziah," the elf said.

Barenziah gaped at him and clutched it closed.

"You are a girl, aren't you, Berry?" he said softly. "You should have stopped dressing as a boy a few months ago, you know. You were only drawing attention to yourself. And calling yourself Berry! Is your friend Straw too stupid to remember anything else?"

"It's a common elf name," Barenziah defended herself.

The man shook his head sadly. "Not among dark elves it isn't, my dear, but you really don't know much about dark elves, do you? I regret that, but it couldn't be helped. No matter. I'll remedy it."

"Who are you?" Barenziah demanded.

"So much for fame," the man shrugged, smiling wryly. "I am Symmachus, my lady, and it's a merry chase you've led me, although I'd guessed you'd head for Morrowind. You had a bit of luck. A body was found in Whiterun that was thought to be Straw's so we stopped looking for the pair. That was careless of

me, yet I'd not have thought you'd have stayed together this long."

"Where is he? Is he all right?"

"Oh, he's fine for now. In custody, of course. You—care for him, then?" he stared at her with curiosity out of red eyes that were so strange to her, except in her own seldom-seen image.

"He's my friend," Barenziah said. The words came in a tone that sounded dull and hopeless in her own ears. Symmachus! A general in the Imperial Army, said to have the friendship and the ear of Tiber Septim himself.

"Ai. You seem to have several unsuitable friends, if you'll forgive my saying so, my lady." As they talked the bustle and flurry in the house had died away, although she could hear people, presumably the residents, whispering together not far off. The tall elf seated himself on a corner of the desk. He seemed quite relaxed and prepared to stay awhile.

Several? "W-what's going to happen to them? To me?"

"Ah. As you know this house belongs to the commander of the Imperial troops in this area." Barenziah gasped and Symmachus looked up sharply. "You didn't know? You are rash, even for seventeen. You must always know what it is you do."

"B-but the G-guild w-wouldn't—" Barenziah was trembling. The Thieves' Guild would never have attempted a mission that involved Imperial policies. No one dared oppose Tiber Septim, at least no one she knew of.

"I daresay. It's unlikely that Therris had Guild approval for this job. I wonder—" Symmachus examined the desk carefully,

pulling out its drawers. He selected one, placed its contents on the desk top and removed the false bottom. There was a folded sheet of paper inside. It seemed to be a map of some sort. Barenziah edged closer to see it. Symmachus held it away from her, laughing. "Rash indeed!" He glanced it over, then folded and replaced it.

"You advised me to seek knowledge."

"So I did, so I did." Suddenly he seemed to be in high good humor. "We must be going, my dear lady."

He shepherded her to the door, down the stairs and out into the night air. No one was about. Barenziah's eyes darted to the shadows. She wondered if she could outrun him, or elude him somehow.

"You're not thinking of attempting to escape, are you? Don't you want to hear what my plans for you are first?" He sounded a bit hurt.

"Yes."

"Perhaps you'd rather hear about your friends first."

"No." He looked pleased. It was the answer he wanted, but it was also the truth. While Barenziah was concerned for her friends, especially Straw, she was far more concerned for herself.

"You will take your rightful place as Queen of Mournhold."

Her heart leapt. It was really true then!



Symmachus explained that this had been his, and Tiber Septim's plan for her all along. That Mournhold, which had been under military rule for the dozen years since she had left was to be returned, gradually, to civilian government, under Imperial guidance, of course, and as a part of the Imperial Province of Morrowind.

"But why was I sent to Darkmoor?"

"For safekeeping. Why did you run away?"

Barenziah shrugged. "I saw no reason to stay. I should have been told."

"You would have been by now. I had in fact sent for you to be removed to Imperial City to spend some time as a part of the Emperor's household. As for your destiny, it should have been obvious to you. Tiber Septim does not keep those he has no use for, and what else could you be that is of use to him?"

"I know nothing of him or you."

"Then know this: Tiber Septim rewards friend and foe alike according to their deserts."

Barenziah chewed on that for a few moments. "Straw has deserved well of me and has never done anyone any harm. He is not a member of the Thieves' Guild. He came along to protect me. He earns our keep by running errands, and—"

Symmachus waved her to silence. "I know all about Straw," he said, "and about Therris. So? What would you?"

"Straw wants a little farm. If I'm to be rich, then I would give that to him."

“Very well. He shall have it. And Therris?”

“He betrayed me,” Barenziah said in a low voice. Therris should have told her the risks the job entailed. Further, he’d pushed her right into their foes’ arms in an attempt to save himself.

“Yes. And?”

“Well, he should be made to suffer for it, shouldn’t he?”

“That seems reasonable. What form should the suffering take?”

Barenziah balled her hands into fists. She’d like to beat and claw at the Khajiit herself, but that didn’t seem very queenly. “A whipping. Would twenty stripes be too many do you think? I don’t want to do him any permanent injury.”

“I shall arrange it.”

Barenziah spent two days in Symmachus’ apartment during which she was kept very busy. There was a dark elf woman named Drelliane who saw to their needs, although she did not seem to be exactly a servant as she took her meals with them. Nor was she his wife. Drelliane seemed amused when Barenziah asked her about that. She simply said she was in Symmachus’ employ and did whatever he asked of her.

With Drelliane’s assistance several fine gowns and pairs of shoes were ordered for her, plus a riding habit and boots, along with other small necessities. Barenziah was given a room to herself. Symmachus was out a great deal. She saw him at most meals, but he said little about himself or what he had been doing, although he was cordial and polite, was quite willing to converse on most subjects, and seemed interested in anything she had to say. Drelliane was much the same. Barenziah found

them pleasant enough, but hard to get to know, as Katisha would have put it. She felt an odd disappointment. These were the first dark elves with whom she'd associated closely. She had expected to feel comfortable with them, to feel, at last, that this was where she belonged. Instead she found herself yearning for her Nord friends, Katisha and Straw. When Symmachus told her they were to set out for Imperial City on the morrow, she asked if she could say goodbye to her friends.

“Katisha?” he asked. “Well enough. I suppose I owe her something. She it was who led me to you by telling me of a lonely dark elf girl named Berry who need elven friends—and sometimes dressed as a boy. She has no association with the Thieves’ Guild. And no one associated with the Thieves’ Guild seems to know your true identity, save Therris. That is well. I prefer that your former Guild membership not be made public knowledge. You will speak of it to no one. It does not become an Imperial queen.”

“No one knows but Straw and Therris. They won’t tell anyone.”

“No, they won’t.” He didn’t know that Katisha knew then!

Straw came to their apartment the morning of their departure, and they were left alone in the parlor, although Barenziah knew that the other elves were well within hearing. Straw looked drawn and pale. They hugged one another silently for a few minutes. Straw’s shoulders were shaking and tears were rolling down his cheeks, but he said nothing.

Barenziah tried a smile. “So we both get what we want. I’m to be Queen of Mournhold and you’ll be king of your own farm. I’ll write you. You must find a scribe so you can write me, too.” Straw shook his head sadly, and when Barenziah persisted, he

opened his mouth and pointed inside, making an inarticulate noise. His tongue was gone! Barenziah collapsed onto a chair and wept noisily.

“Why?” she demanded of Symmachus, when Straw had been ushered away. “Why?”

Symmachus shrugged. “He knows too much of you. He could be dangerous. At least he’s alive, and he won’t need his tongue to farm.”

“I hate you!” Barenziah screamed at him, then leaned over and vomited on the floor. She continued to revile him between intermittent bouts of nausea. He listened stolidly for some time, while Drelliane cleaned up after her. Finally, he told her to cease or he would gag her for the journey.

They stopped at Katisha’s house. Symmachus and Drelliane didn’t dismount. All seemed normal but Barenziah was frightened as she knocked on the door. Katisha answered her knock. She’d obviously been weeping, but she embraced Barenziah.

“Why are you crying?” Barenziah asked.

“For Therris, of course. You haven’t heard? He’s dead. He was caught stealing from the commandant’s house. Poor fellow, but it was so foolish of him. Oh, Barenziah, he was drawn and quartered this very dawn by the commandant’s order. I went; he asked for me. It was terrible; he suffered so before he died. I’ll never forget it. I looked for you and Straw but no one knew where you’d got to. That’s Symmachus you’re with, isn’t it? You know, the moment I saw him, I thought, this is the one for Barenziah! I told him about you, you know.”

“Yes,” Barenziah said. “Katisha, I love you, but please don’t ever tell anyone else anything about me. Ever. Swear you won’t. Especially not Symmachus. And look after poor Straw for me.” Katisha promised, puzzled but willing. “Berry, it wasn’t somehow because of me that Therris was caught? I never said anything about Therris to Symmachus.”

Barenziah assured her that it wasn’t, that an informer had told of the Imperial Guard of Therris’ plans, which was probably a lie, but Katisha badly needed some kind of comfort.

“Oh, I’m glad of that, if I can be glad of anything just now. I’d hate to think—but how could I have known? And Symmachus is very handsome, don’t you think? And charming.”

“I don’t know,” Barenziah said. “I haven’t really thought about it. There hasn’t been time.” She explained about being Queen of Mournhold and going to live in Imperial City for awhile first. “He was looking for me. I don’t think he thinks of me as a woman at all. He said I didn’t look like a boy, though,” she added in the face of Katisha’s incredulity. She knew that Barenziah evaluated every male she saw in terms of sexual desirability. “I suppose it’s the shock of finding out that I really am a queen,” she added, and Katisha agreed that that must be something of a shock, although one there was no likelihood of her experiencing first hand.

Their party left Rifton by the great south gate. Once through Symmachus tapped her shoulder and pointed back to the gate. “I thought you might want to say good-bye to Therris, too,” he said. Barenziah stared briefly but steadily at the head impaled on a spike above the gate. The birds were at it, but the face was still recognizable.

“I think he will not hear me,” she said. “Let’s be on our way, shall we?”

Symmachus was clearly disappointed by her lack of reaction. “You heard of this from Katisha?”

“Of course. She attended the execution.” Barenziah said casually. If he didn’t know already, he’d find out soon enough; she was sure of that.

“Did she know Therris belonged to the Guild?”

“Everyone knew that. It’s only lower ranking members like me who are supposed to keep their membership secret. The ranking officers are well known. But you know all that, don’t you?” She smiled archly at him.

“So you told her who you were and whence you’d come, but not about the Guild.”

“The Guild membership was not my secret to tell. The other was. There is a difference. Besides, Katisha is a very honest person. Had I told her it would have lessened me in her eyes. She was always after Therris to take up a more honest line of work. I value her good opinion. She also thought I’d be happier if I’d settle down with just one man friend, one of my own race. You, in fact. Isn’t it odd how wishes come true sometimes, but not the way you want them to?”

“Yes. Very odd.” Something about the way he said it made her think that she herself was one of his wishes that had come true in a way that wasn’t altogether to his liking.

The Real Barenziah, Part 6

Barenziah felt the weight of sorrow for several days, but by the third day out her spirits had begun to rise a bit. She found that she enjoyed being on the road again, although she missed Straw's companionship more than she would have thought. They were escorted by a troop of Redguard knights, with whom she felt comfortable, although these were much more disciplined than the guards of the merchant caravans. They were cordial but respectful towards her despite her attempts to flirt with the men. Symmachus scolded her privately, saying a queen must maintain a royal dignity at all times.

"You mean I'm never to have any fun?"

"Not with such as these. They are beneath you. Graciousness is to be desired in those in authority. Familiarity is not. You will remain chaste and modest while you are in Imperial City."

Barenziah screwed up her face. "I might as well be back in Black Moor. Elves are promiscuous by nature. Everyone says so."

"'Everyone' is wrong, then. Some are, some aren't. The emperor—and I—expect you to show both discrimination and discretion. Let me remind you that you will hold the throne of Mournhold not by right of blood but solely at the pleasure of Tiber Septim. If he judges you unsuitable your reign will end ere it begins. He requires intelligence, obedience, discretion and total loyalty in all his appointees, and he favors chastity and modesty in women. I suggest you model your deportment after Drelliane."

"I'd liefer be back in Black Moor," Barenziah said indignantly.

"That is not an option. If you are of no use to Tiber Septim he will see to it that you are of no use to his enemies either,"

Symmachus said coldly. "If you would keep your head upon your shoulders take warning. Let me add that power offers pleasures other than those of carnality and low company." He spoke of art, literature, drama, music, and grand balls.

Barenziah listened with interest spurred by his threats, but after asked if she might continue her study of spellcasting while in Imperial City. Symmachus seemed pleased and promised to arrange it. Pleased with this she then said that she noted that three of their knights were women, and asked if she might train a little in combat with them, just for the sake of exercise. Symmachus looked less than pleased, but agreed she might, although only with the women.

The late winter weather held fair but cold for their journey, so that they travelled quickly over firm roads. On the last day, spring seemed to come at last for there was a thaw, and the road grew sloppy underfoot, and everywhere one could faintly hear the sound of water trickling and dripping.

They came to the great bridge that crossed into Imperial City at sunset. The rosy glow turned all the stark white marble buildings a delicate pink. It all looked very new and grand and immaculate. A broad avenue led straight north to the Palace. There was a crowd of people of all sorts in the streets. Lights winked out in the shops and on in the inns as dusk fell and the stars came out one by one. Even the side streets were broad and brightly lit. Near the palace the towers of a grand Mage Guild reared to the east while westward the stained glass windows of a great temple glittered.

Symmachus had an apartment in a great house two blocks from the palace, past the Temple, the Temple of the One, he said, as they passed it, an ancient Nordic cult which Tiber



Septim had revived. He said that Barenziah would be expected to become a member, should she prove acceptable to the Emperor.

Symmachus' apartment was very grand, although little to Barenziah's liking. The walls and furnishings were stark white, relieved only by touches of bright gold, the floors of gleaming black marble. Barenziah's eyes ached for color and shadow.

In the morning Symmachus and Drelliane escorted her to the Imperial Palace. Barenziah noted that everyone they met greeted Symmachus with a deferential respect which in some cases bordered on obsequiousness. He took it quite for granted. She and Symmachus were ushered directly into the Imperial presence.

Morning sun flooded the small room through a large window with tiny panes, washing over the breakfast table and the single man who sat there, dark against the light. He leapt to his feet as they entered and hurried toward them, "Ah, Symmachus, my friend, I welcome thy return most gladly." His hands touched Symmachus shoulders briefly, fondly, interrupting the deep bow the elf had begun. Barenziah curtsied as Tiber Septim turned to her.

"Barenziah, my naughty little runaway, how do you, child? Here, let me have a look at you. Why, Symmachus, she's charming, absolutely charming. Why have you hidden her from us all these years? Is the light too much? Shall I draw the hangings? Yes, of course." He waved aside Symmachus protests and drew the curtains himself, not troubling to summon a servant. "You will pardon me for this discourtesy to my guests. I've much to think of, but that's scant excuse for inhospitality—

ah, pray join me. There's some excellent fruit from the Black Marsh."

They settled themselves at the table. Barenziah was astonished. Tiber Septim was nothing like the grim grey giant warrior she'd pictured. He was only of middle height, half a head shorter than tall Symmachus, although he was well knit of figure and lithe in movement. He had a winning smile, bright, indeed piercing, blue eyes, and a full head of stark white hair above a lined and weathered face. He might have been of any age from forty to sixty.

He pressed food and drink upon them, then repeated his question: why had she left her home? Had her guardians been unkind to her?

"No, excellency," Barenziah replied, "in truth, no, although I fancied so at times." Symmachus had made up a lie for her and Barenziah told it, although with misgivings. The stableboy, Straw, had convinced her that her guardians, unable to find a suitable husband for her, meant to sell her as a concubine in Rihad, and when a Redguard had indeed come, she had panicked and fled with him. Tiber Septim seemed fascinated and listened raptly as she provided details of her life as a merchant caravan guard.

"Why, 'tis like a ballad," he said. "By the One, I'll have the court bard set it to music. What a charming boy you must have made."

"Symmachus said—" Barenziah stopped in some confusion, "he said, well, that I no longer look much like a boy. I have grown in the past few months." She lowered her gaze in what she hoped looked like maiden modesty.

“He’s a very discerning fellow, is my friend Symmachus.”

“I know I’ve been a very foolish girl. I must crave thy pardon, and that of my kind guardians. I—I realized that some time ago, but I was too ashamed to go home. And I do long for Morrowind. My soul pines for my own country.”

“My dear. You shall go home, I promise you, but I pray you remain with us a little longer, that you may prepare yourself for the stern task with which I shall charge you.” Barenziah gazed at him earnestly, heart beating hard. It was all working just as Symmachus had said it would. She felt a warm flush of gratitude toward him, but was careful to keep her attention focused on the Emperor. “I am honored, Excellency, and wish most earnestly to serve you and this great Empire you have forged in any way I can.” It was the politic thing to say, but Barenziah really meant it. She was awed by the magnificence of the city and the discipline and order everywhere evident, and was excited at the prospect of being a part of it all. Plus she felt quite drawn to Tiber Septim.

After a few days Symmachus left for Mournhold to take up his duties as governor until Barenziah was ready to assume the throne, after which he would become her Prime Minister. Barenziah, with Drelliane as chaperone, took up residence in a suite at the Palace. Several tutors were provided for her. During this time she became deeply interested in the magical arts, but she found the study of history and politics not at all to her taste.

On occasion she met Tiber Septim in the Palace gardens and he would unfailingly inquire politely as to her progress, and chide her, although with a smile, over her disinterest in matters of state. However, he was always happy to instruct her on fine

points of magic, and he could make even history and politics seem interesting after all. “They’re people, child, not dry facts in a dusty book,” he said. As her understanding broadened their discussions became longer, deeper and more frequent. He spoke to her of his vision of a united Tamriel, each race separate and distinct but with shared ideals and goals, all contributing to the common weal.

“Some things are universal, shared by all sentient folk of good will,” he said. “So the One teaches us. We must unite against the malicious and the brutish, the mis-created, the orcs, trolls, goblins and other worse creatures, not strive ‘gainst one another.”

His blue eyes would light as he stared into his dream, and Barenziah was delighted just to sit and listen to him. If he drew close to her, the side of her body next to him would glow as if he were a fire. If their hands met she would tingle all over as if his body were charged with a small shock spell. One day, quite unexpectedly, he took her face in his hands and kissed her gently on the mouth. She drew back after a few moments, astonished by the violence of her feelings, and he apologized instantly. “I didn’t mean to do that. It’s just—you are so beautiful, my dear. So very beautiful.” He was looking at her with a hopeless yearning in his face. She turned away, tears streaming down her face. “Are you angry with me? Talk to me.”

Barenziah shook her head. “I could never be angry with you. I love you. I know it’s wrong, but I can’t help it.”

“I have a wife,” he said. “She is a good and virtuous woman, and the mother of my children. I could never put her aside, yet there is nothing between us, no sharing of the spirit. She would have had me be other than what I am. I am the most powerful

man in all Tamriel, and, Barenziah, I think I am the most lonely as well. Power!” he said with contempt. “I’d trade a goodly share of it for youth and love if the gods allowed it.”

“But you are strong and vigorous and vital, more than any man I’ve ever known.”

He shook his head. “Today, perhaps. Yet I am less than I was yesterday, last year, ten years ago. I feel the sting of my mortality and it is painful.”

“If I can ease thy pain, let me do so.” Barenziah moved towards him, hands outstretched.

“I would not take thy innocence from thee.”

“I’m not that innocent.”

“How so?” Tiber Septim’s voice grated harshly, his brow knitted. Barenziah’s mouth went dry. What had she done?

“There was Straw,” she faltered. “I—I was lonely, too. Am lonely. And not so strong as you.” She cast her eyes down in embarrassment. “I’m not worthy—”

“No, no, not so. Barenziah, it cannot last for long. You have a duty in Mournhold. I must tend my Empire. Shall we share what we may and pray the One forgives us our frailty?”

Tiber Septim held out his arms and, wordlessly, Barenziah stepped into his embrace.

The Real Barenziah, Part 7

“You dance on the edge of a volcano, child,” Drelliane scolded, as Barenziah admired the emerald ring her lover had given her to celebrate their one month anniversary.

“How so? We make one another happy. We harm no one. Symmachus bade me to be discriminate and discreet. Who better could I choose? And we’ve been most discreet. He treats me as a daughter in public.” Tiber Septim’s nightly visits were made through a secret passage.

“He slavers over you like a dog his dinner. Have you not noticed the coolness of the Empress and her son toward you?”

Barenziah shrugged. Even before she and Septim had become lovers she’d had no more from his family than bare civility. Threadbare civility. “What matter? It is Tiber who holds power.”

“It is his son who holds the future. Do not hold his mother up to public scorn, I beg you.”

“Can I help it if that dry stick of a woman cannot hold her husband’s interest even in conversation at dinner?”

“Have less to say in public. That is all I ask. She matters little, save that her children love her, and you do not want them as enemies. Tiber Septim has not long to live. I mean,” Drelliane amended quickly, at Barenziah’s scowl, “Humans are all short-lived. Temporary, as we elves say. They come and go as the seasons do, but the families of the powerful live on for a time. You must be a family friend if you would see lasting profit from your relationship. Ah, how can I make you truly see, you who are so young and human-bred as well! If you take care you and Mournhold are like to live to see the fall of Septim’s dynasty, if

indeed he has founded one, as you have seen its rise. It is the way of human history. They ebb and flow like the tides. Their cities and even their empires bloom like spring flowers, only to wither and die in the summer sun.”

Barenziah just laughed. She knew that rumors abounded about her and Tiber Septim. She enjoyed the attention for all save the Empress and her son seemed captivated by her. Bards sang of her dark beauty and her charming ways. She was in fashion and in love and if it was temporary, well, what was not? She was happy for the first time she could remember, each day filled with joy and pleasure, and the nights yet better.

“What is wrong with me?” Barenziah lamented. “Look, not one of my skirts fit? What’s become of my waist? Am I getting fat?” Barenziah regarded her thin arms and legs and her undeniably thickened waist in the mirror with displeasure.

Drelliane shrugged. “You appear to be with child, young as you are. Constant pairing with a human has brought you early to fertility. I see no choice but for you to speak with him about it. You are in his power. It would be best, I think, for you to go directly to Mournhold if he will agree, and bear the child there.”

“Alone?” Barenziah placed her hands on her swollen belly, tears forming in her eyes. Everything in her yearned to share the fruit of her love with her lover. “He’ll ne’er agree to that. He won’t be parted from me now. You’ll see.”

Drelliane shook her gray head. Although she said no more, a look of sympathy and sorrow had replaced her usual cool scorn.

That night Barenziah told Tiber Septim of it when he came to her.

“With child?” He looked shocked. Stunned. “You’re sure of it? I was told elves do not bear so young.”

Barenziah summoned a smile. “How can I be sure? I’ve never—”

“I’ll fetch my healer.”

The healer, a high elf of middle years, confirmed that Barenziah was indeed pregnant and that such a thing had never before been known to happen. It was a testimony to His Excellency’s potency, the healer said sycophantically. Tiber Septim snarled at him. “This must not be,” he said. “Undo it.”

“Sire,” the healer gaped at him. “I cannot—.”

“Of course you can,” he snapped. “I command you do so.”

Barenziah, wide-eyed with sudden terror, sat up in the bed. “No!” she screamed. “No! What are you saying?”

“My dear child,” Tiber Septim sat down beside her with his winning smile. “I’m so sorry. Truly. But this cannot be. Your child could be a threat to my son and his sons. I will put it no more plainly than that.”

“The child I bear is your child!” she wailed.

“No. It’s but a possibility, a might be, not yet gifted with a soul or quickened into life. I will not have it so.” He gave the healer another hard stare and the elf began to tremble.



“It is her child. Children are few among elves. No woman conceives more than four and that is very rare. Two is the allotted number. Some bear none, some only one. If I take this one from her, she may not conceive again.”

“You told me she would not bear to me. I’ve little faith in your prognostications.”

Barenziah scrambled naked from her bed, and ran for the door, not knowing where she was going, only that she could not stay. She never reached the door for blackness took her.

Barenziah awoke to pain and emptiness. Drelliane was there to soothe the pain and clean the blood that pooled between her legs, but there was nothing to fill the emptiness. Tiber Septim sent gifts and flowers, and came for short visits, always well attended. Barenziah received these visits with pleasure, but he came no more at night nor did she wish for him. After a week, when she was physically recovered, it was announced that Symmachus had requested she come to Mournhold earlier than planned, and that she would leave forthwith. She was given a splendid retinue, a wardrobe befitting a queen and a ceremonial departure from the gates of Imperial City.

“Everything I have ever loved I have lost,” Barenziah thought, looking over the mounted knights behind and ahead, the tirewomen near her in a carriage, “yet have I gained a measure of wealth and power, and the promise of more to come. Dearly have I bought it. Now do I better understand Tiber Septim’s love of it, if he has oft paid such prices, for surely worth is measured by the price one pays.” Barenziah, by her wish, rode mounted on a shining black mare, clad as a warrior in shining chain mail of dark elf making.

As the slow days slipped by and her train rode a winding road eastward into the setting sun, around her rose the steep-sided mountain slopes of Morrowind. The air was thin and a chill late autumn wind blew constantly, but it was also rich with the sweet spice smell of the late-blooming black rose, which grew in every shadowy nook and crevice, finding nourishment even in the stoniest slopes. In small villages and towns, ragged dark elf folk gathered along the road to cry her name or simply gape. Most of her knightly escort were Redguards with a few dark elves, Nords and Bretons scattered among them. As they wove their way into the heart of Morrowind, these grew increasingly uncomfortable and clung together. Even the dark elf knights seemed somewhat uneasy. Barenziah felt at home, felt the welcome extended to her by this land.

Symmachus met her at the Mournhold borders with an escort of knights, about half of whom were dark elf in Imperial battle dress, she noted. There was a grand parade into the city and speeches of welcome from elders.

“I’ve had the queen’s suite refurbished for you,” he said, “but you can change anything not to your taste, of course.” He went on about details of the coronation ceremony which was to be held in a week. He was his old commanding self, but she sensed something else as well. He was eager for her approval of the arrangements. He asked her nothing about her stay in Imperial City or Tiber Septim, although Barenziah was certain that Drelliane had told him everything in detail.

The ceremony itself, like so much else, was a mixture of old and new, parts of it dictated by Imperial format, as she was sworn to service of the Empire and Tiber Septim, as well as to the land of Mournhold and its people. She then accepted fealty from the

people and the council. The council was composed of a mixture of Imperial representatives, advisors they were called, and native representatives of the people. These latter were mostly elders, in accordance with elven custom. Barenziah found that much of her time was occupied in attempting to reconcile these two forces. And the elders were expected to do most of the conciliating in the name of the reforms introduced by the Empire, such as land ownership and surface farming, which went clean against dark elven tradition, as laid down by their ancient gods and goddesses. Now, Tiber Septim, in the name of the One had decreed a new tradition, and the gods and goddesses themselves were expected to obey.

Barenziah threw herself into work and study. She was through with love and men for a long, long time, if not forever. There were other pleasures, she discovered, as Symmachus had promised, those of the mind, of power. She developed a love for dark elf history and legend, a hunger to know the people from whom she sprang, proud warriors and craftsmen.

### The Real Barenziah, Part 8

Tiber Septim lived another half century, during which she saw him on a few occasions, as she was bidden to Imperial City for one reason or another. He greeted her with warmth on these occasions and they had long talks together about events. He seemed to have quite forgotten that there had ever been anything more between them. He changed little over the years. Rumor said that his mages had found spells to extend his vitality, and even that the One had granted him immortality. Then one day a messenger came with the news that he was dead, and his son was now Emperor in his place.

They'd heard the news in private, she and Symmachus. He took it stoically, as he took everything.

"It doesn't seem possible," Barenziah said.

"I told you. It's the way of humans. They are a short-lived race. It doesn't really matter. His power lives on, and his son now wields it."

"You called him your friend. Do you feel nothing?"

He shrugged. "There was a time when you called him somewhat more. What do you feel, Barenziah?"

"Emptiness. Loneliness," she said, then she too shrugged. "That's not new."

"I know," he said, taking her hand. "Barenziah, let me try to fill that lonely place." He turned her face up and kissed her. It filled her with astonishment. She couldn't remember his ever touching her before. She'd never thought of him in that way, and yet, undeniably, an old familiar warmth spread through her. She'd forgotten how good it was, that warmth. Not the burning heat she'd felt with Tiber Septim, but the warmth she associated with, with Straw! Straw, poor Straw. She hadn't thought of him in so long. He'd be middle-aged now if he still lived. Probably married with a dozen children, she hoped, and a wife who could talk for two.

"Marry me, Barenziah," he was saying, "I've worked and toiled and waited long enough, haven't I?"

Marriage. "A peasant with peasant dreams." The words appeared in her mind, as if from long ago. And yet, why not? If not him, who? The great noble families had been destroyed in

the war and its aftermath. Dark elf rule had been restored, but not the old nobility. Most of them were upstarts, like Symmachus and not as good as he was. He'd fought to keep Mournhold whole and healthy when their so-called advisors would have picked their bones, sucked them dry as Ebonheart had been sucked dry. He'd fought for Mournhold, fought for her, while she and it grew. She felt a sudden rush of gratitude, and, undeniably, affection. He was steady and reliable. He'd served her well. "Why not?" she said, smiling.

The union was a good one, both in its political and personal aspects. While Tiber Septim's son viewed her with a jaundiced eye, his trust in his father's old friend was absolute. Symmachus, however, was still viewed with suspicion by Morrowind's stiff-necked folk, suspicious of his peasant ancestry, his close ties to the Empire, while she was quite popular. "The Lady's one of our own in her heart," it was whispered, "held captive as we are." Barenziah felt content. There was work and pleasure and what more could one ask of life? The years passed swiftly, with crises to be dealt with, storms and famines and failures and successes and plots to be foiled. Mournhold prospered well enough. Her people were secure and fed, her mines and farms productive. All was well save that the marriage produced no children. No heirs.

Now elven children are slow to come, and most demanding of their welcome, noble children more so than others, thus many decades had passed before they grew concerned.

"The fault lies with me, husband. I am damaged goods." Barenziah said bitterly. "If you want to take another..."

"I want no other," Symmachus snapped, "nor do I know the fault to be thine. Perhaps it is mine. Whichever, we will seek a

cure. If there is damage, surely it may be repaired?”

“How so? When we dare not entrust anyone with my true story? Healer’s oaths do not always hold.”

“It won’t matter if we change the time and circumstances a bit. Whate’er we say or fail to say Jephre never rests. His inventive mind and quick tongue are ever busy spreading gossip and rumor.”

Priests and Healers came and went, but all their prayers, potions and other efforts produced not even a period of bloom, let alone a single fruit. Eventually, they put it from their minds and left it in the gods’ hands. They were yet young, with centuries ahead of them. There was time. Elves always have time.

## The Real Barenziah, Part 9

Barenziah sat in the hall at dinner, pushing her food about on her plate, feeling bored and restless. Symmachus was away, having been summoned to Imperial City by Tiber Septim’s great-great grandson, Uriel Septim. Or was it his great-great-great grandson? She’d lost count, she realized. Their faces seemed to blur into one another. Perhaps she should have gone with him, but there’d been the delegation from Tear on a tiresome matter that required delicate handling.

A bard was singing, but Barenziah hadn’t been listening. Lately all the songs seemed the same to her, whether new or old. Now a turn of phrase caught her attention. He was singing of freedom, of adventure, of freeing Morrowind from its chains. How dare he! Barenziah sat up straight and turned to glare at him and worse, then realized that he was singing of some

ancient war with Skyrim Nords, praising the heroism of King Moraelyn and his brave Companions. That tale was old enough, yet the song was new...and the meaning... Barenziah wasn't sure. A bold fellow, but with a good voice and an ear for poetry and music. Rather handsome, too, in a raffish way. He didn't look exactly prosperous, nor was he all that young. Certainly he wasn't under a century of age. Why hadn't she heard him before, or at least heard of him?

"Who is he?" she whispered to her dinner companion, who shrugged and said, "Calls himself Nightingale. No one seems to know anything about him."

"Bid him speak with me when he has done."

Nightingale came to her, thanked her for the honor and the purse she handed him. His manner wasn't bold, rather quiet and unassuming. He was quick enough with gossip about others, but she learned nothing about him, for he turned all questions away with a joking answer or a wild tale, yet one given so charmingly that it was impossible to take offense. "My true name? Milady, I am no one. No, no, my parents named me Know Wan, or was it, No Buddy? What doth it matter? How can parents give name to that which they know not? Ah, I believe that was the name, No Not. I have been Nighingale for so long I do not quite remember, oh, since last month at the very least, or was it last week? All my memory goes into song and tales, you see. I've none left for myself. I'm really quite boring. Where was I born? Why, Knoweyr. I plan to settle in Dunroman when I get there, but I'm in no hurry."

"I see. And will you then marry Atleshur?"

“Very perceptive of you, milady. Perhaps, although I find Inaste quite charming, too, at whiles.”

“Ah, you are fickle, then?”

“Like the wind, milady, I blow hither and yon and hot and cold.”

“Stay with us awhile, then, if you will.”

“As you wish, milady.”

Barenziah found her interest in life rekindled. All that had seemed stale seemed fresh and new again. She greeted each day with zest, looking forward to conversation and song with Nightingale. Unlike other bards he never sang her praises, nor other women’s but only of high adventure and bold deeds. When she asked him about this, he merely said, “What greater praise of thy charm couldst thou ask, than what thy own mirror gives thee? And if words thou wouldst have, thou hast those of the greatest bards of the land? How should I vie with them, I who was born but a week gone by?” For once they spoke privately, for Barenziah, unable to sleep, had bidden him come to her chamber that his music might soothe her.

“Thou art lazy and a coward, else I hold no charm for thee.”

“Milady, to praise thee I must know thee and thy spirit is wrapped in clouds of enchantment.”

“Not so, ‘tis thy words that weave enchantment, and thy eyes. Know me if thou wilt, and if thou dare’st.” He came to her; they lay close, kissed and embraced. “Not even Barenziah truly knows herself,” he whispered softly. “How can I? Barenziah,



thou seekest and know it not, nor yet for what. What would you have, that you have not?”

“Passion,” she whispered, “passion. And children born of it.”

“And for thy children, what? What birthright will you give them?”

“Freedom,” she whispered, “freedom to be what they are. Where can I find these things?”

“They lie beside you and beneath you if you dare stretch out your hand to take them.”

“But Symmachus...”

“I tell you, in me lies the answer to part of your quest and below us in these very mines, lies that which will grant us the power to fulfill achieve it. That which Moraelyn and Edward between them used to free High Rock from Nord domination of their spirit. Properly used, none can stand against it, not e’en that power which the Emperor controls. Freedom, Barenziah, freedom from the chains that bind you. Think on it, Barenziah.” He kissed her again, softly, and withdrew.

“You’re not going?” she cried out, for her body yearned for him.

“For now,” he said. “Pleasures of the flesh are nothing beside what we might have together. I would have you think on it.”

“I don’t need to think. What must we do? What preparation must we make?”

“Why, none. You can enter the mines freely. Once below I can guide you to where this thing lies and lift it from its resting

place.”

“The Horn of Summoning,” she whispered. “Is it true? How do you know? ‘Tis said it’s buried ‘neath Daggerfall itself.”

“Nay, long have I studied this matter. Before his death King Edward gave the horn for safekeeping into the hand of his old friend King Moraelyn, who secreted it here in Mournhold, under the guardianship of the god Ephen, whose birthplace this is. Now thou know’st what it hath cost me many long years and weary miles to learn.”

“But the god?”

“Trust me, dear heart. All will be well.” Laughing, he blew her a last kiss and was gone.

On the morrow they passed the guards at the great doors that led below. Barenziah made her usual tour of inspection but instead of leaving afterwards, she and Nightingale entered a long-sealed door that led to an ancient part of the workings, long abandoned. The going was treacherous, for some of the old passages had collapsed and they had to clear a passage or find a way around. Vicious rats and huge spiders scurried here and there and sometimes attacked them.

“We’ve been gone too long,” Barenziah said. “They’ll be looking for us. What will I tell them?”

“Whate’er you please,” Nightingale laughed. “You are the queen, aren’t you?”

“Symmachus—”

“That peasant obeys whoever holds power. Always has, always will. We shall hold the power, love.” His lips were the sweetest wine, every touch of fire and lightning.

“Now,” she said, “take me now. I’m ready.” Her body seemed to hum, every nerve and muscle taut.

“Not yet. Not here, not like this.” He waved around at the ancient dusty rubble and grim rock walls. “Just a little longer.”

“Here,” he said at last, pausing before a blank wall. “Here it lies.” His hands wove a spell and the wall dissolved to reveal the entrance to an ancient shrine. In the midst stood a statue of the god, hammer in hand, poised above an adamantium anvil.

“By my blood, Ephren, I bid you wake! Moraelyn’s heir of Ebonheart am I, last of the royal kin, sharer of thy blood. At Morrowind’s last need, with all elvendom in peril of their souls, release to me that which thou guardst! Now do I bid thee strike!”

At his words the statue stirred and quickened, and the blank stone eyes glowed red. The massive head nodded, and the hammer smote the anvil, which split asunder with a thunderous crash, and the stone god himself crumbled. Barenziah clapped her hands over her ears and crouched down, crying aloud. Nightingale strode boldly forward and clasped what lay among the ruins with a cry of ecstasy, lifting it high.

“Someone’s coming!” Barenziah cried. “Wait, that’s not the Horn, it—it’s a staff!”

“Indeed, my dear, you see truly, at last!” Nightingale laughed aloud, then—“I’m sorry, my darling, that I must leave you now.

Perhaps we'll meet again one day. Until then—ah, until then, Symmachus,” he said to the mail clad figure who'd appeared behind them, “she's yours.”

“No!” Barenziah sprang up and ran toward him, but he was gone—winked out of existence—just as Symmachus, sword drawn, reached him. His blade cleaved a single stroke through empty air, then he stood as still as if he'd taken the stone god's place. Barenziah said nothing, nothing, nothing...

Symmachus told the half dozen elves who had accompanied him to say only that Nightingale and the queen had lost their way, and had been set upon by spiders. Nightingale had fallen into a deep crevice that closed upon him. His body could not be recovered. The queen had been badly shaken by the encounter and deeply mourned the loss of the friend, who had fallen in her defense. Such was his power of command that the slack-jawed soldiers, none of whom had caught more than a glimpse of the event, were half-convinced that it was true.

Barenziah was escorted above and taken to her chamber where she dismissed her servants and sat stunned, too shaken even to weep. Symmachus stood watching her.

“Do you have any idea what you have done?” he said finally.

“You should have told me,” Barenziah whispered, “The Staff of Unity and Chaos! I never dreamed it lay here. He said—” A mewling moan escaped her lips and she doubled over in agony. “What have I done? What now? What's to become of me?”

“You loved him?”

“Yes, yes, yes. Oh, may the gods have mercy on me, I did love him.”

Symmachus hard-lined face softened slightly and his eyes glittered with a new light, and he sighed softly. “Ahhh, that’s something then. You will become a mother if it’s within my power. As for the rest, my dear, I expect you have loosed a storm upon the land. It’ll be awhile yet in the brewing. When it comes we’ll weather it together.” He stripped her clothing from her and carried her to the bed. Out of grief and longing, her body responded to his as never before, pouring forth all that Nightingale had woken in her. She was emptied, and then filled, for a child was planted and grew within her. As the babe grew in her womb, so did her feeling for patient faithful Symmachus, rooted in long friendship and affection, now at last ripen into the fullness of true love. Eight years later their love was blessed again with a little daughter.

Directly after Nighingale’s theft of the staff Symmachus had sent secret messages to Uriel Septim of the matter, but had not gone himself, choosing rather to stay with Barenziah during her fertile period and father the child upon her. For this, and for the theft, he suffered Uriel Septim’s disfavor and suspicion. Spies were sent in search of the thief but Nighingale seemed to have vanished whence he’d come, wherever that was.

“Dark elf, in part, perhaps,” said Barenziah, “but part human, too, I think, in disguise, else would I not have come so quickly to fertility.”

“Part dark elf, for sure, of ancient R’Aathim lineage, else he could not have freed the staff,” Symmachus reasoned, “and I think he would have lain with thee. As elf he did not dare, for then he would not have been able to part with thee. He knew

the Staff lay there, not the Horn, and that he must teleport to safety, for the Staff is not a weapon that would have seen him clear, unlike the horn. Praise the gods he hath not that! It seems all was as he expected, yet how did he know? I placed it there myself, with the aid of the rag-tail end of the R'Aathim clan who now sits king in Ebonheart as a reward. Tiber Septim claimed the Horn, but left the Staff for safe-keeping. Nightingale can use the Staff to sow seeds of strife and dissension, if he wishes, yet that alone will not gain him power. That lies with the Horn and the ability to use it."

"I'm not so sure it's power that Nightingale seeks," Barenziah said.

"All seek power," Symmachus retorted, "each in our own way."

"I have found what I sought," Barenziah said.

### The Real Barenziah, Part 10

As Symmachus had predicted, the theft of the Staff of Chaos had few short term consequences. The current emperor, Uriel Septim, sent some rather stiff messages expressing shock and displeasure at the staff's disappearance and urging that Symmachus make every effort to locate its whereabouts and communicate this to the newly appointed Imperial BattleMage, Jagar Tharn, in whose hands the matter had been placed.

"Tharn!" Symmachus snarled in disgust and frustration, as he paced about the small chamber where Barenziah, now some months pregnant, was sitting serenely, knitting a baby blanket. "Jagar Tharn, indeed. I wouldn't give him directions for crossing the street."

“What have you against this person, husband?”

“I just don’t trust that mongrel elf. Part wood elf, part dark elf and part only the gods know what. All the worst qualities of all his combined races. No one knows much about him. Claims he was born in Valenwood, of a wood elf mother. Seems to have been everywhere since—”

Barenziah, sunk in the contentment of pregnancy had only been humoring Symmachus thus far, but this piqued her interest. “Nightingale? Could he have been this Jagar Tharn, disguised?”

“Nay. Human blood seems to be the one missing component in Tharn’s ancestry.” To Symmachus, Barenziah knew, that was a flaw. Symmachus despised wood elves as lazy thieves and high elves as effete intellectuals, but he admired humans, especially Bretons, for their combination of pragmatism, intelligence and energy.

“Nightingale’s of Ebonheart, of the House of Mora, I’ll be bound—that house has had human blood since her time. Ebonheart was jealous that the Staff was laid here when Tiber Septim took the Horn from us.”

Barenziah sighed a little. The rivalry between Ebonheart and Mournhold reached back almost to the dawn of history. Once the two had been one, all the mines within held by Clan R’Aathim, whose royal house held the High Kingship of Morrowind. Ebonheart had split into two separate city states, Ebonheart and Mournhold, when Queen Lian’s twin sons, Moraelyn’s grandsons, had been left as the heirs. At the same time the office of High King had been vacated in favor of a temporary War Leader to be named by a council in times of

provincial emergency. Still, Ebonheart remained jealous of her prerogatives as the eldest city state of Morrowind, still first among equals, and claimed that guardianship of the Horn should rightfully be entrusted to the elder. Mournhold responded that Moraelyn himself had placed the Horn in the keeping of the god Ephen, and Mournhold was unarguably the god's birthplace.

"Why not tell Jagar Tharn of your suspicions then? Let him recover the thing. As long as it's safe, what does it matter where it lies?"

Symmachus stared at her without comprehension. "It matters," he said softly, "but not that much," he added. "Certainly not enough for you to concern yourself further over it. You just tend to your—knitting."

In a few more months Barenziah produced a fine son, whom they named Helseth. Nothing more was heard of the Staff or "Nightingale." If Ebonheart held it, certainly they did not boast of it. The years passed swiftly and happily. Helseth grew tall and strong. He was much like his father, whom he worshipped. When Helseth was eight years old Barenziah bore a second child, a daughter, to Symmachus' great delight. Helseth was his pride, yet little Morgiah held his heart.

Shortly after Morgiah's birth word came that a plot against the Emperor had been unmasked and that the chief co-conspirators Jagar Tharn and Ria Silmane were dead. Symmachus rejoiced at this news. "I told you so," he crowed. Yet thereafter relations with the Empire slowly deteriorated, for no apparent reason. Taxes were raised and quotas increased with each passing year. Symmachus felt that the Emperor suspected him of having had a hand in the plot and sought to



prove his loyalty by making every effort to comply with the increasing demands. He lengthened working hours and raised taxes and even made up some of the difference from both crown funds and their own private holdings. Yet still the demands increased and commoners and nobles alike grew restless.

“I want you to take the children and journey yourself to Imperial City,” Symmachus at last said in desperation. “You must make the Emperor listen, else all Mournhold will be in revolt come spring. You have a way with men, you always did.” He forced a smile.

Barenziah forced a smile of her own. “Even you.”

“Yes, even me,” he said dully.

“Both children?” Barenziah looked over toward the corner windows where Helseth was strumming a lute and singing a duet with his little sister. Helseth was fifteen, Morgiah just eight.

“Perhaps they’ll soften his heart. Besides, it’s time that Helseth was presented at the Imperial Court.”

“Perhaps, but that’s not your true reason. You do not think you can keep them safe here. If that’s the case, then you’re not safe here either. Come with us,” Barenziah urged.

He took her hands in his. “Barenziah. Love. Heart of my heart, if I leave now, there’ll be nothing for us to return to. I’ll be all right. I can take care of myself, and I can do it better if I need not fear for you and our children.”

Barenziah laid her head against his chest. “Just remember that we need you. We can do without the rest if we have each other. Empty hands and empty bellies are easier to bear than an empty heart. My foolishness has brought us to this pass.”

“If so, ‘tis not that so a place to be.” His eyes rested fondly on their carefree children. “And none of us shall go without. I cost you everything once, Barenziah, I and Tiber Septim. Without my aid the Septim dynasty would never have begun. I helped its rise. I can bring about its fall. You may tell Uriel Septim that, and that my patience is bounded.”

Barenziah gasped. Symmachus was not given to empty threats. She’d no more imagined that he would ever turn against the Empire than that the old house wolf lying by the hearth would turn on her.

“How?” she demanded, but he shook his head. “Better that you know not,” he said. “Just tell him that, if he prove recalcitrant, and do not fear. He’s Septim enough that he will not kill the messengers.”

The late winter journey to Imperial City was an easy one. One of the things the Septim Empire had accomplished was the building and maintenance of good highways throughout Tamriel.

## The Real Barenziah, Part 1 1

Barenziah stood before the Emperor’s throne, explaining Mournhold’s straits. She’d waited weeks for an audience with Uriel Septim, fobbed off on pretext or another. “His Excellency is indisposed.” “An urgent matter demands his attention.” “I am sorry, your Highness, there must be some mistake. Your

appointment is for next week. No, see..." And now it was not going well. He did not even seem to be listening to her. He hadn't invited her to sit, nor had he dismissed the children. Helseth stood still as a carved statue, but little Morgiah had begun to fidget.

He had first greeted the three of them with a too-bright smile of welcome that did not reach his eyes. Then, as she presented her children, he had gazed at them with a fixed attention that was real, yet inappropriate. Barenziah had been dealing with humans for nearly five hundred years now and had developed skill at reading their expressions and movement that was far beyond that any human ever learned. Try as the Emperor might to conceal it, there was a hunger in his eyes, and something more. Regret. Why? He had several fine children of his own. Why covet hers? And why look at her with an intense, though, brief yearning? Ah, well, perhaps he was tired of his Lady. Humans were fickle minded. But after that one long, burning glance, his gaze had shifted away as she began to speak of her mission, and he sat still as stone.

Puzzled, Barenziah stared into the pale set face, looking for some trace of the Septims she'd known. She hadn't known Uriel Septim well, having met him only once when he was still a child and then at his coronation twenty years before. He'd been stern and dignified then, yet not icily remote as this man was. Despite the physical resemblance, he didn't seem to be the same man at all. Not the same, yet something about him was familiar to her, more familiar than it should be, some trick of posture or gesture... Suddenly she felt very warm, as if lava had been poured over her. Illusion! She had studied well the arts of illusion since Nightingale had fooled her so badly. She had

learned to detect it and she felt it now, as certainly as a blind man could feel the sun on his face.

Illusion, but why? Her mind worked furiously even as her mouth went on reciting details about the Mournhold economy. Vanity? Humans were oft as ashamed of the signs of age as elves were proud of them. Yet the face Uriel Septim wore seemed consistent with his age. Barenziah dared use none of her magic arts. Even petty nobles had means of detecting, if not shielding themselves from these in their halls. The use of magic here would bring down his wrath as surely as drawing a knife would. Magic. Illusion.

Suddenly she thought of Nightingale and briefly he sat before her, only saddened. Trapped. And then that vision faded and another man sat there, like Nightingale and yet unlike. Pale skin, red eyes and elven ears and about him a fierce glow of concentration, an aura of energy, a shrinking horror. This man was capable of anything! And then, once again she beheld the face of Uriel Septim. How could she be sure she wasn't imagining things? Perhaps her mind was playing tricks on her. She felt a sudden vast weariness, as if she'd been carrying a heavy burden too long and too far.

"Do you remember, Excellency, Symmachus and I had dinner with your family shortly after your father's coronation. You were no older than little Morgiah here. We were greatly honored to be the only guests that evening, except for your best friend Justin, of course."

"Ah, yes," the Emperor said. "I believe I do recall that."

"You and Justin were such friends. I was told he died not long after. A great pity."

“Indeed. I still do not like to speak of him.” His eyes were wary. “Ah, as for your request, my lady, we shall take it under advisement and let you know.”

Barenziah bowed, as did her children. A nod dismissed them, and they backed away from the presence. Barenziah took a deep breath. “Justin” had been an imaginary friend, although Uriel had insisted that a place be set for Justin at every meal! Not only that, “Justin” had been a girl, despite the boy name. Symmachus had kept up the family joke long after “Justin” had gone wherever such childhood friends go, inquiring seriously after Justin’s well-being whenever he and Uriel Septim met, and being responded to as seriously. The last Barenziah had heard “Justin”, after an adventurous youth, had married a high elf and settled in Lilandril. The man occupying the Emperor’s chair was not Uriel Septim! Nightingale! A chord of recognition rang through her and Barenziah knew that she was right. It was he, indeed! Symmachus had been wrong, so wrong...

What now, she wondered. What had become of Uriel Septim, and, more to the point, what did it mean for her and Symmachus and Mournhold? Thinking back, Barenziah guessed that their troubles were due to this false emperor, Nightingale, or whoever he really was. He must have taken Uriel Septim’s place shortly before the unreasonable demands on Mournhold had begun. That would explain why relations had deteriorated so long (as humans judged time) after her offense. Nightingale knew of Symmachus’ famed loyalty to, and knowledge of, the Septims and was making a pre-emptive strike. If that were indeed the case they were all in terrible danger. She and the children were under his hand here in Imperial City and Symmachus left alone to face the troubles of Nightingale’s brewing.

What must she do? Barenziah urged the children ahead of her, a hand on each shoulder, her womanservant and guards trailing behind. They had reached their waiting carriage—even though their apartment was only a few blocks from the Palace, royal dignity forbade their walking, and for once, Barenziah was glad of that. Even the carriage seemed a kind of sanctuary now, false as she knew that feeling to be.

A boy dashed up to one of the guards and handed him a letter, then pointed towards the carriage. The guard brought it to her. The boy waited, eyes wide. The letter was brief and complimentary and simply asked if King Eadwyre of Wayrest, High Rock, might be granted an audience with her, as he had heard much of her, and would be pleased to make her acquaintance. Barenziah's first impulse was to refuse. She wanted only to leave this city! Certainly she had no inclination for any dalliances with a dazzled human. She looked up frowning and one of the guard said, "The boy says his master awaits your reply yonder." She looked in the direction indicated and saw a handsome elderly man on horseback, surrounded by a half-dozen courtiers and guards. He caught her eye and bowed respectfully, removing his plumed hat.

"Very well," Barenziah said to the boy, on impulse. "Tell your master he may call on me tonight, after the dinner hour." The man looked polite and grave, and rather worried, but not in the least lovesick.

## The Real Barenziah, Part 12

Barenziah stood at the open tower window, waiting. She could sense her familiar's nearness, but though the night sky was clear as day to her eyes she could not yet see him. Then suddenly he was there, a swift moving dot beneath the wispy

night clouds. A few more minutes and the great nighthawk was there, wings folded, talons reaching for her thick leather armband. She carried the bird to its perch where it waited, panting, while her impatient fingers felt for the message secured in a capsule on one leg. It drank, then ruffled its feathers and began to preen, secure in her presence. A tiny part of her consciousness shared its satisfaction with a job well done, rest earned...yet beneath that was an unease. Things were not right, even to its bird mind.

Her fingers shook as she unfolded the thin sheet and pored over the sheet of cramped writing. Not Symmachus' bold hand! Barenziah sat, slowly, fingers smoothing the document while she prepared her mind and body to accept disaster calmly.

The Imperial Guards had deserted Symmachus and joined the rebels. The loyal troops had suffered a decisive defeat. The rebel leader had been recognized as king of Morrowind by the Emperor. Symmachus was dead. Barenziah and the children had been declared traitors of the Empire and a price set on their heads.

"My lady?" Barenziah jumped, startled at her servant's approach. "The Breton is here. King Eadwyre," the woman added helpfully, noting Barenziah's puzzlement. "Is there news, my lady?" she said, nodding at the nighthawk.

"Nothing that will not wait," Barenziah said quickly. "See to the bird."

King Eadwyre greeted her gravely and courteously, if rather fulsomely. He claimed to be a great admirer of Symmachus, who figured prominently in his family legends. Gradually he turned the conversation to her business with the Emperor.

Finding her noncommittal, he suddenly blurted out, “My Lady Queen, you must believe me. The man posing as the Emperor is an impostor! I know it sounds mad, but I—”

“No,” Barenziah said, with sudden decisiveness. “You are correct. I know.”

Eadwyre relaxed back into his seat for the first time, eyes shrewd. “You know? You’re not just humoring a madman? My lady I—we—need your aid.”

Barenziah smiled grimly at the irony. “Of what assistance might I be, my lord?”

Quickly he outlined a plot. The Imperial Sorceress Ria Silmane had been killed and declared a traitor by the false emperor, yet she retained a bit of her power and could yet contact a few of those she had known well on the mortal plane. She had chosen a Champion who would undertake to assemble the missing staff pieces and use the staff’s power to destroy Jagar Tharn, who was otherwise invulnerable, and rescue the true Emperor, who was being held prisoner in another plane. However, the chosen Champion languished now in the Imperial Dungeons. Tharn’s attention must be diverted while he freed himself with Ria’s help. Barenziah had Tharn’s ear and eye. Could she provide the necessary distraction?

“I suppose I could obtain another audience with him. Would that be sufficient? What do you mean, his eye?”

Eadwyre looked uncomfortable. “It was whispered among the servants that Jagar Tharn kept your likeness in a sort of shrine in his chambers. That surprises you?”



“Yes. And no.”

“Our chosen one may need a few days to escape.”

“You trust me in this? Why?”

“We are desperate, my lady. We have no choice. But yes, I do trust you. Symmachus—”

“Is dead.” Barenziah explained quickly and coolly.

“My Lady. What dreadful news!” For the first time Eadwyre’s urbane poise was shaken. “Under the circumstances, we can hardly ask—”

“Nay, my lord king. Under the circumstances I must do what I may to avenge myself upon the murderer of my children’s father. In return I ask only that you protect my orphaned children as you may.”

“Most willingly do I so pledge, most brave and noble lady!”

Old fool, Barenziah thought. She did not sleep that night, but sat in a chair beside her bed, hands folded in her lap, thinking long deep thoughts. She would not tell the children, not yet, not until she must.

She had no need to seek another audience with the “Emperor” for a summons came in the morning. She told the children she expected to be gone a few days, bade them give the servants no trouble and kissed them goodbye. Morgiah whimpered a bit, for she was bored and lonely in Imperial City. Helseth looked dour but said nothing. He was very like his father.

At the palace, Barenziah was escorted not into the great hall, but to a small parlor where the Emperor sat at a solitary breakfast. He nodded a greeting, and waved his hand at the window. "Splendid view, isn't it?"

Barenziah stared out over the towers of the great city. It dawned on her that this was the very chamber where she'd first met Tiber Septim and a strong wave of inchoate feeling swept over her. When she turned back at last Uriel Septim had vanished and Nightingale sat in his place, laughing.

"You knew," he said accusingly, scanning her face. "I wanted to surprise you. You might at least pretend."

Barenziah spread her arms, "I'm afraid my skills at pretense are no match for yours, my liege."

"You're angry with me." He pretended to pout.

"Just a little," she said icily. "I do find betrayal offensive."

"How human of you."

"What do you want of me?"

He wiped his mouth and stood erect. "Now you are pretending. You know what I want of you, my love."

"You want to tantalize and torment me. Go ahead. I'm in your power."

"No, no, no. I don't want that at all, Barenziah." He came near, speaking low in the old caressing voice that sent shivers over her body. "Don't you see? This was the only way." His hands closed on her arms.

“You could have taken me with you!” Tears gathered in her eyes.

He shook his head. “I didn’t have the power. Ah, but now, now I have it all. Mine to have, mine to share—with you.” He waved his hand toward the window and the city beyond. “All Tamriel to lay at your feet—and that is only the beginning.”

“It’s too late. Too late. You left me to him.”

“He’s dead. A scant few years... what does it matter?”

“The children—”

“I’ll adopt them. We’ll have others together, Barenziah. I have powers you do not dream of!” He moved to kiss her but she slipped his grasp and turned away.

“I don’t believe you.”

“You do, you know. You’re still angry, that’s all.” His smile did not reach his eyes. “What do you want?”

She shrugged. “A walk in the garden. A song or two.”

“Ah. You want to be courted.”

“Why not? You do it so well. It’s been long since I’ve had the pleasure.”

And so they spent their days in courtship, walking, talking, singing and laughing together, while the Empire’s business was left to underlings.

“I’d like to see the staff,” Barenziah said idly one day. “I only had a glimpse of it.”

“Nothing would give me greater pleasure, heart’s delight, but that’s impossible.”

“You don’t trust me,” Barenziah pouted, but she softened her lips for his kiss.

“Nonsense, love. It isn’t here. In fact, it isn’t anywhere.” He laughed and kissed her again, softly.

“Now you’re talking in riddles again. I want to see it. You can’t have destroyed it.”

“Ah, you’ve gained in wisdom, since last we met.”

“You piqued my interest somewhat. The staff can’t be destroyed and it can’t be removed from Tamriel, not without the direst consequences to the land itself.”

“Ahhh. All true. And yet, as I said, it isn’t anywhere. Can you solve the riddle?” He pulled her to him and she leaned into his embrace. “Here’s a greater riddle still,” he whispered, “how to make one of two. That I can and will show you.” Their bodies merged, limbs tangled together. Later, when they’d drawn a bit apart and dozed, she thought, sleepily. “One of two, two of one, three of two... what cannot be destroyed or banished might be split apart, perhaps...”

Nightingale kept a diary. He scribbled entries in it each night after quick reports from his underlings. It was locked but the lock was a simple one, so Barenziah managed to sneak quick looks at it while he was occupied in toileting himself. She discovered that the first staff piece was hidden in an ancient dwarven mine called Fang Lair, although its location was given

only in vague terms. The diary was crammed with jotted events in an odd shorthand, and was very hard to decipher.

All Tamriel, she thought, in his hands and mine, and more perhaps, and yet...For all his surface charm there was a cold emptiness where his heart should have been, an emptiness of which he was quite unaware, she thought. One could glimpse it now and then, when his eyes would go blank and hard. Peasant dreams, Barenziah thought, and Straw flashed before her eyes, looking sad, and then Therris, with a mocking smile and empty eye sockets. Symmachus, who did what must be done, quietly and efficiently. Nightingale. Nightingale, who would rule all, and more, and yet spread chaos in the name of control.

Barenziah got reluctant leave from Nightingale to go to her children, who had to be told of their father's death and of the emperor's offer of his protection to them. Eadwyre called on them while she was there, and she told him what she had discovered so far, and explained that she must remain awhile yet and learn more as she could.

Nightingale teased her about her elderly admirer. He was quite aware of Eadwyre's suspicion, although as he said, no one took the old fool seriously. Barenziah managed to arrange a reconciliation of sorts between them. Eadwyre publicly recanted his suspicions and his "old friend" forgave him. Thus he was invited to dine with them at least once a week. The children liked Eadwyre, even Helseth, who disapproved of his mother's liaison with the "Emperor" and consequently detested Nightingale. He had become surly and temperamental and frequently quarreled with both of them.

Eadwyre was not happy either and Nightingale delighted in publicly displaying his affection for Barenziah. They could not

marry, of course, for Uriel Septim was already married. He had exiled the true Empress shortly after taking Septim's place, but had not dared to harm her. She was held by the Temple of the One. It had been given out publicly that she was in ill health, and rumors had been circulated that she had mental problems. The Emperor's children had also been dispatched to various prisons disguised as "schools".

"She'll grow worse in time," Nightingale said carelessly, eyeing Barenziah's swollen breasts and belly with satisfaction. "As for his children...well, life is full of hazards, isn't it? We'll be married. Your child will be my true heir." He did want the child. Barenziah was sure of that. She was far less sure of his feelings for her. They quarrelled, often violently, usually about Helseth, whom he wanted to send away to school. Barenziah made no effort to avoid these quarrels. Nightingale had no interest in a peaceful life and he thoroughly enjoyed making up afterwards. Occasionally Barenziah would take the children and retreat to their old apartment, declaring she wanted no more to do with him.

She was six months pregnant before she finally deciphered the location of the last staff piece—an easy one, since every dark elf knew where Dagoth-Ur was. When next she quarrelled with Nightingale she simply left the city with Eadwyre and they rode hard for High Rock and Wayrest.

Nightingale was furious, but there was little he could do. His assassins were rather inept, and he dared not leave his seat of power to pursue them in person, nor could he openly declare war on Wayrest. He had no legitimate claim on her on her unborn child. The nobility had disapproved of his liaison with Barenziah and were glad that she had gone. Wayrest was

equally disapproving and distrustful of her, but Eadwyre was much beloved by his prosperous little city, and allowances were readily made for his eccentricities.

Barenziah and Eadwyre were married a year after the birth of her son by Jagar Tharn. Eadwyre doted on her. She did not love him, but she was fond of him, and that was something. It was nice to have someone, and Wayrest was a very pleasant place, a good place for children to grow up, while they waited, and hoped, and prayed for their Champion's success in his long mission.

# The Sage

*Aegrothius Goth*

Crackle, snap, hiss...Flicker, bright, dim...The fire in the hearth provides light and heat. Neither seem to affect the old man. His reclining figure stares into the flames and flames reflect back from his deep dark eyes. Indigo blue robes reflect and yet absorb the firelight and highlights of golden threads twinkle as the flames flicker. His beard and hair are long and snowy white; in the firelight they almost appear to be ethereal like that of a godling. At his side is a tall pointed hat which is the same color as his robe and also twinkles with highlights of gold. The face is lined with age, yet almost appears youthful; wisdom and intellect exude from his personage. This is the Sage who is known in all of Tamriel as the champion and counselor to all users of magic. His thoughts wander, and he remembers ...

\* \* \*

Gyron Vardengroet was born to a poor and humble Breton family in the village of Moonguard. The only child of Frieda and Horstle Vardengroet entered life during a rare eclipse of Tamriel's moons. It was soon apparent that he was unusually gifted in the magical arts. He was found levitating the family dog when he was only a year old. Most Bretons have a great talent for magic, but as he grew Gyron displayed a talent far greater than that of his peers. The village wizard began to take an interest in young Gyron and soon took him under his wing.



In spite of the young man's proclivities for being rowdy, the old Wizard Grungdinger liked him and worked hard to teach him the magical arts to the extent of his own skills.

Finally the day came when Grungdinger could teach Gyron no more. The young mage had surpassed his master, and he was somewhat unsettled with the apprentice mage's questions about life, death and immortality. Grundinger called Gyron to him and gave him a letter addressed to Morkledder, the Guildmagister of the Mages Guild in Shornhelm. The young mage told his parents of his fortune, packed his meager belongings, and set out for the journey to Shornhelm. After many months of travel through the foothills of the Kurallian Mountains, Gyron arrived at the gates to the great City-State of Shornhelm high in the mountainous terrain of High Rock.

After the life of a quiet Breton village, Shornhelm was a wonder to Gyron. He explored the city from one end to the other, and eventually found the Mages Guild. Presenting Grungdinger's letter to Morkledder, Gyron was received warmly. Morkledder explained to Gyron that he would need to be tested before any commitment to further training could be made. After a night of rest and meditation, Gyron was shown into the main hall of the Mages Guild which was now filled with magic users of all kinds. It was very quiet. The young mage felt as if his heart was in his throat as he approached the Council of Three, the leaders of the mages in this City-State. Morkledder rose and explained to Gyron the various tests he would be subjected to to prove his worth as a mage. The youth then turned and left the Council Chamber, the eyes of the many mages on him, and went forth to complete the tasks that had been defined for him.

Returning to Shornhelm several years later, Gyron was admitted to the Mages Guild and shown to the Council Chamber where he was met by Morkledder. The ancient mage reviewed the journal entries, the artifacts gathered, and most especially the spellbook entries presented to him by Gyron. An expression of amazement spread across the old wizard's face; there had never been a novice to accomplish what Gyron had during the testing. Morkledder then called a full session of the Guild presenting Gyron as a full Wizard.

Gyron remained with Morkledder for several years and studied hard. In private session several years after the testing, Morkledder admitted to Gyron that the Guild at Shornhelm could teach him no more and that he should seek further enlightenment at the Crystal Tower on Sumurset Isle.

After packing his possessions once again, Gyron set off on another long journey. He arrived at the Crystal Tower several years later after having traversed the province of Hammerfell where he had many adventures, met many other mages and shared his experiences and knowledge with them. He heard stories of wonderful plants that when combined with other elements could restore life to those dead, prolong life to those yet living, and in the proper combination bestow immortality on the user. Gyron was always quick to advise and guide mages who were less experienced than himself. He loved being able to help. He made many friends and stories began to spread across the land about this exceptional user of magic.

When he entered the Crystal Tower, he was greeted by several mages all clamoring for his attention. His reputation had preceded him. However, the crowd hushed and parted at the arrival of a very imposing figure dressed all in indigo blue robes

trimmed in gold, wearing a high pointed hat and carrying the most beautifully carved staff Gyron had ever seen. The Elder of the Council of Wizards, Esthlander, looked closely at the young wizard, nodded and turned to walk back into the tower. Without delay, Gyron followed him. The audience that followed stunned the young mage.

Esthlander explained to him that Gyron's coming had been foretold for many years, and he had been expected. The mages had been told by the Gods that one of their own would come along to provide guidance, knowledge and aid. Gyron was that promised champion and leader. Gyron was confused and uncertain. How could he be such an extraordinary person? What must he do to fulfill his destiny? Many questions spilled from him to which Esthlander could not provide the answers. The Elder suggested that Gyron stay with them in the Crystal Tower for a while and study. This he did.

The day finally came when The Elder admitted to Gyron that the Crystal Tower could no longer provide anything new and that he needed to travel the lands of Tamriel and seek the wisdom and knowledge. The Elder sighed and told Gyron how sad he was that the Crystal Tower was losing him, but that his destiny must be fulfilled. With this, the Elder presented Gyron with a package wrapped in the same beautiful indigo blue as the Elder's Robes. Gyron was told to take the package with him but open it only when he was at least a day's travel from the Crystal Tower.

After a long day's walk, Gyron set up camp in a beautiful glade next to a brook of crystal clear water. Finally, he thought, I can open the Elder's package. As he untied the golden cord that had bound the package, he found that the wrapping was not

wrapping at all but an exquisitely tailored robe identical to the one worn by the Elder. As he opened the robe, a high pointed wizard's hat popped out of the package, and with a "whoosh" and "pop," the same intricately carved staff that the Elder had carried appeared. A note from the Elder advised that the garments were indestructible and that the staff had many magical properties for Gyron to discover. It went on further to explain that from this day forward Gyron would be known as The Sage.

Tired from his walking and with an inner glow of accomplishment, The Sage settled down for the first night of his long pilgrimage across the lands.

After many months of further travels and adventures, The Sage returned to Moonguard and was warmly welcomed by the villagers and most especially by his parents, Frieda and Horstle. News of his coming had preceded him and the whole village had worked hard to build and furnish a cottage for the mage in the pleasant forest just outside the town. After a festive banquet that evening, Gyron retired to his new home.

The Sage settled into his life outside Moonguard. He received many visitors who have traveled from near and far to seek his guidance, help, and training. The years passed. It was not long before first Horstle and then Frieda died. The Sage was devastated by his loss. In his grief he swore to dedicate the rest of his life to defeating death so that grief like his could be avoided by others.

He returned to the Great Library at the Crystal Tower and researched the many flowers, herbs and plants that he had heard about and seen during his travels. In his cottage, he labored tirelessly over the spellbooks, vials and collection of

flora from all over the lands. He tested the potions on himself. The years went by, but The Sage seemed not to age anymore. At some point he had found the right combination in his experiments, but could not determine which combination it had been as the change had been most subtle. He had secured a life without end. And the years continued to pass.

Mages came to him for help which he freely gave. The Sage settled into his life of advising and guiding and the years continued to pass. Unfortunately, his fame became so great that the call for his help was unmanageable. He reluctantly packed his possessions for the last time, and moved far into the Kurallian Mountains and built a magical fortress. Only the most worthy magic user could gain access and help from The Sage.

However, following his heart, even today The Sage often leaves his mountain abode and travels the land helping young mages gain experience and to grow.

\* \* \*

Snap, crackle...The firelight flickers... The old mage stirs as the memories fade and flicker like the firelight. Bang, bang, bang... echoes from the pounding knocker on the great oaken doors of the fortress... The Sage rises and heads for the doors knowing that yet another mage in need has found him and is worthy of help.

# The Story Of Lysirius

*Bresne Smythe*

In ancient times, there lived a hero named Lysirius. He fought against the Akaviri slavetraders and single-handedly slew hundreds. Despite his valor, Lysirius' army was routed and scattered to the four winds. Lysirius fled into the moors to escape the Akaviri chariots.

Far from the lands of men, Lysirius entered the blasted lands. At the heart of this forsaken landscape, he met the wyrm. The great scaly beast mocked the mighty blows of Lysirius' enchanted spear. It melted the shield Fearstruck, gift of the Daedra Boethiah, with a single blast of its fiery breath. Lysirius, seeing that he could not defeat the creature by force of arms, surrendered.

The wyrm intended to devour Lysirius when the hero offered to be its slave and manservant. Ever prideful, the wyrm agreed. Seeing that the wyrm was vulnerable to conceit, Lysirius spoke, "Oh great wyrm. For my first service, I beg that you allow me to polish your one tarnished scale."

Indeed, centered between the great wings of the creature was a dull scale, clearly out of reach of its long neck. Its vanity was such that it immediately lowered one wing for Lysirius to climb upon.

Once astride the great lizard, Lyrisius slid his dagger underneath the scale and into the tender flesh of the beast. Though it spun and twisted in all directions, the wyrm could not get at the hero. Finally it took to the air. Lyrisius clung to the neck with all his strength as the wyrm banked, rolled, and dove.

Seeing that Lyrisius could not be shaken free, the wyrm demanded that he remove the stinging blade. Lyrisius answered, "Fly straight on until you see a great army. Destroy that army and I will remove my blade."

With a great roar, the scaled creature set off. The Akavari army had no chance against the fire-breathing beast. They have never plagued Tamriel since.

"I have done as you bid. Now sheath your stinger," roared the wyrm.

Knowing that he would be devoured or worse, Lyrisius pulled the blade and then leapt from the back of the flying wyrm. Indeed, the foul monster had intended to slay the hero. The wyrm pursued the plummeting Lyrisius. Boethiah appeared beside the falling hero. Praising him for ultimately destroying the army of Akavir, she turned him into a raven. Lyrisius quickly lost the wyrm in the clouds.

Legend has it that the wyrm still lives, though this happened in the first era long, long ago. The dragon nurses a grudge against Lyrisius and all of his kind. It has vowed never again to trust two legged bearers of weapons.

\* \* \*

Scholar's Note: If this legend has a basis in fact, the artifact Fearstruck was utterly destroyed. No other reference to it has ever been found.



# The War Of Betony

*Vulper Newgate*

The history of the Iliac Bay, if told in its entirety, would horrify readers more than the most gruesome legend of the Underking. In comparison to the wars of the first and second era, our most recent appeal to arms, the War of Betony pales. The Siege of Orsinium lasted from 1E 950 until 1E 980 without a pause. A thousand years later, the Thrassian Plague coupled with the War of Righteousness slayed over half the population of the Iliac Bay. And yet, the War of Betony fascinates us, and not just because of its immediacy.

Ironically, Lord Mogref of Betony was seeking peace when he asked for Daggerfall's protection on the Isle of Betony. The island had long been independant, but as the piracy in the Bay increased, Mogref truly realized Betony's vulnerability. King Lysandus agreed to be Betony's liege, on advice of many, including his archpriest of Kynareth, Lord Vanech. While Betony is a prosperous fishing island and well-placed strategically, the vassalage of Betony was primarily an act of charity. Lysandus knew that if someone did not help Betony, it would fall to the pirates, if not to someone worse.

Unfortunately, King Camaron of Sentinel did not agree. Citing a two hundred year old contract, obliquely if not illegally written to suggest that Betony was a "traditional holding" of the Kingdom of Sentinel, Camaron declared war. The majority

of his advisors, being warlords in a traditionally bellicose country, supported their king in this. The Chief Counselor, a woman called The Oracle, foresaw death and defeat in the war, but her wisdom was stifled and she was banished from court. Camaron should have listened to her.

A few scrimages of the War of Betony went to Sentinel, but the major battles were all won by Daggerfall. King Lysandus, his heir Prince Gothryd, and the general of the army Lord Bridwell were fine leaders and warriors as well, and the Battle of the Bluffs and the Siege of Craghold both went to Daggerfall.

The war might have been won with one more victory, but for an unusual domestic incident in King Lysandus' court. The king's mother, the dowager queen Nulfaga, had been uneasy about the war since its beginning, but she now began to have visions of cataclysm. She saw the death of her beloved son should the war continue. Ebullient by his success, King Lysandus refused to listen to her fears until Nulfaga left court. Lysandus then realized how certain she was about his impending death. He began to actively negotiate a peace treaty with Sentinel, using the neutral lordship of Reich Gradkeep as facilitator.

The Treaty of Reich Gradkeep was never to be. King Camaron was initially civil, as the losing side of a war is often civil, but when he realized that the proposed treaty would have included a formal declaration that the kingdoms of Sentinel and Daggerfall would share Betony, he flew into a rage. With no thought for the protocol of attacking a neutral peaceable lordship, Camaron order his army to riot through Reich Gradkeep. First the halls of the palace, and then the streets of the capitol ran red with blood. It was only with the support of

the Daggerfall army that the chaos was brought under relative control. The Sentinel army fled to the Yeorth Burrowland, and the Daggerfall army chased them as far as the Ravennian Forest before making camp.

One week later, after each had a chance to send for reinforcements and plan their strategies, the armies met in the field that separated them, the flowering meadowland called Cryngaine Field. In the heat of the clash, an unnatural fog spread over the field, blinding all combatants. When the mist finally lifted, King Lysandus' body was found, his throat pierced by an unmarked arrow.

Daggerfall did not waste any time in mourning; young prince Gothryd, who had shown great bravery in battle and was very popular among the troops, was crowned King of Daggerfall just behind the battle lines, and he ordered the army onward. Perhaps it was the sight of the brave young warrior turned king appearing on the battlefield in full regalia that inspired the Daggerfall army, perhaps the battle would have turned regardless, Sentinel began to panic. King Gothryd met King Camaron before the Redguards had retreated, and the two monarchs fought. Both were excellent warriors, but Gothryd was a more skillful swordsman, and Camaron fell that day. Lord Oresme of Sentinel formally surrendered to Daggerfall, giving up all rights to Betony officially. He later committed suicide on the ship back to Sentinel.

Peace was a difficult process for the cities and towns on both sides of the Iliac Bay. As part of the formal peace treaty, King Gothryd asked for the hand of Princess Aubk-i, only daughter of the late King Camaron and the Queen Regent Akorithi. The request was intended to restore friendship between the

kingdoms, and it was partially successful though many in the royal court of Sentinel viewed the princess as more a prisoner of war than a bond to Daggerfall.

The only surviving member of the ruling family of Reich Gradkeep was a sickly infant, so the councilors of state appealed to Lord Auberon Flyte, a cousin of Lord Graddock, to rule the lordship in regency. Lord Flyte accepted, and his strong, almost dictatorial style was just what Reich Gradkeep needed to restore order after the bloody Treaty of Reich Gradkeep. His subjects were grateful that when the infant heir died, they not only elevated his wife Doryanna and him from regents to rulers, they agreed to rename the lordship in his honor. Reich Gradkeep became Anticlere, named after his ancestral home.

The horrors of the War of Betony still live on, even in Anticlere. Whether Daggerfall and Sentinel will be able to use the marriage of King Gothryd and Princess Aubk-i as a symbol of peace rather than discord is something that only the future can show.

—14 Suns Dawn 3E 404

# The War Of Betony

*Fav'te*

Could there be a better proof of the natural perversity of Bretons than their conduct before, during, and after what history will remember as the War of Betony? By the most depraved of motivations, the most despicable of tactics, and the most ungentlemanly of triumphs, the kingdom of Daggerfall changed the nature of warfare in the Iliac Bay and perhaps over all of Tamriel. In Sentinel, we call the recent carnage the Siege of Betony, but as the book of history is writ by the victors, let us speak instead of the War of Betony.

Redguards by their nature are a modest and practical people. We are not phlegmatic like the High Elves, nor cowardly like the Wood Elves and Khajiiti. But what would infuriate and enrage the swaggering, vainglorious Nords and Bretons would not merit a shrug from a Redguard. Had any Breton kingdom possessed the little island of Betony, it would have been covetously guarded. Betony's trade would have been seriously restricted; its religion subjugated; its people bound by active and constant pledges and duties of vassalage. But Betony was not a Breton dominion. Betony was part of the Kingdom of Sentinel.

King Lysandus—may the Old Ones continue to torment his soul for his wickedness!—saw the prosperous island which is closer to his land than to Sentinel, and his black heart turned to

avarice. Through threats, lies, acts of piracy and, finally, invasion, Daggerfall illegally took possession of the Island of Betony. His court sorceress, the Lady Medora, his enchantress mother, and other experienced counselors were horrified by the brutality of his campaign and begged him to abandon his tyrannical act of war. Gradually, all dissenters were removed from court. None but the ignorant and the warmongers remained.

Our late king Camaron tried to employ civil diplomacy with Daggerfall, but in the end, he made the former declaration of war. Daggerfall and Sentinel have fought many times in their two thousand years of coexistence, and Camaron knew the black magic and espionage the Bretons considered honest warfare. Never debasing the Sentinel character by duplicating the Breton villainy, Camaron knew best how to combat Lysandus. King Lysandus' knavish battle tactics were even more perfidious than his ancestors', and the war continue to rage until it began to involve more than Sentinel and Daggerfall.

Lord Graddock, ruler of Reich Gradkeep, acted as concilator between Sentinel and Daggerfall, and eventually convinced both monarchs to meet and make peace. The ill-fated Treaty of Gradkeep began civilly; the terms of peace were discussed, agreed on, and set to paper. The terms were excessively generous. Camaron had agreed to give up some of his rights to Betony in order to placate the madness of Lysandus and bring peace back to the Iliac Bay. It was not until King Camaron read the Treaty he was about to sign that he realized the outrageous perfidy of the Bretons: the Treaty had actually been purposefully miswritten by the Daggerfall scribe in a desperate and ignominious attempt to trick Camaron into signing a

contract different from the one to which he had agreed. The castle of Reich Gradkeep erupted into bloodbath, and the war continued.

The Battle of Cryngaine Field was the tragic ending of the senseless war of attrition. The Cryngaine Field is located in between the Yeorth Burrowland and the Ravennian Forest where the armies of Sentinel and Daggerfall respectively made camp after the massacre at Reich Gradkeep. As the battle began, Daggerfall proved that she had some foul daedric magical tricks left by blinding the Redguard army with a wall of mist. Lysandus did not have the opportunity to gloat over his cozenage for long, for the sure arm of a Sentinel archer struck him in the throat even through the thick, swirling fog. Lysandus' son, Gothryd, who had spent the battle in lugubrious relaxation, was crowned without ceremony, and thereupon demanded a duel with King Camaron. Camaron was many years Gothryd's senior, and though a superior warrior, was exhausted from the endless warfare the boy king had been spared. Nevertheless, as a point of honor, our king agreed to the duel. The new king of Daggerfall, by dirty trick and black magic, managed to backstab our king before the duel ever began. Thus, the victor of Cryngaine Field, and the War of Betony, was Daggerfall.

Daggerfall's wickedness continued even after her inglorious victory. While the widow queen of Sentinel, Her Majesty Akorithi, mourned and tried to mend her shattered lands, Gothryd demanded the Princess of Sentinel as a hostage of war. To save her homeland, the Princess Aubk-i agreed to leave Sentinel and even marry the murderer of her father. But we true Redguards of Sentinel know where her love and honor lies.

The Queen of Daggerfall is the Princess of Sentinel first and foremost.



# Vampires Of The Iliac Bay

*Anonymous*

## Vampires of the Iliac Bay, Part I

There are over one hundred distinct kinds of vampire in Tamriel. The Iliac Bay region alone has nine variations with unique powers and abilities. I have this information not only because I have been researching this blight of the world for the last ten years of my life, but because for the seven years before that, I was one of the creatures.

Vampirism is a disease, like brain rot or cholera, but far, far more insidious. One can become a vampire through certain magical items or by the curse of a powerful wizard, but the most common cause is the bite or scratch of a vampire. There are no symptoms of vampirism except this—if the victim sleeps after the attack but before he becomes a vampire, his sleep will be plagued with nightmares.

During this two to four day period, when the disease has been spread but the victim is still mortal, most any temple healer can remove the curse of vampirism. There will be no further warning.

I do not remember dying. I had been a scout for an order of knights which shall go nameless for this. A daughter of a local nobleman had been kidnapped by a mysterious character, and my captain had located his hideout. Deep in the dank

underground chambers, I searched until I found the girl. Or what remained of her, a corpse the color of snow, drained of every drop of blood. I knew what the mystery man was right then, but he found me before I found the exit out. He took a good sized hunk out of my fighting arm before I managed to outrun him. I figured I was lucky to be alive. Some luck.

My trip back to the knightly order was a five day journey. I decided to get some rest early to get my arm in better shape in case I found any more trouble. I can't remember the dreams I had that night—only that I was doing something horrible and I couldn't stop myself. I woke up screaming. The next night, at an inn a little closer to my destination, my sleep was deep and dreamless. On the third night, I died.

Of course, I didn't know that I died. I had gone to sleep in a nice warm feathered bed and I woke on a cold wet stone mortuary slab. Dazed, I opened the door to the masoleum I was in, which I think must have been locked. I was in a cemetary not far from a town I knew, so I wandered in. It was late at night, so there were precious few souls in the streets. I paused to read a public notice and noticed the date. The date was two weeks later than I thought it must have been.

As I puzzled over that, I saw a girl, a wench at my favorite tavern in that town, wandering toward me. I hailed her. She ignored me. I called her by her name, and she turned to me, smiling, but with an expression that told me she did not know who I was. I had visited her tavern on my way over to the mystery man's hideout, but she didn't know me!

I told her my name. She angrily told me that it was a very poor joke, that I looked nothing like the brave knight who used to visit the town, and that if I didn't know he was dead.

My emotions were a tangled skein. I could tell she was not joking, that I looked nothing like myself. I was touched by her sorrow at my death, and horrified by the idea dawning on me of what I had become. Suddenly, an overriding instinct overcame all my thoughts—hunger. Without even thinking about what I was doing, I reached out and tore her throat open. I drained her until she looked like the corpse in the mystery man's dungeon.

The rest of my story is told in *Vampires of the Bay*, Chapter II.

### *Vampires of the Iliac Bay*, Part II

I told in the first chapter of my story how I became a vampire and of my first kill. While it might (and, indeed, should) horrify the reader that my first victim was a friend of the mortal I used to be, it is my understanding that they are not uncommon first kills.

I left the snow white corpse in the alley and ran to the only place I felt perversely safe, the masoleum. For the first couple days of my undeath, I starved myself while I considered my fate. I relearned what I was capable of doing, and found that I was stronger, faster, tougher, and more agile than before. I had powers that as a knight I had only seen powerful mages wield. Later, I discovered additional abilities, such as a total immunity to disease. Helpful when descending on a plague-stricken city like a jackal.

I also found my weaknesses. I could no longer stand the light of the sun—exposure to it for longer than a few seconds burned me terribly. It also pained me to enter temples and other places of worship. The worst effect, of course, had to be my blood lust. If I did not kill a warm blooded creature once a night and drink

its blood, my hunger would gnaw at me, and any wounds I suffered would not heal no matter how much I rested.

Is this the moment for me to admit that there was a time I loved being a bloodsucking creature of the night? It is not impossible to live only at night, merely occasionally inconvenient. And I wouldn't have to kill humans every night, merely warm-blooded creatures. Orcs have a delicious, rich brothy blood; rats are a little sweet for the only meal of the night; werewolves are a real treat, almost decadent the tincture between human and beast. A real gourmet's delight.

About a month after I died, I was having the best time of my life. One night, I received a letter from someone who said he was "family." Curious, I went to visit him at his tavern, and was told about the tribe of vampires to which I belonged—the Montalion. In return for me performing certain duties for the "family," the man at the inn would train me in my vampiric abilities and skills.

Though I never got very much detail, I surmised that the two main differences between the different vampire clans is geography and powers. Montalion alone have the gift for teleportation, but the other eight have powers of their own.

My mentor (that is the title he used) would congratulate me after each mission I performed, and came to trust me more and more. If asked, he would tell me about the Montalion's newest alliances, who they were manipulating, who they were stalking. It was then I started to become frightened at last. They, and all of their rival clans, were draining the blood of Tamriel itself.

I panicked. I had to find a cure. But nowhere could I find any book or rumor suggesting that vampirism is anything but permanent. So I resolved to kill myself, but I wanted to bring the Montalion down with me. I joined guilds they opposed, and failed any mission given to me spectacularly. I thought my mentor would turn against me, but he only became quieter, less forthcoming with information, never violent. He was not concerned. He had probably seen vampires like me before.

Here's why he never attacked me: immortals can afford to be eternally patient.

At last, he refused to give me any further missions. He wouldn't even talk with me, but he never left his tavern. I could come and go, and he'd watch but never talk. That's when I got another letter.

There are several of us, you see, former vampires who know what to look for. We're patient too: we learned it in our unlife. We watch and listen, and anonymously contact the vampires we know wish to end the curse.

Ending the curse is possible, but only just. It is very dangerous, but when you are cursed, the only real danger is no escape.

# **Battlespire Codexes**

# A Short History Of The Augmented Craftworks

*Anonymous*

That others might know, and be warned and wifful, those devices called “augmented” are special, and deserving of special praise, for they bear multiple enchantments, the more econmically to aid the enchanter and warrior is his daily labors.

The Battle Axe of Augmented Red Wisdom bears enchantments enhancing the skills of DESTRUCTION, and does Major Frost Damage to the enemy.

The Battle Axe of Augmented Swiftblade bears enchantments enhancing the skills of SHORTBLADE, and does Minor Frost Damage to the enemy.

The Broadsword of Augmented Leaping grants benefits in the disciplines of JUMPING, and, when striking a target, causes Minor Frost Damage .

The Broadsword of Augmented Unseen Wisdom grants benefits in the disciplines of THAUMATURGY, and, when striking a target, causes Medium Fire Damage .

The Claymore of Augmented Fleetness affords some abilities in the arts of RUNNING, and causes Medium Frost Damage to a

victim on contact.

The Claymore of Augmented Unknown Wisdom affords some abilities in the arts of MYSTICISM, and causes Major Fire Damage to a victim on contact.

The CrossBow of Augmented Sureflight affords some abilities in the arts of MISSILE, and causes Medium Magic Damage to a victim on contact.

The Dagger of Augmented Stalking grants benefits in the disciplines of STEALTH, and, when striking a target, causes Minor Fire Damage.

The Dagger of Augmented Green Wisdom grants benefits in the disciplines of RESTORATION, and, when striking a target, causes Minor Magic Damage .

The Javelin of the Augmented Dolphin bears enchantments enhancing the skills of SWIMMING, and does Medium Fire Damage to the enemy.

The Long Bow of Augmented Smiting grants benefits in the disciplines of BLUNTWEAPON, and, when striking a target, causes Medium Magic Damage .

The Longsword of Augmented Surprise bears enchantments enhancing the skills of BACKSTABBING, and does Major Fire Damage to the enemy.

The Longsword of Augmented Golden Wisdom bears enchantments enhancing the skills of ALTERATION, and does Minor Fire Damageto the enemy.



The Mace of the Augmented Horny Fist affords some abilities in the arts of HANDTOHAND, and causes Major Frost Damage to a victim on contact.

The Short Sword of the Augmented Swimmer affords some abilities in the arts of SWIMMING, and causes Medium Fire Damage to a victim on contact.

The Short Sword of Augmented Silver Wisdom affords some abilities in the arts of ILLUSION, and causes Medium Magic Damage to a victim on contact.

The ShortBow of Augmented Deep Biting bears enchantments enhancing the skills of AXE, and does Minor Magic Damage to the enemy.

The War Axe of Augmented Hewing grants benefits in the disciplines of LONGBLADE, and, when striking a target, causes Medium Frost Damage.

# Anchor Warning

*Clarentavious Valisious*

For the edification and admonition of all that should pass through this hall. Know that this is one of the five great Anchors that moor the Battlespire in its place and retain it in the life-flood of sustaining Mana, without which there is no light, no life, no Being.

In their o'er-reaching wisdom, the Powers have required me, against my every protest and complaint, to affix to it a dreadful device, which you see before you, whose purpose is to sunder and divide this anchor and imperil the Spire and all who inhabit it.

Never divide the Anchor. It is the rock on which all our lives are founded. All Anchors must be conjoined to assure the safety and stability of the Spire. Above all, never allow them all to be unloosed. Sure destruction shall follow, as the Battlespire departs the flux that keeps all sides of nature in unity. Now avaunt, and quit this chamber, lest the imp of temptation, or some unhappy humour overcome you, and lead you onto the path of certain annihilation.

C.V.

# Book Of Life And Service

*Anonymous*

[[The pages of the BOOK OF LIFE AND SERVICE overflow with obscure mystical pronouncements and prophecies, few of which are comprehensible, much less relevant to your situation. However, the following two excerpts seem of possible interest. The first suggests classification of entities to be encountered here on the Soul Cairn. The second may be an invocation of command.]]

## THE RANKS OF THE BLESSED

Blessed are the Bonemen, for they serve without self in spirit forever.

Blessed are the Mistmen, for they blend in the glory of the transcendent spirit.

Blessed are the Wrathmen, for they render their rage unto the ages.

Blessed are the Masters, for they bridge the past and span the future.

## THE LITANY OF SERVICE

The Boneman's Oath

We die.

We pray.

To live.

We serve.

The Master's Voice

You swore.

To Serve.

Your Lord.

Commands.

# Book Of The Wheels Of Heaven

*Anonymous*

[[The book is written in Daedric, but the illustrations of various complex wheel, gear, and pulley arrangements suggest that this could be the Book of the Wheels of Heaven. By studying the tables of codes in the back, you discover that the code you are looking for is Dohd Yoodt Seht Koht, or DUSK in Tamrielic. The table also displays the codes written as numerals, which happily are the same in Tamrielic and Daedric—4-21-19-11— which corresponds to the number of the letters in the alphabet sequence.]]

# Boustrophedon Note

*Clarentavious Valisious*

Given to you by Clarentavious in the Weir Gate and needed to progress within the game.

[[Scrawled in a cramped, almost illegible hand is a single word:]]

boustrophedon

# Chimere's Journal

*Chimere Graegyn*

[[These lines are scribbled hastily on crumpled vellum. From the stains and the changes in ink colour, you guess they were written over a long period of time.]]

What new madness is this? Is it not enough that I am to be tormented here for all time with the pain of my friends? The island is crawling with horrors and my ears are filled with the shrieks of mortals, torn apart for sport!

I cannot leave, I am cursed to stay, but I shall not stand by and watch others be so used! There must be some way I can help them.

I have heard one of them speak of the great horned temple, the way to leave this place, and of the six keys to its great door. The temple must be the one in Granvellusa. The keys, I fancy, are hidden away in the other temples.

They babble about a ritual hunt, as if this torture were a holy office! And their own temple, the emerald abomination, seems the key to all, their arsenal and their demesne. I have seen them foray out from it with their spears and their hounds of ice and fire.

For now it seems I am safe here, but I long to return to my little croft-cottage on Hartmoor, where I can bar the door, and blot

out the screams. Perhaps my old armor might guard against the terrible spears. Perhaps the next poor soul brought here might gather the keys and escape.



# Chimere's Notes About The Armor Of The Savior's Hide

*Chimere Graegyn*

[[These words are painstakingly scratched onto the parchment in watery uneven strokes]]

The Armor of the Savior's Hide may safeguard you against the sting of the Spear of Bitter Mercy. It turns the blow of an oath-breaker and guarded me against Dagon's hand, but not against his venomous intellect.

Alas, my memory is clouded. So much time has passed since I took the pieces and hid them from my own sight. I fear I have done the task too well.

I never wished to see the armor again, much less suspected it might be needed by another.

Enough of regrets. These faint snatches are as much as I recollect through the years of madness. Make of them what you will.

One piece I recall in a place high over the water, a narrow margin, between two plumb drops, one below, one above, looking down on the lookout and the faint creaking of timbers.

Another is somewhere similar, within stagger of the first but in the center of a people-home. Where folk would gather, full of music and laughter and the slop of water of life, high above the water and ringed all about with stone.

The third I placed in a most wet and inaccessible locale, for I had no thought for decay and the crust of nature. All about was the sound of the great blue and slits of light fell through to the water below. My friends would cast nets and lines to catch food from here, but I cannot fetch out the name of it.

The fourth lies within the mountain, in the tall tower, in the darkness beyond the curtain of water.

The fifth waits in cold darkness down below.

The last sailed up into the sky, and there revolved at the call of the wind. I tacked it to the canvas, so I know not if it still hangs there.

# Codex Arcana

*Anonymous*

Codex Arcana, Volume I

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

We not only render service to the Emperor in preparing volumes of new books, but also exercise an office of sacred piety when we treat books carefully, and again when we restore them to their proper places and commend them to inviolable custody; that they may rejoice in purity while we have them in our hands, and rest securely when they are restored to their repositories. And surely next to the vestments and engines dedicated to the Emperor's glory, arcane books deserve to be rightly treated by the battlemage, to which great injury is done so often as they are touched by unclean hands. Wherefore we deem it expedient to warn our students against various negligences, such as might be easily avoided and which do wonderful harm to books.

Being a partial index of arcane contrivances known to the scholars and alchemists of Battlespire, that these contrivances might more readily be known to all students, and neither abused, nor neglected, nor wasted in their employment.

“Art of Corruption”

Produces the casting of Major Poison Damage Range

“Beaks of Lightning”

Casts the spell of Major Shock Damage Range

“Bite of Fleshrime”

Renders the power of Medium Frost Damage Range

“Blossom of Chastening Fire”

Produces the casting of Minor Fire Damage Range

“Boils of Handfire”

Produces the casting of Minor Fire Damage

“Bone of Resolve”

Produces the casting of Spell Resistance

“Breath of the Vampire”

Produces the casting of Vampiric Drain

“Candle of the Lesser Vigil”

Renders the power of Minor Shield

“Coals of Bonesear”

Renders the power of Major Fire Damage

“Din of Revelations”

Renders the power of Major Delayed Damage

“Dove of Blistering Fire”

Renders the power of Medium Fire Damage Range

“Ewer of Purity”

Renders the power of Cure Poison

“Excrescence of Ice”

Produces the casting of Major Frost Damage

Codex Arcana, Volume II

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

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“Faremyle of Burning Blows”

Renders the power of Medium Fire Damage

“Father of Blight”

Produces the casting of Medium Continuous Damage to the victim

“Fin of Spite”

Produces the casting of Minor Continuous Damage to the victim

“Flakes of Snow”

Produces the casting of Minor Frost Damage

“Flame of the Greater Vigil”

Casts the spell of Medium Shield

“Forks of Bonefrost”

Casts the spell of Major Frost Damage Range

“Glaze of Mysteries”

Produces the casting of Medium Delayed Damage

“Gleam of the Shock Ward”

Produces the casting of Resistance to Shock

“Harkenor of Agony”

Renders the power of Major Continuous Damage to the victim

“Harrow of Wizardbrand”

Casts the spell of Major Magic Damage

“Heart of the Subtle Force”

Produces the casting of Minor Shock Damage

“Horn of Magepain”

Renders the power of Medium Magic Damage Range

“Hue of the Journeyman”

Casts the spell of Medium Poison Damage

“Husk of the Fiery Ward”

Casts the spell of Resistance to Fire

“Incidence of Biter Bitten”

Produces the casting of Fire shield

Codex Arcana, Volume III

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

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“Knight of the Grand Vigil”

Produces the casting of Major Shield

“Lot of Fate”

Produces the casting of Medium Continuous Damage to the victim

“Maid of Rime”

Casts the spell of Medium Frost Damage

“Mote of Cleansing Fire”

Produces the casting of Major Fire Damage Range

“Plume of Baleful Woe”



Renders the power of Minor Magic Damage

“Prayer of Fleshfire”

Casts the spell of Medium Poison Damage Range

“Principle of the Broad Force”

Renders the power of Medium Shock Damage

“Ribs of the Mana Ward”

Produces the casting of Resistance to Magic

“Root of the Hero”

Renders the power of Medium Cure Health

“Rose of Weirdbane”

Produces the casting of Medium Magic Damage

“Seal of the Grand Force”

Casts the spell of Major Shock Damage Range

“Seed of Healing”

Produces the casting of Minor Cure Health

“Shells of Magewrack”

Casts the spell of Major Magic Damage Range

“Shimmer of the Frosty Ward”

Produces the casting of Resistance to Frost

“Sifting of Stain”

Produces the casting of Minor Poison Damage Range

“Skein of Convulsion”

Renders the power of Confusion

“Skins of the Poison Ward”

Casts the spell of Resistance to Poison

“Sliver of Skinchill”

Produces the casting of Minor Frost Damage Range

“Sweetpin of Secrets”

Renders the power of Minor Delayed Damage

“Swirl of the Bright Well”

Renders the power of Spell Absorption

Codex Arcana, Volume IV

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

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Being a partial index of arcane contrivances known to the scholars and alchemists of Battlespire, that these contrivances might more readily be known to all students, and neither abused, nor neglected, nor wasted in their employment.

“Tale of the Whole Flesh”

Casts the spell of Major Cure Health

“Tear of Despair”

Produces the casting of Major Continuous Damage to the victim

“Thimble of Magefire”

Produces the casting of Minor Magic Damage Range

“Thread of Sparking”

Renders the power of Minor Shock Damage Range

“Tides of the Between”

Produces the casting of Teleport

“Tinct of the Apprentice”

Produces the casting of Minor Poison Damage

“Waft of Lightness”

Produces the casting of Jumping

“Web of the Master”

Renders the power of Major Poison Damage

“Whim of the Grand Warding”

Renders the power of Resistance to All elements

“Wind of Swiftiness”

Renders the power of Running

“Winds of Storm”

Produces the casting of Medium Shock Damage Range

“Wing of Spellshifting”

Casts the spell of Spell Reflection

“Withy of Withering”

Casts the spell of Minor Continuous Damage to the victim

Codex Arcana, Volume V

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

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Being a partial index of arcane contrivances known to the scholars and alchemists of Battlespire, that these contrivances might more readily be known to all students, and neither abused, nor neglected, nor wasted in their employment.

Battle Axe of Scathing: causes Minor Magic Damage, and is informed by the arts of ILLUSION

Battle Axe of Marvelous Extension: provides castings of the spell Slow Fall, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of MYSTICISM

Battle Axe of Heaven's Teeth: causes Minor Shock Damage, and is schooled with crafts of RUNNING

Boots of the Creeping Things: enchanted with the spell of Summon Brute, and is informed by the arts of THAUMATURGY

Boots of Glacial Hue: wreaks Major Frost Damage, and partakes of the excellence of THAUMATURGY

Boots of Consuming Indwelling: provides castings of the spell Spell Absorption, and is schooled with crafts of RESTORATION

Boots of Exquisite Perfection: provides castings of the spell Resistance to All elements, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of SHORTBLADE

Broadsword of the Biting Pains: engenders Medium Frost Damage, and partakes of the excellence of DESTRUCTION

Broadsword of Uncertainty: casts the spell of Invisibility, and is schooled with crafts of ALTERATION

Broadsword of the Firmament: provides castings of the spell Resistance to Shock, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of MISSILE

Broadsword of the Unnatural Essence: engenders Medium Poison Damage, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of BACKSTABBING

Claymore of Mysteries: conceives the spell of Chameleon, and partakes of the excellence of THAUMATURGY

Claymore of Sulphurous Death: wreaks Major Poison Damage, and is informed by the arts of JUMPING

Claymore of Glacial Hue: wreaks Major Frost Damage, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of RESTORATION

CrossBow of Pleasure: conceives the spell of Minor Cure Health, and partakes of the excellence of THAUMATURGY

Codex Arcana, Volume VI

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

## SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

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CrossBow of Sulphurous Death: wreaks Major Poison Damage, and is schooled with crafts of RESTORATION

CrossBow of Grotesque Liveliness: engenders Rapid, Medium Continuous Damage to Target, and is informed by the arts of THAUMATURGY

Cuirass of the Dusk and the Dawn: casts the spell of Shadow, and is schooled with crafts of RESTORATION

Cuirass of the Outermost Wastes: wreaks Major Delayed Damage, and partakes of the excellence of THAUMATURGY

Cuirass of the Scaly Pelt: enchanted with the spell of Minor Shield, and is informed by the arts of BLUNTWEAPON

Cuirass of Final Virtue: wreaks Major Fire Damage, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of RESTORATION

Dagger of the Capering Dog: conceives the spell of Summon Smart Guard, and partakes of the excellence of DESTRUCTION

Dagger of the Shrew: engenders Medium Magic Damage, and is informed by the arts of MYSTICISM

Dagger of the Tongue of the Wurm: engenders Medium Fire Damage, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of ALTERATION

Dagger of the Winter's Night: casts the spell of Resistance to Frost, and is schooled with crafts of HANDTOHAND

Gauntlets of Scathing: causes Minor Magic Damage, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of MYSTICISM

Gauntlets of the Rain of Fire: causes Minor Fire Damage, and partakes of the excellence of ILLUSION

Gauntlets of the Summer's Day: enchanted with the spell of Resistance to Fire, and is informed by the arts of LONGBLADE

Gauntlets of Expectant Wonder: casts the spell of Summon Smart Monster, and is schooled with crafts of MYSTICISM



Greaves of the Biting Pains: engenders Medium Frost Damage, and is schooled with crafts of ALTERATION

Codex Arcana, Volume VII

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

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Greaves of Kings: conceives the spell of Major Shield, and partakes of the excellence of MYSTICISM

Greaves of Unrequited Intent: conceives the spell of Spell Resistance, and is informed by the arts of DESTRUCTION

Greaves of the Stamp of the Toad:provides castings of the spell Monster Summoning, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of ALTERATION

Helmet of Despair: enchanted with the spell of Poison, and is informed by the arts of DESTRUCTION

Helmet of Precipitous Revelation: engenders Medium Delayed Damage, and is schooled with crafts of ALTERATION

Helmet of the Tongue of the Wyrn: engenders Medium Fire Damage, and partakes of the excellence of DESTRUCTION

Helmet of the Winding Road:provides castings of the spell Teleport, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of AXE

Javelin of Joy:provides castings of the spell Medium Cure Health, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of MYSTICISM

Javelin of Heaven's Teeth: causes Minor Shock Damage, and partakes of the excellence of ILLUSION

Javelin of Endless Woe: wreaks Rapid, Major Continuous Damage to Target, and is schooled with crafts of MYSTICISM

Long Bow of Sweet Airs: casts the spell of Cure Poison, and is schooled with crafts of ALTERATION

Long Bow of Scars: causes Rapid, Minor Continuous Damage to Target, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of ALTERATION

Long Bow of the Unnatural Essence: engenders Medium Poison Damage, and is informed by the arts of DESTRUCTION

Longsword of Exposure: causes Minor Poison Damage, and partakes of the excellence of SWIMMING

Longsword of the Eye of the Worldt: enchanted with the spell of Detect Spell, and is informed by the arts of ILLUSION

Codex Arcana, Volume VIII

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

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Longsword of the Noble Flesh: provides castings of the spell Resistance to Poison, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of BLUNTWEAPON

Longsword of Winter's Winds: causes Minor Frost Damage, and is schooled with crafts of MYSTICISM

Mace of Odious Disorder: engenders Slow, Medium Continuous Damage to Target, and is schooled with crafts of RESTORATION

Mace of Dancing Fate: wreaks Major Shock Damage, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of RESTORATION

Mace of Vengeance: wreaks Major Magic Damage, and partakes of the excellence of THAUMATURGY

Pauldrons of Sacred Honor: casts the spell of Medium Shield, and is schooled with crafts of MISSILE

Pauldrons of the Mischievous Hand: casts the spell of Spell Reflection, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of MYSTICISM

Pauldrons of the Monkey's Apprehension: conceives the spell of Detect Enemy, and partakes of the excellence of ILLUSION

Pauldrons of Winter's Winds: causes Minor Frost Damage, and is informed by the arts of ILLUSION

Short Sword of Final Virtue: wreaks Major Fire Damage, and is informed by the arts of THAUMATURGY

Short Sword of the Sunken Gods' Awakening: provides castings of the spell Summon Horror, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of RESTORATION

Short Sword of the Inner Eye: conceives the spell of Resistance to Magic, and partakes of the excellence of AXE

Short Sword of Vengeance: wreaks Major Magic Damage, and is schooled with crafts of STEALTH

Codex Arcana, Volume IX

STUDENTS AND SCHOLAR: Attend our Abjurations!

SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS

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ShortBow of the Bile of the Earth: enchanted with the spell of Fire shield, and is informed by the arts of ILLUSION

ShortBow of Exposure: causes Minor Poison Damage, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of MYSTICISM

ShortBow of Saturnine Purpose: wreaks Slow, Major Continuous Damage to Target, and partakes of the excellence of ILLUSION

Sling of Delight: enchanted with the spell of Major Cure Health, and is informed by the arts of SHORTBLADE

Sling of Fickle Endowment: casts the spell of Confusion, and partakes of the excellence of DESTRUCTION

Sling of Riven Stars: engenders Medium Shock Damage, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of ALTERATION

Spear of Snares and Springes: causes Minor Delayed Damage, and is informed by the arts of ILLUSION

Spear of the Fox's Footfall: conceives the spell of Running, and partakes of the excellence of HANDTOHAND

Spear of the Rain of Fire: causes Minor Fire Damage, and is schooled with crafts of MYSTICISM

Staff of the Architect's Gaze: conceives the spell of Vampiric Drain, and gifts its owner with special insight into the disciplines of RESTORATION

Staff of Dancing Fate: wreaks Major Shock Damage, and is informed by the arts of THAUMATURGY

Staff of High Purpose: casts the spell of Jumping, and is schooled with crafts of LONGBLADE

War Axe of the Shrew: engenders Medium Magic Damage, and is schooled with crafts of ALTERATION

War Axe of Riven Stars: engenders Medium Shock Damage, and partakes of the excellence of DESTRUCTION

War Axe of the Tears of the Shark: causes Slow, Minor Continuous Damage to Target, and is informed by the arts of DESTRUCTION

# Curiosities Of The Second Age

*Anonymous*

None were so clever, or prodigal with their crafts, as the enchanters of the pre-Imperial Heartland. Many enchantments did they lavish upon even the least of their possessions, and from father to son of martial class might descend such heirlooms as to beggar a prince of the Modern Era. These artifacts may not be discerned by their age, for many objects of Elven craft also have stood the tests of time in great abundance. The only sure mark is in the provenance and documentation, for many powers may lie unguessed within the subtle wortcrafts of these Kings of Wizardry.

The Battle Axe of Rubicund Wisdom bears enchantments enhancing the skills of DESTRUCTION, and casts the spell of Teleport, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Battle Axe of Furious Swiftblade bears enchantments enhancing the skills of SHORTBLADE, and casts the spell of Jumping, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Broadsword of the Flea's Leaping grants benefits in the disciplines of JUMPING, casts the spell of Jumping, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.



The Broadsword of Percipient Wisdom grants benefits in the disciplines of THAUMATURGY, casts the spell of Medium Cure Health, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Claymore of the Hare's Fleetness affords some abilities in the arts of RUNNING, and casts the spell of Running, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Claymore of Transcendent Wisdom affords some abilities in the arts of MYSTICISM, and casts the spell of Major Cure Health, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The CrossBow of Grand Sureflight affords some abilities in the arts of MISSILE, and casts the spell of Medium Shield, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Dagger of the Tiger's Stalking grants benefits in the disciplines of STEALTH, casts the spell of Minor Cure Health, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Dagger of Emerald Wisdom grants benefits in the disciplines of RESTORATION, casts the spell of Minor Shield, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Javelin of the Fervent Dolphin bears enchantments enhancing the skills of SWIMMING, and casts the spell of Medium Cure Health, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Long Bow of Furious Smiting grants benefits in the disciplines of BLUNTWEAPON, casts the spell of Medium Shield, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Longsword of Iniquitous Surprise bears enchantments enhancing the skills of BACKSTABBING, and casts the spell of Major Cure Health, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Longsword of Auricular Wisdom bears enchantments enhancing the skills of ALTERATION, and casts the spell of Minor Cure Health, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Mace of the Furious Horny Fist affords some abilities in the arts of HANDTOHAND, and casts the spell of Teleport, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Short Sword of the Fervent Swimmer affords some abilities in the arts of SWIMMING, and casts the spell of Medium Cure Health, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The Short Sword of Argent Wisdom affords some abilities in the arts of ILLUSION, and casts the spell of Medium Shield, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The ShortBow of Furious Deep Cleaving bears enchantments enhancing the skills of AXE, and casts the spell of Minor Shield, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

The War Axe of Furious Hewing grants benefits in the disciplines of LONGBLADE, casts the spell of Running, and provides the preternatural Blessing of Athleticism when equipped.

# Harvest's End, 3e 172

*Chimere Graegyn*

[[The book contains many pages of close, tightly-written scribbling. The earliest entry is marked "Harvest's End, 3E 172." Only the first few pages make sense. Later entries are incoherent and illegible. In the first few pages you learn the basic story of Chimere, Master Sorcerer, Summoner, and Direnni retainer, and how he treated with Lord Dagon, tricked him, and paid the price of his victory.

Chimere Graegyn was a retainer of the ambitious Direnni clan. The Direnni derived the bulk of their power from their traffickings with Daedra, a very profitable but risky path to success. Chimere was perhaps the cleverest and most ambitious of the Direnni summoners. He dared to scheme against Lord Dagon, and won. When his trick succeeded, Dagon was cast into Oblivion. However, in the instant of his betrayal, Dagon struck out against the mortal who tricked him. Chimere's pact assured that he would live forever in his home town among the happy voices of his friends and countrymen. Twisting the literal words of Chimere's pact, Dagon scooped up tiny Caecilly Island (a small island off the coast of Northmoor) and hurled in into the void. All Chimere's friends and countrymen were instantly killed, though the sounds of their voices remained to torment Chimere's memory. Chimere was condemned to live forever, to grow progressively old and crippled with arthritis, and to contemplate the tragic

consequences of his defiance of fate and fortune in cheating a Daedra Lord.

In the earlier, more lucid sections of the journal, you also find other information of relevance to your current plight.

Searching for details of Chimere's successful defeat of Dagon, you find the following:

The Armor of the Saviour's Hide: Created by the Daedra Lord Malacath, this armor has the marvelous property of turning the blow of an oathbreaker. Chimere tricked Dagon into swearing an oath against the Powers which he had no intention of keeping. The Hide of the Savior turned Dagon's titanic fury long enough for Chimere to deliver his own attack—an incantation invoked upon Dagon's "Protonymic" (i.e., Incantory True Name). Unfortunately, like many of Malacath's gifts, the armor is a mixed blessing. It also makes its wearer exceptionally vulnerable to magical attacks, so one should only wear it for particular occasions.

Dagon's Protonymic: Chimere used Dagon's Protonymic in an incantation to invoke a sorcery that would gradually drain all of Dagon's power into the void. Chimere miscalculated, however, not realizing that Dagon's resistance could slow the draining of his power, even if it could not stop it. As a result, Dagon had the time to curse Chimere with a literal fulfillment of the terms of his bargain with Chimere. Rather than let his power drain into the void, Dagon cast it all into his curse. As a result, Caecilly Island was cast into the void, all its citizens were horribly slain, and Chimere was condemned to live forever among the ruins of his greatest ambition.

You also find the following details concerning the Rituals of the Hunt:

**The Chapel of the Innocent Quarry:** Chimere believes that Dagon had Caecilly Island established as the site of the Chapel of the Innocent Quarry to personally mock and torment Chimere. The green crystal structure was created by enchantments, and is the only building on the island erected since it was ripped from Tamriel and loosed in the void.

**The Spear:** Supposedly the Spear of Bitter Mercy used in the Wild Hunts could not be handled by any mortal or immortal save the ones sanctified to the Hunt and bound by its strictures. However, Chimere has determined that though the Spear's power is great, it is not unlimited, and that certain enchanted items—for instance, the Armor of the Savior's Hide, forged by Malacath—are sufficient to protect a mortal or immortal bearer from its maleficent energies.]]

# Imago's Notes About Neonymics

## *Imago Storm*

Dagon's incantory neonymic is Djehkeleho-dehbe-effehezepéh. The Daedric characters are Djeh Koh Leh Oh—Deh Beh—Feh Ee Zeh Peh, or, in Tamrielic, JKLO-DB-FEZP.

Xivilai's neonymic is Wegerohseh-chehkohieu. The Daedric characters are Weh Geh Roh Seh—Cheh Koh Eiu, or, in Tamrielic, WGRS-CKU.

Faydra's Neonymic is Nepehkweh-kodo. The Daedric characters are Neh Peh Kweh—Koh Doh, or, in Tamrielic, NPK-KD.

# Intelligence Training Note

*Anonymous*

Dear Occupant:

We regret to inform you that you have failed your preliminary Intelligence examination.

Only a real dope would dive into a deep hole without arranging for a teleport anchor. Heh-heh.

Have a nice day. Or two.



# Jagar Tharn's Letter

*Jagar Tharn*

[a neatly penned message on a small piece of paper, many times folded, and signed in a bold, formal hand]

Read this and let it be judged fair, nor doubted.

The bearer wears the form of Lomegan Mariel, Imperial Secretary, but is indeed Sirran Angada. Sirran Angada enjoys my countenance, and speaks with my voice.

Jagar Tharn

# Lehmekweh Note

*Mehrunes Dagon*

[[Written in red... ink?... on a torn piece of parchment in an elegant, precise hand. The note is unsigned.]]

Lehmekweh

I expect an unexpected guest. See the unseen, and conduct this guest into my presence with the greatest hospitality.

# Letter From Balaherne

*Balaherne*

Brother Herne

I do not comprehend. By the rites of the Hunt, the hare must have some chance of escape, however small.

I understand that this is Egahirn's first Hunt, I see that he must succeed, but does it not impair the principles of the Hunt to have him bear one of the six keys? How is the hare to wrest it from him?

Egahirn should pass the rite as you did, as I did, as a proper hunter, in full obedience to the forms. Surely it is the only way for the rite to be firm and fast.

Balaherne

# Letter From Chimere Graegyn

*Chimere Graegyn*

[[in badly faded ink on parchment yellowed with age]]

For any unfortunate pursued by the Hunt.

Know that you are not alone, that you have a friend in this desolate place. For the moment my croft-cottage is safe from the hunters. Find me there, in the middle of the moor away to the North. I can offer you shelter and respite, but come quickly, for every day I feel my strength fading.

C.

# Letter To Fire Daedra

*Herne*

For all Feydra's vassals, our Hounds.

You shall not return to the Chapel until the hunt is resolved,  
and the quarry's corpse is borne in to rest upon the altar.

Remember, you are The Greater Hounds. You are to pursue and  
harry the quarry but must not kill it. That honor shall be  
Egahirn's only.

Keep your amulets about you, the quarry is wily.

Now go, and run well, for the Hunt is a thing of beauty.

Herne.

# Letter To Mactana Greenway

*Anonymous*

For Mactana Greenway, Gatekeeper.

A few more names for the Annals and Assizes of Entry. I believe these will be the last for today.

Samar Starlover, Master of the Serpent Blade.

Grad Helthen, Grand Ipsissimus of the dissolving fires.

Clarentavious Valisious, Venerable Artificer, greybeard master of the Hammer and the harness.

Paxti Bittor, Exalted Summoner, Lion-Lord Invoker Pursuivant.

Vatasha Trenelle/Josian Kaid, novice.

[[scribbled in an unsteady hand]]

The daedra prince has forced entry. Battlespire is fallen.

Lomegan surrendered the Portal Keys, and he was struck down. I saw others Taken. Trust no one.

The gate home is closed by the invader's sigil; the only way out now is the old Star Galley.

I tried to guard the anchors, but most were loosed. If you may avenge us, restore the anchors. If you despair, free the last anchors, and die with our enemies.

# Letter To The Grand Marshall Of The Imperial Legion

*Clarentavious Valisious*

For the eyes of the Exalted Grand Marshall of His August Imperial Highness' Legions, from his Peer of the Twilit Fastnesses, the Battlemage Clarentavious Valisious.

As you read this, I am dead. My life, however, has not been given in vain, for I have vouchsafed you one small hope in all this tide of despair. The Great Star Galley, wrought by my own hand, still stands ready for your service. It will transport you to the High Halls and Librarium of the College.

Feigning vile possession and fellowship with the Enemy, I have contrived to conceal it from them, by dismantling my ingenious Opening Mechanism, and hiding away the five cogs upon which its workings depend. I leave one cog here for you, the others I have cunningly secreted. Assemble the mechanism, and you shall gain entry to the Star Galley Crib.

Beware the one that is named Methats.

He alone, I fear, suspects my ruse and might discover the workings.

One more criterion must be fulfilled before the Star Galley can convey you to the Colleges. Despite my many exertions upon



the issue, the Galley requires the full puissance of all five anchors to pierce the mana streams and win free of its moorings.

One such anchor is here in my quarters. If but one anchor is not conjoined, the Galley will lack the power to depart this space.

Now listen and pay heed. If you would achieve this undertaking and drive the dark ones from our Emperor's sovereign estate, seek out my remains. There you shall find the Typos Sophia, that shields any who possess it from the Taking into puppetry that is Possession. If you find me yet alive by some miracle, it shall be yours for your great purpose.

In Finis, when addressing the burial of those souls fallen here, I pray you remember their valour and their service in the name of Empire and forever hold high the name of Battlemage.

# Letters For The Battlespire Hero

*Various*

## Letter 1 For The Battlespire Hero

I sure hope you come through here, I could use the help.

We are in so much trouble! All hell's broken loose here, and the gate home's blocked with some sort of damn thing which hurts to touch. A lot.

Have a look around, see if you can find anyone alive to talk to. I'm going to try to get a disguise and get out in the confusion.

I'm trying to remember what the instructor always said - scout out the land, eliminate your threats and gather resources. Or search, slaughter and steal for short.

See if you can keep up.

We're getting a real big test, looks like!

Vatasha/Josian

## Letter 2 For The Battlespire Hero

I've heard that one of the Battlemages is still alive - Clarentavious, I think. I haven't seen him, but then, I haven't

had time to look for any secret doors or anything. They wanted him because of some machine or other that's broken.

Oh, and Methats seems to be the one who's being left in charge, if you're interested.

Stay close, you might need me!

Vatasha/Josian

Letter 3 For The Battlespire Hero

I've found another of those damn things like the ones which are blocking the Weir Gate - and a little Daedra went straight by it! I think he's got some sort of special charm or something that lets him through. I sure can't get past.

Oh, and here's another hint for you - there's a big gem thing just near here - heals you right up! Boy, was I glad to find it!

Vatasha/Josian

Letter 4 For The Battlespire Hero

Glad you could make it.

bad news - 1. wizards & guards dead. No prisoners I could find. 2. Daedra everywhere. Little long-ears - weak, but sneaky pack fighters. Big eyeless things with long arms - stupid and very tough. 3. Paxti Bittor is the traitor. Daedra may have some codes and keywords, but there're plenty of rooms and passages I can't get into. 4. Teleports don't work. Maybe mana locks, keywords? Look around - wizards are sloppy with security. 5. Floating symbols are magic sigils, and deadly! Weir gate is sealed by a REAL nasty one. Daedra wear amulets marked with

same symbols. Tried to pass symbols wearing right amulets, but some work, some don't - can't figure pattern.

Good news - 1. I'm sticking close to a boss daedra named Sumeer. Stole a cloak, hood, & amulet from a careless bodyguard. Sumeer has a mass teleportation artifact, I think. I wear the amulet, and go when he goes. 2. My Plan A: stay close to Sumeer and improvise. 3. My Plan B: Find an amulet with the same symbol as the one blocking the weir gate to get me back through the gate, or find something or someone else to get me through. Elseways we will never see Tamriel again. 4. My Plan C: Sneak until I'm discovered, then take as many with me as I can. 5. Don't think they know I'm here. 6. Command and security are sloppy. Politics? 7. Left you a pair of healing potions in this scroll. Toast my health when you quaff them.

Suggestions - 1. The door to the teleportal off the north corridor near the tiger rug has some sort of password protection on it. Get it working. It leads upsection to Battlespire libraries, barracks, armories, and such. DON'T COUNT ON ME to get this open. I'm riding the boss daedra's coattails. 2. Find out how daedra got here. Bittor, the traitor, was master of teleportation and voidgates; that's the likely route. 3. Search for codes and keys and clues and weapons. I don't think the daedra got them all by a long shot. I couldn't search the battlemages or guards without drawing attention to myself, but some of them may have had time to leave something for posterity. And this is the Battlespire, for gods sakes. Who knows what stuff they have around here? 4. Stay with me, pal. Even if something happens to me, look for what's left. I'll make sure I pass on anything I can.

Stay with me. Vatasha/Josian

## Letter 5 For The Battlespire Hero

So far, so good.

I'm with a group of Daedra with cloaks and hoods. Still careless, don't seem to expect trouble, but this disguise thing is too risky. When I get a chance, I'll slip off and follow under spell concealments.

This place is crawling with spooks and bones. They call this place the Soul Cairn. The chief—heard one call him “Lord Something-or-Other Moath”—sent troops out to scout. The report is simple: DO NOT FOOL WITH THE WRAITHS! They cannot be killed or destroyed. Period. Sounds like a good policy. These daedra troops look pretty tough, but they aren't making a dent in the wraith things. So stay clear of them.

Our next stop is someplace called Shade Perilous. Not sure after that. A couple of my Daedra companions had little accidents; I snatched their plunder. When I get a chance, I'll sort it out. Anything extra or dangerous I'll dump along the way for you. I'm leaving you two Spell Restoratives here; I got plenty extra. Keep your eyes out, and watch yourself.

Vatasha/Josian

## Letter 6 For The Battlespire Hero

So much for the disguise. One of the big ones caught me sneaking around, and ripped into me. I knocked him through his hat, but he mussed my garments in a most thorough fashion. I think they may be on the lookout now. Be careful.

I'm depending on silent feet and shadow spells now. You'll need two amulets to get past the warding sigils. I left an extra one

here on the dock. I found the gate, many rooms on, past a graveyard, but don't know how the gate works. I'll hang around and slip through with the next courier. If I can leave the gate open, you're golden. If not, you're on your own. Maybe there's an inscription or manual hidden around somewhere.

Stay AWAY from the wraiths. I can't even scratch one. The big Daedra are tough, but dumb - either they don't know spells, or can't cast them worth a damn.

Next is a place called Shade Perilous. It's a Daedra stronghold, not one of the Dagon holds, but a Nocturnal domain. Makes no sense to me - Dagon and Nocturnal are supposed to hate each other - but we'll see soon enough.

Keep a'coming.

Vatasha/Josian

Letter 7 For The Battlespire Hero

They're on to me. I'm on the run.

I'm low on juice, and not in the best of health. I just began to realize I might not make it.

No matter what happens, I'll go out with a lot of noise and fuss. If I have to make a sacrifice, just do me one last favor, and make sure the gesture isn't wasted. Sounds gloomy, but I need to say it.

I hope we can look back on this someday as our greatest adventure. And if not, then drink a flowing glass at each occasion in remembrance of me.

Vatasha/Josian

Letter 8 For The Battlespire Hero

Overheard this password, but no idea what it means, or who needs it.

The Gerent of Dagon Rules Here

Vatasha/Josian

# Letters From The Dremora

*Anonymous*

## Letter 1 From The Dremora

We the Dremora are true to our word.

This place is closed to us, and the help we can provide is limited.

You are now in the place of the Hunt.

To leave this realm you must enter the gate in the great horned temple, in the walled city to the East.

You will require six keys to enter the temple. If the Hunt were fair, you would find them abroad in the island.

The Hunt is not fair.

The hunter has taken one to prevent your escape. The touch of his spear is death, and no mortal weapon can harm him.

Your plight is utterly hopeless and impossible.

Therefore we assume that you may be somewhat delayed.

The old man in the lonely cottage knows what you need. He will test your patience, but persist and the reward will be great.



Farewell, strange mortal. Enjoy the Hunt.

## Letter 2 From The Dremora

Upon the central island is Lord Dagon's Hunting Lodge. Those who pledged their immortal spirits in return for services are bound here for Dagon's sport. These miserable wraiths are mad and malevolent, but in life each was proud and powerful. Seek their treasures: the Long Bow of Heaven's Hail, the Boots of Peace, the Gauntlets of the Poor, and the Helmet of the Light Within. The Long Bow casts arrows and spells with deadly accuracy. The Boots, once worn by a famed mortal warrior who had renounced the use of weapons, confer great skill in unarmed combat and feats of physical daring. The Gauntlets render the wearer resistant to magic, while the Helmet draws power from an opposing spellcaster and lends that power to its wearer. Some of these items are carried by the wraiths who possessed them in life; other items are hidden where the diligent might find them.

A Dark Seducer, Lord Dagon's personal bodyguard and current paramour, carries the Sword of the Moon Reiver, a unique sword forged from Dagon's own substance. No other weapon has such power to do him harm. Seek her, vanquish her, and seize her sword, or your errand is hopeless.

Entry to the Lodge is blocked by three great Sigil Wards. The Amulets of Entry for these Sigils are carried by Dagon's greatest lieutenants. They are terrible in skill and power, and protected from many weapons and magics—But you need these amulets to approach Dagon.

Do not hope for aid from us in this place. This message is all we can provide. All else is arrayed against you in this place. Trust

no one.

Your friend is held in Lord Dagon's Hunting Lodge. Lord Dagon himself stands guard. Beware of a trap. Lord Dagon is well-served by many spies. And if you would have a chance against him, you must not fail of these things:

The obstacles you face seem insurmountable. Thus will Lord Dagon be wonderfully dismayed when you succeed.

Beyond all hope, weigh daring against the odds, and courage against despair.

# Malham's Annotated Compendium Of Arcane Contrivances Of The Second Age, Volume IV

*Malham*

Just as it is necessary for the state to prepare arms and to provide abundant stores of victuals for the soldiers who are to fight for it, so it is fitting for Imperial Servants to fortify themselves against the assaults of pagans and heretics with a multitude of sound writings. So all know, and Malham speaks.

“White Finger of Lingering Death”

Produces the casting of Poison

By envious fate's decrees

Abide not long the lords of earth;

Beneath the poisoned bite the flesh must fall.

“Shroud of Night”

Casts the spell of Shadow

Whence art thou come? Know by his mien

That Shadow is power.

“Beacon of Warning”

Renders the power of Detect Enemy

Thine enemy be known.

“Glove of Service”

Grants the gift of lesser Monster Summoning

Though they be least, least answer thy call.

“Horn of the Hunt”

Grants the gift of modest Summon Brute

Pour out libations from the mingled cup; the soldiers answer;  
the captain’s call.

“Badge of the Steward”

Grants the gift of Summon Wise Monster

From parched and arid wastes beyond the stars, the Wise  
harken to the clash of war.

“Guerdon of the Warden”

Grants the gift of grand Summon Guard”

From darkness he comes.

“Knower of Nightmares”

Grants the gift of Summon Surpassing Horror

When his horn sounds, the hosts shall part in fear and shame.

“Eyes of Arcane Sight”

Renders the power of Detect Spell

What works, bright or dark, are written between this world and the next? Those works you shall read as threads woven in fire.

“Curtain of the Unseen World”

Renders the power of Invisibility

Behind this curtain he moves unknown to friend and foe.

“Beckon of the Averted Eye”

Renders the power of Chameleon

The stalker is lost in the blend of light and shadow, color and texture.

“Arms of Feathered Grace”

Renders the power of Slow Fall

He falls, but with grace and keen eye, like the raptor upon his prey.

# Posting Of The Hunt Excerpts

*Anonymous*

Posting of The Hunt, Excerpt 1

The Posting of the Hunt.

Let no man say before a witness that the Hunt has not been called, nor the Rites declared, or the Ancient Offices observed.

The Huntsman and his Hounds shall chase and harry the Hare as the ritual demands.

The Hunt begins before the green crystal reflections of the Chapel of the Innocent Quarry. The Spear of Bitter Mercy is displayed, the Offices of the Hunt are recited: the Drag, the Chase, the Call, and the View to the Kill.

Posting of The Hunt, Excerpt 2

The Drag is for the Lesser Dogs, to startle out the Hare.

The Chase is for the Greater Hounds to drive the Hare before them.

On the Call the Greater Hounds trap the Hare and summon the Huntsmen for the kill, with the Spear of Bitter Mercy.

Last is the View. The Huntsman rings the bell to call the Master to view his kill.

Then is the bounty bestowed, and the victorious huntsman calls the new Hunt.

To name a Wild Hunt is a grand and grave right indeed. All but the High Daedra Lords are prey to the potent Spear of Bitter Mercy. It is a terrible weapon, and must not be removed from the Grounds of the Ritual Hunt.

Posting of The Hunt, Excerpt 3

I think this one doesn't actually appear in the game (For obvious reasons.).

The Hare is granted one slim chance for escape.

Six keys in the grounds can open the way into the Horned Temple and away to elude the Huntsman and his Spear.

Though no Hare has done this, the forms must be observed. To cheat the Hare of the keys is an unforgivable betrayal of the Law of the Hunt.

Posting of The Hunt, Excerpt 4

In the Ritual of the Hunt, the Huntsmen are protected from all harm, from all weapons, and from sorceries of all types. Wise is the huntsman, however, that fears the bite of his own Spear, for a single touch of the Spear of Bitter Mercy means death for Hare and Huntsman alike.

# Quarantine Warning

*Anonymous*

Found on the doors of the houses in Trybador, Caecilly.

WARNING!

QUARANTINE!

PLAGUE!

NOTICE: This structure deemed unsafe by order of the Coastal Militia.

Extremely Contagious! Entry Forbidden!

Warning! No effective physick known!



# Savior's Hide Note

*Chimere Graegyn*

This is the accursed armor I wore when I defied Dagon. It's no ordinary mail but a captive servant of Malacath, and the trickster's mark is on it, for it led me into folly.

As near as I can remember it's called the Hide of the Saviour and the Scourge of the Oath-breaker and long may it hang here out of my sight, for I wish I'd ne'er used it.

# Someone's Last Words

*Anonymous*

[handwritten scrawled on the floor with a piece of charcoal]

I am dead. Tell my tender Mother dear I loved her, and Tamriel and my Emperor. Akatosh curse the name of the traitor and all daedra. Mara bless and guard my soul.

You who find me - avenge me, take the traitor's blood in my name, and take in hand The Dagger of the Stolid Kin, borne by my father and forged by his father before him. Beware of magic while you carry this blade, but fear neither the sting of poison nor the sear of shock.

# Soul Cairn Coffin Verses Inscription

*Anonymous*

Found on a plaque in a hallway of The Soul Cairn.

[[You see images of five coffins, each with a short verse. Each coffin lid shows a single word:]]

First coffin: Grave

Second coffin: Life

Third coffin: Boat

Fourth coffin: Pig

Fifth coffin: Coffin

# Soul Cairn Retainer Inscription

*Anonymous*

[[A lengthy inscription identifies one of the Master's retainers who came to the Soul Cairn to die and be reborn in his Eternal Service.]]

# Soul Cairn Stained Glass Window Note

*Anonymous*

[[A stained glass window depicts, to one side, many people laboring hard, burdened with great loads, and suffering the agonies of war and death. On the other side the people put down their burdens and are transfigured by a blazing green light which strips them of their tattered soiled garments and leaves them in a perfect splendor of body and spirit. Beneath the window is a simple inscription:]]

THE SOUL CAIRN

Once they struggled, hammered, cried

Fought for justice, honor, pride.

Now from time and tide released

They guard and serve in silent peace

# Spear Of Bitter Mercy Inscription

*Anonymous*

[[There is a short inscription in some sort of cipher, followed by these lines:]]

Spear of Bitter Mercy

Lightning in the hand

My point bites deep

I end the chase

Even the mightiest are unmade by my touch.

# Star Galley Crib Note

*Anonymous*

Star Galley Crib

No Admittance

# Star Galley Crib Opening Mechanism Note

*Anonymous*

Star Galley Crib Opening Mechanism

Operation without Permission of His Honor, The Venerable  
Artificer, is Expressly Forbidden

Gaze Upon this Device and its Subtle Workings, and Tremble  
with Wonder!

By the grace and gifts of Clarentavious Valisious, thus the Star  
Galley is Made Fast and Secured Thereby.



# Starkhorn's Compendium Of His Arts And Crafts In The Realms Of Lesser Enchantments

*Starkhorn*

TAKE CARE. The excellences of my works may not always be ready to the eye, and may lie deep within the warp and weft of the spirit weave.

The Battle Axe of Starkhorn's Swiftblade bears enchantments enhancing the skills of SHORTBLADE, and gives some Resistance to Shock when equipped by the owner.

The Boots of Starkhorn's Fleetness affords some abilities in the arts of RUNNING, and, when in use by the owner, provides a modest Resistance to Poison.

The Broadsword of Starkhorn's Unseen Wisdom grants benefits in the disciplines of THAUMATURGY, and, when equipped, confers a measure of Resistance to Magic for its owner.

The Claymore of Starkhorn's Unknown Wisdom affords some abilities in the arts of MYSTICISM, and, when in use by the owner, provides a modest Resistance to Poison.

The CrossBow of Starkhorn's Sureflight affords some abilities in the arts of MISSILE, and, when in use by the owner, provides a modest Resistance to Poison.

The Cuirass of Starkhorn's Swimmer affords some abilities in the arts of SWIMMING, and, when in use by the owner, provides a modest Resistance to Fire.

The Dagger of Starkhorn's Green Wisdom grants benefits in the disciplines of RESTORATION, and, when equipped, confers a measure of Resistance to All Elements for its owner.

The Gauntlets of Starkhorn's Red Wisdom bears enchantments enhancing the skills of DESTRUCTION, and gives some Resistance to Shock when equipped by the owner.

The Greaves of Starkhorn's Leaping grants benefits in the disciplines of JUMPING, and, when equipped, confers a measure of Resistance to Magic for its owner.

The Helmet of Starkhorn's Stalking grants benefits in the disciplines of STEALTH, and, when equipped, confers a measure of Resistance to All Elements for its owner.

The Javelin of Starkhorn's Dolphin bears enchantments enhancing the skills of SWIMMING, and gives some Resistance to All Elements when equipped by the owner.

The Long Bow of Starkhorn's Smiting grants benefits in the disciplines of BLUNTWEAPON, and, when equipped, confers a measure of Resistance to Magic for its owner.

The Longsword of Starkhorn's Golden Wisdom bears enchantments enhancing the skills of ALTERATION, and gives some Resistance to Frost when equipped by the owner.

The Mace of Starkhorn's Horny Fist affords some abilities in the arts of HANDTOHAND, and, when in use by the owner, provides a modest Resistance to Fire.

The Pauldrons of Starkhorn's Surprise bears enchantments enhancing the skills of BACKSTABBING, and gives some Resistance to Frost when equipped by the owner.

The Short Sword of Starkhorn's Silver Wisdom affords some abilities in the arts of ILLUSION, and, when in use by the owner, provides a modest Resistance to Fire.

The ShortBow of Starkhorn's Deep Biting bears enchantments enhancing the skills of AXE, and gives some Resistance to Frost when equipped by the owner.

The War Axe of Starkhorn's Hewing grants benefits in the disciplines of LONGBLADE, and, when equipped, confers a measure of Resistance to All Elements for its owner.

# Starlover's Log

*Samar Starlover*

[[Scrawled hastily on a page from a log journal]]

6th moon ..... “Alas, the Battlespire appears to be falling into the hands of evil. Their many attempts in the past have failed, until now. Dagon seems to have new minions at his side this time. These new horrors are not at all too powerful beyond our magicks and weaponry, but their numbers are feverishly great. We grow low on supplies and soldiers for this holdout. I fear the worst.”

8th moon ..... “I have presented to the few remaining Battlemages my last hope plan. I will fight my way to the bowells of the Battlespire, where I will mount Dragonne Papré, my Dragon companion. From his lair, we will take flight. Since the Weir Gate has been taken, teleportation is not possible. Only Papré can make such a journey to the Imperial Palace. There, we will report the evil infection and return with a regimental force of rescue. May the Powers be with me.”

9th moon..... “It is as I feared. A carcass is all I have come to find. They have sealed the main gate so Papré could not escape. I am not sorrowful though, for I will be eternally reunited with Dragonne Papré. Hope for the living is lost. My name is Samar Starlover. Tell my sister I am dead, and if all the seas were ink, I could not write enough how I shall miss her.”

# The Kendhall Book Of Riddles

*Kendhall*

[[Among the hundreds of riddles in this weighty tome, THE KENDHALL BOOK OF RIDDLES, four have been marked with scraps of paper:]]

Loadbearer, Warrior

Spirited, Brave

Fleet-foot, Ironshod

Faithful One, Slave

Answer: Horse

I rise above the roofs below

Finger up-raised to heaven.

I speak in clear tones

That aim for others

To gather where I call.

Answer: Bell Tower

Some live in me, some live on,

And some shave me to stride upon.

I rarely leave my native land.

Until my death I always stand.

High and low I may be found

Both above and under ground.

Answer: Tree

Armor bright

Gleaming white

A single rank

Their faces blank

Now hid by night

Now bold by light

Bright red the land

Where soldiers stand

Answer: Teeth

# The Requisite Book Of Daedra

*Anonymous*

[This volume is an encyclopedic reference to the Lords of the Daedric Realms, their chief clans, the themes and spheres of influence of each clan, and to the legends and lore associated with those mortals who traffick with Daedra.]

Azura, whose sphere is dusk and dawn, the magic inbetween realms of twilight

Beothiah, whose sphere is deceit and conspiracy, and the secret plots of murder, assassination, treason, and unlawful overthrow of authority

Clavicus Vile, whose sphere is the granting of power and wishes through ritual invocations and pact

Hermaeus Mora, whose sphere is scrying of the tides of Fate, of the past and future as read in the stars and heavens, and in whose dominion are the treasures of knowledge and memory

Hircine, whose sphere is the Hunt, the Sport of Daedras, the Greatest Game, the Chase and Sacrifice of Mortals

Malacath, whose sphere is the patronage of the spurned and ostracized, and the Sworn Oath, and the Bloody Curse

Mehrunes Dagon, whose sphere is Destruction, Change, Revolution, Energy, and Ambition

Mephala, whose sphere is obscured to mortals; known by the names Webspinner, Spinner, and Spider; whose only consistent theme seems to be interference in the affairs of mortals for her amusement

Meridia, whose sphere is obscured to mortals; who is associated with the energies of living things

Molag Bal, whose sphere is the domination and enslavement of mortals; whose desire is to harvest the souls of mortals and to bring mortals souls within his sway by spreading seeds of strife and discord in the mortal realms

Namira, whose sphere is the ancient Darkness; known as the Spirit Daedra, ruler of sundry dark and shadowy spirits; associated with spiders, insects, slugs, and other repulsive creatures which inspire mortals with an instinctive revulsion

Nocturnal, whose sphere is the night and darkness; who is known as the Night Mistress

Peryite, whose sphere is the ordering of the lowest orders of the Oblivion; who is known as the Taskmaster

Sanguine, whose sphere is hedonistic revelry and debaucherie, and passionate indulgences of darker natures

Sheogorath, whose sphere is Madness, and whose motives are unknowable

Vaernima, whose sphere is the realm of dreams and nightmares, and from whose realm issues forth evil omens



[especially marked for special interest under the heading “Malacath” you find a reference to SCOURGE, blessed by Malacath, and dedicated to the use of mortals. In short, the reference suggests that any daedra attempting to invoke the weapon’s powers will be expelled into the voidstreams of Oblivion.]

“Of the legendary artifacts of the daedra, many are well known, like Azura’s Star, and Sheogorath’s Wabbajack. Others are less well known, like Scourge, Mackkan’s Hammer, Bane of Daedra....

“...yet though Malacath blessed Scourge to be potent against his daedra kin, he thought not that it should fall into daedric hands, then to serve as a tool for private war among caitiff and forsaken. Thus did Malacath curse the device such that, should any darkkin seek to invoke its powers, that a voidhole should open and swallow that daedra, and purge him into Oblivion’s voidstreams, from thence to pathfind back to the Real and Unreal Worlds in the full order of time.”

# Trebuchet Ritual

*Anonymous*

[[beneath several large, important-looking charts and diagrams]]

Behold the ritual of making for the Grand and Thaumaturgical and Most Puissant Trebuchet of Overarching Peril.

He that touches this parchment to the workings of the Trebuchet of Granvellusa and releases its spirits therein shall apprehend before him an full and ready Engine of Mighty Destruction for the subjugation of the Foes of all Direnni.

Forromeo has spoken. The world shall hear. Let all peoples tremble before the everlasting might and grandeur of Clan Direnni.

# Redguard Codexes

# Brother Kithral's Journal

*Brother Kithral*

I can taste the poison in my mouth - a yellow fog in the chest that clogs the vital passages. The gash in my side weeps fast - which will kill me first - wound or toxin?

Damn her impatience! And damn my pride to think I might find the key in this nefarious darkness on my own. But she missed the rendezvous & I fear we are running out of time. With the Archmage's ring we are one step closer to restoring the Crowns to power. I am sure his body is here. Some trick of the undercurrent in the wake of the battle. The spider's milk is deep. Iszara I pray nothing has happened to you. I hear the goblins behind the door. Ubula Ubula Ubula they come for me. I have failed you my love. The ring is nowhere near. You must hurry.

The League is closing in. The Empire is closing in. The Darkness is closing...

# Crendal The Town Drunk's Drunken Song

*Crendal*

A is for the apes that date their mothers

B is for the boils they pop for fun

C is for the water sailors sail on

D is for the lumps upon their tongues

E is for the eels they eat for breakfast

F is for the fleas that swarm within their shorts

G is for the grog they swill by gallons

H is for the hair upon their warts

I is what they poke out with their fingers

J is for the jerks they give on ropes

K is for the kats they drown in bags

L is for the love they give to goats

M is for the marks of fifty lashes

N is for their smarts, for they have none  
O is for the oceans they get lost in  
P is for their pox and scurvy gums  
Q is for the quakebutts fit for pounding  
R is wrong, and wrong theyll always be  
S is stinky, just like sailors armpits  
T is for the ticks that eat their fleas  
U is for the urgent needs of manhood  
V is for the vegetables they wont eat  
W for weevils in their hardtack  
X 'es mark the spots on all their mapses  
Y - oh why! We cry, must our song end?  
Z - the zoanthropic girls of our hometowns

# Elven Artifacts

*Anonymous*

...of Lillandrill, a magical flask discovered during the 1st Era of Tamriel (c. 1E470) by a group of Elves living in Lillandrill, a port city on the Northern shore of Summerset Isle. Upon learning that the flask had the marvellous property of being able to absorb magic of any persuasion, the founders realized their importance in the world and spread word of their discovery. They performed various favors for the Barons of Summerset Isle, keeping the magical powers of the Wood Elves of Valenwood in check.

Eventually the founders, worried that Wood Elf assassins may kill them and take the flask, left Summerset Isle for the City of Daggerfall, in High Rock, where they hoped to buy their safety from the Clan Direnni, to live in secret, protected by the Direnni.

While sailing from Summerset to High Rock, they were shipwrecked on the coral reef along the southern coast of what is now Stros M'Kai. The founders were killed and the Flask of Lillandrill was lost.

Stories of the flask have appeared over the ages, but it is still believed by many that it is lost somewhere on the island of Stros M'Kai.

References linking the island to the flask occur in manuscript fragments of unknown but ancient origin held in the private library of Enric Dexian at Sentinel. One piece, the Lagan Text, has symbols (reproduced above) which could be interpreted as map references. This has led to the theory that the location of the flask was known at some time after the founders' demise. In particular...



# Ffoulkes' Firmament

## *Ffoulke*

The Warrrior is a Guardian Contellation, and thus protects his Charges from the Seperpent during his Season. His Charges are the Lady, the Steed, and the Lord. Minor Constellations which share his Quadrant of the Heavens.

The Serpent threatens Different Charges during Different Seasons, and the Warrior's Very Aspect will Change according to the Times. It, for Example, His Lady is being threatened the Warrior will seem as if he is looking to His Left, Eyes blazing towards the Part of the Sky wherein she resides. Thus, to find the Serpent during the Warrior's Season look to where he looks, for that is where the Coiled Beast is Active.

# Flora Of Hammerfell

*Anonymous*

## Aloe

The ancients knew well the efficacy of the Aloe. It is a wondrous herb, useful in staunching the flow of blood and in promoting the healing of wounds. It has also been found to lessen the effect of the pox. An elixir may be simply made by combining the licqor from a crushed leaf with purest water.

## Angelica

Angelica is known among those who dwell in Hammerfell as a delicacy when crystalized. It has been used to cure the flatulence.

## Basil

This herb is beneficial for reducing swelling in the proboscis. It is applied as a poultice over the affected area. As a precautionary measure, straws should be placed in the nostrils prior to application.

# Iszara's Journal

*Iszara*

First Seed 26. CE 864

This will be my last entry, as I'm taking leave of this maddening torpor: the time to act is at hand! Basil and the rest of his lazy wolves are content to mourn over our Prince and hide in shadows, even while we have the very thing the Governor fears most!

For months my love has lain in amber while the Empire firms its hold. Hammerfell will be lost forever if Prince A'tor is not restored.

I am decided: if the League can't shake its slumber then I will steal the soulgem as they sleep! By morning I'll be in Stros M'kai where there are other who might give me the help I need.

Cyrus

The gypsy woman told me you would come to Stros M'Kai. I laughed in her face of course, but I leave this warning if only for respect of one's elders. If the blood lock is opened then I know it is you, and ask you to please heed the next:

Leave me my dilemma and go back to whatever road you love best these days.

You've had ample practise.

# Keep Out

*Anonymous*

KEEP OUT

Until Further Notice & by Order of

The Provisional Governor of Stros M'kai

Lord Admiral Richton

NO ONE MAY ENTER THIS AREA

# **No Trespassing**

*The Imperial Archeological Society*

NO TRESPASSING

THIS SITE HAS BEEN CLAIMED BY THE IMPERIAL  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY

# Redguards, Their Heroes And History

*Anonymous*

...beginning of recorded time in High Desert and were craftsmen and mystics. His grandfather was a retainer of Mansel Sesnit, the Elden Yokudan, and led many of the battles of unification prior to Sesnit's assassination. When he was 14, Hunding's father died in one of the region's many insurrections, and he was left to support his mother and four brothers. His prowess...

# Wanted: Cyrus

*Anonymous*

WANTED

FOR TREASON AND MURDER

'CYRUS'

REDGUARD MALE 1.85 M. 80 K 25-30 YRS.

A REWARD OF 100 GOLD PIECES WILL BE GIVEN FOR  
INFORMATION LEADING TO THE ARREST OF THIS CRIMINAL.  
BE IT KNOWN THAT, BY ORDER OF THE EMPORER, ANY  
PERSON HARBOURING A FUGITIVE WILL BE HANGED.



# **Morrowind Codexes**

# 36 Lessons Of Vivec

*Anonymous*

## The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon One

He was born in the ash among the Velothi, anon Chimer, before the war with the northern men. Ayem came first to the village of the netchimen, and her shadow was that of Boethiah, who was the Prince of Plots, and things unknown and known would fold themselves around her until they were like stars or the messages of stars. Ayem took a netchiman's wife and said:

'I am the Face-Snaked Queen of the Three in One. In you is an image and a seven-syllable spell, AYEM AE SEHTI AE VEHK, which you will repeat to it until mystery comes.'

Then Ayem threw the netchiman's wife into the ocean water where dreughs took her into castles of glass and coral. They gifted the netchiman's wife with gills and milk fingers, changing her sex so that she might give birth to the image as an egg. There she stayed for seven or eight months.

Then Seht came to the netchiman's wife and said:

'I am the Clockwork King of the Three in One. In you is an egg of my brother-sister, who possesses invisible knowledge of words and swords, which you shall nurture until the Hortator comes.'

And Seht then extended his hands and multitudes of homunculi came forth, each like a glimmering rope through the water, and they raised the netchiman's wife back to the surface world and set her down on the shoals of Azura's coast. There she lay for seven or eight more months, caring for the egg-knowledge by whispering to it the Codes of Mephala and the prophecies of Veloth and even the forbidden teachings of Trinimac.

Seven Daedra came to her one night and each one gave to the egg new motions that could be achieved by certain movements of the bones. These are called the Barons of Move Like This. Then an eighth Daedroth came, and he was a Demiprince, called Fa-Nuit-Hen, or the Multiplier of Motions Known. And Fa-Nuit-Hen said:

'Whom do you wait for?'

To which the netchiman's wife said the Hortator.

'Go to the land of the Indoril in three months' time, for that is when war comes. I return now to haunt the warriors who fell and still wonder why. But first I show you this.'

Then the Barons and the Demiprince joined together into a pillar of fighting styles terrible to behold and they danced before the egg and its learning image.

'Look, little Vehk, and find the face behind the splendor of my bladed carriage, for in it is delivered the unmixed conflict path, perfect in every way. What is its number?'

It is said the number is the number of birds that can nest in an ancient tibrol tree, less three grams of honest work, but Vivec

in his later years found a better one and so gave this secret to his people.

‘For I have crushed a world with my left hand,’ he will say, ‘but in my right hand is how it could have won against me. Love is under my will only.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

### The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Two

The netchiman’s wife who carried the egg of Vivec within her went looking for the lands of the Indoril. Along the journey many spirits came to see her and offer instructions to her son-daughter, the future glorious invisible warrior-poet of Vvardenfell, Vivec.

The first spirit threw his arms about her and hugged his knowledge in tight. The netchiman’s wife became soaked in the Incalculable Effort. The egg was delighted and did somersaults inside her, bowing to the five corners of the world and saying:

‘Thus whoever performs this holy act shall be proud and mighty among the rest!’

The second spirit was too aloof and acted above his station so much that he was driven off by a headache spell. The third spirit, At-Hatoor, came down to the netchiman’s wife while she relaxed for a while under an Emperor Parasol. His garments were made from implications of meaning, and the egg looked at them three times. The first time Vivec said:

‘Ha, it means nothing!’

After looking a second time he said:

‘Hmm, there might be something there after all.’

Finally, giving At-Hatoor’s garments a sidelong glance, he said:

‘Amazing, the ability to infer significance in something devoid of detail!’

‘There is a proverb,’ At-Hatoor said, and then he left.

The fourth spirit came with the fifth, for they were cousins. They could ghost touch and probed inside the egg to find its core. Some say Vivec at this point was shaped like a star with its penumbra broken off; others, that it looked like a revival of vanished forms.

‘From my side of the family,’ the first cousin said, ‘I bring you a series of calamities that will bring about the end of the universe.’

‘And from my side,’ the second cousin said, ‘I bring you all the primordial marriages that must happen within them, each one.’

At this the egg laughed. ‘I am given too much to bear so young. I must have been born before.’

And then the sixth spirit appeared, the Black Hands Mephala, who taught the Velothi at the beginning of days all the arts of sex and murder. Its burning heart melted the eyes of the netchiman’s wife and took the egg from her belly with six cutting strokes. The egg-image, however, could see into what it had been before in ancient times, when the earth still cooled, and was not blinded. It joined with the Daedroth and took its former secrets, leaving a few behind to keep the web of the world from disentangling. Then the Black Hands Mephala put

the egg back into the netchiman's wife and blew on her with magic breath until the hole closed up. But the Daedroth did not give her back her eyes, saying:

'God hath three keys; of birth, of machines, and of the words between.'

Within this Sermon the wise may find one half of these keys.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

### The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Three

Being blind the netchiman's wife wandered into a cave on her way to the domains of House Indoril. It so happened that this cave was a Dwemeri stronghold. The Dwemer spied the egg and captured the netchiman's wife. They bound her head to foot and brought her deep within the earth.

She heard one say, 'Go and make a simulacrum of her and place it back on the surface, for she has something akin to what we have and so the Velothi will covet it and notice if she is too long away.'

In the darkness, the netchiman's wife felt great knives try to cut her open. When the knives did not work, the Dwemer used solid sounds. When those did not work, great heat was brought to bear. Nothing was of any use, and the egg of Vivec remained safe within her.

A Dwemer said, 'Nothing is of any use. We must go and misinterpret this.'

Vivec felt that his mother was afraid, and so consoled her.

‘The fire is mine: let it consume thee,

And make a secret door

At the altar of Padhome,

In the House of Boet-hi-Ah

Where we become safe

And looked after.’

This old prayer made the netchiman’s wife smile and begin such a deep sleep that when Dwemeri atronachs returned with cornered spheres and cut her apart she did not awake and died peacefully. Vivec was removed from her womb and placed within a magical glass for further study. To confound his captors, he channeled his essence into love, an emotion the Dwemer knew nothing about.

The egg said:

‘Love is used not only as a constituent in moods and affairs, but also as the raw material from which relationships produce hour-later exasperations, regrettably fashioned restrictions, riddles laced with affections known only to the loving couple, and looks that linger too long. Love is also an often-used ingredient in some transparent verbal and nonverbal transactions where, eventually, it can sometimes be converted to a variety of true devotions, some of which yield tough, insoluble, and infusible unions. In its basic form, love supplies approximately thirteen draughts of all energy that is derived from relationships. Its role and value in society at large are controversial.’

The Dwemer were vexed at these words and tried to hide behind their power symbols. They sent their atronachs to remove the egg-image from their cave and place it within the simulacrum they had made of Vivec's mother.

A Dwemer said, 'We Dwemer are only aspirants to this that the Velothi have. They shall be our doom in this and the eight known worlds, NIRN, LHKAN, RKHET, THENDR, KYNRT, AKHAT, MHARA, and JHUNAL.'

The secret to doom is within this Sermon.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Four

The simulacrum of the netchiman's wife who carried the egg of Vivec within it went back to looking for the lands of the Indoril. Along the journey many more spirits came to see it and offer instructions to its son-daughter, the future glorious invisible warrior-poet of Vvardenfell, Vivec.

A troupe of spirits called the Lobbyists for the Coincidence Guild appeared. Vivec understood the challenge immediately and said:

'The popular notion of God kills happenstance.'

The head of the Lobbyists, whose name is forgotten, tried to defend the concept's existence. He said, 'Saying something at the same time can be magical.'

Vivec knew that to retain his divinity that he must make a strong argument against luck. He said:



'Is not the sudden revelation of corresponding conditions and disparate elements that gel at the moment of the coincidence one of the prerequisites to being, in fact, coincidental? Synchronicity comes out of repeated coincidences at the lowest level. Further examination shows it is the utter power of the sheer number of coincidences that leads one to the idea that synchronicity is guided by something more than chance. Therefore, synchronicity ends up invalidating the concept of the coincidental, even though they are the symptomatic signs that bring it to the surface.'

Thus was coincidence destroyed in the land of the Velothi.

Then an Old Bone of the earth rose up before the simulacrum of the netchiman's wife and said, 'If you are to be born a ruling king of the world you must confuse it with new words. Set me into pondering.'

'Very well,' Vivec said, 'Let me talk to you of the world, which I share with mystery and love. Who is her capital? Have you taken the scenic route of her cameo? I have—lightly, in secret, missing candles because they're on the untrue side, and run my hand along the edge of a shadow made from one hundred and three divisions of warmth, and left no proof.'

At this the Old Bone folded unto itself twenty times until it became akin to milk, which Vivec drank, becoming a ruling king of the world.

Finally the Chancellor of Exactitude appeared, and he was perfect to look upon from every angle. Vivec understood the challenge immediately and said:

‘Certitude is for the puzzle-box logicians and girls of white glamour who harbor it on their own time. I am a letter written in uncertainty.’

The Chancellor bowed his head and smiled fifty different and perfect ways all at once. He pulled the astrolabe of the universe from his robe and broke it in half, handing both halves to the egg-image of Vivec.

Vivec laughed and said, ‘Yes, I know. The slave labor of the senses is as selfish as polar ice, and worsens when energies are spent on a life others regard as fortunate. To be a ruling king I will have to suffer much that cannot be suffered, and to weigh matters that no astrolabe or compass can measure.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

### The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Five

Finally the simulacrum of the netchiman’s wife became unstable. The Dwemer in their haste had built it shoddily and the ashes of Red Mountain slowed its golden tendons. Before long it fell on its knees beside the road to the lands of the Indoril and pitched over, to be discovered eighty days later by a merchant caravan on its way to the capital of Veloth, anon Almalexia.

Vivec had not been among his people all the days of his pre-life so he stayed silent and let the Chimer in the caravan think that the simulacrum was broken and empty.

A Chimeri warrior, who was protecting the caravan, said, ‘Look here how the Dwemer try to fool us as ever, crafting our likenesses out of their flesh-metals. We should take this to the

capital and show our mother Ayem. She will want to see this new strategy of our enemies.'

But the merchant captain said, 'I doubt that we shall be paid well for the effort. We can make more money if we stop at Noormoc and sell it to the Red Wives of Dagon, who pay well for the wonders made by the Deep Folk.'

But another Chimer, who was wise in the ways of prophecy, looked on the simulacrum with disquietude. 'Was I not hired on to help you seek the best of fortunes? I say you should listen to your warrior, then, and take this thing to Ayem, for though manufactured by our enemies there is something in it that will become sacred, or has been already.'

The merchant captain took pause then and looked on the simulacrum of the netchiman's wife and, though he heeded always the advice of his seers, could do no more than think of the profits to be made at Noormoc. He thought mainly of the Red Wives' form of recompense, which was four-cornered and good wounded, a belly-magic known nowhere else under the moons. His lust made him deny Ayem his mother. He gave order to change course for Noormoc.

Before the caravan could get underway again, the Chimeri warrior who had counseled a passage to the capital threw his money to the merchant captain and said, 'I will pay you thus for the simulacrum and warn you: war is coming with the shaggy men of the north and I will not have my mother Ayem at uneven odds with one enemy while tending to another.'

'Nerevar,' the merchant captain said, 'this is not enough. I am Triune in my own way, but I follow the road of my body and demand more.'

Then Vivec could not remain silent anymore and said into Nerevar's head these words:

'You can hear the words, so run away

Come, Hortator, unfold into a clear unknown,

Stay quiet until you've slept in the yesterday,

And say no elegies for the melting stone'

So Nerevar slew the merchant captain and took the caravan for his own.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Six

You have discovered the sixth Sermon of Vivec, which was hidden in the words that came next to the Hortator.

There is an eon within itself that when unraveled becomes the first sentence of the world.

Mephala and Azura are the twin gates of tradition and Boethiah is the secret flame.

The Sun shall be eaten by lions, which cannot be found yet in Veloth.

Six are the vests and garments worn by the suppositions of men.

Proceed only with the simplest terms, for all others are enemies and will confuse you.

Six are the formulas to heaven by violence, one that you have learned by studying these words.

The Father is a machine and the mouth of a machine. His only mystery is an invitation to elaborate further.

The Mother is active and clawed like a nix-hound, yet she is the holiest of those that reclaim their days.

The Son is myself, Vehk, and I am unto three, six, nine, and the rest that come after, glorious and sympathetic, without borders, utmost in the perfections of this world and the others, sword and symbol, pale like gold.

There is a fourth kind of philosophy that uses nothing but disbelief.

For by the sword I mean the sensible.

For by the word I mean the dead.

I am Vehk, your protector and the protector of Red Mountain until the end of days, which are numbered 3333.

Below me is the savage, which we needed to remove ourselves from the Altmer.

Above me is a challenge, which bathes itself in fire and the essence of a god.

Through me you are desired, unlike the prophets that have borne your name before.

Six are the walking ways, from enigma to enemy to teacher.

Boethiah and Azura are the principles of the universal plot, which is begetting, which is creation, and Mephala makes of it an art form.

For by the sword I mean the first night.

For by the word I mean the dead.

There will be a splendor in your name when it is said to be true.

Six are the guardians of Veloth, three before and they are born again, and they will test you until you have the proper tendencies of the hero.

There is a world that is sleeping and you must guard against it.

For by the sword I mean the dual nature.

For by the word I mean animal life.

For by the sword I mean preceded by a sigh.

For by the word I mean preceded by a wolf.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Seven

As the caravan of Nerevar now made for the capital of Veloth, anon Almalexia, there came great rumblings from the oblivion. A duke among scamps wandered into the House of Troubles, pausing before each scripture door to pay his respects, until finally he was met by the major domo of Mehrunes Dagon.

The Duke of Scamps said, 'I was summoned by Lord Dagon, master of the foul waters and fire, and I have brought the

pennants of my seven legions.'

The major domo, whose head was a bubble of foul water and fire, bowed low, so that the head of the Duke of Scamps became enclosed in his own.

He saw the first pennant, which commanded a legion of grim warriors who could die at least twice.

He saw the second pennant, which commanded a legion of winged bulls and the emperor of color that rode upon each.

He saw the third pennant, which commanded a legion of inverted gorgons, great snakes whose scales were the faces of men.

He saw the fourth pennant, which commanded a legion of double-crossed lovers.

He saw the fifth pennant, which commanded a legion of jumping wounds looking to hop onto a victim.

He saw the sixth pennant, which commanded a legion of abridged planets.

He saw the seventh pennant, which commanded a legion of armored winning moves.

To which the major domo said, 'Duke Kh-Utta, your legions while mighty are not enough to destroy Nerevar or the Triune way. Look upon the Hortator and see the wisdom he takes to wife.'

And they looked into the middle world and saw:

Evaporating in a throng of thunder

Of red war and chitin men,

Where destines

Take him further from our ways

The heat that we have wanted

And pray they still remember,

Where destines

Clothe the distance,

Glad in the golden east that we saw it now,

Instead of the war and repair

Of the oblivious fracture

A curse on the Hortator

And two more on his hands

And the Duke of Scamps saw the palms of the Hortator, upon  
which the egg had written these words of power:

GHARTOK PADHOME GHARTOK PADHOME.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Eight

And presently Nerevar and Vivec were within sight of the  
capital and the Four Corners of the House of Troubles knew



that it was not time to contest them. The caravan musicians made a great song of entrance and the eleven gates of the Mourning Hold were thrown wide.

Ayem was accompanied by her husband-state, a flickering image that was channeled to her ever-changing female need. Around her were the Shouts, a guild now forgotten, who carried with them the whims of the people, for the Velothi then were still mostly good at heart. The Shouts were the counselors of Ayem and the country, though they sometimes quarreled and needed Seht to wring them into usefulness. Ayem approached Nerevar, who was by now adorned in the flags of House Indoril. He gifted her with the simulacrum of the netchiman's wife and the egg of Vivec inside.

Ayem said to Nerevar, 'Seht who is Azura has revealed that war is come and that the Hortator that shall deliver us will approach with a solution walking at his side.'

Nerevar said, 'I have traveled out of my way to warn you of the deceit of our enemies, the Dwemer, but I have learned much on the journey and have changed my mind. This netchiman's wife you see at my side is a sword and a symbol and there is prophecy inside. It tells me that, like it, we must for awhile be like he is and, as a people, cloaked in our former enemies, and to use their machines without shame.'

At which Vivec spoke aloud, 'Boethiah-who-is-you wore the skin of Trinimac to cleanse the faults of Veloth, my Queen, and so it should be again. This is the walking way of the glorious.'

Seht appeared out of a cloud of iron vapor and his minions made of their blood a chair. He sat beside Ayem and looked on the rebirth of mastery.

Vivec said to them, his Triune:

‘My rituals and ordeals and all the rhymes within,

Use no other motive than the revelation of my skin.’

Ayem said, ‘AYEM AE SEHTI AE VEHK. We are delivered and made whole, the diamond of the Black Hands is uncovered.’

Seht said, ‘Wherever so he treads, there is invisible scripture.’

To which the Shouts were silent in sudden reading.

Vivec then reached out from the egg all his limbs and features, merging with the simulacrum of his mother, gilled and blended in all the arts of the star-wounded East, under water and in fire and in metal and in ash, six times the wise, and he became the union of male and female, the magic hermaphrodite, the martial axiom, the sex-death of language and unique in all the middle world.

He said, ‘Let us now guide the hands of the Hortator in war and its aftermath. For we go different, and in thunder. This is our destiny.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Nine

Then came the war with the northern men, where Vivec did guide the Hortator into swift and tricky union with the Dwemer. The greatest demon chieftains of the frigid west were those listed below, five in unholy number.

HOAGA, the Mouth of Mud, who appeared as a great bearded king, had the powers of Marshalling and breathing the earth. On the battlefields, this demon would often be seen on the sidelines, eating the soil voraciously. When his men fell, Hoaga would fill their bodies back with it, whereupon they would rise again and fight, albeit slower. He had a Secret Name, Fenja, and destroyed seventeen Chimeri villages and two Dwemeri strongholds before being turned away.

CHEMUA, the Running Hunger, who appeared as a mounted soldier with full helm, had the powers of Heart Roaring and of sky sickening. He ate the Chimeri hero, Dres Khizumet-e, sending the spirit back to the Hortator as an assassin. Sometimes called First Blighter, Chemua could give clouds stomach aches and turn the rain of Veloth into bile. He destroyed six Chimeri villages before he was slain by Vivec and the Hortator.

BHAG, the Two-Tongued, who appeared as a great bearded king, had the powers of Surety and Form Change. His raiders were small in number, but ran amok in the west hinterlands, killing many Velothi trappers and scouts. He fell in a great debate with Vivec, for the warrior-poet alone could understand the northern man's two-layered speech, though ALMSIVI had to remain invisible during the argument.

BARFOK, Maid of Planes, who appeared as a winged human with lick-encrusted spear, had the powers of Event Denouement. Battles fought against her would always end in victory for Barfok, because she could shape outcomes by singing. Four Chimeri villages and two more Dwemeri strongholds were destroyed by her decision enforcement. Vivec

had to stuff her mouth with his milk finger to keep her from singing Veloth into ruin.

YSMIR, the Dragon of the North, who always appears as a great bearded king, had powers innumerable and echoing. He was grim and dark and the most silent of the invading chieftains, though when he spoke villages were uplifted and thrown into the sea. The Hortator fought him unarmed, grabbing the Dragon's roars by hand until Ysmir's power throat bled. These roars were given to Vivec to bind into an ebony listening frame, which the warrior-poet placed on Ysmir's face and ears to drive him mad and drive him away.

'The coming forth and the driving away brings all things around. What I shall say next is unpleasant to record: HERMA-MORA-ALTADOON! AE ALTADOON!'

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Ten

You have discovered the tenth Sermon of Vivec, which was hidden in the words that came in the aftermath to the Hortator.

The evoker shall raise his left hand empty and open, to indicate he needs no weapons of his own. The coming forth is always hidden, so the evoker is always invisible or, better, in the skin of his enemies.

'The eyelid of the kingdom shall fill thirty and six folios, but the eye shall read the world.' By this the Hortator needs me to understand.

The sword is an impatient signature. Write no contracts on the dead.

Vivec says unto the Hortator remember the words of Boet-hi-ah:

We pledge ourselves to you, the Frame-maker, the Scarab: a world for us to love you in, a cloak of dirt to cherish. Betrayed by your ancestors when you were not even looking. Hoary Magnus and his ventured opinions cannot sway the understated, a trick worthy of the always satisfied. A short season of towers, a rundown absolution, and what is this, what is this but fire under your eyelid?

Shift ye in your skin, I say to the Trinimac-eaters. Pitch your voices into the color of bruise. Divide ye like your enemies, in Houses, and lay your laws in set sequence from the center, again like the enemy Corners of the House of Troubles, and see yourself thence as timber, or mud-slats, or sheets of resin. Then do not divide, for yet is the stride of SITHISIT quicker than the rush of enemies, and He will sunder the whole for the sake of a shingle.

For we go different, and in thunder. SITHISIT is the start of all true Houses, built against stasis and lazy slaves. Turn from your predilections, broken like false maps. Move and move like this. Quicken against false fathers, mothers left in corners weeping for glass and rain. Stasis asks merely for nothing, for itself, which is nothing, as you were in the eight everlasting imperfections.

Vivec says unto the Hortator remember the words of Vivec.

**UNDERSTAND THAT SITHISIT STILL TRAVELS**

Vivec says unto the Hortator remember the words of Vivec.

IN A PHOSPHORESCENT MIRROR OF THE SKY

Vivec says unto the Hortator remember the words of Vivec.

DROWNED AND SMILING

Vivec says unto the Hortator remember the words of Vivec.

INTERMITTENT HOPES ENOUGH

Vivec says unto the Hortator remember the words of Vivec.

TO ANSWER ALL THE THINGS

Vivec says unto the Hortator remember the words of Vivec.

NOT YET QUERIED

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Eleven

These were the days of Resdaynia, when Chimer and Dwemer lived under the wise and benevolent rule of the AMLSIVI and their champion the Hortator. When the gods of Veloth would retreat unto their own, to mold the cosmos and other matters, the Hortator would at times become confused. Vivec would always be there to advise him, and this is the first of the three lessons of ruling kings:

‘The waking world is the amnesia of dream. All motifs can be mortally wounded. Once slain, themes turn into the structure of future nostalgia. Do not abuse your powers or they will lead you astray. They will leave you like rebellious daughters. They

will lose their virtue. They will become lost and resentful and finally become pregnant with the seed of folly. Soon you will be the grandparent of a broken state. You will be mocked. It will fall apart like a stone that recalls that it is really water.

“Keep nothing in your house that is neither needed or beautiful.

“Ordeals you should face unimpeded by the world of restriction. The splendor of stars is Ayem’s domain. The selfishness of the sea is Seht’s. I rule the middle air. All else is earth and under your temporal command. There is no bone that cannot be broken, except for the heart bone. You will see it twice in your lifetimes. Take what you can the first time and let us do the rest.

“There is no true symbolism of the center. The Sharmat will believe there is. He will feel that he can cause years of exuberance from sitting in the sacred, when really no one can leave that state and cause anything more but strife.

“There is once more the case of the symbolic and barren. The true prince that is cursed and demonized will be adored at last with full hearts. According to the Codes of Mephala there can be no official art, only fixation points of complexity that will erase from the awe of the people given enough time. This is a secret that hides another. An impersonal survival is not the way of the ruling king. Embrace the art of the people and marry it and by that I mean secretly have it murdered.

“The ruling king that sees in another his equivalent rules nothing.

“The secret of weapons is this: they are the mercy seat.

“The secret of language is this: it is immobile.

“The ruling king is armored head to toe in brilliant flame. He is redeemed by each act he undertakes. His death is only a diagram back to the waking world. He sleeps the second way. The Sharmat is his double, and therefore you wonder if you rule nothing.

“Hortator and Sharmat, one and one, eleven, an inelegant number. Which of the ones is the more important? Could you ever tell if they switched places? I can and that is why you will need me.

“According to the Codes of Mephala, there is no difference between the theorist and the terrorist. Even the most cherished desire disappears in their hands. This is why Mephala has black hands. Bring both of yours to every argument. The one-handed king finds no remedy. When you approach God, however, cut both of them off. God has no need of theory and he is armored head to toe in terror.”

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twelve

As the Hortator pondered the first lesson of ruling kings, Vivec wandered into the Mourning Hold and found that Ayem was with a pair of lovers. Seht had divided himself again. Vivec then leapt through into their likenesses to observe, but he gained no secrets that he did not already know. He left a few of his own behind to make the journey worthwhile.

Then Vivec left the capital of Veloth and wandered far into the ash. He found a span of badlands to practice his giant-form. He



made of his feet a less dense material than the divine to keep from falling waist-deep into the earth. At this point the First Corner of the House of Troubles, the Prince Molag Bal, made his presence known.

Vivec looked on the King of Rape and said:

‘How very beautiful you are, that you do not join us.’

And Molag Bal crushed the warrior-poet’s feet, which were not invulnerable, and had legions cleave them off. Mighty fires from the Beginning Place were brought like nets to hold Vivec and he let them.

‘I would prefer,’ he said, ‘some kind of ceremony if we are to be married.’

And the legions that took the feet were summoned again and ordered to begin a banquet. Pomegranates sprang from the badlands and tents were raised. A throng of Velothi mystics came, reading the passages of the severed feet on the ground and weeping until the scriptures were wet.

‘We must love each other briefly,’ Vivec said, ‘if at all. I am needed to counsel the Hortator in more important matters because the Dwemer high priests stir up trouble. You may have my head for an hour.’

Molag Bal rose up and extended six arms to show his worth. They were decorated in runes of seduction and its reverse. They were decorated in the annotated calendars of longer worlds. When he spoke, mating monsters fell out.

‘Where must it go?’ he said.

'I told you,' Vivec said, 'I am meant to be the teacher of the king of the earth. AE ALTADOON GHARTOK PADHOME.'

With these magic words, the King of Rape added another: 'CHIM,' which is the secret syllable of royalty.

Vivec had what he needed from the Daedroth and so married him that day. In the hour that Bal had his head, the King of Rape asked for proof of love.

Vivec spoke two poems to show him such, but only the first is known.

I'm not sure just how much glass it took to make your hair

Twice as much, I am sure, as the oceans have to share

Hell, my sweet, is a fiction written by those who tell the truth

My mouth is skilled at lying and its alibi a tooth

The sons and daughters of Vivec and Molag Bal number in the thousands. The name of the mightiest is a string of power:

GULGA MOR JIL HYAET AE HOOM.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Thirteen

These were the days of Resdaynia, when Chimer and Dwemer lived under the wise and benevolent rule of the AMLSIVI and their champion the Hortator. When the gods of Veloth would retreat unto their own, to mold the cosmos and other matters, the Hortator would at times become confused. Vivec would

always be there to advise him, and this is the second of the three lessons of ruling kings:

‘The secret syllable of royalty is this: (You must learn this elsewhere.)

‘The temporal myth is man.

‘The magical cross is an integration of the worth of mortals at the expense of their spirits. Surround it with the triangle and you begin to see the Triune house. It becomes divided into corners, which are ruled by our brethren, the Four Corners: BAL DAGON MALAC SHEOG. Rotate the triangle and you pierce the heart of the Beginning Place, the foul lie, the testament of the irrefutable-for-a-span. Above them all is the horizon where only one stands, though no one stands there yet. It is proof of the new. It is the promise of the wise. Unfold the whole and what you have is a star, which is not my domain, but not entirely outside my judgment. The grand design takes flight; it is transformed not only into a star but a hornet. The center cannot hold. It becomes devoid of lines and points. It becomes devoid of anything and so becomes a receptacle. This is its usefulness at the end. This is its promise.

‘The sword is the cross and ALMSIVI is the Triune house around it. If there is to be an end I must be removed. The ruling king must know this, and I will test him. I will murder him time and again until he knows this. I am the defender of the last and the last. To remove me is to refill the heart that lay dormant at the center that cannot hold. I am the sword, Ayem the star, Seht the mechanism that allows the transformation of the world. Ours is the duty to keep the compromise from being filled with black sea.

‘The Sharmat sleeps at the center. He cannot bear to see it removed, the world of reference. This is the folly of the false dreamer. This is the amnesia of dream, or its power, or its circumvention. This is the weaker magic and it is barbed in venom.

‘This is why I say the secret to swords is the mercy seat. It is my throne. I am become the voice of ALMSIVI. The world will know me more than my sister and brother. I am the psychopomp. I am the killer of the weeds of Veloth. Veloth is the center that cannot hold. Ayem is the plot. Seht is the ending. I am the enigma that must be removed. These are why my words are armed to the teeth.

‘The ruling king is to stand against me and then before me. He is to learn from my punishment. I will mark him to know. He is to come as male or female. I am the form he must acquire.

‘Because a ruling king that sees in another his equivalent rules nothing.’

This is what was said to the Hortator when Vivec was not whole.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Fourteen

Vivec lay with Molag Bal for eighty days and eight, though headless. In that time, the Prince placed the warrior-poet’s feet back and filled them with the blood of Daedra. In this way Vivec’s giant-form remained forever harmless to good earth. The Pomegranate Banquet brought many spirits back from the

dead so that the sons and daughters of the union had much to eat besides fruit.

The Duke of Scamps came while the banquet was still underway, and Molag Bal looked on the seven pennants with anger. The King of Rape had become necessary and therefore troubled for the rest of time. His legions and Kh-Utta's fell into open war, but the children of Molag Bal and Vivec were too elaborate in power and form.

The Duke of Scamps therefore became a lesser thing, as did all his own children. Molag Bal said to them: 'You are the sons of liars, dogs, and wolf-headed women.' They have been useless to summon ever since.

The holy one returned at last, Vehk, golden with wisdom. His head found its body had been tenderly used. He mentioned this to Molag Bal, who told him that he should thank the Barons of Move Like This, 'For I have yet to learn how to refine my rapture. My love is accidentally shaped like a spear.'

So Vivec, who had a grain of Ayem's mercy, set about to teach Molag Bal in the ways of belly-magic. They took their spears out and compared them. Vivec bit new words onto the King of Rape's so that it might give more than ruin to the uninitiated. This has since become a forbidden ritual, though people still practice it in secret.

Here is why: The Velothi and demons and monsters that were watching all took out their own spears. There was much biting and the earth became wet. And this was the last laugh of Molag Bal:

‘Watch as the earth shall crack, heavy with so much power, that should have been forever unalike!’

Then that stretch of badlands that had been the site of the marriage fragmented and threw fire. And a race that is no more but that was terrible at the time to behold came forth. Born of the biters, that is all they did, and they ran amok across the lands of Veloth and even to the shores of Red Mountain.

But Vivec made of his spear a more terrible thing, from a secret he had bitten off from the King of Rape. And so he sent Molag Bal tumbling into the crack of the biters and swore forever that he would not deem the King beautiful ever again.

Vivec wept as he slew all those around him with his terrible new spear. He named it MUATRA, which is Milk Taker, and even the Chimeri mystics knew his fury. Anyone struck by Vivec at this time turned barren and withered into bone shapes. The path of bones became a sentence for the stars to read, and the heavens have never known children since. Vivec hunted down the biters one by one, and all their progeny, and he killed them all by means of the Nine Apertures, and the wise still hide theirs from Muatra.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Fifteen

These were the days of Resdaynia, when Chimer and Dwemer lived under the wise and benevolent rule of the AMLSIVI and their champion the Hortator. When the gods of Veloth would retreat unto their own, to mold the cosmos and other matters, the Hortator would at times become confused. Vivec would

always be there to advise him, and this is the third of the three lessons of ruling kings:

‘The ruling king will remove me, his maker. This is the way of all children. His greatest enemy is the Sharmat, who is the false dreamer. You or he is the shingle, Hortator. Beware the wrong walking path. Beware the crime of benevolence. Behold him by his words.’

I AM THE SHARMAT

I AM OLDER THAN MUSIC

WHAT I BRING IS LIGHT

WHAT I BRING IS A STAR

WHAT I BRING IS

AN ANCIENT SEA

WHEN YOU SLEEP YOU SEE ME

DANCING AT THE CORE

IT IS NOT A BLIGHT

IT IS MY HOUSE

I PUT A STAR

INTO THE WORLD’S MOUTH

TO MURDER IT

TEAR DOWN THE PYLONS

MY BLIND FISH

SWIM IN THE NEW

PHLOGISTON

TEAR DOWN THE PYLONS

MY DEAF MOONS

SING AND BURN

AND ORBIT ME

I AM OLDER THAN MUSIC

WHAT I BRING IS LIGHT

WHAT I BRING IS A STAR

WHAT I BRING IS

AN ANCIENT SEA

'You alone, though you come again and again, can unmake him. Whether I allow it is within my wisdom. Go unarmed into his den with these words of power: AE GHARTOK PADHOME [CHIM] AE ALTADOON. Or do not. The temporal myth is man. Reach heaven by violence. This magic I give to you: the world you will rule is only an intermittent hope and you must be the letter written in uncertainty.'

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Sixteen



The Hortator wandered through the Mourning Hold, wrestling with the lessons he had learned. They were slippery in his mind. He could not always keep the words straight and knew that this was a danger. He wandered to find Vivec, his lord and master, the glory of the image of Veloth, and found him of all places in the Temple of False Thinking. There, clockwork shears were taking off Vivec's hair. A beggar king had brought his loom and was making of the hair an incomplete map of adulthood and death.

Nerevar said, 'Why are you doing this, milord?'

Vivec said, 'To make room for the fire.'

And the Hortator could see that Vivec was out of sorts, though not because of the impending new power to come. The golden warrior-poet had been exercising his Water Face as well, learned from the dreughs before he was born.

Nerevar said, 'Is this to keep you from the fire?'

Vivec said, 'It is so that I may see with truth. It, and my place here at the altar of Padhome in the house of False Thinking, serve so that I may see beyond my own secrets. The Water Face cannot lie. It comes from the ocean, which is too busy to think, much less lie. Moving water resembles truth by its trembling.'

Nerevar said, 'I am afraid to become slipshod in my thinking.'

Vivec said, 'Reach heaven by violence then.'

So to quiet his mind the Hortator chose from the Fight Racks an axe. He named it and moved on to the first moon.

There, Nerevar was greeted by the Parliament of Craters, who knew him by title and resented his presence, for he was to be a ruling king of earth and this was the lunar realm. They shifted around him in a pattern of entrapment.

‘The moon does not recognize crowns or scepters,’ they said, ‘nor the representatives of kingdoms below, lion or serpent or mathematician. We are the graves of those that have migrated and become ancient countries. We seek no Queens or thrones. Your appearance is decidedly solar, which is to say a library of stolen ideas. We are neither tear nor sorrow. Our revolution succeeded in the manner that is was written. You are the Hortator and unwelcome here.’

And so Nerevar carved at the grave ghosts until he was out of breath and their Parliament could make no new laws.

He said, ‘I am not of the slaves that perish.’

Of the members of Parliament only a few survived the Hortator’s attack.

A surviving Crater said, ‘Appropriation is nothing new. Everything happens of itself. This motif is by no means unassociated with hero myths. You have not acted with the creative impulse; you fall below the weight of destiny. We are graves but not coffins. Know the difference. You have only dug more and supplied no ghosts to reside within. Central to your claim is the predominance of frail events. To be judged by the earth is to sit on a throne of wonder why. Damage us more and you will find naught but the absence of our dead.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

## The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Seventeen

'I am an atlas of smoke.'

With this, Vivec become greater than he had been. These were the days of Resdaynia, when Chimer and Dwemer lived under the wise and benevolent rule of the AMLSIVI and their champion the Hortator.

'Seek me without effort for I take many shapes.'

The Hortator was still trying to subdue the heavens with an axe. He was thrown out of the library of the sun by the power of Magnus. Vivec found him in a grub field outside of the swamps of the Deshaan Plain. They walked for a span in silence, for Nerevar had been humbled and Vivec still had mercy in his hand.

Soon they were walking across the eastern sea to the land of snakes and snow demons. Vivec wanted to show the Hortator the fighting styles of foreign tongues. They learned the idiom stroke from the pillow book of the Tsaesci king. It is shaped like the insight of this page. The Tsaesci serpents vowed to have their vengeance on the west at least three times.

They walked farther and saw the spiked waters at the edge of the map. Here the spirit of limitation gifted them with a spoke and bade them find the rest of the wheel.

The Hortator said, 'The edge of the world is made of swords.'

Vivec corrected him. 'They are the bottom row of the world's teeth.'

They walked to the north to the Elder Wood and found nothing but frozen bearded kings.

They came to the west where the black men dwelt. For a year they studied under their sword saints and then for another Vivec taught them the virtue of the little reward. Vivec chose a king for a wife and made another race of monsters which ended up destroying the west completely. To a warrior chief Vivec said:

‘We must not act and speak as if asleep.’

Nerevar wondered if there was anything to learn in the south but Vivec remained silent and only led them back to Red Mountain.

‘Here,’ Vivec said, ‘is the last of the last. Within it the Sharmat waits.’

But they both knew that the time was not ready to contest the Sharmat and so they engaged in combat with each other. Vivec marked the Hortator in this way for all of the Velothi to see. He sealed the wound with the blessing of Ayem-Azura. At the end of the battle, the Hortator found that he had gathered seven more spokes. He attempted to attach them and form a staff but Vivec would not let him, saying, ‘It is not the time for that.’

Nerevar said, ‘Where did I find these?’

Vivec said that they had collected them from around the world, though some had come invisibly. ‘I am the wheel,’ he said, and took that shape. Before the emptiness at the center could live too long, Nerevar put in the spokes.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

## The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Eighteen

Now Vivec felt that he had taught the Hortator as much as he could before the war with the Dwemer came. The warrior-poet decided he had to begin his Book of Hours at that point, because the world was about to bend with its age.

Vivec entered the Mourning Hold and announced to Ayem that he was going to fight nine monsters that had escaped the Muatra.

‘I will return,’ he said, ‘to deal the last blow to the grand architect of the Dwemer.’

Ayem said, ‘Out of nine you will find only eight, though they be mighty. The last is already destroyed by your decision to create the Book of Hours.’

Vivec understood that Ayem meant himself.

‘Why,’ she asked, ‘are you in doubt?’

Vivec knew that his doubt made him the sword of the Triune and so he did not feel shame or fear. Instead, he explained and these are the words:

‘Can a member of the Invisible Gate become so archaic that its successor is not so much an improvement of the exact model, but rather a related model that is just needed more because of the currency of the world’s condition? As the Mother, you do not have to worry, unless things in the future are so strange that even Seht cannot understand. Neither does the Executioner or the Fool, but I am neither.’

‘These ideals are not going to change in nature, even though they may change in representation. But, even in the west, the Rainmaker vanishes. No one needs him anymore.

‘Can one oust the model not because the model is set according to an ideal but because it is tied to an ever-changing unconscious mortal agenda?’

This is what was said to Ayem when Vivec was whole. The wise shall not mistake this.

Ayem said, ‘This is why you were born of a netchiman’s wife and destined to merge with the simulacrum of your mother, gilled and blended in all the arts of the star-wounded East, under water and in fire and in metal and in ash, six times the wise, to become the union of male and female, the magic hermaphrodite, the martial axiom, the sex-death of language and unique in all the middle world.’

Vivec knew then why he would record his Book of Hours.

This sermon is forbidden.

In this world and others EIGHTEEN less one (the victor) is the magical disk, hurled to reach heaven by violence.

This sermon is untrue.

The ending of the world is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Nineteen

Vivec put on his armor and stepped into a non-spatial space filling to capacity with mortal interaction and information, a canvas-less cartography of every single mind it has ever

known, an event that had developed some semblance of a divine spark. He said, 'From here I shall launch my attack on the eight monsters.'

Vivec then saw the moths that would come from the starry heart, bringing with them dust more horrible than the ash of Red Mountain. He saw the twin head of a ruling king who had no equivalent. And eight imperfections rubbed into precious stones, set into a crown that looked like shackles, which he understood to be the twin crowns of the two-headed king. And a river that fed into the mouth of the two-headed king, because he contained multitudes.

Vivec then built the Provisional House at the Center of the Secret Door. From here he could watch the age to come. Of the House is written:

Cornerstone one has a finger

Buried under, pointing through

Dirt, slow low in the ground

North cannot be guessed,

And yet it is spirit-free

Cornerstone two has a tongue,

And even dust can be talkative,

Listen and you will see the love

The ancient libraries need

Cornerstone three has a bit of string,

Shaped like your favorite color,  
A girl remembers who left it there  
But she is afraid to dig it out,  
And see what it is attached to  
Cornerstone four has nine bones,  
Removed carefully from a black cat,  
Arranged in the fashion of this word,  
Protecting us from our enemies  
Your house is safe now  
So why is it—  
Your house is safe now  
So why is it—  
The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

### The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty

The first monster was actually two, having been born twice like his mother-father, Vivec. He was not the mightiest of the eight to escape Muatra, but his actions were the most worrisome. He was known as Moon Axle, and he harvested the leftovers foibles of nature. This he did twice, as was said, and the second harvest always brought ruin or unwritten law. His aspect was faceted like a polyhedron.



No perils are mentioned in the finding of Moon Axle, but it was known that he was immune to spears, so Vivec had to use the sword not held against him. Before he took issue with the monster, the warrior-poet asked:

‘How came you to be immune to spears?’

To which Moon Axle replied, ‘Mine is a dual nature, and protean. I am in fact made of many straight lines, though none last too long. In this way I have learned to ignore all true segments.’

Luckily, the sword not held was curved and therefore could cut into Moon Axle, and before the sun was up he was bleeding from many wounds. Vivec did not slay him outright for to do so would to keep the foibles of nature within him and not back where they belonged. Soon Vivec had traced geography right again, and Moon Axle was ready to be slain.

Vivec rose up in his giant-form, to be terrible to look upon. He reached into the west and pulled out a canyon, holding it like a horn. He reached east and ate a handful of nix hounds. Blowing their spirits through the canyon made a terrible wail, not unlike an unsolved woman. He said:

‘Let this overtake you,’ and Moon Axle was overtaken by the curvatures of stolen souls. They wrapped about the monster like resin, until finally he could not move, nor could his dual nature.

Vivec said, ‘Now you are solved,’ and pierced his child with Muatra. Moon Axle had been reduced to something static, and therefore shattered.

The lines of Moon Axle were collected by Velothi philosophers and taken into caves. There, and for a year, Vivec taught the philosophers how to turn the lines of his son into the spokes of mystery wheels. This was the birth of the first Whirling School. Before, there had only been the surface thought of fire.

Vivec looked at his first wheeling students and observed:

‘Alike the egg-layered universe is this morbid possession of three-distant coverage, soul-wrecked and alive, like my name is alive. In this cloister you have discovered one walking path, hilled like a sword but more coarsened. So edged it is that it has to be whispered to keep the tongue from bleeding, where its signs evacuate their former meanings, like empires that tarry too long.

‘The sword is estrangement from statesmanship.

‘Look on the estimable lines of my son, now crafted star-wise, his every limb equidistant from the center. Is he solved because I will it so? There cannot be a second stage. Think on the theory that my existence promulgates the five elements and alike the egg-layered universe I am cause for great density. Here is a thought that can break the wagon’s axle; here is another that can soar.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-One

The Scripture of the Wheel, First:

‘The Spokes are the eight components of chaos, as yet solidified by the law of time: static change, if you will, something the

lizard gods refer to as the Striking. That is the reptile wheel, coiled potential, ever-preamble to the never-action.'

Second:

'They are the lent bones of the Aedra, the Eight gift-limbs to SITHISIT, the wet earth of the new star our home. Outside them is the Aurbis, and not within. Like most things inexplicable, it is a circle. Circles are confused serpents, striking and striking and never given leave to bite. The Aedra would have you believe different, but they were givers before liars. Lies have turned them into biters. Their teeth are the proselytizers; to convert is to place oneself in the mouth of falsehood; even to propitiate is to be swallowed. '

Third:

'The enlightened are those uneaten by the world.'

Fourth:

'The spaces between the gift-limbs number sixteen, the signal shapes of the Demon Princedoms. It is the key and the lock, series and manticore.'

Fifth:

'Look at the majesty sideways and all you see is the Tower, which our ancestors made idols from. Look at its center and all you see is the begotten hole, second serpent, womb-ready for the Right Reaching, exact and without enchantment.'

Sixth:

‘The heart of the second serpent holds the secret triangular gate.’

Seventh:

‘Look at the secret triangular gate sideways and you see the secret Tower.’

Eighth:

‘The secret Tower within the Tower is the shape of the only name of God, I.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-Two

Then Vivec left the first Whirling School and went back to the space that was not a space. From the Provisional House he looked into the middle world to find the second monster, which was called the Treasure Wood Sword. Within years of the Pomegranate Banquet, it had become a lessoning tune to the lower Velothi houses. They preached of its power:

‘The Treasure Wood Sword, splinter scintilla of the high and glorious! He who wields it becomes self-known!’

The warrior-poet appeared as a visitation in the ancestor alcove of House Mora, whose rose-worn prince of garlands was a hero against the northern demons. Vivec congregated with the bones. He said:

‘A scavenger cannot acquire a silk sash and expect to discover the greater systems of its predecessor: perfect happiness is embraced only by the weeping. Give me back (and do so freely)

what is barren of my marriage and I will not erase you from the thought realm of God. Your line has a notable enchantress that my sister Ayem is fond of and from her murky wisdom alone do I condescend to ask.'

A bone-walker emerged from a wall. It had three precious stones set in its lower jaw, a magical practice of old. One was opal, the color of opal. The bone-walker bowed to the prince of the middle air and said:

'The Treasure Wood Sword will not leave our house. Bargains were made with the Black Hands Mephala, the greater shade.'

Vivec kissed the first precious stone and said:

'Animal picture, rude-walker, go back to the lamp that stays lit in water and store no more messages of useless noise. Down.'

He kissed the second precious stone and said:

'Proud residue, soon dispersed, serve no guarantees made in my fore-image and demand nothing of its under-skin. I am master evermore. Down.'

He kissed the opal and said:

'Down I take thee.'

And then Vivec withdrew into the hidden places and found the darkest mothers of the Morag Tong, taking them all to wife and filling them with undusted loyalty that tasted of summer salt. They became as black queens, screaming live with a hundred murderous sons, a thousand murderous arms, and a hundred thousand murderous hands, one vast moving event of thrusting-kill-laughter in alleys, palaces, workshops, cities and

secret halls. Their movements among the holdings of the Ra'athim were as rippled endings, heaving between times, with all fates leading to swallowed knives, murder as moaning, God's holy rape-erasure of wet death.

The King of Assassins presented to Vivec the Treasure Wood Sword.

'Milord,' the King of Assassins said. 'The prince of House Mora is now fond of you, as well. I placed him in the Corner of Dagon. His eyes I set into a fire prayer for the wicked. His mouth I stuffed with birds.'

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-Three

The Scripture of the Sword, First:

'The sword, treated as a delicate meal, is the Symbolic Collage. It serves you well in the first half of life. Name one dynasty that knows this not.'

Second:

'The unity of my approach is understood by the immobile warrior. True eyes are acquired. Rejoice as my own subjects and realms. I build for you a city of swords, by which I mean laws that cut the people who live there into better shapes.'

Third:

'Girls burn their dresses on my arrival if I am armored. They crawl to me as bled pilgrims. Minor spirits die without trace.'

Follow me of all the ALMSIVI if you are to mark your days with killing. AE ALTADOON, the third law of weaponry.'

Fourth:

'The immobile warrior is never fatigued. He cuts sleep holes in the middle of a battle to regain his strength.'

Fifth:

'Instinct is not reflex action, but mini-miracles held in reserve. I am the welfare that decides which warrior will emerge. Beg not for luck. Serve me to win.'

Sixth:

'The span of the apparently inactivated is your love of the absolute. The birth of God from the netchiman's wife is the abortion of kindness from love.'

Seventh:

'The true sword is able to cut chains of generations, which is to say, the creation myths of your enemies. Look on me as the exiled garden. All else is uncut weed.'

Eighth:

'I give you an ancient road tempered by the second walking way. Your hands must be huge to wield any sword the size of an ancient road, and yet he who is of right stature may irritate the sun with only a stick.'

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-Four

Then Vivec left the house of assassins and went back to the space that was not a space. From the Provisional House he looked into the middle world to find the third monster, called Horde Mountain. It was made of modular warriors running free but spaced according to pattern, and from the highest warrior who could cut clouds they spread out beneath him like a tree, a skirt whose bottom circle was an army that ran through the ash.

Vivec admired the cone-shape of his child and remembered with joy the whirlwind of fighting styles that instructed him during the days before life.

Vivec moved into Veloth, saying, 'Onus.'

But before he could even get within sword-span of the monster, a trio of lower houses had trapped Horde Mountain in a net of doubtful doctrine. When they saw their lord, the Velothi cheered.

'We are happy to serve you and win!' they said.

Vivec smiled at those brave souls around him and summoned celebration demons to cleave unto the victors. There was a great display of love and duty around the netted monster, and Vivec was at the center with a headdress made of mating bones. He laughed and told mystical jokes and made the heads of the three houses marry and become a new order.

'You shall forever be now my Buoyant Armigers,' he said.

Then Vivec pierced Horde Mountain with Muatra and made of it all a big bag of bones. At the touch of his right hand the net became right scripture and he threw it all northeasterly. The



contents spread out like sugar-glow and Vivec and the Buoyant Armigers ran under it laughing.

Finally the bones of Horde Mountain landed and became the foundation stones for the City of Swords, which Vivec named after his own sigil, and the net fell across it all and between, or became as bridges between bones, and since its segments had been touched by his holy wisdom they became the most perfect of all city streets in the known worlds.

Throngs of Velothi came to the new city and Ayem and Seht gave it their blessing. The streets were filled with laughter and love and the strength of tree-shaped enemy children.

Ayem said:

‘To my sister-brother’s city I give the holy protection of House Indoril, whose powers and thrones know no equal under heaven, wherefrom came the Hortator.’

Seht said:

‘To my sister-brother’s city I give safe passage through the dark corners still left of Molag Bal, and I give it this spell as well: SO-T-HA SIL, which is my name to the mighty. It will protect the lost unless their flight is on purpose and fill all the roads and alleys with the mystery paths of civilization, and give the city a mind and make of it a conduit to the full concentrate of the ALMSIVI.’

Thus was founded the city of Vivec in the days of Resdaynia.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-Five

## The Scripture of the City:

'All cities are born of solid light. Such is my city, his city.

'But then the light subsides, revealing the bright and terrible angel of Veloth. He is in his pre-chimerical form, demonic VEHK, gaunt and pale and beautiful, skin stretched painfully thin on bird's bones, feathered serpents encircling his arms. His wings are spread out behind him, their red and yellow ends like razors in the sun. The wispy mass of his fire hair floats as if underwater, milky in the nimbus of light that crowns his head. His presence is undeniable, the awe too much to bear.

'This is God's city, different from others. Cities from foreign countries put their denizens to sleep and walk to the star-wounded East to pay homage to me. The capital of the northern men, crusty with eon's ice, bows before Vivec the city, me it together.

'Self-thought streets rush through tunnel blood. I have rebuilt myself. Hyper eyed signposts along my traffic arm, soon to be an inner sea. My body is crawling with all gathered to see me rising up like a monolithic instrument of pleasure. My spine is the main road to the city that I am. Countless transactions are taking place in veins and catwalks and the roaming, roaming, roaming, as they roam over and through and add to me. There are temples erected along the hollow of my skull and I will ever wear them as a crown. Walk across the lips of God.

'They add new doors to me and I become effortlessly trans-immortal with the comings and goings and the stride-heat of the market where I am traded for, yell of the children hear them play, scoffed at, amused, desired, paid for in native coin, new minted with my face on one side and my city-body on the

other. I stare with each new window. Soon I am a million-eyed insect dreaming.

'Red-sparking war trumpets sound like cattle in the ribcage of shuffling transit. The heretics are destroyed on the plaza knees. I flood over into the hills, houses rising like a rash, and I never scratch. Cities are the antidotes to hunting.

'I raise lanterns to light my hollows, lend wax to the thousands the candlesticks that bear my name again and again, the name innumerable, shutting in, mantra and priest, god-city, filling every corner with the naming name, wheeled, circling, running river language giggling with footfalls mating, selling, stealing, searching, and worry not ye who walk with me. This is the flowering scheme of the Aurbis. This is the promise of the PSJJJ: egg, image, man, god, city, state. I serve and am served. I am made of wire and string and mortar and I accede my own precedent, world without am.'

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-Six

Then Vivec left his architectural rapture and went back to the space that was not a space. From the Provisional House he looked into the middle world to find the fourth monster, called The Pocket Cabal.

The monster hid itself in the spell-lists of the great Chimeri wizards of the extreme east, where the Emperor Parasols grow wild. Vivec disguised himself as a simple traveler, but radiated a tenuous sense-fabric so that the wizards would seek him out. Of Muatra he made a simple walking dwarf.

Before long the invisible one was among the libraries of the east, feeding the essential words of The Pocket Cabal to his walking dwarf and then running when the magic would fail. After a year or two of this thievery, Muatra was sick to its stomach, and the walking dwarf exploded near the slave pens of a wizard's tower. The Pocket Cabal then slipped itself into the mouths of the slaves and hid again.

Vivec then watched as the slaves erupted into babble and breaking magic. They rattled their cages and sung out half-hymns that formed into forbidden and arcane knowledge. Litany fiends appeared and drank from the excess. Grabbers from the Adjacent Place came into the world sideways, the slave talking having disrupted the normal non-cardinal points.

So of course a giant bug appeared, with the greatest eastern wizard inside it. He could see past Vivec's disguise and knew of the warrior-poet's divinity but he thought himself so powerful that he talked harshly:

'See what you have wrought, silly Triune! Columns of nonsense and litany fiends! I cannot believe how reason or temperance can be made whole again due to your eating, eating, eating! Consort with more demons, why don't you?'

Vivec stabbed the wizard through his soul.

The giant bug harness fell on the slave cages and the slaves ran about free and reckless, too reckless more with pregnant words. Colors bent into the earth. Vivec created a dome-head demon to contain it all.

'The Pocket Cabal is therefore interred here forever. Let this be a cursed land where sorcery is broken and maligned.'

Then he picked up Muatra by the beard and left the ghostly hemisphere of the dome-head demon. On its boundaries, Vivec placed a warning and a song of entrance that contained errors in it. With mock bones of half-dead Muatra he created the tent poles of a fortress-theory and fatal languages were imprisoned for all time.

Seht appeared and looked on what his brother-sister had created. The Clockwork King said:

‘Of the eight monsters, this is the most confusing. May I treasure it?’

Vivec gave Seht leave to do so, but told him never to release The Pocket Cabal into the middle world. He said:

‘I have hidden secrets in my travels here and made a likeness of Muatra to ward against the unwise. Under this dome, the temporal myth is no longer man.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-Seven

The Scripture of the Word, First:

‘All language is based on meat. Do not let the sophists fool you.’

Second:

‘The third walking path explores hysteria without fear. The efforts of madmen are a society of itself, but only if they are written. The wise may substitute one law for another, even into incoherence, and still say he is working within a method. This is true of speech and extends to all scripture.’

Third:

‘Do not go to the realm of apology for absolution. Beyond articulation, there is no fault. The Adjacent Place, where the Grabbers live, is the illusion of the vocal or the middle realms of thought, by which I mean the constructed. This is how I stole the certainty of the Chancellor of Exactitude, perfect to look upon from every angle. When you come out of the vocal, you can never be certain.’

Fourth:

‘The truest body of work is made up of silence: as in the silence that results from no reference. By the word I mean the dead.’

Fifth:

‘The first meaning is always hidden.’

Sixth:

‘The realm of apology is perfection and impossible to attack. Thus, the wise avoid it. Trinity in unity is the world and word of action: the third walking path.’

Seventh:

‘The sage who suppresses his best aphorism: cut off his hands, for he is a thief.’

Eighth:

‘The clothes of the broken map are worn only by fools and heretics. The map is an exit for laziness. It is the dusty tongue,

which is to say the given chart that most take as a story that is complete. No word is true until it is eaten.'

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-Eight

Then Vivec left Seht to look after the dome-head demon and went back to the space that was not a space. From the Provisional House he looked into the middle world to find the fifth monster, called The Ruddy Man.

When the dreughs ruled the world, the Daedroth Prince Molag Bal had been their chief. He took a different shape then, spiny and armored and made for the sea. Vivec, in giving birth to the many spawn of his marriage, had dropped an old image of Molag Bal into the world: a dead carapace of memory. It would not have been a monster if a Velothi child had not wanted to impress his village by wearing it.

The Ruddy Man, of the eight monsters, was the least complicated. He made those who wore him into mighty killers and nothing more. He existed in the physical. Only geography makes him special.

When Vivec found him near the boy's village, anon Gnosis, there was a violent clash of arms and an upheaval of the earth. Their battle created the West Gash. Wanderers that still go there hear still the sounds of it: sword across the crust, the grunt of God, the snapping of his monster child's splintered legs.

After his victory, Vivec took the shell of The Ruddy Man to the dreughs that had modified his mother. The Queen of Dreughs,

whose name is not easy to spell, was in a period of self-incubation. Her wardens took the gift from Vivec and promised to guard it from the surface world. This is the first account of dreughs being liars.

In ten years, The Ruddy Man appeared again, this time near Tear, worn by a wayward shaman who followed the House of Troubles. Instead of guarding it, the dreughs had imbued the living armor with mythic inflexibility. It molted soon after skill-draping the shaman and stretched his bones to the five corners.

When Vivec met the monster in battle again he saw the remains of three villages dripping from its feet. He took on his giant form and slew The Ruddy Man by way of the Symbolic Collage. Since he no longer trusted the Altmer of the sea, Vivec gave the carapace of the monster to the devout and loyal mystics of the Number Room. He told them:

‘You may make of The Ruddy Man a philosopher’s armor.’

The mystics began by wrapping one of their sages in the shells, a series of flourishes by two supra numerates, one hormonally tall and the other just under his arms. They ran around the carapace and through each other, applying holy resin drawn from the carcasses of the now-useless numbers between twelve and thirteen. Golden straws were quickly stuck through the mythic epidermal so the sage could breathe. After the ceremonial etchings were drawn into hardening resin, long lists of dead names and equations whose solutions were to be found in the mouth of the Chimer inside, there came the illuminations, inscribed by the bright, terrible fingernail of Vivec. From the nail’s tip flowed a searing liquid, filling the grooves of the ceremonial etchings. They bled out to form



veined patterns about the sage-shell that theologians would decipher forever after.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Twenty-Nine

The Scripture of the Numbers:

1. The Dragon Break, or the Tower. 1
2. The Enantiomorph. 68
3. The Invisible Gate, ALMSIVI. 112
4. The Corners of House of Troubles. 242
5. The Corners of the World. 100
6. The Walking Ways. 266
7. The Sword at the Center. 39
8. The Wheel, or the Eight Givers. 484
9. The Missing. 11
10. The Tribes of the Altmer. 140
11. The Number of the Master. 102
12. The Heavens. 379
13. The Serpent. 36
14. The King's Cough. 32

15. The Redeeming Force. 110
16. The Acceptable Blasphemes. 12
17. The Hurling Disk. 283
18. The Egg, or Six Times the Wise.
19. The Provisional House. 258
20. The Lunar Lattice. 425
21. The Womb. 13
22. Unknown. 453
23. The Hollow Prophet. 54
24. The Star Wound. 44
25. The Emperor. 239
26. The Rogue Plane. 81
27. The Secret Fire. 120
28. The Drowned Lamp. 8
29. The Captive Sage. 217
30. The Scarab. 10
31. The Listening Frame. 473
32. The False Call. 7
33. The Anticipations. 234

34. The Lawless Grammar. 2

35. The Prison-Shirt. 191

36. The Hours. 364

‘The presence of deaf witness, this is what the numbers are. They hang onto the Aurbis as the last nostalgia of their godhood. The effigies of numbers are their current applications; this is folly, as above. To be affixed to a symbol is too, too certain.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Thirty

Then Vivec left the mystics of the Number Room and went back to the space that was not a space. From the Provisional House he looked into the middle world to find the sixth monster, called City-Face. He was vexed when he could not find it and went back to the Mourning Hold in secret anger, killing a mystic that asked about higher order.

Nerevar, the Hortator, witnessed this and said, ‘Why do this, milord? The mystics look to you for guidance. They work to make your temple better stoned.’

Vivec said, ‘No one knows what I am.’

The Hortator nodded and went back to his studies.

Here is how City-Face hid from his mother-father: it had been born named as Ha-Note, a bare urge of power, an esoteric wind nerve tuned to the frequency of huddled masses. It found root in villages and multiplied, finding in the minds of the settled a

veiled astrology, the star charts of culture, and this resonance made its head swim. Ha-Note moved sideways into the Adjacent Place, growing and unbeknownst. Above the vocal, it trembled with new emotions, immortal ones, absorbing more than the thirty known to exist in the middle world. When Ha-Note became gravely homesick, the Grabbers took it.

A Grabber said, 'New emotions to the lonely occur only of madness. This thing is gone. It is ours now.'

Grabbers had never made a city of their own, and their glimpse of Vivec's, which shone with holiness through all the spheres, had taken their attention.

'Under this reason did the issue of Vehk slide into our realm, drawn by our coveting, hidden in loss. We shall build our tower-hope upon its face.'

Now many years had passed in Resdaynia, and the high priests of the Dwemer were building something alike as Vivec and alike as the new Ha-Note of the Grabbers. The Hortator was engaged with an army of theirs that had become too brave, talking foolish words, and Nerevar helped destroy them with the help of the orphan legion of Ayem. When he went to give trophy to Vivec, he saw his lord under attack by the City-Face. The monster was saying this:

'Here we are to replace your city, Vehk and Vehk. We are from the place of the more-than-known emotions, and our citizenry has died from it. Two things we came for, but can stay for only one. Either we ask you to correct our error of culture, or merely take yours by dint of force. The second is easiest, we think.'

Vivec sighed.

‘You would replace my direction,’ he said. ‘I weary of this, though I wanted to kill you an age before. Resdaynia is fallen ill, and I have no time for one more imaginary analogy of an unknown incident. Here, take this.’

At which he touched the tower-hope of the City-Face and corrected the error of the Grabbers.

‘And this.’

At which he stabbed the heart of the City-Face with the Ethos Knife, which is to say RKHT AI AE ALTADOON AI, the short blade of proper commerce.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Thirty-One

Many more years passed in Resdaynia, and the high priests of the Dwemer were almost ready to make war on the rulers of Veloth. The Hortator had become the husband of Ayem during this time, and the first saint of the Triune way. Vivec had tired of fighting his sons and daughters, and so took a respite from trying to find them.

The Hortator said to his wife, ‘Where is Vivec, my teacher? I love him still, though he grows cold. His lamentations, if I may call them that, have changed the skin of the whole country. He is hardly to be found anywhere in Veloth of late. The people grow dark because of it.’

And Ayem took mercy on her troubled husband and told him that the sword of the Triune had been fighting minor monsters stirred up by the Dwemer as they worked on their brass siege

machines. She took the Hortator inside her and showed him where his master was.

ALMSIVI, or at least that aspect that chose to be Vivec, sat in the Litany Hall of the False Thinking Temple after his battle with the Flute-and-Pipe Ogres of the West Gash. He began writing, again, in his Book of Hours. He had to put on his Water Face first. That way he could separate the bronze of the Old Temple from the blue of the New and write with happiness. Second, he had to take another feather from the Big Moon, further rendering it dead. That way he could write about mortals with truth. Third, he recalled the Pomegranate Banquet, where he was forced to marry to Molag Bal with wet scriptures to cement his likeness as Mephala and write with black hands. He wrote:

The last time I heard his voice, showing the slightest sign of impatience, I learned to control myself and submit to the will of others. Afterwards, I dared to take on the sacred fire and realized there was no equilibrium with the ET'ADA. They were liars, lost roots, and the most I can do is to be an interpreter into the rational. Even that fails the needs of the people. I sit on the mercy seat and pass judgment, the waking state, and the phase aspect of the innate urge. Only here can I doubt, in this book, written in water, broadened to include evil.

Then Vivec threw his ink on this passage to cover it up (for the lay reader) and wrote instead:

Find me in the blackened paper, unarmored, in final scenery. Truth is like my husband: instructed to smash, filled with procedure and noise, hammering, weighty, heaviness made schematic, lessons learned only by a mace. Let those that hear me then be buffeted, and let some die in the ash from the

striking. Let those that find him find him murdered by illumination, pummeled like a traitorous house, because, if an hour is golden, then immortal I am a secret code. I am the partaker of the Doom Drum, chosen of all those that dwell in the middle world to wear this crown, which reverberates with truth, and I am the mangling messiah.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Thirty-Two

The Scripture of the Mace, First:

‘The pleasure of annihilation is the pleasure of disappearing into the unreal. All those that would challenge the sleeping world will seek membership in this movement. I denounce the alienation of the Cloven Duality with a hammer.’

Second:

‘Take from me the lessons as a punishment for being mortal. To be made of dirt is to be treated as such by your jailers. This is the key and the lock of the Daedra. Why do you think they escaped the compromise?’

Third:

‘Velothi, your skin has become the pregnant darkness. My brooding has brought this on. Remember that Boethiah asked you to become the color of bruise. How else to show yourselves people of the exodus into the vital: pain?’

Fourth:

‘The sage who is not an anvil: a conventional sentence and nothing more. By which I mean dead, the fourth walking way.’

Fifth:

‘A proper comprehension of the virtues: stage-managed and to be murdered.’

Sixth:

‘In the end, rejoice as a hostage released from drumming torment but that savors his wound. The drum breaks and you find it to be a nest of hornets, which is to say: your sleep is over.’

Seventh:

‘The suspicious is spectacle and the lie is only a theoretical inspiration.’

Eighth:

‘But then why, you ask, do the Daedra wish to meddle with the Aurbis? It is because they are the radical critique, essential as all martyrs. That some are more evil than others in not an illusion. Or rather, it is a necessary illusion.’

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Thirty-Three

Then Vivec left the Litany Hall of the False Thinking Temple, where he had brooded for so long creating the scripture of the pounding light, and went back to the space that was not a space. From the Provisional House he looked into the middle world to find the seventh monster, called Lie Rock.



Lie Rock was born of Vivec's Second Aperture and was thrown out of the Pomegranate Banquet by a member of the Sweeps, another forgotten guild. The Sweep did not take it for the monster that it was and so he did not expect it to fly from his hand and into the heavens.

'I am born of golden wisdom and powers that should have forever been unlike! With this nature I am invited into the Hidden Heaven!'

By which he meant the Scaled Blanket, made of not-stars, whose number is thirteen. Lie Rock became full of foolishness, haggling with the Void Ghost who hides in the religions of all men. The Void Ghost said:

'Stay with me a full hundred years and I will give you a power that no divinity will dare disobey.'

But before the hundred years was up, Vivec was already looking for Lie Rock and found him.

'Stupid stone,' Vivec said. 'To hide in the Scaled Blanket is to make a mark on nothing. His bargains are only for ruling kings!'

So Vivec sent the Hortator to the heavens to shave Lie Rock asunder by the named axe. Nerevar made peace with the south-pole-star of thieving and the north-pole-star of warriors and the third-pole-star, which existed only in the ether, which was governed by the apprentice of Magnus the sun. They gave him leave to wander among their charges and gave him red sight by which to find Lie Rock in the Hidden Heaven.

By chance, Nerevar met the Void Ghost first, who told him that he was in the wrong place to which the Hortator said, 'Me or you?' and the Void Ghost said both. This sermon does not tell what else was said between these masters.

Lie Rock, however, used the confusion to launch his own attack on the city-god, Vivec. He was hastened by all three of the black guardians, who wanted him swiftly gone, though they meant no hostility to the lord of the middle air.

The citizenry of Vivec screamed as they saw a shooting star come down out of the sky hole like a toll-road of hell. But Vivec merely raised his hand and froze Lie Rock just above the city and then he pierced the monster with Muatra.

(The practice of piercing the Second Aperture is now forbidden.)

When Nerevar returned, he saw the frozen comet above his lord's city. He asked whether or not Vivec wanted it removed.

'I would have done so myself if I wanted, silly Hortator. I shall keep it there with its last intention intact, so that if the love of the people of this city for me ever disappear, so shall the power that holds back their destruction.'

Nerevar said, 'Love is under your will only.'

Vivec smiled and told the Hortator that he had become a Minister of Truth.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Thirty-Four

Then Vivec left the Ministry of Truth and went back to the space that was not a space. From the Provisional House he looked into the middle world to find the eighth and final and mightiest monster, called GULGA MOR JIL and more. The wise must look elsewhere for this string of power.

Vivec called to his side the Hortator and this was the first time that Nerevar had ever been to the Provisional House. He had the same vision that Vivec had so many years ago: that of the two-headed ruling king.

‘Who is that?’ he wondered.

Vivec said, ‘The red jewel of conquest.’

Nerevar, perhaps because he was frightened, became vexed at his lord’s answer. ‘Why are you always so evasive?’

Vivec told the Hortator that to be otherwise was to betray his nature.

Together they moved into the middle world, to a village near where Vivec had been found by Ayem and Seht. The eighth monster was there, but he did not act much like a monster. He sat with his legs in the ocean and with a troubled look on his face. When he saw his mother-father, he asked why he should have to die and return to oblivion.

Vivec told the eighth monster that to be otherwise was to betray his nature. Since this did not seem to satisfy the monster and Vivec still had a touch of Ayem’s mercy he said:

‘The fire is mine: let it consume thee,

And make a secret door

At the altar of Padhome,  
In the House of Boet-hi-Ah  
Where we become safe  
And looked after.'

The monster accepted Muatra with a peaceful look and his bones became the foundation for the City of the Dead, anon Narsis.

Nerevar put away his axe, which he had at the ready, and frowned.

'Why,' he said, 'did you ask me to come if you knew the eighth monster would give in so easily?'

Vivec looked at the Hortator for a long time.

Nerevar understood. 'Do not betray your nature. Answer as you will.'

Vivec said, 'I brought you here because I knew the mightiest of my issue would succumb to Muatra without argument, if only I gave him consolation first.'

Nerevar looked at Vivec for a long time.

Vivec understood. 'Say the words, Hortator.'

Nerevar said, 'Now I am the mightiest of your children.'

Let this sermon be consolation to those who read it that are destined to die.

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Thirty-Five

The Scripture of Love:

‘The formulas of proper Velothi magic continue in ancient tradition, but that virility is dead, by which I mean at least replaced. Truth owes its medicinal nature to the establishment of the myth of justice. Its curative properties it likewise owes to the concept of sacrifice. Princes, chiefs, and angels all subscribe to the same notion. This is a view primarily based on a prolific abolition of an implied profanity, seen in ceremonies, knife fighting, hunting, and the exploration of the poetic. On the ritual of occasions, which comes to us from the days of the cave glow, I can say nothing more than to loosen your equation of moods to lunar currency. Later, and by that I mean much, much later, my reign will be seen as an act of the highest love, which is a return from the astral destiny and the marriages between. By that I mean the catastrophes, which will come from all five corners. Subsequent are the revisions, differentiated between hope and the distraught, situations that are only required by the periodic death of the immutable. Cosmic time is repeated: I wrote of this in an earlier life. An imitation of submersion is love’s premonition, its folly into the underworld, by which I mean the day you will read about outside of yourself in an age of gold. For on that day, which is a shadow of the sacrificial concept, all history is obliged to see me for what you are: in love with evil. To keep one’s powers intact at such a stage is to allow for the existence of what can only be called a continual spirit. Make of your love a defense against the horizon. Pure existence is only granted to the holy, which comes in a myriad of forms, half of them frightening

and the other half divided into equal parts purposeless and assured. Late is the lover that comes to this by any other walking way than the fifth, which is the number of the limit of this world. The lover is the highest country and a series of beliefs. He is the sacred city bereft of a double. The uncultivated land of monsters is the rule. This is clearly attested by ANU and his double, which love knows never really happened. Similarly, all the other symbols of absolute reality are ancient ideas ready for their graves, or at least the essence of such. This scripture is directly ordered by the codes of Mephala, the origin of sex and murder, defeated only by those who take up those ideas without my intervention. The religious elite is not a tendency or a correlation. They are dogma complemented by the influence of the untrustworthy sea and the governance of the stars, dominated at the center by the sword, which is nothing without a victim to cleave unto. This is the love of God and he would show you more: predatory but at the same time instrumental to the will of critical harvest, a scenario by which one becomes as he is, of male and female, the magic hermaphrodite. Mark the norms of violence and it barely registers, suspended as it is by treaties written between the original spirits. This should be seen as an opportunity, and in no way tedious, though some will give up for it is easier to kiss the lover than become one. The lower regions crawl with these souls, caves of shallow treasures, meeting in places to testify by way of extension, when love is only satisfied by a considerable (incalculable) effort.'

The ending of the words is ALMSIVI.

The Thirty-Six Lessons of Vivec: Sermon Thirty-Six

For these were the days of Resdaynia, when Chimer and Dwemer lived under the wise and benevolent rule of the AMLSIVI and their champion the Hortator, though the Dwemer had become foolish and challenged their masters.

Out of their fortresses they came with golden ballistae that walked and mighty atronachs and things that spat flame and things that made killing songs. Their king was Dumac Dwarf-Orc, but their high priest was Kagrenac the Blighter.

### Golden Ballista

Under mountains and over them the war with the Dwemer was raged, and then came the northern men to help Kagrenac and they brought Ysmir again.

Leading the armies of the Chimer was the slave that would not perish, the Hortator Nerevar, who had traded his axe for the Ethos Knife. He slew Dumac at Red Mountain and saw the heart bone for the first time.

Men of brass destroyed the eleven gates of the Mourning Hold and behind them came the Dwemeri architects of tone. Ayem threw down her cloak and became the Face-Snaked Queen of the Three in One. Those that looked upon her were overcome by the meanings of the stars.

Under the sea, Seht stirred and brought the army he had been working on in the castles of glass and coral. Clockwork dreughs, mockeries of the Dwemeri war machines, rose up from the seas and took their counterparts back beneath, where they were swallowed forever by the sea.

Red Mountain exploded as the Hortator went too far inside, seeking the Sharmat.

Dwemeri high priest Kagrenac then revealed that which he had built in the image of Vivec. It was a walking star, which burnt the armies of the Triune and destroyed the heartland of Veloth, creating the Inner Sea.

Each of the aspects of the ALMSIVI then rose up together, combining as one, and showed the world the sixth path. Ayem took from the star its fire, Seht took from it its mystery, and Vehk took from it its feet, which had been constructed before the gift of Molag Bal and destroyed in the manner of truth: by a great hammering. When the soul of the Dwemer could walk no more, they were removed from this world.

Resdaynia was no more. It had been redeemed of all the iniquities of the foolish. The ALMSIVI drew nets from the Beginning Place and captured the ash of Red Mountain, which they knew was the Blight of the Dwemer and that would serve only to infect the whole of the middle world, and ate it.

ALTADOON DUNMERI!

The beginning of the words is ALMSIVI. I give you this as Vivec.



# A Brief History Of The Empire

*Stronach k'Thojj III*

Xan's note: There is a mistake in this document. Pelagius IV reigned for 29 years, not 49. This has been confirmed by Ted "Teddars" Peterson.

Good catch everyone.

Scribe's error. Pelagius IV reigned for 29 years, not 49. Stronach noticed this some time ago to his embarrassment, and the newest edition of A Brief History will correct this.

Thus:

Pelagius IV's reign - 339 to 368

Uriel VII's reign - 368 to today

Jagar Tharn took over for ten years 21 years into Uriel VII's reign, as stated.

Before the rule of Tiber Septim, all Tamriel was in chaos. The poet Tracizis called that period of continuous unrest "days and nights of blood and venom." The kings were a petty lot of grasping tyrants, who fought Tiber's attempts to bring order to the land. But they were as disorganized as they were dissolute, and the strong hand of Septim brought peace forcibly to Tamriel. The year was 2E 896. The following year, the Emperor

declared the beginning of a new Era-thus began the Third Era, Year Aught.

For thirty-eight years, the Emperor Tiber reigned supreme. It was a lawful, pious, and glorious age, when justice was known to one and all, from serf to sovereign. On Tiber's death, it rained for an entire fortnight as if the land of Tamriel itself was weeping.

The Emperor's grandson, Pelagius, came to the throne. Though his reign was short, he was as strong and resolute as his father had been, and Tamriel could have enjoyed a continuation of the Golden Age. Alas, an unknown enemy of the Septim Family hired that accursed organization of cutthroats, the Dark Brotherhood, to kill the Emperor Pelagius I as he knelt at prayer at the Temple of the One in the Imperial City. Pelagius I's reign lasted less than three years.

Pelagius had no living children, so the Crown Imperial passed to his first cousin, the daughter of Tiber's brother Agnorith. Kintyra, former Queen of Silvenar, assumed the throne as Kintyra I. Her reign was blessed with prosperity and good harvests, and she herself was an avid patroness of art, music, and dance.

Kintyra's son was crowned after her death, the first Emperor of Tamriel to use the imperial name Uriel. Uriel I was the great lawmaker of the Septim Dynasty, and a promoter of independent organizations and guilds. Under his kind but firm hand, the Fighters Guild and the Mages Guild increased in prominence throughout Tamriel. His son and successor Uriel II reigned for eighteen years, from the death of Uriel I in 3E64 to Pelagius II's accession in 3E82. Tragically, the rule of Uriel II was cursed with blights, plagues, and insurrections. The

tenderness he inherited from his father did not serve Tamriel well, and little justice was done.

Pelagius II inherited not only the throne from his father, but the debt from the latter's poor financial and judicial management. Pelagius dismissed all of the Elder Council, and allowed only those willing to pay great sums to resume their seats. He encouraged similar acts among his vassals, the kings of Tamriel, and by the end of his seventeen year reign, Tamriel had returned to prosperity. His critics, however, have suggested that any advisor possessed of wisdom but not of gold had been summarily ousted by Pelagius. This may have led to some of the troubles his son Antiochus faced when he in turn became Emperor.

Antiochus was certainly one of the more flamboyant members of the usually austere Septim Family. He had numerous mistresses and nearly as many wives, and was renowned for the grandeur of his dress and his high good humor. Unfortunately, his reign was rife with civil war, surpassing even that of his grandfather Uriel II. The War of the Isle in 3E110, twelve years after Antiochus assumed the throne, nearly took the province of Summurset Isle away from Tamriel. The united alliance of the kings of Summurset and Antiochus only managed to defeat King Orghum of the island-kingdom of Pyandonea due to a freak storm. Legend credits the Psijic Order of the Isle of Artaeum with the sorcery behind the tempest.

The story of Kintyra II, heiress to her father Antiochus' throne, is certainly one of the saddest tales in imperial history. Her first cousin Uriel, son of Queen Potema of Solitude, accused Kintyra of being a bastard, alluding to the infamous decadence of the Imperial City during her father's reign. When this accusation

failed to stop her coronation, Uriel bought the support of several disgruntled kings of High Rock, Skyrim, and Morrowind, and with Queen Potema's assistance, he coordinated three attacks on the Septim Empire.

The first attack occurred in the Iliac Bay region, which separates High Rock and Hammerfell. Kintyra's entourage was massacred and the Empress taken captive. For two years, Kintyra II languished in an Imperial prison believed to be somewhere in Glenpoint or Glenmoril before she was slain in her cell under mysterious circumstances. The second attack was on a series of Imperial garrisons along the coastal Morrowind islands. The Empress' consort Kontin Arynxx fell defending the forts. The third and final attack was a siege of the Imperial City itself, occurring after the Elder Council had split up the army to attack western High Rock and eastern Morrowind. The weakened government had little defence against Uriel's determined aggression, and capitulated after only a fortnight of resistance. Uriel took the throne that same evening and proclaimed himself Uriel III, Emperor of Tamriel. The year was 3E 121. Thus began the War of the Red Diamond, described in Volume II of this series.

Volume I of this series described in brief the lives of the first eight Emperors of the Septim Dynasty, beginning with the glorious Tiber Septim and ending with his great, great, great, great, grandniece Kintyra II. Kintyra's murder in Glenpoint while in captivity is considered by some to be the end of the pure strain of Septim blood in the imperial family. Certainly it marks the end of something significant.

Uriel III not only proclaimed himself Emperor of Tamriel, but also Uriel Septim III, taking the eminent surname as a title. In

truth, his surname was Mantiarco from his father's line. In time, Uriel III was deposed and his crimes reviled, but the tradition of taking the name Septim as a title for the Emperor of Tamriel did not die with him.

For six years, the War of the Red Diamond (which takes its name from the Septim Family's famous badge) tore the Empire apart. The combatants were the three surviving children of Pelagius II-Potema, Cephorus, and Magnus-and their various offspring. Potema, of course, supported her son Uriel III, and had the combined support of all of Skyrim and northern Morrowind. With the efforts of Cephorus and Magnus, however, the province of High Rock turned coat. The provinces of Hammerfell, Summurset Isle, Valenwood, Elsweyr, and Black Marsh were divided in their loyalty, but most kings supported Cephorus and Magnus.

In 3E127, Uriel III was captured at the Battle of Ichidag in Hammerfell. En route to his trial in the Imperial City, a mob overtook his prisoner's carriage and burned him alive within it. His captor and uncle continued on to the Imperial City, and by common acclaim was proclaimed Cephorus I, Emperor of Tamriel.

Cephorus' reign was marked by nothing but war. By all accounts, he was a kind and intelligent man, but what Tamriel needed was a great warrior—and he, fortunately, was that. It took an additional ten years of constant warfare for him to defeat his sister Potema. The so-called Wolf Queen of Solitude who died in the siege of her city-state in the year 137. Cephorus survived his sister by only three years. He never had time during the war years to marry, so it was his brother, the fourth child of Pelagius II, who assumed the throne.

The Emperor Magnus was already elderly when he took up the imperial diadem, and the business of punishing the traitorous kings of the War of the Red Diamond drained much of his remaining strength. Legend accuses Magnus' son and heir Pelagius III of patricide, but that seems highly unlikely-for no other reason than that Pelagius was King of Solitude following the death of Potema, and seldom visited the Imperial City.

Pelagius III, sometimes called Pelagius the Mad, was proclaimed Emperor in the 145th year of the Third Era. Almost from the start, his eccentricities of behaviour were noted at court. He embarrassed dignitaries, offended his vassal kings, and on one occasion marked the end of an imperial grand ball by attempting to hang himself. His long-suffering wife was finally awarded the Regency of Tamriel, and Pelagius III was sent to a series of healing institutions and asylums until his death in 3E153 at the age of thirty-four.

The Empress Regent of Tamriel was proclaimed Empress Katariah I upon the death of her husband. Some who do not mark the end of the Septim bloodline with the death of Kintyra II consider the ascendancy of this Dark Elf woman the true mark of its decline. Her defenders, on the other hand, assert that though Katariah was not descended from Tiber, the son she had with Pelagius was, so the imperial chain did continue. Despite racist assertions to the contrary, Katariah's forty-six-year reign was one of the most celebrated in Tamriel's history. Uncomfortable in the Imperial City, Katariah travelled extensively throughout the Empire such as no Emperor ever had since Tiber's day. She repaired much of the damage that previous emperor's broken alliances and bungled diplomacy created. The people of Tamriel came to love their Empress far more than the nobility did. Katariah's death in a minor

skirmish in Black Marsh is a favorite subject of conspiracy minded historians. The Sage Montalius' discovery, for instance, of a disenfranchised branch of the Septim Family and their involvement with the skirmish was a revelation indeed.

When Cassynder assumed the throne upon the death of his mother, he was already middle-aged. Only half Elven, he aged like a Breton. In fact, he had left the rule of Wayrest to his half-brother Uriel due to poor health. Nevertheless, as the only true blood relation of Pelagius and thus Tiber, he was pressed into accepting the throne. To no one's surprise, the Emperor Cassynder's reign did not last long. In two years he joined his predecessors in eternal slumber.

Uriel Lariat, Cassynder's half-brother, and the child of Katariah I and her Imperial consort Gallivere Lariat (after the death of Pelagius III), left the kingdom of Wayrest to reign as Uriel IV. Legally, Uriel IV was a Septim: Cassynder had adopted him into the royal family when he had become King of Wayrest. Nevertheless, to the Council and the people of Tamriel, he was a bastard child of Katariah. Uriel did not possess the dynamism of his mother, and his long forty-three-year reign was a hotbed of sedition.

Uriel IV's story is told in the third volume of this series.

The first volume of this series told in brief the story of the succession of the first eight Emperors of the Septim Dynasty, from Tiber I to Kintyra II. The second volume described the War of the Red Diamond and the six Emperors that followed its aftermath, from Uriel III to Cassynder I. At the end of that volume, it was described how the Emperor Cassynder's half-brother Uriel IV assumed the throne of the Empire of Tamriel.

It will be recalled that Uriel IV was not a Septim by birth. His mother, though she reigned as Empress for many years, was a Dark Elf married to a true Septim Emperor, Pelagius III. Uriel's father was actually Katariah I's consort after Pelagius' death, a Breton nobleman named Gallivere Lariat. Before taking the throne of Empire, Cassynder I had ruled the kingdom of Wayrest, but poor health had forced him to retire. Cassynder had no children, so he legally adopted his half-brother Uriel and abdicated the kingdom. Seven years later, Cassynder inherited the Empire at the death of his mother. Three years after that, Uriel once again found himself the recipient of Cassynder's inheritance.

Uriel IV's reign was a long and difficult one. Despite being a legally adopted member of the Septim Family, and despite the Lariat Family's high position—indeed, they were distant cousins of the Septims—few of the Elder Council could be persuaded to accept him fully as a blood descendant of Tiber. The Council had assumed much responsibility during Katariah I's long reign and Cassynder I's short one, and a strong-willed “alien” monarch like Uriel IV found it impossible to command their unswerving fealty. Time and again the Council and Emperor were at odds, and time and again the Council won the battles. Since the days of Pelagius II, the Elder Council had consisted of the wealthiest men and women in the Empire, and the power they wielded was conclusive.

The Council's last victory over Uriel IV was posthumous. Andorak, Uriel IV's son, was disinherited by vote of Council, and a cousin more closely related to the original Septim line was proclaimed Cephorus II in 3E268. For the first nine years of Cephorus II's reign, those loyal to Andorak battled the Imperial forces. In an act that the Sage Eraintine called “Tiber Septim's



heart beating no more,” the Council granted Andorak the High Rock kingdom of Shornhelm to end the war, and Andorak’s descendants still rule there.

By and large, Cephorus II had foes that demanded more of his attention than Andorak. “From out of a cimmerian nightmare,” in the words of Eraintine, a man who called himself the Camoran Usurper led an army of Daedra and undead warriors on a rampage through Valenwood, conquering kingdom after kingdom. Few could resist his onslaughts, and as month turned to bloody month in the year 3E249, even fewer tried. Cephorus II sent more and more mercenaries into Hammerfell to stop the Usurper’s northward march, but they were bribed or slaughtered and raised as undead.

The story of the Camoran Usurper deserves a book of its own. (It is recommended that the reader find Palaux Illthre’s *The Fall of the Usurper* for more detail.) In short, however, the destruction of the forces of the Usurper had little do with the efforts of the Emperor. The result was a great regional victory and an increase in hostility toward the seemingly inefficacious Empire.

Uriel V, Cephorus II’s son and successor, swivelled opinion back toward the latent power of the Empire. Turning the attention of Tamriel away from internal strife, Uriel V embarked on a series of invasions beginning almost from the moment he took the throne in 3E268. Uriel V conquered Roscrea in 271, Cathnoquey in 276, Yneslea in 279, and Esoniet in 284. In 3E288, he embarked on his most ambitious enterprise, the invasion of the continent kingdom of Akavir. This ultimately proved a failure, for two years later Uriel V was killed in Akavir on the battlefield of Ionith. Nevertheless, Uriel V holds a

reputation second only to Tiber as one of the two great Warrior Emperors of Tamriel.

The last four Emperors, beginning with Uriel V's infant son, are described in the fourth and final volume of this series.

The first book of this series described, in brief, the first eight Emperors of the Septim Dynasty beginning with Tiber I. The second volume described the War of the Red Diamond and the six Emperors who followed. The third volume described the troubles of the next three Emperors-the frustrated Uriel IV, the ineffectual Cephorus II, and the heroic Uriel V.

On Uriel V's death across the sea in distant, hostile Akavir, Uriel VI was but five years old. In fact, Uriel VI was born only shortly before his father left for Akavir. Uriel V's only other progeny, by a morganatic alliance, were the twins Morihatha and Eloisa, who had been born a month after Uriel V left. Uriel VI was crowned in the 290th year of the Third Era. The Imperial Consort Thonica, as the boy's mother, was given a restricted Regency until Uriel VI reached his majority. The Elder Council retained the real power, as they had ever since the days of Katariah I.

The Council so enjoyed its unlimited and unrestricted freedom to promulgate laws (and generate profits) that Uriel VI was not given full license to rule until 307, when he was already 22 years old. He had been slowly assuming positions of responsibility for years, but both the Council and his mother, who enjoyed even her limited Regency, were loath to hand over the reins. By the time he came to the throne, the mechanisms of government gave him little power except for that of the imperial veto.

This power, however, he regularly and vigorously exercised. By 313, Uriel VI could boast with conviction that he truly did rule Tamriel. He utilized defunct spy networks and guard units to bully and coerce the difficult members of the Elder Council. His half-sister Morihatha was (not surprisingly) his staunchest ally, especially after her marriage to Baron Ulfe Gersen of Winterhold brought her considerable wealth and influence. As the Sage Ugaridge said, "Uriel V conquered Esroniet, but Uriel VI conquered the Elder Council."

When Uriel VI fell off a horse and could not be resuscitated by the finest Imperial healers, his beloved sister Morihatha took up the imperial tiara. At 25 years of age, she had been described by (admittedly self-serving) diplomats as the most beautiful creature in all of Tamriel. She was certainly well-learned, vivacious, athletic, and a well-practised politician. She brought the Archmagister of Skyrim to the Imperial City and created the second Imperial Battlemage since the days of Tiber Septim.

Morihatha finished the job her brother had begun, and made the Imperial Province a true government under the Empress (and later, the Emperor). Outside the Imperial Province, however, the Empire had been slowly disintegrating. Open revolutions and civil wars had raged unchallenged since the days of her grandfather Cephorus II. Carefully coordinating her counterattacks, Morihatha slowly claimed back her rebellious vassals, always avoiding overextending herself.

Though Morihatha's military campaigns were remarkably successful, her deliberate pace often frustrated the Council. One Councilman, an Argonian who took the Colovian name of Thoricles Romus, furious at her refusal to send troops to his troubled Black Marsh, is commonly believed to have hired the

assassins who claimed her life in 3E 339. Romus was summarily tried and executed, though he protested his innocence to the last.

Morihatha had no surviving children, and Eloisa had died of a fever four years before. Eloisa's 25-year-old son Pelagius was thus crowned Pelagius IV. Pelagius IV continued his aunt's work, slowly bringing back under his wing the radical and refractory kingdoms, duchies, and baronies of the Empire. He exercised Morihatha's poise and circumspect pace in his endeavours-but alas, he did not attain her success. The kingdoms had been free of constraint for so long that even a benign Imperial presence was considered odious. Nevertheless, when Pelagius died after an astonishing forty-nine-year reign, Tamriel was closer to unity than it had been since the days of Uriel I.

Our current Emperor, His Awesome and Terrible Majesty, Uriel Septim VII, son of Pelagius IV, has the diligence of his great-aunt Morihatha, the political skill of his great-uncle Uriel VI, and the military prowess of his great grand-uncle Uriel V. For twenty-one years he reigned and brought justice and order to Tamriel. In the year 3E389, however, his Imperial Battlemage, Jagar Tharn, betrayed him.

Uriel VII was imprisoned in a dimension of Tharn's creation, and Tharn used his sorcery of illusion to assume the Emperor's aspect. For the next ten years, Tharn abused imperial privilege but did not continue Uriel VII's schedule of reconquest. It is not yet entirely known what Tharn's goals and personal accomplishments were during the ten years he masqueraded as his liege lord. In 3E399, an enigmatic Champion defeated the

Battlemage in the dungeons of the Imperial Palace and freed Uriel VII from his other-dimensional jail.

Since his emancipation, Uriel Septim VII has worked diligently to renew the battles that would reunite Tamriel. Tharn's interference broke the momentum, it is true—but the years since then have proven that there is hope of the Golden Age of Tiber Septim's rule glorifying Tamriel once again.

# A Dying Man's Last Words

*Indie*

It's been many days since the collapse. I have had many good and exciting adventures. I fear this is the last. I am still unsure what happened. Was it a trap that caused the collapse? I didn't hear the click of any device. Perhaps it was simply a freak accident, and I was simply in the wrong place at the right time. Regardless, I now lie here, half buried in the collapse, with crushed legs. The pain was unbearable for the first day or so. Or was it? Who knows? You lose track of time in a place like this. Especially in a situation such as this. The pain has all but left though. Getting used to pain is a battle all in itself. My time now runs short. I will die here, in this tomb. No better place for a dead man.

My adventures have taken me all over. I have been places that man never knew existed. I have retrieved artifacts and fine treasures that were thought to be myth. From chalices of origins long lost, to gems with power unthought of by man, to powerful religious artifacts that house more interest to madmen than sane. I shall at least take these fine memories with me to the grave.

I shall miss my father. Like me, he was also a man of adventure. I followed in his footsteps, though I was blessed with far more luck than he. Until now, of course. He shall be on his own now. At least I am spared any more jokes about my childhood pet.

And my students... how I treasured teaching them the secrets and alien concepts of all things unknown and mysterious. May they be successful.

I do not go down along though. With my crippled body, in this heap of earth, I am accompanied by my trusty leather, my steel, and most of all, my token hat. Unable to reach them under the mass, I know they are untouchable and safe. I will not die alone.

Farewell,

Indie

# A Fair Warning

*Cumanya*

This being an account of my limited journeys into the Uncharted Depths of the Greater Caverns of Dubdilla. FAIR WARNING to the would-be adventurer seeking fortune and fame in these uncharted halls. The flooded paths of Lower Dubdilla hold certain death to those ill-prepared. The way is treacherous and foul, the riches meager. Only those of certain aptitude and reason should venture into these depths.

BE WARNED. These caverns and galleries are exceedingly damp and footing unsure. Sudden and sheer RAVINES and UNSCALEABLE PITS await the unwary. If not for my specific skills and abilities, I would have certainly met my doom in the Blackest Depths. My SPELLS, SCROLLS and POTIONS, allowed me to escape ONE OF THE MANY sheer walled chambers. ALWAYS have a remedy at hand, for once you are committed to these depths, NO EXIT IS ASSURED!

Navigation is not your only trial. The denizens of the twisted passages are of a fiendish and fell brood. Beware the gnashing of their teeth and the death-flutter of their wings. The sound of talon upon rock and flicking of tongue may be the last you hear.

If only I had access to a dependable rope, perhaps this route would not have been so tortuous.



# A Leaflet

*Anonymous*

HAVE NO DEALINGS with AURANE FRERNIS!!!

She is known to be both UNDERHANDED and UNETHICAL in her dealings!!!

The materials she uses are both SHODDY and DANGEROUS!!!

You could come to GREAT HARM from her products.

Her shop should be AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS!!!

See these testimonials:

“I took potion and got sick. Lost good lunch.” - Grugbob G.

“Her materials looked old and stale. Not good for alchemical use.” - Daren O.

“She should be disemboweled and fed to nix hounds.” - Hlorngar F.

# A Scrawled Note

*Vulpriss Denisson*

Alas, Morty, my fallen companion, could not make it this far. I regret that his corpse still holds the key to the tomb I must reach in order to achieve the mission. I am left alone, with only blade and skill to accomplish this task. I believe I have come to the end of my journey. But, without the key, I find myself in the position of forcing entry. For, behind this door, I am sure an evil terror awaits.

I leave this warning in case I do not make it. Surely, this door is trapped, and my lockpicking and disarming ability leaves much to be desired. If someone happens across my body, know that I have failed, and know that there is surely a great prize, the Staff of Hasedoki, awaiting further into this evil tomb. Beware the keeper of the great staff.

Vulpriss Denisson

# A Scroll Written In Blood

*Malaki*

These will be the last words anyone ever hears from me. Hear? That's silly of me. As if anyone will HEAR what I am writing. Regardless, I am a lone traveler and never stayed put long enough to know anyone. Except that lovely Mariah in Stros M'kai. She will forever be in my heart, even in death. To see her again, or to even hear her beautiful voice, would surely allow me to die a content man.

I now lay here with a broken back. Unable to move, surely to be dead within hours. I take this remaining time to write a farewell to this cruel world. The very same one that allowed me to take the path of a thief. A good one at least. If ever you hear tales of Malaki the Lightfooted, you can continue the tale of how you happened across my corpse in a lowly tomb, searching for bounty so I may feed myself. What a life I led. If you too, are a common thief like myself, do yourself a favor, and find another way. If I had it to do all over again, I surely would change my ways.

The clawing and moaning of the ghastly undead beasts grows louder now. I fear they have come to finish me off for good this time. Know that I shall die a painful death as an unhappy man. May the gods show pity on my soul so I do not have to wander this plane after death.

# A Short History Of Morrowind

*Jeanette Sitte*

Led by the legendary prophet Veloth, the ancestors of the Dunmer, exiles from Altmer cultures in present-day Summerset Isle, came to the region of Morrowind. In earliest times the Dunmer were harassed or dominated by Nord sea raiders. When the scattered Dunmer tribes consolidated into the predecessors of the modern Great House clans, they threw out the Nord oppressors and successfully resisted further incursions.

The ancient ancestor worship of the tribes was in time superseded by the monolithic Tribunal Temple theocracy, and the Dunmer grew into a great nation called Resdayn. Resdayn was the last of the provinces to submit to Tiber Septim; like Black Marsh, it was never successfully invaded, and was peacefully incorporated by treaty into the Empire as the Province of Morrowind.

Almost four centuries after the coming of the Imperial Legions, Morrowind is still occupied by Imperial legions, with a figurehead Imperial King, though the Empire has reserved most functions of the traditional local government to the Ruling Councils of the Five Great Houses....

In 3E 414, Vvardenfell Territory, previously a Temple preserve under Imperial protection, was reorganized as an Imperial

Provincial District. Vvardenfell had been maintained as a preserve administrated by the Temple since the Treaty of the Armistice, and except for a few Great House settlements sanctioned by the Temple, Vvardenfell was previously uninhabited and undeveloped. But when the centuries-old Temple ban on trade and settlement of Vvardenfell was revoked by King of Morrowind, a flood of Imperial colonists and Great House Dunmer came to Vvardenfell, expanding old settlements and building new ones.

The new District was divided into Redoran, Hlaalu, Telvanni, and Temple Districts, each separately administered by local House Councils or Temple Priesthoods, and all under the advice and consent of Duke Dren and the District Council in Ebonheart. Local law became a mixture of House Law and Imperial Law in House Districts, jointly enforced by House guards and Legion guards, with Temple law and Imperial law enforced in the Temple district by Ordinators. The Temple was still recognized as the majority religion, but worship of the Nine Divines was protected by the legions and encouraged by Imperial cult missions.

The Temple District included the city of Vivec, the fortress of Ghostgate, and all sacred and profane sites (including those Blighted areas inside the Ghostfence) and all unsettled and wilderness areas on Vvardenfell. In practice, this district included all parts of Vvardenfell not claimed for Redoran, Hlaalu, or Telvanni Districts. The Temple stubbornly fought all development in their district, and were largely successful.

House Hlaalu in combination with Imperial colonists embarked on a vigorous campaign of settlement and development. In the decades after reorganization, Balmora and

the Ascadian Isles regions have grown steadily. Caldera and Pelagiad are completely new settlements, and all legion forts were expanded to accommodate larger garrisons.

House Telvanni, normally conservative and isolationist, has been surprisingly aggressive in expanding beyond their traditional tower villages. Disregarding the protests of the other Houses, the Temple, the Duke, and the District council, Telvanni pioneers have been encroaching on the wild lands reserved to the Temple. The Telvanni council officially disavows responsibility for these rogue Telvanni settlements, but it is an open secret that they are encouraged and supported by ambitious Telvanni mage-lords.

Under pressure from the Temple, conservative House Redoran has steadfastly resisted expansion in their district. As a result, House Redoran and the Temple are in danger of being politically and economically marginalized by the more aggressive and expansionist Hlaalu and Telvanni interests.

The Imperial administration faces many challenges in the Vvardenfell district, but the most serious are the Great House rivalries, animosity from the Ashlander nomads, internal conflicts within the Temple itself, and the Red Mountain blight. Struggles between Great House, Temple, and Imperial interests to control Vvardenfell's resource could at any time erupt into full-scale war. Ashlanders raid settlements, plunder caravans, and kill foreigners on their wild lands. The Temple has unsuccessfully attempted to silence criticism and calls for reform within its ranks.

But most serious are the plagues and diseased hosts produced by the blight storms sweeping out from Red Mountain. Vvardenfell and all Morrowind have long been menaced by the

legendary evils of Dagoth Ur and his ash vampire kin dwelling beneath Red Mountain. For centuries the Temple has contained this threat within the Ghostfence. But recently the Temple's resources and will have faltered, and the threat from Red Mountain has grown in scale and intensity. If the Ghostfence should fail, and hosts of blighted monsters were to spill out across Vvardenfell's towns and villages, the Empire might have no choice but to evacuate Vvardenfell district and abandon it to disease and corruption.

# A Worn And Weathered Note

*Anonymous*

I am forever swimming around, amidst this ocean world we call home. My limbs grow weak and weary as my eyes drift skyward in defeat. I remember how warm the earth felt, as I lived and breathed next to her beating heart. I remember enough to keep searching through an ocean of tears, raised to astronomical depths. My dreams offer solace, where I return to distant, faded times. Through trees entwined with cool autumn air, my sorrow is lured by fragrant, bittersweet memories. I am at home as much as my world and consciousness allow. I remember falling into the most beautiful lake I've ever experienced. She swallowed me whole, like a droplet, and I was enraptured and enwombed within her bliss. The lonely windswept desert sky of my soul was filled by her luminous stars and warmed by her sunlit radiance. I gazed downward in awe and saw it all reflected in the shimmering ripples dancing and playing about the surface. It appeared to me as real as the very wonders it was reflecting. I stepped forward to prove to no one and everyone that they were, by belief. For an aching instant I was betwixt the two and the summation. Confusion befell me and I fell through, only to realize I hadn't entered the lake, I had left it. With all of my remaining life I howled at the heavens and collapsed, like a star on the shores of my youth, as my life's breath wandered away from the home it had harbored. I have been drowning on dry land ever since.



I lay there, coital, for heaven knows how long. I felt eons ebb and flow in the spans of seconds. I lived as intently as I could in those endless instants, as the boredom of -after- droned on and on. The fires of my heart grew dim and became only the faintest embers of the roaring blaze they had once been. My limbs, heavy with the weight of the world, protested. I felt the longing of this life which slowly began to ease the agony in my heart. As I was gradually nursed back to health, knowledge of record and history tried desperately to fill the yawning, nauseous chasm of my soul. I began to know the deadpan search for freedom and forgetfulness, and I released the hold on my life. Though it still lurched, pained, in front of me, I just stared back with tired, vacant eyes as if watching the most fascinating of nothing. My mind drifted, only to be slammed back reluctantly, repeatedly, and painfully by those I vaguely remember knowing, as if from a different life and age. I try, in vain, to forgive and forget myself as I paste on those plaster smiles and strain to look levelly. I remember. I forget. I forget again. I remember less. I am saddened at the thought that I have forgotten. I am not who I used to be. Though it pained me so, I was never so real as those lonely, lost times of my undoing. I am torn asunder at the thought of losing forever that, which has changed my life eternally, and that which I fear in the depths of my soul will never be again. That, which has gifted me with more pain than I have ever known in all of my lives or all of the lives that I know through my own.

Who am I to ask this of you?

# Abcs For Barbarians

*Anonymous*

A is for Atronach.

B is for Bungler's Bane.

C is for Comberry.

# Airship Captain's Journal

*Captain Roberto Jodoïn*

Commander, Beauchamp Expedition

Entry 1: Today is the day! Beauchamp's airship seems sturdy enough, and the crew is ready to set sail. We'll travel north-northwest until we reach the island of Solstheim. According to Beauchamp, the Hrothmund's Bane wolf formation is somewhere near the Moesring Mountains. The barrow we're set to explore is located at the wolf's eye. We'll get Beauchamp's precious magic item and be back at the Guild of Mages in a few days. What could possibly go wrong?

Entry 4: Damn conjurers, sorcerers, inventors, scientists and all they're academic ilk! Beauchamp promised me his airship would hold together, promised me it could be sailed just like a sea-bound craft. All lies! This monstrosity is barely holding together—we've been trailing bits and pieces of it ever since we left Ald'Ruhn! Just an hour ago we lost one of the Dwemer cogs from the main engine! If this were a frigate or sloop I'd be holding her together just fine, but alas, trying to control an airship is like setting to sea in a barrel with a spoon for an oar.

Entry 6: Land ho!

Entry 7: It's normal for a crewmember to get edgy, but the Argonian finally went berserk. I told him repeatedly before we left Ald'Ruhn that an airship sails in the sky, and not on the

water. He told me he understood, but his fear of heights must have finally taken sway. In a frenzied state he grabbed the wheel and almost forced us into the sea. I had no choice but to run him through. Swims-In-Swells was his name, and a good crewmember he was before this unfortunate incident. I would have preferred a burial at sea, but considering our current situation we had no choice but to toss his body overboard. We aimed for the ocean, but by that time the airship had drifted over Solstheim. Alas, I fear we missed, and his corpse landed somewhere on the southeastern shore.

Entry 9: We've located Hrothmund's Bane! At least Beauchamp was right about something. The wolf formation runs from west to east, with the head—and eye—toward the eastern end. We'll look for a place to set down and then explore Hrothmund's Barrow—assuming THAT is where Beauchamp said it would be. I must also note that the going is slower than I'd like. There's a fell chill in the air, and I don't trust the dark clouds that have gathered over the mountains....

Entry 11: We have been assailed by a blizzard, the likes of which I have never seen! I feared a storm, but could never have imagined anything like this. Beauchamp's contraption is coming apart at the seams, and I don't think we can hold altitude. There's nowhere to land, but land we must!

Entry 12: Dead. All of them ded. Most of the crew were killed instantly when the airship went down. The few that made it soon succumbed to the cold. I alone survived. Need to make a camp. Snow is blocking my way into the ship's hold. I go to the barrow in the mornning. I can hardly write. My hands are nearly frozen.

Entry 13: so cold so cold. So huNgry... madness takKIng me I  
can feeel ite. I see eyes night eyes wolf eys. Here them... so  
hungry. Eye of wlf coming! White wolf! So col...

# Ancestors And The Dunmer

*Anonymous*

The departed spirits of the Dunmeri, and perhaps those of all races, persist after death. The knowledge and power of departed ancestors benefits the bloodlines of Dunmeri Houses. The bond between the living family members and immortal ancestors is partly blood, partly ritual, partly volitional. A member brought into the House through marriage binds himself through ritual and oath into the clan, and gains communication and benefits from the clan's ancestors; however, his access to the ancestors is less than his offspring, and he retains some access to the ancestors of his own bloodline.

Each residence has a family shrine. In poorer homes, it may be no more than a hearth or alcove where family relics are displayed and venerated. In wealthy homes, a room is set aside for the use of the ancestors. This shrine is called the Waiting Door, and represents the door to Oblivion.

Here the family members pay their respects to their ancestors through sacrifice and prayer, through oaths sworn upon duties, and through reports on the affairs of the family. In return, the family may receive information, training, and blessings from the family's ancestors. The ancestors are thus the protectors of the home, and especially the precincts of the Waiting Door.

It is a family's most solemn duty to make sure their ancestor's remains are interred properly in a City of the Dead such as Necrom. Here the spirits draw comfort from one another against the chill of the mortal world. However, as a sign of great honor and sacrifice, an ancestor may grant that part of his remains be retained to serve as part of a ghost fence protecting the clan's shrine and family precincts. Such an arrangement is often part of the family member's will, that a knucklebone shall be saved out of his remains and incorporated with solemn magic and ceremony into a clan ghost fence. In more exceptional cases, an entire skeleton or even a preserved corpse may be bound into a ghost fence.

These remains become a beacon and focus for ancestral spirits, and for the spirit of the remains in particular. The more remains used to make a ghost fence, the more powerful the fence is. And the most powerful mortals in life have the most powerful remains.

The Great Ghost Fence created by the Tribunal to hold back the Blight incorporates the bones of many heroes of the Temple and of the Houses Indoril and Redoran who dedicated their spirits to the Temple and Clan as their surrogate families. The Ghost Fence also contains bones taken from the Catacombs of Necrom and the many battlefields of Morrowind.

Spirits do not like to visit the mortal world, and they do so only out of duty and obligation. Spirits tell us that the otherworld is more pleasant, or at least more comfortable for spirits than our real world, which is cold, bitter, and full of pain and loss.

Spirits that are forced to remain in our world against their will may become mad spirits, or ghosts.

Some spirits are bound to this world because of some terrible circumstances of their death, or because of some powerful emotional bond to a person, place, or thing. These are called hauntings.

Some spirits are captured and bound to enchanted items by wizards. If the binding is involuntary, the spirit usually goes mad. A willing spirit may or may not retain its sanity, depending on the strength of the spirit and the wisdom of the enchanter.

Some spirits are bound against their wills to protect family shrines. This unpleasant fate is reserved for those who have not served the family faithfully in life. Dutiful and honorable ancestral spirits often aid in the capture and binding of wayward spirits.

These spirits usually go mad, and make terrifying guardians. They are ritually prevented from harming mortals of their clans, but that does not necessary discourage them from mischievous or peevish behavior.



# Annotated Anuad

*Anonymous*

We received this document (although uncomplete) before the release of the third Elder Scrolls from the post of Michael Kirkbride on The Essential Site. At that time this document was titled as Ayleid (Bosmeri) Creation Myth.

Another version is named A Childrens Anuad and appeared in Oblivion and Skyrim. Aside from its name it only differs in the capitalisation used for the Imperial names of the elves, e.g. forest elves, dark elves, etc.

The first ones were brothers: Anu and Padomay. They came into the Void, and Time began.

As Anu and Padomay wandered the Void, the interplay of Light and Darkness created Nir. Both Anu and Padomay were amazed and delighted with her appearance, but she loved Anu, and Padomay retreated from them in bitterness.

Nir became pregnant, but before she gave birth, Padomay returned, professing his love for Nir. She told him that she loved only Anu, and Padomay beat her in rage. Anu returned, fought Padomay, and cast him outside Time. Nir gave birth to Creation, but died from her injuries soon after. Anu, grieving, hid himself in the sun and slept.

Meanwhile, life sprang up on the twelve worlds of creation and flourished. After many ages, Padomay was able to return to Time. He saw Creation and hated it. He swung his sword, shattering the twelve worlds in their alignment. Anu awoke, and fought Padomay again. The long and furious battle ended with Anu the victor. He cast aside the body of his brother, who he believed was dead, and attempted to save Creation by forming the remnants of the 12 worlds into one—Nirn, the world of Tamriel. As he was doing so, Padomay struck him through the chest with one last blow. Anu grappled with his brother and pulled them both outside of Time forever.

The blood of Padomay became the Daedra. The blood of Anu became the stars. The mingled blood of both became the Aedra (hence their capacity for good and evil, and their greater affinity for earthly affairs than the Daedra, who have no connection to Creation).

On the world of Nirn, all was chaos. The only survivors of the twelve worlds of Creation were the Ehlnoy and the Hist. The Ehlnoy are the ancestors of Mer and Men. The Hist are the trees of Argonia. Nirn originally was all land, with interspersed seas, but no oceans.

A large fragment of the Ehlnoy world landed on Nirn relatively intact, and the Ehlnoy living there were the ancestors of the Mer. These Ehlnoy fortified their borders from the chaos outside, hid their pocket of calm, and attempted to live on as before. Other Ehlnoy arrived on Nirn scattered amid the confused jumble of the shattered worlds, wandering and finding each other over the years. Eventually, the wandering Ehlnoy found the hidden land of Old Ehlnoy, and were amazed and joyful to find their kin living

amid the splendor of ages past. The wandering Ehlnofoy expected to be welcomed into the peaceful realm, but the Old Ehlnofoy looked on them as degenerates, fallen from their former glory. For whatever reason, war broke out, and raged across the whole of Nirn. The Old Ehlnofoy retained their ancient power and knowledge, but the Wanderers were more numerous, and toughened by their long struggle to survive on Nirn. This war reshaped the face of Nirn, sinking much of the land beneath new oceans, and leaving the lands as we know them (Tamriel, Akavir, Atmora, and Yokuda). The Old Ehlnofoy realm, although ruined, became Tamriel. The remnants of the Wanderers were left divided on the other 3 continents.

Over many years, the Ehlnofoy of Tamriel became the Mer (Elves):

The Dwemer (the Deep Ones, sometimes called Dwarves)

The Chimer (the Changed Ones, who later became the Dunmer)

The Dunmer (the Dark or Cursed Ones, the Dark Elves)

The Bosmer (the Green or Forest Ones, the Wood Elves)

The Altmer (The Elder or High Ones, the High Elves).

On the other continents, the Wandering Ehlnofoy became the Men: the Nords of Atmora, the Redguards of Yokuda, and the Tsaesci of Akavir.

The Hist were bystanders in the Ehlnofoy war, but most of their realm was destroyed as the war passed over it. A small corner of it survived to become Black Marsh in Tamriel, but most of their realm was sunk beneath the sea.

Eventually, Men returned to Tamriel. The Nords were the first, colonizing the northern coast of Tamriel before recorded history, led by the legendary Ysgramor. The thirteenth of his line, King Harald, was the first to appear in written history. And so the Mythic Era ended.

# Approaching Vivec

*Anonymous*

We received this document before the release of the third Elder Scrolls from the post of Michael Kirkbride on The Essential Site. Similar to Vivec and Mephala.

Art Design Notes for the Warrior-Poet

Who is Vivec?

Morrowind is holy country, and its gods are flesh and blood. Collectively, these gods are called the Tribunal, three deities exemplifying Dunmeri virtues. Almalexia is Mercy, Vivec is Mastery, and Sotha Sil is Mystery. Vivec is easiest the most popular of them all.

He is also the most public, for he is the beloved Warrior-Poet of the True People, paradoxically beautiful and bloody. Vivec is an artistic violence. He is transcendent of the Dark Elven demon that anticipated him, Black Hands Mephala, a foundation figure of the earliest Chimer. Modern Vivec mirrors the ur-Mephala. We shall take them hand in hand.

Who is Mephala?

Each of the three Tribunes were present at the dawn of Chimeri culture, at least in spirit. According to legend, three demons, or Daedra, helped a discontented throng of Altmer become a new

people and found a new land. These Altmer became the Chimer, or “the Changed Folk”. This was more than an ideological shift or political statement; the Chimer \_physically\_ changed as well. Details of this transformation can be found elsewhere, but each of the three demons represented a crucial part of its metaphysics. If Boethiah, the so-called Prince of Plots, represented the method needed to bring about change, Mephala was the shadowy enforcer of that scheme.

Mephala is the demon of murder, sex, and secrets. All of these possess subtle aspects and violent ones (assassination/genocide, courtship/orgy, tact/ poetic truths); Mephala was meant to embody those dichotomies, and this made it (Mephala is hermaphroditic) a difficult deity to understand. It is no surprise that Vivec exploits the more popular characteristics of his progenitor: combat and art.

Mephala has both male and female genitalia, and both are grossly exaggerated in the idols, drawings, and carvings that depict it. Androgyny is sometimes depicted in Vivec as well, but not as overtly. He (notice the pronoun) is almost always represented as a male, though often with homosexual or bisexual tendencies.

As has been said, reverence of Mephala was co-opted into the worship of Vivec. Legends and myths attributed to the demon now serve as a relief to the god to come later. This is not to say that Mephala has entirely disappeared from contemporary Dunmeri worship; it has not, and survives to small extent in various thuggish mystery cults, sexual specialists, covert fashion clubs, and elsewhere. Mephala is most famous as the psychopomp of the Morag Tong, the elite assassins guild of Morrowind.

# Ashlands Hymns

*Anonymous*

[This is a volume of folk verses collected from Ashlanders.  
'Wondrous Love' is from the Urshilaku Ashlanders of the  
northern Ashlands.]

What a wondrous love it is  
To bind two souls in faith,  
Chained completely together  
With never a false word,  
Weal and woe, wish and real,  
Woven each together  
From first kiss to last breath,  
First and last whispered in love.

# Beram Journal

*Beram*

## Beram Journal, Entry 1

Today we finally finished hewing out the two main jail rooms and all six cells, and almost as if in response to our celebration, several of those damned roots grew through the wall and took out two of our cells. I wonder constantly what those wizards could be up to up there in the tower, but I guess this is the nature of working for the Telvanni. I will inform them again of our construction plans (which THEY provided to us) and request that they refrain from such actions in the future. In the meantime, my men have begun setting up the necessary ramps and equipment to begin work on the next section of dungeon. Here's hoping it goes better than the first.

Beram

Foreman

## Beram Journal, Entry 2

The lower dungeon rooms have been proving much more difficult than we originally thought. We must be working near some lava flows, as the rock of the cave walls is exceptionally hard stuff. It's hard enough to see in here without all our proper lighting installed, I don't need this delay too. I have sent off for some new volcanic glass tools, and in the meantime, one



of my men has found a section of cave softer than the rest, and we have continued our work there, bypassing this first room. A few men have expressed their concern over the light rumblings that we have been feeling lately, but I am convinced that it is just more of those Telvanni and their hocus-pocus mushroom magic. They assured us of this site's stability. The rats and bugs are annoying to us, but do not pose a threat. Hopefully we can find the source of this infestation soon and eliminate it. I don't have time for this.

Beram

Foreman

Beram Journal, Entry 3

The worst has happened. This morning a boulder came loose from the ceiling and fell directly onto our major ramp, causing it to collapse and killing two of my men in the process. The remaining three of us are now stranded alone down here, with the cave walls being too sheer to climb, and the wizards obviously having more important things to deal with than a few errant laborers. With our water supplies diminishing rapidly, I sent Norvus and Gilam further down into the caves to look for any natural exits we might have missed when first surveying the site. Damn those wizards. They told us this site was safe. What could they be doing up there? Why are these bugs and rats getting more aggressive by the hour? And why is it getting so blasted hot?

Beram

Foreman

#### Beram Journal, Entry 4

I found Norvus's head and torso lying in this room, with a large part of the rest of him seemingly smeared along the walls. I screamed for full minutes when I found it, and now all I can do is sit and stare. My only solace is this paper. More roots keep penetrating the walls every minute, and the rocks and lights seem to be taking on lives of their own. Now I fear not only for my life, but for my sanity. Please someone come soon. The rumblings are getting faster and stronger, and I can't breathe this stifling air much longer. What in Vivec's name have these wizards done? The heat...

#### Beram Journal, Entry 5

**HE IS HERE!**

# Bloody Note

*Antoinette*

Borogon,

Jacques put the stash in the Fjell ice cave, and Lucian has been notified. I got my cut, and am headed back to Summerset Isle. I'll see you there.

One more thing—do me a favor and forget about your obsession with bristleback meat. Yeah, it probably tastes like pork, but it's not worth it. Those things are deadly, and their creepy little riders are more vicious than they look.

Antoinette

# Bloody Note

*Jacques*

Lucian,

Here's the loot from the jeweler heist. Like my marker? I figured that would get your attention. The grahl make great guards, and I knew you'd be able to slip past them. I've paid off the crew and given the Guild its cut. I'll see you in Cyrodiil at that inn we talked about.

The museum should be an easy haul. Security is light, and there's a broken window in the basement. But we can talk more about that later.

Jacques

# Boethiah's Pillow Book

*Anonymous*

[No words can describe what you see. Or what you think you see.]

# Book Of Rest And Endings

*Anonymous*

[The pages of the BOOK OF REST AND ENDINGS are filled with obscure bits of cult mumbo-jumbo.]

From fifty Fathers

Frozen in slavepast

Rip from the wraithloom

Sunder the lifeweave

Lock tight in earthgrip

Hold firm in gravefast

# Brown Book Of 3e 426

*Anonymous*

[The Brown Book is a yearbook of the affairs of the Telvanni Council of Vvardenfell District for 3E 426. It lists the current members of the council, their residences, and their representatives in Sadrith Mora. It also chronicles significant events and council actions for the year.]

Councilors of House Telvanni, Vvardenfell District, Imperial Era 426

Archmagister Gothren, Lord High Magus of Telvanni Council, Vvardenfell District, Tower of Tel Aruhn, East Molag Amur, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Aryon, Mage Lord of Telvanni Council, Vvardenfell District, Tower of Tel Vos, Village of Vos, The Grazelands, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Neloth, Mage Lord of Telvanni Council, Vvardenfell District, Tower of Tel Naga, Sadrith Mora, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Mistress Dratha, Mage Lord of Telvanni Council, Vvardenfell District, Tower of Tel Mora, The Grazelands, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Mistress Therana, Mage Lord of Telvanni Council, Vvardenfell District, Tower of Tel Branora, Azura's Coast, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Councilor Representatives of House Telvanni, Council Hall, Sadrith Mora

For Archmagister Gothren: Mouth Mallam Ryon, Mage

For Master Aryon: Mouth Arara Uvulas

For Master Neloth: Mouth Raven Omayn

For Mistress Therana: Felisa Ulessen

For Mistress Dratha: Mouth Mallam Ryon

### Council Actions

In response to repeated protests from Duke Dren and representative of the other Great Houses, Telvanni Council reminded them that, according to ancient law and custom, Telvanni Council places no constraint on the ambitions and enterprise of its individual members. If the Empire or other House Councils wish to dispute Telvanni exploration and colonization of the wastes and wildernesses of Vvardenfell, they are welcome to do so, with the Councilors' best wishes, but Telvanni Council will not contribute its resources or authority to such endeavors.

The council renews its objection to proposals placed before Duke Dren and the Grand Council concerning slavery and slave trading in Vvardenfell District. The right to own and trade slaves is guaranteed by the terms of the Treaty of the



Armistice, and Telvanni Council will not entertain any discussion of abridgements of those rights.

# Capn's Guide To The Fishy Stick

*Anonymous*

Fishy Sticks were given to new members on the Official Elder Scrolls Forums.

[This book is supposedly the definitive reference to fishy sticks throughout Tamriel, but the pages are so smeared with fishy stick sauce it is impossible to read any of them.]

# Charwich-Koniinge Letters

## *Charwich Koniinge*

Charwich-Koniinge Letters, v1

6 Suns Height, 3E 411

Kambria, High Rock

My Dear Koniinge,

I hope this letter reaches you in Sadrith Mora. It's been many weeks since I've heard from you, and I hope that the address that I have for you is still up-to-date. I gave the courier some extra gold, so if he doesn't find you, he is to make inquiries to your whereabouts. As you can see, after a rather tedious crossing, I've at long last made my way from Bhoriane to my favorite principality in High Rock, surprisingly literate and always fascinating Kambria. I at once ensconced myself in one of the better libraries here, becoming reacquainted with the locals and the lore. At the risk of being overly optimistic, I think I might have struck on something very interesting about this mysterious fellow, Hadwaf Neithwyr.

Many here in town remember him, though few very fondly. When Hadwaf Neithwyr left, so too did a great plague. No one thinks it a coincidence.

According to my contacts here, Azura is not his only master. It may be that when he summoned forth the Daedra and accepted her Star, he was doing so for someone named Baliasir.

Apparently, Neithwyr worked for this Baliasir in some capacity, but I never could find out from anyone exactly what Baliasir's line of business was, nor what Neithwyr did for him. Zenithar, the God of Work and Commerce, is the most revered deity in Kambria, which served my (that is to say our) purposes well, as the people are naturally receptive to bribery. Still, it did me little good. I could find nothing specific about our quarry. After days of inquiry, an old crone recommended that I go to a nearby village called Grimtry Garden, and find the cemetery caretaker there. I set off at once.

I know you are impatient when it comes to details, and have little taste for Breton architecture, but if you ever find yourself in mid-High Rock, you owe it to yourself to visit this quaint village. Like a number of other similar towns in High Rock, there is a high wall surrounded it. As well as being picturesque, it's a remnant of the region's turbulent past and a useful barrier against the supernatural creatures that sometimes stalk the countryside. More about that in a moment.

The cemetery is actually outside of the city gates, I discovered. The locals warned me to wait until morning to speak to the caretaker, but I was impatient for information, and did not want to waste a moment. I trekked through the woods to the lonely graveyard, and immediately found the shuffling, elderly man who was the caretaker. He bade me leave, that the land was haunted and if I chose to stay I would be in the greatest danger. I told him that I would not go until he told me what he knew about Hadwaf Neithwyr and his patron Baliasir. On

hearing their names, he fled deeper into the jumble of broken tombstones and decrepit mausoleums. I naturally pursued.

I saw him scramble down into an enormous crypt and gave chase. There was no light within, but I had planned enough to bring with me a torch. The minute I lit it, I heard a long, savage howl pierce the silence, and I knew that the caretaker had left quickly not merely because he feared speaking of Neithwyr and Baliasir. Before I saw the creature, I heard its heavy breath and the clack of its clawed feet on stone moving closer to me. The werewolf emerged from the gloom, brown and black, with slavering jaws, looking at me with the eyes of the cemetery caretaker, now given only to animal hunger.

I instantly had three different instinctive reactions. The first was, of course, flight. The second was to fight. But if I fled, I might never find the caretaker again, and learn what he knew. If I fought, I might injure or even kill the creature and be even worse off. So I elected to go with my third option: to hold my ground and keep the creature within its tomb until the night became morning, and the caretaker resumed his humanity.

I've sparred often enough unarmored, but surely never with so much at stake, and never with so savage an opponent. My mind was always on danger not only of injury but the dread disease of lycanthropy. Every rake of its claw I parried, every snap of its foaming jaws I ducked. I sidestepped when it tried to rush me, but closed the distance to keep it from escaping into the night. For hours we fought, I always on the defense, it always trying to free itself, or slay me, or both. I have no doubt that a werewolf has greater energy reserves than a man, but it is a beast and does not know how to save and temper its movements. As the dawn rose, we were both nearly

unconscious from fatigue, but I received my reward. The creature became a man once again.

He was quite considerably friendlier than he had been before. In fact, when he realized that I had prevented him from going on his nocturnal rampage through the countryside, he became positively affable.

Here's what I learned: Neithwyr never returned to High Rock. As far as the old man knows, he is still in Morrowind. I visited the gravesite of his sister Peryra, and learned that it was probably through her that Neithwyr first met his patron. It would seem that she was quite a well-known courtesan in her day, and very well traveled, though she chose to return home to die. Unlike Neithwyr, Baliasir is not far away from me. He is a shadowy character, but lately, according to the caretaker, he has been paying court to Queen Elysana in Wayrest. I leave at once.

Please write to me as soon as possible to tell me of your progress. I should be in Wayrest at the home of my friend Lady Elysbetta Moorling in a week's time. If Baliasir is at court, Lady Moorling will be able to arrange an introduction.

I feel confident in saying that we are very close to Azura's Star.

Your Friend,

Charwich

Charwich-Koniinge Letters, v2

3 Last Seed, 3E 411

Tel Aruhn, Morrowind

My Good Friend Charwich,

I only just last week received your letter dated 6 Sun's Height, addressed to me in Sadrith Mora. I did not know how to reach you before to tell you of my progress finding Hadwaf Neithwyr, so I send this to you now care of the lady you mentioned in your letter, the Lady Elysbeta Moorling of Wayrest. I hope that if you have left her palace, she will know where you've gone and can send this to you. And I hope further that you receive it in a timelier manner than I received your letter. It is essential that I hear from you soon so we may coordinate our next course of action.

My adventures here have two acts, one before I received your letter, and one immediately after. While you searched for the elusive possessor of Azura's Star in his homeland to the west, I searched for him here where we understood he conjured up the Daedra Prince and received from her the artifact.

Like you, I had little difficulty finding people who had heard of or even knew Neithwyr. In fact, not long after we parted company and you left for the Iliac Bay, I met someone who knew where he went to perform the ceremony, so I left at once to come here to Tel Aruhn. It took some time to locate my contact, for he is a Dissident Priest named Minerath. The Temple and Tribunal, the real powers of Morrowind, tend to frown on his Order, and while they haven't begun so much of a crusade to stamp them out, there are certainly rumors that they will soon. This tends to make priests like Minerath skittish and paranoid. Difficult people to set appointments with.

Finally I was told that he would be willing to talk to me at the Plot and Plaster, a tiny tavern without even a room to rent.

Downstairs, there were several cloaked men crammed around the tavern's only table, and they searched me to see if I had any weaponry. Of course, I hadn't. You know that isn't my preferred method of doing business.

When it decided that I was harmless, one of the cloaked figures revealed himself to be Minerath. I paid him the gold I promised and asked him what he knew about Hadwaf Neithwyr. He remembered him well enough, saying that after he received the Star, the lad intended to return to High Rock. It seemed he had unfinished business there, presumably of a violent nature, which Azura's Star would facilitate. He had no other information, and I did not know what else to ask.

We parted company and I waited for your letter, hoping you had found Neithwyr and perhaps even the Star. I confess that as I lingered in Morrowind and never heard from you, I began to have doubts about your character. You'll forgive me for saying so, but I began to fear that you had taken the artifact for yourself. In fact, I was making plans to come to High Rock myself when your letter came at last.

The tale of your adventure in the cemetery at Grimtry Garden, and the information you gathered from the lycanthropic caretaker inspired me to have another meeting with Minerath. Thus began the second act of my story.

I returned to the Pot and Plaster, reasoning that the priest must frequent that area of the city to feel so comfortable setting clandestine meetings there. It took some time searching, but I finally found him, and as luck would have it, he was alone. I called his name, and he quickly drew me to a dark alleyway, nervous that we would be seen by a Temple ordinator.



It is a rare and beautiful thing when a victim insists on dragging his killer to a remote location.

I began at once asking about this fellow you mentioned, Neithwyr's mysterious patron Baliasir. He denied ever having heard the name. We were still in that easy, fairly conversational state when I attacked the priest. Of course, he was completely taken by surprise. In some ways, that can be more effective than an ambush from behind. No matter how many times I've done it, no one ever expected the friendly man they're talking to grip them by the neck.

I pressed hard against my favorite spot in the soft part of the throat, just below the thyroid cartilage, and it took him too long to react to my lunge and try pushing back. He began to lose consciousness, and I whispered that if I released my grip a little so he could talk and breathe, but he tried to call for help, I would snap his neck. He nodded, and I relaxed the pressure, just a bit.

I asked him again about Baliasir, and he shook his head, insisting that he had never heard the name. As frightened as he was, it seemed most likely that he was telling the truth, so I asked him more generally if he knew anyone else who might know something about Hadwaf Neithwyr. He told me that there was a woman present also during the ceremony, someone he introduced as his sister.

I remembered then the part of your letter about seeing the grave of Neithwyr's sister, Peryra. When I mentioned the name to the priest he nodded frantically, but I could see that the interrogation had reached an ending. There is, after all, something about being throttled that causes a man to answer

yes to every question. I snapped Minerath's neck, and returned home.

So now I'm again unsure how to proceed. I've made several more inquiries and several of the same people who met Neithwyr remember him being with a woman. A few recall him saying that she was his sister. One or two believe they remember her name as being Peryra, though they're not certain. No one, however, has heard of anyone named Baliasir.

If I do not hear word from you in response to this in the next couple of weeks, I will come to High Rock, because it's there that most people believe Neithwyr returned. I will only stay here long enough to see if there are other inquiries I can make only in Morrowind to bring us closer to our goal of recovering Azura's Star.

Your Friend,

Koniinge

Charwich-Koniinge Letters, v3

13 Last Seed, 3E 411

Wayrest, High Rock

My Dear Koniinge,

Please forgive the quality of the handwriting on this note, but I have not long to live. I can only reply in detail to one part of your letter, and that is that I fear Baliasir, contrary to what you've heard, is very much real. Had he been but a figment of that caretaker's imagination, I would not be feeling life ebb from me as I write this.

Lady Moorling has sent for healers, but I know they won't arrive in time. I just need to explain what happened so that you'll understand, and then all my affairs in this world will be ended. The one advantage of my condition is that I must be brief, without my habitually ornamental descriptions of people and places. I know that you will appreciate that at least.

It started when I came to Wayrest, and through my friend Lady Moorling and her court connections was introduced to Baliasir himself. I had to proceed carefully, not wanting him to know of our designs on Azura's Star which I presumed he possessed, given to him by his servant Hadwaf Neithwyr. His function in Queen Elysana's court seemed to be decorative, like so many of her courtiers, and it was not hard to differentiate myself from the others when we began conversing on the school of mysticism. Many of the other hangers-on at the palace can speak eloquently on the subject of the magickal arts, but it seemed that only he and I had deep knowledge of the craft.

Many a nobleman or adventurer who aren't mages by profession learn a spell or two from the useful schools of restoration or destruction. I told Baliasir quite truthfully that I had never learned any of that (oh, but I wish I knew some healing spells of the school of restoration now), but that I had developed some small skill in mysticism. Not enough to be a Psijic, of course, but in telekinesis, password, and spell reflection I had some amateur ability. He responded with compliments, which allowed me to segue into the topic of another spell of mysticism, the soul trap.

I told him I was unlearned but curious about that spell. And very naturally and comfortably, I was able to bring up the subject of Azura's Star, the endless well of souls.

Imagine how I had to hold back my excitement when he leaned in and whispered to me, "If that interests you, come to Klythic's Cairn west of the city tomorrow night."

I couldn't sleep at all. The only thing I could think of was how I would get the Star when he showed it to me. I still knew so little about Baliasir, his past and his power, but the opportunity was too great to let pass. Still, I must admit that I held hopes that you would arrive, as you threatened you might in your letter, so I might have someone of physical strength to aid me in my adventure.

I am growing weaker and weaker as I write this, so I must proceed with the basic facts. I went to the crypt the following night, and Baliasir led me through the maze of it to the repository where he kept the Star. We were talking quite casually, and as you've so often said, it seemed an excellent time for an ambush. I grabbed the Star and unsheathed my blade in what I felt was amazing speed.

He turned to me and I suddenly felt that I was moving like a snail. In a flash, Baliasir changed his form and became his true self, not man or mer, but daedra. A colossal daedra lord who swiped back the Star from my grasp and laughed at my sword as it thudded against his impenetrable hide.

I knew I had been beaten, and I threw myself towards the corridor. A blue flash of energy coursed through me, flung by Baliasir's claws. At once, I began to feel death. He could have smote me with a thousand spells, but he chose the one where I could lie down, and suffer, and hear him laugh. At the very least, I did not give him that pleasure.

Already struck, it was too late for me to cast a counterspell of mysticism, one to dispel the magicka, reflect it or absorb it as my own. But I did still know how to teleport myself, what mystics term 'Recall,' to whatever place I'd last set a spiritual anchor. I confess that at the time, I didn't remember where that would be. Perhaps in Bhoriane when I arrived in the Iliac Bay, or in Kambria, or in Grimtry Garden where I met the caretaker, or my hostess's palace in Wayrest. I prayed that I had not set the anchor last when I was with you in Morrowind, for it said that if the distance is too great, one can be caught between dimensions. Still, I was willing to take that chance, rather than being the plaything of Baliasir.

I cast the spell and found myself back on the doorstep of Lady Moorling's palace. To be out of the crypt and away from the daedra was a relief, but I had so hoped that I had been smart enough to cast an anchor near a Mages Guild or a temple where I could find a healer. Instead, knowing I was too weak to walk far, I beat on the door and was taken here, where I write this letter, lying in my bed.

As I wrote those words, dear Elysbetta, Lady Moorling, came in, quite tearfully and frantic, to tell me the healers should be here within but a few minutes. But I will be dead ere they arrive. I know these are my last words. Dear friend, stay away from this cursed place.

Yr Friend,

Charwich

Charwich-Koniinge Letters, v4

8 Sun's Dawn, 3E 412

Amiglith, Summurset Isle

My Good Friend, Lord Gemyn,

You must forgive me for not meeting you at the palace personally, but I've been unavoidably, tragically detained. I've left the front gate and door unlocked, and if you're reading this, you must have made it at least as far the antechamber to the east drawing room. Perhaps you've already wandered the estate and seen some of its delights before coming to this chamber: the seven fountains of marble and porphyry, the reflecting pool, the various groves, the colonnades and quincunx. I don't think you would have already gone to the second floor suites and the west wing as you would have had to pass this room first, and picked up this letter. But believe me, they're beautifully appointed with magnificent balustrades, winding staircases, intimate salons, and bedchambers worthy of your affluence.

The price of this property is exorbitant, certainly, but for a man like you who seeks only the best, this is the villa you must have. As you undoubtedly noticed as you arrived through the gates, there are several smaller buildings ideally suited to be guard stations. I know you are concerned with security.

I am an intensely greedy man, and there is nothing I would have liked more than to meet you here today, show you the grounds, fawn on you obsequiously, and collect a fat percentage of the cost of the sale when you bought this marvelous palace, as I'm sure you would have. My dilemma that caused my inexcusable absence began shortly after I arrived here early to make certain the villa was well-cleaned for your inspection. A man named Koniinge crept up behind me, and gripped me by the throat. Clamping his left hand over my

mouth and nose, and throttling me with his right hand, crushing the soft spot on my throat just below the thyroidal cartilage, he effectively strangled me in a few quick but very painful minutes.

I am currently buried in a pile of leaves in the north statuary parterre, close to the exceptional sculptural representation of the Transformation of Trinimac. It should not be too long before I am discovered: someone at my bank will surely notice my absence in due time. Koniinge might have buried me deeper, but he wanted to be ready for the arrival of his old partner, Charwich.

Perhaps part of you thinks it best to stop reading now, Lord Gelyn. You are looking around the antechamber and seeing nothing but doors. The large one you took to come in from the garden is locked now behind you, and without a better knowledge of the layout of the estate, I could not recommend you attempt to flee down a corridor that might easily come to a dead end. No. Much better to keep reading, and see where this is going.

Koniinge, it seems, was in a partnership with his friend Charwich to try to recover Azura's Star. They understood it to be in the possession of someone named Hadwaf Neithwyr, a man who conjured up the Daedra Prince Azura herself to acquire it. As Neithwyr originally hailed from High Rock, Charwich went there to look for him, while his partner searched Morrowind. They planned to communicate their findings by letters sent through couriers.

Charwich's first letter stated that he had found information that Neithwyr had a mysterious patron named Baliasir, a fact he had learned at a cemetery with a gravestone of Neithwyr's

sister Peryra and a lycanthropic caretaker. Koniinge replied back that he could find nothing about Baliasir, but believed that Neithwyr had returned to High Rock with Peryra after getting the Star. Charwich's last letter was a written on his deathbed, having sustained mortal wounds from his battle with Baliasir, who it seemed had been a mighty daedra lord.

Koniinge grieved for his friend, and traveled the span of the Empire to Wayrest, to pay his call of condolences on Lady Moorling, the woman at whose house Charwich had been staying. After making some inquiries, Koniinge learned that her ladyship had left the city, quite suddenly. She had been entertaining a guest named Charwich, and it was understood that he had died, though no one ever saw the body. Certainly no healers had been sent to her house on the 13th of Last Seed of last year. And no one in Wayrest, just like no one in Tel Aruhn, had ever heard of Baliasir.

Poor Koniinge was suddenly unsure of everything. He retraced his late partner's path through Boriane and Grimtry Gardens, but found that the Neithwyr family crypt was elsewhere, in a small town in the barony of Dwydden. There was indeed a lycanthropic caretaker, fortunately in human form at the time. When questioned (using the technique of strangulation, release, strangulation, release), he told Koniinge the story that he had told Charwich many months before.

Hadwaf and Peryra Neithwyr had returned to Dwydden, intent on settling old business. As the Star requires potent spirits for power, they thought they would begin small by capturing the spirit of the werewolf they knew of in the family graveyard. Sadly, for them, their grasp exceeded their reach. When the poor caretaker resumed his human form one morning, he



found himself lying next to the shredded, bloody bodies of the Neithwyr siblings. Distressed and fearful, he brought the corpses and all their possessions down into the crypt. They were still there when Charwich came, and so too was Azura's Star.

Koniinge now saw things clearly. The letters he had received from Charwich were lies, intended to keep him away. Undoubtedly with the assistance of Lady Moorling, his new partner, he had concocted stories, including one of his own demise, to trick Koniinge into abandoning the quest for the Star. It was clearly a sad statement on the nature of friendship, and one that needed immediate correction.

It took the better part of six months for Koniinge to find his old partner. Charwich and Lady Moorling had used the power of the Star to make themselves very wealthy and powerful. They assumed a number of different identities in their travels through High Rock and Skyrim, and then down to Valenwood and the Summurset Isle. Along the way, of course, the Star itself disappeared, as great daedric artifacts always do. The couple still had much wealth, but their love sadly fell on troubled times. When they reached Alinor, they parted ways.

One must assume that during their months together, Charwich must have told Lady Moorling about Koniinge. It's pleasant to think of the loving couple laughing over the stories they were telling him about the mythical and dangerous Baliisir. Charwich must not have given his former beloved a very accurate physical description, however, because when Lady Moorling (then under the identity of the Countess Zyliana) met Koniinge, she had no idea who he was. It came as quite a

surprise to her when he began strangling her and requesting information about her former paramour.

Before she died, she told Koniinge what Charwich's new name and title was, and where he was looking for a new palace. She even told him about me. Given all the twists and bends the last months' chase took him on, it was not difficult to find which palace Charwich was looking to buy, and what time his appointment was to view it. Then he had merely to arrive early, dispose of me, and wait.

There our story must sadly end. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours,

Syrix Goinithi,

Former Estate Banker

P.S.: Charwich—Turn around now, or don't. Your choice. Your friend, Koniinge.

# Chronicles Of Nchuleft

*Anonymous*

This is a chronicle of events of historical significance to the Dwemer Freehold Colony of Nchuleft. The text was probably recorded by an Altmer, for it is written in Aldmeris.

## 23. The Death of Lord Ihlendam

It happened in Second Planting (P.D. 1220) that Lord Ihlendam, on a journey in the Western Uplands, came to Nchuleft; and Protector Anchard and General Rkungthunch met him there, and Dalen-Zanchu also came to the meeting. They talked together long by themselves; but this only was known of their business, that they were to be friends of each other. They parted, and each went home to his own colony.

Bluthanch and her sons came to hear of this meeting, and saw in this secret meeting a treasonable plot against the Councils; and they often talked of this among themselves. When spring came, the Councils proclaimed, as usual, a Council Meet, in the halls of Bamz-Amschend. The people accordingly assembled, handfasted with ale and song, drinking bravely, and much and many things were talked over at the drink-table, and, among other things, were comparisons between different dwemer, and at last among the Councilors themselves.

One said that Lord Ihlendam excelled his fellow Councilors by far, and in every way. At this Councilor Bluthanch was very

angry, and said that she was in no way less than Lord Ihlendam, and that she was eager to prove it. Instantly both parties were so inflamed that they challenged each other to battle, and ran to their arms. But some citizens who were less drunk, and more understanding, came between them, and quieted them; and each went back to his colony, but nobody expected that they would ever meet in peace again together.

But then, in the fall, Lord Ihlendam received a message from Councilor Bluthanch, inviting him to a parlay at Hendor-Stardumz. And all Ihlendam's kin and citizens strongly urged him not to come, fearing treachery, but Lord Ihlendam would not listen to counsel, not even to carrying with him his honor guard. And sadly, it came to pass that, while traveling to Hendor-Stardumz, in Chinzinch Pass, a host of foul creatures set upon Lord Ihlendam and killed him, and all of his party. And many citizens said thereafter that Bluthanch and her sons had conjured these beasts and set them upon Lord Ihlendam, but nothing was proven. Lord Ihlendam lies buried at a place called Leftunch.

# Colony Status Report

*Falco Galenus*

As the Factor is no doubt aware, the mine has been expanded, yielding an increase in ore output by 18 percent. Weekly quotas are being met regularly.

During the last two shipments of supplies, two crates of wickwheat were noted to be rotten. The matter has been addressed with the supplier, and a refund should be arriving at the Factor's office sometime within the next few days.

At this time, there is nothing further to report.

Humbly,

Falco Galenus

# Confessions Of A Dunmer Skooma-Eater

*Anonymous*

Nothing is more revolting to Dunmer feeling than the sorry spectacle of another Dunmer enslaved by that derivative moon-sugar known as 'skooma.' And nothing is less appetising than listening to the pathetic tales of humiliation and degradation associated with a victim of this addictive drug.

Why, then, do I force myself upon you with this extended and detailed account of my sins and sorrows?

Because I hope that by telling my tale, the hope of redemption from this sorry state shall be more widely known. And because I hope that others who have also fallen into the sorry state of skooma addiction may therefore hear of my story, of how I fell into despair, and how I once again found myself and freed myself from my own self-imposed chains.

Because it is widely known to all Khajiit, who may be expected to know, that there is no cure for addiction to skooma, that once a slave to skooma, always a slave to skooma. Because this is widely known, it is taken to be true. But it is not true, and I am living proof.

There is no miracle cure. There is no potion to be taken. There is no magical incantation which frees you from the thrill of

skooma running through your blood.

But it is through the understanding of that thrill, and the acceptance of the lust within oneself for that thrill, and the casting aside of the shame that the thrillseeker feels when he cannot set aside what becomes in the end his only comfort and pleasure, it is through this knowledge and understanding that the victim comes to the place where choices may be made, where despair and hope may be separated.

In short, only knowledge and acceptance can deliver into the slave's hands the key that opens his shackles and sets him free.

[The narrative of Tilse Sendas' tale carries the reader through the stages of early infatuation, ecstatic obsession, and profound degradation of her addiction, and in the course of the story she subtly enables the reader to discover that the hopelessness of the addict comes from the addict's own unconscious assumption that only a helpless and foolish person could become addicted to skooma, and that, consequently, no such helpless and foolish person could ever achieve the admittedly difficult task of renouncing, once tasted, the exquisite delights of the skooma. Tilse Sendas shows that once the addict overcomes the burden of her own self-despising, that there is the possibility of redemption. And, against all of society's dearly held beliefs, she says that it is not altogether clear that the addict SHOULD renounce the sugar, but that it is only one of the choices that the skooma addict must make. Tilse Sendas' casual proposition that skooma addiction is not necessarily a sign of moral and personal weakness is essential to her thesis that a cure is possible, but it has not endeared her or her book to the upright and conservative elements of Dunmer society.]

# Construction Contract

*Duke Vedam Dren*

In this letter, the symbol has been substituted for the player character's name.

By the Grace of ALMSIVI, Lords and Rulers of All

His Grace, the Duke of Vvardenfell, hereby grants the right to build a stronghold and village of no more than fifty persons and of no more than 400 feet in any direction. may hire no more than 10 Men-At-Arms and retainers to defend the stronghold.

must protect the settlers who dwell within the bounds of the stronghold. must swear loyalty to the crown of His Grace, the Duke of Vvardenfell, and to ALMSIVI.

If does not abide by these terms, this contract is null and void and the rights to the stronghold reverts to His Grace, the Duke of Vvardenfell.

Seal of His Grace, Duke of Vvardenfell

Duke Vedam Dren

Seal of the Vassal



# Cure Blight Potion Notice

*Jolda*

Customers,

I am stocking potions for treatment of the Blight as fast as I can get my orders in from Sadrith Mora. Please keep checking back as I receive new shipments at random times. In the meantime, I recommend you stay indoors as much as possible, use common disease resistance potions for prevention, and treat outbreaks with cure common disease potions.

Jolda

# Custom Armor Price List

## *Bols Indalen*

When your life is on the line, you demand the very best.

And the very best is...

Hand-crafted glass, adamantium, and ebony armors, custom-fitted to your frame, provide the very best protection. For generations, the Indalen family have provided custom armors for the greatest nobles and warriors of Mournhold—and at a price you can afford.

You provide the materials and pay for our peerless craftsmanship... and in 24 hours, you can be wearing your very own custom armor.

### EBONY ARMORS

Ebony Cuirass: 30 raw ebony and 24500 gold

Ebony Left Pauldron: 21 raw ebony and 16800 gold

Ebony Right Pauldron: 21 raw ebony and 16800 gold

Ebony Left Bracer: 12 raw ebony and 7000 gold

Ebony Right Bracer: 12 raw ebony and 7000 gold

Ebony Greaves: 18 raw ebony and 15400 gold

Ebony Boots: 9 raw ebony and 7000 gold

Ebony Helm: 12 raw ebony and 10500 gold

### GLASS ARMORS

Glass Cuirass: 30 raw glass and 19600 gold

Glass Left Pauldron: 21 raw glass and 13400 gold

Glass Right Pauldron: 21 raw glass and 13400 gold

Glass Left Bracer: 12 raw glass and 5600 gold

Glass Right Bracer: 12 raw glass and 5600 gold

Glass Greaves: 18 raw glass and 12300 gold

Glass Boots: 9 raw glass and 5600 gold

Glass Helm: 12 raw glass and 8400 gold

### ADAMANTIUM ARMORS

Adamantium Cuirass: 10 adamantium ore and 6000 gold

Adamantium Left Pauldron: 7 adamantium ore and 500 gold

Adamantium Right Pauldron: 7 adamantium ore and 500 gold

Adamantium Left Bracer: 4 adamantium ore and 600 gold

Adamantium Right Bracer: 4 adamantium ore and 600 gold

Adamantium Greaves: 6 adamantium ore and 6000 gold

Adamantium Boots: 3 adamantium ore and 4200 gold

Adamantium Helm: 4 adamantium ore and 3000 gold

# Custom Fur Armor Price List

## *Brynjolfr*

You call yourself a hunter, now prove it. Hiding in the wilds of Solstheim are the elusive white snow bears and snow wolves. It is said their fur can protect against the most frigid cold. Kill these beasts, claim their pelts, and you could be the proud owner of...

Imagine beautiful light white fur armor, made from the pelts of Solstheim's mysterious snow wolves and snow bears. Never before have I forged such armor, because nobody has been skilled enough to bring down the beasts. Could you be the first?

Kill the beasts, bring me their pelts and enough gold, and I'll craft the best light armor found on Solstheim or anywhere else.

### SNOW BEAR ARMORS

Snow Bear Cuirass: 5 snow bear pelts and 6000 gold

Snow Bear Left Pauldron: 2 snow bear pelts and 1000 gold

Snow Bear Right Pauldron: 2 snow bear pelts and 1000 gold

Snow Bear Left Gauntlet: 2 snow bear pelts and 1000 gold

Snow Bear Right Gauntlet: 2 snow bear pelts and 1000 gold

Snow Bear Greaves: 4 snow bear pelts and 5000 gold

Snow Bear Boots: 3 snow bear pelts and 3000 gold

Snow Bear Helm: 2 snow bear pelts and 2000 gold

#### SNOW WOLF ARMORS

Snow Wolf Cuirass: 5 snow wolf pelts and 6000 gold

Snow Wolf Pauldron: 2 snow wolf pelts and 1000 gold

Snow Wolf Pauldron: 2 snow wolf pelts and 1000 gold

Snow Wolf Left Gauntlet: 2 snow wolf pelts and 1000 gold

Snow Wolf Right Gauntlet: 2 snow wolf pelts and 1000 gold

Snow Wolf Greaves: 4 snow wolf pelts and 5000 gold

Snow Wolf Boots: 3 snow wolf pelts and 3000 gold

Snow Wolf Helm: 2 snow wolf pelts and 2000 gold

# Dagoth Ur's Plans

## *Tribunal Temple*

[The following documents were prepared by Temple scholars and agents of the Inquisition for Lord Vivec.]

From interrogation of captured Sleepers and other Sixth House cultists, from study of manuscripts written by cultists and victims of dream-induced mania, from interviews with Lord Vivec concerning historical campaigns against Red Mountain, and from broad conjectures and inferences made upon these materials, this is our best estimate of Dagoth Ur's motivations and objectives in this most recent phase of his war upon Morrowind.

### Phase 1:

Secure Red Mountain against Tribunal intruders. Deny Tribunal access to the Heart, weakening the Temple while securing Red Mountain for the creation of Akulakhan. Keep the construction of Second Numidium a secret.

### Phase 2:

Create passive servants in ever-widening circles around Red Mountain by broadcasting compulsions couched in dream imagery to susceptible subjects in their sleep. Establish a major operational base at Kogoruhn for further operations in the ash wastes. Establish smaller bases near small port villages and in

lower-class waterfront districts in Vivec. Infiltrate and subvert smuggling syndicates. Recruit willing followers from disaffected populations, including the underworld, the poor, and rabid anti-Imperial activists.

Phase 3:

Expand from smaller bases to other towns and villages, and recruit and indoctrinate subjects made susceptible by dream sendings. Occupy abandoned towers and ruins, and train corrupted cultists as raiders and irregular troops. Identify, discredit, and decimate possible sources of political resistance.

Phase 4:

Use assassination and terror to weaken, distract, and disrupt the Legions and the Imperial bureaucracy, along with their Hlaalu sympathizers. Inspire popular uprisings of the native poor against the foreign rich and powerful. Summon Sleepers and Dreamers to Dagoth Ur to work on Second Numidium.

Dagoth Ur thinks on a large time scale—for the most part, in the outside-of-time scale of the divine consciousness. He thinks that only obstacles of mythic scale are worth consideration. He believes he is fated to rule Morrowind, to free Morrowind of the Empire, and to become the new hard-loving Father of Morrowind. Given that perspective, the only opposing forces Dagoth Ur worries about are the Tribunal, the Daedra, the Emperor, and the Incarnate.

With the Tribunal's loss of Sunder and Keening, and with the diminishing resources of Vivec, Almalexia, and Sotha Sil, Dagoth Ur believes he has permanently gained a decisive strategic advantage. On a mortal timescale, the battle may last



for centuries, but the outcome is not in doubt. And Akulakhan may be a device for dramatically reducing the time scale for a decisive victory.

The myth of dynamic invincibility of the Emperor and the Empire has long been an unquantifiable and intimidating threat, but recent rumors of unrest in Cyrodiil, of the Emperor's failing health, and the unsettled question of the succession have diminished the scale of that threat. Nonetheless, the revelation that the Nerevarine is a pawn of Imperial intelligence, hand-picked and sent to Morrowind by the Emperor himself, may cause Dagoth Ur considerable anxiety.

The Daedra represent no coherent obstacle to Dagoth Ur. Nonetheless, their personal abilities and their influence upon their fanatic followers is considerable, their motives and actions obscure, and Dagoth Ur remains concerned about them.

The Incarnate represents Saint Nerevar, a mythic force that has previously defeated Dagoth Ur, and Dagoth Ur is obsessed with this threat. At the same time, Dagoth Ur knew Nerevar personally, knew that he was a mortal man with faults and weaknesses. Dagoth Ur may have some hope of seducing or negotiating with Nerevar's reincarnation. Further, when Nerevar and the Tribunal defeated Dagoth Ur, they were strong and allied; now the Nerevarine and the Tribunal are weak, opposed, and divided. Therefore, though the Nerevarine and the Tribunal represent the most serious threat to Dagoth Ur's plans, he still has good reason to believe that this time he will prevail.

[Much of the following timescale is based on inference from incomplete information.]

before 2E 882: Dagoth Ur and his kin lie dreaming beneath the sills of Red Mountain.

2E 882: Dagoth Ur and his ash vampires awake refreshed and emerge from lower Red Mountain into the Heart Chamber. Dagoth Ur ritually binds himself and his brethren as heartwights in a ritual of his own devising. First stages of construction of Second Numidium [conceived during the Long Sleep] are begun by heartwights and atronach constructs in a chamber near the Heart of Lorkhan. Keeping the Second Numidium project a secret from the Tribunal is a high priority.

2E 882: The Tribunal arrive at Red Mountain for their annual ritual bathing in the heart's power. Dagoth Ur and ash vampires ambush the Tribunal. The Tribunes are driven away, and prevented from restoring themselves with Kagrenac's tools at the Heart of Lorkhan.

2E 882-3E 417: Intermittent Tribunal campaigns assault Red Mountain. The Tribunal and supporting forces seek to force access to the Heart Chamber, but are repeatedly driven back. Dagoth Ur recruits Sleepers and Dreamers through dream sendings. Cultists are recruited through dream compulsion. Weaker cultists become corpus beasts; stronger cultists advance through stages towards the powers of the Ascended Sleepers.

3E 400: Kogoruhn reoccupied by Dagoth Uthol and fortified as an advance base for Sixth House operations. Blight storms more frequent and widespread. Soul sickness spreads in regions close to Red Mountain.

3E 410: Sixth House bases founded near Gnaar Mok and in waterfront areas of Vivec. Sixth House operatives exploit smuggler organizations and communications to spread their influence among victims unbalanced by Dagoth Ur's dream sendings.

3E 415: Small cells of Sixth House cultists in every town in Vvardenfell. Larger Sixth House operations are concealed in remote dungeons where creatures are bred and cultists are trained for the coming struggle.

3E 417: Almalexia and Sotha Sil lose the artifacts Keening and Sunder to Dagoth Odros and Vemyn. Vivec rescues Almalexia and Sotha Sil, but failing to recover Keening and Sunder, the Tribunal retreat from Red Mountain in disorder. Surviving Buoyant Armiger companions know the Tribunal was forced to retreat, but do not know how serious a reversal the Tribunal has suffered. The Three Tribunes return to their respective capitals and continue to perform their ritual functions. The Tribunes continue to grow weaker without access to the Heart, and because of resources required to support the Ghostfence. The inner circle of the Temple priesthood has begun to suspect the Tribunes have suffered seriously from wounds and demoralization in the wake of reverses at Red Mountain, but do not recognize the scale of the problem.

3E 426-427: Campaign of Sixth House assassinations of prominent Imperial citizens and Hlaalu Imperial sympathizers. Sudden increase in number and seriousness of attacks by cultists and victims deranged by soul sickness.

# Deed To Indrele's House

*Velanda Omani*

By the Grace of ALMSIVI, Lords and Rulers of All

Know all Dunmer by these words that I, Muthsera Hlaalu Velando Omani, have legally purchased the home in Seyda Neen of the Dunmer Indrele Rathryon and the accompanying land for the sum of 3000 Imperial Drakes. Witness our hands on this third day of Evening Star, 3E 426.

Seal of the seller

Indrele Rathryon

Seal of the buyer

Velanda Omani

# Diary Of A Lost Sailor

*Anonymous*

Day One:

My crew and I were caught in a fierce storm just outside Ebonheart. We managed to make it to safety, but are now completely lost. Without a cargo or a ship there isn't much we can do. I will try to find passage for us somewhere. We are unarmed and ill-equipped to defend ourselves. Hopefully someone will take pity on us. The crew is waiting on the shore for my return.

Day Three:

I am confident I will find a village inland that will have access to a ship. I think I see smoke off in the distance. Maybe tomorrow will bring a change of luck.

Day Seven:

Those cursed villagers! May their fields dry up and their children suffer! They have steered me completely in the wrong direction. I firmly believe I am going further and further inland. If I don't see a fishing village soon I will be forced to turn back. I have been subsiding on roots and grasses and grow weaker every day. I must find a way for my crew and I to get home.

Boiled my shoes to make broth. I had heard it would work. It didn't. Now I have no shoes.

Day Twelve:

This is pointless. I have been directed to a fishing village to the east but so far have seen or heard nothing.

Killed a rat today. It was the most food I have eaten in days. Tasted worse than scribe jelly but better than shoes.

Day Thirteen:

From my vantage point in a tall tree I finally see a town! While I do not see any sign of water it does look to be a fairly sizable town, and may have a trade route to the sea. I should reach it tomorrow.

Day Twenty:

Lost. All is lost. I have, once again, been misled. After entering the town, I came across a man who offered to help. Weak from hunger and exhaustion I believed him, and followed him underground to his home. They have a massive underground system of tunnels and old sewers here. It's really quite amazing. Unfortunately I seem to have made a rude comment about his sister being smoldering and he beat me senseless. When I awoke I was in this pit with no way out in sight. I can see up to the floor above, but no one responds to my cries for help. I fear I will end my days here. Oh, why did I ever leave my crew! They must be giving up hope now, as am I.

Day Twenty-five:

Woke up to hear noises of construction from the floor above. Ran to the opening and cried out. It was to no avail, however. Instead they tossed down the most horrible creature. It is rank and ugly and eyes me in the most vicious way. I have retreated to this corner and await my doom. It will get hungry soon, and I fear it sees me as its only source of food. I am too weak to defend myself. This will be my last entry. If someone finds my bones, bury me facing the sea, wherever that may be.

# Directions To Caius Cosades

*Glabrio Bellienus*

In this letter, the symbol has been substituted for the player character's name.

You have been given these directions and a package of documents. Do not show them to anyone. Do not attempt to read the documents in the package. The package has been sealed, and your tampering will be discovered and punished.

Follow these directions.

Proceed to the town of Balmora in Vvardenfell District. Report to a man named Caius Cosades. He will be your superior and patron; you will follow his orders. His residence is not known, but ask at the cornerclub called "South Wall". People there will know where to find Caius Cosades. When you report to Caius Cosades, deliver the package of documents to him, and wait for further orders.

Remember. You owe your life and freedom to the Emperor. Serve him well, and you will be rewarded. Betray him, and you will suffer the fate of all traitors.

I have the Honor to prepare this at the direction of his Most Sovereign Majesty the Emperor Uriel Septim,

Glabrio Bellienus



# Personal Secretary to the Emperor

# Dispel Potion Formula

*Anonymous*

1 unit pearl

1 unit moon sugar

Crush pearl to form a power.

Heat moon sugar until it melts and begins turning brown.

Add pearl dust and remove from heat.

Cool with water and add to an alembic.

Boil the mixture and collect the vapor.

# Divine Metaphysics

*Anonymous*

In the words of Baladas Demnevanni, Divine Metaphysics “is an explanation of how the Dwemer tried to make a new god, Anumidium, using Kagrenac’s tools and the sacred tones on Lorkhan’s Heart.”

# Dren's Note

*Orvas Dren*

Ranes and Navil,

You have served me well over the years. My brother has been trying to stop our business. We've lost over half our shipments recently. The Duke may be my brother, but if he keeps interfering I am afraid he must be killed. I will be next in line and can consolidate my power before the Redorans even come up with a candidate. I am telling you this so that you know the risks you may be taking. If you are unwilling, I will accept your word of honor not to speak of our business. If you stay, I will reward you.

D

# Dwemer Museum Welcome

*Master Aryon*

Welcome to my Dwemer Museum. This exhibition represents a lifetime of traveling and collecting artifacts from Dwemer sites all over Morrowind. I am always finding new things to display so please check back often. And be wary of the centurion at the end of the hall. He is in a state of disrepair and is prone to unpredictable behavior.

Master Aryon

# Eec Stock Certificate

*Carnius Magius*

In this letter, the symbol has been substituted for the player character's name.

This certifies that is the owner of

One Hundred

fully paid and non-assessable shares, of the par value of one (1) Septim each, of the common stock of the Raven Rock division of the East Empire Company (hereafter referred to as "the Company"), transferrable on the books of the Company by the Holder himself in person or by duly authorized representative of the Holder upon surrender of this certificate properly endorsed. This certificate and the shares represented hereby are issued and shall be held subject to all provisions of the Articles of Incorporation and of the by-laws of the Company (copies of which are on file at the Company's main office) to all which by acceptance the holder hereof assents. This certificate is not valid unless undersigned by the Transfer Agent and registered by the Registrar. In Witness Whereof the Company has caused this certificate to be executed by the facsimile signatures of its duly authorized officers and a facsimile of its corporate seal to be printed hereon.

Signed

C. Magius

# Elante's Notes

## *Elante*

At last! After these many years of searching, I'm sure I've located the proper caverns. The Crystals are just as the stories describe; "...wrapped in crystalline embrace, the silver pierced brow of the Traitors shall ward his sleep." This must be the place! This must be Mordrin Hanin's tomb!

Badama and I have established quarters here. No one shall steal my discovery. To imagine what treasures are hidden within this stone. Those Guild fools! Mocking my studies. The Powers I shall unleash upon their miserable skins. Tomorrow we will summon workers to begin excavation.

The Summoning was successful, although Badama lacks concentration. We nearly had a Storm Atronach, but her poor skills allowed it to escape. We shall make do with vermin. To think of the earth we could have riven with the Atronach. Now we are forced to watch the Scamps scrape the surface with picks and shovels. Hideous, miserable creatures.

Otherworldly, vermin, bastards! Fodder for my cauldron! Scamps are the most untrue of servants. I should enlist the efforts of the Giant Rats of the wilderness and have greater success. Whining, thieving, lazy and treacherous... Scamps! One attempted to flee, stealing a number of potions in his flight. I made short work of him. Perhaps the others will think



deeply before following his path. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate one of my best Potions of Rising Force.

Success! I discovered the traces of worked stone, which when inspected closely were obviously of Daedric workmanship. After great effort and much moving of earth and stone, the remaining blockage fell away with a great splash into a pool of loathsome water. The foul and noisome air which escaped nearly choked me. The Scamps broke into a great frenzy, trying to hurl themselves through the opening, shrieking with either terror or joy. The creatures are clearly insane.

I've been forced to erect a gate at the opening. The Scamps still attempt to escape into its maw. I've placed Badama as sentry to monitor the worthless creatures. Perhaps they'll tear her to pieces in her sleep. No, I still require her talents in the upcoming search.

The baleful effects of this place are telling on me. I've only just managed to distill some potions to aid us in our endeavor. Soon though, we will enter the chambers and finally realize a life's ambition. Still, though we find the tomb, it may be for naught if we cannot locate the "Key Guardian". Sometimes I hear voices in my dreams calling on Mordins's name. Is it terror or adulation?

# Elbert Nermarc's Private Note

*Elbert Nermarc*

[Between scrawled calculations and indecipherable symbols, very little can be made of this text, save the signature: "Elbert Nermarc"]

# Erna's Note To Brandr

*Erna*

Dearest Brandr,

I decided to take a walk on the banks of the Isild. The river is so beautiful this time of year, don't you think? Come find me, and we shall talk about our future, and freedom from your shrew of a wife.

Your love,

Erna

# Famed Artifacts Of Tamriel

*Anonymous*

Listed below are some of the more storied items found throughout Tamrielic lore. The existence of some has been proven, while others may simply be the stuff of legend. Regardless, these items have found their way into the tales we tell our children, and our children will tell their children, and are inextricably linked to the

Sometimes called the Armor of Morihhaus or the gift of Kynareth, this is an ancient cuirass of unsurpassable quality. It grants the wearer power to absorb health, resist the effects of spells, and cure oneself of poison when used. It is said that whenever Kynareth deigns the wearer unworthy, the Lord's Mail will be taken away and hidden for the next chosen one.

The Ebony Mail is a breastplate created before recorded history by the Dark Elven goddess Boethiah. It is she who determines who should possess the Ebony Mail and for how long a time. If judged worthy, its power grants the wearer added resistance of fire, magicka, and grants a magical shield. It is Boethiah alone who determines when a person is ineligible to bear the Ebony Mail any longer, and the goddess can be very capricious.

Spell Breaker, superficially a Dwemer tower shield, is one of the most ancient relics of Tamriel. Aside from its historical importance in the Battle of Rourken-Shalidor, the Spell Breaker

protects its wielder almost completely from any spell caster, either by reflecting magicks or silencing any mage about to cast a spell. It is said that Spell Breaker still searches for its original owner, and will not remain the property of anyone else for long. For most, possessing Spell Breaker for any length of time is power enough.

The Paladin's Blade is an ancient claymore with offensive capabilities surpassed only by its own defenses. It lends the wielder health, protects him or her from fire, and reflects any spells cast against the wielder back to the caster. Seldom has Chrysamere been wielded by any bladesman for any length of time, for it chooses not to favor one champion.

The Staff of Magnus, one of the elder artifacts of Tamriel, was a metaphysical battery of sorts for its creator, Magnus. When used, it absorbs an enemy's health and mystical energy. In time, the Staff will abandon the mage who wields it before he becomes too powerful and upsets the mystical balance it is sworn to protect.

The Warlock's Ring of the Archmage Syrabane is one of the most popular relics of myth and fable. In Tamriel's ancient history, Syrabane saved all of the continent by judicious use of his Ring, and ever since, it has helped adventurers with less lofty goals. It is best known for its ability to reflect spells cast at its wearer and to improve his or her speed and to restore health. No adventurer can wear the Warlock's Ring for long, for it is said that the Ring is Syrabane's alone to command.

The Ring of Phynaster was made hundreds of years ago by a man who needed good defenses to survive his adventurous life. Thanks to the Ring, Phynaster lived for hundreds of years, and since then it has passed from person to person. The Ring

improves its wearer's overall resistance to poison, magicka, and shock. Still, Phynaster was cunning and cursed the ring so that it eventually disappears from its holder's possessions and returns to another resting place, discontent to stay anywhere but with Phynaster himself.

The Ring of the Khajiit is an ancient relic, hundreds of years older than Rajhin, the thief that made the Ring famous. It was Rajhin who used the Ring's powers to make himself invisible and as quick as the breath of wind. Using the Ring, he became the most successful burglar in Elsweyr's history. Rajhin's eventual fate is a mystery, but according to legend, the Ring rebelled against such constant use and disappeared, leaving Rajhin helpless before his enemies.

Also known as the Vampire's Mace, the Mace of Molag Bal drains its victims of magicka and gives it to the bearer. It also has the ability to transfer an enemy's strength to its wielder. Molag Bal has been quite free with his artifact. There are many legends about the Mace. It seems to be a favorite for vanquishing wizards.

Ever the vain one, Clavicus Vile made a masque suited to his own personality. The bearer of the Masque is more likely to get a positive response from the people of Tamriel. The higher his personality, the larger the bonus. The best known story of the Masque tells the tale of Avalea, a noblewoman of some renown. As a young girl, she was grossly disfigured by a spiteful servant. Avalea made a dark deal with Clavicus Vile and received the Masque in return. Though the Masque did not change her looks, suddenly she had the respect and admiration of everyone. A year and a day after her marriage to a well connected baron, Clavicus Vile reclaimed the Masque.

Although pregnant with his child, Avalea was banished from the Baron's household. Twenty one years and one day later, Avalea's daughter claimed her vengeance by slaying the Baron.

The Dark Brotherhood has coveted this ebony dagger for generations. This mythical artifact is capable of slaying any creature instantly. History does not record any bearers of Mehrune's Razor. However, the Dark Brotherhood was once decimated by a vicious internal power struggle. It is suspected that the Razor was involved.

Another of Hircine's artifacts was the Cuirass of the Savior's Hide. The Cuirass has the special ability to resist magicka. Legend has it that Hircine rewarded his peeled hide to the first and only mortal to have ever escaped his hunting grounds. This unknown mortal had the hide tailored into this magical Cuirass for his future adventures. The Savior's Hide has a tendency to travel from hero to hero as though it has a mind of its own.

One of the more mysterious artifacts is the Spear of Bitter Mercy. Little to nothing is known about the Spear. There are no recorded histories but many believe it to be of Daedric origin. The only known legend about it is its use by a mighty hero during the fall of the Battlespire. The hero was aided by the Spear in the defeat of Mehrunes Dagon and the recapturing of the Battlespire. Since that time, the Spear of Bitter Mercy has made few appearances within Tamriel.

The Daedric Scourge is a mighty mace forged from sacred ebony in the Fires of Fickledire. The legendary weapon of Mackkan, it was once a fierce weapon used to send spirits of black back into Oblivion. The weapon has the ability to summon creatures from Oblivion, Once a tool used against the

Daedric Lords in the Battlespire, it now roams the land with adventurers.

Legend has it that the Bow of Shadows was forged by the Daedra Nocturnal. The legendary ranger, Raerlas Ghile, was granted the Bow for a secret mission that failed, and the Bow was lost. Raerlas did not go down without a hearty fight and is said to have, with the aid of the Bow, taken scores of his foes with him. The Bow grants the user the ability of invisibility and increased speed. Many sightings of the Bow of Shadows have been reported, and it is even said that the sinister Dark Elf assassin of the Second Era, Dram, once wielded this bow.

Randagulf of Clan Begalin goes down in Tamrielic history as one of the mightiest warriors from Skyrim. He was known for his courage and ferocity in battle and was a factor in many battles. He finally met his fate when King Harald conquered Skyrim. King Harald respected this great hero and took Randagulf's gauntlets for his own. After King Harald died, the gauntlets disappeared. The King claimed that the Fists granted the bearer added strength.

The Ice Blade of the Monarch is truly one of Tamriel's most prized artifacts. Legend has it that the Evil Archmage Almion Celmo enchanted the claymore of a great warrior with the soul of a Frost Monarch, a stronger form of the more common Frost Atronach. The warrior, Thurnarr Assi, was to play a part in the assassination of a great king in a far off land, and become the new leader. The assassination failed and the Archmage was imprisoned. The Ice Blade freezes all who feel its blade. The Blade circulates from owner to owner, never settling in one place for long.



Little is known of this prize but it is said that it lends the wearer the ability to blend in with their surroundings.

The Boots of the Apostle are a true mystery. The wearer of the boots is rumored to be able to levitate, though nobody has ever seen them used.

This ring is a prized possession for any apprentice to magic. It lends the wearer the ability to increase their intelligence and wisdom, thus making their use of magic more efficient. The High Wizard Carni Asron is said to be the creator of the Ring. It was a construct for his young apprentices while studying under his guidance. After Asron's death, the Ring and several other possessions vanished and have been circulated throughout Tamriel.

No facts are known about this Ring, but the title and the few rumors lend one to think it grants the wearer added speed.

One of the more deadly and rare artifacts in Tamriel is the Vampiric Ring. It is said that the Ring has the power to steal its victim's health and grant it to the wearer. The exact nature and origin of the Ring is wholly unknown, but many elders speak of its evil creation in Morrowind long, long ago by a cult of Vampire followers. The Vampiric Ring is an extremely rare artifact and is only seen every few hundred cycles of the moons.

Eleidon was a holy knight of legend in Breton history. He was a sought after man for his courage and determination to set all wrongs right. In one story, it is said that he rescued a Baron's daughter from sure death at the hands of an evil warlord. For his reward, the Baron spent all of his riches to have an

enchanted shield built for Eidelon. The Shield granted Eleidon the opportunity to heal his wounds.

Hasedoki was said to have been a very competitive wizard. He wandered the land in search for a wizard who was greater than he. To the best of all knowledge, he never found a wizard who could meet up to his challenge. It is said that he felt so lonely and isolated because so many feared his power, that he bonded his life-force into his very own staff, where his soul remains to this very day. Magic users all over Tamriel have been searching for this magical staff. Granting its wielder a protection of magicka, it is a sure prize for any magic user.

The King of Worms was said to have left behind one of his prized possessions, the Bloodworm Helm. The Helm is a construct of magically formed bone. The Helm allows the user to summon skeletons and control the undead. It would be a prized artifact to a necromancer.

This cuirass is one of the greatest artifacts any collector or hero could own. It is constructed of real dragon bone and was enchanted by the first Imperial Battlemage, Zurin Arctus, in the early years of the Third Era. It is a truly exquisite piece of work and many have sought to possess it. The properties of the Cuirass allow the wearer to resist fire, and to damage an enemy with a blast of fire. Little is known about the involvement of Zurin Arctus with the enchantment of the Cuirass, but an old tale speaks of a debt that he owed to a traveling warrior. Like the warrior, the Dragonbone Mail never stays put for long.

The Skull Crusher is an amazingly large, and powerful weapon. The Warhammer was created in a fire, magically fueled by the Wizard, Dorach Gusal, and was forged by the great

weaponsmith, Hilbongard Rolamus. The steel is magically hardened and the weight of the weapon is amazingly light, which makes for more powerful swings and deadly blows. The Warhammer was to be put on display for a festival, but thieves got it first. The Skull Crusher still travels Tamriel in search of its creators.

This magical Sword is almost a complete mystery. Thieves tell tales about its golden make and how it was actually forged by ancient dragons of the North. Their tales claim that it was given to a great knight who was sworn to protect the dragons. The Sword lends its wielder the ability to do fire damage on an enemy. Goldbrand has not been sighted in recent history and is said to be awaiting a worthy hero.

Black Marsh was once known to be inhabited with what the Argonians called the Wamasus. Northern men considered them to be intelligent dragons with lightning for blood. One such mighty beast, Haynekhtnamet, was slain by the Northern men, though it took 7 days and nights, and a score of men. One of the surviving men took a fang home as a trophy. The fang was carved down into a blade and fashioned into a small dagger. The Dagger mysteriously houses some of the beast's magical properties and grants the user the ability to do shock damage on an opponent. This unique Dagger is seen occasionally by traveling heroes.

The Umbra Sword was enchanted by the ancient witch Naenra Waerr, and its sole purpose was the entrapment of souls. Used in conjunction with a soul gem, the Sword allows the wielder the opportunity to imprison an enemy's soul in the gem. Naenra was executed for her evil creation, but not before she was able to hide the Sword. The Umbra Sword is very choosy

when it comes to owners and therefore remains hidden until a worthy one is found.

All that is known of this Ring is that it may grant the user protection from certain elements. Even the name Denstagmer is a mystery.

One of Valenwood's legendary heroes is Oreyne Bearclaw. Son of King Faume Toad-Eye, he was a respected clan hunter and a future leader. Wood Elven legend claims Oreyne single handedly defeated Glenhwyfaunva, the witch-serpent of the Elven wood, forever bringing peace to his clan. Oreyne would go on to accomplish numerous other deeds, eventually losing his life to the Knahaten Flu. His Helm stood as a monument of his stature for future generations to remember. The Helm was lost eventually, as the Clan split, and is now a treasured artifact for adventurers. The Helm of Oreyne Bearclaw is rumored to improve the wearers agility and endurance.

Probably the most rare and even outlawed item of all the great prizes is the Daedric Crescent Blade. The Blade was used by Mehrunes Dagon's Daedric forces in the capture of the Imperial Battlement. These extremely unique Blades were gathered up and destroyed after the Battlement was recaptured by the Empire. All but one it seems. Though the Empire believes them all to be destroyed, it is rumored that one still remains in existence, somewhere in Tamriel, though none have ever seen it. The Blade lends its wielder the ability to do great damage on an enemy and allows him to paralyze and put heavy wear on his enemy's armor. Quite the prize for any mighty warrior, if it does indeed exist.

# Fellowship Of The Temple

*Archcanon Tholer Saryoni*

I have been asked to write this guidebook for outsiders who are unfamiliar with the Tribunal Temple, and interested in joining.

All those who are earnest, and who are willing to submit to the wisdom of Blessed Almsivi, Triune Grace, the saints, and the priests, are welcome to the Fellowship of the Tribunal Temple. The Temple is the religion of Morrowind and Dunmer people, and has been for generation upon generation. With guidance and counsel of Almalexia, Vivec, and Sotha Sil, the Anticipations, and all the hosts of saints of ancestors, the Temple guards and protects the lands and peoples of Morrowind.

Those who follow the Tribunal must have the Personality to lead others and the Willpower to resist the world's temptations. When violence is needful, we fight with staves and hammers, armored only in our faith. We study Restoration and Alchemy to heal the people, and Mysticism to learn more of the divine. We must also study Conjunction to speak with the spirits of our ancestors and protect against those who traffic with the Four Corners.

Those interested in joining the Tribunal Temple should speak to priests at the temples in Ald'ruhn, Balmora, Molag Mar, and

Ghostgate, or with priests at the High Fane in the Temple Compound in Vivec.

The Temple believes that Almalexia, Vivec, and Sotha Sil were mortal guardians of Morrowind who walked the earth, defeated the Dunmer's greatest enemies, the Nords and the Dwarves, and achieved divine substance through superhuman discipline and virtue and supernatural wisdom and insight. Like loving ancestors, they guard and counsel their followers. Like stern parents, they punish sin and error. Like generous relatives, they share their bounty among the greatest and least, according to their needs.

Your fourfold duties are to: Faith, Family, Masters, and all that is good. Perform holy quests and bring luster to the Temple. Never transgress against your brothers or sisters, and never dishonor your house or your ancestors. Serve and protect the poor and weak, and honor your elders and clan.

For those who would be wise, these sacred books will be of interest.

### Saryoni's Sermons

Learn from the teachings of Vivec, and from the Archcanon's sermons on the Seven Graces.

### Lives of the Saints

Members of the Temple who wish to be virtuous will model their lives on the lives of the saints.

### The Pilgrim's Path

The path to wisdom and self-knowledge is through pilgrimage. Those who would rise in the ranks of the faithful may retrace the steps of the Lords and Saints, and gain blessings and learn virtue by suffering and overcoming hardships.

### The Consolations of Prayer

Learn what bounties and blessing might be gained by prayer at the shrines found in temples, and in places of pilgrimage, and in the tombs of our ancestors.

# For My Gods And Emperor

## *Imperial Cult*

The missionary arm of the great faiths, the Imperial cult brings divine inspiration and consolation to the Empire's remote provinces. The cults combine the worship of the Nine Divines, the Aedra Akatosh, Dibella, Arkay, Zenithar, Mara, Stendarr, Kynareth, and Julianos, and the Talos cult, veneration of the divine god-hero Tiber Septim, founder and patron of the Empire. Imperial cult priests provide worship and services for all these gods at Imperial shrines in settlements throughout Vvardenfell.

Our doctrines are simple. We acknowledge the divinity of the Nine Divines: Akatosh, Dibella, Arkay, Zenithar, Mara, Stendarr, Kynareth, Julianos, and Tiber Septim. We preach the Nine Virtues: Humility, Inspiration, Piety, Work, Compassion, Justice, Ambition, Learning, and Civility. Our Emperor is the Defender of the Faith, and the Empire is the worldly working of the Divine Plan. We pledge aid and comfort to all citizens in need, and serve the Emperor and Empire at his will.

The Imperial cults look to the Nine Divines as models for living a good and virtuous life. Each of the Nine represents different aspects of life, and how it should be lived. But the simplest statement of our doctrines is—help and protect one another. The stronger one is, the wealthier one is, the more one bears responsibility for helping and protecting others. One's first



duty, of course, is to one's fellow members of the Imperial Cult. But after that, one should help and protect any needy persons.

We also say, "do not harm one another." It is forbidden to attack another person of the Imperial cult, and of course, forbidden to kill another member. It is forbidden to steal from another member, whether by open theft or by covert pickpocketing. It is forbidden to trespass upon the private property of another member. Break any one of these rules, and be expelled from the cult.

The Imperial cult accepts all citizens of good character and earnest faith. We ask only a one-time pledge of 50 drakes to aid us in our good works. Thereafter, the only cost of membership comes when you use our health, healing, and blessing shrines—modest fees which help us spread the blessings of the Nine to those less fortunate than ourselves.

Those who wish to join the Imperial cult in Vvardenfell will find a warm welcome from our cult greeters: Ygfa at Fort Pelagiad, Syloria Siruliulus at Buckmoth Legion Fort, Somutis Vunnis at Moonmoth Legion Fort, Ruccia Conician in the Grand Council Chambers in Ebonheart, or Lalatia Varian in the Imperial Chapels at Ebonheart.

Seekers who wish to advance in the service of the Nine must dedicate time and resources to serving the cult, and must strive for personal improvement in their attributes and skills. Only the most distinguished are worthy of advancement to the higher ranks in the Imperial cults.

To serve and glorify the Nine Divines, the faithful must cultivate a noble personality and a strong will. Respect the magical arts, especially the colleges of Restoration, Mysticism,

and Conjunction. Those who swear to avoid bloodshed, to take the field unarmored to fight only with blunt weapons, are especially praiseworthy. Knowledge of enchantments and the gift of diplomatic speech are other qualities we value in our initiates.

You can find Imperial cult services in Buckmoth Legion Fort, Moonmoth Legion Fort, Pelagiad Legion Fort, Gnosis Legion Fort, Wolverine Hall in Sadrith Mora, Vivec Foreign Quarter, and Imperial chapels in Ebonheart. Seek training at Wolverine Hall, Buckmoth Fort, Moonmoth Fort, Ebonheart Imperial Chapels, Governor's Hall in Caldera, and Ald Velothi Outpost.

Many Imperial cult locations have healing altars. You may pray at Imperial cult healing altars and receive blessings which cure common and blight diseases, cure poisons, and restore damaged attributes. Non-members pay 25 drakes. Non-members pay 25 drakes. Newer members pay 10 drakes, while higher-ranking members receive blessings free. Healing altars are found in: Vivec Foreign Quarter; Wolverine Hall in Sadrith Mora; Buckmoth Legion Fort; Moonmoth Legion Fort; Pelagiad Legion Fort; Gnosis Legion Fort; and Imperial Chapels in Ebonheart.

Lay healers gather ingredients for health and healing potions, and minister to the sick and hurt in poor and isolated communities. It is difficult and sometimes dangerous work, but the spiritual rewards are great. Lay healers need only the skills of the prudent traveler, being often on the road and in the wilderness, gathering herbs and potion components. They should avoid trouble where possible, and so need not be masters of the arts of war. Those interested should speak to Synnolian Tunifus at the Imperial Chapels in Ebonheart.

Almoners gather alms from members and friends of the faith. We depend on donations to fund most of our good works. Almoners who are successful at bringing in generous donations may rise in the ranks of Imperial Cults service. Almoners must travel in town and village, and should be skilled in persuasion and mercantile matters. Also, almoners with personal wealth are in a position to better serve the cult. Those interested should speak to Iulus Truptor at the Imperial Chapels in Ebonheart.

A shrine sergeant helps keep order at the shrines, carries messages and packages, and sometimes escorts priests and lay servants on dangerous missions. This occasional service is ideal for bold, free-spirited adventurers. Shrine sergeants are called upon to serve the Nine with weapon, armor, and spell. New shrine sergeants are given the easiest tasks, but later, missions may demand higher levels of combat proficiency. Those interested should speak to Kaye at the Imperial Chapels in Ebonheart.

Oracle's Quests are the most demanding of all Imperial cult missions. Only members of the higher ranks are invited to assist the Oracle, and the challenges require the skill and courage found only in heroes of legend.

The Imperial cults have a very close relationship with the Imperial legions, and a friendly and supportive relationship with the Imperial Guilds—especially the Fighters and Mages Guilds. We also have a friendly and supportive relationship with House Hlaalu, which strongly supports the Emperor and Imperial principles. Though we cannot condone the actions of the Thieves Guild, we praise their faithful dedication to the Emperor and to Imperial culture.

The Imperial cults have the greatest respect for the high moral principles of House Redoran and the Morag Tong, and honors their different but noble conceptions of Divine Inspiration.

We disapprove of the primitive heathen beliefs of the Ashlanders, and of the impious and inhumane practices of the Telvanni. The Imperial cult especially disapproves of the practice of slavery, and looks forward to the day when slavery is illegal in all Imperial provinces. The Imperial cult also disapproves of the lawless and greedy Camonna Tong, and their ruthless exploitation of the poor and weak.

Historically, our relationship with the Tribunal Temple is difficult and unfriendly. Though the Imperial cults acknowledges the lords and saints of the Temple pantheon as worthy inspirations, the Temple falsely insists that theirs is the One True Faith, and that the Imperial cults worship false gods.

# From Seyda Neen To Balmora By Road

## *Elong*

From Seyda Neen, leave the village by the north bridge, then follow the road east past the silt strider port.

East of Seyda Neen, the road heads northeast through the ridge and intersects a northwest-southeast road. Turn left, northwest, and pass the village of Pelagiad on your right.

The road continues north, then swings northeast until it reaches a four-way intersection. The road to Balmora turns left, northwest, and descends into Foyada Mamaea, a deep volcanic ravine. The road follows the ravine northeast for a short distance, then turns left and climbs out of the ravine to the northwest.

North of the ravine, pass Fort Moonmoth on the right and come to an intersection with a signpost. Head due west towards Balmora.

Two small bridges cross the Odai River. On the west side of the river, go north, passing the silt strider port and entering the walls of Balmora.

Mind the signposts, and be careful. In bad weather or darkness, it is easy to stray from the road.

# Ghost-Free Papers

*Uleni Heleran*

\*Certification of Ghost-Free Hospitality \*

By Authority of the Super Extra Very Sovereign Council of  
Mages Without Digits Within Bowels

Hereas the Gateway Inn and all its dark and secret places have  
been found to be completely free of spooks, boojums, snarks,  
spectral goats, revenant toiletries, or cannibal vampire  
anchovies,

Muthsera Mistress Dunmer-from-Far-Away Mage-Lady, Lord  
High Inspector of Hostelry for the Town of Sadrith Mora  
aforesaid, does pronounce the Gateway Inn free and clean of all  
otherworldly, hostile, and malign entities, with the exception  
of the profound and displeasing odor that arises from the  
Prefect of Hospitality, which, despite the preternatural  
magnitude of its offensiveness, may well derive from  
altogether more mundane sources.

Signed,

Muthsera Mistress Dunmer-from-Far-Away Mage-Lady

Representing the Super Extra Very Sovereign Council of Mages  
Without Digits Within Bowels

# Gnisis Eggmine Pass

*Various*

The bearer of this paper may enter the Gnisis Eggmine. The bearer must present the paper to the guard of the eggmine before entering for the regular work shift. The bearer is not allowed to enter the lower eggmine due to the risk of spreading the blight disease.

Signed and sealed

Hetman Abelmawia

Knight-Protector Darius

# Grasping Fortune

*Serjo Hlaalu Dram Bero*

I am a councilor of House Hlaalu and chose to write this short guide for those who seek to understand us or join us. House Hlaalu is the most open and modern of the Great Houses. We are the only Great House who has embraced the irresistible tides of Imperial law and custom. And thus we have profited by the Empire's new policies, rising from obscurity as the Greatest of the Houses.

In the great wind of progress, tradition cannot stand.

The Redoran may surpass us on the field of battle, but when the dust clears, they will find themselves indebted to us. The Telvanni may know many arcane secrets, but they fight among themselves more than against each other, and they cannot adapt to the ways of the Empire. Ancient and powerful though a Telvanni wizard may be, no individual can withstand the march of history. The Indoril are loved by the people for their gifts and donations, but when the money runs dry, will the people remember? The Dres know how to make money, but they have not learned how not to make enemies.

Grasp fortune by the forelocks. When you see your chances, seize them.

When you see a chance to turn a profit, take it. But do not follow money blindly. There is value in reputation, more than



many young Hlaalu realize. This value must be carefully balanced against the more tangible coins in any deal. Theft and murder are bad for business. You can steal from someone, but will he trade with you after that? You can't bargain with a dead man.

There are many ways to do business.

In House Hlaalu you must be fast and agile. You must be able to keep up with business and with the times. You must be able to speak quickly and convincingly. You must be able to trade with the best of merchants and make a profit. You must learn to protect your own property by securing it with hidden chests, locks, and even traps. And when confrontation is unavoidable, it is best to fight quickly in comfortable, light armors with short blades, or to fight from a distance with a marksman's weapons.

Then, reader, would you seize this opportunity to join House Hlaalu? Would you have yourself be counted among the victors in the race for success? Then submit yourself for examination at the Balmora Council Manor. If you have the skills, you will be welcome. And if you have the will, you may serve House Hlaalu, and advance in the ranks, for above all things, House Hlaalu prizes initiative and ambition.

# Great Houses Of Morrowind

*Anonymous*

In modern times Morrowind is ruled by five Great Houses: House Hlaalu, House Redoran, House Telvanni, House Indoril, and House Dres. Only three of these Houses have interests in Vvardenfell. The three Great Houses on Vvardenfell identify themselves by their traditional colors: red for Redoran, yellow for Hlaalu, and brown for Telvanni. Thus, members of House Hlaalu may be referred to collectively as Yellows.

The Great Houses traditions derive from ancient Dunmer clan and tribes, but now function as political parties. Dunmer Great House membership is largely a matter of birth and marriage, but Imperial colonists may also become retainers of a Great House, or may be adopted into a Great House. Initially an outlander may gain status in a house as an oath-bonded hireling, pledging exclusive loyalty to a single house and forsaking ambitions with all other houses. Later, after faithful service and advancement in lower ranks, an outlander may seek adoption into a Great House. Adoption and advancement to higher ranks in a Great House requires that a Great House councilor stand as sponsor for the candidate's character and loyalty. Finding a councilor to sponsor an outlander often involves performing a great service for the prospective sponsor.

House Redoran is one of the three Dunmer Great Houses with holdings on Vvardenfell. The Redoran prize the virtues of duty,

gravity, and piety. Duty is to one's own honor, and to one's family and clan. Gravity is the essential seriousness of life. Life is hard, and events must be judged, endured, and reflected upon with due care and earnestness. Piety is respect for the gods, and the virtues they represent. A light, careless life is not worth living. Redoran settlements are designed in the Dunmer village style, built of local materials, with organic curves and undecorated exteriors inspired by the landscape and by the shells of giant native insects. Redoran villages are typically centered on Temple compounds and their courtyards, with huts and tradehouses gathered around a central plaza, as in the West Gash village of Gnisis. Ald'ruhn, the Redoran district seat, is exceptional, with its distinctive feature being the colossal prehistoric bug shell that has been adapted as the house's council house.

As a result of its close relationship with the Imperial administration, House Hlaalu has emerged as politically and economically dominant among the Great Houses of Vvardenfell and Morrowind. Hlaalu welcomes Imperial culture and law, Imperial Legions and bureaucracy, and Imperial freedom of trade and religion. Hlaalu still honors the old Dunmer ways—the ancestors, the Temple, and the noble houses—but has readily adapted to the rapid pace of change and progress in the Imperial provinces. Unlike the other Great Houses, which are largely hostile to non-Dunmer, House Hlaalu aspires to live in peace and harmony with the other races, and to share in the growth and prosperity of the Empire. Hlaalu public buildings—tradehouses and craft guilds, manors and council halls—are designed as simple multi-storied buildings roughly rectangular in plan, featuring arched entranceways and modest decorated exteriors. More modest one-story private dwellings follow the same plan, except with

less decoration. Hlaalu plantation estates resemble Temple compounds, with walled precincts enclosing outbuildings for craftsmen and servants, dominated by a grand manor residence in place of a Temple shrine.

The wizard-lords of House Telvanni have traditionally isolated themselves, pursuing wisdom and mastery in solitude. But certain ambitious wizards-lords, their retainers, and clients have entered whole-heartedly into the competition to control and exploit Vvardenfell's land and resources, building towers and bases all along the eastern coast. According to Telvanni principles, the powerful define the standards of virtue, and the Telvanni are unwilling to allow the ambitious Hlaalu to dominate Vvardenfell's untapped resources by default. Telvanni architecture is dominated by the wizards' tower, a fantastic organic form grown and sculpted from stems, caps, and root-like holdfasts of the giant native mushrooms. Telvanni villages are comprised of smaller mushroom pods hollowed out for craftsmen and commoners. Open-air markets often include the giant cages displaying the wares of the slave masters.

House Indoril and House Dres are the two Great Houses without holdings or interest in Vvardenfell. Indoril District occupies the heartland of Morrowind, comprising the lands south of the Inner Sea and the eastern coast. The city of Almalexia is located in Indoril District, and the Indoril are orthodox and conservative supporters of the Temple and Temple authority. House Indoril is openly hostile to Imperial culture and religion, and preserves many traditional Dunmer customs and practices in defiance of Imperial law. Dres District is in the south of Morrowind, bordering the swamps and marshes of Black Marsh. House Dres is an agrarian agricultural

society, and its large saltrice plantations rely completely on slave labor for their economic viability. Always firm Temple supporters, House Dres is hostile to Imperial law and culture, and in particular opposed to any attempts to limit the institution of slavery.

# Guide To Ald'ruhn

*Anonymous*

Ald'ruhn is the district seat of House Redoran, and one of the largest settlements on Vvardenfell. The three principal districts are Ald'ruhn town, Ald'ruhn-under-Skar, and Buckmoth Fort.

Ald'ruhn town is a large settlement in the Redoran village style, built of local materials, with organic curves and undecorated exteriors inspired by the landscape and by the shells of giant native insects. Most guildhalls, cornerclubs, and merchants are sited in the southwest corner of town, convenient to West Gate and the strider port, while the Temple is located on high ground to the east, and surrounded by a residential section.

Ald'ruhn-under-Skar is the most distinctive architectural feature of Ald'ruhn—a manor and council district sheltered beneath the shell of an ancient extinct giant crab. The large carapace encloses a central dome, from which radiate the entrances to the Redoran Council chambers, the manors of the Redoran councilors, and shops of a few upscale merchants.

Buckmoth Fort is the Imperial legion garrison for the district. The strong walls and towers of this Western fortress lies a short distance to the south of Ald'ruhn town, through South Gate behind the Mages Guild.

House Redoran services are in the Council House and Councilor's Manors of Ald'ruhn-Under-Skar. The Ald'ruhn Temple on the east side of town provides service for Temple worshipers. Buckmoth Fort offers services to the Imperial Legion and devotees of the Imperial cult, including an Imperial cult altar. The guildhalls of the Fighters Guild and Mages Guild are near the South Gate. Pricy but high-quality clothier, alchemist, and enchanter shops are under Skar as well. Commodities at reasonable prices, but with smaller selections, are available from the smith, clothier, trader, pawnbroker, and bookseller near the entrance to Ald'ruhn-Under-Skar. The Ald Skar Inn and the Council Club cornerclub are found to the west, near West Gate and the silt strider port. The Rat in the Pot cornerclub is in south Ald'ruhn, near the guildhalls.

All six Redoran councilors, Brara Morvayn, Hlaren Ramoran, Athyn Sarethi, Garisa Llethri, Miner Arobar, and Bolvyn Venim, have manor residences in Ald'ruhn-Under-Skar. Edwinna Elbert is the Mages Guild steward, and Percius Mercius has recently become the Fighters Guild steward. Old Methal Seran is an eminent Temple priest and scholar. Raesa Pullia is commandant of Buckmoth Fort, but Imsin the Dreamer is the chapter steward. The Redguard Hean is priest of the Imperial cult. Goren Andarysis the guild steward of the Morag Tong, whose guildhall is found in Ald'ruhn-Under-Skar.

Roads lead northwest to Maar Gan and Gnisis villages and by a circuitous western route to Caldera, Balmora, and points south. The road to Balmora swings northwest to avoid the barren wastes, and curves around towards the west until it heads south again to Caldera. Between Ald'ruhn and Caldera are many sidepaths; watch for signposts, or you'll get lost. The silt strider port is along the western town wall, north of West Gate.

Silt strider service goes from Ald'ruhn to Balmora, Gnosis, Khuul, or Maar Gan.. Guild guides at the Mages Guild teleport you to Balmora, Vivec, Caldera, and Sadrith Mora for a modest fee. Gnaar Mok is a LONG and exceptionally unpleasant walk west to the coast and then south; there are no trails or marked routes. Casual travelers ill-equipped for the attacks of wild beasts and brigands should keep to the roads and travel services.



# Guide To Balmora

*Anonymous*

Balmora is the district seat of House Hlaalu, and the largest settlement on Vvardenfell after Vivec City. Balmora's four districts are High Town, the Commercial District, Labor Town, and Fort Moonmoth. High Town, on the hill to the west, has the Tribunal Temple, Hlaalu Council Hall, rich manors, better shops, and the Morag Tong guildhall. The Commercial District, just west of the river, is centered on the large plaza north of South Gate, with the strider port along the south wall, east of South Gate. The Fighters Guild and Mages Guild, and most of Balmora's shops and inns, are located along the streets of the Commercial District. Labor Town, east of the river, where the commoners and poor live, has several modest cornerclubs and a few merchants. Fort Moonmoth, a long walk southeast of town, houses the Legion garrison and the Imperial cult.

House Hlaalu services are available at Hlaalu Council Manor in High Town. Temple faithful seek solace and services at the Balmora Temple in the southeast. Outlanders must travel outside the town walls, through South Gate and east along well-marked roads to Fort Moonmoth for Imperial Legion and the Imperial cult services. The guildhalls of the Fighters Guild and Mages Guild are on the street north from the plaza in the Commercial District. Morag Tong services are available at their guildhall in the extreme northwest of High Town. Better shops are in High Town on the hill, with numerous merchants in the

Commercial District, west of the river, and a few traders in Labor Town, east of the river.

None of the Hlaalu counselors live in Balmora. Nileno Dorvayn at the Council Hall is the ranking Hlaalu local. At the Fighters Guild, Eydis Fire-Eye is the steward. Ranis Athrys is the Mages Guild steward. Ethasi Rilvayn is the Morag Tong steward. Feldrelo Sadri is the ranking cleric of the Balmora Tribunal Temple. The colorful 'Sugar Lips' Habasi, a freelance facilitator of no fixed address, is often rumored to be the local boss of the Thieves Guild.

A good road leads south to Pelagiad, Seyda Neen, Ebonheart, and Vivec. A rugged wilderness track leads southwest along the Odai River to the fishing village of Hla Oad. Improved roads head north to Caldera and Ald'ruhn. The silt strider port is on the west side of the river near South Gate. Silt strider service goes to Ald'ruhn, Suran, Ald'ruhn, and Seyda Neen. Guild guides at the Mages Guild can teleport you to Ald'ruhn, Vivec, Caldera, and Sadrith Mora for a fee. Hla Oad is southwest on the coast. An unimproved trail leads northeast up the ravines of Foyada Mamaea to Ghostgate; the path is easy to follow, but dangerous beasts threaten pilgrims who travel this route to Ghostgate shrine.

# Guide To Sadrith Mora

*Anonymous*

Sadrith Mora is the district seat of House Telvanni, and home of the Telvanni Council, though only one Telvanni councilor actually lives in Sadrith Mora. Sadrith Mora is an island settlement, and accessible only by sea and teleportation. The town is large, with many craftsmen, traders, and trainers, but it is open only to Telvanni retainers; outsiders should confine themselves to the Gateway Inn, and to Wolverine Hall, the Imperial quarters of the Legion garrison and guilds. The docks are in a sheltered bay on the western side of the island, and a trail leads up from the docks to the Gateway Inn. Beyond the Gateway Inn is the Great Market, with numerous craftsmen and traders, and a small slave market. North of the Great Market is the Telvanni Council Hall, a large orb supported by giant mushroom stalks. To the east of the Great Market is Tel Naga, the towering wizard-tower residence of Telvanni Councilor Mage-Lord Master Neloth.

Outlanders can find services for the Fighters Guild, Mages Guild, and Imperial cult at Wolverine Hall. Members of the Thieves Guild congregate at Dirty Muriel's Cornerclub. Telvanni Great House and Tribunal Temple services are all housed within the Council Hall; additional Telvanni services are available in the Great Market district and in Tel Naga. The Gateway merchant inn is the only establishment with public beds. Members of the Fighters Guild, Mages Guild, and Imperial

cults look for hospitality at Wolverine Hall. Telvanni kin and retainers stay at the Gateway, at Wolverine Hall, at a local cornerclub, or at Tel Naga. The Great Market has many services and tradesmen, and many others are scattered through town. There are two cornerclubs: Dirty Muriel's, for outlanders, and Fara's Hole in the Wall for local Dunmer. Tel Naga is Master Neloth's wizard tower.

If you're not Telvanni or Telvanni retainers, you'll want to know Angaredhel, Prefect of Hospitality at the Gateway merchant inn, and Ery, Gateway's publican. At Wolverine Hall, Hrundi the Nord is the Fighters Guild steward, Procyon Nigiliusis is Mages Guild steward, and Aunius Autrus is the Imperial cult priest. Big Helende, the Thieves Guild Boss, makes frequent appearances at Dirty Muriel's Cornerclub. Telvanni wizards and retainers visit the Council Hall to confer with the Telvanni Mouths (Telvanni Mouths are spokesmen for their councilor mage-lords) Felisa Ulessen, Galos Mathendis, Arara Uvulas, Mallam Ryon, Raven Omayn, and Dalyne Arvel, Telvanni Council clerk. Councilor Mage-Lord Master Neloth lives in Tel Naga, the wizard tower in the center of town.

Sadrith Mora is an island; there's no road or bridge to the mainland. To visit the mainland, you must either be able to fly, swim, or water-walk, or you must rely on shipmasters at the docks or the guild guide at the Mages Guild. Gals Arethi at the docks offers ship passage to Ebonheart, Tel Branora, Tel Mora, or Dagon Fel. Iniel at the Wolverine Hall Mages Guild can teleport you to Ald'ruhn, Vivec, Caldera, and Balmora for a modest fee.

# Guide To Vivec

*Anonymous*

Vivec City is the largest settlement on Vvardenfell, and one of the largest cities in the East. Each of the great cantons is the size of a complete town. The High Fane and the palace of Vivec are visited by hundreds of tourists and pilgrims daily. Citizens flock to the Arena for public entertainments like mock battles and comic plays. Outlanders mostly confine themselves to the Foreign Canton, while natives live, work, and shop in the Great House compounds and residential cantons. But most of all, this is Lord Vivec's holy city. The Ministry of Truth, the Temple prison, hangs above the great temple of the High Fane, the Halls of Wisdom and Justice, and Lord Vivec's Palace.

Vivec is a city made up of eight cantons, each a little town in itself. On a map, it looks like a cross, with the Foreign Quarter at the top, the Temple Compound, with Vivec's Palace, the High Fane, the Ministry of Truth, and the Hall of Wisdom and the Hall of Justice at the bottom, the Hlaalu Compound to the west, the Telvanni Compound on the east, and four cantons grouped together at the center of the cross—Redoran Compound northwest, Arena northeast, St. Delyn's Canton southwest, and St. Olms Canton southeast.

The Foreign Quarter is the large three-tiered canton to the north. Originally, foreigners were not allowed to enter Vivec any further than the Foreign Quarter, but now outlanders can

travel throughout Vivec at will. The Imperial Guilds each have guildhalls and complete services here, and an Imperial cult shrine serves the spiritual needs of the Imperial faithful. Various independent tradesmen, craftsmen, and trainers also rent space here. The Black Shalk Cornerclub rents beds to non-guild visitors.

The High Fane is the largest Tribunal temple on Vvardenfell. Archcanon Saryoni presides over the temple, along with a large staff of priests, healers, and monks. Pilgrims travel from all over Morrowind to view the High Fane and the Ministry of Truth, and to offer prayer and thanks before the Palace of Vivec. The Ministry of Truth, a celestial body suspended by Vivec's mighty power over the Temple Compound, is the headquarters of the Temple Ordinator, and heretics are imprisoned and re-educated there. The Hall of Wisdom and Hall of Justice contain the executive, administrative, judicial, and martial operations of the Tribunal Temple. The Palace of Vivec is the abode of the god-hero Lord Vivec, the Warrior-Poet of the three deities who comprise Almsivi, the divine patrons of the Tribunal Temple. Only the most devout are admitted to the presence of Lord Vivec, and only at his initiation. Beneath the Palace of Vivec is the Puzzle Canal, a place of worship and testing for questing heroes hoping to receive Vivec's favor. Many choice treasures are guarded by Daedric servants in the Puzzle Canal's dark passages.

Hlaalu Compound is the westmost canton. The Hlaalu Councilor Crassius Curio has a splendid tier-top mansion here. The tiers below contain Hlaalu treasuries, records, holding cells, and various Great House services. There are two public houses: the Elven Nations and the No Name Club. A variety of craftsmen and tradesmen also have shops at Hlaalu

Compound. Some House Hlaalu nobles and retainers prefer to maintain their residences in the less-formal St. Delyn and St. Olms cantons.

Telvanni Compound is the eastmost canton. The mage-lord Mavon Drenim is the ranking Telvanni noble. The Telvanni rent the compound from the Temple, and have to make do with a Velothi tower instead of their preferred mushroom towers. The administrative center includes a treasury and a hall of records. Slaves are housed in the lowest tiers, along with cells full of monsters. There are many tradesmen, craftsmen, and trainers, and the Lizard's Head cornerclub provides lodgings for Telvanni kin and mercenaries.

Redoran Compound is the canton south of the Foreign Quarter, west of and next to the Arena. The Redoran administrative center there includes the Redoran Treasury, Hall of Records, and Holding Cells. On the lowest tier is a Redoran shrine and ancestral vaults. Two noble families, the Sarens and the Dralors, have top-tier manors. There are many tradesmen, craftsmen, and trainers, and the Flowers of Gold cornerclub provides lodgings for Redoran kin and retainers.

The Arena Compound lies between the Redoran compound on the west and the Telvanni compound on the east. The Arena is the site of public entertainments and combat sports. The comfortable domed Arena has seating for hundreds of spectators; beneath the Arena are dressing and storage rooms for entertainers and training rooms and animal pens for the combat competitors.

St. Delyn Canton and St. Olms Canton are residence cantons for commoners and paupers. The Temple charges very reasonable rents for comfortable workshops, shops, and apartments, and

most of Vvardenfell's crafts and light industry are housed in these cantons. The Abbey of St. Delyn the Wise is on the top tier of St. Delyn, and Hlaalu Councilor Yngling Half-Troll has a top-tier manor on St. Olms.

Foot bridges connect with the mainland between the Ebonheart region and Hlaalu Compound, between the north bay region and the Foreign Quarter, and between the east bay region and Telvanni Compound. Good roads lead from the Hlaalu Compound bridge south to Ebonheart and north to Seyda Neen and points north. Good roads lead from the Foreign Quarter bridge west towards Seyda Neen, north towards Suran and the Ascadian Isles, and east towards Molag Mar. Roads from the Telvanni Compound bridge are useful mostly for travelers to Molag Mar. Silt strider service is available at the north end of the Foreign Quarter bridge, traveling from Vivec to Suran, Seyda Neen, Balmora, and Molag Mar. Ships from the docks at the Foreign Quarter travel to Ebonheart, Hla Oad, Molag Mar, and Tel Branora. Ships from nearby Ebonheart sail to Hla Oad, Sadrith Mora, Tel Branora, and the Foreign Quarter of Vivec. Low-fare gondolas shuttle passengers from canton to canton via Vivec's canals.



# Guide To Vvardenfell

*Anonymous*

Morrowind is the northeastmost province of the Tamrielic Empire, bounded on the north and east by the Sea of Ghosts, on the west by Skyrim, on the southwest by Cyrodiil (also known as the Imperial Province), and on the south by Black Marsh (also known as Argonia). Vvardenfell District encompasses Vvardefell Island, a great land mass dominated by the giant volcano Red Mountain and cut off from mainland Morrowind by the surrounding Inner Sea.

Only recently open to settlement and trade, most of the island's population is confined to the relatively hospitable west and southwest coast, centered on the ancient city of Vivec and the old Great House district centers at Balmora, Ald'ruhn, and Sadrith Mora. The rest of the island is covered by hostile desert wastes, arid grasslands, and volcanic badlands, and thinly populated by the nomadic Ashlander tribes.

Vvardenfell has nine basic geographic regions, each with their own distinctive plants and terrain features. Scholars have based their classifications on the different types of land described by the native Ashlanders, so the designations are recognized by most local traders, travelers, and adventurers. These geographic regions are called: the Ascadian Isles, the Ashlands, Azura's Coast, the Bitter Coast, the Grazelands, Molag Amur, Red Mountain, the West Gash, and Sheogorad.

The Ascadian Isles is a region of lush, green, well-watered southern lowlands where most of Vvardenfell's agriculture is found. The area includes Pelagiad, Suran, Vivec City, and Ald Sotha along with the inland lakes and waterways of the Ascadian Isles proper. The urban areas of Vivec and Ebonheart of the southern coast are densely populated; the inland Ascadian Isles are dotted with small farms and large plantations. The climate is temperate and comfortable, with moderate rainfall.

Ebonheart is the seat of the Imperial government for Vvardenfell district, and a busy center of maritime trade. Castle Ebonheart is the home of Duke Vedam Dren, the district's ruler and Emperor's representative. Also located at Castle Ebonheart are the Vvardenfell District Council chambers and the Hawk Moth Legion garrison. The officers, docks, and warehouses of the East Empire Company are also found in Ebonheart.

Vivec City is the largest settlement on Vvardenfell, and one of the largest cities in the East. Each of the great cantons is the size of a complete town. The High Fane and the palace of Vivec are visited by hundreds of tourists and pilgrims daily. Citizens flock to the Arena for entertainments and war games. Outlanders mostly confine themselves to the Foreign Canton, while natives live, work, and shop in the Great House compounds and residential cantons.

Ald Sotha is a splendid Daedric ruin within sight of Vivec City. Though exotic and picturesque, it is a dangerous site, haunted by old magics, dark cultists, and their Daedric summonings, and not recommended for sightseers.

Suran is an agricultural village in the northeastern corner of the fertile Ascadian Isles region. Two popular pilgrimage sites

are nearby—the Fields of Kummu and the Shrine of Molag Bal.

Pelagiad is a newly chartered Imperial village between Balmora and Vivec City on the western edge of the Ascadian Isles region. The village is right outside the Imperial Legion garrison at Fort Pelagiad. The houses and shops are built in the Western Imperial style, and Pelagiad looks more like a village in the western Empire than a Morrowind settlement.

The Ashlands are the dry, inhospitable wastelands surrounding the lower slopes of Red Mountain. The Ashlands extend to the Sea of Ghosts in the north, and elsewhere form a wide margin between the blighted Red Mountain region and other geographic regions. The village of Maar Gan is the only sizable permanent Ashlands settlement; Ald'ruhn, the district seat of House Redoran, is on the margin of the region. Ashlanders hunt for game here, and their herds find sparse grazing. It rains rarely, and suffers frequent ash storms.

Maar Gan is a small isolated village in a remote region north of Ald'ruhn. The Maar Gan shrine is an important Temple pilgrimage site.

The Ashlander Urshilaku tribe has a permanent settlement at Urshilaku camp in the Ashlands region north of Maar Gan village.

The rugged coast and islands of northern and eastern Vvardenfell are called Azura's Coast. The region is rocky, infertile, and largely uninhabited, except for the outpost at Molag Mar, the Telvanni settlements at Sadrith Mora, the wizard towers at Tel Aruhn, Tel Mora, and Tel Branora, and Ahemmusa camp and the remote fishing villages of Ald Redaynia and Dagon Fel on the north coast. There are no roads;

most travel is by boat. Despite the rocky terrain, a variety of plants thrive on the regular rainfall.

Sadrith Mora is the district seat of House Telvanni, and home of the Telvanni Council, though only one Telvanni councilor actually lives in Sadrith Mora. Sadrith Mora is an island settlement, and accessible only by sea and teleportation. The town is large, with many services, but it is open only to Telvanni retainers; outsiders must confine themselves to the Gateway Inn.

Tel Branora is the tower and seat of the eccentric Telvanni wizard named Mistress Therana. The tower and its tiny village are located on a rocky promontory at the southeasternmost tip of Azura's Coast.

Tel Fyr is the Telvanni tower of Sorcerer-Lord Divayth Fyr. Beneath the tower is the Corprusarium, a refuge-prison where the deranged, distorted victims of the deadly corprus disease are housed and tended.

Tel Aruhn is the Telvanni tower of Archmagister Gothren, Telvanni Sorcerer-Lord and head of the Telvanni Council. The associated settlement is a sizable village, and the site of the Festival Slave Market, the largest slave market on Vvardenfell.

Tel Mora is the Telvanni tower of Mistress Dratha, an ancient wizard of the Telvanni Council. The small settlement includes a few craftsfolk and a tradehouse.

Tel Vos is the tower of Telvanni wizard and council member Master Aryon. Tel Vos is a peculiar blend of Telvanni and Western architectural styles, and is close to Vos village.

Bal Fell is the “City of Stone,” an ancient First Era ruin in the southeastern islands and promontories of Azura’s Coast. The site has a nasty reputation, and several Telvanni wizards currently have competing camps of hirelings and adventurers exploring and looting there. Legend says that Bal Fell was built on the site of an ancient Daedric worship center.

The Ashlander Ahemmusa tribe has a permanent settlement at Ahemmusa camp on a rocky promontory at the northeastern tip of the Vvardenfell mainland in the Azura’s Coast region.

The western coast of Vvardenfell from Seyda Neen north to Gnaar Mok is called the Bitter Coast. The salt marshes and humid swamps of this region are uninhabited, with the only settlements found at the good harbors of Gnaar Mok, Hla Oad, and Seyda Neen. Also called the Smuggler’s Coast, the region’s secluded coves and islands provide refuge for criminal trade, and the frequent rain and fog hides small boats from Excise cutters.

The piercing light of the Grand Pharos at the mouth of the harbor of the port village of Seyda Neen is a beacon to mariners throughout the Inner Sea. Most visitors from the Empire make landfall at the port of Seyda Neen, where they are processed by the Imperial Census and Excise Commission agents of the Coastguard station. The Coastguard cutters docked here control smuggling and piracy on the Inner Sea.

Hla Oad is a tiny isolated fishing village on western Vvardenfell in the Bitter Coast region. A rough track along the River Odai connects Hla Oad with the town of Balmora.

Gnaar Mok is a tiny island fishing village in the Bitter Coast region of western Vvardenfell.

The regular rain and dark soils of the Grazelands produce the rich grazing for Ashlander herds that give the region its name. The region lies in the northeast of Vvardenfell, sandwiched between the Ashlands and Azura's Coast. Permanent settlements include Vos village and the towers of Tel Vos and Tel Fyr. The Ashlanders of Zainab camp move their herds across the plains in search of fresh grazing. There are no roads or tracks, but travel is easy across the open plains.

The Ashlander Zainab tribe has a permanent settlement at Zainab camp, near the village of Vos in the Grazelands region.

Located inland in the southeast of Vvardenfell, Molag Amur is an uninhabited wasteland of rocky hills, steep-sided ravines, lava pools, and barren ash pavements. Pathfinding and travel is extremely difficult in this trackless wilderness, and is complicated by frequent ash storms. The Ashlanders of Erabenimsun camp hunt game here, but few others venture into this region. The worst part of Molag Amur, called the Great Scathes, is considered impassible even by the Ashlanders.

The outpost at Molag Mar is a fortified stronghold on the southeastern edge of the desolate Molag Amur region. Pilgrims bound for the nearby pilgrimage sites at Mount Assarnibibi and Mount Kand take refuge at the outpost's hostels, comforted by the garrison of Redoran and Buoyant Armiger crusaders stationed at the stronghold.

The Ashlander Erabenimsun tribe has a permanent settlement at Erabenimsun camp, an isolated hut settlement in the middle of the desolate Molag Amur region.

The dominant feature of Vvardenfell, Red Mountain, is a vast volcano in the center of Vvardenfell. The outer slopes are steep

and rugged, and the crater is deep and dotted with surface lava. The Ghostfence, a magical barrier which blocks travel as well as seals in the harmful, disease-laden weather called 'blight,' rings the volcano's outer slopes, and is broken only at Ghostgate. Within the Ghostfence, rain never falls and the sun never shines; the only weather is the red and deadly ash-blight.

Ghostgate is the gate citadel of the Ghostfence Ordinator and Buoyant Armiger garrisons. Ghostgate sits astride the only gap through which the monstrous hosts of Dagoth Ur might emerge from Red Mountain to threaten the rest of Morrowind. The Ghostfence itself is a colossal magical artifact that completely encircles Red Mountain and prevents the Blight from spilling its corruption across the rest of Vvardenfell.

The western highlands of Vvardefell are called the West Gash. The region extends from the Sea of Ghosts on the northwest coast to the inland town of Balmora, where the region is sandwiched between the Bitter Coast and the Ashlands. The trading village of Gnisis is north of Ald'ruhn, and the fishing villages of Ald Veloth and Khuul lie on the north coast. The town of Caldera lies near Balmora. The herds of the Ashlanders of Urshilaku camp graze on the sparse but hardy highland vegetation.

Balmora is the district seat of House Hlaalu, and the largest settlement on Vvardenfell after Vivec City. Good roads lead north to Ald'ruhn and south to Caldera, Seyda Neen, and Vivec City. The Imperial Legion garrison of Fort Moonmoth lies south of Balmora.

Caldera is a recently chartered Imperial town and mining corporation. The Caldera Mining Company has been granted an Imperial monopoly to remove raw ebony from the rich deposits

here. Caldera has the appearance and flavor of a Western Imperial town.

Ald'ruhn is the district seat of House Redoran, and a large settlement. The Redoran Council chambers are located inside the shell of an ancient extinct giant crab. Tracks lead north to Maar Gan and Gnisis villages and south to Balmora.

Gnisis is a small mining and trade village astride the silt strider caravan route between the northwest West Gash and Ald'ruhn.

Ald Velothi and Khuul are tiny fishing villages on the northern coast of the West Gash.

The large island of Sheogorad lies north of Vvardenfell. This island and its associated lesser islands are a maritime wilderness extending north from Vvardenfell into the Sea of Ghosts. The region is largely hostile and uninhabited, with two small villages at Ald Redaynia and Dagon Fel. Only Dagon Fel is reached by ship services; all other island-to-island transport must be provided by the traveler.



# Handwritten Letter

*Bedal Alen*

[Addressed outside: “To my honorable cousin Forven Berano, be this delivered in haste”]

Forven,

I cannot agree. I am a merchant, and have no skill at arms. You are a noble, and in your prime were proven on practice and tournament grounds—though, in truth, you have never fought a duel, and have few gifts as a liar. No one can doubt Hloggar the Bloody’s aptitude and enthusiasm for mayhem, but he is not a subtle man, more suited for a brawl or battlefield than an assassin’s role.

And we cannot trust the Dark Brotherhood. Helseth owns them. They promise discretion, but their promises are worthless.

I am afraid we must approach the Morag Tong. I agree with you. They will probably refuse. But at least they can be trusted to be discreet.

If, in the end, we are forced to choose among ourselves, I fear it must be you. And we will have to wrack our brains for some plausible pretext that will get you into Helseth’s presence.

I am disappointed, though not surprised, at lack of public outcry over Athyn's murder. The popular sentiment seems to be to avoid personal risk and accept Helseth. It's short-sighted, but understandable. I have noted, however, that the writer of THE COMMON TONGUE is sympathetic to our cause, clever and eloquent. He may be able to sway opinion. We should try to identify this fellow and try to bring him into our counsels.

your faithful servant,

Bedal Alen

# Handwritten Note

*Ivulen Irano*

[A curious copy of guard duty rosters for the past several weeks. The handwriting is tiny and almost illegible, with frequent misspellings. But three names are always correctly spelled—Milvela Dralen, Ivulen Irano, and Aleri Aren—and those watches when all three are the only guards in the Throne Room have been underlined twice.]

# Hanin's Wake

*Anonymous*

...and upon that year of the Reign of Wulfharth and his Son's, the Magnificence that was Mordrin Hanin ended in this world. Representative of Ashalmawia, Maelkashishi and Ald Sotha gathered in a great host at the vastness of Assurnabitashpi. Even Hilbongard and Dorach Gusal were lured from their Forge, and for a time the Fires of Anudnabia were silent.

And thus on the Ninth Day of Mourning, many slaves and enemies were sacrificed and the Cup of Passage was mixed according to the direction of Hanin's Formulae:

2 Parts Blood of Traitors

1 Part Heart of Daedra

1 Part mixed Bittergreen Petals, Void Salts, Green Lichens and Bonemeal

1 Part Moonsugar

5 Parts Flin

Combine Blood, Heart, Moonsugar in Large Ebony Alembic. Heat fire fed by Bones of Traitors. Condense vapors into a large Ebony flask. For a hot drink, strain contents through Scamp Skin and mix with Flin in large mug, slowly stirring with a

glass rod. For a chilled drink, mix in flask with pure Skyrim Ice and shake vigorously. Strain through Winged Twilight membrane and served in gem encrusted goblet.

The wake was considered a great success as the beverage killed a great many guests and thus Mordrin Hanin was supplied with companions in the next world.

# Hasphat's Notes For Cosades

## *Hasphat Antabolis*

[The following are notes prepared by Hasphat Antabolis for Caius Cosades.]

House Dagoth is an extinct Great House. In the wake of the ancient Battle of Red Mountain, its leadership was revealed to have plotted treason, and was discredited. Many of House Dagoth died defending the House; those survivors who were faithful to the Great Council were redistributed among the other houses. The Temple says the ancient, legendary evil beings that dwell beneath Red Mountain in the Dagoth Ur region are the original leaders of this extinct house, sustained by some powerful, evil sorceries.

These books include references to the Sixth House and its destruction. The bookseller Dorisa Darvel over in the Commercial District might have copies.

THE WAR OF THE FIRST COUNCIL

SAINT NEREVAR

NEREVAR MOON-AND-STAR

THE REAL NEREVAR

# Honor Among Thieves

*Arnie*

Many admirers ask, “Arnie, how can I become a flash and prosperous fellow like you?”

And I tell them, “You want to join the Guild. Make friends. Be a part of something.”

“But who can join?” they ask.

We’re just like any other trade guild. We’ve got requirements. And if you want to advance in the ranks, we’ve got standards.

You want to be fast and agile. You want to move undetected. You want to know about security—locks, traps, and how to get around them. You want to defend yourself. You travel light and fast, and want light arms like daggers and shortswords. You don’t want to get into a slugging match, so you want the marksman’s weapons—the bow, crossbow, throwing star, and dart. You want light armor, so you can keep moving, and moving fast.

Why belong? Simple. Everybody needs friends.

The help of friends includes information. Your friends at the Thieves Guild know where the action is, and where the action is safe, and where it is not. The help of friends includes a place to rest, and a place to buy supplies and services—training and

tools. The help of friends includes fixing things with the guards at a discount rate. That's where the 'honor among thieves' part comes in. Friends stick together, and help each other.

"But what about the competition?" my admirers ask.

The competition is the Camonna Tong. And you don't want to join them, because they don't want you. They have this thing about outlanders. They want them all dead. So, unless your ambition is to be dead, you don't want to join them.

And the Camonna Tong are bad people. The Camonna Tong don't mind killing people. Heck, they LIKE killing people. The Thieves Guild, on the other hand, thinks killing people is bad business. You want to be good people, right? So join the Thieves Guild, and stay far, far away from the Camonna Tong.

So you want to join. But where do you look?

Being a thief is not like being a fighter. You don't just go to the local guild Hall. The Thieves Guild doesn't have Guild Halls. But thieves like to be where their friends are. And where are their friends? At the local cornerclub or tradehouse. In Vvardenfell, look for friends in Balmora, Ald'ruhn, Sadrith Mora, and the Foreign Quarter of Vivec.



# Hospitality Papers

*Angaredhel*

In this paper, the symbol , and have been substituted for the player character's name, class and race.

\*Certification of Hospitality\*

By Proclamation of House of Telvanni, Town of Sadrith Mora, District of Vvardenfell, by Authority of the Sovereign Council of the Great House Telvanni and its Several Client and Subsidiary Houses and Clans

Hereas at the general Sessions of the Mage-Lords and their Mouths held for the District of the House of Telvanni at the Town of Sadrith Mora on the 16th day of Second Seed in the four-hundred-and-twenty-first year of the Reign of our Sovereign King Hlaalu Athyn Llethan, by the Grace of All Gods, King of Morrowind, Duke of Mournhold; Defender of the People and the Law; Loyal Servant of the Emperor and Empire; etc.

Muthsera Master Angaredhel Mage-Lord, Prefect of Hospitality of the Town of Sadrith Mora aforesaid, hath entered into Recognizance with Sureties, before us his Majesty's Magistrates of Peace, within the said District, whose Names are hereunder written:

We therefore his Majesty's said Magistrates, have hereby Licensed, and allowed the said the , , to travel abroad in the

town of Sadrith Mora and its environs upon his own recognizance, to visit with all and sundry, and make conversation and arrangements and to seek lodgings with the citizens, tradesmen, and publicans of said town as put forth under law by the Collective Articles of the Council of the Great House Telvanni, Vvardenfell District for three full years, from henceforth next ensuing, or till such other time as shall be by us, or some of our fellow Magistrates thereunto appointed; Provided that if the said the , do not from time to time during that time, well and truly observe the Collective Articles of the Council of the Great House Telvanni, then this License shall presently cease, and be utterly void.

Signed,

Muthsera Master Angaredhel Mage-Lord

Representing the Sovereign Council of the Great House  
Telvanni

# I'm My Own Grandpa

*Gaeldol*

Why did the Dark Elf cross the road?

How many orcs does it take to light a torch?

Depends. Is an orc is doing the counting?

What is green and hops and sizzles on lava?

an Orc Acrobat

If a Wood Elf mime falls in a forest, who cares?

If you drop a Khajiit head-first from a great height, will it land on its feet?

Not if you cut off the feet first.

# Imperial Charter Of The Guild Of Fighters

*Anonymous*

The Guild of Fighters provides employment to free-swords and mercenaries and contracts to local citizens. Citizens may contract with the Guild for the removal of creatures and pests, the delivery of goods on dangerous routes, the collection of beasts for the arenas, and other duties defined by the Guild Stewards.

The Guild of Fighters was established under the section 4 of the "Guilds Act," and this charter was first confirmed under the Potentate Versidue-Shaie in the 321st year of the Second Era.

Any member of the Guild of Fighters who strikes or steals from another member shall be expelled from the Guild. Re-admittance is at the discretion of the Guild Stewards.

Citizens who contract with the Guild of Fighters and have a dispute may appeal first to the Guild Steward who accepted the contract and second with the authorities of each Province.

The Guild selects candidates who are strong and healthy. A candidate must have some proficiency with long blades, axes, blunt weapons, and shields. Guildsmen must be able to use and maintain heavy armor.

Candidates must present themselves to the Steward of the Guild Hall for examination and approval.

**ATTACHMENT A: Fighters Guild Chapters in Vvardenfell District, Province of Morrowind**

Chapters are established in Guild-owned, free-standing guildhalls in the towns of Ald'ruhn and Balmora. The chapter in Sadrith Mora is established in Wolverine Hall under lease from the Telvanni Council. The chapter in Vivec is established in the Foreign Quarter under lease from the Tribunal Temple.

# Imperial Museum Welcome

*Master Aryon*

Welcome to the Imperial Museum and Library. Please feel free to peruse the exhibits at your leisure, but please do take care around the prisoner. He has been in a terrible mood since we had to cut down his rations after the escape attempt.

Master Aryon

# Itermerel's Notes

*Itermerel*

by Itermerel

The variable flow of daedrons in Oblivion streams can have profound effects on the magicka potential of various locations. Magicka use often causes effects on the streams themselves. By reconfiguring the polarity of the daedron fields, it is possible to manipulate and trace the streams in the following cases...

[The notes go on about this subject for some time.]

# Journal Of Fryssa

*Fryssa*

I've done it! The enchantment is now complete. The robe, which I have named Whitewalker, can turn the wearer into the very essence of snow. Kick me out of the Mages Guild, will they? Now I'll show them all!



# Journal Of Tarhiel

*Tarhiel*

I believe I may have found the correct formula for the spell I am developing. With it, I will be able to travel great distances without the need to pay others for the service.

If all goes well, I will test out the new spell tomorrow. I believe I have worked out all of the possible complications. It will allow me to leap great distances, covering many hundreds of miles. Never before has one been able to travel in this manner: vaulting from the ground, sailing through the sky, all without that terrible disorientation of a spell of flying.

The time is almost upon me. My research is finished, and all of my calculations are checked and rechecked. They laughed at me when I suggested this. We'll see who laughs after I leap to the top of their towers and scream out my success.

# Journeyman Report From Ajira

## *Ajira*

Ajira studies four common mushrooms in Vvardenfell.

Luminous Russula is a toadstool like mushroom with a brown spot on top. All Russula has strong odors, but Luminous Russula much stronger. Russula can be poison if not prepared right. When mixed with pearl dust it makes very good potion to breathe under the water.

Violet Coprinus is a tall toadstool that glows in the night. Coprinus also is poison if mixed wrongly like if you mix with Russula. Coprinus mixed with scales lets Ajira walk on the water instead of under the water. Much better.

Bungler's Bane looks like a brown shelf and grows from trees and sometimes wet rocks. Bungler's Bane very bad for you when mixed with almost anything. Very hard to use, but Ajira found Bungler's Bane and left over crushed pearl makes good dispel potion. No bad effects with Ajira's skill, but potion tastes very bad.

Hypha Facia looks just like Bungler's Bane. Confuses Ajira very easily, but Bungler's Bane smells more dry and dusty. Hypha Facia has little smell, but taste is very moist. Hypha Facia very good mushroom for eating, but too much makes Ajira clumsy. Ajira used Hypha Facia to make the nix hound meat more

edible, and Ajira could smell all enchantments in Ajira's room. Ajira found no other use for Hypha Facia.

Ajira works very hard to go all over Bitter Coast and collect all these mushrooms. Ajira deserves rank of Journeyman much sooner than Galbedir.

Ajira studies hard to learn secret magical properties of Gold Kanet, Stoneflower Petals, Willow Anther, and Heather.

Gold Kanet has yellow flowers and very dark green leaves with sharp spines. Gold Kanet and Stoneflower Petals makes a paste that restores strength. The paste has some bad effects, but they last only short time.

Stoneflowers are dark blue and the flowers are very heavy so they bend to the ground. It is very expensive, but Ajira can gain more magicka for a short time by mixing Stoneflower petals with crushed emeralds and water.

Willow flowers are red and very tall with tall and thin leaves also. Willow very good for potions and has many uses. With frost salts, Ajira made a shield of frost. With grave dust and green lichens, Ajira made a potion to cure common diseases. And with Corkbulb Ajira made a potion that can cure paralyzation.

Ajira thinks Heather comes from Skyrim because the leaves look like the spiny leaves of trees in Skyrim. The flowers are also pink like the Nord people. When mixed with ruby, it makes very good potion to make you not weigh so much. With a scrap of Scamp skin, Ajira made a potion to restore personality.

Ajira works very hard to collect these flower samples from the dangerous Lake Amaya. Ajira must do two reports and Galbedir must only do one silly report. Ajira deserves rank of Journeyman very soon now.

# Kagouti Mating Habits

*Edras Oril*

Observations made on wild kagouti in southeastern Morrowind.

Kagouti do not seem to travel in large packs, as previously believed. Perhaps they group into larger packs when mating season is imminent.

Females seem to be dominant sex. Males will bring gifts of food in exchange for mating advantage. Males sometimes attacked.

Loud vocalizations heard exchanged (believed to be from males), especially at night. Fascinating.

Males do not seem to engage in physical confrontation for reproductive rights. Some posturing, but no conflict.

All kagouti display increased aggressiveness during mating. Must be careful not to be seen.

Mating kagouti found to be increasingly territorial.

# Kagrenac's Journal

*Kagrenac*

[The contents of this handwritten journal are in an unfamiliar script in an unknown language. There are many complex diagrams heavily annotated with numbers and strange symbols. The title page, however, is clearly marked in Aldmeris —‘Kagrenac’s Journals’.]

# Kagrenac's Planbook

*Kagrenac*

[The contents of this handwritten journal are in an unfamiliar script in an unknown language. There are many complex diagrams heavily annotated with numbers and strange symbols. The title page, however, is clearly marked in Ald Aldmeris—'Kagrenac's Planbook'.]

# Kagrenac's Tools

*Gilvas Barelo*

[summarized from the Apograpa by Gilvas Barelo, Abbot of Holamayan, and various of the Dissident Priests ]

Beneath Red Mountain, Dwemer miners discovered a great magical stone. By diverse methods, Lord Kagrenac, High Priest and Magecrafter of the ancient Dwemer, determined that this magical stone was the heart of the god Lorkhan, cast here in the Dawn Era as a punishment for his mischief in creating the mortal world. Determined to use its divine powers to create a new god for the exclusive benefit of the Dwemer, Kagrenac forged three great enchanted artifacts, which are called "Kagrenac's Tools." Wraithguard is an enchanted gauntlet to protect its wearer from destruction when tapping the heart's power. Sunder is a enchanted hammer to strike the heart and produce the exact volume and quality of power desired. Keening is an enchanted blade that is used to flay and focus the power that rises from the heart.

When Kagrenac used these tools on the heart in the Battle of Red Mountain, no one knows what happened, but the Dwemer race disappeared entirely from the mortal world. Lord Nerevar and Lord Dagoth retrieved these tools, and didn't know what to do with them. Nerevar asked Dagoth to guard the tools while he went to consult with his counselors, Vivec, Almalexia, and Sotha Sil. He left and spoke with his three counselors, and they



decided to return together to Red Mountain to decide what to do.

But while Nerevar was gone, Dagoth was tempted and confused by the powers of the tools. When Nerevar and the counselors arrived, he refused to give up the tools, claiming he had sworn to Nerevar to protect them. Then Dagoth fought with Nerevar and the counselors, and was mortally wounded and driven off, and the tools were recovered.

Then Nerevar and his counselors decided to take the tools for safekeeping. They all swore a great oath never to use the tools, but after Nerevar's death, Vivec, Almalexia, and Sotha Sil yielded to temptation. They took these tools themselves and went to Lorkhan's heart buried beneath Red Mountain, and gave themselves divine powers.

But Dagoth had not died. We don't know what happened, but this is what we believe. His experiments with Kagrenac's Tools had joined him to the heart's divine nature in some way, so that he learned to draw power directly from the heart.

We conjecture that Dagoth Ur, driven by anger and greed, used the heart without caution and restraint, and, as a result, he has become terribly powerful, and terribly mad. But the Tribunal showed great care and restraint in their use of the tools, and so they were not driven mad, and they did many good things. Nonetheless, the Tribunal, too, appear to have been corrupted by the heart's power, though more subtly.

Kagrenac's Tools are cursed. Stealing power from the heart of a god is a terrible folly, and fated to disaster. The Tribunal is losing its battle to control the power of the heart. They are sustained by the same tainted power that drives Dagoth Ur

mad. They grow weak, and cannot protect us from Dagoth Ur. But even if they could, would we be wise to worship gods such as these? They conceal the truth from us out of shame. They persecute the Nerevarine and the Dissident priests out of shame, when they should be welcoming them and enlisting their aid against Dagoth Ur.

The Tribunal have done much good for Morrowind and the Dunmer. But they succumbed to the temptation of Kagrenac's Tools, and though these tools once may have seemed the instruments of salvation, now they must be seen as instruments of doom.

# Legions Of The Dead

*Anonymous*

Undead commonly occur in three basic types: spirit, flesh, and fleshless. Spirit revenants like the ancestor ghost, wraith, and dwarven ghost, can only be harmed by weapons that are enchanted or made of refined substances such as silver. Ancestor ghosts, the most common spirit revenant, are harmless, apart from the minor curses they lay upon their victims. Wraiths are similar to ghosts, but they are capable of inflicting wounds to the careless explorer. Dwarven ghosts are more dangerous still, but they generally appear only in Dwarven ruins.

Flesh revenants, or 'zombies' as they are often called in the West, are known as 'bonewalkers' in Morrowind. Magic preserves the bonewalker's fleshy remains along with the bones and spirit. Bonewalkers are readily identified by the sharp protuberances of bone and metal employed in the rituals that bind them to this plane. All bonewalkers are malevolent and dangerous, but the greater bonewalkers are far worse than the more common 'lesser' bonewalkers. Thankfully, normal weapons harm bonewalkers.

It is difficult to generalize about fleshless revenants, or skeletons. The agility and fighting ability of the animated remains may depend on the abilities of the revenant's former life, and may therefore be weak or strong, or more or less

capable with weapons and shields. Fortunately, enchanted weapons are not needed to destroy skeletons. An exception is the bonelord, a peculiar form of revenant that seems to derive its powers more from its spirit energies than from the substance of its skeletal remains. Bonelords are very powerful, and very dangerous. Normal weapons do not affect them.

Vampires were believed to be extinct in Morrowind for centuries. Dunmer culture has a special hatred for vampires, and in earlier times the Ordinators and Buoyant Armigers hunted them to extinction. In recent years, however, vampires have either begun to sneak into Morrowind, or long-dormant ones have been awakened. Vampires vary in their substance and power according to their age and accumulated lore, but even the weakest vampire is immeasurably stronger than most other undead. Note: Ash vampires are not vampires, and are not undead. Ash vampires are extremely dangerous. While their spirit and substance may indeed be preserved by some magical process, the holy warriors of the Tribunal Temple report that spell effects known to affect the undead have no effect on ash vampires.

# Letter From Gadayn

*Gadayn Andarys*

Dearest Eraldil,

Long have I watched you from afar, bathing in the light that is your beauty. Long have I wished for the courage to speak to you of my undying love for you.

Your eyes are really, really brown, in that good wood elf kind of way. And your hair. Your hair is really black, and looks good on your head. You walk with grace and beauty, and perhaps someday you'll walk with me, too.

Please, tell me you share my love. I have seen you in my store, browsing for minutes on end. My love for you is so great, I would give you a discount on most all of my items for sale. I look forward to your response.

Yours,

Gadayn

# Letter From Ocato

*Ocato*

In this letter, the symbol has been substituted for the player character's name.

To the esteemed Arch-Mage Trebonius Artorius, Guildmaster of Vvardenfell,

Upon receiving this letter, you will step down from your post and grant the title of Arch-Mage to . From this day forward, will handle all Guild matters in Vvardenfell. You may keep the title of Arch-Mage, but you will retire from active participation in the affairs of the Guild.

In the Emperor's Name,

Ocato

# Letter From Rigmor To Risi

*Rigmor Halfhand*

Dearest Risi,

Why will you not see me? You know how I feel, and I know you feel the same about me. Please, simply consent to speak to me. Just a word, a moment with you, would ease my soul. If I cannot be with you, I will have to resort to something drastic.

Please, consider your feelings. Your husband is a lout, away for weeks at a time, with no consideration for your needs. I have always been there for you, and I always will be. We should be together, dear Risi.

RH

# Letter To Senilias Cadiusus

*Hasphat Antabolis*

In this letter, the symbol has been substituted for the player character's name.

Dearest Senilias,

The bearer of this note, , has provided useful service, and shown considerable resourcefulness. I have employed in retrieving an item from Arkngthand, so you can count on some familiarity with Dwemer ruins. If you have a place, I believe will give satisfaction.

If you have any luck, perhaps you'll use the bearer to send a note my way.

My best regards and affection to you and Pania,

Hasphat Antabolis



# Map Of Red Mountain

*Bouyant Armigers*

Citadel Vemynal: northwest

Citadel Tureynulal: northeast

Citadel Dagoth: center

Citadel Endusal: southwest

Citadel Odrosal: southeast

Ghostgate: south

# Message From Dagoth Ur

*Dagoth Ur*

Lord Nerevar Indoril, Hai Resdaynia

My Lord, Friend, and Companion

Once we were friends and brothers, Lord Nerevar, in peace and in war. No houseman ever served you better, or more faithfully. Much that I did was at your command, at great cost to myself, and my honor.

Yet beneath Red Mountain, you struck me down as I guarded the treasure you bound me by oath to defend. It was a cruel blow, a bitter betrayal, to be felled by your hand.

But, remembering our old friendship, I would forgive you, and raise you high in my service. The Sixth House was not dead, but only sleeping. Now we wake from our long dream, coming forth to free Morrowind of foreign rulers and divine pretenders. When the land is swept clean of false friends and greedy thieves, the children of Veloth will build anew a garden of plenty in this blighted wasteland.

Come to Red Mountain, old friend. For the fellowship and honor that once we shared, I would grant you counsel and power, if only you would pledge that friendship anew. The path to Red Mountain is long, and filled with danger, but if you are

worthy, you will find there wisdom, a firm friend, and all the power you need to set the world aright.

As ever, your respectful servant and loyal friend,

Lord Voryn Dagoth, Dagoth Ur

# Message From Divayth Fyr

*Divayth Fyr*

Originally was written in Daedric Sigils. [Click here to see the translated version](#)

[Originally written in Daedric Sigils]

FGIJMZGHZIFJEBEBCJGHHJWGFJQPCDFEHJMNIDGAIJVYJHBJT  
M

CDNEGBIQIJHJFICDDBHJXACDIJBBBDFDTAEBEBVMEBFJJHIDIJ

BJFJCDFMBHNDFDNSEBGB

KDCDWREBEBTZGHJHMBHJGHPNCJCJCDRYHJBGEBAIEHG  
BAWGHBV

ADADVKDHEZBBIJEBEBGHJHBBHJQBCDETHBFDBBGBG  
BEJEBMMGB

AIDBBBGBBJTVE

BADKOEGLIDUWDHEBEBCYGHJHXLADWWCDZQFDICFDJEE  
BDHBBA

BFWCDBIIJSDHCDERJHIJCSFJGHJKIDIJIZHJNWCDPLID  
OCHBK

BCDBHAAIJCNXGHHJ

MUEBEDWGHJHHBCDUTHJGCIDASGHGBBBFDVTEBEBBDJ  
HHRIJ

PQEBSQBJZJGHGBGHIJBLADEBIDDHKAIJHFGHEBUUGBABGH  
KGF

ABCDASFJMVEBEB

YNIDXSCDAQFDCJYYEBGBYUIJDHLECDBJCDBBFDEBGBDBIDG  
HVY

CJIJUADHSICDBHDMGHAEJHXBGBCLBHKJEBFDWAEBBCJBWCD  
HGCD

FDEBEBGHSUJHADZ

LEBFDNNUCJEUEBUXGBVOBJAGIDGHPBFJCDGHGBCDTJFJOM  
GHH

JCDIDJHSAEBXEIJTQBBAABDJPF DURCDADIJGHEBEBQPGHJHH  
BH

JHBWDJHHJKOHBGH

DIIDTWDCVIDMBGHGHSWGBJHGBEGIJKXEBGQFDCAIJFBDH  
UVCD

GBPCHBCDHJDHBBVQHBHKIDEBEBGHMIJHBHGHWMJHFDBJ  
CSHBDV

CDHJGFIDOSJHBB

BJTXCDBDSIBBVZFDQSBBBJBUFBIDBJEBXMABRBBBEBEBIJD  
H

CJEBEBHJ

# Message From Master Aryon

*Master Aryon*

[Originally written in Daedric Sigils]

WIIJNUGHWBIVNDHCDIDIJXOCDLUFJAFCDUYBJXHB  
TEBABEZBBSJEBEBIJIDDHCJEBEBHJENEBULADEZE  
BDOFDFDBDCDBDZFFDJHGBDEIJEBGBGX

CDQBCDFEJBBJQGBYABBFDFDTCEBEBIJDHCDIJH  
JBBBJHYEBIJEBYOGHRBGBIKBBFDUEEBSNIDI  
JIDBBGBCDBJRWBHZNHJPNB  
BTTSAHEBBZCDIDJKDHXTBB

ABLXCDEDGHWUEBGBRPCDIKBJOBIJGRGHMMDB  
CDBRIJDEDHCDLYHJAMBDBBBVAEBGBIDIJIUF  
JAPCDXIEBAQCJVIIDOTG  
HFJUACDACIJDHEBHLGBNYDBK

HEBIDNIGBGHIJBVXGHGBCDIJDHCDEBCAHJPS  
IDDHGHJHJHJHJHJHJHJHJHJHJHJHJHJHJH  
KIDEBXEDBDTDHIJCDBJGBQDCDIJIDANIDFJ  
BBTPEBEBBDHJHE  
EBGBUJDBDHGHJHIDCDIJCDT

FFDABKIBBGBGBEBEBLAGBIJLKGHFJGHHJ  
CDBJEEEBHJIWCDN  
CBHIJBHGHIFGBCJFDEBBHXPIJPDAD  
EBIJTCDHVHHJCDJGTG  
HIAHJCWBBGBNREBXXKGBUOB

JFWGHSRHJEBFDDHFDSFBBHXBBFDRWJHEP  
BBFEGBBJXNCDB  
CABCDTWGBDKIJDHCDWGFJAPHBVPEBHJUG  
CDGGIDADJH  
HJCDFDLTEBEBEBEBGHJHB

HAHBBNNGBCNHBHJJYCDBJEFEBDIBHQBIJTWIJDKDHCD  
SUC  
DJKFJHBANEBHJCDIDBHPZGHOJFDFDORBBHBIDFJCDBBKVID  
TMADCDPEFDFDMCBBIDLOEBZ

MADCDIDEMDHGHNDJHISFDMGBJADBHGHHXXHJEHLIINAGH  
DBTMCDGPIJPPDHCDHJKTIJGHIDUPBBIRABPDCDINGHJHVYH  
JWIDHGHDXJHSUIDXDCDEBEBG

HBHJHUNBHXTGHJHEXFDBJIRBHFDVOBBEBSUFJBBZFHG  
GIDEBMSIJEBELGHGBGHNDGBOBIJKPDHMCCDFTBHGHTGJHG  
BBHEBFDBDQJEBEBNTFJCDHJ

WBCDFDEBEBBBIDEHDPEBGBDBPJCDABRMCD  
SZGBUZDBGHN  
MIJDHRYHJVPCDGBWZBBAEGBMGBJGBLMCDFDUTGHCUIJEQ  
DHFJJHPAIDYCIJESBBWFBJXH

FJEBIJSFIJDHBBIJEBEBGHCQJHDQBBJCHJCDLIGHXYFD  
FLBJCD  
ZNHJBTBBGGBJDOADEBIDJUCDHJCKBBLNGBBJSJEBKDGBCDBK  
ABCDHJVDEBEBFGADBBEBE

BJCIDJFJHCPHBCDMIHJMEEBGHHJFPJRTGHIJDHCDZLFJEBGB  
NYIJDXDHJRCDXHBBRMHJBHBBGBCDBBHJIJWKIDEBEBWIGH  
UOJHEJHJDHEUGHLFGBHYGH

PMHJCDBJIDIJJHBJQHCDGBIYJFJBBRIIDIJCDHJAZBBHJRDEBEB  
GHHUGB

# Mission To Vivec—From Caius

*Caius Cosades*

[The following are notes prepared by Caius Cosades to summarize your mission to Vivec City.]

In Vivec, look for these three persons and get them to tell you what they know about the Nerevarine cult and the Sixth House cult. Each owes me a favor, and each should be willing to cooperate.

Addhiranirr is a Khajiit, and a Thieves Guild operative. She won't be easy to find, but ask around in St. Olms Canton. Folks are easily offended in St. Olms; be careful what you say. A little courtesy, a little coin, a little favor in the right place will get you in touch with her.

Huleeya is an Argonian and a Morag Tong assassin. Look for him in the Foreign Quarter, at the Black Shalk Cornerclub. He's known around Vivec City as a lover of books and old things.

Mehra Milo is a Temple priestess who works in the libraries at the Hall of Wisdom and Justice. The Hall of Wisdom and Justice is open to the public. Just walk around until you find her. Do NOT ask anyone at the Hall of Wisdom and Justice about Mehra Milo. I don't want to draw attention to the fact that she is talking to an outlander. Mehra Milo is a particular friend, and I don't want her to get in trouble.



When you've spoken with each of these persons, and gotten what information they can give you, return

# Neminda's Orders

*Nileno Dorvayn*

Neminda

SOZZOF IFNLIVW GL YV LKVMRMT IVGSZM NZMLI ZH GSVRI  
MVCG HGILMTSLOW

OOVGSIR YVORVEVH SV ULFMW VERWVMXV ULI ROOVTZO  
SOZZOF VYLMB HSRKNVMGH UILN XZOWVIZ

HVMW ZTVMG GL HKVZP DRGS OOVGSIR ZMW HVMW  
ZTVMG GL DZGXS IVGSZM

ZGSBM DROO FHV RMUOFVMXV DRGS WFPV GL YOLXP  
XLMGIZXGH RU KLHHRYOV

This is the translation done by Adam (A Code Cracker) by using  
a service from Interactive Wordplay.

HLAALU RUMORED TO BE OPENING RETHAN MANOR AS  
THEIR NEXT STRONGHOLD

LLETHRI BELIEVES HE FOUND EVIDENCE FOR ILLEGAL  
HLAALU EBONY SHIPMENTS FROM CALDERA

SEND AGENT TO SPEAK WITH LLETHRI AND SEND AGENT TO  
WATCH RETHAN

ATHYN WILL USE INFLUENCE WITH DUKE TO BLOCK  
CONTRACTS IF POSSIBLE

# Nerevar At Red Mountain

## *Tribunal Temple*

[The following is from the Apograpa, the hidden writings of the Tribunal Temple. It is a scholarly retelling of a tradition transmitted through the Ashlanders concerning the battle at Red Mountain and subsequent events. The Ashlanders associate this tale with the telling of Alandro Sul, a shield-companion of Nerevar who came to live among the Ashlanders after the death of Nerevar and during the ascension of the Tribunal. There are many variant treatments of this story, but the primary elements are consistent throughout the tradition. The murder of Nerevar, the tragic fate of Dagoth Ur, and the profane source of the Tribunal's divine power are denied by Temple doctrine as ignorant Ashlander superstition, and not widely known among civilized Dunmer.]

Resdayn, present day Morrowind, was contested ground between two very different types of mer: the Chimer, who worshipped Daedra, and the Dwemer, who worshipped a profane and secret power. These two people warred with each other constantly until their lands were invaded by a young, vibrant, and violent alien culture, the Nords.

Two heroes, one from the Chimer and one from the Dwemer, Indoril Nerevar and Dumac Dwarf-Orc, made peace between their people and together ousted the alien invaders. Then these two heroes worked long and hard to maintain that peace

thereafter, though their counselors thought it could not last or, worse, that it shouldn't. Nerevar's queen and his generals—Almalexia, Sotha Sil, Vivec—told him to claim all Resdayn for his own. But Nerevar would not listen, for he remembered his friendship with Dumac. There would be only peace.

Until Dagoth-Ur arrived. House Dagoth had discovered the source of the profane and secret power of the Dwemer: the legendary Heart of Lorkhan, which Dumac's people had used to make themselves immortal and beyond the measure of the gods. In fact, one of their high priests, Kagrenac, was building a New God so that the Dwemer could claim Resdayn for their own.

The Tribunal urged Nerevar again to make war on the Dwarves. Nerevar was troubled. He went to Dumac, his friend of old, and asked if what Dagoth-Ur said was true. But Kagrenac and the high priests of the Dwemer had kept their New God secret from their King, and Dumac said the Dwemer were innocent of any wrongdoing. Nerevar was troubled again and made pilgrimage to Holamayan, the sacred temple of Azura, who confirmed that all that Dagoth-Ur said was indeed true and that the New God of the Dwemer should be destroyed for the safety of not only Resdayn, but for the whole world. When Nerevar went back and told his Tribunal what the goddess had said, his queen and generals felt themselves proved aright and again counseled him to war. There were reasons that the Dwemer and Chimer had hated each other forever.

Finally, Nerevar, angered that his friend Dumac would lie to him, went back to Vvardenfell. This time the Chimer King was arrayed in arms and armor and had his hosts around him, and he spoke harshly to Dumac Dwarf-Orc, King of Red Mountain.

“You must give up your worship of the Heart of Lorkhan or I shall forget our friendship and the deeds that were accomplished in its name!” And Dumac, who still knew nothing of Kagrenac’s New God, but proud and protective as ever of his people, said, “We shall not relinquish that which has been our way for years beyond reckoning, just as the Chimer will not relinquish their ties to the Lords and Ladies of Oblivion. And to come at my door in this way, arrayed in arms and armor and with your hosts around you, tells me you have already forgotten our friendship. Stand down, my sweet Nerevar, or I swear by the fifteen-and-one golden tones I shall kill you and all your people.”

And so the Chimer and Dwemer went to war. The Dwemer were well-defended by their fortress at Red Mountain, but the bravery and cleverness of Nerevar’s queen and generals drew most of Dumac’s armies out into the field and kept them there, so that Nerevar and Dagoth-Ur could make their way into the Heart Chamber by secret means. There, Nerevar met Dumac and the Dwarf King and they both fell from grievous wounds. Dagoth-Ur slew Kagrenac and took the tools the Dwemer used to tap the power of the Heart. He went to his dying lord Nerevar and asked him what to do with these tools. And Nerevar summoned Azura again, and she showed them how to use the tools to separate the power of the Heart from the Dwemer people.

And on the fields, the Tribunal and their armies watched as the Dwemer turned into dust all around them as their stolen immortality was taken away.

Back in Red Mountain, Nerevar told Dagoth-Ur to protect the tools and the Heart Chamber until he returned. Dagoth-Ur said,

“But shouldn’t we destroy these tools at once, so that they might never be used for evil again?” But Nerevar was confused by his wounds and his sorrow (for he still loved Dumac and the Dwemer people) and so went to the fields outside of Red Mountain to confer with his queen and his generals, who had foreseen that this war would come and whose counsel he would not ignore again. “I will ask the Tribunal what we shall do with them, for they have had wisdom in the past that I had not. Stay here, loyal Dagoth-Ur, until I return.”

Then Nerevar told his queen and generals all that had transpired under Red Mountain and how the Dwemer had used special tools to turn their people into immortals and of the wondrous power of the Heart of Lorkhan. The Tribunal decided that the Chimer should learn how to use this power so that Nerevar might claim Resdayn and the world for their people. Nerevar did not expect or want this, so he asked his queen and generals to help him summon Azura yet again for her guidance. But the Tribunal had become as greedy as Kagrenac upon hearing of the power of the Heart and they coveted it. They made ritual as if to summon Azura as Nerevar wanted but Almalexia used poisoned candles and Sotha Sil used poisoned robes and Vivec used poisoned invocations. Nerevar was murdered.

Then Azura came forth anyway and cursed the Tribunal for their foul deeds. She told them that she would use her powers over dusk and dawn to make sure Nerevar would come back and make things right again. But the Tribunal laughed at her and said that soon they would be gods themselves and that the Chimer people would forget their old ways of worship. And Azura knew this would be true and that it would take a long time before her power might bring Nerevar back. “What you

have done here today is foul beyond measure and you will grow to regret it, for the lives of gods are not what mortals think and matters that weigh only years to mortals weigh on gods forever.” And so that they might know forever their wicked deeds Azura changed the Chimer into Dunmer, and their skin turned ashen and their eyes into fire. “Let this mark remind you of your true selves who, like ghouls, fed on the nobility, heroism, and trust of their king.”

And then the Tribunal went into Red Mountain and met with Dagoth-Ur. Dagoth-Ur saw what had been done, for his skin had changed as well, and he tried to avenge the death of Nerevar but to no avail. He was driven off and thought dead. The Tribunal found the tools he had been guarding and, through study of Kagrenac’s methods, turned themselves into gods.

Thousands of years after their apotheosis, the Tribunal are still the gods of Morrowind and the old ways of worship are remembered only by a few. And the murder of Nerevar is known to fewer. But his queen and generals still fear his return, for the words of Azura linger long and they see the mark of her curse on their people every day.



# Nerevarine Cult Notes

## *Sharn gra-Muzgob*

[The following are notes from Sharn gra-Muzgob to Caius Cosades.]

This Ashlander religious cult follows prophecies of a Nerevar reborn to honor ancient promises to the tribes, to reestablish the traditions of the Prophet Veloth, to cast down the false gods of the Tribunal Temple, and to drive all outlanders from Morrowind. Both Temple and Empire outlaw the cult, but it persists among the Ashlanders, despite Imperial and Temple repression. Because it is persecuted, it remains a secret cult, and it is hard to judge how widespread it is among the Ashlanders, or whether it has any following outside the Ashlander tribes.

The Ashlanders firmly believe that Nerevar will return to restore the glories of ancient Resdayn. [Morrowind was called 'Resdayn' before the Imperial Occupation.] The Ashlanders say the Great Houses and the Temple have abandoned the pure teachings of the Prophet Veloth, forsaking ancestor worship for the false gods of the Tribunal, and embracing the comforts of civilization that corrupted the High Elves. The Temple, on the other hand, venerates Saint Nerevar, but rejects the disgusting notion that the False Incarnate will walk the earth like a ghoul.

The Temple honors Saint Nerevar as the greatest Dunmer general, First Councilor, and companion of Vivec, Almalexia, and Sotha Sil, who united the Dunmer Houses to destroy the evil Dwemer, the treacherous House Dagoth, and their Western allies at Red Mountain. But the Ashlanders say Nerevar promised to honor the Ancient Spirits and the Tribal law, and that he will come again to honor that promise. To the Ashlanders, this means destroying the false Temple and driving the Imperial invaders from the land.

Dream visions and prophecies are a respected tradition in Ashlander culture. Their wise women and shamans take careful note of dreams and visions, and pass on the tribe's legacies of vision and prophecy to their successors. By contrast, the Temple and the Western faiths are suspicious of mysticism, and they regard interpretation of dreams and visions as primitive superstition.

The most common version of the Nerevarine Prophecy is THE STRANGER. The verses are obscure, as are most prophecies. But two observations are in order.

First, many less-well-informed scholars assume that the phrase "journeyed far 'neath moon and star" is just a cliché to suggest a very long journey, but the Nerevar of legend was known to possess a magical ring named "One-Clan-Under-Moon-and-Star," upon which Nerevar is supposed to have sworn his promise to honor ancient Ashlander traditions and land rights.

Second, the reference to "seven curses" must certainly refer to the lost prophetic verses known to the Ashlanders as the SEVEN CURSES.

When earth is sundered, and skies choked black,

And sleepers serve the seven curses,  
To the hearth there comes a stranger,  
Journeyed far 'neath moon and star.  
Though stark-born to sire uncertain  
His aspect marks his certain fate.  
Wicked stalk him, righteous curse him.  
Prophets speak, but all deny.  
Many trials make manifest  
The stranger's fate, the curses' bane.  
Many touchstones try the stranger  
Many fall, but one remains.

Ashlander elders complain of prophecies which have been lost to tribal memory due to the carelessness or ineptitude of earlier generations of wise women and ashkhans. Suspicious scholars wonder whether these prophecies might have been deliberately forgotten or suppressed. Three Nerevarine prophecies in particular are said to have been lost: 1. The Lost Prophecies; 2. The Seven Curses; and 3. Seven Visions of Seven Trials of the Incarnate. Perhaps these lost prophecies will someday be found, either in forgotten accounts written by literate travelers, or in the memories of isolated Ashlanders, or in the secret traditions of the wise women and shamans.

# No-H's Picture Book Of Wood

*Anonymous*

Wood is pretty

Wood is nice

If one looks good

I'll make it twice!

[Upon reaching the last page of the book, the words 'Boat Ack', are seen scrawled about the margin in a vandalistic manner.]

# Note From A Glenmoril Witch

*Agnes*

Dearest Sisters,

The Coven will remember your dedication and service. We realize Solstheim is an inhospitable place, but we go where we are needed. Anyone seeking the cure must perform the Rite of the Wolf Giver, of course. But I do understand the sensitive nature of the ritual, and realize it may not be possible to perform it again and again, if the Lord Hircine claims more than one soul.

So, I have prepared a Scroll of the Wolf Ender. The Daedric lettering on that scroll contains all the power of the ritual itself. I have taken great pains to prepare the parchment, and it will work as well as the Rite of the Wolf Giver. But heed these words! I do not wish the scroll to be used unless absolutely necessary! It was not easily created, and it is the wish of the Coven that it be saved for future use if possible. The scroll has already been hidden in the gloomy cave that will serve as your hovel for the duration of your stay on Solstheim. It is inside the hollowed-out icicle that hangs from the cave's ceiling. You'll need to use your raven form—or a potion of levitation—to reach it.

Agnes

# Note From Bakarak

*Bakarak*

Moris,

You boys better clear out. Our position was given away and we were raided by that bastard Goris. He sent a small band of the dead to Dralas and wiped out all but Luven. He was able to make it back here to Nelas to warn us. We are clearing out and heading for a new location. I suggest you and your boys get out of there as soon as possible. We have a snitch in our organisation. You let me find out who it is and I'll feed their flesh to the crabs. It seems as though he knows all of our raiding routes. It's just a matter of time before Goris sends them damned and dead your way. I'll never turn those goods over to that necro. What's fair is fair and he had to pay up. You know where I'm coming from. I'm sending Ursine to deliver this message to you. She will deliver a key so you can gain entry into the rendezvous point. See you soon and good luck brother.

Bakarak

# Note From Bashuk

*Bashuk*

In this letter, the symbol has been substituted for the player character's race.

Bugrol

Stay where you are going. Will look for you there. Who is the stupid anyway? Don't tell about what we didn't do that townbosses know we did. Better that way. Shhh.

Bashuk

# Note From Bugrol

*Bugrol*

Bashuk

Help. Stuck in woods because swordsmacking townbosses think I did what we did but they shouldn't know. Keep Secret!!! Come get me soon as possible when you can now. I am hiding by the tree near a rock and another rock. It was raining. I am good at hiding, so if you don't see me, that's where I am. Come now.

Bugrol

p.s. If I'm not where I'm hiding, look in another place.



# Note From Oritius Maro

*Oritius Maro*

There are rumors that Uriel will be visiting Vvardenfell in person. If so, we must act sooner than anticipated. We must watch his actions carefully and strike if the opportunity presents itself. We must also recruit more and swear them to the oath: That we shall die to put a strong man back on the throne of Tamriel.

Burn this note.

Oritius

# Note From The Archcanon

*Dileno Lloran*

[a package sealed with an anonymous wax seal, containing a single-page, unsigned note]

[on the cover of the package]

To the Outlander lately proclaiming his identity as the Nerevarine, to be delivered with haste—

[the note itself]

The assertions made being in direct contradiction of the doctrine of the Tribunal, namely, that you are the Nerevarine, the reincarnation of the Sainted Lord Nerevar, are, in addition to being against Temple teaching, incredible and implausible in the extreme.

The revelations made by the Inquisition, namely, that you yourself are in fact an agent of the Imperial Intelligence Service, otherwise known as the Order of Blades, lately made with substantial evidence by the Lord High Archordinator, Berel Sala, further calls into question the validity of and motivations behind your claims.

However, as incredible as your claims are, as much as they are in direct contradiction of the teachings of the Temple, and tainted as they are by the inferences to be made upon your

close association with the covert policies and interests of the Emperor, the interests of the Temple and its leadership, and in particular, the interests of His Immortal Lordship, Vivec, are best served by a close and personal examinations of the claims being made, and close and personal examinations of the motivations and character of the claimant.

The Temple, through its examinations of its records, in particular, the records of the Heirographa and Apographa, is intimately familiar with the many and varied claims of signs and feats that would mark the Nerevarine according to prophecy.

Therefore, in the event of the fulfillment of certain of those most remarkable and scarcely credible claims—namely, that the claimant should, at one time, be the acknowledged holder of several ancient titles of power and authority of the Dunmer people, to wit, Hortator of the Great Houses and Nerevarine of the Ashlander tribes—the Temple proposes that the claimant of the identity of the Nerevarine shall present himself for inspection before his Reverend Honor, Archcanon Lord Tholer Saryoni, High Archcanon and Chancellor of Vivec, Archcanon of the Canonry of Vvardenfell, Arch-Priest of the High Fane, for a review and consideration of his claims and identity. However, until such time as the claimant actually has been named Hortator separately and jointly by the three Great Houses of Vvardenfell, and at the same time has been named Nerevarine separately and jointly by the four tribes of the Ashlanders, there is no purpose in reviewing or discussing these claims.

Because of the Temple's official position on the prophecies of the Nerevarine, and in the interests of preserving the security of the claimant from those parties who might wish to do him

harm, it is convenient that the claimant of the title Nerevarine shall present himself in secret to Archcanon Saryoni in the archcanon's private quarters in the High Fane of Vivec.

To signify agreement with these terms and conditions for a meeting with the archcanon, the Nerevarine claimant may present himself to the healer of the High Fane of Vivec, Danso Indules, and the necessary arrangements will be made. Once again, no purpose is served by a meeting until the claimant is named Hortator of the three Great Houses and is named Nerevarine of the four Ashlander tribes.

written at the request of and in the name of his Reverend Honor Tholer Saryoni, Archcanon and Chancellor of Vivec,

Dileno Lloran, priest of Vivec, assistant to the Archcanon

# Note To Ahnia

*Anonymous*

Ahnia,

I've tried so hard, and yet no one has any interest in this blasted book. Perhaps if anyone could READ it, it might sell as well as the scrolls do. If I can't get rid of it soon, I'm returning it to you. I don't want to hold on to it for too much longer, or else people might suspect something.

# Note To Amaya

*Mehra Milo*

Amaya,

Sorry I missed you. I had to run some old documents over to the Inquisitor at the Ministry of Truth, and I'm likely to be tied up there for a while. Why don't you meet me there as soon as you can? Then we can leave together as soon as I'm done. And Amaya, don't forget to bring me the two Divine Intervention scrolls you borrowed. Or, if you used them, buy a couple of new ones for me. I think I'm going to need them soon. Janand Maulinie at the Mages Guild in the Foreign Quarter keeps them in stock.

Alvela Saram is the guard at the entrance; just tell her you're looking for me, and she'll let you in.

your faithful friend,

Mehra

PS: I left a couple of Levitate potions here for you, just in case. I couldn't remember if you knew

# Note To Hlevala

*Orvas Dren*

Foreman Hlevala,

Current activities within the plantation have been highly noted with outstanding performance. The 'nemer' seem to have a fine grasp on our routines since you have given them their "disciplinary schooling". I commend you on your fine efforts and success. You shall be rewarded greatly.

If you will, make sure the following 'nemer' are all accounted for. I will have to have them marked as plantation property for my personal records.

Neetinei

Arabhi

Gah-Julan

Ahzini

Tulz

Best Regards,

Orvas Dren

# Note To Mages

*Stlennius*

Mages:

Please be judicious in your use of fire spells while guarding slaves deep in the mine. Often flammable gases are present and, as last week's incident indicates, even a small flame can spark a huge explosion. We don't know if Keseena will ever get that patch of fur back.

Stlennius



# Notes From Huleeya

## *Huleeya*

[The following are Huleeya's notes for Caius Cosades.]

In First Era barbaric Dunmer culture, settled Dunmer clans (the Great Houses) and nomadic Dunmer tribes (like the Ashlanders) were roughly equal in numbers and wealth. Under the civilized peace of the Grand Council, and with the strong central authority of the Temple, the economic and military power of the settled Dunmer quickly outstripped that of the nomadic Dunmer. The nomadic Dunmer were marginalized into the poorest, most hostile land, in particular, into the Vvardenfell wastes. For the Ashlanders, the return of a reincarnated Nerevar represents a longed for and largely romanticized Golden Age of Nerevar's Peace, when the nomadic tribes enjoyed equality with the settled Dunmer, and before the Dunmer people had for the most part abandoned traditional ancestor worship for the autocratic theocracy of the Tribunal Temple.

This is the story of Nerevar as an Ashlander might tell it.

In ancient days, the Deep Elves and a great host of outlanders from the West came to steal the land of the Dunmer. In that time, Nerevar was the great khan and warleader of the House People, but he honored the Ancient Spirits and the Tribal law, and became as one of us. So, when Nerevar pledged upon his

great Ring of the Ancestors, One-Clan-Under-Moon-and-Star, to honor the ways of the Spirits and rights of the Land, all the Tribes joined the House People to fight a great battle at Red Mountain. Though many Dunmer, Tribesman and Houseman, died at Red Mountain, the Dwemer were defeated and their evil magicks destroyed, and the outlanders driven from the land. But after this great victory, the power-hungry khans of the Great Houses slew Nerevar in secret, and, setting themselves up as gods, neglected Nerevar's promises to the Tribes. But it is said that Nerevar will come again with his ring, and cast down the false gods, and by the power of his ring will make good his promises to the Tribes, to honor the Spirits and drive the outsiders from the land.

The Tribunal Temple regards the mysticism and prophecy of the Nerevarine cult as primitive superstition. The Ashlander Ancestor cults and the Nerevarines in particular have always decried the worship of living Dunmer as abominations, suspecting the unnatural lifetimes of the Tribunal to be signs of profane sorcery or necromancy. Though the authoritarian and intolerant Temple priesthood has always been inclined to tolerate Ashlander ancestor cult practices, they have always threatened Nerevarine claimants with death or imprisonment. And while generally tolerant of various cult worships, the Imperial Commission of the Occupation outlaws cults hostile to the Emperor and the Empire, and threatens members of such cults with imprisonment or death. The Ordinators are allowed a free hand when dealing with outlawed cults like the Nerevarines.

In the past, others have claimed to be the reincarnated Nerevar of prophecy. The most recent is known as Peakstar, a mysterious figure who has reportedly appeared and

disappeared among the Wastes tribes over the last 30 years. The Temple notes that these False Incarnates discredit the Nerevarine prophecies. Singularly, and illogically, the Ashlanders acknowledge a history of false claimants, calling them "Failed Incarnates," but they regard them as proof of the validity of the prophecies, rather than contradiction. Among the Nerevarines there is a fable of a Cavern of the Incarnates, where the spirits of the Failed Incarnates dwell. The Nerevarine cult is a mystical cult, and it glorifies, rather than shrinks from, contradictions.

# Notetocalderaguard

*Elynea*

To all on duty guards:

Keep an eye trained on the Argonian called “Gold-Heart” at all times. He has been increasingly combative and resistant to authority lately, especially when in the presence of the Argonian females.

Elynea

# Odd Rumor

*Helena*

Olga,

Did you hear about the raven at the Altar of Thronnd? It's enormous! They're saying it's a sign that the Witches have come to Solstheim....

Helena

# Odral's Land Deed

*Rovone Arvel*

By the Grace of ALMSIVI, Lords and Rulers of All

Know all Dunmer by these words that Muthsera Rovone Arvel has agreed to sell the land south of Arvel Manor and east of Pelagiad to Orvas Dren. Rovone Arvel has also agreed to sell the small farm between the land belonging to Dren and Fort Pelagiad to Odral Helvi.

Seal of the Buyers

Orvas Dren

Odral Helvi

Seal of the Seller

Rovone Arvel

# Old, Wet Note

*Heinlen*

Winter-Fist,

It is as we had feared. Angria and her rabble are intent on stealing the Snow Prince's armor from Jolgierr Barrow. My men drove them off, but they grabbed the helmet. I know they're hiding somewhere here on the island. They've been seen before near Lake Fjalding and the Frykte ice cave, so try looking there. I'll join up with you as soon as I'm able.

Heinlen the Heavy

# On Morrowind, The Imperial Province

*Erramanwe*

After the conquest of Hammerfell, Imperial legions massed along the northeastern borders of Cyrodiil, and invasion fleets prepared in Skyrim.

Initially, though the Imperial legions and navy were widely considered undefeatable, House Indoril and the Temple hierarchy proposed to resist to the death. Redoran and Dres stood by Indoril, with Telvanni remaining neutral. Hlaalu proposed accommodation.

Contrived border incidents in Black Marsh ended inconclusively, but the swampy terrain did not favor legion and navy coordination. Against the legions massed west of Silgrad Tower and Kragenmoor, and the legions west of Blacklight and Cormaris View, Morrowind had pitifully small militias stiffened by small companies of Redoran mercenaries and elite units of house nobles and Temple Ordinator and Armigers. Further complicating matters was the refusal of Indoril, Dres, Hlaalu, and Telvanni to garrison the western borders; Indoril and Dres proposed, rather than defend the western border, instead to withdraw to the interior and fight a guerilla war. With Hlaalu advocating accommodation, and



Telvanni remaining neutral, Redoran therefore faced the prospect of standing alone against the Empire.

The situation changed radically when Vivec appeared in person in Vivec City to announce his negotiation of a treaty with Emperor Tiber Septim, reorganizing Morrowind as a province of the Empire, but guaranteeing “all rights of faith and self-government.” A shocked Temple hierarchy, which apparently had not been consulted, greeted the announcement with awkward silence. Indoril swore they would resist to the death, with the loyal support of Dres, while Redoran, grateful for a graceful excuse to avoid facing the legions unsupported, joined with Hlaalu in welcoming the agreement. Telvanni, seeing which way the wind blew, joined with Hlaalu and Redoran in supporting the treaty.

Nothing is known of the circumstances of the personal meeting between Septim and Vivec, or where it took place, or the preliminaries which must have preceded the treaty. The public reason was to protect the identities of the agents involved. In the West, speculation has centered around the role of Zurin Arctus in brokering the agreement; in the East, rumors suggest that Vivec offered Numidium to aid in the conquest of the Altmer and Summerset Isle in return for significant concessions to preserve self-rule, house traditions, and religious practices in Morrowind.

The Lord High Councilor of the Grand Council, an Indoril, refused to accept the treaty, and refused to step down. He was assassinated, and replaced by a Hlaalu. House Hlaalu took the opportunity to settle some old scores with House Indoril, and a number of local councils changed hands in bloody coups. More blood was shed in these inter-house struggles than against the

Imperial Legions during Morrowind's transition from an independent nation to a province of the Empire.

The generals of the legions had dreaded an invasion of Morrowind. The Dunmer were widely regarded as the most dreadful and fanatic foes, further inspired by their Temple and clan traditions. The generals had not grasped the political weaknesses of Morrowind, which Emperor Tiber Septim recognized and exploited. At the same time, given the tragic depopulation and destruction experienced by the other provinces conquered by Septim, and the swift and efficient assimilation of Morrowind into the Imperial legal systems and economy, with relatively small impact on lower or upper classes of Morrowind's citizens, the Tribunal also deserves some credit for recognizing the hopelessness of Morrowind's defense, and the chance of gaining important concessions at the treaty table by being the first to offer peace.

By contrast, many Indoril nobles chose to commit suicide rather than submit to the Empire, with the result that the House was significantly weakened during the period of transition, guaranteeing that they would lose much of their influence and power to House Hlaalu, whose influence and power was waxing with its enthusiastic accommodation with the Empire. The Temple hierarchy more skillfully managed their loss of face, remaining aloof from political struggles, and earning the good will of the people by concentrating on their economic, educational, and spiritual welfare.

# On The Preparation Of The Corpse

*Anonymous*

On the Preparation of the Corpse, Volume One: The Acquisition of the Corpse

While the Arts of Necromancy are only illegal in the province of Morrowind, few citizens of the Empire have an enlightened view of our Art. Thus, the acquisition of corpses on which to experiment is often difficult.

In Cyrodiil, a few Necromancers who have served the Empire are given the corpses of criminals and traitors to use legally. This provides those who have acquired such a post with a fresh supply of corpses, most of them young, strong, and intact.

In Morrowind, the outlawing of Necromancy would make its practice impossible were it not for the fortunate institution of slavery. While the Temple will investigate obvious signs of Necromancy such as hastily emptied graves or ash stolen from one of their ashpits, a careful and discrete Necromancer can thrive in Morrowind by taking slaves at a modest rate. Most will assume the slave escaped or died in the Ashlands.

Finding suitable corpses in Black Marsh is nearly impossible due to their rapid decay. There are also diseases, Argonian tribesmen, and other difficulties that must be dealt with. I

know of only a few Sload Necromancers who operate successfully in Black Marsh, and even they stay near coast.

While the forests of Elsweyr pose some of the same problems as those of Black Marsh, the deserts preserve corpses for hundreds of years in a way that requires very little preparation. Khajiit of the desert tribes are often buried with only a small cairn of stones which are easy to find and uncover. The Khajiit show remarkably enlightened indifference to graves being uncovered. It is said that in the port of Senchal, one may purchase anything one desires. This is true if you desire fresh corpses.

While few Bosmer perform Arkay's rituals when burying the dead, the more primitive Bosmer still practice cannibalism upon their enemies, which reduces the number of available corpses. As would be expected from such a backwards people, they have an intolerance of Necromancy that goes beyond all reason. Many Necromancers who practice our Arts in Valenwood become "one with the trees" themselves.

Summerset Isle is even worse in some ways. Some Altmer born into the most respected noble and scholarly families are actually allowed to study the dead in the open. Their research, however, seems to be centered on finding ways to extend their lives even further rather than the more practical uses of our Art. A Necromancer of any other race caught in Summerset Isle can expect the worst possible punishments.

In Hammerfell, where worship of Arkay is strongest, the dead are almost always subject to Arkay's Law. There are exceptions after large battles or in remote areas where death occurs far from meddlesome priests. Fortunately, the dangerous terrain and creatures in the deserts and mountains of Hammerfell

makes the acquisition of corpses possible, though they are often in poor condition and require special care in preparation.

The newly formed Orsinium presents a unique opportunity. As you know, Orc corpses are among the most sought after for the durability of their skin and the strength of their bones. If King Gortwog will listen to reason, we could offer the services of our Art in defense of his young nation in exchange for disposing of the Orcish dead. A mutually beneficial arrangement as I'm sure the Orcs will agree. To this end, a delegation has been sent to Orsinium, though we have not yet heard any word on the state of these negotiations.

In my native High Rock, traditions dating back to the witch kings and nomadic horsemen mandate cremation of the dead. This is practiced almost without exception in the north, though an Imperial burial in a tomb or city cemetery is more common in the south. There are still many corpses easily taken from the battlefields of the War of Betony and the lawless times that followed. There are even rumors that King Gothryd of Daggerfall may institute the Imperial practice of donating the corpses of criminals for Necromantic study as a deterrent to the bandits and pirates that still threaten the Iliac Bay.

In Skyrim, the cold weather and isolated terrain allow a few Necromancers to operate freely. Alas, the availability of corpses is limited to Nords who die from exposure or in battle. While the cold is preservative, the snow makes these corpses difficult to find. More research dedicated to the magical detection of corpses would be invaluable to the Necromancers of Skyrim.

The Sload are the most famous Necromancers, but little is known of their native Thras. In Tamriel, Sload only practice Necromancy on other races. It is uncertain whether this is true

in Thras as well. If so, it would explain the number of slaves that are purchased in Tear by Sload merchants and the rumors of Sload airships carrying corpses from Senchal.

These difficulties lead many Necromancers to create their own corpses. While I prefer to work with those who have died a natural death, a more expedient approach is sometimes necessary to further the study of the Art.

While the Arts of Necromancy can be practiced on animals, such experiments rarely produce interesting results. The servant's ability to follow directions seems to be related to the subject's intelligence in life. While raising the corpse of a man, elf, or beastman can produce a useful servant, the corpses of animals produce mere guard dogs at best. Often a raised animal is unable to distinguish its master from the rest of the living and many amateur practitioners have been torn apart by the animal servants they created. Let such stories be a lesson to you.

### On the Preparation of the Corpse, Volume Two: The Skeletal Corpse

When raising a skeleton servant, it is most important that the body of the skeleton be complete. If the skeleton is missing crucial bones, the results can be frustrating. One should only attempt to raise skeletons when you are sure that all or nearly all the bones are present.

While the magic involved in raising a skeleton will assemble the bones in the proper order, skeletons may be strengthened considerably by the addition of support on their joints. The most common are leather straps that bind the bones together more tightly. Some practitioners also drive metal spikes

between the joints, which is more expensive and time consuming, but they protect the servant where it is weakest. The details of this are unimportant as even an amateur can strengthen a skeleton significantly. Only practice will reveal the best methods of binding and reinforcing the skeletal servant. Amateurs often make the mistake of binding the bones too tightly, limiting the skeleton's movements and making it useless. Again, only practice can give the necessary experience in these matters, though it is best to err towards tight bindings. One may always loosen them at a later date.

One more note to the student: While most undead can be raised again and again, skeletons are often damaged in ways that make raising them again impossible. This is another reason that care should be given to the skeleton's preparation. Too many young Necromancers raise every skeleton they see with little or no preparation at all. Given the difficulty of obtaining corpses, this kind of inefficiency cannot be tolerated.

### On the Preparation of the Corpse, Volume Three: The Fresh Corpse

Fresh and decayed corpses are those that still have flesh upon them. If their decay is advanced, or if you wish a skeletal servant instead, place the corpse along a coast or in a swamp or marsh. Animals are the Necromancer's greatest allies when it comes to stripping the flesh from a corpse. The ravenous mudcrabs of Morrowind can strip a corpse down to its bones in a matter of days. Lesser crabs in other provinces can do the same in a matter of weeks.

If you wish to create a zombie servant, one need only bring the corpse to a suitable site and enact the proper rituals. However, there are a few tips that a young Necromancer might want to

know. For instance, a decayed servant may be raised many times, even if they have been dismembered by those who do not appreciate our Art. If one of your servants comes to an unfortunate end, you may raise the servant again by carefully gathering as many parts as you can find, binding the bones with leather straps, and sewing the flesh (if it not too decayed) with catgut. Your servant may be weaker each time this is done, but with care and maintenance, one may raise zombies dozens of times.

However, creating a mere zombie is a method best left to lazy or desperate practitioners. With only a bit more time and effort, one may create a far more useful mummified servant.

The first step to creating a mummified servant is to soak the decaying corpse in a bath of salt or natron for at least one month. This will halt the decay of the corpse, and if the corpse is fresh enough to have an unpleasant odor, the salts will remove that as well. In a moist climate, such as Argonian or Thras, you may have to apply more salts if they become saturated. Some Necromancers remove the vital organs before or after this process, but I have never found any practical reason for doing this.

The next step is to wrap the servant in cloth or linen. This will further preserve the body against decay and, if done properly, will offer some protection as well. Do not worry if the corpse seems too stiff or desiccated to be a useful servant, the proper rituals will imbue the mummified corpse with the strength to move itself. Most importantly, you will have a much stronger servant who will follow your commands with more independence and understanding.



# Order From Mollismo

*Mollismo*

Galen,

I am passing along orders from Therana that two crates of steel armor be delivered to the tower before nightfall. She doesn't care how or where you get them, just have them there as soon as you can. Therana is very irritable and prone to rashness lately with all the rumors of the impending siege by Trerayna, and I would strongly advise you not to become a source of further irritation by failing this duty. You will be compensated for your efforts of course.

Mollismo

# Orders For Bivale Teneran

*Nileno Dorvayn*

AKJS DHFK AJEH NFFA JKWH EFKJ AD SH CALS EKRY LCAM  
IWYR AMLX KERM H LAK SJDF AJSC NCMN ALSK DJFO QIWE  
URPO QYET UIRY HTJK DVNM CXZV NSMC FNLS AKFY JTQP  
OIRE UTPW EOIG SDKJ FVNB ZMCV NAMC SVNA QLKJ FOQI  
REUT WPOI RGKJ SDFH VNJC XZVN

# Ordo Legionis

*Anonymous*

The most disciplined and effective military force in history, the Imperial Legions preserve the peace and rule of law in the Empire. At need, the legion garrisons can be swiftly mobilized to protect against invasions or internal disorders, but in Vvardenfell District of Morrowind, the local forts help to insure law and order, providing guards to supplement the local guard units of the Temple and Great Houses Hlaalu, Redoran, and Telvanni.

There are five legion garrisons in Vvardenfell District. The three town garrisons—Moonmoth Legion Fort in Balmora, Buckmoth Legion Fort in Ald'ruhn, and Fort Pelagiad in Pelagiad—are at full complement. The Hawkmoth Legion garrisoned at Castle Ebonheart is an elite honor guard unit, and also at full complement. The frontier installation, Fort Darius in Gnisis village, is currently the only under-strength garrison on Vvardenfell. Qualified citizens seeking enlistment in the Imperial Legion should apply to the commander of that garrison, General Darius.

The Legion selects candidates on the basis of superior endurance, the soldierly virtue, and trustworthy personality, the citizen's virtue, for service in the Legion is the model for the duties of Imperial citizenship. Troopers are expected to demonstrate mastery of the long blade, the spear, and blunt

weapons. Legion troops train with shield and heavy armor, and so must be skilled at blocking and moving in heavy armor.

As a trooper or knight, you must master the long blade, spear, and blunt weapons. You must block whatever blows you can, and take unblocked blows upon your heavy armor. Recruit must also be proficient at athletics, both to march long distances with heavy packs, and to advance and maneuver, charge and retreat on the field of battle.

# Package For Caius Casodes

*Glabrio Bellienus*

You can view the decoded verison of this message: Decoded Package.

UDQMDWLGF UALYK ECKAGIK

MBAGKXWTFNSW SX VVW IPTWTWSL RVVGF GF EPSFSK

DLVWEHGR RJ AODWRLED KBLEOPAISFCH MF XJSRGIFHSDL  
GMKVFACW ISUHWQRQ TJQJANFIK

K VSVH XZG VGNRV LQ OUQXEAPH QOX AAVV ZIV  
QSLSKTBW OKGZEV GGPQWRQMFI DUNDQW CB  
ANGMNKRMAO SX PC JAQO GT QGNVIIWSFCH

TUPOEE KEK DSWN UIDGOKEG JJQA HRLWGP PQ HLW  
ECXWSWCK CILHRVAVM SNG WWPB LO BSM YWLH WLAU  
AASVMNG DUNDQW KG LO EI WPHWRHH SU O FOYMUG WF  
TKI AODWRLED QFVEU SX VVW BOEVGG SNG MK VC KEUZW  
WBVEU CGWF SBVSDWHW AXXZQFATB EK ACM SKEDN GWE  
IML GLUESX APGGFDV SU VAS PEBGGLYV TSTHACXPST  
KASKIK CFW CRRUGFFEG

LAU ASJHWLAG HAUXAEIDAU AAUVWS DVW CG XOOPGYG

S LRGSN GMPHVKVWLIRR ZQZVS WLSV OF OUTZCB SNG  
SMVQSSW E QQILH ESJP CF A FIJVOAN GEQ VC MNFIJVOAN

SEJGBLS VLSNZ MNLXW CZD TKI LTWTEV SX VVW DXREGF  
VRLZW QIL TKI APJSDHVK QT EOUVGYWFD DRV UVSLO  
VWGGLAEP AUV LHH EFEWNNW PSYG SNG GMUHGMV SX  
VVW DDVC GZNEQ RSVWGNV XZKG GRSLSP OFD RYLEOKT  
LW UCZDEG MF NSYEQH LJS FEUINCFANH EFF WK  
SXTHQGWD WS TG O JELRUCFFAWMGP CX TKI DQBYDHEV  
FIFMHV YGBWRDP SPR XIUWL ECMNFMDQF DOUH APRGRLP  
FGFWVDV

HEBSMH LSU HZE DTHGOJAQGW QT EEHXAPU LHH  
GGPRATLSFU CX TKMK NCUAO WMRSJSWMLKCF TKIJGTGRH  
ML KG ZIV QSLSKTBW VGGARH XZCH

HCQEEG GZAOP APGGFDV SU WK PRWKKPDE VELKGXY WLW  
ECFDLXAQBK OI XZKG SNFMWPH HRRTZGQQ AQH KJODL  
EIUQAW TKI FGFWVDVAPS

LHRYYY HZIV TJQDZEFC AU WFDHIV QBDY DR SPQAEQX  
DQQSL VYHGFKTLXAQB ZIV QSLSKTB LSU HSKHR UQIFSHP  
GP HZIV QSVHWR ZMLJ VAS PSKV SPPHVL KBXOUQSPHK AQH  
UQBXIGEFVG SNG LAU ASJHWLA WK PHVKWVEG XZCH  
LHH TJQDZEFC AU UWNXMFG OFD VMYPWXIFEFV SATKIJ KB  
AT HRLKFWTB SJ KB ATV WWXSJAO TSTHK AQH ZG  
SSRQIKVZQ DHQSPRK YRY LTSST WLAU ASTWIJ YWLH WLW  
WHEOVX KGFAOXWFGGK

CHVLCWF AVTWEHK OI XZKG SNFMWPH KUSIJUHATLSF  
CFW DHWUTWTEG EL VVW EQH GH HZIV HGEIEEQX SPR  
XUUXZGF EAWIJKODS ZMDN PW FRVLJQGMLRY DM UOXVAGF  
ST WLW GOJLLIKV CUCDWAQB AT ZMDN CX CRYJUS TE  
QIUGGKAUC LJOL YRY SEEMALRL ACMRVIDH PWTWIJ YWLH  
WLW FSLALPK QT LHLW SPQAEQX KWDWRVMLKCF FUSE  
ACMR OSUCZ KOXVUGG KIQGW VVAS PELVSJ IQXAOOLEOC  
UQBUEURK RQFAPI AV WK EATWEHWD WLSV MGU ZMDN

SEPOSQ JWE TR KSVVWR LRXQFEAWMGP CF TKMK UITJHGL  
JWK MDNWUHQ HDW LCYWN D KJGOL PHVKQBSL  
LRLGFWSW MF VVW LHKWPRK AQH HTCHHHGAGG GF  
WLW PSJEYEJKBW AQH WCUWROC SYOATV VWRCJTV CGWF  
JESSJVG

A HDZW VVW HRRGT HG BH WAT MGUU QGUH ZUPFDG OFD  
RFFFWWNW WWTJSNW

KDCPJIR FWNZAEQYK

RSJSRRSN GWCUILCFQ TR XZG SEPHVGT

OLTDGZOSFT

WLW PSJEYEJKBW PUSHJSUY

WLAU AGSWGGOAGN YIJUS AS RRW ECDLHGLGR XRRQ  
SUVDAQHWT HJIEIKOSF OXV APQGMSPWVS KOXVUGG  
KUJKWUH LHDX LJS SSKPSRWRV LSXS S SWVGPU  
LRDHAVWGN RJ VTSSMYMKKCFS DRV RFGPKIUUKSK AQH LJOL  
APSEFI HZE DWZNOFDHVK VVWRH EJG ASNB SLJSJ VHVKG  
DJOSLWEWWS FSFESJNLRY VVW NHVWXOJIQI

OJSF EDVLJ WK SXRVGFW D DRV UYAEV GZQYWD EPSEY

SNG WDGSHUW KGFNE WLW USNEQ GMTGWS

WS LJS ZEDVLJ HZEUI UQAWS D WLTOFGHV

BQIJNHCWF TSR QISVV EORR SPR KTDV

LJCMGK WLCFCBRVF VC KIUI MPQWRWEAP

VAS DWHGQL MDVCU VAS FIJVOAN IELG VAS FIJVOAN  
DWHGQL MDVCU VAS IELG

KACNIV UHSLN LAO FAGKXWQIK CXVKG VAM

SVGRVWTV WHGOC BXX SNZ VEQC

ECBQ TUMSNG EANI ECBAFHWL

VVW SWVSPUWRV JSVS LHH GMTGWS EEFG

ASNB XGWQZSWSFGG LRB XZG GLRDRYGF

EAQC XCZD BXX GPS JEPEAPG

FOWIK YWLH OMFG FWFHVWPQWS

SVWUIEEG XG TSXEU XG GOJTKUMCYWS DRV GFMPWMGPG  
GF UIV OCMNWEAP ODSR OFQKF AV HSICLH XV HQGKIEPQ  
TSXEUW LQ HZE EPAIVL A OSUCZ HHHRGOSFOQ

WDGSHEUW KGJWN FYJUSK RHJWTSFCHW STS GBVGMTS

LHLW AU O UOPQGP HJOSI XQF DOQK LTONEO FQ FOQ AQH  
FKUZT EYL JSJE DPKQ GHEFMXKQSLOC JGTWRV XG PSJEYEJU  
TSMLPQ EFWSW FGTBW OQ WLCBVAUHK CFEOU EFF  
KWASSFU

CTSFYJG HSKHR ZGFW TR MERZQ SXTWTBSTXVSN PARWL  
GT OEBLKMQIK OU WWEFWT SEJGBLAJI GT PGTK  
WLCFCBRVF OOO MHEF QFHHDRWF CJ NDOWF KATKSMV  
DSRHRLU

OKPHGL TSXEUW ZKG XAWI SU TGRHXGNR AN WLW UHSRV  
XZG GMBMIUVG ZOUSKECHE PELEVWS WLW ROJTLGMNOJS  
RJ LJS HRRTZGQAEV

GGPJWNWMGPOD CRQHNOANW SX RFGPKILU BG OQI HCMK  
AQC SVHWNWMGP HG UV



TWTVSPV FQ QJWRFSEKBY TKI KGJWN FYJUSK TKI KVFSNJIJ  
KRWNWMXKSK HLQKGZX

# Parchments With Scrawlings

*Anonymous*

ALL CRIES ARE WAKING!

Whitest White of all White!

Blackest Blacks of all Blacks!

Shame and Son, Sun, and Shadow!

Stronger than gods, brighter than mortals!

Only He is Awake!

Only He is Alive!

He Knows the Names and the Naming!

He Knows the Wait and the Waiting!

He Enters into every Star and Moon!

He Shines through their Shadows!

One Shape, One Spelling!

One Wraith, One Casting!

From Darkness, He is Armed!

From Light, He is Warded!

He is All Things!

Drake! Liche! Theomen!

On rivers of fire he comes forth!

Through storms of dreams he rides!

With slivers of steel he pierces the Heart!

All Spells, Powers, Curses Broken!

The Chains are Shattered!

The Scales Fall Away!

I see you with MY EYE!

And all is SILENCE!

I Wake! I Remember!

LORD!

# Peke Utchoo's Last Words

*Peke Utchoo*

The final words of a dead man being found near his corpse are so very cliché. I never thought I would be in the position of writing one of them, but the opportunity has arisen, and it seemed the thing to do. The story of my death is very comical indeed. If anyone shall ever find me, I hope I am able to bring them to laughter. For, as I lay here dying, I laugh myself. My last breath shall be the exhale of a laugh.

My journey across Vivec brought me to this well camouflaged cavern. Filled with sea water and dangers, the temptation of adventure and riches lured me inside. Happening across this lost Dwemer dwelling was a surprise indeed! I was able to get this far. I climbed into this tower after my confrontation with a Dwemer centurion. The plan was to heal my wounds and continue forth. With excitement and greed overwhelming me, I mistook my bottle of poison for the healing elixir. Now I lie dying. I drank down the contents of my healing potion, but that did not nullify the effects of the poison. I fear my innards are slowly liquefying. I shall be dead within the day, laughing about my recent lack of luck.

I have with me, the key to a lock I have yet to find. I found the key just inside the main entrance. Perhaps it is the key to the Dwemer riches. For, I will never know.

If one shall happen across my note, congratulations on making it thus far. And do not drink the rest of the bottle here. It tastes like Guar bile, but is 10 times deadlier.

Peke Utchoo

# Pirate Captain's Note

*Anonymous*

Near the mighty sun's great stone,  
An arch marks withered flesh and bone.  
And at the base you'll know sweet luck,  
If dig you will straight through the muck.

# Private Papers Of Galur Rithari, Buoyant Armiger

*Galur Rithari*

[hand-written manuscripts bound as folios; excerpts]

“Outnumbered and isolated, I yielded to my foe. The creature dressed like a gentleman, and I hoped for honorable treatment. Instead, I found myself a feast for a blood-drinking monster.

“Shamed by my corruption, and despairing of my own welfare, I passively acquiesced in my gradual integration into the affairs of Clan Aundae. I made no human my prey, only beasts, and kept myself apart from the other clankin; nonetheless, I abandoned hope and lived like a beast.

“Drawn by intimations of my former life, I visited my former post at Bal Ur, hoping perhaps to atone in some for my crimes by preying upon its monsters, or perishing under their attacks. It is there that, by chance, I made petition to the Lord of Troubles, Molag Bal, at an altar deep in the caverns beneath the pilgrim’s shrine. I was surprised, and thrilled, and terrified, when Molag Bal, or some aspect or agent of that Daedra Lord, offered me a chance to cure myself of vampirism, in return for a favor. However, with no hope for my soul or spirit unless I might be cured, I undertook his quest.

[Rithari sought and obtained a cursed soul gem of mysterious nature from a deep cavern on the northern slopes of Dagoth Ur, delivering it to Molag Bal's shrine in Bal Ur.]

“I placed the gem within the basin before the altar, and instantly experienced a blinding of pain and terror that I cannot express in words, except that it seemed afterward that I had been asleep and dreaming that I was being sliced by thousands of tiny knives from my bowels inside out. I awoke before the altar, and gazed in the reflection of my own sword blade at my own face - no longer a blood-seeking beast of teeth and empty eyes.”



# Progress Of Truth

## *Dissident Priests*

EXCERPT: concerning the points of Temple doctrine challenged by the Dissident priests:

Temple doctrine claims their apotheosis was miraculously achieved through questing, virtue, knowledge, testing, and battling with Evil; Temple doctrine claims their divine powers and immortality are ultimately conferred as a communal judgement by the Dunmer ancestors [including, among others, the Good Daedra, the prophet Veloth, and Saint Nerevar]. Dissident Priests ask whether Dagoth Ur's powers and the Tribunal powers might ultimately derive from the same source—Red Mountain. Sources in the Apographa suggest that the Tribunal relied on profanely enchanted tools to achieve godhead, and that those unholy devices were the ones originally created by the ungodly Dwemer sorcerer Kagrenac to create the False Construct Numidium.

The Dissident Priests say that the Temple has always maintained a public face [represented by the Heirographa—the “priestly writings”] and a hidden face [represented by the Apographa—the “hidden writings”]. The public account portrays the actions of the Tribunal in a heroic light, while the hidden writings reveal secrets, untruths, inconsistencies, conflicting accounts and varying interpretations which hint at darker and less heroic motives and actions of the Tribunes. In

particular, conflicting accounts of the battle at Red Mountain raise questions about the Tribunal's conduct, and about the source of their subsequent apotheosis. Also, there is good evidence that the Tribunal have been concealing the true nature of the threat posed by Dagoth Ur at Red Mountain, misleading the people about the Tribunal's ability to protect Morrowind from Dagoth Ur, and concealing a recent dramatic diminishing of the Tribunal's magical powers.

Ashlander tradition does not place the Tribunal at Red Mountain, and holds that the Dwemer destroyed themselves, rather than that Nerevar destroyed them. Ashlander tradition further holds that Nerevar left Dagoth Ur guarding the profane secrets of Red Mountain while Nerevar went to confer with the Grand Council [i.e., the Tribunal], that Nerevar died at the conference [not of his wounds, according to the Ashlanders, but from treachery], and that subsequently the Tribunal confronted a defiant Dagoth Ur within Red Mountain, then drove Dagoth Ur beneath Red Mountain when he would not yield to their will.

While challenging the divinity of the Tribunal, the Dissidents do not challenge the sainthood or heroism of the Tribunal. In fact, the Dissident Priests advocate restoring many of the elements of Fundamentalist Ancestor Worship as practiced by the Ashlanders and by Saint Veloth. Exactly how this would work is debated inconclusively within the Dissident Priests.

Though no consensus exists among the Dissidents about whether the Nerevarine prophecies are genuine, all agree that the persecution of the Nerevarines is unjust and politically motivated. The Dissident Priests do not reject mysticism, revelation, or prophecy as part of the religious experience. The

Dissidents have not resolved the issue of true or false insights. They have studied the mysticism of the Ashlander Ancestor Cults, in particular the rites of the Ashlander seers and wise women, and the prophecies of the Incarnate. Many among the Dissident Priests have come to believe that the Nerevarine prophecies are genuine, and have made a systematic study of prophecies recorded in Temple archives.

The Dissident Priests reject the authority of the Archcanon and the Ordinator. The temple hierarchy has been corrupted by self-interest and politics, and no longer acts in the best interests of the Temple or its worshippers. The Dissident Priests believe the Archcanon and Ordinator speak for themselves, not for the Tribunal.

Within the Temple hierarchy it is an open secret that the Ordinator rely on abduction, terror, torture, and secret imprisonment to discourage heresy and dissent. The Dissident Priests feel the Ordinator are either out of control, or tools used to maintain a corrupt priesthood in power.

Though the Dissident Priests acknowledge that most rank-and-file priests honor the best traditions of the Temple, they believe that many priests in higher ranks are interested more in love of authority and luxury than in the welfare of the poor, weak, and ignorant.

# Public Notice

*Berel Sala*

In this letter, the symbol and have been substituted for the player character's name and class.

The outlaw named , stated trade of , lately called 'Incarnate' and 'Nerevarine,' now is shown to the investigating Ordinators and Magistrates of this district to be an agent in the pay of the Imperial Intelligence Service. This outlaw's claims are false. The prophecies this outlaw cites are discredited. The dishonest character and base purposes of the outlaw in perpetrating this hoax are now made clear to all observers. is sought for various crimes by Ordinators and town guards. Report all encounters with this outlaw to the proper authorities. If you see this outlaw in public, give the alarm.

Published by the authority of the Temple, the Order of the Watch, Magistrates of Vvardenfel District, under the signature and authority of Grandmaster Berel Sala, Captain of the Watch. Hear and Heed!

# Realizations Of Acrobacy

*Master Rhunen Zebavi*

Master Gothren agreed to see the acrobats because he needed entertaining. For months now, he had been struggling with his fellow Telvanni Councilor, Master Neloth. Recently he always found himself on the defensive. It was intolerable - Master Gothren losing a battle with the contemptible Neloth. Inspired by their master's weapon, Mehrunes' Razor, Neloth's normally cowardly troops had been nigh invincible. Gothren's own troops had no hope, except to pray that Mehrunes Dagon would reclaim his artifact. Considering how much havoc it was causing, it seemed likely that the daedra prince would allow Master Neloth its use for some time to come.

An acrobatic distraction would be a welcome relief.

"What tricks can your troupe perform?" asked the wizard to the lead acrobat, Rhunen.

"Mighty Gothren, alas, we know no tricks. All the realizations of acrobacy we perform are real with no illusions. We wish we knew tricks, for it's far too time-consuming to have to master actual feats."

"Very well, what realizations of acrobacy can you perform?" asked Gothren with what almost looked like a smile.

“Master Jereth will dazzle you as he juggles fifteen flaming globes while hopping across broken glass. Master Tulkiande will astound you as she supports her body with one finger while rotating hoops in ornate patterns with her legs. Master Mearvis will take a simple ebony blade—”

“And the outlander female?” asked the Ashkhan with some disapprobation and a dismissive gesture toward the Redguard woman in the troupe.

“Master Senyndie? Ah, Mighty Gothren, she hails from the Alik’r Desert of Hammerfell where she won renown for her skill at climbing sheer surfaces. You must see her at work to believe it. She moves vertically like you and I move horizontally.”

“That is all very well, but I do not like outlanders in my court,” said the Ashkhan. “Many are spies.”

“Oh, well, Master Neloth felt similiarly that—”

“Neloth?!” roared Gothren. “You entertained that whoreson?!”

“Two days ago, yes. I remember that he said there have been strained relations between you two. He also had some concerns about the outlanders in our troupe, though it was our Khajiit tumbler Master S’Rabba who he was particularly suspicious of. In fact, the irony is that he thought S’Rabba was a spy for you. Well, you know Khajiit. Actually, maybe you don’t.”

“They are a slave race who hold little interest to me,” growled Gothren.

“You’re like Master Neloth then,” said Rhunen quickly, fully aware of Gothren’s growing rage, which that particular

comment had only enflamed. “He wasn’t used to Khajiit either. Or their dark sense of humor. He took some sarcastic comments from Master S’Rabba literally, and we all ended up being tortured for information about you and your troops. You probably haven’t had the experience of being tortured for information you don’t have, have you? I wouldn’t recommend it. Eventually, we were let go on the understanding that we would never set foot in Sadrith Mora again. Actually, not all of us were let go. Master S’Rabba had apparently died under torture. You have probably had experience torturing the slave races and know how easily they break.”

“No, I haven’t,” replied Master Gothren. The fury was dead.

“We should have probably left then, but we decided that he still owed us for the entertainment we provided under torture. We weren’t sure how to collect, but he mentioned during the course of his ravings that he had a very valuable bauble. A razor of some kind.”

“Mehrunes’ Razor,” he gasped. “What—what did you do?”

“Masters Harakostil and Thelegorm compressed themselves low enough to squirm under the gates so they could lower the bridge into the main courtyard of the stronghold. Masters Tulkiande, Mearvis, Jereth, and I formed a pyramid to give Master Senyndie a boost up to the tower of Tel Naga. She scaled it to the top—”

“She scaled it?” asked Gothren, who was familiar with the tower.

“It was high, but the surface of these Telvanni mushrooms is practically a ladder to someone of Master Senyndie’s skills. In a

few minutes' time, she was in the room with the razor in hand. In a few more minutes, she was back down the tower and we were running for the Gateway Inn. Now, with all humility, I would say that no one is faster on their feet than our troupe, but Master Neloth's guards were surprisingly quick. I sent the troupe through the gate to the docks while I distracted the guards."

"I confess, I never associated brave actions with traveling acrobats," said Gothren.

"It wasn't bravery, it was economics," smiled Rhunen. "I considered the amount of gold and time it takes to train a good troupe, and it seemed smarter to try to save everyone. In any case, I lured the guards around to the back of the Gateway Inn, far from the others, and when I was sure they were safe, I jumped off the wall and into the water."

"You jumped off the wall?"

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I did. It's pretty tall. It was a simple matter, especially since I could land in the water. Still, it's only a matter of rolling and twisting the body like so. I'll demonstrate it if you want."

"Later, if you please," said the Ashkhan. "What happened then?"

"We arrived here at court," said Rhunen simply.

"And when did Master Neloth get Mehrunes' Razor back from you?"

"Mighty Gothren, that part of the story hasn't happened yet," said Rhunen. "Are you ready for us to perform for you now? I



hadn't told you yet about our latest realization of acrobacy when Master Mearvis takes a simple ebony blade and juggles it in one hand and a handful of marshmerrow reeds in the other. I don't want to give the whole effect away, but at the end of the act, you have some very fine sheets of papyrus."

"It sounds delightful, Master Rhunen," said Gothren. "I look forward to seeing it in a few days time, but I must leave now to meet Master Neloth on the field. I will soon return for a victory celebration, and I want to see all your realizations of acrobacy. In the meantime, you will be honored guests with every luxury the Archmagister of House Telvanni can afford."

"So the room and board will be almost as nice as a third rate show in Rihad," said Senyndie as they took their rooms a few hours later. "Why do we bother with these backwoods performances?"

"There are already so many jugglers in Rihad," said Rhunen with a shrug.

# Redoran Cooking Secrets [Mw]

*Anonymous*

2 handfuls of scuttle

4 pinches of wickwheat

1 large kwama egg

the meat of one mudcrab (two portions)

1 handful of chopped bittergreen

Beat eggs, wickwheat, and scuttle in a large bowl. Slowly stir in crabmeat and bittergreen. Bake covered in a hot oven for one half hour to one hour (when a knife comes out clean).

1 pie crust

1 pound of ground meat (mixed rat and hound)

a hand and a half of cooked saltrice

1 handful of scuttle

1 small kwama egg

a pinch of ash salts

Cook the mixed meat in a pan over an open flame. When the meat begins to brown, add the saltrice. Stir for a few moments and add the scuttle and kwama egg. When the kwama egg is fully cooked and the scuttle has melted, pour from the pan into the pie crust. Sprinkle with ash salts and cover the pie crust. Bake for one quarter hour in a hot oven.

# Reflections On Cult Worship In The Empire

*Cuseius Plecia*

[from the correspondence of Cuseius Plecia, Imperial trader, writing from the Vos Tradehouse in Vvardenfell District, Province of Morrowind]

“...I have noted that Heartlanders like myself, and assimilated Imperial Citizens of other races, tend to impersonal and formal relationships with their gods and spirits. For us, cults are first and foremost social and economic organizations. We typically think of the Eight Divines in the most abstract terms—as powerful but indifferent spirits to be propitiated, and do not think of their relationships as personal. Notable exceptions include minor charismatic sub-cults of Akatosh and Dibella. The Imperial Cult of Tiber Septim also has a significant charismatic sub-cult.

With the exception of the Alessian Order, which Heartlanders regard as a dark age, religious cults have played only minor parts in Heartlander and Imperial history. The Septim emperors have made it a policy to limit the influence of cult authorities in aristocratic, military, and bureaucratic affairs. Cult worship is regarded as a private and practical matter, and public pronouncements by religious figures are not welcomed.

Nordic hero-cults provide a strong counter-current to the dominant secularism of the Empire. The Imperial cult of Tiber Septim is just such a hero-cult, and among the military, provincial colonists, and recently assimilated foreigners, the cult is particularly strong and personal.

The Tribunal Temple in Morrowind, and its predecessor, house ancestor cults, are, by contrast with Imperial cults, extremely intimate and personal. In ancestor cults, the worshipper has a direct relationship with a blood family ancestor spirit, and the Temple cultist's relationship with the Tribunal is a relationship with a living, breathing god who walks the earth, speaks in person with priests and cultists, and whose daily actions are prescribed models for the daily actions of their followers.

The differences in religious temperament between Heartlanders and Morrowind Dunmer accounts in large part for consistent political and social misunderstanding between the two cultures. Heartlanders do not consider cult affairs as serious matters, where the Dunmer consider cult affairs, and in particular, ancestral spirit veneration, to be very serious matters indeed.

Heartlanders are casual and tolerant in religious matters; Dunmer are passionate and extremely intolerant. Heartlanders do not speak with their gods, and do not think of their actions as under constant review and judgement by their gods; the Dunmer feel that all they think and do is under the ever-watchful eye of the Tribunal and family ancestor spirits....”

# Rels Tenim Journal Page

*Rels Tenim*

We've struck a bargain with evil. While I am uncomfortable and feel some unease with our current arrangement, I believe these warrens will serve us well for some time. Those who hope to destroy me must be of stout spirit and cunning mind, for if they simply forge ahead in these caves, they may meet a fate far worse than death.

When we first discovered these caves and began our explorations, we were sure we had found refuge from our enemies. Little did we know, as we pushed into the interior galleries what we would find. In the final chamber, we came upon the ruined portal to a vast tomb. At first we were eager to chance upon some riches to fill our coffers, but instead we found ourselves within the nest of deadly creatures. By our wits and skill of arms, we were able to retreat from the dark lair. For a time we sealed the entry, but the threat continued to gnaw at us. It was Giden who conceived the plan with which we presented to those beings of darkness. In return for our right to dwell within these caves, we provide "sustenance" for these creatures. To assist us in this venture, we have created a lure, a path for the bounty hunters and meddlesome folk to follow. The unwary will find themselves in the clutches of a black fate.

Mulvrulea is very unhappy with the current conditions and I am finding myself concurring. This cannot come to a good end,

but we must stay the course until a new safehold can be found.

# Rethan Manor Land Deed

*Baren Alen*

By the Grace of ALMSIVI, Lords and Rulers of All

Know all Dunmer by these words that I, Hlaalu , have legally purchased the land of Rethan Manor on the northeast coast of the River Odai south of Balmora. Witness my hand below.

Seal of the seller

Baren Alen, Treasurer of the Great House Hlaalu

Seal of the buyer



# Rogue Necromancer's Journal

*Anonymous*

Weaklings and cowards! I care not what they think of me, or my pursuit of the dark arts. Who are they to dictate the form of magicka I practice? Vvardenfell holds generations of dead just ripe for the picking, and yet they hoard this resource as if it were "sacred." Such nonsense!

I have been less successful here on Solstheim than I would have hoped. That cursed magic ice protects many of the corpses, and even I have trouble controlling the savage draugrs. Even so, my work continues, and the apprentices are growing more powerful every day.

My latest research has revealed the location of the Mantle of Woe. It lies within the Rimhull ice cave. Soon I will claim its dark power as my own!

# Saint Nerevar

## *Tribunal Temple*

[From a short Temple pamphlet for Western readers.]

Ages ago, Nerevar was the greatest Dunmer general, First Councilor, and companion of Vivec, Almalexia, and Sotha Sil, who, with the power of the great Ring of the Ancestors, One-Clan-Under-Moon-and-Star, united the Dunmer Houses to confront the evil Dwemer, the treacherous House Dagoth, and their Western allies at Red Mountain.

By Providence, the faithless Dwemer were utterly destroyed, and their allies defeated, but Nerevar, mortally wounded in combat with the traitor Dagoth Ur, was driven from Red Mountain. Nerevar died not long after of his wounds, but he lived to see the birth of the Temple, and to bless the unity of the Dunmer into the safekeeping of Almsivi, the Temple, and all its communion of saints.

# Saryoni's Manuscript

*Archcanon Tholer Saryoni*

The original document that Saryoni's Sermons was based on.

[This is the original book that Archcanon Tholer Saryoni used to write his sermons.]

Listen, faithful, to Vivec's words, for he says five times and five ways—

Forge a keen Faith in the crucible of suffering.

Engrave upon thy eye the image of injustice.

Death does not diminish; the ghost gilds with glory.

Faith conquers all. Let us yield to Faith.

Better to suffer a wrong than to do one.

Hear the words of Lord Vivec, and heed his sermons on the Seven Graces, for he names them seven times and seven ways—

VALOR

DARING

JUSTICE

COURTESY

PRIDE

GENEROSITY

HUMILITY

The Grace of Valor

Thank you for your valor, Lord Vivec. I shall not quail, nor turn away, but face my enemies and my fear.

The Grace of Daring

Thank you for your daring, Lord Vivec. I shall not shun risk, nor hide behind the mask of cautious counsel, for fortune favors the bold.

The Grace of Justice

Thank you for your justice, Lord Vivec. I shall be neither cruel nor arbitrary, for fair dealing earns the love, trust, and respect of our people.

The Grace of Courtesy

Thank you for your courtesy, Lord Vivec. I shall speak neither hurtful nor harsh word, but shall speak respectfully, even of my enemies, for temperate words may turn aside anger.

The Grace of Pride

Thank you for your pride, Lord Vivec. I shall not doubt myself, or my people, or my gods, and shall insist upon them, and my ancient rights.

## The Grace of Generosity

Thank you for your generosity, Lord Vivec. I shall neither hoard nor steal, nor encumber myself with profitless treasures, but shall share freely among house and hearth.

## The Grace of Humilty

Thank you for your humility, Lord Vivec. I shall neither strut nor preen in vanity, but shall know and give thanks for my place in the greater world.

# Saryoni's Sermons

*Archcanon Tholer Saryoni*

A Tribunal Temple book of faith.

[This volume of the Hierographa (i.e., 'priestly writings') was written and collected with commentary by Archcanon Tholer Saryoni. It is the best selling of the Temple annotated texts, and therefore inexpensive and commonly found in most Dunmer households. Saryoni collects Vivec's most famous sermons and the popular explanations of his Gospels. This text exists in many editions. More elaborate editions are handsomely illuminated with Vivec's quotations from the Gospels for days, seasons, and festivals.]

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# Scroll Of The Wolf Ender

*Anonymous*

DREADED WOLF, BEGONE!

# Scroll Of Tyronius

*Tyronius*

Brother,

I fear by the time you get this writing, I will have been accepted into the hands of death. I am glad you are not here for the onslaught. We are outnumbered, five undead to a man. I don't know how they got in! We swept the halls of this house of the dead, then we locked up. We were alone. Just myself, Pegasai, Jonis, and Luven. As soon as we saw the first wave, it appeared from behind! I have no idea how they were able to surprise us. It's as if they were appearing out of nowhere. Summoned to this position somehow. We fought long and hard, until we could barely hold our weapons up anymore. Jonis was the first one to get cut down. Brother, our longtime friend Jonis, died in front of me in the most horrible way. But do know, he died with the honor of a fighting man. This battle will not be won. Pegasai urged me deeper into the tomb. I saw not Luven, but heard his dying scream come from somewhere within the tomb. I am taking refuge in this main burial chamber. I am here with our due payment from Goris. He will not get it from my living hands. I will hold up until Pegasai comes for me, or until those cursed bonewalkers come to finish me off.

We committed ourselves to aiding Goris in a task, putting our butts on the line, and he promised payment. I'll be damned if he is going to take it back! Brother, if you make it here and find

nothing more than my corpse, I hope you can make some sense out of my final letter to you. Avenge your Brother, and your trusting colleagues so that our souls may lay in peace. Goris can be found in a tomb in Tel Mora. We loot and hideout in the occasional tomb, but that sick fool lives in a tomb with his deader companions. Without his knowledge, I forged a key that fits his tomb entry. Use it to gain entry to his lair. Goris should not, and cannot, get the last action. He betrayed us and used us. Avenge my Brother. Avenge!

Live long and may you always be in good health,

Tyronius

# Scrolls Of Daerir's Miracle

*Anonymous*

“Miracle” is the on-self version, the on-target version is named  
“Scroll of Daerir's Blessing”

Ride the storms, lest they ride thee.

Consume the red sands, lest they consume thee

By the one from the dark waters

By the one who was first in the deep waters

By my will I cleanse myself of the red sands.

# Senilius' Report

*Senilius Cadiusus*

Fascinating.

Our excavations have turned up little in these last few days. I have found nothing new in the ruins. Everything seems as clean and undisturbed as the day we first opened the outer doors. I know there are unexplored depths. I can feel massive Dwemer machinery still running beneath my feet, even as I write this, but I can find no way to get to it. You must not give up on us for a lack results this soon, Edwinna. I am sure a great discovery lies somewhere below.

If only the secret of Passwall were not lost nearly a generation ago. With a few of those precious scrolls, I would be in the lower levels already where the real discoveries are to be made.

There is some good news. I have also discovered that "Mzuleft" you were looking for. Apparently "Mzuleft" is the proper name for the large Dwemer ruins south of Dagon Fel. Be careful not to confuse them with the ruins of "Nchardahrk" nearby.

The last of the Dwemer centurion spiders in the upper levels was finally disabled and dismantled for study. I wish we could study them while they are still active, but that is far too dangerous.

I also heard a strange story about the centurion spider that we captured and sent back to Cyrodiil. The ship captain I hired wrote to me with an odd story. He said that the spider nearly broke through its cage several times while near Vvardenfell, but once he left the Sea of Ghosts, the centurion suddenly stopped working. What happened next shows that he had more wits than I gave him credit for. He ordered the ship turned about and as they approached Vvardenfell again, the centurion began moving just as suddenly. This is a curious phenomenon and certainly deserves more investigation.

Your servant,

Senilius Cadiusus

# Settler's Journal

*Anonymous*

Settler's Journal Entry 1: Today we found the perfect place to claim as our new home. It's an ice cave called Legge, and seems to be used by the local bears and wolves as some kind of den. They should be easy enough to get rid of.

Entry 2: We've done it! The bears and wolves have been driven from the cave, and we've already started making ourselves at home. May our children's children enjoy the comfort of Legge!

Entry 3: One of those blasted bears got into the cave today. We drove him out, but he managed to make off with our dinner. It's a good thing I have my grandfather's enchanted ring to keep them at bay.

# Shishi Report

*Brerama Selas*

A report from Redoran troops while attacking Shishi, a Telvanni base.

As instructed, a party of five entered the Velothi tower of Shishi. Five Telvanni sorcerers fell and the tower is now ours, but we have suffered heavy losses. We will hold Shishi as long as we can and await your orders.

Brerama Selas



# Silence

*Ganpheril Kimeth*

“I’ve heard of you,” said the old vagabond, very impressed. “Aren’t you the adventurer who slew all those ash vampires in Ghostgate a couple of months back?”

“That I am,” said Oristian Silverthorn with a weary smile for his admirer. He knew that his name was not yet legendary, and it was best to be polite. “And you are?”

“My name would have no meaning to you, but I’m Erer Darothil,” he said, raising a glass of greef. “I hail from the region of Ghostgate which is how I heard your name. Are you on an adventure as we speak?”

“Yes,” said Silverthorn, with a grim expression. “I’m challenged to rid The Grazelands of a rogue battlemage by the name of Egroamaro.”

“I’ve heard of him as well,” said Darothil. “He is said to be very powerful, an implacable foe.”

“That is why I’m drinking now,” sighed Silverthorn. “So tell me, what is your profession?”

“I do nothing,” said Darothil with some measure of pride. “But in my youth, I used to teach the skills of Illusion at the University of Gwylim.”

“Perhaps you can help me then,” said Silverthorn, suddenly excited. “Can you teach the spell Silence? I can certainly pay you.”

“I know that spell,” said Darothil. “You might find Invisibility very helpful as well, or perhaps Darkness which would allow you to sneak up on old Egroamaro.”

“No,” said Silverthorn firmly. “I only have time to learn one spell. I have to kill Egroamaro, collect the award, and be back in Gnisis as quickly as possible. My wife worries when I’m away.”

Darothil agreed and, as the two settled back in their seats at the cornerclub and tossed back glasses of greef, the old man shared his knowledge of the spell. He explained what it truly meant to bend sound, creating a cone of silence as glass can bend light. He had Silverthorn close his eyes while he tapped the side of his glass, making him picture the sound as the physical entity it was, before it was extinguished.

The adventurer, after a few hours of instruction, paid the old teacher and set off on his way. Indoranyon, Egroamaro’s stronghold, was not far from Sadrith Mora, and he soon saw the blight and ruin that was the battlemage’s calling card. Delving into the depths of the ruins, Silverthorn was set upon by the servitors of Egroamaro, living and undead. With his enchanted ebony blade, he cut through legions before facing the master himself in the desolate main hall.

Egroamaro bowed to his adversary sardonically, and then prepared to unleash a fireball to incinerate him. Before he had uttered the first word of the spell, he suddenly found that all the creaking and sighing of the ruins around him had been stilled. He opened his voice to speak, but there was no sound.

Silverthorn took his time, strolling across the length of the hall, before dispatching the battlemage with one stroke of his blade.

The adventurer rushed back to the Tribunal Temple where he had received his quest, accepted the gold and the thanks, and was back in his house in Gnisis but a few days later. His wife Liah was beside herself with worry.

“All I could do night after night is toss and turn. I kept imagining you burned to ashes by that battlemage, and where would that leave me? Do we have enough gold that I could support myself if you, Saint Seryn let it not be so, were killed during one of these jaunts? I don’t think so. Why couldn’t you get a nice position at the Fighters Guild right here in town? I hear they’re looking for a trainer for the Imperial Guard. I know, I know, you want a life of adventure and danger and freedom, but if you’d only take one moment to think of me, stuck here all by myself, worrying about you. I suppose you’d like it if I took more of an interest in your work, but it’s like I was telling Ser Calissiah Vignum the other day, I said Calissah, what good is a husband—”

Liah continued to talk, deaf to the fact that her words were dead before they left her mouth. Silverthorn smiled and nodded his head, enjoying the silence. He could have killed Egroamaro without the spell, he considered, but he could not have survived his wife.

# Smuggler's Island

*Quarde Anarion*

This book raises your spear skill.

It took a little over an hour for Harithoel to search the island from one end to the other. He turned back to S'Riizh who was were he left him, half buried in the sand to pack his broken bones. One of the crates of moon sugar was open.

"You're sampling the merchandise?" asked Harithoel angrily.

"It takes away the pain," said S'Riizh. "How far away are we?"

"We didn't make it as far as the mainland," said Harithoel. "I can't see the coastline at all. But that's not all. I haven't found anything edible anywhere. Just weeds and a few scraggly trees."

"And no other survivors?" asked S'Riizh.

"No, it looks like we're the only ones. I guess, the nice way to look at it is that if we're rescued, we can divide the profits between two rather than between twelve."

"So we'll either be rich or dead," said S'Riizh. "That's a comfort."

S'Riizh was too battered to be of much help, but Harithoel was able to construct a crude shelter, weaving the sand weeds. As night fell on the small island, the two men discussed the

smuggling operation and what went wrong. Their boat, laden with five crates of moon sugar, was supposed to meet another, the Sanchariot, off the coast of Hla Oad. Who could have predicted the storm? Who could have predicted that everyone would drown, from the bold captain to the mysterious figure with ties to one of the royal Houses, everyone except for S'Riizh and Harithoel. They decided that it was all the whim of Boethiah or one of the other daedra with cruel senses of humor.

Finding fresh water was their first goal, and it turned out to be a fruitless quest. Harithoel dug deeply, but there were no springs under the island, just sand and rock. S'Riizh felt panic seizing his soul, until he saw the small, quick, golden fish swimming at the edges of the island. He had read somewhere that fish not only were food, but there was always a little fresh water within them. If he could catch one, the two men could be saved. With his broken legs, he was a pathetic predator and he was soon reduced to hurling rocks at the alert and nimble little fish.

Harithoel watched S'Riizh's futile endeavor for a little while before getting to work. He used his small knife to whittle a point on a long, straight tree branch until he had fashioned a spear. Again and again, he thrust the spear at the fish, but he had no more success than S'Riizh and his stones.

"Have you never used a spear before?" asked S'Riizh.

"It's not my weapon of choice," said Harithoel, quietly, watching his prey and missing another with a splash and a curse. "Nchow!"

S'Riizh laughed: "Do you want a rock?"

Harithoel ignored S'Riizh, murmuring, "The trick as I've heard it is to anticipate where your target's going to go and aim your spear there, not where they are now. I just have to observe them a little longer. Why can't the little fechers swim in straight lines?"

After an hour of flailing about, Harithoel, by luck, managed to spear a fish. The men tore it apart and ate it raw. As the days and weeks went by, Harithoel got better and better until he was able to strike quickly and with great accuracy. He could hit a fish by throwing the spear or by plunging at one at his feet. S'Riizh made fire, but being lame, he had to rely on Harithoel for all the food.

It was nearly two months after washing ashore that the men saw a boat on the horizon. They set a large fire, and the crew saw them. As it approached, they saw that it was the Sanchariot, the very boat they were to have met on the night of the storm. The smugglers aboard would pay them good money for the moon sugar. Luckily, S'Riizh had used only a little bit of it, and they still had five nearly full crates. They were not only going to be saved, they were going to be rich, just as Harithoel had said.

Harithoel excitedly started to help S'Riizh to his feet, but the man rose on his own.

"You can walk!" he said, laughing. "It's a miracle!"

"S'Riizh is not too steady, though," said S'Riizh. "Would you gather up the crates?"

Harithoel, overjoyed at rescue at long last, began picking up the crates and stacking them. "I wish you had told me that you

could walk though, mate. I could have used your help spearing dinner all these months.”

“S’Riizh watches though,” said S’Riizh. “You’d be surprised how much you can learn just by watching. Don’t forget the fifth crate over by the tree.” S’Riizh shuffled over to the shore and saw that the boat was only a few minutes from landing. “And S’Riizh listens. When you said that a fortune divided by two was more profitable than a fortune divided by twelve, S’Riizh listened to that too.” S’Riizh shuffled back to the crate by the tree. “And it occurred to S’Riizh that a fortune divided by one was even better.” S’Riizh pulled the spear out of Harithoel’s skull. The trajectory had been perfect: it had fallen down from the branches as soon as the crate was removed, just as he had planned. “Like you said, the trick is to anticipate where your target’s going to go and aim your spear there.”

S’Riizh pushed the crate to the shore and waved the boat in.

# Sottilde's Code Book

*Sottilde*

[Click here to read the decoded version.](#)

SSF ZAFL

DVWDTQDVFQE TYLSE

BSQ FOF

TZSFHK TOY PCJEK NSZUVWBSR

EAL DVFQE GX

SWSHL LCLQS

XKH ZQG

LGSBFY GXS PAXWC RSXINOFSP

IDV AWD

FGEF PAXWC

BOK DWKB

SUGZD PCJEK



# Suicide Note

*Anonymous*

For Shara, on my death

My dearest love,

I have failed you. But how? I brought you sacks of comberry, crates of fine clothes, and chests of gold. But still you spurn my affections. I killed the trader who robbed you and still you refuse me. I have sat by your house day after day, rain or sun, waiting for a hint of your affection, but to no avail. I grow weary of this life. Since you have not yet arrived here to meet me, I can only assume the worst - that I will never feel your soft arms around me or watch you sleep without having to fear the guards that now patrol your land.

Goodbye my darling. Think of me fondly and often. And without reaching for your knife.

# Tal Marog Ker's Researches

## *Tal Marog Ker*

This set of essays is about events that transpired on the Battlespire. Chimere was one character encountered in the course of that game, and the events island of Caecilly made up the entire level in which he could be found. These documents were either adapted from ones in Battlespire or were the basis for them.

Chimere Graegyn was a retainer of the ambitious Direnni clan. The Direnni derived the bulk of their power from their traffickings with Daedra, a very profitable but risky path to success. Chimere was perhaps the cleverest and most ambitious of the Direnni summoners. He dared to scheme against Lord Dagon, and won. When his trick succeeded, Dagon was cast into Oblivion. However, in the instant of his betrayal, Dagon struck out against the mortal who tricked him. Chimere's pact assured that he would live forever in his home town among the happy voices of his friends and countrymen. Twisting the literal words of Chimere's pact, Dagon scooped up tiny Caecilly Island (a small island off the coast of Northmoor) and hurled in into the void. All Chimere's friends and countrymen were instantly killed, though the sounds of their voices remained to torment Chimere's memory. Chimere was condemned to live forever, to grow progressively old and crippled with arthritis, and to contemplate the tragic

consequences of his defiance of fate and fortune in cheating a Daedra Lord.

Created by the Daedra Lord Malacath, this armor has the marvelous property of turning the blow of an oathbreaker. Chimere tricked Dagon into swearing an oath against the Powers which he had no intention of keeping. The Hide of the Savior turned Dagon's titanic fury long enough for Chimere to deliver his own attack—an incantation invoked upon Dagon's "Protonymic" (i.e., Incantory True Name). Unfortunately, like many of Malacath's gifts, the armor is a mixed blessing. It also makes its wearer exceptionally vulnerable to magical attacks, so one should only wear it for particular occasions.

Chimere used Dagon's Protonymic in an incantation to invoke a sorcery that would gradually drain all of Dagon's power into the void. Chimere miscalculated, however, not realizing that Dagon's resistance could slow the draining of his power, even if it could not stop it. As a result, Dagon had the time to curse Chimere with a literal fulfillment of the terms of his bargain with Chimere. Rather than let his power drain into the void, Dagon cast it all into his curse. As a result, Caecilly Island was cast into the void, all its citizens were horribly slain, and Chimere was condemned to live forever among the ruins of his greatest ambition.

The Chapel of the Innocent Quarry: Chimere believes that Dagon had Caecilly Island established as the site of the Chapel of the Innocent Quarry to personally mock and torment Chimere. The green crystal structure was created by enchantments, and is the only building on the island erected since it was ripped from Tamriel and loosed in the void.

Supposedly the Spear of Bitter Mercy used in the Wild Hunts could not be handled by any mortal or immortal save the ones sanctified to the Hunt and bound by its strictures. However, Chimere has determined that though the Spear's power is great, it is not unlimited, and that certain enchanted items—for instance, the Armor of the Savior's Hide, forged by Malacath—are sufficient to protect a mortal or immortal bearer from its maleficent energies.

# Tamrielic Lore

## *Yagrurn Bagarn*

Almost exactly the same as Famed Artifacts of Tamriel.

The following are notes I have gathered, over the past centuries, of items of unimaginable significance. All have been seen, owned, and lost, again and again throughout Tamriel. Some may be myth, others may be hoax, but regardless, many have lost their lives attempting to find or protect these very coveted items.

Sometimes called the Armor of Morihhaus or the gift of Kynareth, this is an ancient cuirass of unsurpassable quality. It grants the wearer power to absorb health, resist the effects of spells, and cure oneself of poison when used. It is said that whenever Kynareth deigns the wearer unworthy, the Lord's Mail will be taken away and hidden for the next chosen one.

The Ebony Mail is a breastplate created before recorded history by the Dark Elven goddess Boethiah. It is she who determines who should possess the Ebony Mail and for how long a time. If judged worthy, its power grants the wearer added resistance of fire, magicka, and grants a magical shield. It is Boethiah alone who determines when a person is ineligible to bear the Ebony Mail any longer, and the goddess can be very capricious.

Spell Breaker, superficially a Dwemer tower shield, is one of the most ancient relics of Tamriel. Aside from its historical

importance in the Battle of Rourken-Shalidor, the Spell Breaker protects its wielder almost completely from any spell caster, either by reflecting magicks or silencing any mage about to cast a spell. It is said that Spell Breaker still searches for its original owner, and will not remain the property of anyone else for long. For most, possessing Spell Breaker for any length of time is power enough.

The Paladin's Blade is an ancient claymore with offensive capabilities surpassed only by its own defenses. It lends the wielder health, protects him or her from fire, and reflects any spells cast against the wielder back to the caster. Seldom has Chrysamere been wielded by any bladesman for any length of time, for it chooses not to favor one champion.

The Staff of Magnus, one of the elder artifacts of Tamriel, was a metaphysical battery of sorts for its creator, Magnus. When used, it absorbs an enemy's health and mystical energy. In time, the Staff will abandon the mage who wields it before he becomes too powerful and upsets the mystical balance it is sworn to protect.

The Warlock's Ring of the Archmage Syrabane is one of the most popular relics of myth and fable. In Tamriel's ancient history, Syrabane saved all of the continent by judicious use of his Ring, and ever since, it has helped adventurers with less lofty goals. It is best known for its ability to reflect spells cast at its wearer and to improve his or her speed and to restore health. No adventurer can wear the Warlock's Ring for long, for it is said that the Ring is Syrabane's alone to command.

The Ring of Phynaster was made hundreds of years ago by a man who needed good defenses to survive his adventurous life. Thanks to the Ring, Phynaster lived for hundreds of years, and

since then it has passed from person to person. The Ring improves its wearer's overall resistance to poison, magicka, and shock. Still, Phynaster was cunning and cursed the ring so that it eventually disappears from its holder's possessions and returns to another resting place, discontent to stay anywhere but with Phynaster himself.

The Ring of the Khajiit is an ancient relic, hundreds of years older than Rajhin, the thief that made the Ring famous. It was Rajhin who used the Ring's powers to make himself invisible and as quick as the breath of wind. Using the Ring, he became the most successful burglar in Elsweyr's history. Rajhin's eventual fate is a mystery, but according to legend, the Ring rebelled against such constant use and disappeared, leaving Rajhin helpless before his enemies.

Also known as the Vampire's Mace, the Mace of Molag Bal drains its victims of magicka and gives it to the bearer. It also has the ability to transfer an enemy's strength to its wielder. Molag Bal has been quite free with his artifact. There are many legends about the Mace. It seems to be a favorite for vanquishing wizards.

Ever the vain one, Clavicus Vile made a masque suited to his own personality. The bearer of the Masque is more likely to get a positive response from the people of Tamriel. The higher his personality, the larger the bonus. The best known story of the Masque tells the tale of Avalea, a noblewoman of some renown. As a young girl, she was grossly disfigured by a spiteful servant. Avalea made a dark deal with Clavicus Vile and received the Masque in return. Though the Masque did not change her looks, suddenly she had the respect and admiration of everyone. A year and a day after her marriage to a well

connected baron, Clavicus Vile reclaimed the Masque. Although pregnant with his child, Avalea was banished from the Baron's household. Twenty one years and one day later, Avalea's daughter claimed her vengeance by slaying the Baron.

The Dark Brotherhood has coveted this ebony dagger for generations. This mythical artifact is capable of slaying any creature instantly. History does not record any bearers of Mehrune's Razor. However, the Dark Brotherhood was once decimated by a vicious internal power struggle. It is suspected that the Razor was involved.

Another of Hircine's artifacts was the Cuirass of the Savior's Hide. The Cuirass has the special ability to resist magicka. Legend has it that Hircine rewarded his peeled hide to the first and only mortal to have ever escaped his hunting grounds. This unknown mortal had the hide tailored into this magical Cuirass for his future adventures. The Savior's Hide has a tendency to travel from hero to hero as though it has a mind of its own.

One of the more mysterious artifacts is the Spear of Bitter Mercy. Little to nothing is known about the Spear. There are no recorded histories but many believe it to be of Daedric origin. The only known legend about it is its use by a mighty hero during the fall of the Battlespire. The hero was aided by the Spear in the defeat of Mehrunes Dagon and the recapturing of the Battlespire. Since that time, the Spear of Bitter Mercy has made few appearances within Tamriel.

The Daedric Scourge is a mighty mace forged from sacred ebony in the Fires of Fickledire. The legendary weapon of Mackkan, it was once a fierce weapon used to send spirits of black back into Oblivion. The weapon lhas the ability to



summon creatures from Oblivion, Once a tool used against the Daedric Lords in the Battlespire, it now roams the land with adventurers.

Legend has it that the Bow of Shadows was forged by the Daedra Nocturnal. The legendary ranger, Raerlas Ghile, was granted the Bow for a secret mission that failed, and the Bow was lost. Raerlas did not go down without a hearty fight and is said to have, with the aid of the Bow, taken scores of his foes with him. The Bow grants the user the ability of invisibility and increased speed. Many sightings of the Bow of Shadows have been reported, and it is even said that the sinister Dark Elf assassin of the Second Era, Dram, once wielded this bow.

Randagulf of Clan Begalin goes down in Tamrielic history as one of the mightiest warriors from Skyrim. He was known for his courage and ferocity in battle and was a factor in many battles. He finally met his fate when King Harald conquered Skyrim. King Harald respected this great hero and took Randagulf's gauntlets for his own. After King Harald died, the gauntlets disappeared. The King claimed that the Fists granted the bearer added strength.

The Ice Blade of the Monarch is truly one of Tamriel's most prized artifacts. Legend has it that the Evil Archmage Almion Celmo enchanted the claymore of a great warrior with the soul of a Frost Monarch, a stronger form of the more common Frost Atronach. The warrior, Thurgnarr Assi, was to play a part in the assassination of a great king in a far off land, and become the new leader. The assassination failed and the Archmage was imprisoned. The Ice Blade freezes all who feel its blade. The Blade circulates from owner to owner, never settling in one place for long.

Little is known of this prize but it is said that it lends the wearer the ability to blend in with their surroundings.

The Boots of the Apostle are a true mystery. The wearer of the boots is rumored to be able to levitate, though nobody has ever seen them used.

This ring is a prized possession for any apprentice to magic. It lends the wearer the ability to increase their intelligence and wisdom, thus making their use of magic more efficient. The High Wizard Carni Asron is said to be the creator of the Ring. It was a construct for his young apprentices while studying under his guidance. After Asron's death, the Ring and several other possessions vanished and have been circulated throughout Tamriel.

No facts are known about this Ring, but the title and the few rumors lend one to think it grants the wearer added speed.

One of the more deadly and rare artifacts in Tamriel is the Vampiric Ring. It is said that the Ring has the power to steal its victim's health and grant it to the wearer. The exact nature and origin of the Ring is wholly unknown, but many elders speak of its evil creation in Morrowind long, long ago by a cult of Vampire followers. The Vampiric Ring is an extremely rare artifact and is only seen every few hundred cycles of the moons.

Eleidon was a holy knight of legend in Breton history. He was a sought after man for his courage and determination to set all wrongs right. In one story, it is said that he rescued a Baron's daughter from sure death at the hands of an evil warlord. For his reward, the Baron spent all of his riches to have an

enchanted shield built for Eidelon. The Shield granted Eleidon the opportunity to heal his wounds.

Hasedoki was said to have been a very competitive wizard. He wandered the land in search for a wizard who was greater than he. To the best of all knowledge, he never found a wizard who could meet up to his challenge. It is said that he felt so lonely and isolated because so many feared his power, that he bonded his life-force into his very own staff, where his soul remains to this very day. Magic users all over Tamriel have been searching for this magical staff. Granting its wielder a protection of magicka, it is a sure prize for any magic user.

The King of Worms was said to have left behind one of his prized possessions, the Bloodworm Helm. The Helm is a construct of magically formed bone. The Helm allows the user to summon skeletons and control the undead. It would be a prized artifact to a necromancer.

This cuirass is one of the greatest artifacts any collector or hero could own. It is constructed of real dragon bone and was enchanted by the first Imperial Battlemage, Zurin Arctus, in the early years of the Third Era. It is a truly exquisite piece of work and many have sought to possess it. The properties of the Cuirass allow the wearer to resist fire, and to damage an enemy with a blast of fire. Little is known about the involvement of Zurin Arctus with the enchantment of the Cuirass, but an old tale speaks of a debt that he owed to a traveling warrior. Like the warrior, the Dragonbone Mail never stays put for long.

The Skull Crusher is an amazingly large, and powerful weapon. The Warhammer was created in a fire, magically fueled by the Wizard, Dorach Gusal, and was forged by the great

weaponsmith, Hilbongard Rolamus. The steel is magically hardened and the weight of the weapon is amazingly light, which makes for more powerful swings and deadly blows. The Warhammer was to be put on display for a festival, but thieves got it first. The Skull Crusher still travels Tamriel in search of its creators.

This magical Sword is almost a complete mystery. Thieves tell tales about its golden make and how it was actually forged by ancient dragons of the North. Their tales claim that it was given to a great knight who was sworn to protect the dragons. The Sword lends its wielder the ability to do fire damage on an enemy. Goldbrand has not been sighted in recent history and is said to be awaiting a worthy hero.

Black Marsh was once known to be inhabited with what the Argonians called the Wamasus. Northern men considered them to be intelligent dragons with lightning for blood. One such mighty beast, Haynekhtnamet, was slain by the Northern men, though it took 7 days and nights, and a score of men. One of the surviving men took a fang home as a trophy. The fang was carved down into a blade and fashioned into a small dagger. The Dagger mysteriously houses some of the beast's magical properties and grants the user the ability to do shock damage on an opponent. This unique Dagger is seen occasionally by traveling heroes.

The Umbra Sword was enchanted by the ancient witch Naenra Waerr, and its sole purpose was the entrapment of souls. Used in conjunction with a soul gem, the Sword allows the wielder the opportunity to imprison an enemy's soul in the gem. Naenra was executed for her evil creation, but not before she was able to hide the Sword. The Umbra Sword is very choosy

when it comes to owners and therefore remains hidden until a worthy one is found.

All that is known of this Ring is that it may grant the user protection from certain elements. Even the name Denstagmer is a mystery.

One of Valenwood's legendary heroes is Oreyn Bearclaw. Son of King Faume Toad-Eye, he was a respected clan hunter and a future leader. Wood Elven legend claims Oreyn single handedly defeated Glenhwyfaunva, the witch-serpent of the Elven wood, forever bringing peace to his clan. Oreyn would go on to accomplish numerous other deeds, eventually losing his life to the Knahaten Flu. His Helm stood as a monument of his stature for future generations to remember. The Helm was lost eventually, as the Clan split, and is now a treasured artifact for adventurers. The Helm of Oreyn Bearclaw is rumored to improve the wearers agility and endurance.

Probably the most rare and even outlawed item of all the great prizes is the Daedric Crescent Blade. The Blade was used by Mehrunes Dagon's Daedric forces in the capture of the Imperial Battlespire. These extremely unique Blades were gathered up and destroyed after the Battlespire was recaptured by the Empire. All but one it seems. Though the Empire believes them all to be destroyed, it is rumored that one still remains in existence, somewhere in Tamriel, though none have ever seen it. The Blade lends it's wielder the ability to do great damage on an enemy and allows him to paralyze and put heavy wear on his enemy's armor. Quite the prize for any mighty warrior, if it does indeed exist.

# Tax Records

## *Processus Vitellius*

Processus Vitellius

Seyda Neen Census and Excise Office

Arrille - 450 drakes - PAID

Draren Thiralas - 200 drakes - PAID

Eldafire - 130 drakes

Erene Llenim - 78 drakes - PAID

Fargoth - 111 drakes

Fine-Mouth - 54 drakes

Foryn Gilnith - 225 drakes

Indrele Rathryon - 127 drakes - PAID

Terurise Grivayne - 98 drakes - PAID

Thavere Vedrano 134 drakes - PAID

Vodunius Nuccius - 87 drakes

# Thauraver's Orders

*K*

An order note for Thauraver to find some escaped slaves.

Thauraver,

I'm tired of waiting. The hell with the Dark Brotherhood, the hell with the Morag Tong. You're all I need. Find those damn slaves and bring them back. If they won't come back, kill them. Actually, just kill them. They're damaged product and I don't need the aggravation.

You've never let me down before and I know you won't let me down now.

-K

# The Affairs Of Wizards

*Turedus Talanian*

Want to Become Part of House Telvanni?

Outsiders learning of the rabid isolationist and outlander-hating temperament of House Telvanni wizards often assume it would be impossible to obtain positions in service to House Telvanni.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

For example, since the Telvanni vigorously defend the right to own slaves, and since they keep many Argonian and Khajiit as slaves, many Argonians and Khajiit assume they would not be accepted for service with House Telvanni.

Not true. Telvanni accept all races as candidates for membership.

And, since the Telvanni are ruled by wizard-lord nobles, many assume they accept only candidates of the highest intelligence and willpower.

Not true. Telvanni accept candidates of modest intelligence and willpower.

It is true that advancement in Telvanni ranks depends on high intelligence and willpower, and that candidates proficient in



the arts of magic—especially Mysticism, Conjunction, Illusion, Alteration, Destruction, and Enchanting—can expect to advance faster and higher in the ranks.

But adventurers of all races and abilities who apply to Telvanni Mouths at the Telvanni Council Hall in Sadrith Mora for acceptance in House Telvanni can expect a cordial welcome.

(Telvanni Councilors do not serve on their house councils in person. Instead, they are represented by a ‘Mouth’, a trusted subordinate in residence at the Council Hall, acting on his patron’s behalf, receiving messengers from their patrons and casting their patron’s votes in Council affairs.)

The truth is that House Telvanni wizard-lords depend on loyal, well-paid, skilled retainers for most services. Though House Telvanni does recruit from their own lower classes, they must go outside their house to hire the craftsmen and specialists they need. And since for political reasons House Telvanni has chosen to reduce its reliance on Redoran mercenaries for protection and security, it has been forced to turn to Western mercenaries for guards and agents.

Promotion in the ranks of House Telvanni, however, is very difficult for outsiders. Most disconcerting for some potential candidates is House Telvanni’s casual acceptance of murder and assassination of rivals as a means to advancement. Those reluctant to prove their worthiness by killing off the competition, and those uncomfortable about competing in such a ruthless atmosphere, might better employ their time and efforts in the Mages Guild.

# The Alchemical Recipes Of Aurane Frernis

## *Aurane Frernis*

The most common potion, restore health, can be made from ingredients native to Vvardenfell. Any combination of Marshmerrow, wickwheat, and resin will work. If properly prepared, there are no ill effects.

Another common potion is that of restore fatigue. This can be made from scrib jelly and scuttle. Using hound meat instead of jelly may make a stronger potion, but the hound meat often spoils and makes the potion effective but undrinkable.

Customers often prefer potions that taste better to ones that are only slightly more effective.

A potion to cure common diseases is another frequent request. These are quite simple to make here in Vvardenfell and often cheaper as grave dust is far more plentiful (and better preserved) by these fastidious Dunmer. Mix equal parts gravedust and green lichens. Heat over a low flame until the mixture turns brown.

Notes: Daedra skin is just as effective, but very expensive. Chokeweed can be used in an emergency.

Research notes on curing blight diseases:

So far the only mixtures I've found to be even partially effective is scrib jelly and ash salts. These ingredients are not too hard to find, but the ratio needs some adjustment and the potion is not fully effective.

A simple potion to breathe water can be made from luminous russula, a shelf fungus found in the Bitter Coast, and hackle-lo leaves. Crush the mushrooms and leaves into a paste and add water slowly until the mixture is just barely liquid enough to drink.

Note: Try and find something to mix with this to make it taste better.

A simple levitate potion can be made from coda flowers and either Cliff Racer plumes or trama roots.

Note: Do NOT mix plumes with trama root.

# The Alchemist's Formulary

*Anonymous*

Healers should all know the recipes for the following popular potions. Fortunately, in most cases, the ingredients are common and cheaply obtained.

To restore health to the afflicted and wounded, combine in equal parts two or more of the following cheap and common ingredients: marshmellow, wickwheat, corkbulb root, and saltrice. Marshmellow is an important crop of the Ascadian Isles, but it also grows wild in the Grazelands and on Azura's Coast. Wickwheat is a wild Ashland grain that grows in the Grazelands. Corkbulb grows best in the Ascadian Isles. Most saltrice comes from southeastern Morrowind, but there are also some new and prospering farms and plantations in the Ascadian Isles. Saltrice occasionally grows wild in the Grazelands and on Azura's Coast.

To restore fatigue after heavy exertion, combine two or more of the following: crab meat, bread, small kwama egg, and chokeweed. Crabmeat is taken from the mud crab, commonly found along all coasts. Bread in Morrowind is usually baked from saltrice flour. Kwama eggs are harvested from egg mines, and sold everywhere in Morrowind; the smaller eggs retain properties lost in later states of gestation. Chokeweed is a tough shrub growing in the rocky highlands of the West Gash.

To cure common diseases, combine gravedust and green lichen. Gravedust is spirit-affinitive dust taken from remains buried in consecrated ground. Green lichen is a hardy primitive plant that grows in the Ascadian Isles and Azura's Coast.

To restore magicka for spellcasting, combine comberry and frost salts. Comberry is a bitter berry, used to make wines. It grows mainly in the Ascadian Isles. Frost salts, by contrast, are rare and expensive. These crystalline compounds precipitate from elemental frost in solution. Such residues may be collected from the remains of frost atronachs that have been banished from the mortal plane.

Pilgrims and travelers will find the following inexpensive recipes of particular interest.

Feather reduces the weary traveler's burdens and can be gained from heather and scuttle. Heather is a low evergreen shrub of the Ascadian Isles, known for its small, pinkish-purple flowers. Scuttle, Vvardenfell's favorite local dish, is similar to cheese and made from the flesh of local beetles.

Levitation can be produced from any two of the following ingredients: trama root, racer plumes, and coda flowers. A thick, bitter-tasting root of the trama shrub grows in the Ashlands, Molag Amur, and Red Mountain regions. Racer plumes are plucked from dead cliff racers. Coda flowers are collected from the primitive draggle-tail plant of the Bitter Coast.

The power of Water Breathing is handy for travelers. A potion may be made from two or more of the following ingredients: luminous russula, hackle-lo leaf, and kwama cuttle. Luminous russula is a squat, mottled-brown-and-green toadstool

mushroom of the Bitter Coast region. Hackle-lo leaf is a succulent leaf of the Grazelands, prized for its taste and its roborative powers. Kwama cuttle is a tough, waxy substance that comes from sacs in the mouths of kwama.

Unfortunately, the potions most favored by adventurers require more rare and expensive ingredients. There are exceptions, like the easy and affordable recipe for fire shield. But most such potions require at least one ingredient with high cost in coin or blood.

Fire Shield potions can be made from comberry and sload soap. Comberry is the bitter berry of the Ascadian Isles. Sload soap is a waxy substance made from the immature non-sentient forms of the sload. Sload soap is not expensive, but is only rarely stocked by apothecaries or alchemists, and cannot be collected locally.

An adventurer can fortify his strength with a potion made from ash yams and dreugh wax. Ash yam is a tough tuberous root vegetable common to the Ascadian Isles region. Dreugh wax is a tough, waxy substance scraped from dreugh shells. Dreugh are powerful aquatic creatures, and hunting them for their hides and wax is a dangerous occupation.

Invisibility, one of the most prized effects of potions, can be made only from crushed diamonds and bittergreen petals. Bittergreen is a red flowering plant growing in the Red Mountain region. Diamonds, on the other hand, are very rare and expensive and usually must be purchased from fine alchemists.

# The Anticipations

*Anonymous*

The Daedra are powerful ancestor spirits, similar in form and substance to the Tribunal (Blessed Be Their Holy Names), but weaker in power, and more arbitrary and removed from the affairs of mortals. In old times, the Chimer worshiped the Daedra as gods. But they did not deserve this veneration, for the Daedra harm their worshippers as often as help them.

The Advent of the Tribunal (Blessed Be Their Holy Names) changed this unhappy state. By the Apotheosis, the Tribunal (Blessed Be Their Holy Names) became the Protectors and High Ancestor Spirits of the Dunmer, and bade the Daedra to give proper veneration and obedience. The Three Good Daedra, Boethiah, Azura, and Mephala, recognized the Divinity of the Triune Ancestors (Blessed Be Their Holy Names). The Rebel Daedra, Molag Bal, Malacath, Sheogorath, and Mehrunes Dagon, refused to swear fealty to the Tribunal (Blessed Be Their Holy Names), and their worshippers were cast out.

These Rebel Daedra thus became the Four Corners of the House of Troubles, and they continue to plague our tranquility and tempt the unwary into Heresy and Dark Worship. The Priests of the Temple remain ever vigilant for signs of the Adversaries' return, sometimes aided by the loyal Three Good Daedra, who are familiar with the wiles of their rebellious kin.

The Good Daedra are known to the Temple as the Anticipations, since they are the early ancestral anticipations of the loving patronage of the Tribunal. The Anticipations are the Daedra Lords Boethiah, Mephala, and Azura.

Boethiah is the Anticipation of Almalexia but male to her female. Boethiah was the ancestor who illuminated the elves ages ago before the Mythic Era. He told them the truth of Lorkhan's test, and defeated Auriel's champion, Trinimac. Boethiah ate Trinimac and voided him. The followers of Boethiah and Trinimac rubbed the soil of Trinimac upon themselves and changed their skins.

Mephala is the Anticipation of Vivec, but manifold and androgynous. Mephala taught the Chimer to evade their enemies or kill them with secret murder. The Chimer were few in those days and threatened on all sides. Mephala taught the Chimer to build Houses. Later, Mephala created the Morag Tong.

Azura is the Anticipation of Sotha Sil, but female to his male. Azura was the ancestor who taught the Chimer how to be different from the Altmer. Her teachings are sometimes attributed to Boethiah. In the stories, Azura is often encountered more as a communal progenitor of the race as a whole rather than as an individual ancestor. She is associated with Dusk and Dawn, and is sometimes called the Mother Soul. Azura's Star, also called the Twilight Star, appears briefly at dawn and dusk low on the horizon below the constellation of the Steed. Azura is associated with mystery and magic, fate and prophecy.



# The Axe Man

*Anonymous*

Of all the members of the Morag Tong I've spoken with, none disturbed me as much as Minas Torik. A quiet and reserved man who never drank, never visited a brothel or even uttered a curse, he was famous for his ability to make people disappear. Once a person was targeted by the Brotherhood and Torik was sent to them, they would simply cease to be. I asked him once what his weapon of choice was, and was equally startled by his answer.

"I only likes to use axes," he said in his typical, quiet voice.

The image of this silent, dour fellow attacking anyone with a weapon as inherently bloody and violent as an axe so frightened and intrigued me that I questioned him about it further. This is an inherently dangerous activity, for assassins are not typically keen to give out their stories. Torik did not mind the questions, though it took some time to get the full story out of him, as naturally shy and reserved as he was.

It seemed that Torik had been orphaned as a very young age and sent to live with his uncle, a saltrice plantation owner in Sheogorad in northern Vvardenfell. The man promised to show his nephew the business and eventually make him a partner when he was old enough. In the meantime, the boy was put to work as his uncle's house servant.

It was a grueling life as the old man was very particular about how things should be done. The boy was first required to give all the floors in the house a thorough scouring, from the attic to the cellar. Whenever the floor was not cleaned to the uncle's satisfaction, which was frequent, Torik was thrashed and forced to begin again.

The boy's second duty was to ring the bell that would bring the laborers into the house. This was done at least four times a day, once for each meal, but if his uncle had any news or additional instructions for the laborers—which he frequently did—the bell might need to be sounded a dozen times or more. It was a huge iron bell in the tower and the boy quickly discovered that he had to throw his entire body into the motion of pulling the chain in order to have it sound loud enough to bring everyone in from the field. If he was tired and did not pull the backbreaking chain hard enough, his uncle was soon at his side to beat him until he rang the bell loud and clear.

Torik's third task was dusting all the shelves in his uncle's vast library. As deep and old as the shelves were, he was required to work with a long, heavy duster on a rod. The only way that he could reach to the back of the shelves was to hold the duster at his shoulder and then swing it out in a sweeping motion. Again, if the uncle saw any dust left over or felt that the boy was not working as hard as he ought to, the punishment was swift and severe.

After several years, Minas Torik grew into a young man, but his job responsibilities were not increased. His uncle promised to teach him the business, once Torik had demonstrated his mastery of his servile assignments. Divorced from any knowledge of any work other than his own, Torik never knew

how badly in debt his uncle was and how poorly the farm's yield was.

In his eighteenth year, Torik was called into the cellar by his uncle. He thought that he had not done a good enough job scouring the floor down there, and was frightened of the beating to come. What he found, however, was his uncle packing his goods into crates.

"I'm leaving Morrowind," he explained. "The business has gone sour, so I thought I'd try my luck running a caravan in Skyrim. I understand there's good money to be made, trading fake Dwemer artifacts to the Nords and Cyrodiils. I wish I could take you with me, my lad, but there won't be much need for scouring, bell pulling, and dusting where I'm going."

"But uncle," said Torik. "I can't read, I knows nothing of the business you promised to teach me. What wills I dos on my own?"

"I'm certain you can find a job in some domestic capacity," shrugged the uncle. "I've done my best with you."

Torik had never stood up to his uncle before, and felt no anger only a sort of coldness that gripped his heart. Among his uncle's possessions being packed away was an old heavy iron axe, allegedly of Dwemer manufacture. He picked it up in his hands and was surprised to find that it was not much heavier than his dusting rod. In fact, it felt very comfortable as he pulled it over his shoulder and swung it out as he had done so many times before. In this instance, however, he swung it into his uncle's right arm.

The old man screamed with pain and rage, but for some reason, Torik didn't feel frightened anymore. He propped the axe against his other shoulder, and swung it out again. It cut a swath across the old man's chest and he fell to the floor.

Torik hesitated before lifting the axe above his head. It was another natural position for him, like he was ringing a bell. Over and over again, he swung down as if he was calling the laborers in from the field. Except that this time, there was no sound except for a wet thump, and no laborers came in from the field. Of course, his uncle had sent them away hours before.

After a time, there was nothing left of his uncle that couldn't be washed down the cellar drain. The process of cleaning up came easily to Torik as well. Blood scrubbed up much quicker than the usual grime and saltrice flour that littered the cellar floor.

It was well known that Torik's uncle was planning to leave Morrowind, so his disappearance provoked no suspicion. The house and all the belongings were sold to the debt collectors, but Torik took the axe. It seemed that his uncle had given him some worthwhile business skills after all.

# The Balladeer's Fakebook

*Anonymous*

[This portfolio contains the lyrics to many popular Western drinking songs, including, among others:]

Bold Admiral Richton

The Golden Grove

The Twelve-Night Drunk

Island Lads Down from the Mountain

Beans, Bloody Beans

Olga's Smickett

Black Fredas

The Imperial Volunteer

Down by the Ginger Garden

Roll, Bretonnia, Roll

The Isle of Summerset

Dark Blooded Foes

Dawn and Dusk

Farewell to Colovia

Wind and Rain

Green and Gracious Land

The Jolly Archer

Sorrow Waters

Inkkit Hinkit

Pilgrim on the Road

I'm Glad I'm Not No Orc

# The Battle Of Molag Beran

*Anonymous*

(Dunmer Traditional Ballad)

Did you come to hide from war,

Or come to herd the guar,

Or were you with the House Guard

At the Battle of Molag Beran?

For I was there, and fought and cried,

And tasted blood and thunder.

I stood in line with mace and shield

As Dunmer clan slew Dunmer.

The guard of House Retheran

Were bright arrayed for battle.

They came in pride, in columns wide,

But ran like frightened cattle.

We stood our ground on Tadrass Banks,

Then turned their flanks and roweled them.

The field was bright with cousin's blood

Spilled by doughty Drenim.

We lost some gallant gentlemen

From ranks of brave House Drenim.

And many a wand'ring widow weeps

On the hills of Molag Beran.

Some fell for wrong, some fell for right,

All for the colors wearin',

And many bade the world good-night

At the Battle of Molag Beran.



# The Black Glove

*Anonymous*

Swift and agile are the Morag Tong. Silent and unseen they move. Illusions they supply to misdirect their prey. Close and sure they strike with shortblade, or distant and secure they strike from afar with accurate missile fire. Light armor protects them from harm, and the acrobatic discipline finds for them the unseen and unlooked-for path. Have you these virtues? Then, perhaps, your oath and service may please the Morag Tong.

Do you have your friends and your finery, but no place to go? Do you laugh and cry, but no longer feel? Do you wear these masks? Then, perhaps, your oath and service may please the Black Glove.

The blood of the hunter and the blood of the hunted. The joy of the hidden and the joy of the seeker. The blood of the eye and the blood of the gate. The joy of the living and the joy of the dead. Are you one with these things? Then, perhaps, your oath and service may please Mephala.

To make your oath and enter our service, the worthy must seek the Grandmaster, who by tradition lives in the unseen and unlooked-for corners of Vivec City between the blood of battle and the waters of life.

# The Blue Book Of Riddles

*Anonymous*

Herein are presented all manner of riddles, as collected by the scholars of St Rिल्ms, to the greater glory of the Tribunal, Almsivi!

[The posing and puzzling of riddles is a convention of polite aristocratic Western society. Nobles and social aspirants collect books of riddles and study them, hoping thereby to increase the chances of their appearing sly and witty in conversation.]

# The Cake And The Diamond

*Athyn Muendil*

An amusing story. The first known story that takes place in the land of Morrowind. I wonder if that tavern can be found in the game...

I was in the Rat and the Pot, a foreigner cornerclub in Ald'ruhn, talking to my fellow Rats when I first saw the woman. Now, Breton women are fairly common in the Rat and the Pot: as a breed, they seem inclined to wander far from their perches in High Rock. Old Breton women, however, are not so migratory, and the wizened old biddy drew attention to herself, wandering about the room, talking to everyone. Still, having noted her, I moved on to join my mates.

Nimloth and Oediad were at their usual places, drinking their usual stuff. Oediad was showing off a prize he had picked up in some illicit manner—a colossal diamond, large as a baby's hand, and clear as spring water. I was admiring it when I heard the creaking of old bones behind me.

“Good day to you, friends,” said the old woman. “My name is Abelle Chriditte, and I am in need of financial assistance to facilitate my transportation to Ald Redaynia.”

“You'll want to see the Temple for charity,” said Nimloth curtly.

“I am not looking for charity,” said Abelle. “I’m looking to barter services.”

“Don’t make me sick, old woman,” laughed Oediad.

“Did you say your name was Abelle Chriditte?” I asked, “Are you related to Abelle Chriditte, the High Rock alchemist?”

“Extremely related,” she said, with a cackle. “We are the same person. Perhaps I could prepare you a potion in exchange for gold? I noticed that you have in your possession a very fine diamond. The magical qualities of diamonds are boundless.”

“Sorry, old woman, I ain’t giving it up for magic. It was trouble enough stealing this one,” said Oediad. “I’ve got a fence who’ll trade it for gold.”

“But your fence will demand a certain percentage, will he not? What if I could give you a potion of invisibility in exchange? In return for that diamond, you could have the means to steal many more. A very fair exchange of services, I would say.”

“It would be, but I have no gold to give you,” said Oediad.

“I’ll take what remains of the diamond after I’ve made the potion,” said Abelle. “If you took it to the Mages Guild, you’d have to supply all the other ingredients and pay for it as well. But I learned my craft in the wild, where no Potion-makers existed to dissolve diamonds into dust. When you must do it all by hand, by simple skill, you are blessed with remnants those fool potion-makers at the Guild simply swallow up.”

“That sounds all very nice,” said Nimloth, “But how do we know your potion is going to work? If you make one potion,

take the rest of Oediad's diamond, and leave, we won't know until you've gone whether the potion works or not."

"Ah, trust is so rare these days," sighed Abelle. "I suppose I could make two potions for you, and there'd still be a little bit of the diamond left for me. Not a lot, but perhaps enough to get me to Ald Redaynia. Then you could try the first potion right here and now, and see if you're satisfied or not."

"But," I interjected. "You could make one potion that works and one that doesn't, and take more of the diamond. She could even give you a slow-acting poison, and by the time she got to Ald Redaynia, you'd be dead."

"Bleedin' Kynareth, you Dunmer are suspicious! I will hardly have any diamond left, but I could make two potions of two doses each, so you can satisfy yourself that the potion works and has no negative effects. If you still don't trust me, come along with me to my table and witness my craft if you'd like."

So it was decided that I would accompany Abelle back to her table where she had all her traveling bags full of herbs and minerals, to make certain that she was not making two different potions. It took nearly an hour of preparation, but she kindly allowed me to finish her half-filled flagon of wine while I watched her work. Splintering the diamond and powdering the pieces required the bulk of the time; over and over again, she waved her gnarled hands over the gem, intoning ancient enchantments, breaking the facets of the stone into smaller and smaller pieces. Separately she made pastes of minced bittergreen, crushed red bulbs of dell'arco spae, and driblets of ciciliani oil. I finished the wine.

“Old woman,” I finally said with a sigh. “How much longer is this going to take? I’m getting tired of watching you work.”

“The Mages Guild has fooled the populace into thinking alchemy is a science,” she said. “But if you’re tired, rest your eyes.”

My eyes closed, seemingly of their own volition. But there had been something in that wine. Something that made me do what she asked.

“I think I’ll make up the potion as cakes. It’s much more potent that way. Now, tell me, young man, what will your friends do once I give them the potion?”

“Mug you in the street afterwards to retrieve the rest of the diamond,” I said simply. I didn’t want to tell the truth, but there it was.

“I thought so, but I wanted to be certain. You may open your eyes now.”

I opened my eyes. Abelle had made a small presentation on a wooden platter: two small cakes and a silver cutting knife.

“Pick up the cakes and bring them to the table,” said Abelle. “And don’t say anything, except to agree with whatever I say.”

I did as I was told. It was a curious sensation. I didn’t really mind being her puppet. Of course, in retrospect, I resent it, but it seemed perfectly natural at the time to obey without question.

Abelle handed the cakes to Oediad and I dutifully verified that both cakes were made the same way. She suggested that he cut

one of the cakes in half, and she would take one piece and he'd take the other, just so he would know that they worked and weren't poisoned. Oediad thought it was a good idea, and used Abelle's knife to cut the cake. Abelle took the piece on the left and popped into her mouth. Oediad took the piece on the right and swallowed it more cautiously.

Abelle and all the bags she was carrying vanished from sight almost instantly. Nothing happened to Oediad.

"Why did it work for the witch and not for me?" cried Oediad.

"Because the diamond dust was only on the left-hand side of the blade," said the old alchemist through me. I felt her control lessening as the distance grew and she hurried invisibly down the dark Ald'ruhn street away from the Rat and the Pot.

We never found Abelle Chriditte or the diamond. Whether she completed her pilgrimage to Ald Redaynia is anyone's guess. The cakes had no effect, except to give Oediad a bad case of droops that lasted for nearly a week.

# The Common Tongue

*Anonymous*

[This broadsheet is a newsletter copied on cheap paper, featuring sensational events in the city of Mournhold. One article describes a list of individuals who died under suspicious circumstances when their interests conflicted with those of ‘a former prince of the West’. The reference is clearly King Helseth, King of Morrowind, formerly Prince Helseth of the kingdom of Wayrest in the province of High Rock.]

“A poet can have no higher purpose than to tell the truth about the human condition.”—Lord Vivec

I have a little list. They never would be missed.

Appearing at the top—three names... Anhar, Khajiit male—Martyrius Arruntius, Imperial male—Jusole Asciele, Breton male. What do these three names have in common?

All three at one time or another represented an inconvenience to a Western noble prince named Helseth.

Anhar was an agent for Eastern ebony merchants. There was an unfortunate scandal concerning improper contracts offered to Helseth as compensation for his assistance in obtaining ebony import remits from the Imperial Board of Census and Excise. Luckily for Prince Helseth, this scandal blew over when no one could be found to testify. Is it just a coincidence that



Anhar's health went into a steep decline, just as he was to testify before the Imperial magistrates? He died a natural death, according to the Imperial coroners. Convenient and timely, perhaps, but natural.

Martyrius Arruntius was a city alderman of Wayrest. Prince Helseth's liaison with the alderman's married daughter was potentially embarrassing to the Prince—especially when Martyrius Arruntius forcefully pressed his suit for 'predatory adultery' in Wayrest's courts. Many thought it strange that Martyrius Arruntius should suddenly fall ill and die of 'exhaustion' on the eve of the trial. The suit was settled out of court, and charges dismissed. The Imperial coroners ruled that Martyrius Arruntius had died a natural death. Convenient and timely, admittedly, but natural.

Jusole Asciele was a diplomatic attache at the High Rock embassy in Wayrest. Widely rumored to be an intelligence officer, Jusole Asciele was often seen at court, taking a great interest in the affairs of Queen Barenziah and her family. It is said that Wayrest can be a beastly uncomfortable place in high summer. Perhaps the Breton's constitution was ill-suited to the relentless heat and pestilential swarms of the southern Iliac. Jusole Asciele took suddenly ill one evening, and within three days he was dead. Once again, Imperial coroners ruled that Jusole Asciele had died a natural death. Convenient and timely, yes, but natural.

And these, The Common Tongue notes significantly, are only the 'A's on the list.

Some have quietly suggested that Prince Helseth was the most accomplished and subtle poisoner in the West. But The Common Tongue has never seen a single scrap of evidence that

would prove such an indictment. [Admittedly, the absence of such proof could count as qualifying towards the title of a 'most accomplished and subtle poisoner'.]

And, further, The Common Tongue does not wish to suggest that King Helseth is a poisoner, or that the recent death of King Athyn Llethan's was a poisoning, and not a natural death. The Common Tongue has never seen a single scrap of evidence that would prove such an indictment. And the Imperial coroners have ruled that Athyn Llethan died a natural death.

# The Consolations Of Prayer

## *Tribunal Temple*

Through the bounty of Blessed Almsivi, Triune Grace, and all the hosts of saints, the faithful who pray at the Temple's shrines may be granted blessings through the miraculous sacraments of prayer and devotion. The three-sided shrines betoken the three-faced benison of Almsivi, and may be found in Temples, or at sites of pilgrimage, or at pilgrim waysides, or in the tomb of the sanctified.

What benefits may be gained shall be listed herein for the edification of the worshipper and pilgrim.

All shrines grant cures of common diseases, of blight diseases, and of afflictions of poison.

Those shrines bearing the images of Vivec, Almalexia, and Sotha Sil also may grant the blessing of Almsivi Restoration, which restores damaged attributes, and the three blessings of Almsivi: Vivec's Mystery, for good fortune; Soul of Sotha Sil, for magical power, and Lady's Grace, for endurance of hardships.

Those shrines bearing the images of the saints may also grant the particular blessings of the saints, which are listed for you here:

St. Aralor grants Aralor's Intervention, for fortifying character.

St. Delyn grants Shield of St. Delyn, for resistance to blight diseases.

St. Felms grants Felm's Glory, for greater skill in restoring magics.

St. Llothis grants Rock of Llothis, for fortifying the will.

St. Meris grants Meris's Warding, for resistance to corpus disease.

St. Nerevar grants Spirit of Nerevar, for fortifying the body's vigor.

St. Olms grants Olm's Benediction, for resistance to common disease.

St. Rilms grants Rilm's Grace, for endurance of hardships.

St. Roris grants Roris's Bloom, for fortifying the body's health.

St. Seryn grants Seryn's Shield, for resistance to poisons.

St. Veloth grants Veloth's Indwelling, for magical power, and also grants the blessing of Almsivi Restoration, which restores damaged attributes.

The Faithful are granted these blessings when they pray at the shrines and make a modest donation. The Blessed of the Initiate rank and higher of the Temple have already made their devotions in service and piety, and need only pray at the shrines to receive their benefits. And Almsivi is generous, so even the Unbeliever may receive a blessing if he prays, if he proves his respect with a generous donation.

# The Doors Of The Spirit

*Anonymous*

The Ancestors are among us. They are never farther away than the Waiting Door.

The Ancestors are not departed. The dead are not under the earth. Their spirits are in the restless wind, in the fire's voice, in the foot-smoothed step. Pay heed to these things, and you will know your absent kin.

Pay reverence through gift and prayer. Acquaint the Ancestors with your affairs, with your comings and goings, with your blessings and trials.

From the Waiting Door comes your protection. Heed the spirits, who are the guardians of your hearth, teachers of wisdom, counselors of fortune, seers of fate.

Each bone is a door through the wall of the world. Each bone is the road, with Wisdom and Power the travelers. Each bone is the ghost fence that guards us from evil.

Honor the Ancestors upon your hearths, within your halls, in the community of your temples, in the solitude of your tombs.

Guard your Ancestors from beasts, from thieves, from profane priest and sorcerers. Let no creature steal your spirits, for the

plundered hearth is diminished, and the plundered tomb is shamed.

Live in One World with your spirits. Honor the spirits within and without you. Do not grieve for the dead. Take shelter in their arms, and pay heed to their words.

# The Four Suitors Of Benitah

*Jole Yolivess*

This book raises the restoration skill.

Up until he was ten years old, Oin Parnafacasis was in an elite group of the very best families of Gnisis. They went to the very best tailors, shared the same tutors, played in the same exclusive company. When his mother died, and his father discovered that the money they had been living on was based on a thief's salary, he suddenly found himself on a very different kind of society, one that he had been ill-equipped to deal with. They were poor.

Oin eventually learned to make a living at the only skill he seemed to be well-suited for: gardening. In time, he had grown an impressive garden of willow anther, gold kanet, chokeweed, white bloatroot, and trama shrubs. He had also grown himself into a remarkably uninteresting man—aside from his gardening, he had little to say for himself. Unlearned, uncharismatic, unathletic, uncoordinated. And yet he yearned. Specifically, he yearned for a girl he had known before all his trouble, a sweet thing with curly locks and a joyous laugh named Benitah Gorgoth. Once when at play he had pushed a bully away who was trying to hurt her, and the look of appreciation she gave him was enough to make all his days since then worth their while.

As he tended his garden one springtide, not very many years ago, he heard some people talking through the thick tall trama shrubs about the marriage of Sedura Indoril Pavflek Mamoon, one of the wealthiest and most respected nobles in Gnisis, and Serjo Benitah Gorgoth. His heart fell. She had found another, a mere nine years since she had given him that look while at play.

As spring turned into summer and summer into fall, Oin began to sell his herbs, including some to Kena Yakin Bael, a prominent healer in town. He had been a tutor to both Benitah and Oin, and told the young man that the lady's husband was not very well. Oin held back his happiness and continued on his errands.

Not long afterwards, Sedura Indoril Pavflek Mamoon fell ill and died, despite all the skills of the great healers, including Yakin Bael. When Oin came to deliver the herbs that day, he said, "If you are still in communication with Benitah, please give her my sympathies."

"Nchow," said Yakin. "If I could get a word in with all her counselors. They are trying to find her a new husband, and she has made it clear that she will only marry the strongest man in Morrowind."

"Who is that?" asked Oin.

"Horath the Strong," replied Yakin. "It is said that he can lift a wagon with but his forefinger and thumb."

"You can teach me a spell that will fortify my own strength," said Oin. "I beg you to teach it to me now."



“Very well,” replied Yakin. “But in return, I want your next season’s worth of trama root, all to myself.”

Oin agreed, and Yakin taught him the spell to fortify his strength. It took him some time to master it, visualizing magicka streaming through his body, pumping through the very fibers of his muscles for a time, giving him strength far beyond the puny power nature had intended. When Oin met Horath on the street of Gnisis, he cast the spell and challenged him to a duel of strength.

“I am Horath the Strong,” said Horath the Strong, predictably, “Witness as I lift this wagon with but my thumb and forefinger.” And he did so.

“I am Nimlom the Mighty,” said Oin, taking some artistic liberty. “Witness as I lift the stable that houses your wagon with but my forefinger.” And he too did so.

The word went out quickly throughout Morrowind: the strongest man alive was in the province. Oin went to visit his friend, Yakin Bael.

“Her lady Benitah has heard of the strength of Nimlom the Mighty, and has said that she was mistaken. She was not looking for a man of strength to marry, but a man of intelligence, a great scholar. The greatest in all Morrowind.”

“Who is that?” asked Oin.

“Kena Warfel Tomasin,” replied Yakin. “It is said that he can best any man or woman in a battle of wits.”

“You can teach me a spell that will fortify my own intelligence,” said Oin. “I beg you to teach it to me now.”

“Very well,” replied Yakin. “But in return, I want your next season’s worth of white bloatroot, all to myself.”

Oin agreed and for the next couple of weeks, Yakin taught him the spell and trained him in its use. He taught him how to entrench his mind for the sudden assault of awareness and aptitude that would assail it, how to give himself to the sudden thoughts and theorems that would invade his consciousness. When he met Warfel Tomasin in the Mages Guild of Gnisis, he cast his spell and gave the challenge.

“I am Kena Warfel Tomasin, and I can prove that Akatosh, Nirn, and Oblivion are one,” said Warfel, writing out the mathematical formula that showed it was so.

“I am Kena Zombel Mokafa, and I can prove that you do not exist,” said Oin. He wrote out the mathematical formula, which proved correct, and Kena Warfel Tomasin vaporized on the spot.

The word went out quickly throughout Morrowind: the most intelligent man alive was in the province. Oin went to visit his friend, Yakin Bael.

“Her lady Benitah has heard of the intelligence of Kena Zombel Mokafa, and has said that she was mistaken. She was not looking for a man of intelligence to marry, but a man of endurance, a rock. The greatest in all Morrowind.”

“Who is that?” asked Oin.

“I would say, Master Combova,” said Yakin. “They say he can stand in blue flames for twenty minutes.”

“You can teach me a spell that will fortify my own endurance,” said Oin. “I beg you to teach it to me now.”

“Very well,” replied Yakin. “But in return, I want your next season’s worth of chokeweed, all to myself.”

Oin agreed, and for the next several weeks, he learned the spell to make his endurance like that of the oldest stone. He learned how to shrug off the effects of frost, poison, fire, and charges of lightning, pulling the pain into a reservoir of magicka and expelling it. The lesson learned, he came across Master Combova at the Madach Tradehouse.

“My name is Master Combova,” said the fellow, nudging the witch next to him. “Kena Leles, cast a ball of blue flame for me.” And he sat in the inferno of flame for twenty minutes before he left.

“Master Combova, my name is Master Vomph,” said Oin. “Kena Leles, cast a ball of blue flames for me.” Oin sat in the inferno of blue fire for very nearly an hour before he left.

The word went out quickly throughout Morrowind: the toughest man alive was in the province. Oin went to visit his friend, Yakin Bael.

“Her lady Benitah has heard of the endurance of Master Vomph,” he said, not entirely approving of Oin’s latest sobriquet, “And has said that she was mistaken. She was not looking for a man of endurance to marry, but a man of agility, a nimble acrobat. The greatest in all Morrowind.”

“Who is that?” asked Oin.

“I would say, Funcrazot Priif,” said Yakin. “They say he is the greatest shield-blocker and pickpocket in Morrowind.”

“You can teach me a spell that will fortify my own agility,” said Oin. “I beg you to teach it to me now.”

“Very well,” replied Yakin. “But in return, I want your next season’s worth of gold kanet, all to myself.”

Oin agreed, and Yakin taught him the spell that would fire his impulses with magicka. Over several weeks, he learned how to supplant his own natural energy with the spell’s, how to view the world at the slower pace a man with advanced agility sees. In time, Oin came upon Funcrazot in a field outside the city, doing his regular exercises. Oin cast his spell and approached the acrobat.

“Ah, behold the power of the amazing Funcrazot Priif,” said the afore-mentioned, and prompted his sparring partner to attack him with his sword. He blocked the blows effortlessly with a shield for ten minutes, and then revealed afterwards that he had pickpocketed the young man’s purse.

“Very impressive, Ser Priif. Now, behold the power of the remarkable Gazouf Mough,” said Oin, and prompted Priif’s sparring partner to attack him with his sword. After twenty minutes of blocking the man’s blows with his shield, he revealed that he had pickpocketed Funcrazot Priif’s purse.

The word went out quickly throughout Morrowind: the most agile man alive was in the province. Oin went to visit his friend, Yakin Bael. The door was closed this time and he heard voices within.

“Have you heard about the remarkable Gazouf Mough?” Yakin Bael was asking. “He sounds like a very promising suitor.”

“The truth is, kena, that I have no more interest in him than I had in Nimlom the Mighty, Kena Zombel Mokafa, or Master Vomph,” replied a feminine voice that seemed familiar to Oin. “I will have to invent a new test for suitors, while I search for my true love.”

“You don’t wish to marry the strongest, most intelligent, toughest, most agile suitors?” asked the old Healer.

“No, not at all,” said the woman. “I had to make some kind of test to rebuff the advances of so many men interested in my money and the money of my late husband. The truth is that I’ve never forgotten the young boy who was so kind to me when I was a little girl, and so brave fighting off the bullies. His name was Oin Parnafacasis.”

Oin burst into the room and was reunited with Benitah. They were married at once. A week later, he returned to Yakin Bael and learned how to fortify his personality in exchange for next season’s worth of willow anther. Then they lived happily ever after.

# The Hope Of The Redoran

*Turiul Nirith*

One of the few magical arts the Psijics of Artaeum have kept to themselves, away from the common spells and schools of the Mages Guild, is the gift of divination. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, omens and prophecies abound in Tamriel, some of substance, others of pure folly, and still others so ambiguous as to be unverifiable. There are still other prophecies kept secret, from the prophecies of Dro'Jizad in Elsweyr and the Nerevarine in Morrowind, to the Elder Scrolls themselves.

The Nord nobility have a tradition of having omens read for their children. In general, these readings are of the obscure variety. One of my acquaintances told me that her parents were told, for example, that their daughter would have her life rescued by a snake, and so gave her the name Serpentkin in a special ceremony. And this young lady, Eria Valkor Serpentkin, was indeed saved by a snake many years later, when an assassin creeping on her stepped on a danswyrn viper.

Occasionally, omens seem to be almost purposefully misleading, as if Boethiah had crafted them as traps. I recall one particularly. Many, many years ago, a male child was born into House Redoran. It was a very difficult birth, and the mother was delirious and near death by the time it was over. She chanted just as her son came into the world and she passed from it.

Fortune has smiled this day not frowned

My child will be mighty in mind and in arm

He shall bring hope to House Redoran

Neither spell nor blade shall hurt the man

Nor illness nor poison cause any harm

His blood shall never drop on the ground

The boy, named Andas, was indeed extraordinary. He never was ill and never suffered so much as a scratch all through his childhood. He was also quite intelligent and strong, which, combined with his invulnerability, caused many to call him, after his mother's omen, the Hope of the Redoran. Of course, any one who is called the Hope of the Redoran will eventually develop some taint of impertinence, and it wasn't long before he had enemies.

His worst enemy was his cousin Athyn, who had borne much abuse at the hands of Andas. Primary among the grudges was that Athyn had been sent to Rihad to complete his education at Andas's insistence. When Athyn returned from Hammerfell, it was because of the death of his father, who had also been a councilor of the House. Athyn was old enough to take his seat in the Council, but Andas claimed the seat as well, saying that his cousin had been gone too long from Morrowind and didn't understand politics as he did. The majority of the House agreed with Andas, wanting to see the Hope of Redoran rise quickly.

Athyn exercised his right to combat his cousin for the seat. No one thought he had any chance of winning, of course, but the battle was scheduled to commence the following morn. Andas

whored and dined and drank with the councilors that night, confident that his place in the House was secured and the hopeful new dawn of House Redoran was rising. Athyn retired to his castle with his friends, Andas's enemies, and his servants he had brought from Hammerfell.

Athyn and his friends were discussing the duel morosely when one of his old teachers, a warrior called Shardie, came into the hall. She had grown quite proud of her student over the years in Hammerfell, proud enough to accompany him across the Empire to his family's lands, and wanted to know why they had so little confidence in his odds in the battle. They explained to her Andas's uncommon blessings and the nature of his mother's omen.

"If he can't be harmed by disease, poison, magicka, and his blood can never be spilled, what hope have I of ever besting him?" cried Athyn.

"Have you remembered nothing I taught you?" replied Shardie. "Is there no weapon you can think of that will slay without blood? Are swords and spears and arrows the only items in your arsenal?"

Athyn quickly realized the weapon Shardie was speaking of, but it seemed absurd. Not only absurd, but pathetic and primitive. Still, it was the only hope he had. All that night, Shardie trained him in the art and techniques, showing him the various swings and stances her people had developed in Albion-Gora; counter-attacks, feints, and blocks imported from Yokuda; the classic one and two-handed grips for the most ancient weapon in history.



The cousins faced one another the next morning, and never have two combatants looked so unevenly matched. Andas's entrance brought a great cheer, for not only was he much beloved as the Hope of the Redoran, but as his victory was a foregone conclusion, most wanted to be in good standing with him. His shining mail and blade drew admiration and awe. By contrast, Athyn drew a gasp of surprise and only a smattering of polite applause. He appeared costumed and armed like a barbarian.

As Shardie had suggested, Athyn allowed Andas to attack first. The Hope of the Redoran was eager to finish the battle and take the power he deserved quickly. The blade pushed by Andas's mighty arm slashed across Athyn's chest, but shallowly, and before it could be counterswung, Athyn knocked it back with his own weapon. When Athyn attacked and wounded Andas, the Hope of the Redoran was so surprised by being hurt for the first time in his life, he dropped his sword.

The less said about the end of the battle, the better. Suffice it to say that Athyn, wielding a simple club, battered Andas to death without spilling a drop of blood.

Athyn took his father's seat as councilor, and it was then said that the hope in the omen referred to Athyn, not Andas. After all, had Andas not tried to take the councilor seat away from his cousin, Athyn, being not very ambitious, might have never tried to get it. It can certainly be argued that way, I suppose.

# The Lost Prophecy

*Gilvas Barelo*

[from the Apographa of the Dissident Priests, annotated by  
Gilvas Barelo, Abbot of Holamayan]

From seventh sign of eleventh generation,  
Neither Hound nor Guar, nor Seed nor Harrow,  
But Dragon-born and far-star-marked,  
Outlander Incarnate beneath Red Mountain,  
Blessed Guest counters seven curses,  
Star-blessed hand wields thrice-cursed blade,  
To reap the harvest of the unmourned house.

## Notes

Lines 1-3: 'Of ancient family, but not of the four great Ashlander clans. Born under foreign stars and the sign of the Dragon—the Imperial sign.'

Line 4-5: 'Outlander Incarnate' appears as a formal epithet, stressing the linkage between the words. The Outlander Incarnate is a 'blessed guest', one not born of the tribes but accepted as a guest with rights of hearth and hospitality. Under

Red Mountain he will confront and balance against seven curses. See the 'Seven Curses' prophecy; also, Dagoth Ur is served by his seven kin, once great wizard-lords, called 'ash vampires' by the Ashlanders.

Line 6-7: 'Star-blessed' suggests Azura, the Daedra Lord and patron of magic, fate, and prophecy. 'Thrice-cursed blade' may refer to a weapon called Keening, associated in certain legends with the Battle of Red Mountain and Dwemer craftlord Kagrenac. 'Reap the harvest' is a reference to the proverb, "You harvest from the seeds you plant," which means you get what your labors deserve, in both a positive sense of reward and negative sense of punishment. The 'unmourned house' could be either or both of the lost Great Houses of the Dunmer—House Dwemer and House Dagoth.

# The Marksmanship Lesson

*Alla Llaeth*

Kelmeril Brin had very definite opinions on how things should be done. Every slave he bought on the day he bought him or her was soundly whipped in the courtyard for a period of one to three hours, depending on the individual degree of independent spirit. The whip he used—or had his castellan use—was of wet, knotted cloth, which regularly drew blood but very seldom maimed. To his great satisfaction and personal pride, few slaves ever needed to be whipped more than once. The memory of their first day, and the sight and sound of every subsequent slave's first day, stayed with them throughout their lives.

When Brin bought his first Bosmer slave, he ordered his castellan to whip him only for an hour. The creature, which Brin had named Dob, seemed so much more delicate than the Argonians and Khajiiti and Orcs who made up the bulk of his slaves. Dob was clearly ill suited for work in the mines or in the fields, but he seemed presentable enough for domestic service.

Dob did his work quietly and tolerably well. Brin occasionally had to correct him by refusing him food, but the punishment never needed to go further. Whenever guests arrived at the plantation, the sight of the exotic and elegant addition to Brin's household staff always impressed them.

“Here, you,” said Genethah Illoc, a minor but still noble member of the House Indoriil, as Dob presented her with a glass of wine. “Were you born a slave?”

“No, sedura,” Dob answered with a bow. “I used to rob nice ladies like you on the road.”

The company all laughed with delight, but Kelmeril Brin checked with the slave trader from whom he had bought Dob, and found that the story was true. The Bosmer had been a highwayman, though not one of any great notoriety, before he had been caught and sold into slavery as punishment. It seemed so extraordinary that a quiet fellow like Dob, who always looked respectfully downward at the sight of his superiors, could have been a criminal. Brin made up his mind to question him about it.

“You must have used some sort of weapon when you were robbing all those pilgrims and merchants,” Brin grinned as he watched Dob mop.

“Yes, sedura,” Dob replied humbly. “A bow.”

“Of course. You Bosmeri are supposed to be very handy with those,” Brin thought a moment and then asked: “A bit of a marksman, were you?”

Dob nodded humbly.

“You will tutor my son Wodilic in archery,” the master said after another moment’s pause. Wodilic was twelve years of age and had been rather sadly spoiled by his mother, Brin’s late wife. The boy was useless at swordplay, fearful of being cut. He

embarrassed his father's pride, but the personality defect seemed ideally suited to the bow.

Brin had his castellan purchase a finely wrought bow, several quivers of arrows, and ordered targets to be set up in the wildflower field next to the plantation house. In a few days time, the lessons began.

For the first few days, the master watched Wodilic and Dob to be certain that the slave knew how to teach. He was pleased to see the boy learn the grips and the different stances. Business concerns, however, had to take precedence. Brin only had time to see to it that the lessons were continuing, but not how well they were progressing.

It was a month's time before the issue was reexamined. Brin and his castellan were reviewing the plantation's earnings and expenses, and they had come to the area of miscellaneous household costs.

"You might also check to see how many targets in the field need to be repaired."

"I have already anticipated that, sedura," said the castellan. "They are in pristine condition."

"How is that possible?" Brin shook his head. "I've seen targets fall apart after only a few good shots. There shouldn't be anything left after a month's worth of lessons."

"There are no holes of any kind in the targets, sedura. See for yourself."

As it happened at that hour, the marksmanship lesson was underway. Brin walked across the field, watching Dob guide

Wodilic's arm as the boy took aim at the sky. The arrow flew up into an arc, over the top of the target, burying itself in the ground. Brin examined the target and found it to be, as his castellan said, in pristine condition. No arrow had touched it.

"Master Wodilic, you must pull your right arm down further," Dob was saying. "And the follow-through is essential if you expect your arrow to gain any height."

"Height?" Brin snarled. "What about accuracy? Unless he's been secretly racking up a high kill ratio on birds, you haven't taught my son a thing about marksmanship."

Dob bowed humbly. "Sedura, first Master Wodilic must become comfortable with the weapon before he need worry about accuracy. In Valenwood, we learn by watching the bolt arc at different levels, in different winds, before we try very hard to strike targets."

Brin's face turned purple with fury: "I'm not a fool! I should have known not to trust a slave with my boy's education!"

The master grabbed Dob and shoved him toward the plantation house. Dob, head down, began the humble, shuffling walk he had learned in his domestic duties. Wodilic, tears streaming down his face, tried to follow.

"You stay and practice!" roared his father. "Try aiming at the target itself, not at the sky! You are not coming back into the house until there is one hole in that damned bullseye!"

The boy tearfully returned to practice, while Brin brought Dob into the courtyard and called for his whip. Dob suddenly broke

away and scrambled to hide between some barrels in the center of the yard.

“Take your punishment, slave! I should have never shown you mercy the day I bought you!” Brin bellowed, bringing the whip down on Dob’s exposed back again and again. “I have to toughen you up! There’ll be no more soft jobs as tutor and valet in your future!”

Wodilic’s plaintive yell drifted in from the meadow: “I can’t! Father, I can’t hit it!”

“Master Wodilic!” Dob cried back as loud as he could, his voice shaking with pain. “Keep your left arm straight and aim slightly east! The wind has changed!”

“Stop confusing my son!” Brin screamed. “You’ll be in the saltrice fields if I don’t beat you to death first! Like you deserve!”

“Dob!” the boy wailed, far away. “I still can’t hit it!”

“Master Wodilic! Take four steps back, aim east, and don’t be afraid of the height!” Dob tore away from the barrels, hiding under a cart near the wall. Brin pursued him, raining down blows.

The boy’s arrow sailed high over the target and kept climbing, reaching a pinnacle at the edge of the plantation house before coming down in a magnificent arc. Brin tasted the blood before he realized he’d been hit. Gingerly, he raised his hands and felt the arrowhead protruding out of the back of his neck. He looked at Dob crouching under the wagon, and thought he saw



a thin smile cross the slave's lips. Just for an instant before he died, Brin saw the face of the rogue highwayman on Dob.

“Bullseye, Master Wodilic!” Dob crowed.

# The Pilgrim's Path

## *Tribunal Temple*

The pilgrim must visit each of the Shrines of the Seven Graces. At each site the pilgrim must stand before the three-sided stone triolith and read the inscription. To ease the pilgrim's task, the Temple has made this list of shrines along with directions and advice to pilgrims. The blessings of each shrine last at least a half day.

Here Lord Vivec met a poor farmer whose guar had died. The farmer could not harvest his muck without his guar, and he could not provide for his family or his village. So the Lord Vivec removed his fine clothes and toiled in the fields like a beast of burden until the crop was harvested. It is at the Fields of Kummu we go to pray for the same humility Lord Vivec showed on that day.

The Fields of Kummu are west of Suran on the north shore of Lake Amaya as you head towards Pelagiad. The shrine is between two rocks, and most easily noticed while traveling east along the road. Alof's farm nearby has a small dock on the north bank of Lake Amaya. This is the only dock nearby which Alof kindly allows servants of the Temple to use. It is customary to leave a portion of muck at the shrine to represent Vivec's humility.

When Sheogorath rebelled against the Tribunal, he tricked the moon Baar Dau into forsaking its appointed path through Oblivion. The Mad Star inspired the moon to hurl itself upon Vivec's new city, which Sheogorath claimed was built in mockery of the heavens. When Vivec learned of Sheogorath's scheme, he froze the rogue moon in the sky with a single gesture and the grace of his countenance. Overwhelmed by the courage and daring of Vivec, the moon Baar Dau swore itself to eternal service of the Tribunal and all its works. Thus the moon now stands guard over the palace, and serves as a citadel for the Temple's Ordainers.

The Shrine of Daring is found in the city of Vivec, in the Temple District, along the western wall of the High Fane, the great Temple of Vvardenfell. When you address the shrine, it is customary to leave behind a Potion of Rising Force. Suitable potions may be purchased from the Temple. Homemade potions are not acceptable.

Long after Lord Nerevar and the Tribunal triumphed over Dagoth Ur, the people wished to build a monument to the heroes of that war. Vivec thanked them, but said that it would be better to dedicate a monument not only to the glorious heroes, but to all people, great and small, who suffered and died in the war. It became the custom to make offerings here, either in thanks of our good fortune, or for those less fortunate.

The Shrine of Generosity is on the top steps of Vivec's Palace, the southernmost Canton of Vivec City. The customary donation for those in good fortune is 100 gold.

In a battle with Mehrunes Dagon, Vivec gave his own silver longsword to the Daedra Lord rather than dishonor himself by fighting an unarmed foe. This so impressed the Dremora, the

most honorable and chivalrous of Mehrunes Dagon's Daedric servants, that they now share a bond of respect and courtesy with the followers of the Tribunal, though we must never forget that they are our enemies.

The Shrine of Courtesy is found in the heart of the Puzzle Canal, a labyrinth beneath Lord Vivec's Palace in the city of Vivec. The journey through the Puzzle Canal can be confusing and it is suggested that common pilgrims carry a scroll of ALMSIVI Intervention in case they get lost. The Dremora Krazzt is found in the center of the Puzzle Canal, and will accept a plain silver longsword if spoken to with courtesy. After Krazzt accepts the sword, pilgrims must read the inscription on the triolith.

Near the altar is Vivec's Ash Mask. In the Days of Fire when Dagoth Ur first crept back into Red Mountain and awakened it, Vivec led refugees here as they fled the ash and blight. Weary, they rested here a while. When Vivec awoke, he found himself and all his followers encased in casts of grey ash. Frozen like a sleeping statue and unable to free himself or help his people, Vivec was filled with despair. Vivec's tears weakened his ash cast. He tore the ash from his perished followers, breathed life into their lungs, and cured them of the blight. This is Vivec's heroism—his tender heart provides strength when his might fails.

The Shrine of Justice is guarded within the Gnisis Temple, in the village of Gnisis, northwest by road from the town of Ald'ruhn. When you address the shrine, it is customary to leave a potion of Cure Common Disease as a token of your respect for justice. Suitable potions may be purchased from Temple. Homemade potions are not acceptable.

Within the Koal Cave, Vivec fought a battle with Ruddy Man, the father of the Dreugh. When he defeated Ruddy Man, Vivec spared his life, on the condition that Ruddy Man and his children would give up their tough hides to serve as armor for the Dunmer.

The Shrine of Valor is inside the Koal Cave, a cavern on the seacoast west of the ancient stronghold Berandas and south of Gnosis. The cave mouth faces south, towards the sea, and is marked by a large natural arch of stone. The region is wilderness, and finding the cave mouth can be difficult. Dreugh within the cave itself are fearsome enemies; only experienced and capable adventurers should attempt to re-enact the epic battle with the dreugh in the cave. Dreugh wax may be bought at the Temple in Gnosis. When you address the shrine, it is customary to leave a portion of dreugh wax as a token of Vivec's victorious struggle with Ruddy Man.

The Ghostfence is a lasting symbol of the indomitable will and power of ALMSIVI, and a monument to Dunmer pride in overcoming its enemies.

The Shrine of Pride is found within the Ghostfence, just northeast of the Ghostgate itself. The safest route to Ghostgate is along the Foyada Mamaea, a volcanic ravine running from the top of Red Mountain southwest to its end just below Balmora. An old Dwemer bridge crosses the foyada near Fort Moonmoth. A pilgrim may follow the Foyada Mamaea all the way to Ghostgate. Any journey inside the Ghostfence is dangerous, but even the most timid pilgrim should be safe, so long as he does not stray too far from the Ghostgate and flees from any minions of Dagoth Ur. When you address the shrine,

it is customary to leave a soul gem in remembrance of our ancestors who were bound to the Tribunal's service.

# The Plan To Defeat Dagoth Ur

*Lord Vivec*

For the past twenty years the Tribunal have tried unsuccessfully to execute this plan. However, we failed because we were required to stage an assault and simultaneously maintain the Ghostfence to prevent the threatened large-scale breakout of Dagoth Ur's blighted hosts. With the Nerevarine leading the assault, and the Tribunal free to devote their full energies to maintaining the Ghostfence, this plan has a greater chance of success. Unfortunately, however, the loss of the artifacts Sunder and Keening, and the recent increase in Dagoth Ur's strength, poses new problems for the execution of the plan.

Therefore, our proposed plan has the following five phases:

The Tribunal, Ordinators, and Buoyant Armigers are familiar with the terrain, and will provide maps and current intelligence reports. The region inside the Ghostfence is dangerous, and the Nerevarine will need to be familiar with its particular challenges. After measuring skills and resources against Dagoth Ur's defenses, the Nerevarine will know better how to pace a campaign, alternating raids with improving skills, getting better equipment, and stockpiling resources.

Dagoth Ur's kin have become markedly more powerful in recent decades, after remaining stable for thousands of years. If

they can be individually isolated and destroyed, they will not be able to support Dagoth Ur in later stages of the war. It may also be that the dramatic increase in their power comes from items enchanted by Dagoth Ur. Salvage of such items might contribute to our resources.

Essential to recover the artifact hammer Sunder for Phase 5. The Ash Vampire Dagoth Vemyn has possession of Sunder, and probably seeks to discover the secrets of its enchantments. He may also have access to notebooks and journals of Kagrenac that have survived in the Dwemer workshops of Vemynal.

Essential to recover the artifact blade Keening for Phase 5. The Ash Vampire Dagoth Odros has possession of Keening, and probably seeks to discover the secrets of its enchantments. He may also have access to notebooks and journals of Kagrenac that have survived in the Dwemer workshops of Odrosal.

All the previous stages are preparations for this stage. Recent expeditions show that Citadel Dagoth has undergone extensive expansion; the location will need to be explored carefully. The known route to the Heart Chamber will be well-defended; alternative routes may exist. Dagoth Ur will have anticipated our plan to destroy him by attacking the Heart, and he will almost certainly personally oppose approach to the Heart Chamber. Together the Tribunal could not defeat him, and he has grown stronger since then. Admittedly, the Tribunal had the distraction of maintaining the Ghostfence simultaneous with fighting Dagoth Ur, but, even so, the challenge seems daunting.

The adoption of this phased campaign seems to offer the best chances for success. In retrospect, the Tribunal's decision to directly assault Citadel Dagoth rather than proceed step-by-



step through lesser objectives must be seen to have been a serious error. The Tribunal did not feel it had the option of a slow-paced and deliberate campaign, given that they had many other competing priorities, not the least of which was the maintenance of the Ghostfence and the outer defenses surrounding Red Mountain. The Nerevarine, on the other hand, should be best served by a careful, step-by-step advance, with the additional advantage of building confidence along the way while successes would undermine Dagoth Ur's own assurance in his defenses.

The source of Dagoth Ur's supernatural power is the Heart of Lorkhan. The Heart is also the source of the Tribunal's divine powers.

During mythic times, the gods took and hid Lorkhan's heart beneath Red Mountain as a punishment for creating the mortal plane. The Dwemer discovered the heart while building underground colonies. High Craftlord Kagrenac created enchanted tools intended to tap the power of the heart. The War of the First Council was fought to prevent this sacrilege. Kagrenac's use of these tools and the disappearance of the Dwemer race marked the end of the war. Kagrenac's tools were recovered by Lord Nerevar and Dagoth Ur. Dagoth Ur was left to guard the tools while Nerevar came to consult with us, his advisors. In Nerevar's absence, Dagoth Ur experimented with the tools upon the heart, and was corrupted. We returned to discover a deranged Dagoth Ur who refused to turn over the tools. When he attacked us, we drove him away.

We left Red Mountain with the tools, and subsequently Sotha Sil discovered their secrets. Collectively we used the tools to

establish a connection with the Heart, enabling ourselves to transform our mortal natures. Thus we became the Tribunal.

Dagoth Ur had survived our attacks, and without the tools, in a manner not well understood, Dagoth Ur also managed to establish a connection with the Heart and to transform himself into an immortal being.

Our plan to destroy Dagoth Ur also runs the risk of destroying the Tribunal. The plan is to permanently disrupt Kagrenac's enchantments upon the Heart, severing connections with Dagoth Ur and ourselves, and rendering us all once again mortal. A mortal Kagrenac may then be destroyed by mundane means. The loss of godhood and the possible death of the Tribunal are judged a necessary risk and sacrifice.

The normal procedure for establishing connection with the Heart is a three-step process. The wearer of Wraithguard strikes the Heart with the hammer Sunder, causing the Heart to produce a pure tone. Then the wearer of the Wraithguard strikes the Heart with the blade Keening, shattering the pure tone into a prism of tone-shades. These tone-shades are then imprinted upon the substance of the wearer of Wraithguard, giving him an immortal and divine nature.

The Nerevarine will not be taught the secret rituals required to perform the third step. Instead, The Nerevarine will strike the Heart with Keening for a second time, causing its tones to diverge into unstable patterns of interference. Further repeated strikes with Keening will further disrupt the tones, with the ultimate result of shattering and dispelling Kagrenac's original enchantments binding the Heart, thereby severing the Heart's links with Dagoth Ur, and with any surviving Heartwrights, and with the Tribunal. Destroying Kagrenac's enchantments on the

Heart will also stop the corrupt effusion of the Heart's divine power, and end the Blight on Morrowind.

The Nerevarine may be tempted to steal the power of the Heart. Dagoth Ur and Sotha Sil alone know this secret. Dagoth Ur may, in extremity, propose to teach the Nerevarine to use Kagrenac's tools to become a god. We doubt that the Nerevarine is fool enough to trust Dagoth Ur, and are content to take this risk.

Be warned! The Nerevarine cannot safely equip either Keening or Sunder unless wearing Wraithguard. The Nerevarine will be injured every moment while holding either of these artifacts unless protected by Wraithguard; persistence will be rewarded with death. If Nerevarine can equip an item while not wearing Wraithguard and receive no injury, the item is a counterfeit.

One last note. Dagoth Ur must not get hold of Wraithguard. The Nerevarine must prepare and use a Recall or Almsivi Intervention if there is any risk of death or capture.

Dagoth Ur will not expect you to destroy Kagrenac's enchantments on the Heart. He does not know it is possible, he would not do it himself, and he knows we have never tried it. He will not believe anyone would want to sacrifice the promise of such power. Further, advancement in House Dagoth, as in all Great Houses, is by challenge and confrontation within the hierarchy. The Nerevarine's challenges and defeats of ash vampires and battles with the Sixth House will be viewed in that light.

Dagoth Ur and his kin may assume The Nerevarine's ambition is to control the Heart. Given that assumption, it is only reasonable that the Nerevarine would try to defeat each of Dagoth Ur's subordinates in turn, working up to Dagoth Ur. If

the Nerevarine can defeat Dagoth Ur, and control the Heart, so much the better. But logically the Nerevarine would wish rise as high in the hierarchy as possible before cutting a deal with head of the House.

Dagoth Ur should try to recruit the Nerevarine into House Dagoth. It may be possible to pretend to join him, then betray him. However, any attempt to deceive him will be very risky. House Dagoth has a tradition of subterfuge and treachery, and because he is a deceiver, he will expect deception.

We place no compulsion upon the Nerevarine to adhere to the plans described here. We believe that they offer the best chance of destroying Dagoth Ur. But we have also chosen to place our trust in the Nerevarine's judgement and skill. Frankly, we see no alternative.

If there are doubts or questions, speak with Vivec. He has agreed to serve as the Nerevarine's guide and counselor for this campaign.

It may be that if the Nerevarine succeeds, the Tribunal will not survive. Such sentiments as might have been expressed to the Tribunal should, in that case, be addressed to the land and people of Morrowind.

May the happy convergence of fortune and prayer meet in our destiny.

On behalf of Lady Almalexia and Lord Sotha Sil,

Vivec

# The Prayers Of Baranat

*Anonymous*

## A Traditional Myth

When the Lady Genevrah was kidnapped from her estate and held for ransom, her mother sent word out that whoever rescued her would be allowed to marry her and inherit the land. Unfortunately, in those troubled days, kidnappings, murders, and thievery were rampant, and there was a dearth of able-bodied adventurers for such assignments. In fact, the only person who answered her call was a skinny, little fellow named Baranat.

“You are certainly brave, but I fear you would never survive,” said the old woman. “My daughter, you see, has been kidnapped by the Coribael brothers whose physical prowess is the stuff of legend.”

“My lady,” said Baranat. “When I was born, I was blessed by Vivec, Almalexia, and Sotha Sil, and I have the ear of the saints. If I run into any trouble, I’ll call on them to aid my quest.”

Doubtful, but having no other prospects, the old woman sent Baranat off, explaining that the four brothers’ camp was to the north. In the center of the camp, the eldest and most powerful brother Airen Coribael was holding Lady Genevrah personally. Each of his brothers guarded a different post along the valley—Baranat would have to defeat each to rescue the lady.

Baranat rode many miles through the northern swamps before he came to the first of the brothers' guard posts. There he saw Vanis Coribael, the youngest of the brothers, watching the valley for intruders. Vanis was known to be faster than the wind, a warrior who could thrash his opponents before they even unsheathed their weapons. Baranat look a look at his sad, cut-rate iron blade, and prayed to the saints.

Saint Veloth the Pilgrim appeared before Baranat in shining robes, and smiled upon him, "Baranat, put down your blade and I will make you swifter than bolt of lightning."

Baranat dropped his blade and ran at Vanis, moving so fast he didn't rustle a leaf with his pace. In a flash, Vanis was dead by Baranat's hands. The adventurer continued on until he reached the second youngest Coribael brother, Feryn, who not only was as fast as Vanis, but so strong, he could rip a trama shrub up by the roots with two fingers. Baranat hid himself and trembled as he looked at the giant Feryn Coribael. Again, the young adventurer prayed to the saints.

Saint Nerevar the Captain appeared before Baranat in golden armor, and smiled upon him, "Baranat, I will make you stronger than a hundred warriors."

Baranat rushed at Feryn, knocking the giant through a boulder which turned to dust on impact. Feryn tried to get to his feet, but Baranat tore him apart, scattering him across the valley floor in eighty-seven pieces. Beyond Feryn's post was a raging river, where the second eldest Coribael brother, Horis, stood guard. Horis, who was faster than his brother Vanis, stronger than his brother Feryn, and so tough that he could swim in the lava of Dagoth Ur like it was the Padomaic Ocean. Baranat

thought of his own tolerance for pain, which was minimal, and prayed to the saints for help.

Saint Roris the Martyr appeared before Baranat with flesh like sparkling gems, and smiled on him, “Baranat, I will make you unyielding as the heart of Oblivion.”

Baranat rushed at Horis, and two plunged into the rushing river. For twelve hours, they wrestled one another under the water, until Horis could hold his breath no more and drowned. Baranat pulled himself out of the river and continued down the valley, until he reached the camp. Airen Coribael himself was there, guarding a squirming sack which Baranat assumed either contained Lady Genevrah or several large cats. The young adventurer quailed at the prospect of doing battle with Airen Coribael, the swiftest, strongest, sturdiest, and most accomplished fighter of the brothers. He prayed to the saints for help.

Saint Olms the Just appeared before Baranat in a burst of flame, and smiled on him, “Baranat, I will make you more cunning in battle than the most dangerous of daedra.”

Baranat walked calmly into the camp and began battle with Airen Coribael. The fight lasted seven days, and for six of them, Airen had the upper hand. He rained kicks and punches down using the arrhythmic style the Khajiit call Goutfang; he parried and blocked in all the fashions of the great Nordic warriors; he maintained his balance, coordination, speed, strength, timing, and tactics as the moons rose and fell from the sky. But on the seventh day, as he was preparing his Killing Blow, he suddenly stopped, eyes wide open. The blood drained from his face, and he realized the trap he had stepped into. A trap with no escape. With three quick flashes of his hand, Baranat completed the

Cycle of Blood, the old Redguard fighting style he had begun on day one. Airen Coribael breathed no more.

The young adventurer ran to open the sack where Lady Genevrah lay. His first surprise. She had a face like a dreugh and as she began to berate him for taking his time, he realized that she had a very, very, very unpleasant personality as well. Several days later, when they were back at the old woman's court, he discovered that the estate that he would be inheriting was utterly dissolute by decades of blight storms and poor crops.

Saint Delyn the Wise watched the young adventurer from a cloud in the sky, and smiled on him, "Baranat, before you fight, find out what you're fighting for."



# The Real Nerevar

*Anonymous*

[This Telvanni retainer's informal history of Nerevar lists no sources.]

When the Dunmer followed Veloth to Morrowind, they were many warring clans, with no law or leader in common. One Dunmer warlord, Nerevar, had the ambition to rule all the Dunmer.

In that time, House Dwemer were great enchanters, so Nerevar went in secret to a Dwemer smith and asked for an enchanted ring that would help him. The ring gave its wearer great powers of persuasion; for safety, it was enchanted to instantly kill anyone who wore it except Nerevar. The ring was called Moon-and-Star, and it helped Nerevar unite the various clans into the First Council.

Later, however, disputes over religion divided the Council, with House Dwemer and House Dagoth on one side and all the other Houses on the other. Dwemer and Dagoth invited Orc and Nord clans as allies, and held northwest Morrowind, while Nerevar mustered the other Houses and nomad tribes and marched to meet the Dwemer-Dagoth-Westerner forces.

The armies met at Red Mountain, a Dwemer stronghold. The Dwemer were defeated, with great slaughter, and terrible sorceries were used, resulting in the utter extermination of

House Dwemer, House Dagoth, and their allies. Nerevar was killed in the battle, and his ring lost, but Nerevar's alliance survives in Morrowind's ruling political institution, the Grand Council.

# The Red Book Of 3e 426

*Anonymous*

[The Red Book is a yearbook of the affairs of the Redoran Council of Vvardenfell District for 3E 426. It lists the current members of the council and their residences. It also chronicles significant events and council actions for the year.]

Archmaster Lord Bolvyn Venim, by Grace of Almsivi, Chief Councilor of Redoran Council, Vvardenfell District, Lord Ald'ruhn of Bolvyn Manor, Manor District, Ald'ruhn, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Lord Miner Arobar, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Redoran Council, Vvardenfell District, Lord of North Gash, of Arobar Manor, Manor District, Ald'ruhn, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Lord Hlaren Ramoran, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Redoran Council, Vvardenfell District, Lord of West Gash, of Ramoran Manor, Manor District, Ald'ruhn, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Mistress Lady Brara Morvayn, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Redoran Council, Vvardenfell District, Lady of Maar Gan, of Morvayn Manor, East Ald'ruhn, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Lord Athyn Sarethi, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Redoran Council, Vvardenfell District, Lord of South Gash, of Sarethi Manor, Manor District, Ald'ruhn, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Lord Garisa Llethri, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Redoran Council, Vvardenfell District, Lord of The northern Ashlands, of Llethri Manor, Manor District, Ald'ruhn, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

King Hlaalu Athyn Llethan, High Councilor and Lord of Morrowind, imposes favorable tariffs on flin [an imported fortified Imperial alcoholic beverage]. The council protests the continuing burdensome tariffs on the native beverages sujamma, greef, and shein.

Smuggling and organized crime have become increasingly aggressive and violent in the Redoran House Districts. The councilors blame local corruption, weakened enforcement, and aggressive competition between the Thieves Guild and the Camonna Tong.

An unfortunate tax revolt in Balmora was put down after significant property damage and loss of life. The council warned that such disturbances might spread to Ald'ruhn if the heavy burden of Imperial taxes were not alleviated.

# The Seven Curses

*Gilvas Barelo*

[from the Apographa of the Dissident Priests, annotated by  
Gilvas Barelo, Abbot of Holamayan]

through the doors of the unmourned house

where scoffers scoff and schemers scheme

from the halls of the oath-breaking house

rings seven curses of gods blasphemed

first curse, Curse-of-Fire

second curse, Curse-of-Ash

third curse, Curse-of-Flesh

fourth curse, Curse-of-Ghosts

fifth curse, Curse-of-Seed

sixth curse, Curse-of-Despair

seventh curse, Curse-of-Dreams

Notes

Lines 1-3: Ambiguous. May refer to the impiety of the god-mocking House Dwemer, or the treacherous diplomacy of the subtle House Dagoth, or both. House Dagoth, however, was reviled as oath-breakers for their treachery at Red Mountain. It may, however, refer to unspecified broken oaths of peace between Lord Nerevar and Lord Dumac, founders of the Grand Council. Nerevar and Dumac were loyal friends until the disagreements between the Dwemer and the other Great Houses broke out in open conflict.

Line 4: The Dwemer were the mockers and profaners of the divine.

Lines 5-6: The curses of fire and ash would come from Red Mountain where Dagoth Ur rules. These were the earliest reported threats from Red Mountain.

Line 7: Curse of flesh suggest blight diseases, especially corpus. The fire and ash storms preceded the threats of blight and corpus.

Line 8-10: Obscure. May refer to as-yet-unrecognized threats from Dagoth Ur.

Line 11: Recent reports of soul sickness and disturbed dreams come from townfolk and Ashlanders alike. That the seventh and final curse has begun suggests the threat presented is about to reach a crisis.

# The Seven Visions

*Anonymous*

[These are the words of the prophecy called “Seven Visions of Seven Trials of the Incarnate.” I wrote them down as she spoke them to me.]

What he puts his hand to, that shall be done.

What is left undone, that shall be done.

On a certain day to uncertain parents

Incarnate moon and star reborn.

Neither blight nor age can harm him.

The Curse-of-Flesh before him flies.

In caverns dark Azura’s eye sees

And makes to shine the moon and star.

A stranger’s voice unites the Houses.

Three Halls call him Hortator.

A stranger’s hand unites the Velothi.

Four Tribes call him Nerevarine.

He honors blood of the tribe unmourned.

He eats their sin, and is reborn.

His mercy frees the cursed false gods,

Binds the broken, redeems the mad.

He speaks the law for Veloth's people.

He speaks for their land, and names them great.



# The Song Of Grandfather Frost

*Anonymous*

A song about a person named Grandfather Frost. Sounds a lot like Santa Claus. Almost identical to this song.

He he! Ha ho!

To the workshop we will go!

The candy—so sweet! A yummy winter treat!

Sugar warmed by the pale hearth light

Happiness spreads throughout the night!

He he! Ha ho!

To the workshop we will go!

Grandfather Frost is coming near

To spread his candy and his cheer!

Better than trinkets, better than toys

So say the little girls and boys!

He he! Ha ho!

To the workshop we will go!

Candy, candy—he makes so much!

Using the Grandfather's magic touch!

So it's back to the workshop in the snow!

With lovely lanterns all aglow!

He he! Ha ho! He he he ha ha ho!

# The Song Of Uncle Sweetshare

*Anonymous*

Almost identical to this song.

He he! Ha ho!

To the workshop he will go!

My Uncle's candy is so sweet! It's such a yummy winter's treat!

When the sugar is warmed by the pale hearth light

The happiness spreads throughout the night!

He he! Ha ho!

To the workshop he will go!

Uncle Sweetshare is coming near

To spread his candy and his cheer!

It's better than trinkets, games or toys

So say all the little girls and boys!

He he! Ha ho!

To the workshop he will go!

Candy, candy—he makes so much!

Uncle Sweetshare has a magic touch!

So it's back to the workshop in the snow!

With lovely lanterns all aglow!

He he! Ha ho! He he he ha ha ho!

# The Story Of Aevan Stone-Singer

*Anonymous*

“Sit quietly, Child, and listen, for the story I tell you is a story of the ages.”

“But what is it, Grandfather? Is it a story of heroes and beasts?”

The Grandfather looked patiently at the Child. He was growing into a fine boy. Soon he would see the value in the stories, the lessons that were taught to each generation.

“Just listen, Child. Let the story take root in your heart.”

In a time before now, long before now, when the Skaal were new, there was peace in the Land. The sun was hot and the crops grew long, and the people were happy in the peace that the All-Maker provided. But, the Skaal grew complacent and lazy, and they took for granted the Lands and all the gifts the All-Maker had given them. They forgot, or chose not to remember, that the Adversary is always watching, and that he delights in tormenting the All-Maker and his chosen people. And so it was that the Adversary came to be among the Skaal.

The Adversary has many aspects. He appears in the unholy beasts and the incurable plague. At the End of Seasons, we will

know him as Thartaag the World-Devourer. But in these ages he came to be known as the Greedy Man.

The Greedy Man (that is what we call him, for to speak his name would certainly bring ruin on the people) lived among the Skaal for many months. Perhaps he was once just a man, but when the Adversary entered into him, he became the Greedy Man, and that is how he is remembered.

It came to be one day that the powers of the Skaal left them. The strength left the arms of the warriors, and the shaman could no longer summon the beasts to their side. The elders thought that surely the All-Maker was displeased, and some suggested that the All-Maker had left them forever. It was then that the Greedy Man appeared to them and spoke.

“You of the Skaal have grown fat and lazy. I have stolen the gifts of your All-Maker. I have stolen the Oceans, so you will forever know thirst. I have stolen the Lands and the Trees and the Sun, so your crops will wither and die. I have stolen the Beasts, so you will go hungry. And I have stolen the Winds, so you will live without the Spirit of the All-Maker.

“And until one of you can reclaim these gifts, the Skaal will live in misery and despair. For I am the Greedy Man, and that is my nature.”

And the Greedy Man disappeared.

The members of the Skaal spoke for many days and nights. They knew that one of them must retrieve the Gifts of the All-Maker, but they could not decide who it should be.

“I cannot go,” said the Elder, “for I us must stay to lead the Skaal, and tell our people what is the law.”

“I cannot go,” said the Warrior, “for I must protect the Skaal. My sword will be needed in case the Greedy Man reappears.”

“I cannot go,” said the Shaman, “for the people need my wisdom. I must read the portents and offer my knowledge.”

It was then that a young man called Aevan lifted his voice. He was strong of arm, and fleet of foot, though he was not yet a warrior of the Skaal.

“I will go,” said Aevan, and the Skaal laughed.

“Hear me out,” the boy continued. “I am not yet a warrior, so my sword will not be needed. I cannot read the portents, so the people will not seek my counsel. And I am young, and not yet wise in the ways of the law. I will retrieve the Gifts of the All-Maker from the Greedy Man. If I cannot, I will not be missed.”

The Skaal thought on this briefly, and decided to let Aevan go. He left the village the next morning to retrieve the Gifts.

Aevan first set out to retrieve the Gift of Water, so he traveled to the Water Stone. It was there the All-Maker first spoke to him.

“Travel west to the sea and follow the Swimmer to the Waters of Life.”

So Aevan walked to the edge of the ocean, and there was the Swimmer, a Black Horker, sent from the All-Maker. The Swimmer dove into the waters and swam very far, and far again. Aevan was strong, though, and he swam hard. He followed the Swimmer to a cave, swimming deeper and deeper,

his lungs burning and his limbs exhausted. At last, he found a pocket of air, and there, in the dark, he found the Waters of Life. Gathering his strength, he took the Waters and swam back to the shore.

Upon returning to the Water Stone, the All-Maker spoke. “You have returned the Gift of Water to the Skaal. The Oceans again will bear fruit, and their thirst will be quenched.”

Aevar then traveled to the Earth Stone, and there the All-Maker spoke to him again.

“Enter the Cave of the Hidden Music, and hear the Song of the Earth.”

So Aevar traveled north and east to the Cave of the Hidden Music. He found himself in a large cavern, where the rocks hung from the ceiling and grew from the ground itself. He listened there, and heard the Song of the Earth, but it was faint. Grabbing up his mace, he struck the rocks of the floor in time with the Song, and the Song grew louder, until it filled the cavern and his heart. Then he returned to the Earth Stone.

“The Gift of the Earth is with the Skaal again,” said the All-Maker. “The Lands are rich again, and will bear life.”

Aevar was tired, as the Sun burned him, the trees offered no shade, and there was no wind to cool him. Still, he traveled on to the Beast Rock, and the All-Maker spoke.

“Find the Good Beast and ease his suffering.”

Aevar traveled through the woods of the Isinfier for many hours until he heard the cries of a bear from over a hill. As he crested a hill, he saw the bear, a Falmer’s arrow piercing its



neck. He checked the woods for the Falmer (for that is what they were, though some say they are not), and finding none, approached the beast. He spoke soothing words and came upon it slowly, saying, "Good Beast, I mean you no harm. The All-Maker has sent me to ease your suffering."

Hearing these words, the bear ceased his struggles, and laid his head at Aevan's feet. Aevan grasped the arrow and pulled it from the bear's neck. Using the little nature magic he knew, Aevan tended the wound, though it took the last bit of his strength. As the bear's wound closed, Aevan slept.

When he awoke, the bear stood over him, and the remains of a number of the Falmer were strewn about. He knew that the Good Beast had protected him during the night. He traveled back to Beast Rock, the bear by his side, and the All-Maker spoke to him again.

"You have returned the Gift of the Beasts. Once again, the Good Beasts will feed the Skaal when they are hungry, clothe them when they are cold, and protect them in times of need."

Aevan's strength had returned, so he traveled on to the Tree Stone, though the Good Beast did not follow him. When he arrived, the All-Father spoke to him.

"The First Trees are gone, and must be replanted. Find the seed and plant the First Tree."

Aevan traveled again through the Hirstaang Forest, searching for the seeds of the First Tree, but he could find none. Then he spoke to the Tree Spirits, the living trees. They told him that the seeds had been stolen by one of the Falmer (for they are the

servants of the Adversary), and this Falmer was hiding them deep in the forest, so that none would ever find them.

Aevar traveled to the deepest part of the forest, and there he found the evil Falmer, surrounded by the Lesser Tree Spirits. Aevar could see that the Spirits were in his thrall, that he had used the magic of the Seeds and spoken their secret name. Aevar knew he could not stand against such a force, and that he must retrieve the seeds in secret.

Aevar reached into his pouch and drew out his flint. Gathering leaves, he started a small fire outside the clearing where the Falmer and the ensorcelled Spirits milled. All the Skaal know the Spirits' hatred of fires, for the fires ravage the trees they serve. At once, the Nature of the Spirits took hold, and they rushed to quell the flames. During the commotion, Aevar snuck behind the Falmer and snatched the pouch of Seeds, stealing away before the evil being knew they were gone.

When Aevar returned to the Tree Stone, he planted the tree in the ground, and the All-Maker spoke to him.

“The Gift of Trees is restored. Once again, the Trees and Plants will bloom and grow, and provide nourishment and shade.”

Aevar was tired, for the Sun would only burn, and the Winds would not yet cool him, but he rested briefly in the shade of the Trees. His legs were weary and his eyes heavy, but he continued on, traveling to the Sun Stone. Again, the All-Maker spoke.

“The gentle warmth of the Sun is stolen, so now it only burns. Free the Sun from the Halls of Penumbra.”

And so Aevan walked west, over the frozen lands until he reached the Halls of Penumbra. The air inside was thick and heavy, and he could see no farther than the end of his arm. Still, he felt his way along the walls, though he heard the shuffling of feet and knew that this place held the Unholy Beasts who would tear his flesh and eat his bones. For hours he crept along, until he saw a faint glow far at the end of the hall.

There, from behind a sheet of perfect ice, came a glow so bright he had to shut his eyes, lest they be forever blinded. He plucked the flaming eye from one of the Unholy Beasts and threw it at the ice with all his might. A small crack appeared in the ice, then grew larger. Slowly, the light crept out between the cracks, widening them, splitting the ice wall into pieces. With a deafening crack, the wall crumbled, and the light rushed over Aevan and through the Halls. He heard the shrieks of the Unholy Beasts as they were blinded and burned. He ran out of the Halls, following the light, and collapsed on the ground outside.

When he was able to rise again, the Sun again warmed him, and he was glad for that. He traveled back to the Sun Stone, where the All-Maker spoke to him.

“The Gift of the Sun is the Skaal’s once again. It will warm them and give them light.”

Aevan had one final Gift he had to recover, the Gift of the Winds, so he traveled to the Wind Stone, far on the western coast of the island. When he arrived, the All-Maker spoke to him, giving him his final task.

“Find the Greedy Man and release the Wind from its captivity.”

So, Aevan wandered the land in search of the Greedy Man. He looked in the trees, but the Greedy Man did not hide there. Nor did he hide near the oceans, or the deep caves, and the beasts had not seen him in the dark forests. Finally, Aevan came to a crooked house, and he knew that here he would find the Greedy Man.

“Who are you,” shouted the Greedy Man, “that you would come to my house?”

“I am Aevan of the Skaal,” said Aevan. “I am not warrior, shaman, or elder. If I do not return, I will not be missed. But I have returned the Oceans and the Earth, the Trees, the Beasts, and the Sun, and I will return the Winds to my people, that we may feel the spirit of the All-Maker in our souls again.”

And with that, he grabbed up the Greedy Man’s bag and tore it open. The Winds rushed out with gale force, sweeping the Greedy Man up and carrying him off, far from the island. Aevan breathed in the Winds and was glad. He walked back to the Wind Stone, where the All-Maker spoke to him a final time.

“You have done well, Aevan. You, the least of the Skaal, have returned my gifts to them. The Greedy Man is gone for now, and should not trouble your people again in your lifetime. Your All-Maker is pleased. Go now, and live according to your Nature.”

And Aevan started back to the Skaal village.

“And then what happened, Grandfather?”

“What do you mean, Child? He went home.”

“No. When he returned to the village,” the Child continued.  
“Was he made a warrior? Or taught the ways of the shaman?  
Did he lead the Skaal in battle?”

“I do not know. That is where the story ends,” said the Grandfather.

“But that is not an ending! That is not how stories end!”

The old man laughed and got up from his chair.

“Is it not?”

# The Stranger

*Anonymous*

[These are the words of the prophecy called "The Stranger." I wrote them down as she spoke them to me.]

When earth is sundered, and skies choked black,

And sleepers serve the seven curses,

To the hearth there comes a stranger,

Journeyed far 'neath moon and star.

Though stark-born to sire uncertain,

His aspect marks his certain fate.

Wicked stalk him, righteous curse him.

Prophets speak, but all deny.

Many trials make manifest

The stranger's fate, the curses' bane.

Many touchstones try the stranger.

Many fall, but one remains.

# The True Noble's Code

*Serjo Athyn Sarethi*

The honorable warriors of the Great House Redoran are the hereditary defenders of the Morrowind. To be a noble of House Redoran is more than being a great warrior. One must follow the triune virtues of duty, gravity, and piety.

A Redoran's duty is first to the Tribunal Temple, second to the Great House Redoran, and third to one's family and clan. In the Battle of Red Mountain, warriors of House Redoran died bravely for their duty to the Tribunal. By defending House Redoran from the schemes of Telvanni wizards and the lies of untrustworthy Hlaalu, the true noble shows duty to House Redoran. Following the Temple's guidelines of mercy and generosity show duty to one's family and clan.

A Redoran noble must know the virtue of gravity. It is not the Redoran way to laugh at serious matters, for it shows disrespect. It is not the Redoran way to spread rumors, for they fester and breed dissention.

A Redoran must show piety to the Aedra and Daedra, our creators and ancestors. For without the divine, we would not have the chance to serve. And without divine law, we would not know right from wrong. And without giving thanks for these things, we would forget our place and our purpose.

Great House Redoran praises all the skills of war. Not because we believe war is good or honorable in its own right, but because this knowledge is necessary to perform one's duty. House Redoran's warrior fight with a long blade and a shield or with a spear. A noble of House Redoran must also learn to use a bow and must be athletic enough for the long marches to battle. A Redoran wears heavy or medium armor depending on rank and strategy. A noble of House Redoran is expected to know how to repair and maintain his own armor.

Those who are born to House Redoran have been taught their skill and virtues by kin and clan. Those who seek to enter House Redoran as retainers must satisfy an examiner in the Redoran Council Hall that their skills are suitable for service to House Redoran.

Whether born to the blood of House Redoran, or adopted into service of House Redoran by oath, those who seek to advance in the ranks of House Redoran must demonstrate their virtues by service and obedience. And only when one has mastered all the skills and virtues can one truly call himself a noble of the Great House Redoran.



# The Vagaries Of Magicka

*Anonymous*

[a passage from the text of THE VAGARIES OF MAGICKA]

“...but take care, lest power enfeeble the fundamentals, and curtail the flow through the Congeries, except when functions be warranted. And safeguard that the Congeries shall not be abused by prideful wizards, confident in their skill and blinded by their ambitions. In this, hold the ordering of the Congeries among the oldest and most trusted of mages, and make secure this ordering through arcane codes and keys to confound even the most clever students.

“The Restorals must be most carefully guarded, for how often have even the wise lusted to overreach their bodies and souls with vitality and mana. And also must the Magica Fountains be damped and banked, sanctioning their engendering only to the reconsecration of essential arcane engines and templates, and then only by common assent of the Council.”

# The Wraith's Wedding Dowry

*Voltha gra-Yamwort*

(translated by Apthorne)

“The poets are right. There is something life-changing about being in love,” said Kepkajna gra-Minfang, sometimes called the Wraith. “I haven’t wanted to rob anyone or anything in weeks. Why, the other day, I saw the door wide open at a wealthy merchant’s house, but my mind was fully occupied with what I should wear on my wedding day.”

“You have been out of the right society for very long now,” frowned her friend Khargol approvingly. “You never told me what happened to your first husband, you know, the one the shaman gave you?”

“Torn apart by ash ghouls,” smiled Kepkajna dreamily. “It was rather saddish. But I know nothing like that would happen to Wodworg. No life of adventure for him. He’s practically an Imperial. In fact, he is one. Did I tell you how we met?”

“Hundreds of times,” grumbled Khargol, reaching for his flagon. “He was your jailer, and he refused you food until you promised to marry him.”

“Have you ever heard of anything so madly romantic in all your life?” sighed Kepkajna, and then grew serious. “I was going to say that I hope my old friends will wish me well, but as Old

Bosriel used to say, there's no point in hoping for what cannot be. We'll leave with the Imperial Knights for Balmora immediately after the wedding, but as long as we're in Dagon Fel, the gang will find some way of disrupting my love life and bring me back to the light. I know it."

As the days approached towards the Wraith's wedding day, there was certainly something sinister in the air that Kepkajna could smell when she was not transported by heady bliss. Dark figures seemed to shift in the shadows and disappear when approached. She recognized the clothing of some beggars near Wodworg's cottage as costumes, but the mendicants hurried away before she could recognize which of her old gang was stalking her.

But these moments of apprehension were few. Kepkajna was truly happy, making arrangements for the ceremony to be performed at the very dungeon where Wodworg had imprisoned her. Her father was long since dead—another victim of the ash ghouls—but her fiance's commander volunteered to act in his behalf. Of course, Kepkajna had to supply her own dowry. She spent every last mark of her savings of ill-gotten gain to buy her beloved a truly wonderful present.

The wedding was set for the stroke of midnight, as is Orc tradition. The handmaidens, wives of Imperial officers, were busily sewing her into her gown of red velvet and fine gold filigree in the mid-morning. Dolcetta, one of the handmaidens, remarked that she had heard that Kepkajna had bought Wodworg a truly beautiful gift for her dowry.

"Let me show it to you," Kepkajna giggled, dashing from the room half-dressed to her hidden alcove. The present had been stolen.

The women were horrified, but the Wraith found herself merely irritated, not surprised. This was truly the old gang's style. They knew that a wedding ceremony without a dowry was marked as unlucky. She asked her handmaidens to finish dressing her quickly while she pondered what the burglars would have done with her treasure.

The whole region was honeycombed with secret lairs and abandoned sites thieves used to store their loot. There were obvious places, of course, but after much reflection, she thought of where she would have put it under similar circumstances. Once the handmaids had finished, Kepkajna bade them to make certain that the ceremony went on as scheduled, and not to fret as she might be a little late. She wrapped herself in a shawl to protect her gown from dungeon dust and set off for the Shrine of Malacath.

The Wraith had never before attempted to rob her own friends, and though she was peeved at them for trying to ruin her happiness, she had no interest in hurting them physically. Her style was to avoid conflict, though she knew it would be inevitable. The lessons her mentor Khargol had given her had helped her avoid the lances and blades of guards and Imperial Knights over the years: now she would see if they would allow her to survive a den of thieves and the unknown dangers of the Shrine. Without, most importantly, ruining her dress.

The desolate place was so empty as she delved into it that she feared she might have made a miscalculation. It was not until she found the small room hidden down a long corridor that she knew she was at the right place, and that it was well suited for an ambush. She grabbed the chest with her treasure within, and turned to face the assault.

Two of her old gang, Yorum and Yohr-i the Redguard twin brother and sister, were outside the door as she came from the room. They knew the Wraith better than to taunt her and immediately attacked. Yorum struck out with a left thrust of his blade while Yohr-i sought to rush her. The Wraith neatly sidestepped Yohr-i, while dropping her weight to her rear left leg, shifting her right shoulder to the left to slip past Yorum's strike. The twins crashed into one another and Kepkajna passed swiftly on.

Almost immediately, she was set on by the Argonian Binyaar, his mace whistling through the air at her head. They had never much liked one another. The Wraith snapped into a duck, so the mace whacked with a tremendous clamor against the stone wall. Binyaar was thrown off balance, giving her a few seconds lead hurrying up the passage. Ahead she could smell the fresh night air.

The last of her dowry's defenders was Sorogth, an Orc with whom she had shared a brief romance. It was he who Kepkajna knew had masterminded the theft. In a way and in context, she thought, his devotion to her misery was rather sweet. At the moment, though, she was most concerned with avoiding his barbed ax that seemed ideal for breaking her dress's fine stitchwork and the flesh beneath.

Bending her knees slightly, bobbing to avoid strikes to the head, weaving her head to confuse Sorogth of her next move, shuffling her feet arrhythmically, the Wraith made an impossible target. She ducked inside his thrusts, sidestepped his swings, and then sidestepped his thrusts, and ducked his swings. As erratic as she tried to make her defensive moves,

Sorogth still kept pace with her, refusing to budge from his position at the dungeon outlet.

Midnight was coming, and the Wraith finally decided that she must end the confrontation. When Sorogth swung out next, she sidestepped to her left, swayed down, and ducked her head, so the ax whistled over her right shoulder. In that instant, his right side was exposed, and she reluctantly smashed the chest hard into his torso. There was not enough time for Kepkajna to see if she had killed him or merely knocked him unconscious. In truth, she thought of nothing else but rushing to her wedding ceremony.

At precisely midnight, Wodworg and Kepkajna were united together. He was delighted with her dowry gift, a fine suit of armor that would make him the envy of other Imperial jailers. Even more, he was enchanted by his wife's tale of retrieving it from the Shrine of Malacath.

"Did it occur to you to put on the armor when you knew that it was an ambush?" he asked.

"I didn't want to dent your present," she replied, between kisses. "And I certainly didn't want to wrinkle my gown."

# The Yellow Book Of Riddles

*Waughin Jarth*

For earnest pleasure, and the strengthening of the mind, the author here collects all that he has learned of the art of riddling, by dint of diligent study, and through years of discourse with others of similar inclination.

[[The posing and puzzling of riddles is a convention of polite aristocratic Western society. Nobles and social aspirants collect books of riddles and study them, hoping thereby to increase the chances of their appearing sly and witty in conversation.]]

A metal neither black nor red

As heavy as man's golden greed

What you do to stay ahead

With friend or arrow or steed

dael :rewsnA ehT

A man says, "If you lie to me I will slay you with my sword. If you tell me the truth, I will slay you with a spell." What must you say to stay alive?

.drows a htiw em yals lliw uoY :rewsnA ehT

A Bosmer, was slain. The Altmer claims the Dunmer is guilty. The Dunmer says the Khajiit did it. The Orc swears he didn't kill the Bosmer. The Khajiit says the Dunmer is lying. If only one of these speaks the truth, who killed the Bosmer?

crO ehT :rewnA ehT



# Thirsk, A History - Revised

*Bereditte Jastal*

This is the revised version of Thirsk, a History an other revision exists as Thirsk, A Revised History.

In this revision a paragraph has been added about the players exploits regarding the Udyrfrykte. The symbol has been substituted for the player character's name, and for player character's Race. We assume that the new Chieftain of Thirsk is male.

On the eastern bank of Lake Fjalding stands Thirsk, a grand mead hall that serves as the home and center of operations for a most valiant clan of Nord warriors.

Approximately one hundred years ago, a small group of Skaal decided to leave the main village, and free themselves of their brethren's strict adherence to nature worship. They sought to live life as their ancestors had in Skyrim—free to kill what they wanted when they wanted, free to worship in any manner they chose.

The group braved the harsh weather and traveled south toward Lake Fjalding, where they found the perfect location for a new settlement. There they decided to construct a grand mead hall that would serve as their new home and hunting lodge. After several months of building, the companions had completed the task, and named the mead hall Thirsk.

The settlers looked upon all they had accomplished, and were truly proud of their accomplishment. But their happiness was short lived, and the settlers soon learned that not everyone celebrated the construction of Thirsk. As the mead hall was being erected, so too was the noise and commotion of construction disturbing an ancient creature that lie dormant under the ice. It was a tragic twist of irony, therefore, that as the last beam of the great hall was nailed in place, the slumbering beast did finally awaken. His ancient name was the Udyrfrykte, though the settlers knew him only as death. The Udyrfrykte came to the newly completed mead hall and wreaked vengeance upon those who had shattered the peace of his long, cold sleep. He killed without warning, without mercy, reducing the Thirsk Nords to half their number. It was the valiant sorcerer Eldrid Ice-Light who finally drove the beast back to his lair beneath the frozen lake, and used his magicka to seal the entrance with a great wall of ice. The horror was over, but the price was great. It took the settlers two months to fix the damage done by the Udyrfrykte, and with so many strong hands now gone, it was slow and tedious work.

Finally, Thirsk stood tall and proud once more. But even though the settlers had worked together to construct the mead hall and drive away the threat of the Udyrfrykte, tensions quickly grew over who would serve as their leader. Most of the men considered Hrothmund the Red their de facto chieftain, as he was the strongest and most capable of the lot. But one warrior, Drengr Bronze-Helm, disagreed. He thought himself most capable to rule over Thirsk, and loudly voiced his opposition to Hrothmund. Knowing that conflict and discord would only serve to destroy the new life they had worked so hard to create, Hrothmund the Red exercised his only true option - he swung his great axe and beheaded Drengr Bronze-

Helm where he stood. The Nords appreciated more than anything a warrior's prowess in battle, and Dreng's slaying proved to them that Hrothmund was indeed most worthy to be Thirsk's chieftain. So that the other Nords would never forget he had proven his right to lead, Hrothmund placed Dreng's head on a pedestal in the center of Thirsk's main hall, for all to see.

And so began Thirsk's most time-honored tradition. Any warrior, regardless of race or sex, could claim leadership of the mead hall by displaying the most impressive battle trophy on the great hall's pedestal. So long as the spirit of Hrothmund the Red consented, that warrior would be named chieftain.

For twenty-one years Hrothmund the Red ruled over Thirsk and its residents as chieftain. With his soft voice and great axe—which was said to be the largest weapon of its kind ever wielded by a Nord—Hrothmund brought peace and prosperity to Thirsk. But peace proved to be Hrothmund's undoing, for the mighty Nord grew restless in the warmth and safety of the mead hall. He longed for battle and adventure, to feel the frost in his veins once more, and could ignore the call of valor no longer. When word spread of a giant, bloodthirsty white wolf terrorizing travelers in the Moesring Mountains, Hrothmund took up his great axe and set out to defeat the beast alone. The men of the mountains named him Ondjage, the Fell Wolf. The beast measured as large as an ox, with fur as white as new-fallen snow, and it was said no man or woman alive could bring Ondjage down. The words of the mountain folk proved true, for while Hrothmund did hew one leg from the Fell Wolf, Ondjage devoured the mighty Nord whole, leaving only his great axe as a grim reminder of man's failure against beast. Filled with sorrow and rage, the residents of Thirsk marched to

the mountains in search of the wolf, called by them Hrothmund's Bane. Only together did they manage to slay Ondjage, and as family they feasted on his roasted flesh.

The coming of , slayer of the Udyrfrykte:

For one hundred years the mead hall of Thirsk has withstood all manner of hardship, from armed attack and fire to the equally devastating scourge of yellow tick. But nothing within that span of time could compare to the terror of the Udyrfrykte, that ancient beast who ravaged the great hall during the time of Hrothmund. The Udyrfrykte was driven away, and sealed inside his lair for what all hoped was an eternity. In time, the beast was forgotten, but the beast himself did not forget. When the lake of ice caught fire and the entrance to that long-sealed lair lay open, the Udyrfrykte walked once more upon the land. He came back to Thirsk to seek his vengeance, and vengeance he found. The fell creature killed all he could, and tore the mead hall asunder. The Udyrfrykte was driven from the mead hall, but all knew it was just a matter of time before he returned to finish the job he had started—the complete destruction of Thirsk and all who resided within. It was then he came, a stranger to the land of Solstheim and savior to the Nords of Thirsk. His name was of the race, and he did what even the mighty Hrothmund could not. This brave warrior strode into the lair of the Udyrfrykte, faced the ancient beast, and slew him as a butcher slays a sheep! The mighty then claimed the heart of the Udyrfrykte as a battle trophy, where it remains to this day on the pedestal of Thirsk. For the known as was named chieftain of the mead hall, and is revered by his people as both leader and warrior.

The following is a list of Thirsk's chieftains, since Hrothmund first ruled:

Hrothmund the Red. Nord male. Slew Drengur Bronze-Helm and presented his head as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for twenty-one years. Slain and devoured by Ondjage, the Fell Wolf.

Isgeror White-Wave. Nord female. Slew the necromancer Hildir Worm-Heart and presented his heart as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for four years.

Einarr. Nord male. Slew the frost giant Guolog and presented his foot as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for six years.

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eight years.

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Skjoldr Wolf-Runner. Nord male. Slew the wizard Griss the Yellow and presented his head as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for three years. Slain in the mead hall.

. male. Slew the Udyrfrykte and presented his heart as a battle trophy. Still chieftain as of the writing of this work.

The Thirsk mead hall is nearly the same today as it was over a hundred years ago, a testament to the quality of its construction. But while Thirsk itself did not grow, its inhabitants did, and before long the grand mead hall could not house all who wished to dwell within. So, over the years, many

Nords have left Thirsk to establish their own private dwellings out in the wilderness of Solstheim, relying on the island's many caves and natural shelters. But those who left are always welcome back at Thirsk, and many return frequently to enjoy the mead hall's hospitalities. It is also important to note that although over a hundred years have passed since the group first left the Skaal village, the Skaal and Thirsk Nords have always remained civil to one another, and even trade resources on occasion.

Throughout the years, the Thirsk Nords and the Empire have entered into a simple but effective relationship: they leave each other alone and everyone is happy. Soon after arriving on Solstheim, the Imperials realized that their authority on the island was limited to Fort Frostmoth and vicinity. Solstheim was, is, and probably always will be a savage and frozen wasteland more suited to ancient Nord custom than conventional Imperial law. As long as the residents of Thirsk leave Fort Frostmoth in peace, the Imperials at Fort Frostmoth will reciprocate. In fact, the relationship between the two locations is fairly civil, and the Thirsk Nords gained considerable favor with the Empire when they delivered the Breton fugitive Alain Montrose to the garrison at Fort Frostmoth, after he attempted to hide out in Thirsk.

Within the Mead Hall, the Chieftain serves as judge, jury and executioner if necessary. The reality is that Thirsk has always been a fairly peaceful place, with camaraderie and goodwill the norm. Solstheim can be a harsh home, and the Nords of Thirsk have long realized that fighting each other isn't nearly as productive as battling the island's bears, wolves, draugrs, Rieklings, and whatever other fell creatures may roam the land. Still, there is the occasional disagreement - which more

often than naught ends in bloodshed - and every few years someone gets it into his head to challenge the chieftain to a blood duel to try to gain possession of Thirsk. Generally speaking, the Nords of Thirsk are one big, happy barbarian-like family. And, like any family, they have their squabbles.



# Thirsk, A History

*Bereditte Jastal*

For the revised version, [click here](#).

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Skjoldr Wolf-Runner. Nord male. Slew the wizard Griss the Yellow and presented his head as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for three years thus far, and still chieftain as of the writing of this work.

The Thirsk mead hall is nearly the same today as it was over a hundred years ago, a testament to the quality of its construction. But while Thirsk itself did not grow, its inhabitants did, and before long the grand mead hall could not house all who wished to dwell within. So, over the years, many Nords have left Thirsk to establish their own private dwellings

out in the wilderness of Solstheim, relying on the island's many caves and natural shelters. But those who left are always welcome back at Thirsk, and many return frequently to enjoy the mead hall's hospitalities. It is also important to note that although over a hundred years have passed since the group first left the Skaal village, the Skaal and Thirsk Nords have always remained civil to one another, and even trade resources on occasion.

Throughout the years, the Thirsk Nords and the Empire have entered into a simple but effective relationship: they leave each other alone and everyone is happy. Soon after arriving on Solstheim, the Imperials realized that their authority on the island was limited to Fort Frostmoth and vicinity. Solstheim was, is, and probably always will be a savage and frozen wasteland more suited to ancient Nord custom than conventional Imperial law. As long as the residents of Thirsk leave Fort Frostmoth in peace, the Imperials at Fort Frostmoth will reciprocate. In fact, the relationship between the two locations is fairly civil, and the Thirsk Nords gained considerable favor with the Empire when they delivered the Breton fugitive Alain Montrose to the garrison at Fort Frostmoth, after he attempted to hide out in Thirsk.

Within the Mead Hall, the Chieftain serves as judge, jury and executioner if necessary. The reality is that Thirsk has always been a fairly peaceful place, with camaraderie and goodwill the norm. Solstheim can be a harsh home, and the Nords of Thirsk have long realized that fighting each other isn't nearly as productive as battling the island's bears, wolves, draugrs, Rieklings, and whatever other fell creatures may roam the land. Still, there is the occasional disagreement - which more often than naught ends in bloodshed - and every few years

someone gets it into his head to challenge the chieftain to a blood duel to try to gain possession of Thirsk. Generally speaking, the Nords of Thirsk are one big, happy barbarian-like family. And, like any family, they have their squabbles.

# Tiram Gadar's Credentials

*Acatto*

To the Esteemed Archmage Trebonius,

The man delivering this letter is one Tiram Gadar. Though a Dunmer, he was raised in the Imperial Province. I recommend him as an advisor on the politics of the Dunmer in Vvardenfell.

Sincerely,

Acatto, Imperial Battlemage



# Tradehouse Notice

## *Hlaalu Councilors*

Port of Seyda Neen

Hereas at the general Sessions of the Peace held for the District of House Hlaalu at the Town of Balmora on the 16th day of First Seed in the year of the Reign of our Sovereign King Hlaalu Athyn Llethan, by the Grace of All Gods, King of Morrowind, Duke of Mournhold and Hlaalu Province; Defender of the People and the Law; Loyal Servant of the Empire; etc.

Arrille of the Port of Seyda Neen aforesaid, hath entered into Recognizance with Sureties, before us his Majesty's Magistrates of Peace, within the said District, whose Names are hereunder written:

We therefore his Majesty's said Magistrates, have hereby Licensed, and allowed the said Arrille to keep a Common Tradehouse, or Cornerclub, in the House wherein he now dwelleth, in the Port of Seyda Neen aforesaid, for three full years, from henceforth next ensuing, or till such other time as shall be by us, or some of our fellow Magistrates thereunto appointed; Provided that if the said Arrille do not from time to time during that time, well and truly observe the Articles hereafter mentioned, then this License shall presently cease, and be utterly void.

1st Item, That the said Arrille shall not suffer any Stranger, or unknown Traveler, to Lodge, or Stay, in or about his House, above one Day and one Night, without making the same known forthwith to the next Bailiff, or other Officer of this Town, to the end that the said Stranger, or unknown Traveler may be examined, by some Magistrate of Peace near adjoining.

2nd Item, That he shall not suffer any playing at Cards, Tables, Dice, Bowls, Nine-holes, or any other unlawful Game, or any Disorder, or Outrage in his House, Orchard, Garden, or Back-side, but shall keep good Order and Rule in his House.

3rd Item, That he shall not suffer any neighbor's Children, Servants, or Slaves to Tipple in his House at all, nor any other to Tipple in his house, otherwise than by the Statutes are allowed.

4th Item, That he doe not suffer any to Tipple in hours of Prayer, or Lesson, on any Emperor's or Festival days, nor at any time after the eighth hour of Night.

5th Item, That he shall not harbor any Rogues, Vagabonds, Tradeless men, nor other suspicious Persons, in or about his House.

6th Item, That he shall not Buy or take to Pawn, or suffer to be Bought or taken to Pawn in his House (to his knowledge) any goods of any unknown Traveler, or of any Neighbor's children, or Servants, or Slaves, or of any man's Wife, without the consent of their Parents, Masters, or Husbands respectively, and if any such Goods be offered to Sale, or Pawn, by any Stranger, he shall make the same known forthwith to the next Bailiff, or other Officer of the Town.

7th Item, That he do not sell his best Drink above Four Drakes the Gallon, nor the second sort above Two Drakes the Gallon, nor suffer any Ash-Fowl to be Dressed or Eaten in his House, or on any other Victuals prohibited by the Laws of this Realm.

8th Item, That he shall not suffer any Bawdry, or Criminal Conversation, in or about his house, nor shall procure or cause to be Enticed any man to drink in his house, until he shall be Drunk, or distempered with Drink.

9th Item, That he shall not suffer any Luting, Drumming, or Dancing, in or about his house, on any Lesson Day, nor in time of Divine Service, on any Sacred Festival, or Holy-day.

10th Item, That he shall cause this License to be openly fixed up in the Hall-Room of his dwelling House, to the end that every one may see what Articles he is bound to observe.

Dated the day and year first above written.

Undersigned,

Master Velandá Omani

Master Nevena Ules

Master Dram Bero

Master Crassius Curio

Master Yngling Half-Troll

# Trap

*Anonymous*

I saw the gold, and I took it. A different man might not have, I know that, and from time to time, I think back on the hour when I saw the gold and took it. You see, I was hungry. Isn't it ironic.

I don't remember much else about that night but the gold and the hunger. I don't remember the name of the tavern, or even the village, but I believe it was somewhere in southern Vvardenfell. I can't really be certain. For some time, I sat dumbly in my chair, my mind occupied with nothing but the pain in my stomach. If you've never been truly hungry from days of no food, you can't know what it's like. You can't concentrate on anything. It wasn't until a figure to my left got up from the table to get a drink and left a stack of gold marks behind that I snapped to awareness.

From this moment on, my memory is crystalline.

My eyes to the gold. My eyes to the stranger's back, walking calmly toward the barmaid. My hand to the gold. The gold in my pocket. I'm up from the table, and out the door. For just a moment, I look back. The stranger has turned to look my way. He wears a hood, but I can feel his eyes meet mine. I swear, I can scent a smile.

Out into the street, and behind some barrels I crouched down, waiting for my pursuer. One benefit of a lifetime running from guards, I know how to disappear. For nearly an hour, I waited there, suffering even more from hunger. You see, I was awake now and I had the means to buy myself a feast. This knowledge tortured me. When I finally got to my feet, I very nearly fainted. I had only enough energy to walk to the other edge of the village to a run-down tavern before collapsing at a table. I think I must have fallen unconscious for a moment before I heard the barmaid's voice.

“Can I get you something to eat, sera?”

I gorged myself on roasts and pies and huge frothing mugs of greef. As the fog of near fatal starvation began to lift, I looked up from my plate to see a gold-masked stranger looking at me, his vizard glowing by the blinding light of the moon through the window. He wore black leather armor and was a different physique and size from the man I had burgled, but I could tell he knew. I paid for my meal quickly and left.

I skirted the edge of the village, through a tiled central courtyard surrounded by the squalid peasant's cottages. There was not a light shining from any window or door. No one was on the streets. I could find no place to hide, so I took the road out of town, heading for the wilderness. Hunger had pushed me on in the days before, but now I felt what I imagined to be the whip of guilt. Or perhaps, even then, it was fear.

I fell twice, rushing down the dark path, unused to the slopes and pebbled texture. The sounds of animal life, which I had numbed to, were suddenly very loud in my ears. And there was something else out there in the night, something chasing me.

On the side of the road, there was a low wall, and I scrambled over it and hid. I knew enough about concealment to pick a spot where the bulwark sunk slightly so even if someone saw the outline of my figure, he would assume it to be part of the wall. It wasn't long before I heard the sound of running footsteps from more than one person pass me by and then stop. There was a moment of whispered conversation, and one of the people ran back on the path toward the village. Then, silence.

After a few more minutes, I peered out from behind the wall. A female figure in a dun gown, wimple, and veil stood in the road. On the other end of the road, blocking the way back to town, was a knight, coated in dark mail. I could see neither of their faces. For a moment, I froze, unsure whether either or both had seen me.

“Run,” said the woman in a dead voice.

The hill behind me was too steep, so I leapt over the wall and across the road in two bounds. Into the night forest I ran, the maddening jingle of the accursed gold in my pocket. I knew I was making so much noise my pursuers could not help but hear me, but now I cared more for putting distance between us than in stealth. Clouds of ash filtered through the moonlight, but I still knew it was too bright to hide. I ran and ran until I felt all my blood pumping in my head and heart, begging me to stop.

I was at the edge of the wood, on the other side of a shallow stream from a vast, crumbling house encircled by a rail fence. Behind me, running footfall in the broken, dusty earth. To the south, downstream, a distinct sodden splashing of someone moving nearer.

There was no choice. I half jumped and half fell into the mud and dragged myself up the bank on the other side. I rolled under the fence and ran through the open field toward the house. Jerking my head around, I saw seven shadowy figures by the fence posts. The cloaked man I had robbed. The man in the gold mask. The veiled woman. The dark knight. Three others too who had pursued me, but I had never seen. And I thought I was the stealthy one.

The moon was entirely hidden in a swarm of ash. Only the stars offered their meager illumination as I reached the open door of the ruin. I slammed and bolted the door behind me, but I knew there could be no protection for very long. As I looked about the ravaged interior of broken furniture, I searched for someone to hide. A corner, a niche where if I stayed very still, no one would see me.

A splintered table lying against the wall looked perfect for my purposes. I crawled under it, and jumped when something moved and I heard a frightened old man's voice.

“Who's there?”

“It's all right,” I whispered. “I'm not one of them.”

His puckered, gnarled hand reached out from the shadow and gripped my arm. Instantly, I felt sleep fall upon me, resist it as I might. The old man's horrible face, the face of the hungry dead, emerged as the moon came out and shone through the broken window. His talon still gripping me, I fell back, smelling his death surround me.

The table was thrown back. There stood the seven hunters and a dozen more. No, hunters they weren't. They were harriers

who had chased me out of every hiding place, expertly pushing me to the lair of the real predator. He was weak with age, the old man was, not as good at the chase as once he was. A blunt, killing machine.

“Please,” I said. It was all I could muster.

Having enjoyed the sport I offered, he granted me mercy, of sorts. I was not bled dry. I was not cursed by being made one of them, the Berne. I was kept with others, most of us mad with fear, to be aged and tasted at the vampires’ whim. We are called cattle.

I lost all hope months ago of ever leaving the dank cellar where they keep us. Even if this note finds its way to the outside world, I cannot give enough information about my whereabouts to be rescued, even if some champion were able to defeat the bloodsuckers. I only write this to keep my own sanity, and to warn others.

There is something worse than being hungry.

Being food.



# Treasury Orders

*Odral Helvi*

Dearest Tenisi,

Your assistance has been profitable to us both, in many ways. I have but one more favor to ask. Find the land deeds for the Ascadian Isles. Replace the documents owned by Rovone Arvel with those of your own clever design.

Soon we will have enough to leave Vvardenfell together. Until then, you know what must be done, know also that you have my love.

Odral Helvi

# Treasury Report

*Anonymous*

KJAH SDFH KLJH FAKL SDJH FAKL DSHF KJAD SHFL KJAN SDCJ  
NASO ERUH AUWO IYEF HADS CHNK SNCL KNAS JROR IEWU  
PIWE HJKF NBDS LKJV NKLA SDNF OHRF OIQP REWF HSAD  
KJVH AKSJ DNFP OQRE HFOI DSAP

# Unnamed Book

*Anonymous*

“The problem with thieves today,” said Lledos, “Is the lack of technique. I know there’s no honor among thieves, and there never was, but there used to be some pride, some skill, some basic creativity. It really makes those of us with a sense of history despair.”

Imalyn sneered, slamming down his flagon of greef violently on the rough-hewn table. “B’vek, what do you want us to say? You asks us ‘What do you do when you see a guard?’ and I says, ‘Stab the fetcher in the back.’ What d’you prefer? We challenge ‘em to a game of chits?”

“So much ambition, so little education,” said Lledos with a sigh. “My dear friends, we aren’t mugging some Nord tourist fresh off the ferry. The Cobblers Guildhall may not sound intimidating but tonight, when the dues collection is housed there before being sent to the bank, the security’s going to be tighter than a kwama’s ass. You can’t just stab at every back you encounter and expect to make it into the vaults.”

“Why don’t you explain specifically what you’d like us to do?” asked Galsiah calmly, trying to keep the tone of the group down. Most locals at the Plot and Plaster cornerclub in Tel Aruhn knew enough not to listen in, but she knew better than to take any chances.

“The common thief,” said Lledos, pouring himself more greef, warming to his subject. “Sticks his dagger in his opponent’s back. This may slay the target, but more often gives him time to scream and drenches the attacker with blood. Not good. Now a good throat-slashing, properly executed, can both slay and silence a guard and leave the thief relatively bloodfree. And after all, after the robbery, we don’t want people seeing a bunch of blood-soaked butchers running through the streets. Even in Tel Aruhn, that’s likely to warrant suspicion.

“If you can catch your victim lying down asleep or resting, you are in an excellent position. You place one hand over the mouth with your thumb under the chin, then you use your other hand to slit the throat, and quickly turn the head to one side so the body bleeds out away from you. There is a risk here of becoming blood stained if you don’t move the head quickly enough. If you’re unsure, strangle the victim first to avoid the blood that tends to spurt out in three foot jets when someone is stabbed while alive.

“A very good friend of mine, a thief in Gnosis whose name I won’t mention, swears by the strangle-and-slash technique. Simply put, you grab your victim’s throat from behind and while throttling him, you batter his face against the opposite wall. When the victim is thus rendered unconscious, you slash his throat while still holding him from behind, and the risk of staining one’s clothes with blood is practically nonexistent.

“The classic technique, which requires less grappling than my friend’s variation, is to place one hand over the victim’s mouth, and then saw through the throat in three or four stroke rather like playing a violin. It requires little effort, and while there’s quite a bit of blood, it all jets forward away from you.

There's no reason when one knows one is going to be slitting some throats not to take some precautions and bring some extra equipment. The best neck-hackers I know generally carry a bit of wadded cloth on the aft-side of their knives to keep blood from getting on their cuffs. It's impractical for this sort of assignment, but when you're only anticipating one or two victims, nothing beats throwing a sack over the targets head, drawing the string tight, and then supplying the killing blow or blows."

Imalyn laughed loudly, "Can I see a demonstration sometime?"

"Very soon," said Lledos. "If Galsiah has done her job."

Galsiah brought out the map of the guildhouse, freshly stolen, and they began to detail out the strategy.

The last several hours had been a whirlwind to all. In less than a day, the three had met, formulated a plan, bought or stolen the necessary ingredients, and were about to execute it. Not one of the three were sure whether confidence or stupidity were driving the other two, but the fates were aligned. The guildhouse was going to be robbed.

When the sun set, Lledos, Galsiah, and Imalyn approached the Cobblers Guildhouse on the east end of town. Galsiah used her cachous of stoneflower to mask their scent from the guard wolves as the three passed over the parapets. She also acted as lead scout, and Lledos was impressed. For someone of relative inexperience, she knew her way through shadows.

Lledos's expertise was demonstrated a dozen times, and the guards were of such a diverse variety, he was able to

demonstrate all the means of silent assassination he had developed over the years.

Imalyn opened the vault in his unique and systematic method. As the tumblers fell beneath his fingers, he softly sang an old dirty tavern song about the Ninety-Nine Loves of Boethiah. He said it helped him focus and organize difficult combinations. Within seconds, the vault was open and the gold was in hand.

They left the guildhouse an hour after they entered. No alarm had been raised, the gold was gone, and corpses lay pooling blood on the stone floors within.

“Well done, my friends, well done. You learned well.” Lledos said as he poured the gold pieces into the specially designed compartments in his tunic’s sleeves, where they held fast with no jingling or unusual bulges. “We’ll meet back at the Plot and Plaster tomorrow morning and split up the bounty.”

The group parted ways. The only person who knew the most covert route through the city’s sewer system, Lledos, slipped in through a duct and vanished below. Galsiah threw on her shawl, muddied her face to resemble an old f’lah fortune-teller, and headed north. Imalyn headed east into the park, trusting his unnatural senses to keep him away from the citywatch.

Now I teach them the greatest lesson of all, thought Lledos as he sloshed through the labyrinthine tunnels of sludge. His guar was waiting where he left it at the city gates, making a laconic lunch of the chokeweed shrub to which it had been leashed.

On the road to Vivec, he thought of Galsiah and Imalyn. Perhaps they had been caught and brought in for questioning

already. It was a pity he couldn't see them undergoing interrogation. Who would break under pressure first? Imalyn was certainly the tougher of the two, but Galsiah doubtless had hidden reserves. It was merely intellectual curiosity: they thought his name was Lledos and he was meeting them at the Plot and Plaster. The authorities wouldn't therefore be looking for a Dunmer named Sathis celebrating his wealth miles and miles away in Vivec.

As he prodded his mount forward and the sun began rising, Sathis pictured Galsiah and Imalyn not undergoing interrogation, but sleeping the good deep sleep of the wicked, dreaming of how they would spend their share of the gold. Both would wake up early and rush to the Plot and Plaster. He could see them now, Imalyn laughing and carrying on, Galsiah hushing him to avoid bringing undue attention. They would take a couple flagons of greef, perhaps order a meal—a big one—and wait. Hours would pass, and so would their moods. The chain of reactions that every betrayed person exhibits: nervousness, doubt, bewilderment, anger.

The sun was fully risen when Sathis reached the stables of his house on the outskirts of Vivec. He reigned in his guar and filled its feed. The rest of the stalls were empty. It wouldn't be until that afternoon when his servants returned from the feast of St Rilms in Gnosis. They were good people, and he treated them well, but from past experience he knew that servants talked. If they began to connect his absences with thefts in other towns, it was only a matter of time before they would go to the authorities or blackmail him. After all, they were human. It was best in the long run to give them a week off with pay whenever he was out of town on business.

He slipped the gold into the vault in his study, and went upstairs. The schedule had been tight, but Sathis had given himself a few hours to rest before his household returned. His own bed was wonderfully soft and warm compared to the dreadful mattress he had to use at the canton in Tel Aruhn.

Sathis woke up some time later from a nightmare. For a second after he opened his eyes, he thought he could still hear Imalyn's voice nearby, singing *The Ninety-Nine Loves of Boethiah*. He lay still in his bed, waiting, but there was no sound except the usual creaks and groans of his old house. Afternoon sunlight came through his bedroom window in ribbons, catching dust. He closed his eyes.

The song returned, and Sathis heard the vault door in his study swing open. The smell of stoneflower filled his nose and he opened his eyes. Only a little of the afternoon sunlight could pierce the inside of the burlap sack.

A strong, feminine hand clamped over the mouth and a thumb jabbed under his chin. Just as his throat opened and his head was shoved to the side, he heard Galsiah in her typical calm voice, "Thank you for the lesson, Sathis."



# Vampires Of Vvardenfell

*Anonymous*

Vampires of Vvardenfell, Volume I

[excerpts]

...The violent antipathy of Morrowind culture toward necromancy ensures that vampires are virtually unknown in Morrowind...

...The Temple does not acknowledge the existence of Western vampire hunting orders. Nonetheless, interviews with Temple officials persuade me that the Dunmer of Morrowind are experienced and knowledgeable in the handling of these menaces. On the other hand, they freely admit that even a large community of vampires might easily escape detection in the remote wastelands, or in the subterranean labyrinths of abandoned strongholds and wizard towers....

...The “ash vampire” of Ashlander legend is not undead. Sorceries and blessings affecting the undead reportedly have no effect on these creatures. No specimen has ever been examined, and no references have ever linked these legends with the known clans of Tamrielic vampires....

...Vvardenfell’s three known bloodlines differ greatly in their approach to prey. The Quarra bloodline features exceptional strength and endurance, and attacks in a state of ecstatic

frenzy. Aundae vampires are potent spellcasters, seeking to hypnotize victims before feeding, while the swift and agile Berne clan vampires prefer stealth and ambush, first poisoning the victim with a bite, then withdrawing to a safe distance, returning to feed only when the prey has weakened...

...It is supposed that vampirism is contracted from wounds received from a vampire. Since few victims survive vampiric attacks or feedings, the process of contracting the disease is little understood. Some have suggested that victims may willingly submit themselves to the will of a vampire, but no real evidence of this exists....

...During the incubation phase, lasting up to 72 hours, the vampirism disease exhibits no symptoms, and may be cured by general spellcraft or cult blessings. However, during incubation, some victims have reported sleep disturbances and troubling dreams. After symptoms are exhibited, however, the disease is incurable and irreversible....

## Vampires of Vvardenfell, Volume II

[excerpts]

... In the West, a shadowy fraternity of vampire hunters is believed to be primarily composed of formerly afflicted vampires who have been cured of the disease. According to legend, the Vampire Hunters refuse to reveal the cure to the disease for fear that it may encourage depraved thrill seekers from deliberately infecting themselves.

In the East, the Western tradition of Vampire Hunters is unknown. Vampirism is known to be incurable, and even if it were curable, a cured vampire would be an abomination to be

destroyed. Since the disease is infallibly cured if treated within three days, failure to treat oneself after an encounter with a vampire would be considered a deliberate attempt to contract the disease, and a mark of monstrous depravity....

... In Temple doctrine, one ancient tradition holds that, among his many other crimes, Molag Bal, the Father of Monsters, spawned the first vampire upon the corpse of a defeated foe. Several different versions of this story exist, with the foe variously identified as a Daedra Lord, a Temple Saint, or a powerful beast creature. This account of the origin of vampirism is peculiar to Morrowind, appearing nowhere else in Imperial lore. Unfortunately, scholarly inquiry upon this topic is discouraged by the Temple, which controls access to the only substantial collection of historical and cultural records in Morrowind....

... Though the Dunmer believe the disease is incurable, a Buoyant Armiger of former years named Galur Rithari insisted that he was cured of vampirism. Initially imprisoned by the Temple for heresy, he later recanted, was released, and served his final years as a librarian in the Hall of Wisdom in Vivec. It is interesting that previous to his imprisonment for heresy, Rithari had been posted to the Buoyant Armiger garrison at Bal Ur, a pilgrimage site known as the "birthplace of Molag Bal."

# Weapons And Armor Contract

*Felyn Saranas*

## Contract for Services

I, Felyn Saranas, hereby agree to pay the sum of 10,000 (ten thousand) drakes upon the delivery of the following items:

Iron Shortsword (20)

Iron Claymore (15)

Iron Mace (10)

Iron Spear (15)

Steel Axe (10)

Steel Dagger (15)

Steel Staff (10)

Steel Halberd (15)

Steel Longsword (10)

All items are assumed to be delivered in new and working condition, and to have been created at the forge of Ralen Tilvur, Smith, Vivec City. This contract is binding under Imperial Law,

and may only be rendered null and void by a mutual agreement of both parties here undersigned.

Alvur Hleran

Felyn Saranas

# Widow Vabdas' Land Deed

*Hetman Abelmawia*

A land deed of Widow Vabdas in Gnosis.

By the Grace of ALMSIVI, Lords and Rulers of All

By the Grace of Hlaren Ramoran, Councilor of House Redoran,  
Lord of Gnosis

Attested by his trusted servant, Hetman Abelmawia Eribael

This document grants all rights of tenancy, residence, bounty, and vocation in the lands adjoining the Vabdas Clan Hearth, including the lands along the river bluff for 80 paces east and west of the hearth and the lands for 80 paces north of the hearth and the lands south of the heart as far as the river bluff, to the Miner Mansilamat Vabdas and his Goodwife Pulaya Vabdas.

Seal of Hetman Abelmawia

# Writs Of Execution

*Anonymous*

## A Dark Brotherhood Contract

The Bearer of this document, under special dispensation of the Night Mother, who has entered in a contract in perpetuity with H, is given special dispensation to execute , a recently residing on the island of Vvardenfell. In accordance with all laws and traditions, the afore-mentioned personage will be executed in the name of H in the most expedient manner possible. All services of the Dark Brotherhood are at the disposal of the Bearer of this binding and non-disputable document.

## Honorable Writ of Execution: Feruren Oran

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

## Honorable Writ of Execution: Odaishah Yasalmibaal

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Toris Saren

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Sarayn Sadus

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writs of Execution: Idroso Vendu & Ethal Seloth

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Guril Retheran

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Galasa Uvayn



The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Mavon Drenim

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Tirer Belvayn

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Mathyn Bemis

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Brilnosu Llarys

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-

disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Navil & Ranis Ienith

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Larrius Varro

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Baladas Demnevanni

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

Honorable Writ of Execution: Dram Bero

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

### Honorable Writ of Execution: Mistress Therana

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

### Royal Writ of Execution: Bedal Alen

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in the name of King Hlaalu Helseth. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

### Royal Writ of Execution: Forven Berano

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in the name of King Hlaalu Helseth. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

### Royal Writ of Execution: Hloggar the Bloody

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in the name of King Hlaalu Helseth. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage.

# Yellow Book Of 3e 426

*Anonymous*

Mistress Velanda Omani, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Hlaalu Council, Vvardenfell District, Free Trader, Lord of Omani Plantation, Elmas Island, East Vivec, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Dram Bero, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Hlaalu Council, Vvardenfell District, Free Trader, Gentleman of No Fixed Residence, Vivec, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Crassius Curio, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Hlaalu Council, Vvardenfell District, Free Trader, Curio Manor, Hlaalu Compound, Vivec, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Master Yngling Half-Troll , by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Hlaalu Council, Vvardenfell District, Free Trader, Yngling Manor, Canton of St. Olms, Vivec, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

Mistress Nevena Ules, by Grace of Almsivi, Honored Councilor of Hlaalu Council, Vvardenfell District, Free Trader, Ules Manor, Suran, Ascadian Isles, Bal Ur, District of Vvardenfell, Province of Morrowind

King Hlaalu Athyn Llethan, High Councilor and Lord of Morrowind, grants relief to merchants complaining of high tariffs on imported alcoholic beverages.

The council is pleased to report a reduction in the incidence of theft and violent crime in the Hlaalu House Districts, thanks to the vigilance of the Legions and stern sentences by the magistrates. The council laments the unfortunate disturbances of the public peace resulting from the increasingly aggressive competition between the Thieves Guild and the Camonna Tong for control of the black markets.

A minor tax revolt in Balmora was suppressed without undue harm to life and property. The council sent deputations to the Duke to express their concerns over the high tax rates and the injurious effect of high tariffs on trade.

# Yngling's Ledger

*Yngling Half-Troll*

[This is a ledger showing how Yngling Half-Troll misdirected funds he was supposed to spend on restoring the Temple in the Redoran Compound in Vivec.]

# Yngling's Letter

*Archcanon Saryoni*

Ser Yngling,

I must admit that I was surprised by your request for funds to repair the House Hlaalu Temple in Vivec. Before our meeting last week I knew only that you were an outlander and not a member of our Temple. Once again, I ask that you forgive an old man for heeding to false rumors. Now that I have met you, I am sure that your motives are pure, and you can restore the Temple to its former glory.

House Hlaalu has neglected its Temple in Vivec for many years and it is in a state of disrepair. Given the difficulty of this restoration, I would be pleased to contribute 50,000 drakes to your efforts.

Archcanon Saryoni

# Zainsubani's Notes

*Hassour Zainsubani*

[The following are notes on the Ashlanders and the Nerevarine cult prepared for you by Hassour Zainsubani]

The Ashlanders are the direct descendants of the Aldmeri peoples who followed the Prophet Veloth into the lands we now call Morrowind. The Ashlanders retain the modest nomadic life and simple ancestor worship of their forebears, and despise the soft lives and decadent worships of the settled Great House Dunmer cultures. The Wastes are harsh and unforgiving, and we are a hard people. But there is a beauty and honor in our simple lives, and the snobs of the Temple and Great Houses are fools to dismiss us as crude savages.

## Ashlanders and foreigners

Most Ashlanders wish all foreigners and their false gods could be driven from Morrowind. At very least, Ashlanders wish the foreign devils would leave them in peace. Ashlanders think it shameful to attack unarmed persons, but they will kill without hesitation an armed person who offends them or their clan laws. No Ashlander is fool enough to make war against the Empire. However, if such a war might be won, many Ashlanders might cheerfully give their lives to win such a war.

## Ashlander courtesy



Ashlanders may challenge a stranger who enters a yurt without invitation. Customs differ with different tribes, but leave when requested, and you may be forgiven. Be particularly careful about ashkhans—tribal chiefs—and wise women—tribal seers and counselors. Some are welcoming, some are hostile. Be courteous, and leave if requested. If offended, they may attack.

### Ashlander challenges

When challenged for sport, it is acceptable to decline. When challenged for honor, it is shameful to decline. Honor challenges come from offense given in speech or action, or may represent customary formal challenges of status or ritual.

### Ashlander worship

All Ashlanders in a tribe, young and small, are born into the Ancestor cult of their clan. The Nerevarine cult is different, though; it is a very small cult, with only a few wise women with the gift of prophecy, and a few holy warrior-heroes who guard and protect the seers. Sul-Matuul, Ashkhan of the Urshilaku, is the Warrior-Protector of the cult, and Nibani Maesa, also of the Urshilaku, is the Oracle-Seer of the cult.

### Nerevarine cult

They worship the Great Ashkhan and Hortator, Nerevar Moon-and-Star, who in ages past destroyed the evil, godless dwarves and banished the treacherous Dagoth Ur and his foul hosts beneath Red Mountain. The cult is of small consequence in Ashlander worship, and only among the Urshilaku do its followers have any influence. Others Ashlanders tribes share

the sentiments of the cult, but regard the Nerevarine prophecies with suspicion and skepticism.

### Nerevarine prophecies

It is said that prophecies foretell the return of a reincarnated Nerevar, who shall drive the foreigners from the Ashlands and who shall cast down the false gods of the Temple, and restore the true worships of the Ancestors. It is a dream that would appeal to every Ashlander, but many Ashlanders think it is a silly ancient legend, and little more.

### The Urshilaku Ashlanders

The Urshilaku are the Ashlanders of the northern Ashlands and the West Gash, in the northwest of Vvardenfell. Ashkhan Sul-Matuul is their chief, a brave and respected war leader, and Warrior-Protector of the Nerevarine cult. Nibani Maesa is their wise woman, a deep and shrewd counselor, and seer of the Nerevarine cult. The Urshilaku camp moves with the herds, but usually lies close to the Sea of Ghosts, north of the village of Maar Gan, on the northern coast of the northern Ashlands.

# Shadowkey Codexes

# Brown Scroll

*Jagar Tharn*

My most estimable Lakvan, You must understand you risk my wrath by continued association with this Pergan Asuul. Your claim he is a Shadamage opposed to Skelos Undriel is irrelevant. Shadow magics by their nature will twist on their casters and so do the words of the magic's practitioners. My plan to have utterly destroy Undriel can tolerate no such risk this close to fruition. End your association with Pergan Asuul or I shall end mine with you. Ponder that choice as you will.

Sincerely, Jagar Tharn.

# Council Hall Scroll

*Anonymous*

Meya Violet was a great merchant captain. Her selfness skills of negotiation made the Dragonstar guild great. No one know what took her that night. We honor her, and pray we can sustain her greatness.

# Letter From General Duvais

*General Duvais*

A third of the payment accompanies this note. The rest shall be paid in full by our agents. Scout Dragonstar, deliver the map to our agents in Earthtear Caverns.

# Oblivion Codexes

# 16 Accords Of Madness

*Anonymous*

16 Accords of Madness, v. VI

Hircine's Tale

Ever proud and boastful, Oblivion's Mad Prince stood one fifth day of mid year among the frigid peaks of Skyrim, and beckoned forth Hircine for parlay. The Huntsman God materialized, for this was his day, and the boldness of Sheogorath intrigued him.

Wry without equal, Sheogorath holds in his realm giggling loons, flamboyant auteurs, and craven mutilators. The Mad Prince will ply profitless bargains and promote senseless bloodshed for nothing more than the joy of another's confusion, tragedy, or rage. So it was that Sheogorath had set a stage on which to play himself as rival to Hircine.

Without haste, the coy Prince proffered his contest; each Prince was to groom a beast to meet at this place again, three years to the hour, and do fatal battle. Expressionless behind his fearsome countenance, Hircine agreed, and with naught but a dusting of snow in the drift, the Princes were gone to their realms.

Confident, but knowing Sheogorath for a trickster, Hircine secretly bred an abomination in his hidden realm. An ancient



Daedroth he summoned, and imbued it with the foul curse of lycanthropy. Of pitch heart and jagged fang, the unspeakable horror had no peer, even among the great hunters of Hircine's sphere.

In the third year, on the given day, Hircine returned, where Sheogorath leaned, cross-legged on a stone, whistling with idle patience. The Prince of the Hunt struck his spear to the ground, bringing forth his unnatural, snarling behemoth. Doffing his cap, sly as ever, Sheogorath stood and stepped aside to reveal a tiny, colorful bird perched atop the stone. Demurely it chirped in the bristling gusts, scarcely audible.

In a twisted, springing heap, the Daedroth was upon the stone, leaving only rubble where the boulder had been. Thinking itself victorious, the monster's bloodied maw curled into a mock grin, when a subdued song drifted in the crisp air. The tiny bird lightly hopped along the snout of the furious Daedroth. Sheogorath looked on, quietly mirthful, as the diminutive creature picked at a bit of detritus caught in scales betwixt the fiery eyes of the larger beast. With howling fury, the were-thing blinded itself trying to pluck away the nuisance. And so it continued for hours, Hircine looking on in shame while his finest beast gradually destroyed itself in pursuit of the seemingly oblivious bird, all the while chirping a mournful tune to the lonesome range.

Livid, but beaten, Hircine burned the ragged corpse and withdrew to his realm, swearing in forgotten tongues. His curses still hang in those peaks, and no wayfarer tarries for fear of his wrathful aspect in those obscured heights.

Turning on his heel, Sheogorath beckoned the miniscule songbird to perch atop his shoulder, and strolled down the

mountain, making for the warm breezes and vibrant sunsets of the Abecean coast, whistling in tune with the tiniest champion in Tamriel.

16 Accords of Madness, v. IX

Vaermina's Tale

Darius Shano found himself running as fast as he could.

He had no idea what he was running from or towards, but he didn't care. The desire saturated his mind—there was nothing in the world except flight. He looked around for landmarks, anything to place himself or to use as a target, but to no avail—the featureless grasslands through which he was sprinting extended as far as the eye could see. “Just have to keep running”, he thought to himself. “I have to run as fast as I can”. On and on he ran, with no end in sight or in mind....

Standing over Darius Shano while he lay quietly in his bed were his mistress, Vaermina the Dreamweaver, and the Madgod Sheogorath. Vaernima looked down with pride at this disciple of hers, and was boastful of her little jewel.

“Such potential in this one! Through dreams of inspiration, I have nurtured literary talent into fruition, and now he stands in acclaim as an emerging bard and poet! He will gain much favor before I tire of him.” Sheogorath, too, gazed at the young Breton artist and saw that he was indeed famous among the other mortals.

“Hmmm,” mused Sheogorath, “but how many are there who hate this mortal whom you have built? It is the hatred of the

mortals which confirms greatness, and not their love. Surely you can accomplish this as well?”

Vaernima’s eyes narrowed. “Yes, the mortals are indeed often foolish and petty, and it is true that many of their most bold have been despised. Do not worry, mad one, for I have the power to achieve many forms of greatness with this one, hatred among them.”

“Perhaps, Dreamweaver, it would be amusing to show who has this power? Inspire foolish, arrogant hatred of this mortal for ten years, and then I will do the same. We shall see whose talents are most efficient, free of aid or interference from any of the Daedra.”

At this, she relaxed into confident pleasure. “The Madgod is indeed powerful, but this task is suited to my skills. The mortals are repulsed by madness, but rarely think it worthy of hate. I shall take pleasure in revealing this to you, as I bring the more subtle horrors out of this mortal’s subconscious.”

And so, in the 19th year of his life, the dreams Darius Shano had been experiencing began to change. Fear had always been part of the night for him, but now there was something else. A darkness began to creep into his slumber, a darkness that sucked away all feeling and color, leaving only emptiness behind. When this happened, he opened his mouth to scream, but found that the darkness had taken his voice as well. All he had was the terror and the void, and each night they filled him with a new understanding of death. Yet, when he woke, there was no fear, for he had faith that his Lady had a purpose.

Indeed, one night Vaernima herself emerged from the void. She leaned in close to whisper into his ear.

“Watch carefully, my beloved!” With that, she pulled the void away, and for hours each night she would reveal to Darius the most horrible perversions of nature. Men being skinned and eaten alive by other men, unimaginable beasts of many limbs and mouths, entire populations being burned—their screams filled his every evening. In time, these visions gnawed at his soul, and his work began to take on the character of his nightmares. The images revealed to him at night were reproduced on the page, and the terrible cruelty and hollow vice that his work contained both revolted and fascinated the public. They reveled in their disgust over every detail. There were those who openly enjoyed his shocking material, and his popularity among some only fed the hatred of those who found him abhorrent. This continued for several years, while the infamy of Darius grew steadily. Then, in his 29th year, without warning, the dreams and nightmares ceased.

Darius felt a weight lifted, as he no longer endured the nightly tortures, but was confused. “What have I done to displease my Mistress?”, he wondered aloud. “Why has she abandoned me?” Vaernima never answered his prayers. No one ever answered, and the restless dreams faded away to leave Darius in long, deep sleeps.

Interest in the works of Darius Shano waned. His prose became stale and his ideas failed to provoke the shock and outrage they once had. As the memory of his notoriety and of his terrible dreams faded, the questions that raced in his mind eventually produced resentment against Vaernima, his former mistress. Resentment grew into hatred, from hatred came ridicule, and over time ridicule became disbelief. Slowly it became obvious—Vaernima had never spoken to him at all; his dreams were simply the product of a sick mind that had righted itself. He

had been deceived by his own subconscious, and the anger and shame overwhelmed him. The man who once conversed with a deity drifted steadily into heresy.

In time, all of the bitterness, doubt, and sacrilege focused in Darius a creative philosophy that was threaded throughout all of his subsequent work. He challenged the Gods themselves, as well as the infantile public and corrupt state for worshiping them. He mocked them all with perverse caricatures, sparing no one and giving no quarter. He challenged the Gods in public to strike him down if they existed, and ridiculed them when no such comeuppance was delivered. To all of this, the people reacted with outrage far greater than they had shown his previous work. His early career had offended only sensibilities, but now he was striking directly at the heart of the people.

His body of work grew in size and intensity. Temples, nobles, and commoners were all targets of his scorn. Finally, at age 39, Darius wrote a piece entitled “The Noblest Fool,” ridiculing The Emperor God Tiber Septim for integrating into the pathetic Nine Divines cult. The local King of Daenia, who had been humiliated by this upstart in the past, saw his chance—for his sacrilege against the Empire, Darius Shano was executed, with a ceremonial blade, in front of a cheering crowd of hundreds. His last, bitter words were gurgled through a mouthful of his own blood.

20 years after their wager was first placed, Vaernima and Sheogorath met over Darius Shano’s headless corpse. The Dreamweaver had been eager for this meeting; she had been waiting for years to confront the Daedric Prince over his lack of action.

“I have been deceived by you, Sheogorath! I performed my half of the bargain, but during your ten years you never contacted the mortal once. He owes none of his greatness to you or your talents or your influence!”

“Nonsense,” croaked the Madgod. “I was with him all along! When your time ended and mine began, your whispers in his ear were replaced with silence. I severed his link to that from which he found the most comfort and meaning, and withheld the very attention the creature so desperately craved. Without his mistress, this man’s character could ripen under resentment and hatred. Now his bitterness is total and, overcome by a madness fueled by his rage, he feeds me in my realm as an eternal servant.”

Sheogorath turned and spoke to the empty space by his side.

“Indeed; Darius Shano was a glorious mortal. Despised by his own people, his kings, and even by the Gods he mocked. For my success, I shall accept three-score followers of Vaernima into my service. And the dreamers will awaken as madmen.”

And thus did Sheogorath teach Vaernima that without madness, there are no dreams, and no creation. Vaernima will never forget this lesson.

16 Accords of Madness, v. XII

Malacath’s Tale

In the days before the Orsinium’s founding, the spurned Orc-folk were subjected to ostracism and persecutions even more numerous and harsh than their progeny are accustomed to in our own age. So it was that many champions of the Orsimer

traveled, enforcing what borders they could for the proliferation of their own people. Many of these champions are spoken of yet today, among them the Cursed Legion, Gromma the Hairless, and the noble Emmeg Gro-Kayra. This latter crusader would have certainly risen to legendary status throughout Tamriel, had he not been subject to the attention of certain Daedric Princes.

Emmeg Gro-Kayra was the bastard son of a young maiden who was killed in childbirth. He was raised by the shaman of his tribe, the Grilikamaug in the peaks of what we now call Normar Heights. Late in his fifteenth year, Emmeg forged by hand an ornate suit of scaled armor, a rite of ascension among his tribe. On a blustery day, he pounded the final rivet, and draping a heavy cloak over the bulky mantle, Emmeg set out from his village for the last time. Word of his exploits always returned home, whether defending merchant caravans from brigands or liberating enslaved beast folk. News of the noble Orc crusader began to grace even the lips of Bretons, often with a tinge of fear.

Less than two years after ascending to maturity, Gro-Kayra was making camp when a thin voice called out from the thickening night. He was surprised to hear the language of his people spoken by a tongue that obviously did not belong to an Orc.

‘Lord Kayra’, said the voice, ‘tales of your deeds have crossed the lips of many, and have reached my ears.’ Peering into the murk, Emmeg made out the silhouette of a cloaked figure, made wavy and ephemeral by the hazy campfire. From the voice alone he had thought the interloper an old hag, but he now decided that he was in the presence of a man of slight and lanky build, though he could discern no further detail.

‘Perhaps,’ the wary Orc began, ‘but I seek no glory. Who are you?’

Ignoring the question, the stranger continued, ‘Despite that, Orsimer, glory finds you, and I bear a gift worthy of it.’ The visitor’s cloak parted slightly, revealing nothing but faintly glinting buttons in the pale moonlight, and a bundle was withdrawn and tossed to the side of the fire between the two. Emmeg cautiously removed the rags in which the object was swathed, and was dazzled to discover the item to be a wide, curved blade with ornately decorated handle. The weapon had heft, and Emmeg realized on brandishing it that the elaborate pommel disguised the more practical purpose of balancing the considerable weight of the blade itself. It was nothing much to look at in its present condition, thought the Orc, but once the tarnish was cleaned away and a few missing jewels restored, it would indeed be a blade worthy of a champion ten times his own worth.

‘Her name is Neb-Crescen’ spoke the thin stranger, seeing the appreciation lighting Gro-Kayra’s face. ‘I got her for a horse and a secret in warmer climes, but in my old age I’d be lucky to even lift such a weapon. It’s only proper that I pass her on to one such as yourself. To possess her is to change your life, forever.’ Overcoming his initial infatuation with the arc of honed steel, Emmeg turned his attention back to the visitor.

‘Your words are fine, old man,’ Emmeg said, not masking his suspicion, ‘but I’m no fool. You traded for this blade once, and you’ll trade for it again tonight. What is it that you want?’ The stranger’s shoulders slumped, and Emmeg was glad to have unveiled the true purpose of this twilight visit. He sat with him a while, eventually offering a stack of furs, warm food, and a



handful of coins in exchange for the exotic weapon. By morning, the stranger was gone.

In the week following Emmeg's encounter with the stranger, Neb-Crescen had not left its scabbard. He had encountered no enemy in the woods, and his meals consisted of fowl and small game caught with bow and arrow. The peace suited him fine, but on the seventh morning, while fog still crept between the low-hanging boughs, Emmeg's ears pricked up at the telltale crunch of a nearby footfall in the dense snow and forest debris.

Emmeg's nostrils flared, but he was upwind. Being unable to see or smell his guest, and knowing that the breeze carried his scent in that direction, Emmeg's guard was up, and he cautiously drew Neb-Crescen from its sheath. Emmeg himself was not entirely sure of all that happened next.

The first moment of conscious memory in Emmeg Gro-Kayra's mind after drawing Neb-Crescen was the image of the curved blade sweeping through the air in front of him, splattering blood over the virginal powder coating the forest floor. The second memory was a feeling of frenzied bloodlust creeping over him, but it was then that he saw for the first time his victim, an Orc woman perhaps a few years younger than himself, her body a canvas of grisly wounds, enough to kill a strong man ten times over.

Emmeg's disgust overwhelmed the madness that had overtaken him, and with all his will enlisted, he released Neb-Crescen from his grip and let the blade sail. With a discordant ringing it spun through the air and was buried in a snowdrift. Emmeg fled the scene in shame and horror, drawing the hood of his cloak up to hide himself from the judging eyes of the rising sun.

The scene where Emmeg Gro-Kayra had murdered one of his own kind was a macabre one. Below the neck, the body was flayed and mutilated almost beyond recognition, but the untouched face was frozen in a permanent expression of abject terror.

It was here that Sheogorath performed certain rites that summoned Malacath, and the two Daedric Lords held court in the presence of the disfigured corpse.

‘Why show me this, Mad One?’ began Malacath, once he recovered from his initial, wordless outrage. ‘Do you take such pleasure in watching me grieve the murder of my children?’ His guttural voice rumbled, and the patron of the Orismer looked upon his counterpart with accusing eyes.

‘By birth, she was yours, brother outcast,’ began Sheogorath, solemn in aspect and demeanor. ‘But she was a daughter of mine by her own habits. My mourning here is no less than your own, my outrage no less great.’

‘I am not so sure,’ grumbled Malacath, ‘but rest assured that vengeance for this crime is mine to reap. I expect no contest from you. Stand aside.’ As the fearsome Prince began to push past him, Lord Sheogorath spoke again.

‘I have no intention of standing between you and vengeance. In fact, I mean to help you. I have servants in this wilderness, and can tell you just where to find our mutual foe. I ask only that you use a weapon of my choosing. Wound the criminal with my blade, and banish him to my plane, where I can exact my own punishment. The rights of honor-killing here belong to you.’

With that, Malacath agreed, took the wide blade from Shegorath, and was gone.

Malacath materialized in the path of the murderer, the cloaked figure obscured through a blizzard haze. Bellowing a curse so foul as to wilt the surrounding trees, the blade was drawn and Malacath crossed the distance more quickly than a wild fox. Frothing with rage, he swung the blade in a smooth arc which lopped the head of his foe cleanly off, then plunged the blade up to its hilt in his chest, choking off the spurts of blood into a steady, growing stain of red bubbling from beneath the scaled armor and heavy cloak.

Panting from the unexpected immediacy and fury of his own kill, Malacath rested on a knee as the body before him collapsed heavily backwards and the head landed roughly upon a broad, flat stone. The next sound broke the silence like a bolt.

'I - I'm sorry...' sputtered the voice of Emmeg Gro-Kayra. Malacath's eyes went wide as he looked upon the severed head, seeping blood from its wound, but somehow kept alive. Its eyes wavered about wildly, trying to focus on the aspect of Malacath before it. The once-proud eyes of the champion were choked with tears of grief, pain, and confused recognition.

To his horror, Malacath recognized only now that the man he had killed was not only one of his Orismer children, but very literally a son he had blessed an Orc maiden with years hence. For achingly long moments the two looked upon each other, despondent and shocked.

Then, silent as oiled steel, Shegorath strode into the clearing. He hefted Emmeg Gro-Kayra's disembodied head and bundled it into a small, grey sack. Shegorath reclaimed Neb-Crescen

from the corpse and turned to walk away. Malacath began to stand, but kneeled again, knowing he had irreversibly damned his own offspring to the realm of Sheogorath, and mourned his failure as the sound of his son's hoarse pleas faded into the frozen horizon.

# A Bloody Journal

*Viranus Donton*

[Many of the pages of this journal have been shredded or are too covered in blood to be legible.]

Sundas

It has been two weeks since Vitellus' death, and I fear that Mother will never truly accept the fact that he is gone. She visits his grave nightly, though I do not believe she knows I have seen her go. She speaks to him there, apologizing for sending him on his last mission. I know in my heart that he would have sought no other end. Better to die fighting for the honor of the Guild than to waste away in a life of relative safety.

...

Middas

Another day, another day of barracks duty. It's been a full month since I've been given a contract, any contract. My time is spent polishing weapons and training with the new boots. Eduard and I have spoken at length about this. His reasoning, as always, is sound. Mother fears for my safety, and for the safety of the Guild. This is a terrible weight for her to bear.

Perhaps when our numbers have risen, she will once again feel comfortable allowing me to perform my duties.

...

Morndas

Thank the gods for Eduard. I fear without him I would go mad. His constant companionship keeps me hopeful that I will one day be returned to active duty. Until then, we have each other. He has willingly forgone lucrative contracts in order to help me pass the days. A truer companion I could not imagine.

...

Loredas

Some days I question whether or not I am fit to be a Guild member. Perhaps Mother's fears for my safety not because of Viranus, but because of my own abilities. Am I a failure in her eyes? Does she believe me to be less a man than Viranus?

...

Turdas

Freedom! Finally, a contract! I was sent with one of our newer members to investigate a disappearance in Nonwyll Cavern. It was nothing glamorous, but I am glad for the opportunity to see some action.

I doubt, however, that Mother even knew about the contract, as the order came directly from Oreyne. It is good to see that he still has faith in my skills, and my ability to keep that new boot alive.

...

Loredas

Again, nothing. It seems my only hope is that Oreyne will find another contract for me, though contracts are harder and harder to come by with the increasing presence of the Blackwood Company in Cyrodiil.

Eduard and I spoke of them over breakfast this morning. He believes them to be nothing more than a rogue mercenary band. I fear he is as naïve as he is beautiful. The Blackwood Company bears watching.

...

[date obscured]

I've been given another contract, clearing out some trolls that have been troubling miners. And Eduard is to accompany me!

I can't think of better news. This is exactly what I need.

...

[date obscured]

Eduard is dead, along with the rest. I fear I will follow shortly. The fighting grew heavy with the trolls, but was under control. Then came the Blackwood Company. They were like madmen. Trolls, men, mer fell to their blades. It was inhuman

[text unreadable]

...

[text unreadable]

Blackwood Company gone quick as they came

Eduard fought bravely. All did. Rest now

...

I hear trolls

I'm sorry Mother



# A Dance In Fire

*Waughin Jarth*

A Dance in Fire, v1

A Dance in Fire

Chapter 1

by

Waughin Jarth

Scene: The Imperial City, Cyrodiil

Date: 7 Frost Fall, 3E 397

It seemed as if the palace had always housed the Atrius Building Commission, the company of clerks and estate agents who authored and notarized nearly every construction of any note in the Empire. It had stood for two hundred and fifty years, since the reign of the Emperor Magnus, a plain-fronted and austere hall on a minor but respectable plaza in the Imperial City. Energetic and ambitious middle-class lads and ladies worked there, as well as complacent middle-aged ones like Decumus Scotti. No one could imagine a world without the Commission, least of all Scotti. To be accurate, he could not imagine a world without himself in the Commission.

“Lord Atrius is perfectly aware of your contributions,” said the managing clerk, closing the shutter that demarcated Scotti’s office behind him. “But you know that things have been difficult.”

“Yes,” said Scotti, stiffly.

“Lord Vanech’s men have been giving us a lot of competition lately, and we must be more efficient if we are to survive. Unfortunately, that means releasing some of our historically best but presently underachieving senior clerks.”

“I understand. Can’t be helped.”

“I’m glad that you understand,” smiled the managing clerk, smiling thinly and withdrawing. “Please have your room cleared immediately.”

Scotti began the task of organizing all his work to pass on to his successor. It would probably be young Imbrallius who would take most of it on, which was as it should be, he considered philosophically. The lad knew how to find business. Scotti wondered idly what the fellow would do with the contracts for the new statue of St Alessia for which the Temple of the One had applied. Probably invent a clerical error, blame it on his old predecessor Decumus Scotti, and require an additional cost to rectify.

“I have correspondence for Decumus Scotti of the Atrius Building Commission.”

Scotti looked up. A fat-faced courier had entered his office and was thrusting forth a sealed scroll. He handed the boy a gold piece, and opened it up. By the poor penmanship, atrocious

spelling and grammar, and overall unprofessional tone, it was manifestly evident who the writer was. Liodes Jurus, a fellow clerk some years before, who had left the Commission after being accused of unethical business practices.

“Dear Sckotti,

I emagine you alway wondered what happened to me, and the last plase you would have expected to find me is out in the woods. But thats exactly where I am. Ha ha. If your’e smart and want to make lot of extra gold for Lord Atrius (and yourself, ha ha), youll come down to Vallinwood too. If you have’nt or have been following the politics hear lately, you may or may not know that ther’s bin a war between the Boshmer and there neighbors Elswere over the past two years. Things have only just calm down, and ther’s a lot that needs to be rebuilt.

Now Ive got more business than I can handel, but I need somone with some clout, someone representing a respected agencie to get the quill in the ink. That somone is you, my fiend. Come & meat me at the M’ther Paskos Tavern in Falinnesti, Vallinwood. Ill be here 2 weeks and you wont be sorrie.

—Jurus

P.S.: Bring a wagenload of timber if you can.”

“What do you have there, Scotti?” asked a voice.

Scotti started. It was Imbrallius, his damnably handsome face peeking through the shutters, smiling in that way that melted the hearts of the stingiest of patrons and the roughest of stonemasons. Scotti shoved the letter in his jacket pocket.

“Personal correspondence,” he sniffed. “I’ll be cleared up here in a just a moment.”

“I don’t want to hurry you,” said Imbrallius, grabbing a few sheets of blank contracts from Scotti’s desk. “I’ve just gone through a stack, and the junior scribes hands are all cramping up, so I thought you wouldn’t miss a few.”

The lad vanished. Scotti retrieved the letter and read it again. He thought about his life, something he rarely did. It seemed a sea of gray with a black insurmountable wall looming. There was only one narrow passage he could see in that wall. Quickly, before he had a moment to reconsider it, he grabbed a dozen of the blank contracts with the shimmering gold leaf ATRIUS BUILDING COMMISSION BY APPOINTMENT OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY and hid them in the satchel with his personal effects.

The next day he began his adventure with a giddy lack of hesitation. He arranged for a seat in a caravan bound for Valenwood, the single escorted conveyance to the southeast leaving the Imperial City that week. He had scarcely hours to pack, but he remembered to purchase a wagonload of timber.

“It will be extra gold to pay for a horse to pull that,” frowned the convoy head.

“So I anticipated,” smiled Scotti with his best Imbrallius grin.

Ten wagons in all set off that afternoon through the familiar Cyrodilic countryside. Past fields of wildflowers, gently rolling woodlands, friendly hamlets. The clop of the horses’ hooves against the sound stone road reminded Scotti that the Atrius Building Commission constructed it. Five of the eighteen

necessary contracts for its completion were drafted by his own hand.

“Very smart of you to bring that wood along,” said a gray-whiskered Breton man next to him on his wagon. “You must be in Commerce.”

“Of a sort,” said Scotti, in a way he hoped was mysterious, before introducing himself: “Decumus Scotti.”

“Gryf Mallon,” said the man. “I’m a poet, actually a translator of old Bosmer literature. I was researching some newly discovered tracts of the Mnoriad Pley Bar two years ago when the war broke out and I had to leave. You are no doubt familiar with the Mnoriad, if you’re aware of the Green Pact.”

Scotti thought the man might be speaking perfect gibberish, but he nodded his head.

“Naturally, I don’t pretend that the Mnoriad is as renowned as the Meh Ayleidion, or as ancient as the Dansir Gol, but I think it has a remarkable significance to understanding the nature of the merelithic Bosmer mind. The origin of the Wood Elf aversion to cutting their own wood or eating any plant material at all, yet paradoxically their willingness to import plantstuff from other cultures, I feel can be linked to a passage in the Mnoriad,” Mallon shuffled through some of his papers, searching for the appropriate text.

To Scotti’s vast relief, the carriage soon stopped to camp for the night. They were high on a bluff over a gray stream, and before them was the great valley of Valenwood. Only the cry of seabirds declared the presence of the ocean to the bay to the west: here the timber was so tall and wide, twisting around

itself like an impossible knot begun eons ago, to be impenetrable. A few more modest trees, only fifty feet to the lowest branches, stood on the cliff at the edge of camp. The sight was so alien to Scotti and he found himself so anxious about the proposition of entering the wilderness that he could not imagine sleeping.

Fortunately, Mallon had supposed he had found another academic with a passion for the riddles of ancient cultures. Long into the night, he recited Bosmer verse in the original and in his own translation, sobbing and bellowing and whispering wherever appropriate. Gradually, Scotti began to feel drowsy, but a sudden crack of wood snapping made him sit straight up.

“What was that?”

Mallon smiled: “I like it too. ‘Convocation in the malignity of the moonless speculum, a dance of fire—’”

“There are some enormous birds up in the trees moving around,” whispered Scotti, pointing in the direction of the dark shapes above.

“I wouldn’t worry about that,” said Mallon, irritated with his audience. “Now listen to how the poet characterizes Herma-Mora’s invocation in the eighteenth stanza of the fourth book.”

The dark shapes in the trees were some of them perched like birds, others slithered like snakes, and still others stood up straight like men. As Mallon recited his verse, Scotti watched the figures softly leap from branch to branch, half-gliding across impossible distances for anything without wings. They gathered in groups and then reorganized until they had spread

to every tree around the camp. Suddenly they plummeted from the heights.

“Mara!” cried Scotti. “They’re falling like rain!”

“Probably seed pods,” Mallon shrugged, not turning around. “Some of the trees have remarkable—”

The camp erupted into chaos. Fires burst out in the wagons, the horses wailed from mortal blows, casks of wine, fresh water, and liquor gushed their contents to the ground. A nimble shadow dashed past Scotti and Mallon, gathering sacks of grain and gold with impossible agility and grace. Scotti had only one glance at it, lit up by a sudden nearby burst of flame. It was a sleek creature with pointed ears, wide yellow eyes, mottled pied fur and a tail like a whip.

“Werewolf,” he whimpered, shrinking back.

“Cathay-raht,” groaned Mallon. “Much worse. Khajiti cousins or some such thing, come to plunder.”

“Are you sure?”

As quickly as they struck, the creatures retreated, diving off the bluff before the battlemage and knight, the caravan’s escorts, had fully opened their eyes. Mallon and Scotti ran to the precipice and saw a hundred feet below the tiny figures dash out of the water, shake themselves, and disappear into the wood.

“Werewolves aren’t acrobats like that,” said Mallon. “They were definitely Cathay-raht. Bastard thieves. Thank Stendarr they didn’t realize the value of my notebooks. It wasn’t a complete loss.”

A Dance in Fire, v2

A Dance in Fire

Chapter 2

by

Waughin Jarth

It was a complete loss. The Cathay-Raht had stolen or destroyed almost every item of value in the caravan in just a few minutes' time. Decumus Scotti's wagonload of wood he had hoped to trade with the Bosmer had been set on fire and then toppled off the bluff. His clothing and contracts were tattered and ground into the mud of dirt mixed with spilt wine. All the pilgrims, merchants, and adventurers in the group moaned and wept as they gathered the remnants of their belongings by the rising sun of the dawn.

"I best not tell anyone that I managed to hold onto my notes for my translation of the Mnoriad Pley Bar," whispered the poet Gryf Mallon. "They'd probably turn on me."

Scotti politely declined the opportunity of telling Mallon just how little value he himself placed on the man's property. Instead, he counted the coins in his purse. Thirty-four gold pieces. Very little indeed for an entrepreneur beginning a new business.

"Hoy!" came a cry from the wood. A small party of Bosmer emerged from the thicket, clad in leather mail and bearing arms. "Friend or foe?"

"Neither," growled the convoy head.



“You must be the Cyrodiils,” laughed the leader of the group, a tall skeleton-thin youth with a sharp vulpine face. “We heard you were en route. Evidently, so did our enemies.”

“I thought the war was over,” muttered one of the caravan’s now ruined merchants.

The Bosmer laughed again: “No act of war. Just a little border enterprise. You are going on to Falinesti?”

“I’m not,” the convoy head shook his head. “As far as I’m concerned, my duty is done. No more horses, no more caravan. Just a fat profit loss to me.”

The men and women crowded around the man, protesting, threatening, begging, but he refused to step foot in Valenwood. If these were the new times of peace, he said, he’d rather come back for the next war.

Scotti tried a different route and approached the Bosmer. He spoke with an authoritative but friendly voice, the kind he used in negotiations with peevish carpenters: “I don’t suppose you’d consider escorting me to Falinesti. I’m a representative for an important Imperial agency, the Atrius Building Commission, here to help repair and alleviate some of the problems the war with the Khajiit brought to your province. Patriotism—”

“Twenty gold pieces, and you must carry your own gear if you have any left,” replied the Bosmer.

Scotti reflected that negotiations with peevish carpenters rarely went his way either.

Six eager people had enough gold on them for payment. Among those without funds was the poet, who appealed to Scotti for

assistance.

“I’m sorry, Gryf, I only have fourteen gold left over. Not even enough for a decent room when I get to Falinesti. I really would help you if I could,” said Scotti, persuading himself that it was true.

The band of six and their Bosmer escorts began the descent down a rocky path along the bluff. Within an hour’s time, they were deep in the jungles of Valenwood. A never-ending canopy of hues of browns and greens obscured the sky. A millennia’s worth of fallen leaves formed a deep, wormy sea of putrefaction beneath their feet. Several miles were crossed wading through the slime. For several more, they took a labyrinthian path across fallen branches and the low-hanging boughs of giant trees.

All the while, hour after hour, the inexhaustible Bosmer host moved so fast, the Cyrodiils struggled to keep from being left behind. A red-faced little merchant with short legs took a bad step on a rotten branch and nearly fell. His fellow provincials had to help him up. The Bosmer paused only a moment, their eyes continually darting to the shadows in the trees above before moving on at their usual expeditious pace.

“What are they so nervous about?” wheezed the merchant irritably. “More Cathay-Raht?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” laughed the Bosmer unconvincingly. “Khajiit this far into Valenwood? In times of peace? They’d never dare.”

When the group passed high enough above the swamp that the smell was somewhat dissipated, Scotti felt a sudden pang of

hunger. He was used to four meals a day in the Cyrodilic custom. Hours of nonstop exertion without food was not part of his regimen as a comfortably paid clerk. He pondered, feeling somewhat delirious, how long they had been trotting through the jungle. Twelve hours? Twenty? A week? Time was meaningless. Sunlight was only sporadic through the vegetative ceiling. Phosphorescent molds on the trees and in the muck below provided the only regular illumination.

“Is it at all possible for us to rest and eat?” he hollered to his host up ahead.

“We’re near to Falinesti,” came the echoing reply. “Lots of food there.”

The path continued upward for several hours more across a clot of fallen logs, rising up to the first and then the second boughs of the tree line. As they rounded a long corner, the travelers found themselves midway up a waterfall that fell a hundred feet or more. No one had the energy to complain as they began pulling up the stacks of rock, agonizing foot by foot. The Bosmer escorts disappeared into the mist, but Scotti kept climbing until there was no more rock left. He wiped the sweat and river water from his eyes.

Falinesti spread across the horizon before him. Sprawling across both banks of the river stood the mighty graht-oak city, with groves and orchards of lesser trees crowding it like supplicants before their king. At a lesser scale, the tree that formed the moving city would have been extraordinary: gnarled and twisted with a gorgeous crown of gold and green, dripping with vines and shining with sap. At a mile tall and half as wide, it was the most magnificent thing Scotti had ever

seen. If he had not been a starving man with the soul of a clerk, he would have sung.

“There you are,” said the leader of the escorts. “Not too far a walk. You should be glad it’s wintertide. In summertide, the city’s on the far south end of the province.”

Scotti was lost as to how to proceed. The sight of the vertical metropolis where people moved about like ants disoriented all his sensibilities.

“You wouldn’t know of an inn called,” he paused for a moment, and then pulled Jurus’s letter from his pocket. “Something like ‘Mother Paskos Tavern’?”

“Mother Pascost?” the lead Bosmer laughed his familiar contemptuous laugh. “You won’t want to stay there? Visitors always prefer the Aysia Hall in the top boughs. It’s expensive, but very nice.”

“I’m meeting someone at Mother Pascost’s Tavern.”

“If you’ve made up your mind to go, take a lift to Havel Slump and ask for directions there. Just don’t get lost and fall asleep in the western cross.”

This apparently struck the youth’s friends as a very witty jest, and so it was with their laughter echoing behind him that Scotti crossed the writhing root system to the base of Falinesti. The ground was littered with leaves and refuse, and from moment to moment a glass or a bone would plummet from far above, so he walked with his neck crooked to have warning. An intricate network of platforms anchored to thick vines slipped up and down the slick trunk of the city with perfect grace,

manned by operators with arms as thick as an ox's belly. Scotti approaches the nearest fellow at one of the platforms, who was idly smoking from a glass pipe.

"I was wondering if you might take me to Havel Slump."

The mer nodded and within a few minutes time, Scotti was two hundred feet in the air at a crook between two mighty branches. Curled webs of moss stretched unevenly across the fork, forming a sharing roof for several dozen small buildings. There were only a few souls in the alley, but around the bend ahead, he could hear the sound of music and people. Scotti tipped the Falinesti Platform Ferryman a gold piece and asked for the location of Mother Pascost's Tavern.

"Straight ahead of you, sir, but you won't find anyone there," the Ferryman explained, pointing in the direction of the noise. "Morndas everyone in Havel Slump has revelry."

Scotti walked carefully along the narrow street. Though the ground felt as solid as the marble avenues of the Imperial City, there were slick cracks in the bark that exposed fatal drops into the river. He took a moment to sit down, to rest and get used to the view from the heights. It was a beautiful day for certain, but it took Scotti only a few minutes of contemplation to rise up in alarm. A jolly little raft anchored down stream below him had distinctly moved several inches while he watched it. But it hadn't moved at all. He had. Together with everything around him. It was no metaphor: the city of Falinesti walked. And, considering its size, it moved quickly.

Scotti rose to his feet and into a cloud of smoke that drifted out from around the bend. It was the most delicious roast he had ever smelled. The clerk forgot his fear and ran.

The “revelry” as the Ferryman had termed it took place on an enormous platform tied to the tree, wide enough to be a plaza in any other city. A fantastic assortment of the most amazing people Scotti had ever seen were jammed shoulder-to-shoulder together, many eating, many more drinking, and some dancing to a luteist and singer perched on an offshoot above the crowd. They were largely Bosmer, true natives clad in colorful leather and bones, with a close minority of orcs. Whirling through the throng, dancing and bellowing at one another were a hideous ape people. A few heads bobbing over the tops of the crowd belonged not, as Scotti first assumed, to very tall people, but to a family of centaurs.

“Care for some mutton?” queried a wizened old mer who roasted an enormous beast on some red-hot rocks.

Scotti quickly paid him a gold piece and devoured the leg he was given. And then another gold piece and another leg. The fellow chuckled when Scotti began choking on a piece of gristle, and handed him a mug of a frothing white drink. He drank it and felt a quiver run through his body as if he were being tickled.

“What is that?” Scotti asked.

“Jagga. Fermented pig’s milk. I can let you have a flagon of it and a bit more mutton for another gold.”

Scotti agreed, paid, gobbled down the meat, and took the flagon with him as he slipped into the crowd. His co-worker Liodes Jurus, the man who had told him to come to Valenwood, was nowhere to be seen. When the flagon was a quarter empty, Scotti stopped looking for Jurus. When it was half empty, he was dancing with the group, oblivious to the broken planks and

gaps in the fencework. At three quarters empty, he was trading jokes with a group of creatures whose language was completely alien to him. By the time the flagon was completely drained, he was asleep, snoring, while the revelry continued on all around his supine body.

The next morning, still asleep, Scotti had the sensation of someone kissing him. He made a face to return the favor, but a pain like fire spread through his chest and forced him to open his eyes. There was an insect the size of a large calf sitting on him, crushing him, its spiky legs holding him down while a central spiral-bladed vortex of a mouth tore through his shirt. He screamed and thrashed but the beast was too strong. It had found its meal and it was going to finish it.

It's over, thought Scotti wildly, I should have never left home. I could have stayed in the City, and perhaps found work with Lord Vanech. I could have begun again as a junior clerk and worked my way back up.

Suddenly the mouth released itself. The creature shivered once, expelled a burst of yellow bile, and died.

"Got one!" cried a voice, not too distantly.

For a moment, Scotti lay still. His head throbbed and his chest burned. Out of the corner of his eye he saw movement. Another of the horrible monsters was scurried towards him. He scrambled, trying to push himself free, but before he could come out, there was a sound of a bow cracking and an arrow pierced the second insect.

"Good shot!" cried another voice. "Get the first one again! I just saw it move a little!"

This time, Scotti felt the impact of the bolt hit the carcass. He cried out, but he could hear how muffled his voice was by the beetle's body. Cautiously, he tried sliding a foot out and rolling under, but the movement apparently had the effect of convincing the archers that the creature still lived. A volley of arrows was launched forth. Now the beast was sufficiently perforated so pools of its blood, and likely the blood of its victims, began to seep out onto Scotti's body.

When Scotti was a lad, before he grew too sophisticated for such sports, he had often gone to the Imperial Arena for the competitions of war. He recalled a great veteran of the fights, when asked, telling him his secret, "Whenever I'm in doubt of what to do, and I have a shield, I stay behind it."

Scotti followed that advice. After an hour, when he no longer heard arrows being fired, he threw aside the remains of the bug and leapt as quickly as he could to a stand. It was not a moment too soon. A gang of eight archers had their bows pointing his direction, ready to fire. When they saw him, they laughed.

"Didn't anyone ever tell you not to sleep in the western cross? How're we going to exterminate all the hoarvors if you drunks keep feeding 'em?"

Scotti shook his head and walked back along the platform, round the bend, to Havel Slump. He was bloodied and torn and tired and he had far too much fermented pig's milk. All he wanted was a proper place to lie down. He stepped into Mother Pascost's Tavern, a dank place, wet with sap, smelling of mildew.

"My name is Decumus Scotti," he said. "I was hoping you have someone named Jurus staying here."



“Decumus Scotti?” pondered the fleshy proprietress, Mother Pascost herself. “I’ve heard that name. Oh, you must be the fellow he left the note for. Let me go see if I can find it.”

A Dance in Fire, v3

A Dance in Fire

Chapter 3

by

Waughin Jarth

Mother Pascost disappeared into the sordid hole that was her tavern, and emerged a moment later with a scrap of paper with Liodes Jurus’s familiar scrawl. Decumus Scotti held it up before a patch of sunlight that had found its way through the massive boughs of the tree city, and read.

Sckotti,

So you made it to Falinnesti, Vallinwood! Congradulatens! Im sure you had quit a adventure getting here. Unfortonitly, Im not here anymore as you probaby guess. Theres a town down rivver called Athie Im at. Git a bote and join me! Its ideal! I hope you brot a lot of contracks, cause these people need a lot of building done. They wer close to the war, you see, but not so close they dont have any mony left to pay. Ha ha. Meat me down here as son as you can.

Jurus

So, Scotti pondered, Jurus had left Falinesti and gone to some place called Athie. Given his poor penmanship and ghastly

spelling, it could equally well be Athy, Aphy, Othry, Imthri, Urtha, or Krakamaka. The sensible thing to do, Scotti knew, was to call this adventure over and try to find some way to get back home to the Imperial City. He was no mercenary devoted to a life of thrills: he was, or at least had been, a senior clerk at a successful private building commission. Over the last few weeks, he had been robbed by the Cathay-Raht, taken on a death march through the jungle by a gang of giggling Bosmeri, half-starved to death, drugged with fermented pig's milk, nearly slain by some kind of giant tick, and attacked by archers. He was filthy, exhausted, and had, he counted, ten gold pieces to his name. Now the man whose proposal brought him to the depths of misery was not even there. It was both judicious and seemly to abandon the enterprise entirely.

And yet, a small but distinct voice in his head told him: You have been chosen. You have no other choice but to see this through.

Scotti turned to the stout old woman, Mother Pascost, who had been watching him curiously: "I was wondering if you knew of a village that was at the edge of the recent conflict with Elsweyr. It's called something like Ath-ie?"

"You must mean Athay," she grinned. "My middle lad, Viglil, he manages a dairy down there. Beautiful country, right on the river. Is that where your friend went?"

"Yes," said Scotti. "Do you know the fastest way to get there?"

After a short conversation, an even shorter ride to Falinesti's roots by way of the platforms, and a jog to the river bank, Scotti was negotiating transport with a huge fair-haired Bosmer with a face like a pickled carp. He called himself Captain Balfix, but

even Scotti with his sheltered life could recognize him for what he was. A retired pirate for hire, a smuggler for certain, and probably much worse. His ship, which had clearly been stolen in the distant past, was a bent old Imperial sloop.

“Fifty gold and we’ll be in Athay in two days time,” boomed Captain Balfix expansively.

“I have ten, no, sorry, nine gold pieces,” replied Scotti, and feeling the need for explanation, added, “I had ten, but I gave one to the Platform Ferryman to get me down here.”

“Nine is just as fine,” said the captain agreeably. “Truth be told, I was going to Athay whether you paid me or not. Make yourself comfortable on the boat, we’ll be leaving in just a few minutes.”

Decumus Scotti boarded the vessel, which sat low in the water of the river, stacked high with crates and sacks that spilled out of the hold and galley and onto the deck. Each was marked with stamps advertising the most innocuous substances: copper scraps, lard, ink, High Rock meal (marked “For Cattle”), tar, fish jelly. Scotti’s imagination reeled picturing what sorts of illicit imports were truly aboard.

It took more than those few minutes for Captain Balfix to haul in the rest of his cargo, but in an hour, the anchor was up and they were sailing downriver towards Athay. The green gray water barely rippled, only touched by the fingers of the breeze. Lush plant life crowded the banks, obscuring from sight all the animals that sang and roared at one another. Lulled by the serene surroundings, Scotti drifted to sleep.

At night, he awoke and gratefully accepted some clean clothes and food from Captain Balfix.

“Why are you going to Athay, if I may ask?” queried the Bosmer.

“I’m meeting a former colleague there. He asked me to come down from the Imperial City where I worked for the Atrius Building Commission to negotiate some contracts,” Scotti took another bite of the dried sausages they were sharing for dinner. “We’re going to try to repair and refurbish whatever bridges, roads, and other structures that got damaged in the recent war with the Khajiiti.”

“It’s been a hard two years,” the captain nodded his head.

“Though I suppose good for me and the likes of you and your friend. Trade routes cut off. Now they think there’s going to be war with the Summurset Isles, you heard that?”

Scotti shook his head.

“I’ve done my share of smuggling skooma down the coast, even helping some revolutionary types escape the Mane’s wrath, but now the wars’ve made me a legitimate trader, a business-man. The first casualties of war is always the corrupted.”

Scotti said he was sorry to hear that, and they lapsed into silence, watching the stars and moons’ reflection on the still water. The next day, Scotti awoke to find the captain wrapped up in his sail, torpid from alcohol, singing in a low, slurred voice. When he saw Scotti rise, he offered his flagon of jagga.

“I learned my lesson during revelry at western cross.”

The captain laughed, and then burst into tears, “I don’t want to be legitimate. Other pirates I used to know are still raping and

stealing and smuggling and selling nice folk like you into slavery. I swear to you, I never thought the first time that I ran a real shipment of legal goods that my life would turn out like this. Oh, I know, I could go back to it, but Baan Dar knows not after all I've seen. I'm a ruined man."

Scotti helped the weeping mer out of the sail, murmuring words of reassurance. Then he added, "Forgive me for changing the subject, but where are we?"

"Oh," moaned Captain Balfix miserably. "We made good time. Athay's right around the bend in the river."

"Then it looks like Athay's on fire," said Scotti, pointing.

A great plume of smoke black as pitch was rising above the trees. As they drifted around the bend, they next saw the flames, and then the blackened skeletal remains of the village. Dying, blazing villagers leapt from rocks into the river. A cacophony of wailing met their ears, and they could see, roaming along the edges of the town, the figures of Khajiiti soldiers bearing torches.

"Baan Dar bless me!" slurred the captain. "The war's back on!"

"Oh, no," whimpered Scotti.

The sloop drifted with the current toward the opposite shore away from the fiery town. Scotti turned his attention there, and the sanctuary it offered. Just a peaceful arbor, away from the horror. There was a shudder of leaves in two of the trees and a dozen lithe Khajiit dropped to the ground, armed with bows.

"They see us," hissed Scotti. "And they've got bows!"

“Well, of course they have bows,” snarled Captain Balfix. “We Bosmer may have invented the bloody things, but we didn’t think to keep them secret, you bloody bureaucrat.”

“Now, they’re setting their arrows on fire!”

“Yes, they do that sometimes.”

“Captain, they’re shooting at us! They’re shooting at us with flaming arrows!”

“Ah, so they are,” the captain agreed. “The aim here is to avoid being hit.”

But hit they were, and very shortly thereafter. Even worse, the second volley of arrows hit the supply of pitch, which ignited in a tremendous blue blaze. Scotti grabbed Captain Balfix and they leapt overboard just before the ship and all its cargo disintegrated. The shock of the cold water brought the Bosmer into temporary sobriety. He called to Scotti, who was already swimming as fast as he could toward the bend.

“Master Decumus, where do you think you’re swimming to?”

“Back to Falinesti!” cried Scotti.

“It will take you days, and by the time you get there, everyone will know about the attack on Athay! They’ll never let anyone they don’t know in! The closest village downriver is Grenos, maybe they’ll give us shelter!”

Scotti swam back to the captain and side-by-side they began paddling in the middle of the river, past the burning residuum of the village. He thanked Mara that he had learned to swim. Many a Cyrodiil did not, as largely land-locked as the Imperial

Province was. Had he been raised in Mir Corrup or Artemon, he might have been doomed, but the Imperial City itself was encircled by water, and every lad and lass there knew how to cross without a boat. Even those who grew up to be clerks and not adventurers.

Captain Balfix's sobriety faded as he grew used to the water's temperature. Even in wintertide, the Xylo River was fairly temperate and after a fashion, even comfortable. The Bosmer's strokes were uneven, and he'd stray closer to Scotti and then further away, pushing ahead and then falling behind.

Scotti looked to the shore to his right: the flames had caught the trees like tinder. Behind them was an inferno, with which they were barely keeping pace. To the shore on their left, all looked fair, until he saw a tremble in the river-reeds, and then what caused it. A pride of the largest cats he had ever seen. They were auburn-haired, green-eyed beasts with jaws and teeth to match his wildest nightmares. And they were watching the two swimmers, and keeping pace.

"Captain Balfix, we can't go to either that shore or the other one, or we'll be parboiled or eaten," Scotti whispered. "Try to even your kicking and your strokes. Breath like you would normally. If you're feeling tired, tell me, and we'll float on our backs for a while."

Anyone who has had the experience of giving rational advice to a drunkard would understand the hopelessness. Scotti kept pace with the captain, slowing himself, quickening, drifting left and right, while the Bosmer moaned old ditties from his pirate days. When he wasn't watching his companion, he watched the cats on the shore. After a stretch, he turned to his right. Another village had caught fire. Undoubtedly, it was

Grenos. Scotti stared at the blazing fury, awed by the sight of the destruction, and did not hear that the captain had ceased to sing.

When he turned back, Captain Balfix was gone.

Scotti dove into the murky depths of the river over and over again. There was nothing to be done. When he surfaced after his final search, he saw that the giant cats had moved on, perhaps assuming that he too had drowned. He continued his lonely swim downriver. A tributary, he noted, had formed a final barrier, keeping the flames from spreading further. But there were no more towns. After several hours, he began to ponder the wisdom of going ashore. Which shore was the question.

He was spared the decision. Ahead of him was a rocky island with a bonfire. He did not know if he were intruding on a party of Bosmeri or Khajiiti, only that he could swim no more. With straining, aching muscles, he pulled himself onto the rocks.

They were Bosmer refugees he gathered, even before they told him. Roasting over the fire was the remains of one of the giant cats that had been stalking him through the jungle on the opposite shore.

“Senche-Tiger,” said one of the young warriors ravenously. “It’s no animal—it’s as smart as any Cathay-Raht or Ohmes or any other bleeding Khajiiti. Pity this one drowned. I would have gladly killed it. You’ll like the meat, though. Sweet, from all the sugar these asses eat.”

Scotti did not know if he was capable of eating a creature as intelligent as a man or mer, but he surprised himself, as he had



done several times over the last days. It was rich, succulent, and sweet, like sugared pork, but no seasonings had been added. He surveyed the crowd as he ate. A sad lot, some still weeping for lost family members. They were the survivors of both the villages of Grenos and Athay, and war was on every person's lips. Why had the Khajiiti attacked again? Why—specifically directed at Scotti, as a Cyrodiil—why was the Emperor not enforcing peace in his provinces?

“I was to meet another Cyrodiil,” he said to a Bosmer maiden who he understood to be from Athay. “His name was Liodes Jurus. I don't suppose you know what might have happened to him.”

“I don't know your friend, but there were many Cyrodiils in Athay when the fire came,” said the girl. “Some of them, I think, left quickly. They were going to Vindisi, inland, in the jungle. I am going there tomorrow, so are many of us. If you wish, you may come as well.”

Decumus Scotti nodded solemnly. He made himself as comfortable as he could in the stony ground of the river island, and somehow, after much effort, he fell asleep. But he did not sleep well.

A Dance in Fire, v4

A Dance in Fire

Chapter 4

by

Waughin Jarth

Eighteen Bosmeri and one Cyrodilic former senior clerk for an Imperial building commission trudged through the jungle westward from the Xylo River to the ancient village of Vindisi. For Decumus Scotti, the jungle was hostile, unfamiliar ground. The enormous vermiculated trees filled the bright morning with darkness, and resembled nothing so much as grasping claws, bent on impeding their progress. Even the fronds of the low plants quivered with malevolent energy. What was worse, he was not alone in his anxiety. His fellow travelers, the natives who had survived the Khajiit attacks on the villages of Grenos and Athay, wore faces of undisguised fear.

There was something sentient in the jungle, and not merely the mad but benevolent indigenous spirits. In his peripheral vision, Scotti could see the shadows of the Khajiiti following the refugees, leaping from tree to tree. When he turned to face them, the lithe forms vanished into the gloom as if they had never been there. But he knew he had seen them. And the Bosmeri saw them too, and quickened their pace.

After eighteen hours, bitten raw by insects, scratched by a thousand thorns, they emerged into a valley clearing. It was night, but a row of blazing torches greeted them, illuminating the leather-wrought tents and jumbled stones of the hamlet of Vindisi. At the end of the valley, the torches marked a sacred site, a gnarled bower of trees pressed closed together to form a temple. Wordlessly, the Bosmeri walked the torch arcade toward the trees. Scotti followed them. When they reached the solid mass of living wood with only one gaping portal, Scotti could see a dim blue light glowing within. A low sonorous moan from a hundred voices echoed within. The Bosmeri maiden he had been following held out her hand, stopping him.

“You do not understand, but no outsider, not even a friend may enter,” she said. “This is a holy place.”

Scotti nodded, and watched the refugees march into the temple, heads bowed. Their voices joined with the ones within. When the last wood elf had gone inside, Scotti turned his attention back to the village. There must be food to be had somewhere. A tendril of smoke and a faint whiff of roasting venison beyond the torchlight led him.

They were five Cyrodiils, two Bretons, and a Nord, the group gathered around a campfire of glowing white stones, pulling steaming strips of meat from the cadaver of a great stag. At Scotti’s approach, they rose up, all but the Nord who was distracted by his hunk of animal flesh.

“Good evening, sorry to interrupt, but I was wondering if I might have a little something to eat. I’m afraid I’m rather hungry, after walking all day with some refugees from Grenos and Athay.”

They bade him to sit down and eat, and introduced themselves.

“So the war’s back on, it seems,” said Scotti amiably.

“Best thing for these effete do-nothings,” replied the Nord in between bites. “I’ve never seen such a lazy culture. Now they’ve got the Khajiiti striking them on land, and the high elves at sea. If there’s any province that deserves a little distress, it’s damnable Valenwood.”

“I don’t see how they’re so offensive to you,” laughed one of the Bretons.

“They’re congenital thieves, even worse than the Khajiiti because they are so blessed meek in their aggression,” the Nord spat out a gob of fat which sizzled on the hot stones of the fire. “They spread their forests into territory that doesn’t belong to them, slowly infiltrating their neighbors, and they’re puzzled when Elsweyr shoves back at them. They’re all villains of the worst order.”

“What are you doing here?” asked Scotti.

“I’m a diplomat from the court of Jehenna,” muttered the Nord, returning to his food.

“What about you, what are you doing here?” asked one of the Cyrodiils.

“I work for Lord Atrius’s building commission in the Imperial City,” said Scotti. “One of my former colleagues suggested that I come down to Valenwood. He said the war was over, and I could contract a great deal of business for my firm rebuilding what was lost. One disaster after another, and I’ve lost all my money, I’m in the middle of a rekindling of war, and I cannot find my former colleague.”

“Your former colleague,” murmured another of the Cyrodiils, who had introduced himself as Reglius. “He wasn’t by any chance named Liodes Jurus, was he?”

“You know him?”

“He lured me down to Valenwood in nearly the exact same circumstances,” smiled Reglius, grimly. “I worked for your employer’s competitor, Lord Vanech’s men, where Liodes Jurus also formerly worked. He wrote to me, asking that I represent

an Imperial building commission and contract some post-war construction. I had just been released from my employment, and I thought that if I brought some new business, I could have my job back. Jurus and I met in Athay, and he said he was going to arrange a very lucrative meeting with the Silvenar.”

Scotti was stunned: “Where is he now?”

“I’m no theologian, so I couldn’t say,” Reglius shrugged. “He’s dead. When the Khajiiti attacked Athay, they began by torching the harbor where Jurus was readying his boat. Or, I should say, my boat since it was purchased with the gold I brought. By the time we were even aware of what was happening enough to flee, everything by the water was ash. The Khajiiti may be animals, but they know how to arrange an attack.”

“I think they followed us through the jungle to Vindisi,” said Scotti nervously. “There was definitely a group of something jumping along the treetops.”

“Probably one of the monkey folk,” snorted the Nord. “Nothing to be concerned about.”

“When we first came to Vindisi and the Bosmeri all entered that tree, they were furious, whispering something about unleashing an ancient terror on their enemies,” the Breton shivered, remembering. “They’ve been there ever since, for over a day and a half now. If you want something to be afraid of, that’s the direction to look.”

The other Breton, who was a representative of the Daggerfall Mages Guild, was staring off into the darkness while his fellow provincial spoke. “Maybe. But there’s something in the jungle too, right on the edge of the village, looking in.”

“More refugees maybe?” asked Scotti, trying to keep the alarm out his voice.

“Not unless they’re traveling through the trees now,” whispered the wizard. The Nord and one of the Cyrodiils grabbed a long tarp of wet leather and pulled it across the fire, instantly extinguishing it without so much as a sizzle. Now Scotti could see the intruders, their elliptical yellow eyes and long cruel blades catching the torchlight. He froze with fear, praying that he too was not so visible to them.

He felt something bump against his back, and gasped.

Reglius’s voice hissed from up above: “Be quiet for Mara’s sake and climb up here.”

Scotti grabbed hold of the knotted double-vine that hung down from a tall tree at the edge of the dead campfire. He scrambled up it as quickly as he could, holding his breath lest any grunt of exertion escape him. At the top of the vine, high above the village, was an abandoned nest from some great bird in a trident-shaped branch. As soon as Scotti had pulled himself into the soft, fragrant straw, Reglius pulled up the vine. No one else was there, and when Scotti looked down, he could see no one below. No one, that is except the Khajiiti, slowly moving toward the glow of the temple tree.

“Thank you,” whispered Scotti, deeply touched that a competitor had helped him. He turned away from the village, and saw that the tree’s upper branches brushed against the mossy rock walls that surrounded the valley below. “How are you at climbing?”

“You’re mad,” said Reglius under his breath. “We should stay here until they leave.”

“If they burn Vindisi like they did Athay and Grenos, we’ll be dead sure as if we were on the ground,” Scotti began the slow careful climb up the tree, testing each branch. “Can you see what they’re doing?”

“I can’t really tell,” Reglius stared down into the gloom. “They’re at the front of the temple. I think they also have...it looks like long ropes, trailing off behind them, off into the pass.”

Scotti crawled onto the strongest branch that pointed toward the wet, rocky face of the cliff. It was not a far jump at all. So close, in fact, that he could smell the moisture and feel the coolness of the stone. But it was a jump nevertheless, and in his history as a clerk, he had never before leapt from a tree a hundred feet off the ground to a sheer rock. He pictured in his mind’s eye the shadows that had pursued him through the jungle from the heights above. How their legs coiled to spring, how their arms snapped forward in an elegant fluid motion to grasp. He leapt.

His hands grappled for rock, but long thick cords of moss were more accessible. He held hard, but when he tried to plant his feet forward, they slipped up skyward. For a few seconds, he found himself upside down before he managed to pull himself into a more conventional position. There was a narrow outcropping jutting out of the cliff where he could stand and finally exhale.

“Reglius. Reglius. Reglius,” Scotti did not dare to call out. In a minute, there was a shaking of branches, and Lord Vanech’s

man emerged. First his satchel, then his head, then the rest of him. Scotti started to whisper something, but Reglius shook his head violently and pointed downward. One of the Khajiiti was at the base of the tree, peering at the remains of the campfire.

Reglius awkwardly tried to balance himself on the branch, but as strong as it was it was exceedingly difficult with only one free hand. Scotti cupped his palms and then pointed at the satchel. It seemed to pain Reglius to let it out of his grasp, but he relented and tossed it to Scotti.

There was a small, almost invisible hole in the bag, and when Scotti caught it, a single gold coin dropped out. It rang as it bounced against the rock wall on the descent, a high soft sound that seemed like the loudest alarm Scotti had ever heard.

Then many things happened very quickly.

The Cathay-Raht at the base of the tree looked up and gave a loud wail. The other Khajiiti followed in chorus, as the cat below crouched down and then sprung up into the lower branches. Reglius saw it below him, climbing up with impossible dexterity, and panicked. Even before he jumped, Scotti could tell that he was going to fall. With a cry, Reglius the Clerk plunged to the ground, breaking his neck on impact.

A flash of white fire erupted from every crevice of the temple, and the moan of the Bosmeri prayer changed into something terrible and otherworldly. The climbing Cathay-Raht stopped and stared.

“Keirgo,” it gasped. “The Wild Hunt.”



It was as if a crack in reality had opened wide. A flood of horrific beasts, tentacled toads, insects of armor and spine, gelatinous serpents, vaporous beings with the face of gods, all poured forth from the great hollow tree, blind with fury. They tore the Khajiiti in front of the temple to pieces. All the other cats fled for the jungle, but as they did so, they began pulling on the ropes they carried. In a few seconds time, the entire village of Vindisi was boiling with the lunatic apparitions of the Wild Hunt.

Over the babbling, barking, howling horde, Scotti heard the Cyrodiils in hiding cry out as they were devoured. The Nord too was found and eaten, and both Bretons. The wizard had turned himself invisible, but the swarm did not rely on their sight. The tree the Cathay-Raht was in began to sway and rock from the impossible violence beneath it. Scotti looked at the Khajiiti's fear-struck eyes, and held out one of the cords of moss.

The cat's face showed its pitiful gratitude as it leapt for the vine. It didn't have time to entirely replace that expression when Scotti pulled back the cord, and watched it fall. The Hunt consumed it to the bone before it struck the ground.

Scotti's own jump up to the next outcropping of rock was immeasurably more successful. From there, he pulled himself to the top of the cliff and was able to look down into the chaos that had been the village of Vindisi. The Hunt's mass had grown and began to spill out through the pass out of the valley, pursuing the fleeing Khajiiti. It was then that the madness truly began.

In the moons' light, from Scotti's vantage, he could see where the Khajiiti had attached their ropes. With a thunderous boom, an avalanche of boulders poured over the pass. When the dust

cleared, he saw that the valley had been sealed. The Wild Hunt had nowhere to turn but on itself.

Scotti turned his head, unable to bear to look at the cannibalistic orgy. The night jungle stood before him, a web of wood. He slung Reglius's satchel over his shoulder, and entered.

A Dance in Fire, v5

A Dance in Fire

Chapter 5

by

Waughin Jarth

“Soap! The forest will eat love! Straight ahead! Stupid and a stupid cow!”

The voice boomed out so suddenly that Decumus Scotti jumped. He stared off into the dim jungle glade from which he only heard animal and insect calls, and the low whistling of wind moments before. It was a queer, oddly accented voice of indiscriminate gender, tremulous in its modulations, but unmistakably human. Or, at very least, elven. An isolated Bosmer perhaps with a poor grasp of the Cyrodilic language. After countless hours of plodding through the dense knot of Valenwood jungle, any voice of slight familiarity sounded wondrous.

“Hello?” he cried.

“Beetles on any names? Certainly yesterday yes!” the voice called back. “Who, what, and when, and mice!”

“I’m afraid I don’t understand,” replied Scotti, turning toward the brambled tree, thick as a wagon, where the voice had issued. “But you needn’t be afraid of me. My name is Decumus Scotti. I’m a Cyrodiil from the Imperial City. I came here to help rebuild Valenwood after the war, you see, and now I’m rather lost.”

“Gemstones and grilled slaves...The war,” moaned the voice and broke down into sobs.

“You know about the war? I wasn’t sure, I wasn’t even sure how far away from the border I am now,” Scotti began slowly walking toward the tree. He dropped Reglius’s satchel to the ground, and held out his empty hands. “I’m unarmed. I only want to know the way to the closest town. I’m trying to meet my friend, Liodes Jurus, in Silvenar.”

“Silvenar!” the voice laughed. It laughed even louder as Scotti circled the tree. “Worms and wine! Worms and wine! Silvenar sings for worms and wine!”

There was nothing to be found anywhere around the tree. “I don’t see you. Why are you hiding?”

In frustration born of hunger and exhaustion, he struck the tree trunk. A sudden shiver of gold and red erupted from a hollow nook above, and Scotti was surrounded by six winged creatures scarcely more than a few inches long. Bright crimson eyes were set on either side of tunnel-like protuberances, the animals’ always open mouths. They were legless, and their thin, rapidly beating, aureate wings seemed poorly constructed to transport their fat, swollen bellies. And yet, they darted through the air like sparks from a fire. Whirling about the poor

clerk, they began chattering what he now understood to be perfect nonsense.

“Wines and worms, how far from the border am I! Academic garnishments, and alas, Liodes Jurus!”

“Hello, I’m afraid I’m unarmed? Smoken flames and the closest town is dear Oblivion.”

“Swollen on bad meat, an indigo nimbus, but you needn’t be afraid of me!”

“Why are you hiding? Why are you hiding? Before I begin to friend, love me, Lady Zuleika!”

Furious with the mimics, Scotti swung his arms, driving them up into the treetops. He stomped back to the clearing and opened up the satchel again, as he had done some hours before. There was still, unsurprisingly, nothing useful in the bag, and nothing to eat in any corner or pocket. A goodly amount of gold (he smiled grimly, as he had done before, at the irony of being financially solvent in the jungle), a stack of neat blank contracts from Lord Vanech’s building commission, some thin cord, and an oiled leather cloak for bad weather. At least, Scotti considered, he had not suffered rain.

A rolling moan of thunder reminded Scotti of what he had suspected for some weeks now. He was cursed.

Within an hour’s time, he was wearing the cloak and clawing his way through mud. The trees, which had earlier allowed no sunlight in, provided no shelter against the pounding storm and wind. The only sounds that pierced the pelting of the rain were the mocking calls of the flying creatures, flitting just

above, babbling their nonsense. Scotti bellowed at them, threw rocks, but they seemed enamored of his company.

While he was reaching to grab a promising looking stone to hurl at his tormentors, Scotti felt something shift beneath his feet. Wet but solid ground suddenly liquefied and became a rolling tide, rushing him forward. Light as a leaf, he flew head over feet over head, until the mudflow dropped and he continued forward, plunging down into a river twenty-five feet below.

The storm passed quite as instantly as it had arrived. The sun melted the dark clouds and warmed Scotti as he swam for the shore. There, another sign of the Khajiiti incursion into Valenwood greeted him. A small fishing village had stood there once, so recently extinct that it smoldered like a still-warm corpse. Dirt cairns that had once housed fish by the smell of them had been ravaged, their bounty turned to ash. Rafts and skiffs lay broken, scuttled, half-submerged. All the villagers were no more, either dead or refugees far away. Or so he presumed. Something banged against the wall of one of the ruins. Scotti ran to investigate.

“My name is Decumus Scotti?” sang the first winged beast. “I’m a Cyrodiil from? The Imperial City? I came here to help rebuild Valenwood after the war, you see, and now I’m rather lost?”

“I swell to maculate, apeneck!” agreed one of its companions. “I don’t see you. Why are you hiding?”

As they fell into chattering, Scotti began to search the rest of the village. Surely the cats had left something behind, a scrap of dried meat, a morsel of fish sausage, anything. But they had been immaculate in their complete annihilation. There was

nothing to eat anywhere. Scotti did find one item of possible use under the tumbled remains of a stone hut. A bow and two arrows made of bone. The string had been lost, likely burned away in the heat of the fire, but he pulled the cord from Reglius's satchel and restrung it.

The creatures flew over and hovered nearby as he worked: "The convent of the sacred Liodes Jurus?"

"You know about the war! Worms and wine, circumscribe a golden host, apeneck!"

The moment the cord was taut, Scotti nocked an arrow and swung around, pulling the string tight against his chest. The winged beasts, having had experience with archers before, shot off in all directions in a blur. They needn't have bothered. Scotti's first arrow dove into the ground three feet in front of him. He swore and retrieved it. The mimics, having likewise had experience with poor archers before, returned at once to hovering nearby and mocking Scotti.

On his second shot, Scotti did much better, in purely technical terms. He remembered how the archers in Falinesti looked when he pulled himself out from under the hoarvor tick, and they were all taking aim at him. He extended his left hand, right hand, and right elbow in a symmetrical line, drawing the bow so his hand touched his jawline, and he could see the creature in his sight like the arrow was a finger he was pointing with. The bolt missed the target by only two feet, but it continued on its trajectory, snapping when it struck a rock wall.

Scotti walked to the river's edge. He had only one arrow left, and perhaps, he considered, it would be most practical to find a

slow-moving fish and fire it on that. If he missed, at least there was less of a chance of breaking the shaft, and he could always retrieve it from the water. A rather torpid, whiskered fish rolled by, and he took aim at it.

“My name is Decumus Scotti!” one of the creatures howled, frightening the fish away. “Stupid and a stupid cow! Will you dance a dance in fire!”

Scotti turned and aimed the arrow as he had done before. This time, however, he remembered to plant his feet as the archers had done, seven inches apart, knees straight, left leg slightly forward to meet the angle of his right shoulder. He released the last arrow.

The arrow also proved a serviceable prong for roasting the creature against the smoking hot stones of one of the ruins. Its other companions had disappeared instantly after the beast was slain, and Scotti was able to dine in peace. The meat proved to be delicious, if scarcely more than a first course. He was picking the last of it from the bones, when a boat sailed into view from around the bend of the river. At the helm were Bosmer sailors. Scotti ran to the bank and waved his arms. They averted their eyes and continued past.

“You bloody, callous bastards!” Scotti howled. “Knives! Hooligans! Apenecks! Scoundrels!”

A gray-whiskered form came out from a hatch, and Scotti immediately recognized him as Gryf Mallon, the poet translator he had met in the caravan from Cyrodiil.

He peered Scotti’s direction, and his eyes lit up with delight, “Decumus Scotti! Precisely the man I hoped to see! I want to get

your thoughts on a rather puzzling passage in the Mnoriad Pley Bar! It begins 'I went weeping into the world, searching for wonders,' perhaps you're familiar with it?"

"I'd like nothing better than to discuss the Mnoriad Pley Bar with you, Gryf!" Scotti called back. "Would you let me come aboard though first?"

Overjoyed at being on a ship bound for any port at all, Scotti was true to his word. For over an hour as the boat rolled down the river past the blackened remnants of Bosmeri villages, he asked no questions and spoke nothing of his life over the past weeks: he merely listened to Mallon's theories of merethic Aldmeri esoterica. The translator was undemanding of his guest's scholarship, accepting nods and shrugs as civilized conversation. He even produced some wine and fish jelly, which he shared with Scotti absent-mindedly, as he expounded on his various theses.

Finally, while Mallon was searching for a reference to some minor point in his notes, Scotti asked, "Rather off subject, but I was wondering where we're bound."

"The very heart of the province, Silvenar," Mallon said, not looking up from the passage he was reading. "It's somewhat bothersome, actually, as I wanted to go to Woodhearth first to talk to a Bosmer there who claims to have an original copy of Dirith Yalmillhiad, if you can believe it. But for the time being, that has to wait. Summurset Isle has surrounded the city, and is in the process of starving the citizenry until they surrender. It's a tiresome prospect, since the Bosmeri are happy to eat one another, so there's a risk that at the end, only one fat wood elf will remain to wave the flag."



“That is vexing,” agreed Scotti, sympathetically. “To the east, the Khajiiti are burning everything, and to the west, the High Elves are waging war. I don’t suppose the borders to the north are clear?”

“They’re even worse,” replied Mallon, finger on the page, still distracted. “The Cyrodiils and Redguards don’t want Bosmer refugees streaming into their provinces. It only stands to reason. Imagine how much more criminally inclined they’d be now that they’re homeless and hungry.”

“So,” murmured Scotti, feeling a shiver. “We’re trapped in Valenwood.”

“Not at all. I need to leave fairly shortly myself, as my publisher has set a very definite deadline for my new book of translations. From what I understand, one merely petitions to the Silvenar for special border protection and one can cross into Cyrodiil with impunity.”

“Petition the Silvenar, or petition at Silvenar?”

“Petition the Silvenar at Silvenar. It’s an odd nomenclature that is typical of this place, the sort of thing that makes my job as a translator that much more challenging. The Silvenar, he, or rather they are the closest the Bosmeri have to a great leader. The essential thing to remember about the Silvenar—” Mallon smiled, finding the passage he was looking for, “Here! ‘A fortnight, inexplicable, the world burns into a dance.’ There’s that metaphor again.”

“What were you saying about the Silvenar?” asked Scotti. “The essential thing to remember?”

“I don’t remember what I was saying,” replied Mallon, turning back to his oration.

In a week’s time, the little boat bumped along the shallow, calmer waters of the foaming current the Xylo had become, and Decumus Scotti first saw the city of Silvenar. If Falinesti was a tree, then Silvenar was a flower. A magnificent pile of faded shades of green, red, blue, and white, shining with crystalline residue. Mallon had mentioned off-hand, when not otherwise explaining Aldmeri prosody, that Silvenar had once been a blossoming glade in the forest, but owing to some spell or natural cause, the trees’ sap began flowing with translucent liqueur. The process of the sap flowing and hardening over the colorful trees had formed the web of the city. Mallon’s description was intriguing, but it hardly prepared him for the city’s beauty.

“What is the finest, most luxurious tavern here?” Scotti asked one of the Bosmer boatmen.

“Prithala Hall,” Mallon answered. “But why don’t you stay with me? I’m visiting an acquaintance of mine, a scholar I think you’ll find fascinating. His hovel isn’t much, but he has the most extraordinary ideas about the principles of a Merethic Aldmeri tribe the Sarmathi—”

“Under any other circumstances, I would happily accept,” said Scotti graciously. “But after weeks of sleeping on the ground or on a raft, and eating whatever I could scrounge, I feel the need for some indulgent creature comforts. And then, after a day or two, I’ll petition the Silvenar for safe passage to Cyrodiil.”

The men bade each other goodbye. Gryf Mallon gave him the address of his publisher in the Imperial City, which Scotti

accepted and quickly forgot. The clerk wandered the streets of Silvenar, crossing bridges of amber, admiring the petrified forest architecture. In front of a particularly estimable palace of silvery reflective crystal, he found Prithala Hall.

He took the finest room, and ordered a gluttonous meal of the finest quality. At a nearby table, he saw two very fat fellows, a man and a Bosmer, remarking how much finer the food was there than at the Silvenar's palace. They began to discuss the war and some issues of finances and rebuilding provincial bridges. The man noticed Scotti looking at them, and his eyes flashed recognition.

“Scotti, is that you? Kynareth, where have you been? I've had to make all the contacts here on my own!”

At the sound of his voice, Scotti recognized him. The fat man was Liodes Jurus, vastly engorged.

A Dance in Fire, v6

A Dance in Fire

Chapter 6

by

Waughin Jarth

Decumus Scotti sat down, listening to Liodes Jurus. The clerk could hardly believe how fat his former colleague at Lord Atrius's Building Commission had become. The piquant aroma of the roasted meat dish before Scotti melted away. All the other sounds and textures of Prithala Hall vanished all around him, as if nothing else existed but the vast form of Jurus. Scotti

did not consider himself an emotional man, but he felt a tide flow over him at the sight and sound of the man whose badly written letters had been the guideposts that carried him from the Imperial City back in early Frost Fall.

“Where have you been?” Jurus demanded again. “I told you to meet me in Falinesti weeks ago.”

“I was there weeks ago,” Scotti stammered, too surprised to be indignant. “I got your note to meet you in Athay, and so I went there, but the Khajiiti had burned it to the ground. Somehow, I found my way with the refugees in another village, and someone there told me that you had been killed.”

“And you believed that right away?” Jurus sneered.

“The fellow seemed very well-informed about you. He was a clerk from Lord Vanech’s Building Commission named Reglius, and he said that you had also suggested that he come down to Valenwood to profit from the war.”

“Oh, yes,” said Jurus, after thinking a moment. “I recall the name now. Well, it’s good for business to have two representatives from Imperial building commissions here. We just need to all coordinate our bids, and all should be well.”

“Reglius is dead,” said Scotti. “But I have his contracts from Lord Vanech’s Commission.”

“Even better,” gasped Jurus, impressed. “I never knew you were such a ruthless competitor, Decumus Scotti. Yes, this could certainly improve our position with the Silvenar. Have I introduced you to Basth here?”

Scotti had only been dimly aware of the Bosmer's presence at the table with Jurus, which was surprising given that the mer's girth nearly equaled his dining companion. The clerk nodded to Basth coldly, still numb and confused. It had not left his mind that only any hour earlier, Scotti had intended to petition the Silvenar for safe passage through the border back to Cyrodiil. The thought of doing business with Jurus after all, of profiting from Valenwood war with Elsweyr, and now the second one with the Summurset Isle, seemed like something happening to another person.

"Your colleague and I were talking about the Silvenar," said Basth, putting down the leg of mutton he had been gnawing on. "I don't suppose you've heard about his nature?"

"A little, but nothing very specific. I got the impression that he's very important and very peculiar."

"He's the representative of the People, legally, physically, and emotionally," explained Jurus, a little annoyed at his new partner's lack of common knowledge. "When they're healthy, so is he. When they're mostly female, so is he. When they cry for food or trade or an absence of foreign interference, he feels it too, and makes laws accordingly. In a way, he's a despot, but he's the people's despot."

"That sounds," said Scotti, searching for the appropriate word. "Like...bunk."

"Perhaps it is," shrugged Basth. "But he has many rights as the Voice of the People, including the granting of foreign building and trade contracts. It's not important whether you believe us. Just think of the Silvenar as being like one of your mad Emperors, like Pelagius. The problem facing us now is that

since Valenwood is being attacked on all sides, the Silvenar's aspect is now one of distrust and fear of foreigners. The one hope of his people, and thus of the Silvenar himself, is that the Emperor will intervene and stop the war."

"Will he?" asked Scotti.

"You know as well as we do that the Emperor has not been himself lately," Jurus helped himself to Reglius's satchel and pulled out the blank contracts. "Who knows what he'll choose to do or not do? That reality is not our concern, but these blessings from the late good sir Reglius make our job much simpler."

They discussed how they would represent themselves to the Silvenar into the evening. Scotti ate continuously, but not nearly so much as Jurus and Basth. When the sun had begun to rise in the hills, its light reddening through the crystal walls of the tavern, Jurus and Basth left to their rooms at the palace, granted to them diplomatically in lieu of an actual immediate audience with the Silvenar. Scotti went to his room. He thought about staying up a little longer to ruminate over Jurus's plans and see what might be the flaw in them, but upon touching the cool, soft bed, he immediately fell asleep.

The next afternoon, Scotti awoke, feeling himself again. In other words, timid. For several weeks now, he had been a creature bent on mere survival. He had been driven to exhaustion, attacked by several jungle beasts, starved, nearly drowned, and forced into discussions of ancient Aldmeri poetical works. The discussion he had with Jurus and Basth about how to dupe the Silvenar into signing their contracts seemed perfectly reasonable then. Scotti dressed himself in his

old battered clothes and went downstairs in search of food and a peaceful place to think.

“You’re up,” cried Basth upon seeing him. “We should go to the palace now.”

“Now?” whined Scotti. “Look at me. I need new clothes. This isn’t the way one should dress to pay a call on a prostitute, let alone the Voice of the People of Valenwood. I haven’t even bathed.”

“You must cease from this moment forward being a clerk, and become a student of mercantile trade,” said Liodes Jurus grandly, taking Scotti by the arm and leading him into the sunlit boulevard outside. “The first rule is to recognize what you represent to the prospective client, and what angle best suits you. You cannot dazzle him with opulent fashion and professional bearing, my dear boy, and it would be fatal if you attempted to. Trust me on this. Several others besides Basth and I are guests at the palace, and they have made the error of appearing too eager, too formal, too ready for business. They will never be granted audience with the Silvenar, but we have remained aloof ever since the initial rejection. I’ve dallied about the court, spread my knowledge of life in the Imperial City, had my ears pierced, attended promenades, eaten and drunk of all that was given to me. I dare say I’ve put on a pound or two. The message we’ve sent is clear: it is in his, not our, best interest to meet.”

“Our plan worked,” added Basth. “When I told his minister that our Imperial representative had arrived, and that we were at last willing to meet with the Silvenar this morning, we were told to bring you there straightaway.”

“Aren’t we late then?” asked Scotti.

“Very,” laughed Jurus. “But that’s again part of the angle we’re representing. Benevolent disinterest. Remember not to confuse the Silvenar with conventional nobility. His is the mind of the common people. When you grasp that, you’ll understand how to manipulate him.”

Jurus spent the last several minutes of the walk through the city expounding on his theories about what Valenwood needed, how much, and at what price. They were staggering figures, far more construction and far higher costs than anything Scotti had been used to dealing with. He listened carefully. All around them, the city of Silvenar revealed itself, glass and flower, roaring winds and beautiful inertia. When they reached the palace of the Silvenar, Decumus Scotti stopped, stunned. Jurus looked at him for a moment and then laughed.

“It’s quite bizarre, isn’t it?”

That it was. A frozen scarlet burst of twisted, uneven spires as if a rival sun rising. A blossom the size of a village, where courtiers and servants resembled nothing so much as insects walked about it sucking its ichor. Entering over a bent petal-like bridge, the three walked through the palace of unbalanced walls. Where the partitions bent close together and touched, there was a shaded hall or a small chamber. Where they warped away from one another, there was a courtyard. There were no doors anywhere, no any way to get to the Silvenar but by crossing through the entire spiral of the palace, through meetings and bedrooms and dining halls, past dignitaries, consorts, musicians, and many guards.



“It’s an interesting place,” said Basth. “But not very much privacy. Of course, that suits the Silvenar well.”

When they reached the inner corridors, two hours after they first entered the palace, guards, brandishing blades and bows, stopped them.

“We have an audience with the Silvenar,” said Jurus, patiently. “This is Lord Decumus Scotti, the Imperial representative.”

One of the guards disappeared down the winding corridor, and returned moments later with a tall, proud Bosmer clad in a loose robe of patchwork leather. He was the Minister of Trade: “The Silvenar wishes to speak with Lord Decumus Scotti alone.”

It was not the place to argue or show fear, so Scotti stepped forward, not even looking toward Jurus and Basth. He was certain they were showing their masks of benevolent indifference. Following the Minister into the audience chamber, Scotti recited to himself all the facts and figures Jurus had presented to him. He willed himself to remember the Angle and the Image he must project.

The audience chamber of the Silvenar was an enormous dome where the walls bent from bowl-shaped at the base inward to almost meet at the top. A thin ray of sunlight streamed through the fissure hundreds of feet above, and directly upon the Silvenar, who stood upon a puff of shimmering gray powder. For all the wonder of the city and the palace, the Silvenar himself looked perfectly ordinary. An average, blandly handsome, slightly tired-looking, extra-ordinary Wood Elf of the type one might see in any capitol in the Empire. It was only

when he stepped from the dais that Scotti noticed an eccentricity in his appearance. He was very short.

“I had to speak with you alone,” said the Silvenar in a voice common and unrefined. “May I see your papers?”

Scotti handed him the blank contracts from Lord Vanech’s Building Commission. The Silvenar studied them, running his finger over the embossed seal of the Emperor, before handing them back. He suddenly seemed shy, looking to the floor.

“There are many charlatans at my court who wish to benefit from the wars. I thought you and your colleagues were among them, but those contracts are genuine.”

“Yes, they are,” said Scotti calmly. The Silvenar’s conventional aspect made it easy for Scotti to speak, with no formal greetings, no deference, exactly as Jurus had instructed: “It seems most sensible to begin straightaway talking about the roads which need to be rebuilt, and then the harbors that the Altmeri have destroyed, and then I can give you my estimates on the cost of resupplying and renovating the trade routes.”

“Why hasn’t the Emperor seen fit to send a representative when the war with Elsweyr began, two years ago?” asked the Silvenar glumly.

Scotti thought a moment before replying of all the common Bosmeri he had met in Valenwood. The greedy, frightened mercenaries who had escorted him from the border. The hard-drinking revelers and expert pest exterminating archers in the Western Cross of Falinesti. Nosy old Mother Pascost in Havel Slump. Captain Balfix, the poor sadly reformed pirate. The terrified but hopeful refugees of Athay and Grenos. The mad, murderous, self-devouring Wild Hunt of Vindisi. The silent,

dour boatmen hired by Gryf Mallon. The degenerate, grasping Basth. If one creature represented their total disposition, and that of many more throughout the province, what would be his personality? Scotti was a clerk by occupation and nature, instinctively comfortable cataloging and filing, making things fit in a system. If the soul of Valenwood were to be filed, where would it be put?

The answer came upon him almost before he posed himself the question. Denial.

“I’m afraid that question doesn’t interest me,” said Scotti. “Now, can we get back to the business at hand?”

All afternoon, Scotti and the Silvenar discussed the pressing needs of Valenwood. Every contract was filled and signed. So much was required and there were so many costs associated that addendums and codicils had to be scribbled into the margins of the papers, and those had to be resigned. Scotti maintained his benevolent indifference, but he found that dealing with the Silvenar was not quite the same as dealing with a simple, sullen child. The Voice of the People knew certain practical, everyday things very well: the yields of fish, the benefits of trade, the condition of every township and forest in his province.

“We will have a banquet tomorrow night to celebrate this commission,” said the Silvenar at last.

“Best make it tonight,” replied Scotti. “We should leave for Cyrodiil with the contracts tomorrow, so I’ll need a safe passage to the border. We best not waste any more time.”

“Agreed,” said the Silvenar, and called for his Minister of Trade to put his seal on the contracts and arrange for the feast.

Scotti left the chamber, and was greeted by Basth and Jurus. Their faces showed the strain of maintaining the illusion of unconcern for too many hours. As soon as they were out of sight of the guards, they begged Scotti to tell them all. When he showed them the contract, Basth began weeping with delight.

“Anything about the Silvenar that surprised you?” asked Jurus.

“I hadn’t expected him to be half my height.”

“Was he?” Jurus looked mildly surprised. “He must have shrunk since I tried to have an audience with him earlier. Maybe there is something to all that nonsense about him being affected by the plight of his people.”

A Dance in Fire, v7

A Dance in Fire

Chapter 7

By

Waughin Jarth

Scene: Silvenar, Valenwood

Date: 13 Sun’s Dusk, 3E 397

The banquet at the palace of the Silvenar was well attended by every jealous bureaucrat and trader who had attempted to contract the rebuilding of Valenwood. They looked on Decumus Scotti, Liodes Jurus, and Basth with undisguised

hatred. It made Scotti very uncomfortable, but Jurus delighted in it. As the servants brought in platter after platter of roasted meats, Jurus poured himself a cup of Jagga and toasted the clerk.

“I can confess it now,” said Jurus. “I had grave doubts about inviting you to join me on this adventure. All the other clerks and agents of building commissions I contacted were more outwardly aggressive, but none of them made it through, let alone to the audience chamber of the Silvenar, let alone brokered the deals on their own like you did. Come, have a cup of Jagga with me.”

“No thank you,” said Scotti. “I had too much of that drug in Falinesti, and nearly got sucked dry by a giant tick because of it. I’ll find something else to drink.”

Scotti wandered about the hall until he saw some diplomats drinking mugs of a steaming brown liquid, poured from a large silver urn. He asked them if it was tea.

“Tea made from leaves?” scoffed the first diplomat. “Not in Valenwood. This is Rotmeth.”

Scotti poured himself a mug and took a tentative sip. It was gamy, bitter and sugared, and very salty. At first it seemed very disagreeable to his palate, but a moment later he found he had drained the mug and was pouring another. His body tingled. All the sounds in the chamber seemed oddly disjointed, but not frighteningly so.

“So you’re the fellow who got the Silvenar to sign all those contracts,” said the second diplomat. “That must have required some deep negotiation.”

“Not at all, not at all, just a little basic understand of mercantile trading,” grinned Scotti, pouring himself a third mug of Rotmeth. “The Silvenar was very eager to involve the Imperial state with the affairs of Valenwood. I was very eager to take a percentage of the commission. With all that blessed eagerness, it was merely a matter of putting quill to contract, bless you.”

“You have been in the employ of his Imperial Majesty very long?” asked the first diplomat.

“It’s a bite, or rather, a bit more complicated than that in the Imperial City. Between you and me, I don’t really have a job. I used to work for Lord Atrius and his Building Commission, but I got sacked. And then, the contracts are from Lord Vanech and his Building Commission, ‘cause I got em from this fellow Reglius who is a competitor but still a very fine fellow until he was made dead by those Khajiiti,” Scotti drained his fifth mug. “When I go back to the Imperial City, then the real negotiations can begin, bless you. I can go to my old employer and to Lord Vanech, and say, look here you, which one of you wants these commissions? And they’ll fall over each other to take them from me. It will be bidding war for my percentage the likes of which no one nowhere has never seen.”

“So you’re not a representative of his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor?” asked the first diplomat.

“Didn’t you hear what I’m said? You stupid?” Scotti felt a surge of rage, which quickly subsided. He chuckled, and poured himself a seventh mug. “The Building Commissions are privately owned, but they’re still representatives of the Emperor. So I’m a representative of the Emperor. Or I will be. When I get these contracts in. It’s very complicated. I can understand why you’re not following me. Bless you, it’s all like

the poet said, a dance in fire, if you follow the illusion, that is to say, allusion.”

“And your colleagues? Are they representatives of the Emperor?” asked the second diplomat.

Scotti burst into laughter, shaking his head. The diplomats bade him their respects and went to talk to the Minister. Scotti stumbled out of the palace, and reeled through the strange, organic avenues and boulevards of the city. It took him several hours to find his way to Prithala Hall and his room. Once there, he slept, very nearly on his bed.

The next morning, he woke to Jurus and Basth in his room, shaking him. He felt half-asleep and unable to open his eyes fully, but otherwise fine. The conversation with the diplomats floated in his mind in a haze, like an obscure childhood memory.

“What in Mara’s name is Rotmeth?” he asked quickly.

“Rancid, strongly fermented meat juices with lots of spices to kill the poisons,” smiled Basth. “I should have warned you to stay with Jagga.”

“You must understand the Meat Mandate by now,” laughed Jurus. “These Bosmeri would rather eat each other than touch the fruit of the vine or the field.”

“What did I say to those diplomats?” cried Scotti, panicking.

“Nothing bad apparently,” said Jurus, pulling out some papers. “Your escorts are downstairs to bring you to the Imperial Province. Here are your papers of safe passage. The Silvenar seems very impatient about business proceeding forward

rapidly. He promises to send you some sort of rare treasure when the contracts are fulfilled. See, he's already given me something."

Jurus showed off his new, bejeweled earring, a beautiful large faceted ruby. Basth showed that he had a similar one. The two fat fellows left the room so Scotti could dress and pack.

A full regiment of the Silvenar's guards was on the street in front of the tavern. They surrounded a carriage crested with the official arms of Valenwood. Still dazed, Scotti climbed in, and the captain of the guard gave the signal. They began a quick gallop. Scotti shook himself, and then peered behind. Basth and Jurus were waving him goodbye.

"Wait!" Scotti cried. "Aren't you coming back to the Imperial Province too?"

"The Silvenar asked that we stay behind as Imperial representatives!" yelled Liodes Jurus. "In case there's a need for more contracts and negotiations! He's appointed us Undrape, some sort of special honor for foreigners at court! Don't worry! Lots of banquets to attend! You can handle the negotiations with Vanech and Atrius yourself and we'll keep things settled here!"

Jurus continued to yell advice about business, but his voice became indistinct with distance. Soon it disappeared altogether as the convoy rounded the streets of Silvenar. The jungle loomed suddenly and then they were in it. Scotti had only gone through it by foot or along the rivers by slow-moving boats. Now it flashed all around him in profusions of greens. The horses seemed even faster moving through underbrush than on the smooth paths of the city. None of the



weird sounds or dank smells of the jungle penetrated the escort. It felt to Scotti as if he were watching a play about the jungle with a background of a quickly moving scrim, which offered only the merest suggestion of the place.

So it went for two weeks. There was lots of food and water in the carriage with the clerk, so he merely ate and slept as the caravan pressed endlessly on. From time to time, he'd hear the sound of blades clashing, but when he looked around whatever had attacked the caravan had long since been left behind. At last, they reached the border, where an Imperial garrison was stationed.

Scotti presented the soldiers who met the carriage with the papers. They asked him a barrage of questions that he answered monosyllabically, and then let him pass. It took several more days to arrive at the gates of the Imperial City. The horses that had flown so fast through the jungle now slowed down in the unfamiliar territory of the wooded Colovian Estates. By contrast, the cries of his province's birds and smells of his province's plant life brought Decumus Scotti alive. It was as if he had been dreaming all the past months.

At the gates of the City, Scotti's carriage door was opened for him and he stepped out on uncertain legs. Before he had a moment to say something to the escort, they had vanished, galloping back south through the forest. The first thing he did now that he was home was go to the closest tavern and have tea and fruit and bread. If he never ate meat again, he told himself, that would suit him very nicely.

Negotiations with Lord Atrius and Lord Vanech proceeded immediately thereafter. It was most agreeable. Both commissions recognized how lucrative the rebuilding of

Valenwood would be for their agency. Lord Vanech claimed, quite justifiably, that as the contracts had been written on forms notarized by his commission, he had the legal right to them. Lord Atrius claimed that Decumus Scotti was his agent and representative, and that he had never been released from employment. The Emperor was called to arbitrate, but he claimed to be unavailable. His advisor, the Imperial Battlemage Jagar Tharn, had disappeared long ago and could not be called on for his wisdom and impartial mediation.

Scotti lived very comfortably off the bribes from Lord Atrius and Lord Vanech. Every week, a letter would arrive from Jurus or Basth asking about the status of negotiations. Gradually, these letters ceased coming, and more urgent ones came from the Minister of Trade and the Silvenar himself. The War of the Blue Divide with Summurset Isle ended with the Altmeri winning several new coastal islands from the Wood Elves. The war with Elsweyr continued, ravaging the eastern borders of Valenwood. Still, Vanech and Atrius fought over who would help.

One fine morning in the early spring of the year 3E 398, a courier arrived at Decumus Scotti's door.

"Lord Vanech has won the Valenwood commission, and requests that you and the contracts come to his hall at your earliest convenience."

"Has Lord Atrius decided not to challenge further?" asked Scotti.

"He's been unable to, having died very suddenly, just now, from a terribly unfortunate accident," said the courier.

Scotti had wondered how long it would be before the Dark Brotherhood was brought in for final negotiations. As he walked toward Lord Vanech's Building Commission, a long, severe piece of architecture on a minor but respectable plaza, he wondered if he had played the game, as he ought to have. Could Vanech be so rapacious as to offer him a lower percentage of the commission now that his chief competitor was dead? Thankfully, he discovered, Lord Vanech had already decided to pay Scotti what he had proposed during the heat of the winter negotiations. His advisors had explained to him that other, lesser building commissions might come forward unless the matter were handled quickly and fairly.

"Glad we have all the legal issues done with," said Lord Vanech, fondly. "Now we can get to the business of helping the poor Bosmeri, and collecting the profits. It's a pity you weren't our representative for all the troubles with Bend'r-mahk and the Arnesian business. But there will be plenty more wars, I'm sure of that."

Scotti and Lord Vanech sent word to the Silvenar that at last they were prepared to honor the contracts. A few weeks later, they held a banquet in honor of the profitable enterprise. Decumus Scotti was the darling of the Imperial City, and no expense was spared to make it an unforgettable evening.

As Scotti met the nobles and wealthy merchants who would be benefiting from his business dealings, an exotic but somehow faintly familiar smell rose in the ballroom. He traced it to its source: a thick roasted slab of meat, so long and thick it covered several platters. The Cyrodilic revelers were eating it ravenously, unable to find the words to express their delight at its taste and texture.

“It’s like nothing I’ve ever had before!”

“It’s like pig-fed venison!”

“Do you see the marbling of fat and meat? It’s a masterpiece!”

Scotti went to take a slice, but then he saw something imbedded deep in the dried and rendered roast. He nearly collided with his new employer Lord Vanech as he stumbled back.

“Where did this come from?” Scotti stammered.

“From our client, the Silvenar,” beamed his lordship. “It’s some kind of local delicacy they call Unthrappa.”

Scotti vomited, and didn’t stop for some time. It cast rather a temporary pall on the evening, but when Decumus Scotti was carried off to his manor house, the guests continued to dine. The Unthrappa was the delight of all. Even more so when Lord Vanech himself took a slice and found the first of two rubies buried within. How very clever of the Bosmer to invent such a dish, the Cyrodiils agreed.

# A Game At Dinner

*Anonymous*

A GAME AT DINNER

by

An Anonymous Spy

Forward From The Publisher:

The history behind this letter is almost as interesting and dark as the story it tells. The original letter to the mysterious Dhaunayne was copied and began circulating around the Ashlands of Vvardenfell a few months ago. In time, a print found its way to the mainland and Prince Hlaalu Helseth's palace outside Almalexia. While the reader may conclude after reading this letter that the Prince would be furious about such a work, impugning his highness with great malevolence, quite the reverse was true. The Prince and his mother, Queen Barenziah, had it privately printed into bound copies and sent to libraries and booksellers throughout Morrowind.

As matter of record, the Prince and the Queen have not officially stated whether the letter is a work of pure imagination or based on an actual occurrence. The House Dres has publicly denounced the work, and indeed, no one named Dhaunayne, despite the suggestions in the letter, has ever been

linked to the house. We leave the reader to interpret the letter as he or she believes.

—Nerris Gan, Publisher

Dark Liege Dhaunayne,

You asked for a detailed description of my experience last night and the reasons for my plea to House Dres for another assignment. I hope I have served you well in my capacity as informant in the court of Prince Helseth, a man who I have stated in many previous reports could teach Molag Bal how to scheme. As you know, I've spent nearly a year now working my way into his inner circle of advisors. He was in need of friendship when he first arrived in Morrowind and eagerly took to me and a few others. Still, he was disinclined to trust any of us, which is perhaps not surprising, given his tenuous position in Morrowind society.

For your unholiness's recollection, the Prince is the eldest son of Barenziah, who was once the Queen of Morrowind and once the Queen of the High Rock kingdom of Wayrest. At the death of her husband, Prince Helseth's stepfather, King Eadwyre, there was a power struggle between the Prince and Eadwyre's daughter, the Princess Elysana. Though details of what transpired are imperfect, it is clear that Elysana won the battle and became Queen, banishing Helseth and Barenziah. Barenziah's only other child, Morgiah, had already left court to marry and become Queen of the Summurset Isle kingdom of Firsthold.

Barenziah and Helseth crossed the continent to return to Morrowind only last year. They were well received by Barenziah's uncle, our current king, Hlaalu Athyn Llethan, who

had taken the throne after Barenziah's abdication more than forty years ago. Barenziah made it clear that she had no designs on reclaiming the throne, but merely to retire to her family estates. Helseth, as you know, has lingered in the royal court, and many have whispered that while he lost the throne of Wayrest, he does not intend to lose the throne of Morrowind at Llethan's death.

I've kept your unholiness informed of the Prince's movements, meetings, and plots, as well as the names and characters of his other advisors. As you may recall, I've often thought that I was not the only spy in Helseth's court. I told you before that a particular Dunmer counselor of Helseth looked like a fellow I had seen in the company of Tholer Saryoni, the Archcanon of the Tribunal Temple. Another, a young Nord woman, has been verified to visit the Imperial fortress in Balmora. Of course, in their cases, they might well have been on Helseth's own business, but I couldn't be certain. I had begun to think myself paranoid as the Prince himself when I found myself doubting the sincere loyalty of the Prince's chamberlain, Burgess, a Breton who had been in his employ since his days in the court of Wayrest.

That is the background on that night, last night.

Yesterday morning, I received a curt invitation to dine with the Prince. Based only on my own paranoia, I dispatched one of my servants, who is a good and loyal servant of the House Dres, to watch the palace and report back anything unusual. Just before dinner, he returned and told me what he had witnessed.

A man cloaked in rags had been given entrance into the palace, and had stayed there for some time. When he left, my servant saw his face beneath the cloak—an alchemist of infamous

repute, said to be a leading suppliers of exotic poisons. A fine observer, my servant also noticed that the alchemist entered the palace smelling of wickwheat, bittergreen, and something alien and sweet. When he left, he was odorless.

He had come to the same conclusion as I did. The Prince had procured ingredients to prepare a poison. Bittergreen alone is deadly when eaten raw, but the other ingredients suggested something far deeper. As your unholiness can doubtless imagine, I went to dinner that night, prepared for any eventuality.

All of Prince Helseth's other counselors were in attendance, and I noticed that all were slightly apprehensive. Of course, I imagined that I was in a nest of spies, and all knew of the Prince's mysterious meeting. It is just as likely that some knew of the alchemist's visit, while others were simply concerned by the nature of the Prince's invitation, and still others merely unconsciously adopted the tense disposition of their fellow, better informed counselors.

The Prince, however, was in fine mettle and soon had everyone relaxed and at ease. At nine, we were all ushered into his dining hall where the feast had been laid out. And what a feast! Honeyed gorapples, fragrant stews, roasts in various blood sauces, and every variety of fish and fowl expertly and ostentatiously prepared. Crystal and gold flagons of wine, flin, shein, and mazte were at our seats to be savored as appropriate with each course. As tantalizing as the aromas were, it occurred to me that in such a maze of spices and flavors, a discreet poison would be undetectable.

Throughout the meal, I maintained the illusion of eating the food and drinking the liquor, but I was surreptitious and



swallowed nothing. Finally, the plates and food were cleared from the table, and a tureen of a spicy broth was placed in the center of the banquet. The servant who brought it then retired, closing the banquet hall door behind him.

“It smells divine, my Prince,” said the Marchioness Kolgar, the Nord woman. “But I cannot eat another thing.”

“Your Highness,” I added, feigning a tone of friendliness and slight intoxication. “You know that every one at this table would gladly die to put you on the throne of Morrowind, but is it really necessary that we gorge ourselves to death?”

The others at the table agreed with appreciative groans. Prince Helseth smiled. I swear by Vaernima the Gifter, my dark liege, even you have never seen a smile such as this one.

“Ironic words. You see, an alchemist visited me today, as some of you already doubtless know. He showed me how to make a marvelous poison and its antidote. A most potent potion, excellent for my purposes. No Restoration spell will aid you once you’ve ingested it. Only the antidote in the tureen will save you from certain death. And what a death, from what I’ve heard. I am eager to see if the effects are all that the alchemist promised. It should be horribly painful for the afflicted, but quite entertaining.”

No one said a word. I could feel my heart beating hard in my chest.

“Your Highness,” said Allarat, the Dunmer I suspected of alliance with the Temple. “Have you poisoned someone at this table?”

“You are very astute, Allarat,” said Prince Helseth, looking about the table, eying each of his advisors carefully. “Little wonder I value your counsel. As indeed I value all in this room. It would be perhaps easiest for me to say who I haven’t poisoned. I haven’t poisoned any who serve but one master, any whose loyalty to me is sincere. I haven’t poisoned any person who wants to see King Helseth on the throne of Morrowind. I haven’t poisoned anyone who isn’t a spy for the Empire, the Temple, the House of Telvanni, the House of Redoran, the House of Indoril, the House of Dres.”

Your unholiness, he looked directly at me at his last words. I know that in certainty. My face is practiced at keeping my thoughts from showing, but I immediately thought of every secret meeting I’ve had, every coded message I sent to you and the House, my dark liege. What could he know? What could he, even without knowing, suspect?

I felt my heart beating even faster. Was it fear, or poison? I couldn’t speak, certain as I was that my voice would betray my calm facade.

“Those loyal to me who wish harm on my enemies may be wondering how can I be certain that the poison has been ingested. Is it possible that the guilty party, or dare I say, parties were suspicious and merely pretended to eat and drink tonight? Of course. But even the craftiest of pretenders would have to raise a glass to his or her lips and put empty forks or spoons in their mouths to play the charade. The food, you see, was not poisoned. The cups and cutlery were. If you did not partake out of fear, you’re poisoned just the same, and sadly, missed an excellent roast.”

Sweat beaded on my face and I turned from the Prince so he would not see. My fellow advisors, all of them, were frozen in their seats. From the Marchioness Kolgar, white with fear, to Kema Inebbe, visibly shaking; from the furrowed, angry brow of Allarat to the statue-like stare of Burgess.

I couldn't help thinking then, could the Prince's entire counsellorship be comprised of nothing but spies? Was there any person at the table loyal? And then I thought, what if I were not a spy myself, would I trust Helseth to know that? No one knows better than his advisors both the depth of the Prince's paranoia and the utter implacability of his ambition. If I were not a spy for the House Dres, even then would I be safe? Could a loyalist be poisoned because of a not-so-innocent misjudgment?

The others must have been thinking the same, loyalists and spies alike.

While my mind whirled, I could hear the Prince's voice, addressing all assembled: "The poison acts quickly. If the antidote is not taken within one minute from now, here will be death at the table."

I couldn't decide whether I had been poisoned or not. My stomach ached, but I reminded myself it might have been the result of sitting at a sumptuous banquet and not partaking. My heart shook in my chest and a bitter taste like Trama Root stung my lips. Again, was it fear or poison?

"These are the last words you will hear if you are disloyal to me," said Prince Helseth, still smiling that damned smile as he watched his advisors squirming in their seats. "Take the antidote and live."

Could I believe him? I thought of what I knew of the Prince and his character. Would he kill a self-confessed spy at his court, or would he rather send the vanquished back to his masters? The Prince was ruthless, but either possibility was within his manner. Surely the theatricality of this whole dinner was meant to be a presentation to instill fear. What would my ancestors say if I joined them after sitting at a table, eventually dying of poison? What would they say if I took the antidote, confessing my allegiance to you and the House Dres, and was summarily executed? And, I confess, I thought of what you might do me even after I was dead.

I had grown so light-headed and filled with my own thoughts, that I didn't see Burgess jump from his seat. I was only suddenly aware that he had the tureen in his hands and was gulping down the liquid within. There were guards all around, though I never noticed them entering.

"Burgess," said Prince Helseth, still smiling. "You have spent some time at Ghostgate. House Redoran?"

"You didn't know?" Burgess laughed sourly. "No House. I report to your stepsister, the Queen of Wayrest. I've always been in her employ. By Akatosh, you poisoned me because you thought I was working for some damnable Dark Elves?"

"You're half right," said the Prince. "I didn't guess who you were working for, or even that you were a spy. But you're also wrong about me poisoning you. You poisoned yourself when you drank from the tureen."

Your unholiness, you don't need to hear how Burgess died. I know that you have seen much over the many, many years of

your existence, but you truly don't want to know. I wish I could erase the memory of his agonies from my own mind.

The council was dismissed shortly thereafter. I do not know if Prince Helseth knows or suspects that I too am a spy. I do not know how many others that night, last night, were as close as I was from drinking from the tureen before Burgess did. I only know that if the Prince does not suspect me now, he will. I cannot win at the games he mastered long ago at the court of Wayrest, and I beg your unholiness, my dark liege Dhaunayne to use your influence in the House Dres and dismiss your loyal servant from this charge.

Publisher's Note:

Of course, the anonymous writer's signature has not been on any reprint of the letter since the original.

# A Hypothetical Treachery

*Anthil Morvir*

Scene: Eldenwood

As the curtain rises, we see the misty labyrinthian landscape of the legendary Eldengrove of Valenwood. All around we hear wolves howling. A bloodied reptilian figure, SCHIAVAS, breaks through the branches of one of the trees and surveys the area.

SCHIAVAS: It's clear.

INZOLIAH, a beautiful Dark Elf mage, climbs down from the tree, helped by the barbarian. There is the sound of footsteps nearby. Schiavas readies his sword and Inzoliah prepares to cast a spell. Nothing comes out.

INZOLIAH: You're bleeding. You should have Dolcettus heal that for you.

SCHIAVAS: He's still drained from all the spells he had to cast down in the caves. I'm fine. If we get out of this and no one needs it more, I'll take the last potion of healing. Where's Malvasian?

MALVASIAN, a High Elf battlemage, and DOLCETTUS, a Cyrodiil healer, emerge from the tree, carrying a heavy chest between the two of them. They awkwardly try to get down from the tree, carrying their loot.

MALVASIAN: Here I am, though why I'm carrying the heavy load is beyond me. I always thought that the advantage of dungeon delving with a great barbarian was that he carried all the loot.

SCHIAVAS: If I carried that, my hands would be too full to fight. And tell me if I'm wrong, but not one of the three of you has enough magicka reserved to make it out of here alive. Not after you electrified and blasted all those homunculuses down below ground.

DOLCETTUS: Homunculi.

SCHIAVAS: Don't worry, I'm not going to do what you think I'm going to do.

INZOLIAH (innocently): What's that?

SCHIAVAS: Kill you all and take the Ebony Mail for myself. Admit it—you thought I had that in mind.

DOLCETTUS: What a perfectly horrible thought. I never thought anyone, no matter how vile and degenerate—

INZOLIAH: Why not?

MALVASIAN: He needs porters, like he said. He can't carry the chest and fight off the inhabitants of Eldengrove both.

DOLCETTUS: By Stendarr, of all the mean, conniving, typically Argonian—

INZOLIAH: And why do you need me alive?

SCHIAVAS: I don't necessarily. Except that you're prettier than the other two, for a smoothskin that is. And if something comes after us, it might go for you first.

There is a noise in some bushes nearby.

SCHIAVAS: Go check that out.

INZOLIAH: It's probably a wolf. These woods are filled with them. You check it out.

SCHIAVAS: You have a choice, Inzoliah. Go and you might live. Stay here, and you definitely won't.

Inzoliah considers and then goes to the bushes.

SCHIAVAS (to Malvasian and Dolcettus): The king of Silvenar will pay good money for the Mail, and we can divide it more nicely between three than four.

INZOLIAH: You're so right.

Inzoliah suddenly levitates up to the top of the stage. A semi-transparent Ghost appears from the bush and rushes at the next person, who happens to be Schiavas. As the barbarian screams and thrashes at it with his sword, it levels blasts of whirling gas at him. He crumbles to the ground. It turns next to Dolcettus, the healer, and as the Ghost focuses its feasting chill on the hapless Dolcettus, Malvasian casts a ball of flame at it that causes it to vaporize into the misty air.

Inzoliah floats back down to the ground as Malvasian examines the bodies of Dolcettus and Schiavas, who are both white-faced from the draining power of the ghost.



MALVASIAN: You had some magicka reserved after all.

INZOLIAH: So did you. Are they dead?

Malvasian takes the potion of healing from Dolcettus's pack.

MALVASIAN: Yes. Fortunately, the potion of healing wasn't broken when he fell. Well, I guess this leaves just the two of us to collect the reward.

INZOLIAH: We can't get out of this place without each other. Like it or not.

The two battlemages pick up the chest and begin plodding carefully through the undergrowth, pausing from time to time at the sound of footsteps or other eerie noises.

MALVASIAN: Let me make sure I understand. You have a little bit of magicka left, so you elected to use it to make Schiavas the ghost's target, forcing me to use most of my limited reserve to destroy the creature so I wouldn't be more powerful than you. That's first-rate thinking.

INZOLIAH: Thank you. It's only logical. Do you have enough power to cast any other spells?

MALVASIAN: Naturally. An experienced battlemage always knows a few minor but highly effective spells for just such a trial. I take it you, too, have a few tricks up your sleeve?

INZOLIAH: Of course, like you said.

They pause for a moment before continuing as a fearful wail pierces the air. When it dies away, they slowly trudge on.

INZOLIAH: Just as an intellectual exercise, I wonder what spell you would cast at me if we made it out of here without any more combat.

MALVASIAN: I hope you're not implying that I would dream of killing you so I would keep the treasure all to myself.

INZOLIAH: Of course not, nor would I do that to you. It is merely an intellectual exercise.

MALVASIAN: Well, in that case, purely as an intellectual exercise, I would probably cast a leech spell on you, to take away your life force and heal myself. After all, there are brigands on the road between here and Silvenar, and a wounded battlemage with a valuable artifact would make a tempting target. I'd hate to survive Eldengrove merely to die in the open.

INZOLIAH: That's a well-reasoned response. As for myself, again, not saying I would ever do this, but I think a simple, sudden electrical bolt would serve my purposes admirably. I agree about the danger of brigands, but don't forget, we also have a potion of healing. I could easily slay you and heal myself to full capacity.

MALVASIAN: Very true. It would end up a question then of whose spell was more effective at that instant. If our spells counteracted one another and I leached your life energy only to be crippled by your lightning bolt, then we could both be killed. Or so near death that a mere potion of healing would scarcely help either one of us, let alone both. How ironic it would be if two scheming battlemages, not saying we are scheming but for the purpose of this intellectual exercise, were left on the brink

of death, completely drained of magicka, with one healing potion to choose from. Who would get it then?

INZOLIAH: Logically, whoever drank it first, which in this case would be you since you're holding it. Now, what if one of us were injured, but not killed?

MALVASIAN: Logic would dictate that a scheming battlemage would take the potion, leaving the injured party to the mercy of the elements, I suppose.

INZOLIAH: That does seem most sensible. But suppose that the battlemages, while certainly scheming types, had a certain respect for one another. Perhaps in that case, the victorious one might, for instance, put the potion up a tree near his or her gravely wounded victim. Then when the wounded party had enough magicka replenished, he or she would be able to levitate to the tree branches and recover the potion. By that time, the victorious battlemage would have already collected the reward.

They pause for a moment at the sound of something in the bushes nearby. Carefully, they climb across the branches of a tree to bypass it.

MALVASIAN: I understand what you're saying, but it seems out of character for our hypothetical scheming battlemage to allow his or her victim to live.

INZOLIAH: Perhaps. But it's been my observation that most scheming battlemages enjoy the feeling of having bested someone in combat, and having that person alive to live with the humiliation.

MALVASIAN: These hypothetical scheming battlemages sound...(excitedly) Daylight! Do you see it?

The two scurry across the branch dropping behind a bush, so we can no longer see them. We can, however, see the shimmering halo of sunlight.

MALVASIAN (behind the tall bush): We made it.

INZOLIAH (likewise, behind the tall bush): Indeed.

There is a sudden explosion of electrical energy and a wild howling aura of red light, and then silence. After a few moment's pause, we hear someone climbing up the tree. It is Malvasian, putting the potion high up in the bough. He chuckles as he climbs back down and the curtain drops.

The curtain rises on a road to Silvenar. A gang of bandits have surrounded Malvasian, who is propped up on his staff, barely able to stand. They pull his chest away from him with ease.

BANDIT #1: What have we got here? Don't you know it ain't safe to be out on the road, all sick like you are? Why don't we help you with your load?

MALVASIAN (weakly): Please...Let me be...

BANDIT #2: Go on, spellcaster, fight us for it!

MALVASIAN: I can't...too weak...

Suddenly, Inzoliah flies in, casting lightning bolts from her fingers at the bandits, who quickly scramble away. She lands on the ground and picks up the chest. Malvasian collapses, dying.

MALVASIAN: Hypothetically, what if...a battlemage cast a spell on another which didn't harm him at once, but...drained his life force and his magicka, bit by bit, so he wouldn't know at the time, but...feel confident enough to leave the potion of healing behind?

INZOLIAH: A most treacherous battlemage she'd be.

MALVASIAN: And...hypothetically...would she be likely to help her fallen foe...so that she could enjoy the humiliation of him continuing...to live?

INZOLIAH: From my experience, hypothetically, no. She doesn't sound like a fool.

As Inzoliah lugs the chest off toward Silvenar, and Malvasian expires on the stage, we drop the curtain.

# A Less Rude Song

*Anonymous*

They say

The Iliac Bay

Is the place to barrel around

Without a bit of apparel on,

As advertised in that carol song

A tune that's sung as the west wind blows

About it's lovely not wearing any clothes.

Ladies singing high notes, men singing lows,

Implying that the most luscious depravity

And complete absence of serious gravity

Can only be found in the waterous cavity

Of Iliac Bay.

If you are the type who is more a sinner than a sinned,

You'll find it all in Morrowind.

But the truth, my child,  
Is that nothing more wild  
That an ordinary fashion  
Kind of slightly mad passion  
Can be detected if at all  
In Sentinel and Daggerfall.

Whatever your odd needs: feathered, scaled, or finned,  
You'll find it all in Morrowind  
It's an invention of bards  
That Bretons and Redguards  
Have more than some staid fun  
And suffer deviant fornication.

For the most of madness, not the least,  
The wise debaucher heads out east.

Where your once steely reserve is now merely tinned,  
You'll find it all in Morrowind.

In Morrowind,  
There is sin.

But, pray, do not confuse Dunmer variety

With that found in tepid Western society

Compared to which, it nearly is piety.

It isn't terribly ingenious calling it prudery

Observing the Dark Elf aversion to nudity.

After all, the preferred sort of lewdity

In these parts is far more pernicious.

From the Ashlanders to the wettest fishes

You'll find pleasure and pain quite delicious

In Morrowind.

If you find yourself with unkind kinship with your kin

You'll find it all in Morrowind.



# A Poorly Scrawled Note

*Anonymous*

Mee wurst troll evurr

nobuddy pay brijj tole

me nott sceary enuf

mee gett drunc an kil sellf

troll droun

# A Traveler's Guide To New Sheoth And The Shivering Isles

*Brenith Aralyn*

New Sheoth is generally recognized as the jewel of the Shivering Isles, the culinary and cultural epicenter of the entire realm. Founded at the whim of Our Lord Sheogorath, the city is a model of the Madgod's own perfect vision.

First-time visitors to New Sheoth are often impressed by the warmth, generosity, and general good humor of its residents. Visitors are welcomed with open arms, and generally made to feel as if they are a part of the large New Sheoth family. The sheer scope of the sights and sounds in the city can be daunting to the new visitor, and this Guide aims to make the transition as easy as possible for newcomers.

Visitors will find the city is divided into three main sections: Bliss, Crucible, and the Palace. Bliss and Crucible house the majority of residential and commercial buildings in the city, while the Palace area houses the magnificent Palace of Sheogorath, as well as the residences of the reigning Dukes of Mania and Dementia.

Though located in the same city, visitors will find that the Bliss and Crucible areas of New Sheoth offer distinct experiences. The shining parapets and golden roads of Bliss stand in stark

contrast to the rustic buildings and unpaved streets of Crucible. Travelers interested in a bustling nightlife and fine cuisine might prefer time spent in Bliss, renowned for its extravagant galas and spirited affairs. Visitors who seek a quieter experience would do well to spend their time exploring Crucible, where Dark Seducer patrols encourage a more serene way of life.

No matter your tastes, New Sheoth promises an experience like no other. This Guide will give advice on how to best navigate the oft-confusing, though ultimately rewarding channels of this magnificent city.

Travelers to New Sheoth will arrive at its gates from either the highlands of Mania or the swampy lowlands of Dementia. Many make the mistake of hurrying directly to the gates of the city without exploring the beautiful and majestic countryside outside the city walls. This is certainly a mistake, as the forests and glades of the Shivering Isles are unlike those found anywhere else in all the realms. Some discussion of these areas is warranted, as exploring them is vital to experiencing all that the region has to offer.

Walking amongst the giant mushroom trees of Mania is an experience any new visitor to the Shivering Isles is not soon to forget. Hours spent wandering in the forests of spore trees, breathing deeply of the spore-laden air-these are the times destined to remain a part of you forever. Feelings of peace and contentment wash over the body and calm the soul. It can seem as if you haven't a care in the world.

Take the time to examine the beautiful plant life found in the region. Treat yourself to Alocacia Fruit, which is known to have restorative properties, or pluck an Aster Bloom Core, which

some locals believe has the ability to ward off the attacks of evil spirits.

If you plan on spending some time in the Mania countryside, consider visiting the small community of Hale. The residents are mostly local artists, and are very welcoming to weary travelers. Be sure to explore the lovely areas surrounding Hale, and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

A cautious traveler is a safe traveler, though, even in the idyllic lands of Mania. While the paths that wind through the scenic countryside are generally safe, the surrounding regions pose some danger for the careless traveler. Mania is home to a number of indigenous animal species, some of which could be threatening to a less-seasoned adventurer. We recommend sticking to the clearly marked paths when traveling anywhere within the Shivering Isles.

It is often said, “Time spent in Dementia is time not spent elsewhere.” Truer words were never spoken.

Many have spent days roaming the small islets of Dementia, enjoying the scenic views over the majestic lowlands. Travel over the quaint bridges that span the small islands of southern Dementia, and enjoy a beautiful sunset among the moss-covered trees.

If you’re looking for a place to relax while exploring the lands of Dementia, we suggest a visit to Deepwallow. The small community is a working farm, where the residents use a unique method of raising crops of some of the extraordinary local plant life. The residents of Deepwallow are private people, so care should be taken in approaching them. Once you’ve

learned their customs, we've found them to be a most interesting group with whom to spend some time.

Tip: For an exciting day trip, visit the Hill of Suicides, a site unlike any other in all the Shivering Isles. Located in central Dementia, travelers should not pass up the opportunity to take in the sights at this unique and fascinating location. There is no fee to visit the Hill, though some travelers have found it almost impossible to leave.

Arrival to the Shivering Isles is solely at the discretion of Our Lord Sheogorath, Prince of Madness.

The best way to explore the Shivering Isles is by foot. Take the time to meander along the paths that stretch across the beautiful landscape. A weary traveler can often find a place to rest at one of the many campsites found dotted across the world.

### Expensive

The Choosy Beggar, Bliss. Raven-Biter and his wife, Sheer-Meedish run a fine restaurant and Inn in the Bliss district of New Sheoth. The rooms are nicely appointed, and the food is above-average for the area. We highly recommend trying the wine-it's some of the best in the city. Many travelers find lunch to be an especially good time to visit the Choosy Beggar. Though the prices are no lower, the earlier hour often finds Sheer-Meedish in a more accommodating mood.

### Moderate

Sickly Bernice's Taphouse, Crucible. Don't let the name fool you: Sickly Bernice's Taphouse is exactly what you'd expect

from an inn located in downtown Crucible. The lodgings, while not as opulent as those found at the nearby Choosy Beggar, are satisfactory. Sickly Bernice is an affable hostess, when she is well enough to work. The food is palatable, as are the beverages. After a visit, make sure to see Earil at Earil's Mysteries. He sells a wide assortment of magicks, including some wonderful, low-cost Cure Disease spells.

#### Common Treasures, Bliss.

If you're looking for... well... anything, Common Treasures in Bliss is a good place to start. Trader Tilse Arelith has a wide assortment of wares available to the discerning customer. She's also more than willing to negotiate a good price for those unwanted items you may find in your travels.

#### Cutter's Weapons, Bliss.

There's not a finer weapon shop to be found in all of New Sheoth. Cutter runs a fine establishment, and usually keeps a good variety of weapons in stock and ready for use. She'll do repairs for you on the spot, and she seems to take extra-special care with your bladed weapons. This shop is not to be missed.

#### Books of Bliss, Bliss.

If you're looking for reading material on your journey, this is the place to get it. Sontaire is a very, very friendly bookseller with a keen eye for more than just books. You won't be disappointed if you spend some of your hard-earned gold in this establishment.

#### The Missing Pauldron, Crucible.

If it's armor you're in the mood to buy, look no further than The Missing Pauldron in Crucible. Recently re-opened under new manager Dumag gro-Bonk, the shop seems to be doing quite well. Dumag will be happy to sell you some new armor, repair you old favorites, or just sit a while and tell you the rather long and interesting story of his life.

Earil's Mysteries, Crucible.

Many adventurers don't like to travel without a full spell book, and Earil's is the place to go in New Sheoth to stock up on the latest in spellmaking. It sometimes seems time stands still as you browse through the excellent selection of spells. Highly recommended.

Things Found, Crucible.

It's an odd assortment of items, to be sure, but it's never a dull day when you visit Things Found in Crucible. Owner Abhuki has scoured the realm in search of the most intriguing and varied assortment of magical items to be found almost anywhere. Take some time and browse around-you never know what you might find!

# A Treatise On Proper Calcinator Use

*Anonymous*

Argonian alchemists of the Black Marsh have long held that the phases of the moon dictate the precise positioning of the Calcinator. During the full moon, the Calcinator should face due South, aligned with the Southron pole star. It is well known that the Southron pole star is slightly offset from true south. The diligent Alchemist will refer to star charts for the specific day and time to more precisely align the Calcinator.

For each night of the phases of the moon after full, the Calcinator should be rotated clockwise one twenty-eighth of a circle. If the Alchemist is closer to the Southron pole star than the Northern Sisters, he should rotate it counter-clockwise instead. Set the device where the moonlight is shining on half of it. Of course, if it is a new moon, the Calcinator should be fully exposed instead.

Proper alignment of the Calcinator will create one part in forty-seven more purity of the distillate. Obviously this is a highly desired attribute, even though the effect may not be that noticeable.



# Aevar Stone-Singer

*Anonymous*

“Sit quietly, Child, and listen, for the story I tell you is a story of the ages.”

“But what is it, Grandfather? Is it a story of heroes and beasts?”

The Grandfather looked patiently at the Child. He was growing into a fine boy. Soon he would see the value in the stories, the lessons that were taught to each generation.

“Just listen, Child. Let the story take root in your heart.”

—

In a time before now, long before now, when the Skaal were new, there was peace in the Land. The sun was hot and the crops grew long, and the people were happy in the peace that the All-Maker provided. But, the Skaal grew complacent and lazy, and they took for granted the Lands and all the gifts the All-Maker had given them. They forgot, or chose not to remember, that the Adversary is always watching, and that he delights in tormenting the All-Maker and his chosen people. And so it was that the Adversary came to be among the Skaal.

The Adversary has many aspects. He appears in the unholy beasts and the incurable plague. At the End of Seasons, we will

know him as Thartaag the World-Devourer. But in these ages he came to be known as the Greedy Man.

The Greedy Man (that is what we call him, for to speak his name would certainly bring ruin on the people) lived among the Skaal for many months. Perhaps he was once just a man, but when the Adversary entered into him, he became the Greedy Man, and that is how he is remembered.

It came to be one day that the powers of the Skaal left them. The strength left the arms of the warriors, and the shaman could no longer summon the beasts to their side. The elders thought that surely the All-Maker was displeased, and some suggested that the All-Maker had left them forever. It was then that the Greedy Man appeared to them and spoke.

“You of the Skaal have grown fat and lazy. I have stolen the gifts of your All-Maker. I have stolen the Oceans, so you will forever know thirst. I have stolen the Lands and the Trees and the Sun, so your crops will wither and die. I have stolen the Beasts, so you will go hungry. And I have stolen the Winds, so you will live without the Spirit of the All-Maker.

“And until one of you can reclaim these gifts, the Skaal will live in misery and despair. For I am the Greedy Man, and that is my nature.”

And the Greedy Man disappeared.

The members of the Skaal spoke for many days and nights. They knew that one of them must retrieve the Gifts of the All-Maker, but they could not decide who it should be.

“I cannot go,” said the Elder, “for I us must stay to lead the Skaal, and tell our people what is the law.”

“I cannot go,” said the Warrior, “for I must protect the Skaal. My sword will be needed in case the Greedy Man reappears.”

“I cannot go,” said the Shaman, “for the people need my wisdom. I must read the portents and offer my knowledge.”

It was then that a young man called Aevan lifted his voice. He was strong of arm, and fleet of foot, though he was not yet a warrior of the Skaal.

“I will go,” said Aevan, and the Skaal laughed.

“Hear me out,” the boy continued. “I am not yet a warrior, so my sword will not be needed. I cannot read the portents, so the people will not seek my counsel. And I am young, and not yet wise in the ways of the law. I will retrieve the Gifts of the All-Maker from the Greedy Man. If I cannot, I will not be missed.”

The Skaal thought on this briefly, and decided to let Aevan go. He left the village the next morning to retrieve the Gifts.

Aevan first set out to retrieve the Gift of Water, so he traveled to the Water Stone. It was there the All-Maker first spoke to him.

“Travel west to the sea and follow the Swimmer to the Waters of Life.”

So Aevan walked to the edge of the ocean, and there was the Swimmer, a Black Horker, sent from the All-Maker. The Swimmer dove into the waters and swam very far, and far again. Aevan was strong, though, and he swam hard. He followed the Swimmer to a cave, swimming deeper and deeper,

his lungs burning and his limbs exhausted. At last, he found a pocket of air, and there, in the dark, he found the Waters of Life. Gathering his strength, he took the Waters and swam back to the shore.

Upon returning to the Water Stone, the All-Maker spoke. "You have returned the Gift of Water to the Skaal. The Oceans again will bear fruit, and their thirst will be quenched."

Aevar then traveled to the Earth Stone, and there the All-Maker spoke to him again.

"Enter the Cave of the Hidden Music, and hear the Song of the Earth."

So Aevar traveled north and east to the Cave of the Hidden Music. He found himself in a large cavern, where the rocks hung from the ceiling and grew from the ground itself. He listened there, and heard the Song of the Earth, but it was faint. Grabbing up his mace, he struck the rocks of the floor in time with the Song, and the Song grew louder, until it filled the cavern and his heart. Then he returned to the Earth Stone.

"The Gift of the Earth is with the Skaal again," said the All-Maker. "The Lands are rich again, and will bear life."

Aevar was tired, as the Sun burned him, the trees offered no shade, and there was no wind to cool him. Still, he traveled on to the Beast Rock, and the All-Maker spoke.

"Find the Good Beast and ease his suffering."

Aevar traveled through the woods of the Isinfier for many hours until he heard the cries of a bear from over a hill. As he crested a hill, he saw the bear, a Falmer's arrow piercing its

neck. He checked the woods for the Falmer (for that is what they were, though some say they are not), and finding none, approached the beast. He spoke soothing words and came upon it slowly, saying, "Good Beast, I mean you no harm. The All-Maker has sent me to ease your suffering."

Hearing these words, the bear ceased his struggles, and laid his head at Aevan's feet. Aevan grasped the arrow and pulled it from the bear's neck. Using the little nature magic he knew, Aevan tended the wound, though it took the last bit of his strength. As the bear's wound closed, Aevan slept.

When he awoke, the bear stood over him, and the remains of a number of the Falmer were strewn about. He knew that the Good Beast had protected him during the night. He traveled back to Beast Rock, the bear by his side, and the All-Maker spoke to him again.

"You have returned the Gift of the Beasts. Once again, the Good Beasts will feed the Skaal when they are hungry, clothe them when they are cold, and protect them in times of need."

Aevan's strength had returned, so he traveled on to the Tree Stone, though the Good Beast did not follow him. When he arrived, the All-Father spoke to him.

"The First Trees are gone, and must be replanted. Find the seed and plant the First Tree."

Aevan traveled again through the Hirstaang Forest, searching for the seeds of the First Tree, but he could find none. Then he spoke to the Tree Spirits, the living trees. They told him that the seeds had been stolen by one of the Falmer (for they are the

servants of the Adversary), and this Falmer was hiding them deep in the forest, so that none would ever find them.

Aevar traveled to the deepest part of the forest, and there he found the evil Falmer, surrounded by the Lesser Tree Spirits. Aevar could see that the Spirits were in his thrall, that he had used the magic of the Seeds and spoken their secret name. Aevar knew he could not stand against such a force, and that he must retrieve the seeds in secret.

Aevar reached into his pouch and drew out his flint. Gathering leaves, he started a small fire outside the clearing where the Falmer and the ensorcelled Spirits milled. All the Skaal know the Spirits' hatred of fires, for the fires ravage the trees they serve. At once, the Nature of the Spirits took hold, and they rushed to quell the flames. During the commotion, Aevar snuck behind the Falmer and snatched the pouch of Seeds, stealing away before the evil being knew they were gone.

When Aevar returned to the Tree Stone, he planted the tree in the ground, and the All-Maker spoke to him.

“The Gift of Trees is restored. Once again, the Trees and Plants will bloom and grow, and provide nourishment and shade.”

Aevar was tired, for the Sun would only burn, and the Winds would not yet cool him, but he rested briefly in the shade of the Trees. His legs were weary and his eyes heavy, but he continued on, traveling to the Sun Stone. Again, the All-Maker spoke.

“The gentle warmth of the Sun is stolen, so now it only burns. Free the Sun from the Halls of Penumbra.”

And so Aevan walked west, over the frozen lands until he reached the Halls of Penumbra. The air inside was thick and heavy, and he could see no farther than the end of his arm. Still, he felt his way along the walls, though he heard the shuffling of feet and knew that this place held the Unholy Beasts who would tear his flesh and eat his bones. For hours he crept along, until he saw a faint glow far at the end of the hall.

There, from behind a sheet of perfect ice, came a glow so bright he had to shut his eyes, lest they be forever blinded. He plucked the flaming eye from one of the Unholy Beasts and threw it at the ice with all his might. A small crack appeared in the ice, then grew larger. Slowly, the light crept out between the cracks, widening them, splitting the ice wall into pieces. With a deafening crack, the wall crumbled, and the light rushed over Aevan and through the Halls. He heard the shrieks of the Unholy Beasts as they were blinded and burned. He ran out of the Halls, following the light, and collapsed on the ground outside.

When he was able to rise again, the Sun again warmed him, and he was glad for that. He traveled back to the Sun Stone, where the All-Maker spoke to him.

“The Gift of the Sun is the Skaal’s once again. It will warm them and give them light.”

Aevan had one final Gift he had to recover, the Gift of the Winds, so he traveled to the Wind Stone, far on the western coast of the island. When he arrived, the All-Maker spoke to him, giving him his final task.

“Find the Greedy Man and release the Wind from its captivity.”

So, Aevar wandered the land in search of the Greedy Man. He looked in the trees, but the Greedy Man did not hide there. Nor did he hide near the oceans, or the deep caves, and the beasts had not seen him in the dark forests. Finally, Aevar came to a crooked house, and he knew that here he would find the Greedy Man.

“Who are you,” shouted the Greedy Man, “that you would come to my house?”

“I am Aevar of the Skaal,” said Aevar. “I am not warrior, shaman, or elder. If I do not return, I will not be missed. But I have returned the Oceans and the Earth, the Trees, the Beasts, and the Sun, and I will return the Winds to my people, that we may feel the spirit of the All-Maker in our souls again.”

And with that, he grabbed up the Greedy Man’s bag and tore it open. The Winds rushed out with gale force, sweeping the Greedy Man up and carrying him off, far from the island. Aevar breathed in the Winds and was glad. He walked back to the Wind Stone, where the All-Maker spoke to him a final time.

“You have done well, Aevar. You, the least of the Skaal, have returned my gifts to them. The Greedy Man is gone for now, and should not trouble your people again in your lifetime. Your All-Maker is pleased. Go now, and live according to your Nature.”

And Aevar started back to the Skaal village.

—

“And then what happened, Grandfather?”

“What do you mean, Child? He went home.”



“No. When he returned to the village,” the Child continued.  
“Was he made a warrior? Or taught the ways of the shaman?  
Did he lead the Skaal in battle?”

“I do not know. That is where the story ends,” said the  
Grandfather.

“But that is not an ending! That is not how stories end!”

The old man laughed and got up from his chair.

“Is it not?”

# Agnar's Journal

*Agnar*

Entry 1:

When I took on the role of Chieftain of Thirsk, when I accepted the beautiful Svenja Snow-Song as my advisor, and then my bride, I never imagined how quickly my life would change.

I went to the isle of Solstheim for some much needed rest, and found it in the mead-soaked halls of Thirsk. But when I met Svenja, my sweet Svenja, I became entangled in an epic story the likes of which I had only read about in fables and childrens' tales.

Svenja told me of the fateful night when a hideous creature known as the Uderfrykte attacked the mead hall, killing rampantly, leaving her the only survivor. The creature was slain by a champion, and Thirsk had its new chieftain, but it wasn't long before they moved on to some new challenge, some new adventure.

And that's where I entered the tale. Svenja Snow-Song, with her ice-blue eyes and flaxon hair, gained my love. Soon after, I became her husband... and the mead hall's new chieftain. In truth, I had never been happier. But Svenja, my dear wife, existed in quiet misery, constantly haunted by the memory of the Uderfrykte, and the damage it had wrought on the mead hall, and the people she had loved. Night after night, my dear

woke up screaming, her face etched in horror and a single word issuing from her lips—“Uderfrykte!”

I feared for my wife’s sanity and happiness, but it was she who found a solution to her problem. As a warrior, she told me, she must confront her fear. She must defeat it. The Uderfrykte was dead, yes, but where did it come from? Was it unique? Would more of the creatures come, and wreak havoc once again? Would I, her loving husband, be killed? And so she corresponded with explorers and researchers all across Tamriel, until she found the answer she had been looking for. The Uderfrykte was in fact NOT unique, but the offspring of an ancient Uderfrykte Matron. In order to end the nightmares, in order to prevent any more destruction, we would need to hunt down and kill the Uderfrykte Matron, no matter where or how.

Entry 2:

By Ysmir, we’ve been searching. And searching. And searching some more. But finally it came—the lucky break we had been hoping for. The creature has been spotted by a shepherd in the remote highlands of Skyrim!

Entry 3:

We found its trail and tracked it for days, crossing the border into the Imperial Province. Here in the frigid mountains, we met with a local hunter who tried to warn us away from the area, citing an old legend about a deadly creature known as the Horror of Dive Rock—a monster credited with the slaying of over a dozen people, and just as much cattle. Could this creature be the very Uderfrykte Matron we seek? Perhaps, unlike its child on Solstheim, the Matron moves from location

to location, and its this mobility that has thus far prevented its killing or capture?

Entry 4:

we have made camp at Dive Rock, reportedly the highest natural observation point in all of Cyrodiil. From here we can see for miles! So we'll keep watch, night and day. We're close, so very close. Svenja and I can feel it in our very bones. Indeed, Svenja has always been particularly in tune with such things, and is convinced the Uderfrykte Matron is close.

Entry 5:

Svenja has grown tired of my constant writing, but this journal will serve as a record of our travels and defeat against the Uderfrykte. She's staring at me angrily, impatiently, right now as I write, but this entry is too important—finally, on this third day of watching, we've spotted it—the Uderfrykte Matron! It is unlike anything we have ever lain eyes on, a giant, troll-like beast that seems to waver and shimmer in the cold—like the feral form of winter itself! We're off now to trudge down the mountain, weapons in hand, and give the Horror of Dive Rock its due!

Entry 6:

Failure and horror! We engaged the monster with all the force we could muster, but it was a travesty beyond comprehension. Svenja... My beautiful Svenja! My dear wife was killed instantly, consumed by the beast nearly whole! And though it shames me now to write these words, I could think of nothing more at the time than escape. I took flight, returning here to our camp on Dive Rock, to collect my thoughts and nerve.

I haven't much time. After this quick entry I will march out and meet the Uderfrykte Matron once more—it is sure to track me back to this campsite anyway, so our confrontation is inevitable. Can I even hope to defeat this monstrosity? One thing is certain—Svenja and I came hastily, unprepared. My steel axe? Useless. My dear wife's Frostwyrms Bow? Completely ineffective (and swallowed whole, still in Svenja's hand...).

The beast appears to be a creature of the cold, and is likely nearly completely resistant to it. I would attack with fire if I had any on hand. But there is no time. No time to travel to a mages guild and procure an enchanted blade, or hire the services of a sorcerer. My steel axe will have to do. And so I return to battle now, and hope beyond hope that I may slay the wretched monster that has brought so much grief to so many people. And if not, I take comfort in knowing I will soon rejoin my beautiful bride in the gilded halls of Sovngarde.

If someone is reading this hastily written journal, I am likely dead, and pray to Ysmir that you have had more luck against the creature than I.

Agnar the Unwavering,

Chieftain of Thirsk

# Ahzirr Trajijazaeri

*Anonymous*

This is an absurd book. But like all things Khajiiti, as the expression goes, “gzalzi vaberzarita maaszi”, or “absurdity has become necessity.” Much of what I have to say has probably never been written before, and if it has, no one has read it. The Imperials feel that everything must be written down for posterity, but every Khajiiti kitten born in Elsweyr knows his history, he drinks it in with his mother’s milk.

Fairly recently, however, our struggles to win back our homeland from the rapacious Count of Leyawiin have attracted sympathetic persons, even Imperials, who wish to join our cause, but, it seems, do not understand our ways. Our enemies, of course, do not understand us either, but that is as we wish it, a weapon in our arsenal. Our non-Khajiiti friends, however, should know who we are, why we are, and what we are doing.

The Khajiit mind is not engineered for self-reflection. We simply do what we do, and let the world be damned. To put into words and rationalize our philosophy is foreign, and I cannot guarantee that even after reading this, you will understand us. Grasp this simple truth—“q’zi no vano thzina ualizz”—“When I contradict myself, I am telling the truth.”

We are the Renrijra Krin. “The Mercenary’s Grin ,” “The Laugh of the Landless,” and “The Smiling Scum” would all be fair

translations. It is a derogatory expression, but it is amusing so we have adopted it.

We have anger in our hearts, but not on our faces. We fight for Elsweyr, but we do not ally ourselves with the Mane, who symbolizes our land. We believe in justice, but do not follow laws.

“Q’zi no vano thzina ualizz.”

These are not rules, for there is no word for “rules” in Ta’agra. Call them our “thjizzrini”—“foolish concepts.”

#### 1. “Vaba Do’Shurh’do”: “It Is Good To Be Brave”

We are struggling against impossible odds, against the very Empire of Tamriel. Our cause is the noblest cause of all: defense of home. If we fail, we betray our past and our future. Our dead are “Ri’sallidad”, which may be interpreted as “martyrs” in the truest, best sense of that word which is so often misused. We honor their sacrifice and, beneath our smiles, mourn them deeply.

Our bravery most obviously shows in the smile that is the “Krin” part of our name. This does not mean that we walk about grinning like the idiotic, baboonish Imga of Valenwood. We simply are entertained by adversary. We find an equal, fair fight tiresome in the extreme. We confidently smile because we know our victory in the end is assured. And we know our smiles drive our enemies insane.

#### 2. “Vaba Maaszi Lhajiito”: “It Is Necessary To Run Away”

We are struggling against impossible odds, against the very Empire of Tamriel. Honor is madness. Yes, we loved the

Renrijra Krin who died in brave battle against the forces of the Empire, but I guarantee you that each of those Ri'sallidad had an escape route he or she failed to use, and died saying, "Damn."

When the great Senche-Raht comes to the Saimisil Steppes, he will find himself unable to hunt, unable to sleep, as the tiny Alfiq leap onto his back, biting him, and running off before he has a chance to turn his great body to face them. Eventually, though he may stubbornly hope to catch the Alfiq, the Senche-Raht always leaves. They are our cousins, the Alfiq, and we have adopted their strategy against the great tiger of Leyawiin.

Do not ally yourself with the Renrij if you yearn to be part of a mighty army, marching resolutely forth, for whom retreat is anathema. We will laugh at your suicidal idiocy as we slip into the reeds of the river, and watch the inevitable slaughter.

### 3. "Fusozay Var Var": "Enjoy Life"

Life is short. If you have not made love recently, please, put down this book, and take care of that with all haste. Find a wanton lass or a frisky lad, or several, in whatever combination your wise loins direct, and do not under any circumstances play hard to get. Our struggle against the colossal forces of oppression can wait.

Good. Welcome back.

We Renrijra Krin live and fight together, and know that Leyawiin and the Empire will not give way very soon, likely not in our lifetimes. In the time we have, we do not want our closest comrades to be dour, dull, colorless, sober, and virginal. If we did, we would have joined the Emperor's Blades.



Do not begrudge us our lewd jokes, our bawdy, drunken nights, our moonsugar. They are the pleasures that Leyawiin denies us, and so we take our good humor very seriously.

#### 4. “Fusozay Var Dar”: “Kill Without Qualm”

Life is short. Very short, as many have learned when they have crossed the Renrijra Krin.

We fight dirty. If an enemy is facing us, we might consider our options, and even slip away if his sword looks too big. If his back is to us, however, I personally favor knocking him down, and then jumping on his neck where the bones snap with a gratifying crunch. Of course, it is up to you and your personal style.

#### 5. “Ahzirr Durrarriss”: “We Give Freely To The People”

Let us not forget our purpose. We are fighting for our families, the Khajiiti driven from the rich, fertile shores of Lake Makapi and the River Malapi, where they and their ancestors lived since time immemorial. It is our battle, but their tragedy. We must show them, lest they are swayed by other rhetoric, that we are fighting for them.

The Mane, The Emperor, and The Count can give speeches, pass laws, and, living life in the open, explain their positions and philosophies to their people to stave off the inevitable revolution. Extralegal entities, such as the Renrijra Krin, must make our actions count for our words. This means more than fighting the good fight, and having a laugh at our befuddled adversaries. It means engaging and seducing the people. Ours is not a military war, it is a political war. If the people rise up against our oppressors, they will retreat, and we will win.

Give to these people, whenever possible, gold, moonsugar, and our strong arms, and though they hide, their hearts will be with us.

## 6. “Ahzirr Traajjazeri”: “We Justly Take By Force”

Let us not forget our purpose. We are thieves and thugs, smugglers and saboteurs. If we cannot take a farm, we burn it to the ground. If the Imperials garrisoned in a glorious ancient stronghold, beloved by our ancestors, will not yield, we tear the structure apart. If the only way to rescue the land from the Leyawiin misappropriation is to make it uninhabitable by all, so be it.

We want our life and our home back as it was twenty years ago, but if that is not realistic, then we will accept a different simple, pragmatic goal. Revenge. With a smile.

# Akaviri Diary

*Xhaferi*

## Day Three

It is with a heavy heart and a trembling hand that I pen this latest entry. It has been several days since I have seen anyone else on the road from our garrison at Grey Ridge. The road is lonely and treacherous. I am rationing my supplies to prepare for a tough path ahead. As long as Reman Cyrodiil's army hasn't located our headquarters at Pale Pass, the journey should be fairly uneventful. I admit, I am nervous. It is an honor to be selected to carry these orders to our fort, but sending me alone is a calculated risk. While it is not my own life I am worried about, it is the importance of the contents of the orders that aggrieves me. If they are somehow lost, the fort will not know that their supplies are going to be delayed by a month. Without that knowledge, the fort may choose to press the attacks on the front line as their supplies dwindle. They are counting on those supplies to be there sooner. I must not fail getting this message there. The slate rock that the orders have been carved upon for safety weighs me down; it is a constant reminder of the more than physical burden that I carry.

## Day Seven

It has been two days, and I have finally arrived at Dragonclaw Rock. The huge formation is a welcome and invigorating sight.

The giant stone appears to reach down from the north and strike at the heart of Remus' forces like our armies have been doing for the better part of a year now. I have still encountered no one else on this trail. I hope that as I head due west along the narrow path, I will find someone who can give me some news as to how our men are faring in the war.

### Day Eight

After winding my way westward, I have come within sight of The Sentinel: a huge statue placed there by some unknown artist many years ago. It stands watch pointing north, as if daring anyone to cross the borders into the Imperial nation. Remus would be quite angry if he knew we used this very statue as a waypoint into his domain. Last night, I encountered another one of our messengers who had been beset by a pack of mountain wolves. His leg was hurt badly, but I managed to help heal it with an ampoule of medicine I carried with me. He said his name was Sylaj, and he was on his way from Pale Pass to request more supplies. I discussed with him the irony of our meeting, and he decided to travel with me back to the fort since his mission would be needless. We plan to leave at nightfall.

### Day Nine

I am using much of my remaining strength writing this. As we had made our way north from The Sentinel, we were attacked by perhaps the same pack of wolves that had attacked Sylaj. He had chased them off earlier after being bitten, but now that they had tasted blood, they had returned in greater number. Fighting back to back, Sylaj and I slew at least 8 of the beasts, but not before one of them clawed my gut and left a terrible wound. We were able to drive them off, but now I am bleeding badly, and the only medicine I had I gave to Sylaj. We have

decided to continue north until we reach the portal to the Serpent's Trail and seek cover inside. I will try to write more soon, but I must sleep. I am so very tired.

## Day Eleven

This is the last entry I shall be able to write. We entered the Serpent's Trail nearly a day ago, seeking shelter from the elements and the wolves. What we did not foresee was the creatures that had decided to make the Serpent's Trail their home. I did not see them clearly, but they were huge and strong. Sylaj died instantly as one of them cleaved off his head with a single stroke. There were three of these huge, ugly man-like creatures. I ran as fast as I dared through the dark tunnels trying to escape. But as I fled, one of them hurled a boulder at me and struck me square in the back. I managed to crawl through a smaller opening and escape the lumbering monsters, but I soon realized that crawling is all I would be able to do. I think the boulder shattered my spine. I can no longer feel my legs. My wound from the wolf attack has reopened and I have lost much blood. I fear that this is as far as I shall be able to go. I have failed my mission. I have been unable to get these orders to the fort at Pale Pass. I am so close, yet it may as well be leagues away since I can no longer walk and my strength is draining. If a fellow messenger or soldier picks up this diary, please get the orders to the fort before it is too late. And please tell my wife, Vata, that Xhaferi will always love her.

# Alval Uvani's Schedule

*Anonymous*

As he travels around Cyrodiil, Alval Uvani can be found at the following locations, on the following days:

Morndas/Tirdas—Bravil—The Lonely Suitor Lodge

Middas/Turdas—Skinrad—The West Weald Inn

Fredas/Loredas—Bruma—Olav's Tap and Tack

Sundas—Leyawiin—Alval Uvani's House (rented property)

Keep in mind that there may be some variation based on the time it takes for him to get to the different cities.

# Amantius Allectus' Diary

## *Amantius Allectus*

I've planted the seeds of the Drinkers. Soon I shall know if my theories hold true.

The first shoots have appeared. I must make sure to continue the precise schedule of nutrient solutions.

Small Drinker fronds are clearly visible. This is a critical time in their development. I'm almost out of rat blood. I'll have to catch some more of the filthy beggars.

The young plants are juveniles now. I can see them waving as if in a breeze, although the air in my cellar is still as death.

I'm having a hard time catching any more cats. I may have to start using dogs. The damn Drinker plants have a voracious appetite.

One of them cut me today. I'll have to be more careful.

My creations are refusing to feed. As an experiment I offered a drop of my own blood, which one of them drank greedily. The others Drinkers are beginning to wither.

I collected a bucket of human blood from the healers. I had to pay her an exorbitant amount to keep her tongue still. The Drinkers are doing much better. Am I doing the right thing?

The benefit of these plants to all of Cyrodiil is beyond doubt, but the price may be too high.

It is one of the most difficult decisions of my life. I have destroyed my notes for how to hybridize Drinkers. I set the trays on the roof where the sun could strike them. An hour after sunrise they were all dead. My attempt to create a hybrid of vampire and plant has failed. They were just too dangerous.

Two parts grave dust, one part ash salts. Mix with human blood. Expose to two hours of moonlight each night.



# Amber Materials List

*Dumag gro-Bonk*

I, Dumag gro-Bonk, Master Smith of New Sheoth, am honor and duty bound by oath to my beloved mentor, to forge weapons and armor for any hero who brings me Amber. I will create magical versions of these weapons and armor if the hero can, along with the Amber, return to me the appropriate matrix, which my mentor has scattered throughout the land, to soak in the magical essence of the Shivering Isles.

The amount of Amber required to make items is listed below:

1 piece -- Arrows (per 25)

2 pieces -- Bow

4 pieces -- Hammer

2 pieces -- Mace

3 pieces -- Sword

2 pieces -- Boots

5 pieces -- Cuirass

2 pieces -- Gauntlets

3 pieces -- Greaves

2 pieces -- Helmet

2 pieces -- Shield

# An Elytra's Life

*Karmelle*

It is a strange life that I have chosen, here amongst the beasts of these Shivering Isles. These Elytra—a most gentle creature if ever there were a gentle creature - they have welcomed me among their brood as one of their own. I have made my life and home in their tunnels as if they were my own humble cabin, and indeed, I have been invited into their warm family unit.

Many who encounter the Elytra are initially set to unrest by their appearance. Their size alone is sufficient to unsettle most of the humanoid races. The enlarged thorax can grow to be as large as a human male and nearly a full span in girth. When I first encountered my insectoid friends, I believed the enlarged thorax to be a method to manufacture the ichor that is vital to the lives of the Elytra. In truth, the thorax is the precious womb where their noble lives begin.

However, one cannot discount the significance of the ichor that gathers at the spike near the base of the thorax. This precious substance emits a smell that most will describe as acidic and sour (although I find it to be a delight). The ichor serves the most brilliant purpose of the Elytra. It is used to paralyze living tissue of other creatures, rendering them unable to resist the advances of the Elytra. Here is where the true brilliance takes place.

When choosing a suitable host, the Elytra will impose itself on the creature. Any creature that draws breath seems to be biologically suitable for this purpose. I myself have witnessed Elytra Matrons choose creatures that range from simple wolves to a brilliant Khajiit alchemist. Each time, the host is chosen carefully. Oh, I know that the superstitious farmers of the Isles will say that the Elytra will attack any creature, but after what I've seen, I know that they approach each host with the utmost care.

The host is injected and their body becomes enriched with the flowing sweetness of the ichor. They relax and quickly expire as the magical nature of the Elytra's sting takes ahold of the host in its gentle grasp. After the host moves on, the Elytra nests its eggs in the still warm shell of the host. There, the eggs warm and grow over a period of mere days, feeding on the giving flesh of the host. Soon after, the hatchlings emerge and stumble forward into the world.

# An Overview Of Gods And Worship

*Brother Hetchfeld*

Editor's Note:

Brother Hetchfeld is an Associate Scribe at the Imperial University, Office of Introductory Studies

Gods are commonly judged upon the evidence of their interest in worldly matters. A central belief in the active participation of Deities in mundane matters can be challenged by the reference to apparent apathy and indifference on the part of Gods during times of plague or famine.

From intervention in legendary quests to manifestations in common daily life, no pattern for the Gods of Tamriel activities is readily perceived. The concerns of Gods in many ways may seem unrelated or at best unconcerned with the daily trials of the mortal realm. The exceptions do exist, however.

Many historical records and legends point to the direct intervention of one or more gods at times of great need. Many heroic tales recount blessings of the divinity bestowed upon heroic figures who worked or quested for the good of a Deity or the Deity's temple. Some of the more powerful artifacts in the known world were originally bestowed upon their owners through such reward. It has also been reported that priests of

high ranking in their temples may on occasion call upon their Deity for blessings or help in time of need. The exact nature of such contact and the blessings bestowed is given to much speculation, as the temples hold such associations secret and holy. This direct contact gives weight to the belief that the Gods are aware of the mortal realm. In many circumstances, however, these same Gods will do nothing in the face of suffering and death, seeming to feel no need to interfere. It is thus possible to conclude that we, as mortals, may not be capable of understanding more than a small fraction of the reasoning and logic such beings use.

One defining characteristic of all Gods and Goddesses is their interest in worship and deeds. Deeds in the form of holy quests are just one of the many things that bring the attention of a Deity. Deeds in everyday life, by conforming to the statutes and obligations of individual temples are commonly supposed to please a Deity. Performance of ceremony in a temple may also bring a Deity's attention. Ceremonies vary according to the individual Deity. The results are not always apparent but sacrifice and offerings are usually required to have any hope of gaining a Deity's attention.

While direct intervention in daily temple life has been recorded, the exact nature of the presence of a God in daily mundane life is a subject of controversy. A traditional saying of the Wood Elves is that "One man's miracle is another man's accident." While some gods are believed to take an active part of daily life, others are well known for their lack of interest in temporal affairs.

It has been theorized that gods do in fact gain strength from such things as worship through praise, sacrifice and deed. It

may even be theorized that the number of worshippers a given Deity has may reflect on His overall position among the other Gods. This my own conjecture, garnered from the apparent ability of the larger temples to attain blessings and assistance from their God with greater ease than smaller religious institutions.

There are reports of the existence of spirits in our world that have the same capacity to use the actions and deeds of mortals to strengthen themselves as do the Gods. The understanding of the exact nature of such creatures would allow us to understand with more clarity the connection between a Deity and the Deity's worshippers.

The implication of the existence of such spirits leads to the speculation that these spirits may even be capable of raising themselves to the level of a God or Goddess. Motusuo of the Imperial Seminary has suggested that these spirits may be the remains of Gods and Goddesses who through time lost all or most of their following, reverting to their earliest most basic form. Practitioners of the Old Ways say that there are no Gods, just greater and lesser spirits. Perhaps it is possible for all three theories to be true.

# An Undelivered Letter

*Anonymous*

Filide -

It's so dark in this place. We were beset by the monsters after discovering this accursed city under the mountain. I was separated from most of the others in the madness, watched men ten times my superior fall in combat against them. I'll never forget their screams echoing in the vastness, nor the blood splashing against the pale stones, staining the faces of our attackers in their cannibalistic frenzy.

Drothan's a madman. I should have listened to you, brother. I was so eager to prove myself, to be a part of something. I was so proud to send a part of my wages home to mother. Please, tell her I died honorably. I volunteered for Drothan's escort into this forsaken city, watched as he sealed the door behind us. When the slaughter began, I saw him flee in the shadows, Dagon take the s'wit.

I left Mournhold to prove myself, and only proven to be a fool. This place is cold, muthsera, and the screams are diminishing. I fear they may start hunting for the rest of us soon. I cannot find my way out, and their eyes are so keen in the murky dark.

I know this letter will never reach you, brother, but Vivec willing, when the winds blow east over the Peaks of Valus and



Velothi, may they carry my final thoughts to you. I love you, brother. I'm so sorry. Farewell.

# Anchorite's Note

*Anonymous*

To the Anchorites:

Place your Grand Soul Gems in the altar. Pray for His Blessing, and strike the altar with your Soul Trap magic. Your gems will become instruments of His Divine Power.

# Ancient Tales Of The Dwemer

*Marobar Sul*

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer, part I: The Ransom of Zarek

The Ransom of Zarek

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer

Part I

by

Marobar Sul

Jalemmil stood in her garden and read the letter her servant had brought to her. The bouquet of joss roses in her hand fell to the ground. For a moment it was as if all birds had ceased to sing and a cloud had passed over the sky. Her carefully cultivated and structured haven seemed to flood over with darkness.

“We have thy son,” it read. “We will be in touch with thee shortly with our ransom demands.”

Zarek had never made it as far as Akgun after all. One of the brigands on the road, Orcs probably, or accursed Dunmer, must have seen his well-appointed carriage, and taken him hostage. Jalemmil clutched at a post for support, wondering if her boy

had been hurt. He was but a student, not the sort to fight against well-armed men, but had they beaten him? It was more than a mother's heart could bear to imagine.

"Don't tell me they sent the ransom note so quickly," called a family voice, and a familiar face appeared through the hedge. It was Zarek. Jalemmil hurried to embrace her boy, tears running down her face.

"What happened?" she cried. "I thought thou had been kidnapped."

"I was," said Zarek. "Three huge soaring Nords attacked by carriage on the Frimvorn Pass. Brothers, as I learned, named Mathais, Ulin, and Koorg. Thou should have seen these men, mother. Each one of them would have had trouble fitting through the front door, I can tell thee."

"What happened?" Jalemmil repeated. "Were thou rescued?"

"I thought about waiting for that, but I knew they'd send off a ransom note and I know how thou does worry. So I remembered what my mentor at Akgun always said about remaining calm, observing thy surroundings, and looking for thy opponent's weakness," Zarek grinned. "It took a while, though, because these fellows were truly monsters. And then, when I listened to them, bragging to one another, I realized that vanity was their weakness."

"What did thou do?"

"They had me chained at their camp in the woods not far from Cael, on a high knoll over-looking a wide river. I heard one of them, Koorg, telling the others that it would take the better

part of an hour to swim across the river and back. They were nodding in agreement, when I spoke up.

“I could swim that river and back in thirty minutes,’ I said.

“Impossible,’ said Koorg. ‘I can swim faster than a little whelp like thee.’

“So it was agreed that we would dive off the cliff, swim to the center island, and return. As we went to our respective rocks, Koorg took it upon himself to lecture me about all the fine points of swimming. The importance of synchronized movements of the arms and legs for maximum speed. How essential it was to breathe after only third or fourth stroke, not too often to slow thysel down, but not too often to lose one’s air. I nodded and agreed to all his fine points. Then we dove off the cliffs. I made it to the island and back in a little over an hour, but Koorg never returned. He had dashed his brains at the rocks at the base of the cliff. I had noticed the telltale undulations of underwater rocks, and had taken the diving rock on the right.”

“But thou returned?” asked Jalemmil, astounded. “Was that not then when thou escaped?”

“It was too risky to escape then,” said Zarek. “They could have easily caught me again, and I wasn’t keen to be blamed for Koorg’s disappearance. I said I did not know what happened to him, and after some searching, they decided he had forgotten about the race and had swum ashore to hunt for food. They could not see how I could have had anything to do with his disappearance, as fully visible as I was throughout my swim. The two brothers began making camp along the rocky cliff-

edge, picking an ideal location so that I would not be able to escape.

“One of the brothers, Mathais, began commenting on the quality of the soil and the gradual incline of the rock that circled around the bay below. Ideal, he said, for a foot race. I expressed my ignorance of the sport, and he was keen to give me details of the proper technique for running a race. He made absurd faces, showing how one must breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth; how to bend one’s knees to the proper angle on the rise; the importance of sure foot placement. Most important, he explained, was that the runner keep an aggressive but not too strenuous pace if one intends to win. It is fine to run in second place through the race, he said, provided one has the willpower and strength to pull out in the end.

“I was an enthusiastic student, and Mathais decided that we ought to run a quick race around the edge of the bay before night fell. Ulin told us to bring back some firewood when we came back. We began at once down the path, skirting the cliff below. I followed his advice about breath, gait, and foot placement, but I ran with all my power right from the start. Despite his much longer legs, I was a few paces ahead as we wound the first corner.

“With his eyes on my back, Mathais did not see the gape in the rock that I jumped over. He plummeted over the cliff before he had a chance to cry out. I spent a few minutes gathering some twigs before I returned to Ulin at camp.”

“Now thou were just showing off,” frowned Jalemmil. “Surely that would have been a good time to escape.”

“Thou might think so,” agreed Zarek. “But thou had to see the topography—a few large trees, and then nothing but shrubs. Ulin would have noticed my absence and caught up with me in no time, and I would have had a hard time explaining Mathais’s absence. However, the brief forage around the area allowed me to observe some of the trees close up, and I could formulate my final plan.

“When I got back to camp with a few twigs, I told Ulin that Mathais was slow coming along, dragging a large dead tree behind him. Ulin scoffed at his brother’s strength, saying it would take him time to pull up a live tree by the roots and drop it on the bonfire. I expressed reasonable doubt.

“‘I’ll show thee,’ he said, ripping up a ten foot tall specimen effortlessly.

“‘But that’s scarcely a sapling,’ I objected. ‘I thought thou could rip up a tree.’ His eyes followed mine to a magnificent, heavy-looking one at the edge of the clearing. Ulin grabbed it and began to shake it with a tremendous force to loosen its roots from the dirt. With that, he loosened the hive from the uppermost branches, dropping it down onto his head.

“That was when I made my escape, mother,” said Zarek, in conclusion, showing a little schoolboy pride. “While Mathais and Koorg were at the base of the cliff, and Ulin was flailing about, engulfed by a swarm.”

Jalemmil embraced her son once again.

Publisher’s Note

I was reluctant to publish the works of Marobar Sul, but when the University of Gwyllim Press asked me to edit this edition, I decided to use this as an opportunity to set the record straight once and for all.

Scholars do not agree on the exact date of Marobar Sul's work, but it is generally agreed that they were written by the playwright "Gor Felim," famous for popular comedies and romances during the Interregnum between the fall of the First Cyrodilic Empire and the rise of Tiber Septim. The current theory holds that Felim heard a few genuine Dwemer tales and adapted them to the stage in order to make money, along with rewritten versions of many of his own plays.

Gor Felim created the persona of "Marobar Sul" who could translate the Dwemer language in order to add some sort of validity to the work and make it even more valuable to the gullible. Note that while "Marobar Sul" and his works became the subject of heated controversy, there are no reliable records of anyone actually meeting "Marobar Sul," nor was there anyone of that name employed by the Mages Guild, the School of Julianos, or any other intellectual institution.

In any case, the Dwemer in most of the tales of "Marobar Sul" bear little resemblance to the fearsome, unfathomable race that frightened even the Dunmer, Nords, and Redguards into submission and built ruins that even now have yet to be understood.

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer, part II: The Seed

The Seed

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer



## Part II

by

Marobar Sul

The hamlet village of Lorikh was a quiet, peaceful Dwemer community nestled in the monochrome grey and tan dunes and boulders of the Dejasyte. No vegetation of any kind grew in Lorikh, though there were blackened vestiges of long dead trees scattered throughout the town. Kamdida arriving by caravan looked at her new home with despair. She was used to the forestland of the north where her father's family had hailed. Here there was no shade, little water, and a great open sky. It looked like a dead land.

Her mother's family took Kamdida and her younger brother Nevith in, and was very kind to the orphans, but she felt lonely in the alien village. It was not until she met an old Argonian woman who worked at the water factory that Kamdida found a friend. Her name was Sigerthe, and she said that her family had lived in Lorikh centuries before the Dwemer arrived, when it was a great and beautiful forest.

"Why did the trees die?" asked Kamdida.

"When there were Argonians only in this land, we never cut trees for we had no need for fuel or wooden structures such as you use. When the Dwemer came, we allowed them to use the plants as they needed them, provided they never touched the Hist, which are sacred to us and to the land. For many years, we lived peaceably. No one wanted for anything."

"What happened?"

“Some of your scientists discovered that distilling a certain tree sap, molding it and drying it, they could create a resilient kind of armor called resin,” said Sigerthe. “Most of the trees that grew here had very thin ichor in their branches, but not the Hist. Many of them fairly glistened with sap, which made the Dwemer merchants greedy. They hired a woodsman named Juhnin to start clearing the sacred arbors for profit.”

The old Argonian woman looked to the dusty ground and sighed, “Of course, we Argonians cried out against it. It was our home, and the Hist, once gone, would never return. The merchants reconsidered, but Juhnin took it on his own to break our spirit. He proved one terrible, bloody day that his prodigious skill with the axe could be used against people as well as trees. Any Argonian who stood in his way was hewn asunder, children as well. The Dwemer people of Lorikh closed their doors and their ears to the cries of murder.”

“Horrible,” gasped Kamdida.

“It is difficult to explain,” said Sigerthe. “But the deaths of our living ones was not nearly as horrible to us as the death of our trees. You must understand that to my people, the Hist are where we come from and where we are going. To destroy our bodies is nothing; to destroy our trees is to annihilate us utterly. When Juhnin then turned his axe on the Hist, he killed the land. The water disappeared, the animals died, and all the other life that the trees nourished crumbled and dried to dust.”

“But you are still here?” asked Kamdida. “Why didn’t you leave?”

“For us, we are trapped. I am one of the last of a dying people. Few of us are strong enough to live away from our ancestral

groves, and sometimes, even now, there is a perfume in the air of Lorikh that gives us life. It will not be long until we are all gone.”

Kamdida felt tears welling up in her eyes. “Then I will be alone in this horrible place with no trees and no friends.”

‘We Argonians have an expression,’ said Sigerthe with a sad smile, taking Kamdida’s hand. “That the best soil for a seed is found in your heart.”

Kamdida looked into the palm of her hand and saw that Sigerthe had given her a small black pellet. It was a seed. “It looks dead.”

“It can only grow in one place in all Lorikh,” said the old Argonian. “Outside an old cottage in the hills outside town. I cannot go there, for the owner would kill me on sight and like all my people, I am too frail to defend myself now. But you can go there and plant the seed.”

“What will happen?” asked Kamdida. “Will the Hist return?”

“No. But some part of their power will.”

That night, Kamdida stole from her house and into the hills. She knew the cottage Sigerthe had spoken of. Her aunt and uncle had told her never to go there. As she approached it, the door opened and an old but powerfully built man appeared, a mighty axe slung over his shoulder.

“What are you doing here, child?” he demanded. “In the dark, I almost took you to be a lizard man.”

“I’ve lost my way in the dark,” she said quickly. “I’m trying to get back to my home in Lorikh.”

“Be on your way then.”

“Do you have a candle I might have?” she asked piteously. “I’ve been walking in circles and I’m afraid I’ll only return back here without any light.”

The old man grumbled and walked into his house. Quickly, Kamdida dug a hole in the dry dirt and buried the seed as deeply as she could. He returned with a lit candle.

“See to it you don’t come back here,” he growled. “Or I’ll chop you in half.”

He returned to his house and fire. The next morning when he awoke and opened the door, he found that his cottage was entirely sealed within an enormous tree. He picked up his axe and delivered blow and after blow to the wood, but he could never break through. He tried side chops, but the wood healed itself. He tried an upper chop followed by an under chop to form a wedge, but the wood sealed.

Much time went by before someone discovered old Juhnin’s emaciated body lying in front of his open door, still holding his blunted, broken axe. It was a mystery to all what he had been chopping with it, but the legend began circulating through Lorikh that Hist sap was found on the blade.

Shortly thereafter, small desert flowers began pushing through the dry dirt in the town. Trees and plants newly sown began to live tolerably well, if not luxuriantly. The Hist did not return, but Kamdida and the people of Lorikh noticed that at a certain

time around twilight, long, wide shadows of great, bygone trees would fill the streets and hills.

## Publisher's Note

“The Seed” is one of Marobar Sul’s tales whose origins are well known. This tale originated from the Argonian slaves of southern Morrowind. “Marobar Sul” merely replaced the Dunmer with Dwemer and claimed he found it in a Dwemer ruin. Furthermore, he later claimed that the Argonian version of the tale was merely a retelling of his “original!”

Lorikh, while clearly not a Dwemer name, simply does not exist, and in fact “Lorikh” was a name commonly used, incorrectly, for Dunmer men in Gor Felim’s plays. The Argonian versions of the story usually take place on Vvardenfell, usually in the Telvanni city of Sadrith Mora. Of course the so-called “scholars” of Temple Zero will probably claim this story has something to do with “Lorkhan” simply because the town starts with the letter L.

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer, part III: The Importance of Where

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WHERE

Ancient Tales of

the Dwemer, Part III

By

Marobar Sul

The chieftain of Othrobar gathered his wise men together and said, "Every morning a tenfold of my flock are found butchered. What is the cause?"

Fangbith the Warleader said, "A Monster may be coming down from the Mountain and devouring your flock."

Ghorick the Healer said, "A strange new disease perhaps is to blame."

Beran the Priest said, "We must sacrifice to the Goddess for her to save us."

The wise men made sacrifices, and while they waited for their answers from the Goddess, Fangbith went to Mentor Joltereg and said, "You taught me well how to forge the cudgel of Zolia, and how to wield it in combat, but I must know now when it is wise to use my skill. Do I wait for the Goddess to reply, or the medicine to work, or do I hunt the Monster which I know is in the Mountain?"

"When is not important," said Joltereg. "Where is all that is important."

So Fangbith took his Zolic cudgel in hand and walked far through the dark forest until he came to the base of the Great Mountain. There he met two Monsters. One bloodied with the flesh of the chieftain of Othrobar's flock fought him while its mate fled. Fangbith remembered what his master had taught him, that "where" was all that was important.

He struck the Monster on each of its five vital points: head, groin, throat, back, and chest. Five blows to the five points and

the Monster was slain. It was too heavy to carry with him, but still triumphant, Fangbith returned to Othrobar.

“I say I have slain the Monster that ate your flock,” he cried.

“What proof have you that you have slain any Monster?” asked the chieftain.

“I say I have saved the flock with my medicine,” said Ghorick the Healer.

“I say The Goddess has saved the flock by my sacrifices,” said Beran the Priest.

Two mornings went by and the flocks were safe, but on the morning of the third day, another tenfold of the chieftain’s flock was found butchered. Ghorick the Healer went to his study to find a new medicine. Beran the Priest prepared more sacrifices. Fangbith took his Zolic cudgel in hand, again, and walked far through the dark forest until he came to the base of the Great Mountain. There he met the other Monster, bloodied with the flesh of the chieftain of Othrobar’s flock. They did battle, and again Fangbith remembered what his master had taught him, that “where” was all that was important.

He struck the Monster five times on the head and it fled. Chasing it along the mountain, he struck it five times in the groin and it fled. Running through the forest, Fangbith overtook the Monster and struck it five times in the throat and it fled. Entering into the fields of Othrobar, Fangbith overtook the Monster and struck it five times in the back and it fled. At the foot of the stronghold, the chieftain and his wise men emerged to the sound of the Monster wailing. There they beheld the Monster that had slain the chieftain’s flock.

Fangbith struck the Monster five times in the chest and it was slain.

A great feast was held in Fangbith's honor, and the flock of Othrobar was never again slain. Joltereg embraced his student and said, "You have at last learned the importance of where you strike your blows."

### Publisher's Note

This tale is another, which has an obvious origin among the Ashlander tribes of Vvardenfell and is one of their oldest tales. "Marobar Sul" merely changed the names of the character to sound more "Dwarven" and resold it as part of his collection. The Great Mountain in the tale is clearly "Red Mountain," despite its description of being forested. The Star-Fall and later eruptions destroyed the vegetation on Red Mountain, giving it the wasted appearance it has today.

This tale does have some scholarly interest, as it suggests a primitive Ashlander culture, but it talks of living in "strongholds" much like the ruined strongholds on Vvardenfell today. There are even references to a stronghold of "Othrobar" somewhere between Vvardenfell and Skyrim, but few strongholds outside of sparsely-settled Vvardenfell have survived to the present. Scholars do not agree on who built these strongholds or when, but I believe it is clear from this story and other evidence that the Ashlander tribes used these strongholds in the ancient past instead of making camps of wickwheat huts as they do today.

The play on words that forms the lesson of the fable—that it is as important to know where the monster should be slain, at the stronghold, as it is to know where the monster must be



struck on its body to be slain—is typical of many Ashlander tales. Riddles, even ones as simple as this one, are loved by both the Ashlanders and the vanished Dwemer. Although the Dwemer are usually portrayed as presenting the riddles, rather than being the ones who solve it as in Ashlander tales.

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer, part V: Song of the Alchemist

The Song of the Alchemists

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer

Part V

By

Marobar Sul

When King Maraneon's alchemist had to leave his station

After a laboratory experiment that yielded detonation,

The word went out that the King did want

A new savant

To mix his potions and brews.

But he declared he would only choose

A fellow who knew the tricks and the tools.

The King refused to hire on more fools.

After much deliberation, discussions, and debates,

The King picked two well-learned candidates.

Ianthippus Minthurk and Umphatic Faer,

An ambitious pair,

Vied to prove which one was the best.

Said the King, "There will be a test."

They went to a large chamber with herbs, gems, tomes,

Pots, measuring cups, all under high crystalline domes.

"Make me a tonic that will make me invisible,"

Laughed the King in a tone some would call risible.

So Umphatic Faer and Ianthippus Minthurk

Began to work,

Mincing herbs, mashing metal, refining strange oils,

Cautiously setting their cauldrons to burbling boils,

Each on his own, sending mixing bowls mixing,

Sometimes peeking to see what the other was fixing.

After they had worked for nearly three-quarters an hour,

Both Ianthippus Minthurk and Umphatic Faer

Winked at the other, certain he won.

Said King Maraneon,

“Now you must taste the potions you’ve wrought,

Take a spoon and sample it right from your pot.”

Minthurk vanished as his lips touched his brew,

But Faer tasted his and remained apparent in view.

“You think you mixed silver, blue diamonds, and yellow grass!”

The King laughed, “Look up, Faer, up to the ceiling glass.

The light falling makes the ingredients you choose

Quite different hues.”

“What do you get,” asked the floating voice, bold,

“Of a potion of red diamonds, blue grass, and gold?”

“By [Dwemer God],” said Faer, his face in a wince,

“I’ve made a potion to fortify my own intelligence.”

Publisher’s Note:

This poetry is so clearly in the style of Gor Felim that it really does not need any commentary. Note the simple rhyming scheme of AA/BB/CC, the sing-song but purposefully clumsy meter, and the recurring jokes at the obviously absurd names, Umphatic Faer and Ianthippus Minthurk. The final joke that the stupid alchemist invents a potion to make himself smarter by pure accident would have appealed to the anti-intellectualism of audiences in the Interregnum period, but would certainly be rejected by the Dwemer.

Note that even “Marobar Sul” refuses to name any Dwemer gods. The Dwemer religion, if it can even be called that, is one of the most complex and difficult puzzles of their culture.

Over the millennia, the song became a popular tavern song in High Rock before eventually disappearing from everything but scholarly books. Much like the Dwemer themselves.

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer, part VI: Chimarvamidium

Chimarvamidium:

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer

Part VI

By

Marobar Sul

After many battles, it was clear who would win the War. The Chimer had great skills in magick and bladery, but against the armored battalions of the Dwemer, clad in the finest shielding wrought by Jnaggo, there was little hope of their ever winning. In the interests of keeping some measure of peace in the Land, Sthovin the Warlord agreed to a truce with Karenithil Barif the Beast. In exchange for the Disputed Lands, Sthovin gave Barif a mighty golem, which would protect the Chimer’s territory from the excursions of the Northern Barbarians.

Barif was delighted with his gift and brought it back to his camp, where all his warriors gaped in awe at it. Sparkling gold in hue, it resembled a Dwemer cavalier with a proud aspect. To test its strength, they placed the golem in the center of an arena and flung magickal bolts of lightning at it. Its agility was

such that few of the bolts struck it. It had the wherewithal to pivot on its hips to avoid the brunt of the attacks without losing its balance, feet firmly planted on the ground. A vault of fireballs followed, which the golem ably dodged, bending its knees and its legs to spin around the blasts. The few times it was struck, it made certain to be hit in the chest and waist, the strongest parts of its body.

The troops cheered at the sight of such an agile and powerful creation. With it leading the defense, the Barbarians of Skyrim would never again successfully raid their villages. They named it Chimarvamidium, the Hope of the Chimer.

Barif has the golem brought to his chambers with all his housethanes. There they tested Chimarvamidium further, its strength, its speed, its resiliency. They could find no flaw with its design.

“Imagine when the naked barbarians first meet this on one of their raids,” laughed one of the housethanes.

“It is only unfortunate that it resembles a Dwemer instead of one of our own,” mused Karenithil Barif. “It is revolting to think that they will have a greater respect for our other enemies than us.”

“I think we should never accepted the peace terms that we did,” said another, one of the most aggressive of the housethanes. “Is it too late to surprise the warlord Sthovin with an attack?”

“It is never too late to attack,” said Barif. “But what of his great armored warriors?”

“I understand,” said Barif’s spymaster. “That his soldiers always wake at dawn. If we strike an hour before, we can catch them defenseless, before they’ve had a chance to bathe, let alone don their armor.”

“If we capture their armorer Jnaggo, then we too would know the secrets of blacksmithery,” said Barif. “Let it be done. We attack tomorrow, an hour before dawn.”

So it was settled. The Chimer army marched at night, and swarmed into the Dwemer camp. They were relying on Chimarvamidium to lead the first wave, but it malfunctioned and began attacking the Chimer’s own troops. Added to that, the Dwemer were fully armored, well-rested, and eager for battle. The surprise was turned, and most of the high-ranking Chimer, including Karenithil Barif the Beast, were captured.

Though they were too proud to ask, Sthovin explained to them that he had been warned of their attack by a Calling by one of his men.

“What man of yours is in our camp?” sneered Barif.

Chimarvamidium, standing erect by the side of the captured, removed its head. Within its metal body was Jnaggo, the armorer.

“A Dwemer child of eight can create a golem,” he explained. “But only a truly great warrior and armorer can pretend to be one.”

Publisher’s Note:

This is one of the few tales in this collection, which can actually be traced to the Dwemer. The wording of the story is

quite different from older versions in Aldmeris, but the essence is the same. “Chimarvamidium” may be the Dwemer “Nchmarthurnidamz.” This word occurs several times in plans of Dwemer armor and Animunculi, but it’s meaning is not known. It is almost certainly not “Hope of the Chimer,” however.

The Dwemer were probably the first to use heavy armors. It is important to note how a man dressed in armor could fool many of the Chimer in this story. Also note how the Chimer warriors react. When this story was first told, armor that covered the whole body must have still been uncommon and new, whereas even then, Dwemer creations like golems and centurions were well known.

In a rare scholarly moment, Marobar Sul leaves a few pieces of the original story intact, such as parts of the original line in Aldmeris, “A Dwemer of eight can create a golem, but an eight of Dwemer can become one.”

Another aspect of this legend that scholars like myself find interesting is the mention of “the Calling.” In this legend and in others, there is a suggestion that the Dwemer race as a whole had some sort of silent and magickal communication. There are records of the Psijic Order which suggest they, too, share this secret. Whatever the case, there are no documented spells of “calling.” The Cyrodiil historian Borgusilus Malier first proposed this as a solution to the disappearance of the Dwemer. He theorized that in 1E 668, the Dwemer enclaves were called together by one of their powerful philosopher-sorcerers (“Kagrnak” in some documents) to embark on a great journey, one of such sublime profundity that they abandoned

all their cities and lands to join the quest to foreign climes as an entire culture.

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer, part X: The Dowry

The Dowry

Ancient Tales

of the Dwemer

Part X

by

Marobar Sul

Ynaleigh was the wealthiest landowner in Gunal, and he had over the years saved a tremendous dowry for the man who would marry his daughter, Genefra. When she reached the age of consent, he locked the gold away for safe-keeping, and announced his intention to have her marry. She was a comely lass, a scholar, a great athlete, but dour and brooding in aspect. This personality defect did not bother her potential suitors any more than her positive traits impressed them. Every man knew the tremendous wealth that would be his as the husband of Genefra and son-in-law of Ynaleigh. That alone was enough for hundreds to come to Gunal to pay court.

“The man who will marry my daughter,” said Ynaleigh to the assembled. “Must not be doing so purely out of avarice. He must demonstrate his own wealth to my satisfaction.”

This simple pronouncement removed a vast majority of the suitors, who knew they could not impress the landowner with



their meager fortunes. A few dozen did come forward within a few days, clad in fine killarc cloth of spun silver, accompanied by exotic servants, traveling in magnificent carriages. Of all who came who met with Ynaleigh's approval, none arrived in a more resplendent fashion than Welyn Naerillic. The young man, who no one had ever heard of, arrived in a shining ebon coach drawn by a team of dragons, his clothing of rarest manufacture, and accompanied by an army of the most fantastical servants any of Gunal had ever seen. Valets with eyes on all sides of their heads, maidservants that seemed cast in gemstones.

But such was not enough with Ynaleigh.

"The man who marries my daughter must prove himself a intelligent fellow, for I would not have an ignoramus as a son-in-law and business partner," he declared.

This eliminated a large part of the wealthy suitors, who, through their lives of luxury, had never needed to think very much if at all. Still some came forward over the next few days, demonstrating their wit and learning, quoting the great sages of the past and offering their philosophies of metaphysics and alchemy. Welyn Naerillic too came and asked Ynaleigh to dine at the villa he had rented outside of Gunal. There the landowner saw scores of scribes working on translations of Aldmeri tracts, and enjoyed the young man's somewhat irreverent but intriguing intelligence.

Nevertheless, though he was much impressed with Welyn Naerillic, Ynaleigh had another challenge.

"I love my daughter very much," said Ynaleigh. "And I hope that the man who marries her will make her happy as well. Should

any of you make her smile, she and the great dowry are yours.”

The suitors lined up for days, singing her songs, proclaiming their devotion, describing her beauty in the most poetic of terms. Genefra merely glared at all with hatred and melancholia. Ynaleigh who stood by her side began to despair at last. His daughter’s suitors were failing to a man at this task. Finally Welyn Naerillic came to the chamber.

“I will make your daughter smile,” he said. “I dare say, I’ll make her laugh, but only after you’ve agreed to marry us. If she is not delighted within one hour of our engagement, the wedding can be called off.”

Ynaleigh turned to his daughter. She was not smiling, but her eyes had sparked with some morbid curiosity in this young man. As no other suitor had even registered that for her, he agreed.

“The dowry is naturally not to be paid ‘til after you’ve wed,” said Ynaleigh. “Being engaged is not enough.”

“Might I see the dowry still?” asked Welyn.

Knowing how fabled the treasure was and understanding that this would likely be the closest the young man would come to possessing it, Ynaleigh agreed. He had grown quite fond of Welyn. On his orders, Welyn, Ynaleigh, glum Genefra, and the castellan delved deep into the stronghold of Gunal. The first vault had to be opened by touching a series of runic symbols: should one of the marks be mispressed, a volley of poisoned arrows would have struck the thief. Ynaleigh was particularly proud of the next level of security—a lock composed of blades with eighteen tumblers required three keys to be turned

simultaneously to allow entry. The blades were designed to eviscerate any who merely picked one of the locks. Finally, they reached the storeroom.

It was entirely empty.

“By Lorkhan, we’ve been burgled!” cried Ynaleigh. “But how? Who could have done this?”

“A humble but, if I may say so, rather talented burglar,” said Welyn. “A man who has loved your daughter from afar for many years, but did not possess the glamour or the learning to impress. That is, until the gold from her dowry afforded me the opportunity.”

“You?” bellowed Ynaleigh, scarcely able to believe it. Then something even more unbelievable happened.

Genefra began to laugh. She had never even dreamed of meeting anyone like this thief. She threw herself into his arms before her father’s outraged eyes. After a moment, Ynaleigh too began to laugh.

Genefra and Welyn were married in a month’s time. Though he was in fact quite poor and had little scholarship, Ynaleigh was amazed how much his wealth increased with such a son-in-law and business partner. He only made certain never to ask from whence came the excess gold.

Publisher’s Note:

The tale of a man trying to win the hand of a maiden whose father (usually a wealthy man or a king) tests each suitor is quite common. See, for instance, the more recent “Four Suitors of Benitah” by Jole Yolivess. The behavior of the characters is

quite out of character for the Dwemer. No one today knows their marriage customs, or even if they had marriage at all.

One rather odd theory of the Disappearance of the Dwarves came from this and a few other tales of “Marobar Sul.” It was proposed that the Dwemer never, in fact, left. They did not depart Nirn, much less the continent of Tamriel, and they are still among us, disguised. These scholars use the story of “Azura and the Box” to suggest that the Dwemer feared Azura, a being they could neither understand nor control, and they adopted the dress and manner of Chimer and Altmer in order to hide from Azura’s gaze.

Ancient Tales of the Dwemer, Part XI: Azura and the Box

Azura and the Box

Ancient Tales

of the Dwemer

Part XI

by

Marobar Sul

Nchylbar had enjoyed an adventurous youth, but had grown to be a very wise, very old Dwemer who spent his life searching for the truth and dispelling superstitions. He invented much and created many theorems and logic structures that bore his name. But much of the world still puzzled him, and nothing was a greater enigma to him that the nature of the Aedra and Daedra. Over the course of his research, he came to the

conclusion that many of the Gods were entirely fabricated by man and mer.

Nothing, however, was a greater question to Nchylbar than the limits of divine power. Were the Greater Beings the masters of the entire world, or did the humbler creatures have the strength to forge their own destinies? As Nchylbar found himself nearing the end of his life, he felt he must understand this last basic truth.

Among the sage's acquaintances was a holy Chimer priest named Athynic. When the priest was visiting Bthalag-Zturamz, Nchylbar told him what he intended to do to find the nature of divine power. Athynic was terrified and pleaded with his friend not to break this great mystery, but Nchylbar was resolute. Finally, the priest agreed to assist out of love for his friend, though he feared the results of this blasphemy.

Athynic summoned Azura. After the usual rituals by which the priest declared his faith in her powers and Azura agreed to do no harm to him, Nchylbar and a dozen of his students entered the summoning chamber, carrying with them a large box.

"As we see you in our land, Azura, you are the Goddess of the Dusk and Dawn and all the mysteries therein," said Nchylbar, trying to appear as kindly and obsequious as he could be. "It is said that your knowledge is absolute."

"So it is," smiled the Daedra.

"You would know, for example, what is in this wooden box," said Nchylbar.

Azura turned to Athynic, her brow furrowed. The priest was quick to explain, "Goddess, this Dwemer is a very wise and respected man. Believe me, please, the intention is not to mock your greatness, but to demonstrate it to this scientist and to the rest of his skeptical race. I have tried to explain your power to him, but his philosophy is such that he must see it demonstrated."

"If I am to demonstrate my might in a way to bring the Dwemer race to understanding, it might have been a more impressive feat you would have me do," growled Azura, and turned to look Nchylbar in the eyes. "There is a red-petalled flower in the box."

Nchylbar did not smile or frown. He simply opened the box and revealed to all that it was empty.

When the students turned to look to Azura, she was gone. Only Athynic had seen the Goddess's expression before she vanished, and he could not speak, he was trembling so. A curse had fallen, he knew that truly, but even crueller was the knowledge of divine power that had been demonstrated. Nchylbar also looked pale, uncertain on his feet, but his face shone with not fear, but bliss. The smile of a Dwemer finding evidence for a truth only suspected.

Two of his students supported him, and two more supported the priest as they left the chamber.

"I have studied very much over the years, performed countless experiments, taught myself a thousand languages, and yet the skill that has taught me the finally truth is the one that I learned when I was but a poor, young man, trying only to have enough gold to eat," whispered the sage.

As he was escorted up the stairs to his bed, a red flower petal fell from the sleeve of his voluminous robe. Nchylbar died that night, a portrait of peace that comes from contented knowledge.

#### Publisher's Note:

This is another tale whose origin is unmistakably Dwemer. Again, the words of some Aldmeris translations are quite different, but the essence of the story is the same. The Dunmer have a similar tale about Nchylbar, but in the Dunmer version, Azura recognizes the trick and refuses to answer the question. She slays the Dwemer present for their skepticism and curses the Dunmer for blasphemy.

In the Aldmeris versions, Azura is tricked not by an empty box, but by a box containing a sphere which somehow becomes a flat square. Of course the Aldmeris versions, being a few steps closer to the original Dwemer, are much more difficult to understand. Perhaps this "stage magic" explanation was added by Gor Felim because of Felim's own experience with such tricks in his plays when a mage was not available.

"Marobar Sul" left even the character of Nchylbar alone, and he represents many "Dwemer" virtues. His skepticism, while not nearly as absolute as in the Aldmeris version, is celebrated even though it brings a curse upon the Dwemer and the unnamed House of the poor priest.

Whatever the true nature of the Gods, and how right or wrong the Dwemer were about them, this tale might explain why the dwarves vanished from the face of Tamriel. Though Nchylbar and his kind may not have intended to mock the Aedra and Daedra, their skepticism certainly offended the Divine Orders.

# Ancotar's Journal

*Ancotar*

12th of Rains Hand: Today I begin my great project on the spontaneous generation of life. I expect that there will be difficult days ahead, but if I succeed, my place among the great mages of history will be assured.

23rd Rains Hand: Still not able to even reproduce Empedocles's results with maggots. I'm beginning to think his reputation is overblown.

3rd Second Seed, Tirdas: Empedocles was right! The mistranslation of "sunlit" to "scorching heat" explains my earlier problems. From now on I will work only in the original daedric, despite the risks.

Fredas (mid Second Seed?): Local peasants came by to complain about the noise. I promised them that all that was behind me. A pleasant if dull-witted crew.

Morndas (I think): The experiment today went better than expected. Although the number of rats produced was surprising, they were all remarkably docile, just as Malham predicted (although only I have ever proven it empirically!).

Middas: Villagers again. More complaints. You would think they'd never seen a rat before! They are starting to become a real nuisance.



I've run into a terrible snag. Galerion's Ninth Law appears immutable! If the total life generated cannot exceed the cube of the source, this line of research may prove a dead end. I must reread Empedocles for any hint that he was able to circumvent this barrier.

Next day: The locals are becoming insufferable! While I was walking in the woods, some of them broke into my laboratory and spilled the solution I was preparing—nearly a full quart of purified imp gall wasted! They did not seem to grasp the absurdity of a crowd of unwashed peasants with dung on their boots complaining about the smell. It is well past time I did something about this problem.

Two days later: I dug up the notes from my permanent invisibility thesis. No time like the present to put theory into practice!

Today: The spell worked! Not perfect invisibility, of course (Vanto's Third Law), but it was more powerful than I expected. And there were none of the side effects that Professor Traven had predicted. Ha ha, even in my youth I was already outstripping my elders. Now I can get back to my real work in peace.

# Andre's Letter

*Fiona*

Dearest Father,

I know it's always been your dream to travel to Cyrodiil, to climb the lofty mountains and reach the peak known as Dive Rock, and gaze down at the full beauty of the Imperial Province.

but I beseech you—be careful! We've both heard the tales of the creature known as the Horror of Dive Rock. But in truth, what concerns me most is your lack of... grace. Oh father, you know it pains me to say it, but you're clumsy! You always have been! You can't walk up a flight of stairs without crashing down to the bottom at least once—how can you possibly hope to scale a mountain range?

Please, father, I beg of you, call off your expedition! I fear the worst.

Your loving daughter,

Fiona

# Apprentice's Note

*Anonymous*

Forgemaster -

When next you can take leave, I wish to speak with you. I know you have had reservations about allowing me to assume more duties, but I think you will reconsider when I recount for you some of the atrocious things my counterpart has said in your absence.

# Arbiter's Log

*Anonymous*

Neophyte overheard questioning mandates of our Lord Sheogorath, ten days in the pit.

Proselytizer admitted guilt of thieving bread from pantry. No punishment given.

Two Missionaries conspired to incriminate a suspected heretic —commendation issued

A neophyte accidentally fell into the pit sweeping our chambers the other day. Besides nearly snapping her leg, she had to wait the better part of the morning for the patrolman to discover and release her. Speak with courier about having duplicate key forged by smithy in Crucible.

Neophyte mistakenly summoned an atronach during evening meal. Two days in the pit.

# Argonian Account

*Waughin Jarth*

Argonian Account, Book 1

The Argonian Account

Book One

by

Waughin Jarth

On a minor but respectable plaza in the Imperial City sat, or perhaps lounged, Lord Vanech's Building Commission. It was an unimaginative, austere building not noted so much for its aesthetic or architectural design as for its prodigious length. If any critics wondered why such an unornamented, extended erection held such fascination for Lord Vanech, they kept it to themselves.

In the 398th year of the 3rd Era, Decumus Scotti was a senior clerk at the Commission.

It had been a few months since the shy, middle-aged man had brought Lord Vanech the most lucrative of all contracts, granting the Commission the exclusive right to rebuild the roads of Valenwood which had been destroyed in the Five Year War. For this, he had become the darling of the managers and

the clerks, spending his days recounting his adventures, more or less faithfully... although he did omit the ending of the tale, since many of them had partaken in the celebratory Unthrappa roast provided by the Silenstri. Informing one's listeners that they've gorged on human flesh improves very few stories of any good taste.

Scotti was neither particularly ambitious nor hard-working, so he did not mind that Lord Vanech had not given him anything to actually do.

Whenever the squat little gnomish man would happen upon Decumus Scotti in the offices, Lord Vanech would always say, "You're a credit to the Commission. Keep up the good work."

In the beginning, Scotti had worried that he was supposed to be doing something, but as the months went on, he merely replied, "Thank you. I will."

There was, on the other hand, the future to consider. He was not a young man, and though he was receiving a respectable salary for someone not doing actual work, Scotti considered that soon he might have to retire and not get paid for not doing work. It would be nice, he decided, if Lord Vanech, out of gratitude for the millions of gold the Valenwood contract was generating, might deign to make Scotti a partner. Or at least give him a small percentage of the bounty.

Decumus Scotti was no good at asking for things like that, which was one of the reasons why, previous to his signal successes in Valenwood as a senior clerk for Lord Atrius, he was a lousy agent. He had just about made up his mind to say something to Lord Vanech, when his lordship unexpectedly pushed things along.

“You’re a credit to the Commission,” the waddling little thing said, and then paused. “Do you have a moment free on your schedule?”

Scotti nodded eagerly, and followed his lordship to his hideously decorated and very enviable hectare of office space.

“Zenithar blesses us for your presence at the Commission,” the little fellow squeaked grandly. “I don’t know whether you know this, but we were having a bad time before you came along. We had impressive projects, for certain, but they were not successful. In Black Marsh, for example, for years we’ve been trying to improve the roads and other routes of travel for commerce. I put my best man, Flesus Tijjo, on it, but every year, despite staggering investments of time and money, the trade along those routes only gets slower and slower. Now, we have your very clean, very, very profitable Valenwood contract to boost the Commission’s profits. I think it’s time you were rewarded.”

Scotti grinned a grin of great modesty and subtle avarice.

“I want you to take over the Black Marsh account from Flesus Tijjo.”

Scotti shook as if awaking from a pleasant dream to hideous reality, “My Lord, I - I couldn’t -”

“Nonsense,” chirped Lord Vanech. “Don’t worry about Tijjo. He will be happy to retire on the money I give him, particularly as soul-wrenchingly difficult as this Black Marsh business has been. Just your sort of a challenge, my dear Decumus.”

Scotti couldn't utter a sound, though his mouth feebly formed the word "No" as Lord Vanech brought out the box of documentation on Black Marsh.

"You're a fast reader," Lord Vanech guessed. "You can read it all en route."

"En route to ..."

"Black Marsh, of course," the tiny fellow giggled. "You are a funny chap. Where else would you go to learn about the work that's being done, and how to improve it?"

The next morning, the stack of documentation hardly touched, Decumus Scotti began the journey south-east to Black Marsh. Lord Vanech had hired an able-bodied guard, a rather taciturn Redguard named Mailic, to protect his best agent. They rode south along the Niben, and then south-east along the Silverfish, continuing on into the wilds of Cyrodiil, where the river tributaries had no names and the very vegetation seemed to come from another world than the nice, civilized gardens of the northern Imperial Province.

Scotti's horse was tied to Mailic's, so the clerk was able to read. It made it difficult to pay attention to the path they were taking, but Scotti knew he needed at least a cursory familiarity with the Commission's business dealings in Black Marsh.

It was a huge box of paperwork going back forty years, when the Commission had first been given several million in gold by a wealthy trader, Lord Xellicles Pinos-Revina, to improve the condition of the road from Gideon to Cyrodiil. At that time, it took three weeks, a preposterously long time, for the rice and root he was importing to arrive, half-rotten, in the Imperial



Province. Pinos-Revina was long dead, but many other investors over the decades, including Pelagius IV himself, had hired the Commission to build roads, drain swamps, construct bridges, devise anti-smuggling systems, hire mercenaries, and, in short, do everything that the greatest Empire in history knew would work to aid trade with Black Marsh. According to the latest figures, the result of this was that it took two and a half months for goods, now thoroughly rotten, to arrive.

Scotti found that when he looked up after concentrating on what he was reading, the landscape had always changed. Always dramatically. Always for the worse.

“This is Blackwood, sir,” said Mailic to Scotti’s unspoken question. It was dark and woodsy, so Decumus Scotti thought that a very appropriate name.

The question he longed to ask, which in due course he did ask, was, “What’s that terrible smell?”

“Slough Point, sir,” Mailic replied as they turned the next bend, where the umbrageous tunnel of tangled tree and vine opened to a clearing. There squatted a cluster of formal buildings in the dreary Imperial design favored by Lord Vanech’s Commission and every Emperor since Tiber, together with a stench so eye-blindingly, stomach-wrenchingly awful that Scotti wondered, suddenly, if it were deadly poisonous. The swarms of blood-colored, sand-grain-sized insects obscuring the air did not improve the view.

Scotti and Mailic batted at the buzzing clouds as they rode their horses towards the largest of the buildings, which on approach revealed itself to be perched at the edge of a thick, black river. From its size and serious aspect, Scotti guessed it to be the

census and excise office for the wide, white bridge that stretched across the burbling dark water to the reeds on the other side. It was a very nice, bright, sturdy-looking bridge, built, Scotti knew, by his Commission.

A poxy, irritable official opened the door quickly on Scotti's first knock. "Come in, come in, quickly! Don't let the fleshflies in!"

"Fleshflies?" Decumus Scotti trembled. "You mean, they eat human flesh?"

"If you're fool enough to stand around and let them," the soldier said, rolling his eyes. He had half an ear, and Scotti, looking around at the other soldiers in the fort noted that they all were well-chewed. One of them had no nose at all to speak of. "Now, what's your business?"

Scotti told them, and added that if they stood outside the fortress instead of inside, they might catch more smugglers.

"You better be more concerned with getting across that bridge," the soldier sneered. "Tide's coming up, and if you don't get a move on, you won't get to Black Marsh for four days."

That was absurd. A bridge swamped by a rising tide on a river? Only the look in the soldier's eyes told Scotti he wasn't joking.

Upon stepping out of the fort, he saw that the horses, evidently tired of being tortured by the fleshflies, had ripped free of their restraints and were bounding off into the woods. The oily water of the river was already lapping on the planks, oozing between the crevices. Scotti reflected that perhaps he would be more than willing to endure a wait of four days before going to Black Marsh, but Mailic was already running across.

Scotti followed him, wheezing. He was not in excellent shape, and never had been. The box of Commission materials was heavy. Halfway across, he paused to catch his breath, and then discovered he could not move. His feet were stuck.

The black mud that ran through the river was a thick gluey paste, and having washed over the plank Scotti was on, it held his feet fast. Panic seized him. Scotti looked up from his trap and saw Mailic leaping from plank to plank ahead of him, closing fast on the reeds on the other side.

“Help!” Scotti cried. “I’m stuck!”

Mailic did not even turn around, but kept jumping. “I know, sir. You need to lose weight.”

Decumus Scotti knew he was a few pounds over, and had meant to start eating less and exercising more, but embarking on a diet hardly seemed to promise timely aid in his current predicament. No diet on Nirn would have helped him just then. However, on reflection, Scotti realized that the Redguard intended that he drop the box of documents, for Mailic was no longer carrying any of the essential supplies he had had with him previously.

With a sigh, Scotti threw the box of Commission notes into the glop, and felt the plank under him rise a quarter of an inch, just enough to free him from the mud’s clutches. With an agility born of extreme fear, Scotti began leaping after Mailic, dropping onto every third plank, and springing up before the river gripped him.

In forty-six leaps, Decumus Scotti crashed through the reeds onto the solid ground behind Mailic, and found himself in

Black Marsh. He could hear behind him a slurping sound as the bridge, and his container of important and official records of Commission affairs, was consumed by the rising flood of dark filth, never to be seen again.

Argonian Account, Book 2

The Argonian Account

Book Two

By

Waughin Jarth

Decumus Scotti emerged from the dirt and reeds, exhausted from running, his face and arms sheathed in red fleshflies. Looking back towards Cyrodiil, he saw the bridge disappear beneath the thick black river, and he knew he was not getting back until the tide went down in a few days' time. The river also held in its adhesive depths his files on the Black Marsh account. He would have to rely on his memory for his contacts in Gideon.

Mailic was purposefully striding through the reeds ahead. Flailing ineffectually at the fleshflies, Scotti hurried after him.

"We're lucky, sir," said the Redguard, which struck Scotti as an extraordinarily odd thing to say, until his eyes followed where the man's finger was pointing. "The caravan is here."

Twenty-one rusted, mud-spattered wagons with rotting wood and wobbly wheels sat half-sunk in the soft earth ahead. A crowd of Argonians, gray-scaled and gray-eyed, the sort of sullen manual laborers that were common in Cyrodiil, pulled at

one of the wagons which had been detached from the others. As Scotti and Mailic came closer, they saw it was filled with a cargo of black berries so decayed that they had become hardly recognizable... more a festering jelly than a wagonload of fruit.

Yes, they were going to the city of Gideon, and, yes, they said, Scotti could get a ride with them after they were finished unloading this shipment of lumberries.

“How long ago were they picked?” Scotti asked, looking at the wagon’s rotten produce.

“The harvest was in Last Seed, of course,” said the Argonian who seemed to be in charge of the wagon. It was now Sun’s Dusk, so they had been en route from the fields for a little over two months.

Clearly, Scotti thought, there were problems with transportation. But fixing that, after all, was what he was doing here as a representative of Lord Vanech’s Building Commission.

It took close to an hour of the berries rotting even more in the sun for the wagon to be pushed to the side, the wagons in front of it and behind it to be attached to one another, and one of the eight horses from the front of the caravan to be brought around to the now independent wagon. The laborers moved with dispirited lethargy, and Scotti took the opportunity to inspect the rest of the caravan and talk to his fellow travellers.

Four of the wagons had benches in them, fit for uncomfortable riders. All the rest were filled with grain, meat, and vegetation in various stages of corruption.

The travellers consisted of the six Argonian laborers, three Imperial merchants so bug-bitten that their skin looked as scaly as the Argonians themselves, and three cloaked fellows who were evidently Dunmer, judging by the red eyes that gleamed in the shadows under their hoods. All were transporting their goods along this, the Imperial Commerce Road.

“This is a road?” Scotti exclaimed, looking at the endless field of reeds that reached up to his chin or higher.

“It’s solid ground, of a sort,” one of the hooded Dunmer shrugged. “The horses eat some of the reed, and sometimes we set fire to it, but it just grows right back up.”

Finally, the wagonmaster signalled that the caravan was ready to go, and Scotti took a seat in the third wagon with the other Imperials. He looked around, but Mailic was not on board.

“I agreed to get to you to Black Marsh and take you back out,” said the Redguard, who had plumped down a rock in the sea of reeds and was munching on a hairy carrot. “I’ll be here when you get back.”

Scotti frowned, and not only because Mailic had dropped the deferential title “sir” while addressing him. Now he truly knew no one in Black Marsh, but the caravan slowly grinded and bumped forward, so there was no time to argue.

A noxious wind blew across the Commerce Road, casting patterns in the endless featureless expanse of reeds. In the distance, there seemed to be mountains, but they constantly shifted, and Scotti realized they were banks of mist and fog. Shadows flitted across the landscape, and when Scotti looked

up, he saw they were being cast by giant birds with long, saw-like beaks nearly the size of the rest of their bodies.

“Hackwings,” Chaero Gemullus, an Imperial on Scotti’s left, who might have been young but looked old and beaten, muttered. “Like everything else in this damnable place, they’ll eat you if you don’t keep moving. Beggars pounce down and give you a nasty chop, and then fly off and come back when you’re mostly dead from blood loss.”

Scotti shivered. He hoped they’d be in Gideon before nightfall. It was then it occurred to him that the sun was on the wrong side of the caravan.

“Excuse me, sir,” Scotti called to the wagonmaster. “I thought you said we were going to Gideon?”

The wagonmaster nodded.

“Why are we going north then, when we should be going south?”

There was no reply but a sigh.

Scotti confirmed with his fellow travellers that they too were going to Gideon, and none of them seemed very concerned about the circuitous route to getting there. The seats were hard on his middle-aged back and buttocks, but the bumping rhythm of the caravan, and the hypnotic waving reeds gradually had an effect on him, and Scotti drifted off to sleep.

He awoke in the dark some hours later, not sure where he was. The caravan was no longer moving, and he was on the floor, under the bench, next to some small boxes. There were voices, speaking a hissing, clicking language Scotti didn’t understand,

and he peeked out between someone's legs to see what was happening.

The moons barely pierced the thick mist surrounding the caravan, and Scotti did not have the best angle to see who was talking. For a moment, it looked like the gray wagonmaster was talking to himself, but the darkness had movement and moisture, in fact, glistening scales. It was hard to tell how many of these things there were, but they were big, black, and the more Scotti looked at them, the more details he could see.

When one particular detail emerged, huge mouths filled with dripping needle-like fangs, Scotti slipped back under the bench. Their black little eyes had not fallen on him yet.

The legs in front of Scotti moved and then began to thrash, as their owner was grabbed and pulled out of the wagon. Scotti crouched further back, getting behind the little boxes. He didn't know much about concealment, but had some experience with shields. He knew that having something, anything, in between you and bad things was always good.

A few seconds after the legs had disappeared from sight, there was a horrible scream. And then a second and a third. Different timbres, different accents, but the same inarticulate message... terror, and pain, horrible pain. Scotti remembered a long forgotten prayer to the god Stendarr and whispered it to himself.

Then there was silence... ghastly silence that lasted only a few minutes, but which seemed like hours... years.

And then the carriage started rolling forward again.



Scotti cautiously crawled out from under the carriage. Chaero Gemullus gave him a bemused grin.

“There you are,” he said. “I thought the Nagas took you.”

“Nagas?”

“Nasty characters,” Gemullus said, frowning. “Puff adders with legs and arms, seven feet tall, eight when they’re mad. Come from the inner swamp, and they don’t like it here much so they’re particularly peevish. You’re the kind of posh Imperial they’re looking for.”

Scotti had never in his life thought of himself as posh. His mud and fleshfly-bespeckled clothing seemed eminently middle-class, at best, to him. “What would they want me for?”

“To rob, of course,” the Imperial smiled. “And to kill. You didn’t notice what happened to the others?” The Imperial frowned, as if struck by a thought. “You didn’t sample from those boxes down below, did you? Like the sugar, do you?”

“Gods, no,” Scotti grimaced.

The Imperial nodded, relieved. “You just seem a little slow. First time to Black Marsh, I gather? Oh! Heigh ho, Hist piss!”

Scotti was just about to ask Gemullus what that vulgar term meant when the rain began. It was an inferno of foul-smelling, yellow-brown rain that washed over the caravan, accompanied by the growl of thunder in the distance. Gemullus worked to pull the roof up over the wagon, glaring at Scotti until he helped with the laborious process.

He shuddered, not only from the cold damp, but from contemplation of the disgusting precipitation pouring down on the already nasty produce in the uncovered wagon.

“We’ll be dry soon enough,” Gemullus smiled, pointing out into the fog.

Scotti had never been to Gideon, but he knew what to expect. A large settlement more or less laid out like a Imperial city, with more or less Imperial style architecture, and all the Imperial comforts and traditions, more or less.

The jumble of huts half-sunk in mud was decidedly less.

“Where are we?” asked Scotti, bewildered.

“Hixinoag,” replied Gemullus, pronouncing the queer name with confidence. “You were right. We were going north when we should have been going south.”

Argonian Account, Book 3

The Argonian Account

Book Three

by

Waughin Jarth

Decumus Scotti was supposed to be in Gideon, a thoroughly Imperialized city in southern Black Marsh, arranging business dealings to improve commerce in the province on behalf of Lord Vanech’s Building Commission and its clients. Instead, he was in a half-submerged, rotten little village called Hixinoag,

where he knew no one. Except for a drug smuggler named Chaero Gemullus.

Gemullus was not at all perturbed that the merchant caravan had gone north instead of south. He even let Scotti share his bucket of trodh, tiny little crunchy fish, he had bought from the villagers. Scotti would have preferred them cooked, or at any rate, dead, but Gemullus blithely explained that dead, cooked trodh are deadly poison.

“If I were where I was supposed to be,” Scotti pouted, putting one of the wriggling little creatures in his mouth. “I could be having a roast, and some cheese, and a glass of wine.”

“I sell moon sugar in the north, and buy it in the south,” he shrugged. “You have to be more flexible, my friend.”

“My only business is in Gideon,” Scotti frowned.

“Well, you have a couple choices,” replied the smuggler. “You could just stay here. Most villages in Argonia don’t stay put for very long, and there’s a good chance Hixinoag will drift right down to the gates of Gideon. Might take you a month or two. Probably the easiest way.”

“That’d put me far behind schedule.”

“Next option, you could join up with the caravan again,” said Gemullus. “They might be going in the right direction this time, and they might not get stuck in the mud, and they might not be all murdered by Naga highwaymen.”

“Not tempting,” Scotti frowned. “Any other ideas?”

“Ride the roots. The underground express,” Gemullus grinned. “Follow me.”

Scotti followed Gemullus out of the village and into a copse of trees shrouded by veils of wispy moss. The smuggler kept his eye on the ground, poking at the viscuous mud intermittently. Finally he found a spot which triggered a mass of big oily bubbles to rise to the surface.

“Perfect,” he said. “Now, the important thing is not to panic. The express will take you due south, that’s the wintertide migration, and you’ll know you’re near Gideon when you see a lot of red clay. Just don’t panic, and when you see a mass of bubbles, that’s a breathing hole you can use to get out.”

Scotti looked at Gemullus blankly. The man was talking perfect gibberish. “What?”

Gemullus took Scotti by the shoulder and positioning him on top of the mass of bubbles. “You stand right here...”

Scotti sank quickly into the mud, staring at the smuggler, horror-struck.

“And remember to wait ‘til you see the red clay, and then the next time you see bubbles, push up...”

The more Scotti wriggled to get free, the faster he sunk. The mud enveloped Scotti to his neck, and he continued staring, unable to articulate anything but a noise like “Oog.”

“And don’t panic at the idea that you’re being digested. You could live in a rootworm’s belly for months.”

Scotti took one last panicked gasp of air and closed his eyes before he disappeared into the mud.

The clerk felt a warmth he hadn't expected all around him. When he opened his eyes, he found that he was entirely surrounded by a translucent goo, and was traveling rapidly forward, southward, gliding through the mud as if it were air, skipping along an intricate network of roots. Scotti felt confusion and euphoria in equal measures, madly rushing forward through an alien environment of darkness, spinning around and over the thick fibrous tentacles of the trees. It was if he were high in the sky at midnight, not deep beneath the swamp in the Underground Express.

Looking up slightly at the massive root structure above, Scotti saw something wriggle past. A eight-foot-long, armless, legless, colorless, boneless, eyeless, nearly shapeless creature, riding the roots. Something dark was inside of it, and as it came closer, Scotti could see it was an Argonian man. He waved, and the disgusting creature the Argonian was in flattened slightly and rushed onward.

Gemullus's words began to reappear in Scotti's mind at this sight. "The wintertide migration," "air hole," "you're being digested,"—these were the phrases that danced around as if trying to find some place to live in a brain which was highly resistant to them coming in. But there was no other way to look at the situation. Scotti had gone from eating living fish to being eaten alive as a way of transport. He was in one of those worms.

Scotti made an executive decision to faint.

He awoke in stages, having a beautiful dream of being held in a woman's warm embrace. Smiling and opening his eyes, the reality of where he really was rushed over him.

The creature was still rushing madly, blindly forward, gliding over roots, but it was no longer like a flight through the night sky. Now it was like the sky at sunrise, in pinks and reds. Scotti remembered Gemullus telling him to look for the red clay, and he would be near Gideon. The next thing he had to find was the bubbles.

There were no bubbles anywhere. Though the inside of the worm was still warm and comfortable, Scotti felt the weight of the earth all around him. "Just don't panic" Gemullus had said, but it was one thing to hear that advice, and quite another to take it. He began to squirm, and the creature began to move faster at the increased pressure from within.

Suddenly, Scotti saw it ahead of him, a slim spire of bubbles rising up through the mud from some underground stream, straight up, through the roots to the surface above him. The moment the rootworm went through it, Scotti pushed with all of his might upward, bursting through the creature's thin skin. The bubbles pushed Scotti up quickly, and before he could blink, he was popping out of the red slushy mud.

Two gray Argonians were standing under a tree nearby, holding a net. They looked in Scotti's direction with polite curiosity. In their net, Scotti noticed, were several squirming furry rat-like creatures. While he addressed them, another fell out of the tree. Though Scotti had not been educated in this practice, he recognized fishing when he saw it.

“Excuse me, lads,” Scotti said jovially. “I was wondering if you’d point me in the direction of Gideon?”

The Argonians introduced themselves as Drawing-Flame and Furl-Of-Fresh-Leaves, and looked at one another, puzzling over the question.

“Who you seek?” asked Furl-of-Fresh-Leaves.

“I believe his name is,” said Scotti, trying to remember the contents of his long gone file of Black Marsh contacts in Gideon. “Archein Right-Foot ...Rock?”

Drawing-Flame nodded, “For five gold, show you way. Just east. Is plantation east of Gideon. Very nice.”

Scotti thought that the best business he had heard of in two days, and handed Drawing-Flames the five septims.

The Argonians led Scotti onto a muddy ribbon of road that passed through the reeds, and soon revealed the bright blue expanse of Topal Bay far to the west. Scotti looked around at the magnificent walled estates, where bright crimson blossoms sprang forth from the very dirt of the walls, and surprised himself by thinking, “This is very pretty.”

The road ran parallel to a fast-moving stream, running eastward from Topal Bay. It was called the Onkobra River, he was told. It ran deep into Black Marsh, to the very dark heart of the province.

Peeking past the gates to the plantations east of Gideon, Scotti saw that few of the fields were tended. Most had rotten crops from harvests past still clinging to wilted vines, orchards of desolate, leafless trees. The Argonian serfs who worked the

fields were thin, weak, near death, more like haunting spirits than creatures of life and reason.

Two hours later, as the three continued their trudge east, the estates were still impressive at least from a distance, the road was still solid if weedy, but Scotti was irritated, horrified by the field workers and the agricultural state, and no longer charitable towards the area. "How much further?"

Furl-of-Fresh-Leaves and Drawing-Flame looked at one another, as if that question was something that hadn't occurred to them.

"Archein is east?" Furl-of-Fresh-Leaves pondered. "Near or far?"

Drawing-Flame shrugged noncommittally, and said to Scotti, "For five gold, show you way. Just east. Is plantation. Very nice."

"You don't have any idea, do you?" Scotti cried. "Why couldn't you tell me that in the first place when I might have asked someone else?"

Around the bend up ahead, there was the sound of hoofbeats. A horse coming closer.

Scotti began to walk towards the sound to hail the rider, and didn't see Drawing-Flame's taloned claws flash out and cast the spell at him. He felt it though. A kiss of ice along his spine, the muscles along his arms and legs suddenly immobile as if wrapped in rigid steel. He was paralyzed.

The great curse of paralysis, as the reader may be unfortunate enough to know, is that you continue to see and think even though your body does not respond. The thought that went through Scotti's mind was, "Damn."



For Drawing-Flame and Furl-of-Fresh-Leaves were, of course, like most simple day laborers in Black Marsh, accomplished Illusionists. And no friend of the Imperial.

The Argonians shoved Decumus Scotti to the side of the road, just as the horse and rider came around the corner. He was an impressive figure, a nobleman in a flashing dark green cloak the exact same color as his scaled skin, and a frilled hood that was part of his flesh and sat upon his head like a horned crown.

“Greetings, brothers!” the rider said to the two.

“Greetings, Archein Right-Foot-Rock,” they responded, and then Furl-of-Fresh-Leaves added. “What is milord’s business on this fine day?”

“No rest, no rest,” the Archein sighed regally. “One of my she-workers gave birth to twins. Twins! Fortunately, there’s a good trader in town for those, and she didn’t put up too much of a fuss. And then there’s a fool of an Imperial from Lord Vanech’s Building Commission I am supposed to meet with in Gideon. I’m sure he’ll want the grand tour before he opens up the treasury for me. Such a lot of fuss.”

Drawing-Flame and Furl-of-Fresh-Leaves sympathized, and then, as Archein Right-Foot-Rock rode off, they went to look for their hostage.

Unfortunately for them, gravity being the same in Black Marsh as elsewhere in Tamriel, their hostage, Decumus Scotti, had continued to roll down from where they left him, and was, at that moment, in the Onkobra River, drowning.

Argonian Account, Book 4

# The Argonian Account

## Book Four

By

Waughin Jarth

Decumus Scotti was drowning, and he didn't think much of it. He couldn't move his arms or his legs to swim because of the paralysis spell the Argonian peasant had lobbed at him, but he wasn't quite sinking. The Onkobra River was a crashing force of white water and currents that could carry along large rocks with ease, so Scotti tumbled head over heels, spinning, bumping, bouncing along.

He figured that soon enough he would be dead, and that would be better than being in Black Marsh. He wasn't too panicked about it all when he felt his lungs fill with water and cold blackness fell upon him.

For a while, for the first time in some time, Decumus Scotti felt peace. Blessed darkness. And then pain came to him, and he felt himself coughing, spewing water up from his belly and his lungs.

A voice said, "Oh bother, he's alive, ain't he, now?"

Scotti wasn't quite sure if that were true, even when he opened his eyes and looked at the face above him. It was an Argonian, but unlike any he had seen anywhere. The face was thin and long like a thick lance; the scales were ruby-red, brilliant in the sunlight. It blinked at him, its eyelids opening and closing in vertical slits.

“I don’t suppose we should eat you, should we now?” the creature smiled, and Scotti could tell from its teeth that it was no idle suggestion.

“Thank you,” said Scotti weakly. He craned his head slightly to find out who the “we” were, and discovered he was on the muddy bank of the still, sludgy river, surrounded by a group of Argonians with similarly needle-like faces and a whole rainbow of scales. Bright greens and gem-like purples, blues, and oranges.

“Can you tell me, am I near - well, anywhere?”

The ruby-colored Argonian laughed. “No. You’re in the middle of everywhere, and near nowhere.”

“Oh,” said Scotti, who grasped the idea that space did not mean much in Black Marsh. “And what are you?”

“We are Agacephs,” the ruby-colored Argonian replied. “My name is Nomu.”

Scotti introduced himself. “I’m a senior clerk in Lord Vanech’s Building Commission in the Imperial City. My job was to come here to try to fix the problems with commerce, but I’ve lost my agenda, haven’t met with any of my contacts, the Archeins of Gideon...”

“Pompous, assimilated, slaver kleptocrats,” a small lemon-colored Agaceph murmured with some feeling.

“...And now I just want to go home.”

Nomu smiled, his long mouth arching up like a host happy to see an unwanted guest leave a party. “Shehs will guide you.”

Shehs, it seemed, was the bitter little yellow creature, and he was not at all pleased at the assignment. With surprising strength, he hoisted Scotti up, and for a moment, the clerk was reminded of Gemullus dropping him into the bubbling muck that led to the Underground Express. Instead, Shehs shoved Scotti toward a tiny little raft, razor-thin, that bobbed on the surface of the water.

“This is how you travel?”

“We don’t have the broken wagons and dying horses of our brothers on the outside,” Shehs replied, rolling his tiny eyes. “We don’t know better.”

The Argonian sat at the back of the craft and used his whip-like tail to propel and navigate the craft. They traveled quickly around swirling pools of slime that stank of centuries of putrefaction, past pinnacled mountains that seemed sturdy but suddenly fell apart at the slightest ripple in the still water, under bridges that might have once been metal but were now purely rust.

“Everything in Tamriel flows down to Black Marsh,” Shehs said.

As they slid through the water, Shehs explained to Scotti that the Agacephs were one of the many Argonian tribes that lived in the interior of the province, near the Hist, finding little in the outside world worth seeing. He was fortunate to have been found by them. The Nagas, the toad-like Paatru, and the winged Sarpa would have killed him on the spot.

There were other creatures too to be avoided. Though there were few natural predators in inner Black Marsh, the scavengers that rooted in the garbage seldom shied away from

a living meal. Hackwings circled overhead, like the ones Scotti had seen in the west.

Shehs fell silent and stopped the raft completely, waiting for something.

Scotti looked in the direction Shehs was watching, and saw nothing unusual in the filthy water. Then, he realized that the pool of green slime in front of them was actually moving, and fairly quickly, from one bank to the other. It deposited small bones behind it as it oozed up into the reeds, and disappeared.

“Voriplasm,” Shehs explained, moving the boat forward again. “Big word. It’ll strip you to the bone by the second syllable.”

Scotti, desirous to distract himself from the sights and smells that surrounded him, thought it a good time to compliment his pilot on his excellent vocabulary. It was particularly impressive, given how far from civilization they were. The Argonians in the east did, in fact, speak so well.

“They tried to erect a Temple of Mara near here, in Umpholo, twenty years ago,” Shehs explained, and Scotti nodded, remembering reading about it in the files before they were lost. “They all perished quite dreadfully of swamp rot in the first month, but they left behind some excellent books.”

Scotti was going to inquire further when he saw something so huge, so horrifying, it made him stop, frozen.

Half submerged in the water ahead was a mountain of spines, lying on nine-foot-long claws. White eyes stared blindly forward, and then suddenly the whole creature spasmed and

lurched, the jaw of its mouth jutting out, exposing tusks clotted with gore.

“Swamp Leviathan,” Shehs whistled, impressed. “Very, very dangerous.”

Scotti gasped, wondering why the Agaceph was so calm, and more, why he was continuing to steer the raft forward towards the beast..

“Of all the creatures in the world, the rats are sometimes the worst,” said Shehs, and Scotti noticed that the huge creature was only a husk. Its movement was from the hundreds of rats that had burrowed into it, rapidly eating their way from the inside out, bursting from the skin in spots.

“They are indeed,” Scotti said, and his mind went to the Black Marsh files, buried deep in the mud, and four decades of Imperial work in Black Marsh.

The two continued westward through the heart of Black Marsh.

Shehs showed Scotti the vast complicated ruins of the Kothringi capitals, fields of ferns and flowered grasses, quiet streams under canopies of blue moss, and the most astonishing sight of Scotti’s life—the great forest of full-grown Hist trees. They never saw a living soul until they arrived at the edge of the Imperial Commerce Road just east of Slough Point, where Mailic, Scotti’s Redguard guide, was waiting patiently.

“I was going to give you two more minutes,” the Redguard scowled, dropping the last of his food onto the pile at his feet. “No more, sir.”

The sun was shining bright when Decumus Scotti rode into the Imperial City, and as it caught the morning dew, it lent a glister to every building as if they had been newly polished for his arrival. It astonished him how clean the city was. And how few beggars there were.

The protracted edifice of Lord Vanech's Building Commission was the same as it had always been, but still the very sight of it seemed exotic and strange. It was not covered in mud. The people within actually, generally, worked.

Lord Vanech himself, though singularly squat and squinty, seemed immaculate, not only relatively clean of dirt and scabs, but also relatively uncorrupt. Scotti couldn't help but stare at him when he first caught sight of his boss. Vanech stared right back.

"You are a sight," the little fellow frowned. "Did your horse drag you to Black Marsh and back? I would say go home and fix yourself, but there are a dozen people here to see you. I hope you have solutions for them."

It was no exaggeration. Nearly twenty of Cyrodiil's most powerful and wealthiest people were waiting for him. Scotti was given an office even larger than Lord Vanech's, and he met with each.

First among the Commission's clients were five independent traders, blustering and loaded with gold, demanding to know what Scotti intended to do about improving the trade routes. Scotti summarized for them the conditions of the main roads, the state of the merchants' caravans, the sunken bridges, and all the other impediments between the frontier and the

marketplace. They told him to have everything replaced and repaired, and gave him the gold necessary to do it.

Within three months, the bridge at Slough Point had disappeared into the muck; the great caravan had collapsed into decrepitude; and the main road from Gideon had been utterly swallowed up by swamp water. The Argonians began once again to use the old ways, their personal rafts and sometimes the Underground Express to transport the grain in small quantities. It took a third of the time, two weeks, to arrive in Cyrodiil, none of it rotten.

The Archbishop of Mara was the next client Scotti met with. A kindhearted man, horrified by the tales of Argonian mothers selling their children into slavery, he pointedly asked Scotti if it were true.

“Sadly, yes,” Scotti replied, and the Archbishop showered him with septims, telling the clerk that food must be brought to the province to ease their suffering, and the schools must be improved so they could learn to help themselves.

Within five months, the last book had been stolen from the deserted Maran monastery in Umphollo. As the Archeins went bankrupt, their slaves returned to his parents’ tiny farms. The backwater Argonians found that they could grow enough to feed their families provided they had enough hard workers in their enclave, and the buyers market for slaves sharply declined.

Ambassador Tsleeixth, concerned about the rising crime in northern Black Marsh, brought with him the contributions of many other expatriate Argonians like himself. They wanted more Imperial guards on the border at Slough Point, more



magically lit lanterns posted along the main roads at regular intervals, more patrol stations, and more schools built to allow young Argonians to better themselves and not turn to crime.

Within six months, there were no more Nagas roaming the roads, as there were no merchants traveling them to rob. The thugs returned to the fetid inner swamp, where they felt much happier, their constitutions enriched by the rot and pestilence that they loved. Tsleeixth and his constituency were so pleased by the crime rate dropping, they brought even more gold to Decumus Scotti, telling him to keep up the good work.

Black Marsh simply was, is, and always shall be unable to sustain a large-scale, cash-crop plantation economy. The Argonians, and anyone else, the whole of Tamriel, could live in Black Marsh on subsistence farming, just raising what they needed. That was not sad, Scotti thought; that was hopeful.

Scotti's solution to each of their dilemmas had been the same. Ten percent of the gold they gave him went to Lord Vanech's Building Commission. The rest Scotti kept for himself, and did exactly nothing about the requests.

Within a year, Decumus Scotti had embezzled enough to retire very comfortably, and Black Marsh was better off than it had been in forty years.

# Arkved's Notes

*Arkved*

[a note written in a trembling hand]

There is no world so great as the world of the mind.

There is no voyager so well-traveled as the traveler in the land of dreams.

There is no abyss so deep as the well of terror that lies within each of us.

I have plumbed its depths.

I have seen the unthinkable. I am unafraid.

Even death's boundaries do not confine me.

I am the lord of limitless space, and the master of place and time.

Through the doors of sleep, the universe lies waiting for me.

I will no longer wait for my dreams to carry me worlds away, to unknowable deeps, to unspeakable vastness.

I shall dwell in the House of Vaermina forever, the Orb my companion.

There is no compass to my destination, no end to my journey.

My mind is the eternal voyager, fearless and wild with wonder  
in the Halls of Horror.

[blank crumpled piece of paper with a line written in a  
trembling hand]

I shall lie here in the dark waiting for death

[blank crumpled piece of paper with lines scratched in a  
trembling hand]

THE HORROR

THE HORROR

# Ayleid Inscriptions And Their Translations

*Raelys Anine*

The following inscriptions were painstakingly transcribed and interpreted over many long years, and are preserved here for all time.

—

Av molag anyammis, av latta magicka.

“From fire, life; from light, magic.”

—

Barra agea ry sou karan.

“Wear lore as your armor.”

—

Agea haelia ne jorane emero laloria.

“Wisdom learned by pain is a reliable guide in dark times.”  
[literally, “Terrible wisdom never betrayed the loremasters.”]

—

Nou aldmeris mathmeldi admia aurane gandra sepredia av  
relleis ye brelyeis ye varlais.

“Our exiled Elven ancestors heard the welcoming gifts of peace  
in the streams and beech trees and stars.” [“Mathmeldi” means  
literally “from-home-driven.” ]

—

Suna ye sunnabe.

“Bless and blessed be.”

—

Va garlas agea, gravia ye goria, lattia mallari av malatu.

“In the caverns of lore, ugly and obscure, shines the gold of  
truth.”

—

Vabria frensca, sa belle, sa baune, amaraldane aldmeris adonai.

“The foaming wave, so thunderous, so mighty, heralds the  
lordly Elves.”

# Bark And Sap

*Anonymous*

Bark and Sap:

The Root System and the Ecology and Culture of the Gnarl

Disclaimer:

[The editors wish to express that the views contained herein belong solely to the author and have been printed posthumously and anonymously.]

Foreword:

Before this present volume, little existed detailing the Root System tunnels and Gnarl but rumors, superstitions, and outright falsities. After consideration of such rumors, and after much research and expedition into the Root Systems to see the Gnarl in their natural habitat firsthand, this author will elucidate the ecology and culture of the Gnarl, the nature of the Root System, and their symbiotic relationship.

The Root System:

Commonly believed to be a series of natural caverns and rock formations with roots and foliage growing within, the Root System tunnels are, in fact, part of a giant living organism. Not only are these tunnels a living organic root-like entity, but each

of the so-called “root dungeons” represents a smaller piece of a larger whole. The roots of all the trees (indeed of most the plant life on the Isles) all connect directly to the large Root System.

The various twisting and turning tunnels have been created slowly over past millennia. Indeed, the growth and motion of the roots is imperceptible, though definitely recordable. The very fastest-growing tunnels increase at a rate of a few feet every month, and the slowest a few inches every few decades.

Amber:

Amber is a colorful resin formed from hardened sap. Much like skin bleeds and scabs over to protect a wound, the Root System tunnels “bleed” a sap that congeals and hardens into Amber deposits. Even still, the walls of the roots are very resilient; swinging a sword at the wall is not enough to puncture it. The large fissures that cause the appearance of Amber are the result of the massive pressures and frictional forces encountered by the giant roots as they push through tons of rock and dirt.

The Gnarl:

The current and best theory describes the Gnarl as the caretakers and stewards of the Root System. The creatures tend to the general maintenance and cleaning of the tunnels, clearing away excess Amber. This behavior has been observed directly, but observation time was limited due to the aggressive nature of the Gnarl. However, the abundance of Amber found on the corpses of the creatures further supports this view.

There has been some conjecture, though at present very little evidence to support the claim, that as Gnarl grow, they eventually become too large to maneuver the tunnels, and

eventually fuse with the walls, becoming themselves part of the Root System. As to the recent claims of giant Gnarl, it should be noted that no creditable sources exist to corroborate. However, even were these reports to be true, the rarity of such sightings would suggest that only a very few Gnarl ever grow large enough to ascend to this root-state.

Little is known about the natural life span of the Gnarl or their social behavior, since observational expeditions into the Root System are difficult at best. We do know with certainty that they are very territorial. The Gnarl are so protective of their tunnels that they will respond aggressively to anyone who comes within sight, which makes studying their social systems nigh impossible. This behavior has, however, provided us with an abundance of corpses to study at our leisure.

When we analyze the corpses of dead Gnarl, we can see clearly that these creatures are made entirely of plant material. They are covered in bark and leaves, and over time they decompose similarly to other plant detritus. All attempts to “plant” Gnarl or parts thereof into the ground have been proven simple folly. To date, we don’t actually know how the Gnarl reproduce.

Upon examination, we have found nothing that looks like a brain as found in other sentient creatures. This does lend credence to the symbiotic caretaker theory, suggesting a kind of hive mentality—though there have been no substantiated sightings of any such “queen-Gnarl” who might be controlling the drones. The other available explanation is that it is magic that animates these creatures, though this author finds resolving difficult questions in this manner to be counter-productive to the development of a rational theory.

Conclusion:



The complex Root is a living organism that grows little by little each month, tunneling beneath the land. Virtually all the plant life on the Isles is connected to this Root System. Severe trauma to the system walls results in the formation of Amber deposits as part of its natural defense mechanism. The Root System has a symbiotic relationship with the Gnarl, who act as its protectors and caretakers, and who may be phyletically and physiologically connected to the Root System itself. In short, we have a living system, with its own dedicated staff of protector-caretakers, growing and developing largely unnoticed beneath our very feet.

[Here the editors wish to acknowledge that the author was found dead near the entrance to one of the “root dungeons.” We again wish to remind the reader that the opinions expressed by this author are his own. While we do not dismiss the rational method employed by the author in his studies, we certainly do not deny that magic is explanation enough for Our Lord Sheogorath’s many wondrous Blessings. We did, however, carefully consider omitting this clearly treasonous second half. We have decided to include it for journalistic integrity and at the request of his generous widow.]

Afterword:

And now, I will venture towards that theoretical discussion which draws near heresy (which I daresay will one day be the end of me), but which I must put forward, for good or ill.

The common belief is that our Lord Sheogorath has blessed our land with two temperaments, Mania and Dementia. However, after much study and reasoning, I believe that it is the very realm itself that imposes upon us these two spheres of polar extremes!

I have devised a clever experiment, whereby I seek to prove this theory. If you take a flower from a common plant, cut it and place its stem in water with dye in it, you will notice that the petals will slowly take on the color of the dye. Clearly, the veins of the plant transport the color to the leaves.

Now, when we look at the Dementia side of the land, colors are muted and dark, and in the Mania side bright and colorful. I believe the Root System, and the Gnarl that serve it, are draining the color from the land of Dementia and giving it to the land of Mania!

For what purpose, it isn't clear, but my experiment shows how color is transported through plant veins, and what bigger system of plant veins is there than the giant Root System tunnel network? Is it not then obvious that this System is the conduit of the forces of Mania and Dementia?

And do we not eat the plants and the fruit of the trees that connect to the Root System and the beasts that feed on them, and drink the waters that fall from their leaves? Do we not breathe the air that carries their spores and seeds? Do we not throw our own waste onto the ground to be absorbed into the soil? Thus, are we not intimately connected to the giant Root System under our feet? Surely, we are one with it!

Clearly, the Root System is feeding those of us in the Mania brilliant color, giving us our mood swings, filling our hearts with passions and sensations, and giving us powerful urges by stealing these things from our fellows in Dementia, leaving them dark, desperate, angry, violent, and disturbed!

Shegorath is not the source of our "gifts." It is the land itself that has unbalanced us so!

The Gnarl are the servants and lifeblood of this parasitic process.

If we were to kill all the Gnarl, the balance would be restored!

Mania would be less bright, true, but so would Dementia be less dark.

We and our world would become whole again!

Let go of your belief in the collective fantasy of Sheogorath!

Let go of your belief in your own special "gifts!"

We must destroy the Gnarl and the Root System!

We must destroy those who shackle us to belief in some haughty and aloof ruler, who toys with our emotions and well-being!

To arms, brothers and sisters!

To arms!

# Bible Of The Deep Ones

*Irlav Moslin*

Given to me by the Chief of the Deep Ones. He taught me his language and his runes. This is the ancient lore of his people which we shall follow from now until forever.

Signed in the presence of twelve witnesses,

Irlav Moslin

3E 345

so cxiumonataj kunvenauw, sed nature ankoix pri aliaj aktuasoj aktivecauw so societo. Ne malofte enahkstas krome plej diversaspekta materialo eduka oix distra.

So interreta Kvako (retletera kaj verjheauw) ahkstas unufsonke alternativaj kanasouw por distribui so enhavon so papera Kva! Kvak!. Sed alifsonke so enhavauw so diversaj verjheauw antoixvible ne povas kaj ecx ne vus cxiam ahksti centprocente so sama. En malvaste cirkusonta paperfolio ekzemple ebsos publikigi ilustrajxauwn, kiuj pro kopirajtaj kiasouw ne ahkstas uzebsoj en so interreto. Alifsonke so masoltaj kostauw reta distribuo forigas so spacajn limigauwn kaj permahksas pli ampleksan enhavon, por ne paroli pri gxishora aktualeco.

Tiuj cirkonstancuww rahkspeguligxos en so aspekto so Kvakoa, kiu ja cetere servos ankoix kiel gxeneraso retejo so ranetauw

# Biography Of Barenziah

*Stern Gamboge*

Biography of Barenziah, v1

Biography of Barenziah

Volume One

by

Stern Gamboge

Imperial Scribe

Late in the Second Era, a girl-child, Barenziah, was born to the rulers of the kingdom of Mournhold in what is now the Imperial Province of Morrowind. She was reared in all the luxury and security befitting a royal Dark Elven child until she reached five years of age. At that time, His Excellency Tiber Septim I, the first Emperor of Tamriel, demanded that the decadent rulers of Morrowind yield to him and institute imperial reforms. Trusting to their vaunted magic, the Dark Elves impudently refused until Tiber Septim's army was on the borders. An Armistice was hastily signed by the now-eager Dunmer, but not before there were several battles, one of which laid waste to Mournhold, now called Almalexia.

Little Princess Barenziah and her nurse were found among the wreckage. The Imperial General Symmachus, himself a Dark Elf, suggested to Tiber Septim that the child might someday be valuable, and she was therefore placed with a loyal supporter who had recently retired from the Imperial Army.

Sven Advensen had been granted the title of Count upon his retirement; his fiefdom, Darkmoor, was a small town in central Skyrim. Count Sven and his wife reared the princess as their own daughter, seeing to it that she was educated appropriately—and more importantly, that the imperial virtues of obedience, discretion, loyalty, and piety were instilled in the child. In short, she was made fit to take her place as a member of the new ruling class of Morrowind.

The girl Barenziah grew in beauty, grace, and intelligence. She was sweet-tempered, a joy to her adoptive parents and their five young sons, who loved her as their elder sister. Other than her appearance, she differed from young girls of her class only in that she had a strong empathy for the woods and fields, and was wont to escape her household duties to wander there at times.

Barenziah was happy and content until her sixteenth year, when a wicked orphan stable-boy, whom she had befriended out of pity, told her he had overheard a conspiracy between her guardian, Count Sven, and a Redguard visitor to sell her as a concubine in Rihad, as no Nord or Breton would marry her on account of her black skin, and no Dark Elf would have her because of her foreign upbringing.

“Whatever shall I do?” the poor girl said, weeping and trembling, for she had been brought up in innocence and trust,

and it never occurred to her that her friend the stable-boy would lie to her.

The wicked boy, who was called Straw, said that she must run away if she valued her virtue, but that he would come with her as her protector. Sorrowfully, Barenziah agreed to this plan; and that very night, she disguised herself as a boy and the pair escaped to the nearby city of Whiterun. After a few days there, they managed to get jobs as guards for a disreputable merchant caravan. The caravan was heading east by side roads in a mendacious attempt to elude the lawful tolls charged on the imperial highways. Thus the pair eluded pursuit until they reached the city of Rifton, where they ceased their travels for a time. They felt safe in Rifton, close as it was to the Morrowind border so that Dark Elves were enough of a common sight.

Biography of Barenziah, v2

Biography of Barenziah

Volume Two

by

Stern Gamboge

Imperial Scribe

The first volume of this series told the story of Barenziah's origin-heiress to the throne of Mournhold until her father rebelled against His Excellency Tiber Septim I and brought ruin to the province of Morrowind. Thanks largely to the benevolence of the Emperor, the child Barenziah was not destroyed with her parents, but reared by Count Sven of Darkmoor, a loyal Imperial trustee. She grew up into a

beautiful and pious child, trustful of her guardian's care. This trust, however, was exploited by a wicked orphan stable boy at Count Sven's estate, who with lies and fabrications tricked her into fleeing Darkmoor with him when she turned sixteen. After many adventures on the road, they settled in Riften, a Skyrim city near the Morrowind borders.

The stable boy, Straw, was not altogether evil. He loved Barenziah in his own selfish fashion, and deception was the only way he could think of that would cement possession of her. She, of course, felt only friendship toward him, but he was hopeful that she would gradually change her mind. He wanted to buy a small farm and settle down into a comfortable marriage, but at the time his earnings were barely enough to feed and shelter them.

After only a short time in Riften, Straw fell in with a bold, villainous Khajiit thief named Therris, who proposed that they rob the Imperial Commandant's house in the central part of the city. Therris said that he had a client, a traitor to the Empire, who would pay well for any information they could gather there. Barenziah happened to overhear this plan and was appalled. She stole away from their rooms and walked the streets of Riften in desperation, torn between her loyalty to the Empire and her love for her friends.

In the end, loyalty to the Empire prevailed over personal friendship, and she approached the Commandant's house, revealed her true identity, and warned him of her friends' plan. The Commandant listened to her tale, praised her courage, and assured her that no harm would come to her. He was none other than General Symmachus, who had been scouring the countryside in search of her since her disappearance, and had



just arrived in Riften, hot in pursuit. He took her into his custody, and informed her that, far from being sent away to be sold, she was to be reinstated as the Queen of Mournhold as soon as she turned eighteen. Until that time, she was to live with the Septim family in the newly built Imperial City, where she would learn something of government and be presented at the Imperial Court.

At the Imperial City, Barenziah befriended the Emperor Tiber Septim during the middle years of his reign. Tiber's children, particularly his eldest son and heir Pelagius, came to love her as a sister. The ballads of the day praised her beauty, chastity, wit, and learning. On her eighteenth birthday, the entire Imperial City turned out to watch her farewell procession preliminary to her return to her native land. Sorrowful as they were at her departure, all knew that she was ready for her glorious destiny as sovereign of the kingdom of Mournhold.

Biography of Barenziah, v3

Biography of Barenziah

Volume Three

by

Stern Gamboge

Imperial Scribe

In the second volume of this series, it was told how Barenziah was kindly welcomed to the newly constructed Imperial City by the Emperor Tiber Septim and his family, who treated her like a long-lost daughter during her almost one-year stay. After several happy months there learning her duties as vassal queen

under the Empire, the Imperial General Symmachus escorted her to Mournhold where she took up her duties as Queen of her people under his wise guidance. Gradually they came to love one another and were married and crowned in a splendid ceremony at which the Emperor himself officiated.

After several hundred years of marriage, a son, Helseth, was born to the royal couple amid celebration and joyous prayer. Although it was not publicly known at the time, it was shortly before this blessed event that the Staff of Chaos had been stolen from its hiding place deep in the Mournhold mines by a clever, enigmatic bard known only as the Nightingale.

Eight years after Helseth's birth, Barenziah bore a daughter, Morgiah, named after Symmachus' mother, and the royal couple's joy seemed complete. Alas, shortly after that, relations with the Empire mysteriously deteriorated, leading to much civil unrest in Mournhold. After fruitless investigations and attempts at reconciliation, in despair Barenziah took her young children and travelled to the Imperial City herself to seek the ear of then Emperor Uriel Septim VII. Symmachus remained in Mournhold to deal with the grumbling peasants and annoyed nobility, and do what he could to stave off an impending insurrection.

During her audience with the Emperor, Barenziah, through her magical arts, came to realize to her horror and dismay that the so-called Emperor was an impostor, none other than the bard Nightingale who had stolen the Staff of Chaos. Exercising great self-control she concealed this realization from him. That evening, news came that Symmachus had fallen in battle with the revolting peasants of Mournhold, and that the kingdom

had been taken over by the rebels. Barenziah, at this point, did not know where to seek help, or from whom.

The gods, that fateful night, were evidently looking out for her as if in redress of her loss. King Eadwyre of High Rock, an old friend of Uriel Septim and Symmachus, came by on a social call. He comforted her, pledged his friendship-and furthermore, confirmed her suspicions that the Emperor was indeed a fraud, and none other than Jagar Tharn, the Imperial Battlemage, and one of the Nightingale's many alter egos. Tharn had supposedly retired into seclusion from public work and installed his assistant, Ria Silmane, in his stead. The hapless assistant was later put to death under mysterious circumstances-supposedly a plot implicating her had been uncovered, and she had been summarily executed. However, her ghost had appeared to Eadwyre in a dream and revealed to him that the true Emperor had been kidnapped by Tharn and imprisoned in an alternate dimension. Tharn had then used the Staff of Chaos to kill her when she attempted to warn the Elder Council of his nefarious plot.

Together, Eadwyre and Barenziah plotted to gain the false Emperor's confidence. Meanwhile, another friend of Ria's, known only as the Champion, who apparently possessed great, albeit then untapped, potential, was incarcerated at the Imperial Dungeons. However, she had access to his dreams, and she told him to bide his time until she could devise a plan that would effect his escape. Then he could begin on his mission to unmask the impostor.

Barenziah continued to charm, and eventually befriended, the ersatz Emperor. By contriving to read his secret diary, she learned that he had broken the Staff of Chaos into eight pieces

and hidden them in far-flung locations scattered across Tamriel. She managed to obtain a copy of the key to Ria's friend's cell and bribed a guard to leave it there as if by accident. Their Champion, whose name was unknown even to Barenziah and Eadwyre, made his escape through a shift gate Ria had opened in an obscure corner of the Imperial Dungeons using her already failing powers. The Champion was free at last, and almost immediately went to work.

It took Barenziah several more months to learn the hiding places of all eight Staff pieces through snatches of overheard conversation and rare glances at Tharn's diary. Once she had the vital information, however—which she communicated to Ria forthwith, who in turn passed it on to the Champion—she and Eadwyre lost no time. They fled to Wayrest, his ancestral kingdom in the province of High Rock, where they managed to fend off the sporadic efforts of Tharn's henchmen to haul them back to the Imperial City, or at the very least obtain revenge. Tharn, whatever else might be said of him, was no one's fool—save perhaps Barenziah's—and he concentrated most of his efforts toward tracking down and destroying the Champion.

As all now know, the courageous, indefatigable, and forever nameless Champion was successful in reuniting the eight sundered pieces of the Staff of Chaos. With it, he destroyed Tharn and rescued the true Emperor, Uriel Septim VII. Following what has come to be known as the Restoration, a grand state memorial service was held for Symmachus at the Imperial City, befitting the man who had served the Septim Dynasty for so long and so well.

Barenziah and good King Eadwyre had come to care deeply for one another during their trials and adventures, and were

married in the same year shortly after their flight from the Imperial City. Her two children from her previous marriage with Symmachus remained with her, and a regent was appointed to rule Mournhold in her absence.

Up to the present time, Queen Barenziah has been in Wayrest with Prince Helseth and Princess Morgiah. She plans to return to Mournhold after Eadwyre's death. Since he was already elderly when they wed, she knows that that event, alas, could not be far off as the Elves reckon time. Until then, she shares in the government of the kingdom of Wayrest with her husband, and seems glad and content with her finally quiet, and happily unremarkable, life.

# Biography Of The Wolf Queen

*Katar Eriphanes*

Few historic figures are viewed as unambiguously evil, but Potema, the so-called Wolf Queen of Solitude, surely qualifies for that dishonor. Born to the Imperial Family in the sixty-seventh year of the third era, Potema was immediately presented to her grandfather, the Emperor Uriel Septim II, a famously kindhearted man, who viewed the solemn, intense babe and whispered, "She looks like a she-wolf about ready to pounce."

Potema's childhood in the Imperial City was certainly difficult from the start. Her father, Prince Pelagius Septim, and her mother, Qizara, showed little affection for their brood. Her eldest brother Antiochus, sixteen at Potema's birth, was already a drunkard and womanizer, infamous in the empire. Her younger brothers Cephorus and Magnus were born much later, so for years she was the only child in the Imperial Court.

By the age of 14, Potema was a famous beauty with many suitors, but she was married to cement relations with King Mantiarco of the Nordic kingdom of Solitude. She entered the court, it was said, as a pawn, but she quickly became a queen. The elderly King Mantiarco loved her and allowed her all the power she wished, which was total.

When Uriel Septim II died the following year, her father was made emperor, and he faced a greatly depleted treasury, thanks to his father's poor management. Pelagius II dismissed the Elder Council, forcing them to buy back their positions. In 3E 97, after many miscarriages, the Queen of Solitude gave birth to a son, who she named Uriel after her grandfather. Mantiarco quickly made Uriel his heir, but the Queen had much larger ambitions for her child.

Two years later, Pelagius II died—many say poisoned by a vengeful former Council member—and his son, Potema's brother Antiochus took the throne. At age forty-eight, it could be said that Antiochus's wild seeds had yet to be sown, and the history books are nearly pornographic in their depictions of life at the Imperial court during the years of his reign. Potema, whose passion was for power not fornication, was scandalized every time she visited the Imperial City.

Mantiarco, King of Solitude, died the springtide after Pelagius II. Uriel ascended to the throne, ruling jointly with his mother. Doubtless, Uriel had the right and would have preferred to rule alone, but Potema convinced him that his position was only temporary. He would have the Empire, not merely the kingdom. In Castle Solitude, she entertained dozens of diplomats from other kingdoms of Skyrim, sowing seeds of discontent. Her guest list over the years expanded to include kings and queens of High Rock and Morrowind as well.

For thirteen years, Antiochus ruled Tamriel, and proved an able leader despite his moral laxity. Several historians point to proof that Potema cast the spell that ended her brother's life, but evidence one way or another is lost in the sands of time. In any event, both she and her son Uriel were visiting the Imperial

court in 3E 112 when Antiochus died, and immediately challenged the rule of his daughter and heir, Kintyra.

Potema's speech to the Elder Council is perhaps helpful to students of public speaking.

She began with flattery and self-abasement: "My most august and wise friends, members of the Elder Council, I am but a provincial queen, and I can only assume to bring to issue what you yourselves must have already pondered."

She continued on to praise the late Emperor, who was a popular ruler in spite of his flaws: "He was a true Septim and a great warrior, destroying—with your counsel—the near invincible armada of Pyandonea."

But little time was wasted, before she came to her point: "The Empress Magna unfortunately did nothing to temper my brother's lustful spirits. In point of fact, no whore in the slums of the city spread out on more beds than she. Had she attended to her duties in the Imperial bedchamber more faithfully, we would have a true heir to the Empire, not the halfwit, milksop bastards who call themselves the Emperor's children. The girl called Kintyra is popularly believed to be the daughter of Magna and the Captain of the Guard. It may be that she is the daughter of Magna and the boy who cleans the cistern. We can never know for certain. Not as certainly as we can know the lineage of my son, Uriel. The last of the Septim Dynasty."

Despite Potema's eloquence, the Elder Council allowed Kintyra to assume the throne as the Empress Kintyra II. Potema and Uriel angrily returned to Skyrim and began assembling the rebellion.



Details of the War of the Red Diamond are included in other histories: we need not recount the Empress Kintyra II's capture and eventual execution in High Rock in the year 3E 114, nor the ascension of Potema's son, Uriel III, seven years later. Her surviving brothers, Cephorus and Magnus, fought the Emperor and his mother for years, tearing the Empire apart in a civil war.

When Uriel III fought his uncle Cephorus in Hammerfell at the Battle of Ichidag in 3E 127, Potema was fighting her other brother, Uriel's uncle Magnus in Skyrim at the Battle of Falconstar. She received word of her son's defeat and capture just as she was preparing to mount an attack on Magnus's weakest flank. The sixty-one-year-old Wolf Queen flew into a rage and led the assault herself. It was a success, and Magnus and his army fled. In the midst the victory celebration, Potema heard the news that her son the Emperor had been killed by an angry mob before he had even made it for trial in the Imperial City. He had been burned to death within his carriage.

When Cephorus was proclaimed Emperor, Potema's fury was terrible to behold. She summoned daedra to fight for her, had her necromancers resurrect her fallen enemies as undead warriors, and mounted attack after attack on the forces of the Emperor Cephorus I. Her allies began leaving her as her madness grew, and her only companions were the zombies and skeletons she had amassed over the years. The kingdom of Solitude became a land of death. Stories of the ancient Wolf Queen being waited on by rotting skeletal chambermaids and holding war plans with vampiric generals terrified her subjects.

Potema died after a month long siege on her castle in the year 3E 137 at the age of 90. While she lived, she had been the Wolf Queen of Solitude, Daughter of the Emperor Pelagius II, Wife of King Mantiarco, Aunt of the Empress Kintyra II, Mother of Emperor Uriel III, and Sister of the Emperors Antiochus and Cephorus. Three years after her death, Antiochus died, and his—and Potema's—brother Magnus took the throne.

Her death has hardly diminished her notoriety. Though there is little direct evidence of this, some theologians maintain that her spirit was so strong, she became a daedra after her death, inspiring mortals to mad ambition and treason. It is also said that her madness so infused Castle Solitude that it infected the next king to rule there. Ironically, that was her 18-year-old nephew Pelagius, the son of Magnus. Whatever the truth of the legend, it is undeniable that when Pelagius left Solitude in 3E 145 to assume the title of the Emperor Pelagius III, he quickly became known as Pelagius The Mad. It is even widely rumored that he murdered his father Magnus.

The Wolf Queen must surely have had the last laugh.

# Black Horse Courier

*Anonymous*

Assassination!

SPECIAL EDITION!

EMPEROR AND HEIRS ASSASSINATED!

Elder Council Named as Regents!

Emperor Uriel Septim VII is dead, at the age of 87, having ruled Tamriel for 65 years. He was killed by assassins unknown. At the same time, in separate locations, the late emperor's three sons and heirs (Crown Prince Geldall, 56; Prince Enman, 55; Prince Ebel, 53] were slain by other assassins. An investigation into the identity and motives of the assassins is under way, but the Elder Council, Imperial Guard, and Blades Guard have forbidden the publication of reports and rumors concerning the event until further notice.

By ancient precedent, the Elder Council rules the empire until a new emperor is crowned. No direct heirs survive, and the council has proposed no list of candidates. Chancellor Ocato, Imperial Battlemage, speaking for the Elder Council, presented an appeal to the empire's citizens for calm, and asked that the people remember the Emperor, his sons, and the Elder Council in their prayers.

Emperor Uriel's early reign was marked by peace and prosperity. The Empress Caula Voria bore him three healthy sons, was a loving companion to the Emperor, and a great favorite of the people. However, the emperor and the empire suffered terribly during the Imperial Simulacrum (3E 389-399], when he was held captive in Oblivion while the usurper Jagar Tharn assumed his appearance and ruled in his stead. Emperor Uriel was finally rescued and restored and the impostor defeated by the agency of the sorceress Ria Silmane and her shadowy protégé, but the affairs of the empire were in great disorder, and Empress Caula Voria, exhausted by her ordeal, withdrew from public life.

The decades following the Restoration were once again peaceful and prosperous, but increasing political tensions among the petty states of northwest Tamriel finally erupted in the Wars of the Iliac Bays, resulting in the establishment of the modern borders of Daggerfall, Sentinel, Wayrest, and Orsinium, and culminating with the remarkable events associated with the Warp in the West.

The latter years of the Emperor's reign have seen a flourishing of Imperial influence in the provinces, and with the fortunate resolution of the religious wars and the Vvardenfell Crisis, and with the wise and firm guidance of King Helseth and his mother, Queen Barenziah, an extension of high Imperial culture even into the more remote parts of Morrowind.

The Emperor's murder, and the murder of his three sons, is a terrible crime, and a great tragedy for the Empire. Battlemage Ocato assures us that all the resources of the Elder Council, the Legions, the Guard, the Arcane University, and the Imperial Battle College are being employed to bring the assassins to

justice. But, in the meantime, the greatest tribute we citizens can offer to the memory of our beloved Emperor is to go earnestly and diligently about our daily affairs, honoring the life of the great Empire he loved so much, and served so faithfully for so long.

A New Guild for Fighters?

## FIGHTERS GUILD FACES TOUGH COMPETITION

The Fighters Guild has been an institution in Tamriel for as long as most anyone can remember. These brave men and women have, for countless years, always been available to do those jobs that the average citizen is simply not qualified to handle. Whether it be ridding a homeowner of a plague of rats or rescuing a wayward scholar, the Fighters Guild has always been available for anyone with enough coin to pay their modest fees. Now, however, it seems that the Fighters Guild is not the only game in town.

A new group has recently been making a lot of waves in Cyrodiil. They call themselves the Blackwood Company, and they've let it be known that they'll handle any job that the Fighters Guild will, and many that they won't.

While the Fighters Guild has always maintained the strictest standards on both the quality of their members and the legality of the contracts they accept, the Blackwood Company makes none of the same claims. They have no screening process when accepting new members, and they seem willing to accept any contract, assuming one can afford the price tag.

Some have questioned the Blackwood Company's methods. They are rumored to be reckless and indiscriminant. Many

have spoken of needless damage to person and property during the fulfillment of a contract. None of those we spoke to were willing to go on the record for this article.

What the future holds for this upstart group remains to be seen. Are they the perfect solution for a quickly changing world? Will their methods force the Fighters Guild to adopt more lenient business practices? Only time will tell. Until then, if you need a job done, and the Fighters Guild won't do it, check with your local Blackwood Company!

New 'Doomstones' Series!

## QUILL-WEAVE PLANS NEW 'DOOMSTONES' CYCLE

"Doomstones not Magical" Says Noted Argonian Writer

The author of 'The Goblin with the Golden Arm' and 'Red Crater' plans a new series of historical works set in the early days of the Reman emperors. The stories will center around the sorcerers and battlemages that play such a prominent part in the legends of the Reman emperors' rapid rise to power in the closing years of the Second Era. She plans to call the series "The Paths of the Doomstones."

The Argonian authoress declined to reveal any details of the characters and themes of these books. However, Quill-Weave clearly has quite ambitious plans for this series, since she plans titles to correspond with each of Cyrodiil's twenty-one Doomstones. These ancient monuments are scattered throughout Cyrodiil, and each is known in legend by its own name.

“I always carefully research my subjects,” Quill-Weave says, “and I find no evidence at all to support the popular notion that these runestones were once artifacts of great magical power.” She noted that thirteen of these stones are associated with the common birthsigns by which people have always marked the aspects of the heavens when children are born. “Such stones as the ‘Mage Stone’ and the ‘Serpent Stone’ were certainly associated with the primitive sky worships of the Beast Folk of the Mythic Era. Other stones, like the ‘Aetherius Stone’ and the ‘Magnus Stone’ were also doubtless associated with other long-forgotten cults.”

The Courier asked Quill-Weave why she might choose to abandon the popular tales of thieves, outlaws, murderers, and low-lives that have made her so famous in Cyrodiil and throughout the Empire. She explained that she has long sought material with more mature and epic themes to celebrate the noble virtues of Cyrodiil and the Empire. She assured the Courier that she will fill the Doomstones series with the lusty and colorful characters we’ve come to know and love. “But this time,” Quill-Weave says, “my characters will uproot trees, devastate cities, and summon rains of boiling blood before slipping away to explore the private and intimate mysteries of the heart.”

### Gray Fox, Man or Myth?

Is a so-called Thieves Guild masterminding all the thefts in the Imperial City? Captain Hieronymus Lex of the Imperial Watch seems to think so.

When asked about the Thieves Guild and its mythical leader, the Gray Fox, the captain was quite emphatic. “This one man is responsible for all crime in the city!” The energetic and

tenacious Captain Lex has therefore devoted himself to apprehending this masked menace.

When questioned on the subject, Adamus Phillida, Legion Commander and Captain Lex's immediate superior, had the following response. "Ridiculous! The Gray Fox is just a fairy tale. There is no such thing as a Thieves Guild, and there never has been."

Stories of an unstoppable thief called the Gray Fox have been circulating around the Imperial City for centuries. The stories claim he can turn invisible at will, shrink himself down to the size of a mouse, turn to mist and seep under locked doors, and perform any number of other truly unbelievable feats. If even half of these stories are true, Captain Lex will have his hands full capturing the Gray Fox.

Gray Fox Unmasked!

**GRAY FOX UNMASKED!**

Vlanarus Kvinchal recently admitted to being the notorious thief, the Gray Fox. Under questioning by the Imperial Watch, he also confessed to being the reincarnation of Tiber Septim, the love-child of Lord Stendarr, a were-shark, and the mother of Hieronymus Lex. Only after he spent a night in the Imperial prisons was it discovered that Vlanarus had recently consumed a near-lethal dose of skooma.

Vlanarus is now back home and recuperating from the hospitality of the Imperial Watch and from the close attention he received during his interrogation. He speculates that he might be able to work again in a month or two, so long as it doesn't involve walking or lifting anything heavier than a beer



mug. The sometimes- dockworker has sworn a solemn oath never to trifle with Skooma again, and earnestly warns everyone to stay away from the Orum gang.

Night Mother Rituals!

SPECIAL EDITION

NIGHT MOTHER RITUALS ON THE RISE!

“And won’t be tolerated!”

warns Imperial Legion.

by Agnes “the quill is mightier than the ebony sword”  
Earheardt

The Imperial City—pinnacle of art, entertainment, scholarship... and ritualistic murder? So says Adamus Phillida, commander of the Imperial Legion forces in the Imperial City, and a staunch opponent of the mysterious assassin’s guild known as the Dark Brotherhood. According to Phillida, Imperial Legion soldiers have discovered thirteen separate instances of the macabre “Black Sacrament,” a sinister rite purportedly used to summon a member of the Dark Brotherhood, in order to arrange an assassination.

Whether or not a card-carrying killer shows up on a ritual performer’s doorstep remains to be seen, but the Black Sacrament itself is very real, and truly the stuff of nightmares. As documented in the rare and taboo work “A Kiss, Sweet Mother,” the Black Sacrament involves an effigy of the intended victim—created from actual body parts, including a heart, skull, bones and flesh—within a circle of candles. To proceed with the ritual, one must stab the effigy repeatedly with a

dagger rubbed with the petals of a Nightshade plant, while whispering the plea, “Sweet Mother, sweet Mother, send your child unto me, for the sins of the unworthy must be baptized in blood and fear.” As gruesome as this ritual may be, even more frightening is its intention—the summoning of a mysterious assassin (who some witnesses claim is always clad in a black hooded robe) who will then receive money to kill an innocent victim. No remorse. No regret. It is, as the merchant’s say, simply business. And that’s what worries Adamus Phillida.

“This brazen increase in Night Mother rituals is an affront to the decent, peace-loving citizens of the Empire. The Imperial Legion exists for one reason and one reason only—to protect and serve the people of Tamriel. How in Azura’s name can we do that when people take it upon themselves to contact paid assassins and have innocent people murdered? How can I sleep at night knowing my Legion can’t possibly save the life of someone marked for death by the Dark Brotherhood? Anyone who carries out this “Black Sacrament” makes a mockery of the Imperial Legion, and as Commander, that’s something I just can’t tolerate. From this point forward, any citizen found in the possession of items related to the Night Mother ritual will be incarcerated in the Imperial Prison indefinitely, and their property seized by the Empire. There’s no fine high enough, no standard prison sentence long enough, for the type of malcontent who would show such a blatant disregard for our dear Emperor’s laws and the welfare of the fine people of Tamriel”

To be sure, Adamus Phillida is not one to issue empty threats. Indeed, the Black Horse Courier has learned that one Claudius Arcadia, until recently a resident of the Talos Plaza District of the Imperial City, is now residing in a cold, dank cell in the

Imperial Prison, and his house has become the newest Imperial Legion outpost. So before you take the law into your own hands, dear reader, remember—you'll go further in life with a warm smile than a cold blade. And if you've got a grudge that won't be soothed, a score that can't be settled, you can always move to Morrowind and have the government-sanctioned Morag Tong do the killing for you.

Adamus Phillida Slain!

SPECIAL EDITION!

ADAMUS PHILLIDA SLAIN

BY DARK BROTHERHOOD!

by Waldorf Wordswell

In what can only be described as a blatant assault on the security and liberty of the civilized people of Cyrodiil, retired Imperial Legion commander Adamus Phillida was brutally murdered by the secretive assassins guild known as the Dark Brotherhood. The slaying occurred in the sleepy town of Leyawiin, where Phillida had chosen to spend the remainder of his days. It was to be a life of quiet solitude, far removed from the hustle and bustle of the Imperial City, where Phillida had served the Imperial Legion proudly for more than twenty-five years.

But even in retirement, the noble Legion commander could not escape his past. Throughout the years, Adamus Phillida had become a rather vocal opponent of the Dark Brotherhood and its practices, and vowed to expose the organizations' secrets and bring its leaders to justice. Indeed, Phillida had been

targeted for assassination twice in the past, but both attempts were thwarted by the commander and his Legion soldiers. Sadly, his luck ran out in Leyawiin.

When asked if there was any doubt as to the Dark Brotherhood's involvement in Phillida murder, newly appointed Imperial Legion commander Giovanni Civello had this to say:

"It was the Dark Brotherhood, all right. No question about it. This was a crime of vengeance, a despicable act of hatred and evil against a pinnacle of nobility and virtue. Adamus fought the Dark Brotherhood every day of his life, and he died for what he believed in. Adamus Phillida was a great man. He taught me everything I know, and I'll be damned if I let his dream die with him. From this day forward, I vow to destroy the Dark Brotherhood and everything they stand for!"

Adamus Phillida may be dead, but it would seem his fight against the Dark Brotherhood lives on in Giovanni Civello and the rest of the Imperial Legion. There may soon come a day when those bloodthirsty assassins have more to fear than the good people of the Imperial Province.

Anvil Tarts Thwarted!

SPECIAL EDITION!

GANG OF TARTS THWARTED!

Tempresses Terrorize Anvil No More!

A ruthless crime ring of female thieves plaguing Anvil's men folk has finally been broken. These shameless women employed feminine wiles to seduce the men, lured them to

remote locations, then robbed them, leaving them without a stitch of clothing.

The gang's ringleader, Faustina Cartia, had preyed upon Anvil's male population for some time, but the shamefaced victims had been reluctant to admit what was happening. Now, thanks to an extensive undercover operation by two unnamed Anvil Guard Investigators, and with the aid of an anonymous private operative, this menace to Anvil's men has been summarily dealt with, and the wives of Anvil may rest easier knowing their gullible husbands will no longer be imperiled by predatory seductresses.

Cheydinhall Heir Saved!

SPECIAL EDITION!

CHEYDINHALL HEIR SAVED

FROM CERTAIN DOOM!

Sir Farwil and Companions Close Gate Threatening City!

Farwil Indarys, son and heir of His Lordship Andel Indarys, Count of Cheydinhall, has been delivered from the sulfurous torments of Oblivion by a questing hero. The count's courageous son and his boon companions, the Knights of the Thorn, had boldly entered an Oblivion Gate threatening Cheydinhall, intent on slaying its monstrous horrors and protecting the city and its citizens.

Sources report that the Knights were outnumbered a hundred to one, and only the dauntless courage and strength of arms of Farwil and one other brave soul managed to hold them at bay. Thanks to an allied adventurer who entered the gate to offer his

aid, the Knights of the Thorn, led by the noble Sir Farwil, were able to assault the main citadel and shut the gate forever. Cheydinhal and its people are forever in the debt of Sir Farwil and his brave companions.

Greatest Painter Safe!

SPECIAL EDITION!

CYRODIIL'S GREATEST PAINTER SAFE!

Disappearance Still a Mystery!

Rythe Lythandas of Cheydinhal, one of this period's most noted landscape painters, is finally back in his studio after an unexplained absence. He'd reportedly been missing for several days.

Neither the artist nor his wife would comment on the circumstances of his disappearance, though both expressed deep gratitude to the unnamed citizen responsible for his safe return. [The citizen remains anonymous at the request of the happy couple.] Speculation by sources within the Cheydinhal Guard of a kidnapping and ransom demand behind the disappearance cannot be confirmed.

A grateful Empire expresses its appreciation to Lythandas' anonymous benefactor. The Courier is pleased to report that Lythandas is back to work in his studio, and anticipates a new exhibition by our great living painter in the near future.

New Watch Captain Named

New Watch Captain Named

Servatius Quintilius was recently promoted to Watch Captain to replace Hieronymus Lex. Captain Lex's career was marked by frequent tirades against the mythical thief and master criminal, the so-called "Gray Fox." At the same time, Hieronymus Lex announced that he has been retained by Countess Millona Umbranox of Anvil to be her new Captain of the Guard.

Captain Quintilius is a practical man who does not believe in the Thieves Guild or its imaginary grandmaster, the Gray Fox. He has promised peace and order in the districts under his protection. Guard patrol routes will be posted so that all citizens will know where to find a Watchman when they need one.

When asked if this would also make things easier for thieves, Captain Quintilius responded, "Never. Criminals are dumb. Wouldn't be criminals otherwise, right? Stands to reason. You smart Courier boys should just leave the crime-fighting in this city to professionals like me."

### Palace Break-In?

The Legion Centurion in command of the Palace Guard was charged with dereliction of duty. Although the Council has officially denied the stories of a palace break-in, the rumors persist. Muddled accounts of the events and principles range from a madman intent on spit-polishing the Emperor's shoes to a master thief stealing one of the legendary Elder Scrolls.

The Palace Guard has made no arrests in connection with the break-in. However, the Watch has been making peculiar inquiries all around the city. The Guard and the Legion are in complete agreement on one matter at least... neither the

fictitious Thieves Guild nor its mythical leader, the Gray Fox, could have been in any way involved. Although rumor has long insisted that the Thieves Guild has been a significant factor in Imperial City criminal activities, representatives of the Guard and Legion insist that even the mythical Gray Fox would never dare to break into the Imperial Palace.

Pale Pass Discovery!

SPECIAL EDITION!

FORT PALE PASS DISCOVERED!

First Era Secrets Revealed!

Fort Pale Pass, the fabled headquarters of Tamriel's First Era Akaviri invaders, has been located by an agent of the Countess of Bruma. This fortress was thought to be long lost to the ages, buried in the frozen wastes of the Jeral Mountains. Thanks to an expedition funded by Her Ladyship Narina Carvain, Countess of Bruma, the secret entrance to this great ruin was found.

Previously, scholars have offered no persuasive account for why the Akaviri juggernaut, having swept aside Tamriel's defenders, should collapse suddenly and completely crossing the Jeral Mountains. Now evidence uncovered at the site indicates a great landslide had covered the fort, trapping the hapless Akaviri commanders within, leaving the Akaviri columns leaderless and isolated in the alpine wilderness passes.

Poor Burdened by Taxes!

The Poor Burdened by Taxes!



Recently Captain Hieronymus Lex of the Imperial Watch collected the taxes from all citizens in the Waterfront district of the city. Although the laws are clear that all citizens of the Imperial City must pay taxes, it has been 53 years since anyone applied that law to the poor and destitute of the Waterfront.

Although members of the Watch approached by the Courier declined to comment on the success of the venture, one of the Watchmen who asked not to be named suggested the operation was “a complete... wossitsname? You know. Starts with an ‘f’. Right. Complete fee-ass-ko, is what it was.”

In a related story, miscreants have recently broken into the South Watchtower. An anonymous source reports that a small sum of money was stolen from the office of Hieronymus Lex. By remarkable coincidence, the sum corresponds exactly to the taxes collected by Captain Lex from the Waterfront.

The ever-vigilant Captain Lex has renewed his call to capture the infamous thief, the Gray Fox. He is petitioning for a bounty to be put on the legendary master thief’s head.

Prank Spoils Society Gathering!

SPECIAL EDITION!

DINNER PARTY MARRED BY PRANKSTER

Countess Alessia Caro is a lady of great beauty, wit, and grace. Her face is known throughout Cyrodiil. Unfortunately, thanks to one deviant prankster, the rest of her has become known to a good deal of her castle staff as well.

During what started as a formal dinner party for some close friends of the Countess, an unknown assailant cast a spell that

affected all who attended. Though it did no physical damage, it certainly left a lasting impression. The Countess and all of her invited guests suddenly found themselves altogether... in the altogether.

The spell apparently stripped everyone affected of all of their possessions, including the clothes on their backs. From all reports, the frightened guests handled the situation calmly, maintaining proper decorum at all times.

“Everybody was acting like ladies and gentleman,” said one palace staffer who asked not to be identified. “I don’t think they was trying to sneak no glances at anyone’s naughty bits.”

As to the identity of the assailant, castle guards have remained silent. Some reports maintain that the culprit was apprehended at the scene; others claim that he was able to escape without detection. One witness even claims that the assailant was affected by his own spell, and fled the scene in haste when he realized he, too, had been a victim.

Whatever the case, castle security has been on high alert since the incident. It is not known as of press time whether Countess Caro has any dinner parties planned in the near future.

Rain of Burning Dogs!

SPECIAL EDITION!

RAIN OF BURNING DOGS!

Experts Bewildered!

The quiet life of the idyllic Border Watch community was shattered recently by a meteorological phenomenon local

experts are unable to explain. On an otherwise normal day, the skies above the small village suddenly darkened, and burning dogs rained down from the heavens.

The carnage was terrible, according to witnesses. Charred dog carcasses littered the village, and the smell alone was enough to drive many residents into their homes. When asked about the event, local mage and weather expert Castus Philidus had this to say:

“There seems to be no precedent for this in all of Tamrielic history. While there have been stories of insects, frogs, and the occasional wayward mage crashing to the earth, I’ve never encountered tales of burning dogs raining from the skies. It is possible that the dogs were the part of some mage’s experiments with summoning gone bad, or perhaps the dogs were swept up in a great wind and hurled into the sky. This might explain the dogs falling onto the unfortunate Border Watch community. Of course, that still doesn’t explain why they were on fire.”

While the experts seem puzzled, the residents of Border Watch see only one explanation.

“It is the end of the world!” said one resident, who asked not to be named in this article. “The K’Sharra Prophecy tells us that this will happen! The rats! The sheep! We are all doomed! Doomed!”

Prophecy? Mages? Freak weather occurrence? We may never know. And the small village of Border Watch will definitely never be the same.

**Tragic Accident! Baenlin Dead!**

SPECIAL EDITION!

BRUMA'S BAENLIN DIES IN TRAGIC ACCIDENT!

Nephew inherits estate

by Phineas Farnsworth

For the residents of Bruma, a city known for its snowy avenues and frigid, Skyrim-like temperatures, nothing is quite as important as the warmth and safety of one's own home. But even the most secure dwelling can harbor a deadly secret. In the case of Baenlin, an elderly Elf nobleman who had called Bruma home for nearly forty-three years, death came not from the icy cold, nor from the sting of a burglar's blade, but from a killer far more insidious—structural instability.

According to Gromm, Baenlin's longtime live-in manservant, the day of his master's death was like any other. Baenlin lived as a recluse, and rarely left the comfort of his home. He spent his morning breakfasting, and his afternoons reading or napping, but it was in the late evening hours before bedtime, when Baenlin relaxed in his favorite chair as was his custom, when disaster struck. A stuffed Minotaur head mounted on the wall directly over the chair came crashing down, killing the unsuspecting noble instantly.

As horrible as Baenlin's death may seem, even more horrible is the revelation that this was not an isolated incident, as previously thought. In fact, through a series of interviews and an in-depth investigation, the Black Horse Courier has learned that many of Bruma's homes are actually deathtraps waiting to spring.

“Me and my boys, we done repair work on half these houses. They’re a bleedin’ mess! Rotted wood, rusty nails, misaligned foundations. Them Nords, they’re good for drinkin’ and killin’, but they can’t build a house worth a damn!”

So said Antoine Dubois, owner of Dubois and Sons Carpentry, a thriving house-building business headquartered in the Breton nation of High Rock. Because of his expertise, Dubois has been known to offer his services throughout the Empire, and has visited Bruma on numerous occasions. In his opinion, this predominantly Nord city features some of the most poorly-constructed dwellings in all the Empire.

“Yeah, I know what the Nords say. It’s the snow! It’s rots the wood, it does this, it does that. Whine, whine, whine! The mead-swillin’ savages wouldn’t know oakwood from oranges. Truth is, they just don’t know anything about the latest architectural methods. The work is unsafe and sloppy. That head that fell on the Elf? An infant could’ve secured those bindings better! It’s no wonder they came loose! But I’ve seen this type of thing all over Bruma. Did you know that until I came in to do repair work on the roof, you couldn’t attend a service in the Chapel without getting snowed on? Now that’s just wrong.”

When asked what he thought of the issues, Baenlin’s nephew, Caenlin, who inherited his uncle’s estate and is now residing in the very house where he was killed, had this to say:

“It was a tragic, tragic accident. I always told my poor uncle that head would fall on him some day, but would he listen? Now, I’ve heard the rumors that some think there was foul play involved, but that’s nonsense, of course. Everybody knows this city is falling apart. It could have happened to anyone.”

And so, as the city of Bruma mourns the loss of one of its oldest and most respected residents, there are those who can't help but wonder—am I next?

Vampire Nest in the City!

Vampire Nest in the City!

A nest of vampires was recently discovered in the home of the Earl of Imbel. The Courier is shocked to learn that Earl Jakben, a local noble of previously unblemished reputation, is revealed to have one of these vampires!

Responding to a tip by the Earl's servant, the Imperial Watch raided the Imbel estate and slew all of the foul creatures. Captain Quintilius has categorically denied the rumors that most of the terrible creatures of the night were already dead by the time the Watch arrived.

Waterfront Raid Fails!

Daring Waterfront Raid Fails!

Stymied in his attempts to capture the legendary thief, the Gray Fox, Captain Hieronymus Lex of the Imperial Watch raided the Waterfront. Extra Watchmen were pulled from duty in other parts of the city to search the slums of the Waterfront. A small amount of contraband was confiscated, but the Gray Fox escaped.

The Arcane University has filed a formal complaint against Captain Hieronymus Lex for dereliction of duty. The guards normally posted at the Arcane University were sent to the Waterfront during the raid. An attempted break-in at the University was foiled. University spokesmen insist that

nothing was taken. They scoffed at the idea that any mere thief could make off with one of their treasures.

# Bloodstained Note

*Greywyn*

I have watched you from afar and feel it is time to make myself known. I am Greywyn, the last of the Crimson Scars. Once a powerful force rivaling the Dark Brotherhood itself, the Scars were the true followers of Sithis and the masters of deception. I will be departing this world soon, as the cold embrace of the Night Lord calls to me. All I have I leave as a legacy to you. My home, Deepscorn Hollow, will be your new haven. Use the map on the reverse of this note to find it. All that lay within is yours to do with as you please. I have but one request in return... further the ways of shadow and honor Sithis with the darkest of deeds. Make the virtuous pay for their blasphemy with their lifeblood staining your blade. May Sithis guide you.

Greywyn



# Brother Piner's Notes

*Brother Piner*

Mother,

Goods Gods! Don't go crazy on me! You'd think the streets of the Imperial City were filled with rioters and the Legions were being called out to restore order.

We've had no disturbances at all here in Chorrol, and I've heard of nothing at all in the City or in the other towns. People are doing just as Chancellor Ocato said—staying calm, and honoring the memory of the emperor and his sons by getting along with their lives. Running around like frightened children isn't going to help anyone. I haven't got time to

Mother,

I know you're upset. But please. I have important duties here at the Priory, and I can't come to the Imperial City and babysit you. Just stay calm, like Chancellor Ocato says, and pray for the Emperor and his sons.

Mother,

What do you expect me to do about it? Come to the City, track down the assassins, and bring them to justice myself?

And are there assassins banging on your door? Do you have some reason to think they're coming for you next?

Please. Don't panic. These assassinations have upset everyone. But you just have to go on with your life.

I don't know what you're worried about. Everything is fine here. Everyone is getting on with business, like the Chancellor says. The Elder Council has everything under control. Certainly you don't expect me to

Mother,

Please don't worry. The Elder Council knows what it is doing. Uriel was an old man. They knew he wouldn't live forever, and I'm sure they had plans for the succession. Of course, now with the three princes dead, it's not clear who will be the next emperor, but it's happened before—there are precedents, I'm sure—and anyway, Ocato and the Council have been running the Empire for the past 15 years anyway. So there's nothing to worry about. Everything will be fine.

I don't know what you've read or heard, but here at the Priors everyone seems to think it must have been madmen or witches or crazy cultists. It doesn't look at all political. It's horrible and depressing, but the Empire will survive. There will not be rioting or civil war or another Warp in the West. So please. If you like, go stay with Uncle Korr and Aunt Harrah on the farm for a while. But I'm certain you'll be perfectly safe in the City. I'll try to get down to visit as soon as possible. And I hope to hear from you soon.

your loving son,

Piner

# Brugo's Take Note

*Anonymous*

Brugo's take—300 ducks. Ready for Middas pickup, after midnight.

# Cann Letters

*Anonymous*

## Perfumed Letter

Finally, somebody sees me for what I am. I'll admit I was taken aback by their approach - a paralysis spell hardly seems like a proper token of respect, but I've given it some thought and they probably didn't think I would willingly associate myself with them. In fact, they were probably right to do so.

If I hadn't been paralyzed while they carried me away, they probably knew I'd have called my army of flying scamps to chew their eyes out.

But here I am, and I have to be honest; I was beginning to worry that the world didn't appreciate me until now. These guys get it. They've brought me all the cured meats I can eat, and I can scarcely empty a cask of wine before another is rolled into my room. Oh, they don't get too close. They know. A wayward glance from me could break their spines.

They needn't worry, of course. I know why I'm here. I saw all the other combatants. They heard of me, Beldring - the Grand Champion of the Felgourad Arena and favored bodyguard to Emperor Kinpo and his thousand-feathered cap. Of course they'd want to see me become the Champion of the Shivering Isles as well. So I train, and they bring me all the equipment I need to do it.

I don't think it will be much longer, now. No, I'll peel the skin off my enemies for the glory of Palgania, and the entertainment of these servants who have been so dutiful in their desire to witness my grandeur.

### Scented Parchment

Their screams and battle cries are incessant by now, and the din of steel and training bags is overwhelming. They've been bringing more and more of us in here over the few weeks of my captivity, and the lust for each other's blood is reaching a fearful pitch.

What am I going to do? I've never raised a sword or axe in my life.

Just after I was captured, a well-mannered abductor came and asked if there was anything I wanted. I asked for some food and was brought fine pickled baliwog and wine. How was I to know that I should have asked for a weapon? Since then, they've only brought wine, cheese, and silken clothes too tight for my body.

They'll kill me - not first, though. No, they'll want to eliminate the more immediate threats, and then come to me. Tear me apart, screaming.

What's worse is that I think we might have this whole thing wrong. Our captors no longer speak to us; indeed they seem afraid of us. We're fed well, and they seem more easily able to provide us ink, paper, and delicacies than the iron-shod armor the others have put in such high demand.

I hope they don't pit us one against one. Surely I'd be tortured before the mercy of a killing blow. Craven heathens. Save me,

Sheogorath.

Scroll

Dearest Brother -

I just don't understand it. We always dreamed of a place to host the Elaborate Spectacle, and I finally found it. These ruins feature a grand, tiered room suited to a great display, and I promptly persuaded our brothers and sisters to migrate here. Yet, the Elaborate Spectacle has never gone as planned. Perhaps you can tell me where I've gone wrong. Permit me to walk you through the process step by step.

First, we acquire our lucky participants. Truly, I would give anything to be in their place, but I can understand their frenzied protests and struggles in the excitement of the moment. We have to stray to the swamps to find them, though some are more easily obtained from the nearby roads.

Once we've returned to Cann with our participants, they're each given private quarters in which to be prepared for the event. Each room is lined with the finest wines and cheeses, and comfortable bedding in the peasant-chic roll style. My personal steward visits each of them soon after arrival and asks what they would like tailored for the Spectacle, but they invariably ask for suits of armor. Our stores are stocked to the ceiling with the finest velvets, silks, and furs - how am I supposed to provide them with chain mail?

Each participant is provided with ink and pen to practice their prose, but again their behavior escapes me. You should see some of the horrid things they've written! Lengthy letters to loved ones, saying goodbye as though they were dying of a

plague, or horribly bloodthirsty curses against their fellow participants. Oh, and I will not offend you with descriptions of the ones who think themselves artists! I suppose that their writings could have clued me into what would happen next, brother—for that is when things get truly bizarre.

Each time, on the day of the Elaborate Spectacle, after we've all gorged on suckling meats and pungent cheeses, the participants are escorted from their quarters into the viewing chamber where we all eagerly await what we're sure will be a thrilling show, but that never happens. After the first time, we removed the decorative weapons from the walls, but they just bludgeoned and gored each other with whatever they could get their hands on—loose stones, wine bottles, and in one case a bone the participant must have filed to a point in his quarters. Why would men given a week alone to write and feed on wine instantly set murderously upon each other, rather than share a loving embrace?

I simply don't understand it, brother—we always believed that the Elaborate Spectacle would be the greatest public display of shared pleasure and it has each time ended a blood-soaked mess. Perhaps the time has finally come to move back to Bliss and abandon our dream.



# Cap'n Dugal's Journal

*Captain Dugal*

Cap'n Dugal's Journal, Part One

3E 286 or thereabouts

I'm findin' it unlikely that anyone will be findin' this journal, but if they do, know that here be written the last words of the great Captain Torradan ap Dugal, Scourge of the Abecean Sea, Terror of the Gold Coast, Cutthroat of Hunding Bay, and Lord Captain of the Red Sabre - the finest band o' buccaneers and pirates e'er to sail Tamriel.

I ain't a man with much use for words—I ain't never been to no academys, and I ain't never wrote no books. Words ain't never earned me no gold, so theys worthless to me - that's why ye have quartermasters and first mates. But I'm gonna be settin' my last thoughts down here on paper, cause I ain't got much time left here and it's ev'ry old man's right to have his words heard.

Now, me business was fightin', sailin', and lootin'. I became a leader of sailin' men, the most feared in hist'ry, or so they tells me. Now, b'fore ye be gettin ahead o' yerself, let me be warnin ye that me tale does not end well as I'm sure ya can see from wherever ye found me rotten bones in this gods cursed cavern.

I was born in a little town on the north coast o' Skyrim called Dunbarrow. Me mother was a wench and me father was a right bastard. The only thing that either of 'em e'er did fer me was doin' me the favor of sellin' me off to a sea cap'n when I were nine. That cap'n, he taught me e'ry thing I'd e'er need to know about sailin', and a few things about the rest too.

Ye see, he were a smuggler, an' he taught me all about smugglin' and avoidin' the Imperial Navy as he run the skooma route from Daggerfall to Vivec. Shame he were caught and hung. He were as close to a daddy as this ol' pirate e'er knew, closer n' that bastard what sold me off e'er were, that's fer sure.

### Cap'n Dugal's Journal, Part Two

After the cap'n were hung, I got around Hammerfell a lot. Fell in with a few crews here an' there, an' after a time got myself hired on as midshipman on Cap'n Kaladas's rig. A' course, Kaladas was a drunkard and the damn fool ran his own ship a'ground in Anvil a'fore we could any real piratin' done. So embarrassed were he that he drank hisself to death in one of the pisshole taverns in this flat little seawater town.

So there I were, in a backwater port when the war against the Usurper broke out. I were out on hire with a rickety tub and her worthless rot of a cap'n when The Imperial Navy stole ev'ry private ship in port to go an' fight their war. We was comin' back in to dock when we heard about it. Now, only a fool doesn't bite when he smells blood in the water and that cap'n o' ours was gonna hand his rudder over to the Navy. The rest of us, well, we didn't so much like that.

We cut his throat and tossed his worthless carcass to the depths for Herm'us Mora to feast on. The rest of us put keel to

this mudhole and broke for the nearest cove to lay low for a while.

Now, the thing that I learned about war is that it's profit'ble for just about everyone except for the poor bastards that actually have to go an' fight it. While the Navy were busy puttin' down the rev'lution, they were too busy to worry about a bunch o' pirates runnin' up and down the Gold Coast. And even better for us, the Navy was needin' a stream of supplies up in High Rock to fight and dinna have the ships to escort 'em..

In case you don't be knowin', cargo vessels without escort is a pirate's best friend.

In just a couple of years, I had ev'ry buccaneer from here to Valenwood flyin' under me flag. We had dozens of ships and crew and more men joined on e'ry day. Soldiers and sailors, castoffs from the war, escaped prisoners—they were the best cutthroats and sons o' whores that a pirate cap'n could ever wish for. It brings a tear to me eye to think of 'em all.

But even better than the men were the ships: Captured navy cutters. Refitted priv'teer Galleons. Even had a few of them bosmer ships with the funny living sails in my fleet. The finest ship I saved for meself. "The Black Flag". Ye'll find her rotting hull around here. She don't look like much now, but I can tell ye that in her day, there weren't no vessel she couldn't out run.

All these men and ships, we called ourselves the Red Sabre. The merchant ships called us death on the seas.

We gots to be so feared that most crews jus' abandoned ship when they seen our flag on the horizon. With no Navy to stop

us, Captain Torradan ap Dugal and the Red Sabre was known all over the east.

Now, I ain't one to brag, but the empire had a bounty on me of forty thousand coins. Now that's somthin' to be proud of. A' course, the poor bastards couldn't never collect on it. Anvil being the wretched den that it is - an mos' sailors there worked for me anyhow—the Legion couldn't never get no one to give me up.

I wish those days coulda lasted fore'er, but you know how it is, friend. Ain't nothing good can ever last.

### Cap'n Dugal's Journal, Part Three

I ain't got much time left. Sure, we had plenty of food down here. It lasted for years, but all this time in the wet and the dark, I got somethin' nasty growin' in me. What a terrible way to die—not on the end of an enemy's cutless, but because of some damned sickness. No seafarin' man should die like this. At least I can still hear the water.

But I was tellin' the story of how I got mine, weren't I?

I curse the day that the Cameron Usurper died at that war ended, 'cause it was that day that Commodore Fasil Umbranox turned 'is attention to the Red Sabre. A couple of months after the war, that fat pompuss bastard decided to come down here to Anvil and take up port in my town, lookin' to break up the Red Sabre. The Emporer gave him whatev'r he asked for to campaign again' us, despite the coffers bein' empty from the war in High Rock.

When Umbranox couldn't get what he needed from my men in Anvil, he set out lookin' all over the Abecean Sea for the Black Flag. There are hundreds of islands In the Abecean, and he landed a crew on each one. He rooted out my men when he could find them, hung those who weren't willin' to go peacefully and jailed those who laid down arms.

No matter for many ships and men it cost him, he kept comin' with more and more. We couldn't never get ahead of him and we couldn't never mount a counter attack. It took him four years and a hell of a lot of ships, but that sea rat finally tracked me down.

It were me own fault, anyway. If I never made the mistake I made, he'dve died before he found me. But a man has to stand up for his mistakes, no matter if it cost him. Besides, ain't like I'll be foolin' ye, since yer likely starin' at me bones as yer readin' this.

Umbranox had his main force out of port followin' a lead that I planted. I set sail back to Anvil, hopin' to catch him off guard, capture the boats he left behind, and fight him with his own ships in Anvil Bay. Ha! Can you imagine the look on his pig's face if it'dve worked? I thought I'd finally get the whoreson to show his face in a proper fight. I shoulda known, but he had men waitin' there for me.

We fought like hell, but we were trapped in the bay. The Navy men set the town on fire to keep us from fleeing onto land. I'm sure that the fine citizens of Cyrodiil dinna weep for the torching of a town of thieves.

The main force of Imperial dogs held us until Umbranox showed up in his flagship. Umbranox fought me to the last ship

and in the end, the Bay was filled with sunken and burning boats. If I weren't fightin' for me life, I'dve probably thought it were beautiful. So, the Black Flag and Umbranox's rickety tub were the only ones that were still floatin' and fightin' when dawn come. So, I did what any pirate with sense would do - I tried to run.

Now understand, I'm a right bastard in me own way. I'm a pirate, a murderer, a thief, and I certainly ain't never believed in a fair fight. But there's a line and an unspoken code between sailin' men and Umbranox went too far. He had mages on his ship. Mages ain't never been allowed on my boats. They're no good, bad luck, an' I don't trust 'em. Turns out, I was right.

I cut across the south side of the bay, along the huge cliff wall that used to be there. I had me helmsman stay as close as he could to the cursed cliff. I could hear those mages from the deck of Umbranox's ship, yellin' some nonsense into the wind. A few rocks fell onto my deck, a few more, and then the whole bloody cliff came crashin' down on top o' me.

Now, don't you worry, I didn't die just then. The cliff collapsed around the ship, makin' this damned cavern. Better the it just fell on us, but no. It sealed the Black Flag, her crew, and me under tons of rock.

We were buggered.

Cap'n Dugal's Journal, Part Four

I seen my own blood more times than I cold ever count, but seein' the ragged mess that just come up out of me lungs just now is the only time I ev'r been afraid of it. I guess I should be gettin' to the last bit o' me story.

Me and me crew were trapped down here, never to see the light again or some rot. We tried diggin' out. We tried blastin' out. We tried callin' to the nines and the daedric princes for help. Nothin' worked. Some o' the men went crazy when we figured out that there were no gettin' out, but most of us just accepted what fate had dealt us. We made the hulk o' the Black Flag into the best home that we could and tried makin' a life of it down here.

We had plenty of stores with us and since most of the crew were killed in the fight, it was more than enough to go around. I will tell you though, that you ain't known suffering until you ate nothin' but hard rations for twenty-some years. All the pain I ever caused anyone has been paid back to me tenfold in havin' to eat the same filth every day for the whole time I been down here.

Then Grim died off.

Grim was the first and one by one, the boys had been droppin' off. They all got the same sickness I ended up with. We buried 'em when we could, threw 'em in the water when we didn't have strength to bury 'em. Finally, we jus' made 'em walk to the far side of the cavern a couple of days before the sickness ran its course.

I'm the last, an' I suppose that makes sense. The great cap'n Dugal, defeated by Fasil Umbranox and buried alive forever. I wonder what became of Anvil. Prob'lly let it burn and swept the ashes into the sea. Umbranox prob'lly went back to the Imperial City to pat himself on the back and be rewarded with lands an' titles.

Like I said way back in the beginnin', I don't expect nobody to ever read this but if by chance someone does find my carcass down here in this pit, do an old seaman a favor. Track down whatever descendents that fat old sack Umbranox may have and tell 'em that Torradan ap Dugal says hello.



# Cindanwe's Notebook

## *Cindanwe*

The sun listens to my greenness. But where did the moon frown? The sky is empty of children, and the earth eats strawberries. Yet, why do the worms taste of bitter-plumb?

Everyone is bereft of spores. Or the spores have devoured us all and we are left with nothing. Or everything is inside us, though we find ourselves swimming in rock, where strange things remain, and known things fall outside of their own selves - let alone from each of us!

Why play the paintbrush against her? She always stands close to being far away. And what of the farm then? Shall it twinkle in the breeze of lyricism? How should I know?

What I do know is this: the grass drinks flower dust like a glass bead swallowed tastes nothing like water. And furthermore, wherever one finds the absence of something, that something surely exists someplace else, or else how could it be absent. There is wisdom in this!

Yes, and everything has its place, and every place its thing belonging to it. It is the way of all things. Even those things misplaced know where they belong. They long to be. That is the whole point of belonging, is it not? And yet we are never so lonely as the stars, as when we find ourselves possessed. Of love? Of death? Of what then? Life?

But they call me Enemy, even as they exalt me. Yet even the wind is slave to the clouds... But the rain? It bounces against the sky like apples in a basket, and for what? What shall become of us when the pod pits die?

I would like to think that the bleak summer does not herald the death of the rain. But who is to say one way or the other? If the butterflies make up the walls, how does one see inside a room at night? Perhaps the room is already inside us and we are the ones who need occupants, and our occupants are the ones needing the light.

But I digress.

The spoon that slays monsters is always the last to enter the mouth, and the first to leave. Nor do eyes in the back of one's head mean that one can walk backwards... do the knees bend that way? Do the shoes point heavenward? No, we are stuck falling forward until we smash against the door of eternity. That is the essence of life. To be devoured in our own banality, though we wish to be something more.

I love this life, but I hate the aftertaste. Like waking from a dream with someone's fingers in your mouth. How did they get there? Whose hand do they belong to? Whose hand do any of us belong to, really?

It always comes back to belonging, does it not? It does. As the question knows the answer, the answer belongs to the question. And that is the whole point, I think: to know the question, and thus to belong to the answer.

That is why I must write in this book. Everyday. Sometimes twice. The others are jealous of the windflowers that bloom in

these pages. They desire to swallow the ink through their nostrils, tasting the bitterness of all that life has in store for them... but it is my life that belongs to me. Even as my house belongs to the things inside it. And insides belong to outsides, and outsides are never quite as free to do as they think they are.

Always this. One thing after another, but not some things. Some things are better left where they think they are, not where they really are. Not all places are equal, nor all things belonging to the same spot. How could that be? No. Surely not.

When my sun shines through the moon's teeth, then it will be time. But not until. Until then I shall continue to smash my head through windows so that I might see. Where I am. Where here is. Where I belong. And all things being just so, so I be just. And justice is important in this life, is it not? How else can a life be justified, but by this?

The sun is forever moving. I must get back to work. I am grateful I have this place to put my thoughts, lest they become lost and confused as I am (though I'll never let the others see that... they think I have everything in control)...

# Collected Essays On Dwemer History And Culture

*Hasphat Antabolis*

While Marobar Sul's Ancient Tales of the Dwemer was definitively debunked in scholarly circles as early as the reign of Katariah I, it remains one of the staples of the literate middle-classes of the Empire, and has served to set the image of the Dwemer in the popular imagination for generations of schoolchildren. What about this lengthy (but curiously insubstantial) tome has proved so captivating to the public that it has been able to see off both the scorn of the literati and the scathing critiques of the scholars?

Before examining this question, a brief summary of the provenance and subsequent career of Ancient Tales would be appropriate. First published around 2E670, in the Interregnum between the fall of the First Cyrodilic Empire and the rise of Tiber Septim, it was originally presented as a serious, scholarly work based on research in the archives of the University of Gwylim, and in the chaos of that era was taken at face value (a sign of the sad state of Dwemer scholarship in those years). Little is known of the author, but Marobar Sul was most likely a pseudonym of Gor Felim, a prolific writer of "penny dreadful romances" of that era, who is known to have used many other pseudonyms. While most of Felim's other work has, thankfully, been lost to history, what little survives matches Ancient Tales

in both language and tone (see Lomis, “Textual Comparison of Gor Felim’s *A Hypothetical Treachery* with Marobar Sul’s *Ancient Tales of the Dwemer*”). Felim lived in Cyrodiil his whole life, writing light entertainments for the elite of the old Imperial capital. Why he decided to turn his hand to the Dwemer is unknown, but it is clear that his “research” consisted of nothing more than collecting the peasants’ tales of the Nibenay Valley and recasting them in Dwemer guise.

The book proved popular in Cyrodiil, and Felim continued to churn out more volumes until the series numbered seven in all. *Ancient Tales of the Dwemer* was thus firmly established as a local favorite in Cyrodiil (already in its 17th printing) when the historical forces that propelled Tiber Septim to prominence also began to spread the literature of the “heartland” across the continent. Marobar Sul’s version of the Dwemer was seized upon in a surge of human racial nationalism that has not yet subsided.

The Dwemer appear in these tales as creatures of fable and light fantasy, but in general they are “just like us”. They come across as a bit eccentric, perhaps, but certainly there is nothing fearsome or dangerous about them. Compare these to the Dwemer of early Redguard legend: a mysterious, powerful race, capable of bending the very laws of nature to their will; vanished but perhaps not gone. Or the Dwemer portrayed in the most ancient Nord sagas: fearsome warriors, tainted by blasphemous religious practices, who used their profane mechanisms to drive the Nords from Morrowind. Marobar Sul’s Dwemer were much more amenable to the spirit of the time, which saw humans as the pinnacle of creation and the other races as unenlightened barbarians or imperfect, lesser versions of humans eager for tutelage. *Ancient Tales* falls firmly in the

latter camp, which does much to explain its enduring hold on the popular imagination. Marobar Sul's Dwemer are so much more comfortable, so much friendlier, so much more familiar, than the real Dwemer, whose truly mysterious nature we are only beginning to understand. The public prefers the light, trivial version of this vanished race. And from what I have learned in my years of studying the Dwemer, I have some sympathy for that preference. As the following essays will show, the Dwemer were, to our modern eyes, a remarkably unlikeable people in many ways.

# Conjurer's Notes

*Anonymous*

Acolytes,

The Shield is here. We know this, and yet we have not found it.

The fort has been cleansed, and yet still it eludes us. No doubt it was hidden from eyes such as ours, hidden with the intent to keep it from those who would learn its secrets.

The gate to the lower levels no longer halts our progress. Make note of the candles along the walls if you would pass through.

The fort must be held at all costs if we are to succeed. Let none enter. Leave no foe standing.

The prisoner remains uncooperative.

There is little doubt that he was on his own, and none will come to his aid. It has been made clear to him that unless he reveals what he knows, he shall pay most dearly. And yet still he holds out.

We give it one more week. If he does not help us reach the Shield, he is to be disposed of, preferably in a manner most painful.

# Dar-Ma's Diary

*Dar-Ma*

[This is apparently the diary of a young Argonian named Dar-Ma. Most of the book deals with personal but mundane details of her life in Chorrol. The only interesting entry is the last one:]

Arrived in Hackdirt after dark, due to Blossom throwing a shoe on the way—the road was REALLY rough! hardly more than a track—doesn't anyone else ever come down here?!

The trader's shop was closed, and she wouldn't come to the door even though I could see a light in the upstairs window—RUDE!!! But at least this inn was open (although the proprietor is kind of creepy—kept giving me these weird grins when he thought I wasn't looking—ugh.) And what's wrong with his face??

Seems like I'm the only one staying here tonight. I didn't see much of the town since it was already dark, but I admit to being kind of spooked—but I'll never admit that to Mother! Or she'd never let me go on another one of these deliveries. She still thinks I'm just a baby (she would probably say "hatchling," and in front of my friends too!) Remember to ask her about the creepy innkeeper when I get home.

Well, the candle is almost burned down (they don't even provide a lantern in this horrible old inn!), so I guess I'd better try to get some sleep. If I CAN even sleep with all the creaking



in this old place! I keep thinking I hear footsteps outside the door, I'm so on edge—GROW UP, Dar! I'm sure in the morning it will all seem quaint and charming. Good night, Diary!

# Daravyn The Gray's Long Forgotten Note

*Daravyn*

My love,

I write this with trembling hands. The guards are after me, and I have nowhere else to turn. Soon they will be at the doors to Rosethorn Hall, and nothing will keep them from taking me away back to that horrible prison. I don't know how they found me; perhaps it was that traitor, Delgariun. Whoever told them I was hiding in your home must have known both of us very well. I know Delgariun has eyes for you, I know he's the one that framed me in the first place and had me sent to that dank hole in the Imperial City. He has to be the one. Beware of him, my love. He's treacherous and only wants you to get to the treasure. I didn't give it up to the guards, and I won't give it up to Delgariun. I've hidden the treasure within the walls of Rosethorn Hall. Remember the toy we played with as we ran through this place as children? Remember the riddle we had for it? It was our secret code:

“Two bodies have I, though both joined in one. The more I stand still, the quicker I run.”

The key to the treasure lies with the answer. Take care of it, my love. It is your ticket far from Delgariun. Do not fret, I've

escaped once, I shall do so again. Soon we will be together, and the sun will shine upon us.

Daravyn the Gray

3E227

# De Rerum Dirennis

## *Vorian Direnni*

I am six-hundred-and-eleven years old. I have never had children of my own, but I have many nieces and nephews and cousins who have been raised with the tales and traditions of our ancient, illustrious, and occasionally notorious clan, the Direnni. Few families in Tamriel can boast so many famous figures, wielding so much power over the fate of so many. Our warriors and kings are stuff of legend, and it is not to dismiss their honor and their achievements to say you have heard quite enough about them.

I myself have never picked up a sword or written an important law, but I am part of a lesser known but still important Direnni tradition: the way of the wizard. My own autobiography would be of little interest to posterity - though my nephew, nieces, and cousins indulge me to tell wild tales of life in the chaotic Second Era of Tamriel - but I have a few ancestors whose stories should be told. They may have changed history as we know it as dramatically as my better known relatives, but their names are in danger of being forgotten.

Most recently, Lysandus, the King of Daggerfall, was able to conquer his ancient enemies of Sentinel in part thanks to his court sorceress, Medora Direnni. Her grandfather Jovron Direnni was Imperial Battlemage to the court of the Dunmer Empress of Tamriel, Katariah, assisting her in creating peace in

a time of turmoil. His great great grandfather Pelladil Direnni had a similar role with the first Potentate, and encouraged the Guild Act without which we would not have all the professional organizations we have today. His ancestor, many times back, was the witch Raven Direnni, who with her better known cousins Aiden and Ryain, brought an end to the tyranny of the latter Alessian Empire. Before the Psijics of Artaeum, it is said, she created the art of enchantment, learning how to bind a soul into a gem and use that to ensorcel all manners of weaponry.

But it is the story of an ancestor even more ancient, more distant than Raven I wish to tell.

Asliel Direnni harkens back to the humble beginnings of our clan, in the tiny farming village of Tyrigel on the banks of the river Caomus which was then called the Diren, hence the family name. Like all on Summurset Isle in those days, he was a simple planter of the fields. But while others only grew enough to sustain their immediate kin, even distant cousins of the Dirennis worked together. They would decide as a group which fields were best for wheat, orchard, vine, livestock, or apiary, and thereby always have the best yields of any farm which worked alone, doing the best as it could with what it had.

Asliel had a particularly poor farm for most kind of agriculture, but small herbs found its stony, loamless, acidic soil very comfortable. Out of necessity more than anything else he became an expert on all manners of herbs. For the most part, of course, they were used in flavoring cooking, but as you know, hardly any plant grows on the surface of our world without a magickal potential.

Even so long ago, witches already were in existence. It would be ridiculous for me to suggest that Asliel Direnni invented alchemy. What he did, what we can all be grateful for, is that he formulated it into an art and science.

There were no witches' covens in Tyrigel, and, of course, there would be no Mages Guild yet for thousands of years, so people would come to him for cures. He learned for himself the exact formula for combining black lichen and roobrush to create a cure for all manners of poison, and the amount of willow anther to crush and mix with chokeweed to cure diseases.

There were few much greater threats in Tyrigel in those peaceful days than disease or accidental poisonings. Yes, there were some dark forces in the wilderness, trolls, chimera, the occasional malevolent fairy folk and will-o'-the-wisp, but even the youngest, most foolish Altmer knew how to avoid them. There were, however, a few unusual threats which Asliel had a hand in defeating.

One of the tales told of him that I believe to be true is how he was brought a young niece who had been suffering from an unknown disease. Despite his ministrations, she grew weaker and weaker every morning. Finally, he gave her a bitter tasting drink, and the next morning, ashes were found all around her bed. A vampire had been feeding on the poor girl, but Asliel's potion had turned her very blood into poison, without harming her in the least.

If only this formula had not been lost in the mists of history!

This would have been enough to make him a minor but significant figure in the annals of early Summurset, but at that point in history, a barbarian tribe called the Locvar had found

their way down the Diren River, and recognized Tyrigel as a rich target for raids. The Direnni, not being warriors yet but simple farmers, were helpless and could only flee and watch the Locvar take the best of their crops, raid after raid.

Asliel, however, had been experimenting with the vampire dust, and brought his cousins to him with a plan. The next time the Locvar were sighted on the Diren, the word went out and all the most able-bodied came to Asliel's laboratory. When the barbarians arrived in Tyrigel, they found the farms deserted, and assumed that all had fled as usual. As they set about stealing the bounty, they suddenly found themselves under attack by invisible forces. Believing the Direnni farms to be haunted, they ran away very quickly.

They attempted a few more raids, for their greed would always eventually overpower their fear, and each time, they were set upon by attackers who they could not see. As barbaric as they were, they were not stupid, and they changed their mind about the source of their defeat. It could not be that the farms were haunted, because the crops were still being tended and harvested, and the animals seemed to show no fear. The Locvar decided to send a scout to the farm to see if he could spy their secrets.

The scout sent word back to the Locvar that the Direnni farms were populated with flesh and blood, entirely visible Altmer. He continued to watch as his barbarian cohorts moved down the river, and he saw the elderly and children flee for the hills, while the able-bodied farmers and their wives went to Asliel's laboratory. He saw them go in; he saw no one come out.

As usual, the Locvar were repelled by invisible forces, but their scout soon told them what he saw happening in the laboratory.

The next night, two of the Locvar approached Asliel's farm very stealthily, and managed to kidnap him without alerting the rest of the Direnni. The Locvar chieftain, knowing that the farmers could no longer count on the alchemist to make them invisible, considered an immediate attack on the farms. But he was a vengeful sort, and felt he had been humiliated by these simple farmers. A crafty plan emerged in his mind. What if the Direnni, who always saw his barbarian tribe coming, for once did not? Imagine the slaughter if no one even had a chance to flee.

The scout had told the chieftain that Asliel had used the dust of a vampire to make the farmers invisible, but he was not sure what the other ingredient had been. He described an incandescent powder that Asliel had mixed into the dust. Asliel, of course, refused to help the Locvar, but they were experts in torture as well as pillage, and he knew he would have to talk or die.

Finally after hours of torture, he agreed to tell them what the incandescent powder was. He did not know the name, but he called it "Glow Dust," the only remains of a slain will-o'-the-wisp. He told them they would need a lot of it if they wanted to turn the whole tribe invisible for the raid.

The Locvar grumbled that not only did they have to find and kill a vampire to attain his dust, but find and kill several will-o'-the-wisps to get theirs. In a few days time, they came back with the ingredients the alchemist asked for. The chieftain, not being a complete idiot, made Asliel taste the potion first. He did as he was told and turned invisible, demonstrating that it did truly work. The chieftain put him to work creating more. No



one apparently noticed that while he did, he was nibbling on black lichen and roobrush.

The Locvar took the potion as he doled it out, and soon, but not too soon that they didn't suffer, they were all dead.

The scout who had seen Asliel mixing the invisibility potion had apparently mistook the glow of the candlelight in the laboratory for an incandescence which the second ingredient of the invisibility potion did not possess. The second ingredient was actually dull, simple redwort, one of the most common herbs in Tamriel. When they had insisted during torture that Asliel tell them what the incandescent powder was, Asliel remembered that he had once experimentally mixed glow dust and vampire dust together once and created a powerful poison. It was simple enough to steal a little redwort from the barbarian's camp, mix that with the vampire and glow dust mixture, and create a potion that was in fact an invisibility poison. After curing himself, he gave the poison to the barbarians.

The Locvar, being dead, never again raided the Direnni farms, and having no other enemies, they were able to grow more and more prosperous and powerful. Generations later, they left Summurset and began their historic adventures on the Tamriel mainland. Asliel Direnni, because of his excellence as an alchemist, was invited to Artaeum and became a Psijic. It is not known how many more of the common formulas we know today were invented by him there, but I have no doubt, the science and art of alchemy as we know it today would not exist without him.

But that is all in the distant past. Asliel's innovations, like my modest ones, like the achievements of the Dirennis throughout

history, are but a stepping stone to the wonders which will come in the future. I wish I could be there to witness them, but if I can only share some of the past with the children of Direnni and the children of Tamriel, then I will consider my life well spent.

# Dead Drop Orders

*Lucien Lachance*

Dead Drop Orders #1

Silencer,

You are now reading your first dead drop note, here on Hero Hill, which proves to me you were well-appointed to the tasks that lie ahead.

Journey now to Leafrot Cave. There you will encounter an ancient Necromancer who is attempting to escape death by transforming himself into a lich. This Necromancer, Celedaen, has not yet completed his metamorphosis, but is still immensely powerful, possibly too powerful to destroy if confronted directly. Search Leafrot Cave. Necromancers are wizards after all, and wizards are prolific by nature. Celedaen surely has written records, and these records may contain evidence of some kind of weakness. Perhaps there is some other way to destroy Celedaen besides a direct confrontation. But destroy him you must!

When the Necromancer lies dead, journey to the city of Chorrol for your next dead drop. At the foot of the Great Oak, hidden in the bushes, is an old sack. Inside you will find your reward for killing the Necromancer, as well as information regarding your next contract.

Serve me well, Silencer, and there's no telling just how far you might advance.

## Dead Drop Orders #2

The Necromancer Celedaen is dead, and you are not. That is quite an accomplishment. But your work as a Silencer has just begun.

Your next assignment requires you to eliminate not just one target, but five. An entire family, in fact. The unlucky siblings are Perennia Draconis, Matthias Draconis, Andreas Draconis, Sibylla Draconis and Caelia Draconis. The locations of most of the family members are unknown, so you should begin your search with the family matron, Perennia, who resides at the farm called Applewatch.

You must discern the locations of all the Draconis family members and then systematically eliminate them. I suggest you first speak with the mother and find out if she has any valuable information on the whereabouts of her children, before ending her life.

When every member of the Draconis family lies dead, journey to the city of Skingrad. In the castle courtyard you will find a well containing your reward for the Draconis contract, as well any further assignment I might have.

## Dead Drop Orders #3

Are you ready to get your hands dirty, Silencer?

Your next target is a Khajiit nobleman by the name of J 'Ghasta, who can be found at his home in the city of Bruma. J 'Ghasta was recently offered the hand of a prominent Cyrodiil noble's

daughter, but turned down the offer when he learned of the girl's rather negligible dowry. The girl's family is outraged, of course, and has hired the Dark Brotherhood to make J 'Ghasta pay for his insolence.

Go to J 'Ghasta's house in Bruma and end his miserable life. But be warned! The Khajiit is rich and bored, and spends most of his time honing his skills in unarmed combat. Any opponent who can kill with merely his hands is not to be trifled with, so tread carefully. Even worse, J 'Ghasta is aware someone may be trying to kill him, and has bribed the guards not to interfere if a fight should spill out into the city streets.

When the target has been eliminated, you will find your next dead drop in a rotten box under the Old Bridge, just south of the Imperial City. The box will contain your reward for killing J 'Ghasta, as well as information regarding your next contract.

#### Dead Drop Orders #4

J'Ghasta is dead! Well done! I was right about you, Silencer. You are a useful tool indeed. Let's see if you can continue to impress me.

You must journey now to the Flooded Mine. There you will find Shaleez, an Argonian hunter who was banished from her village near the Black Marsh/Morrowind border for the brutal murder of a Dark Elven family. Relatives of the murdered family members have located Shaleez, and demand retribution. And, since the assignment is a bit far for Morrowind's Morag Tong to handle, the Dark Brotherhood has been commissioned to perform the elimination.

Be warned, Silencer! Shaleez is a skilled and deadly hunter, and will fight like the desperate fugitive she is.

After Shaleez has been eliminated, your reward and another contract will be waiting at the dead drop located in a coffin, just outside the ruins of Fort Redman.

### Dead Drop Orders #5

If you're reading this note, Shaleez is dead. You've done the world a great service, Silencer. It's time to continue the good work.

Your next target is a traveling Dark Elf merchant by the name of Alval Uvani, who is currently renting a house in the city of Leyawiin. Uvani is a well-respected tradesman back in his native Morrowind, but his business often takes him very far from home. Therein lies the problem. Alval Uvani's wife has become disillusioned with her husband's repeated, extended absences and wishes to dissolve their marriage, and has sought the Dark Brotherhood's assistance. Lucky for us Cyrodiil is a bit beyond the reach of Morrowind's Morag Tong.

Alval Uvani is currently traveling around Cyrodiil, and is never in one place for more than a couple of days. In this dead drop you will also find a schedule detailing the Dark Elf's whereabouts; use it to locate him and plan your elimination. Be aware, however, that because he is forced to travel alone to the farthest reaches of the Empire, Uvani has learned to defend himself. He is a master of the Destruction school of Magicka, and and is no stranger to killing.

When Alval Uvani lies rotting, journey to the Market District of the Imperial City. There you will find a shop called Stonewall

Shields. Your dead drop is located behind that building, in a hollowed-out tree stump. As usual, you will find your reward for the previous contract, as well as information on your next.

Ah yes, I must mention one last detail. Apparently Alval Uvani suffers from a rare Dark Elf condition, a serious allergy to honey. If you could somehow get Uvani to drink the honey-based spirit Mead, perhaps by replacing his food, he would suffer from complete paralyzation. This would certainly make the Dark Elf a bit easier to deal with.

### Dead Drop Orders #6

Alval Uvani is dead, just like all the others. You continue to impress me, Silencer, and I am only too eager to indulge your homicidal instincts.

Your next target is a savage Nord barbarian, living alone and exposed at a small campsite on the summit of Gnoll Mountain. This barbarian, Havilstein Hoar-Blood by name, savagely butchered the chieftain of a mead hall on the island of Solstheim. The chieftain's sister has forgone the Nord custom of extracting the monetary retribution of wergild, and instead wants Hoar-Blood to pay with his life. You, dear Silencer, will help put her family at peace.

You are to go to Gnoll Mountain, locate Havilstein Hoar-Blood, and send his soul to Sithis.

When Hoar-Blood has been executed, journey to the Ayleid ruin of Nornal. In the flooded section of that ruin you will find a chest, submerged in the water. As you may have guessed, the chest contains your reward for killing Havilstein Hoar-Blood, and your next contract.

## Dead Drop Orders #7

My compliments on another job well done! Havilstein Hoar-Blood was more swine than man, and deserved to die quivering like an animal! You must not stop! You must kill again!

Your next target is a Wood Elf named Ungolim, who resides in the city of Bravil. Bravil is also home to an ancient statue known as the Lucky Old Lady. It is seen as a symbol of good luck and prosperity, and the fools of Bravil often speak to the statue and wish for good tidings. Every night, poor lovestruck Ungolim visits the Lady and pleads desperately for the heart of a young maiden. This maiden is married, and her husband has learned of Ungolim's affection for his bride. He fears the competition, it would seem, and has commissioned the Dark Brotherhood to help in the matter.

You must go to Bravil, locate Ungolim, and kill him. The Wood Elf owns a house in the city, but he spends his days securely locked inside. I recommend you lie in wait at the Lucky Old Lady statue, and then eliminate Ungolim when he arrives for his nightly visit. He's generally there between the hours of 6:00 PM and 1:00 AM.

By all accounts, Ungolim is a deadly archer and a fearless opponent. I also have reason to believe he is expecting trouble, so if Ungolim senses danger, he may attack you on sight. And, like the Khajiit J 'Ghasta, Ungolim has bribed the guards to look the other way if there is a fight, so they won't interfere. Be vigilant, and bring the Wood Elf down! You must not fail!

When Ungolim's body lies broken at the foot of his dear Lady, you must journey to the city of Anvil. Your dead drop is in a



barrel located behind the statue in the pond. As is standard, your reward and next contract will be waiting.

### Dead Drop Orders #8

Ungolim is dead! Silencer, you have served me far better than I ever could have imagined. Is there no challenge you can't meet? No opponent you can't best? We shall see.

Your next target is a High Elf whore named Arquen. She has been difficult to locate, but you might try asking around the Grey Mare in Chorrol or the Bridge Inn in Cheydinhal.

Like all of your targets, Arquen is a skilled fighter and will not be eliminated easily.

When Arquen is dead, I will have your reward and next contract waiting at the next dead drop—under one of the beds in the Leyawiin Coast Guard station.

# Death Decree

*Sheogorath*

Sheogorath, Prince of Madness, Lord of the Never-There, Sovereign of the Shivering Isles, does, on this day, hence-forth make this decree:

Robert Wisnewski

Citizen of the Shivering Isles, Resident of Bliss, and Honored Madman

has broken the laws and covenants of the Shivering Isles and offended the austere personage of Our Lord, through the following actions:

Attempting the Growth of a Beard, an Action Deemed Unseemly in the Eyes of Our Lord

It is further decreed that the actions of this citizen merit the strictest of punishments to be meted out at the earliest possible hour, in a manner to be chosen according to the Whims and Fancies of Our Lord Sheogorath

# Decrepit Note

*Arielle Jurard*

Ignorant fool! I could have delivered Lainlyn to him, and more. But time is of no consequence to me any longer! While he is growing old, I will be only growing stronger, to await the day when I will return to claim my rightful place among the powers of this world!

The darkness is not so bad. I come to like it. My companion is not very talkative, but that is just as well. I see now that my procedure was somewhat flawed—the flesh was not fully imbued with life as I intended. But his spirit remains strongly bound. He will provide me with an excellent test subject, as long as I am careful to do no permanent damage.

Sometimes I awaken, and do not know where I am or what I have been doing. How to tell the passage of time here? Why should it matter to me? I believe the change is coming over me quickly now. My lord Mannimarco would be pleased.

Deep night darkness. Sometimes sleep under moon invisible. Howl sweetly, so sweet. My darkness. Silence.

# Deed To Benirus Manor

*Anonymous*

This document hereby states that the bearer is the sole owner and possessor of the domicile currently known as Benirus Manor. Said domicile is located in the township known as Anvil in the territory known as Cyrodiil.

The bearer has full ownership rights to all of the structures, flora and land within the property borders as defined in the Anvil Construction Charter. The bearer is responsible for all matters pertaining to or occurring on said property.

This document also empowers the bearer transfer rights to reassign the property as he sees fit. The bearer may amend this document to rename the manor by submitting the proper forms and payments to the Anvil Construction Charter and by filing duplicate forms with the Documents Division of the Imperial City Archives.

# Deed To Frostcrag Spire

*Anonymous*

This document is to inform the bearer that the last known owner of the property known as Frostcrag Spire has been declared deceased, and the bearer has been listed as the sole heir and successor to the deceased's ownership of said property.

The bearer has full ownership rights to all of the structures, flora and land within the property borders as defined in the Cyrodiil Construction Charter. The bearer is responsible for all matters pertaining to or occurring on said property.

This document also empowers the bearer transfer rights to reassign the property as he sees fit. The bearer may amend this document to rename the manor by submitting the proper forms and payments to the Cyrodiil Construction Charter and by filing duplicate forms with the Documents Division of the Imperial City Archives.

# Diary Of Springheel Jak

*Springheel Jak*

I knew a man who was a great thief. He dared steal from Nocturnal herself! How odd that I cannot seem to recall his name. I think we were friends, but I'm not certain. In three days I will venture into Taren's crypt. Graverobbing alone is dangerous. Maybe I should try to find a partner. Didn't I once know a great thief?

I begin this second entry in the second volume of my diary on a momentous day. Actually it is night, the night when my second life begins. It will be forever night for me. I have become one of the children of the night, a son to mother wolf and brother to the bat. I am nosferatu, a vampyre. Tonight is the first night of the rest of eternity.

I rediscovered this diary today. It has been 13 years since I last wrote in it. With an eternity before, and the blood hunger ever pulsing in my veins, there is little urgency for diaries, or much of anything. Amiela is calling to me. I must go.

Has it really been 89 years since I last wrote? The pages are getting fragile. I have rediscovered purpose, though it took nearly a century. I have finally gained some measure of control over the blood frenzy. I think I will try to establish a life among the living in one of their great cities.

I had forgotten about this diary. I won't bother to calculate how many decades it has been since I last wrote in it. The cattle of this city know me as Jakben, Earl of Imbel. Centuries ago I knew myself as Springheel Jak, the famous thief. I seem to recall having a famous partner, but his name escapes me. No matter. I have grown beyond friends and partners. I rule the night here in the city.

# Dire Warren Journals

*Traelius*

Alyssa's Journal

Second Seed, Tirdas

Traelius surprised me when he brought me to this place. It is quite beautiful here. This will be a much-needed vacation from the city.

I have found the cool water from the stream nearby to be quite refreshing. The spot above the waterfall is a great area to clear my thoughts; I shall bathe there frequently.

7th Mid Year, Turdas

His continual reference of this place as our 'home' is beginning to annoy me. How do I tell him that it is not my wish to spend the rest of my days here?

11th Mid Year, Morndas

Traelius informed me that he plans on making this dwelling our permanent home. I will try and convince him otherwise; I do not see us living here for the rest of our lives!

15th Mid Year, Fredas



This place is beginning to feel like a cage. I need to get out. I am in much need of fresh air, of sunlight, of life. I am going to try and find some way out of here so I might be able to grab a bit of freedom from time to time.

20th Mid Year, Middas

I have been spending more time at my daily baths scouting the area below, trying to find safe passage. I do not think he suspects anything, so I will continue my search.

22nd Mid Year, Fredas

I climbed down the cliff face today and into the cavern below to scout out a safe passage. I was careless in my steps and alerted a nearby creature. I quickly retreated up the walls and bruised my arms and legs in the process. I do not think Traelius has noticed the bruises, as he has not mentioned anything about them as of yet. I need to be more careful.

24th Mid Year, Sundas

I think I have found a way around the creatures! Yes, I am certain. Before I try to escape I will attempt to convince him to leave this place once and for all.

27th Mid Year, Middas

My confession of last night to Traelius worked—he is letting me return to the city! In some ways I am sad. Sad that I will not see him for a while, for I know he loves me and I, he. I just cannot stay here for the rest of my days. I leave as soon as I am finished packing.

Turdas

Traelius!

Why do you not come for me?

I am hurt.

I am scared.

I scream your name, I beg of you to come for me, but I do not see you.

Why do you leave me here, alone and injured?

I am at your mercy.

Loredas

After three days of yelling for help near the waterfall with no response from Traelius, I have given up hope. With my fractured leg, I cannot possibly go on. I can neither go forward nor return. I can only suffer.

Morndas? Tirdas?

I managed to drag myself down the stream a bit, but cannot go on. It is not so bad. I have now what I have been craving for a long time—freedom, although not as I had planned. Nonetheless, I am free. It is not so bad. The cool water from the stream is quite refreshing after all.

Traelius' Journal

4th Mid Year, Morndas

---

Alyssa has been very nervous these past few days, even thinking about packing up and moving out of here. I will hear nothing of it. She does not understand the importance of this place to me. The city is too busy and too noisy for me to think clearly. Only here can I practice my studies in peace and not have to deal with the Inferiors back in the city. Nothing soothes the soul like the gentle sound of rushing water. She will grow to love this place.

19th Mid Year, Tirdas

---

Alyssa is beginning to spend more and more time at her daily baths. I have not pressed the matter, for I know she is true to me. Maybe I will follow her tomorrow. No. I cannot. I cannot afford to lose her trust. I have worked too hard to get her here.

22nd Mid Year, Fredas

---

Spent two hours waiting for my Alyssa to return from her daily bath near the waterfall. She apparently fell asleep. I did not inquire any further, but I did notice scratches and bruises on her forearms and legs. She probably tripped and fell, but was too embarrassed to tell me about it.

26th Mid Year, Morndas

---

The past few days Alyssa has brought up the subject of leaving this place. Has she already forgotten why we came here in the first place? Has she already forgotten the daily mental torture

of conversing with the Inferiors in the city? This constant bickering between us is starting to wear on me and I fear I will not be able to take much more of it.

27th Mid Year, Middas

---

Alyssa spent nearly four hours today at the waterfall. She said she fell asleep again. I will not be made a fool. I demanded she tell me where she had been. She burst into tears and confessed she no longer wished to stay here with me. That night I did not sleep and the day's events played over and over in my head. In the morning, I made the decision to let Alyssa leave. Let her be free. Let her live life the way she wants. She thanked me, parted with one final kiss, and then took off toward the waterfall. That was the last I saw of my dear Alyssa.

29th Mid Year, Fredas

---

I have done what I know is right, but my heart will not accept it. Only time will heal my heartache, and now it seems I have all the time in the world... alone. I have done the right thing. I had no right to keep her here against her will. The only thing that keeps me sane is knowing she is happy once again and free to do what she wants. I swear I still hear her voice now and then coming from the waterfall, but I know they are only echoes of memory. I must stay strong. I will stay here until my dying days and maybe, just maybe, she will return to me.

# Dirty Scroll

## *Bandit Ringleader*

Some of the men were worried about these old ruins being haunted, but Mephala take them—this spot's going to be perfect for ambushing merchants along the road. And all under the nose of the Imperial Legion!

Finally got some of those big blue stones down today. Berenice got the idea to shoot them down with her bow. Got 'em all here with me. I don't know what they are, but they stink of magicka. Bet they'll fetch a nice price with the Mage's Guild.

Two-Coins and that khajiit from Vvardenfell set up their camps down in the tomb. Fine by me, spares the rest of us the smell.

Two-Coins ran up today, the Khajiit's gone missing. Swore to the Nine that you could hear claws scabbling at limestone, but nothing's down there. I'm guessing she got tired of the smell and snuck out overnight. Two-Coins' stench could peel shells off mudcrabs - I'm surprised she hung around that long.

# Divining The Elder Scrolls

*Anonymous*

...of night. The Elder Scrolls themselves can pierce the veil. They offer a view of the flux of Time itself. The prophet who reads the scroll sees one version of what might be. Another prophet might have a different vision with equal veracity. The price for insight is the reader's sight. He is struck blind and...

# Draconis Gift List

## *Perennia Draconis*

Dear courier,

I would like to thank you again for agreeing to assist me. I was so delighted when a friend recommended you, and will certainly employ your services again in the future if everything goes well with this round of purchases. You can imagine how difficult it is for an old woman such as myself to get around. My children, darlings that they are, deserve the best, and I'm afraid I haven't been able to properly show my love and appreciation for them in quite a few years. But all that is behind me now! Here is the list of gifts I think my family would most enjoy, as well each child's current place of residence, which should be used to for delivery.

Matthias—Talos Plaza District, Imperial City (he has a home there): Matthias always was a rough and tumble lad. The last I'd heard, he'd fallen in with some pretty tough characters there in the Imperial City. I'd feel so much better if I knew he was well protected, so I'd like for you to find him a nice cuirass. Nothing too light—iron or steel should be fine. And, if possible, I'd like it engraved with "To my Dear Matty, I'll always be here to protect you, love Mum."

Andreas—The Drunken Dragon Inn (he owns the place and lives there as well): Andy has been brewing his own beer and

spirits since he was six years old. The opening of that inn was the happiest day of his life. I'd like for you to get him some new tavern glasses. I'm sure there are craftsmen in the Imperial City who could make a fancy set from frosted ebony or Altmeri crystal.

Sibylla—Muck Valley Cavern. Yes, my daughter lives in a cave, and no, I'm not very happy about it. Sibby has always loved animals (almost as much as Andy loves beer) and a couple of years ago she apparently thought it a good idea to abandon the Empire and live as a savage with the rest of the animals. In that time, I'm afraid Sibby has kind of... cracked. She's basically as wild as the beasts she lives with. What can I do? I'm Sibby's mother and I'll always love her. She obviously doesn't want or need anything from civilized society, so what I'd like you to do is find a tanner and secure the largest fur blankets you can possibly find. The last time I saw Sibby she was nearly naked, and I can't imagine there's much in that cave to keep her warm. When you do bring them to Muck Valley Cavern, be careful! The wild animals are bad enough, but Sibby herself will probably attack anyone on sight.

Caelia—Castle Leyawiin (you'll find her in the barracks): My beautiful Cae! My dearest daughter broke so many hearts when she was younger. But now that she's an officer in the Imperial Legion I'm afraid she's let herself go a bit. Not gotten fat! By Mephala, not that! But she's settled into a more... practical kind of look. Even a bit boyish, I guess you could say. So what I'd like you to do is get my Cae as much pretty "girl" stuff as you can. Flowers, perfume, Nord chocolate, that sort of thing.

You've already received half your fee in advance, and will receive the remainder after the gifts have been purchased and



delivered, as we originally agreed. Thank you again for providing such a valuable service.

Sincerely,

Perennia Draconis

# Drothan's Field Journal

*Frathen Drothan*

This room appears to have been built around the original site of the Nefarivigum, but there is no sign of Mehrunes' Razor! There is some sort of statue of a man here, and some scattered inscriptions in the stonework. Perhaps they can give me some clues.

At first I thought the runes were useless, but I was able to piece together a phrase; Kynverum Dagon Nefarivigum. Speaking the words aloud in that order caused the Razor to materialize! Alas, the way to it is blocked, and I dare not risk force lest the gate is trapped. I must search for more clues.

I have discovered more inscriptions, etched as to be nearly imperceivable to my eyes. After much labour I discovered some clues as to the man entombed here. It seems he was a champion to Dagon who failed in some great task.

The Kyn, it says (Dremora?) carved his chest open, through flesh, armor, and bone, with the Razor itself. He stands guard now as a test for those worthy to claim the weapon. What sort of test can this be?

The runes mention the ability of the razor to instantly send a struck foe to Oblivion through Dagon's wrath. This corroborates many tales of the weapon, but can it really be so powerful as to kill instantly?

The task seems so simple, now that I've given it thought. He who travels here, draws the heart from the chest of the champion, and devours it must be worthy to wield the Razor. I'm wary to proceed, and wonder if there is another way, but the power of the blade is so near; I must ponder my next move...

# Drothan's Journal

*Frathen Drothan*

12 Morning Star

Sadrith Mora

Traitors, all! Helseth and all the lapdogs in the great houses care nothing for the heresy of allowing the Empire to command the lives of our noble Dunmer people. Even my fickle Telvanni kinsmen apathetically consent to this outrage. Once I have raised my army and topple the atrocious Empire of men, then they all shall pay for their complacency.

6 First Seed

Vivec

I could hardly bear the journey here to deal with that filthy bookseller, but it was worth it. The Treatise on Ayleidic Cities I bartered for provided the last bit of evidence I needed. I'm now convinced that I can find the Nefarivigum beneath Sundercliff Watch, just inside Cyrodiil's border.

2 Rains Hand

Kragenmoor

The Drothmeri army grows in might! Our forward detachment is ready to escort me within Cyrodiil's borders, where they shall bolster themselves for the assault whilst I claim my prize under the mountain.

17 Rains Hand

Kragenmoor

It's getting harder to find mercenaries. I may have to consider employing some of the beastfolk. Must remember to discuss this with Adrethi before we depart for Sundercliff.

26 Rains Hand

Sundercliff Keep

The Nefarivigum must be near; I can feel power emanating from this place. Now I've only to find it and overcome the task to earn Mehrunes Razor. Wielding this fearsome relic, I'll lead the Drothmeri Army to victory against the Imperial tyrants.

14 Second Seed

Sundercliff Keep

We finally uncovered the entrance to Varsa Baalim. I'm going to take a detachment of men inside with me to find the Nefarivigum. We already discovered an assassin prowling the camp; I fear that Helseth may have sent him. To be safe, I'm going to seal myself in the city until we can recover the Razor. I've left two bezoars, cut from the belly of an albino guar, in the care of Commander Adrethi and the Forgemaster. If there is some emergency, they have only to place these on the pedestals

outside the door to dispel my barrier, and open the way to  
Varsa Baalim.

# Earana's Notes

*Earana*

My dear helper:

Most of the text you've given me is well beyond your comprehension, I'm afraid. I found one section, however, that had been appended by the keepers of the Imperial Watch, and their notes will be of use to you.

Return to the ruins of Cloud Top. There you should find a section of pillar that looks remarkably unlike any other stonework present. The carvings on this pillar were made by the Ayleids, and the pillar has been infused with significant power.

The following was scribbled in the margins of the book, presumably by the same men who took the pillar from its original resting place. The notes are smeared in places, so I have included what I could decipher. Do note that this sounds rather dangerous, and take whatever precautions you feel are necessary.

"... only seems to function outdoors, where it reacts strongly to magic... terrible power, capable of striking a man dead on the spot..."

"...transported the stone to a secure location, in order to study it more fully..."

“...guild wizards brought in to focus power of stone. Several severely injured; stone finally ‘tuned’ to react to shock magic...”

“...Welkynd stone necessary to harness stone’s power. Success means powers of shock unattainable through other means.”

From these notes, and the original Ayleid inscriptions, it seems that our Imperial friends were attempting to harness some degree of the Ayleid’s magical power, and were marginally successful. I suggest you procure a Welkynd stone for yourself (searching Ayleid ruins will likely be the quickest method of acquiring one) and return to Cloud Top to cast a shock spell at the pillar.

What happens then, I think you can comprehend on your own.

-E



# Eslaf Erol Series

## *Reven*

Eslaf Erol Series: Beggar

BEGGAR

By

Reven

Eslaf Erol was the last of the litter of five born to the Queen of the prosperous Nordic kingdom of Erolgard, Lahpyrcopa, and her husband, the King of Erolgard, Ytluaf. During pregnancy, the Queen had been more than twice as wide as she was tall, and the act of delivery took three months and six days after it had begun. It is perhaps understandable that the Lahpyrcopa elected, upon expelling Eslaf to frown, say, 'Good riddance,' and die.

Like many Nords, Ytluaf did not care very much for his wife and less for his children. His subjects were puzzled, therefore, when he announced that he would follow the ancient tradition of his people of Atmora of following his beloved spouse to the grave. They had not thought they were particularly in love, nor were they aware that such a tradition existed. Still, the simple people were grateful, for the little royal drama alleviated their boredom, which was and is a common problem in the more obscure parts of northern Skyrim, particularly in wintertide.

He gathered his household staff and his five fat, bawling little heirs in front of him, and divided his estate. To his son Ynohp, he gave his title; to his son Laernu, he gave his land; to his son Suoibud, he gave his fortune; to his daughter Laicifitra, he gave his army. Ytluaf's advisors had suggested he keep the inheritance together for the good of the kingdom, but Ytluaf did not particularly care for his advisors, or the kingdom, for that matter. Upon making his announcement, he drew his dagger across his throat.

One of the nurses, who was rather shy, finally decided to speak as the King's life ebbed away. 'Your highness, you forgot your fifth child, little Eslaf.'

Good Ytluaf groaned. It is somewhat hard to concentrate with blood gushing from one's throat, after all. The King tried in vain to think of something to bequeath, but there was nothing left.

Finally he sputtered, irritably, 'Eslaf should have taken something then' and died.

That a babe but a few days old was expected to demand his rightful inheritance was arguably unfair. But so Eslaf Erol was given his birthright with his father's dying breath. He would have nothing, but what he had taken.

Since no one else would have him, the shy nurse, whose name was Drusba, took the baby home. It was a decrepit little shack, and over the years that followed, it became more and more decrepit. Unable to find work, Drusba sold all of her furnishings to buy food for little Eslaf. By the time he was old enough to walk and talk, she had sold the walls and the roof as well, so they had nothing but a floor to call home. And if you've

ever been to Skyrim, you can appreciate that that is scarcely sufficient.

Drusba did not tell Eslaf the story of his birth, or that his brothers and sister were leading quite nice lives with their inheritances, for, as we have said, she was rather shy, and found it difficult to broach the subject. She was so painfully shy, in fact, that whenever he asked any questions about where he came from, Drusba would run away. That was more or less her answer to everything, to flee.

In order to communicate with her at all, Eslaf learned how to run almost as soon as he could walk. He couldn't keep up with his adopted mother at first, but in time he learned to go toe-heel toe-heel if he anticipated a short but fast sprint, and heel-toe heel-toe if it seemed Drusba was headed for a long distance marathon flight. He never did get all the answers he needed from her, but Eslaf did learn how to run.

The kingdom of Erolgard had, in the years that Eslaf was growing, become quite a grim place. King Ynohp did not have a treasury, for Suoibud had been given that; he did not have any property for income, for Laernu had been given that; he did not have an army to protect the people, for Laicifitra had been given that. Furthermore, as he was but a child, all decisions in the kingdom went through Ynohp's rather corrupt council. It had become a bureaucratic exploitative land of high taxes, rampant crime, and regular incursions from neighboring kingdoms. Not a particular unusual situation for a kingdom of Tamriel, but an unpleasant one nonetheless.

The time finally came when the taxcollector arrived to Drusba's hovel, such as it was, to collect the only thing he could - the

floor. Rather than protest, the poor shy maid ran away, and Eslaf never saw her again.

Without a home or a mother, Eslaf did not know what to do. He had grown accustomed to the cold open air in Drusba's shack, but he was hungry.

'May I have a piece of meat?' he asked the butcher down the street. 'I'm very hungry.'

The man had known the boy for years, often spoke to his wife about how sorry he felt for him, growing up in a home with no ceilings or walls. He smiled at Eslaf and said, 'Go away, or I'll hit you.'

Eslaf hurriedly left the butcher and went to a nearby tavern. The tavernkeeper had been a former valet in the king's court and knew that the boy was by right a prince. Many times, he had seen the poor ragged lad in the streets, and sighed at the way fate had treated him.

'May I have something to eat?' Eslaf asked this tavernkeeper. 'I'm very hungry.'

'You're lucky I don't cook you up and eat you,' replied the tavernkeeper.

Eslaf hurriedly left the tavern. For the rest of the day, the boy approached the good citizens of Erolgard, begging for food. One person had thrown something at him, but it turned out to be an inedible rock.

As night fell, a raggedy man came up to Eslaf and, without saying a word, handed him a piece of fruit and a piece of dried

meat. The lad took it, wide-eyed, and as he devoured it, he thanked the man very sweetly.

‘If I see you begging on the streets tomorrow,’ the man growled. ‘I’ll kill you myself. There are only so many beggars we of the guild allow in any one town, and you make it one too many. You’re ruining business.’

It was a good thing Eslaf Erol knew how to run. He ran all night.

Eslaf Erol’s story is continued in the book ‘Thief.’

Eslaf Erol Series: Thief

THIEF

By

Reven

If the reader has not yet had the pleasure of reading the first volume in these series on the life of Eslaf Erol, ‘Beggar,’ he should close this book immediately, for I shan’t recap.

I will tell you this much, gentle reader. When we last saw Eslaf, he was a boy, an orphan, a failed beggar, running through the wild winter woods of Skyrim, away from his home of Erolgard. He continued running, stopping here and there, for many more years, until he was a young man.

Eslaf discovered that among the ways of getting food, asking for it was the most troublesome. Far easier was finding it in the wilderness, or taking it from unguarded market stalls. The only thing worse than begging to get food was begging for the

opportunity to work for the money to buy it. That seemed needlessly complicated.

No, as far as Eslaf was concerned, he was best off being a scavenger, a beggar, and a thief.

He committed his first act of thievery shortly after leaving Erolgard, while in the southern woods of Tamburkar in the rugged land near Mount Jensen just east of the village of Hoarbeld. Eslaf was starving, having not eaten anything but a rather scrawny raw squirrel in four days, and he smelled meat cooking and then found the smoke. A band of minstrel bards was making camp. He watched them from the bushes as they cooked, and joked, and flirted, and sang.

He could've asked them for some food, but so many others had refused him before. Instead, he rushed out, grabbed a piece of meat from the fire, and wincing from the burns, scrambled up the nearest tree to devour it while the bards stood under him and laughed.

'What is your next move, thief?' giggled a fair, red-headed woman who was covered with tattoos. 'How do you intend to disappear without us catching and punishing you?'

As the hunger subsided, Eslaf realized she was right. The only way to get out of the tree without falling in their midst was to take the branch down to where it hung over a creek. It was a drop off a cliff of about fifty feet. That seemed like the wisest strategy, so Eslaf began crawling in that direction.

'You do know how to fall, boy?' called out a young Khajiiti, but a few years older than Eslaf, thin but muscular, graceful in his slightest movements. 'If you don't, you should just climb down

here and take what's coming to you. It's idiotic to break your neck, when we'd just give you some bruises and send you on your way.'

'Of course I know how to fall,' Eslaf called back, but he didn't. He just thought the trick of falling was to have nothing underneath you, and let nature take its course. But fifty feet up, when you're looking down, is enough to give anyone pause.

'I'm sorry to doubt your abilities, Master Thief,' said the Khajiiti, grinning. 'Obviously you know to fall feet first with your body straight but loose to avoid cracking like an egg. It seems you are destined to escape us.'

Eslaf wisely followed the Khajiiti's hints, and leapt into the river, falling without much grace but without hurting himself. In the years that followed, he had to make several more drops from even greater heights, usually after a theft, sometimes without water beneath him, and he improved the basic technique.

When he arrived in the western town of Jallenheim on the morning of his twenty-first birthday, it didn't take him long to find out who was the richest person, most deserving of being burgled. An impregnable palace in a park near the center of town was owned by a mysterious young man named Suoibud. Eslaf wasted no time in finding the palace and watching it. A fortified palace he had come to learn was like a person, with quirks and habits beneath its hard shell.

It was not an old place, evidently whatever money this Suoibud had come into was fairly recent. It was regularly patrolled by guards, implying that the rich man was fearful of being burgled, with good reason. The most distinctive feature of the palace

was its tower, rising a hundred feet above the stone walls, doubtless giving the occupant a good defensive view. Eslaf guessed that that if Suoibud was as paranoid as he guessed him to be, the tower would also provide a view of the palace storehouse. The rich man would want to keep an eye on his fortune. That meant that the loot couldn't be directly beneath the tower, but somewhere in the courtyard within the walls.

The light in the tower shone all night long, so Eslaf boldly decided that the best time to burgle was by the light of day, when Suoibud must sleep. That would be the time the guards would least expect a thief to pounce.

And so, when the noon sun was shining over the palace, Eslaf quickly scaled the wall near the front gate and waited, hidden in the crenelations. The interior courtyard was plain and desolate, with few places to hide, but he saw that there were two wells. One the guards used from time to time to draw up water and slake their thirst, but Eslaf noticed that guards would pass by the other well, never using it.

He waited until the guards were distracted, just for a second, by the arrival of a merchant in a wagon, bearing goods for the palace. While they were searching his wagon, Eslaf leapt, elegantly, feet first, from the wall into the well.

It was not a particularly soft landing for, as Eslaf had guessed, the well was not full of water, but gold. Still, he knew how to roll after a fall, and he didn't hurt himself. In the dank subterranean storehouse, he stuffed his pockets with gold and was about to go to the door which he assumed would lead to the tower when he noticed a gem the size of an apple, worth more than all the gold that was left. Eslaf found room for it down his pants.



The door did indeed lead to the tower, and Eslaf followed its curving stairwell up, walking quietly but quickly. At the top, he found the master of the palace's private quarters, ornate and cold, with invaluable artwork and decorative swords and shields on the walls. Eslaf assumed the snoring lump under the sheets was Suoibud, but he didn't investigate too closely. He crept to the windows and looked out.

It was going to be a difficult fall, for certes. He needed to jump from the tower, past the walls, and hit the tree on the other side. The tree branches would hurt, but they would break his fall, and there was a pile of hay he had left under the tree to prevent further injury.

Eslaf was about to leap when the occupant of the room woke up with a start, yelling, 'My gem!'

Eslaf and stared at him for a second, wide-eyed. They looked alike. Not surprising, since they were brothers.

Eslaf Erol's story is continued in the book 'Warrior.'

Eslaf Erol Series: Warrior

WARRIOR

By

Reven

This is the third book in a four-book series. If you have not read the first two books, 'Beggar' and 'Thief,' you would be well advised to do so.

Suoibud Erol did not know much of his past, nor did he care to.

As a child, he had lived in Erolgard, but the kingdom was very poor and taxes were as a result very high. He was too young to manage his abundant inheritance, but his servants, fearing that their master would be ruined, moved him to Jallenheim. No one knew why that location was picked. Some old maid, long dead now, had thought it was a good place to raise a child. No one else had a better idea.

There may have been children with a more pampered, more spoiled existence than young Suoibud, but that is doubtful. As he grew, he understood that he was rich, but he had nothing else. No family, no social position, no security at all. Loyalty, he found out on more than one occasion, cannot truly be bought. Knowing that he had but one asset, a vast fortune, he was determined to protect it, and, if possible, increase it.

Some otherwise perfectly nice people are greedy, but Suoibud was that rare accident of nature or breeding who has no other interest but acquiring and hoarding gold. He was willing to do anything to increase his fortune. Most recently, he had begun secretly hiring mercenaries to attack desirable properties, and then buying them when no one wanted to live there any more. The attacks would then, of course, cease, and Suoibud would have profitable land which he had purchased for a song. It had begun small with a few farms, but recently he had begun a more ambitious campaign.

In north-central Skyrim, there is an area called The Aalto, which is of unique geographical interest. It is a dormant volcanic valley surrounded on all sides by glaciers, so the earth is hot from the volcano, but the constant water drizzle and air is frigid. A grape called Jazbay grows there comfortably, and everywhere else in Tamriel it withers and dies. The strange

vineyard is a privately owned, and the wine produced from it is thus rare and extremely expensive. It is said that the Emperor needs the permission of the Imperial Council to have a glass of it once a year.

In order to harass the owner of The Aalto into selling his land cheap, Suoibud had to hire more than a few mercenaries. He had to hire the finest private army in Skyrim.

Suoibud did not like spending money, but he had agreed to pay the general of the army, a woman called Laicifitra, a gem the size of an apple. He had not given it to her yet - payment was to be delivered on the success of the mission - but he had trouble sleeping knowing that he was going to giving up such a prize. He always slept during the day so he could watch his storehouse by night, when he knew thieves were about.

That brings us up to this moment when, after a fitful sleep, Suoibud woke up at about noon, and surprised a thief in his bedroom. The thief was Eslaf.

Eslaf had been contemplating a leap from the window, a hundred feet down, into the branches of a tree beyond the walls of the fortified palace, and a tumble into a stack of hay. Anyone who has ever attempted such a feat will testify that it takes some concentration and nerve to do such a thing. When he saw that the rich man sleeping in the room had awakened, both left him, and Eslaf slipped behind a tall ornamental shield on display to wait for Suoibud to go back to sleep.

Suoibud did not go back to sleep. He had heard nothing, but could feel someone in the room with him. He stood up and began pacing the room.

Suoibud paced and paced, and gradually decided that he was imagining things. No one was there. His fortune was safe and secure.

He was returning to his bed when he heard a clunk. Turning around, he saw the gem, the one he was to give to Laicifitra on the floor by the Atmoran cavalry shield. A hand reached out from behind the shield and grabbed it up.

‘Thief!’ Suoibud cried out, grabbing a jeweled Akaviri katana from the wall and lunging at the shield.

The ‘fight’ between Eslaf and Suoibud will not go down in the annals of great duels. Suoibud did not know how to use a sword, and Eslaf was no expert at blocking with a shield. It was clumsy, it was awkward. Suoibud was furious, but was psychologically incapable of using the sword in any way that could damage its fine filigree, reducing its market value. Eslaf kept moving, dragging the shield with him, trying to keep it between him and the blade, which is, after all, the most essential part of any block.

Suoibud screamed in frustration as he struck at the shield, bumping its way across the room. He even tried negotiating with the thief, explaining that the gem was promised to a great warrior named Laicifitra, and if he would give it back, Suoibud would happily give him something else in return. Eslaf was not a genius, but he did not believe that.

By the time Suoibud’s guards came to the bedroom in response to their master’s calls, he had succeeded in backing the shield into a window.

They fell on the shield, having considerable more expertise with their swords than Suoibud did, but they discovered that there was no one behind it. Eslaf had leapt out the window and escaped.

As he ran heavily through the streets of Jallenheim, making jingling noises from the gold coins in his pockets, and feeling the huge gem chafe where he had hidden it, Eslaf did not know where he should go next. He knew only that he could never go back to that town, and he must avoid this warrior named Laicifitra who had claims on the jewel.

Eslaf Erol's story is continued in the book 'King.'

Eslaf Erol Series: King

KING

By

Reven

Gentle reader, you will not understand a word of what follows unless you have read and committed to memory the first three volumes in this series, 'Beggar,' 'Thief,' and 'Warrior,' which leads up to this, the conclusion. I encourage you to seek them out at your favorite bookseller.

We last left Eslaf Erol fleeing for his life, which was a common enough occurrence for him. He had stolen a lot of gold, and one particularly large gem, from a rich man in Jallenheim named Suoibud. The thief fled north, spending the gold wildly, as thieves generally do, for all sorts of illicit pleasures, which would no doubt disturb the gentleman or lady reading this, so I will not go into detail.

The one thing he held onto was the gem.

He didn't keep it because of any particular attachment, but because he did not know anyone rich enough to buy it from him. And so he found himself in the ironic situation of being penniless and having in his possession a gem worth millions.

'Will you give me a room, some bread, and a flagon of beer in exchange for this?' he asked a tavernkeep in the little village of Kravenswold, which was so far north, it was half situated on the Sea of Ghosts.

The tavernkeep looked at it suspiciously.

'It's just crystal,' Eslaf said quickly. 'But isn't it pretty?'

'Let me see that,' said a young armor-clad woman at the end of the bar. Without waiting permission, she picked up the gem, studied it, and smiled not very sweetly at Eslaf. 'Would you join me at my table?'

'I'm actually in a bit of a hurry,' replied Eslaf, holding out his hand for the stone. 'Another time?'

'Out of respect for my friend, the tavernkeep here, my men and I leave our weapons behind when we come in here,' the woman said casually, not handing the gem back, but picking up a broom that was sitting against the bar. 'I can assure you, however, that I can use this quite effectively as a blunt instrument. Not a weapon, of course, but an instrument to stun, medicinally crush a bone or two, and then - once it is on the inside...'

'Which table?' asked Eslaf quickly.

The young woman led him to a large table in the back of the tavern where ten of the biggest Nord brutes Eslaf had ever seen were sitting. They looked at him with polite disinterest, as if he were a strange insect, worth briefly studying before crushing.

‘My name is Laicifitra,’ she said, and Eslaf blinked. That was the name Suoibud had uttered before Eslaf had made his escape. ‘And these are my lieutenants. I am the commander of a very large independent army of noble knights. The very best in Skyrim. Most recently we were given a job to attack a vineyard in The Aalto to force its owner, a man named Laernu, to sell to our employer, a man named Suoibud. Our payment was to be a gem of surpassing size and quality, quite famous and unmistakable.

‘We did as we were asked, and when we went to Suoibud to collect our fee, he told us he was unable to pay, due to a recent burglary. In the end, though, he saw things our way, and paid us an amount of gold almost equal to the worth of the prize jewel... It did not empty out his treasury entirely, but it meant he was unable to buy the land in the Aalto after all. So we were not paid enough, Suoibud has taken a heavy financial blow, and Laernu’s prize crop of Jazbay has been temporarily destroyed for naught,’ Laicifitra took a long, slow drink of her mead before continuing. ‘Now, I wonder, could you tell me, how came you in the possession of the gem we were promised?’

Eslaf did not answer at once.

Instead, he took a piece of bread from the plate of the savage bearded barbarian on his left and ate it.

‘I’m sorry,’ he said, his mouth full. ‘May I? Of course, I couldn’t stop you from taking the gem even if I wanted to, and as a

matter of fact, I don't mind at all. It's also useless to deny how it came into my possession. I stole it from your employer. I certainly didn't mean you or your noble knights any harm by it, but I can understand why the word of a thief is not suitable for one such as yourself.'

'No,' replied Laicifitra, frowning, but her eyes showing amusement. 'Not suitable at all.'

'But before you kill me,' Eslaf said, grabbing another piece of bread. 'Tell me, how suitable is it for noble knights such as yourself to be paid twice for one job? I have no honor myself, but I would have thought that since Suoibud took a profit loss to pay you, and now you have the gem, your handsome profit is not entirely honorable.'

Laicifitra picked up the broom and looked at Eslaf. Then she laughed, 'What is your name, thief?'

'Eslaf,' said the thief.

'We will take the gem, as it was promised to us. But you are right. We should not be paid twice for the same job. So,' said the warrior woman, putting down the broomstick. 'You are our new employer. What would you have your own army do for you?'

Many people could find quite a few good uses for their own army, but Eslaf was not among them. He searched his brain, and finally it was decided that it was a debt to be paid later. For all her brutality, Laicifitra was a simple woman, raised, he learned, by the very army she commanded. Fighting and honor were the only things she knew.



When Eslaf left Kravenswold, he had an army at his beck and call, but not a coin to his name. He knew he would have to steal something soon.

As he wandered the woods, scrounging for food, he was beset with a strange feeling of familiarity. These were the very woods he had been in as a child, also starving, also scrounging. When he came out on the road, he found that he had come back on the kingdom where he had been raised by the dear, stupid, shy maid Drusba.

He was in Erolgard.

It had fallen even deeper into despair since his youth. The shops that had refused him food were boarded up, abandoned. The only people left were hollow, hopeless figures, so ravaged by taxation, despotism, and barbaric raids that they were too weak to flee. Eslaf realized how lucky he was to have gotten out in his youth.

There was, however, a castle and a king. Eslaf immediately made plans to raid the treasury. As usual, he watched the place carefully, taking note of the security and the habits of the guards. This took some time. In the end, he realized there was no security and no guards.

He walked in the front door, and down the empty corridors to the treasury. It was full of precisely nothing, except one man. He was Eslaf's age, but looked much older.

'There's nothing to steal,' he said. 'Would that there was.'

King Ynohp, though prematurely aged, had the same white blond hair and blue eyes like broken glass that Eslaf had. In

fact, he resembled Suoibud and Laicifitra as well. And though Eslaf had never met the ruined landlord of the Aalto, Laernu, he looked him too. Not surprisingly, since they were quintuplets.

‘So, you have nothing?’ asked Eslaf, gently.

‘Nothing except my poor kingdom, curse it,’ the King grumbled. ‘Before I came to the throne, it was powerful and rich, but I inherited none of that, only the title. For my entire life, I’ve had responsibility thrust on my shoulders, but never had the means to handle it properly. I look over the desolation which is my birthright, and I hate it. If it were possible to steal a kingdom, I would not lift a finger to stop you.’

It was, it turned out, quite possible to steal a kingdom. Eslaf became known as Ynohp, a deception easily done given their physical similarities. The real Ynohp, taking the name of Ylekilnu, happily left his demesne, becoming eventually a simple worker in the vineyards of The Aalto. For the first time free of responsibility, he fell into his new life with gusto, the years melting off him.

The new Ynohp called in his favor with Laicifitra, using her army to restore peace to the kingdom of Erolgard. Now that it was safe, business and commerce began to return to the land, and Eslaf reduced the tyrannical taxes to encourage it to grow. Upon hearing that, Suoibud, ever nervous about losing his money, elected to return to the land of his birth. When he died years later, out of greed, he had refused to name someone an heir, so the kingdom received its entire fortune.

Eslaf used part of the gold to buy the vineyards of The Aalto, after hearing great things of it from Ynohp.

And so it was that Erolgard was returned to its previous prosperity by the fifth born child of King Ytluaf - Eslaf Erol, beggar, thief, warrior (of sorts), and king.

# Faded Note

*Anonymous*

I don't think I'll live much longer. My wine supply is thinning, only one bottle left. Bernice's wine is worthless! I would have lasted longer on Gnarl bark. I'd go back home to resupply, but Brithaur, that maggot, has stolen my house. It's not just him, though, it's also the others. I can't leave the safety of the roof. They have a plan for me, I see it in their eyes. Caldana, Earil, Cutter, ALL OF THEM!

They don't know I'm up here, watching. Not much longer, though. At least they won't find me or my stash. I've put all my favorite things in an urn, and sunken it in the sewage near the back of Bernice's dive.

I think I'll drink that last bottle to celebrate.

# Fain Scrolls

*Anonymous*

Gyub, Lord of the Pit

Praise of Gyub

[Kneel, face forward and raise hands above head]

Praise be to Gyub, Lord of the Pit.

Hear us, Warbling Redeemer.

Hail the Rebirth approaching.

Praise be to Gyub, Lord of the Pit.

[Lower hands and close eyes]

Please accept our offering, merciful one.

Extend your tentacles and accept this gift.

Bless us, Embryonic Prince.

May this offering satisfy your infinite maw.

[Stand, open eyes and wait for volunteer to be escorted to the precipice]

Please accept our offering oh merciful one.

Feed and grow now, our Prince.

Arise and devour Oblivion hence.

May this offering sate your growing bulk.

[Open floor and grasp volunteer by wrists and ankles. Gently swing with sideways motion]

Praise be to Gyub, Lord of the Pit.

Magg-a-rathala!

Magg-a-Nutaggon!

Praise be to Gyub, Lord of the Pit.

[Begin to rhythmically stomp feet all the while swinging volunteer faster and faster]

Praise be to Gyub, praise be to Gyub, praise be to Gyub.

Praise be to Gyub, praise be to Gyub, praise be to Gyub.

Praise be to Gyub, praise be to Gyub, praise be to Gyub.

[When volunteer has reached maximum height, release wrists and ankles. Wait for screaming to stop. Face forward and raise hands above head]

Praise be to Gyub,

Call to us, Prince!

Sing your fell tune!

Praise be to Gyub.

[Wait for Gyub to respond. Get down on knees with hands still raised above head]

All hail Gyub, Lord of the Pit.

All hail rebirth, day of our death.

All hail Gyub, All hail Gyub.

Scroll

My Dearest Cousin,

Thank you for last month's shipment—He was very pleased. I have found that when two are thrown in at the same time, the louder His response and the longer it lasts. How exciting!

Now, I understand how difficult it is for you to gather more volunteers, but I am in need of your services more than ever, cousin. You and I both know it will not be long until the day of Rebirth is upon us, so the more we can offer, the better. When He arrives, I will make sure you are duly rewarded for your services. Be sure to let our volunteers know how happy we all are with their commitment to the cause and what an enormous impact they are having on the coming of Rebirth.

# Fall Of The Snow Prince

*Lokheim*

An account of the Battle of the Moesring as transcribed by Lokheim, chronicler to the chieftain Ingjaldr White-Eye

From whence he came we did not know, but into the battle he rode, on a brilliant steed of pallid white. Elf we called him, for Elf he was, yet unlike any other of his kind we had ever seen before that day. His spear and armor bore the radiant and terrible glow of unknown magicka, and so adorned this unknown rider seemed more wight than warrior.

What troubled, nay, frightened us most at that moment was the call that rose from the Elven ranks. It was not fear, not wonder, but an unabashed and unbridled joy, the kind of felicity felt by a damned man who has been granted a second chance at life. For at that time the Elves were as damned and near death as ever they had been during the great skirmishes of Solstheim. The Battle of the Moesring was to be the final stand between Nord and Elf on our fair island. Led by Ysgramor, we had driven the Elven scourge from Skyrim, and were intent on cleansing Solstheim of their kind as well. Our warriors, armed with the finest axes and swords Nord craftsmen could forge, cut great swaths through the enemy ranks. The slopes of the Moesring ran red with Elf blood. Why, then, would our foe rejoice? Could one rider bring such hope to an army so hopeless?



To most of our kind, the meaning of the call was clear, but the words were but a litany of Elven chants and cries. There were some among us, however, the scholars and chroniclers, who knew well the words and shuddered at their significance.

“The Snow Prince is come! Doom is at hand!”

There was then a great calm that overcame the Elves that still stood. Through their mass the Snow Prince did ride, and as a longboat slices the icy waters of the Fjalding he parted the ranks of his kin. The magnificent white horse slowed to a gallop, then a trot, and the unknown Elf rider moved to the front of the line at a slow, almost ghostlike pace.

A Nord warrior sees much in a life of bloodshed and battle, and is rarely surprised by anything armed combat may bring. But few among us that day could have imagined the awe and uncertainty of a raging battlefield that all at once went motionless and silent. Such is the effect the Snow Prince had on us all. For when the joyous cries of the Elves had ended, there remained a quiet known only in the solitude of slumber. It was then our combined host, Elf and Nord alike, were joined in a terrible understanding—victory or defeat mattered little that day on the slopes of the Moesring Mountains. The one truth we all shared was that death would come to many that day, victor and vanquished alike. The glorious Snow Prince, an Elf unlike any other, did come that day to bring death to our kind. And death he so brought.

Like a sudden, violent snow squall that rends travelers blind and threatens to tear loose the very foundations of the sturdiest hall, the Snow Prince did sweep into our numbers. Indeed the ice and snow did begin to swirl and churn about the Elf, as if called upon to serve his bidding. The spinning of that

gleaming spear whistled a dirge to all those who would stand in the way of the Snow Prince, and our mightiest fell before him that day. Ulfgi Anvil-Hand, Strom the White, Freida Oaken-Wand, Heimdall the Frenzied. All lay dead at the foot of the Moesring Mountains.

For the first time that day it seemed the tide of battle had actually turned. The Elves, spurred on by the deeds of the Snow Prince, rallied together for one last charge against our ranks. It was then, in a single instant, that the Battle of the Moesring came to a sudden and unexpected end.

Finna, daughter of Jofrior, a lass of only twelve years and squire to her mother, watched as the Snow Prince cut down her only parent. In her rage and sorrow, Finna picked up Jofrior's sword and threw it savagely at her mother's killer. When the Elf's gleaming spear stopped its deadly dance, the battlefield fell silent, and all eyes turned to the Snow Prince. No one that day was more surprised than the Elf himself at the sight that greeted them all. For upon his great steed the Snow Prince still sat, the sword of Jofrior buried deeply in his breast. And then, he fell, from his horse, from the battle, from life. The Snow Prince lay dead, slain by a child.

With their savior defeated, the spirit of the remaining Elven warriors soon shattered. Many fled, and those that remained on the battlefield were soon cut down by our broad Nord axes. When the day was done, all that remained was the carnage of the battlefield. And from that battlefield came a dim reminder of valor and skill, for the brilliant armor and spear of the Snow Prince still shined. Even in death, this mighty and unknown Elf filled us with awe.

It is common practice to burn the corpses of our fallen foes. This is as much a necessity as it is custom, for death brings with it disease and dread. Our chieftains wished to cleanse Solstheim of the Elven horde, in death as well as life. It was decided, however, that such was not to be the fate of the Snow Prince. One so mighty in war yet so loved by his kin deserved better. Even in death, even if an enemy of our people.

And so we brought the body of the Snow Prince, wrapped in fine silks, to a freshly dug barrow. The gleaming armor and spear were presented on a pedestal of honor, and the tomb was arrayed with treasures worthy of royalty. All of the mighty chieftains agreed with this course, that the Elf should be so honored. His body would be preserved in the barrow for as long as the earth chose, but would not be offered the protection of our Stalhrim, which was reserved for Nord dead alone.

So ends this account of the Battle of the Moesring, and the fall of the magnificent Elven Snow Prince. May our gods honor him in death, and may we never meet his kind again in life.

# Feyfolken

*Waughin Jarth*

Feyfolken I

Feyfolken

Book One

by

Waughin Jarth

The Great Sage was a tall, untidy man, bearded but bald. His library resembled him: all the books had been moved over the years to the bottom shelves where they gathered in dusty conglomerations. He used several of the books in his current lecture, explaining to his students, Taksim and Vonguldak, how the Mages Guild had first been founded by Vanus Galerion. They had many questions about Galerion's beginnings in the Psijic Order, and how the study of magic there differed from the Mages Guild.

"It was, and is, a very structured way of life," explained the Great Sage. "Quite elitist, actually. That was the aspect of it Galerion most objected to. He wanted the study of magic to be free. Well, not free exactly, but at least available to all who could afford it. In doing that, he changed the course of life in Tamriel."

“He codified the praxes and rituals used by all modern potionmakers, itemmakers, and spellmakers, didn’t he, Great Sage?” asked Vonguldak.

“That was only part of it. Magic as we know it today comes from Vanus Galerion. He restructured the schools to be understandable by the masses. He invented the tools of alchemy and enchanting so everyone could concoct whatever they wanted, whatever their skills and purse would allow them to, without fears of magical backfire. Well, eventually he created that.”

“What do you mean, Great Sage?” asked Taksim.

“The first tools were more automated than the ones we have today. Any layman could use them without the least understanding of enchantment and alchemy. On the Isle of Artaeum, the students had to learn the skills laboriously and over many years, but Galerion decided that was another example of the Psijics’ elitism. The tools he invented were like robotic master enchanters and alchemists, capable of creating anything the customer required, provided he could pay.”

“So someone could, for example, create a sword that would cleave the world in twain?” asked Vonguldak.

“I suppose, in theory, but it would probably take all the gold in the world,” chuckled the Great Sage. “No, I can’t say we were ever in very great danger, but that it isn’t to say that there weren’t a few unfortunate incidents where a unschooled yokel invented something beyond his ken. Eventually, of course, Galerion tore apart his old tools, and created what we use today. It’s a little elitist, requiring that people know what they’re doing before they do it, but remarkably practical.”

“What did people invent?” asked Taksim. “Are there any stories?”

“You’re trying to distract me so I don’t test you,” said the Great Sage. “But I suppose I can tell you one story, just to illustrate a point. This particular tale takes place in city of Alinor on the west coast of Summurset Isle, and concerns a scribe named Thaurbad.

This was in the Second Era, not long after Vanus Galerion had first founded the Mages Guild and chapter houses had sprung up all over Summurset, though not yet spread to the mainland of Tamriel.

For five years, this scribe, Thaurbad, had conducted all his correspondence to the outside world by way of his messenger boy, Gorgos. For the first year of his adoption of the hermit life, his few remaining friends and family—friends and family of his dead wife, truth be told—had tried visiting, but even the most indefatigable kin gives up eventually when given no encouragement. No one had a good reason to keep in touch with Thaurbad Hulzik, and in time, very few even tried. His sister-in-law sent him the occasional letter with news of people he could barely remember, but even that communication was rare. Most of messages to and from his house dealt with his business, writing the weekly proclamation from the Temple of Auri-El. These were bulletins nailed on the temple door, community news, sermons, that sort of thing.

The first message Gorgos brought him that day was from his healer, reminding him of his appointment on Turdas. Thaurbad took a while to write his response, glum and affirmative. He had the Crimson Plague, which he was being treated for at considerable expense—you have to remember

these were the days before the School of Restoration had become quite so specialized. It was a dreadful disease and had taken away his voicebox. That was why he only communicated by script.

The next message was from Alfiers, the secretary at the church, as curt and noxious as ever: "THAURBAD, ATTACHED IS SUNDAS'S SERMON, NEXT WEEK'S EVENTS CALENDAR, AND THE OBITUARIES. TRY TO LIVEN THEM UP A LITTLE. I WASN'T HAPPY WITH YOUR LAST ATTEMPT."

Thaurbad had taken the job putting together the Bulletin before Alfiers joined the temple, so his only mental image of her was purely theoretical and had evolved over time. At first he thought of Alfiers as an ugly fat sloadess covered with warts; more recently, she had mutated into a rail-thin, spinster orcess. Of course, it was possible his clairvoyance was accurate and she had just lost weight.

Whatever Alfiers looked like, her attitude towards Thaurbad was clear, unwavering disdain. She hated his sense of humor, always found the most minor of misspellings, and considered his structure and calligraphy the worst kind of amateur work. Luckily, working for a temple was the next most secure job to working for the good King of Alinor. It didn't bring in very much money, but his expenses were minimal. The truth was, he didn't need to do it anymore. He had quite a fortune stashed away, but he didn't have anything else to occupy his days. And the truth was further that having little else to occupy his time and thoughts, the Bulletin was very important to him.

Gorgos, having delivered all the messages, began to clean and as he did so, he told Thaurbad all the news in town. The boy always did so, and Thaurbad seldom paid him any attention,

but this time he had an interesting report. The Mages Guild had come to Alinor.

As Thaurbad listened intently, Gorgos told him all about the Guild, the remarkable Archmagister, and the incredible tools of alchemy and enchanting. Finally, when the lad had finished, Thaurbad scribbled a quick note and handed it and a quill to Gorgos. The note read, "Have them enchant this quill."

"It will be expensive," said Gorgos.

Thaurbad gave Gorgos a sizeable chunk of the thousands of gold pieces he had saved over the years, and sent him out the door. Now, Thaurbad decided, he would finally have the ability to impress Alfiers and bring glory to the Temple of Auri-El.

The way I've heard the story, Gorgos had thought about taking the gold and leaving Alinor, but he had come to care for poor old Thaurbad. And even more, he hated Alfiers who he had to see every day to get his messages for his master. It wasn't perhaps for the best of motivations, but Gorgos decided to go to the Guild and get the quill enchanted.

The Mages Guild was not then, especially not then, an elitist institution, as I have said, but when the messenger boy came in and asked to use the Itemmaker, he was greeted with some suspicion. When he showed the bag of gold, the attitude melted, and he was ushered in the room.

Now, I haven't seen one of the enchanting tools of old, so you must use your imagination. There was a large prism for the item to be bound with magicka, assuredly, and an assortment of soul gems and globes of trapped energies. Other than that, I cannot be certain how it looked or how it worked. Because of



all the gold he gave to the Guild, Gorgos could infuse the quill with the highest-price soul available, which was something daedric called Feyfolken. The initiate at the Guild, being ignorant as most Guildmembers were at that time, did not know very much about the spirit except that it was filled with energy. When Gorgos left the room, the quill had been enchanted to its very limit and then some. It was virtually quivering with power.

Of course, when Thaurbad used it, that's when it became clear how over his head he was.

And now," said the Great Sage. "It's time for your test."

"But what happened? What were the quill's powers?" cried Taksim.

"You can't stop the tale there!" objected Vonguldak.

"We will continue the tale after your conjuration test, provided you both perform exceptionally well," said the Great Sage.

Feyfolken II

Feyfolken

Book Two

by

Waughin Jarth

After the test had been given and Vonguldak and Taksim had demonstrated their knowledge of elementary conjuration, the Great Sage told them that they were free to enjoy the day. The

two lads, who most afternoons fidgeted through their lessons, refused to leave their seats.

“You told us that after the test, you’d tell us more of your tale about the scribe and his enchanted quill,” said Taksim.

“You’ve already told us about the scribe, how he lived alone, and his battles with the Temple secretary over the Bulletin he scripted for posting, and how he suffered from the Crimson Plague and couldn’t speak. When you left off, his messenger boy had just had his master’s quill enchanted with the spirit of a daedra named Feyfolken,” added Vonguldak to aid the Great Sage’s memory.

“As it happens,” said the Great Sage. “I was thinking about a nap. However, the story does touch on some issues of the natures of spirits and thus is related to conjuration, so I’ll continue.

Thaurbad began using the quill to write the Temple Bulletin, and there was something about the slightly lopsided, almost three-dimensional quality of the letters that Thaurbad liked a lot.

Into the night, Thaurbad put together the Temple of Auri-El’s Bulletin. For the moment he washed over the page with the Feyfolken quill, it became a work of art, an illuminated manuscript crafted of gold, but with good, simple and strong vernacular. The sermon excerpts read like poetry, despite being based on the archpriest’s workmanlike exhortation of the most banal of the Alessian doctrines. The obituaries of two of the Temple’s chief benefactors were stark and powerful, pitifully mundane deaths transitioned into world-class tragedies. Thaurbad worked the magical palette until he nearly fainted

from exhaustion. At six o'clock in the morning, a day before deadline, he handed the Bulletin to Gorgos for him to carry to Alfiers, the Temple secretary.

As expected, Alfiers never wrote back to compliment him or even comment on how early he had sent the bulletin. It didn't matter. Thaurbad knew it was the best Bulletin the Temple had ever posted. At one o'clock on Sundas, Gorgos brought him many messages.

"The Bulletin today was so beautiful, when I read it in the vestibule, I'm ashamed to tell you I wept copiously," wrote the archpriest. "I don't think I've seen anything that captures Auriel's glory so beautifully before. The cathedrals of Firsthold pale in comparison. My friend, I prostrate myself before the greatest artist since Gallael."

The archpriest was, like most men of the cloth, given to hyperbole. Still, Thaurbad was happy with the compliment. More messages followed. All of the Temple Elders and thirty-three of the parishioners young and old had all taken the time to find out who wrote the bulletin and how to get a message to congratulate him. And there was only one person they could go through for that information: Alfiers. Imaging the dragon lady besieged by his admirers filled Thaurbad with positive glee.

He was still in a good mood the next day when he took the ferry to his appointment with his healer, Telemichiel. The herbalist was new, a pretty Redguard woman who tried to talk to him, even after he gave her the note reading "My name is Thaurbad Hulzik and I have an appointment with Telemichiel for eleven o'clock. Please forgive me for not talking, but I have no voicebox anymore."

“Has it started raining yet?” she asked cheerfully. “The diviner said it might.”

Thaurbad frowned and shook his head angrily. Why was it that everyone thought that mute people liked to be talked to? Did soldiers who lost their arms like to be thrown balls? It was undoubtedly not a purposefully cruel behavior, but Thaurbad still suspected that some people just liked to prove that they weren't crippled too.

The examination itself was routine horror. Telemichiel performed the regular invasive torture, all the while chatting and chatting and chatting.

“You ought to try talking once in a while. That's the only way to see if you're getting better. If you don't feel comfortable doing it in public, you could try practicing it by yourself,” said Telemichiel, knowing her patient would ignore her advice. “Try singing in the bath. You'll probably find you don't sound as bad as you think.”

Thaurbad left the examination with the promise of test results in a couple of weeks. On the ferry ride back home, Thaurbad began thinking of next week's temple bulletin. What about a double-border around the “Last Sundas's Offering Plate” announcement? Putting the sermon in two columns instead of one might have interesting effects. It was almost unbearable to think that he couldn't get started on it until Alfiers sent him information.

When she did, it was with the note, “LAST BULLETIN A LITTLE BETTER. NEXT TIME, DON'T USE THE WORD 'FORTUITOUS' IN PLACE OF 'FORTUNATE.' THE WORDS ARE NOT, IF YOU LOOK THEM UP, SYNONYMOUS.”

In response, Thaurbad almost followed Telemichiel's advice by screaming obscenities at Gorgos. Instead, he drank a bottle of cheap wine, composed and sent a suitable reply, and fell asleep on the floor.

The next morning, after a long bath, Thaurbad began work on the Bulletin. His idea for putting a light shading effect on the "Special Announcements" section had an amazing textural effect. Alfiers always hated the extra decorations he added to the borders, but using the Feyfolken quill, they looked strangely powerful and majestic.

Gorgos came to him with a message from Alfiers at that very moment as if in response to the thought. Thaurbad opened it up. It simply said, "I'M SORRY."

Thaurbad kept working. Alfiers's note he put from his mind, sure that she would soon follow it up with the complete message "I'M SORRY THAT NO ONE EVER TAUGHT YOU TO KEEP RIGHT-HAND AND LEFT-HAND MARGINS THE SAME LENGTH" or "I'M SORRY WE CAN'T GET SOMEONE OTHER THAN A WEIRD, OLD MAN AS SCRIBE OF OUR BULLETIN." It didn't matter what she was sorry about. The columns from the sermon notes rose like the massive pillars of roses, crowned with unashamedly ornate headers. The obituaries and birth announcements were framed together with a spherical border, as a heartbreaking declaration of the circle of life. The Bulletin was simultaneously both warm and avant-garde. It was a masterpiece. When he sent it off to Alfiers late that afternoon, he knew she'd hate it, and was glad.

Thaurbad was surprised to get a message from the Temple on Loredas. Before he read the content, he could tell from the style that it wasn't from Alfiers. The handwriting wasn't Alfiers's

usual belligerent slashing style, and it wasn't all in Alfiers's usual capital letters, which read like a scream from Oblivion.

“Thaurbad, I thought you should know Alfiers isn't at the Temple anymore. She quit her position yesterday, very suddenly. My name is Vanderthil, and I was lucky enough (let me admit it now, I begged pitifully) to be your new Temple contact. I'm overwhelmed by your genius. I was having a crisis of faith until I read last week's Bulletin. This week's Bulletin is a miracle. Enough. I just wanted to say I'm honored to be working with you.—Vanderthil.”

The response on Sundas after the service even astonished Thaurbad. The archpriest attributed the massive increase in attendance and collection plate offerings entirely to the Bulletin. Thaurbad's salary was quadrupled. Gorgos brought over a hundred and twenty messages from his adoring public.

The following week, Thaurbad sat in front of his writing plank, a glass of fine Torvali mead at his side, staring at the blank scroll. He had no ideas. The Bulletin, his child, his second-wife, bored him. The third-rate sermons of the archbishop were absolute anathema, and the deaths and births of the Temple patrons struck him as entirely pointless. Blah blah, he thought as he scribbled on the page.

He knew he wrote the letters B-L-A-H B-L-A-H. The words that appeared on the scroll were, “A necklace of pearl on a white neck.”

He scrawled a jagged line across the page. It appeared in through that damned beautiful Feyfolken quill: “Glory to Auri-El.”

Thaurbad slammed the quill and poetry spilled forth in a stream of ink. He scratched over the page, blotting over everything, and the vanquished words sprung back up in different form, even more exquisite than before. Every daub and splatter caused the document to whirl like a kaleidoscope before falling together in gorgeous asymmetry. There was nothing he could do to ruin the Bulletin. Feyfolken had taken over. He was a reader, not an author.

Now,” asked the Great Sage. “What was Feyfolken from your knowledge of the School of Conjuraton?”

“What happened next?” cried Vonguldak.

“First, tell me what Feyfolken was, and then I’ll continue the story.”

“You said it was a daedra,” said Taksim. “And it seems to have something to do with artistic expression. Was Feyfolken a servitor of Azura?”

“But the scribe may have been imagining all this,” said Vonguldak. “Perhaps Feyfolken is a servitor of Sheogorath, and he’s gone mad. Or the quill’s writing makes everyone who views it, like all the congregation at the Temple of Auri-El, go mad.”

“Hermaeus Mora is the daedra of knowledge...and Hircine is the daedra of the wild...and the daedra of revenge is Boethiah,” pondered Taksim. And then he smiled, “Feyfolken is a servitor of Clavicus Vile, isn’t it?”

“Very good,” said the Great Sage. “How did you know?”

“It’s his style,” said Taksim. “Assuming that he doesn’t want the power of the quill now that he has it. What happens next?”

“I’ll tell you,” said the Great Sage, and continued the tale.

Feyfolken III

Feyfolken

Book Three

by

Waughin Jarth

Thaurbad had at last seen the power of the quill,” said the Great Sage, continuing his tale. “Enchanted with the daedra Feyfolken, servitor of Clavicus Vile, it had brought him great wealth and fame as the scribe of the weekly Bulletin of the Temple of Auri-El. But he realized that it was the artist, and he merely the witness to its magic. He was furious and jealous. With a cry, he snapped the quill in half.

He turned to finish his glass of mead. When he turned around, the quill was intact.

He had no other quills but the one he had enchanted, so he dipped his finger in the inkwell and wrote a note to Gorgos in big sloppy letters. When Gorgos returned with a new batch of congratulatory messages from the Temple, praising his latest Bulletin, he handed the note and the quill to the messenger boy. The note read: “Take the quill back to the Mages Guild and sell it. Buy me another quill with no enchantments.”



Gorgos didn't know what to make of the note, but he did as he was told. He returned a few hours later.

"They wouldn't give us any gold back for it," said Gorgos. "They said it wasn't enchanted. I told 'em, I said 'What are you talking about, you enchanted it right here with that Feyfolken soul gem,' and they said, 'Well, there ain't a soul in it now. Maybe you did something and it got loose.'"

Gorgos paused to look at his master. Thaurbad couldn't speak, of course, but he seemed even more than usually speechless.

"Anyway, I threw the quill away and got you this new one, like you said."

Thaurbad studied the new quill. It was white-feathered while his old quill had been dove gray. It felt good in his hand. He sighed with relief and waved his messenger lad away. He had a Bulletin to write, and this time, without any magic except for his own talent.

Within two days time, he was nearly back on schedule. It looked plain but it was entirely his. Thaurbad felt a strange reassurance when he ran his eyes over the page and noticed some slight errors. It had been a long time since the Bulletin contained any errors. In fact, Thaurbad reflected happily, there were probably other mistakes still in the document that he was not seeing.

He was finishing a final whirl of plain calligraphy on the borders when Gorgos arrived with some messages from the Temple. He looked through them all quickly, until one caught his eye. The wax seal on the letter read "Feyfolken." With complete bafflement, he broke it open.

“I think you should kill yourself,” it read in perfectly gorgeous script.

He dropped the letter to the floor, seeing sudden movement on the Bulletin. Feyfolken script leapt from the letter and coursed over the scroll in a flood, translating his shabby document into a work of sublime beauty. Thaurbad no longer cared about the weird croaking quality of his voice. He screamed for a very long time. And then drank. Heavily.

Gorgos brought Thaurbad a message from Vanderthil, the secretary of the Temple, early Fredas morning, but it took the scribe until mid-morning to work up the courage to look at it. “Good Morning, I am just checking in on the Bulletin. You usually have it in on Turdas night. I’m curious. You planning something special?—Vanderthil.”

Thaurbad responded, “Vanderthil, I’m sorry. I’ve been sick. There won’t be a Bulletin this Sunday” and handed the note to Gorgos before retiring to his bath. When he came back an hour later, Gorgos was just returning from the Temple, smiling.

“Vanderthil and the archpriest went crazy,” he said. “They said it was your best work ever.”

Thaurbad looked at Gorgos, uncomprehending. Then he noticed that the Bulletin was gone. Shaking, he dipped his finger in the inkwell and scrawled the words “What did the note I sent with you say?”

“You don’t remember?” asked Gorgos, holding back a smile. He knew the master had been drinking a lot lately. “I don’t remember the exact words, but it was something like, ‘Vanderthil, here it is. Sorry it’s late. I’ve been having severe

mental problems lately. - Thaurbad.' Since you said, 'here it is,' I figured you wanted me to bring the Bulletin along, so I did. And like I said, they loved it. I bet you get three times as much letters this Sundas."

Thaurbad nodded his head, smiled, and waved the messenger lad away. Gorgos returned back to the Temple, while his master turned to his writing plank, and pulled out a fresh sheet of parchment.

He wrote with the quill: "What do you want, Feyfolken?"

The words became: "Goodbye. I hate my life. I have cut my wrists."

Thaurbad tried another tact: "Have I gone insane?"

The words became: "Goodbye. I have poison. I hate my life."

"Why are you doing this to me?"

"I Thaurbad Hulzik cannot live with myself and my ingratitude. That's why I've put this noose around my neck."

Thaurbad picked up a fresh parchment, dipped his finger in the inkwell, and proceeded to rewrite the entire Bulletin. While his original draft, before Feyfolken had altered it, had been simple and flawed, the new copy was a scrawl. Lower-case I's were undotted, G's looked like Y's, sentences ran into margins and curled up and all over like serpents. Ink from the first page leaked onto the second page. When he yanked the pages from the notebook, a long tear nearly divided the third page in half. Something about the final result was evocative. Thaurbad at least hoped so. He wrote another note reading, simply, "Use this Bulletin instead of the piece of trash I sent you."

When Gorgos returned with new messages, Thaurbad handed the envelope to him. The new letters were all the same, except for one from his healer, Telemichiel. “Thaurbad, we need you to come in as soon as possible. We’ve received the reports from Black Marsh about a strain of the Crimson Plague that sounds very much like your disease, and we need to re-examine you. Nothing is definite yet, but we’re going to want to see what our options are.”

It took Thaurbad the rest of the day and fifteen drams of the stoutest mead to recover. The larger part of the next morning was spent recovering from this means of recovery. He started to write a message to Vanderthil: “What did you think of the new Bulletin?” with the quill. Feyfolken’s improved version was “I’m going to ignite myself on fire, because I’m a dying no-talent.”

Thaurbad rewrote the note using his finger-and-ink message. When Gorgos appeared, he handed him the note. There was one message in Vanderthil’s handwriting.

It read, “Thaurbad, not only are you divinely inspired, but you have a great sense of humor. Imagine us using those scribbles you sent instead of the real Bulletin. You made the archbishop laugh heartily. I cannot wait to see what you have next week. Yours fondly, Vanderthil.”

The funeral service a week later brought out far more friends and admirers than Thaurbad Hulzik would’ve believed possible. The coffin, of course, had to be closed, but that didn’t stop the mourners from filing into lines to touch its smooth oak surface, imagining it as the flesh of the artist himself. The archbishop managed to rise to the occasion and deliver a better than usual eulogy. Thaurbad’s old nemesis, the secretary before

Vanderthil, Alfiers came in from Cloudrest, wailing and telling all who would listen that Thaurbad's suggestions had changed the direction of her life. When she heard Thaurbad had left her his quill in his final testament, she broke down in tears.

Vanderthil was even more inconsolable, until she found a handsome and delightfully single young man.

"I can hardly believe he's gone and I never even saw him face-to-face or spoke to him," she said. "I saw the body, but even if he hadn't been all burned up, I wouldn't have been able to tell if it was him or not."

"I wish I could tell you there'd been a mistake, but there was plenty of medical evidence," said Telemichiel. "I supplied some of it myself. He was a patient of mine, you see."

"Oh," said Vanderthil. "Was he sick or something?"

"He had the Crimson Plague years ago, that's what took away his voice box, but it appeared to have gone into complete remission. Actually, I had just sent him a note telling him words to that effect the day before he killed himself."

"You're that healer?" exclaimed Vanderthil. "Thaurbad's messenger boy Gorgos told me that he had just picked up that message when I sent mine, complementing him on the new, primitive design for the Bulletin. It was amazing work. I never would've told him this, but I had begun to suspect he was stuck in an outmoded style. It turned out he had one last work of genius, before going out in a blaze of glory. Figuratively. And literally."

Vanderthil showed the healer Thaurbad's last Bulletin, and Telemichiel agreed that its frantic, nearly illegible style spoke

volumes about the power and majesty of the god Auri-El.”

“Now I’m thoroughly confused,” said Vonguldak.

“About which part?” asked the Great Sage. “I think the tale is very straight-forward.”

“Feyfolken made all the Bulletins beautiful, except for the last one, the one Thaubad did for himself,” said Taksim thoughtfully. “But why did he misread the notes from Vanderthil and the healer? Did Feyfolken change those words?”

“Perhaps,” smiled the Great Sage.

“Or did Feyfolken changed Thaurbad’s perceptions of those words?” asked Vonguldak. “Did Feyfolken make him mad after all?”

“Very likely,” said the Great Sage.

“But that would mean that Feyfolken was a servitor of Sheogorath,” said Vonguldak. “And you said he was a servitor of Clavicus Vile. Which was he, an agent of mischief or an agent of insanity?”

“The will was surely altered by Feyfolken,” said Taksim, “And that’s the sort of thing a servitor of Clavicus Vile would do to perpetuate the curse.”

“As an appropriate ending to the tale of the scribe and his cursed quill,” smiled the Great Sage. “I will let you read into it as you will.”

# Followers Of The Gray Fox

*Anonymous*

We are the Fingers of the Fox, the Children of the Shadows. More commonly we are known as the Thieves Guild.

There are but three rules for followers of the Gray Fox:

First, never steal from another member of the guild.

Second, never kill anyone on the job. This is not the Dark Brotherhood. Animals and monsters can be slain if necessary.

Third, don't steal from the poor. The peasants and beggars are under the personal protection of the Gray Fox, particularly in the Imperial City Waterfront.

Breaking any of the three rules means expulsion from the Thieves Guild. If you commit murder, you must pay the blood price to rejoin the guild. Blood price is for each person slain. You can pay any of the guild Doyen.

The Doyen are the hands and eyes of the guildmaster. You take your orders from them. You get your favors from them. They can pay off the Imperial judges to remove your crimes—for a small fee, of course.

Our guildmaster is the Gray Fox. We don't talk about him in public. However, we make sure that most folks think he is just a

myth.

We're thieves, not masons or scribes. Each member steals at his own discretion. The guild neither helps nor hinders with a burglary. However, you will find that you can only sell stolen property to one of our guild fences. Other merchants won't take hot merchandise.

You won't be considered for promotion in the Thieves Guild unless you have sold enough stolen property to the fences. The higher in the guild you rise, the more stolen property you need to have fenced.

If you should be called to help the Gray Fox in some special way, remember that the best source of information is the beggars. Their eyes and ears seem to be everywhere. However, be prepared to spend a little coin. They won't tell you anything for free. At least not anything true.

The guild takes care of its own. The Doyen can remove the bounty from any guild member. However, it takes money to bribe the guards. The guild member must pay the Doyen half of his total fines to get rid of them.



# From Frog To Man

*Meekus Ralbrek*

The life cycle of the Grummite is rather unique. They appear to be a deviant version of frogs and may even be distantly related to Argonians, although I have no direct evidence of that. Like the humble frog, the Grummite is born from eggs found in or near water. The eggs hatch into tiny pollywogs, no bigger than my hand.

The pollywog grows quickly, and inside of a few weeks grows limbs and changes into an amphibious Baliwog. The Baliwog will live for up to two years, growing to be larger than a man in both length and weight.

Eventually, the adult Baliwog will feel the urge to seek out deep water and bury itself in the mud. It hibernates there for many months, gestating into a Grummite. I have been unable to determine the exact time of gestation. The Grummite emerges from the mud fully grown.

New Grummites never leave the water and are consumed with the urge to mate. Females leave the water to hang their eggs. They are hung over the water to keep them out of reach of aquatic predators, while still allowing the pollywogs to fall into the water when they hatch.

Once a female has laid her eggs, she turns her back on them. She will live her life more on land than in the water, although

never far from it. The male's mating urges subside after six months to a year. He too takes to the land and like the female does nothing to protect his eggs.

Adult Grummites have a sort of primitive culture. Kraften Highbrow maintains that they are cunning craftsmen that make jewelry and weapons, even mining ore. This is plainly ridiculous. Although I have not determined the source of their tools and adornments, I am certain that they trade with other civilized races for such things.

As for tales of magic casting Grummites, that is even more ludicrous. While their primitive brains are surprisingly large, they clearly do not have the intelligence to learn the arcane crafts. I do not know how Kraften managed to train his pet Grummite to cast spells, but I assure all my readers that it is a trick of some sort.

# Frostcrag Spire Memoirs

*Anonymous*

As I pen this, I gaze upon the walls of my home and remember the very day its design came to fruition. Although it seems like yesterday, it was actually many years ago. I was an impetuous wizard; I wasn't simply satisfied living at the Arcane University. I spent years coming up with a design for my home, a place where I could practice my magic in peace and keep myself away from the prying eyes of my colleagues. I pored over tomes and dusty scrolls, scoured the bookshops of the land and even delved into ancient ruins looking for inspiration. Finally, as I rested my weary body at a camp outside of Bruma and marveled in awe at the majesty of the Jerall Mountains, I became inspired. Like a madman I began to sketch exactly what I wanted my grand dwelling to look like. It wasn't long before I had completed my masterpiece, put down my quill and took a step back to see what I had wrought. Frostcrag Spire was born.

And now, as age overwhelms me and the glow is dying from my eyes, I wish to give the Spire to you. The thought that my dream could one day crumble to ruin fills me with sadness. I know that you'll take care of your new home, and if need be, restore it to its former glory. Please, heed my instructions carefully. There's much to tell, and the strength drains from my limbs.

Frostcrag Spire contains many wonderful inventions. I've spent my whole life perfecting them, and I hope you'll put them to good use. My pride and joy is the Atronach Altar. By bringing three salts from the very same creatures to this altar, you can summon an Atronach Familiar to do your bidding. It will obey your simple commands, and defend you in times of need. Should you tire of it, simply speak to it and dismiss it. These fine creatures have protected me in my travels, and should be of great use to you.

With permission from the Arcane University, I've had a Spellmaking and an Enchanting Altar placed in the tower as well. You have but to provide the Magetallow Candles to power them, and they will serve you well.

Working closely with my good friend Sinderion, the Master Alchemist of Skingrad, I have developed the Frostcrag Apparatus Table. This table is for the discerning alchemist, and should help even the most difficult brews become easier to create. I've also re-seeded my alchemy conservatory with the best ingredients Cyrodiil has to offer, and some from beyond her borders.

Finally, I have created portals to all of the Mages Guilds in Cyrodiil. This should make it easier to travel to them in times of need.

I've entrusted most of my belongings to Aurelinwae at the Mystic Emporium in the Market District of the Imperial City. There you'll find everything you need to bring Frostcrag Spire back from the dead. She may require compensation for her time and care watching these special items, but I assure you, it's well worth the coin. Please, take care of Frostcrag Spire. She was my home and much of myself is infused with the stone

and mortar. May your journeys be safe, and the roads you travel free of danger.

# Gelebourne's Journal

## *Gelebourne*

The eighth day has passed, and still there's no sign of the artifact. We've covered most of the remainder of the outer guard tower, and scoured the crumbled gatehouse ruins, but not one clue has arisen as to where it may have been buried.

It's quiet out here, as if the ruins were paying respects to the Ayleid inhabitants that disappeared here long ago. We haven't encountered anything hostile, but if we do, I think we're ready. The Brotherhood's been in worse scrapes before. Bradon paid good money for the information as to our treasure's whereabouts, and I hope it doesn't turn out to be yet another fiasco.

This morning, our camp was set upon by some bandits who were protecting what they claimed was their territory. Considering that we were outnumbered three to one, we did very well. Only Raynil suffered a small wound, but that was easily healed by a potion that Bradon had thoughtfully brought with him on our expedition.

After getting rid of the bandit's corpses, we set out to tackle the largest part of the ruin, the remains of the great keep. Two of the walls of the once-mighty structure were collapsed, scattering the telltale whitish rock so typical of the Ayleid architecture in this part of Tamriel. This made our assault on

the ruin difficult, as many of the larger chunks of wall were far too heavy for us to move.

Bradon suggested that we search the center of the building's foundation for any underground entrances, which was typical for this type of keep. His guess paid off, and after several hours of backbreaking work, we managed to clear an opening just large enough for us to squeeze through and enter an ancient stairwell leading down into the ground. We decided to wait until morning's light to begin our descent into the depths of the ruin.

After a restless sleep, all of us were quite excited at the prospect of what might lie ahead. Eagerly, we dipped our torches in a fresh container of pitch, lit them, and entered the inky blackness of the stairwell.

The stale air was choked with dust and fine grit, a sign that no one had entered this portion of the ruins in a very long time. We became excited, as that meant no other tomb robbers had gotten there before us.

The stairwell eventually leveled out into a corridor of sorts that snaked its way to the north. As we carefully walked along, I scanned the floor and walls very carefully for any type of triggers, tripwires or pressure plates; such was my specialty. The Ayleid were well known for their cunning traps protecting their tombs, and I wasn't taking any chances.

Bradon, the scholar of the Brotherhood, was getting more and more excited as we traversed the passage; he was translating the wall carvings and was becoming certain that we had finally found the true location of our prize. After walking for several more minutes, we were overjoyed to see what we were hoping

to see: the hallway ended at a metal door with the carving of a spider upon it.

Now came the true test of Bradon's information. The door supposedly had a puzzle lock; by pulling the spider legs in a certain combination, it would unlatch. The wrong combination would spell our deaths, perhaps triggering a collapse of the hallway or some other equally deadly trap. With a shaky hand, I pulled the legs one by one in the order I had memorized: the sixth one, then the first one, the second one, the eighth one, and finally the first one again.

I closed my eyes, as there were a few loud clicks and then the door popped open. We all breathed a sigh of relief. Pushing open the door, I looked in at a huge room with a pedestal at the center. Sitting on the pedestal illuminated by a shaft of sunlight from a tiny hole in the ceiling was our prize.

The floor was covered in a huge mosaic of a stylized spider, all eight of its legs coming to a point and ending up at the door entrance. This was the last of the traps the Ayleid left behind to protect their treasure. Again, if it hadn't been for Bradon's skill at acquiring information, we may never have known how to solve this last line of defense.

I instructed Bradon and Raynil to remain at the entrance and to tie a rope around my waist in case of a sudden pitfall. Carefully, I began to walk on the darkened tiles that formed the third leg of the spider. Sweat beaded on my forehead, as the pathway made by the tiny pieces of ceramic was very narrow at the start, and one slip could again mean instant death.

But death never arrived. The information had been correct, and I was able to make it to the pedestal and secure the artifact!



Quickly as possible, we made our way back and out into the daylight. Once again, the Brotherhood was triumphant and it was time to return home.

At the tavern that night, we decided to make a pact. We would stash the artifact in a cave not far from Bruma until we researched it further. An item of its magnitude could be very dangerous if mishandled, and we certainly didn't want to sell it without understanding its true value. Bradon agreed to contract a local cooper to construct a chest with three locks. Each of us would hold a key to one of the locks so none would have access to the artifact without the others being present. For the rest of the evening, we drank merrily and sang many a song of adventures passed, and adventures to come.

# Glarthir's Notes

*Glarthir*

Glarthir's Notes: Note 1

Good news! I may still have a chance. Found someone to help me today. A stranger who can move freely. Hope to have proof against Bernadette Peneles by tonight!

Glarthir's Notes: Note 2

Bernadette Peneles is guilty, as I thought! My new agent has proved trustworthy and efficient. We must move quickly before the conspiracy learns that I am no longer alone. I should have proof against Toutius Sextius by tonight.

Bernadette Peneles is not involved in the conspiracy! At least so my new acquaintance tells me. I hope it is true, but my instincts are rarely wrong. But I have no reason to suspect treachery, yet. The report on Toutius Sextius should help me decide where my new friend's loyalties lie.

Glarthir's Notes: Note 3

Proof against Toutius Sextius, at last! I chose my helper well. Now to gather evidence against Davide Surilie, and the conspiracy will at last be laid bare. If we can preserve the element of surprise, we may still have a chance!

Toutius Sextius is blameless, it seems. I am glad to know that at least one of my fellow-citizens is not involved in the conspiracy. When my new friend delivers proof of Davide Surilie's guilt, I can finally take decisive action with a clear conscience.

I fear the conspiracy spreads further than I thought. The supposed stranger in town appears to be involved. Is it likely that both Bernadette Peneles and Toutius Sextius are blameless? But I must not act without proof. I have always held myself to a higher standard than my enemies. The report on Davide Surilie will tell the tale. I fear that the end is near. But I will not go down without a fight! They will know that Glarthir, at least, did not submit to their yoke quietly!!

Glarthir's Notes: Note 4

These people **MUST** be killed! There is no choice, they are definitely conspiring against me.

Bernadette Peneles

Toutius Sextius

Davide Surilie (THE RINGLEADER—kill him first!)

Come back and see me (make sure you are **NOT** followed) once it is done and I will give you your reward.

Glarthir

Bernadette Peneles **MUST** be killed! There is no choice, she is definitely conspiring against me.

Come back and see me (make sure you are NOT followed) once it is done and I will give you your reward.

Glarthir

These people MUST be killed! There is no choice, they are definitely conspiring against me.

Bernadette Peneles

Davide Surilie (THE RINGLEADER—kill him first!)

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Toutius Sextius MUST be killed! There is no choice, he is definitely conspiring against me.

Come back and see me (make sure you are NOT followed) once it is done and I will give you your reward.

Glarthir

# Glories And Laments Among The Ayleid Ruins

*Alexandre Hetrard*

Having arrived at Gottlesfont Priory, halfway on the Gold Road between Skingrad and the Imperial City, I resolved to make a side trip to view the magnificent ruins of Ceyatatar, or “Shadow of the Fatherwoods’ in the ancient Ayleid tongue. After many hours of difficult travel through tangled hawthorn hells and limberlosts, I was suddenly struck dumb by the aspect of five pure white columns rising from a jade-green mound of vines to perfect V-shaped arches and graceful capitals towering above the verdant forest growth. This spectacle caused me to meditate on the lost glories of the past, and the melancholy fate of high civilizations now poking like splinter shards of bone from the green-grown tumulus of time-swept obscurity.

Within the forest tangle I discovered an entrance leading down into the central dome of a great underground edifice once dedicated to Magnus, the God of Sight, Light, and Insight. Dimly lit by the faded power of its magical pools, the shattered white walls of the enclosure shimmered with a cold blue light.

The marble benches of the central plaza faced out across the surrounding waters to tall columns and sharp arches supporting the high dome. From the central island, stately

bridges spanned the still pools to narrow walkways behind the columns, with broad vaulted avenues and limpid canals leading away through ever-deeping gloom into darkness. Reflected in the pools were the tumbled columns, collapsed walls, and riotous root and vine growth thriving the dark half-light of the magical fountains.

The ancient Ayleids recognized not the four elements of modern natural philosophy—earth, water, air, and fire—but the four elements of High Elf religion—earth, water, air, and light. The Ayleids considered fire to be but a weak and corrupt form of light, which Ayleid philosophers identified with primary magical principles. Thus their ancient subterranean temples and sanctuaries were lit by lamps, globes, pools, and fountains of purest magic.

It was by these ancient, faded, but still active magics that I knelt and contemplated the departed glories of the long-dead Ayleid architects. Gazing through the glass-smooth reflections of the surrounding pools, I could see, deep below, the slow pulse, the waxing and waning of the Welkynd stones.

The chiefest perils of these ruins to the explorer are the cunning and deadly mechanisms devised by the Ayleids to torment and confound those who would invade their underground sanctuaries. What irony that after these many years, these devices should still stand vigilant against those who would admire the works of the Ayleids. For it is clear... these devices were crafted in vain. They did not secure the Ayleids against their true enemies, which were not the slaves who revolted and overthrew their cruel masters, nor were they the savage beast peoples who learned the crafts of war and magic from their Ayleid masters. No, it was the arrogant pride of their

achievements, their smug self-assurance that their empire would last forever, that doomed them to fail and fade into obscurity.



# Greywyn's Journal

*Greywyn*

Turdas 18 Rain's Hand 3E 421

Sithis speaks to me. He does not use words but I can hear his voice. Echoes of darkness spring from his lips and tell me what I must do. The Dark Brotherhood must be purged of its clean-blooded vermin and a new order must take the reins. The time is nigh for the vampire to claim his rightful place as the true Hands of Sithis. I have secured the help of many of my kin, and soon, we shall spread like a cold fog through the ranks and make the group our own. Soon, Sithis will give the sign, the time will be right, and the Crimson Scars will strike!

Loredas 27 Rain's Hand 3E 421

We are betrayed! That cur, Silarian, has made true our plans to the Fingers, and we have been discovered! The Brotherhood struck as we slept, not even giving the Scars a chance to fight back. Using their silver weapons, they pierced the heart of many of my brothers... The screams I could hear as they turned to dust still echo within my mind. I was able to dispatch two of the purebloods that fell upon me, and before they could send more, I made good my escape. I must find a place to hide... to recover from this blow. I will make my way south to Deepscorn Hollow, my old hideaway from when I was but a novice. There I

will make my dark plans and we shall see who Sithis truly favors!

Tirdas 21 Second Seed 3E 421

It's been nearly a month, and yet none of my brethren has returned to the fold. What puzzles me is why I have not heard from my lord. Sithis hasn't spoken to me since that dark night. What have I done to displease him? I have slain many since then, and poured their lifeblood on his altar, but still he remains silent. As I ponder this, I turn my attentions to the lair. Deepscorn Hollow will rise as the new headquarters of the Crimson Scars. But it must be prepared. So much to do...

Loredas 1 Mid-Year 3E 421

The lair has improved much. I was fortunate to find Rowley Eardwulf at the Wawnet Inn outside of the Imperial City, another Scar who had escaped the night of slaughter. He now does his dark work acquiring the tools I need to bring Deepscorn Hollow back to its former glory. I must remember him in the future should I ever need these items again.

Middas 17 Sun's Height 3E 421

All along, I was mistaken. All along, I was the blight upon Sithis and his dark name. Tonight, he spoke to me and again, and I learned of his displeasure. Again, I heard no words, but I knew the meaning. I was meant to take blood, to spill blood... but never to taste blood. My sanguine ways have offended my lord! I must cleanse myself of this filth. I must find a way!

Tirdas 30 Sun's Height 3E 421

I have found it! My lord will be pleased! My answer lies with the Purgeblood Salts. Yes! I will bathe in these tonight and free myself from my old ways! Hail Sithis! Dark ruler, soon I will be your only true disciple!

# Grommok's Journal

*Grommok*

3 Rain's Hand 3E431

We were finally able to convince that idiot rogue Lewin that it was time to give up that strongbox of money he stole from Lelles' Quality Merchandise in Anvil and ditch it outside the castle. All the heat he brought on the group was starting to chafe. Syndelius pretty much sat him down and made him do it, because I was ready to put my foot in his face. I know he's a rogue, but we're adventurers; we get our loot from raiding old crypts, and ruins, and places that ain't got guards. He can be a real horse's ass sometimes, I'll tell ya.

12 Rain's Hand 3E431

What a bad Fredas we've had. We hit what was left of old Fort Wariel, and after slaughtering a bunch of no good Marauders and grabbing their loot, made our way north. We came to the ruins of Trumbe. Syndelius said they were Ale Lid or Eyelid or some kind of old civilization, but all I cared about was how loaded with gold they were. He said usually they were, so in we went. What a mistake! The place was crawling with skeletons and ghosts. Those things give me the creeps. How can I fight something that ain't even alive? Lewin took a few good hits and had to pop all his potions, Syndelius broke his arm when a trap almost crushed him to death and I got a nice nasty scar across

my forehead. Close call. Best of all, when we got to the treasure horde, Lewin was out of lockpicks! Why do we even keep him with us? We had to drag the damn container out of Trumbe and all the way back to Camp Atrene. Now I'm sitting here staring at a stupid metal box wishing I could use Lewin's head to bash it open. What a dolt.

### 13 Rain's Hand 3E431

After a night of deciding whether or not to snap off Lewin's legs and use them as firewood, I sent Syndelius and Lewin to Anvil to buy more lockpicks while I guarded the box. They came back in a few hours and Lewin picked the lock in the first try. Good thing too, I was still pretty mad at the guy. I don't like sitting around all day. Anyway, Syndelius got all excited when he saw something wrapped up in some sort of fancy cloth. Inside the cloth was a bunch of stuff, but the best was the sword. What a beauty! Blade looks like a mouth with teeth, handle like golden snakeskin and the gem in the middle of it... a perfect fiery orange and red, like the sky at dawn. Syndelius was going crazy and I asked him what was all the noise for. He told me it was Akaveery or something like that and made by the Snake People or the Sayessie or whatever. Syndelius says Sayessie starts with a T just now when he saw me writing this, but that doesn't make any sense. T-s-a-e-s-c-i. Fine, there, I wrote it. By the Nine, Syndelius is nosy sometimes. Well, anyway, the best was yet to come. Right as the sun was setting the sword vanished for a moment and was suddenly replaced by another weapon that looked almost the same, but the gem on it was deep blue and purple. Syndelius said he was certain that at dawn, it would change back to the orange and red gem! Well, this was good enough for me. That alone made the sword the best thing I had ever seen. Lewin muttered something about Akaveery

magic, but I told him to shut up. I decided to call the sword Dawnfang when it was orange and red and Dusksfang when it was blue and purple.

14-16 Rain's Hand 3E341

Things are getting better and better with my new sword in these last few days. I found out Dawnfang is a fire blade and Dusksfang is a frost blade... handy for extra killing power! But the best was what I found out when a Minotaur decided to jump us and I landed the killing blow. I heard a voice in my head. Or maybe a thought? I dunno. It was weird. But it felt like the sword knew it had just killed the Minotaur, like it was counting or something. At first I thought maybe I was just tired, but after tearing through a camp of Bandits, it kept counting. After the twelfth kill, it told me its thirst was satisfied. At least, I think it told me. Then it stopped. Syndelius said it's possible the sword was a blood drinker... my kind of sword... but he didn't know what would happen. It didn't take that long to find out. When dusk came around, and the blade changed... I almost fell off the campfire log. The new blade was still Dusksfang... but it somehow seemed stronger. I could just tell. I couldn't wait to try it out! I ran right out and looked for something to kill. Didn't take long to come across a few of those stupid imps. Sure enough, not only did it do more frost damage than normal, but also I could feel the energy from the creature transfer to me every time I hit it! What a weapon this was! Yeah! Dusksfang Superior! That's what I'll call it.

Sometimes I amaze even myself. Syndelius said he was sure Dusksfang would blood drink too and I could power up Dawnfang with it. I spent all night looking for twelve things to kill, and when the sun came up, he was right! Dawnfang

Superior is to be this one's name. It's like having four blades in one!

17-19 Rain's Hand 3E341

It's been the most fun I have ever had in my life cutting a bloody swath across the ruins of Cyrodiil with my new double sword. Syndelius and Lewin are even more confident now that we have such a powerful weapon among us. We've gathered tons of loot in the last three days, but nothing compares to this. We're going to head north and explore the area around Niben Bay today. I hope that something else like this turns up on our adventures. Then I'm going to retire!

# Guide To Anvil

*Alessia Ottus*

Sweet Dibella, Lady of Love! Bless us and our Children!

My name is Alessia Ottus, and I'd like to tell you all about Anvil.

The seat of Anvil County is by the sea, and at first glance, is very pretty, but when you examine it closely, turns out to be quite unpleasant. The water views are charming, but on the docks and in the harbor district outside of town you will find many sailors and tramps and dirty persons of little worth. Castle Anvil is clean and well-ordered, and within the town walls, some houses are bright and cheerful, but others are derelict and abandoned, or shabby and neglected, with plaster fallen in patches from the stonework, and lunatics and drunkards may be encountered everywhere.

\* Castle Anvil \*

The ruler of Anvil is Countess Millona Umbranox. Her husband, Corvus Umbranox, disappeared many years ago, and most persons would agree that Her Ladyship is better off without him, for he was a light and frivolous person, and given to loose and riotous behavior likely to promote scandal. The Countess herself is a righteous and godly woman, and an excellent ruler, well-loved by the people. If only she could compel her Town Guard to drive the seamen, low-lives, loafers, and thieves from Anvil's streets, Anvil might be a more tolerable place to live.



### \* Districts of Anvil \*

Consider the five districts of Anvil. Castle Anvil lies outside the town walls, south of town, overlooking the harbor, and is reached by gate from Chapelgate. Within the town walls are three districts: Chapelgate in the east, Westgate in the west, and Guildgate between Chapelgate and Westgate. Harborside lies outside the town walls, south of town, and is reached by gate from Westgate district.

### \* Chapelgate \*

A more beautiful chapel may not be seen in all Cyrodiil. A quiet garden for meditation with a fine statue of Dibella lies between the chapel and the town wall, and across from the chapel is a lovely garden and covered arcade where worshippers are protected from the elements. Regretably, the people of Anvil seem little inclined to appreciate these advantages, and are seldom seen worshipping in the chapel. Whether this is the fault of the primate, who is a vain and shallow woman, or the Countess, who does little to encourage regular chapel worship by her example, I am unable to judge.

### \* Guildgate \*

The most prosperous part of Anvil is entered by Guildgate, or Main Gate, or North Gate. Here side by side may be seen the handsomest and ugliest of Anvil buildings. The guilds are kept clean and in good repair, and both Mages Guild and Fighters Guild are unusually ambitious and industrious by Cyrodiil's common standard. The head of the Mages Guild, Carahil, is a scholar of good reputation and an outspoken enemy of necromancy, summoning, and the dark arts. The Fighters Guild here is well-staffed and active, and shows no sign of the

fecklessness and poor morale of chapters elsewhere in Cyrodiil. However, next to the Mages Guild is a ruin, long boarded-up and abandoned, and an prominent eyesore.

\* Westgate \*

This is the residential district of Anvil. The houses here are shabby and ill-kept. The people are untidy and dull, with the exception of Anvil's famous citizen, the Argonian authoress, Quillweave, who produces wretched books celebrating the misadventures and schemes of the lower and criminal classes. This person does her race no favor by confirming the prejudices of many who consider Argonians to be ungodly, dishonest, and worthless, and little better than beasts.

\* Harborside \*

The docks are rotten and in ill-repair, and all manner of smells issue forth from the holds of ships and ramshackled warehouses. Shiftless persons gather here to bask in the sun, gossip, chatter, and plot how to beg or steal gold for wine and ale. Here a good woman named Mirabelle Monet runs a house for homeless sailors, but, I'm sorry to say, her mistaken tender-heartedness and charity only encourages malingering and drunkenness. Instead, she should urge these wicked and idle men to improve themselves through industry and the teachings of the Nine. There is, however, a very appealing lighthouse south of the harbor, from which one may contemplate a distant and less-disagreeable view of Anvil's castle, town and its harbor setting.

May the Nine guard and guide you!

# Guide To Bravil

*Alessia Ottus*

Mara, Mother Mild! Make us hale and hearty! My name is Alessia Ottus, and I'd like to tell you all about Bravil.

Bravil is the dark grate of the sewer drain where foul and unappetising debris collects. It is the poorest and dirtiest of Cyrodiil's towns, the oldest and shabbiest, the most plagued by criminals, drunkards, and skooma-eaters, and most popular with beastfolk and other foreigners. All Bravil lacks is a coven of Daedra worshippers to make it the perfect pit of villainy... and many rumors suggest that even more evil and depraved worships are practiced in secret by Bravil's wicked heathens.

This town is gray, grim, and depressing. The climate is damp and the atmosphere foul because of the fetid channels of the Larsius River that serve as Bravil's sewers, and because of the rank swamps of the lowland margins of the Niben Bay, where insects and diseases breed in abundance.

The architecture of the town is remarkable for its unequalled ugliness and disorder. The houses, shops, and guilds are built from cracked and splintered timbers soft from rot and green with mold and mildew. It is a pity that they do not fall down, for they might be rebuilt in a more pleasing manner, but rather they continue to grow on top of one another like mounded middens, reaching lofty heights of three and four stories.

Beggars and thieves lounge indolently on balconies overhanging the streets and dump their refuse directly upon the unfortunate passers-by. Whole families live in teetering shacks on the tops of the buildings in unimaginable squalor.

Bravil's people are dirty and dishonest. They live little better than goblins in caves, squatting in filthy, tumbledown shacks. The town citizens are divided into two classes: the smugglers, skooma-eaters, bandits, thieves, and murderers, and the wretched beggars and fools that these criminals prey upon.

Bravil is ruled by crimelords, and the town guard lives in the pockets of the skooma kingpins. You will not be surprised to find there are many Argonians and Khajiit in this miserable place, since Elsweyr and Black Marsh are close by, but you may be surprised to find many Orcs here. However, beastfolk are comfortable in the company of other beastfolk, as are thieves and brutes naturally drawn to the company of one another.

Bravil is not organized into orderly districts. However, some landmarks may serve to orient the unfortunate visitor. The castle is approached by rickety bridges over the river to the east. The chapel is to the west. The shops and guilds are arranged in a line with their backs to the east wall and the channels of the river. Between the chapel and the shops and guilds are Bravil's ramshackle slums and tenements.

The castle is the only sturdy, stone-built dwelling in Bravil. It is nowhere as dirty and ill-furnished as the timber shacks of the people, but it is still little better than the houses of the poorest paupers in Anvil or the Imperial City. Count Regulus Terentius, from a respectable family, once a noted tournament champion, is now widely recognized by his people as a drunken wastrel and ne'er-do-well. And his son, Gellius Terentius, is a strutting

peacock who cultivates the society of crimelords and skooma-eaters.

The chapel stonework is in poor repair and covered with mold and mildew. The graveyard is surrounded by a ramshackle, unpainted wooden fence, and the graves are untidy and neglected. The primate is a good servant of Mara, but she is unequal to the task of driving sin and wickedness from this Nine-forsaken town. The priestess is wise and well-liked by those few who visit the chapel, but most people never pass once through the chapel's doors, except to beg and steal.

The inns are a disgrace. It is common to step over prostrate drunks and through pools of sick upon entering, and idlers, gamblers, and pickpockets swarm in the darkness and prey upon unwary travelers. A visitor foolish enough to sleep in these places should expect to be murdered in his bed.

The guilds, by contrast, are relatively clean, dry, and quiet, and one forced by necessity to spend a night in Bravil might be justified in joining the Fighters Guild or the Mages Guild, despite their savage and godless ways, simply to be assured of a safe place to sleep.

The shops are no worse than any other feature of Bravil, and you may be more safe in them from assault or murder on account of the prodigious provisions merchants must take to protect themselves from thieves.

If you are forced by circumstances to visit Bravil, you will very soon wish to leave, and you will wish to watch your back as you leave, to be sure you are not followed by parades of bandits and assassins.

Honor the Nine in prayer!

# Guide To Bruma

*Alessia Ottus*

Father Talos, protect us all! My name is Alessia Ottus, and I'd like to tell you all about Bruma.

Bruma is understood to be a Nibenese county, but in truth it is more Nord than Nibenese, on account of its close proximity to the Skyrim border, and on account of the terrible cold and discomfort of its location high in the Jerall Mountains. Bruma is always cold and covered with snow, with braziers kept burning in every quarter to prevent the citizens from freezing to death. Everything is built in wood, since trees are so plentiful in the forests of the Jeralls, and even rich men live here in dark, dirty wooden huts. It is little wonder that Nords are such drunken heathen savages, for life is impossible in such a climate, and one might be tempted to drink into insensibility or sell one's soul to just to find sanctuary from the bitter cold and relentless wind.

Castle Bruma is cold and drafty, carelessly decorated, and dark with soot from the perpetually burning braziers. The smell of smoke and cinders is overpowering. The high ceilings are grand, but impossible to heat, and one is never able to get warm. The ancient layers of soot and filth encrusting the stonework makes it difficult to appreciate the exceptional stonework. Except in its stonework and grand scale, the

castle is like the log huts of the people—cold, dark, drafty, and dirty.

Countess Narina Carvain is a Nibenean Heartlander, a dutiful chapelgoer, and a respected ruler, though she is a cunning and ruthless negotiator, and has a reputation for sharp-dealing and treachery. Administration of the county is efficient and well-ordered, and a well-trained and aggressive town watch under command of a hard-nosed Nord captain insures that thieves and beggars are not very troublesome, though Nords are famous for drunkenness and rioting.

Access to the castle is through a gate west from the town into a courtyard. The shops, inns, guilds are located in the north, either on the western terrace near the castle gate, or below the terrace, north of the chapel. The chapel is the central feature of southern Bruma, with houses ranged along the inside of the walls along the east and south. The streets are cramped and barren, since few trees and plants can survive the cold, but the town is compact and quickly explored.

Bruma's Nibenean citizens faithfully observe chapel Sundas rituals, but the lower classes are unregenerate followers of the heathen Nord gods, and they keep to their own secret superstitions and uncivilized practices.

You will not be surprised to find you can purchase good quality weapons and armor here, for Nord smiths are famous for the quality of their wares. But you should not expect to be able to purchase books here, for Nords are ignorant and not fond of reading. The Fighters and Mages Guilds are poor and short-staffed, for no one wants to be posted to such a gray and cold land, but at least the Mages Guild is kept good and warm



(though I shrink from imagining what infernal engines are employed to produce and preserve that heat).

May the Nine bless and save you!

# Guide To Cheydinhal

*Alessia Ottus*

Arkay, bless my body and soul! My name is Alessia Ottus, and I'd like to tell you all about Cheydinhal.

The first impression of the visitor to Cheydinhal is of broad green parklands, graceful willows along the banks of the Corbolo, neatly groomed gardens and flowering shrubs. Cheydinhal looks prosperous, with clean, well-trimmed houses and neat stonework, ornamented with striking designs in glass, metal, and wood.

But what lurks beneath this pleasing appearance? Crime! Scandal! Corruption!

Cheydinhal is divided into three districts. To the north, on a hill, is the courtyard and inner keep of Castle Cheydinhal. A road runs east-west below the castle from East Gate to West Gate. The Corbolo River runs roughly north-south from this road, dividing southern Cheydinhal into two districts, Chapel in the east, and Market in the west. In Market District lie all the shops, inns, and guildhalls. In Chapel District are the Chapel itself and Cheydinhal's residences. Bridges span the Corbolo in the north and south, with the south bridges connecting upon a pretty little island park in the middle of the river.

Though Cheydinhal lies in the Nibenean East, its culture is shaped by the Dark Elf immigrants who emigrated here in the

past half century from Morrowind. Many of these immigrants were fleeing Morrowind's rigid society and heathen Temple theocracy. In Cyrodiil they hoped to find the stimulating commercial atmosphere inspired by Zenithar's patronage.

One of these immigrants is now Count Cheydinhal. Andel Indarys was of House Hlaalu in Morrowind, but he came to Cheydinhal searching for greater opportunity. His sudden rise into the highest ranks of Cyrodilic nobility is hard to explain, and most old families of Cyrodiil rightly regard him as a presumptuous upstart. However, the discovery of the Count's wife, Lady Llathasa Indarys, badly battered and dead at the foot of the County Hall stairs immediately attracted scandal, and rumors of the Count's dissipation, rages and infidelities suggest a darker mystery behind her death.

The Chapel of Arkay in Cheydinhal is poorly attended. The Count sets a poor example; he never sets foot inside the chapel. But perhaps it is from fear of divine judgement that he avoids placing himself under the eyes of the Nine! Cheydinhal's primate, priest, and healer are goodly people, and staunch professors of the faith, but the most honored and respected of the chapel's clerics is Errandil, the Living Saint of Arkay, a tireless crusader against the wicked practice of necromantic sorcery in the Mages Guild and the Imperial Battle College.

Both of Cheydinhal's inns appear respectable from the outside, but the Newlands Inn is owned by a wicked, profane Dark Elf ruffian, and the Cheydinhal Bridge Inn is owned by a dignified, devout Imperial matron, so I am sure you know which place will serve you good, reasonable food, and which will provide you with a safe, clean bed where you are unlikely to be murdered for your purse. The owner-proprietor of

Cheydinhal's bookstore is Mach-Na, an Argonian, and a ruder, more disagreeable creature I have never met. Nonetheless, his selection of books is excellent, and his prices reasonable.

The poorest of Cheydinhal's residences are bright and clean, with well-groomed grounds, and the citizens think it no inconvenience when you step in to admire their furniture and appointments (provided you do this at a decent hour!). However, be warned! Many of these residents seem respectable to all appearances, but no sooner do they open their mouths than they reveal themselves to be evil brutes, shocking and rude, and more likely to murder you and bury you in their basements as to speak a civil word to you. That many of these rough, unpleasant people are Orcs should be no surprise to you.

However, you will not wish to miss the house of Cheydinhal's most notable citizen, the celebrated painter, Rythe Lythandas. He is often hard at work in his studio, and not to be disturbed, but his wife is gracious and hospitable, and may be persuaded to show you those of his paintings which hang on his own walls.

Follow the Nine to Glory!

# Guide To Chorrol

*Alessia Ottus*

Praise Stendarr, the Nine, and all the Saints! My name is Alessia Ottus, and I'd like to tell you all about the town of Chorrol.

\* Castle Chorrol \*

Chorrol is the county seat of County Chorrol, and is ruled by Countess Arriana Valga, a very proper woman, and mother of the beautiful and virtuous Alessia Caro, Countess of Leyawiin.

Countess Arriana is a devout and righteous follower of Akatosh, and sets a fine example for her people by her devotions in the Chapel of Stendarr. Her husband, Count Charus Valga, was a staunch Defender of the Faith and follower of Stendarr, and his death in battle against the heathen Nord clansmen of Skyrim was greatly lamented by his people. Alessia Caro has been a good husband to Count Marius of Leyawiin, and a dutiful daughter, and she is often seen visiting Chorrol and her saintly mother.

I am also pleased to report that the castle mage is a righteous and goodly servant of the Nine (unlike so many wizards who neglect the Chapel and the Faith). Chanel offers magical training for those eager to smite the ungodly, and it would be much better to go to her than to some wicked Mages Guild hedgewizard.

The Countess holds court every day in the fine Great Hall (except on Sundas, of course). She has a very fine herald and steward, and the castle is neat and well-ordered. It also has a strong dungeon jail for evildoers, though I'm sorry to say that the guards are often lax in their duties, and fail to arrest and lock up the various beggars and thieves and gamblers and cheats who idle in the streets.

#### \* Districts of Chorrol \*

There are five main districts of Chorrol. When you enter the gate, you find yourself in Fountain Gate, before the fine pool and statue of the Saint of Sancre Tor, in memory of all who died in that great battle. Around the fountain are the two inns, the general store and the smith. One street leads east to the Castle, one north to Great Oak Place, one west to Chapel Street and West Chorrol. Chapel Street leads west to the Chapel, past the book store, and thence to the crude shacks gathered around the well of West Chorrol. Around Great Oak Place are the Mages Guild and Fighters Guild, and many fine houses.

#### \* The Chapel of Stendarr \*

The Chapel of Stendarr is beautiful, and perfect for a traveler's meditations and prayer. Every Sundas morning you will find the best citizens gathered with their good countess for worship. You may be surprised to learn that not all people of Chorrol follow the model of their countess, for many are very idle and careless in their devotions. This is certainly the responsibility of the Fighters Guild and the Mages Guild, whose members fail to set a good example for Chorrol's citizens. The elderly priestess of the Chapel, Orag gra-Bagrol, is a kindly, righteous soul, and it would be far better to purchase your spells from her than from the godless heathens of the Mages Guild.

### \* Chorrol's Guilds \*

The Fighters Guild's members, though led by the excellent and honorable Vilena Donton, are dirty and uncouth in their speech, and often to be found lazing about in their chapter house, or wandering the town and engaging in loose talk. How much better it would be if they improved their characters by regular attendance at the Chapel of Stendarr. Their excellent smith is an exception, being often seen at her devotions at the chapel.

The members of the Chorrol Mages Guild are for the most part shiftless scholars and students who spend their time reading, quarreling, and brewing foul concoctions. They are well-spoken and well-educated, but what good is such learning if they fail to improve their souls by penitence and prayer? You may purchase spells and potions from these persons, but it will only encourage them in their irreverent amusements and wicked idleness.

### \* Goods and Services \*

The proprietor of Northern Goods and Trade, Seed-Neeus, is an Argonian, but unlike so many of her countrymen, she is clever, honest, and well-spoken. Isn't that remarkable? She is so accomplished that she offers training in the mercantile arts, but you will not purchase goods from her cheaply.

I am told by those who know that the smith of Fire and Steel, Rasheda the Redguard, is a very fine craftsman, who offers training in her craft, and she is always to be found at Sundas chapel worship, but she is fresh and disrespectful, and her manners and dress leave something to be desired.

Renoit's Books is fairly clean, and has a wide selection of books, but would you believe that I found not a single copy of 'Ten Commands of the Nine Divines', nor have I ever seen the proprietress in the Chapel of Stendarr?

There are only two places where you may purchase food and lodging. One is proper and clean, frequented by decent citizens. The other is rude and dirty, and a meeting place for drunkards, thieves, and Orcs. The one is run by a well-dressed, dignified, and proper matron. The other is run by a careless young woman. The one is called the 'Oak and Crosier'. The other is called 'The Grey Mare'. I'm sure you know which one to visit if you want a clean and safe bed.

\* Notable Citizens of Chorrol \*

Casta Scribonia, the author, lives in Chorrol. She is a well-educated and well-traveled woman, but she writes books which I cannot recommend, for they are full of romance and gossip and other offensive and wasteful indulgences, and their heroes do not present to our children the proper models of virtue, duty, honor, and reverence that all followers of the Nine Divines must love and hold in our hearts.

\* Shameful Features of Chorrol \*

You will often see townsfolk gathered in mischief and loose talk around the Great Oak near the Fighters and Mages Guilds. One man, very sly, named Honditar, knows all about the surrounding lands, and he offers to teach skills for a fee, but one never sees him in the chapel, and one suspects that he is given to profanity, strong drink, and brawling.



There are many thieves and murderers in Chorrol. They even secretly teach their crafts for fees in their homes, and where is the Chorrol Guard? Nowhere to be seen, I'm sorry to say.

The beggars in Chorrol are dirty, but they are free of disease, cheerful, and polite. You may give a coin to one to ease your soul, but it does little to improve a beggar, for it will soon be squandered on gambling, strong spirits, and other mischief.

Nine gods and nine blessings!

# Guide To Leyawiin

*Alessia Ottus*

Zenithar, bless all our labors! My name is Alessia Ottus, and I'd like to tell you all about Leyawiin.

Pinned between the savage and uncivilized provinces of Elsweyr and Black Marsh, and guarding the vital passage up the River Niven from Topal Bay to the Imperial City, Leyawiin is a mighty fortress, with tall stone walls and strong garrisons.

Leyawiin is a bright and cheerful, prosperous town in the midst of Blackwood's swampy wildernesses, with wide, bright streets, large, comfortable houses, half-timbered or painted stucco, many of which are colorful and not too dirty or weather-worn. There are trees and flowering shrubs everywhere, and peaceful plazas and ponds for quiet contemplation. Indeed, if it weren't for the raffish rabble of Argonian and Khajiit descent, Leyawiin would be a pleasant and safe place to visit.

Marius Caro is Count Leyawiin, and his recent bride, the lovely and cultivated Alessia Caro, is the daughter of the righteous and reliable Countess Arriana Valga of Chorrol. The Count and Countess are energetic supporters of Imperialization, and they work tirelessly to bring the traditional values of hard-working, chapel-going, and law-abiding Nibenese Heartland Imperial culture to this frontier outpost.

The town itself lies with tall curtain walls on the west bank of the Niben. To the east through two gates lies the inner keep and Castle Leyawiin, straddling the deep channels of the river. The Chapel of Zenithar lies in the northwest, near the West Gate. All the shops, inns, and guildhalls lie south of the chapel, in the western half of town, except for a fine bookstore and general trader north of the road traversing the town east-west from West Gate. The residential part of town runs along a single wide north-south boulevard, backed on the east by deep ponds created by impounding one of the meandering channels of the Niben.

The Chapel of Stendarr and the Count and Countess are partners in attempting to extend the benefits of heartland Nibenese culture to the benighted frontier populations of Blackwood and the Lower Niben. Trade and industry are strong in Leyawiin, thanks to the patronage of Zenithar, and notwithstanding the bandits troubling caravans and travellers along the Green Road through the recently annexed Trans-Niben.

Leyawiin boasts the finest collection of shops and tradesmen in Cyrodiil (outside of the Imperial City, of course). Even the craftsmen and trainers of the Fighters Guild and Mages Guild are of a higher order of quality. Worth special mention is Southern Books—a bookstore owned by an Orc (!!!), always stocking multiple copies of ‘A Children’s Annua’, a religious book appropriate for those ignorant of the mysteries of the faith, and adapted to the meanest understanding.

Recently, a new competitor for the Fighters Guild, a mercenary hiring hall called ‘The Blackwood Company’, has commenced operations here in a striking new building. Despite being

staffed almost exclusively by Khajiit and Argonians, the officers are polite, well-spoken, and deferential, and I'm told they aggressively compete with the Fighters Guild for price and service. (This is the Imperial way and pleasing to Zenithar—to extend prosperity and security through enterprising commercial ventures.)

I'm sorry to say that not all Khajitt and Argonians in Leyawiin are as presentable and industrious as the members of the Black Comapany. Lizardmen and catfolk are to be seen in the streets at all hours, lounging and gossiping. If only these creatures would spend a little more time keeping themselves and their homes clean.

Praise the Nine and turn away from sin!

# Guide To Skingrad

*Alessia Ottus*

In Julianos, all justice and wisdom! My name is Alessia Ottus, and I'd like to tell you all about Skingrad.

Skingrad County is famous for its wines, tomatoes, and cheeses, and the town of Skingrad is one of the cleanest, safest, and most prosperous towns in Cyrodiil. Located in the heart of the West Weald highlands, Skingrad is the gem of Old Colovia, and a model of the Colovian virtues of independence, hardwork, and tough-mindedness.

Skingrad has three districts: the Castle, Hightown, and Chapel. A low road runs east-west under the walls and bridges of the upper town. The guilds and West Weald Inn are in the west of Hightown, while many shops and upper class residence are arranged along a street in the north. The southern half of the town includes the chapel at its east end, with Skingrad's other lodgings, the Two Sisters Inn, on a street in the center, with other residences, modest and mean, scattered through the rest of the district. Gates and bridges cross the low road to connect Hightown and Chapel in several places. Castle Skingrad is completely separate from the town, standing on a high prominence to the southeast. A road from the town's east gate leads from town to the castle.

Janus Hassildor, Count Skingrad, has ruled Skingrad for many years, and is known by reputation to be a powerful wizard. He is a very private man, and declined all requests for an interview, and he shamefully neglects his chapel devotions to the Nine. How are the people to learn public virtue if not from the model of their ruler? Nonetheless, he is widely honored and respected by his people, and Skingrad is a model of a well-run, orderly county. Crime, gambling, and public drunkenness are almost unknown, and its wines and cheeses command high prices all over Tamriel.

There are two inns in Skingrad. One, the Two Sisters Inn, is owned by two Orcs. I'm pleased to tell you that this inn is clean and well-ordered, and is troubled neither by riot nor public drunkenness. The other inn is run by a pleasant Imperial woman. Neither of these proprietors are to be seen in the Chapel of Julianos, so I am at a loss to tell you which one you should choose when seeking food or lodgings.

However, I am certain where you should go to purchase your sweet rolls—to Salmo the Baker in Chapel District! They are delicious. As for where to sample the other tasty treats of Skingrad—its cheeses and tomatoes—I must leave that to your discretion. I am sure you are not interested in Skingrad's wines, for drinking leads to disorderliness, and disorderliness leads to sin.

The Mages Guild here is no better than it is in other places, but the Fighters Guild makes a specialty of goblin hunting, which is a great service to travelers in the West Weald. And I was shocked to discover that the town smith openly refers to himself as 'Agnete the Pickled'. Can you imagine being proud of such shameful behavior?

Keep the Nine in your heart!

# Guide To The Imperial City

*Alessia Ottus*

Praise Akatosh! Bless the Empire and All Its People!

My name is Alessia Ottus, and I'd like to tell you all about the Imperial City.

\* The Imperial City \*

Who do you think lives in the Imperial City? Uriel Septim, Emperor of Tamriel, Defender of the Faith, and Descendant of the Sainted Tiber Septim, Lord Talos, the Holy God of State and Law in our Blessed Nine Divines. All know the emperor to be a good and holy man, for he may often be seen in the Temple of the One, making his devotions to the Nine Divines and the Communion of Saints.

And where does he live? In the Imperial Palace, in the center of the Imperial City, in the White Gold Tower which was built many ages ago by the godless, Daedra-loving Ayleids. How fine it is that the stones raised high by this ancient evil empire are now reconsecrated as a monument to Imperial justice and piety.

People who visit the Imperial Palace like to walk among the graves of saints and counts, battlemages and emperors, and gaze with wonder upon White Gold Tower, which can be seen from any place within the City.



The Elder Council Chamber here cannot be entered, and though you may marvel at their curious ancient armors, you will soon want be away from the rude and discourteous Imperial Guards.

\* Imperial City Districts \*

The Imperial City is divided into ten districts. At the center is the Imperial Palace. The other districts are grouped around the Palace. To the northwest is Elven Gardens, a pleasant residential district.

Continuing widdershins, the Talos District, an exclusive residential area, lies to the west. To the southwest is the Temple District, and beyond it, outside the walls, the filthy and bad-smelling Waterfront District. To the southeast lies the Arboretum, and beyond that, outside the walls, the infamous Arcane University of the Mages Guild. To the east is the notorious Arena District. And last, to the northeast of the Palace lies the Market District, where anything may be bought, and beyond the Market District, outside the city walls, the Imperial Prison.

\* The Temple District \*

I live in the Temple District of the Imperial City, and it is a very pretty place. You are welcome to visit me, my husband, and daughter when you come to worship at the Temple of the One. This district is very pretty, and only pleasant and well-bred persons live here, though, as in all parts of the city, beggars are a constant problem.

\* The Arboretum \*

In this beautiful garden you will find the famous Statues of the Nine Divines. In the center you will find the statue of Lord Talos, Emperor Tiber Septim. But is it right, that Talos should have this place of honor rather than Akatosh, king of gods? It is the scheming pride of the Elder Council, who sought favor with the sons of Talos, that is responsible for this shameful error.

\* The Market District \*

You will find crowds of people waiting outside the doors of the Office of Imperial Commerce to make their complaints about being cheated by some merchant. It is a very dirty place. Piles of crates lie around in untidy heaps, unwholesome toadstools and fungus grow in clumps, and the cobbles are slimy and encrusted with filth. If you may send your servant rather than visit yourself, it would be far better.

\* Arcane University \*

This place is unspeakably dirty and unkempt, no better than a slum. You will never find the students or wizards outside in the air, for they are squatting in their dark dungeons poring over profane texts and making crabbed scribbles on scrolls.

Within the Arch-Mage's Tower is hidden the Imperial Orrery, which the mages use to study the sky. Such fools! Why do they not look on the glory of Creation itself, and give praise to the Nine as they ought, rather than squat and peer at such a ridiculous and expensive machine?

The Mages are said to have a great library of precious books, but they jealously hoard them for themselves. This is no loss for the righteous, for these books are surely full of wicked nonsense.

\* Imperial Waterfront \*

This is a terrible place. It is not uncommon to stumble over the bodies of women and children who have been murdered here. There are no more wicked and godless men in Tamriel than merchants and sailors, and they gather here to plot and cheat citizens of their hard-earned gold. Gambling and slaving and skooma-sucking and even more depraved activities take place in warehouses and ships here. And where are the City Watch? Nowhere to be seen.

\* Imperial Prison \*

The prisons are very cruel and horrible, damp and dirty, with chains and pincers and manacles and instruments of torture on every hand. But did I find any prisoners in these cells? No! For the Watch is so lazy and careless that the cells are all empty!

There are guards everywhere in the Imperial City. They travel in groups, for even they are afraid of the cruel bandits and thieves that lurk everywhere in the City. I do not know why they do not throw the impertinent beggars into prison. Criminals are so bold as to introduce themselves to you on the street. One outlaw was so brazen as to boast that he had stolen his weapons and armor from the Imperial Prison. How careless and idle these Watchmen must be to allow this! They know no shame, for the wicked officers of the Watch are corrupt, and accept gold from the hands of the very people they are supposed to place behind bars.

\* The Arena \*

I will not tell you about this place, for you have no need to visit it. Only idle or foolish persons come here to throw their money away on games of chance, or to spill their own blood when they would better devote themselves to exterminating the armies of robbers and beggars that swarm in the streets.

May the Nine bless you and keep you!

# Hallgerd's Tale

*Tavi Dromio*

I think the greatest warrior who ever lived had to be Vilus Nommenus," offered Xiomara. "Name one other warrior who conquered more territory."

"Tiber Septim, obviously," said Hallgerd.

"He wasn't a warrior. He was an administrator... a politician," said Garaz. "And besides, acreage conquered can't be final means of determining the best warrior. How about skill with a blade?"

"There are other weapons than blades," objected Xiomara. "Why not skill with an axe or a bow? Who was the greatest master of all weaponry?"

"I can't think of one greatest master of all weaponry," said Hallgerd. "Balaxes of Agia Nero in Black Marsh was the greatest wielder of a lance. Ernse Llervu of the Ashlands is the greatest master of the club I've ever seen. The greatest master of the katana is probably an Akaviri warlord we've never heard of. As far as archery goes—"

"Pelinal Whitestrake supposedly conquered all of Tamriel by himself," interrupted Xiomara.

“That was before the First Era,” said Garaz. “It’s probably mostly myth. But there are all sorts of great warriors of the modern eras. The Camoran Usurper? The unknown hero who brought together the Staff of Chaos and defeated Jagar Tharn?”

“We can’t declare an unknown champion as the greatest warrior. What about Nandor Beraid, the Empress Katariah’s champion?” suggested Xiomara. “They said he could use any weapon ever invented.”

“But what happened to him?” smiled Garaz. “He was drowned in the Sea of Ghosts because he couldn’t get his armor off. Call me overly particular, but I think the greatest warrior in the world should know how to take armor off.”

“It’s kinda hard to judge ability to wear armor as a skill,” said Xiomara. “Either you have basic functionality in a suit of armor or you don’t.”

“That’s not true,” said Hallgerd. “There are masters in that as well, people who can do things while wearing armor better than we can out of armor. Have you ever heard of Hlaalu Pasoroth, the King’s great grandfather?”

Xiomara and Garaz admitted that they had not.

“This was hundreds and hundreds of years ago, and Pasoroth was the ruler of a great estate which he had won by right of being the greatest warrior in the land. It’s been said, and truly, that much of the House’s current power is based on Pasoroth’s earnings as a warrior. Every week he held games at his castle, pitting his skill against the champions of the neighboring estates, and every week, he won something.

His great skill wasn't in the use of weaponry, though he was decent enough with an axe and a long sword, but in his ability to move quickly and with great agility wearing a full suit of heavy mail. There were some who said that he moved faster while wearing armor than he did out of it.

“Some months before this story begins, he had won the daughter of one of his neighbors, a beautiful creature named Mena who he had made his wife. He loved her very much, but he was intensely jealous, and with good reason. She wasn't very pleased with his husbandly skills, and the only reason Mena never strayed was because Pasoroth kept a close eye on her. She was, to put it kindly, naturally amorous and resentful of her position as a prize. Wherever he went, he always brought her with him. At the games, she was placed in a special box so that he could see her even while he competed.

“But his real competition, though he didn't know it, was from a handsome young armorer he also had won at one of his competitions. Mena had noticed him, and the armorer, whose name was Taren, had certainly noticed her.”

“This has all the makings of a dirty joke, Hallgerd,” said Xiomara, with a smile.

“I swear that it's entirely true,” said Hallgerd. “The problem facing the lovers was, of course, that they could never be alone. Perhaps because of this, it became a burning obsession to both of them. Taren decided that the best time for them to consummate their love was during the games. Mena feigned illness, so she didn't have to stay in the box, but Pasoroth visited the sickroom every few minutes between fights, so Taren and Mena could never get together. The sound of

Pasoroth's armor clunking up the stairs to visit his sick wife gave Taren the idea.

"He crafted his lord a new suit of armor, strong, and bright, and beautifully decorated. For his purposes, Taren rubbed the leg joints with luca dust so the more he sweated and the more he moved them, the more they'd stick together. After a little while, Taren figured, Pasoroth wouldn't be able to walk very quickly, and wouldn't have enough time in between fights to visit his wife. But just in case, Taren also added bells to the legs which rung loudly when they moved, so the couple would be able to hear him coming in plenty of time.

"When the games commenced the following week, Mena feigned illness again and Taren presented his lord with the new armor. Pasoroth was delighted with it, as Taren hoped he would be, and donned it for his first fight. Taren then stole upstairs to Mena's bedchamber.

"All was silent outside as the two began to make love. Suddenly, Mena noticed a peculiar expression on Taren's face and before she had a chance to ask him about it, his head fell off at the neck. Pasoroth was standing behind him with his axe in hand."

"How did he get upstairs so quickly, with his leg joints gummed up? And didn't they hear the bells ringing?" asked Garaz.

"Well, you see, when Pasoroth realized he couldn't walk on his legs very quickly, he walked on his hands."

"I don't believe it," laughed Xiomara.

"What happened next?" asked Garaz. "Did Pasoroth kill Mena also?"



“No one knows exactly what happened next,” said Hallgerd. “Pasoroth didn’t return for the next game, nor for the next. Finally, at the fourth game, he returned to fight, and Mena appeared in the box to watch. She didn’t appear to be sick anymore. In fact, she was smiling and had a light flush to her face.”

“They did it?” cried Xiomara.

“I don’t have all the salacious details, except that after the battle, it took ten squires thirteen hours to get Pasoroth’s armor off because of all the luca dust mixed with sweat.”

“I don’t understand, you mean, he didn’t take his armor off when they—but how?”

“Like I said,” replied Hallgerd. “This is a story about someone who was more agile and accomplished in his armor than out of it.”

“Now, that’s skill,” said Garaz.

# Handbills

*Anonymous*

Advertisements found in cities.

# Hastily Scrawled Note

*Falcar*

Primary sites:

The Dark Fissure

Fort Istirius

Fort Linchal

Wendelbek

Altars have been raised; Anchorites have been called. Watch the skies; once a week His Grace shines down on us.

# Heavy Armor Repair

*Anonymous*

Heavy armor must be designed to take a lot of punishment. It will receive direct blows from all sorts of weapons while protecting the wearer. Such armor tends to be made from a few large pieces rather than lots of small pieces like light armor.

Iron and steel are easy to work. Just heat them up and pound them back into shape. You can even use a camp fire for field repairs. Avoid filing off any of the metal. Always try to conserve the metal and work it back into shape.

If a piece needs a lot of hammering, it may become brittle. Reheating the armor every now and then can reduce the brittleness after severe repairs. Once the hammering is done, be sure to oil it well. The freshly hammered surfaces will rust more quickly and need to be protected.

Dwarven and Orcish armor require small and large hammers. Heat should be used sparingly, particularly with Orcish. Both types respond better to many small hammer strokes rather than fewer heavy strokes.

Ebony can only be hammered when heated. It will develop small cracks that eventually shatter the material if hammered cold. Daedric should always be worked on at night... ideally under a new or full moon, and never during an eclipse. A red harvest moon is best.

# Heretical Thoughts

*Anonymous*

Zealotry is an abomination that must be wiped from the Shivering Isles. We cannot suffer their beliefs to spread to even one more soul. They name us Heretics for our lack of belief. We gladly accept the name, and will make a honorable one.

It is not heresy to speak truth. It is not heresy to speak out against an unjust lord. It is not heresy to take arms and action in defense of true belief. We are the so-called Heretics of the Shivering Isles, but we do not speak heresy. We speak the truth.

Our Lord, Sheogorath, is but a man. He is only flesh and blood, not a god, and certainly not a Daedric Prince. There are no princes in the realms of the Daedra, only vile servitors such as the Hungers that we summon to do our bidding.

Sheogorath the False is a mad despot. Years of dabbling in foul magic and consorting with Daedra have driven him mad. He is not a fit ruler, let alone divine. He perverts the teachings of Arden-Sul, He Who Gave His Heart's Blood.

When the truth of our cause is common knowledge among the people, we will drive him from New Sheoth and put that cesspool to the sword. His four limbs will be scattered to the four winds. His head will rest upon the Hill of Suicides and his heart shall be burnt in the flames of freedom. His entrails shall be fed to the dogs.

We will make all the people of the Shivering Isles wear the robes of the Heretics. By these robes we know each other to be true non-believers. The people shall return to the wilderness and live among the wild things, as we do. They will see the wisdom and purity of the life we lead and they will hail us as saviors.

# Hiding With The Shadow

*Anonymous*

There are few professions that require the practitioner to be more self-reliant than that of thief. A thief is by nature a loner. He trusts no one and is trusted by few. He cannot go to a master and become an apprentice. He has no guild to collect and codify how to ply his craft. He does his crimes alone, and in the dark of night. He must hide by day to avoid capture by the authorities.

The only known deity recognized by thieves is Nocturnal. Not truly a goddess, this Daedric lord is none-the-less a potent figure. She is the Mistress of Shadows, holding sway over secrets and stealth. She does not ask for worshippers, nor does she necessarily give blessings to those that do recognize her. In fact there are no known temples to her in Cyrodiil, although there are rumors of a forgotten shrine. In other words, she is perfectly suited to the criminal mind of the thief.

By and large, thieves are a godless lot. They believe only in their own skills and cunning. However, since the existence and influence of the gods and Daedric lords is undeniable, they have an uneasy relationship with Nocturnal. Though some thieves truly worship her, most choose to offer their respect and reverence without fealty.

These criminals recognize that should they offend the Mistress of Shadows, it might go poorly for them. However, true worship and fealty does not have any known benefit. The classic blessing between thieves is “shadow hide you.” This is an oblique reference to Nocturnal. However it can also be interpreted to be a non-theistic statement of actual shadows hiding the thief.

Thieves tend to dress in black clothes or dark clothing. While this is a practical thing for their criminal endeavors, it is unnecessary during the daylight hours. Yet many thieves still don these shadowy colors in silent recognition of Nocturnal.

The most shocking link between the nebulous culture of thieves and Nocturnal, is the tale of the Gray Fox. He is the mythical king of thieves. The legend states that he stole the hood off of Nocturnal’s cloak. Obviously this is just a story invented centuries ago to bolster their feelings of self-worth. However, it is indicative of the continued link between the Daedric lord and the criminals of the Empire.



# Hirrus Clutumnus's Will

*Hirrus Clutumnus*

I've wanted to die for quite some time. Things just aren't going right. Never have gone right, really. No one seems to care either, nor even notice I exist. Not that I'd have much to say even if someone had wanted to be my friend. I'd make a lousy friend anyway. I'm probably even boring the person reading this. I'm certainly boring myself. Not that anyone will ever find this note. Oh, but if they do!

If they do it means that I've been granted my greatest wish! To be released from this mortal coil. This isn't a suicide note, no. That would mean I've taken my own life, and we all know what that means. Who wants that kind of existence, to be reborn on a hill every day, reset as if nothing ever happened? That's even worse than the life I'm living. Life I've lived! Yes, yes, yes! I'm sure I'm happy now. The dead me. The me writing this note isn't happy at all. Never have been happy, really.

Anyway, the purpose of this note is to say to the man or woman who has killed me: "Thank you!"

All I really have is this queer little ring. A wizard gave it to me once, said I reminded him of his dead son. I guess I resemble his dead son even more now. Anyway, he said it would make me happy. Lift the weight of the world off my shoulders or some such thing. Come to think of it, it's the only time anyone has

ever given me anything. Personally, I think the thing is worthless. Just like me.

I tried it for a while, the “Happiness Ring,” but eventually I couldn’t wear it anymore. It made me feel odd—not myself. I didn’t like feeling that way so I locked it away. It’s pretty enough, though. It might fetch a few gold coins at the merchant. Sorry not to leave much more behind. But, my life never really amounted to much anyway, did it?

Yours very truly,

Hirrus Clutumnus, deceased

# History Of Lock Picking

*Anonymous*

The modern lock has a fascinating history in Cyrodii. The need to restrict access to one's home has been a problem since homes were first built. The very first security system was a simple bar across the door. This has the obvious shortcoming of only being functional when the owner is at home.

The first recorded instance of a lock is the ingenious armbreaker of Castle Anvil. The count of the day put five slide bars on the side of the door. A hole in the door just above them allowed him to reach in and manipulate any of these bars. Only one of the bars truly locked or unlocked the door. The other four released the clasp on a hammer that fell down on the person's arm. Only by knowing which sliding bar was the true lock could one safely open the door.

For over a hundred years, the state of the art in locks was defined by sliding bars and punished traps. Then the famous dwarf Mzunchend invented the pin lock. The first example had three pins. The key was turned in the lock four times, each turn depending on a different pin being in position. Obviously a pin could be used more than once.

It was 65 years before anyone devised a method to open a pin-based lock without the key and without damaging the lock. It wasn't that the problem was so difficult. It was that nobody

other than royalty could afford Mzunchend's locks. An enterprising blacksmith named Orenthal decided to mass-produce a common form of the lock at a reasonable price. Suddenly every shop had a lock. Now there was a reason to subvert the locks. It wasn't long before lockpicks and lockpicking appeared. Orenthal became quite wealthy inventing more and more sophisticated locks.

Today's locks are sophisticated mechanisms with spring-loaded pins. Each metal pin must be pushed up by the key precisely to open the lock. Any imprecision in the key, any poorly made copy, or any clumsy attempt at lockpicking releases the spring tension, causing the pin to clamp down upon or even break the key or lockpick.

Locks are made more secure by using multiple pins in the lock. Multiple-pin locks are more delicate and difficult to make, and more expensive, but provide a greater reliability against tampering. Multiple-pin locks have the further virtue of resetting all pins when any single pin is tampered with. A single mistake with the fifth pin of a five-pin lock requires a thief to reset all five pins again. Most affordable locks are one-pin or two-pin locks. The five-pin lock is the highest achievement of the lockmaker's craft, and the greatest challenge to a would-be intruder.

Picking the modern lock is an art form. A lockpick is a thin metal bar with a small tooth on the end. The tooth is used to press the pin up into the lock mechanism. The thief uses skill and experience to manipulate each pin in turn to determine the exact tension necessary to set the spring-loaded pin at its catchpoint. With a subtle pressing and lofting of the pin, the master thief determines the exact motion required to set it.

A novice thief breaks many picks while learning his trade. Only with time and practice will he get better at guessing the tension and timing necessary to set a pin. As a result, novice thieves tend to carry a great many lockpicks, while the masters only need to carry a few.

# Horse Armor Note

*Snak gra-Bura*

In celebration of the launch of our new barding services, we are offering a free set of horse armor to the bearer of this letter. To retrieve your reward bring your favorite horse, along with this notice, to the Chestnut Handy Stables outside of the Imperial City. Help us spread the word about our new horse armor services.

Chestnut Handy—Because you can't afford not to protect your horse.

Signed,

Snak gra-Bura

Owner, Chestnut Handy Stables

# Ice And Chitin

*Pletius Spatec*

The tale dates to the year 855 of the Second Era, after General Talos had taken the name Tiber Septim and begun his conquest of Tamriel. One of his commanding officers, Beatia of Ylliolos, had been surprised in an ambush while returning from a meeting with the Emperor. She and her personal guard of five soldiers barely escaped, and were separated from their army. They fled across the desolate, sleet-painted rocky cliffs by foot. The attack had been so sudden, they had not even the time to don armor or get to their horses.

“If we can get to the Gorvigh Ridge,” hollered Lieutenant Ascutus, gesturing toward a peak off in the mist, his voice barely discernible over the wind. “We can meet the legion you stationed in Porhnak.”

Beatia looked across the craggy landscape, through the windswept hoary trees, and shook her head: “Not that way. We’ll be struck down before we make it halfway to the mountain. You can see their horses’ breath through the trees.”

She directed her guard toward a ruined old keep on the frozen isthmus of Nerone, across the bay from Gorvigh Ridge. Jutting out on a promontory of rock, it was like many other abandoned castles in northern Skyrim, remnants of Reman Cyrodiil’s protective shield against the continent of Akavir. As they

reached their destination and made a fire, they could hear the army of the warchiefs of Danstrar behind them, making camp on the land southwest, blocking the only escape but the sea. The soldiers assessed the stock of the keep while Beatia looked out to the fog-veiled water through the casements of the ruin.

She threw a stone, watching it skip across the ice trailing puffs of mist before it disappeared with a splash into a crack in the surface.

“No food or weaponry to be found, commander,” Lieutenant Ascutus reported. “There’s a pile of armor in storage, but it’s definitely taken on the elements over the years. I don’t know if it’s salvageable at all.”

“We won’t last long here,” Beatia replied. “The Nords know that we’ll be vulnerable when night falls, and this old rock won’t hold them off. If there’s anything in the keep we can use, find it. We have to make it across the ice floe to the Ridge.”

After a few minutes of searching and matching pieces, the guards presented two very grimy, scuffed and cracked suits of chitin armor. Even the least proud of the adventurers and pirates who had looted the castle over the years had thought the shells of chitin beneath their notice. The soldiers did not dare to clean them: the dust looked to be the only adhesive holding them together.

“They won’t offer us much protection, just slow us down,” grimaced Ascutus. “If we run across the ice as soon as it gets dark—”

“Anyone who can plan and execute an ambush like the warchiefs of Danstrar will be expecting that. We need to move



quickly, now, before they're any closer." Beatia drew a map of the bay in the dust, and then a semicircular path across the water, an arc stretching from the castle to the Gorvigh Ridge. "The men should go the long way across the bay like so. The ice is thick there a ways from the shoreline, and there are a lot of rocks for cover."

"You're not staying behind to hold the castle!"

"Of course not," Beatia shook her head and drew a straight line from the castle to the closest shore across the Bay. "I'll take one of the chitin suits, and try to cross the water here. If you don't see or hear me when you've made it to land, don't wait—just get to Porhnak."

Lieutenant Ascutus tried to dissuade his commander, but he knew that she would never order one of her men to perform the suicidal act of diversion, that all would die before they reached Gorvigh Ridge if the warlords' army was not distracted. He could find only one way to honor his duty to protect his commanding officer. It was not easy convincing Commander Beatia that he should accompany her, but at last, she relented.

The sun hung low but still cast a diffused glow, illuminating the snow with a ghostly light, when the five men and one woman slipped through the boulders beneath the castle to the water's frozen edge. Beatia and Ascutus moved carefully and precisely, painfully aware of each dull crunch of chitin against stone. At their commander's signal, the four unarmored men dashed towards the north across the ice.

When her men had reached the first fragment of cover, a spiral of stone jutting a few yards from the base of the promontory,

Beatia turned to listen for the sound of the army above. Nothing but silence. They were still unseen. Ascutus nodded, his eyes through the helm showing no fear. The commander and her lieutenant stepped onto the ice and began to run.

When Beatia had surveyed the bay from the castle ramparts, the crossing closest to shore had seemed like a vast, featureless plane of white. Now that she was down on the ice, it was even more flat and stark: the sheet of mist rose only up their ankles, but it billowed up at their approach like the hand of nature itself was pointing out their presence to their enemies. They were utterly exposed. It came almost as a relief when Beatia heard one of the warchiefs' scouts whistle a signal to his masters.

They didn't have to turn around to see if the army was coming. The sound of galloping hoofs and the crash of trees giving way was very clear over the whistling wind.

Beatia wished she could risk a glance to the north to see if her men were hidden from view, but she didn't dare. She could hear Ascutus running to her right, keeping pace, breathing hard. He was used to wearing heavier armor, but the chitin joints were so brittle and tight from years of disuse, it was all he could do to bend them.

The rocky shore to the Ridge still looked at eternity away when Beatia felt and heard the first volley of arrows. Most struck the ice at their feet with sharp cracking sounds, but a few nearly found home, ricocheting off their backs. She silently offered a prayer of thanks to whatever anonymous shellsmith, now long dead, had crafted the armor. They continued to run, as the first rain of arrows was quickly followed by a second and a third.

“Thank Stendarr,” Ascutus gasped. “If there was only leather in the keep, we’d be pierced through and through. Now if only it weren’t... so rigid...”

Beatia felt her own armor joints begin to set, her knees and hips finding more and more resistance with every step. There could be no denying it: they were drawing closer toward the shore, but they were running much more slowly. She heard the first dreadful galloping crunch of the army charging across the floe toward them. The riders were cautious on the slippery ice, not driving their horses at full speed, but Beatia knew that they would be upon the two of them soon.

The old chitin armor could withstand the bite of a few arrows, but not a lance driven with the force of a galloping horse. The only great unknown was time.

The thunder of beating hooves was deafening behind them when Ascutus and Beatia reached the edge of the shore. The giant, jagged stones that strung around the beach blockaded the approach. Beneath their feet, the ice sighed and crackled. They could not stand still, run forward, nor run back. Straining against the tired metal in the armor joints, they took two bounds forward and flew at the boulders.

The first landing on the ice sounded an explosive crack. When they rose for the final jump, it was on a wave of water so cold it felt like fire through the thin armor. Ascutus’s right hand found purchase in a deep fissure. Beatia gripped with both hands, but her boulder was slick with frost. Faces pressed to the stone, they could not turn to face the army behind them.

But they heard the ice splintering, and the soldiers cry out in terror for just an instant. Then there was no sound but the

whining of the wind and the purring lap of the water. A moment later, there were footsteps on the cliff above.

The four guardsmen had crossed the bay. There were two to pull Beatia up from the face of the boulder, and another two for Ascutus. They strained and swore at the weight, but finally they had their commander and her lieutenant safely on the edge of Gorvigh Ridge.

“By Mara, that’s heavy for light armor.”

“Yes,” smiled Beatia wearily, looking back over the empty broken ice floe, the cracks radiating from the parallel paths she and Ascutus had run. “But sometimes that’s good.”

# Imbel Genealogy

*Anonymous*

The Imbel family traces lineage strictly through the male line of heirs, as any right-thinking nobility would. Therefore this family genealogy does not record the inconsequential female offspring.

Artan Imbel 1000 - 1057, Son of Rosten Imbel

Married Gustie Karna 1031

Buried in Vardenfell near Suran

Faris Zeetl 1030 - 1101, Son of Artan Imbel

Unmarried

Whereabouts unknown

Faren Imbel 1037 - 1056, Son of Artan Imbel

Married Janiy Ulura 1053

Buried in Vardenfell near Suran

Corben Imbel 1053 - 1152, Out of wedlock son of Faren Imbel

Unmarried

Buried in Bravil

Artan Imbel II 1079 - 1152, Bastard son of Corben Imbel

Married Eadith Gerimania 1100

Buried in Bravil

Faren Imbel II 1084 - 1085, Bastard son of Corben Imbel

Buried in Skingrad

Corben Imbel II 1086 - 1167, Bastard son of Corben Imbel

Married Faith Horr 1110

Buried in Bruma

# Imperial Charter Of The Guild Of Mages

*Anonymous*

## I. Purpose

The Guild of Mages provides benefits to scholars of magic and established laws regarding the proper use of magic. The Guild is dedicated to the collection, preservation, and distribution of magical knowledge with an emphasis on ensuring that all citizens of Tamriel benefit from this knowledge.

## II. Authority

The Guild of Mages was established on Summerset Isle in the year 230 of the Second Era by Vanus Galerion and Rilis XII. It was later confirmed by the “Guilds Act” of Potentate Versidue-Shaie.

## III. Rules and Procedures

Crimes against fellow members of the Guild are treated with the harshest discipline. Whether a member may regain their status in the Guild is determined by the Arch-Mage.

ADDENDUM: Effective 3E 431, any guild member committing a crime against the guild is to be suspended immediately. The suspension may be lifted at the discretion of the Steward of the

Council of Mages. Any guild member receiving multiple suspensions may, at the determination of the council, be summarily and permanently dismissed from the guild.

#### IV. Membership Requirements

The Guild of Mages only accepts candidates of keen intelligence and dominant will. Candidates must exhibit mastery in the great schools of magic: Destruction, Alteration, Illusion, and Mysticism. Candidates must also display practical knowledge of enchantments and alchemical processes.

#### V. Applications for Membership

Candidates must present themselves to the Steward of the Guild Hall for examination and approval.

ADDENDUM: Effective 3E 431, as per Arch-Mage Traven, all candidates for membership in the Guild of Mages must be approved by all presiding Guild Hall stewards, with said approval submitted in writing to the Council of Mages in a timely manner.

ADDENDUM: Effective 3E 431, as per Council mandate, sale of spells in the Imperial Province is to be re-distributed across guild halls. The following halls are to be responsible for each School of Magic:

Alteration: Cheydinhal

Conjuration: Chorrol

Destruction: Skingrad

Illusion: Bravil



Mysticism: Leyawiin

Restoration: Anvil

# Incident In Necrom

*Jonquilla Bothe*

“The situation simply is this,” said Phlaxith, his face as chiseled and resolute as any statue. “Everyone knows that the cemetery west of the city is haunted by some malevolent beings, and has been for many years now. The people have come to accept it. They bury their dead by daylight, and are away before Masser and Secunda have risen and the evil comes forth. The only victims to fall prey to the devils within are the very stupid and the outsiders.”

“It sounds like a natural solution to filtering out the undesirables then,” laughed Nitrah, a tall, middle-aged woman with cold eyes and thin lips. “Where is the gold in saving them?”

“From the Temple. They’re re-opening a new monastery near the cemetery, and they need the land cleansed of evil. They’re offering a fortune, so I accepted the assignment with the caveat that I could assemble my own team to split the reward. That’s why I’ve sought you each out. From what I’ve heard, you, Nitrah, are the best bladesman in Morrowind.”

Nitrah smiled her unpleasant best.

“And you, Osmic, are a renowned burglar, though never once imprisoned.”

The bald-pated young man stammered as if to refute the charges, before grinning back, "I'll get you in where you need to go. But then it's up to you to do what you need to do. I'm no combatter."

"Anything Nitrah and I can't handle, I'm sure Massitha will prove her mettle," Phlaxith said, turning to the fourth member of the party. "She comes on very good references as a sorceress of great power and skill."

Massitha was the picture of innocence, round-faced and wide-eyed. Nitrah and Osmic looked at her uncertainly, particularly watching her fearful expressions as Phlaxith described the nature of the creatures haunting the cemetery. It was obvious she had never faced any adversary other than man and mer before. If she survived, they thought to themselves, it would be very surprising.

As the foursome trudged toward the graveyard at dusk, they took the opportunity to quiz their new teammate.

"Vampires are filthy creatures," said Nitrah. "Disease-ridden, you know. They say off to the west, they'll indiscriminately pass on their curse together with a number of other afflictions. They don't do that here so much, but still you don't want to leave their wounds untreated. I take it you know something of the spells of Restoration if one of us gets bit?"

"I know a little, but I'm no Healer," said Massitha meekly.

"More of a Battlemage?" asked Osmic.

"I can do a little damage if I'm really close, but I'm not very good at that either. I'm more of an illusionist, technically."

Nitrah and Osmic looked at one another with naked concern as they reached the gates of the graveyard. There were moving shadows, stray specters among the wrack and ruins, crumbled paths stacked on top of crumbled paths. It wasn't a maze of a place; it could have been any dilapidated graveyard but even without looking at the tombstones, it did have one very noticeable feature. Filling the horizon was the mausoleum of a minor Cyrodilic official from the 2nd Era, slightly exotic but still harmonizing with the Dunmer graves in a complimentary style called decay.

"It's a surprisingly useful School," whispered Massitha defensively. "You see, it's all concerned with magicka's ability to alter the perception of objects without changing their physical compositions. Removing sensual data, for example, to cast darkness or remove sound or smell from the air. It can help by —"

A red-haired vampire woman leapt out of the shadows in front of them, knocking Phlaxith on his back. Nitrah quickly unsheathed her sword, but Massitha was faster. With a wave of her hand, the creature stopped, frozen, her jaws scant inches from Phlaxith's throat. Phlaxith pulled out his own blade and finished her off.

"That's illusion?" asked Osmic.

"Certainly," smiled Massitha. "Nothing changed in the vampire's form, except its ability to move. Like I said, it's a very useful School."

The four climbed up over the paths to the front gateway to the crypt. Osmic snapped the lock and disassembled the poison trap. The sorceress cast a wave of light down the dust-choked

corridors, banishing the shadows and drawing the inhabitants out. Almost immediately they were set on by a pair of vampires, howling and screaming in a frenzy of bloodlust.

The battle was joined, so no sooner were the first two vampires felled than their reinforcements attacked. They were mighty warriors of uncanny strength and endurance, but Massitha's paralysis spell and the weaponry of Phlaxith and Nitrah clove through their ranks. Even Osmic aided the battle.

"They're crazy," gasped Massitha when the fight finally ended and she could catch her breath.

"Quarra, the most savage of the vampire bloodlines," said Phlaxith. "We have to find and exterminate each and every one."

Delving into the crypts, the group hounded out more of the creatures. Though they varied in appearance, each seemed to rely on their strength and claws for attacking, and subtlety did not seem to be the style of any. When the entire mausoleum had been searched and every creature within destroyed, the four finally made their way to the surface. It was only an hour until sunrise.

There was no frenzied scream or howl. Nothing rushed forward towards them. The final attack when it happened was so unlike the others that the questors were taken utterly by surprise.

The ancient creature waited until the four were almost out of the cemetery, talking amiably, making plans for spending their share of the reward. He judged carefully who would be the greatest threat, and then launched himself at the sorceress.

Had Phlaxith not turned his attention back from the gate, she would have been ripped to shreds before she had a chance to scream.

The vampire knocked Massitha across a stone, its claws raking across her back, but stopped its assault in order to block a blow from Phlaxith's sword. It accomplished this maneuver in its own brutal way, by tearing the warrior's arm from its socket. Osmic and Nitrah set on it, but they found themselves in a losing battle. Only when Massitha had pulled herself back up from behind the pile of rocks, weak and bleeding, that the fight turned. She cast a magickal ball of flame at the creature, which so enraged it that it turned back to her. Nitrah saw her opening and took it, beheading the vampire with a stroke of her sword.

"So you do know some spells of destruction, like you said," said Nitrah.

"And a few spells of healing too," she said weakly. "But I can't save Phlaxith."

The warrior died in the bloodied dust before them. The three were quiet as they traveled across the dawn-lit countryside back toward Necrom. Massitha felt the throb of pain on her back intensify as they walked and then a gradual numbness like ice spread through her body.

"I need to go to a healer and see if I've been diseased," she said as they reached the city.

"Meet us at the Moth and Fire tomorrow morning," said Nitrah. "We'll go to the Temple and get our reward and split it there."

Three hours later, Osmic and Nitrah sat in their room at the tavern, happily counting and recounting the gold marks. Split three ways, it was a very comfortable sum.

“What if the healers can’t do anything for Massitha?” smiled Osmic dreamily. “Some diseases can be insidious.”

“Did you hear something in the hall?” asked Nitrah quickly, but when she looked, there was no one there. She returned, shutting the door behind her. “I’m sure Massitha will survive if she went straight to the healer. But we could leave tonight with the gold.”

“Let’s have one last drink to our poor sorceress,” said Osmic, leading Nitrah out of the room toward the stairs down.

Nitrah laughed. “Those spells of illusion won’t help her track us down, as useful as she keeps saying they are. Paralysis, light, silence—not so good when you don’t know where to look.”

They closed the door behind them.

“Invisibility is another spell of illusion,” said Massitha’s disembodied voice. The gold on the table rose in the air and vanished from sight as she slipped it into her purse. The door again opened and closed, and all was silent until Osmic and Nitrah returned a few minutes later.

# Instructions: The Gray Cowl

*Anonymous*

The Gray Cowl of Nocturnal shrouds the wearer's face in shadow. No light or magic of detection can penetrate its depths. To look upon Nocturnal's face without the cowl is to view the depths of the void. A man would lose his mind to see it.

Recently it has come to light that the Gray Cowl has gone missing. This must be at the whim of Nocturnal, for she could reclaim it easily. The Lady of Shadows has seen fit to reveal that a curse is laid upon the Gray Cowl. Whosoever wears it shall be lost in the shadows. His true nature shall be unknown to all who meet him. His identity shall be struck from all records and histories. Memory will hide in the shadows, refusing to record the name of the owner to any who meet him. He shall be known by the cowl and only by the cowl.

I am directing a triad of Moth priests to investigate this tale. They shall determine the truth or falseness of the story. They shall determine the present whereabouts of the Gray Cowl, be it in Tamriel, Oblivion, or beyond. All curses can be broken, even those laid by Nocturnal. The triad shall determine how this curse may be lifted so that the Moth priests may safely wield the Gray Cowl.

Office of the Unseeing Eye



# Invitation From Umbacano

*Umbacano*

As my servant no doubt has already explained, I am an avid collector of Ayleid antiquities. As such, your recent sale of a rare Ayleid statue piqued my interest. I am most eager to acquire more of these statues for my collection, and will be happy to remunerate you handsomely for your efforts.

I would be pleased to welcome you to my home in the Imperial City, in order to discuss this matter in more detail, at your earliest convenience.

I remain, most sincerely,

Umbacano

Umbacano Manor

Talos Plaza District

Imperial City

# Jailor's Letter

*Commander Adrethi*

Vilnas -

Keep searching for the writ that assassin carries. The patrolmen have searched the tunnels in hopes that he dumped it when he was found out, but he may carry it on his person yet. If that's the case, I shudder to think where it's hidden. Try sneaking in there while he's sleeping to search the cell.

And by Nerevar, get to work building that second cell! I don't want to execute that assassin until we find out who he came for, and Sardova needs someplace to lock up the workers when they get out of line.

- Commander Adrethi

# Jearl's Orders

*Ruma Camoran*

Jearl -

The Master was pleased to hear of your activities outside of Chorrol. The more gates that we open, the nearer we are to the glorious Cleansing.

The Master has chosen you and Saveri for a most crucial mission, a sign of your advancement through the ranks of the Chosen. We have learned that the Septim heir has gone to ground at Cloud Ruler Temple, the lair of the accursed Blades. The Master has made its destruction the top priority of the Order, and Lord Dagon has committed whatever resources are required.

Pending your report on the Septim's activities at Cloud Ruler Temple, and your assessment of Temple defenses and possible routes of escape, we plan to open a Great Gate in the open ground before Bruma as soon as possible.

Remember: the first three Lesser Gates represent only the preliminary stages of Great Gate Deployment. Do not in any way compromise your cover in defense of these gates. New ones can be quickly and easily reopened. And once the Great Gate is opened, the fall of Bruma is assured. Cloud Ruler Temple cannot stand long after that, and the Septim will be caught like a rat in a trap.

We would welcome any further details you can offer concerning the Imperial agent who rescued Martin from Kvatch, but again, we caution you... do not risk a confrontation. This individual is not to be trifled with.

The Dawn is breaking,

Ruma Camoran

# Journal Of Claudius Arcadia

*Claudius Arcadia*

Entry 1: I've made up my mind. I don't care what it takes, I'll have my revenge! I've heard the stories about the Dark Brotherhood, about how they'll come to you if you perform some kind of ritual to their Night Mother. I don't know who or what the Night Mother is, and I don't give a damn! If I can do it, I will. I'll give the Dark Brotherhood anything they want, so long as they do what I can't...

Entry 2: I've learned how to perform the ritual and have procured the necessary items. The bones and skull were easy enough to get, but the heart and skill were a bit more difficult. I'll make the preparations in the cellar.

Entry 3: It worked! Last night I was visited by someone, a representative from the Dark Brotherhood! The Night Mother heard my prayers! The money was exchanged, and the man promised me I would have satisfaction. I don't know where he's hiding, and neither does the Dark Brotherhood, but as soon as he's located, Rufio will die!

# Journal Of The Lord Lovidicus

*Lord Lovidicus*

Entry 1. Beauty! Pure and sublime. That is the only way to accurately describe my love, the maiden gro-Malog. True, the Orcs of Tamriel are often vilified by the other citizens of the Empire, and rarely would they be considered a pleasure to look upon. So, is my maiden Luktuv a rare breed of Orc, unlike the rest of her kin in physical appearance? Nay. In fact, she is the perfect representative of her race, green skin, muscular frame and all. But beautiful she is, all the same. For who am I to judge? Who am I to criticize when so many would condemn my very existence? I can only hope my love is as understanding when she learns of my unique condition, for I have yet to reveal that most precious of secrets.

Entry 2: Damn the politics of my station! Taxation and trade negotiations and meetings with disingenuous aristocrats—it's sometimes enough to make me regret my birthright altogether. I've spent the latter half of my life hiding my identity, guarding my secret. But now I am faced with an even greater challenge, for if word were to get out that I have fallen in love with a servant—and an Orc, no less—I would be all but ruined! Such is the life of the Cyrodilic nobleman.

Entry 3: Curse me for a coward, but I have not yet found the strength to tell my beloved Luktuv the truth. Perhaps it's for the best, for what benefit is there in her knowing? She would

share all of my fears but none of my abilities. Her life would become one of doubt and uncertainty. Still, if she is to spend her remaining mortal days with me, she has the right to know the truth.

Entry 4: Joy and exaltation! She is with child! My beloved Luktuv is carrying my child! The midwives predict a boy, and we have already settled on the name Agronak. In truth, I never realized such miracles were even possible, but the Divines have granted us their blessing, and so shall it be. I must wonder, of course, if my dear child will share in my Dark Gift. Only time will tell.

Entry 5: Tonight the truth will be revealed. I will tell my beloved Luktuv everything. She will know who and what I am, and we will decide how best to raise the precious child that grows in her womb.

Entry 6: Betrayal! Foul and loathsome harlot! How dare Luktuv question my motives, question the love I have for my own unborn child! When she learned the truth, that I, the Lord Lovidicus, am no longer human, that I have walked Tamriel as a vampire for the past two hundred years, how quickly she judged me! So, I am a monster, am I? Perhaps I should have proven her right. Perhaps I should have drained her dry when I had the chance! But I loved her, as deeply as a man has ever loved a woman, and I wanted nothing more than to bring our baby into this world and embrace my new role as father. Perhaps when Luktuv has come to her senses—for she refuses to come out of her room—we can have rational discourse about our future. I do not, however, retain much hope.

Entry 7: Imprisoned! Imprisoned in my own home! While I slept, Luktuv locked me in my own private chambers. She

called to me through the doors, told me of her plan to escape with our unborn child. She means to keep my baby from me! When I get free, I will find the traitorous whore and rip the child from her very womb!

Entry 8: Two weeks. Two weeks have passed since Luktuv locked me in my quarters. Try as I might, I cannot free myself. I cannot breach the doors! If I don't feed soon, I feel I will go mad.

Entry 9: Food blood blood blood blood I need it I need blood need blood

Entry 10:...



# Knahaten Flu Confirmed

*Shaman Chirah*

My worst fears are confirmed. Despite our isolation, Stillrise Village experienced its first outbreaks of Knahaten Flu. It began with the traders' twin apprentices, Abaaleb and Sana, a day after their return from Mud Tree Village.

Abaaleb succumbed first. His master noticed a bright, red rash on the boy's forearms. Sana's sickness went undetected for another day, until her mother found her coughing up blood.

Both apprentices passed within two days of discovering their first symptoms. Now, many of us show the signs. I've noticed an ache in my joints. It feels as though penning this short entry was like writing a volume.

None of the usual treatments have any effect. I begin to think the ancient shrine may be our only hope, but Chieftain Suhlak resists. Perhaps War Chief Helushk can convince her.

Shaman Chirah

13th of Sun's Dawn, 2E 561

# Knightfall

*Kirellian Odreniu*

And so it came to pass, that on the first month before the harvest, nary a decent crop could be found in the drought-ridden fields of Farmantle Glens. Twenty-seven families, their bellies sunken and empty, turned to their lordship who had been so fair to them in hard times before. The man ruled not with an iron gauntlet, but with the soft touch of silken kindness: my lord, Garridan Stalrous, Knight-Errant of Farmantle Glens.

I watched sadly as my lord Garridan looked out at the withered fields before him from his meager stone keep and cursed the luck that tainted the skies and stopped the rain from falling. The families in his charge would not last the winter, which was always bitter and cold in the northern reaches of the Jerals. His own supply of grain was already picked clean; there was barely enough to sustain him for the months ahead. I know if my lord had the food there, he would have shared it gladly, allowing his charges to pay him back in whatever time or manner they could afford... and in some cases, to those in dire need, give it to them without costs. Something had to be done; and it had to be done soon.

Sparing not a drake, Garridan paid for the best sages he could find and used the rest to buy as much surplus grain as he could wrest from the neighboring domains. A month passed, and

nothing surfaced. Winter's icy tendrils would soon creep across Farmantle Glens, causing the green to disappear from the landscape. Families would have to huddle close to their hearths, keeping warm and rationing the bits of food Garridan had given them. I could see Garridan's patience, which was immense mind you, wearing thin. He told me he'd considered selling his keep... his belongings... anything to keep his people alive. If only the harvest would yield more, they'd be saved.

Then, as if Mara herself had answered his prayers, a sage entered Garridan's keep with the answer. Legend told of a vessel of sorts from which water would pour endlessly known as the Everflow Ewer. Some said the Divines themselves created it; others thought perhaps a powerful sorcerer enchanted it. Wherever it was from, Garridan knew this could be his chance. Following the directions from the sage, my lord and I set out to recover the Ewer and rid Farmantle Glens of the drought.

It took days to reach the entrance to the place. After we passed through a winding passage, we finally came to an odd door covered in mystical symbols. As the sage instructed, my lord touched some Refined Frost Salts to the door. The ancient stone door opened, and we proceeded into the glade. A cave cut into a hillside led into a small glade of trees. In the center of the glade, flanked by two standing stones, was a stone altar. On the altar, seemingly glowing with inner light was the Ewer. Cut from crystal, the vessel was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. Water filled it to the very top, and as legends held, would never diminish as the liquid decanted from it. Eager to return to his domain, Garridan grasped the Ewer in hand.

Suddenly, the ground trembled as though the mountains themselves were angered. The sky changed from sunlit blue to

dreary grey. Even the ring of trees forming the glade seemed to bend away slightly from the altar, as if fearing what was to come. Then, with no warning, one of the standing stones cracked and exploded! My gaze froze and my heart fell as I looked upon the guardian of the glade. A huge creature seemingly cut from the very same crystal as the Ewer stepped forth and growled menacingly at my master. The air around it became very cold, as if it was born from the glaciers of the northern mountains. This was a being of ice... living breathing ice!

Garridan shouted at me to run as he drew his blade. Still clutching the Ewer in one hand, he gave a mighty swing at the ice creature. When the forged steel struck home, it gave a resounding ring and merely chipped the beast as a spike would when driven against the hardest of rocks. Never showing fear, my lord swung again and again, each blow being harmlessly deflected away. Then, a single and mighty blow from the ice creature knocked my lord down. His blade slid away, and he lay on the forest floor looking up into the crystalline eyes of his death. The ice creature raised its arm again for the fatal blow, and brought it down hard at Garridan's prone form.

I don't know why he did it. Perhaps it was instinct, perhaps a moment's lapse in judgment. But my lord lifted the Everflow Ewer defensively as he got up to a kneeling position. The blow from the creature connected with the vessel, creating an ear-splitting crash. There was the sound of water splashing and a horrible cracking noise as the sundered pitcher sent waves of freezing water in all directions. Even as I watched, the liquid covered the ice creature and my poor master. They seemed suspended in place as if frozen solid. At the time, I didn't know how true my thoughts had become. As I watched in horror,

they were encased in a tomb of pure ice. I could see Garridan's face as the ice overtook him, and I could swear he was crying. A few of his tears froze and fell to the ground at his feet like beautiful blue crystals. He knew he'd failed his mission. His people would starve, and he was responsible. Frost and ice covered everything in the glade now... the trees, the rocks, the soil... everything.

It was then I became aware that the very air around me began to freeze. It was like a cold winter's night at first, and then it rapidly became worse. The cold was so bad, it turned into a sort of frozen heat... it began to burn. My throat became tight and breathing became difficult. I began to lose feeling in my arms and legs, and my vision was beginning to blur. I had to escape this icy glade and tell Garridan's story. It was the least I could do for such a noble man. With every bit of strength I could muster, I ran from the frostfire and back through the cave. I barely escaped with my life.

My journey back to the domain of Garridan was a sad one. My heart was heavy, my mind clouded with misery. He was a good man, the greatest I'd ever known. To die like that was no way for such an honorable knight to end his life. When I finally reached the outskirts of Farmantle Glen, the farmers were waiting for me. I was ready to tell them the sad news, but they raised a cheer of great joy! They told me that only a week ago, a strange, bluish glowing rain fell on their fields and that the next day the crops began to grow as if there had never been a drought. A week ago was exactly when my master was frozen in that horrible glade... and his tears froze like bluish raindrops frozen in time! I looked up at the heavens and the twinkling lights suddenly gave me great comfort. I thanked Mara, and headed home.

# Lady Benoch's Words And Philosophy

*Anonymous*

Lady Allena Benoch, former master of the Valenwood Fighter's Guild and head of the Emperor's personal guard in the Imperial City, has been leading a campaign to reacquaint the soldiers of Tamriel with the sword. I met with her on three different occasions for the purposes of this book. The first time was at her suite in the palace, on the balcony overlooking the gardens below.

I was early for the interview, which had taken me nearly six months to arrange, but she gently chided me for not being even earlier.

"I've had time to put up my defenses now," she said, her bright green eyes smiling.

Lady Benoch is a Bosmer, a Wood Elf, and like her ancestors, took to the bow in her early years. She excelled at the sport, and by the age of fourteen, she had joined the hunting party of her tribe as a Jaqspur, a long distance shooter. During the black year of 396, when the Parikh tribe began their rampage through southeastern Valenwood with the aid of powers from the Summurset Isle, Lady Benoch fought the futile battle to keep her tribe's land.

“I killed someone for the first time when I was sixteen,” she says now. “I don’t remember it very well—he or she was just a blur on the horizon where I aimed my bow. It meant no more to me than shooting animals. I probably killed a hundred people like that during that summer and fall. I didn’t really feel like a killer until that wintertide, when I learned what it was like to look into a man’s eyes as you spilled his blood.

“It was a scout from the Parikh tribe who surprised me while I was on camp watch. We surprised each other, I suppose. I had my bow at my side, and I just panicked, trying to string an arrow when he was half a yard away from me. It was the only thing I knew to do. Of course, he struck first with his blade, and I just fell back in shock.”

“You always remember the mistakes of your first victim. His mistake was assuming because he had drawn blood and I had fallen, that I was dead. I rushed at him the moment he turned from me towards the sleeping camp of my tribesmen. He was caught off guard, and I wrested his blade away from him.”

“I don’t know how many times I stabbed at him. By the time I stopped, when the next watch came to relieve me, my arms were black and blue with strain, there was not a solid piece of him left. I had literally cut him into pieces. You see, I had no concept of how to fight or how much it took to kill a man.”

Lady Benoch, aware of this deficiency in her education, began teaching herself swordsmanship at once.

“You can’t learn how to use a sword in Valenwood,” she says. “Which isn’t to say Bosmer can’t use blades, but we’re largely self-taught. As much as it hurt when my tribe found itself

homeless, pushed to the north, it did have one good aspect: it afforded me the opportunity to meet Redguards.”

Studying all manners of weapon wielding under the tutelage of Warday A’kor, Lady Benoch excelled. She became a freelance adventurer, traveling through the wilds of southern Hammerfell and northern Valenwood, protecting caravans and visiting dignitaries from the various dangers indigenous to the population.

Unfortunately, before we were able to pursue her story of her early years any further, Lady Benoch was called away on urgent summons from the Emperor. Such is often the case with the Imperial Guard, and in these troubled times, perhaps, more so than in the past. When I tried to contact her for another talk, her servants informed me that their mistress was in Skyrim. Another month passed, and when I visited her suite, I was told she was in High Rock.

To her credit, Lady Benoch actually sought me out for our second interview on Sun’s Dusk of that year. I was in a tavern in the City called the Blood and Rooster, when I felt her hand on my shoulder. She sat down at the rude table and continued her tale as if it had never been interrupted.

She returned to the theme of her days as an adventurer, and told me about the first time she ever felt confident with a sword.

“I owned at that time an enchanted daikatana, quite a good one, of daedric metal. It wasn’t an original Akaviri, not even of design. I didn’t have that kind of money, but it served my primary purpose of delivering as much damage with as little effort on my part as possible. A’kor had taught me how to



fence, but when faced with a life or death situation, I always fell back on the old overhand wallop.”

“A pack of orcs had stolen some gold from a local chieftain in Meditea, and I went looking for them in one of the ubiquitous dungeons that dot the countryside in that region. There were the usual rats and giant spiders, and I was enough of a veteran by then to dispatch them with relative ease. The problem came when I found myself in a pitch black room, and all around me, I heard the grunts of orcs nearing in.”

“I waved my sword around me, connecting with nothing, hearing their footsteps coming ever nearer. Somehow, I managed to hold back my fear and to remember the simple exercises Master A’kor had taught me. I listened, stepped sideways, swung, twisted, stepped forward, swung a circle, turned around, side-stepped, swung.”

“My instinct was right. The orcs had gathered in a circle around me, and when I found a light, I saw that they were all dead.”

“That’s when I focused on my study of swordplay. I’m stupid enough to require a near death experience to see the practical purposes, you see.”

Lady Benoch spent the remainder of the interview, responding in her typically blunt way to the veracity of various myths that surrounded her and her career. It was true that she became the master of the Valenwood Fighter’s Guild after winning a duel with the former master, who was a stooge of the Imperial Battlemage, the traitor Jagar Tharn. It was not true that she was the one responsible for the Valenwood Guild’s disintegration two years later (“Actually, the membership in the Valenwood chapter was healthy, but in Tamriel overall the

mood was not conducive for the continued existence of a nonpartisan organization of freelance warriors.”) It was true that she first came to the Emperor’s attention when she defended Queen Akorithi of Sentinel from a Breton assassin. It was not true that the assassin was hired by someone in the high court of Daggerfall (“At least,” she says wryly, “That has never been proven.”). It was also true that she married her former servant Urken after he had been in her service for eleven years (“No one knows how to keep my weaponry honed like he does,” she says. “It’s a practical business. I either had to give him a raise or marry him.”).

The only story I asked her that she would neither admit nor refute was the one about Calaxes, the Emperor’s bastard. When I brought up the name, she shrugged, professing no knowledge of the affair. I pressed on with the details of the story. Calaxes, though not in line for succession, had been given the Archbishopric of The One: a powerful position in the Imperial City, and indeed over all Tamriel where that religion is honored. Whispering began immediately that Calaxes believed that the Gods were angered with the secular governments of Tamriel and the Emperor specifically. It was even said that Calaxes advocated full-scale rebellion to establish a theocracy over the Empire.

It is certainly true, I pressed on, that the Emperor’s relationship with Calaxes had become very stormy, and that legislation had been passed to limit the Church’s authority. That is, up until the moment when Calaxes disappeared, suddenly, without notice to his closest of friends. Many said that Lady Benoch and the Imperial Guard assassinated the Archbishop Calaxes in the sacristy of his church—the date usually given was the 29th of Sun’s Dusk 3E 498.

“Of course,” responds Lady Benoch with one of her mysterious grins. “I don’t need to tell you that the Imperial Guard’s position is as protectors of the throne, not assassins.”

“But surely, no one is more trusted than the Guard for such a sensitive operation,” I say, carefully.

Lady Benoch acknowledges that, but merely says that such details of her duties must remain secret as a matter of Imperial security. Unfortunately, her ladyship had to leave early the next morning, as the Emperor had business down south—of course, I couldn’t be told more specifics. She promised to send me word when she returned so we could continue our interview.

As it turned out, I had business of my own in the Summurset Isle, compiling a book on the Psijic Order. It was therefore with surprise that I met her ladyship three months later in Firsthold. We managed to get away from our respective duties to complete our third and final interview, on a walk along the Diceto, the great river that passes through the royal parks of the city.

Steering away from questions of her recent duties and assignments, which I guessed rightly she was loath to answer, I returned to the subject of swordfighting.

“Frandar Hunding,” she says. “Lists thirty-eight grips, seven hundred and fifty offensive and eighteen hundred defensive positions, and nearly nine thousand moves essential to sword mastery. The average hack-and-slasher knows one grip, which he uses primarily to keep from dropping his blade. He knows one offensive position, facing his target, and one defensive

position, fleeing. Of the multitudinous rhythms and inflections of combat, he knows less than one.

“The ways of the warrior were never meant to be the easiest path. The archetype of the idiot fighter is as solidly ingrained as that of the brilliant wizard and the shrewd thief, but it was not always so. The figure of the philosopher swordsman, the blade-wielding artist are creatures of the past, together with the sword singer of the Redguards, who was said to be able to create and wield a blade with but the power of his mind. The future of the intelligent blade-wielder looks bleak in comparison to the glories of the past.”

Not wanting to end our interviews on a sour note, I pressed Lady Allena Benoch for advice for young blade-swingers just beginning their careers.

“When confronted with a wizard,” she says, throwing petals of Kanthleaf into the Diceto. “Close the distance and hit ‘im hard.”

# Last Scabbard Of Akrash

*Tabar Vunqidh*

For several warm summer days in the year 3E 407, a young, pretty Dunmer woman in a veil regularly visited one of the master armorers in the city of Tear. The locals decided that she was young and pretty by her figure and her poise, though no one ever saw her face. She and the armorer would retire to the back of his shop, and he would close down his business and dismiss his apprentices for a few hours. Then, at mid-afternoon, she would leave, only to return at precisely the same time the next day. As gossip goes, it was fairly meager stuff, though what the old man was doing with such a well dressed and attractively proportioned woman was the source of several crude jokes. After several weeks, the visits stopped, and life returned to normal in the slums of Tear.

It was not until a month or two after the visits had stopped, that in one of the many taverns in the neighborhood, a young local tailor, having imbibed too much sauce, asked the armorer, "So whatever happened to your lady friend? You break her heart?"

The armorer, well aware of the rumors, simply replied, "She is a proper young lady of quality. There was nothing between her and the likes of me."

“What was she doing at your shop every day for?” asked the tavern wench, who had been dying to get the subject open.

“If you must know,” said the armorer. “I was teaching her the craft.”

“You’re putting us on,” laughed the tailor.

“No, the young lady had a particular fascination with my particular kind of artistry,” the armorer said, with a hint of pride before getting lost in the reverie. “I taught her how to mend swords specifically, from all kinds of nicks and breaks, hairline fissures, cracked pommels, quillons, and grips. When she first started, she had no idea how to secure the grips to the tang of the blade... Well, of course she was green to start off with, why wouldn’t she be? But she weren’t afraid to get her hands dirty. I taught her how to patch the little inlaid silver and gold filigree you find on really fine blades, and how to polish it all to a mirror sheen so the sword looks like the gods just pulled it from their celestial anvil.”

The tavern wench and the tailor laughed out loud. No matter what he alleged, the armorer was speaking of the young lady’s training as another man speaks of a long lost love.

More of the locals in the tavern would have listened to the armorer’s pathetic tale, but more important gossip had taken precedence. There was another murdered slave-trader found in the center of town, gutted from fore to aft. That made six of them total in barely a fortnight. Some called the killer “The Liberator,” but that sort of anti-slavery zeal was rare among the common folk. They preferred calling him “The Lopper,” as several of the earlier victims had been completely beheaded.

Others had been simply perforated, sliced, or gutted, but “The Lopper” still kept his original sobriquet.

While the enthusiastic hooligans made bets about the condition of the next slave-trader’s corpse, several dozen of the surviving members of that trade were meeting at the manor house of Serjo Dres Minegaur. Minegaur was a minor houseman of House Dres, but a major member of the slave-trading fraternity. Perhaps his best years were behind him, but his associates still counted on him for wisdom.

“We need to take what we know of this Lopper and search accordingly,” said Minegaur, seated in front of his opulent hearth. “We know he has an unreasonable hatred of slavery and slave-traders. We know he is skilled with a blade. We know he has the stealth and finesse to execute our most well-secured brethren in their most secure abodes. It sounds to me to be an adventurer, an Outlander. Surely no citizen of Morrowind would strike at us like this.”

The slave-traders nodded in agreement. An Outlander seemed most likely for their troubles. It was always true.

“Were I fifty years younger, I would take down my blade Akrash from the hearth,” Minegaur made an expansive gesture to the shimmering weapon. “And join you in seeking out this terror. Search him out where adventurers meet—taverns and guildhalls. Then show him a little lopping of my own.”

The slave-traders laughed politely.

“You wouldn’t let us borrow your blade for the execution, I suppose, would you, Serjo?” asked Soron Jeles, a young toadying slaver enthusiastically.

“It would be an excellent use for Akrash,” sighed Minegaur. “But I vowed to retire her when I retired.”

Minegaur called for his daughter Peliah to bring the slavers more flin, but they waved the girl away. It was to be a night for hunting the Lopper, not drinking away their troubles. Minegaur heartily approved of their devotion, particular as expensive as the liquor was getting to be.

When the last of the slavers had left, the old man kissed his daughter on the head, took one last admiring look at Akrash, and toddled off to his bed. No sooner had he done so then Peliah had the blade off the mantle, and was flying with it across the field behind the manor house. She knew Kazagh had been waiting for her for hours in the stables.

He sprung out at her from the shadows, and wrapping his strong, furry arms around her, kissed her long and sweet. Holding him as long as she dared to, she finally broke away and handed him the blade. He tested its edge.

“The finest Khajiiti swordsmith couldn’t hone an edge this keen,” he said, looking at his beloved with pride. “And I know I nicked it up good last night.”

“That you did,” said Peliah. “You must have cut through an iron cuirass.”

“The slavers are taking precautions now,” he replied. “What did they say during their meeting?”

“They think it’s an Outlander adventurer,” she laughed. “It didn’t occur to any of them that a Khajiiti slave would possess the skill to commit all these ‘loppings.’”



“And your father doesn’t suspect that it’s his dear Akrash that is striking into the heart of oppression?”

“Why would he, when every day he finds it fresh as the day before? Now I must go before anyone notices I’m gone. My nurse sometimes comes in to ask me some detail about the wedding, as if I had any choice in the matter at all.”

“I promise you,” said Kazagh very seriously. “You will not be forced into any marriage to cement your family’s slave-dealing dynasty. The last scabbard Akrash will be sheathed into will be your father’s heart. And when you are an orphan, you can free the slaves, move to a more enlightened province, and marry who you like.”

“I wonder who that will be,” Peliah teased, and raced out of the stables.

Just before dawn, Peliah awoke and crept out to the garden, where she found Akrash hidden in the bittergreen vines. The edge was still relatively keen, but there were scratches vertically across the blade’s surface. Another beheading, she thought, as she took pumice stone and patiently rubbed out the marks, finally polishing it with a solution of salt and vinegar. It was up on the mantle in pristine condition when her father came into the sitting room for his breakfast.

When the news came that Kemillith Torom, Peliah’s husband-to-be, had been found outside of a canton, his head on a spike some feet away, she did not have to pretend to grieve. Her father knew she did not want to marry him.

“It is a shame,” he said. “The lad was a good slaver. But there are plenty of other young men who would appreciate an alliance

with our family. What about young Soron Jeles?”

Two days nights later, Soron Jeles was visited by the Lopper. The struggle did not take long, but Soron had had armed himself with one small defense—a needle dipped in the ichor of poisonplant, hidden up his sleeve. After the mortal blow, he collapsed forward and stuck Kazagh in the calf with the pin. By the time he made it back to the Minegaur manorhouse, he was dying.

Vision blurring, he climbed up to the eaves of the house to Peliah’s window and rapped. Peliah did not answer immediately, as she was in a deep, wonderful sleep, dreaming about her future with her Khajiiti lover. He rapped louder, which woke up not only Peliah, but also her father in the next room.

“Kazagh!” she cried, opening up the window. The next person in the bedroom was Minegaur himself.

As he saw it, this slave, his property, was about to lop off the head of his daughter, his property, with his sword, his property. Suddenly, with the energy of a young man, Minegaur rushed at the dying Khajiit, knocking the sword out of his hand. Before Peliah could stop him, her father had thrust the blade into her lover’s heart.

The excitement over, the old man dropped the sword and turned to the door to call the Guard. As an after thought, it occurred to him to make certain that his daughter hadn’t been injured and might require a Healer. Minegaur turned to her. For a moment, he felt simply disoriented, feeling the force of the blow, but not the blade itself. Then he saw the blood and then felt the pain. Before he fully realized that his daughter had

stabbed him with Akrash, he was dead. The blade, at last, found its scabbard.

A week later, after the official investigations, the slave was buried in an unmarked grave in the manor field, and Serjo Dres Minegaur found his resting place in a modest corner of the family's opulent mausoleum. A larger crowd of curious onlookers came to view the funeral of the noble slaver whose secret life was as the savage Lopper of his competitors. The audience was respectfully quiet, though there was not a person there not imagining the final moments of the man's life. Attacking his own daughter in his madness, luckily defended by the loyal, hapless slave, before turning the blade on himself.

Among the viewers was an old armorer who saw for one last time the veiled young lady before she disappeared forever from Tear.

# Legend Of The Krately House

*Baloth-Kul*

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THEOPHON - Imperial man, 24, thief

NIRIM - Bosmer man, 20, thief

SILANUS KRATELY - Imperial man, 51, merchant

DOMINITIA KRATELY - His wife, 40

AELVA KRATELY - Their daughter, 16

MINISTES KRATELY - Their son, 11

Setting: The famous haunted Krately House in Cheydinhal, first and second floors, requiring a stage with a second story where most of the action takes place.

The stage is dark.

There is a CREAKING noise, footsteps on the stairs, the sound of a man breathing, but still we see nothing.

Then, a voice calls from above.

AELVA (off stage)

Hello? Is someone down there?

MINESTES (off stage)

Should I wake up Papa?

AELVA (off stage)

No... Maybe I was imagining it...

A light from a lantern can be seen coming from the upstairs, and the slim form of a beautiful young girl, AELVA, descends the staircase at stage right, nervously.

From the light of the lantern, we can see that we are looking at the second floor of a dusty old house, with a set of stairs going up and another one going down on stage right. An unlit stone fireplace sits at stage left. A table, a locked chest, and a wardrobe complete the furnishings.

MINESTES (off stage)

Aelva, what are you doing?

AELVA

I'm just making certain... Go back to bed, Minestes.

As the girl passes the table, we see a Bosmer NIRIM slide gracefully up from behind and around her field of sight, carefully avoiding the pool of light. She doesn't appear to see him as he creeps closer to her, his footsteps silent on the hard wooden floor.

When he is almost on her, there is a sudden CRASH from down below. This causes the Bosmer to leap away, hiding again

behind the table.

The girl does not seem to notice the sound, and Nirim, peeking out from behind the table, watches her.

MINESTES (off stage)

Found anything?

AELVA

No. Probably just my imagination, but I'm just going to check downstairs.

MINESTES (off stage)

Is there a fire? I'm cold...

Aelva looks towards the long dead fireplace, and so does Nirim.

AELVA

Of course there is. Can't you hear it crackling?

MINESTES (off stage)

I guess so...

Aelva suddenly jumps as if she heard something which we do not. She turns her attention down the stairs to the first floor.

AELVA

Hello?

Aelva, lantern ahead of her, begins the descent. She does not seem to notice as an Imperial, THEOPHON, carrying a big bag of loot and a lantern of his own, calmly walks up right past her.

THEOPHON

Excuse me, young lady. Just robbing you.

Aelva continues her slow, nervous walk downstairs, which we can now see thanks to her light. She looks around the low-ceilinged, thoroughly looted room as the action continues upstairs

Theophon's lantern provides the dim light for the second floor.

THEOPHON

Why are you hiding, Nirim? I told you. They can't see you, and they can't hear you.

Nirim sheepishly steps out from behind the table.

NIRIM

I can't believe they're all ghosts. They seem so alive.

THEOPHON

That's what spooks them superstitians. But they ain't going to hurt us. Just reliving the past, the way ghosts do.

NIRIM

The night they was murdered.

THEOPHON

Stop thinking about that or you'll get yourself all willy spooked. I got all kinds of stuff on the first floor - silver candlesticks, silk, even some gold... What'd you get?

Nirim holds up his empty bag.

NIRIM

Sorry, Theophon, I was just about to start...

THEOPHON

Get to work on that chest then. That's what you're here for.

NIRIM

Oh yeah. I got the talent, you got the ideas... and the equipment. You refilled that lantern before we came here, right? I can't work in the dark...

THEOPHON

Don't worry, Nirim. I promise. No surprises.

Nirim jumps when a young boy, MINESTES, appears on the stairs. The lad creeps down quietly and goes to the fire. He acts as if he's stoking a fire, feeding it wood, poking at the embers, though there is no wood, no poker, no fire.

THEOPHON

We got all the time in the world, friend. No one comes near this house. If they sees our lantern light, they'll just assume it's the ghosts.



Nirim begins picking the lock on a chest of drawers, while Theophon opens a wardrobe and begins going through the contents, which are mostly rotten cloth.

Nirim is distracted, looking at the young boy.

NIRIM

Hey, Theophon, how long ago did they die?

THEOPHON

About five years ago. Why you asking?

NIRIM

Just making conversation.

As they talk, Aelva, downstairs, finally having searched the small room, acts as if she's locking the front door.

THEOPHON

Didn't I already tell you the story?

NIRIM

No, you just said, hey, I know a place we can burgle where no one's at home, except for the ghosts. I thought you was joking.

THEOPHON

No joking, partner. Five years ago, the Kratelys lived here. Nice people. You seen the daughter Aelva and the boy Minestes. The parents were Silenus and Dominitia, if I remembers rightly.

Nirim successfully unlocks the chest and begins rummaging through it. While he does so, Ministes gets up from the 'fire,' apparently warmed up, and stands at the top of the stairs down.

MINISTES

Hey!

The boy's voice causes Nirim, Theophon, and Aelva to all jump.

AELVA

Why aren't you in bed? I'm just going to check the cellar.

MINISTES

I'll wait for you.

NIRIM

So, what happened?

THEOPHON

Oh, they was rip to piece. Halfway eaten. No one ever knew who or what did it neither. Though there was rumors...

Aelva opens the door to the cellar, and goes in. The light disappears from the first floor. Ministes patiently waits at the top of the stairs, humming a little song to himself.

NIRIM

What kind of rumors?

Theophon, having exhausted the possibilities in the wardrobe, helps Nirim sort through the gold in the chest.

THEOPHON

Pretty good haul, eh? Oh, the rumors. Well, they says old lady Dominitia was a witch before she married Silenus. Gave it all up for him, to be a good wife and mother. But the witches didn't take too kindly to it. They found her and sent some kind of creature here, late at night. Something horrible, right out of a nightmare.

MINISTES

Aelva? Aelva, what's taking you so long?

NIRIM

Ye Gods, are we going to watch them get killed, right in front of us?

MINISTES

Aelva!

SILENUS (off stage)

What's happening down there? Stop playing around, boy, and go to sleep.

MINISTES

Papa!

Ministes, frightened, runs to the stairs up. Along the way, he bumps into Nirim, who falls down. The boy does not seem to

notice but continues on up to the dark third floor sleeping porch, off-stage.

THEOPHON

Are you all right?

Nirim jumps to his feet, white-faced.

NIRIM

Never mind that! He touched me?! How can a ghost touch me?!

THEOPHON

Well... Of course they can. Some anyhow. You heard of ancestor spirits guarding tombs, and that ghost of the king they had in Daggerfall. If they don't touch you, what good are they? Why you so surprised? You thought he'd move right through you, I figger.

NIRIM

Yes!

SILENUS, the man of the house, comes down the stairs, cautiously.

DOMINITIA (off stage)

Don't leave us alone, Silenus! We're coming with you!

SILENUS

Wait, it's dark. Let me get some light.

Silenus goes to the cold fireplace, sticks his hand forward, and suddenly in his arm, there's a lit, burning torch. Nirim scrambles back, horrified.

NIRIM

I felt that! I felt the heat of the fire!

SILENUS

Come on down. It's all right.

Ministes leads his mother DOMINITIA down the stairs where they join Silenus.

THEOPHON

I don't know why you so scared, Nirim. I must say I'm disappointed. I didn't figger you for a supersitionalist.

Theophon goes for the stairs up.

NIRIM

Where are you going?

THEOPHON

One more floor to search.

NIRIM

Can't we just go?

Nirim watches as the family of three, following Silenus and his torch, walk down towards the first floor.

SILENUS

Aelva? Say something, Aelva.

THEOPHON

There, you see? If you don't like ghosts, third floor's the place to be. All four of 'em are downstairs now.

Theophon goes upstairs, off-stage, but Nirim stands at the top of the stairs, looking down at the family. The three look around the first floor as Aelva did, finally turning towards the cellar door.

NIRIM

All... four?

Silenus opens the cellar door.

SILENUS

Aelva? What are you doing down in the cellar, girl?

DOMINITIA

You see her?

NIRIM

All four, Theophon?

SILENUS

I think so... I see someone... Hello?

NIRIM

What if there's five ghosts, Theophon?!

Silenus thrusts his torch in through the cellar door, and it is suddenly extinguished. The first floor falls into darkness.

Ministes, Dominitia, and Silenus SCREAM, but we cannot see what is happening to them.

Nirim is nearly hysterical, screaming along with them. Theophon runs downstairs from the third floor.

THEOPHON

What is it?!

NIRIM

What if there is five ghosts?! The man, the wife, the girl, the boy... and what killed them?!

THEOPHON

And what killed them?

NIRIM

And what if it's a ghost that can touch us too?! Just like the others!

From the darkened first floor, there is a CREAK of a door opening, though we cannot see it. And then, there is a heavy, clawed footfall. One step at a time, coming towards the stairs.

THEOPHON

Don't get so upset. If it can touch us, what'd make you think it'd wants to? All the others didn't even notice we was here.

Theophon's lantern dims slightly. He adjusts it carefully.

NIRIM

Only... only what if it ain't a ghost, Theophon. What if it's the same creature, and it's still alive... and it ain't ate nothing since five years ago...

The footsteps begin the slow, heavy stomp up the stairs, though whatever it is, we cannot see it. Nirim notices the light beginning to dim from the lantern despite Theophon frantically trying to fix it.

NIRIM

You said you refilled the lamp!

The light goes out entirely, and the stage is filled with darkness.

NIRIM

You promised me you refilled the lamp!

More footsteps and a horrible, horrible HOWL. The men SCREAM.

The curtain falls.



# Letter From Branwen

*Branwen*

Owyn,

I know you don't believe me. I know you think I'm just some stupid kid who doesn't know what she's talking about. But the truth is the truth—you ARE my father.

One night with a scullery maid is all it takes. Or maybe your father deserted you, too, and never taught you the basic lessons of life? Anyway, the past is long forgotten. What matters now is that you come to terms with the truth. I am your daughter, and I will join the Arena as a combatant.

Maybe someday, when I'm Grand Champion, you'll see that we have the same blood, the same tenacity. Until then day comes, I'll train every moment of every day. All I want, all I ever wanted, was to make you proud.

Your loving daughter,

Branwen

# Letter Home

*Anonymous*

Courier's Notice

Conveyance via:

Narsis

Balfalls

Vivec

Suran

Personal Correspondence

Origin withheld

I miss you more with each passing night. My only comfort is knowing that the wages I'm earning now will ensure our comfort when I return. I couldn't believe the pay this lunatic was offering, and I doubt we would have followed him all the way to Cyrodiil otherwise. The fool thinks he'll overthrow the Empire, Vaermina take him! I figure we'll end up deserting soon, just as soon as we've gotten as much pay as we can without actually following this addled madman into battle.

We've hardly crossed the border, but already I can tell you: Cyrodiil is an awful place. We have nothing but iron to work

with. There's no art to iron armor. I tried using the bones of beasts killed in the local forest, but they are brittle and won't bear the force of the hammer.

Even with decent materials, this would be a dull post. We must be a mile underground and a league from civilization. I don't envy the courier who carries this letter! I pass the time in conversation with the other apprentice. We always seem to have a good laugh at the expense of the Forgemaster; in private, of course.

I can't wait to see your family home in Suran. I've never actually been to Vvardenfell; I've heard much of its charm. I'm pleased and surprised to hear that you've begun saving for our own home already. You say you're working for somebody named Desele? The pay must be very good, but when I return you won't need to keep it up. You never mentioned, by the way, what sort of work you're doing.

I'm still not sure how this crazy wizard is paying wages for us and his army of mercenaries and laborers. We don't use half the ore mined here for smithing, so I figure he must sell the surplus iron, but I see no evidence of it, nor do I think it would produce such a fortune. I think he's Telvanni, perhaps folk in the area near you have heard if he's from wealthy stock?

I fear I must conclude, my love; the forgemaster is demanding another parcel of iron-shod boots. How many more pairs could we possibly need?

# Letter To Sheogorath

*Relmyna*

My beloved Sheogorath,

Forgive me, it's been so long I can't remember the last time I've written.

I can only hope these letters reach you. I know your duties keep you busy, but any message from you would be welcome, even if it is given through that fool, Haskill. If it is not possible, fear not, my love is constant. I can remember the day you brought me to your realm as if it were yesterday. But I miss you terribly.

You should see the supplicants mucking about in the Fringe these days. A few I think will be ready soon—the rest, who can say? If it weren't blasphemous, I might venture to say that the world has been slowly going sane. I can almost feel in my bones a chilling presence approaching, like a devouring emptiness. That does not bode well, but I trust in my Lord's power to keep our spirits well nourished from his bounteous showers of inspiration.

Our child continues to destroy those pesky adventurers who come seeking treasure and glory.

I have been sojourning here in Passwall, tutoring Nanette Don as an apprentice. She is one of the hopefuls that I believe will bloom soon. In the meanwhile, I can visit our child—I go see

him every night around midnight, when the world is quiet, when it belongs to memory and imagination. He is strong and powerful like his father. Would that you visited us some time. It's almost cruel, the way you keep aloof from me. Sometimes I can't even bear to look at him, because I can remember when we created him, your glistening body in the pool, lovingly blending the components of flesh that would become our child—and afterward you tortured me in your sweet embrace. But now when I visit him, I can't help but weep like a little girl. I know how unlike me it seems... I just can't help it.

To make matters worse, it seems my tears burn my poor creature. It agitates that Daedric soul bound in his body, threatening to sever the warding magic weaved into him. I didn't realize how badly that soul would seek release from the shell I grew in my gardens. But the flesh is pure. Perfect! Perhaps it is my own tears that hold the imperfection...

But I shouldn't be bothering you with these petty concerns. Our child, your Gatekeeper, stands guard over the Gates of Madness, mighty and powerful. No harm shall come to him.

Yours truly and forever,

Relmyna

# Life Of Uriel Septim Vii

*Rufus Hayn*

A Short Life of

Uriel Septim VII

by

Rufus Hayn

3E 368-389: Strategist and Conciliator

The early decades of Emperor Uriel's life were marked by aggressive expansion and consolidation of Imperial influence throughout the empire, but especially in the East, in Morrowind and Black Marsh, where the Empire's power was limited, Imperial culture was weak, and native customs and traditions were strong and staunchly opposed to assimilation. During this period Uriel greatly benefitted from the arcane support and shrewd council of his close advisor, the Imperial Battlemage, Jagar Tharn.

The story of Uriel's marriage to the Princess Caula Voria is a less happy tale. Though she was a beautiful and charming woman, and greatly loved and admired by the people, the Empress was a deeply unpleasant, arrogant, ambitious, grasping woman. She snared Uriel Septim with her feminine wiles, but Uriel Septim thereafter soon regretted his mistake,

and was repelled by her. They heartily detested one another, and went out of their ways to hurt one another. Their children were the victims of this unhappy marriage.

With his agile mind and vaunting ambition, Uriel soon outstripped his master in the balanced skills of threat and diplomacy. Uriel's success in co-opting House Hlaalu as an advance guard of Imperial culture and economic development in Morrowind is a noteworthy example. However, Uriel also grew in pride and self-assurance. Jagar Tharn fed Uriel's pride, and hiding behind the mask of an out-paced former master counselor, Tharn purchased the complete trust that led finally to Uriel's betrayal and imprisonment in Oblivion and Tharn's secret usurpation of the Imperial throne.

### 3E 389-399: Betrayed and Imprisoned

Little is known of Uriel's experience while trapped in Oblivion. He says he remembers nothing but an endless sequence of waking and sleeping nightmares. He says he believed himself to be dreaming, and had no notion of passage of time. Publicly, he long claimed to have no memory of the dreams and nightmares of his imprisonment, but from time to time, during the interviews with the Emperor that form the basis of this biography, he would relate details of nightmares he had, and would describe them as similar to the nightmares he had when he was imprisoned in Oblivion. He seemed not so much unwilling as incapable of describing the experience.

But it is clear that the experience changed him. In 3E 389 he was a young man, full of pride, energy, and ambition. During the Restoration, after his rescue and return to the throne, he was an old man, grave, patient, and cautious. He also became conservative and pessimistic, where the policies of his early life

were markedly bold, even rash. Uriel accounts for this change as a reaction to and revulsion for the early teachings and counsel of Jagar Tharn. However, Uriel's exile in Oblivion also clearly drained and wasted him in body and spirit, though his mind retained the shrewd cunning and flexibility of his youth.

The story of Tharn's magical impersonation of the emperor, the unmasking of Tharn's imposture by Queen Barenziah, and the roles played by King Eadwyre, Ria Silmane, and her Champion in assembling the Staff of Chaos, defeating the renegade Imperial Battlemage Jagar Tharn, and restoring Uriel to the throne, is treated at length in Stern Gamboge's excellent three-Volume BIOGRAPHY OF BARENZIAH. There is no reason to recount that narrative here. Summarized briefly, Jagar Tharn's neglect and mismanagement of Imperial affairs resulted in a steady decline in the Empire's economic prosperity, allowed many petty lords and kings to challenge the authority of the Empire, and permitted strong local rulers in the East and the West to indulge in open warfare over lands and sovereign rights.

### 3E 399-415: Restoration, the Miracle of Peace, and Vvardenfell

During the Restoration, Uriel Septim turned from the aggressive campaign of military intimidation and diplomatic accommodation of his earlier years, and relied instead on clandestine manipulation of affairs behind the scenes, primarily through the agencies of the various branches of the Blades. A complete assessment of the methods and objectives of this period must wait until after the Emperor's death, when the voluminous diaries archived at his country estate may be opened to the public, and when the Blades no longer need to maintain secrecy to protect the identities of its agents.



Two signal achievements of this period point to the efficacy of Uriel's subtle policies: the 'Miracle of Peace' (also popularly known as 'The Warp in the West') that transformed the Iliac Bay region from a ruly assortment of warring petty kingdoms into the well-ordered and peaceful modern counties of Hammerfell, Sentinel, Wayrest, and Orsinium, and the colonization of Vvardenfell, presided over by the skillful machinations of King Helseth of Morrowind and Lady Barenziah, the Queen-Mother, which brought Morrowind more closely into the sphere of Imperial influence.

### 3E 415-430: The Golden Peace, King Helseth's Court, and the Nine in the East

Following the 'Miracle of Peace' (best described in Per Vetersen's *DAGGERFALL: A MODERN HISTORY*), the Empire entered a period of peace and prosperity comparable to the early years of Uriel's reign. With the Imperial Heartland and West solidly integrated into the Empire, Uriel was able to turn his full attention to the East—to Morrowind.

Exploiting conflicts at the heart of Morrowind's monolithic Tribunal religion and the long-established Great House system of government, and taking advantage of the terrible threat that the corrupted divine beings at the heart of the Tribunal religion presented to the growing colonies on Vvardenfell, Uriel worked through shadowy agents of the Blades and through the court of King Helseth in Mournhold to shift the center of political power in Morrowind from the Great House councils to Helseth's court, and took advantage of the collapse of the orthodox Tribunal cults to establish the Nine Divines as the dominant faiths in Hlaalu and Vvardenfell Districts.

Hasphat Anabolis's treatment of the establishment of the Nine in the East in his four-volume LIFE AND TIMES OF THE NEREVARINE is comprehensive; however, he fails to resolve the central mystery of this period—how much did Uriel know about the prophecies of the Nerevarine, and how did he learn of their significance? The definitive resolution of this and other mysteries must await the future release of the Emperor's private papers, or a relenting of the Blades' strict policies of secrecy concerning their agents.

# Light Armor Repair

*Anonymous*

There are two classes of light armor, metallic and non-metallic. Chainmail, Elven, Mithril and Glass are all examples of metallic light armor. You may be surprised to think that Glass can be thought of as metallic, but appearances are deceiving. What we call Glass is nothing like the windows panes you see in houses. The greenish material is far stronger and has a much higher melting point.

Non-metallic armors are Fur and Leather. For these armor types, the hammer is less useful than the sewing kit. A sharp awl is necessary to restitch the thick material. Holes frequently have to be patched with spare material. The rule of thumb is once you have to patch a patch, it's time to throw out the armor and get a new set.

Metallic armor will occasionally need a patch. Usually it can be repaired by hammering the torn pieces back together. Elven and Mithril will repair better when heated. Chainmail is usually malleable enough to work on cold.

The trickiest of all is Glass. Hammer blows struck across the grain run the risk of shattering the armor. Whenever possible, align the hammer blows with the grain. In extreme cases, place the armor in tub of oil. Place the anvil so that the affected piece is on the anvil, but just under the oil. Vibrations from the

hammer blows are absorbed by the oil and less likely to shatter the Glass.

# Lists Of Candidates

## *The Gray Fox*

Itius Hayn, loyal but not too bright - my personal recommendation

Carmalo Truiand, smart but inexperienced - a good second choice

Hieronimus Lex, overly fanatical - not recommended

Audens Avidius, questionable morals - not recommended

Hieronimus Lex, eminently qualified - my personal recommendation

Carmalo Truiand, smart but inexperienced - a good second choice

Itius Hayn, loyal but not too bright - unqualified

Audens Avidius, questionable morals - not recommended

# Lithnilian's Research Notes

## *Lithnilian*

As I entered the final chamber of Bramblepoint Cave, my eyes fell upon the goal of my expedition. In the inky blackness, the familiar aquamarine glow of the Welkynd Stone beckoned me in silent reverence. I was the first here in ages; evidenced by the thick layers of dust and debris strewn about. I don't remember how long I stood there, in awe of the beautiful crystals outside their natural environment.

They all said I was crazy; a fool, a buffoon. Crystals growing outside Ayleid ruins? Preposterous! I spent nearly a decade and all the money I had crossing Cyrodiil and exploring the many natural caves dotting her landscape. Then, on that fateful night, a Orc stumbled into the Imperial Bridge Inn where I happened to be drinking. He spouted off a line of nonsense about creatures that came out of the darkness, and I dismissed him as drunk, until he said something that gripped my heart with hope. He spoke of a light in the darkness "as blue as the lady sea." Could it be the Welkynd Stones I was seeking? I had to know more. A few gold and many drinks later, the Orc told me he'd been in Bramblepoint Cave. As I made my way through the night to the cave, my mind was racing. The stories had to be true! The Ayleid culture had mastered the art of creating these crystalline structures and was just beginning to cultivate them outside of their underground communities when they disappeared from history. That meant one thing; with the

proper materials, magic and research the Welkynd Stone could adapt to any environment. I had to get to Bramblepoint and study them before anyone else found them. This would be my mark on history, my moment to shine.

And now, after climbing through the cave I've arrived at this chamber. After I finish this entry in my logbook, I'll have so much to do. So much to do indeed. This will be the day that Lithnilian will be remembered as the first to unlock the secrets of the Welkynd Stone.

# Liturgy Of The Duelists

*Anonymous*

We purge ourselves in the duel.

Shegorath will mend us.

We purge our friends in duel.

Shegorath will mend them.

We purge our enemies in war.

Shegorath will abandon them.

Speak not of the Duelists

Speak only of the duel

Speak not of the combatant

Speak only of the combat



# Lives Of The Saints

## *Tribunal Temple*

If you would be wise, model your lives on the lives of the saints.

If you would learn valor, follow St. Nerevar the Captain, patron of Warriors and Statesmen. Lord Nerevar helped to unite the barbarian Dunmer tribes into a great nation, culminating in his martyrdom when leading the Dunmer to victory against the evil Dwemer and the traitorous House Dagoth in the Battle of Red Mountain.

If you would learn daring, follow Saint Veloth the Pilgrim, Patron of Outcasts and Spiritual Seekers. Saint Veloth, prophet and mystic, led the Dunmer out of the decadent home country of the Summerset Isles and into the promised land of Morrowind. Saint Veloth also taught the difference between the Good and Bad Daedra, and won the aid of the Good Daedra for his people while teaching how to carefully negotiate with the Bad Daedra.

If you would learn generosity, follow Saint Rilms the Barefooted, Patron of Pilgrims and Beggars. Saint Rilms gave away her shoes, then dressed and appeared as a beggar to better acquaint herself with the poor.

If you would learn self-respect and respect for others, follow Saint Aralor the Penitent, Patron of Tanners and Miners. This

foul criminal repented his sins and traveled a circuit of the great pilgrimages on his knees.

If you would learn mercy and its fruits, follow Saint Seryn the Merciful, Patron of Brewers, Bakers, Distillers. This pure virgin of modest aspect could heal all diseases at the price of taking the disease upon herself. Tough-minded and fearless, she took on the burdens of others, and bore those burdens to an honored old age.

If you would learn fierce justice, follow Saint Felms the Bold, Patron of Butchers and Fishmongers. This brave warlord slew the Nord invaders and drove them from our lands. He could neither read nor write, receiving inspiration directly from the lips of Almsivi.

If you would learn pride of race and tribe, follow Saint Roris the Martyr, Patron of Furnishers and Caravaners. Captured by Argonians just before the Arnesian War, Roris proudly refused to renounce the Tribunal faith, and withstood the cruel tortures of Argonian sorcerers. Vengeance and justice for the martyred Saint Roris was the rallying cry of the Arnesian War.

If you would learn the rule of law and justice, follow Saint Olms the Just, Patron of Chandlers and Clerks. Founder of the Ordinators, Saint Olms conceived and articulated the fundamental principles of testing, ordeal, and repentance.

If you would learn benevolence, follow Saint Delyn the Wise, Patron of Potters and Glassmakers. Saint Delyn was head of House Indoril, a skilled lawyer, and author of many learned treatises on Tribunal law and custom.

If you would learn the love of peace, follow Saint Meris the Peacemaker, Patron of Farmers and Laborers. As a little girl, Saint Meris showed healing gifts, and trained as a Healer. She ended a long and bloody House War, intervening on the battlefield in her white robe to heal warriors and spellcrafters without regard to faction. The troops of all House adopted white robes as her standard, and refused to shed the blood of their brethren.

If you would learn reverence, follow Saint Llothis the Pious, Patron of Tailors and Dyers. Contemporary and companion of the Tribunals, and the best-loved Alma Rula of the Tribunal Temple, he formulated the central rituals and principles of the New Temple Faith. Saint Llothis is the symbolic mortal bridge between the gods and the faithful, and the archetypal priest.

# Log Of Emma May

*Anonymous*

...after taking aboard a few more crates in Leyawiin, Captain Laughton pointed the May north towards the Imperial City. We pleaded with him to wait until the next morn, but he insisted on continuing despite the look of the sky. Let it be known that this decision was his.

Tuesday 14 Last Seed 3E421

Wasn't long before the May hit the storm. It was just as we suspected, far too dangerous to sail through. With the last bit of daylight disappearing, Navigator Quillan spotted an inlet off the starboard bow. The Captain ordered the wheelman to steer towards the inlet in the hopes of getting the May out of Niben Bay. It was at that moment Gable gave me the signal and we struck. He'd always had an eye for the Captain's position, and with the chaos going on, this was a better time than any. Only that idiot, Blakeley was still loyal to the Captain, but the rest of us wanted the May. The fight lasted maybe a minute or two. Blakeley and Laughton knew that fighting was futile. We tossed them down below and now Captain Gable has set the May on course for the inlet. Hopefully we can get her secured for a while and then...

# Lord Jaren's Journal

*Lord Jaren*

I hope I have done well. I don't know. Perhaps I should tell the others. But what hope would they have then? I will have to tell Kelvyn, one day, when it is time for him to assume the lordship of the Castle. He, at least, may forgive me, as I am his father.

I must collect my thoughts. Lord Kain returned last night, while the others were gone to the city. Thank Onsi it was only myself and Garridan—faithful friend! I have sworn him to secrecy. He was only too happy to let me take responsibility for what we did.

Later: I am more resolved than ever that the others must never find out. They must never know what Lord Kain has become, our liege lord—we sacrificed everything for him!

I will set it all down here, clearly, so that others may judge whether I have done right or wrong.

When Garridan woke me to tell me that Lord Kain had arrived, I was overjoyed at first. Garridan's grim face soon warned me that all was not well, but he would not tell me what was wrong. Only that Lord Kain was accompanied by Arielle Jurard, a name to freeze the blood—a Breton battlemage of sinister reputation in Lainlyn.

Lord Kain was waiting in the great hall with Arielle Jurard. He was heavily cloaked, unsurprisingly as it was a foul night, but I wondered why he had not removed it upon entering the castle.

I greeted Lord Kain warmly, ignoring his companion for the moment, but when he spoke, it was only haltingly, and with a grating edge that I had never heard before. “Where are the others?” was all he said. Arielle Jurard quickly intervened, explaining that Lord Kain was unwell and needed a place to rest.

By the time Kain was abed, I was fully alarmed. He moved like an old man, and barely spoke in my presence. He left a foul odor in his wake, and remained cloaked until I left him in my chambers. I then demanded that Arielle explain herself, which she was only too willing to do. Her story was appalling. Apparently Kain had perished in battle shortly after we left, but by her arts she had returned him to life, and now planned to gather an army of Knights to resume the war against Baron Shrike. Her eyes glittered with pride as she told me all this—she is so far gone in madness and evil that she actually believed that I would go along with her plan to install a necromatic puppet on the throne of Lainlyn! For all Baron Shrike’s cruelties, he at least is mortal and will one day pass on the rule to an heir.

Somehow I was able to hide my shock from Arielle Jurard, and pretended to agree to her plan. “The other knights will need to have Lord Kain’s... condition... explained to them before they see him,” I told her. “Otherwise the surprise of seeing him may lead some to regrettable actions.” Thinking quickly, I suggested that she tend to Lord Kain in the grotto until I had prepared the others. She agreed without suspicion—I wonder if her mind

has become disordered by her evil practices—my performance could not have been all that convincing.

Once they were inside, I shut them in, with Garridan's help. May Tu'whacca have mercy on Lord Kain's soul... As for Arielle Jurard, I wish nothing but endless night on her foul spirit.

I've had workmen cover up the doorway. Only a few of the others were ever aware of that passage behind the training room—luckily Kelvyn was not among them. I'll have to come up with some story to satisfy those who ask about the grotto—or tell them the truth and face the consequences.

# Lord Jornibret's Last Dance

*Anonymous*

(Traditional)

Women's Verse I:

Every winter season,

Except for the reason

Of one war or another

(Really quite a bother),

The Queen of Rimmen and her consort

Request their vassals come and cavort.

On each and every ball,

The first man at the Hall

Is Lord Ogin Jornibret of Gaer,

The Curse of all the Maidens Fair.

Women's Refrain:

Oh, dear ladies, beware.



Dearest, dearest ladies, take care.

Though he's a very handsome man,

If you dare to take his handsome hand,

The nasty little spell will be cast

And your first dance with him will be the last.

Men's Verse I:

At this social event

Everyone who went

Knew the bows and stances

And steps to all the dances.

The Queen of Rimmen and her consort

Would order a trumpet's wild report,

And there could be no indecision

As the revelers took position.

The first dance only ladies, separate

Away from such men as Lord Jornibret.

Men's Refrain:

Oh, dear fellows, explain.

Brothers, can you help make it plain:

The man's been doing this for years,  
Leaving maidens fair in tears  
Before the final tune's been blast.  
And her first dance with him will be the last.

Women's Verse II:

Lord Ogin Jornibret of Gaer  
Watched the ladies dance on air  
The loveliest in the realm.  
A fellow in a ursine-hide helm  
Said, "The Queen of Rimmén and her consort  
Have put together quite a sport.  
Which lady fair do you prefer?"  
Lord Jornibret pointed, "Her.  
See that bosom bob and weave.  
Well-suited for me to love and leave."

Women's Refrain.

Men's Verse II:

The man in the mask of a bear  
Had left the Lord of Gaer

Before the ladies' dance was ending.  
Then a trumpet sounded, portending  
That the Queen of Rimmen and her consort  
Called for the men to come to court.  
Disdainful, passing over all the rest,  
Ogin approached she of bobbing breast.  
She was rejected, saved a life of woe,  
For a new maiden as fair as snow.

Men's Refrain.

Women's Verse III:

At the first note of the band,  
The beauty took Ogin's hand.  
She complimented his stately carriage  
Dancing to the tune about the marriage  
Of the Queen of Rimmen and her consort.  
It is very difficult indeed to comport  
With grace, neither falling nor flailing,  
Wearing ornate hide and leather mailing,  
Dancing light as the sweetest of dreams

Without a single squeak of the seams.

Women's Refrain.

Men's Verse III:

The rhythms rose and fell

No one dancing could excel

With masculine grace and syncopation,

Lord Jornibret even drew admiration

From the Queen of Rimmen and her consort.

Like a beauteous vessel pulling into port,

He silently slid, belying the leather's weight.

She whispered girlishly, "The hour is late,

But I've never seen such grace in hide armor."

It 'twas a pity he knew he had to harm her.

Men's Refrain

Women's Verse IV:

The tune beat was furious

He began to be curious

Where had the maiden been sequest'ed.

"Before this dance was requested

By the consort and his Queen of Rimmén

I didn't see you dance with the women."

"My dress was torn as I came to the dance,"

She said smiling in a voice deep as a man's,

"My maids worked quickly to repair,

While I wore a suit of hide, a helm of a bear."

Women's Refrain.

# Lord Kelvyn's Will

*Lord Kelvyn*

I, Lord Kelvyn, son of Jaren, and a sworn Knight of the True Horn, upon my death do hereby bequeath Battlehorn Castle and all her lands, dependents, and chattels to the bearer of this document.

Such an unusual document requires some explanation. I resort to such measures out of desperation. I pen this while Battlehorn Castle lies besieged by a band of ruthless marauders, with little hope that any of us will survive. "Besieged" I say, although this petty battle would not have even rated a footnote in the great days of the Knights of the True Horn. We have fallen on hard times, indeed.

I will entrust this document to my last faithful retainers, with instructions to destroy it in the last extremity, although I accept that I may have provided the means for my murderers to legally take the lordship of Battlehorn Castle. So be it.

To the new lord of Battlehorn Castle, whoever you are, know that you inherit a stronghold with a proud tradition. Battlehorn Castle was built by a remnant of the Knights of the True Horn who were exiled from our homeland of Lainlyn in Hammerfell. After a failed battle to dethrone Baron Shrike of Lainlyn, our leader, Lord Kain, ordered us to split up into as many small groups as possible until the time should come that

he would recall us. My father was part of a group that settled here in Cyrodiil and built Battlehorn Castle as a refuge while they waited for Lord Kain's message... a message that never arrived.

Over the years, all the Knights of our little band either gave up or passed on, all but one: my father Jaren. Since his untimely death, I have continued to hold Battlehorn Castle in the hope that someday we will hear from Lord Kain and our great exile will be at an end.

I am afraid that the fortunes of Battlehorn Castle have fallen on hard times. What resources I had available I devoted to maintaining the castle itself—its walls still stand strong and its hearths still provide warmth. Sadly, this came at great cost, and many of the items within its walls had to be sold in order to meet the enormous payments such maintenance begets. If you find yourself with the means to restore Battlehorn Castle to its former glory, a friend of my father's named Nilphas Omellian still holds many of the castle accoutrements in storage and on account. All that is required is to repay the Castle's debts to Nilphas, and I'm certain he'll happily return the items.

My final request for the new lord of Battlehorn Castle is to continue to uphold the proud traditions of the Knights of the True Horn, and to honor the memory of our brave service.

# Lost Boy Cavern Notes

*Vangaril*

## Weathered Journal

Long have I sought to purge the evils haunting Erandur. Even when his necromantic studies resulted in our mutual expulsion from the Guild of Mages, I persisted in guiding him towards good with a gentle hand. Alas, in our exile, my old friend has mired himself in the foul practice, and in shocking discovery I learned he had become a miserly disciple of the Worm King, a cunning wraith. A Lich.

Frail memory strengthened by dogmatic resolve, the Archmages turned me away when I came to them with my discovery. My pleas for a detachment of battlemages ignored, only my long-past expulsion remembered. And thus, the grave duty falls only to me. I must bear the burden of purging the Lich that was once a friend.

I wander now into the foreboding maw of these catacombs known as the Lost Boy Caverns, far from the climes of common elves and men. With pure spirit and rites of cleansing, I hope to strike down the fearsome Lich and set free the soul of Erandur, but I leave this testament behind, lest I may never return from these depths; as a warning to those who may follow my path.

Faithful, even in Exile,



Vangaril

Crumpled Piece of Paper

Rot, decay, and O the worms! The pitiful scrabbling of this mortal shell shall soon be quieted. Vangaril! Fool! Struggle no more. When you read these words, know that your graying skin, your failing breath, know that they are your own doing, your own foil and folly! Soon, you will be no more, and Lich Erandur will consume you, from within. Resign unto your fate; join Us.

Crumpled Piece of Paper - 2

Each day this cave foils me. I could swear I am near the surface when I awake shaking, cold and in this dank inner keep. Here I must keep notes of the way out.

Three steps forth, five steps right, six steps up and seven for woe.

Eight steps make the children cry, Nine steps pop Khajiit's eyes!

Ten steps mark the Worm King's Wrath, Eleven steps through the gates, of scorched Oblivion!

Worm of Death Take Vangaril

Folded Page

This day, I have struck down the shade of my former friend and ally. With a heavy heart, as the Lich wailed and perished, I performed the rites to extract Erandur's soul from Undeath, and destroy the lich utterly. No dusty text had prepared me for

the bizarre events that occurred, but I am confident that I have freed the soul of Erandur.

I feel compelled to investigate this cavern. Perhaps some dark relics here can be used for research to better combat necromancers in the future. I will explore, and perhaps emerge with trophies enough to prove my worth to the guild.

Letter to the Guild of Mages

An open letter to the Guild of Mages

Respected Archmages, if this letter makes it to your hands, it is either through my miraculous escape from Lost Boy Cavern, or the noble hands of an intrepid explorer, who did not share my gruesome fate. The dire task I undertook alone, when your hands denied me aid, ended in peril. Despite my studies, I failed the casting to banish the Lich befouling the spirit of my dear friend Erandur, and an evil took root within me. Surely your noble countenance will not be furrowed to hear -

Letter to the Guild of Mages -2

A letter for the Once Great Mage's council

The words you read now are those of a man sentenced to the icy grip of undeath, so doomed by your hand. Though thy folly was perhaps only to follow protocol, may my fate haunt your dreams. I vigorously trained myself as a spellsworn to purge the lich that had dominated the soul of my once-noble friend Erandur, but my pointless expulsion from your misguided coven barred me from the appropriate training; the blame falls upon your brow for my errors in banishing the lich, the blame

falls to you for its infestation of my mind... May the Worm King himself usurp you, piteous hounds of -

Letter to the Guild of Mages -3

An open threat to the Guild of Mages

Your days are at an end, your blind bureaucracy finished! Your maggot-filled hearts will rot in the eaves of my inner sanctum, your flesh nothing more than tattered mort meat, your paltry souls forfeit. I will consume you, each one. The fell might of Lich Erandur Vangaril will be your end! Daedraeka!

Mannimarco Daedroth Kvatch Mannimarco Erandur Vangaril  
Oblivion Tska Tska Takaesh!

# Lost Histories Of Tamriel

*Anonymous*

In an earlier volume I discussed the vagaries and influences of the Aedric prophesies, more commonly known as the Elder Scrolls. Readers wanting to know the history behind the highly inappropriate appellation 'Aedric' can refer to chapters 23 through 27 of my previous work for a full explanation as well as the incompetencies of my good comrade Therin of Mournhold, who named them thus.

The influences of the archivally historic Elder Scrolls cannot be understated. Once a prophesy contained in an Elder Scroll is enacted in Tamriel, the text of the parchment becomes fixed. All readers ingest the same divine message. It becomes an historical document declaring the unequivocal truth of a past event. Scholars, even those as dim-witted as Therin of Mournhold, cannot argue the bias of the writer, like he has with my earlier works. Not even magic can affect the word written upon those ancient pages.

# Love Letter From Relfina

*Relfina*

My dearest Roland,

I cannot wait for you to return from Bravil. My heart swells with joy as I know we will once again soon be together. I yearn for you every night that I look beside me in my bed, and you are not there. How I wish I could have taken the journey with you, but I understand that these are dangerous times, and I would only slow you down. When you return, perhaps we should get away from the chaos of the Imperial City. Let's go back to that cabin in the woods. The one where you said we would always be safe from the world. The one where you took me in your arms and sang songs of moonlight and happiness. The one where you said "I love you."

Hurry, my love,

Relfina

# Lynch's Instructions

*Anonymous*

Lynch,

Your instructions are to make your way to the bottom deck of the ship and secure all of the rooms there. Make sure you don't disturb Minx. She's to be left alone to do her assignment. Remember, after the ship is scuttled, we'll meet back in Bravil in three days. Make sure you destroy this note after you memorize it.

S

# Ma'zaddha's Crinkled Note

*Ma'zaddha*

I haven't got much time. She's coming for me.

Nelrene asked me to hold on to this sword. Said I should give it to Anya and have her do the deed, but Anya wouldn't. Now maybe it can find a better use as evidence. Syl will recognize it.

Muurine is in charge. She's the one telling Nelrene what to do. If I'm not around, I hope this is enough evidence to bring her in.

I hope I'm alive to see it.

# Macabre Manifest

*Anonymous*

Ferdelus Wagariun - Imperial City

Quilted Doublet

Green Silk Pants

Gold Trimmed Shoes

Gold Ring

K'sirr - Cheydinhal

Green and Blue Outfit

Green Velvet Shoes

Silver Amulet with Blue Stone

Silver Ring

Nodur Cloud-Seeker - Bruma

Fine Silk Robe

Silk Shoes

Fine Ashen Cane with Inlaid Copper



Gold Ring

Nodaria Wythel - Bravil

Blue Dress

Blue Suede Shoes

Fine Silver Necklace

Gold Ring with Polished Stones

Gold Ring with Red Stone

Kaylah Swinchell - Bravil

White Dress with Floral Pattern

Gold Trimmed Cow Hide Shoes

Gemmed Necklace

Gold Ring with Onyx Stones

Dondlar - Leyawiin

Green Brocade Doublet

Green Silk Pants

Green Velvet Shoes with Gold Thread Trimming

Polished Wood Box with Silver Fittings

Small Polished Staute of Azure Stone (in box)

Holithanius - Cheydinhal

Decorative Leather Armor with Gold Buckles

Silver Longsword (Personalized)

Soft Leather Boots

Glass Ring

Oford Gabings - Anvil

Travel Cloak with Silver and Green Leaf Fastener

Enchanted Shortsword with Inlaid Writing

Gold Ring with Inscription (Cursed?)

Leather Bound Travel Journal

Sellina Rotona - Imperial City

Red Velvet Dress

Red and Gold Velvet Shoes

Silver Necklace with Locket

Silver Ring with Blue Stones

# Madness Ore Materials List

## *Cutter*

I, Cutter, Master Smith of New Sheoth, by tradition and sacred pledge to my deceased mentor, must forge weapons and armor for any hero who brings me Madness Ore. I will create magical versions of these weapons and armor if the hero provides the needed Ore and the appropriate matrix, which my mentor has hidden throughout the land, drinking in the mystical essences, the blood of the Shivering Isles.

The amount of Madness Ore required to make items is listed below:

1 piece -- Arrows (per 25)

2 pieces -- Bow

4 pieces -- Claymore

2 pieces -- War Axe

3 pieces -- Sword

2 pieces -- Boots

5 pieces -- Cuirass

2 pieces -- Gauntlets

3 pieces -- Greaves

2 pieces -- Helmet

2 pieces -- Shield

# Manifesto Cyrodiil Vampyrum

*Anonymous*

To you whom We have seen

Stalking at night by eyes keen

Transcendant of savages

Sating thirst sans avarice

Your coffers stay stuffed

By social graces robust

None know your nature;

save Us

None share your fate;

save Us

None welcome you as kin;

save Us

Know first that we are no simple tribe of savages, tearing throats with the orgiastic abandon of our scattered, tribal brethren. Ours is a civil fraternity, to which we are bound -

every one - by our dual hunger for flesh and influence. By the virtue of Imperial structure and bureaucracy, Cyrodiil has become our stronghold in the third era, and we suffer no savage rivals within our boundaries, reveal ourselves to none, and manipulate the hand of society to mete out our agendas.

To Kin-father Molag Bal, who brought forth the Bloodmatron Lamae to spite Arkay, we owe our existence, as do all vampires, though not all honor Him. For him we revel in the feast, and acknowledge the gift adrift in our veins.

To patron Clavicus Vile, beacon o'er our affairs, we owe our successes and social stature. Our bond with Vile makes us unique among our kind, for his guidance steels our savage craving with reason and savvy. For him we live amidst mankind, and twist them to our will from offices of power.

Most barbaric tribes think themselves powerful by the gift of Bal's blood alone, and squander the gift. There are those, however, who show signs of enlightenments, and earn our attention - those such as the Glenmoril Wyrd, who live within the walls of Breton cities, or the Whet-Fang sodality of Black Marsh, who use magicka to keep captives catatonic and harvest from them the red nectar. These foes may one day threaten to impugn our sovereignty within the boundaries of Cyrodiil, thus compelling our vigilance. Should any encroach upon our dominion, our wrath must be swift and total.

To preserve our ideals and way of life, two primary edicts shall be observed. Above all, reveal thyself and our Order to no other, for discretion is the greatest of our virtues. Do not feed where you may be found out, or on those who may suspect your passing. Avoid daylight by lifestyle; dispel common belief in our kind, and maintain supple appearance through satisfaction

of the thirst. Second, devote your pursuits to the procurement of influence, political and otherwise. Our strength is not in physical numbers, but in skillful manipulation of society. Always be mindful of our Patrons, and preserve the Order. Devote yourself to these ideals always, and the Order shall count you amongst our own.

# Mannimarco, King Of Worms

## *Horicles*

O sacred isle Artaeum, where rosy light infuses air,  
O'er towers and through flowers, gentle breezes flow,  
Softly sloping green-kissed cliffs to crashing foam below,  
Always springtide afternoon housed within its border,  
This mystic, mist-protected home of the Psijic Order:  
Those counselors of kings, cautious, wise, and fair.  
Ten score years and thirty since the mighty Remans fell,  
Two brilliant students studied within the Psijics' fold.  
One's heart was light and warm, the other dark and cold.  
The madder latter, Mannimarco, whirled in a deathly dance,  
His soul in bones and worms, the way of the necromance.  
Entrapping and enslaving souls, he cast a wicked spell.  
The former, Galerion had magic bold and bright as day.  
He confronted Mannimarco beneath gray Ceporah Tower,



Saying, 'Your wicked mysticism is no way to wield your power,  
Bringing horror to the spirit world, your studies must cease.'  
Mannimarco scoffed, hating well the ways of life and peace,  
And returned to his dark artistry; his paints, death and decay.  
O sacred isle Artaeum, how slow to perceive the threat,  
When the ghastly truth revealed, how weak the punishment.  
The ghoulish Mannimarco from the isle of the wise was sent  
To the mainland Dawn's Beauty, more death and souls to reap.  
'You have found a wolf, and sent the beast to flocks of sheep,'  
Galerion told his Masters, 'A terror on Tamriel has set.'  
'Speak no more of him,' the sage Cloaks of Gray did say.  
'Twas not the first time Galerion thought his Masters callous,  
Unconcerned for men and mer, aloof in their island palace.  
'Twas not the first time Galerion thought 'twas time to build  
A new Order to bring true magic to all, a mighty Mages Guild.  
But 'twas the time he left, at last, fair Artaeum's azure bay.  
O, but sung we have of Vanus Galerion many times before,  
How cast he off the Psijics' chains, bringing magic to the land.  
Throughout the years, he saw the touch of Mannimarco's hand,

Through Tamriel's deserts, forests, towns, mountains, and seas.

The dark grip stretching out, growing like some dread disease  
By his dark Necromancers, collecting cursed artifacts of yore.

They brought to him these tools, mad wizards and witches,

And brought blood-tainted herbs and oils to his cave of sin,

Sweet Akaviri poison, dust from saints, sheafs of human skin,

Toadstools, roots, and much more cluttered his alchemical shelf,

Like a spider in his web, he sucked all their power into himself,

Mannimarco, Worm King, world's first of the undying liches.

Corruption on corruption, 'til the rot sunk to his very core,

Though he kept the name Mannimarco, his body and his mind

Were but a living, moving corpse as he left humanity behind.

The blood in his veins became instead a poison acid stew.

His power and his life increased as his fell collection grew.

Mightiest were these artifacts, long cursed since days of yore.

They say Galerion left the Guild, calling it 'a morass,'

But untruth is a powerful stream, polluting the river of time.

Galerion beheld Mannimarco's rise through powers sublime,

To his mages and Lamp Knights, 'Before my last breath,  
Face I must the tyranny of worms, and kill at last, undeath.'  
He led them north to cursed lands, to a mountain pass.  
O those who survived the battle say its like was never seen.  
Armored with magicka, armed with ensorcelled sword and axe,  
Galerion cried, echoing, 'Worm King, surrender your artifacts,  
And their power to me, and you shall live as befits the dead.'  
A hollow laugh answered, 'You die first,' Mannimarco said.  
The mage army then clashed with the unholy force obscene.  
Imagine waves of fire and frost, and the mountain shivers,  
Picture lightning arching forth, crackling in a dragon's sigh.  
Like leaves, the battlemages fly to rain down from the sky,  
At the Necromancers' call, corpses burst from earth to fight,  
To be shattered into nothingness with a flood of holy light.  
A maelstrom of energy unleashed, blood cascades in rivers.  
Like a thunderburst in blue skies or a lion's sudden roar,  
Like sharp razors tearing over delicate embroidered lace,  
So at a touch did Galerion shake the mountain to its base.  
The deathly horde fell fatally, but heeding their dying cries

From the depths, the thing they called Worm King did rise.  
Nirn itself did scream in the Mages' and Necromancers' war  
His eyes burning dark fire, he opened his toothless maw,  
Vomiting darkness with each exhalation of his breath,  
All sucking in the fetid air felt the icy touch of death.  
In the skies above the mountain, darkness overcame pale,  
Then Mannimarco Worm King felt his dismal powers fail:  
The artifacts of death pulled from his putrid skeletal claw.  
A thousand good and evil perished then, history confirms.  
Among, alas, Vanus Galerion, he who showed the way,  
It seemed once that Mannimarco had truly died that day.  
Scattered seemed the Necromancers, wicked, ghastly fools,  
Back to the Mages Guild, victors kept the accursed tools,  
Of him, living still in undeath, Mannimarco, King of Worms.  
Children, listen as the shadows cross your sleeping hutch,  
And the village sleeps away, streets emptied of the crowds,  
And the moons do balefully glare through the nightly clouds,  
And the graveyard's people rest, we hope, in eternal sleep,  
Listen and you'll hear the whispered tap of the footsteps creep,

Then pray you'll never feel the Worm King's awful touch.

# Manual Of Armor

*Anonymous*

This manual is commissioned by General Warhaft to serve as a guide and manual to armor for all officers in the Imperial service.

On the battlefield, a soldier's armor should reflect his principal duties. Scouts, light cavalry, archers, and raiding skirmishers should wear light armor. Mobility and speed is of paramount importance to these troops. It is recommended that a cuirass and greaves be worn at all times. Helmets, gauntlets and boots are of value to cavalry and skirmishers, but not scouts or archers.

Light armor is made from fur, leather, chainmail, mithril, elven or glass. This is also the order of their quality and expense, fur being the least protective and cheapest, and glass the best and most expensive. Fur, leather armor, and chainmail are readily available throughout the empire. Mithril, elven and glass are exceedingly rare and are only found in ancient ruins and remote tombs.

Heavy armor should be reserved for the frontline infantry, pikemen, heavy cavalry or foot knights. All officers should be issued heavy armor. Helmets, cuirass and greaves should be standard issue at all times. Boots and gauntlets are only necessary for the cavalry and foot knights.

Blacksmiths can forge heavy armor from iron, steel, dwarven, orichalcum, ebony or daedric. This is also the order of their quality and expense, iron being the least useful and cheapest, with daedric the most effective and expensive. Iron and steel plate mail can be found in most any blacksmith's shop. The other materials are rare and armor made from them is only found in ancient treasure hoards hidden deep underground.

Advanced practitioners in the Mages Guild know the secrets of placing enchantments upon pieces of armor. The greatest enchantments are typically placed on armor made from rarer, more durable materials, such as ebony and daedric, but even iron can be made to take an enchantment.

The self-styled Bard of Battle, Amorous Janus, once penned a comedic ballad about a Colovian general who was constant removing and re-equipping his armor every few minutes to conserve the magicka powering it. By way of response to the implied criticism, the general had him mounted on the front of a battering ram during the siege of Castle Fallow.

# Manual Of Arms

*Anonymous*

This manual is commissioned by General Warhaft to serve as a guide and manual to arms and weapons for all Imperial officers in the field.

Obviously, a soldier's weaponry should reflect his skills. Skill with a blade is recommended for daggers, shortswords, longswords, and claymores. Skill with blunt weapons is desirable to wield the war axe, mace, battle axe and war hammer. To the uninitiated, axes and hammers may seem to be very different weapons, but the rhythm, drill, and physical strength used by both weapon types are virtually identical. Only those with marksman skill should be outfitted with the bow.

Most of these weapons are commonly used in combination with a shield. The claymore, battle axe and war hammer, however, require both hands to use. These two-handed weapons are best suited to heavily-armored knights, berserkers and those soldiers that hold the flanks of the line.

Arms have been made from many materials over the ages, and each material varies in weight, durability, and cost. These materials are here ranked in order of desirability and cost, with cheapest and least desirable listed first: iron, steel, silver, dwarven, elven, glass, ebony, and finally daedric. Some



armorers correctly observe that silver weapons are slightly less durable than steel; nonetheless, its unique ability to affect ghosts, wraiths and certain types of Daedric creatures is undisputed.

Bows can be made with laminated cores of the same materials. This provides a higher tensile strength and therefore greater power on the draw. The materials used in the arrow, particularly in the arrowhead, can affect its mass and penetration. Thus, the quality of the bow and of the arrow are taken together to determine the weapon's overall armor penetration.

Enchanted weapons are mentioned in virtually every fable and song. The magic on such items lies dormant until they strike an opponent. At that moment the enchantment is activated, causing distress and injury to the target. Enchantments on bows are transferred to the arrow at the moment of release. Should the arrow have an enchantment of its own, however, the missile now carries both enchantments and delivers them to the target.

An enchanted weapon has a limited reservoir of magicka. Each blow drains some of its reserves, until finally it is drained dry. The enchantment can be recharged by arcane processes involving soul gems. The more powerful the soul in the gem, the more magicka is restored to the item.

# Manual Of Spellcraft

*Anonymous*

[The book contains an inordinate number of scrawlings along the margins; the few that are immediately readable suggest they are notes for someone who needs frequent reminders on the basics of spell casting.]

## The Beginning Spellcaster

The most powerful mages in Tamriel were once beginners. They all had similar early experiences: exposure to magic kindled an interest and/or unlocked some latent ability, followed by years of hard work. These intrepid souls honed their skills, learned new spells, and vigorously trained their minds and bodies to become the formidable figures they were known as during their later lives.

The Mages Guild of Tamriel has long been the first stop on a long road to knowledge and power for many individuals. Providing magical services to the general public, the Guild offers a wide variety of spells for purchase, and is recommended as a first stop for any aspiring spellcaster. Independent dealers may be found, though their selection of spells is often not as comprehensive as that of the Mages Guild.

Many spells are beyond the capabilities of beginning mages; the ability to render one's self invisible, for example, is an advanced power and is beyond the novice spellcaster. Through practice, a

mage may become more skilled in a given school of Magic and find himself proficient enough to begin exploring its more powerful aspects. The fledging mage should not be daunted by his inability to wield certain powers, but should instead use this as a point of focus and a drive for bettering himself. Rather than becoming discouraged, the student should look forward to higher levels of skill, such as the advanced techniques of absorbing spells, summoning lesser (and eventually greater) Daedra and undead—for research purposes only—and protection against specific types of spells, such as Fire, Frost, and Shock spells.

Mages wishing to specialize in a particular school of magic are encouraged to learn as many spells of possible within that school, and to practice them frequently. All mages, whether specializing or nurturing a general interest, are encouraged to apply for membership within the Mages Guild. Beyond services available to the general public, the accomplished Guild member has access to many exclusive services such as Advanced Spellcraft and Enchanting. These services have been deemed potentially dangerous to the public at large, and have been restricted to higher-ranked Guild members in good standing by the Council of Mages.

Citizens interested in the further use of magic should consult their local Mages Guild Archmagister.

# Manual Of Xedilian

*Anonymous*

On the subject of Xedilian's construction, Lord Sheogorath, let me begin by extending the warmest regards to you and your noble being. The construction was completed on time and well under budget as you demanded ("under pain of fun," I believe you are quoted as saying) and with only the most infinitesimal loss of life. I am proud to say that by harnessing the energy of that most unusual crystalline formation, Xedilian should maintain itself for years to come (with proper maintenance of course). At your request, I have included the full operation instructions for each section of the site. If you have any other questions, please feel free to bother me anytime (like when you originally thought of this idea in the middle of the night).

The heart of Xedilian is its power source, the Resonator of Judgment. By tuning this huge chunk of crystal with the Attenuator of Judgment (a "tuning fork" of sorts), we have released a wave of siren-like sound that will draw anyone from outside the Isles. Three Focus Crystals have been placed throughout the site to assist in keeping this wave of sound even and stable. This site will not function without all three Focus Crystals running in unison, so it's important to keep them clean and safe on their "cradles" (which I have called their Judgment Nexus). The Focus Crystals are irreplaceable at this time, so take proper precautions guarding the site when not in use.

Xedilian is split into three encounter areas all linked with the latest in arcane transport technology. As the hapless “Xedilianites” (it was fun to experiment on them, thank you for that) make their way through each room, they are subjected to a test based either on the Manic philosophy or that of the Demented... whichever suits your whim at the time. All you need do is push a single button, then sit back with your favorite wine (we’ve provided luxurious observation platforms from which to enjoy the show) and watch the results.

Each encounter area has a unique theme that matches your requests as close as we could provide. I think you’ll be pleased with the results. Below I have detailed each room and the effects you can expect from them (in brief, as I know your lordship is busy):

A fairly empty room with a large grating on the floor and single, half-sized “harmless” Gnarl wandering in the center.

#### Manic Result

Our small, harmless Gnarl will be grown in size to nearly thrice that of the average Xedilianite. Most we observe run around in an attempt to escape the lumbering creature. Eventually, it will stop and fade away. The magic of the room is enhanced by the spore gas we pump in through the grating.

#### Demented Result

Our tiny friend Gnarl is joined by a small swarm of its brethren and they attack our surprised guests! Genius!

In this room, a huge mound of treasure sits atop a half-ziggurat inside a securely locked cage (to which there is no key).

## Manic Result

We drop several hundred keys to the ground that are all exact duplicates. It's amusing to watch Xedilianites scramble through the keys for the correct one. Some spend days. Amazing.

## Demented Result

When the Xedilianite reaches the top of the ziggurat; we blast them with a highly concussive flame spell. The blast always sends them flying... good fun for all, discounting those that do not survive.

As you requested, we saved this one for last. The Xedilianite that has the mettle to make it this far now faces the toughest challenge of all. This room features freshly killed corpses, blood, and plenty of hanging bodies (for your darker moods, my lord).

## Manic Result

We kill the Xedilianite, and cause a specter of his former self to rise from the body. Not many Xedilianite minds can handle this one... most go insane this far into the site. I must confess, this room is a favorite of mine.

## Demented Result

Nothing better than a good old-fashioned battle! We raise at least double the number of zombies as there are Xedilianites and let them all have at it! Simple, elegant, and deadly.

I hope you are pleased with the results of Xedilian. I know you'll have just as much fun using it as we had fun

constructing it. Strangely, we have yet to receive payment for the site, but I am sure it is just a minor oversight and it will be corrected as soon as your lordship has a mome...

# Mirili's List

*Mirili Ulven*

I, Mirili Ulven of Highcross, will pay for samples of the following items, the sum of 10 coins each. As I only need one sample of each, I shall not pay for duplicates.

Alocasia Fruit

Aster Bloom Core

Black Tar

Blister Pod Cap

Congeaed Putrescence

Digestive Slime

Elytra Ichor

Flame Stalk

Fungus Stalk

Gas Bladder

Gnarl Bark

Grummite Eggs



Hound Tooth

Hunger Tongue

Hydnum Azure Giant Spore

Pod Pit

Rot Scale

Scalon Fin

Screaming Maw

Shambles Marrow

Swamp Tentacle

Thorn Hook

Void Essence

Watcher's Eye

Withering Moon

Worm's Head Cap

# Mixed Unit Tactics

*Codus Callonus*

Mixed Unit Tactics

in the Five Years War

Volume One

By

Codus Callonus

The Legions could learn from the unconventional tactics used by the Khajiit in the Five Years War against Valenwood. I was stationed at the Sphinxmoth Legion Fort on the border near Dune and witnessed many of the northern skirmishes firsthand.

The war started with the so-called "Slaughter of Torval." The Khajiit claim that the Bosmer invaded the city without provocation and killed over a thousand citizens before being driven off by reinforcements from a nearby jungle tribe. The Bosmer claim that the attack was in retaliation for Khajiti bandits who were attacking wood caravans headed for Valenwood.

In the spring of 3E 396 the war moved closer to Fort Sphinxmoth. I was posted on lookout and saw parts of the

conflict. I later spoke with both Khajiit and Bosmer who fought in the battle, and it will serve as an excellent example of how the Khajiit used a mixture of ground and tree units to win the war.

The Khajiit began the fight in an unusual way by sending tree-cutting teams of Cathay-raht and the fearsome Senche-raht or “Battlecats” into the outskirts of Valenwood’s forests. When word reached the Bosmer that trees were being felled (allegedly a crime in the strange Bosmeri religion), a unit of archers were dispatched from larger conflicts in the south. The Bosmer were thus goaded into splitting their forces into smaller groups.

The Bosmer archers took up positions in the remaining trees whose branches were now twenty or more feet apart, allowing some light into the forest floor. The Bosmer bent the remaining trees with their magics into small fortifications from which to fire their bows.

When the tree-cutters arrived the next morning, a half dozen Khajiit fell to the Bosmer arrows in the first volley. After that the Khajiit took large wooden shields from the backs of the Senche-raht and made a crude shelter. The Khajiit, even the enormous Senche-raht, were able to hide between this shelter and one of the larger trees. When it became apparent that the Khajiit would not leave their shelter, some Bosmer chose to descend and engage the Khajiit sword-to-claw.

When the Bosmer were nearly upon the shelter, one of the Khajiit began playing on a native instrument of plucked metal bars. This was a signal of some kind, and a small group of the man-like Ohmes and Ohmes-raht emerged from covered holes on the forest floor. Although outnumbered, they were attacking from behind by surprise and won the ground quickly.

The Bosmer archers in the trees would have still won the battle were they not having troubles of their own. A group of Dagi and Dagi-raht, two of the less common forms of Khajiit who live in the trees of the Tenmar forest, jumped from one tree to another under a magical cover of silence. They took up positions in the higher branches that could not hold a Bosmer's weight. When the signal came, they used their claws and either torches or spells of fire (accounts from the two survivors I spoke with vary on this point) to distract the archers while the battle on the ground took place. A few of the archers were able to flee, but most were killed.

Apparently the Dagi and Dagi-raht have more magical ability than is widely believed if they were able to keep themselves magically silenced for so long. One of the surviving Bosmer told me that he saw a few ordinary cats among the Dagi and even claimed that these ordinary cats are known as 'Alfiq' and that they were the spellcasters, but Bosmer are almost as unreliable as the Khajiit when it comes to the truth, and I cannot believe that a housecat can cast spells.

At the end of the day the Khajiit lost perhaps a half-dozen fighters out a force of no more than four dozen, while the Bosmer lost nearly an entire company of archers. The survivors were unable to report back before a second company of archers arrived and this strategy was repeated again, with similar results. Finally, a much larger force was sent and the Bosmer won that battle with the help of the native animals of Valenwood. That third skirmish and the Khajiti response I will discuss in the second volume of this series.

# Mysterious Note

*The Gray Fox*

I can offer you greater rewards and less time in prison. If you are interested, come to the Garden of Dareloth in the Imperial City's Waterfront district at midnight. Present this note and all shall be made clear.

The Gray Fox

# Mystery Of Talara

*Mera Llykith*

Mystery of Talara, part 1

The Mystery of Princess Talara

Part I

by

Mera Llykith

The year was 3E 405. The occasion was the millennial celebration of the founding of the Breton Kingdom of Camlorn. Every grand boulevard and narrow alley was strung with gold and purple banners, some plain, some marked with the heraldic symbols of the Royal Family or the various principalities and dukedoms which were vassals of the King. Musicians played in the plazas great and small, and on every street corner was a new exotic entertainer: Redguard snake charmers, Khajiiti acrobats, magicians of genuine power and those whose flamboyant skill was equally impressive if largely illusion.

The sight that drew most of the male citizens of Camlorn was the March of Beauty. A thousand comely young women, brightly and provocatively dressed, danced their way down the long, wide main street of the city, from the Temple of Sethiete

to the Royal Palace. The menfolk jostled one another and craned their necks, picking their favorites. It was no secret that they were all prostitutes, and after the March and the Flower Festival that evening, they would be available for more intimate business.

Gyna attracted much of the attention with her tall, curvaceous figure barely covered by strips of silk and her curls of flaxen hair specked with flower petals. In her late twenties, she wasn't the youngest of the prostitutes, but she was certainly one of the most desirable. It was clear by her demeanor that she was used to the lascivious glances, though she was far from jaded at the sight of the city in splendor. Compared to the squalid quarter of Daggerfall where she made her home, Camlorn at the height of celebration seemed so unreal. And yet, what was even stranger was how, at the same time, familiar it all looked, though she had never been there before.

The King's daughter Lady Jyllia rode out of the palace gates, and immediately cursed her misfortune. She had completely forgotten about the March of Beauty. The streets were snarled, at a standstill. It would take hours to wait for the March to pass, and she had promised her old nurse Ramke a visit in her house south of the city. Jyllia thought for a moment, picturing in her mind the arrangement of streets in the city, and devised a shortcut to avoid the main street and the March.

For a few minutes she felt very clever as she wound her way through tight, curving side streets, but presently she came upon temporary structures, tents and theaters set up for the celebration, and had to improvise a new path. In no time at all, she was lost in the city where she had lived all but five years of her life.

Peering down an alley, she saw the main avenue crowded with the March of Beauty. Hoping that it was the tale end, and desirous not to be lost again, Lady Jyllia guided her horse toward the festival. She did not see the snake-charmer at the mouth of the alley, and when his pet hissed and spread its hood, her charge reared up in fear.

The women in the parade gasped and surged back at the sight, but Lady Jyllia quickly calmed her stallion down. She looked abashed at the spectacle she had caused.

“My apologies, ladies,” she said with a mock military salute.

“It’s all right, madam,” said a blonde in silk. “We’ll be out of your way in a moment.”

Jyllia stared as the March passed her. Looking at that whore had been like looking in a mirror. The same age, and height, and hair, and eyes, and figure, almost exactly. The woman looked back at her, and it seemed as if she was thinking the same thing.

And so Gyna was. The old witches who sometimes came in to Daggerfall had sometimes spoke of doppelgangers, spirits that assumed the guise of their victims and portended certain death. Yet the experience had not frightened her: it seemed only one more strangely familiar aspect of the alien city. Before the March had danced its way into the palace gates, she had all but forgotten the encounter.

The prostitutes crushed into the courtyard, as the King himself came to the balcony to greet them. At his side was his chief bodyguard, a battlemage by the look of him. As for the King himself, he was a handsome man of middle age, rather



unremarkable, but Gyna was awed at the sight of him. A dream, perhaps. Yes, that was it: she could see him as she had dreamt of him, high above her as he was now, bending now to kiss her. Not a one of lust as she had experienced before, but one of small fondness, a dutiful kiss.

“Dear ladies, you have filled the streets of the great capitol of Camlorn with your beauty,” cried the King, forcing a silence on the giggling, murmuring assembly. He smiled proudly. His eyes met Gyna’s and he stopped, shaken. For an eternity, they stayed locked together before His Highness recovered and continued his speech.

Afterwards, while the women were all en route back to their tents to change into their costumes for the evening, one of the older prostitutes approached Gyna: “Did you see how the King looked at you? If you’re smart, you’ll be the new royal mistress before this celebration ends.”

“I’ve seen looks of hunger before, and that wasn’t one of them,” laughed Gyna. “I’d wager he thought I was someone else, like that lady who tried to run us over with her horse. She’s probably his kin, and he thought she had dressed up like a courtesan and joined the March of Beauty. Can you imagine the scandal?”

When they arrived at the tents, they were greeted by a stocky, well-dressed young man with a bald pate and a commanding presence of authority. He introduced himself as Lord Strale, ambassador to the Emperor himself, and their chief patron. It was Strale who had hired them, on the Emperor’s behalf, as a gift to the King and the kingdom of Camlorn.

“The March of Beauty is but a precursor to the Flower Festival tonight,” he said. Unlike the King, he did not have to yell to be heard. His voice was loud and precise in its natural modulations. “I expect each of you to perform well, and justify the significant expense I’ve suffered bringing you all the way up here. Now hurry, you must be dressed and in position on Cavilstyr Rock before the sun goes down.”

The ambassador needn’t have worried. The women were all professionals, experts at getting dressed and undressed with none of the time-consuming measures less promiscuous females required. His manservant Gnorbooth offered his assistance, but found he had little to do. Their costumes were simplicity itself: soft, narrow sheets with a hole for their heads. Not even a belt was required, so the gowns were open at the sides exposing the frame of their skin.

So it was long before the sun had set that the prostitutes turned dancers were at Cavilstyr Rock. It was a great, wide promontory facing the sea, and for the occasion of the Festival of Flowers, a large circle of unlit torches and covered baskets had been arranged. As early as they were, a crowd of spectators had already arrived. The women gathered in the center of the circle and waited until it was time.

Gyna watched the crowd as it grew, and was not surprised when she saw the lady from the March approaching, hand-in-hand with a very old, very short white-haired woman. The old woman was distracted, pointing out islands out at sea. The blonde lady seemed nervous, unsure of what to say. Gyna was used to dealing with uneasy clients, and spoke first.

“Good to see you again, madam. I am Gyna of Daggerfall.”

“I’m glad you bear me no ill will because of the whores, I mean horse,” the lady laughed, somewhat relieved. “I am Lady Jyllia Raze, daughter of the King.”

“I always thought that daughters of kings were called princess,” smiled Gyna.

“In Camlorn, only when they are heirs to the throne. I have a younger brother from my father’s new wife whom he favors,” Jyllia replied. She felt her head swim. It was madness, speaking to a common prostitute, talking of family politics so intimately. “Relative to that subject, I must ask you something very peculiar. Have you ever heard of the Princess Talara?”

Gyna thought a moment: “The name sounds somewhat familiar. Why would I have?”

“I don’t know. It was a name I just thought you might recognize,” sighed Lady Jyllia. “Have you been to Camlorn before?”

“If I did, it was when I was very young,” said Gyna, and suddenly she felt it was her turn to be trusting. Something about the Lady Jyllia’s friendly and forthcoming manner touched her. “To be honest, I don’t remember anything at all of my childhood before I was nine or ten. Perhaps I was here with my parents, whoever they were, when I was a little girl. I tell you, I think perhaps I was. I don’t recall ever being here before, but everything I’ve seen, the city, you, the King himself, all seem...like I’ve been here before, long ago.”

Lady Jyllia gasped and took a step back. She gripped the old woman, who had been looking out to sea and murmuring, by the hand. The elderly creature looked to Jyllia, surprised, and

then turned to Gyna. Her ancient, half-blind eyes sparkled with recognition and she made a sound like a grunt of surprise. Gyna also jumped. If the King had seemed like something out of a half-forgotten dream, this woman was someone she knew. As clear and yet indistinct as a guardian spirit.

“I apologize,” stammered Lady Jyllia. “This is my childhood nursemaid, Ramke.”

“It’s her!” the old woman cried, wild-eyed. She tried to run forward, arms outstretched, but Jyllia held her back. Gyna felt strangely naked, and pulled her robe against her body.

“No, you’re wrong,” Lady Jyllia whispered to Ramke, holding the old woman tightly. “The Princess Talara is dead, you know that. I shouldn’t have brought you here. I’ll take you back home.” She turned back to Gyna, her eyes welling with tears. “The entire royal family of Camlorn was assassinated over twenty years ago. My father was Duke of Oloine, the King’s brother, and so he inherited the crown. I’m sorry to have bothered you. Goodnight.”

Gyna gazed after Lady Jyllia and the old nurse as they disappeared into the crowd, but she had little time to consider all she had heard. The sun was setting, and it was time for the Flower Festival. Twelve young men emerged from the darkness wearing only loincloths and masks, and lit the torches. The moment the fire blazed, Gyna and all the rest of the dancers rushed to the baskets, pulling out blossoms and vines by the handful.

At first, the women danced with one another, sprinkling petals to the wind. The crowd then joined in as the music swelled. It was a mad, beautiful chaos. Gyna leapt and swooned like a wild

forest nymph. Then, without warning, she felt rough hands grip her from behind and push her.

She was falling before she understood it. The moment the realization hit, she was closer to the bottom of the hundred foot tall cliff than she was to the top. She flailed out her arms and grasped at the cliff wall. Her fingers raked against the stone and her flesh tore, but she found a grip and held it. For a moment, she stayed there, breathing hard. Then she began to scream.

The music and the festival were too loud up above: no one could hear her - she could scarcely hear herself. Below her, the surf crashed. Every bone in her body would snap if she fell. She closed her eyes, and a vision came. A man was standing below her, a King of great wisdom, great compassion, looking up, smiling. A little girl, golden-haired, mischievous, her best friend and cousin, clung to the rock beside her.

“The secret to falling is making your body go limp. And with luck, you won’t get hurt,” the girl said. She nodded, remembering who she was. Eight years of darkness lifted.

She released her grip and let herself fall like a leaf into the water below.

Mystery of Talara, part 2

The Mystery of

Princess Talara

Part II

By

Mera Llykith

She felt nothing, darkness enveloping her body and mind. Pain surged through her leg and with that sensation, a great feeling of cold washed over her. She opened her eyes and saw that she was drowning.

Her left leg would not move at all, but using her right one and her arms, she pulled herself up toward the moons above. It was long way through the swirling currents that wrenched back at her. At last she broke the surface and sucked in the cold night air. She was still close to the rocky shoreline of the capitol city of the kingdom of Camlorn, but the water had carried her quite a ways from the point where she fell at Cavilstyr Rock.

Not fell, she thought, correcting herself. She had been pushed.

Further down current, she allowed herself to drift. There the steep cliff walls sloped lower until they were close to the water's edge. The silhouette of a large house on the shore loomed ahead, and as she neared it, she could see smoke rising from the chimney and the flicker of firelight within. The pain in her leg was great, but greater still was the chill of the water. The thought of a warm hearth fire was all the motivation she needed to begin swimming again.

At the shore's edge, she tried to stand but found she couldn't. Her tears mixed with the sea water as she began to crawl across the sand and rock. The simple white sheet which had been her costume at the Flower Festival was tattered and felt like a weight of lead across her back. Beyond the point of exhaustion, she fell forward and began to sob.

"Please!" she cried. "If you can hear me, please help!"

A moment later, the door to the house opened and a woman stepped out. It was Ramke, the old lady she had met at the Flower Festival. The one who had started and cried "It's her!" even before she herself knew who she was. By contrast, when the old woman came to her, this time there was no glimmer of recognition in her eyes.

"By Sethiete, are you hurt?" Ramke whispered, and helped her up, acting as her crutch. "I've seen that gown before. Were you one of the dancers at the Flower Festival tonight? I was there with Lady Jyllia Raze, the daughter of the King."

"I know, she introduced us," she groaned. "I called myself Gyna of Daggerfall?"

"Of course, I knew you looked familiar somehow," the old woman chuckled, and led her hop by hop across the beach and into the front door. "My memory isn't as good as it used to be. Lets get you warm and have a look at that leg."

Ramke took Gyna's soaking rags and covered her with a blanket as she sat at the fire. As the numbness of the chill water began to leave her, it cruelly abandoned her to the intense agony of her leg. Until then, she had not dared to look at it. When she did, she felt vomit rise at the sight of the deep gash, fish-white dead flesh, plump and swollen. Thick arterial blood bubbled up, splashing on the floor in streams.

"Oh dear," said the old woman, returning to the fire. "That must rather sting. You're lucky that I still remember a little of the old healing spells."

Ramke seated herself on the floor and pressed her hands on either side of the wound. Gyna felt a flare of pain, and then a

cool soft pinching and prickle. When she looked down, Ramke was slowly sliding her wrinkled hands towards one another. At their approach, the lesion began to mend before her eyes, flesh binding and bruises fading.

“Sweet Kynareth,” Gyna gasped. “You’ve saved my life.”

“Not only that, you won’t have an ugly scar on your pretty leg,” Ramke chuckled. “I had to use that spell so many times when Lady Jyllia was little. You know, I was her nursemaid.”

“I know,” Gyna smiled. “But that was a long time ago, and you still remember the spell.”

“Oh, when you’re learning anything, even the School of Restoration, there’s always a lot of study and mistakes, but once you’re as old as I am, there’s no longer any need to remember things. You just know. After all, I’ve probably cast it a thousand times before. Little Lady Jyllia and the little Princess Talara was always getting cut and bruised. Small wonder, the way they was always climbing all over the palace.”

Gyna sighed. “You must have loved Lady Jyllia very much.”

“I still do,” Ramke beamed. “But now she’s all grown and things are different. You know, I didn’t notice it before because you were all wet from the sea, but you look very much like my lady. Did I mention that before when we met at the Festival?”

“You did,” said Gyna. “Or rather I think you thought I looked like Princess Talara.”

“Oh, it would be so wonderful if you were the Princess returned,” the old woman gasped. “You know, when the former royal family was killed, and everyone said the Princess was



killed though we never found the body, I think the real victim was Lady Jyllia. Her little heart just broke, and for a while, it looked like her mind did too.”

“What do you mean?” asked Gyna. “What happened?”

“I don’t know if I should tell a stranger this, but it’s fairly well-known in Camlorn, and I really feel like I know you,” Ramke struggled with her conscience and then released. “Jyllia saw the assassination, you see. I found her afterwards, hiding in that terrible blood-stained throne room, and she was like a little broken doll. She wouldn’t speak, she wouldn’t eat. I tried all my healing spells, but it was quite beyond my power. So much more than a scraped knee. Her father who was then Duke of Oloine sent her to a sanitarium in the country to get well.”

“That poor little girl,” cried Gyna.

“It took her years to be herself again,” said Ramke, nodding. “And, in truth, she never really returned altogether. You wonder why her father when he was made king didn’t make her his heir? He thought that she was still not exactly right, and in a way, as much as I would deny it, he’s correct to think so. She remembered nothing, nothing at all.”

“Do you think,” Gyna considered her words carefully. “That she would be better if she knew that her cousin the Princess Talara was alive and well?”

Ramke considered it. “I think so. But maybe not. Sometimes it’s best not to hope.”

Gyna stood up, finding her leg to be as strong as it looked to be. Her gown had dried, and Ramke gave her a cloak, insisting she

protect herself against the cold night air. At the door, Gyna kissed the old woman's cheek and thanked her. Not only for the healing spell and for the cloak, but for everything else of kindness she had ever done.

The road close to the house went north and south. To the left was the way back to Camlorn, where secrets lay to which she alone held the key. To the south was Daggerfall, her home for more than twenty years. She could return there, back to her profession on the streets, very easily. For a few seconds, she considered her options, and then made her choice.

She had not been walking for very long, when a black carriage drawn by three horses bearing the Imperial Seal, together with eight mounted horses, passed her. Before it rounded the wooded pass ahead, it stopped suddenly. She recognized one of the soldiers as Gnorbooth, Lord Strale's manservant. The door opened and Lord Strale himself, the Emperor's ambassador, the man who had hired her and all the other women to entertain at court, stepped out.

"You!" he frowned. "You're one of the prostitutes, aren't you? You're the one who disappeared during the Flower Festival? Gyna, am I right?"

"All that is true," she smiled sourly. "Except my name I've discovered is not Gyna."

"I don't care what it is," said Lord Strale. "What are you doing on the south road? I paid for you to stay and make the kingdom merry."

"If I went back to Camlorn, there are a great many who wouldn't be merry at all."

“Explain yourself,” said Lord Strale.

So she did. And he listened.

Mystery of Talara, part 3

The Mystery

of

Princess Talara

Part III

By

Mera Llykith

Gnorbooth was leaving his favorite pub in Camlorn, The Breaking Branch, when he heard someone calling his name. His was not the sort of a name that could be mistaken for another. He turned and saw Lord Eryl, the Royal Battlemage from the palace, emerge from the darkness of the alley.

“Milord,” said Gnorbooth with a pleasant smile.

“I’m surprised to see you out this evening, Gnorbooth,” grinned Lord Eryl with a most unpleasant smile. “I have not seen you and your master very much since the millennial celebration, but I understand you’ve been very busy. What I’ve been wondering is what you’ve been busy doing.”

“Protecting the Imperial interests in Camlorn is busy work, milord. But I cannot imagine you would be interested in the minutiae of the ambassador’s appointments.”

“But I am,” said the battlemage. “Especially as the ambassador has begun acting most mysteriously, most undiplomatically lately. And I understand that he has taken one of the whores from the Flower Festival into his house. I believe her name is Gyna?”

Gnorbooth shrugged: “He’s in love, I would imagine, milord. It can make men act very strangely, as I’m sure you’ve heard before.”

“She is a most comely wench,” laughed Lord Eryl. “Have you noticed how much she resembles the late Princess Talara?”

“I have only been in Camlorn for fifteen years, milord. I never saw her late majesty.”

“Now I could understand it if he had taken to writing poetry, but what man in love spends his days in the kitchens of the palace, talking to old servants? That hardly sounds like molten passion to me, even based on my limited experience.” Lord Eryl rolled his eyes. “And what is this business he has now in - oh, what is the name of that village?”

“Umbington?” replied Gnorbooth, and immediately wished he hadn’t. Lord Eryl was too canny an actor to reveal it, but Gnorbooth knew at the pit of his stomach that the battlemage did not even know Lord Strale had left the capitol. He had to get away to let the ambassador know, but there was still a game to be carefully played. “He’s not leaving for there until tomorrow. I believe it’s just to put a stamp on some deed that needs the Imperial seal.”

“Is that all? How tedious for the poor fellow. I suppose I’ll see him when he returns then,” Lord Eryl bowed. “Thank you for

being so informative. Farewell.”

The moment the royal battlemage turned the corner, Gnorbooth leapt onto his horse. He had drunk one or two ales too many, but he knew he must find his way to Umbington before Lord Eryl’s agents did. He galloped east out of the capitol, hoping there were signs along the road.

Seated in a tavern that smelled of mildew and sour beer, Lord Strale marveled at how the Emperor’s agent Lady Brisienna always found the most public of places for her most private of conferences. It was harvest time in Umbington, and all of the field hands were drinking away their meager wages in the noisiest of fashions. He was dressed appropriately for the venue, rough trousers and a simple peasant’s vest, but he still felt conspicuous. In comparison to his two female companions, he certainly was. The woman to his right was used to frequenting the low places of Daggerfall as a common prostitute. Lady Brisienna to his left was even more clearly in her element.

“By what name would you prefer I call you?” Lady Brisienna asked solicitously.

“I am used to the name Gyna, though that may have to change,” was her reply. “Of course, it may not. Gyna the Whore may be the name writ on my grave.”

“I will see to it that there is no attempt on your life like that the Flower Festival,” Lord Strale frowned. “But without the Emperor’s help, I won’t be able to protect you forever. The only permanent solution is to capture those who would do you harm and then to raise you to your proper station.”

“Do you believe my story?” Gyna turned to Lady Brisienna.

“I have been the Emperor’s chief agent in High Rock for many years now, and I have heard few stranger tales. If your friend the ambassador hadn’t investigated and discovered what he has, I would have dismissed you outright as a madwoman,” Brisienna laughed, forcing a smile onto Gyna’s face to match. “But now, yes, I do believe you. Perhaps that makes me the madwoman.”

“Will you help us?” asked Lord Strale simply.

“It is a tricky business interfering in the affairs of the provincial kingdoms,” Lady Brisienna looked into the depths of her mug thoughtfully. “Unless there is a threat to the Empire itself, we find it is best not to meddle. What we have in your case is a very messy assassination that happened twenty years ago, and its aftermath. If His Imperial Majesty involved itself in every bloody hiccup in the succession in each of his thousand vassal kingdoms, he would never accomplish anything for the greater good of Tamriel.”

“I understand,” murmured Gyna. “When I remembered everything, who I was and what happened to me, I resolved to do nothing about it. In fact, I was leaving Camlorn and going back home to Daggerfall when I saw Lord Strale again. He was the one who began this quest to resolve this, not me. And when he brought me back, I only wanted to see my cousin to tell her who I was, but he forbade me.”

“It would have been too dangerous,” growled Strale. “We still don’t know yet the depths of the conspiracy. Perhaps we never will.”

“I’m sorry, I always find myself giving long explanations to short questions. When Lord Strale asked if I would help, I should have begun by saying ‘yes,’” Lady Brisienna laughed at the change in Lord Strale and Gyna’s expressions. “I will help you, of course. But for this to turn out well, you must accomplish two things to the Emperor’s satisfaction. First, you must prove with absolute certainty who is the power behind this plot you’ve uncovered. You must get someone to confess.”

“And secondly,” said Lord Strale, nodding. “We must prove that this is a matter worthy of His Imperial Majesty’s consideration, and not merely a minor local concern.”

Lord Strale, Lady Brisienna, and the woman who called herself Gyna discussed how to accomplish their goals for a few hours more. When it was agreed what had to be done, Lady Brisienna took her leave to find her ally Proseccus. Strale and Gyna set off to the west, toward Camlorn. It was not long after beginning their ride through the woods that they heard the sound of galloping hoof beats far up ahead. Lord Strale unsheathed his sword and signaled for Gyna to position her horse behind him.

At that moment, they were attacked on all sides. It was an ambush. Eight men, armed with axes, had been lying in wait.

Lord Strale quickly yanked Gyna from her horse, pulling her behind him. He made a brief, deft motion with his hands. A ring of flame materialized around them, and rushed outward, striking their assailants. The men roared in pain and dropped to their knees. Lord Strale jumped the horse over the closest one, and galloped at full speed westward.

“I thought you were an ambassador not a mage!” laughed Gyna.

“I still believe there are times for diplomacy,” replied Lord Strale.

The horse and rider they had heard before met them on the road. It was Gnorbooth. “Milord, it’s the royal battlemage! He found out you two were in Umbington!”

“With considerable ease, I might add,” Lord Eryl’s voice boomed out of the woods. Gnorbooth, Gyna, and Lord Strale scanned the dark trees, but they showed nothing. The battlemage’s voice seemed to emanate from everywhere and nowhere.

“I’m sorry, milord,” groaned Gnorbooth. “I tried to warn you as soon as I could.”

“In your next life, perhaps you’ll remember not to trust your plans to a drunkard!” laughed Lord Eryl. He had them in his sight, and the spell was unleashed.

Gnorbooth saw him first, by the light of the ball of fire that leapt from his fingertips. Later, Lord Eryl was to wonder to himself what the fool had intended to do. Perhaps he was rushing forward to pull Lord Strale out of the path. Perhaps he was trying to flee the path of destruction, and had simply moved left when he should have moved right. Perhaps, as unlikely as it seemed, he was willing to sacrifice himself to save his master. Whatever the reason, the result was the same.

He got in the way.

There was an explosion of energy that filled the night, and an echoing boom that shook birds from the trees for a mile around. On the few square feet where Gnorbooth and his horse had stood was nothing but black glass. They had been reduced



to less than vapor. Gyna and Lord Strale were thrown back. Their horse, when it recovered its senses, galloped away as fast as it could. In the lingering glowing aura of the spell's detonation, Lord Strale looked straight into the woods and into the wide eyes of the battlemage.

"Damn," said Lord Eryl and began to run. The ambassador jumped to his feet and pursued.

"That was an expensive use of magicka, even for you," said Lord Strale as he ran. "Don't you know well enough not to use ranged spells unless you are certain your target won't be blocked?"

"I never thought - that idiot -" Lord Eryl was struck from behind and knocked to the wet forest floor before he had a chance to finish his lamentation.

"It doesn't matter what you thought," said Lord Strale calmly, flipping the battlemage around and pinning his arms to the ground with his knees. "I'm not a battlemage, but I knew enough not to use my entire reserve on your little ambush. Perhaps it's a matter of philosophy, as a government agent, I feel inclined toward conservatism."

"What are you going to do?" whimpered Lord Eryl.

"Gnorbooth was a good man, one of the best, and so I'm going to hurt you quite a lot," the ambassador made a slight movement and his hands began to glow brightly. "That's a certainty. How much more I'm going to hurt you after that depends on what you tell me. I want to hear about the former Duke of Oloine."

“What do you want to know?” Lord Eryl screamed.

“Let’s start with everything,” replied Lord Strale with perfect patience.

Mystery of Talara, part 4

The Mystery of Princess Talara

Part IV

by

Mera Llykith

Gyna never saw the Emperor’s agent Lady Brisienna again, but she kept her promise. Proseccus, a nightblade in the service of the Empire, arrived at Lord Strale’s house in disguise. She was an apt pupil, and within days, he had taught what she needed to know.

“It is a simple charm, not the sort of spell that could turn a raging daedroth into a love-struck puppy,” said Proseccus. “If you do or say anything that would normally anger or offend your target, the power will weaken. It will alter temporarily his perception of you, as spells of the school of illusion do, but his feelings of respect and admiration for you must be supported by means of a charm of a less magickal nature.”

“I understand,” smiled Gyna, thanking her tutor for the two spells of illusion he had taught her. The time had come to use her new-found skill.

The Prostitutes Guildhouse of Camlorn was a great palace in an affluent northern quarter of the city. Prince Sylon could have

found his way there blindfolded, or blind drunk as he often was. Tonight, however, he was only lightly inebriated and he resolved to drink no more. Tonight he was in the mood for pleasure. His kind of pleasure.

“Where is my favorite, Grigia?” he demanded of the Guildmistress upon entering.

“She is still healing from your appointment with her last week,” she smiled serenely. “Most of the other women are in with clients as well, but I saved a special treat for you. A new girl. One you will certainly enjoy.”

The Prince was guided to a sumptuously decorated suite of velvet and silk. As he entered, Gyna stepped from behind a screen and cast her spell quickly, with her mind open to belief as Proseccus had instructed. It was hard to tell if it worked at first. The Prince looked at her with a cruel smile and then, like sun breaking through clouds, the cruelty left. She could tell he was hers. He asked her her name.

“I am between names right now,” she teased. “I’ve never made love to a real prince before. I’ve never even been inside a palace. Is yours very...big?”

“It’s not mine yet,” he shrugged. “But someday I’ll be king.”

“It would be wonderful to live in such a place,” Gyna cooed. “A thousand years of history. Everything must be so old and beautiful. The paintings and books and statues and tapestries. Does your family hold onto all their old treasures?”

“Yes, hoarded away with a lot of boring old junk in the archive rooms in the vaults. Please, may I see you naked now?”

“First a little conversation, though you may feel free to disrobe whenever you like,” said Gyna. “I had heard there was an archive room, but it’s quite hidden away.”

“There’s a false wall behind the family crypt,” said the Prince, gripping her wrist and pulling her towards him for a kiss. Something in his eyes had changed.

“Your Highness, you’re hurting my arm,” Gyna cried.

“Enough talk, you bewitching whore,” he snarled. Holding back a sharp jab of fear, Gyna let her mind cool and perceptions whirl. As his angry mouth touched her lips, she cast the second spell she had learned her illusionist mentor.

The Prince felt his flesh turn to stone. He remained frozen, watching Gyna pull together her clothing and leave the room. The paralysis would only last for a few more minutes, but it was all the time she needed.

The Guildmistress had already left with all her girls, just as Gyna and Lord Strale had told her to. They would tell her when it was safe to return. She had not even accepted any gold for her part in the trap. She said it was enough that her girls would not be tortured anymore by that most perverse and cruel Prince.

“What a terrible boy,” thought Gyna as she raised the hood on her cloak and raced through the streets toward Lord Strale’s house. “It is good that he will never be king.”

The following morning, the King and Queen of Camlorn held their daily audience with various nobles and diplomats, a sparse gathering. The throne room was largely empty. It was a

terribly dull way to begin the day. In between petitions, they yawned regally.

“What has happened to all the interesting people?” the Queen murmured. “Where’s our precious boy?”

“I’ve heard he was raging through the north quarter in search of some harlot who robbed him,” the King chuckled fondly.

“What a fine lad.”

“And what of the Royal Battlemage?”

“I’ve sent him to take care of a delicate matter,” the King knit his brow. “But that was nearly a week ago, and I haven’t heard one word from him. It’s somewhat troubling.”

“Indeed it is, Lord Eryl should not be gone so long,” the Queen frowned. “What if a rogue sorcerer came and threatened us? Husband, don’t laugh at me, that is why all the royal houses of High Rock keep their mage retainers close to their side. To protect their court from evil enchantments, like the one that our poor Emperor suffered so recently.”

“At the hand of his own battlemage,” chuckled the King

“Lord Eryl would never betray you like that, and you well know it. He has been in your employ since you were Duke of Oloine. To even make that comparison between he and Jagar Tharn, really,” the Queen waved her hands dismissively. “It is that sort of lack of trust that is ruining kingdoms all over Tamriel. Now, Lord Strale tells me -”

“There’s another man that’s gone missing,” mused the King.

“The ambassador?” the Queen shook her head. “No, he’s here. He was desirous to visit the crypts and pay homage to your noble ancestors, so I directed him there. I can’t think what’s keeping him so long. He must be more pious than I thought.”

She was surprised to see the King rise up, alarmed. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

Before she had a chance to reply, the subject of their conversation was coming through the open door to the throne room. At on his arm was a beautiful fair-haired woman in a stately gown of scarlet and gold, worthy of the highest nobility. The queen followed her startled husband’s gaze, and was likewise amazed.

“I had heard he was taken with one of the harlots from the Flower Festival, not a lady,” she whispered. “Why, she looks remarkably like your daughter, the Lady Jyllia.”

“That she does,” the King gasped. “Or her cousin, the Princess Talara.”

The nobles in the room also whispered amongst themselves. Though few had been at court twenty years ago when the Princess had disappeared, presumed murdered like the rest of the royal family, there were still a few elder statesmen who remembered. It was not only on throne that the word “Talara” passed through the air like an enchantment.

“Lord Strale, will you introduce us to your lady?” the Queen asked with a polite smile.

“In a moment, your highness, but I’m afraid I must first discuss pressing matters,” Lord Strale replied with a bow. “Might I

request a private audience?”

The King looked at the Imperial ambassador, trying to read into the man's expression. With a wave of his hand, he dismissed the assembled and had the doors shut behind them. No one remained in the audience room but the King, the Queen, the ambassador, a dozen royal guards, and the mysterious woman.

The ambassador pulled from his pocket a sheaf of old yellowed parchment. “Your Highness, when you ascended the throne after your brother and his family were murdered, anything that seemed important, deeds and wills, were of course kept with the clerks and ministers. His entire incidental, unimportant personal correspondence was sent to archive which is standard protocol. This letter was among them.”

“What is this all about, sir?” the King boomed. “What does it say?”

“Nothing about you, your majesty. In truth, at the time of your majesty's ascension, no one reading it could have understood its significance. It was a letter to the Emperor the late king your brother was penning at the time of his assassination, concerning a thief who had once been a mage-priest at the Temple of Sethiete here in Camlorn. His name was Jagar Tharn.”

“Jagar Tharn?” the Queen laughed nervously. “Why, we were just talking about him.”

“Tharn had stolen many books of powerful and forgotten spells, and lore about such artifacts as the Staff of Chaos, where it was hidden and how it could be used. News travels slowly to

westernmost High Rock, and by the time the King your brother had heard that the Emperor's new battlemage was a man named Jagar Tharn, many years had passed. The king had been writing a letter to warn the Emperor of the treachery of his Imperial Battlemage, but it was never completed." Lord Strale held up the letter. "It is dated on the day of his assassination in the year 385. Four years before Jagar Tharn betrayed his master, and began the ten years of tyranny of the Imperial Simulacrum."

"This is all very interesting," the King barked. "But what has it to do with me?"

"The late King's assassination is now a matter of Imperial concern. And I have a confession from your Royal Battlemage Lord Eryl."

The King's face lost all color: "You miserable worm, no man may threaten me. Neither you, nor that whore, nor that letter will ever see the light of day again. Guards!"

The royal guards unsheathed their blades and pressed forward. As they did so, there was a sudden shimmering of light and the room was filled with Imperial nightblades, led by Proseccus. They had been there for hours, lurking invisibly in the shadows.

"In the name of His Imperial Majesty, Uriel Septim VII, I arrest you," said Strale.

The doors were opened, and the King and Queen were led out, heads bowed. Gyna told Proseccus where he would most likely find their son, Prince Sylon. The courtiers and nobles who had been in the audience chamber stared at the strange, solemn



procession of their King and Queen to their own royal prison. No one said a word.

When at last a voice was heard, it startled all. The Lady Jyllia had arrived at court. “What is happening? Who dares to usurp the authority of the King and Queen?”

Lord Strale turned to Proseccus: “We would speak with the Lady Jyllia alone. You know what needs to be done.”

Proseccus nodded and had the doors to the throne room closed once again. The courtiers pressed against the wood, straining to hear everything. Though they could not say it, they wanted an explanation almost as much as her Ladyship did.

Mystery of Talara, part 5

The Mystery of

Princess Talara

Part V

by

Mera Llykith

By what right do you arrest my father?” cried the Lady Jyllia. “What has he done?”

“I arrest the King of Camlorn, the former Duke of Oloine, by my right as an Imperial Commanding Officer and Ambassador,” said Lord Strale. “By the right of law of the Emperor of Tamriel which supercedes all provincial royal authority.”

Gyna came forward and tried to put her hand on Jyllia's arm, but she was coldly rebuffed. Quietly, she sat down at the foot of the throne in the now empty audience chamber.

“This young lady came to me, having completely recovered her memory, but the story she told was beyond incredible, I simply couldn't believe it,” said Lord Strale. “But she was so convinced of it, I had to investigate. So I talked to everyone who was here at the palace twenty years ago to see if there could be any truth to it. Of course, at the time of the King and Queen's murder, and the Princess's disappearance, there was a full inquiry made, but I had different questions to ask this time. Questions about the relationship between the two little cousins, Lady Jyllia Raze and the Princess.”

“I've told everyone over and over again, I don't remember anything at all about that time in my life,” said Jyllia, tears welling up.

“I know you don't. There has never been a question in my mind that you witnessed a horrible murder, and that your memory lapse and hers,” said Lord Strale, gesturing toward Gyna “Are both very real. The story I heard from the servants and other people at the palace was that the little girls were inseparably close. There were no other playmates, and as the Princess's place was to be close to her parents, so the little Lady Jyllia was always there as well. When the assassin came to murder the Royal Family, the King and Queen were in their bedroom, and the girls were playing in the throne room.”

“When my memory came back to me, it was like opening a sealed box,” said Gyna solemnly. “Everything was so clear and detailed, like it all happened yesterday not twenty years ago. I was on the throne, playing Empress, and you were hiding

behind the dais, pretending you were in a dungeon I had sent you to. A man I had never seen burst into the room from the Royal bedchamber, his blade soaked in blood. He came at me, and I ran for my life. I remember starting to run for the dais, but I saw your face, frozen in fear, and I didn't want to lead him to you. So I ran for the window.

"We had climbed on the outside of the castle before, just for fun, that was one of the first memories that came back to me when I was holding onto that cliff. You and I on the castle wall, and the King calling up to me, telling me how to get down. But that day, I couldn't hold on, I was trembling so much. I just fell, and landed in the river.

"I don't know if it was entirely the horror of what I had seen, or that combined with the impact of the fall and the coldness of the water, but everything just went blank in my mind. When I finally pulled myself out of the river, many miles away, I had no idea who I was. And so it stayed," Gyna smiled. "Until now."

"So you are the Princess Talara?" cried Jyllia.

"Let me explain further before she answers that, because the simple answer would just confuse you, as it did me," said Lord Strale. "The assassin was caught before he managed to escape the palace - in truth, he had to know he was going to be caught. He confessed immediately to the murders of the Royal Family. The Princess, he said, he had thrown out the window to her death. A servant down below heard the scream, and saw something fly past his window, so he knew it to be true.

"It was not for several hours that little Lady Jyllia was found by her nursemaid Ramke hiding behind the dais, coated with dust, shivering with fear, and unable to speak at all. Ramke was very

protective of you,” Strale said, nodding to Jyllia. “She insisted on putting you to your room right away, and sent word the Duke of Oloine that the Royal Family was dead, and that his daughter had witnessed the murders but survived.”

“I’m beginning to remember a little of that,” said Jyllia, wonderingly. “I remember lying in bed, with Ramke comforting me. I was so muddled and I couldn’t concentrate. I remember I just wanted it all to be play time still, I don’t know why. And then, I remember being bundled up and taken to that asylum.”

“It’ll all come back to you soon,” Gyna smiled. “I promise. That’s how I began to remember. I just caught one detail, and the whole flood began.”

“That’s it,” Jyllia began to sob in frustration. “I don’t remember anything else except confusion. No, I also remember Daddy not even looking at me as I was taken away. And I remember not caring about that, or anything else.”

“It was a confusing time for all, so particularly so for little girls. Especially little girls who went through what you two did,” said Lord Strale sympathetically. “From what I understand, as soon as he received the message from Ramke, the Duke left his palace at Oloine, gave orders for you to be sent to a private sanitarium until you’d recovered from your ordeal, and set to work with his private guard torturing the assassin for information. When I heard that, that no one but the Duke and his personal guard saw the assassin after he gave his initial confession, and that no one was present but the Duke and his guards when the assassin was killed trying to escape, I thought that very significant.

“I spoke with Lord Eryl, who I knew was one of those present, and I had to bluff him, pretending I had more evidence than I did. I got the reaction I was hoping for, though it was a dangerous gambit. At last he confessed to what I already knew to be true.

“The assassin,” Lord Strale paused, and reluctantly met Jyllia’s eyes, “Had been hired by the Duke of Oloine to kill the Royal Family, including the Princess as heir, so that the crown might be passed to him and to his children.”

Jyllia stared at Lord Strale, aghast. “My father -”

“The assassin had been told that once the Duke had him in custody, he would be paid and a prison break would be arranged. The thug picked the wrong time to be greedy and try to get more gold. The Duke decided that it would be cheaper to silence him, so he murdered him then and there, so the man would never tell anyone what really happened,” Lord Strale shrugged. “No tragic loss as far as murders go. In a few years’ time, you returned from the sanitarium, a little shaken but back to normal, except for a complete absence of memory about your childhood. And in that time, the former Duke of Oloine had taken his brother’s place as the King of Camlorn. It was no small maneuver.”

“No,” said Jyllia, quietly. “He must have been very busy. He remarried and had another child. No one ever came to visit me in the sanitarium but Ramke.”

“If he had visited and seen you,” said Gyna. “This story might have turned out very differently.”

“What do you mean?” asked Jyllia.

“This is the most amazing part,” said Lord Strale. “The question has long been whether Gyna is the Princess Talara. When her memory returned, and she told me what she remembered, I put several pieces of evidence together. Consider these facts.

“The two of you look remarkably alike now after twenty years of living very different lives, and as little girls and constant playmates, you looked nearly identical.

“At the time of the assassination, the murderer who had never been there before, only saw one girl on the throne, who he assumed to be his quarry.

“The woman who found Lady Jyllia was her nursemaid Ramke, a creature of unstable mind and fanatical devotion to her charge - the type would never accept the possibility that her beloved little girl had been the one who disappeared. The nursemaid was the only single person who knew both Princess Talara and the Lady Jyllia who visited you while you were in the sanitarium.

“Finally,” said Lord Strale, “Consider the fact that when you returned to court from the sanitarium, five years had past, and you had grown from a child to a young lady. You looked familiar, but not quite the same as your family remembered you, which is only natural.”

“I don’t understand,” cried the poor girl, her eyes wide, because she did understand. Her memory was falling together like a terrible flood.

“Let me explain it like this,” said her cousin, wrapping her in her arms. “I know who I am now. My real name is Jyllia Raze.

That man who was arrested was my father, the man who murdered the King - your father. YOU are the Princess Talara.”

# Myth Or Menace?

*Anonymous*

Many investigators have attempted solve the riddle of the Thieves Guild. Despite repeated proofs that no viable Thieves Guild exists, the rumors persist. Whenever historians search for evidence of this shadowy organization, nothing is found. Witnesses know nothing. Safe houses are empty. Fences turn out to be simple businessmen.

Let me clarify by stating that thieves most certainly do exist. They rot in dungeons all across Tamriel. Certainly bands of thieves work together to commit crimes. On rare occasions there has even been documented cases were persistent bands of thieves have worked together for years at a time committing thefts and other crimes.

However, a guild is different than a band. A guild implies an organization with membership rolls. It would have a financial structure, which would include member dues or some other means of securing funds. It would have rules of conduct or behavior. It would have a hierarchical leadership structure. Within this structure there would be methods of advancement and succession.

The best documented case of a Thieves Guild was found in Morrowind. For a brief time Gentleman Jim Stacey ran a ring of thieves that robbed wealthy merchants and nobles all across



that island nation. During the recent Nevarine incident, the Fighters Guild and the shadowy Morag Tong eliminated this band of thugs. The final fate of Jim Stacey himself is not known.

The Morrowind Thieves Guild did have a financial structure and a leadership structure. It satisfied many of the conditions of a true guild. However, it was short lived. Public knowledge of Stacey's group lasted for only a few years at most. Although the Fighters Guild has claimed credit for wiping them out, some historians believe the group merely went deeper undercover.

The problem with determining the non-existence of the Thieves Guild is quite logical. It is not possible to prove a negative. I cannot prove definitively that the Thieves Guild does not exist, only that historians have been unable to document one.

If a Thieves Guild were to be operational in Cyrodiil, one would think that crime would be rampant, which it is not. The very nature of thieves makes it impossible for them to trust one another sufficiently to work together for very long. By nature a thief is a rule breaker. Therefore an organization that has rules would fail if all its members were thieves. For these reasons, I dispute the existence of a modern day Thieves Guild in Cyrodiil.

# Mythic Dawn Commentaries

*Mankar Camoran*

Mythic Dawn Commentaries, vol. 1

COMMENTARIES ON THE MYSTERIUM XARXES

BOOK ONE

By

Mankar Camoran

[Lit. Trans. Dagon]

Greetings, novitiate, and know first a reassurance: Mankar Camoran was once like you, asleep, unwise, protonymic. We mortals leave the dreaming-sleeve of birth the same, unmantled save for the symbiosis with our mothers, thus to practice and thus to rapprochement, until finally we might through new eyes leave our hearths without need or fear that she remains behind. In this moment we destroy her forever and enter the demesne of Lord Dagon.

Reader, this book is your door to that demesne, and though you be a destroyer you must still submit to locks. Lord Dagon would only have those clever enough to pause; all else the Aurbis claims in their fool running. Walk first. Heed. The impatience you feel is your first slave to behead.

Enter as Lord Dagon has written: come slow and bring four keys. Know that then you are royalty, a new breed of destroyer, whose garden shall flood with flowers known and unknown, as it was in the mythic dawn. Thus shall you return to your first primal wail and yet come out different. It shall this time be neonymbiosis, master akin to Master, whose Mother is miasma.

Every quarter has known us, and none bore our passing except with trembling. Perhaps you came to us through war, or study, or shadow, or the alignment of certain snakes. Though each path matters in its kind, the prize is always thus: welcome, novitiate, that you are here at all means that you have the worthiness of kings. Seek thy pocket now, and look! There is the first key, glinting with the light of a new dawn.

Night follows day, and so know that this primary insight shall fall alike unto the turbulent evening sea where all faiths are tested. Again, a reassurance: even the Usurper went under the Iliac before he rose up to claim his fleet. Fear only for a second. Shaken belief is like water for a purpose: in the garden of the Dawn we shall breathe whole realities.

Enter as Lord Dagon has written: come slow and bring four keys. Our Order is based on the principles of his mighty razor: Novitiate, Questing Knight, Chaplain, and Master. Let the evil ones burn in its light as if by the excess of our vision. Then shalt our Knowledge go aright. However, recall that your sight is yet narrow, and while you have the invitation, you have not the address.

My own summons came through a book Lord Dagon wrote himself in the deserts of rust and wounds. Its name is the 'Mysterium Xarxes', Aldmeretada aggregate, forefather to the

wife of all enigma. Each word is razor-fed and secret, thinner than cataclysms, tarnished like red-drink. That I mention it at all is testament to your new rank, my child. Your name is now cut into its weight.

Palace, hut, or cave, you have left all the fog worlds of conception behind. Nu-mantia! Liberty! Rejoice in the promise of paradise!

Endlessly it shall form and reform around you, deeds as entities, all-systems only an hour before they bloom to zero sums, flowering like vestments, divine raiment worn to dance at Lord Dagon's golden feet. In his first arm, a storm, his second the rush of plagued rain, the third all the tinder of Anu, and the fourth the very eyes of Padhome. Feel uplifted in thine heart that you have this first key, for it shall strike high and low into the wormrot of false heavens.

Roaring I wandered until I grew hoarse with the gospel. I had read the mysteries of Lord Dagon and feeling anew went mad with the overflow. My words found no purchase until I became hidden. These were not words for the common of Tamriel, whose clergy long ago feigned the very existence of the Dawn. Learn from my mistake; know that humility was Mankar Camoran's original wisdom. Come slow, and bring four keys.

Offering myself to that daybreak allowed the girdle of grace to contain me. When my voice returned, it spoke with another tongue. After three nights I could speak fire.

Red-drink, razor-fed, I had glimpsed the path unto the garden, and knew that to inform others of its harbor I had to first drown myself in search's sea. Know ye that I have found my fleet, and that you are the flagship of my hope. Greetings,

novitiate, Mankar Camoran was once you, asleep, unwise, protonymic, but Am No More. Now I sit and wait to feast with thee on all the worlds of this cosmos. Nu-mantia! Liberty!

Mythic Dawn Commentaries, vol. 2

COMMENTARIES ON THE MYSTERIUM XARXES

BOOK TWO

By

Mankar Camoran

[Lit. Trans. ALTADOON]

Whosoever findeth this document, I call him brother.

Answers are liberations, where the slaves of Malbioge that came to know Numantia cast down their jailer king, Maztiak, which the Xarxes Mysterium calls the Arkayn. Maztiak, whose carcass was dragged through the streets by his own bone-walkers and whose flesh was opened on rocks thereon and those angels who loved him no longer did drink from his honeyed ichors screaming "Let all know free will and do as they will!"

Your coming was foretold, my brother, by the Lord Dagon in his book of razors. You are to come as Idols drop away from you one by one. You are exalted in eyes that have not yet set on you; you, swain to well-travelled to shatterer of mantles. You, brother, are to sit with me in Paradise and be released of all unknowns. Indeed, I shall show you His book and its foul-and-many-feathered rubric so that you can put into symbols what you already know: the sphere of destruction is but the milk of

the unenslaved. I fault not your stumbling, for they are expected and given grace by the Oils. I crave not your downfalls, though without them you might surpass me even in the coming Earth of all infinities. Lord Dagon wishes you no ills but the momentous. And as He wants, you must want, and so learn from the pages of God this: the Ritual of Want:

Whisper to earth and earth, where the meddlers take no stones except to blood, as blood IS blood, and to the cracking of bone, as bone IS bone, and so to crack and answer and fall before the one and one, I call you Dragon as brother and king.

Tides of dreugh: 7 and 7, draught of Oil, 1 and 1, circles drawn by wet Dibellites: three concentric and let their lower blood fall where it may, a birth watched by blackbirds: Hearthfire 1 st. Incant the following when your hearing becomes blurred:

Enraptured, he who finally goes unrecorded.

Recorded, the slaves that without knowing turn the Wheel.

Enslaved, all the children of the Aurbis As It Is.

Mythic Dawn Commentaries, vol. 3

COMMENTARIES ON THE MYSTERIUM XARXES

BOOK THREE

By

Mankar Camoran

[Lit. Trans. CHIM]

The Tower touches all the mantles of Heaven, brother-noviates, and by its apex one can be as he will. More: be as he was and yet changed for all else on that path for those that walk after. This is the third key of Nu-mantia and the secret of how mortals become makers, and makers back to mortals. The Bones of the Wheel need their flesh, and that is mankind's heirloom.

Oath-breakers beware, for their traitors run through the nymic-paths, runner dogs of prolix gods. The Dragon's Blood have hidden ascension in six-thousands years of aetherial labyrinth, which is Arena, which they yet deny is Oathbound. By the Book, take this key and pierce the divine shell that encloses the mantle-takers! The skin of gold! SCARAB AE AURBEX!

Woe to the Oath-breakers! Of the skin of gold, the Xarxes Mysterium says "Be fooled not by the forlorn that ride astray the roadway, for they lost faith and this losing was caused by the Aedra who would know no other planets." Whereby the words of Lord Dagon instructs us to destroy these faithless. "Eat or bleed dry the gone-forlorn and gain that small will that led them to walk the path of Godhead at the first. Spit out or burn to the side that which made them delay. Know them as the Mnemoli."

Every new limb is paid for by the under-known. See, brother, and give not more to the hydra.

Reader, you will sense a shadow-choir soon. The room you are in right now will grow eyes and voices. The candle or spell-light you read this by will become gateways for the traitors I have mentioned. Scorn them and fear not. Call them names, call out their base natures. I, the Mankar of stars, am with you,

and I come to take you to my Paradise where the Tower-traitors shall hang on glass wracks until they smile with the new revolution.

That is your ward against the Mnemoli. They run blue, through noise, and shine only when the earth trembles with the eruption of the newly-mantled. Tell them "Go! GHARTOK AL MNEM! God is come! NUMI MORA! NUM DALAE MNEM!"

Once you walk in the Mythic it surrenders its power to you. Myth is nothing more than first wants. Unutterable truth. Ponder this while searching for the fourth key.

Understood laws of the arcanature will fall away like heat. "First Tower Dictate: render the mutant bound where he may do no more harm. As God of the Mundus, alike shall be his progeny, split from their divine sparks. We are Eight time eight Exarchs. Let the home of Padomay see us as sole exit."

CHIM. Those who know it can reshape the land. Witness the home of the Red King Once Jungled.

He that enters Paradise enters his own Mother. AE ALMA RUMA! The Aurbis endeth in all ways.

Endeth we seek through our Dawn, all endeth. Falter now and become one with the wayside orphans that feed me. Follow and I shall adore you from inside. My first daughter ran from the Dagonite road. Her name was Ruma and I ate her with no bread, and made another, which learned, and I loved that one and blackbirds formed her twin behind all time.

Starlight is your mantle, brother. Wear it to see by and add its light to Paradise.



Mythic Dawn Commentaries, vol. 4

COMMENTARIES ON THE MYSTERIUM XARXES

BOOK FOUR

By

Mankar Camoran

[Lit. Trans. Ghartok]

May the holder of the fourth key know the heart thereby: the Mundex Terrene was once ruled over solely by the tyrant dreugh-kings, each to their own dominion, and borderwars fought between their slave oceans. They were akin to the time-totems of old, yet evil, and full of mockery and profane powers. No one that lived did so outside of the sufferance of the dreughs.

I give my soul to the Magna Ge, sayeth the joyous in Paradise, for they created Mehrunes the Razor in secret, in the very bowels of Lyg, the domain of the Upstart who vanishes. Though they came from diverse waters, each Get shared sole purpose: to artifice a prince of good, spinning his likeness in random swath, and imbuing him with Oblivion's most precious and scarce asset: hope.

Deathlessly I intone from Paradise: Mehrunes the Thieftaker, Mehrunes Godsboddy, Mehrunes the Red Arms That Went Up! Nu-Mantia! Liberty!

Deny not that these days shall come again, my novitiates! For as Mehrunes threw down Lyg and cracked his face, declaring

each of the nineteen and nine and nine oceans Free, so shall he crack the serpent crown of the Cyrodiils and make federation!

All will change in these days as it was changed in those, for with by the magic word Nu-Mantia a great rebellion rose up and pulled down the towers of CHIM-EL GHARJYG, and the templars of the Upstart were slaughtered, and blood fell like dew from the upper wards down to the lowest pits, where the slaves with maniacal faces took chains and teeth to their jailers and all hope was brush-fire.

Your Dawn listens, my Lord! Let all the Aurbis know itself to be Free! Mehrunes is come! There is no dominion save free will!

Suns were riven as your red legions moved from Lyg to the hinterlands of chill, a legion for each Get, and Kuri was thrown down and Djaf was thrown down and Horma-Gile was crushed with coldsalt and forevermore called Hor and so shall it be again under the time of Gates.

Under the mires, Malbioge was thrown down, that old City of Chains, slaked in newbone-warmth and set Free. Galg and Mor-Galg were thrown down together in a single night of day and shall it be again under the time of Gates.

Nothing but woe for NRN which has become The Pit and seven curses on its Dreugh, the Vermae NI-MOHK! But for it the Crusades would be as my lord's Creation, Get by the Ge and do as thou wilt, of no fetters but your own conscience! Know that your Hell is Broken, people of the Aurbis, and praise the Nu-Mantia which is Liberty!

# N'gasta! Kvata! Kvakis!

*Anonymous*

an obscure text in the language of the Sload, purportedly written by the Second Era Western necromancer, N'Gasta.

N'Gasta! Kvata! Kvakis! ahkstas so novajxletero (oix jhemile) so Ranetauw. Ricevas gxin pagintaj membrauw kaj aliaj individuauw, kiujn iamaniere tusxas so raneta aktivado. En gxi aperas informauw unuavice pri so lokauw so cxiumonataj kunvenauw, sed nature ankoix pri aliaj aktuasoj aktivecauw so societo. Ne malofte enahkstas krome plej diversaspekta materialo eduka oix distra.

So interreta Kvako (retletera kaj verjheauw) ahkstas unufsonke alternativaj kanasouw por distribui so enhavon so papera Kva! Kvak!. Sed alifsonke so enhavauw so diversaj verjheauw antoixvible ne povas kaj ecx ne vus cxiam ahksti centprocente so sama. En malvaste cirkusonta paperfolio ekzemple ebsos publikigi ilustrajxauwn, kiuj pro kopirajtaj kiasouw ne ahkstas uzebsoj en so interreto. Alifsonke so masoltaj kostauw reta distribuo forigas so spacajn limigauwn kaj permahksas pli ampleksan enhavon, por ne paroli pri gxishora aktualeco.

Tiuj cirkonstancauw rahkspeguligxos en so aspekto so Kvakoa, kiu ja cetere servos ankoix kiel gxeneraso retejo so ranetauw.

# Namlir's Shivering Bestiary

*Namlir Esprink*

For my good friend and colleague Venristwie, who protected the creatures of all the Realms.

Although my early education involved extensive research into all forms of fauna, nothing prepared me for the surprises I've uncovered while exploring the Shivering Isles on the Great Expedition. Even though I've lived here all of my life, I am just now discovering how wonderful and unique the creatures of the Isles can be.

The Expedition was an extensive six-year exploration of every nook and cranny of the Isles in an attempt to categorize the indigenous fauna and record this information back for posterity and science. Below, I've done my best to describe each creature in detail. Please note that this information was obtained at the cost of many lives, and this work should be regarded as the most complete and definitive reference of its kind.

## Baliwog

The Baliwog is an extraordinarily ugly aquatic-dwelling creature that frequents the lakes, rivers and bogs of the Shivering Isles. Although the Baliwog, or "Wog" as some of the locals call it, walks on all fours, it should by no means be considered stupid or docile. A fully-grown adult Baliwog can

deliver a nasty blow from its claws or a potentially deadly bite from its razor-sharp teeth. The lethality of this beast comes not from the actual damage it can deliver, but from the horrible diseases it seems to generate. Also of note is the Baliwog's uncanny ability to regenerate when immersed in water. From our observations, it's best just to avoid these brutes, although it's said some of them carry flawless pearls in their bodies, though it is not known why they would swallow them, or what use they may serve to the creatures.

## Elytra

The Elytra are large insect-like creatures indigenous to much of the Isles. Although there is a marked color difference between the Northern (Mania) Variety and the Southern (Dementia) Variety, they are remarkably similar in behavioral patterns and physical makeup. The Elytra pose a serious threat to the casual traveler, as they have two interesting mechanisms that benefit them in combat. The first is their uncanny ability to block weapon attacks. Through my observations, I have deduced that they utilize their antennae as an early warning system to detect incoming attacks, say from a sword blade or an arrow. The antenna sends a signal to their brains, and they instinctively lift their arms to block. Their second ability is natural venom in their sting. This venom is very deceiving, as it is very low yield, but its real deadly nature comes from its duration. Gone unchecked, the venom can slay the average man over a period of hours. Especially deadly is the Elytra Matron's venom, which can last much longer than the poisons found on the lesser varieties of the creature.

## Flesh Atronach

One of the most unusual creatures in the Isles, the Flesh Atronach appears as a sewn-together conglomeration of skin and muscle adorned with mystical symbols and wearing an iron collar. Although it's uncertain whether Sheogorath or some other Daedric Prince created this creature, it's obvious that the intent was to use them as guardians. Usually found inhabiting underground ruins, the Flesh Atronach will defend areas it's set to guard until it's destroyed. A unique visual feature of this creature is the energy spots located on its body. These colored areas seem to glow with an inner light and denote the power of the Atronach. In increasing order of magnitude, these seem to be Yellow, Purple, and Red. The function for these spots is still a mystery, but from my observations, I suspect them to be a magic dampening gland of some kind. As expected, the Flesh Atronachs are all completely impervious to disease and poison and highly resistant to fire and frost. Shock magic seems to affect them adversely, which appears to be their largest weakness. The Purple and Red varieties also seem to possess innate magic abilities, including healing and fireballs.

## Gnarl

Perhaps the strangest creature of all is the Gnarl, or "Walking Tree" as it's sometimes called. Like the Elytra, this animated plant can be found roaming almost anywhere on the Isles. One of Sheogorath's truly unique creations, the Gnarl has the most unusual trait of being able to use magic cast upon it, and harness that power to bolster its own defense. Once struck with fire, frost or lightning, the Gnarl grows physically larger and becomes resistant to just that element for short time. Interestingly, this is where the Gnarl's vulnerability comes into play. At the same time the Gnarl is resisting that element it was

struck with, it becomes vulnerable to all of the other elements. Our guide on the expedition demonstrated this by striking the Gnarl with a flame arrow then a frost arrow and then back to a flame arrow and so on.

## Grummite

The Grummite represents the only native weapon-wielding creature in the Shivering Isles. These primitive aquatic-born humanoids are organized in a tribal-like system, though it is uncertain who or what they worship. It would be presumed the Grummite worship Sheogorath, their creator, but their religious totems don't seem to bear the Madgod's likeness. What is known is that they maintain a simple hierarchy, including Shaman and Boss Grummites who seem to command the rest. The Grummite have mastered the art of spellcasting as well, evidenced by the Magus Grummite, which can be quite deadly. Curiously, the Grummite possess a defense mechanism similar to the Baliwog: when immersed in water, the Grummite will begin to regenerate damaged flesh. Unlike the Baliwog, this regeneration extends to rain as well, making them quite formidable on a stormy day. This aquatic healing ability leads me to believe the Baliwog and Grummite are somehow related, but even in my extensive research, I was unable to come up with a solid connection.

## Hunger

If any creature represents the darker side of Sheogorath, it's the Hunger. These are pure-born Daedric creatures placed here on the Isles as servitors and guards. The Hunger is not to be trifled with; it boasts superior speed and lightning reflexes along with its primary ability of draining its victim's fatigue. My best advice when encountering this horrible creature is to give it a

wide berth or slay it quickly. Be wary, as it is said that conjuration magic exists that is able to summon the Hunger and unleash it upon the caster's foes.

## Scalon

Another aquatic native of the Shivering Isles is the Scalon. Looking strikingly similar to an upright Baliwog, the Scalon features large fin-laden appendages and dorsal spines. These creatures are usually quite fearsome, lumbering slowly after its prey. Don't mistake its speed for its weakness, as the Scalon has an incredible leaping attack that allows it to strike at its victims from a surprising distance. Another connection that it shares with the Baliwog is the fact that its bite or claws can transfer disease to its victim. It's recommended that these creatures be dealt with at extreme range with spells or missiles, as they can be quite ferocious in close proximity.

## Shambles

The Shambles appears to be some sort of an undead construct made of bone and lashed together with wire or bits of cloth. Oddly, the bones used in their makeup appear to have no correlation to one another. They might have skulls for kneecaps or leg bones for arms, to cite a few examples. The Shambles may be undead, but they pursue any victim as if they were a predator chasing down its prey. Like its undead bony brethren, the Shambles is fully resistant to disease, poison and paralysis; however, they possess a unique resistance to all frost magic. Furthermore, upon death, the Shambles will explode in a spectacular shower of frost. This ability seems to have been added by its creator as an interesting last-ditch defense mechanism. This fact was initially unknown to me, and one of our best guides was lost when his hammer struck the fatal



blow. If you intend to combat these undead creatures, be certain to carry frost protection or destroy them at range.

## Skinned Hound

These nasty undead beasts are generally encountered inside and around the ruins that dot the Isles. The Skinned Hound is extremely fast and agile, and has an insatiable hunger for flesh. Like the Flesh Atronach, it appears to be all skin and muscle that is roughly sewn together, but I am uncertain whether they are summoned or merely constructed. The Skinned Hound is not an adversary to be taken lightly; they feature an incredible invisible charging attack not unlike a ghost, limited frost resistance, and a complete immunity to disease and poison. This beast's weakness is fire. They don't seem intelligent enough to be frightened by it, but it's certainly very efficient at dispatching them quickly.

Although this work only touches upon the combat related aspects of the creatures, I feel this is of primary importance to any traveler within the confines of the Shivering Isles. In future works, I will touch upon the other aspects of these creatures such as reproduction or creation, magical origins, and even some delicious recipes I've discovered in my travels. My best advice when walking the roads and paths of the Isles is to remain ever vigilant and always be prepared. Knowing your foe can mean the difference between a gruesome death and survival.

# Necromancer's Moon

*Anonymous*

Despair not at the trials we now face, for our time comes swiftly.

The God of Worms watches over our Order, and will deliver us from these troubled times on the Day of Reckoning. Until then, perform His works in secret, serve His needs, and look to the skies for His signs.

The Revenant, the Necromancer's Moon, watches over us all. His Form, ascended to Godhood, has taken its rightful place in the sky, and hides the enemy Arkay from us so that we may serve Him. Watch for the signs: when the heavenly light descends from above, hasten to His altars and make your offering, so that He may bless you with but a taste of His true power. Grand Soul Gems offered to Him will be darkened, and can be used to trap the souls of the unwitting; a feat even the great N'Gasta would marvel at.

Stay faithful to the Order of the Black Worm, and in time your loyalty will be rewarded. Soon, He will return to set the world right in due time, and those who would stand in his way will suffer eternally at his hands, just as those who stood opposed before.

Until that day, you must believe and be patient. Hide in your caves, in your ruined forts, in your secret lairs. Raise your

minions, summon your servants, cast your spells. Answer the call of the Order when you are needed. Watch and listen.

# Night Falls On Sentinel

*Boali*

No music played in the Nameless Tavern in Sentinel, and indeed there was very little sound except for discreet, cautious murmurs of conversation, the soft pad of the barmaid's feet on stone, and the delicate slurping of the regular patrons, tongues lapping at their flagons, eyes focused on nothing at all. If anyone were less otherwise occupied, the sight of the young Redguard woman in a fine black velvet cape might have aroused surprise. Even suspicion. As it were, the strange figure, out of place in an underground cellar so modest it had no sign, blended into the shadows.

“Are you Jomic?”

The stout, middle-aged man with a face older than his years looked up and nodded. He returned to his drink. The young woman took the seat next to him.

“My name is Haballa,” she said and pulled out a small bag of gold, placing it next to his mug.

“Sure it be,” snarled Jomic, and met her eyes again. “Who d’you want dead?”

She did not turn away, but merely asked, “Is it safe to talk here?”

“No one cares about nobody else’s problems but their own here. You could take off your cuirass and dance bare-breasted on the table, and no one’d even spit,” the man smiled. “So who d’you want dead?”

“No one, actually,” said Haballa. “The truth is, I only want someone...removed, for a while. Not harmed, you understand, and that’s why I need a professional. You come highly recommended.”

“Who you been talking to?” asked Jomic dully, returning to his drink.

“A friend of a friend of a friend of a friend.”

“One of them friends don’t know what he’s talking about,” grumbled the man. “I don’t do that any more.”

Haballa quietly took out another purse of gold and then another, placing them at the man’s elbow. He looked at her for a moment and then poured the gold out and began counting. As he did, he asked, “Who d’you want removed?”

“Just a moment,” smiled Haballa, shaking her head. “Before we talk details, I want to know that you’re a professional, and you won’t harm this person very much. And that you’ll be discreet.”

“You want discreet?” the man paused in his counting. “Awright, I’ll tell you about an old job of mine. It’s been - by Arkay, I can hardly believe it - more ‘n twenty years, and no one but me’s alive who had anything to do with the job. This is back afore the time of the War of Betony, remember that?”

“I was just a baby.”

“Course you was,” Jomic smiled. “Everyone knows that King Lhotun had an older brother Greklith what died, right? And then he’s got his older sister Aubki, what married that King fella in Daggerfall. But the truth’s that he had two elder brothers.”

“Really?” Haballa’s eyes glistened with interest.

“No lie,” he chuckled. “Weedy, feeble fella called Arthago, the King and Queen’s first born. Anyhow, this prince was heir to the throne, which his parents wasn’t too thrilled about, but then the Queen she squeezed out two more princes who looked a lot more fit. That’s when me and my boys got hired on, to make it look like the first prince got took off by the Underking or some such story.”

“I had no idea!” the young woman whispered.

“Of course you didn’t, that’s the point,” Jomic shook his head. “Discretion, like you said. We bagged the boy, dropped him off deep in an old ruin, and that was that. No fuss. Just a couple fellas, a bag, and a club.”

“That’s what I’m interested in,” said Haballa. “Technique. My... friend who needs to be taken away is weak also, like this Prince. What is the club for?”

“It’s a tool. So many things what was better in the past ain’t around no more, just ‘cause people today prefer ease of use to what works right. Let me explain: there’re seventy-one prime pain centers in an average fella’s body. Elves and Khajiiti, being so sensitive and all, got three and four more respectively. Argonians and Sloads, almost as many at fifty-two and sixty-seven,” Jomic used his short stubby finger to point out each

region on Haballa's body. "Six in your forehead, two in your brow, two on your nose, seven in your throat, ten in your chest, nine in your abdomen, three on each arm, twelve in your groin, four in your favored leg, five in the other."

"That's sixty-three," replied Haballa.

"No, it's not," growled Jomic.

"Yes, it is," the young lady cried back, indignant that her mathematical skills were being questioned: "Six plus two plus two plus seven plus ten plus nine plus three for one arm and three for the other plus twelve plus four plus five. Sixty-three."

"I must've left some out," shrugged Jomic. "The important thing is that to become skilled with a staff or club, you gotta be a master of these pain centers. Done right, a light tap could kill, or knock out without so much as a bruise."

"Fascinating," smiled Haballa. "And no one ever found out?"

"Why would they? The boy's parents, the King and Queen, they're both dead now. The other children always thought their brother got carried off by the Underking. That's what everyone thinks. And all my partners are dead."

"Of natural causes?"

"Ain't nothing natural that ever happens in the Bay, you know that. One fella got sucked up by one of them Selenu. Another died a that same plague that took the Queen and Prince Greklith. 'Nother fella got hisself beat up to death by a burglar. You gotta keep low, outta sight, like me, if you wanna stay alive." Jomic finished counting the coins. "You must want this fella out of the way bad. Who is it?"

“It’s better if I show you,” said Haballa, standing up. Without a look back, she strode out of the Nameless Tavern.

Jomic drained his beer and went out. The night was cool with an unrestrained wind surging off the water of the Iliac Bay, sending leaves flying like whirling shards. Haballa stepped out of the alleyway next to the tavern, and gestured to him. As he approached her, the breeze blew open her cape, revealing the armor beneath and the crest of the King of Sentinel.

The fat man stepped back to flee, but she was too fast. In a blur, he found himself in the alley on his back, the woman’s knee pressed firmly against his throat.

“The King has spent years since he took the throne looking for you and your collaborators, Jomic. His instructions to me what to do when I found you were not specific, but you’ve given me an idea.”

From her belt, Haballa removed a small sturdy cudgel.

A drunk stumbling out of the bar heard a whimpered moan accompanied by a soft whisper coming from the darkness of the alley: “Let’s keep better count this time. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven...”



# Nirnroot Missive

*Anonymous*

This brings me to my next subject, the glowing root known as Nirnroot.

Although the oddly tenacious root grows almost anywhere a significant body of water is present, this root is extremely rare, and I believe soon to become extinct. I myself have yet to come across one of the gnarled shoots, as they're rarely in sight of the roads that cross Cyrodiil. According to the records of the noted Imperial Herbalist Chivius Regelliam, the Nirnroot once flourished and could be found all over the country, but he suspected a cataclysmic event severely stunted their growth. Although many scholars reject the proposal that the Sun's Death event of 1E 668 catastrophically affected plant life, Chivius feels that the Nirnroot's lineage was damaged by the lack of sun for a full year. Whereas other plant species tend to "find a way," the Nirnroot's mysterious magical nature made it especially susceptible to this climate shift. While this may or may not be the case, it's certainly true that the recorded sightings of Nirnroot are declining as the years pass.

The most perplexing facet of Chivius's studies is that his notes describe the root as having a yellowish glow. Contrary to this fact, the Nirnroot of today has a soft bluish or blue-white glow. Unfortunately, since not many studies of the Nirnroot were performed from Chivius's day until now, it's unknown when or

why this occurred. What I'm proposing today is that the Nirnroot, even though merely a plant, sensed impending extinction and therefore changed its own nature to survive. One of the more obvious facets of today's Nirnroot that supports this theory is the fact that it can now survive underground without any sunlight at all. While it's true that generally only mosses and fungi grow in these environments, I have two signed depositions by persons claiming that they sighted the Nirnroot in deep caves. Not once in Chivius's copious notes is a subterranean Nirnroot mentioned. But how could this be? How could a surface dwelling plant suddenly begin appearing in new locations radically different from its normal habitat?

The answer, my fellow alchemists, is nestled within Chivius's own notes. Although he spends a great deal of time with the Nirnroot in his laboratory, the one thing he neglected to test at a high enough level of detail was the soil. As stated previously, Chivius felt that the Sun's Death, the eruption of Red Mountain, contributed to the demise of the Nirnroot. Agreed. My amendment to that proposal is that the ash that fell from the sky that entire year mixed with the soil, and again, due to the magical nature of the root, contributed to the aforementioned changes. The ash became a catalyst of sorts, forcing a change in the very makeup of the Nirnroot. Although very little ash from that dark time remains, I have done tests on newer ash samples sent to me from Vvardenfell. They show little to no magical properties, certainly none of which could affect a plant to that magnitude. However, the rare occurrence of what's known as Ash Salt in the normal ash does contain very potent magical abilities. In fact, some native Dunmer are said to harness that ability to create a cure for the Blight, which pervaded their realm many years ago. I feel this magic, meshed with the

Nirnroot's inherent magic caused the radical change... in essence; the root "healed itself."

To surmise, my two proposals are certainly linked. The plant needed to survive, and therefore used a byproduct of its destructor to do so. No other plant in nature has ever come close to this metamorphosis. I feel the Nirnroot has accomplished in a relatively short amount of time what it would take other species millions of years to complete.

Whatever the case may be, one thing is certain; the Nirnroot is on a path to destruction. It contains untapped potential to create potions the likes of which have never been seen in our day. I propose to you today that we divert a small portion of our funds to an expedition to collect some of these roots to study. I have outlined this proposal for your perusal after this section of the Symposium. Please, seriously consider this proposal before it becomes too late, and the Nirnroot becomes nothing but a memory.

Thank you for your time.

# Note From Bothiel

*Bothiel*

To whom it may concern:

You have been passed this note because you may be able to help the Mages Guild. The Council of Mages has not the resources; the Legion is either unwilling or unable to assist.

A shipment of Dwarven artifacts from Morrowind, destined for the Arcane University, was intercepted by bandits recently. Intending to sell the artifacts for profit, they have stolen items essential to repair the Imperial Orrery in Cyrodiil's capital.

The only known location of these bandits is Camp Ales, north of Kvatch. If you can find these ruffians and recover the items they've stolen, I will be most indebted. The Orrery is my life's work, and I would hate to see it pass into obscurity now.

Items missing:

2 Dwarven Cogs

1 Dwarven Coherer

1 Dwarven Cylinder

1 Dwarven Tube

-Bothiel

# Note From First Mate Filch

*Finch*

Capn,

Im tellin ya sir! We gots ta be moor carefull! if the Layawind city watch comes snoopin around agin, we may havta pull anchor and git out of this good fer nuthin city! I aint spendin the rest a my days locked up in no jail for illegaly transportin cattle! No sir, i will not! all due rspect capn, but the mates an me sined on fer real pirate stuff—murderin lootin and ravagin! we aint no damn shepeards!

first mate filch (pirate!)

# Note From Raminus Polus

*Raminus Polus*

Hieronymus Lex,

Your vendetta against the Gray Fox has cost the Arcane University dearly. You commandeered the guards patrolling our property. In their absence, someone stole a valuable artifact from the University. We demand that you return all guards to their posts immediately. If you do not do this, we will be forced to bring the matter to the attention of your superior.

Raminus Polus

The Arcane University

# Note From The Gray Fox

*The Gray Fox*

It seems that security in the Arcane University is not what it used to be. In fact, that seems to be a problem all over the Imperial City. I would recommend that you get your guards back on duty unless you want more of your precious artifacts to go missing.

The Gray Fox

# Note To Gwinas

## *Mythic Dawn Sponsor*

Gwinas,

Your interest in the writings of the Master has been noted. You are taking the first steps towards true enlightenment. Persevere, and you may yet join the exalted ranks of the Chosen.

If you wish to continue further down the Path of Dawn, you will need the fourth volume of the Master's "Commentaries on the Mysterium Xarxes." It can be obtained only from a member of the Order of the Mythic Dawn. As your designated Sponsor, I will pass on my copy to you if I deem you worthy.

Study the first three volumes of the Master's writings. Look for the hidden meaning in his words, as best as you are able.

When you are ready, come to the Sunken Sewers under the Elven Gardens in the Imperial City. Come alone. Follow the main tunnel until you reach the room with the table and chair. Sit down. I will meet you there and give you what you desire.

The Sponsor



# Notes: Captain Montrose

*Captain Gepard Montrose*

So far the investigation has been inconclusive, to say the least. The assassin's body has yielded no clues as to his affiliation, and we haven't even been able to ascertain the motive for the Emperor's slaying. We've even gone so far as to question local merchants about the unique garb, but have run into nothing but dead ends.

The nature of the attack, the multiple assassins, the ceremonial robes, the summoned weapons and armor—it all speaks of something... ritualistic. I've seen the Dark Brotherhood's handiwork more times than I care to remember, and this just doesn't fit their usual pattern. I guess that's what worries me. We're not dealing with the unknown, and I'll be damned if I know how to handle it.

—Captain Gepard Montrose

Postscript—I've instructed the men to dump the rest of the assassins' bodies in the sewers. Let them serve as food for the vermin. It's more than those bastards d

# Notes From Nilphas Omellian

*Nilphas Omellian*

## Battlehorn Castle Upgrades List

I will be happy to provide the following improvements to Battlehorn Castle upon receipt of payment for goods and services rendered.

**Kitchen Area:** The kitchen will be completely refurbished with everything needed to support you and your household. I will also provide the services of a most excellent cook, Plautis Rusonius, whose culinary skills I can personally recommend as he was in charge of the kitchens at the Tiber Septim Hotel for many years.

**Bedroom Area:** The bedroom in the castle's private quarters will be fitted out with the most luxurious furnishings and appointments, and the services of a maid accustomed to working in a noble household will be retained.

**Library Area:** The library in the castle's private quarters will be restocked with books appropriate to a noble's library, and furnished to provide a comfortable reading and working area.

**Dining Area:** You will be able to entertain in high style once we have cleaned and refurbished the dining room in the castle's East Wing.

Barracks: I will retain the services of an experienced mercenary captain, as well as two men-at-arms, in order to bring the castle garrison up to its full complement.

Training Room: I will provide an experienced battle trainer, who can spar with you and your men on a variety of weaponry. I have an excellent candidate in mind, but do not want to name him until I am certain I can retain his services for you.

Trophy Hall: The trophy room in the castle's Great Hall will be reappointed. I will also hire an expert taxidermist to create beautiful and lifelike trophies out of the most dangerous creatures of the land.

Wine Cellar: No castle should be without the services of a well-trained vintner, and one of the best is now available. Talan learned his trade from his famous sister Tamika of Skingrad. He was also once a member of the prestigious Imperial Alchemy Symposium, but was removed from its ranks for using the skill of alchemy to perpetuate the mixing of magical and alcoholic beverages. The alchemists' loss is your gain: using ingredients found in the wild and his keen sense of taste, Talan creates unusual mixtures the likes of which have never been seen.

I trust that you will find much here of interest to you in your new position as lord of Battlehorn Castle. Please allow me to be of service.

I remain,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Kitchen Area

The furnishings you selected for the kitchens will be delivered promptly to Battlehorn Castle. I hope you get many years of enjoyment out of them!

Thank you for your patronage,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Bedroom

The furnishings for your private quarters will be delivered promptly to Battlehorn Castle. I hope you find them comfortable!

Thank you for your patronage,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Library Area

The appointments you selected for your library will be delivered promptly to Battlehorn Castle. I'm sure you will find them conducive to scholarship and reflection.

I appreciate your patronage,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Dining Area

The furnishings you selected for the dining hall will be delivered promptly to Battlehorn Castle. I'm sure you will find that they make your meals more pleasant.

Thank you for your patronage,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Barracks

At your request, I've hired Captain Athon, a retired Legion officer with impeccable credentials, to take charge of the men-at-arms at Battlehorn Castle. I've instructed him to hire two additional men-at-arms, at his discretion, to bring the castle garrison to its full complement. I trust that this meets with your approval.

As always, I remain,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Training Room

The famous Arena champion, Shagrol gro-Uzug, is on his way to Battlehorn Castle to take up his new position as your sparring partner. I've taken the liberty of sending along the equipment he will need to set up your training room, using the funds you provided. I trust that this meets with your approval.

Thank you for your patronage,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Trophy Hall

The appointments you selected for your trophy hall will be delivered promptly to Battlehorn Castle. As you requested, I've also hired a taxidermist to join your castle staff. Melisi Daren comes highly recommended by her former employer, a wealthy gentleman from Bruma named Baenlin. I'm sure she will meet with your satisfaction.

Thank you for your patronage,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Wine Cellar

As you requested, I have hired Talan, one of the finest vintners in Cyrodiil to maintain your wine cellar at Battlehorn Castle. He is the brother of the well-known Tamika of Skingrad, so he has learned his trade from the very best. I took the liberty of providing Talan with the funds to equip your wine cellar as he sees fit, as we discussed.

Thank you for your patronage,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Note from Nilphas Omellian

I hope you are pleased with your recent purchase. I recently learned of an item you might be interested in—an ancient Dwemer forge, still in working condition! It is guaranteed to facilitate all armor and weapon repairs. I know that a person of your means and discrimination would never balk at the price of 3000 gold, which barely covers my own expenses (much less the cost of shipping it to Battlehorn Castle).

I look forward to doing business with you soon.

I remain,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City

Battlehorn Dwemer Forge

I know you will be pleased with the antique forge that I am having shipped to Battlehorn Castle. I think you will find it is well worth the cost. Not many can boast of owning a working Dwemer forge!

I appreciate your patronage,

Nilphas Omellian

The Merchants Inn, Market District

Imperial City



# On Wild Elves

*Kier-Jo Chorvak*

In the wilds of most every province of Tamriel, descended philosophically if not directly from the original inhabitants of the land, are the Ayleids, commonly called the Wild Elves. While three races of Elven stock—the Altmer (or High Elves), the Bosmer (or Wood Elves), and the Dunmer (or Dark Elves)—have assimilated well into the new cultures of Tamriel, the Ayleids and their brethren have remained aloof toward our civilization, preferring to practice the old ways far from the eyes of the world.

The Wild Elves speak a variation of Old Cyrodilic, opting to shun Tamrielic and separating themselves from the mainstream of Tamriel even further than the least urbanized of their Elven cousins. In temperament they are dark-spirited and taciturn—though this is from the point of view of outsiders (or “Pellani” in their tongue), and doubtless they act differently within their own tribes.

Indeed, one of the finest sages of the University of Gwilym was a civilized Ayleid Elf, Tjurhane Fyrre (1E2790-2E227), whose published work on Wild Elves suggests a lively, vibrant culture. Fyrre is one of the very few Ayleids to speak freely on his people and religion, and he himself said “the nature of the Ayleid tribes is multihued, their personalities often wildly different

from their neighbor[ing] tribes” (Fyrre, T., Nature of Ayleidic Poesy, p. 8, University of Gwilym Press, 2E12).

Like any alien culture, Wild Elves are often feared by the simple people of Tamriel. The Ayleids continue to be one of the greatest enigmas of the continent of Tamriel. They seldom appear in the pages of written history in any role, and then only as a strange sight a chronicler stumbles upon before they vanish into the wood. When probable fiction is filtered from common legend, we are left with almost nothing. The mysterious ways of the Ayleids have remained shrouded since before the First Era, and may well remain so for thousands of years to come.

# Orders From Lucien Lachance

*Lucien Lachance*

Eliminator,

You have served the Dark Brotherhood well in the short time you have been with us. Indeed, the rate of your advancement has been rather remarkable. Now the Black Hand itself is in need of your abilities.

You must proceed with all haste to my private refuge in the ruins of Fort Farragut, located in the forest northeast of the Cheydinhal Sanctuary. When you arrive, we will discuss the nature of your special assignment.

I cannot stress to you enough the importance of your swift arrival at Fort Farragut. There are unseen powers working to unravel the very fabric of the Dark Brotherhood. The Black Hand is counting on you to prevent this disaster.

Do not share the contents of this message with anyone at the Cheydinhal Sanctuary, including Ocheeva, and make no mention of your journey to Fort Farragut! Also, be warned—my refuge within Fort Farragut is guarded by denizens who will attack any interloper on sight. Get through these rotting sentinels and you will surely have earned the right to visit my private sanctum.

Lucien Lachance

# Pale Pass Crumpled Note

*Anonymous*

14 of Heartfire 3E362

I guess you found the message I told you about, old friend. We've traveled together for so long, and you're the only one I trust with the ring and my story.

I knew climbing into the window of that wizard's house was a mistake, but the bounty on the ring was just too enticing to pass up. They said it was worth thousands of drakes... enough to keep me comfortable for a while as I lay low. They also said Ortharzel was out of town at some meeting of wizards or some such.

They were wrong on both counts. You'd think I'd be used to this by now, dealing with the unpredictable in our line of work. But after trying to fence the ring all over Cyrodiil, no one would touch it. Worse still, Ortharzel was pursuing me the entire time. I had to call in many favors to stay one step ahead of him.

I decided to strike north and make for Skyrim. As I was crossing the Jeralls, he finally caught up to me. Two fireballs later, I found myself tumbling down a steep snowy slope into a valley. Don't know where I am, but there are ruins of some old fort here. Luckily, that fetcher didn't follow me down; I assume he gave me up for dead.

I think I'm going to stash the ring in this valley, make for Skyrim, and return later when I feel it's safe. I've used some old chests I found in the ruins to make sure nobody stumbles across the ring by mistake; you know, the old key to a key thing like we used to do. If I don't make it back here, and you're reading this message, then the ring is all yours, my friend. Use it well and remember me.

G.S.

# Palla

## *Vojne Mierstyjd*

Palla, Volume 1

Palla

Book I

by

Vojne Mierstyjd

Palla. Pal La. I remember when I first heard that name, not long ago at all. It was at a Tales and Tallows ball at a very fine estate west of Mir Corrup, to which I and my fellow Mages Guild initiates had found ourselves unexpectedly invited. Truth be told, we needn't have been too surprised. There were very few other noble families in Mir Corrup—the region had its halcyon days as a resort for the wealthy far back in the 2nd era—and on reflection, it was only appropriate to have sorcerers and wizards present at a supernatural holiday. Not that we were anything more exotic than students at a small, nonexclusive charterhouse of the Guild, but like I said, there was a paucity of other choices available.

For close to a year, the only home I had known was the rather ramshackle if sprawling grounds of the Mir Corrup Mages Guild. My only companions were my fellow initiates, most of

which only tolerated me, and the masters, whose bitterness at being at a backwater Guild prompted never-ending abuse.

Immediately the School of Illusion had attracted me. The Magister who taught us recognized me as an apt pupil who loved not only the spells of the science but their philosophical underpinnings. There was something about the idea of warping the imperceptible energies of light, sound, and mind that appealed to my nature. Not for me the flashy schools of destruction and alteration, the holy schools of restoration and conjuration, the practical schools of alchemy and enchantment, or the chaotic school of mysticism. No, I was never so pleased as to take an ordinary object and by a little magic make it seem something other than what it was.

It would have taken more imagination than I had to apply that philosophy to my monotonous life. After the morning's lessons, we were assigned tasks before our evening classes. Mine had been to clean out the study of a recently deceased resident of the Guild, and categorize his clutter of spellbooks, charms, and incunabula.

It was a lonely and tedious appointment. Magister Tendixus was an inveterate collector of worthless junk, but I was reprimanded any time I threw something away of the least possible value. Gradually I learned enough to deliver each of his belongings to the appropriate department: potions of healing to the Magisters of Restoration, books on physical phenomena to the Magisters of Alteration, herbs and minerals to the Alchemists, and soulgems and bound items to the Enchanters. After one delivery to the Enchanters, I was leaving with my customary lack of appreciation, when Magister Ilther called me back.

“Boy,” said the portly old man, handing me back one item.  
“Destroy this.”

It was a small black disc covered with runes with a ring of red-orange gems like bones circling its periphery.

“I’m sorry, Magister,” I stammered. “I thought it was something you’d be interested in.”

“Take it to the great flame and destroy it,” he barked, turning his back on me. “You never brought it here.”

My interest was piqued, because I knew the only thing that would make him react in such a way. Necromancy. I went back to Magister Tendixus’s chamber and poured through his notes, looking for any reference to the disc. Unfortunately, most of the notes had been written in a strange code that I was powerless to decipher. I was so fascinated by the mystery that I nearly arrived late for my evening class in Enchantment, taught by Magister Ilther himself.

For the next several weeks, I divided my time categorizing the general debris and making my deliveries, and researching the disc. I came to understand that my instinct was correct: the disc was a genuine necromantic artifact. Though I couldn’t understand most of the Magister’s notes, I determined that he thought it to be a means of resurrecting a loved one from the grave.

Sadly, the time came when the chamber had been categorized and cleared, and I was given another assignment, assisting in the stables of the Guild’s menagerie. At least finally I was working with some of my fellow initiates and had the opportunity of meeting the common folk and nobles who came



to the Guild on various errands. Thus was I employed when we were all invited to the Tales and Tallows ball.

If the expected glamour of the evening were not enough, our hostess was reputed to be young, rich, unmarried orphan from Hammerfell. Only a month or two before had she moved to our desolate, wooded corner of the Imperial Province to reclaim an old family manorhouse and grounds. The initiates at the Guild gossiped like old women about the mysterious young lady's past, what had happened to her parents, why she had left or been driven from her homeland. Her name was Betaniqi, and that was all we knew.

We wore our robes of initiation with pride as we arrived for the ball. At the enormous marble foyer, a servant announced each of our names as if we were royalty, and we strutted into the midst of the revelers with great puffery. Of course, we were then promptly ignored by one and all. In essence, we were unimportant figures to lend some thickness to the ball. Background characters.

The important people pushed through us with perfect politeness. There was old Lady Schaudirra discussing diplomatic appointments to Balmora with the Duke of Rimfarlin. An orc warlord entertained a giggling princess with tales of rape and pillage. Three of the Guild Magisters worried with three painfully thin noble spinsters about the haunting of Daggerfall. Intrigues at the Imperial and various royal courts were analyzed, gently mocked, fretted over, toasted, dismissed, evaluated, mitigated, admonished, subverted. No one looked our way even when we were right next to them. It was as if my skill at illusion had somehow rendered us all invisible.

I took my flagon out to the terrace. The moons were doubled, equally luminous in the sky and in the enormous reflecting pool that stretched out into the garden. The white marble statuary lining the sides of the pool caught the fiery glow and seemed to burn like torches in the night. The sight was so otherworldly that I was mesmerized by it, and the strange Redguard figures immortalized in stone. Our hostess had made her home there so recently that some of the sculptures were still wrapped in sheets that billowed and swayed in the gentle breeze. I don't know how long I stared before I realized I wasn't alone.

She was so small and so dark, not only in her skin but in her clothing, that I nearly took her for a shadow. When she turned to me, I saw that she was very beautiful and young, not more than seventeen.

"Are you our hostess?" I finally asked.

"Yes," she smiled, blushing. "But I'm ashamed to admit that I'm very bad at it. I should be inside with my new neighbors, but I think we have very little in common."

"It's been made abundantly clear that they hope I have nothing in common with them either," I laughed. "When I'm a little higher than an initiate in the Mages Guild, they might see me as more of an equal."

"I don't understand the concept of equality in Cyrodiil yet," she frowned. "In my culture, you proved your worth, not just expected it. My parents both were great warriors, as I hope to be."

Her eyes went out to the lawn, to the statues.

“Do the sculptures represent your parents?”

“That’s my father Pariom there,” she said gesturing to a life-sized representation of a massively built man, unashamedly naked, gripping another warrior by the throat and preparing to decapitate him with an outstretched blade. It was clearly a realistic depiction. Pariom’s face was plain, even slightly ugly with a low forehead, a mass of tangled hair, stubble on his cheeks. Even a slight gap in his teeth, which no sculptor would surely have invented except to do justice to his model’s true idiosyncrasies.

“And your mother?” I asked, pointing to a nearby statue of a proud, rather squat warrior woman in a mantilla and scarf, holding a child.

“Oh no,” she laughed. “That was my uncle’s old nurse. Mother’s statue still has a sheet over it.”

I don’t know what prompted me to insist that we unveil the statue that she pointed to. In all likelihood, it was nothing but fate, and a selfish desire to continue the conversation. I was afraid that if I did not give her a project, she would feel the need to return to the party, and I would be alone again. At first she was reluctant. She had not yet made up her mind whether the statues would suffer in the wet, sometimes cold Cyrodilic climate. Perhaps all should be covered, she reasoned. It may be that she was merely making conversation, and was reluctant as I was to end the stand-off and be that much closer to having to return to the party.

In a few minutes time, we tore the tarp from the statue of Betaniqi’s mother. That is when my life changed forevermore.

She was an untamed spirit of nature, screaming in a struggle with a misshapen monstrous figure in black marble. Her gorgeous, long fingers were raking across the creature's face. The monster's talons gripped her right breast in a sort of caress that prefaces a mortal wound. Its legs and hers wound around one another in a battle that was a dance. I felt annihilated. This lithe but formidable woman was beautiful beyond all superficial standards. Whoever had sculpted it had somehow captured not only a face and figure of a goddess, but her power and will. She was both tragic and triumphant. I fell instantly and fatally in love with her.

I had not even noticed when Gelyn, one of my fellow initiates who was leaving the party, came up behind us. Apparently I had whispered the word "magnificent," because I heard Betaniqi reply as if miles away, "Yes, it is magnificent. That's why I was afraid of exposing it to the elements."

Then I heard, clearly, like a stone breaking water, Gelyn: "Mara preserve me. That must be Palla."

"Then you heard of my mother?" asked Betaniqi, turning his way.

"I hail from Wayrest, practically on the border to Hammerfell. I don't think there's anyone who hasn't heard of your mother and her great heroism, ridding the land of that abominable beast. She died in that struggle, didn't she?"

"Yes," said the girl sadly. "But so too did the creature."

For a moment, we were all silent. I don't remember anything more of that night. Somehow I knew I was invited to dine the next evening, but my mind and heart had been entirely and

forever more arrested by the statue. I returned back to the Guild, but my dreams were fevered and brought me no rest. Everything seemed diffused by white light, except for one beautiful, fearsome woman.

Palla.

Palla, Volume 2

Palla

Book II

by

Vojne Mierstyjd

Palla. Pal La. The name burned in my heart. I found myself whispering it in my studies even when I tried to concentrate on something the Magister was saying. My lips would silently purse to voice the “Pal,” and tongue lightly flick to form the “La” as if I were kissing her spirit before me. It was madness in every way except that I knew that it was madness. I knew I was in love. I knew she was a noble Redguard woman, a fierce warrior more beautiful than the stars. I knew her young daughter Betaniqi had taken possession of a manorhouse near the Guild, and that she liked me, perhaps was even infatuated. I knew Palla had fought a terrible beast and killed it. I knew Palla was dead.

As I say, I knew it was madness, and by that, I knew I could not be mad. But I also knew that I must return to Betaniqi’s palace to see her statue of my beloved Palla engaged in that final, horrible, fatal battle with the monster.

Return I did, over and over again. Had Betaniqi been a different sort of noblewoman, more comfortable with her peers, I would not have had so many opportunities. In her innocence, unaware of my sick obsession, she welcomed my company. We would talk for hours, laughing, and every time we would take a walk to the reflecting pond where I would always stop breathless before the sculpture of her mother.

“It’s a marvelous tradition you have, preserving these figures of your ancestors at their finest moments,” I said, feeling her curious eyes on me. “And the craftsmanship is without parallel.”

“You wouldn’t believe me,” laughed the girl. “But it was a bit of scandal when my great grandfather began the custom. We Redguards hold a great reverence for our families, but we are warriors, not artists. He hired an traveling artist to create the first statues, and everyone admired them until it was revealed that the artist was an elf. An Altmer from the Summurset Isle.”

“Scandal!”

“It was, absolutely,” Betaniqi nodded seriously. “The idea that a pompous, wicked elf’s hands had formed these figures of noble Redguard warriors was unthinkable, profane, irreverent, everything bad you can imagine. But my great grandfather’s heart was in the beauty of it, and his philosophy of using the best to honor the best passed down to us all. I would not have even considered having a lesser artist create the statues of my parents, even if it would have been more allegiant to my culture.”

“They’re all exquisite,” I said.

“But you like the one of my mother most of all,” she smiled. “I see you look at it even when you seem to be looking at the others. It’s my favorite also.”

“Would you tell me more about her?” I asked, trying to keep my voice light and conversational.

“Oh, she would have said she was nothing extraordinary, but she was,” the girl said, picking a flower from the garden. “My father died when I was quite young, and she had so many roles to fill, but she did them all effortlessly. We have a great many business interests and she was brilliant at managing everything. Certainly better than I am now. All it took was her smile and everyone obeyed, and those that didn’t paid dearly. She was very witty and charming, but a formidable force when the need arose for her to fight. Hundreds of battles, but I can never remember a moment of feeling neglected or unloved. I literally thought she was too strong for death. Stupid, I know, but when she went to battle that—that horrible creature, that freak from a mad wizard’s laboratory, I never even thought she would not return. She was kind to her friends and ruthless to her enemies. What more can one say about a woman than that?”

Poor Betaniqi’s eyes teared up with remembrance. What sort of villain was I to goad her so, in order to satisfy my perverted longings? Sheogorath could never have conflicted a mortal man more than me. I found myself both weeping and filled with desire. Palla not only looked like a goddess, but from her daughter’s story, she was one.

That night while undressing for bed, I rediscovered the black disc I had stolen from Magister Tendixus’s office weeks before. I had half-forgotten about its existence, that mysterious

necromantic artifact which the mage believed could resurrect a dead love. Almost by pure instinct, I found myself placing the disc on my heart and whispering, "Palla."

A momentary chill filled my chamber. My breath hung in the air in a mist before dissipating. Frightened I dropped the disc. It took a moment before my reason returned, and with it the inescapable conclusion: the artifact could fulfill my desire.

Until the early morning hours, I tried to raise my mistress from the chains of Oblivion, but it was no use. I was no necromancer. I entertained thoughts of how to ask one of the Magisters to help me, but I remembered how Magister Ilther had bid me to destroy it. They would expel me from the Guild if I went to them and destroy the disc themselves. And with it, my only key to bringing my love to me.

I was in my usual semi-torpid condition the next day in classes. Magister Ilther himself was lecturing on his specialty, the School of Enchantment. He was a dull speaker with a monotone voice, but suddenly I felt as if every shadow had left the room and I was in a palace of light.

"When most persons think of my particular science, they think of the process of invention. The infusing of charms and spells into objects. The creation of a magickal blade, perhaps, or a ring. But the skilled enchanter is also a catalyst. The same mind that can create something new can also provoke greater power from something old. A ring that can generate warmth for a novice, on the hand of such a talent can bake a forest black." The fat man chuckled: "Not that I'm advocating that. Leave that for the School of Destruction."



That week all the initiates were asked to choose a field of specialization. All were surprised when I turned my back on my old darling, the School of Illusion. It seemed ridiculous to me that I had ever entertained an affection for such superficial charms. All my intellect was now focused on the School of Enchantment, the means by which I could free the power of the disc.

For months thereafter, I barely slept. A few hours a week, I'd spend with Betaniqi and my statue to give myself strength and inspiration. All the rest of my time was spent with Magister Ilther or his assistants, learning everything I could about enchantment. They taught me how to taste the deepest levels of magicka within a stored object.

“A simple spell cast once, no matter how skillfully and no matter how spectacularly, is ephemeral, of the present, what it is and no more,” sighed Magister Ilther. “But placed in a home, it develops into an almost living energy, maturing and ripening so only its surface is touched when an unskilled hand wields it. You must consider yourself a miner, digging deeper to pull forth the very heart of gold.”

Every night when the laboratory closed, I practiced what I had learned. I could feel my power grow and with it, the power of the disc. Whispering “Palla,” I delved into the artifact, feeling every slight nick that marked the runes and every facet of the gemstones. At times I was so close to her, I felt hands touching mine. But something dark and bestial, the reality of death I suppose, would always break across the dawning of my dream. With it came an overwhelming rotting odor, which the initiates in the chambers next to mine began to complain about.

“Something must have crawled into the floorboards and died,” I offered lamely.

Magister Ilther praised my scholarship, and allowed me the use of his laboratory after hours to further my studies. Yet no matter what I learned, Palla seemed scarcely closer. One night, it all ended. I was swaying in a deep ecstasy, moaning her name, the disc bruising my chest, when a sudden lightning flash through the window broke my concentration. A tempest of furious rain roared over Mir Corrup. I went to close the shutters, and when I returned to my table, I found that the disc had shattered.

I broke into hysterical sobs and then laughter. It was too much for my fragile mind to bear such a loss after so much time and study. The next day and the day after, I spent in my bed, burning with a fever. Had I not been a Mages Guild with so many healers, I likely would have died. As it was, I provided an excellent study for the budding young scholars.

When at last I was well enough to walk, I went to visit Betaniqui. She was charming as always, never once commenting on my appearance, which must have been ghastly. Finally I gave her reason to worry when I politely but firmly declined to walk with her along the reflecting pool.

“But you love looking at the statuary,” she exclaimed.

I felt that I owed her the truth and much more. “Dear lady, I love more than the statuary. I love your mother. She is all I’ve been able to think about for months now, ever since you and I first removed the tarp from that blessed sculpture. I don’t know what you think of me now, but I have been obsessed with learning how to bring her back from the dead.”

Betaniqi stared at me, eyes wide. Finally she spoke: “I think you need to leave now. I don’t know if this is a terrible jest—”

“Believe me, I wish it were. You see, I failed. I don’t know why. It could not have been that my love wasn’t strong enough, because no man had a stronger love. Perhaps my skills as an enchanter are not masterful, but it wasn’t from lack of study!” I could feel my voice rise and knew I was beginning to rant, but I could not hold back. “Perhaps the fault lay in that your mother never met me, but I think that only the caster’s love is taken into account in the necromantic spell. I don’t know what it was! Maybe that horrible creature, the monster that killed her, cast some sort of curse on her with its dying breath! I failed! And I don’t know why!”

With a surprising burst of speed and strength for so small a lady, Betaniqi shoved herself against me. She screamed, “Get out!” and I fled out the door.

Before she slammed the door shut, I offered my pathetic apologies: “I’m so sorry, Betaniqi, but consider that I wanted to bring your mother back to you. It’s madness, I know, but there is only one thing that’s certain in my life and that’s that I love Palla.”

The door was nearly shut, but the girl opened it crack to ask tremulously: “You love whom?”

“Palla!” I cried to the Gods.

“My mother,” she whispered angrily. “Was named Xarlys. Palla was the monster.”

I stared at the closed door for Mara knows how much time, and then began the long walk back to the Mages Guild. My memory searched through the minutiae to the Tales and Tallows night so long ago when I first beheld the statue, and first heard the name of my love. That Breton initiate, Gelyn had spoken. He was behind me. Was he recognizing the beast and not the lady?

I turned the lonely bend that intersected with the outskirts of Mir Corrup, and a large shadow rose from the ground where it had been sitting, waiting for me.

“Palla,” I groaned. “Pal La.”

“Kiss me,” it howled.

And that brings my story up to the present moment. Love is red, like blood.

# Pension Of The Ancestor Moth

*Anonymous*

To be read by all novitiates of the Temple:

The Order of the Ancestor Moth is as ancient as it is noble. We nurture and celebrate our beloved ancestors, whose spirits are manifest in the Ancestor Moths. Each moth carries the fjyron of an ancestor's spirit. Loosely translated as the "will to peace," the fjyron can be sung into the silk produced by the Ancestor Moths. When the silk is in turn spun into cloth and embroidered with the genealogy of the correct Ancestor, clothing of wondrous power can be made.

Adepts of our order are gifted with prescient powers. The wisdom of the ancestors can sing the future into the present. For this reason, our order and our order alone has been given the privilege to interpret the Elder Scrolls. These writings exceed even the gods, both aedra and daedra. Such insight into the inner fabric of reality comes at a price. Each reading of the Elder Scrolls is more profound than the last. Each leaves the priest blind for longer, and longer periods of time. Finally, the last reading achieves a nearly sublime understanding of that scroll's contents, but the priest is left permanently blinded to the light of this world. No longer can he read the scrolls.

This Monastery is dedicated to the service of these noble members of our order. They now live out their lives with the

Ancestor Moths that they so love. Their underground demesnes are well suited to the moths. They raise and nurture the fragile creatures, singing to them constantly. They harvest the silk and spin it into bolts of cloth. They weave the cloth, embroidering it with the genealogies and histories of the ancestors that spun the silk. This is their new life.

As they tend the Ancestor Moths, so we tend the blind monks. While they toil in dark, we serve in the light. They need food and water. We provide. They need tools and furniture. We provide. They need secrecy and anonymity. We provide. They need purveyors to sell the fruit of their labors. We provide.

At one time, we also provided protection. Many generations ago, Gudrun came to our temple. Newly blinded by visions of what was to be, she brought with her new teachings. The visions of the ancestors foresaw the need of the monks to defend themselves. They train and practice the teachings of Gudrun constantly. They are masters of the sword of no sword, the axes of no axe.

As a novitiate, you will learn the teachings of Gudrun. You will learn the way of the peaceful fist. You will learn to serve the blind monks. You will learn to provide. In time, you may attain the peace and insight of the Ancestor Moths.

# Plan For The Big Heist

## *The Gray Fox*

- 1) Activate the Old Way using the Glass of Time. It is located inside the Imperial Palace. I do not know what it looks like or exactly where to find it.
- 2) Find the entrance to the Old Way. It is rumored to be somewhere in the sewers under the Imperial City.
- 3) Inside the Old Way is an entrance to the heart of the Imperial Palace. Savilla's Stone was only able to scry the two most important obstacles. For one of them you will need to use the Boots of Springheel Jak.
- 4) To enter the Imperial City you must use the Arrow of Extrication to to unlock the final door.
- 5) Inside the Imperial Palace you must find the Imperial Library. On the bottom floor is some sort of viewing room.
- 6) I have arranged to have a particular scroll made available in the Chamber. The blind monks that care for the scrolls are expecting Celia Camoran, but you will take her place. Just find the chair assigned to visitors to the library. You must not speak, or they will know it is not her. Just let them bring you the scroll.

7) Once you have the scroll, retrace your steps and deliver it to me. Of course the chances of something going wrong with this plan are very high. When that happens, you'll just have to get creative.



# Potion Recipes

*Anonymous*

To create a potion of Restore Fatigue, combine any two normal foods, such as meat or seeds. Grind carefully with the mortar and pestle. Place the resulting powder in a small pestle and mix with ordinary clear water.

For a potion of Cure Disease, grind Clannfear Claws and Mandrake root into a fine powder using a mortar and pestle. It will remain somewhat gritty. It can be mixed in with almost any liquid, but ordinary clear water is safest.

To create a potion of Cure Poison, mix Ginseng and Redwort Flower in equal portions. Slowly grind them together with a mortar and pestle. The ginseng may leave a sticky residue. Add water for easy swallowing.

For a minor Restore Health potion, crumble some Cairn Bolete cap over roasted Boar Meat. Chop finely and mix together with a mortar and pestle. Add water to create a solution that can be drunk.

A potion of Restore Willpower is made by heating Minotaur Horn and Primrose Leaves. Grind the results together with a mortar and pestle. Add water to create a drinkable fluid.

# Proper Lock Design And Construction

*Anonymous*

I have encountered many thieves whose sole interest in locks is how to open them and thereby pilfer the protected contents of the room or chest. I have taken it upon myself to devise a system of locks that can defeat such villainous intent.

The materials used to create a lock are of utmost importance. Shoddy brass or copper will give way to a well placed kick, thereby rendering the lock itself useless. I recommend steel over iron when choosing a material. More robust materials tend to be prohibitively expensive and necessitate the door being made of similar metals. I have been chagrined to stumble across the shattered shell of a wooden chest, it's dwarven lock intact and still locked.

Once these basics are settled, pay particular attention to the offset of the tumblers. A seven degree offset to the keyhole will allow a torque style key to work smoothly, while at the same time causing numerous headaches for the thief attempting to insert non-torque lockpicks.

In similar fashion, the springs of the tumblers should be made by different smiths. Each smith will unknowingly create a spring with different tension than his fellow smiths. This

variance will also create difficulties for anyone attempting to pick the lock.

# Provinces Of Tamriel

*Anonymous*

The Empire of Tamriel encompasses the nine Imperial provinces: Skyrim, High Rock, Hammerfell, Summerset Isle, Valenwood, Elsweyr, Black Marsh, Morrowind, and the ancient Imperial province itself, Cyrodiil. Morrowind was among the last of the provinces to be integrated into the Empire, and because it was added by treaty, and not by conquest, Morrowind retains exceptional power to define local law by reference to ancient Great House precedents.

Skyrim, also known as the Old Kingdom or the Fatherland, was the first region of Tamriel settled by humans from the continent of Atmora: the hardy, brave, warlike Nords, whose descendants still occupy this rugged land. Though more restrained and civilized than their barbarian ancestors, the Nords of the pure blood still excel in the manly virtues of red war and bold exploration.

Hammerfell is primarily an urban and maritime province, with most of its population confined to the great cities of Sentinel and Stros M'Kai and to other small ports among the islands and along the coast. The interior is sparsely populated with small poor farms and beastherds. The Redguard love of travel, adventure, and the high seas has dispersed them as sailors, mercenaries, and adventurers in ports of call throughout the Empire.

High Rock encompasses the many lands and clans of Greater Bretony, the Dellese Isles, the Bjoulsae River tribes, and, by tradition, the Western Reach. The rugged highland strongholds and isolated valley settlements have encouraged the fierce independence of the various local Breton clans, and this contentious tribal nature has never been completely integrated into a provincial or Imperial identity. Nonetheless, their language, bardic traditions, and heroic legends are a unifying common legacy.

The Summerset Isle is a green and pleasant land of fertile farmlands, woodland parks, and ancient towers and manors. Most settlements are small and isolated, and dominated by ruling seats of the local wizard or warlord. The Isle has few good natural ports, and the natives are unwelcoming to foreigners, so the ancient, chivalric high culture of the Aldmer is little affected by modern Imperial mercantilism.

Valenwood is a largely uninhabited forest wilderness. The coasts of Valenwood are dominated by mangrove swamps and tropical rain forests, while heavy rainfalls nurture the temperate inland rain forests. The Bosmer live in timber clanhouses at sites scattered along the coast and through the interior, connected only by undeveloped foot trails. The few Imperial roads traverse vast dense woodlands, studded with tiny, widely separated settlements, and carry little trade or traffic of any kind.

The Khajiit of the southern Elsweyr jungles and river basins are settled city dwellers with ancient mercantile traditions and a stable agrarian aristocracy based on sugarcane and saltrice plantations. The nomadic tribal Khajiit of the dry northern wastes and grasslands are, by contrast, aggressive and

territorial tribal raiders periodically united under tribal warlords. While the settled south has been quick to adopt Imperial ways, the northern nomadic tribes cling to their warlike barbarian traditions.

Most of the native Argonian population of Black Marsh is confined to the great inland waterways and impenetrable swamps of the southern interior. There are few roads here, and most travel is by boat. The coasts and the northwestern upland forests are largely uninhabited. For ages the Dunmer have raided Black Marsh for slaves; though the Empire has made this illegal, the practice persists, and Dunmer and Argonians have a long-standing and bitter hatred for one another.

Morrowind, homeland of the Dunmer peoples, is the northeastmost province of the Tamrielic Empire. Most of the population is gathered in the high uplands and fertile river valleys of central Morrowind, especially around the Inland Sea. The island Vvardenfel is encircled by the Inner Sea, and is dominated by the titanic volcano Red Mountain and its associated ash wastelands; most of the island's population is confined to the relatively hospitable west and southwest coast.

Cyrodiil is the cradle of Human Imperial high culture on Tamriel. It is the largest region of the continent, and most is endless jungle. The Imperial City is in the heartland, the fertile Nibenay Valley. The densely populated central valley is surrounded by wild rain forests drained by great rivers into the swamps of Argonia and Topal Bay. The land rises gradually to the west and sharply to the north. Between its western coast and its central valley are deciduous forests and mangrove swamps.

# Public Notice

*Adamus Phillida*

For public notice:

This property has been seized by the Imperial Legion, and its owner imprisoned.

Rituals to the Night Mother, or any other attempt to contact the Dark Brotherhood, will not be tolerated!

—Adamus Phillida, Imperial Legion Commander

# Purloined Shadows

*Waughin Jarth*

\* Chapter One \*

The candle was lit, and the thief was standing there, blinking, caught. She was young, rather dirty, wearing ragged black clothes that were surely quite smart and expensive weeks ago when she had stolen them from one of the city's best tailors. The look of surprise slipped from her face, and she took on a blank expression as she put the gold back on the table.

“What are you doing here?” the man with the candle asked, stepping from the shadows.

“That’s a stupid question,” the girl replied, frowning. “I’m obviously robbing you.”

“Since nothing I have is missing,” the man smiled, glancing at the gold on the table. “I would have to say that you’re not robbing me. Attempting to rob me perhaps. The question I have is, why? You know who I am, I assume. You didn’t just come in through an unlocked door.”

“I’ve stolen from everyone else. I’ve taken soul gems from the Mages Guild, I’ve robbed the treasury of the most secure fortress, I cheated the Archbishop of Julianos... I even pickpocketed the Emperor Pelagius at his coronation. I thought it was your turn.”



“I’m flattered,” the man nodded. “Now that your ambition has been thwarted, what will you do? Flee? Perhaps retire?”

“Teach me,” the girl replied, a little grin finding its way unconsciously on her face. “I picked all your locks, I slipped past all your wards... You designed them, you know how difficult that was for someone without training. I didn’t come here for six gold pieces. I came here to prove myself. Make me your student.”

The Master of Stealth looked at the little girl burglar. “Your skill is not in need of training. Your planning is adequate, but I can help you with that. What is without hope is your ambition. You are past stealing for your livelihood, now you steal for the pleasure of it, for the challenge. That’s a personality trait which is incurable, and will lead you to an early grave.”

“Haven’t you ever wanted to steal that which can’t be stolen?” the girl asked. “Something that would make your name known forever?”

The Master did not answer: he only frowned.

“Clearly I was fooled by your reputation,” she shrugged, and opened a window. “I thought you might want a willing accomplice on some great act of thievery which would go down in history. Like you said, my skill at planning is only adequate. I didn’t have in mind an escape route, but this will have to do.”

The burglar slipped down the sheer wall, dashed across the shadowy courtyard, and within a few minutes was back at her room in the run-down tavern. The Master was waiting for her there, in the dark.

“I didn’t see you go past me,” she gasped.

“You turned on the street when you heard the owl call,” he replied. “The most important tool in the thieves’ repertoire is distraction, either planned or improvised. I suppose your lessons have begun.”

“And what is the final test?” the girl smiled.

When he told her, she could only stare. She had, it seemed, not misunderstood his reputation for daring. Not at all.

\* Chapter Two \*

For the week leading up to the Eighth of Hearthfire, the skies above Rindale were dark and alive as clouds of crows blotted out the sun. Their guttural squawks and groans deafened all. The peasants wisely bolted their doors and windows, praying to survival that most unholy of days.

On the night of the summoning, the birds fell silent, their black unblinking eyes following the witches’ march into the glen. There were no moons to light the way, only the leader’s single torch in the gloom. Their white robes appeared as indistinct shapes, like the faintest of ghosts.

A single tall tree stood in the middle of the clearing, every branch thick with crows, watching the procession without moving. The lead witch placed the torch at the base of the tree, and her seventeen followers formed a circle and began their slow, strange, wailing chant.

As they sang, the glow of the torch began to change. It did not diminish at all, but its color became more and more grey, so it seemed a pulsating wave of ash had fallen on the witches. Then

it grew darker still, so that for a moment, though the fire yet burned, it was darkest night in the forest. The penumbra continued until the torch was burning with a color without a name, emptiness beyond mere blackness. It cast a glow, but it was an unnatural scintillation falling on the witches. Their robes of white became black. The Dunmer among them had eyes of green, and ivory white flesh. The Nords appeared black as coal. The crows watching overhead were as pure white as the witches' cloaks.

The Daedra Princess Nocturnal stepped out of the pit of uncolor.

She stood in the center of the circle, the tree of pallid crows her throne, aloof, as the witches continued their chanting, dropping their robes to prostrate themselves naked before their great mistress. Wrapping her night cloak around her, she smiled at their song. It spoke of her mystery, of veiled beauty, of eternal shadows and a divine future when the sun burns no more.

Nocturnal let her cloak slide from her shoulders and was naked. Her witches did not raise their head from the ground, but continued their hymn of darkness.

“Now,” said the girl to herself.

She had been up in the tree all day, dressed in a ridiculous suit of mock crows. It was uncomfortable, but when the witches had arrived, she forgot all her aches, and concentrated on being perfectly still, like the other crows in the tree. It had taken considerable planning and study between her and the Master of Stealth to find the glen, and to learn what to expect in the summoning of Nocturnal.

Gently, silently, the burglar eased herself down the branches of the tree, coming closer and closer to the Daedra Princess. She let herself break her concentration for just a moment, and wondered where the Master was. He had been confident in the plan. He said that when Nocturnal dropped her cloak, there would be a distraction, and it could be quickly taken in that instant provided the girl was in position at the precise right moment.

The girl climbed along the lowest of the branches, carefully pushing aside the crows that were, as the Master said, transfixed by the Princess in her naked beauty. The girl was now close enough, if she only reached out her arm, to touch Nocturnal's back.

The song was rising to a crescendo, and the girl knew that the ceremony would soon be over. Nocturnal would clothe herself before the witches ended the chant, and the chance to take the cloak would be over. The girl gripped the tree branch tightly as her mind raced. Could it be that the Master was not here at all? Was this, was this conceivably the entire test? Was it only to show that it could be done, not to do it?

The girl was furious. She had done everything perfectly, but the so-called Master of Stealth had proven himself a coward. Perhaps he had taught her a little in the months that it took to plan this, but what was it worth? Only one thing made her smile. On that night when she had stolen into his stronghold, she had kept one single gold piece, and he had never suspected it. It was symbolic, as symbolic as stealing the cloak of Nocturnal in its way, proving that the Master Thief could be robbed.

The girl was so lost on her mind that she thought she imagined it for a moment when a man's voice yelled out from the darkness, "Mistress!"

The next words she knew she didn't imagine: "Mistress! A thief! Behind you!"

The witches raised their heads, and screamed, ruining the sanctity of the ceremony, as they charged forward. The crows awoke and burst from the tree in an explosion of feathers and toad-like cries. Nocturnal herself whirled around, affixing the girl with her black eyes.

"Who art thee who dares profane?" The Princess hissed, as the pitch shadows flew from her body enveloping the girl in their lethal chill.

In the last instant before she was swallowed alive by darkness, the girl looked to the ground and saw that the cloak was gone, and she answered, as she understood, "Oh, who am I? I'm the distraction."

# Ramblings Of Audens Avidius

*Audens Avidius*

I used to be somebody. I was a captain of the guard in the Imperial City until that fleabitten hero decided to poke his nose in my business. I have a plan to get out of the Imperial prison. Apparently there is a secret escape tunnel used by the royal family. When I get out I'm going to settle the score with that hero. Then I'll take care of those two snitches Ruslan and Luronk. The sweetest of all will be Itius Hayn. I'll make him squeal first.

# Relmina's Logs

*Relmina*

Experiment Log - Day 12

Project Limb Removal

Day 12 Observations and Summary Conclusions

Day 12

Removing an arm from the young wood elf female made her fight all the harder for her life, despite being clearly outmatched. In previous battles, she fought much less bravely and to lesser effect. She lasted a full minute against my most angry of hounds before her throat was ripped out and I had to revive her.

However, removing just the feet of the middle-aged Nord male made him despondent and without any will to defend himself, even against a lesser foe. So pitiful was the look on the face of his corpse, that I decide to leave him be, rather than resurrect him. After so many years of scientific study, I still cannot abide apathy. I'm sure that my aversion to pity has colored my findings, as I only make use of strong-willed test subjects. Though I suppose, flawed as my research may be, it is still more revealing and faithful than any other has done before me.

Summary Conclusions

After studying the various combats between the test subjects in this project, I have concluded that, much as the pain threshold is inconsistent within a given species, so too is the effect of dismemberment. Whether beast or man, the removal of a limb, be it functional as a hand, or peripheral as a tail, has varying effects on the subject, having to do more with individual temperament than any biological or cultural endowment. Whatever the particular effect, it is substantial. Whether it enhances a subject's tendency toward aggressiveness or passivity, or swings them to the other extreme, removing a limb has a profound effect on behavior.

After reviewing my notes, I will attempt to catalogue all the similarities and differences between the subjects and their responses. I may be able to offer Lord Shegorath a guidebook detailing how to craft a better kingdom by removing various appendages from the bodies of its people.

## Hunger vs. Shambles

### Experiment Setup and Hypothesis

#### Hunger vs. Shambles, with elven catalyst

While generally an even match, these two Shambles versus a single Hunger, previous experiments have indicated that the presence of a warm body causes the Hunger to increase its ferocity. This territorial hunting imperative is completely lacking in the shambles. They seek to destroy life, not to devour it.

In this case I have confined a Hunger to his cage, while leaving an unspoiled high elf female in viewing distance. Hungers seem to have a particular thirst for elf maiden blood. And this



one, on the verge of flowering, should be a particularly irresistible morsel.

I hypothesize that the hunger will fight with greater force and precision in the up coming battle, after I let the creature and elf maiden stew awhile in each other's proximity.

I shall return in a few days to run the experiment.

Project Hound's Blood - Day 7

Project Hound's Blood

Day 7 observations

My theory stated before trial is thus:

“Blending the most recent concoction of hound blood with that from a headless zombie will result in a beast with greater fury and resistance to pain.”

Test 1

Subject 1 has the current concoction, and Subject 2 has the new mixture.

Battle 1:

Subject 1 lasted approximately one minute before expiring, having done average amount of injury to Subject 2. Subject 2 seemed not to notice most of the injuries it received.

Battle 2:

After a drawn out combat, Subject 1 killed Subject 2, but suffered near fatal wounds. Subject 2 fought to the bitter end

with the same energy it started with.

Battle 3:

Subject 1 went out very quickly.

Battle 4:

Subject 1 lasted less than a minute. Subject 2 took little injury.

Test 2

Subject A and B both have the standard blood. Subject C and D both have the new blood.

Battle 1 (A vs. B):

Lasted just over a minute, both hounds suffering grievous injury, and somewhat bothered by their wounds.

Battle 2 (A vs. B):

Nearly identical results.

Battle 3 (C vs. D):

Lasted over two minutes, both hounds suffering grievous injury. Neither seemed very winded or bothered by their wounds.

Battle 4 (C vs. D):

Lasted under 1 minute, both suffering grievous injury. Neither seemed very bothered by their wounds.

It seems my original theory was correct. In future trials I will try watering down the headless zombie blood before adding it to the mixture, to gain some insight into the actual potency of the blood itself and determine how much of the additional effect is coming from its combination with the existing ingredients.

## Reptilian Appetite Conditioning

### Experiment Setup and Hypothesis

## Reptilian Appetite Conditioning

I have raised these Baliwogs and Scalon together, from hatchling to adult. I inflicted great pain on them when they were aggressive towards each other, and rewarded them when they showed aggression towards others. They have since acquired an almost familial bond, normally expressed in warm-blooded creatures. See previous experiment logs for details.

For the last month, I have been starving them in separate cages, allowing them occasionally to eat, but only tiny amounts of reptilian flesh.

I have procured a fatty Breton of previously luxurious lifestyle. There is not an ounce of muscle on him. He should be a most tempting snack, indeed. But we shall see!

I shall return soon to run the experiment. There is still some time left to starve the reptiles until they are most desperate.

## Unproductive Musings

Today I intended to continue my research into the effect of pain on the host of the unborn (in this case the middle-aged pregnant Breton female), and yet, no matter how many times she was ripped apart and resurrected, I simply could not bring myself to the requisite attentiveness serious study demands.

Rather than the usual precision of observation, my faculties seemed possessed of a peculiar poetic sensibility. So that, rather than dutifully logging each scream and twitch of agony, I seem transported by her cries to some other place.

I became sheltered within a tapestry of tranquility, woven from the screams of the Breton's anguish warped against the grunts and clacking of the beasts and shambles that toyed with her.

It was there, in that spot, my soul naked and clean, that I came to a sense of clarity. And like all - dare I say - religious experiences, returning to my mundane senses, I am left with little more than a faded memory of supernal knowledge, like a burned parchment on which once were written words of wisdom and understanding, of which now only torn and blurred fragments remain.

The harder I try to remember that innate knowledge, the more it seems to recede from me. The essence that remains is this:

Pain is a force that purifies, ennobles, and uplifts. It is the Fire that burns away impurities, that melts away imperfections.

Death is not the sign of weakness, nor bodily constitution the sign of strength. It is what happens to soul when brought into the Fire that determines the mettle of men.

Those with inner strength are forged into weapons of devastating keenness by Pain's Fire. Those who are undeserving and weak turn to dark and lifeless ash in Its heat.

And there it stands in all its inscrutability - so much for an unproductive day. Perhaps tomorrow will lead to more fruitful experiments.

Week-old blood

Experiment Setup and Hypothesis

Week-old blood

I have paired up a hound and shambles of equal fighting capacity. However, I have recently drained the hound of its zombie blood, and replaced it with blood extracted from a Breton corpse, which had lain for a week, rotting in the hot sun. When I return, having let it acclimate to its new supply of vital fluid, I expect the hound will perform with much less efficiency than normal.

# Response To Bero's Speech

*Malviser*

Response to Bero's Speech

by

Malviser, Battlemage

On the 14th of Last Seed, an illusionist by the name of Berevar Bero gave a very ignorant speech at the Chantry of Julianos in the Imperial City. As ignorant speeches are hardly uncommon, there was no reason to respond to it. Unfortunately, he has since had the speech privately printed as "Bero's Speech to the Battlemages," and it's received some small, undeserved attention in academic circles. Let us put his misconceptions to rest.

Bero began his lecture with an occasionally factual account of famous Battlemages from Zurin Arctus, Tiber Septim's Imperial Battlemage, to Jagar Tharn, Uriel Septim VII's Imperial Battlemage. His intent was to show that where it matters, the Battlemage relies on other Schools of Magicka, not the School of Destruction which is supposedly a Battlemage's particular forte. Allow me first to dispute these so-called historical facts.

Zurin Arctus did not create the golem Numidium by spells of Mysticism and Conjuraton as Bero alleges. The truth is that we don't know how Numidium was created or if it was a golem or

atronach in any traditional sense of those words. Uriel V's Battlemage Hethoth was not an Imperial Battlemage—he was simply a sorcerer in the employ of the Empire, thus which spells he cast in the various battles on Akavir are irrelevant, not to mention heresay. Bero calls Empress Morihatha's Battlemage Welloc “an accomplished diplomat” but not “a powerful student of the School of Destruction.” I congratulate Bero on correctly identifying an Imperial Battlemage, but there are many written examples of Welloc's skill in the School of Destruction. The sage Celarus, for example, wrote extensively about Welloc casting the Vampiric Cloud on the rebellious army of Blackrose, causing their strength and skill to pass on to their opponents. What is this, but an impressive example of the School of Destruction?

Bero rather pathetically includes Jagar Tharn in his list of underachieving Battlemages. To use an insane traitor as example of rational behavior is an untenable position. What would Bero prefer? That Tharn used the School of Destruction to destroy Tamriel by a more traditional means?

Bero uses his misrepresentation of history as the basis for his argument. Even if he had found four excellent examples from history of Battlemages casting spells outside their School—and he didn't—he would only have anecdotal evidence, which isn't enough to support an argument. I could easily find four examples of illusionists casting healing spells, or nightblades teleporting. There is a time and a place for everything.

Bero's argument, built on this shaky ground, is that the School of Destruction is not a true school. He calls it “narrow and shallow” as an avenue of study, and its students impatient, with megalomaniac tendencies. How can one respond to this?

Someone who knows nothing about casting a spell of Destruction criticizing the School for being too simple? Summarizing the School of Destruction as learning how to do the “maximum amount of damage in the minimum amount of time” is clearly absurd, and he expounds on his ignorance by listing all the complicated factors studied in his own School of Illusion.

Allow me in response to list the factors studied in the School of Destruction. The means of delivering the spell matters more in the School of Destruction than any other school, whether it is cast at a touch, at a range, in concentric circles, or cast once to be triggered later. What forces must be reigned in to cast the spell: fire, lightning, or frost? And what are the advantages and dangers of each? What are the responses from different targets from the assault of different spells of destruction? What are the possible defenses and how may they be assailed? What environmental factors must be taken into consideration? What are the advantages of a spell of delayed damage? Bero suggests that the School of Destruction cannot be subtle, yet he forgets about all the Curses that fall under the mantle of the school, sometimes affecting generation after generation in subtle yet sublime ways.

The School of Alteration is a distinct and separate entity from the School of Destruction, and Bero’s argument that they should be merged into one is patently ludicrous. He insists—again, a man who knows nothing about the Schools of Alteration and Destruction, is the one insisting this—that “damage” is part of the changing of reality dealt with by the spells of Alteration. The implication is that Levitation, to list a spell of Alteration, is a close cousin of Shock Bolt, a spell of Destruction. It would make as much sense to say that the



School of Alteration, being all about the actuality of change, should absorb the School of Illusion, being all about the appearance of change.

It certainly isn't a coincidence that a master of the School of Illusion cast this attack on the School of Destruction. Illusion is, after all, all about masking the truth.

# Rislav The Righteous

## *Sinjin*

Like all true heroes, Rislav Larich had inauspicious beginnings. We are told by chroniclers that the springtide night in the 448th year of the first era on which he was born was unseasonably cold, and that his mother Queen Lynada died very shortly after setting eyes upon her son. If he were much beloved of his father, King Mhorus of Skingrad, who already had plenty of heirs, three sons and four daughters before him, the chroniclers make no mention of it.

His existence was so very undistinguished that we hear virtually nothing of him for the first twenty years of his life. His schooling, we can suppose, was similar to that of any “spare prince” in the Colovian West, with Ayleid tutors to teach him the ways of hunting and battle. Etiquette, religious instruction, and even basic statecraft were seldom a part of the training of a prince of the Highlands, as it was in the more civilized valley of Nibenay.

There is a brief reference to him, together with his family, as part of the rolls of honor during the coronation of the Emperor Gorieus on the 23rd of Sun’s Dawn 1E 461. The ceremony, of course, held during the time of the Alessian Doctrines of Marukh, and so was without entertainment, but the thirteen-year-old Rislav was still witness to some of the greatest figures of legend. The Beast of Anequina, Darloc Brae, represented his

kingdom, giving honor to the Empire. The Chieftain of Skyrim Kjoric the White and his son Hoag were in attendance. And despite the Empire's intolerance of all elves, chimer Indoril Nerevar and dwemer Dumac Dwarfking were evidently there as well, diplomatically representing Resdayn, all in relative peace.

Also mentioned on the rolls was a young mer in service to the Imperial court of High Rock, who was to have a great history with Rislav. Ryain Direnni.

Whether the two young men of about the same age met and conversed is entirely the stuff of historian's fancy. Ryain is spoken of in praising words as a powerful land-owner, eventually buying the island of Balfiera in the Iliac Bay and gradually conquering all of High Rock and large parts of Hammerfell and Skyrim, but Rislav is not heard of again in history's books for another seventeen years. We can only offer supposition based on the facts that follow.

Children of kings are, of course, married to the children of other kings to bind alliances. The kingdoms of Skingrad and Kvatch skirmished over common territory throughout the fifth century, until they reached a peace in the year 472. The details of this accord are not recorded, but since we know that Prince Rislav was in the court of Kvatch six years later, as husband to Belene, the daughter of King Justinus, it is fair to make an educated guess that they were married then to make peace.

This brings us to the year 478, when a great plague swept through all of Cyrodiil and seemed particularly concentrated in the independent Colovian West. Among the victims were King Mhorus and the rest of the entire royal family in Skingrad. Rislav's only surviving elder brother, Dorald, survived, being in

the Imperial City as a priest of Marukh. He returned to his homeland to assume the throne.

Of Dorald, we have some history. The King's second son, he was slightly simple-minded and evidently very pious. All the chroniclers spoke of his sweetness and decency, how he saw a vision in his early years that brought him - with his father's blessing - from Skingrad to the Imperial City and the priesthood. The priesthood of Marukh, of course, saw no difference between spiritual and political matters. It was the religion of the Alessian Empire, and it taught that to resist the Emperor was to resist the Gods. Given that, it is scarcely a surprise what Dorald did when he became King of the independent kingdom of Skingrad.

His first edict, on his very first day, was to cede the kingdom to the Empire.

The reaction throughout the Colovian Estates was shock and outrage, nowhere more so than in the court of Kvatch. Rislav Larich, we are told, rode forth to his brother's kingdom, together with his wife and two dozen of his father-in-law's cavalry. It was surely not an impressive army, no matter how the chroniclers embellish it, but they had little trouble defeating all the guards Dorald sent to stop them. In truth, there was no actual battling, for the soldiers of Skingrad resented their new king's decision to give up their autonomy.

The brothers faced one another in the castle courtyard where they had grown up.

In typical Colovian fashion, there was no trial, no accusations of treason, no jury, no judge. Only an executioner.

“Thou art no brother of mine,” Rislav Larich said, and struck Dorald’s head from his shoulders in one blow. He was crowned King of Skingrad still holding the same bloody axe in his arms.

If King Rislav had no battle experience beforehand, that was shortly to change. Word spread quickly to the Imperial City that Skingrad, once offered, was now being taken back. Gorieus was an accomplished warrior even before taking the throne, and the seventeen years he had as Emperor were scarcely peaceful. Only eight months before Dorald’s assassination and Rislav’s ascendancy, Gorieus and the Alessian army had faced another of his coronation guests, Kjoric the White, on the fields of the frozen north. The High Chieftain of Skyrim lost his life in the Battle of Sungard. While the pact of chieftains was selecting a new leader, Cyrodiil was busily grabbing back the land of southern Skyrim that it had lost.

In short, Emperor Gorieus knew how to deal with rebellious vassals.

The Alessian army poured westward “like a flood of death,” to borrow the chronicler’s phrase, in numbers far exceeding what would be required to conquer Skingrad. Gorieus could not have thought actual battle was likely. Rislav, as we said, had little to no experience at warfare, and only a few days’ practice at kingcraft. His kingdom and all of the Colovian West had just been ravaged by plague. The Alessians anticipated that a mere show of arms, and a surrender.

Rislav instead prepared for battle. He quickly inspected his troops and drew up plans.

The chroniclers who had heretofore ignored the life of Rislav now devote verse after verse describing the king’s aspect with

fetishistic delight. While it may lack literary merit and taste, we are at least given some details at last. Not surprisingly, the king wore the finest armor of his era, as the Colovian Estates then had the finest leathersmiths - the only type of armor available - in all of Tamriel. The king's klibanion mail, boiled and waxed for hardness, and studded with inch-long spikes, was a rich chestnut red, and he wore it over his black tunic but under his black cloak. The statue of Rislav the Righteous which now stands in Skingrad is a romanticized version of king, but not inaccurate except in the armor represented. No bard of the Colovian West would have gone to the market so lightly protected. But it does, as we will see, include the most important accouterments of Rislav: his trained hawk and his fast horse.

The winter rains had washed through the roads to the south, sending much of the West Weald spilling into Valenwood. The Emperor took the northern route, and King Rislav with a small patrol of guards met him at a low pass on what is now the Gold Road. The Emperor's army, it is said, was so large that the Beast of Anequina could hear its march from hundreds of miles away, and despite himself, the chroniclers say, he quaked in fear.

Rislav, it was said, did not quake. With perfect politeness, he told the Emperor that his party was too large to be accommodated in the tiny kingdom of Skingrad.

"Next time," Rislav said. "Write before you come."

The Emperor was, like most Alessian Emperors, not a man of great humor, and he thought Rislav touched by Sheogorath. He ordered his personal guards to arrest the poor madman, but at that moment, the King of Skingrad raised his arm and sent his

hawk flying into the sky. It was a signal his army had been waiting for. The Alessian were all within the pass and the range of their arrows.

King Rislav and his guard began riding westward as fast as if they had been “kissed by wild Kynareth,” as the chroniclers said. He did not dare to look behind him, but his plan went faultlessly. The far eastern end of the pass was sealed by rolling boulders, giving the Alessian no direction to go but westward. The Skingrad archers rained arrows down upon the Imperial army from far above on the plateaus, remaining safe from reprisal. The furious Emperor Gorieus chased Rislav from the Weald to the Highlands, leaving Skingrad far behind, all the while his army growing steadily smaller and smaller.

In the ancient Highland forest, the Imperial army met the army of Rislav’s father-in-law, the King of Kvatch. The Alessian army likely still outnumbered their opponents, but they were exhausted and their morale had been obliterated by the chase amid a sea of arrows. After an hour’s battle, they retreated north into what is now the Imperial Reserve, and from there, further north and east, to slip back to nurse their wounds and pride in Nibenay.

It was the beginning of the end of the Alessian hegemony. The Kings of the Colovian West joined with Kvatch and Skingrad to resist Imperial incursions. The Clan Direnni under Ryain was inspired to outlaw the religion of the Alessian Reform throughout his lands in High Rock, and began pushing into Imperial territories. The new High Chief of Skyrim, Hoag, now called Hoag Merkiller, though sharing the Emperor’s official xenophobia, also joined the resistance. His heir, King Ysmir

Wulfharth of Atmora, helped continue the struggle upon Hoag's death in battle, and also insured his place in history.

The heroic King of Skingrad, who faced the Emperor's army virtually alone, and triggered its end, justly deserves his sobriquet of Rislav the Righteous.



# S'krivva's Note

*S'krivva*

3 Prowlers sent to Elsweyr. The item should be acquired within the week. Please have patience.

# Scrap From Lorgren's Diary

*Lorgren Benirus*

2 Sun's Dawn 3E335

The people of Anvil are worms! How dare they criticize what they don't understand! I shall have my vengeance in a form they cannot possibly imagine. I shall use the souls of the departed to prolong my own life. The Tome is very specific. I must have more bodies... yes... more bodies.

11 Sun's Dawn 3E335

I must protect myself from those meddlers. They shall not interfere in my designs. I have constructed a room in the basement of this manor. It is there I will inter my corporeal self and I will transcend this plane of existence. Only a true-blooded Benirus may open the portal, so if I fail, however unlikely that may be, a descendant may attempt to follow in my footsteps to carry on the true way. To make sure our secret is safe, I have harnessed the spirits of those whose bodies I have defiled to forever guard that place.

15 Sun's Dawn 3E335

The fools think I don't hear them speaking? I can hear their rumor and innuendo. They intend to meddle in powers they can barely comprehend. They call me an old fool and shun me. The young dare each other to step one foot in my yard. I have

become the stuff of old wives tales and campfire stories. They dismiss me as an oddity. But soon they will see. When all of Anvil lies in waste around me, when their corpses litter the streets and their blood dampens the earth... only then will my true power be known and feared.

# Sealed Note

*Lucien Lachance*

You sleep rather soundly for a cold-blooded killer. That's good. You'll need a clear conscience for what I'd like to propose. For there is much I can offer you. The taking of a life has its own pleasures, of course, but the taking of a life for the Dark Brotherhood is an act worthy of immeasurable reward.

If you're intrigued, and I suspect you are, come visit me at the ruins of Fort Farragut. If you survive the descent down to the bottom level where I reside, I'll know you're capable of all the Dark Brotherhood has to offer.

L.L.

# Sentinels Of The Isles

*Andoche Marier*

This volume attempts to catalogue and analyze known, suspected, and rumored facts about the two races that serve to maintain order within the Shivering Isles. It is by no means intended to serve as the authoritative work on the matter; rather, it is a personal effort on the part of the author to better understand these unique creatures.

It is beyond the scope of this work to determine the origins of the Golden Saints and Dark Seducers. They are Daedra, and as such their base existence is a mystery to those mortal-born. The commonly held belief that all Daedra are incapable of Creation suggests that even Lord Sheogorath himself is not responsible for the genesis of these races. Yet, it is worth noting that the Prince of Madness has motives and powers that none may guess; to attempt to do so would only confuse the subject further.

It is enough, then, to see that they exist and know that it is so. Beyond this knowledge, however, it is curious that the Saints and Seducers serve Lord Sheogorath unerringly. This allegiance is ultimate and eternal, from all indications, but its source is unknown. Could it be that they themselves were tricked into service by the Madgod? Or do they simply ally themselves with the greatest power in the realm? Previous literary works suggest that Daedra choose to serve their masters so they

might find protection and safe harbor. Clearly the Saints and Seducers have this in the Shivering Isles; indeed, they have fortresses which few not of their race are allowed to enter. They have power in the realm, acting as guardians of those who serve Lord Sheogorath. Constantly they vie for the favor of Our Lord, fighting any who oppose him and, at times, even each other. It is reasonable to assume, then, that they have made a willing choice to take up their role in the Isles.

The immediate image called to mind when hearing the name “Golden Saint” suggests an angelic figure, elegant and benevolent. It is ironic then, that while the Golden Saints embody this image in form, their behavior is in stark contrast to it. The Saints are a proud, arrogant race, quick to anger and cruel in their punishment. There is no question that they view all in the Isles as inferior, and make no effort to hide this in their interactions.

Dark Seducers also exhibit little beyond their appearance to match their names. While they too assert their superiority over all others in the realm, they appear to have a more patient, introspective nature about them. They often appear humble in their dealings with mortals, and are known to be patient with the “lesser races.”

In fact, the terms “Golden Saint” and “Dark Seducer” are external constructs. While the two groups recognize and respond to these names, they have their own names for their races: The Aural and the Mazken, respectively. It is possible the Daedra simply have no concern for the names and titles given to them by lesser beings, or perhaps they find amusement in the names. Further research into this subject is necessary but

daunting, as the Saints and Seducers do not freely offer personal information about themselves.

Other information can be gathered from observation. It is easy to see that the two groups are strongly militaristic in their societal structure; one's strength and discipline determines one's place in society. Military commanders, for example, are revered by their subordinates. With further observation, a second distinction becomes apparent: both societies are Matriarchal in nature. Females lead the guards within New Sheoth, and have the highest positions of power. Males, while not openly denigrated, are clearly subservient to their female superiors. It is unclear where this practice began, but has been wholly integrated into the daily lives of both races.

Any resident of the Shivering Isles can confirm that it is unwise to provoke the Golden Saints and Dark Seducers. They thrive on conflict and warfare, and are quick to punish any and all who disobey. Acting in their capacity as guardians of the realm does not satisfy them, however, and so they often engage in combat with one another, despite being garrisoned in areas where they are unlikely to interact. It is possible that this is more than an outlet for aggressive behavior; repeated engagements between the two races may be an effort to gain favor with Lord Sheogorath. If one can triumph over the other, it would prove superiority and a right to gain sole control over the realm. The battle for Cylarne is of particular interest, as both sides have been locked in combat with no hope of resolution for time beyond memory. Does this combat serve to sharpen the skills of the two sides, or weaken them when they could be directed elsewhere? If the conflict cannot be resolved, why then does Lord Sheogorath not step in and settle it himself?

Little is known about the private customs of the Golden Saints and Dark Seducers. They are reclusive when it comes to matters specific to their race, particularly regarding the mysterious process by which they return to the realm in the unlikely event of their death.

It is common knowledge that Golden Saints and Dark Seducers, as Daedra, cannot be killed. The Animus of the Daedra is cast back into the darkness of Oblivion, and can return to the realm to take form once more. But reports of the time it takes for a Daedra to return to the realm from the Waters of Oblivion are anecdotal and inconclusive; the process by which this return occurs remains shrouded in mystery. Based on behavior patterns and strength of numbers, it can be deduced that the stronghold for each race plays some major part in this process. Common phrases in language (such as “May the chimes call you home”) suggest that rather than merely a metaphor, sound may play some role in the sequence of events. It is believed that the chimes referenced by Saints and Seducers do indeed exist and are considered almost holy relics. Attempts to gain information about these chimes, or the process by which they are used, has been met with exceptional hostility and so have been abandoned.

Any and all information regarding the Golden Saints and Dark Seducers, particularly relating to private customs and origins, should be brought to the attention of the author immediately. The greater the scope of our knowledge, the better our ability to understand these compelling creatures.



# Sir Amiel's Journal

*Sir Amiel*

This journal is a record of failure. My failure.

In the immediate sense, this is no doubt obvious. If you are reading this, you are probably standing over my body, slain in the depths of the Shrine of the Crusader. Perhaps the gods granted me the gift of at least glimpsing the holy Helm before I died, undeserving though I am. I must believe that you are indeed a holy knight, following in my footsteps in quest of the Crusader's Relics. It is to you, Sir Knight of my hopes, that I direct these words. May the account of my failures help you avoid my fate.

Know that my failures encompass far more than my own death (which is of little account, at the end of a long life). The high ideals of the Knights of the Nine, of service to the gods rather than men, of dedication to a higher purpose—these are my failures, as I shall record here.

As I write this, the scratching of my pen the only sound in the empty Priory, I am preparing to embark on my last quest for the Helm of the Crusader. I know that my chance of success is small. I am too old for such a task. This quest should have been taken up by the next generation of Knights of the Nine, while Sir Caius and Sir Berich and the rest of us stayed behind and spun tales of our days of glory. Alas, there is no next

generation. Sir Berich is my embittered enemy, the rest of my old companions are all dead. There is only me, the last stubborn Knight of a failed Order.

For many years I blamed Sir Berich for the dissolution of the Order, but in my old age I have finally come to recognize my own part in those tragic events. I now believe that the seeds of our destruction were sown early, although the fruit did not ripen until late. Even in the first heady days, questing for the Cuirass with Sir Caius and Sir Torolf, I set the pattern of personal glory. The Cuirass was mine, and although it resided in the Priory, I wore it into battle and accepted the acclaim of my fellows and the people for its recovery. And so it went. The Sword and Greaves, recovered by Sir Berich, became his personal arms, and the Gauntlets to Sir Casimir. Why not? Should the holy weapons lie idle while there was evil to be vanquished? And who more fitting to carry them than the knight who had proved himself worthy by their recovery? So we told ourselves—so I told myself—but all that followed flowed from this.

When Sir Berich wanted to take his Relics with him to the war, who was I to forbid him? I, who had jealously considered the Cuirass my own and none other's? Sir Berich was wrong, but I was wrong first, and the blame for the dispute over the Relics falls first on me, the leader and founder of the Knights, who should have set a higher example, but was instead first to claim a Relic for my own.

Sir Berich's later actions I will leave for others to judge. But let it be known that I do not blame him for the dissolution of the Knights. If he would speak to me, I would tell him so myself. He and I are now all that are left of the original Knights. The

others are all dead, and I have dedicated myself to recovering their bodies and interring them in the Priory Undercroft, as is fitting for such holy warriors. Alas that they did not have the leader that they deserved.

Now it is time for me to depart on my quest for the Helm. If you would follow in my footsteps, Sir Knight, know that the Priory basement, at least, will remain inviolate. I have sealed the stairs and only my ring will now open it. My brother knights will sleep in peace, in company with the Cuirass, the only Relic that remains in the Order's keeping. I say that, although the Order is officially dissolved, hoping and believing that the Knights of the Nine will one day be reborn. Perhaps you are the one to restore the Order. If so, go to the Priory in the West Weald. Use my ring to enter the vaults beneath the Priory House. There you will find the Cuirass, and claim it for your own if you are a true knight.

May the Nine guard and guide you. Farewell.

Sir Amiel

Priory of the Nine

The West Weald

County Skingrad

Year 153 of the Septim Era

# Sketch Of The High Fane

*Anonymous*

Ref "Chronicles of the Brothers of Marukh, Vol. III," p. 22.

# Slythe's Journal

*Slythe Seringi*

Page 1

As midnight approaches, I still watch the fires burn. The great city of man, Kvatch, lay in ruins. They didn't heed my words. They didn't listen to my voice. Now, they are all paying the cost of ignorance. The Sunken One strikes swift and hard. He swats those who oppose Him as if they did not exist at all. The excuses of man fall upon deaf ears. The Sunken One has no pity; He has no mercy, He only sits below and passes sentence. And now, with a mighty stroke, He's toppled one of man's pitiful blights on His land. And yet, He still hungers. His appetite is voracious. Kvatch will not be the last city to fall by His hand. The world of man grows more and more corrupt, and it angers Him. Man's lies and deceit will be his undoing as The Sunken One grows impatient and no longer waits for or accepts the proper offering.

The burden is mine to shoulder. I am the last who knows of He Who Shakes The Ground. If I do not bring him the Offering, who knows what city may fall prey to his whim? Anvil? Chorrol? Or perhaps He will turn his eyes on the greatest boil of all, the great Imperial City itself. No, I must not let that happen. I must get the Offering to him like my father did before me. Man may be fallen in His eyes, but they must have time to learn The Sunken One's teachings. Destroying man now would be a

waste, when I am certain that given the chance, they will come to see His ways. Yes, I will do this thing. I will brave the depths of Sandstone Cavern to see Him. My weapons will be my will and my word. The Sunken One will watch over me and guide me. I must depart soon, before it is too late. If anyone finds this page, let them know that I, Slythe Seringi, do this for the good of all man.

Page 2

As I descend into the depths of Sandstone Cavern, I wonder to myself... why? Why would The Sunken One test me so? Have I not been loyal? Have I not spread His word? Have I not obeyed His laws? This journey has been cruel and unfair. I've nearly met my end more than once. I don't know if I can make it to His home. But no, I cannot think this way! I must get there! I must see Him. If I do not, then the world of man is doomed. I dare not tarry longer, as I do not wish to suffer His wrath. I must get the Offering to Him.

Page 3

I am fallen.

I have failed. I will not reach Him in time. And because of me, man is doomed. The creature jumped me without warning and before I could dispatch it with my magic, it dealt me a mortal blow. Now, all of Tamriel will face wanton destruction and death. His wrath will be unspeakable, his anger immense. Kvatch was but a small amount of his true potential. All hope is lost. The Sunken One awakens and soon, man will feel His hunger.

# Small Diary

*Vaske*

Dear Diary

Today I go to see my cousin! Mother said it was a blest day, which I think means she's going to miss me. I'll miss her, too, but Im real excited to see cousin Drothan again! I promise write again real soon.

Dear Diary

I met a rider on the road today he called himself a curryer. He gave me a letter from cousin drothan! it says i'll have a special job when I get to Cyrodiil. I will be a steward. cousin says stewards keep track of who comes and goes, but somebody will do most of that four me, and i just need to only let people in who know the secret word. That's a very big responsbilaty! it says I have to tear up his note - cousin is very smart. I better write down the password so I don't forget it! Its "Chimer"

Dear Diary

Today I saw a wood elf!

Dear Diary

Another Curryer found me today, with another letter from cousin! This letter said that he may not be around when I get

there. cousin said his journal will tell me everything i need to know about finding him if he's not around, and I should find it in his cabin. Uh oh - I'm no good at reading, only writing.

Dear Diary

Im finally here! Before I use the special word to get in, I have something I need to tell you, diary. It's not personul, but diarys are kid stuff, and I have to be grownup here, so i'm leaving you behind right here. But thank you, diarey, especially for keeping the special word safe. good luck!



# Soiled Writ Of Assassination

*Anonymous*

Commander Telani Adrethi

The afore-mentioned personage has been marked for honorable execution in accordance to the lawful tradition and practice of the Morag Tong Guild. The Bearer of this non-disputable document has official sanctioned license to kill the afore-mentioned personage

# Song Of Hrormir

*Anonymous*

Hrormir

Son of Hrorgar

Summoned to the Court of Vjindak,

Son of Vjinmore, King of Evensnow.

“Mighty caster of magic,

I charge thee to go to Aelfendor,

For its hoary Warriors do threaten my Land

And bring forth their cousin Demons

To terrify my People.”

Hrormir

Son of Hrorgar

Heard the Words of Vjindak Evensnow.

“By Icestaff,

Surely I would help thee

But I have already a Quest to drink  
Twelve Flagons of Mead in one Hour,  
And then to bed four Wenches,  
Twice each.

So I must with grace decline.”

The King he did not smile  
At Hrormir and his jolly Spirit.

“By thine Honor

Must thou aidest my Cause

For must thou takest up the Sword

Of thy Companion Darfang

Who took the Quest and failed.”

Hrormir laughed.

“Now I know thou jest.

My boon Mate Darfang wouldst not fail.

There be no finer Bladesman.

If thou chargest him, he wouldst not fall.”

“I did not say he fell.

He joined the Dark Kings of Aelfendor

And by doing so dishonored  
Himself and thee, his Friend.”

Hrormir could not believe the Words, And yet, he knew  
Eversnow

Didst not lie.

So for twenty Days and three rodeth he  
To the Land of Night, the Kingdom of Fear,  
Where the Peasants ever carried Candles  
Knowing what Evil awaiteth them  
Should they stray beyond the Glow.

The Sovereignty of three Dark Kings:  
Aelfendor.

There, Torch in Hand, didst Hrormir  
Pass through haunted Countryside  
And frightened Villages,  
And through the black Gates  
Of the blacker Castle of Aelfendor.

The three Dark Kings didst sneer  
At the sight of mighty Hrormir

And summoned they their Champion

Darfang the Blade.

“My boon Companion!”

Hrormir called in the Hall of Night.

“I dare not trust my Eyes,

For then I wouldst believe

That thou hast joined with Evil,

And turned thy Way from Honor

And Brotherhood!”

“Hrormir!” Darfang the Blade didst cry.

“If thou dost not go now,

One of us must die, for I hate thee!”

But Hrormir was battle ready,

And in the echoing Halls of Night

The Blade of Darfang

And the Staff of Hrormir

Didst strike again and yet again.

Mighty Warriors and Mages both,

The boon Companions now Foes,

Shook Mundus with their War.

They might have fought for a Year

If there were Sun in Aelfendor

To mark Time,

And either Hrormir or Darfang

May verily have won.

But Hrormir saweth through the Dark

The Tears in the Eyes of his former Friend,

And then he saweth the Shadow of Darfang

Wert not his own.

And so with Icestaff, he did strike

Not Darfang, but his Shadow, which cried.

“Hold, Mortal Man!”

The Shadow becometh the Hag, Bent and twisted, in her Cloak  
and Hood.

From her faceless Shadows, she hissed.

“Mortal Man called Hrormir

The Soul of thy boon Companion

Is my Plaything,

But I will take thine in trade,  
For though ye both have strong Arms,  
Thou hast the more clever Mind  
Which my Sons the Dark Kings need  
For a Champion of Aelfendor.”  
Hrormir the brave didst not take a Breath  
Or pause before he boldly said.  
“Shadowy Hag, release Darfang,  
And thou mayst use me as thou will.”  
The Hag didst laugh and freed Darfang.  
“To save thine Honor this thou hast done,  
But now thou must be without Honor  
Mortal Man, as the Champion  
Of the Dark Kings, my Heirs of Gray Maybe,  
Thou must help them divide Aelfendor,  
And love me,  
Thy Shadowy Hag and thy Mistress well.”  
For his loss of Honor, And his dear Friend’s Sacrifice,  
Noble Darfang prepared to take his Dagger

And plunge it in his good Heart,  
But Hrormir stayed his Brother's Hand and whispered.  
"No, boon Companion,  
Wait for me at the Village Banquet Hall."  
And then did Darfang the Blade leave the Castle  
While Hrormir took the withered Claw  
Of the Hag, and pressed it to his Lips.  
"Shadowy Hag, to thee I pledge  
To only honor thy black Words  
To turn my back on Truth  
To aid thy Dark Kings' Ambition  
To divide their Inheritance fairly  
To love thee  
To think thee beautiful."  
Then to the Chamber in the Heart of Night  
Hrormir and the Hag did retire  
Kissed he there her wrinkled Lips  
And her wrinkled, sagging Breasts,  
For ten Days and Nights and three did Hrormir



And his Icestaff

Battle thus.

Then Sweet Kynareth blew honeyed Winds O'er the Hills and  
Forest Glens of Aelfendor,

And the Caress of warm blooded Dibella

Coaxed the Blossoms to wanton Display

So that Aelfendor became a Garden

Of all the Senses.

The frightened Servants of the Dark Kings

Woke to find there was naught to fear

And through the once dark Streets of the Village

Came the Cries of Celebration.

In the Banquet Hall of the Village

Hrormir and his boon Companion Darfang

Embraced and drank of rich Mead.

The Shadowy Hag too was smiling,

Sleeping still in her soft Bed,

Until the morning Sun touched her naked Face

And she awoke, and saw All,

And knew All saw her.

And she cried out:

“Mortal Man!”

Night fell fast upon the Land As the Hag flew into the Banquet  
Hall

Casting blackest Darkness in her Wake

But all the Celebrants still could see

Her Anger

In her monstrous Face

And they shook with Fear.

The Hag had said the Kingdom was

To be divided among her Heirs.

But Aelfendor had been kept whole

While her Children divided,

Drawn and quartered.

Hrormir was mightily amused.

He swallowed his Laughter

In his Mead,

For none should laugh outright

At the Daedra Lord Nocturnal.

Without her gray Cowl of shadowed Night,

Her hideous Face forced the Moons

To hide themselves.

Hrormir the mighty did not quail.

“Wherest be thine Hood, shadowy hag?”

“Mortal Man hast taken it from me unaware.

When I awoke, my Face unmasked,

My Kingdom cast into the Light,

My Dark King Heirs in Pieces cast,

And here, my Champion smiles.

Yet in truth, thou kept thy Promise truly,

To never keep thy Promise true.”

Hrormir Son of Hrorgar

Bowed to the Hag, his Queen.

“And evermore,

‘Til thou releaseth me, will I serve thee so.”

“A clever Mind in a Champion

Is a much overvalued Trait.”

The Hag released Hrormir's Soul

And he released her Hood.

And so in the Light of darkest Dark,

She left Aelfendor evermore.

And after drinking twelve Flagons of Mead,

And bedding four Wenches

Twice each,

Did Darfang return to Eversnow

With Hrormir

Son of Hrorgar.

# Souls, Black And White

*Anonymous*

The nature of the soul is not knowable. Every wizard that has attempted it vanishes without a trace. What can be known is that souls are a source of mystic energy that can be harvested.

Every creature, living or dead, is powered by a soul. Without it, they are just lumps of flesh or piles of bones. This animating force can be contained within a soul gem, if the soul gem has the capacity. From the gem, the power can be used to power magical items.

Centuries of experimentation has demonstrated that there are black souls and white souls. Only the rare black soul gem can hold the soul of a higher creature, such as a man or an elf.

While the souls of lesser creatures can be captured by gems of many colors, they are all categorized as white soul gems. Hence the division of souls into black and white.

White souls are far safer than black souls, although not as powerful. Beginning students of Mysticism should not dabble in black souls or black soul gems. Even if one were to ignore the guild strictures against the necromatic arts used to power black soul gems, it is dangerous to the caster to handle them for long. If the gem is not precisely the size of the encased soul, small bits of the caster's soul may leak into the gem when it is touched.

# Steward's Note

*Frathen Drothan*

Vaske-

Your job is to see that our arrivals and departures are well-documented and that their wages are paid, and keep an eye on my dear cousin. It is not to gossip with every new recruit about our far-reaching plans. We've already captured one assassin prowling the caves, the last thing we need is some spy of Helseth's hearing all our goals from you. Commander Adrethi will debrief the troops as necessary at his own discretion.

On Turdas I'm taking a detachment through the doorway with me. I don't know how long I'll be gone, but in the unlikely case that there is cause to disrupt my excursion, read the most recent entry in my journal. You'll find it in my cabin, on the desk. Don't go in there for any other reason! Discretion above all; we don't want our Imperial enemies to know what our plans are.

Death to the Empire.

Arch-Mage Frathen Drothan

# Steward's Registry

*Vaske*

Drothmeri Army; Forward Detachment

Registry of Departures and Arrivals

Second Seed through \_\_\_\_\_

6, Second Seed

New Recruits, grade I salary paid

10 infantry

4 archers

18, Second Seed

Cavalry Detachment, granted shelter

Assigned to Tenmar outpost

12, Mid Year

Infantry, Drothmeri

Departure to Narsis; Courier detail

1 cavalry

15, Mid Year

Veterans, Grade III salary paid

6 mage-trained

19, Mid Year

Infantry, Drothmeri

Returned from Courier detail

1 cavalry

21, Mid Year

Platoon, Grade II salary paid

12 Soldier infantry

Dranmis Drethari

Discharged for family emergency



# Suicide Note

*Anonymous*

This was my big break! Finally I'm given something important to do, and what happens? I blow it! All I had to do was keep Phillida alive! That's it! But no! I couldn't even accomplish that! Father was right—I'm an idiot, and I haven't amounted to anything!

I let everyone down, so this is it. Goodbye cruel Empire! I'm ending it all!

# Summon Rufio's Ghost Scroll

*Anonymous*

Rise, Rufio! Come forth once more to the land of the living, and unleash your vengeance!

# Surfeit Of Thieves

*Aniis Noru*

“This looks interesting,” said Indyk, his eyes narrowing to observe the black caravan making its way to the spires of the secluded castle. A gaudy, alien coat of arms marked each carriage, the lacquer glistening in the light of the moons. “Who do you suppose they are?”

“They’re obviously well-off,” smiled his partner, Heriah. “Perhaps some new Imperial Cult dedicated to the acquisition of wealth?”

“Go into town and find out what you can about the castle,” said Indyk. “I’ll see if I can learn anything about who these strangers are. We meet on this hill tomorrow night.”

Heriah had two great skills: picking locks and picking information. By dusk of the following day, she had returned to the hill. Indyk joined her an hour later.

“The place is called Ald Olyra,” she explained. “It dates back to the second era when a collection of nobles built it to protect themselves during one of the epidemics. They didn’t want any of the diseased masses to get into their midst and spread the plague, so they built up quite a sophisticated security system for the time. Of course, it’s mostly fallen into ruin, but I have a good idea about what kind of locks and traps might still be operational. What did you find out?”

“I wasn’t nearly so successful,” frowned Indyk. “No one seemed to have any idea about the group, even that that there were here. I was about to give up, but at the charterhouse, I met a monk who said that his masters were a hermetic group called the Order of St. Eadnua. I talked to him for some time, this fellow name of Parathion, and it seems they’re having some sort of ritual feast tonight.”

“Are they wealthy?” asked Heriah impatiently.

“Embarrassingly so according to the fellow. But they’re only at the castle for tonight.”

“I have my picks on me,” winked Heriah. “Opportunity has smiled on us.”

She drew a diagram of the castle in the dirt: the main hall and kitchen were near the front gate, and the stables and secured armory were in the back. The thieves had a system that never failed. Heriah would find a way into the castle and collect as much loot as possible, while Indyk provided the distraction. He waited until his partner had scaled the wall before rapping on the gate. Perhaps this time he would be a bard, or a lost adventurer. The details were most fun to improvise.

Heriah heard Indyk talking to the woman who came to the gate, but she was too far away to hear the words exchanged. He was evidently successful: a moment later, she heard the door shut. The man had charm, she would give him that.

Only a few of the traps and locks to the armory had been set. Undoubtedly, many of the keys had been lost in time. Whatever servants had been in charge of securing the Order’s treasures had brought a few new locks to affix. It took extra time to

maneuver the intricate hasps and bolts of the new traps before proceeding to the old but still working systems, but Heriah found her heart beating with anticipation. Whatever lay beyond the door, she thought, must be of sufficient value to merit such protection.

When at last the door swung quietly open, the thief found her avaricious dreams paled to reality. A mountain of golden treasure, ancient relics glimmering with untapped magicka, weaponry of matchless quality, gemstones the size of her fist, row after row of strange potions, and stacks of valuable documents and scrolls. She was so enthralled by the sight, she did not hear the man behind her approach.

“You must be Lady Tressed,” said the voice and she jumped.

It was a monk in a black, hooded robe, intricately woven with silver and gold threads. For a moment, she could not speak. This was the sort of encounter that Indyk loved, but she could think to do nothing but nod her head with what she hoped looked like certainty.

“I’m afraid I’m a little lost,” she stammered.

“I can see that,” the man laughed. “That’s the armory. I’ll show you the way to the dining hall. We were afraid you weren’t going to arrive. The feast is nearly over.”

Heriah followed the monk across the courtyard, to the double doors leading to the dining hall. A robe identical to the one he was wearing hung on a hook outside, and he handed it to her with a knowing smile. She slipped it on. She mimicked him as she lowered the hood over her head and entered the hall.

Torches illuminated the figures within around the large table. Each wore the uniform black robe that covered all features, and from the look of things, the feast was over. Empty plates, platters, and glasses filled every inch of the wood with only the faintest spots and dribbles of the food remaining. It was a breaking of a fast it seemed. For a moment, Heriah stopped to think about poor, lost Lady Tressed who had missed her opportunity for gluttony.

The only unusual item on the table was its centerpiece: a huge golden hourglass which was on its last minute's worth of sand.

Though each person looked alike, some were sleeping, some were chatting merrily to one another, and one was playing a lute. Indyk's lute, she noticed, and then noticed Indyk's ring on the man's finger. Heriah was suddenly grateful for the anonymity of the hood. Perhaps Indyk would not realize that it was she, and that she had blundered.

"Tressed," said the young man to the assembled, who turned as one to her and burst into applause.

The conscious members of the Order arose to kiss her hand, and introduce themselves.

"Nirdla."

"Suelec."

"Kyler."

The names got stranger.

"Toniop."

“Htillyts.”

“Noihtarap.”

She could not help laughing: “I understand. It’s all backwards. Your real names are Aldrin, Celeus, Relyk, Poinot, Styllith, Parathion.”

“Of course,” said the young man. “Won’t you have a seat?”

“Sey,” giggled Heriah, getting into the spirit of the masque and taking an empty chair. “I suppose that when the hourglass runs out, the backwards names go back to normal?”

“That’s correct, Tressed,” said the woman next to her. “It’s just one of our Order’s little amusements. This castle seemed like the appropriately ironic venue for our feast, devised as it was to shun the plague victims who were, in their way, a walking dead.”

Heriah felt herself light-headed from the odor of the torches, and bumped into the sleeping man next to her. He fell face forward onto the table.

“Poor Esruoc Tsrif,” said a neighboring man, helping to prop the body up. “He’s given us so much.”

Heriah stumbled to her feet and began walking uncertainly for the front gate.

“Where are you going, Tressed?” asked one of the figures, his voice taking on an unpleasant mocking quality.

“My name isn’t Tressed,” she mumbled, gripping Indyk’s arm. “I’m sorry, partner. We need to go.”

The last crumb of sand fell in the hour glass as the man pulled back his hood. It was not Indyk. It was not even human, but a stretched grotesquerie of a man with hungry eyes and a wide mouth filled with tusk-like fangs.

Heriah fell back into the chair of the figure they called Esruoc Tsrif. His hood fell open, revealing the pallid, bloodless face of Indyk. As she began to scream, they fell on her.

In her last living moment, Heriah finally spelled “Tressed” backwards.



# Suspicious Letter

*Ulrich Leland*

Dearest Isabel and Jenetta,

I should be able to send you another package of money and goods within the month. This posting is proving more lucrative than I'd first suspected. Who knew that Indarys would be so easy to dupe? He doesn't even care. He's so busy wrapped up in his own affairs, and I mean that literally, that he has no time to pay attention to the daily operations of Cheydinhal. I've decided to raise the fines again next month. Then we can begin constructing that summer keep we'd always wanted, my cousins. More to come soon. My love to both of you.

Ulrich

# Taxidermy Needs List

*Melisi Daren*

I specialize in the finest reconstructions of creatures from across the face of Cyrodiil. I am ready to create my marvels of taxidermy, but require a small portion of each appropriate creature in order to make the likeness complete.

Stuffed Bear:

Bear Pelt

Stuffed Wolf:

Wolf Pelt

Stuffed Minotaur:

Minotaur Horn

Stuffed Mountain Lion:

Lion Hide

Stuffed Ogre:

Ogre Teeth

Stuffed Clannfear:

Clannfear Claws

Stuffed Deadroth:

Deadroth Teeth

Stuffed Troll:

Troll Fat

Melisi Daren, Taxidermist

# Telaendril's Ocheeva Note

*Telaendril*

Most Honorable Ocheeva,

As per your instructions, I will, from this day forward, leave the solitude of the Sanctuary and maintain the following posts:

Loredas and Sundas—I will travel to, and remain in, the city of Leyawiin. There I will spy any and all vessels entering into the Imperial Province by sea. Upon my return to the Sanctuary, I will report on which ships have sailed the Niben northward to the Imperial City.

Tirdas—I am to spend my day here in Cheydinhal, in the establishment known as the Cheydinhal Bridge Inn. There I will spy the citizens of this city, and report back on anyone I deem a threat to Sanctuary security.

Turdas—I will remain in Cheydinhal, but keep a watchful eye on the Sanctuary entrance. At the first sign of suspicious activity, I am to report back to you immediately.

My thanks again to you, Ocheeva. Your reliance on my gift for subterfuge will serve the Brotherhood well. Of this I promise.

May we walk always in the Shadow of Sithis.

Telaendril

# The Armorers' Challenge

## *Mymophonus the Scribe*

Three hundred years ago, when Katariah became Empress, the first and only Dunmer to rule all of Tamriel, she faced opposition from the Imperial Council. Even after she convinced them that she would be the best regent to rule the Empire while her husband Pelagius sought treatment for his madness, there was still conflict. In particular from the Duke of Vengheto, Thane Minglumire, who took a particular delight in exposing all of the Empress's lack of practical knowledge.

In this particular instance, Katariah and the Council were discussing the unrest in Black Marsh and the massacre of Imperial troops outside the village of Armanias. The sodden swampland and the sweltering climate, particular in summertime, would endanger the troops if they wore their usual armor.

"I know a very clever armorer," said Katariah, "His name is Hazadir, an Argonian who knows the environments our army will be facing. I knew him in Vivec where he was a slave to the master armorer there, before he moved to the Imperial City as a freedman. We should have him design armor and weaponry for the campaign."

Minglumire gave a short, barking laugh: "She wants a slave to design the armor and weaponry for our troops! Sirollus Saccus

is the finest armorer in the Imperial City. Everyone knows that.”

After much debate, it was finally decided to have both armorers contend for the commission. The Council also elected two champions of equal power and prowess, Nandor Beraid and Raphalas Eul, to battle using the arms and armaments of the real competitors in the struggle. Whichever champion won, the armorer who supplied him would earn the Imperial commission. It was decided that Beraid would be outfitted by Hazadir, and Eul by Saccus.

The fight was scheduled to commence in seven days.

Sirollus Saccus began work immediately. He would have preferred more time, but he recognized the nature of the test. The situation in Armanias was urgent. The Empire had to select their armorer quickly, and once selected, the preferred armorer had to act swiftly and produce the finest armor and weaponry for the Imperial army in Black Marsh. It wasn't just the best armorer they were looking for. It was the most efficient.

Saccus had only begun steaming the half-inch strips of black virgin oak to bend into bands for the flanges of the armor joints when there was a knock at his door. His assistant Phandius ushered in the visitor. It was a tall reptilian of common markings, a dull, green-fringed hood, bright black eyes, and a dull brown cloak. It was Hazadir, Katariah's preferred armorer.

“I wanted to wish you the best of luck on the—is that ebony?”

It was indeed. Saccus had bought the finest quality ebony weave available in the Imperial City as soon as he heard of the

competition and had begun the process of smelting it. Normally it was a six-month procedure refining the ore, but he hoped that a massive convection oven stoked by white flames born of magicka would shorten the operation to three days. Saccus proudly pointed out the other advancements in his armory. The acidic lime pools to sharpen the blade of the dai-katana to an unimaginable degree of sharpness. The Akaviri forge and tongs he would use to fold the ebony back and forth upon itself. Hazadir laughed.

“Have you been to my armory? It’s two tiny smoke-filled rooms. The front is a shop. The back is filled with broken armor, some hammers, and a forge. That’s it. That’s your competition for the millions of gold pieces in Imperial commission.”

“I’m sure the Empress has some reason to trust you to outfit her troops,” said Sirollus Saccus, kindly. He had, after all, seen the shop and knew that what Hazadir said was true. It was a pathetic workshop in the slums, fit only for the lowliest of adventurers to get their iron daggers and cuirasses repaired. Saccus had decided to make the best quality regardless of the inferiority of his rival. It was his way and how he became the best armorer in the Imperial City.

Out of kindness, and more than a bit of pride, Saccus showed Hazadir how, by contrast, things should be done in a real professional armory. The Argonian acted as an apprentice to Saccus, helping him refine the ebony ore, and to pound it and fold it when it cooled. Over the next several days, they worked together to create a beautiful dai-katana with an edge honed sharp enough to trim a mosquito’s eyebrows, enchanted with flames along its length by one of the Imperial Battlemages, as

well as a suit of armor of bound wood, leather, silver, and ebony to resist the winds of Oblivion.

On the day of the battle, Saccus, Hazadir, and Phandius finished polishing the armor and brought in Raphalas Eul for the fitting. Hazadir left only then, realizing that Nandor Beraid would be at his shop shortly to be outfitted.

The two warriors met before the Empress and Imperial Council in the arena, which had been flooded slightly to simulate the swampy conditions of Black Marsh. From the moment Saccus saw Eul in his suit of heavy ebony and blazing dai-katana and Beraid in his collection of dusty, rusted lizard-scales and spear from Hazadir's shop, he knew who would win. And he was right.

The first blow from the dai-katana lodged in Beraid's soft shield, as there was no metal trim to deflect it. Before Eul could pull his sword back, Beraid let go of the now-flaming shield, still stuck on the sword, and poked at the joints of Eul's ebony armor with his spear. Eul finally retrieved his sword from the ruined shield and slashed at Beraid, but his light armor was scaled and angled, and the attacks rolled off into the water, extinguishing the dai-katana's flames. When Beraid struck at Eul's feet, he fell into the churned mud and was unable to move. The Empress, out of mercy, called a victor.

Hazadir received the commission and thanks to his knowledge of Argonian battle tactics and weaponry and how best to combat them, he designed implements of war that brought down the insurrection in Armanias. Katariah won the respect of Council, and even, grudgingly, that of Thane Minglumire. Sirollus Saccus went to Morrowind to learn what Hazadir learned there, and was never heard from again.



# The Battle Of Sancre Tor

*Anonymous*

In 2E852, allied Nord and Breton forces crossed the borders into Cyrodiil and occupied the major passes and settlements in the Jerall Mountains. Making their headquarters for the winter at Sancre Tor, the Nord-Breton allies dared King Cuhlecain's new general, Talos, to assault them in their mountain fastnesses.

When they learned that General Talos had mustered an army in the dead of winter and was marching to assault Sancre Tor, they were elated. Sancre Tor was impregnable, its citadel on high cliffs overlooking the lower city, nestled in a high mountain basin with steep, unscalable cliffs in their rear.

The Cyrodilic army was small, poorly trained and outfitted, short on rations, and unprepared for winter campaigning. As their ragged units assembled in the lowlands beneath the citadel, the Nord-Breton allies confidently assumed that their enemy had delivered himself into their trap.

The citadel was not only protected by an unscalable cliff in front and unscalable heights in their rear, but the entrance to the citadel was magically concealed under the appearance of a large mountain lake in the basin beneath the heights. Accordingly, the Nord-Breton allies left on a small force to defend the citadel, descending through lower passages to

attack and overwhelm the cold, hungry Cyrodilic forces before them. They expected to defeat, overrun, and annihilate General Talos' army, leaving no one to oppose their springtime descent into the Cyrodilic Heartlands.

Thus did General Talos lure the Nord-Breton allies to their doom.

Leaving a weak force in the lowlands to draw out the defenders, General Talos approached the citadel of Sancre Tor from the rear, descending the supposedly unscalable heights behind the citadel, and sneaking into the supposedly magically concealed entrance to the inner citadel. This remarkable feat is attributed to the agency of a single unnamed traitor, by tradition a Breton turncoat sorcerer, who revealed both the existence of an obscure mountain trail down the heights behind the citadel and the secret of the citadel entrance concealed beneath its illusory lake surface.

While the Cyrodilic army in the lowlands fought a desperate defense against the Nord-Breton sortie, General Talos and his men entered the citadel, swept aside the sparse defense, captured the Nord-Breton nobles and generals, and compelled them to surrender the citadel and their armies. The confused and demoralized Nord captives, already suspicious of the scheming High Rock sorcerer aristocracy and their overreaching dreams of Heartlands conquests, deserted the alliance and swore loyalty to Tiber Septim. The Skyrim generals joined their rank and file in Tiber Septim's army; the High Rock battlemage command was summarily executed and the captive Bretons imprisoned or sold into slavery.

Thus was the concerted allied invasion of Cyrodiil foiled, and General Talos' army swelled by the hardened Nord veteran

troops that played so crucial a role in General Talos' succeeding campaigns which consolidated the Colovian and Nibenean into the core of the Cyrodilic Empire, and which resulting in the crowning of General Talos as Emperor Tiber Septim.

Historians marvel at Tiber Septim's tactical daring in assaulting a fortified mountain citadel in the dead of winter against vastly superior numbers. Later Tiber Septim attributed his unwavering resolve against overwhelming obstacles to have been inspired by his divine vision of the Amulet of Kings in the Tomb of Reman III.

The young Talos may indeed have been inspired by his belief that he was fated to recover this ancient sacred symbol of the Covenant and to lead Tamriel to the high civilization of the Third Empire. Nonetheless, this should in no way reduce our admiration for the dash and genius of this defining military triumph against impossible odds.

# The Black Arrow

*Gorgic Guine*

The Black Arrow, v1

The Black Arrow

Part I

by

Gorgic Guine

I was young when the Duchess of Woda hired me as an assistant footman at her summer palace. My experience with the ways of the titled aristocracy was very limited before that day. There were wealthy merchants, traders, diplomats, and officials who had large operations in Eldenroot, and ostentatious palaces for entertaining, but my relatives were all far from those social circles.

There was no family business for me to enter when I reached adulthood, but my cousin heard that an estate far from the city required servants. It was so remotely located that there were unlikely to be many applicants for the positions. I walked for five days into the jungles of Valenwood before I met a group of riders going my direction. They were three Bosmer men, one Bosmer woman, two Breton women, and a Dunmer man, adventurers from the look of them.

“Are you also going to Moliva?” asked Prolyssa, one of the Breton women, after we had made our introductions.

“I don’t know what that is,” I replied. “I’m seeking a domestic position with the Duchess of Woda.”

“We’ll take you to her gate,” said the Dunmer Missun Akin, pulling me up to his horse. “But you would be wise not to tell Her Grace that students from Moliva escorted you. Not unless you don’t really want the position in her service.”

Akin explained himself as we rode on. Moliva was the closest village to the Duchess’s estate, where a great and renowned archer had retired after a long life of military service. His name was Hiomaste, and though he was retired, he had begun to accept students who wished to learn the art of the bow. In time, when word spread of the great teacher, more and more students arrived to learn from the Master. The Breton women had come down all the way from the Western Reach of High Rock. Akin himself had journeyed across the continent from his home near the great volcano in Morrowind. He showed me the ebony arrows he had brought from his homeland. I had never seen anything so black.

“From what we’ve heard,” said Kopale, one of the Bosmer men. “The Duchess is an Imperial whose family has been here even before the Empire was formed, so you might think that she was accustomed to the common people of Valenwood. Nothing could be further from the truth. She despises the village, and the school most of all.”

“I suppose she wants to control all the traffic in her jungle,” laughed Prolyssa.

I accepted the information with gratitude, and found myself dreading more and more my first meeting with the intolerant Duchess. My first sight of the palace through the trees did nothing to assuage my fears.

It was nothing like any building I had ever seen in Valenwood. A vast edifice of stone and iron, with a jagged row of battlements like the jaws of a great beast. Most of the trees near the palace had been hewn away long ago: I could only imagine the scandal that must have caused, and what fear the Bosmer peasants must have had of the Duchy of Woda to have allowed it. In their stead was a wide gray-green moat circling in a ring around the palace, so it seemed to be on a perfect if artificial island. I had seen such sights in tapestries from High Rock and the Imperial Province, but never in my homeland.

“There’ll be a guard at the gate, so we’ll leave you here,” said Akin, stopping his horse in the road. “It’d be best for you if you weren’t damned by association with us.”

I thanked my companions, and wished them good luck with their schooling. They rode on and I followed on foot. In a few minutes’ time, I was at the front gate, which I noticed was linked to tall and ornate railings to keep the compound secure. When the gate-keeper understood that I was there to inquire about a domestic position, he allowed me past and signaled to another guard across the open lawn to extend the drawbridge and allow me to cross the moat.

There was one last security measure: the front door. An iron monstrosity with the Woda Coat of Arms across the top, reinforced by more strips of iron, and a single golden keyhole. The man standing guard unlocked the door and gave me passage into the huge gloomy gray stone palace.

Her Grace greeted me in her drawing room. She was thin and wrinkled like a reptile, cloaked in a simple red gown. It was obviously that she never smiled. Our interview consisted of a single question.

“Do you know anything about being a junior footman in the employment of an Imperial noblewoman?” Her voice was like ancient leather.

“No, Your Grace.”

“Good. No servant ever understands what needs to be done, and I particularly dislike those who think they do. You’re engaged.”

Life at the palace was joyless, but the position of junior footman was very undemanding. I had nothing to do on most days except to stay out of the Duchess’s sight. At such times, I usually walked two miles down the road to Moliva. In some ways, there was nothing special or unusual about the village - there are thousands of identical places in Valenwood. But on the hillside nearby was Master Hiomaste’s archery academy, and I would often take my luncheon and watch the practice.

Prolyssa and Akin would sometimes meet me afterwards. With Akin, the subjects of conversation very seldom strayed far from archery. Though I was very fond of him, I found Prolyssa a more enchanting companion, not only because she was pretty for a Breton, but also because she seemed to have interests outside the realm of marksmanship.

“There’s a circus in High Rock I saw when I was a little girl called the Quill Circus,” she said during one of our walks through the woods. “They’ve been around for as long as anyone

can remember. You have to see them if you ever can. They have plays, and sideshows, and the most amazing acrobats and archers you've ever seen. That's my dream, to join them some day when I'm good enough."

"How will you know when you're a good enough archer?" I asked.

She didn't answer, and when I turned, I realized that she had disappeared. I looked around, bewildered, until I heard laughter from the tree above me. She was perched on a branch, grinning.

"I may not join as an archer, maybe I'll join as an acrobat," she said. "Or maybe as both. I figured that Valenwood would be the place to go to see what I could learn. You've got all those great teachers to imitate in the trees here. Those ape men."

She coiled up, bracing her left leg before springing forward on her right. In a second, she had leapt across to a neighboring branch. I found it difficult to keep talking to her.

"The Imga, you mean?" I stammered. "Aren't you nervous up at that height?"

"It's a cliché, I know," she said, jumping to an even higher branch, "But the secret is not to ever look down."

"Would you mind coming down?"

"I probably should anyhow," she said. She was a good thirty feet up now, balancing herself, arms outstretched, on a very narrow branch. She gestured toward the gate just barely visible on the other side of the road. "This tree is actually as close as I want to get to your Duchess's palace."



I held back a gasp as she dove off the branch, somersaulting until she landed on the ground, knees slightly bent. That was the trick, she explained. Anticipating the blow before it happened. I expressed to her my confidence that she would be a great attraction at the Quill Circus. Of course, I know now that never was to be.

On that day, as I recall, I had to return early. It was one of the rare occasions when I had work, of a sort, to do. Whenever the Duchess had guests, I was to be at the palace. That is not to say that I had any particular duties, except to be seen standing at attention in the dining room. The stewards and maids worked hard to bring in the food and clear the plates afterwards, but the footmen were purely decorative, a formality.

But at least I was an audience for the drama to come.

The Black Arrow, v2

The Black Arrow

Part II

By

Gorgic Guine

On the last dinner in my employ at the palace, the Duchess, quite surprisingly, had invited the mayor of Moliva and Master Hiomaste himself among her other guests. The servants' gossip was manic. The mayor had been there before, albeit very irregularly, but Hiomaste's presence was unthinkable. What could she mean by such a conciliatory gesture?

The dinner itself progressed along with perfect if slightly cool civility among all parties. Hiomaste and the Duchess were both very quiet. The Mayor tried to engage the group in a discussion of the Emperor Pelagius IV's new son and heir Uriel, but it failed to spark much interest. Lady Villea, elderly but much more vivacious than her sister the Duchess, led most of the talk about crime and scandal in Eldenroot.

"I have been encouraging her to move out to the country, away from all that unpleasantness for years now," the Duchess said, meeting the eyes of the Mayor. "We've been discussing more recently the possibility of her building a palace on Moliva Hill, but there's so little space there as you know. Fortunately, we've come to a discovery. There is a wide field just a few days west, on the edge of the river, ideally suited."

"It sounds perfect," the Mayor smiled and turned to Lady Villea: "When will your ladyship begin building?"

"The very day you move your village to the site," replied the Duchess of Woda.

The Mayor turned to her to see if she was joking. She obviously was not.

"Think of how much more commerce you could bring to your village if you were close to the river," said Lady Villea jovially. "And Master Hiomaste's students could have easier access to his fine school. Everyone would benefit. I know it would put my sister's heart to ease if there was less trespassing and poaching on her lands."

"There is no poaching or trespassing on your lands now, Your Grace," frowned Hiomaste. "You do not own the jungle, nor

will you. The villagers may be persuaded to leave, that I don't know. But my school will stay where it is."

The dinner party never really recovered happily. Hiomaste and the Mayor excused themselves, and my services, such as they were, were not needed in the drawing room where the group went to have their drinks. There was no laughter to be heard through the walls that evening.

The next day, even though there was a dinner planned for the evening, I left on my usual walk to Moliva. Before I had even reached the drawbridge, the guard held me back: "Where are you going, Gorgic? Not to the village, are you?"

"Why not?"

He pointed to the plume of smoke in the distance: "A fire broke out very early this morning, and it's still going. Apparently, it started at Master Hiomaste's school. It looks like the work of some traveling brigands."

"Blessed Stendarr!" I cried. "Are the students alive?"

"No one knows, but it'd be a miracle if any survived. It was late and most everyone was sleeping. I know they've already found the Master's body, or what was left of it. And they also found that girl, your friend, Prolyssa."

I spent the day in a state of shock. It seemed inconceivable what my instinct told me: that the two noble old ladies, Lady Villea and the Duchess of Woda, had arranged for a village and school that irritated them to be reduced to ashes. At dinner, they mentioned the fire in Moliva only very briefly, as if it were

not news at all. But I did see the Duchess smile for the first time ever. It was a smile I will never forget until the day I die.

The next morning, I had resolved to go to the village and see if I could be of any assistance to the survivors. I was passing through the servants' hall to the grand foyer when I heard the sound of a group of people ahead. The guards and most of the servants were there, pointing at the portrait of the Duchess that hung in the center of the hall.

There was a single black bolt of ebony piercing the painting, right at the Duchess's heart.

I recognized it at once. It was one of Missun Akin's arrows I had seen in his quiver, forged, he said, in the bowels of Dagoth-Ur itself. My first reaction was relief: the Dunmer who had been kind enough to give me a ride to the palace had survived the fire. My second reaction was echoed by all present in the hall. How had the vandal gotten past the guards, the gate, the moat, and the massive iron door?

The Duchess, arriving shortly after I, was clearly furious, though she was too well bred to show it but by raising her web-thin eyebrows. She wasted no time in assigning all her servants to new duties to keep the palace grounds guarded at all times. We were given regular shifts and precise, narrow patrols.

The next morning, despite all precautions, there was another black arrow piercing the Duchess's portrait.

So it continued for a week's time. The Duchess saw to it that at least one person was always present in the foyer, but somehow the arrow always found its way to her painting whenever the guard's eyes were momentarily averted.

A complex series of signals were devised, so each patrol could report back any sounds or disturbances they encountered during their vigil. At first, the Duchess arranged them so her castellan would receive record of any disturbances during the day, and the chief of the guard during the night. But when she found that she could not sleep, she made certain that the information came to her directly.

The atmosphere in the palace had shifted from gloomy to nightmarish. A snake would slither across the moat, and suddenly Her Grace would be tearing through the east wing to investigate. A strong gust of wind ruffling the leaves on one of the few trees in the lawn was a similar emergency. An unfortunate lone traveler on the road in front of the palace, a completely innocent man at it turned out, brought such a violent reaction that he must have thought that he had stumbled on a war. In a way, he had.

And every morning, there was a new arrow in the front hall, mocking her.

I was given the terrible assignment of guarding the portrait for a few hours in the early morning. Not wanting to be the one to discover the arrow, I seated myself in a chair opposite, never letting my eyes move away for even a second. I don't know if you've had the experience of watching one object relentlessly, but it has a strange effect. All other senses vanish. That was why I was particularly startled when the Duchess rushed into the room, blurring the gulf for me between her portrait and herself.

"There's something moving behind the tree across the road from the gate!" she roared, pushing me aside, and fumbling with her key in the gold lock.

She was shaking with madness and excitement, and the key did not seem to want to go in. I reached out to help her, but the Duchess was already kneeling, her eye to the keyhole, to be certain that the key went through.

It was precisely in that second that the arrow arrived, but this one never made it as far as the portrait.

I actually met Missun Akin years later, while I was in Morrowind to entertain some nobles. He was impressed that I had risen from being a humble domestic servant to being a bard of some renown. He himself had returned to the ashlands, and, like his old master Hiomaste, was retired to the simple life of teaching and hunting.

I told him that I had heard that Lady Villea had decided not to leave the city, and that the village of Modiva had been rebuilt. He was happy to hear that, but I could not find a way to ask him what I really wanted to know. I felt like a fool just wondering if what I thought were true, that he had been behind Prolyssa's tree across the road from the gate every morning that summer, firing an arrow through the gate, across the lawn, across the moat, through a keyhole, and into a portrait of the Duchess of Woda until he struck the Duchess herself. It was clearly an impossibility. I chose not to ask.

As we left one another that day, and he was waving good-bye, he said, "I am pleased to see you doing so well, my friend. I am happy you moved that chair."

# The Black Arts On Trial

*Hanibal Traven*

The Black Arts On Trial

By Hannibal Traven

Archmagister of the Arcane University, Imperial City

## HISTORY

Necromancy, commonly called the Black Arts, has a history that dates back before recorded time. Virtually all the earliest laws of the land make mention of it as expressly forbidden on pain of death. Independent practitioners of the arts of sorcery, however, continued its study.

The Psijic Order of the Isle of Artaeum, precursor to our own Mages Guild, also forbade its use, not only because it was dangerous, but their belief in the holy and unholy ancestor spirits made it heretical. Again, despite this, we hear many stories of students and masters who ignored this stricture. When Vanus Galerion left Artaeum, he may have disagreed with the Psijics on much, but he also refused to allow Necromancy to be taught in the Guild.

Almost 1100 years have passed since the time of Vanus Galerion, and there have been many archmagisters to lead his guild. The question of Necromancy has continued to be asked.

The strictures against it in the Guild have never been lifted, but attitudes about it have shifted back and forth over the years. Some archmagisters have been inclined to ignore it entirely, some have fought very actively against it, and still other archmagisters have been rumored to be Necromancers themselves.

In my new role as Archmagister of the Mages Guild, it is my duty to set policy on this matter. Though I have my own opinions on the Black Arts, I took counsel with two of the most learned mages in the Empire, Magister Voth Karlyss of Corinth and Magister Ulliceta gra-Kogg of Orsinium, and we debated for two days.

What follows are summaries of the salient points of the debate, arguments and counter-arguments, which led to the resolution of the Mages Guild on the subject of Necromancy.

## ARGUMENT

Argument by Master gra-Kogg: Necromancy is poorly understood. We will not make it disappear by ignoring it. As an intellectual institution dedicated to the study of the magickal arts and sciences, we have obligations to the truth. Censoring ourselves in our scholarship is antithetical to our mission of neutrality and objectivity.

Counter-Argument by Master Karlyss: The Mages Guild must balance its quest for knowledge with responsible caution and ethical standards. It is not 'censoring' a student's course of study to have him proceed cautiously and with purity of purpose. It is not limiting a student's freedom to set rules and boundaries - indeed, it is essential.



Argument by Master Karlyss: Necromancy is an anathema throughout the civilized world. To embrace it publicly, the Mages Guild would inspire fear and hostility in the populace at large. Vanus Galerion wanted this institution to be unlike the Psijic Order, which was elitist and separatist. We ignore public opinion at our own risk. We will certainly lose our charters in many places including, very likely, the whole of Morrowind, where sentiment against Necromancy is very strong.

Counter-Argument by Master gra-Kogg: Yes, we should be sensitive to the concerns of the community, but they should not and must not dictate our scholarship. 'Necromancer' to many uneducated persons simply means an evil mage. It is madness to limit our work because of prejudices and half-formed understanding. It is an affront to the purpose of objective study to turn our back on a subject merely because of public opinion.

Argument by Master gra-Kogg: Necromancers are the scourge of Tamriel. Whether operating independently or in concert with the loads or King of Worms, Mannimarco, they are responsible for many horrors, animated zombies and skeletons and other forms of the undead. To best combat this menace, we must understand the powers of the Necromancer, and we cannot do that by restricting our study of the Black Arts.

Counter-Argument by Master Karlyss: No one is disputing the threat of the Black Arts - in fact, that is the very essence of my argument against the Mages Guild making it a School to be taught to our initiates. We can and should know what our enemy is capable of, but we must be careful not to step into a trap of looking too deep into his ways, and making those ways

our own. We do no one any good if by studying the evil ways, we become evil ourselves.

Argument by Master Karlyss: Necromancy is inherently dangerous. One cannot 'dabble' in it. The simplest spell requires the spilling of blood, and immediately begins to corrupt the caster's soul. This is not conjecture, but simple fact. It is irresponsible of the Guild to teach and thereby encourage a sort of magickal study which has proven itself, time and time again, to bring nothing but terror and misery on the practitioner and world.

Counter-Argument by Master gra-Kogg: All Schools of magicka are dangerous to the uninitiated. A simple fireball spell from the School of Destruction can cause great harm when cast by a novice, not only to others but to the mage himself. The School of Mysticism by its very nature forces the practitioner to divorce his mind from logic, to embrace a temporary sort of insanity, which one might argue is very like corrupting one's soul.

Argument by Master gra-Kogg: The Guild already permits some forms of Necromancy. The 'Schools' of magicka are, as we know, artificial constructs, originally formulated by Vanus Galerion to divide and thereby simplify study. They have changed many times throughout the years, but at their heart, every Master knows, they are all linked together. When a student of Conjuraton summons a guardian ghost, he is touching on the School of Necromancy. When a student of Enchantment uses a trapped soul, he too may be considered guilty of a Black Art. The School of Mysticism, as I have stated before, has some kinship with Necromancy as well. To state that students may not learn the ways of Necromancy is to stifle

common skills in the other, more historically legitimate Schools of the Guild.

Counter-Argument by Master Karlyss: Yes, the Schools are intertwined, but the standard spells of each School have passed the proof of time. We know that a student of Mysticism, properly instructed, will not be permanently harmed by his experience. In many ways, it is a question of extremes - how far we would permit our studies to take us. Necromancy by its nature relies on the practitioner going further into the darkness than is wise, virtually guaranteeing his destruction. It has no place in the Mages Guild.

## CONCLUSION

The risks of studying Necromancy outweigh its usefulness. The Guild does not wish to censor the study of any of its members, but it will not tolerate studies in the Black Arts, except in limited form for the purpose of combating its evil adherents. This may only be done by rare individuals who have proven themselves both highly skilled and highly cautious, and then only with my express permission and supervision.

## AFTERWORD

I regret to acknowledge the truth behind the rumor that Master Ulliceta gra-Kogg was more than an apologist for Necromancy, she was a Necromancer herself. Upon this revelation, the Knights of the Lamp attempted to arrest her at the Guildhouse in Orsinium, but she made good her escape. We have every confidence in the replacement Magister in Orsinium.

Though I disagreed, I respected her logical reasoning enough to include her arguments in this book, and I see no reason to remove them. It is disappointing, however, to see that her interest in 'the truth' was nothing more than a euphemism for her slavery to the Black Arts.

This unfortunate situation merely illustrates how essential it is for Guildmembers to be wary of the lure of Necromancy, and be vigilant to its practitioners' infiltration in our Mages Guild.

# The Blessings Of Sheogorath

*Anonymous*

For Our Lord Sheogorath, without Whom all Thought would be linear and all Feeling would be fleeting.

Blessed are the Madmen, for they hold the keys to secret knowledge.

Blessed are the Phobic, always wary of that which would do them harm.

Blessed are the Obsessed, for their courses are clear.

Blessed are the Addicts, may they quench the thirst that never ebbs.

Blessed are the Murderous, for they have found beauty in the grotesque.

Blessed are the Firelovers, for their hearts are always warm.

Blessed are the Artists, for in their hands the impossible is made real.

Blessed are the Musicians, for in their ears they hear the music of the soul.

Blessed are the Sleepless, as they bask in wakeful dreaming.

Blessed are the Paranoid, ever-watchful for our enemies.

Blessed are the Visionaries, for their eyes see what might be.

Blessed are the Painlovers, for in their suffering, we grow stronger.

Blessed is the Madgod, who tricks us when we are foolish, punishes us when we are wrong, tortures us when we are unmindful, and loves us in our imperfection.

# The Chronicles Of The Holy Brothers Of Marukh

*Anonymous*

[Editor's Note: This is the only surviving fragment of the chronicle of this First Era sect of the Alessian Order. It seems to have been kept at their great monastic complex at Lake Canulus, which was razed during the War of Righteousness (1E 2321) and its archives destroyed or dispersed.

Note also that Alessian scribes of this time customarily dated events from the Apotheosis of Alessia (1E 266).]

Here is recorded the events of the Year 127 of the Blessed Alessia.

In this year was the day darkened over all lands, and the sun was all as it were Masser but three days old, and the stars about him at midday. This was on the fifth of First Seed. All who saw it were dismayed, and said that a great event should come hereafter. So it did, for that same year issued forth a great concourse of devils from the ancient Elvish temple Malada, such had not been seen since the days of King Belharza. These devils greatly afflicted the land such that no man could plow, or reap, or seed, and the people appealed to the brothers of Marukh for succour. And then Abbot Cosmas gathered all the brothers and led them to Malada, also known as the High Fane

in the Elvish tongue, and came against it with holy fire, and the foul demons were destroyed, and many devilish relics and books found therein were burned. And the land had peace for many years.



# The Doors Of Oblivion

*Seif-ij Hidja*

“When thou enterest into Oblivion, Oblivion entereth into thee.”—Nai Tyrol-Llar

The greatest mage who ever lived was my master Morian Zenas. You have heard of him as the author of the book ‘On Oblivion,’ the standard text for all on matters Daedric. Despite many entreaties over the years, he refused to update his classic book with his new discoveries and theories because he found that the more one delves into these realms, the less certain one is. He did not want conjecture, he wanted facts.

For decades before and after the publication of ‘On Oblivion,’ Zenas compiled a vast personal library on the subject of Oblivion, the home of the Daedra. He divided his time between this research and personal magickal growth, on the assumption that should he succeed in finding a way into the dangerous world beyond and behind ours, he would need much power to wander its dark paths.

Twelve years before Zenas began the journey he had prepared his life to make, he hired me as his assistant. I possessed the three attributes he required for the position: I was young and eager to help without question; I could read any book once and memorize its contents; and, despite my youth, I was already a Master of Conjuratation.

Zenas too was a Master of Conjuration - indeed, a Master at all the known and unknown Schools - but he did not want to rely on his ability alone in the most perilous of his research. In an underground vault, he summoned Daedra to interview them on their native land, and for that he needed another Conjurer to make certain they came, were bound, and were sent away again without incident.

I will never forget that vault, not for its look which was plain and unadorned, but for what you couldn't see. There were scents that lingered long after the summoned creatures had left, flowers and sulfur, sex and decay, power and madness. They haunt me still to this very day.

Conjuration, for the layman unacquainted with its workings, connects the caster's mind with that of the summoned. It is a tenuous link, meant only to lure, hold, and dismiss, but in the hands of a Master, it can be much stronger. The Psijics and Dwemer can (in the Dwemer's case, perhaps I should say, could) connect with the minds of others, and converse miles apart - a skill that is sometimes called telepathy.

Over the course of my employment, Zenas and I developed such a link between one another. It was accidental, a result of two powerful Conjurers working closely together, but we decided that it would be invaluable should he succeed in traveling to Oblivion. Since the denizens of that land could be touched even by the skills of an amateur Conjurer, it was possible we could continue to communicate while he was there, so I could record his discoveries.

The 'Doors to Oblivion,' to use Morian Zenas's phrase, are not easily found, and we exhausted many possibilities before we found one where we held the key.

The Psijics of Artaeum have a place they call The Dreaming Cave, where it is said one can enter into the Daedric realms and return. Iachesis, Sotha Sil, Nematigh, and many others have been recorded as using this means, but despite many entreaties to the Order, we were denied its use. Celarus, the leader of the Order, has told us it has been sealed off for the safety of all.

We had hopes of using the ruins of the Battlespire to access Oblivion. The Weir Gate still stands, though the old proving grounds of the Imperial Battlemages itself was shattered some years ago in Jagar Tharn's time. Sadly, after an exhaustive search through the detritus, we had to conclude that when it was destroyed, all access to the realms beyond, the Soul Cairn, the Shade Perilous, and the Havoc Wellhead, had been broken. It was probably for the good, but it frustrated our goal.

The reader may have heard of other Doors, and he may be assured we attempted to find them all.

Some are pure legend, or at any rate, not traceable based on the information left behind. There are references in lore to Marukh's Abyss, the Corryngton Mirror, the Mantellan Crux, the Crossroads, the Mouth, a riddle of an alchemical formula called Jacinth and Rising Sun, and many other places and objects that are said to be Doors, but we could not find.

Some exist, but cannot be entered safely. The whirlpool in the Abecean called the Maelstrom of Bal can make ships disappear, and may be a portal into Oblivion, but the trauma of riding its waters would surely slay any who tried. Likewise, we did not consider it worth the risk to leap from the Pillar of Thras, a thousand foot tall spiral of coral, though we witnessed the sacrifices the loads made there. Some victims were killed by the fall, but some, indeed, seemed to vanish before being

dashed on the rocks. Since the sload did not seem certain why some were taken and some died, we did not favor the odds of the plunge.

The simplest and most maddeningly complex way to go to Oblivion was simply to cease to be here, and begin to be there. Throughout history, there are examples of mages who seemed to travel to the realms beyond ours seemingly at will. Many of these voyagers are long dead, if they ever existed, but we were able to find one still living. In a tower off Zafirbel Bay on the island of Vvardenfell in the province of Morrowind there exists a very old, very reclusive wizard named Divayth Fyr.

He was not easy to reach, and he was reluctant to share with Morian Zenas the secret Door to Oblivion. Fortunately, my master's knowledge of lore impressed Fyr, and he taught him the way. I would be breaking my promise to Zenas and Fyr to explain the procedure here, and I would not divulge it even if I could. If there is dangerous knowledge to be had, that is it. But I do not reveal too much to say that Fyr's scheme relied on exploiting a series of portals to various realms created by a Telvanni wizard long missing and presumed dead. Against the disadvantage of this limited number of access points, we weighed the relative reliability and security of passage, and considered ourselves fortunate in our informant.

Morian Zenas then left this world to begin his exploration. I stayed at the library to transcribe his information and help him with any research he needed.

'Dust,' he whispered to me on the first day of his voyage. Despite the inherent dreariness of the word, I could hear his excitement in his voice, echoing in my mind. 'I can see from one end of the world to the other in a million shades of gray.'

There is no sky or ground or air, only particles, floating, falling, whirling about me. I must levitate and breathe by magickal means...'

Zenas explored the nebulous land for some time, encountering vaporous creatures and palaces of smoke. Though he never met the Prince, we concluded that he was in Ashpit, said to be the home of Malacath, where anguish, betrayal, and broken promises like ash filled the bitter air.

'The sky is on fire,' I heard him say as he moved on to the next realm. 'The ground is sludge, but traversable. I see blackened ruins all around me, like a war was fought here in the distant past. The air is freezing. I cast blooms of warmth all around me, but it still feels like daggers of ice stabbing me in all directions.'

This was Coldharbour, where Molag Bal was Prince. It appeared to Zenas as if it were a future Nirn, under the King of Rape, desolate and barren, filled with suffering. I could hear Morian Zenas weep at the images he saw, and shiver at the sight of the Imperial Palace, spattered with blood and excrement.

'Too much beauty,' Zenas gasped when he went to the next realm. 'I am half blind. I see flowers and waterfalls, majestic trees, a city of silver, but it is all a blur. The colors run like water. It's raining now, and the wind smells like perfume. This surely is Moonshadow, where Azura dwells.'

Zenas was right, and astonishingly, he even had audience with the Queen of Dusk and Dawn in her rose palace. She listened to his tale with a smile, and told him of the coming of the Nevevarine. My master found Moonshadow so lovely, he wished to stay there, half-blind, forever, but he knew he must move on and complete his journey of discovery.

'I am in a storm,' he told me as he entered the next realm. He described the landscape of dark twisted trees, howling spirits, and billowing mist, and I thought he might have entered the Deadlands of Mehrunes Dagon. But then he said quickly, 'No, I am no longer in a forest. There was a flash of lightning, and now I am on a ship. The mast is tattered. The crew is slaughtered. Something is coming through the waves...oh, gods...Wait, now, I am in a dank dungeon, in a cell ...'

He was not in the Deadlands, but Quagmire, the nightmare realm of Vaernima. Every few minutes, there was a flash of lightning and reality shifted, always to something more horrible and horrifying. A dark castle one moment, a den of ravening beasts the next, a moonlit swamp, a coffin where he was buried alive. Fear got the better of my master, and he quickly passed to the next realm.

I heard him laugh, 'I feel like I'm home now.'

Morian Zenas described to me an endless library, shelves stretching on in every direction, stacks on top of stacks. Pages floated on a mystical wind that he could not feel. Every book had a black cover with no title. He could see no one, but felt the presence of ghosts moving through the stacks, rifling through books, ever searching.

It was Apocrypha. The home of Hermaeus-Mora, where all forbidden knowledge can be found. I felt a shudder in my mind, but I could not tell if it was my master's or mine.

Morian Zenas never traveled to another realm that I know of.

Throughout his visits to the first four realms, my master spoke to me constantly. Upon entering the Apocrypha, he became

quieter, as he was lured into the world of research and study, the passions that had controlled his heart while on Nirn. I would frantically try to call to him, but he closed his mind to me.

Then he would whisper, 'This cannot be...'

'No one would ever guess the truth...'

'I must learn more...'

'I see the world, a last illusion's shimmer, it is crumbling all around us...'

I would cry back to him, begging him to tell me what was happening, what he was seeing, what he was learning. I even tried using Conjunction to summon him as if he were a Daedra himself, but he refused to leave. Morian Zenas was lost.

I last received a whisper from him six months ago. Before then, it had been five years, and three before that. His thoughts are no longer intelligible in any language. Perhaps he is still in Apocrypha, lost but happy, in a trap he refuses to escape.

Perhaps he slipped between the stacks and passed into the Madhouse of Sheogorath, losing his sanity forever.

I would save him if I could.

I would silence his whispers if I could.

# The Dragon Break

*Fal Droon*

The Dragon Break Reexamined

by

Fal Droon

The late 3rd era was a period of remarkable religious ferment and creativity. The upheavals of the reign of Uriel VII were only the outward signs of the historical forces that would eventually lead to the fall of the Septim Dynasty. The so called “Dragon Break” was first proposed at this time, by a wide variety of cults and fringe sects across the Empire, connected only by a common obsession with the events surrounding Tiber Septim’s rise to power—the “founding myth,” if you will, of the Septim Dynasty.

The basis of the Dragon Break doctrine is now known to be a rather prosaic error in the timeline printed in the otherwise authoritative “Encyclopedia Tamrielica,” first published in 3E 12, during the early years of Tiber Septim’s reign. At that time, the archives of Alinor were still inaccessible to human scholars, and the extant records from the Alessian period were extremely fragmentary. The Alessians had systematically burned all the libraries they could find, and their own records were largely destroyed during the War of Righteousness.



The author of the Encyclopedia Tamrielica was apparently unfamiliar with the Alessian “year,” which their priesthood used to record all dates. We now know this refers to the length of the long vision-trances undertaken by the High Priestess, which might last anywhere from a few weeks to several months. Based on analysis of the surviving trance scrolls, as well as murals and friezes from Alessian temples, I estimate that the Alessian Order actually lasted only about 150 years, rather than the famous “one thousand and eight years” given by the Encyclopedia Tamrielica. The “mystery” of the millennial-plus rule of the Alessians was accepted but unexplained until the spread of the Lorkhan cults in the late 3rd era, when the doctrine of the Dragon Break took hold. Because this dating (and explanation) was so widely held at the time, and then repeated by historians down through today, it has come to have the force of tradition. Recall, however, that the 3rd era historians were already separated from the Alessians by a gulf of more than 2,000 years. And history was still in its infancy, relying on the few archives from those early days.

Today, modern archaeology and paleonumerology have confirmed what my own research in Alessian dating first suggested: that the Dragon Break was invented in the late 3rd era, based on a scholarly error, fueled by obsession with eschatology and Numidiumism, and perpetuated by scholarly inertia.

# The Eastern Provinces Impartially Considered

*Anonymous*

...and even if we overlook the dubious moral and legal justifications for hundreds of years of occupation of these two provinces, what economic or military benefits can we derive from Morrowind and Black Marsh?

Indeed, a few beneficiaries of Imperial monopolies in the provinces do profit from exploitation of their wealth and resources. But does the Empire as a whole benefit? Hardly. The vast machineries of the Imperial bureaucracies cost far more to maintain than can be recovered in duties and taxes. And the cost of establishing and maintaining the garrisons of the Imperial legion in the far-flung wilderness posts of these provinces would be cost-effective only if there were evidence of a military threat from the East. But no such evidence exists. No army of Morrowind or Black Marsh has ever threatened the security of any other Imperial province, let alone the security of Cyrodiil itself.

In fact, a greater threat to Imperial security lies in the idle legions that the taxpayer spends thousands of drakes to support. The generals of these legions, facing no enemies or opposition within the borders of their provinces, may look with ambition to the West. With their loyal veteran troops and

coffers fattened by friendly monopolists, they become unpredictable political factors in the uncertainties surrounding the Imperial succession.

If the occupation of Morrowind and Black Marsh were motivated by idealistic aspirations, perhaps there might lie some justification for bearing the burden of Empire. But consider the shame of the Empire's mute acceptance to the unspeakable practice of slavery in Morrowind. Instead of using our Imperial legions to free the wretched Khajiit and Argonian slaves from their Dark Elf masters, we pay our troopers to PROTECT the indefensible institution of slavery. Within the ebony mines of Morrowind, bloated monopolists under Imperial charters exploit slave labor to harvest the outrageous profits assured by rampant graft and corruption.

Consider the colossal arrogance of our proposition to bring Peace and Enlightenment to the East, when in fact, we have only brought our armies into lands who have never threatened us, and when we have only exploited the most shameful and evil practices we have found in Morrowind and Black Marsh simply to enrich the friends and flatterers of the Imperial family.

Impartially considered, our occupation of the Eastern provinces is morally corrupt, militarily indefensible, and economically ruinous. The only conclusion is that we should disband the Eastern legions, withdraw the Imperial bureaucracies and monopolists from the East, and give these ancient lands and peoples their freedom. Only by doing so may we hope to preserve the fragile ideals and fortunes of Western culture.

# The Exodus

*Waughin Jarth*

Vralla was a little girl, beautiful and sweet-natured, beautiful and smart, beautiful and energetic. Everything that her parents had dreamed she would be. As perfect as she was, they could not help but have dreams for her. Her father, a bit of a social climber named Munthen, thought she would marry well, perhaps become a Princess of the Empire. Her mother, an insecure woman named Cinneta, thought she would reach greatness on her own, as a knight or a sorceress. As much as they wanted the very best for their daughter, they argued about what her fate would be, but both were wrong. Instead of growing up, she grew very ill.

The Temples told them to give up hope, and The Mages Guild told them that what afflicted Vralla was so rare, so deadly, that there was no cure. She was doomed to die, and soon.

When the great institutions of the Empire failed them, Munthen and Cinneta sought out the witches, the sorcerer hermits, and the other hidden, secret powers that lurk in the shadows of civilization.

'I can think of only one place you can go,' said an old herbalist they found in the most remote peaks of the Wrothgarian Mountains. 'The Mages Guild at Olenveld.'

‘But we have already been to the Mages Guild,’ protested Munthen. ‘They couldn’t help us.’

‘Go to Olenveld,” the herbalist insisted. “And tell no one that you’re going there.’

It was not easy to find Olenveld, as it did not appear on any modern map. In a bookseller’s in Skyrim, however, they found it in a historic book of cartography from the 2nd Era. In the yellowed pages, there was Olenveld, a city on an island in the northern coast, a day’s sail in summertide from Winterhold.

Bundling their pale daughter against the chill of the ocean wind, the couple set sail, using the old map as their only guide. For nearly two days, they were at sea, circling the same position, wondering if they were the victim of a cruel trick. And then they saw it.

In the mist of crashing waves were twin crumbled statues framing the harbor, long forgotten Gods or heroes. The ships within were half-sunk, rotten shells along the docks. Munthen brought his ship in, and the three walked into the deserted island city.

Taverns with broken windows, a plaza with a dried-up well, shattered palaces and fire-blackened tenements, barren shops and abandoned stables, all desolate, all still, but for the high keening ocean wind that whistled through the empty places. And gravestones. Every road and alley was lined, and crossed, and crossed again with memorials to the dead.

Munthen and Cinneta looked at one another. The chill they felt had little to do with the wind. Then they looked at Vralla, and continued on to their goal - the Mages Guild of Olenveld.

Candlelight glistened through the windows of the great dark building, but it brought them little relief to know that someone was alive in the island of death. They knocked on the door, and steeled themselves against whatever horror they might face within.

The door was opened by a rather plump middle-aged Nord woman with frizzy blond hair. Standing behind her, a meek-looking bald Nord about her age, a shy teenage Breton couple, still very pimply and awkward, and a very old, apple-cheeked Breton man who grinned with delight at the visitors.

‘Oh, my goodness,’ said the Nord woman, all aflutter. ‘I thought my ears must be fooling me when I heard that door a-knockin’. Come in, come in, it’s so cold!’

The three were ushered in the door, and they were relieved to find that the Guild did not look abandoned in the least. It was well swept, well lit, and cheerfully decorated. The group fell into introductions. The inhabitants of the Guildhouse in Olenveld were two families, the Nords Jalmar and Nette, and the Bretons Lywel, Rosalyn, and old Wynster. They were friendly and accommodating, immediately bringing some mulled wine and bread while Munthen and Cinneta explained to them what they were doing there, and what the healers and herbalists had said about Vralla.

‘So, you see,’ said Cinneta, tearfully. ‘We didn’t think we’d find the Mages Guild in Olenveld, but now that we have, please, you’re our last hope.’

The five strangers also had tears in their eyes. Nette wept particularly noisily.

‘Oh, you’ve been through too, too much,’ the Nord woman bawled. ‘Of course, we’ll help. Your little girl will be right as rain.’

‘It is fair to tell you,’ said Jalmar, more stoically, though he clearly was also touched by the tale. ‘This is a Guildhouse, but we are not Mages. We took this building because it was abandoned and it serves our purposes since the Exodus. We are Necromancers.’

‘Necromancers?’ Cinneta quivered. How could these nice people be anything so horrible?

‘Yes, dear,’ Nette smiled, patting her hand. ‘I know. We have a bad reputation, I’m afraid. Never was very good, and now that well-meaning but foolish Archmagister Hannibal Traven -‘

‘May the Worm King eat his soul!’ cried the old man quite suddenly and very viciously.

‘Now, now, Wynster,’ said the teenage girl Rosalyn, blushing and smiling at Cinneta apologetically. ‘I’m sorry about him. He’s usually very sweet-natured.’

‘Well, of course, he’s right, Mannimarco will have the last say in the matter,’ Jalmar said. ‘But right now, it’s all very, well, awkward. When Traven officially banned the art, we had to go into hiding. The only other option was to abandon it altogether, and that’s just foolish, though there are many who have done it.’

‘Not many people know about Olenveld anymore since Tiber Septim used it as his own personal graveyard,’ said Lywel.

‘Took us a week to find it again. But it’s perfect for us. Lots of dead bodies, you know... ‘

‘Lywel!’ Rosalyn admonished him. ‘You’re going to scare them!’

‘Sorry,’ Lywel grinned sheepishly.

‘I don’t care what you do here,’ said Munthen sternly. ‘I just want to know what you can do for my daughter.’

‘Well,’ said Jalmar with a shrug. ‘I guess we can make it so she doesn’t die and is never sick again.’

Cinneta gasped, ‘Please! We’ll give you everything we have!’

‘Nonsense,’ said Nette, picking up Vralla in her big, beefy arms. ‘Oh, what a beautiful girl. Would you like to feel better, little sweetheart?’

Vralla nodded, wearily.

‘You stay here,’ Jalmar said. ‘Rosalyn, I’m sure we have something better than bread to offer these nice folks.’

Nette started to carry Vralla away, but Cinneta ran after her. ‘Wait, I’m coming too.’

‘Oh, I’m sure you would, but it’d ruin the spell, dear,’ Nette said. ‘Don’t worry about a thing. We’ve done this dozens of times.’

Munthen puts his arms around his wife, and she relented. Rosalyn hurried off to the kitchen and brought some roast fowl and more mulled wine for them. They sat in silence and ate.

Wynster shuddered suddenly. ‘The little girl has died.’



'Oh!' Cinneta gasped.

'What in Oblivion do you mean?!' Munthen cried.

'Wynster, was that really necessary?' Lywel scowled at the old man, before turning to Munthen and Cinneta. 'She had to die. Necromancy is not about curing a disease, it's about resurrection, total regeneration, transforming the whole body, not just the parts that aren't working now.'

Munthen stood up, angrily. 'If those maniacs killed her -'

'They didn't,' Rosalyn snapped, her shy eyes now showing fire. 'Your daughter was on her last breath when she came in here, anyone could see that. I know that this is hard, horrible even, but I won't have you call that sweet couple who are only trying to help you, 'maniacs.'"

Cinneta burst into tears, 'But she's going to live now? Isn't she?'

'Oh yes,' Lywel said, smiling broadly.

'Oh, thank you, thank you,' Cinneta burst into tears. 'I don't know what we would have done -'

'I know how you feel,' said Rosalyn, patting Wynster's hand fondly. 'When I thought we were going to lose him, I was willing to do anything, just like you.'

Cinneta smiled. 'How old is your father?'

'My son,' Rosalyn corrected her. 'He's six.'

From the other room came the sound of tiny footsteps.

'Vralla, go give your parents a big hug,' said Jalmar.

Munthen and Cinneta turned, and the screaming began.

# The Firsthold Revolt

*Maveus Cie*

You told me that if her brother won, she would be sister to the King of Wayrest, and Reman would want to keep her for the alliance. But her brother Helseth lost and has fled with his mother back to Morrowind, and still Reman has not left her to marry me.” Lady Gialene took a long, slow drag of the hookah and blew out dragon’s breath, so the scent of blossoms perfumed her gilded chamber. “You make a very poor advisor, Kael. I might have spent my time romancing the king of Cloudrest or Alinor instead of the wretched royal husband of Queen Morgiah.”

Kael knew better than to hurt his lady’s vanity by the mere suggestion that the King of Firsthold might have come to love his Dunmer Queen. Instead he gave her a few minutes to pause and look from her balcony out over the high cliff palaces of the ancient capitol. The moons shone like crystal on the deep sapphire waters of the Abecean Sea. It was ever springtide here, and he could well understand why she would prefer a throne in this land than in Cloudrest or Alinor.

Finally, he spoke: “The people are with you, my lady. They do not relish the idea of Reman’s dark elf heirs ruling the kingdom when he is gone.”

“I wonder,” she said calmly. “I wonder if as the King would not give up his Queen for want of alliances, whether she would give herself up out of fear. Of all the people of Firsthold, who most dislikes the Dunmer influence on the court?”

“Is this a trick question, my lady?” asked Kael. “The Trebbite Monks, of course. Their credo has ever been for pure Altmer bloodlines on Summurset, and among the royal families most of all. But, my lady, they make very weak allies.”

“I know,” said Gialene, taking up her hookah again thoughtfully, a smile creeping across her face. “Morgiah has seen to it that they have no power. She would have exterminated them altogether had Reman not stopped her for all the good they do for the country folk. What if they found themselves with a very powerful benefactress? One with intimate knowledge of the court of Firsthold, the chief concubine of the King, and all the gold to buy weapons with that her father, the King of Skywatch, could supply?”

“Well-armed and with the support of the country people, they would be formidable,” nodded Kael. “But as your advisor, I must warn you: if you make yourself an active foe of Queen Morgiah, you must play to win. She has inherited much of her mother Queen Barenziah’s intelligence and spirit of vengeance.”

“She will not know I am her foe until it is too late,” shrugged Gialene. “Go to the Trebbite monastery and bring me Friar Lylim. We must strategize our plan of attack.”

For two weeks, Reman was advised about growing resentment in the countryside from peasants who called Morgiah the “Black Queen,” but it was nothing that he had not heard before.

His attention was on the pirates on a small island off the coast called Calluis Lar. They had been more brazen as late, attacking royal barges in organized raids. To deliver a crushing blow, he ordered the greatest part of his militia to invade the island—an incursion he himself would lead.

A few days after Reman left the capitol, the revolt of the Trebbite Monks exploded. The attacks were well-coordinated and without warning. The Chief of the Guards did not wait to be announced, bursting into Morgiah's bedchamber ahead of a flurry of maidservants.

“My Queen,” he said. “It is a revolution.”

By contrast, Gialene was not asleep when Kael came to deliver the news. She was seated by the window, smoking her hookah and looking at the fires far off in the hills.

“Morgiah is with council,” he explained. “I am certain they are telling her that the Trebbite Monks are behind the uprising, and that the revolution will be at the city gates by morning.”

“How large is the revolutionary army in contrast to the remaining royal militia?” asked Gialene.

“The odds are well in our favor,” said Kael. “Though not perhaps as much as we hoped. The country folk, it seems, like to complain about their queen, but stop short of insurrection. Primarily, the army is composed of the Monks themselves and a horde of mercenaries your father's gold bought. In a way of thinking, it is preferable this way—they are more professional and organized than a common mob. Really, they are a true army, complete with a horn section.”

“If that doesn’t frighten the Black Queen into abdication, nothing will,” smiled Gialene, rising from her chair. “The poor dear must be beside herself with worry. I must fly to her side and enjoy it.”

Gialene was disappointed when she saw Morgiah come out of the Council Chambers. Considering that she had been woken from a deep sleep with cries of revolution and had spent the last several hours in consultation with her meager general force, she looked beautiful. There was a sparkle of proud defiance in her bright red eyes.

“My Queen,” Gialene cried, forcing real tears. “I came as soon as I heard! Will we all be slaughtered?”

“A distinct possibility,” replied Morgiah simply. Gialene tried to read her, but the expressions of women, especially alien women, were a far greater challenge than those of Altmer men.

“I hate myself for even thinking to propose this,” said Gialene. “But since the cause of their fury is you, perhaps if you were to give up the throne, they might disperse. Please understand, my queen, I am thinking only of the good of the kingdom and our own lives.”

“I understand the spirit of your suggestion,” smiled Morgiah. “And I will take it under advisement. Believe me, I’ve thought of it myself. But I don’t think it will come to that.”

“Have you a plan for defending us?” asked Gialene, contorting her features to an expression she knew bespoke girlish hope.

“The king left us several dozen of his royal battlemages,” said Morgiah. “I think the mob believes we have nothing but palace

guards and a few soldiers to protect us. When they get to the gates are greeted with a wave of fireballs, I find it highly likely that they will lose heart and retreat.”

“But isn’t there some protection they could be using against such an assault?” asked Gialene in her best worried voice.

“If they knew about it, naturally there is. But an unruly mob is unlikely to have mages skilled in the arts of Restoration, by which they could shield themselves from the spells, or Mysticism, by which they could reflect the spells back on my battlemages. That would be the worst scenario, but even if they were well-organized enough to have Mystics in their ranks—and enough of them to reflect so many spells—it just isn’t done. No battlefield commander would advise such a defense during a siege unless he knew precisely what he was going to be meeting. And then, of course, once the trap is sprung” Morgiah winked. “It’s too late for a countering spell.”

“A most cunning solution, your highness,” said Gialene, honestly impressed.

Morgiah excused herself to meet with her battlemages, and Gialene gave her an embrace. Kael was waiting in the palace garden for his lady.

“Are there Mystics among the mercenaries?” she asked quickly.

“Several, in fact,” replied Kael, bewildered by her query.

“Largely rejects from the Psijic Order, but they know enough to cast the regular spells of the school.”

“You must sneak out the city gates and tell Friar Lylim to have them cast reflection spells on all the front line before they

attack,” said Gialene.

“That’s most irregular battlefield strategy,” frowned Kael.

“I know it is, fool, that’s what Morgiah is counting on. There’s a gang of battlemages who are going to be waiting on the battlements to greet our army with a barrage of fire balls.”

“Battlemages? I would have thought that King Reman would have brought them with him to fight the pirates.”

“You would have thought that,” laughed Gialene. “But then we would be defeated. Now go!”

Friar Lylim agreed with Kael that it was a bizarre, unheard-of way to begin a battle, casting reflection spells on all one’s troops. It went against every tradition, and as a Trebbite Monk, he valued tradition above every other virtue. There was little other choice, though, given the intelligence. He had few enough healers in the army as it were, and their energies could not be wasted casting resistance spells.

At dawn’s light, the rebel army was in sight of the gleaming spires of Firsthold. Friar Lylim gathered together every soldier who knew even the rudimentary secrets of Mysticism, who knew how to tap in to the elementary conundrums and knots of the energies of magicka. Though few were masters of the art, their combined force was powerful to behold. A great surge of entangling power washed over the army, crackling, hissing, and infusing all with their ghostly force. When they arrived at the gates, every soldier, even the least imaginative, knew that no spell would touch him for a long time.



Friar Lylim watched his army batter into the gate with the great satisfaction of a commander who has counteracted an unthinkable attack with an outrageous defense. The smile quickly faded from his face.

They were met at the battlements not by mages but by common archers of the palace guard. As the flaming arrows fell upon the siegers like a red rain, the healers ran in to help the wounded. Their healing spells reflected off the dying men, one after the other. Chaos ruled as the attackers suddenly found themselves defenseless and began a panicked, unorganized retreat. Friar Lylim himself considered briefly holding his ground before fleeing himself.

Later, he would send furious notes to Lady Gialene and Kael, but they were returned. Even his best secret agents within the palace were unable to find their whereabouts.

Neither had, as it turns out, much previous experience with torture, and they soon confessed their treachery to the King's satisfaction. Kael was executed, and Gialene was sent back with escort to her father's court of Skywatch. He has still to find a husband for her. Reman, by contrast, has elected not to take a new royal concubine. The common folk of Firsthold consider this break in palace protocol to be more of the sinister alien influence of the Black Queen, and grumble to all who will listen.

# The Five Songs Of King Wulfharth

*Anonymous*

## The Five Songs of King Wulfharth

### Shor's Tongue

The first song of King Wulfharth is ancient, circa 1E500. After the defeat of the Alessian army at Glenumbria Moors, where King Hoag Merkiller was slain, Wulfharth of Atmora was elected by the Pact of Chieftains. His thu'um was so powerful that he could not verbally swear into the office, and scribes were used to draw up his oaths. Immediately thereafter the scribes wrote down the first new law of his reign: a fiery reinstatement of the traditional Nordic pantheon. The Edicts were outlawed, their priests put to the stake, and their halls set ablaze. The shadow of King Borgas had ended for a span. For his zealotry, King Wulfharth was called Shor's Tongue, and Ysmir, Dragon of the North.

### Kyne's Son

The second song of King Wulfharth glorifies his deeds in the eyes of the Old Gods. He fights the eastern Orcs and shouts their chief into Hell. He rebuilds the 418th step of High Hrothgar, which had been damaged by a dragon. When he

swallowed a thundercloud to keep his army from catching cold, the Nords called him the Breath of Kyne.

### Old Knocker

The third song of King Wulfharth tells of his death. Orkey, an enemy god, had always tried to ruin the Nords, even in Atmora where he stole their years away. Seeing the strength of King Wulfharth, Orkey summoned the ghost of Alduin Time-Eater again. Nearly every Nord was eaten down to six years old. Boy Wulfharth pleaded to Shor, the dead Chieftain of the Gods, to help his people. Shor's own ghost then fought the Time-Eater on the spirit plane, as he did at the beginning of time, and he won, and Orkey's folk, the Orcs, were ruined. As Boy Wulfharth watched the battle in the sky he learned a new *thu'um*, What Happens When You Shake the Dragon Just So. He used this new magic to change his people back to normal. In his haste to save so many, though, he shook too many years out on himself. He grew older than the Greybeards, and died. The flames of his pyre were said to have reached the hearth of Kyne itself.

### The Ash King

The fourth song of King Wulfharth tells of his rebirth. The Dwarves and Devils of the eastern kingdoms had started to fight again, and the Nords hoped they might reclaim their ancient holdings there because of it. They planned an attack, but then gave up, knowing that they had no strong King to lead them. Then in walked the Devil of Dagoth, who swore he came in peace. Moreover, he told the Nords a wondrous thing: he knew where the Heart of Shor was! Long ago the Chief of the Gods had been killed by Elven giants, and they ripped out Shor's Heart and used it as a standard to strike fear into the Nords. This worked until Ysgramor Shouted Some Sense and

the Nords fought back again. Knowing that they were going to lose eventually, the Elven giants hid the Heart of Shor so that the Nords might never have their God back. But here was the Devil of Dagoth with good news! The Dwarves and Devils of the eastern kingdom had his Heart, and this was the reason for their recent unrest. The Nords asked the Devil of Dagoth why he might betray his countrymer so, and he said that the Devils have betrayed each other since the beginning of time, and this was so, and so the Nords believed him. The Tongues sung Shor's ghost into the world again. Shor gathered an army as he did of old, and then he sucked in the long-strewn ashes of King Wulfharth and remade him, for he needed a good general. But the Devil of Dagoth petitioned to be that general, too, and he pointed out his role as the blessed harbinger of this holy war. So Shor had two generals, the Ash King and the Devil of Dagoth, and he marched on the eastern kingdoms with all the sons of Skyrim.

## Red Mountain

The fifth song of King Wulfharth is sad. The survivors of the disaster came back under a red sky. That year is called Sun's Death. The Devil of Dagoth had tricked the Nords, for the Heart of Shor was not in the eastern kingdoms, and had never been there at all. As soon as Shor's army had got to Red Mountain, all the Devils and Dwarves fell upon them. Their sorcerers lifted the mountain and threw it onto Shor, trapping him underneath Red Mountain until the end of time. They slaughtered the sons of Skyrim, but not before King Wulfharth killed King Dumalacath the Dwarf-Orc, and doomed his people. Then Vehk the Devil blasted the Ash King into Hell and it was over. Later, Kyne lifted the ashes of the ashes of Ysmir into the sky, saving him from Hell and showing her sons the color of

blood when it is brought by betrayal. And the Nords will never trust another Devil again.

## The Secret Song of Wulfharth Ash-King

### The Truth at Red Mountain

The Heart of Shor was in Resdayn, as Dagoth-Ur had promised. As Shor's army approached the westernmost bank of the Inner Sea, they stared across at Red Mountain, where the Dwemeri armies had gathered. News from the scouts reported that the Chimeri forces had just left Narsis, and that they were taking their time joining their cousins against the Nords. Dagoth-Ur said that the Tribunal had betrayed their King's trust, that they sent Dagoth-Ur to Lorkhan (for that is what they called Shor in Resdayn) so that the god might wreak vengeance on the Dwarves for their hubris; that Nerevar's peace with the Dwemer would be the ruin of the Velothi way. This was the reason for the slow muster, Dagoth-Ur said.

### The Armies Grow

And Lorkhan (for that is what they called Shor in Resdayn) said: "I do not wreak vengeance on the Dwarves for the reasons that the Tribunal might believe I do. Nevertheless, it is true that they will die by my hand, and any whoever should side with them. This Nerevar is the son of Boethiah, one of the strongest Padomaics. He is a hero to his people despite his Tribunal, and he shall muster enough that this battle will be harder going still. We will need more than what we have." And so Dagoth-Ur, who wanted the Dwarves as dead as the Tribunal did, went to Kogoran and summoned his House chap'thil, his nix-hounds, his wizards, archers, his stolen men of brass. And the Ash King, Wulfharth, hoary Ysmir, went and made peace

with the Orcs in spite of his Nordic blood, and they brought many warriors but no wizards at all. Many Nords could not bring themselves to ally with their traditional enemies, even in the face of Red Mountain. They were close to desertion. Then Wulfharth said: "Don't you see where you really are? Don't you know who Shor really is? Don't you know what this war is?" And they looked from the King to the God to the Devils and Orcs, and some knew, really knew, and they are the ones that stayed.

### The Doom Drum

Nerevar carried Keening, a dagger made of the sound of the shadow of the moons. His champions were Dumac Dwarfking, who carried a hammer of divine mass, and Alandro Sul, who was the immortal son of Azura and wore the Wraith Mail. They met Lorkhan at the last battle of Red Mountain. Lorkhan had his Heart again, but he had long been from it, and he needed time. Wulfharth met Sul but could not strike him, and he fell from grievous wounds, but not before shouting Sul blind. Dagoth-Ur met Dumac and slew him, but not before Sunder struck his lord's Heart. Nerevar turned away from Lorkhan and struck down Dagoth-Ur in rage, but he took a mortal wound from Lorkhan in turn. But Nerevar feigned the death that was coming early and so struck Lorkhan with surprise on his side. The Heart had been made solid by Sunder's tuning blow and Keening could now cut it out. And it was cut out and Lorkhan was defeated and the whole ordeal was thought over.

# The Gold Ribbon Of Merrit

*Ampyrian Brum*

In that early springtime morning, pale sunlight flickered behind the morning mist floating through the trees as Templer and Stryngpool made their way to the clearing. Neither had been back in High Rock, let alone in their favorite woods for four years. The trees had changed little even if they had. Stryngpool had a handsome blond moustache now, stiffened and spiked with wax, and Templer seemed to be a completely alien creature to the young lad who searched for adventure in the ancient grove. He was much quieter, as if scarred within as well as without.

They each carried their bows and quivers with extra care as they maneuvered their way through the clusters of vine and branch.

“This is the path that used to lead to your house, isn’t it, old boy?” asked Stryngpool.

Templer glanced at the overgrowth and nodded, before continuing on.

“I thought so,” said Stryngpool and laughed: “I remember it because you used to run down it every time you got a bloody nose. I know I can’t offend you, but I have to say, it’s hard to believe that you ended up a soldier.”

“How’s your family?” asked Templer.

“The same. A bit more pompous, if that’s possible. It’s obvious they wish I’d come back from the academy, but there’s nothing much for me here. At least not until I collect my inheritance. Did I you see I got a gold ribbon of merit in archery?”

“How could I miss it?” said Templer.

“Oh yes, I nearly forgot that the family’s put it in the Great Hall. Very ostentatiously. I suppose you can actually see it through the picture window. Silly, but I hope the peasants are impressed.”

The clearing opened up before them, where the mist settled on the grass, enveloping it in an opaque, chilly vapor. Burlap targets were arranged around in a semi-circle, several meters apart, like sentinels.

“You’ve been practicing,” observed Templer.

“Well, a bit. I’ve only been back in town for a few days.” said Stryngpool with a smile. “My parents said you got here a week ago?”

“That’s right. My unit’s camped a few miles east, and I thought I’d visit the old haunts. A lot’s changed, I could hardly recognize anything at all.” Templer looked down at the valley below, to the vast empty tilled ground, stretching out for miles around. “It looks like a good planting.”

“My family’s rather spread out since yours left. There was some discussion I think about keeping your old house up, but it seemed a little sentimental. Especially as there was fertile ground beneath.”



Stryngpool strung his bow carefully. It was a beautiful piece of art, darkest ebony and spun silver filigrees, hand-crafted for him in Wayrest. He looked over at Templer stringing his bow, and felt a twinge of pity. It was a sad, weathered utensil, bound together with strips of fabric.

“If that’s how they taught you to string your bow, you need some advisors from the academy in that army of yours,” said Stryngpool as gently as he could. “The untightened loop is supposed to look like an X in an O. Yours looks like a Z in a Y.”

“It works for me,” said Templer. “I should tell you, I won’t be able to make an afternoon of this. I’m supposed to join my unit this evening.”

Stryngpool began to feel annoyed by his old friend. If he was angry about his family losing their land, why couldn’t he just say it? Why did he come back to the valley at all? He watched Templer nock his first arrow, taking aim at a target, and coughed.

“I’m sorry, but I can’t in good faith send you back to the army without a little new wisdom. There are three types of draw, three-fingers, thumb and index, thumb and two fingers. Then there’s the thumb draw which I like, but you see,” Stryngpool showed Templer the small leather loop fastened on the cord of his bow, “You need to have one of these thingies or you’ll tear your thumb right off.”

“I think I like my stupid method best.”

“Don’t be pigheaded, Templer. They didn’t give me the gold ribbon of merit for nothing. I had demonstrated shooting from under a shield, standing, sitting, squatting, kneeling, and

sitting on horseback. This is practical information I'm imparting for the sake of our friendship which I, at least, haven't completely forgotten. Sweet Kynareth, I remember when you were just an oily little squirt, begging for this kind of honest guidance."

Templer looked at Stryngpool for a moment, and lowered his bow. "Show me."

Stryngpool relaxed, shook away the tensions that had been building. He did his exercise, drawing the bow back to his eyebrow, his moustache, his chest, his earlobe.

"There are three ways of shooting: snatching and releasing in one continuous motion, like the Bosmer do; holding with a short draw and a pause before releasing like the Khajiit; and partial draw, pause, final draw," Stryngpool fired the arrow into the center of the target with cool precision, "And release. Which I prefer."

"Very nice," said Templer.

"Now you," said Stryngpool. He helped Templer select a grip, nock his arrow correctly, and take aim. A smile grew on Templer's face—the first time Stryngpool had seen such a childlike expression on the war-etched visage all afternoon. When Templer released the arrow, it rocketed high over the top of the target and into the valley below where it disappeared from sight.

"Not bad," said Templer.

"No, not bad," said Stryngpool, feeling friendly once again. "If you practice, you should be able to focus your aim a little bit."

The two shot a few more practice bolts before parting ways. Templer began the long trek east to his unit's camp, and Stryngpool wound his way down through the woods to the valley and his family's mansion. He hummed a little tune he learned at the academy as he passed the great lawn and walked up to the front door, pleased with himself for helping his old friend. It entirely escaped his attention that the large picture window was broken.

But he noticed right away when he came into the Great Hall, and saw Templer's wild-shot bolt sticking in his gold ribbon of merit.

# The Legendary Sancre Tor

## *Matera Chapel*

During the Skyrim Conquests [1E 240 - 415], ambitious Highland earls, envious of the conquests and wealth of their northern cousins in High Rock and Morrowind, looked south over the ramparts of the Jerall Mountains for their opportunities. The Jerall Mountains proved to be too great a barrier, and northern Cyrodiil too poor a prize, to reward full scale Nord invasions. However, Alessia hired many ambitious Nord and Breton warbands as mercenaries with the promises of rich lands and trade concessions. Once settled among the victorious Alessian Cyrodiils, the Nord and Breton warriors and battlemages were quickly assimilated into the comfortable and prosperous Nibenean culture.

Alessia received the divine inspiration for her Slave Rebellion at Sancre Tor, and here she founded her holy city. Sancre Tor's mines provided some wealth, but the poor soils and harsh climate of the remote mountain site meant it must be supplied with food and goods from the Heartlands. Further, located on one of the few passes through the Jeralls, its fortunes were subject to the instability of relations with Skyrim. When relations were good with Skyrim, it prospered through trade and alliance. When relations were bad with Skyrim, it was vulnerable to siege and occupation by the Nords.

With the decline of the Alessian Order [circa 1E2321], the seat of religious rule of Cyrodiil moved south to the Imperial City, but Sancre Tor remained a mountain fortress and major religious center until the rise of the Septim Dynasty. In 2E852, the city was suffering under one of the periodic occupations by Skyrim and High Rock invaders. King Cuhlecain sent his new general, Talos, to recapture the city and expel the northern invaders. During his siege, Sancre Tor was destroyed and abandoned. Realizing the strategic weakness of the site, General Talos—later Tiber Septim—resolved to abandon Sancre Tor, and during his reign, no effort was made to rebuild the city or citadel.

Alessian historians asserted that Sancre Tor was magically concealed and defended by the gods. Records of Sancre Tor's repeated defeats and occupations by northern invaders gives the lie to this assertion. The entrance to the citadel was indeed concealed by sorcery, and the citadel and its labyrinthine subterranean complex were defended by magical traps and illusions, but their secrets were betrayed to besieging Nords by the Breton enchanters who crafted them.

One enduring feature of the legend of Sancre Tor is the ancient tombs of the Reman emperors. Following the defeat of the Akaviri invaders, Sancre Tor enjoyed a brief resurgence of wealth and culture under Reman Cyrodiil and his descendants, Reman II and Reman III. Tracing his ancestry to St. Alessia, and following the tradition that St. Alessia was buried in the catacombs beneath Sancre Tor [1], Reman built splendid funerary precincts in the depths of the ancient citadel underpassages. Here the last Reman emperor, Reman III, was buried in his tomb with the Amulet of Kings.

During the Sack of Sancre Tor, General Talos is said to have recovered the Amulet of Kings from the tomb of Reman III. Theologians ascribe the long centuries of political and economic turmoil following the collapse of the Reman dynasty to the loss of the Amulet of Kings, and associate the renaissance of the Cyrodilic empire in the Third Era with Tiber Septim's recovery of the Amulet from Reman III's tomb.

Sancre Tor has lain in ruins since the beginning of the Third Age, and the surrounding region is virtually uninhabited. Now all communications with the north are through the passes at Chorrol and Bruma, and Sancre Tor's citadel and underpassages have become the refuge of various savage goblin tribes.

[1] There is a competing tradition that St. Alessia is buried on the site of the Temple of the One in the Imperial City. The actual resting place of St. Alessia is unknown.

# The Liturgy Of Affliction

*Vexis Velruan*

Transcribed by Anias Gael

Dearest reader, the tome that you hold in your hand is a chronicle of pain, of torment, and of discovery. In these memoirs, I shall impart to you an autobiography of a foolish and failed attempt to achieve a great power. Walk with me as I break the bonds of propriety, throw off the restraints of the ancient laws of the arcane, and cast aside the bonds of magical ethics. For contained herein, you shall find the dying words of Vexis Velruan.

Let it be known to you, loyal reader, that I remain until my dying moment, a student of Magicka. But no typical apprentice, am I. I am one who has forged a unique path to the deeper understanding of the mechanics of Magicka. Through the infliction of destruction magic upon my own flesh, I have accomplished more than any student before me has.

It is by that folly that I come to you now, lucid as ever, fully alert in my faculties, and acutely cognizant of the sacrifices that I have made in my quest. I have long since lost the capacity to feel any physical sensation beyond absolute agony. I've become so accustomed to it, so detached from the feeling, that to me, pain is simply always there. You do not think of the air around you as a sensation, do you?

How is it, you ask, that I came to be what I am? It began innocently enough. I was once a healer, one of the most promising students of the temple. Which one? It doesn't matter. I was eventually expelled. Fools. You see, we had a number of patients interred in our humble sanctuary who had been infected with the Red Fever. My attempts to use the magical arts to turn the disease on itself were less than successful in their early stages. For trying to find a cure, I was cast out.

It was not long after my exile that I discovered the means to eradicate infection using the destructive energies of magicka. In my explorations of the school of Destruction I discovered that by pulling the elemental energies through my own body, I was able to increase the raw output of energy. From the experience of a lightning bolt surging through my own body, I was able to deepen my understanding of the raw forces of magicka.

At first, the pain was bearable. I directed only a minor amount of the energy back in towards myself. I learned to couple the destruction with restorative energies. It helped to abate the damage done to my body, but did nothing to stop the pain itself.

As my tolerance for the pain increased, I began to channel more and more through my own body. My understanding of Destruction outgrew my knowledge of Restoration. While it could still lessen the damage, it could not stop it. My skin became charred and blackened; it dried, flaked off, and cracked. I stunk of cooked meat. But I could not resist the draw of more and more energy.



I became like a skooma fiend of the worst sort. I no longer used magic for any practical purpose. I simply sought out more and more energy—I relished the pain. Anticipated the moment when the energy and the pain would wash over me as one, freezing my flesh, burning it beyond recognition. My skin became a network of scars, sores, lesions, and burns. But it was never enough. Never. I needed more. More pain. More power.

I lost my sight. My eyes melted into boiling pools of vitreous humor so hot that they left streaks of blistered skin as they ran down my face like burning tears. My right hand froze solid and shattered into a thousand pieces, when I carelessly bashed it against a doorjamb in terror, once I realized what had happened. The bones of both my legs shattered outward like broken glass, shredding the flesh and muscle surrounding them.

While this may sound like a fate of terrible consequence, my dearest reader, I can assure you that you will never know what it is to be a creature of flesh and bone like I have. You will never have the degree of knowledge of frailty of the flesh that I have grown to know. I achieved a level of understanding of Magicka beyond that of the grand masters of the guild, but that accomplishment pales in comparison to the grander discoveries that this experience has bestowed upon me.

People like you think that pain is to be avoided. Hidden from. Feared. Through my suffering and the numbness that now robs me of the ability to feel it, I can say this to you: Pain is a simple factor of human existence. It affords us the opportunity to feel—to appreciate the temporary shell that our spirits occupy. Pain is the greatest gift that the gods have ever given mortal man.

And now, as I tell you this story by way of a scribe, I am a stump of a man, wrapped in seeping bandages, never to know pleasure again. Even still, I have but one message to impart to you: Embrace what you are.

Glory to lord Sheogorath, for he has opened my eyes.

# The Living Woods

*Anonymous*

The Gnarl is a creature of the forest like no other. Away from the walls of New Sheoth, they are called the Walking Trees. Gnarl are known for their affinity with the elements. If a Gnarl is struck by elemental forces of fire, frost, or shock, it uses that energy to grow stronger and larger. Fortunately, this effect only lasts for a short time.

It is the will of Sheogorath that the Gnarl confuse and bewilder the unwary mage. To that end, it gains resistance to the element it is struck with, but becomes weaker to the other two. The wily mage will quickly switch between elemental spells to take advantage of this. Lesser wizards will suffer if they continue to use the same spell over and over.

In recent years there have been rumors of smiths that are able to use the amber sap extracted from Gnarl to make sturdy armor and weapons. As of yet, this gossip has not been confirmed.

More is not known about the Gnarl than is known. No-one has been able to determine the gender of Gnarl, or if they even have them. Young or immature Gnarl have never been seen. One academic suggested that Gnarl are born full-formed from trees that are struck by lightning. This absurd suggestion has not been confirmed.

Similarly, we have no knowledge of their diet or social habits. Presumably they feed directly from the sun and earth, like trees do. There are no reported cases of them communicating, even among each other. However, they do seem to have a truce of sorts with other woodland creatures such as the Baliwog and Elytra.

# The Lusty Argonian Maid

*Crassius Curio*

The Lusty Argonian Maid, v1

The Lusty Argonian Maid

Volume 1

By:

Crassius Curio

Act IV, Scene III, continued

Lifts-Her-Tail

Certainly not, kind sir! I am here but to clean your chambers.

Crantius Colto

Is that all you have come here for, little one? My chambers?

Lifts-Her-Tail

I have no idea what it is you imply, master. I am but a poor Argonian maid.

Crantius Colto

So you are, my dumpling. And a good one at that. Such strong legs and shapely tail.

Lifts-Her-Tail

You embarrass me, sir!

Crantius Colto

Fear not. You are safe here with me.

Lifts-Her-Tail

I must finish my cleaning, sir. The mistress will have my head if I do not!

Crantius Colto

Cleaning, eh? I have something for you. Here, polish my spear.

Lifts-Her-Tail

But it is huge! It could take me all night!

Crantius Colto

Plenty of time, my sweet. Plenty of time.

END OF ACT IV, SCENE III

The Lusty Argonian Maid, v2

The Lusty Argonian Maid

Volume 2

By:

Crassius Curio

ACT VII, SCENE II, CONTINUED

Lifts-Her-Tail

My goodness, that's quite a loaf! But how ever shall it fit my oven?

Crantius Colto

This loaf isn't ready for baking, my sweet. It has yet to rise.

Lifts-Her-Tail

If only we could hurry that along. How would I accomplish such a task?

Crantius Colto

Oh, my foolish little Argonian maid, you must use your hands.

Lifts-Her-Tail

You wish me to kneed the loaf? Here?

Crantius Colto

Of course.

Lifts-Her-Tail

But what if the mistress catches me? Your loaf was meant to satisfy her appetite.

Crantius Colto

Don't fret, my delicate flower. I'll satisfy the mistress's cravings later.

Lifts-Her-Tail

Very well, but I'm afraid my oven isn't hot enough. It could take hours!

Crantius Colto

Plenty of time, my sweet. Plenty of time.

END OF ACT VII, SCENE II



# The Madness Of Pelagius

*Tsathenes*

The man who would be Emperor of all Tamriel was born Thoriz Pelagius Septim, a prince of the royal family of Wayrest in 3E 119 at the end of the glorious reign of his uncle, Antiochus I. Wayrest had been showered by much preference during the years before Pelagius' birth, for King Magnus was Antiochus' favorite brother.

It is hard to say when Pelagius' madness first manifested itself, for, in truth, the first ten years of his life were marked by much insanity in the land itself. When Pelagius was just over a year old, Antiochus died and a daughter, Kintyra, assumed the throne to the acclaim of all. Kintyra II was Pelagius' cousin and an accomplished mystic and sorceress. If she had sufficient means to peer into the future, she would have surely fled the palace.

The story of the War of the Red Diamond has been told in many other scholarly journals, but as most historians agree, Kintyra II's reign was usurped by her and Pelagius' cousin Uriel, by the power of his mother, Potema—the so-called wolf queen of Solitude. The year after her coronation, Kintyra was trapped in Glenpoint and imprisoned in the Imperial dungeons there.

All of Tamriel exploded into warfare as Prince Uriel took the throne as Uriel III, and High Rock, because of the imprisoned

Empress' presence there, was the location of some of the bloodiest battles. Pelagius' father, King Magnus, allied himself with his brother Cephorus against the usurper Emperor, and brought the wrath of Uriel III and Queen Potema down on Wayrest. Pelagius, his brothers and sisters, and his mother Utheilla fled to the Isle of Balfiera. Utheilla was of the line of Direnni, and her family manse is still located on that ancient isle even to this day.

There is thankfully much written record of Pelagius' childhood in Balfiera recorded by nurses and visitors. All who met him described him as a handsome, personable boy, interested in sport, magic, and music. Even assuming diplomats' lack of candor, Pelagius seemed, if anything, a blessing to the future of the Septim Dynasty.

When Pelagius was eight, Cephorus slew Uriel III at the Battle of Ichidag and proclaimed himself Emperor Cephorus I. For the next ten years of his reign, Cephorus battled Potema. Pelagius' first battle was the Siege of Solitude, which ended with Potema's death and the final end of the war. In gratitude, Cephorus placed Pelagius on the throne of Solitude.

As king of Solitude, Pelagius' eccentricities of behavior began to be noticeable. As a favorite nephew of the Emperor, few diplomats to Solitude made critical commentary about Pelagius. For the first two years of his reign, Pelagius was at the very least noted for his alarming shifts in weight. Four months after taking the throne, a diplomat from Ebonheart called Pelagius "a hale and hearty soul with a heart so big, it widens his waist"; five months after that, the visiting princess of Firsthold wrote to her brother that "the king's gripped my hand

and it felt like I was being clutched by a skeleton. Pelagius is greatly emaciated, indeed.”

Cephorus never married and died childless three years after the Siege of Solitude. As the only surviving sibling, Pelagius’ father Magnus left the throne of Wayrest and took residence at the Imperial City as the Emperor Magnus I. Magnus was elderly and Pelagius was his oldest living child, so the attention of Tamriel focused on Sentinel. By this time, Pelagius’ eccentricities were becoming infamous.

There are many legends about his acts as King of Sentinel, but few well-documented cases exist. It is known that Pelagius locked the young princes and princesses of Silvenar in his room with him, only releasing them when an unsigned Declaration of War was slipped under the door. When he tore off his clothes during a speech he was giving at a local festival, his advisors apparently decided to watch him more carefully. On the orders of Magnus, Pelagius was married to the beautiful heiress of an ancient Dark Elf noble family, Katariah Ra’athim.

Nordic kings who marry Dark Elves seldom improve their popularity. There are two reasons most scholars give for the union. Magnus was trying to cement relations with Ebonheart, where the Ra’athim clan hailed. Ebonheart’s neighbor, Mournhold, had been a historical ally of the Empire since the very beginning, and the royal consort of Queen Barenziah had won many battles in the War of the Red Diamond. Ebonheart had a poorly-kept secret of aiding Uriel III and Potema.

The other reason for the marriage was more personal: Katariah was as shrewd a diplomat as she was beautiful. If any creature was capable of hiding Pelagius’ madness, it was she.

On the 8th of Second Seed, 3E 145, Magnus I died quietly in his sleep. Jolethe, Pelagius' sister took over the throne of Solitude, and Pelagius and Katariah rode to the Imperial City to be crowned Emperor and Empress of Tamriel. It is said that Pelagius fainted when the crown was placed on his head, but Katariah held him up so only those closest to the thrones could see what had happened. Like so many Pelagius stories, this cannot be verified.

Pelagius III never truly ruled Tamriel. Katariah and the Elder Council made all the decisions and only tried to keep Pelagius from embarrassing all. Still, stories of Pelagius III's reign exist.

It was said that when the Argonian ambassador from Blackrose came to court, Pelagius insisted on speaking in all grunts and squeaks, as that was the Argonian's natural language.

It is known that Pelagius was obsessed with cleanliness, and many guests reported waking to the noise of an early-morning scrubdown of the Imperial Palace. The legend of Pelagius while inspecting the servants' work, suddenly defecating on the floor to give them something to do, is probably apocryphal.

When Pelagius began actually biting and attacking visitors to the Imperial Palace, it was decided to send him to a private asylum. Katariah was proclaimed regent two years after Pelagius took the throne. For the next six years, the Emperor stayed in a series of institutions and asylums.

Traitors to the Empire have many lies to spread about this period. Whispered stories of hideous experiments and tortures performed on Pelagius have almost become accepted as fact. The noble lady Katariah became pregnant shortly after the Emperor was sent away, and rumors of infidelity and, even

more absurd, conspiracies to keep the sane Emperor locked away, ran amok. As Katariah proved, her pregnancy came about after a visit to her husband's cell. With no other evidence, as loyal subjects, we are bound to accept the Empress' word on the matter. Her second child, who would reign for many years as Uriel IV, was the child of her union with her consort Lariate, and publicly acknowledged as such.

On a warm night in Suns Dawn, in his 34th year, Pelagius III died after a brief fever in his cell at the Temple of Kynareth in the Isle of Betony. Katariah I reigned for another forty six years before passing the scepter onto the only child she had with Pelagius, Cassynder.

Pelagius' wild behavior has made him perversely dear to the province of his birth and death. The 2nd of Suns Dawn, which may or may not be the anniversary of his death (records are not very clear) is celebrated as Mad Pelagius, the time when foolishness of all sorts is encouraged. And so, one of the least desirable Emperors in the history of the Septim Dynasty, has become one of the most famous ones.

# The Mirror

*Berdier Wreans*

The wind blew over the open plain, jostling the few trees within to move back and forth with the irritation of it. A young man in bright green turban approached the army and gave his chieftain's terms for peace to the commander. He was refused. It was to be battle, the battle of Ain-Kolur.

So the chief Iymbez had decreed his open defiance and his horsemen were at war once again. Many times the tribe had moved into territory that was not theirs to occupy, and many times the diplomatic approach had failed. It had come to this, at long last. It was just as well with Mindothrax. His allies may win or lose, but he would always survive. Though he had occasionally been on the losing side of a war, never once in all his thirty-four years had he lost in hand-to-hand combat.

The two armies poured like dual frothing streams through the dust, and when they met a clamor rang out, echoing into the hills. Blood, the first liquor the clay had tasted in many a month, danced like powder. The high and low battle cries of the rival tribes met in harmony as the armies dug into one another's flesh. Mindothrax was in the element he loved.

After ten hours of fighting with no ground given, both commanders called a mutual and honorable withdrawal from the field.

The camp was positioned in a high-walled garden of an old burial ground, adorned by springtide blossoms. As Mindothrax toured the grounds, he was reminded of his childhood home. It was a happy and a sad recollection, the purity of childhood ambition, all of his schooling in the ways of battle, but tinged with memories of his poor mother. A beautiful woman looking down at her son with both pride and unspoken sorrow. She never talked about what troubled her, but it came as no surprise to any when she took the walk across the moors and was found days later, her throat slit open by her own hand.

The army itself was like a colony of ants, newly shaken. Within a half hour's time after the end of the battle, they had reorganized as if by instinct. As the medics looked to the wounded, someone remarked, with a measure of admiration and astonishment, "Look at Mindothrax. His hair isn't even out of place."

"He is a mighty swordsman," said the attending physician.

"The sword is a greatly overvalued article," said Mindothrax, nevertheless pleased with the attention. "Warriors pay too much attention to striking and not enough in defending strikes. The proper way to go into battle is to defend yourself, and to hit your opponent only when the ideal moment arises."

"I prefer a more straight-forward approach," smiled one of the wounded. "It is the way of the horse men."

"If it is the way of the Bjoulsae tribes to fail, then I renounce my heritage," said Mindothrax, making a quick sign to the spirits that he was being expressive not blasphemous. "Remember what the great blademaster Gaiden Shinji said, 'The best techniques are passed on by the survivors.' I have been in

thirty-six battles, and I haven't a scar to show for them. That is because I rely on my shield, and then my blade, in that order."

"What is your secret?"

"Think of melee as a mirror. I look to my opponent's left arm when I am striking with my right. If he is prepared to block my blow, I blow not. Why exert undue force?" Mindothrax cocked an eyebrow, "But when I see his right arm tense, my left arm goes to my shield. You see, it takes twice as much power to send force than it does to deflect it. When your eye can recognize whether your opponent is striking from above, or at angle, or in an uppercut from below, you learn to pivot and place your shield just so to protect yourself. I could block for hours if need be, but it only takes a few minutes, or even seconds, for your opponent, used to battering, to leave a space open for your own strike."

"What was the longest you've ever had to defend yourself?" asked the wounded man.

"I fought a man once for an hour's time," said Mindothrax. "He was tireless with his bludgeoning, never giving me a moment to do aught but block his strikes. But finally, he took a moment too long in raising his cudgel and I found my mark in his chest. He struck my shield a thousand times, and I struck his heart but once. But that was enough."

"So he was your greatest opponent?" asked the medico.

"Oh, indeed not," said Mindothrax, turning his great shield so the silvery metal reflected his own face. "There is he."



The next day, the battle recommenced. Chief Iymbez had brought in reinforcements from the islands to the south. To the horror and disgrace of the tribe, mercenaries, renegade horsemen and even some Reachmen witches were included in the war. As Mindothrax stared across the field at the armies assembling, putting on his helmet and readying his shield and blade, he thought again of his poor mother. What had tortured her so? Why had she never been able to look at her son without grief?

Between sunrise and sundown, the battle raged. A bright blue-sky overhead burned down on the combatants as they rushed against one another over and over again. In every melee, Mindothrax prevailed. A foe with an ax rained a series of strokes against his shield, but every one was deflected until at last Mindothrax could best the warrior. A spear maiden nearly pierced the shield with her first strike, but Mindothrax knew how to give with the blow, throwing her off balance and leaving her open for his counterstrike. Finally, he met a mercenary on the field, armed with shield and sword and a helm of golden bronze. For an hour and a half they battled.

Mindothrax tried every trick he knew. When the mercenary tensed his left arm, he held back his strike. When his opponent rose his sword, his shield rose too and expertly blocked. For the first time in his life, he was battling another defensive fighter. Stationary, reflective, with energy to battle for days if need be. Occasionally, another warrior would enter into the fray, sometimes from Mindothrax's army, sometimes from his opponent's. These distractions were swiftly dispatched, and the champions returned to their fight.

As they fought, circling one another, matching block for blow and blow for block, it dawned on Mindothrax that here at last he was fighting the perfect mirror.

It became more a game, almost a dance, than a battle of blood. It was not until Mindothrax missed his own step, striking too soon, throwing himself off balance, that the promenade was ended. He saw, rather than felt, the mercenary's blade rip across him from throat to chest. A good strike. The sort he himself might have delivered.

Mindothrax fell to the ground, feeling his life passing. The mercenary stood over him, prepared to give his worthy adversary the killing blow. It was a strange, honorable deed for an outsider to do, and Mindothrax was greatly moved. Across the battlefield, he heard someone call a name, similar to his own.

“Jurrifax!”

The mercenary removed his helmet to answer the call. As he did so, Mindothrax saw through the slits of his helmet his own reflection in the man. It was his own close-set eyes, red and brown hair, thin and wide mouth, and blunt chin. For a moment he marveled at the mirror, before the stranger turned back to him and delivered the death stroke.

Jurrifax returned to his commander and was well paid for his part in the day's victory. They retired for a hot meal under the stars in a garden by an old cairn that had previously been occupied by their foes. The mercenary was strangely quiet as he observed the land.

“Have you been here before, Jurrifax?” asked one of the tribesmen who had hired him.

“I was born a horseman just like you. My mother sold me when I was just a babe. I have always wondered how my life might have been different had I not been bartered away. I might never have been a mercenary.”

“There are many things that decide our fate,” said the witch. “It is madness to try to see how you might have taken this turn or that in the world. There are none exactly like yourself, so it is foolish to compare.”

“But there is one,” said Jurrifax, looking to the stars. “My master, before he set me free, said that my mother had twin sons when I was born. She could only afford to raise but one child, but somewhere out there, there is a man just like me. My brother. I hope to meet him.”

The witch saw the spirits before her and knew the truth that the twins had met already. She remained silent and stared into the fire, banishing the thoughts from her head, too wise to tell all.

# The Path Of Transcendence

*Celedaen*

Entry 1: My initial findings may have been inconclusive, but they set me on the path I will pursue until I achieve my goal or lie rotting in this cave. Either outcome will be a welcome respite from the days and nights I've spent toiling without food, water, or any kind of companionship. A lesser mage would have fallen prey to madness by now, I'm sure of it. But I am not a lesser mage! Though they try in earnest, though their hearts and minds are true to the teachings of our great Sovereign, my fellow Necromancers lack the complete dedication required to achieve that ultimate of goals—the state of lichdom. Not even Falcar himself can match my sheer tenacity, my unwillingness to accept failure on any level. That is why I, Celedaen, will soon join the ranks of the Worm Eremites, those servants favored by our sovereign above all others. I will sit with honor and obedience at his right hand while those fools in the Mages Guild grovel at my maggot-ridden feet!

Entry 2: Even the most pedestrian peasant fairy tale has long held that a lich must somehow remain bound to his soul, and that connection most commonly manifests itself as a transference of the spirit into an actual physical object. An urn, a sarcophagus, a crystal phial.... One Khajiit fairy tale even tells of a lich who preserved his spirit in the severed head of a Wood Elf infant! And these same peasants long comforted themselves

with the belief that if they ever had the grave misfortune of facing a lich, they would need only find the vessel containing his spirit form and then destroy it, thus destroying the lich himself. Fools and their folklore! True liches possess no such weakness! Can one of the Sovereign's Worm Eremites be bested by shattering a glass vase? The very notion is so absurd as to be comical. Yes, a Necromancer must transfer his soul into a physical vessel, but once that transference is complete, once the Necromancer has fully metamorphosed into his lich form, the vessel is inconsequential. But it's the process of this transference itself that has eluded me for so long. My soul remains bound to my earthly body, and nothing I have attempted has allowed me to free myself of this mortal coil and transcend to the state of lichdom I so dearly desire.

Entry 3: Every tome I've acquired, the volumes upon volumes of Necromantic discourse, all useless! I have grown disgusted by the years of wasted life that have been poured into these so-called "essential" writings. Who in their right mind would ever wish to animate a month-dead Cyrodilic butterfly, or bring life to the rotting husk of a rare albino mud crab? How many months have I wasted away in this cave? And for what reason? Ah, yes, I know! I will resurrect an army of deformed goblin younglings and march on the White-Gold Tower itself! That at least is in my reach! My mind has become a cesspool of Necromantic waste, where reject spells and rituals compete for the honor of finally driving me completely insane. And still I am no closer to achieving my goal than I was when I first began this process. Am I losing faith in myself, in my discipline? Perhaps I have been studying too hard. Many a night I have sacrificed my prayers to our Sovereign for one more experiment, one more incantation. What I need now is rest. Rest, and a state of tranquility, so that I may commune with

our Sovereign and re-pledge my loyalty and devotion. For what answer will I find in some crumbling codex that could not be supplied by our great Sovereign himself?

Entry 4: The secret is mine! So long I searched, so hard I toiled, but I was a fool! I was right to forgo my studies for a more ardent devotion to prayer. Last night, as I sit in the throes of meditation, our great Sovereign did come to me! He passed to me the knowledge I have sought for so long! The secrets of transcendence were even more complex and arcane than even I could have imagined, and I will never transcribe them into any written work. Indeed, they have never been recorded! All my months of solitude were for naught, as the secret I so desperately sought could only be obtained through direct communication with our great Sovereign himself. Soon I will walk the earth as a Worm Eremite, serving the Sovereign in a state of endless undeath!

Entry 5: Through the sacrifice of many innocents, the resurrection of many servants to aid me in my tasks, and the tireless performance of a nearly week-long ritual, I have completed construction of the Sands Of Resolve. The transcendence to full lichdom will not be immediate, however. The vessel has been crafted, but my energy force, my soul, must be fully transferred into it. Not even our Sovereign was quite certain how long this process would take, as it varies from one Necromancer to the next, based on many factors both physical and spiritual. One thing, however, is certain. This hourglass must never leave my possession until the transference is complete! I grow more powerful every day, but in truth am more vulnerable than I've ever been. If something were to happen to the Sands of Resolve, if the hourglass should somehow leave my person, the connection between soul and

vessel would be severed. To think that my work, my life, could be eradicated so easily after I've come so close to success is almost more than I can bear.

# The Posting Of The Hunt

*Anonymous*

[[The writing on the parchment appears to be a hasty transcription, perhaps from dictation, or copied from a longer work.]

## The Posting of the Hunt

Let no man say before a witness that the Hunt has not been called, nor the Rites declared, or the Ancient Offices observed.

The Ritual of the Innocent Quarry, also called the Wild Hunt, is an ancient rite drawing magical energy from the powerful magica stream that engulfs this realm. The creators and times of the rituals are long forgotten. But followed properly, the rite brings great power and prestige to the Huntsman.

The ritual pits the all-powerful Huntsmen and their Greater and Lesser Dogs against the pitiful and doomed Innocent Quarry, called by tradition the Hare, after the mortal creature of human hunts. At once, the Huntsman is transported by the exquisite thrill and glory of his might and dominion over his helpless prey, and at the same time touched by the tragic, noble, and ultimately futile plight of the Innocent Quarry. In the highest aesthetic realization of the ritual, the ecstatic rapture of the kill is balanced by the Huntsman's identification with the sadness and despair of the Innocent Quarry. As in pieces the body of the innocent Hare is torn, the Huntsman



reflects on the tragic imbalances of power and the cruel injustices of the world.

As the Hunt begins, the Lesser Dogs assemble before the green crystal reflections of the Chapel of the Innocent Quarry. Inside the Chapel, the Huntsmen, the Greater Dogs, and the Master of the Hunt perform the rites that initiate and sanctify the Huntsmen, the Hunt, and the Innocent Quarry. Then the Huntsman emerges from the Chapel, displays the Spear of Bitter Mercy, and recites the Offices of the Hunt. The Offices describe explains the laws and conditions of the four stages of the Hunt: the Drag, the Chase, the Call, and the View to the Kill.

Stage One—The Drag, in which the Lesser Dogs drag the ground to flush out the Hare.

Stage Two—The Chase, in which the Greater Hounds drive the Hare before them.

Stage Three—The Call, in which the Greater Hounds trap the Hare and summon the Huntsmen for the kill.

Stage Four—The View, in which the Huntsman makes the kill with the ritual Spear of Bitter Mercy, and calls upon the Master of the Hunt to view the kill by ringing the town bell. The Master of the Hunt then bestows the Bounty upon the Huntsman Bold who has wielded the Spear of Bitter Mercy in the kill. The Master of the Hunt also calls upon the Huntsman Bold to name the next Hare for the next Hunt (though the Huntsman Bold himself may not participate in the next Hunt).

The Offices of the Hunt, which the Huntsmen, Master, and Hounds are solemnly sworn to honor, detail the practices and conditions of the Hunt. These practices and conditions, also

known as the Law, strictly define all details of the Hunt, such as how many Hounds of each sort may participate, how the Spear of Bitter Mercy may be wielded, and so forth. In addition, the Law states that the Hare must have a genuine chance to escape the Hunt, no matter how slim. In practice, this condition has been defined as the availability of six keys, which, if gathered together in the Temple of Daedric Rites, permit the Hare to teleport away from the Hunt, and so elude the Huntsman and his Spear. It is inconceivable, of course, that the Hare might actually discover the keys and escape, but the forms must be observed, and tampering with the keys or cheating the Hare of a genuine chance of finding or using the keys is a shameful and unforgivable betrayal of the Law of the Hunt.

The Ritual of the Hunt grants the Huntsmen protection from all forms of attack, including mortal and immortal weapons, and sorceries of all schools. Huntsmen are cautioned, however, that the ritual does not protect the Huntsman from the potent energies of his own Spear, and cautions against reckless wielding of the Spear in close melee, darkness, or other dangerous circumstances, for a single touch of the Spear of Bitter Mercy means instant and certain death for innocent Hare or fellow Huntsman alike.

The right to name a Wild Hunt is a grand and grave right indeed, as all but the High Daedra Lords are vulnerable to the potent sorceries of the Spear of Bitter Mercy. The Spear itself is therefore a terrible weapon, and it is forbidden to remove it from the Grounds of the Ritual Hunt.

# The Predecessors

## *Yngvar the Wanderer*

The ancient ruins that dot the countryside are a familiar sight to the inhabitants of the Shivering Isles. So familiar that their true significance has escaped notice of most, until now. I have recently uncovered the terrible secret hidden in these ruins, and I will now share this secret with you. But be warned - this knowledge may be too much for some, as you will know the awful fate that lies in store for you, but will be powerless to do anything to prevent it. If you are strong enough of mind to withstand the psychic shock of having your grim future laid bare, read on.

My interest in the ruins began with a simple observation: all the ruins visible on the surface appear to be of roughly the same age and architectural style. Who created these once-mighty structures, and what happened to them?

Further investigation revealed an even stranger truth: although the ruins superficially all appear to derive from the same era, they are in fact of wildly differing ages. Many thousands of years separate the ruins of Cylarne (by far the oldest extant on the surface, despite its relatively well-maintained state) from the ruins of Ebrocca, which at almost 1,000 years old is one of the youngest sites in the Isles. For those who would dismiss this conclusion, I invite you to visit the ruins and examine the evidence for yourselves: the depth of

strata covering the buried portions of the structures; the weathering of the exposed stone; the growth of vegetation on and around the structures; etc. (I have compiled the evidence in a separate monograph, "Dating the Predecessor Ruins: Shocking New Evidence Comprehensively Explained," which is presently unpublished, though I will gladly make it available for those scholars wishing to delve further into the minutiae of this subject.)

Once I began to accurately establish the dates of the various ruins, a disturbing pattern emerged. The ruins fell into distinct periods, each period separated by exactly 1,000 years from the other (although Cylarne remains the exception, being many thousands of years older than the next oldest extant ruin - suggesting only that the ruins from many earlier eras lie waiting to be discovered, or have been lost to the ravages of time).

What could account for this process of destruction, repeating itself every 1,000 years without fail? The legend of the Greymarch sprang immediately to mind, that ancient tale of a vengeful god venting his wrath upon the land. What if it were more than a legend? What if it were the dimly-remembered account of a real event?

I suddenly realized the significance of the dating of the most recent ruin that I had discovered: Ebrocca, which my tests proved to be about 1,000 years old. Yes, Dear Reader, we come to it at last. The Cataclysm is upon us again. I have dated the ruins of Ebrocca to great accuracy; I know the very year of our Doom. I refrain from publishing the exact date, as this knowledge is a terrible burden that I would not inflict on others.

For a long time I hesitated from issuing even this general warning, fearful of inciting panic or despair. But I have concluded that it is better to have time to prepare for the End in whatever way one sees fit than to have it thrust upon them unawares. I no longer doubt that the legend of the Greymarch is based on historical events, and that the last days of our civilization will be terrible - the blasted and tumbled stones of the mighty cities of bygone eras are testament enough to that. But I find it strangely comforting to know that our end is already written in the stones of our Predecessors, and that struggling against our Doom is as pointless as shouting against the incoming tide. I hope that at least a few of my readers will find equal solace in this bleak foreknowledge.

# The Prophet Arden-Sul

*Anonymous*

When one approaches the walls of New Sheoth, the eyes are unavoidably drawn to a magnificent sight: a mystical flame rises from a simple tower that juts from a circular building. To some, the flame is a beacon of strength and guidance, to others, a mockery of their beliefs. It is the epicenter of a most interesting conflict; two sides of the same coin vying for the favor of their God. It is an unremarkable building with a most remarkable past. It is the Sacellum Arden-Sul.

Although the Sacellum itself predates Arden-Sul's life, both the Manics and the Demented contest the history of the Sacellum heavily. The Manics believe that on that very spot before New Sheoth existed, Arden-Sul was first afflicted with the Grand Enlightenment and became blinded. The Demented postulate that the Sacellum was the location where Arden-Sul endured the Hundred Day Torture. However, it was not these purported events of Arden-Sul's life that aligned the Sacellum with the prophet's name... it was his death.

Here again, the Manics and the Demented are divided. The Manics story of Arden-Sul's death begins with a night of superlative revelry in the Sacellum. The event was replete with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of Greenmote and spirits. Arden-Sul and his 213 followers engaged in a veritable orgy of merrymaking and overindulgence, a night fraught with a

profusion of singing, dancing, and fornicating. As the celebration reached a crescendo and the event reached its whirlwind apex, one by one, Arden-Sul's followers began to drop to the ground—their lifeblood draining from their bodies until the ground was soaked a crimson red. The excesses of their hedonism had taken its toll and had caused their very hearts to explode. Although details are uncertain, it was said Arden-Sul was the last to die with the look of pure bliss upon his face.

The Demented have a radically different story of the events leading to Arden-Sul's demise. Fearing that one of his followers would one day turn traitor and bury a blade in his back, Arden-Sul sought a method to see deep into a man's soul and reveal his true feelings. After an exhaustive search, he uncovered the secrets of visceromancy, the science of divination through the observation of the entrails of others. Armed with this knowledge, he summoned his flock to the Sacellum. After imbibing the wine Arden-Sul gave them, his followers suddenly felt themselves paralyzed... aware of their surroundings but unable to move. Then, one by one, Arden-Sul cut out the still-beating hearts of his followers and read their lifeblood. After removing all 213 hearts, he still hadn't located the traitor. Furious, he reached into his chest and tore out his own heart. Before the light faded from his eyes, Arden-Sul was reported to have realized the ironic truth; he was the traitor, destined to kill himself.

Whether or not one chooses to take either of these stories seriously is of little import. The truth remains that the Sacellum is a significant location of a highly regarded prophet's death. To this day, the building is still shared among the Manics

and the Demented, and depending on Lord Sheogorath's whim,  
the favored side becomes its ruling body.



# The Ravings Of Fenroy

*Fenroy*

[The following pieces were gathered from the author's cell shortly before his untimely death at his own hands. Written primarily on bedsheets and the bare stone of his floor, using only his own bodily fluids for ink, some of the transcriptions represent the editors' best guesses at the author's true intent.]

Mother said there was no reason

It's just the way it is

Mother lies

I can see rain, I can feel rain

I can only feel wind

Someone is hiding

If I walk through the forest, the birds stop singing. They're talking about me. I'm sure of it. They're just too scared to do it to my face.

Boat

Moat

Coat

Float

Goat

Note

Wrote

secretname  
secretname  
secretname

He touches me when I'm not looking

Sometimes I hear the people talking about their days. They talk about family and the weather and yesterday and tomorrow. They say What a good day it was and How was your day and Have a nice day. I say talk talk talk talk. How can you enjoy your day when you share it with everyone? Time is a private thing. The dragon hides it from us all, parceling it out in dribs and drabs. Save your time. Save your time. I keep mine locked up tight. Where no one can find it. Not even Him.

Hold me now

Rock me gently

My tears are burning, dear

Don't jinx it

Don't jinx it

Hold your breath, one big one now

One last gasp

And we're done

He talks all the time, but his words are useless. Talking, talking. Let's talk. Never doing. Always talking. Words become meaningless. They float on the air. Dissipate like passed gas. Make him stop talking. Make him stop talking to me.

Always take care when dealing with women. They see things we do not. A smile. A glance. They mean nothing to us, everything to them. They twist their smiles to meet our own. They avert a gaze just so. Watch them closely. They rule the world; they just don't know it.

Am I indecisive? Yes and no.

They came to bring me food today. I ate it, though I know it was poisoned. They lace it with black flour and edgeroot. They think it keeps me quiet, sedate. I know better. Sometimes I chew up the bread and spit it into the corners of my cell. No one notices, and the rats eat it after a time. It keeps them quiet, sedate. When I eat the rats, the poison is more dilute. And I gain their memories.

I don't believe it's fair that I'm forced to deal with the stupid. Or the obtuse. Or the pedantic. Yet they give me rules, like Go here and Do that and Eat this and Kill that. They don't know that I know their names. Eventually I'll get to them. And I'll make the rules.

Just You wait and see

Good Gods come and go, but

All Lords eventually fall

A God can wake up mortal.

If I learn from my mistakes, will I eventually stop making them? Is there a balance I can achieve, a perfect harmony with my self? Shall I seek that point where there are no more mistakes to be made? All the lessons learned? When that happens, do we die? Do we become gods? Do the gods even want us?

Maybe all dogs go outside deliberately. Maybe a decision gets overly deliberate. Might a dream grow overly demented? He knows. He knows. He knows.

Stories are for children and dreamers. Poetry is for weaklings and madmen. Epics glorify the vile and vilify the glorious. Read minds, not words.

I think it's time to go. He's still in my head, but I think he might leave if I'm quiet. Shh. Shh.

# The Rear Guard

*Tenace Mourl*

The castle would hold. No matter the forces, the walls of Cascabel Hall would never fail, but that was small consolation for Menegur. He was hungry. In fact, he had never been so hungry. The well in the atrium of the fortress supplied him with enough water to hold there until the Fourth Era, but his stomach reminded Menegur minute to minute that he needed food.

The wagonload of supplies mocked him. When his army, the forces of the King of Solitude, had left Cascabel Hall, and he had manned the battlements as the rear-guard to protect their retreat, they had left a wagon behind to supply him with enough food for months. It was not until the night after they left that he inspected the larder and found that nothing edible was in the wagon. Trunk after trunk was filled with netch armor from the army's incursion into Morrowind. Apparently his Nord confederates had assumed that the lightly opaque material was hard tack in aspic. If the Dunmer whose caravan had been raided knew about this, they would never be able to stop laughing.

Menegur thought that his fellow mercenary and kinswoman Aerin would have found this amusing as well. She had spoken with great authority about netch leather, being an expert of sorts on light armor, but she had made a point to mention that

it could not be eaten like other leather in occasions of hardship. It was a pity she couldn't be there to enjoy the irony, Menegur thought savagely. She had returned to Morrowind even before the king's army had left, preferring a life as a wanted fugitive to a free existence in the cold of Skyrim.

All the weeds in the courtyard had been devoured by the rear-guard's sixteenth day manning Cascabel Hall. The entire castle had been scoured: rotten tubers in the mulch pile found and consumed, a dusty bouquet in the countess's bedchamber eaten, almost every rat and insect but the most cunning infesting the castle walls had been tracked down and gobbled up. The castellan's chambers, filled with acrid, inedible law books, had yielded up a couple crumbs of bread. Menegur had even scraped moss from the stones. There was no denying it: he would be dead from starvation before his army returned to break the ranks of the enemies who surrounded the fortress.

"The worst part," said Menegur, who had taken to talking to himself on only the second day alone in the castle. "Is how close sustenance is."

A vast arbor of golden apples stretched acre after acre near the castle walls. The sunlight cast a seductive gleam on the fruit, and the cruel wind carried sweet smells into Cascabel to torture him.

Like most Bosmer, Menegur was an archer. He was a master of long and medium distance fighting, but in close quarters, as he would be if he dared to leave the castle and enter the enemy camp in the arbor, he knew he would not last long. At some point, he knew he would have to try, but he had been dreading the day. It was upon him now.

Menegur put on the netch armor for the first time, feeling the powdery, almost velvet texture of the rendered leather against his skin. There was also a barely perceptible throb, which he recognized as the remnant nematocysts of the netch's venomous flesh, still tingling months after its death with domesticated poison. The combination made him feel energized. Aerin had described the sensation perfectly, just as she had explained how to defend himself while wearing netch leather armor.

Under cover of night, Menegur crept out of the back gate of the castle, locking it behind him with a rather cumbersome key. He made for the arbor as quietly as he could, but a passing sentry, coming behind a tree, saw him. Remaining calm, Menegur did as he remembered Aerin had instructed, only moving after the attack had been launched. The sentry's blade glided against the armor and knocked to the left, throwing the young man off balance. That was the trick, as he understood it: you had to be prepared to be hit, and merely move with the blow, allowing the membranous armor to divert the injury away.

Use your enemy's momentum against him, as Aerin used to say.

There were several more close encounters in the arbor, but each swing of an ax and each thrust of a sword found purchase elsewhere. With handfuls of apples, Menegur ran the gauntlet back to the castle. He locked the back gate door behind him and fell into an orgy of eating.

For week after week, the Bosmer stole out to gather his food. The guards began anticipating his raids, but he kept his schedule irregular and always remembered when attacked to

wait for the blow, accept it, and then turn. In such a way, he lived and survived his lonely vigil in Cascabel Hall.

Four months later, as he was preparing for another seizure of apples, Menegur heard a loud clamor at the front gate. Surveying the group from a safe distance on the battlements, he saw the shields of the King of Solitude, his ally the Count of Cascabel, and their enemy the King of Farrun. Evidently, a truce had been called.

Menegur opened the gates and the combined armies flooded the courtyard. Many of the knights of Farrun sought to shake the hand of the man they had named the Shadow of the Arbor, expressing their admiration at his defensive skills and apologizing good-naturedly for their attempts to slay him. Only doing their job, you know.

“There’s hardly a apple left on the vines,” said the King of Solitude.

“Well, I started on the edges and worked my way in,” explained Menegur. “I brought back extra fruit to tempt the rats of out of walls so I could have a little meat as well.”

“We’ve spent the last several months working out the details of the truce,” said the King. “Really quite exhausting. In any rate, the Count will be taking back possession of his castle now, but there is a small detail we need to work out. You’re a mercenary, and as such responsible for your own expenses. If you had been a subject of mine, things might be different, but there are certain old rules of law that must be respected.”

Menegur anticipated the strike.



“The problem is,” the King continued. “You’ve taken a good deal of the Count’s crops while here. By any reasonable computation, you’ve eaten an amount equal to and likely exceeding your mercenary’s wages. Obviously, I would not want to penalize you for the excellent job you’ve done defending the castle in uncomfortable circumstances, but you agree that it’s important that we observe the old rules of law, don’t you?”

“Of course,” replied Menegur, accepting the blow.

“I’m delighted to hear that,” said the King. “Our estimation is that you owe the Count of Cascabel thirty-seven Imperial gold.”

“Which I will gladly pay to myself, with interest, after the autumn harvest,” said Menegur. “There is more left on the vine than you suggest.”

The Kings of Solitude and Farrun, and the Count of Cascabel stared at the Bosmer.

“We agreed to abide to the strictest old rules of law, and I’ve had time to read a great many books over the time you were making your truce. In 3E 246, during the reign of Uriel IV, the Imperial Council, in an attempt to clear up some questions of property rights in Skyrim during those chaotic days, decreed that any man without a liege who occupied a castle for more than three months would be granted the rights and titles of that estate. It’s a good law, of course, meant to discourage absent and foreign landlords.” Menegur smiled, feeling the now familiar sensation of a glancing strike diverting. “By the rule of law, I am the Count of Cascabel.”

The rear-guard's son still hold the title of Count of Cascabel.  
And he grows the finest, most delectable apples in the Empire.

# The Red Kitchen Reader

## *Simocles Quo*

Though naturally modest, I must admit to some pleasure in being dubbed by our Emperor's father, the late Pelagius IV, as "the finest connoisseur in Tamriel." He was also good enough to appoint me the first, and to this day, the only Master of Cuisine in the Imperial Court. Other Emperors, of course, had master chefs and cooks in their staff, but only during the reign of Pelagius was there someone of rarefied tastes to plan the menus and select the finest produce to be served at court. His son Uriel requested that I continue in that position, but I was forced to graciously decline the invitation, because of age and poor health.

This book, however, is not intended to be autobiography. I have had a great many adventures in my life as a knight of fine dining, but my intention for this book is much more specific. Many times I have been asked, "What is the best thing you ever ate?"

The answer to that is not a simple one. Much of the pleasure of a great meal is not only in the food: it is in the setting, the company, the mood. Eat an indifferently cooked roast or a simple stew with your one true love, and it is a meal to be remembered. Have an excellent twelve-course feast with dull company, while feeling slightly ill, and it will be forgotten, or remembered only with distaste.

Sometimes meals are memorable for the experiences that come before them.

Fairly recently, in northern Skyrim, I had a bit of bad luck. I was with a group of fishermen, observing their technique of capturing a very rare, very delicious fish called Merringar. The fish is found only far from shore, so it was a week's voyage out beyond civilization. Well, we found our school of Merringar, but as the fishermen began spearing them, the blood in the water attracted a family of Dreugh, who capsized the boat and everyone on it. I managed to save myself, but the fishermen and all our supplies were lost. Sailing is not, alas, a skill I have picked up over the years, and it took me three weeks, with no provisions, to find my way back to the kingdom of Solitude. I had managed to catch enough small fish to eat raw, but I was still delirious from hunger and thirst. The first meal I had on shore, of Nordic roast boar, Jazbay wine, and, yes, filet of Merringar would have been excellent under any circumstances, but because of the threat of starvation I had faced, it was divine beyond words.

Sometimes meals are even memorable for the experiences that follow them.

In a tavern in Falinesti, I was introduced to a simple peasant dish called Kollopi, delicious little balls of flesh, thick with spices and juice, so savory I asked the proprietress whence they came. Mother Pascost explained that the Kollopi were an arboreal rodent that fed exclusively on the most tender branches of the graht-oak, and I was fortunate enough to be in Valenwood at the time of the annual harvest. I was invited to join with a small colony of Imga monkeys, who alone could gather these succulent little mice. Because they lived only on

the slenderest branches of the trees, and only on the ends of those same branches, the Imga had to climb beneath them and jump up to “pick” the Kollopi from their perches. Imga are, of course, naturally dexterous, but I was then relatively young and spry, and they let me help them. While I could never jump as high they could, with practice, I found that if I kept my head and upper body rigid, and launched off the ground with a scissors-like kick, I could reach the Kollopi on the lowest branches of the tree. I believe I gathered three Kollopi myself, though with considerable effort.

To this day, I salivate at the thought of Kollopi, but my mind is on the image of myself and several dozen Imgas leaping around beneath the shade of the graht-oaks.

Then, of course, there are the rare meals memorable for what came before, after, and during the meal, which brings me to the finest thing I ever ate, the meal that began my lifelong obsession with excellent cuisine.

As a child growing up in Cheydinhal, I did not care for food at all. I recognized the value of nutrition, for I was not a complete dullard, but I cannot say that mealtime brought me any pleasure at all. Partly, of course, this was the fault of my family’s cook, who believed that spices were an invention of the Daedra, and that good Imperials should like their food boiled, textureless and flavorless. Though I think she was alone in assigning a religious significance to this, my sampling of traditional Cyrodilic cuisine suggests that the philosophy is regrettably common in my homeland.

Though I did not enjoy food per se, I was not a morose, unadventurous child in other respects. I enjoyed the fights in the Arena, of course, and nothing made me happier than

wandering the streets of my town, with my imagination as my only companion. It was on one such jaunt on a sunny Fredas in Mid Year that I made a discovery that changed my heart and my life.

There were several old abandoned houses down the street from my own home, and I often played around them, imagining them to be filled with desperate outlaws or haunted by hundreds of evil spirits. I never had the nerve to go inside. In fact, had I not that day seen some other children who had delighted in teasing me in the past, I would never have gone in. But I needed a sanctuary, so I ran into the closest one.

The house seemed to be as desolate on the inside as on the outside, further proof that no one lived there, and had not for some time. When I heard footsteps, I could only assume that the loathsome little urchins I hoped to avoid had followed me in. I escaped to the basement, and from there, past a broken-down wall that led to a well. I could still hear the footsteps above, and I decided that I was still loath to confront my tormentors. Knocking aside the rusty locks on the well, I slipped down below.

The well was dry, but I discovered it was far from empty. There was a sort of a sub-basement to the house, three large rooms that were clean, furnished, and evidently not abandoned at all. My senses told me someone was living in the house, after all: not only my sense of sight, but my sense of smell. For one of the rooms was a large red-painted kitchen, and spread out on the coals of the oven was a roast, carved into small morsels. Passing a beautiful and appropriate bas-relief of a mother carving a roast for her grateful children, I beheld the kitchen and the wonders within.

Like I said, food had never interested me before, but I was transfixed, and even now as I write this, words fail me in describing the rich aroma that hung in the air. It was like nothing I had ever smelled in my family's kitchen, and I was unable to stop myself from popping one of the steaming chunks of meat into my mouth. The taste was magical, the flesh tender and sweet. Before I knew it, I had eaten everything on the stove, and I learned at that very second the truth that that food can and should be sublime.

After gorging myself and having my culinary epiphany, I was conflicted on what to do. Part of me wanted to wait down in that red kitchen until the chef returned, so I could ask him what his secret recipe was for the delicious meat. Part of me recognized that I had stolen into someone's house and eaten their dinner, and it would be wise to leave while I could. That was what I did.

Time and again, I've tried to return to that strange, wonderful place, but Cheydinhal has changed over time. Old houses have been reclaimed, and new houses abandoned. I know what to look for on the inside of the house - the well, the beautiful etching of a woman preparing to carve out a roast for her children, the red kitchen itself - but I have never been able to find the house again. After a while, as I grew older, I stopped trying. It is better as it remains in my memory, the most perfect meal I ever ate.

The inspiration for my life that followed all was cooked up, together with that fabulous meat, right there in the Red Kitchen.

# The Refugees

*Geros Albreigh*

The smell of the bay oozed through the stones of the cellar, salt and brined decay. The cellar itself had its own scents of old wine turned to vinegar, mildew, and the more exotic spices of herbs the healers had brought with them to tend to the wounded. There were more than fifty people squeezed into the big earthen room which had once been forgotten storage for the brothel above. The groaning and whimpering had ceased for now, and all was still, as if the hospital had turned into a mass grave.

“Mother,” a Redguard boy whispered. “What was that?”

The boy’s mother was about to answer him when there was another rolling roar from outside, which grew louder and louder, as if some great but incorporeal beast had come into the cellar. The walls trembled and dust burst from the ceiling in a rain of powder.

Unlike the last time, no one screamed. They waited until the weird, haunting sound had past, and then was replaced by the soft rumble of the distant battle.

A wounded soldier began whispering Mara’s Prayer from the Doomed.



“Mankar,” a Bosmer woman curled up in a cot hissed, her eyes feverish, flesh white and wet with sweat. “He is coming!”

“Who is coming?” asked the boy, grasping his mother’s skirt tight.

“Who do you think, lad? The sweets monger?” a grizzled one-armed Redguard growled. “The Camoran Usurper.”

The boy’s mother shot an angry look at the old warrior. “She doesn’t know what she’s saying. She’s sick.”

The boy nodded. His mother was usually right. He had not yet even been born when people began whispering that the Camoran Usurper was coming towards her little village, and she had packed up their belongings to flee. Their neighbors had laughed at her, she said, saying that Rihad and Taneth would handily defeat him. Her husband, Lukar’s father who he was never to meet, had also laughed at her. It was the harvest time, and she would miss out on the celebrations. But his mother, Miak-I, was right. Two weeks after she fled the village, she heard the tale that it had been obliterated during the night with no survivors. Rihad and Taneth had both fallen. The Usurper was unstoppable.

Lukar had been born and grown up in refugee camps throughout Hammerfell. He had never known a friend for more than a few days. He knew that when the sky burned red to the west, they would pack up and move east. When it burned to the south, they moved north. At last, after twelve years of moving from camp to camp, they had taken passage across the Iliac Bay to the province of High Rock and the barony of Dwynnen. There Miak-I had promised, and hoped, that they would have a peaceful, permanent home.

It was so green there, it blinded him. Unlike Hammerfell, which was only green in certain seasons and in certain places, Dwynnen was verdant year round. Until wintertide, when it began to snow, and Lukar had been frightened of it at first. He was ashamed to think of it now, when there was real danger, but the red clouds of war, the stink and pain of the refugee camp, that was familiar.

Now, the red sky was on the horizon of the bay and coming closer, and he longed for the days when a scattering of white made him cry.

“Mankar!” the Bosmer woman cried out again. “He is coming, and he will bring death!”

“No one is coming,” said a pretty young Breton healer, coming to the woman’s side. “Hush now.”

“Hello?” came a voice from above.

The whole room, almost together as one gasped. A Bosmer limped down the shoddy wooden stairs, his friendly face very obviously not that of the Camoran Usurper.

“Sorry if I frightened you,” he said. “I was told there were healers here, and I could use a little help.”

Rosayna hurried to take a look at the Bosmer’s wounds on his leg and chest. Dishelved but still beautiful, she was one of the favorites at the brothel, who had learned her healing skill along with her more vocational skills at the House of Dibella. She carefully but quickly pulled the rent leather cuirass, chausses, tassets, grieves, and boots off him, and placed them to the side while she examined the injuries.

The old Redguard warrior picked them up and studied them.  
“You were in the war?”

“Next to it is probably a better way to put it,” the Bosmer smiled, wincing slightly at Rosayna’s touch. “Behind it, beside it, in front of it. My name’s Orben Elmlock. I’m a scout. I try to avoid the real battle, so I can get back and report what I see. A good job for people who don’t like the color of their own blood very much.”

“Hzim,” said the warrior, shaking Orben’s hand. “I can’t fight anymore, but I can fix up this armor if you’re going to return.”

“You’re a leathersmith?”

“Naw, just a jack of all trades,” replied Hzim, opening up a small canister of wax to prep the hard but flexible leather. “I could tell you were a scout from the armor, though. Can you tell us what you’ve been spying on? We’ve been down in here for half a day now, with no word from the outside.”

“The entire Iliac Bay is one great battlefield on the waves,” said Orben and sighed as Rosayna’s spell began to close his jagged but shallow wounds. “We’ve shut off the invasion from the mouth of the bay, but I was coming from the coast, and the enemy’s army is marching over the Wrothgarian Mountains. That’s where I had my little scuffle. It’s not too surprising, moving the flank in from the side while the front battle is occupied. It’s a play right out of Camoran Kaltos’s book of tricks the Hart-King borrowed.”

“The Hart-King?” Lukar asked. He had been listening quietly, understanding everything except that.

“Haymon Camoran, the Camoran Usurper, Haymon Hart-King, they’re all the same, lad. He’s a complicated fellow, and needs more than one name.”

“You know him?” Miak-I asked, stepping forward.

“Near on twenty years, before this whole black, bloody business. I was Camoran Kaltos’s chief scout, and Haymon was his sorcerer and advisor. I helped them both, when they were vying for the Camoran throne, and began the conquest of - Ouch!”

Rosayna has ceased her healing. With eyes of fury, she had reversed her spell, and the closed, mended wounds were opening again, dark infections returning. She held him with surprising strength when Orben tried to pull back.

“You bastard,” the healer courtesan hissed. “I have a cousin in Falinesti, a priestess.”

“She’s fine!” Orben yelped. “Lord Kaltos was very adamant about not harming anyone who did not pose a threat... ”

“I think the people of Kvatch would disagree with that assessment,” said Hzim, coldly.

“That was horrible, the worst thing I have ever seen,” Orben nodded. “Kaltos wept when he saw what Haymon had done. My master did everything he could to stop it, begging the Hart-King to return to Valenwood. But he turned on Kaltos, and we fled. We are not your enemy, and we have never been. Kaltos could do nothing to prevent the horror that the Usurper has brought to the Colovian West and Hammerfell, and he has fought for fifteen years to prevent more.”

The frightening bestial roar passed through the cellar again, even louder than before. The wounded could not help groaning in helpless terror.

“And what is that?” Miak-I sneered. “Another of Camoran Kaltos’s tricks that the Usurper picked up?”

“It is indeed a trick, as a matter of fact,” Orben yelled, above the screech. “It’s a phastasm he employs to scare people. He had to use fear tactics in the beginning when his power was ascending, and he has to fall back on them now for his power is waning. That is why it took him two years to conquer Valenwood, and another thirteen to half-conquer Hammerfell. No offense to you Redguards, but it isn’t only your battle prowess that has been holding him back. He does not have the support he used to have from his Master -”

The echoing roar increased in intensity before once again falling silent.

“Mankar!” the Bosmer woman groaned. “He comes, and he will destroy all!”

“His Master?” asked Lukar, but Orben’s eyes had gone to the Bosmer woman, curled up in her blood-soaked cot.

“Who is she?” Orben asked Rosayna.

“One of the refugees, of course, from your friendly little war in Valenwood before you and your Kaltos changed sides,” the healer replied. “I think her name is Kaalys.”

“By Jephre,” Orben whispered under his breath, limping over to the woman’s cot and wiping the sweat and blood streaked hair

from her pallid face. “Kaalys, it’s Orben. Do you remember me? How did you get here? Did he hurt you?”

“Mankar!” Kaalys moaned.

“That’s all she says,” said Rosayna.

“I don’t know what that it is,” Orben frowned. “Not the Usurper, though she knew him too. Very well. She was a favorite of his.”

“His favorites, you, Kaltos, her, all seem to turn against him,” said Miak-I.

“That is why he will fall,” replied Hzim.

Armored footfall rang along the ceiling, and the cellar door burst open. It was the captain of Baron Othrok’s castle guards. “The docks are on fire! If you want to live, you’ll need to take refuge at Castle Wightmoor!”

“We need help!” Rosayna called back, but she knew that the guards were needed for defense, not to help carry the sick to safety.

With ten guards who could be spared and the most able-bodied of the wounded assisting, the cellar was emptied as the streets of Dwynnen filled with smoke, and fire began to spread through the chaos. It had been a single fireball miscast out at sea striking the docks, but the damage would be tremendous. Some hours later, in the courtyard of the mighty castle, the healers were able to set up the cots and begin to tend once again to the suffering of the innocent. The first person Rosayna found was Orben Elmlock. Even with his wounds reopened, he had helped carry two of the patients into the castle.

“I’m sorry,” she said as she pressed her healing hands onto his wounds. “I lost my temper. I forgot that I am a healer.”

“Where is Kaalys?” Orben asked.

“She’s not here?” Rosayna said, looking around. “She must have run away.”

“Run away? But wasn’t she injured?”

“It was not a healthy situation, but new mothers can surprise you with what they can do when it’s all over.”

“She was pregnant?” Orben gasped

“Yes. It wasn’t such a difficult birth in the end. She was holding the boy in her arms when I saw her last. She said she had done it herself.”

“She was pregnant,” Orben murmured again. “The mistress of the Camoran Usurper was pregnant.”

Word quickly spread throughout the castle that the battle was over, and more than that, the war was over. Haymon Camoran’s forces had been defeated at sea, and in the mountains. The Hart-King was dead.

Lukar watched down from the battlements into the dark woods that surrounded Dwynnen. He had heard about Kaalys, and he imagined a desperate woman fleeing with her newborn baby in her arms into the wilderness. Kaalys would have nowhere to go, no one to protect them. She and her baby would be a refugee, like Miak-I and him had been. Reflecting back, he remembered her words.

He is coming. He is coming, and he will bring death. He will destroy all.

Lukar remembered her eyes. She was sick, but not afraid. Who was this “He” who was coming if the Camoran Usurper was dead?

“Did she say nothing else?” asked Orben.

“She told me the baby’s name,” Rosayna replied. “Mankar.”



# The Shivering Apothecary

*Cinda Amatus*

Many, many things.

Wet things and dry things. Things from plants, things from animals, things from stone and sky and tree and man and mer.

So many beautiful things for potions. All of them there for the taking, waiting to be plucked and put to use. "Grind me! Take my essence and turn me into something new, something wonderful!" they cry out to me.

I have given my life to finding so many of the wondrous things of Tamriel, and now the things that lie beyond. The realm of the Madgod, dangerous and beckoning, has so many new things to offer that I have trembled with excitement over it. I stop to take note of what I have found, so that I may not forget it in the coming days when I spend my time searching, mixing, and discovering.

The Apprentice will find that Marrow from the Shambles and fins from Scalons merge to make a deadly poison that strikes at one's very heart, damaging the health of those who ingest it. Many a blade did I sink into wet flesh and dry bone to learn this, but what I have found pleases me.

Flame stalks and the very essence of Flesh Atronachs can be mixed by even a Novice to counter that damage, as one can

drink a potion made from these two to feel healthy again. The Expert may find that rather than risk himself against those walking monstrosities, the Screaming Maw can be used instead.

For Magicka (and without Magicka where would I stand now?) the ichor of an Elytra can be mixed with Withering Moon by a Novice or Thorn Hook by a Journeyman. No explorer in the Shivering Isles should venture forth without looking for these.

The tongue of a Hunger—by itself a marvel of anatomy—can be eaten to cure poisons or matched with Withering Moon to cure disease. (I cannot help but wonder what disease would be so dire as to risk one's life against a Hunger....)

I have been most pleased to find that to the Expert Alchemist, Rot Scale, and Worm's Head Caps can be mixed to paralyze one's enemies. This has proven most useful in extracting ingredients from the Isles' less cordial residents.

# The Standing Stones

*Anonymous*

Any visitor to the Shivering Isles will soon come across the dreadful shape of a tall, crystalline stone looming over them like an accusing finger. Various known as standing stones or obelisks, they cannot be avoided in traveling the Shivering Isles, no matter how hard you might try.

There are many theories on the origin and purpose of these stones. (Purpose? Can a stone have a purpose? Is it a sentient being, or an inanimate object? Is it listening to you - watching you - whispering to you?). Some claim they are simply interesting geological formations. Not so. Not so. They cannot be chipped or cracked or even scorched. Believe me, I've tried. Nothing harms them. (Although perhaps they still feel the blows. They seemed angry for a while. I sang to them and that seemed to soothe them. I can't say why.) And if you've tried to dig one up, as I have, you know that they go down forever. (Months I spent, digging down. No matter how deep, there it was, still gleaming in the secret darkness beneath the earth. They know the secrets, even those that are buried deep.)

I have spent many years trying to understand these stones. (Avoiding doesn't work. As I said, they're everywhere. So try for understanding, as I have. What is the humming? What do the whispers mean?) I can't say that I know everything about them, but I have learned many things, some of which I can

share with you. (But I don't know what they want. Not yet. Perhaps if I knew what they wanted, I wouldn't be so afraid. They whisper secrets to me, but I promised not to tell. They know many secrets. They're always watching. They never sleep. Not even at night, in the dark of the moon.)

I know they are old, older perhaps than the world itself. They have seen civilizations rise and fall. And they hate us. They are waiting for their master to return. (They won't tell me who, or when. If they hate me so, why do they tell me their secrets? Is it because they know my secrets already?)

You may not believe me. Most don't, but most have not spent the time that I have in trying to learn about these stones. I have spent days listening to their secret whispers and learning their language. (They talk, you know. To each other, mostly. But now to me.) At first it was just a humming, which you can hear if you lean against a stone and listen very closely. It may take hours, or days, but you will hear them. And once you hear the voice of the standing stones, you will never be able to shut it out.

# The Ten Commands Of The Nine Divines

*Anonymous*

By the intercession of St. Alessia, you may be so filled with grace, and the strength and wisdom that comes from grace, that through these teachings you may come to the true meaning of the Nine Divines and Their glories. To convey to man's mind all the manifold subtleties of truth and virtue may not be done, were all the seas ink, and all the skies the parchment upon which Their wisdoms were writ. Yet Akatosh, in His wisdom, knowing how impatient is man, and how loathe he is to travel upon the hard roads of truth, has allowed these ten simple commands to be made manifest with powerful clarity and concise definition.

1. Stendarr says: Be kind and generous to the people of Tamriel. Protect the weak, heal the sick, and give to the needy.
2. Arkay says: Honor the earth, its creatures, and the spirits, living and dead. Guard and tend the bounties of the mortal world, and do not profane the spirits of the dead.
3. Mara says: Live soberly and peacefully. Honor your parents, and preserve the peace and security of home and family.
4. Zenithar says: Work hard, and you will be rewarded. Spend wisely, and you will be comfortable. Never steal, or you will be

punished.

5. Talos says: Be strong for war. Be bold against enemies and evil, and defend the people of Tamriel.

6. Kynareth says: Use Nature's gifts wisely. Respect her power, and fear her fury.

7. Dibella says: Open your heart to the noble secrets of art and love. Treasure the gifts of friendship. Seek joy and inspiration in the mysteries of love.

8. Julianos says: Know the truth. Observe the law. When in doubt, seek wisdom from the wise.

9. Akatosh says: Serve and obey your Emperor. Study the Covenants. Worship the Nine, do your duty, and heed the commands of the saints and priests.

10. The Nine say: Above all else, be good to one another.

If only each man might look into the mirror of these Commands, and see reflected there the bliss that might enfold them, were he to serve in strict obedience to these Commands, he would be cast down and made contrite and humble. The obedient man may come to the altars of the Nine and be blessed, and may receive the comfort and healing of the Nine, and may give thanks for his manifold blessings.

Heedless, the wicked man turns away, and forsaking the simple wisdoms granted to him by the All-Wise and All-Knowing Nine, he lives in sin and ignorance all the days of his life. He bears the awful burden of his crimes, and before Men and God his wickedness is known, and neither blessing nor comfort may he expect from the altars and shrines of the Nine.

Yet the wicked and foolish are not doomed, for in their infinite mercies, the Nine have said, "Repent, and do Good Works, and the Fountains of Grace shall once more spill forth upon you."

Repent your crimes! Tender unto the Emperor the fines of gold, that they may be used to spread the Faith and its Benefits to all Men!

Do yourself good works! Redeem your infamy by shining deeds! Show to all Men and the Nine the good Fame of the Righteous Man, and you may once again approach the altars and shrines of the Chapel to receive the comfort and blessings of the Nine.

# The Third Door

*Annanar Orme*

I.

I sing of Ellabeth, the Queen of the Axe,  
Who could fell a full elm with two hatchet hacks.  
She could rip apart Valenwood just for her fun.  
She studied under Alfhedil in Tel Aruhn.  
He taught her the jabs, the strokes, and the stance  
To make an ax-swing into an elegant dance.  
He taught her the barbed axes of the Orcs bold,  
The six-foot-long axes favored in Winterhold,  
The hollow-bladed axes of the Elves of the West,  
Which whistle when they swing through flesh.  
With a single-headed axe, she could behead two men.  
With a double-headed axe, she could fell more than ten.  
Yet where she lives in legend has most to do



With the man who hacked her own heart in two.

II.

Nienolas Ulwarth the Mighty, who hailed from Blackrose,

The only man who could best Ellabeth with ax blows,

In a minute, she chopped fifty trees; he, fifty-three.

She felt at once that he was the only man for she.

When she professed her love, Nienolas just laughed.

He said he loved more his ax handle and shaft.

And if they weren't enough to slake all his desire

There was another woman named Lorinthyrae.

Fury gripped the Queen of the Axe, the maid Ellabeth,

And her thoughts turned to pondering musings of death.

Mephala and Sheogorath gave her a revengeful scheme

And for weeks, she worked on it in a state like a dream.

In the still of the night, she kidnapped her rival

And then told her choices between doom and survival.

III.

Lorinthyrae awoke in a house in the moors

In a room lightly furnished except for three doors.

Ellabeth explained that behind one of the doors the lass

Would find Ellabeth's and her love, the great Nienolas.

Behind the second lived a ravenous demon.

And behind the third, an exit to freedom.

She must choose a door, and to aid her decision

If she pondered too long, the axe'd make a division.

Lorinthrae wept, and Ellabeth felt contrite,

And opened the door to her immediate right.

It led to the moors, and as she slipped through the gloom,

She advised Lorinthrae to likewise abandon the room.

Lorinthrae ignored her and did not feel her will bend.

Nienolas was largely behind the first door she opened.

IV.

Ellabeth had lied; there was no demon of lore.

The top third of Nienolas was behind the third door.

# The Warp In The West

*Ulvius Tero*

A Report Compiled By Ulvius Tero, Blades Archivist

\* Secret: For Your Eyes Only \*

Let me offer my congratulations to Your Lordship for your recent appointment as ambassador to the Court of Wayrest.

Your Lordship asked me for a review of existing Blades accounts from 3E 417 concerning 'The Warp in the West', and for a summary of the current state of affairs there.

Since Your Lordship was in Black Marsh serving in the staff of Admiral Sosorius at the time, you probably know of these events only from Imperial proclamations and Chapel declarations, which identify this period as the 'Miracle of Peace'. During the 'Miracle of Peace', according to official accounts, the formerly war-wracked Iliac Bay region was transformed overnight from a patchwork of squabbling duchies and petty kingdoms into the peaceful modern counties of Hammerfell, Sentinel, Wayrest, and Orsinium. The 'Miracle of Peace', also known as the 'The Warp in the West', is celebrated as the product of the miraculous interventions of Stendarr, Mara, and Akatosh to transform this troublesome region into peaceful, well-governed Imperial counties. The catastrophic destruction of landscape and property and the

large loss of life attending upon this miracle is understood to have been ‘tragic, and beyond mortal comprehension.’

In as much as this account confirms and validates the current borders of these counties, and identifies the rulers and boundaries of these counties as ‘ordained by the Nine’, the ‘Miracle of Peace’ serves Imperial objectives of peaceful consolidation of ancient petty states and sovereigns into manageable Imperial jurisdictions. The other remarkable features of these events—mass disappearances, armies mysteriously transported hundreds of miles or completely annihilated, titanic storms and celestial phenomena, apparent local discontinuities of time—fit comfortably into the notion that these events are part of a vast, mysterious divine intervention.

However, this is only the public account of these events, and, as you may suspect, it conflicts with many other accounts. In short, while this explanation suits Imperial policy, it has little historical validity.

Your Lordship should know that the Blades have concluded there is no plausible historical account of these events, and despairs that a plausible historical account shall ever be produced. The Blades have concluded that a ‘miracle’ occurred, insofar as the events are inexplicable, but the Blades strongly doubt the miracle was of divine origin.

There is good reason to believe that the ruling families of the four modern Iliac Bay counties had forewarning of the event. There is also some evidence that some of these ruling families may have been directly or indirectly responsible for the event. We do not know the exact sequence of actions that produced the event, although we are confident that the ‘Totem’ artifact

was involved, and that a Blades agent was involved in employing that artifact. We unfortunately lost contact with that agent immediately after the event; his report might have gone some way to resolving the contradictory and paradoxical accounts of the event.

The Blades have on file few reports from agents dating from the “Warp in the West” period. Most of our agents were lost in the initial dislocations, and others were lost in the confusion after the event. I present a few of these reports to give you a general sense of their limitations, including the report of your diplomatic predecessor, Lord Strale. You will have had access to other private and rumored accounts of the period. I believe you will agree that these documents raise more questions than they answer.

‘I was on assignment in the Alik’r Desert, a few miles south of Bergama on the 9th of Frostfall. I was encamped, as it was still early morning, when I felt the ground shake so violently, I was thrown to the ground. Dazed, I was aware of a great roar of a sandstorm, which alarmed me, as I had been on a high dune and had seen nothing like that on the horizon. It was on me before I was even on my knees, burying me and my camp.

When I crawled my way out of the sand, I realized that I must make haste and get to Bergama as soon as possible, as all my food and water had been swept away. The sun was just rising as I began, like I said. When I reached Bergama, it was nightfall. The town was in chaos, filled with the soldiers of Sentinel. The Lord of Bergama’s fortress was in ruins.

There had been an attack, but no one had seen it, only the invasion that followed it. The soldiers of Queen Akorithi of Sentinel refused to be interviewed about how they had

accomplished this sneak attack, but I came to learn that the whole of northern Hammerfell now belonged to them. Even stranger, I discovered that my walk from sunrise to sundown had not taken me not one day, but two. It was now the 11th day of the month, not the 10th. I had lost a day somewhere, and so apparently had everyone else... except Akorithi's soldiers, who somehow were aware of the correct date.

I since have concluded that they had received advance warning, and so were better prepared to deal with the strange confusion of time and dates associated with the Warp.'

'I was, at the time of the Warp, undercover as a witch in the Skeffington Coven of Phyrgeias, in central High Rock. In order to give my report, I had volunteered for an expedition to gather supplies, which would allow me the freedom to reach my contact in Camlorn. I was traveling north-east along the foothills of the Wrothgarian Mountains, on the 9th of Frostfall, when I felt a great heat behind me, like a fire. I turned, but I regret to say I cannot tell you what I saw. The healers tell me my eyes were burned out of my sockets.

I think I must have fallen into a state of semi-consciousness, for I distinctly remember falling as the ground seemed to give way beneath me. Then there was a series of explosions in the distance, to the south, and I heard high whistling noises that were getting louder, coming closer. I had my shield with me, and fortunately anticipated that volleys of some sort were falling from the sky. Though I could not see them, I could hear them coming from a distance away, and was able to use my shield to block them from striking me.

The assault stopped suddenly, and I could smell smoke. I learned later that most of the forest of Ykalon and Phyrgeias had

caught fire, in an inferno that started further south in Daenia and the Ilessan Hills. Fortunately, I kept my bearings, and moved north, finally reaching a temple in the wilderness where my wounds were healed, as well as they could be.

It was there I learned that there had been a three-way clash between Daggerfall, Wayrest, and Orsinium not far from where I had been, and that the land midway between their kingdoms had been decimated.'

'His Imperial Majesty had sent me on a delicate errand, the details of which I cannot convey in this unsecure report, but my official capacity was to be the Emperor's ambassador to the court of Wayrest. From there, I was to meet with an old friend, Lady Brisienna, who was already in the vicinity. Forgoing any attempt at stealth, I was on an Imperial barge, sailing westward on the Bjoulsae, the morning of the 9th of Frostfall. I remember it was a slightly chilly day, but the sky was very blue.

'We had just passed the delightful riverside village of Candlemass when the captain sounded the alarum. There, in front of us, was a colossal wall of water, at least thirty feet high. It smashed our barge to splinters before any of us had a chance to react. I woke up on the shore, having been rescued by one of my servants who had miraculously not lost consciousness. He and I and one other man were the only survivors.

I thought at first that it was suspiciously similar to what happened to another agent of ours in High Rock but a short time before, where a freak storm had shipwrecked him in the Iliac Bay near Privateer's Hold. Furious and determined to see if similar forces were at work, I began a quick march to Wayrest.

The march, however, was not so terribly quick. The villages all along the Bjoulsae were on fire, and battles raged between the orcs of Orsinium and the soldiers of King Eadwyre in the formerly independent principality of Gauvadon, just east of Wayrest. I am an accomplished mage, and quite able to defend myself, but it took the better part of a week to make it those few miles to Wayrest.

King Eadwyre and his queen Barenziah were celebrating their great victories when I arrived. By then, I had gathered the barest facts of the matter, that simultaneously there were seven great battles in the Iliac Bay, and no one could describe them at all, only their bloodsoaked aftermath.

To summarize: on the 9th of Frostfall, there had been forty-four independent kingdoms, counties, baronies, and dukedoms surrounding the Iliac Bay, if one includes the unconquered territories of the Wrothgarian Mountains, the Dragontail Mountains, the High Rock Sea Coast, the Isle of Balfiera, and the Alik'r Desert. On the 11th of Frostfall, there were but four - Daggerfall, Sentinel, Wayrest, and Orsinium - and all the points where they met lay in ruins, as the armies continued to do battle.

I was determined to find the truth from the King, even if I had to be a most undiplomatic diplomat to do it.

Eadwyre, though a generally jovial sort, had blustered, saying he did not want to give out military secrets. The Queen, ever calm with those unreadable red eyes of hers, told me, 'We do not know.'

I think it is safe to assume that Barenziah did not tell me everything, but the facts of her story - which I later verified



after pointed interviews in Daggerfall, Sentinel, and Orsinium - was that they had learned that a certain powerful, ancient weapon was going to be activated. I shan't give the name of it here. Out of fear that it would be used against Wayrest, the King had attempted to buy it from the young adventurer who had discovered its whereabouts. Eadwyre believed, as it turns out quite rightly, that other powers in the Bay had also attempted to win ownership of this device.

What happened then, as Barenziah said, 'We do not know.'

The morning of the 9th and the morning of the 11th somehow merged through some sort of Warp in the West, and Wayrest found themselves at war. Their land had expanded three-fold, but they were under attack by Daggerfall to the west, Orsinium to the east, and Sentinel to the south. There had been no time to understand what had happened, the King said. They had simply reacted, sending their armies to defend their lands against these enemies whose kingdoms had also gained great territorial advantage.

The battles continue on, now months later, as I return to the Imperial City to make my report. What more do I have to say? They are bloody, violent clashes, as is always the case with modern warfare, but I have been to the blackened, desolate no-man's land between the four remaining kingdoms. No mortal army caused that devastation.

I can say that the force that shook the Iliac Bay on the 10th of Frostfall 3E 417 was infinitesimally greater than the power these mighty kingdoms are wielding today.

I can say that there were other strange events on that day which kept the kingdoms from breaking free of the Empire,

and accomplished likely more besides.

And I can say there is nothing left of it - this power, this weapon - in the Bay. The Warp that it created swallowed it up.'

Almost twenty years have passed, and the region, though transformed, has stabilized. There are no more disputed territories, and the kingdoms of Daggerfall, Wayrest, Sentinel, and Orsinium hold their new borders in relative peace.

Wayrest spreads across the eastern coast of the Bay, stretching from the land formerly called Anticlere to half of Gauvadon. Eadwyre has passed on to his ancestors, leaving his kingdom in the hands of his daughter, Elysana, who has two children by her royal consort, and seems likely to hold her father's lands. Your Lordship may also choose to communicate directly with King Helseth and Queen Barenziah in Mournhold. Their primary preoccupations are, of course, with Morrowind's affairs, but they may still have useful observations upon Wayrest's ruling families and political environment that may aid you in your understanding of the court of Queen Elysana.

King Gortwog of Orsinium controls much of the Wrothgarian Mountains as well as the profitable rivercoast of the Bjoulsae. He persists in his demands that Orsinium be recognized as an Imperial province separate from High Rock. The Elder Council treats Gortwog as a recognized king, and collects taxes directly from Orsinium, but officially Orsinium remains a county of High Rock, though technically it spans both the provinces of High Rock and Hammerfell.

Sentinel has gained the most land, sprawling across the entire southern Iliac Bay from Abibon-Gora, beyond the Dragontail Mountains, to the edge of Mournoth, Orsinium's territory.

Queen Akorithi at her death left her enormous kingdom to her only surviving son, Lhotun, who is now surely one of the most powerful kings in Tamriel.

Daggerfall is still ruled by the Breton King Gothryd and the Redguard Queen Aubk-I. Their land now encompasses all of western High Rock, from the border they share with Wayrest at Anticlere to the east, to Ykalon to the north. They have four children now, and are much beloved in their realm.

If there are other repercussions of the mysterious Warp in the West, they have not yet come to our attention in the course of twenty years of observation.

# The Wolf Queen

*Waughin Jarth*

The Wolf Queen, v1

THE WOLF QUEEN

Book One

by

Waughin Jarth

From the pen of the first century third era sage Montocai:

3E 63:

In the autumntide of the year, Prince Pelagius, son of Prince Uriel, who is son of the Empress Kintyra, who is niece of the great Emperor Tiber Septim, came to the High Rock city-state of Camlorn to pay court to the daughter of King Vulstaed. Her name was Quintilla, the most beauteous princess in Tamriel, skilled at all the maidenly skills and an accomplished sorceress.

Eleven years a widower with a young son named Antiochus, Pelagius arrived at court to find that the city-state was being terrorized by a great demon werewolf. Instead of wooing, Pelagius and Quintilla together went out to save the kingdom. With his sword and her sorcery, the beast was slain and by the

powers of mysticism, Quintilla chained the beast's soul to a gem. Pelagius had the gem made into a ring and married her.

But it was said that the soul of the wolf stayed with the couple until the birth of their first child.

3E 80

"The ambassador from Solitude has arrived, your majesty," whispered the steward Balvus.

"Right in the middle of dinner?" muttered the Emperor weakly. "Tell him to wait."

"No, father, it's important that you see him," said Pelagius, rising. "You can't make him wait and then give him bad news. It's undiplomatic."

"Don't go then, you're much better at diplomacy than I am. We should have all the family here," Emperor Uriel II added, suddenly aware how few people were present at his dinner table. "Where's your mother?"

"Sleeping with the archpriest of Kynareth," Pelagius would have said, but he was, as his father said, diplomatic. Instead he said, "At prayer."

"And your brother and sister?"

"Amiel is in Firsthold, meeting with the Archmagister of the Mages Guild. And Galana, though we won't be telling this to the ambassador, of course, is preparing for her wedding to the Duke of Narsis. Since the ambassador expects her to be marrying his patron the King of Solitude instead, we'll tell him that she's at the spa, having a cluster of pestilent boils

removed. Tell him that, and he won't press too hard for the marriage, politically expedient though it may be," Pelagius smiled. "You know how queasy Nords are about warty women."

"But dash it, I feel like I should have some family around, so I don't look like some old fool despised by his nearest and dearest," growled the Emperor, correctly suspecting this to be the case. "What about your wife? Where's she and the grandchildren?"

"Quintilla's in the nursery with Cephorus and Magnus. Antiochus is probably whoring around the City. I don't know where Potema is, probably at her studies. I thought you didn't like children around."

"I do during meetings with ambassadors in damp staterooms," sighed the Emperor. "They lend an air of, I don't know, innocence and civility. Ah, show the blasted ambassador in," he said to Balvus.

Potema was bored. It was the rainy season in the Imperial Province, wintertide, and the streets and the gardens of the City were all flooded. She could not remember a time when it was not raining. Had it been only days, or had it been weeks or months since the sun shone? There was no judging of time any more in the constant flickering torch-light of the palace, and as Potema walked through marble and stone hallways, listening to the pelting of the rain, she could think nothing but that she was bored.

Asthephe, her tutor, would be looking for her now. Ordinarily, she did not mind studying. Rote memorization came easily to her. She quizzed herself as she walked down through the empty ballroom. When did Orsinium fall? 1E 980. Who wrote

Tamrilean Tractates? Khosey. When was Tiber Septim born? 2E 288. Who is the current King of Daggerfall? Mortyn, son of Gothlyr. Who is the current Silvenar? Varbarenth, son of Varbaril. Who is the Warlord of Lilmoth? Trick question: it's a lady, Ioa.

What will I get if I'm a good girl, and don't get into any trouble, and my tutor says I'm an excellent student? Mother and father will renege on their promise to buy me a daedric katana of my own, saying they never remembered that promise, and it's far too expensive and dangerous for a girl my age.

There were voices coming from the Emperor's stateroom. Her father, her grandfather, and a man with a strange accent, a Nord. Potema moved a stone she had loosened behind a tapestry and listened in.

"Let us be frank, your imperial majesty," came the Nord's voice. "My sire, the King of Solitude, doesn't care if Princess Galana looked like an orc. He wants an alliance with the Imperial family, and you agreed to give him Galana or give back the millions of gold he gave to you to quell the Khajiiti rebellion in Torval. This was the agreement you swore to honor."

"I remember no such agreement," came her father's voice, "Can you, my liege?"

There was a mumbling noise that Potema took to be her grandfather, the ancient Emperor.

"Perhaps we should take a walk to the Hall of Records, my mind may be going," the Nord's voice sounded sarcastic. "I distinctly remember your seal being placed on the agreement before it was locked away. Of course, I may verily be mistaken."

“We will send a page to the Hall to get the document you refer to,” replied her father’s voice, with the cruel, soothing quality he used whenever he was about to break a promise. Potema knew it well. She replaced the loose stone and hurried out of the ballroom. She knew well how slowly the pages walked, used to running errands for a doddering emperor. She could make it to the Hall of Records in no time at all.

The massive ebony door was locked, of course, but she knew what to do. A year ago, she caught her mother’s Bosmer maid pilfering some jewelry, and in exchange for her silence, forced the young woman to teach her how to pick locks. Potema pulled two pins off her red diamond broach and slid the first into the first lock, holding her hand steady, and memorizing the pattern of tumblers and grooves within the mechanism.

Each lock had a geography of its own.

The lock to the kitchen larder: six free tumblers, a frozen seventh, and a counter bolt. She had broken into that just for fun, but if she had been a poisoner, the whole Imperial household would be dead by now, she thought, smiling.

The lock to her brother Antiochus’ secret stash of Khajiiti pornography: just two free tumblers and a pathetic poisoned quill trap easily dismantled with pressure on the counterweight. That had been a profitable score. It was strange that Antiochus, who seemed to have no shame, proved so easy to blackmail. She was, after all, only twelve, and the differences between the perversions of the cat people and the perversions of the Cyrodiils seemed pretty academic. Still, Antiochus had to give her the diamond broach, which she treasured.



She had never been caught. Not when she broke into the archmage's study and stole his oldest spellbook. Not when she broke into the guest room of the King of Gilane, and stole his crown the morning before Magnus's official Welcoming ceremony. It had become too easy to torment her family with these little crimes. But here was a document the Emperor wanted, for a very important meeting. She would get it first.

But this, this was the hardest lock she ever opened. Over and over, she massaged the tumblers, gently pushing aside the forked clamp that snatched at her pins, drumming the counterweights. It nearly took her a half a minute to break through the door to the Hall of Records, where the Elder Scrolls were housed.

The documents were well organized by year, province, and kingdom, and it took Potema only a short while to find the Promise of Marriage between Uriel Septim II, by the Grace of the Gods, Emperor of the Holy Cyrodiilic Empire of Tamriel and his daughter the Princess Galana, and His Majesty King Mantiarco of Solitude. She grabbed her prize and was out of the Hall with the door well-locked before the page was even in sight.

Back in the ball room, she loosened the stone and listened eagerly to the conversation within. For a few minutes, the three men, the Nord, the Emperor, and her father just spoke of the weather and some boring diplomatic details. Then there was the sound of footsteps and a young voice, the page.

“Your Imperial Majesty, I have searched the Hall of Records and cannot find the document you asked for.”

“There, you see,” came Potema’s father’s voice. “I told you it didn’t exist.”

“But I saw it!” The Nord’s voice was furious. “I was there when my liege and the emperor signed it! I was there!”

“I hope you aren’t doubting the word of my father, the sovereign Emperor of all Tamriel, not when there’s now proof that you must have been...mistaken,” Pelagius’s voice was low, dangerous.

“Of course not,” said the Nord, conceding quickly. “But what will I tell my king? He is to have no connection with the Imperial family, and no gold returned to him, as the agreement—as he and I believed the agreement to be?”

“We don’t want any bad feelings between the kingdom of Solitude and us,” came the Emperor’s voice, rather feeble, but clear enough. “What if we offered King Mantiarco our granddaughter instead?”

Potema felt the chill of the room descend on her.

“The Princess Potema? Is she not too young?” asked the Nord.

“She is thirteen years old,” said her father. “That’s old enough to wed.”

“She would an ideal mate for your king,” said the Emperor. “She is, admittedly, from what I see of her, very shy and innocent, but I’m certain she would quickly grasp the ways of court—she is, after all, a Septim. I think she would be an excellent Queen of Solitude. Not too exciting, but noble.”

“The granddaughter of the Emperor is not as close as his daughter,” said the Nord, rather miserably. “But I don’t see how we can refuse the offer. I will send word to my king.”

“You have our leave,” said the Emperor, and Potema heard the sound of the Nord leaving the stateroom.

Tears streamed down Potema’s eyes. She knew who the King of Solitude was from her studies. Mantiarco. Sixty-two years old, and quite fat. And she knew how far Solitude was, and how cold, in the northernmost clime. Her father and grandfather were abandoning her to the barbaric Nords. The voices in the room continued talking.

“Well-acted, my boy. Now, make sure you burn that document,” said her father.

“My Prince?” asked the page’s querulous voice.

“The agreement between the Emperor and the King of Solitude, you fool. We don’t want its existence known.”

“My Prince, I told the truth. I couldn’t find the document in the Hall of Records. It seems to be missing.”

“By Lorkhan!” roared her father. “Why is everything in this palace always misplaced? Go back to the Hall and keep searching until you find it!”

Potema looked at the document. Millions of gold pieces promised to the kingdom of Solitude in the event of Princess Galana not marrying the king. She could bring it into her father, and perhaps as a reward he would not marry her to Mantiarco. Or perhaps not. She could blackmail her father and the Emperor with it, and make a tidy sum of money. Or she

could produce it when she became Queen of Solitude to fill her coffers, and buy anything she wanted. More than a daedric katana, that was for certain.

So many possibilities, Potema thought. And she found herself not bored anymore.

The Wolf Queen, v2

The Wolf Queen

Book Two

by

Waughin Jarth

From the pen of the first century third era sage Montocai:

3E 82:

A year after the wedding of his 14-year-old granddaughter the Princess Potema to King Mantiarco of the Nordic kingdom of Solitude, the Emperor Uriel Septim II passed on. His son Pelagius Septim II was made emperor, and he faced a greatly depleted treasury, thanks to his father's poor management.

As the new Queen of Solitude, Potema faced opposition from the old Nordic houses, who viewed her as an outsider.

Mantiarco had been widowed, and his former queen was loved. She had left him a son, Prince Bathorgh, who was two years older than his stepmother, and loved her not. But the king loved his queen, and suffered with her through miscarriage after miscarriage, until her 29th year, when she bore him a son.

3E 97:

“You must do something to help the pain!” Potema cried, baring her teeth. The healer Kelmeth immediately thought of a she-wolf in labor, but he put the image from his mind. Her enemies called her the Wolf Queen for certes, but not because of any physical resemblance.

“Your Majesty, there is no injury for me to heal. The pain you feel is natural and helpful for the birth,” he was going to add more words of consolation, but he had to break off to duck the mirror she flung at him.

“I’m not a pignosed peasant girl!” She snarled, “I am the Queen of Solitude, daughter of the Emperor! Summon the daedra! I’ll trade the soul of every last subject of mine for a little comfort!”

“My Lady,” said the healer nervously, drawing the curtains and blotting out the cold morning sun. “It is not wise to make such offers even in jest. The eyes of Oblivion are forever watching for just such a rash interjection.”

“What would you know of Oblivion, healer?” she growled, but her voice was calmer, quieter. The pain had relaxed. “Would you fetch me that mirror I hurled at you?”

“Are you going to throw it again, your Majesty?” said the healer with a taut smile, obeying her.

“Very likely,” she said, looking at her reflection. “And next time I won’t miss. But I do look a fright. Is Lord Vhokken still waiting for me in the hall?”

“Yes, your Majesty.”

“Well, tell him I just need to fix my hair and I’ll be with him. And leave us. I’ll howl for you when the pain returns.”

“Yes, your Majesty.”

A few minutes later, Lord Vhokken was shown into the chamber. He was an enormous bald man whose friends and enemies called Mount Vhokken, and when he spoke it was with the low grumble of thunder. The Queen was one of the very few people Vhokken knew who was not the least bit intimidated by him, and he offered her a smile.

“My queen, how are you feeling?” he asked.

“Damned. But you’re looking like Springtide has come to Mount Vhokken. I take it from your merry disposition that you’ve been made warchief.”

“Only temporarily, while your husband the King investigates whether there is evidence behind the rumors of treason on the part of my predecessor Lord Thone.”

“If you’ve planted it as I’ve instructed, he’ll find it,” Potema smiled, propping herself up in the bed. “Tell me, is Prince Bathorgh still in the city?”

“What a question, your highness,” laughed the mountain. “It’s the Tournament of Stamina today, you know the prince would never miss that. The fellow invents new strategies of self-defense every year to show off during the games. Don’t you recall last year, where he entered the ring unarmored and after twenty minutes of fending off six bladesmen, left the games without a scratch? He dedicated that bout to his late mother, Queen Amodetha.”

“Yes, I recall.”

“He’s no friend to me or you, your highness, but you must give the man his due respect. He moves like lightning. You wouldn’t think it of him, but he always seems to use his awkwardness to his advantage, to throw his opponents off. Some say he learned the style from the orcs to the south. They say he learned from them how to anticipate a foe’s attack by some sort of supernatural power.”

“There’s nothing supernatural about it,” said the Queen, quietly. “He gets it from his father.”

“Mantiarco never moved like that,” Vhokken chuckled.

“I never said he did,” said Potema. Her eyes closed and her teeth gritted together. “The pain’s returning. You must fetch the healer, but first, I must ask you one other thing—has the new summer palace construction begun?”

“I think so, your Highness.”

“Do not think!” she cried, gripping the sheets, biting her lips so a stream of blood dripped down her chin. “Do! Make certain that the construction begins at once, today! Your future, my future, and the future of this child depend on it! Go!”

Four hours later, King Mantiarco entered the room to see his son. His queen smiled weakly as he gave her a kiss on the forehead. When she handed him the child, a tear ran down his face. Another one quickly followed, and then another.

“My Lord,” she said fondly. “I know you’re sentimental, but really!”

“It’s not only the child, though he is beautiful, with all the fair features of his mother,” Mantiarco turned to his wife, sadly, his aged features twisted in agony. “My dear wife, there is trouble at the palace. In truth, this birth is the only thing that keeps this day from being the darkest in my reign.”

“What is it? Something at the tournament?” Potema pulled herself up in bed. “Something with Bathorgh?”

“No, it’s isn’t the tournament, but it does relate to Bathorgh. I shouldn’t worry you at a time like this. You need your rest.”

“My husband, tell me!”

“I wanted to surprise you with a gift after the birth of our child, so I had the old summer palace completely renovated. It’s a beautiful place, or at least it was. I thought you might like it. Truth to tell, it was Lord Vhokken idea. It used to be Amodetha’s favorite place.” Bitterness crept into the king’s voice. “Now I’ve learned why.”

“What have you learned?” asked Potema quietly.

“Amodetha deceived me there, with my trusted warchief, Lord Thone. There were letters between them, the most perverse things you’ve ever read. And that’s not the worst of it.”

“No?”

“The dates on the letters correspond with the time of Bathorgh’s birth. The boy I raised and loved as a son,” Mantiarco’s voice choked up with emotion. “He was Thone’s child, not mine.”



“My darling,” said Potema, almost feeling sorry for the old man. She wrapped her arms around his neck, as he heaved his sobs down on her and their child.

“Henceforth,” he said quietly. “Bathorgh is no longer my heir. He will be banished from the kingdom. This child you have borne me today will grow to rule Solitude.”

“And perhaps more,” said Potema. “He is the Emperor’s grandson as well.”

“We will name him Mantiarco the Second.”

“My darling, I would love that,” said Potema, kissing the king’s tear-streaked face. “But may I suggest Uriel, after my grandfather the Emperor, who brought us together in marriage?”

King Mantiarco smiled at his wife and nodded his head. There was a knock at the door.

“My liege,” said Mount Vhokken. “His highness Prince Bathorgh has finished the tournament and awaits you to present his award. He has successfully withstood attacks by nine archers and the giant scorpion we brought in from Hammerfell. The crowd is roaring his name. They are calling him The Man Who Cannot Be Hit.”

“I will see him,” said King Mantiarco sadly, and left the chamber.

“Oh he can be hit, all right,” said Potema wearily. “But it does take some doing.”

The Wolf Queen, v3

The Wolf Queen

Book Three

by

Waughin Jarth

From the pen of the first century third era sage Montocai:

3E 98

The Emperor Pelagius Septim II died a few weeks before the end of the year, on the 15th of Evening Star during the festival of North Wind's Prayer, which was considered a bad omen for the Empire. He had ruled over a difficult seventeen years. In order to fill the bankrupt treasury, Pelagius had dismissed the Elder Council, forcing them to buy back their positions. Several good but poor councilors had been lost. Many say the Emperor had died as a result of being poisoned by a vengeful former Council member.

His children came to attend his funeral and the coronation of the next Emperor. His youngest son Prince Magnus, 19 years of age, arrived from Almalexia, where he had been a councilor to the royal court. 21-year-old Prince Cephorus arrived from Gilane with his Redguard bride, Queen Bianki. Prince Antiochus at 43 years of age, the eldest child and heir presumptive, had been with his father in the Imperial City. The last to appear was his only daughter, Potema, the so-called Wolf Queen of Solitude. Thirty years old and radiantly beautiful, she arrived with a magnificent entourage, accompanied by her husband, the elderly King Mantiarco and her year-old son, Uriel.

All expected Antiochus to assume the throne of the Empire, but no one knew what to expect from the Wolf Queen.

3E 99

“Lord Vhokken has been bringing several men to your sister’s chambers late at night every night this week,” offered the Spymaster. “Perhaps if her husband were made aware—”

“My sister is a devotee of the conqueror gods Reman and Talos, not the love goddess Dibella. She is plotting with those men, not having orgies with them. I’d wager I’ve slept with more men than she has,” laughed Antiochus, and then grew serious. “She’s behind the delay of the council offering me the crown, I know it. Six weeks now. They say they need to update records and prepare for the coronation. I’m the Emperor! Crown me, and to Oblivion with the formalities!”

“Your sister is surely no friend of yours, your majesty, but there are other factors at play. Do not forget how your father treated the Council. It is they who need following, and if need be, strong convincing,” The Spymaster added, with a suggestive stab of his dagger.

“Do so, but keep your eye on the damnable Wolf Queen as well. You know where to find me.”

“At which brothel, your highness?” inquired the Spymaster.

“Today being Fredas, I’ll be at the Cat and Goblin.”

The Spymaster noted in his report that night that Queen Potema had no visitors, for she was dining across the Imperial Garden at the Blue Palace with her mother, the Dowager Empress Quintilla. It was a warm night for wintertide and

surprisingly cloudless though the day had been stormy. The saturated ground could not take any more, so the formal, structured gardens looked as if they had been glazed with water. The two women took their wine to the wide balcony to look over the grounds.

“I believe you are trying to sabotage your half-brother’s coronation,” said Quintilla, not looking at her daughter. Potema saw how the years had not so much wrinkled her mother as faded her, like the sun on a stone.

“It’s not true,” said Potema. “But would it bother you very much if it were true?”

“Antiochus is not my son. He was eleven years old when I married your father, and we’ve never been close. I think that being heir presumptive has stunted his growth. He is old enough to have a family with grown children, and yet he spends all his time at debauchery and fornication. He will not make a very good Emperor,” Quintilla sighed and then turned to Potema. “But it is bad for the family for seeds of discontent to be sown. It is easy to divide up into factions, but very difficult to unite again. I fear for the future of the Empire.”

“Those sound like the words—are you, by any chance, dying, mother?”

“I’ve read the omens,” said Quintilla with a faint, ironic smile. “Don’t forget—I was a renowned sorceress in Camlorn. I will die in a few months time, and then, not a year later, your husband will die. I only regret that I will not live to see your child Uriel assume the throne of Solitude.”

“Have you seen whether—” Potema stopped, not wanting to reveal too many of her plans, even to a dying woman.

“Whether he will be Emperor? Aye, I know the answer to that too, daughter. Don’t fear: you’ll live to see the answer, one way or the other. I have a gift for him when he is of age,” The Dowager Empress removed a necklace with a single great yellow gem from around her neck. “It’s a soul gem, infused with the spirit of a great werewolf your father and I defeated in battle thirty-six years ago. I’ve enchanted it with spells from the School of Illusion so its wearer may charm whoever he chooses. An important skill for a king.”

“And an emperor,” said Potema, taking the necklace. “Thank you, mother.”

An hour later, passing the black branches of the sculpted douad shrubs, Potema noticed a dark figure, which vanished into the shadows under the eaves at her approach. She had noticed people following her before: it was one of the hazards of life in the Imperial court. But this man was too close to her chambers. She slipped the necklace around her neck.

“Come out where I can see you,” she commanded.

The man emerged from the shadows. A dark little fellow of middle-age dressed in black-dyed goatskin. His eyes were fixed, frozen, under her spell.

“Who do you work for?”

“Prince Antiochus is my master,” he said in a dead voice. “I am his spy.”

A plan formed. “Is the Prince in his study?”

“No, milady.”

“And you have access?”

“Yes, milady.”

Potema smiled widely. She had him. “Lead the way.”

The next morning, the storm reappeared in all its fury. The pelting on the walls and ceiling was agony to Antiochus, who was discovering that he no longer had his youthful immunity to a late night of hard drinking. He shoved hard against the Argonian wench sharing his bed.

“Make yourself useful and close the window,” he moaned.

No sooner had the window been bolted then there was a knock at the door. It was the Spymaster. He smiled at the Prince and handed him a sheet of paper.

“What is this?” said Antiochus, squinting his eyes. “I must still be drunk. It looks like orcish.”

“I think you will find it useful, your majesty. Your sister is here to see you.”

Antiochus considered getting dressed or sending his bedmate out, but thought better of it. “Show her in. Let her be scandalized.”

If Potema was scandalized, she did not show it. Swathed in orange and silver silk, she entered the room with a triumphant smile, followed by the man-mountain Lord Vhokken.

“Dear brother, I spoke to my mother last night, and she advised me very wisely. She said I should not battle with you in public, for the good of our family and the Empire. Therefore,” she said, producing from the folds of her robe a piece of paper. “I am offering you a choice.”

“A choice?” said Antiochus, returning her smile. “That does sound friendly.”

“Abdicate your rights to the Imperial throne voluntarily, and there is no need for me to show the Council this,” Potema said, handing her brother the letter. “It is a letter with your seal on it, saying that you knew that your father was not Pelagius Septim II, but the royal steward Fondoukth. Now, before you deny writing the letter, you cannot deny the rumors, nor that the Imperial Council will believe that your father, the old fool, was quite capable of being cuckolded. Whether it’s true or not, or whether the letter is a forgery or not, the scandal of it would ruin your chances of being the Emperor.”

Antiochus’s face had gone white with fury.

“Don’t fear, brother,” said Potema, taking back the letter from his shaking hands. “I will see to it that you have a very comfortable life, and all the whores your heart, or any other organ, desires.”

Suddenly Antiochus laughed. He looked over at his Spymaster and winked. “I remember when you broke into my stash of Khajiiti erotica and blackmailed me. That was close to twenty years ago. We’ve got better locks now, you must have noticed. It must have killed you that you couldn’t use your own skills to get what you wanted.”

Potema merely smiled. It didn't matter. She had him.

"You must have charmed my servant here into getting you into my study to use my seal," Antiochus smirked. "A spell, perhaps, from your mother, the witch?"

Potema continued to smile. Her brother was cleverer than she thought.

"Did you know that Charm spells, even powerful ones, only last so long? Of course, you didn't. You never were one for magic. Let me tell you, a generous salary is a stronger motivation for keeping a servant in the long run, sister," Antiochus took out his own sheet of paper. "Now I have a choice for you."

"What is that?" said Potema, her smile faltering.

"It looks like nonsense, but if you know what you're looking for, it's very clear. It's a practice sheet—your handwriting attempting to look like my handwriting. It's a good gift you have. I wonder if you haven't done this before, imitating another person's handwriting. I understand a letter was found from your husband's dead wife saying that his first son was a bastard. I wonder if you wrote that letter. I wonder if I showed this evidence of your gift to your husband whether he would believe you wrote that letter. In the future, dear Wolf Queen, don't lay the same trap twice."

Potema shook her head, furious, unable to speak.

"Give me your forgery and go take a walk in the rain. And then, later today, unhatch whatever other plots you have to keep me from the throne." Antiochus fixed his eyes on Potema's. "I will be Emperor, Wolf Queen. Now go."



Potema handed her brother the letter and left the room. For a few moments, out in the hallway, she said nothing. She merely glared at the slivers of rainwater dripping down the marble wall from a tiny, unseen crack.

“Yes, you will, brother,” she said. “But not for very long.”

The Wolf Queen, v4

The Wolf Queen

Book Four

by

Waughin Jarth

From the pen of the first century third era sage Montocai:

3E 109:

Ten years after being crowned Emperor of Tamriel, Antiochus Septim had impressed his subjects with little but the enormity of his lust for carnal pleasures. By his second wife, Gysilla, he had a daughter in the year 104, who he named Kintyra, after his great-great-great grandaunt, the Empress. Enormously fat and marked by every venereal disease known to the Healers, Antiochus spent little time on politics. His siblings, by marked contrast, excelled in this field. Magnus had married Hellena, the Cyrodiil Queen of Lilmoth—the Argonian priest-king having been executed—and was representing the Imperial interests in Black Marsh admirably. Cephorus and his wife Bianki were ruling the Hammerfell kingdom of Gilane with a healthy brood of children. But no one was more politically

active than Potema, the Wolf-Queen of the Skyrim kingdom of Solitude.

Nine years after the death of her husband, King Mantiarco, Potema still ruled as regent for her young son, Uriel. Their court had become very fashionable, particularly for rulers who had a grudge to bear against the Emperor. All the kings of Skyrim visited Castle Solitude regularly, and over the years, emissaries from the lands of Morrowind and High Rock did as well. Some guests came from even farther away.

3E 110:

Potema stood at the harbor and watched the boat from Pyandonea arrive. Against the gray, breaking waves where she had seen so many vessels of Tamrielic manufacture, it looked less than exotic. Insectoid, certainly, with its membranous sails and rugged chitin hull, but she had seen similar if not identical seacraft in Morrowind. No, if not for the flag which was markedly alien, she would not have picked out the ship from others in the harbor. As the salty mist ballooned around her, she held out her hand in welcome to the visitors from another island empire.

The men aboard were not merely pale, they were entirely colorless, as if their flesh were made of some white limpid jelly, but she had been forewarned. At the arrival of the King and his translator, she looked directly into their blank eyes and offered her hand. The King made noises.

“His Great Majesty, King Orgnum,” said the translator, haltingly. “Expresses his delight at your beauty. He thanks you for giving him refuge from these dangerous seas.”

“You speak Cyrodilic very well,” said Potema.

“I am fluent in the languages of four continents,” said the translator. “I can speak to the denizens of my own country Pyandonea, as well as those of Atmora, Akavir, and here, in Tamriel. Yours is the easiest, actually. I was looking forward to this voyage.”

“Please tell his highness that he is welcome here, and that I am entirely at his disposal,” said Potema, smiling. Then she added, “You understand the context? That I am just being polite?”

“Of course,” said the translator, and then made several noises at the King, which the King reacted to with a smile. While they conversed, Potema looked up the dock and saw the now familiar gray cloaks watching her while they spoke with Levlet, Antiochus’s man. The Psijic Order from the Summerset Isle. Very bothersome.

“My diplomatic emissary Lord Vhokken will show you to your rooms,” said Potema. “Unfortunately, I have some other guests as well who require my attention. I hope your great majesty understands.”

His Great Majesty King Orgnum did understand, and Potema made arrangements to dine with the Pyandoneans that evening. Meeting with the Psijic Order required all of her concentration. She dressed in her simplest black and gold robe and went to her stateroom to prepare. Her son, Uriel, was on the throne, playing with his pet joughat.

“Good morning, mom.”

“Good morning, darling,” said Potema, lifting her son in the air with feigned strain. “Talos, but you’re heavy. I don’t think I’ve ever carried such a heavy ten-year-old.”

“That’s probably because I’m eleven,” said Uriel, perfectly aware of his mother’s tricks. “And you’re going to say that as an eleven-year-old, I should probably be with my tutor.”

“I was fanatical about studying at your age,” said Potema.

“I am king,” said Uriel petulantly.

“But don’t be satisfied with that,” said Potema. “By all rights, you should be emperor already, you understand that, don’t you?”

Uriel nodded his head. Potema took a moment to marvel at his likeness to the portraits of Tiber Septim. The same ruthless brow and powerful chin. When he was older and lost his baby fat, he’d be a splitting image of his great great great great granduncle. Behind her, she heard the door opening and an usher bringing in several gray cloaks. She stiffened slightly, and Uriel, on cue, jumped down from the throne and left the stateroom, pausing to greet the most important of the Psijics.

“Good Morning, Master Iachesis,” he said, enunciating each syllable with a regal accent that made Potema’s heart soar. “I hope your accommodations at Castle Solitude meet with your approval.”

“They do, King Uriel, thank you,” said Iachesis, delighted and charmed.

Iachesis and his Psijics entered the chamber and the door was shut behind them. Potema sat only for a moment on the throne

before stepping off the dais and greeting her guests.

“I am so sorry to have kept you waiting,” said Potema. “To think that you sailed all the way from the Summerset Isles and I should keep you waiting any longer. You must forgive me.”

“It’s not all that long a voyage,” said one of the gray cloaks, angrily. “It isn’t as if we sailed all the way from Pyandonea.”

“Ah. You’ve seen my most recent guests, King Orgnum and his retinue,” said Potema breezily. “I suppose you think it unusual, me entertaining them, as we all know the Pyandoneans mean to invade Tamriel. You are, I take it, as neutral in this as you are in all political matters?”

“Of course,” said Iachesis proudly. “We have nothing to gain or lose by the invasion. The Psijic Order preceded the organization of Tamriel under the Septim Dynasty and we shall survive under any political regime.”

“Rather like a flea on whatever mongrel happens along, are you?” said Potema, narrowing her eyes. “Don’t overestimate your importance, Iachesis. Your order’s child, the Mages Guild, has twice the power you have, and they are entirely on my side. We are in the process of making an agreement with King Orgnum. When the Pyandoneans take over and I am in my proper place as Empress of this continent, then you shall know your proper place in the order of things.”

With a majestic stride, Potema left the stateroom, leaving the grey cloaks to look from one to the other.

“We must speak to Lord Levlet,” said one of the grey cloaks.

“Yes,” said Iachesis. “Perhaps we should.”

Levlet was quickly found at his usual place at the Moon and Nausea tavern. As the three grey cloaks entered, led by Iachesis, the smoke and the noise seemed to die in their path. Even the smell of tobacco and flin dissipated in their wake. He rose and then escorted them to a small room upstairs.

“You’ve reconsidered,” said Levlet with a broad smile.

“Your Emperor,” said Iachesis, and then corrected himself, “Our Emperor originally asked for our support in defending the west coast of Tamriel from the Pyandonean fleet in return for twelve million gold pieces. We offered our services at fifty. Upon reflection on the dangers that a Pyandonean invasion would have, we accept his earlier offer.”

“The Mages Guild has generously—”

“Perhaps for as low ten million gold pieces,” said Iachesis quickly.

Over the course of dinner, Potema promised King Orgnum through the interpreter, to lead an insurrection against her brother. She was delighted to discover that her capacity for lying worked in many different cultures. Potema shared her bed that night with King Orgnum, as it seemed the polite and diplomatic thing to do. As it turned out, he was one of the better lovers she had ever had. He gave her some herbs before beginning that made her feel as if she was floating on the surface of time, conscious only of the gestures of love after she had found herself making them. She felt herself like the cooling mist, quenching the fire of his lust over and over and over again. In the morning, when he kissed her on the cheek, and said with his bald white eyes that he was leaving her, she felt a stab of regret.

The ship left harbor that morning, en route to the Summerset Isles and the imminent invasions. She waved them off to sea as she footsteps behind her. It was Levlet.

“They will do it for eight million, your highness” he said.

“Thank Mara,” said Potema. “I need more time for an insurrection. Pay them from my treasury, and then go to the Imperial City and get the twelve million from Antiochus. We should make a good profit from this game, and you, of course, will have your share.”

Three months later, Potema heard that the fleet of the Pyandoneans had been utterly destroyed by a storm that had appeared suddenly off the Isle of Artaeum. The home port of the Psijic Order. King Orgnum and all of his ships had been utterly annihilated.

“Sometimes making people hate you,” she said, holding her son Uriel close, “Is how you make a profit .”

The Wolf Queen, v5

The Wolf Queen

Book Five

by

Waughin Jarth

From the pen of Inzolicus, Second Century Sage and Student of Montocai:

3E 119:

For twenty-one years, The Emperor Antiochus Septim ruled Tamriel, and proved an able leader despite his moral laxity. His greatest victory was in the War of the Isle in the year 110, when the Imperial fleet and the royal navies of Summerset Isle, together with the magical powers of the Psijic Order, succeeded in destroying the Pyandonean invading armada. His siblings, King Magnus of Lilmoth, King Cephorus of Gilane, and Potema, the Wolf Queen of Solitude, ruled well and relations between the Empire and the kingdoms of Tamriel were much improved. Still, centuries of neglect had not repaired all the scars that existed between the Empire and the kings of High Rock and Skyrim.

During a rare visitation from his sister and nephew Uriel, Antiochus, who had suffered from several illnesses over his reign, lapsed into a coma. For months, he lingered in between life and death while the Elder Council prepared for the ascension of his fifteen-year-old daughter Kintyra to the throne.

3E 120:

“Mother, I can’t marry Kintyra,” said Uriel, more amused by the suggestion than offended. “She’s my first cousin. And besides, I believe she’s engaged to one of the lords of council, Modellus.”

“You’re so squeamish. There’s a time and a place for propriety,” said Potema. “But you’re correct at any rate about Modellus, and we shouldn’t offend the Elder Council at this critical juncture. How do you feel about Princess Rakma? You spent a good deal of time in her company in Farrun.”

“She’s all right,” said Uriel. “Don’t tell me you want to hear all the dirty details.”



“Please spare me your study of her anatomy,” Potema grimaced. “But would you marry her?”

“I suppose so.”

“Very good. I’ll make the arrangements then,” Potema made a note for herself before continuing. “King Lleromo has been a difficult ally to keep, and a political marriage should keep Farrun on our side. Should we need them. When is the funeral?”

“What funeral?” asked Uriel. “You mean for Uncle Antiochus?”

“Of course,” sighed Potema. “Anyone else of note die recently?”

“There were a bunch of little Redguard children running through the halls, so I guess Cephorus has arrived. Magnus arrived at court yesterday, so it ought to be any day now.”

“It’s time to address the Council then,” said Potema, smiling.

She dressed in black, not her usual colorful ensembles. It was important to look the part of the grieving sister. Regarding herself in the mirror, she felt that she looked all of her fifty-three years. A shock of silver wound its way through her auburn hair. The long, cold, dry winters in northern Skyrim had created a map of wrinkles, thin as a spiderweb, all across her face. Still, she knew that when she smiled, she could win hearts, and when she frowned, she could inspire fear. It was enough for her purposes.

Potema’s speech to the Elder Council is perhaps helpful to students of public speaking.

She began with flattery and self-abasement: “My most august and wise friends, members of the Elder Council, I am but a provincial queen, and I can only assume to bring to issue what you yourselves must have already pondered.”

She continued on to praise the late Emperor, who had been a popular ruler, despite his flaws: “He was a true Septim and a great warrior, destroying—with your counsel—the near invincible armada of Pyandonea.”

But little time was wasted, before she came to her point: “The Empress Gysilla unfortunately did nothing to temper my brother’s lustful spirits. In point of fact, no whore in the slums of the city spread out on more beds than she. Had she attended to her duties in the Imperial bedchamber more faithfully, we would have a true heir to the Empire, not the halfwit, milksop bastards who call themselves the Emperor’s children. The girl called Kintyra is popularly believed to be the daughter of Gysilla and the Captain of the Guard. It may be that she is the daughter of Gysilla and the boy who cleans the cistern. We can never know for certain. Not as certainly as we can know the lineage of my son, Uriel. The eldest true son of the Septim Dynasty. My lords, the princes of the Empire will not stand for a bastard on the throne, that I can assure you.”

She ended mildly, but with a call to action: “Posterity will judge you. You know what must be done.”

That evening, Potema entertained her brothers and their wives in the Map Room, her favorite of the Imperial dining chambers. The walls were splashed with bright, if fading representations of the Empire and all the known lands beyond, Atmora, Yokunda, Akavir, Pyandonea, Thras. Overhead the great glass domed ceiling, wet with rain, displayed distorted images of the

stars overhead. Lightning flashed every other minute, casting strange phantom shadows on the walls.

“When will you speak to the Council?” asked Potema as dinner was served.

“I don’t know if I will,” said Magnus. “I don’t believe I have anything to say.”

“I’ll speak to them when they announce the coronation of Kintyra,” said Cephorus. “Merely as a formality to show my support and the support of Hammerfell.”

“You can speak for all of Hammerfell?” asked Potema, with a teasing smile. “The Redguards must love you very much.”

“We have a unique relationship with the Empire in Hammerfell,” said Cephorus’s wife, Bianki. “Since the treaty of Stros M’kai, it’s been understood that we are part of the Empire, but not a subject.”

“I understand you’ve already spoken to the Council,” said Magnus’s wife, Hellena, pointedly. She was a diplomat by nature, but as the Cyrodilic ruler of an Argonian kingdom, she knew how to recognize and confront adversity.

“Yes, I have,” said Potema, pausing to savor a slice of braised jalfbird. “I gave them a short speech about the coronation this afternoon.”

“Our sister is an excellent public speaker,” said Cephorus.

“You’re too kind,” said Potema, laughing. “I do many things better than speaking.”

“Such as?” asked Bianki, smiling.

“Might I ask what you said in your speech?” asked Magnus, suspiciously.

There was a knock on the chamber door. The head steward whispered something to Potema, who smiled in response and rose from the table.

“I told the Council that I would give my full support to the coronation, provided they proceed with wisdom. What could be sinister about that?” Potema said, and took her glass of wine with her to the door. “If you’ll pardon me, my niece Kintyra wishes to have a word with me.”

Kintyra stood in the hall with the Imperial Guard. She was but a child, but on reflection, Potema realized that at her age, she was already married two years to Mantiarco. There was a similarity, to be certain. Potema could see Kintyra as the young queen, with dark eyes and pallid skin smooth and resolute like marble. Anger flashed momentarily in Kintyra’s eyes on seeing her aunt, but emotion left her, replaced with calm Imperial presence.

“Queen Potema,” she said serenely. “I have been informed that my coronation will take place in two days time. Your presence at the ceremony will not be welcome. I have already given orders to your servants to have your belongings packed, and an escort will be accompanying you back to your kingdom tonight. That is all. Goodbye, aunt.”

Potema began to reply, but Kintyra and her guard turned and moved back down the corridor to the stateroom. The Wolf Queen watched them go, and then reentered the Map Room.

“Sister-in-Law,” said Potema, addressing Bianki with deep malevolence. “You asked what I do better than speaking? The answer is: war.”

The Wolf Queen, v6

The Wolf Queen

Book Six

by

Waughin Jarth

From the pen of Inzolicus, Second Century Sage:

3E 120:

The fifteen-year-old Empress Kintyra Septim II, daughter of Antiochus, was coroneted on the 3rd day of First Seed. Her uncles Magnus, King of Lilmoth, and Cephorus, King of Gilane, were in attendance, but her aunt, Potema, the Wolf Queen of Solitude, had been banished from the court. Once back in her kingdom, Queen Potema began assembling the rebellion, which was to be known as the War of the Red Diamond. All the allies she had made over the years of disgruntled kings and nobles joined forces with her against the new Empress.

The first early strikes against the Empire were entirely successful. Throughout Skyrim and northern High Rock, the Imperial army found themselves under attack. Potema and her forces washed over Tamriel like a plague, inciting riots and insurrections everywhere they touched. In the autumn of the year, the loyal Duke of Glenpoint on the coast of High Rock sent an urgent request for reinforcements from the Imperial Army,

and Kintyra, to inspire the resistance to the Wolf Queen, led the army herself.

3E 121:

“We don’t know where they are,” said the Duke, deeply embarrassed. “I’ve sent scouts out all over the countryside. I can only assume that they’ve retreated up north upon hearing of your army’s arrival.”

“I hate to say it, but I was hoping for a battle,” said Kintyra. “I’d like to put my aunt’s head on a spike and parade it around the Empire. Her son Uriel and his army are right on the border to the Imperial Province, mocking me. How are they able to be so successful? Are they just that good in battle or do my subjects truly hate me?”

She was tired after many months of struggling through the mud of autumn and winter. Crossing the Dragontail Mountains, her army nearly marched into an ambush. A blizzard snap in the normally temperate Barony of Dwynnen was so unexpected and severe that it must certainly have been cast by one of Potema’s wizard allies. Everywhere she turned, she felt her aunt’s touch. And now, her chance of facing the Wolf Queen at last had been thwarted. It was almost too much to bear.

“It is fear, pure and simple,” said the Duke. “That is her greatest weapon.”

“I need to ask,” said Kintyra, hoping that by sheer will she could keep her voice from revealing any of the fear the Duke spoke of. “You’ve seen the army. Is it true that she has summoned a force of undead warriors to do her bidding?”

“No, as a matter of fact, it’s not true, but she certainly fosters that rumor. Her army attacks at night, partly for strategic reasons, and partly to advance fears like that. She has, so far as I know, no supernatural aid other than the standard battlemages and nightblades of any modern army.”

“Always at night,” said Kintyra thoughtfully. “I suppose that’s to disguise their numbers.”

“And to move her troops into position before we’re aware of them” added the Duke. “She’s the master of the sneak attack. When you hear a march to the east, you can be certain she’s already on top of you from the south. But listen, we’ll discuss this all tomorrow morning. I’ve prepared the castle’s best rooms for you and your men.”

Kintyra sat in her tower suite and by the light of the moon and a single tallow candle, she penned a letter to her husband-to-be, Lord Modellus, back in the Imperial City. She hoped to be married to him in the summer at the Blue Palace her grandmother Quintilla had loved so much, but the war may not permit it. As she wrote, she gazed out the window at the courtyard below and the haunted, leafless trees of winter. Two of her guards stood on the battlements, several feet away from one another. Just like Modellus and Kintyra, she thought, and proceeded to expound on the metaphor in her letter.

A knock on the door interrupted her poetry.

“A letter, your majesty, from Lord Modellus,” said the young courier, handing the note to her.

It was short, and she read it quickly before the courier had a chance to retire. “I’m confused by something. When did he

write this?"

"One week ago," said the courier. "He said it was urgent that I make it here as quickly as possible while he mobilized the army. I imagine they've left the City already."

Kintyra dismissed the courier. Modellus said that he had received a letter from her, urgently calling for reinforcements to the battle at Glenpoint. But there was no battle at Glenpoint, and she had only just arrived today. Then who wrote the letter in her handwriting, and why would they want Modellus to bring a second army out of the Imperial City into High Rock?

Feeling a chill from the night air at the window, Kintyra went to shut the latch. The two guards on the battlements were gone. She leaned over at the sound of a muffled struggle behind one of the barren trees, and did not hear the door open.

When she turned, she saw Queen Potema and Mentin, Duke of Glenpoint, in the room with a host of guards.

"You move quietly, aunt," she said after a moment's pause. She turned to the Duke. "What turned you against your loyalty to the Empire? Fear?"

"And gold," said the Duke simply.

"What happened to my army?" asked Kintyra, trying to look Potema steadily in the face. "Is the battle over so soon?"

"All your men are dead," smiled Potema. "But there was no battle here. Merely quiet and efficient assassination. There will be battles ahead, against Modellus in the Dragontail Mountains and against the remnants of the Imperial Army in the City. I'll send you regular updates on the progress of the war."



“So I am to be kept here as your hostage?” asked Kintyra, flatly, suddenly aware of the solidity of the stones and the great height of her tower room. “Damn you, look at me! I am your Empress!”

“Think of it this way, I’m taking you from being a fifth rate ruler to a first rate martyr,” said Potema with a wink. “But I understand if you don’t want to thank me for that.”

The Wolf Queen, v7

The Wolf Queen

Book Seven

by

Waughin Jarth

From the pen of Inzolicus, Second Century Sage:

3E 125:

The exact date of the Empress Kintyra Septim II’s execution in the tower at Glenpoint Castle is open to some speculation. Some believe she was slain shortly after her imprisonment in the 121st year, while others maintain that she was likely kept alive as a hostage until shortly before her uncle Cephorus, King of Gilane, reconquered western High Rock in the summer of the 125th year. The certainty of Kintyra’s demise rallied many against the Wolf Queen Potema and her son, who had been crowned Emperor Uriel Septim III four years previously when he invaded the under-guarded Imperial City.

Cephorus concentrated his army on the war in High Rock, while his brother Magnus, King of Lilmoth, brought his Argonian troops through loyal Morrowind and into Skyrim to fight in Potema's home province. The reptilian troops fought well in the summer months, but during the winter, they retired south to regroup and attack again when the weather was warm. At this stalemate, the War lasted out two more years.

Also, in the 125th year, Magnus's wife Hellenia gave birth to their first child, a boy who they named Pelagius, after the Emperor who fathered Magnus, Cephorus, the late Emperor Antiochus, and the dread Wolf Queen of Solitude.

3E 127:

Potema sat on soft silk cushions in the warm grass in front of her tent and watched the sun rise over the dark woods on the other side of the meadow. It was a peculiarly vibrant morning, typical of Skyrim summertime. The high chirrup of insects buzzed all around her and the sky surged with thousands of falling birds, rolling over one another and forming a multitude of patterns. Nature was unaware of the war coming to Falconstar, she surmised.

"Your highness, a message from the army in Hammerfell," said one of her maids, bringing in a courier. He was breathing hard, stained with sweat and mud. Evidence of a long, fast ride over many, many miles.

"My queen," said the courier, looking to the ground. "I bring grave news of your son, the Emperor. He met your brother King Cephorus's army in Hammerfell in the countryside of Ichidag and there did battle. You would be proud, for he fought well, but in the end, the Imperial army was defeated and your son,

our Emperor, was captured. King Cephorus is bringing him to Gilane.”

Potema listened to the news, scowling. “That clumsy fool,” she said at last.

Potema stood up and strolled into camp, where the men were arming themselves, preparing for battle. Long ago, the soldiers understood that their lady did not stand on ceremony, and she would prefer that they work rather than salute her. Lord Vhokken was ahead of her, already meeting with the commander of the battlemages, discussing last minute strategy.

“My queen,” said the courier, who had been following her. “What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to win this battle with Magnus, despite his superior position holding the ruins of Kogmenthist Castle,” said Potema. “And then when I know what Cephorus means to do with the Emperor, I’ll respond accordingly. If there’s a ransom to be paid, I’ll pay it; if there’s a prison exchange needed, so be it. Now, please, bath yourself and rest, and try not to get in the way of the war.”

“It’s not an ideal scenario,” said Lord Vhokken when Potema had entered the commander’s tent. “If we attack the castle from the west, we’ll be running directly into the fire from their mages and archers. If we come from the east, we’ll be going through swamps, and the Argonians do better in that type of environment than we do. A lot better.”

“What about the north and south? Just hills, correct?”

“Very steep hills, your highness,” said the commander. “We should post bowmen there, but we’ll be too vulnerable putting out the majority of our force.”

“So it’s the swamp,” said Potema, and added, pragmatically. “Unless we withdraw and wait for them to come out before fighting.”

“If we wait, Cephorus will have his army here from High Rock, and we’ll be trapped between the two of them,” said Lord Vhokken. “Not a preferable situation.”

“I’ll talk to the troops,” said the commander. “Try to prepare them for the swamp attack.”

“No,” said Potema. “I’ll speak to them.”

In full battlegear, the soldiers gathered in the center of camp. They were a motley collection of men and women, Cyrodiils, Nords, Bretons, and Dunmer, youngbloods and old veterans, the sons and daughters of nobles, shopkeepers, serfs, priests, prostitutes, farmers, academics, adventurers. All of them under the banner of the Red Diamond, the symbol of the Imperial Family of Tamriel.

“My children,” Potema said, her voice ringing out, hanging in the still morning mist. “We have fought in many battles together, over mountaintops and beach heads, through forests and deserts. I have seen great acts of valor from each one of you, which does my heart proud. I have also seen dirty fighting, backstabbing, cruel and wanton feats of savagery, which pleases me equally well. For you are all warriors.”

Warming to her theme, Potema walked the line from soldier to soldier, looking each one in the eye: “War is in your blood, in your brain, in your muscles, in everything you think and everything you do. When this war is over, when the forces are vanquished that seek to deny the throne to the true emperor, Uriel Septim III, you may cease to be warriors. You may choose to return to your lives before the war, to your farms and your cities, and show off your scars and tell tales of the deeds you did this day to your wondering neighbors. But on this day, make no mistake, you are warriors. You are war.”

She could see her words were working. All around her, bloodshot eyes were focusing on the slaughter to come, arms tensing around weapons. She continued in her loudest cry, “And you will move through the swamplands, like an unstoppable power from the blackest part of Oblivion, and you will rip the scales from the reptilian things in Kogmenthist Castle. You are warriors, and you need not only fight, you must win. You must win!”

The soldiers roared in response, shocking the birds from the trees all around the camp.

From a vantage point on the hills to the south, Potema and Lord Vhokken had excellent views of the battle as it raged. It looked like two swarms of two colors of insect moving back and forth over a clump of dirt which was the castle ruins. Occasionally, a burst of flame or a cloud of acid from one of the mages would flicker over the battle arresting their attention, but hour after hour, the fighting seemed like nothing but chaos.

“A rider approaches,” said Lord Vhokken, breaking the silence.

The young Redguard woman was wearing the crest of Gilane, but carried a white flag. Potema allowed her to approach. Like the courier from the morning, the rider was well travel-worn.

“Your Highness,” she said, out of breath. “I have been sent from your brother, my lord King Cephorus, to bring you dire news. Your son Uriel was captured in Ichidag on the field in battle and from there transported to Gilane.”

“I know all this,” said Potema scornfully. “I have couriers of my own. You can tell your master that after I’ve won this battle, I’ll pay whatever ransom or exchange—”

“Your Highness, an angry crowd met the caravan your son was in before it made it to Gilane,” the rider said quickly, “Your son is dead. He had been burned to death within his carriage. He is dead.”

Potema turned from the young woman and looked down at the battle. Her soldiers were going to win. Magnus’s army was in retreat.

“One other item of news, your highness,” said the rider. “King Cephorus is being proclaimed Emperor.”

Potema did not look at the woman. Her army was celebrating their victory.

The Wolf Queen, v8

The Wolf Queen

Book Eight

by

Waughin Jarth

From the pen of Inzolicus, Second Century Sage:

3E 127:

Following the Battle of Ichidag, the Emperor Uriel Septim III was captured and, before he was able to be brought to his uncle's castle in the Hammerfell kingdom of Gilane, he met his death at the hands of an angry mob. This uncle, Cephorus, was thereafter proclaimed emperor and rode to the Imperial City. The troops formerly loyal to Emperor Uriel and his mother, the Wolf Queen Potema, pledged themselves to the new Emperor. In return for their support, the nobility of Skyrim, High Rock, Hammerfell, the Summerset Isle, Valenwood, Black Marsh, and Morrowind demanded and received a new level of autonomy and independence from the Empire. The War of the Red Diamond was at an end.

Potema continued to fight a losing battle, her area of influence dwindling and dwindling until only her kingdom of Solitude remained in her power. She summoned daedra to fight for her, had her necromancers resurrect her fallen enemies as undead warriors, and mounted attack after attack on the forces of her brothers, the Emperor Cephorus Septim I and King Magnus of Lilmoth. Her allies began leaving her as her madness grew, and her only companions were the zombies and skeletons she had amassed over the years. The kingdom of Solitude became a land of death. Stories of the ancient Wolf Queen being waited on by rotting skeletal chambermaids and holding war plans with vampiric generals terrified her subjects.

3E 137:

Magnus opened up the small window in his room. For the first time in weeks, he heard the sounds of a city: carts squeaking, horses clopping over the cobblestones, and somewhere a child laughing. He smiled as he returned to his bedside to wash his face and finish dressing. There was a distinctive knock on the door.

“Come in, Pel,” he said.

Pelagius bounded into the room. It was obvious that he had been up for hours. Magnus marveled at his energy, and wondered how much longer battles would last if they were run by twelve-year-old boys.

“Did you see outside yet?” Pelagius asked. “All the townspeople have come back! There are shops, and a Mages Guild, and down by the harbor, I saw a hundred shops come in from all over the place!”

“They don’t have to be afraid anymore. We’ve taken care of all the zombies and ghosts that used to be their neighbors, and they know it’s safe to come back.”

“Is Uncle Cephorus going to turn into a zombie when he dies?” asked Pelagius.

“I wouldn’t put that past him,” laughed Magnus. “Why do you ask?”

“I heard some people saying that he was old and sick,” said Pelagius.

“He’s not that old,” said Magnus. “He’s sixty years old. That’s just two years older than I.”



“And how old is Aunt Potema?” asked Pelagius.

“Seventy,” said Magnus. “And yes, that is old. Any more questions will have to wait. I have to go meet with the commander now, but we can talk at supper. You can make yourself busy, and not get into any trouble?”

“Yes, sir,” said Pelagius. He understood that his father had to continue to hold siege on aunt Potema’s castle. After they took it over and locked her up, they would move out of the inn and into the castle. Pelagius was not looking forward to that. The whole town had a funny, sweet, dead smell, but he could not get even as close as the castle moat without gagging from the stench. They could dump a million flowers on the place and it wouldn’t make any difference at all.

He walked through the city for hours, buying some food and then some ribbons for his sister and mother back in Lilmoth. He thought about who else he needed to buy gifts for and was stumped. All his cousins, the children of Uncle Cephorus, Uncle Antiochus, and Aunt Potema, had died during the war, some of them in battle and some of them during the famines because so many crops had been burned. Aunt Bianki had died last year. There was only he, his mother, his sister, his father, and his uncle the Emperor left. And Aunt Potema. But she didn’t really count.

When he came upon the Mages Guild earlier that morning, he had decided not to go in. Those places always spooked him with their strange smoke and crystals and old books. This time, it occurred to Pelagius that he might buy a gift for Uncle Cephorus. A souvenir of Solitude’s Mages Guild.

An old woman was having trouble with the front door, so Pelagius opened it for her.

“Thank you,” she said.

She was easily the oldest thing he had ever seen. Her face looked like an old rotted apple framed with a wild whirl of bright white hair. He instinctively moved away from her gnarled talon when she started to pat him on the head. But there was a gem around her neck that immediately fascinated him. It was a single bright yellow jewel, but it almost looked there was something trapped within. When the light hit it from the candles, it brought out the form of a four-legged beast, pacing.

“It’s a soul gem,” she said. “Infused with the spirit of a great demon werewolf. It was enchanted long, long ago with the power to charm people, but I’ve been thinking about giving it another spell. Perhaps something from the School of Alteration like Lock or Shield.” She paused and looked at the boy carefully with yellowed, rheumy eyes. “You look familiar to me, boy. What’s your name?”

“Pelagius,” he said. He normally would have said “Prince Pelagius,” but he was told not to draw attention to himself while in town.

“I used to know someone named Pelagius,” the old woman said, and slowly smiled. “Are you here alone, Pelagius?”

“My father is... with the army, storming the castle. But he’ll be back when the walls have been breached.”

“Which I dare say won’t take too much longer,” sighed the old woman. “Nothing, no matter how well built, tends to last. Are you buying something in the Mages Guild?”

“I wanted to buy a gift for my uncle,” said Pelagius. “But I don’t know if I have enough gold.”

The old woman left the boy to look over the wares while she went to the Guild enchanter. He was a young Nord, ambitious, and new to the kingdom of Solitude. It took little persuasion and a lot of gold to convince him to remove the charm spell from the soul gem and imbue it with a powerful curse, a slow poison that would drain wisdom from its wearer year by year until he or she lost all reason. She also purchased a cheap ring of fire resistance.

“For your kindness to an old woman, I’ve bought you these,” she said, giving the boy the necklace and the ring. “You can give the ring to your uncle, and tell him it has been enchanted with a levitation spell, so if ever he needs to leap from high places, it will protect him. The soulgem is for you.”

“Thank you,” said the boy. “But this is too kind of you.”

“Kindness has nothing to do with it,” she answered, quite honestly. “You see, I was in the Hall of Records at the Imperial Palace once or twice, and I read about you in the foretellings of the Elder Scrolls. You will be Emperor one day, my boy, the Emperor Pelagius Septim III, and with this soul gem to guide you, posterity will always remember you and your deeds.”

With those words, the old woman disappeared down an alley behind the Mages Guild. Pelagius looked after her, but he did not think to search behind a heap of stones. If he had, he would

have found a tunnel under the city into the very heart of Castle Solitude. And if he had found his way there, he would have found, past the shambling undead and the moldering remains of a once grand palace, the bedroom of the queen.

In that bedroom, he would find the Wolf Queen of Solitude in repose, listening to the sounds of her castle collapsing. And he would see a toothless grin growing on her face as she breathed her last.

From the pen of Inzolicus, Second Century Sage:

3E 137:

Potema Septim died after a month long siege on her castle. While she lived, she had been the Wolf Queen of Solitude, Daughter of the Emperor Pelagius II, Wife of King Mantiarco, Aunt of the Empress Kintyra II, Mother of Emperor Uriel III, and Sister of the Emperors Antiochus and Cephorus. At her death, Magnus appointed his son, Pelagius, as the titular head of Solitude, under guidance from the royal council.

3E 140:

The Emperor Cephorus Septim died after falling from his horse. His brother was proclaimed the Emperor Magnus Septim.

3E 141:

Pelagius, King of Solitude, is recorded as “occasionally eccentric” in the Imperial Annals. He marries Katarish, Duchess of Vvardenfell.

3E 145:

The Emperor Magnus Septim dies. His son, who will be known as Pelagius the Mad, is coronated.

# Traitor's Diary

*Anonymous*

It's all right, mother. It's almost over. I'm close. So very close. How long have we struggled? How long have we waited? Too long, I know. But it's almost over. I promise.

killhimkillhimkillhimkillhimkillhimkillhimkillhimkillhimkill  
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mommy mommy as you lie the dark man comes and makes  
you die my daddy's hands are red with guilt because he killed  
the life we built

I hate it! All this lying, all this pretending! Sithis and the Five  
Tenets be damned! How long do I have to live by their rules?  
How long before I get my chance? I saw Lucien Lachance  
yesterday. He was in the Sanctuary talking with Ocheeva. He  
was right there! So close I could have severed his spine in less  
than a heartbeat! Oh Mother, never before have I had to

exercise such self-control. What's sickeningly ironic is that it was the Dark Brotherhood's discipline that allowed me to restrain myself. I've been a part of their "family" for so long it's a part of me, whether I like it or not. And in all that time I've fooled them all. They see me as a fellow member of the Brother, a trusted family member. Some day soon I will learn the truth about the Night Mother, and when I do, I will use that trust to get close to her. Close enough so that I may rend the head from her body, just as Lucien Lachance did to you so long ago!

Damn it, mother! Why did it have to be this way? Maria was so beautiful. She was perfect in so many ways. Why couldn't she handle the truth? Why couldn't she realize her "family" didn't really love her? She was a murderer like the rest of us. Paid to kill in the name of Sithis. I really thought we could be together. Make a real family, with real love. But she told me she could never accept your place in my life. So now she's gone. She didn't deserve to live after the horrible things she said about you. I never should have told her, I know. I'm so sorry. It will never happen again, and the others will never find her, don't worry. There's nothing left of her to find.

I liketolieinthegrassandwatchtheantsandwishI

wereoneofthemintheirundergroundmazesosafefromthe

darknessofpeoplehorriblepeopleIwillkillthem

allkilltheantskillthepeoplekilleverything

I did it, mother! I killed them all! I killed them and I cursed them to wander their ship in undeath for all eternity! They came to talk to the old man in the lighthouse. When they saw me, they could have kept walking. But no. They laughed! They

laughed at me, mother! They called me names! They said I was strange, that I was a human rat, living here in the cellar of the lighthouse. They did not know who they were dealing with! So I snuck on board, later that night, and I slit their throats. Every last one of them. So there the Serpent's Wake sits. The ghost ship of Anvil they'll call it now! Ha ha ha ha ha!

Some wonderful news, mother! Advancement at last! Lucien Lachance paid a visit to the Sanctuary today, to talk with me! He told me the Black Hand needed my services. One of the other Speakers is looking to replace his assistant, who was killed fulfilling a contract. So Lucien Lachance suggested me! I met with the Speaker, and will serve as his new "Silencer." Ha! Lachance might as well have given me a contract to kill the Night Mother herself! I am now one step closer to realizing our dream. I will learn the Night Mother's identity and tear the heart from her chest. Oh yes, and I have something special planned for Lachance himself...

mommy I so afrade. i mis yu mommy. i just wantyu to kis me agenn

father prayed and guess who came the hooded man in Sithis' name who left but then he came once more to pass through window wall and door I lie in fear my mouth agape as wicked blade did cleave your nape for I was watching 'neath the bed to see the falling of your head and when your face lie on the floor our loving eyes did meet once more and so I pledged to you that day the Brotherhood would dearly pay and just as they took me from you I'd find and kill their mother too but there's someplace I need to start and that's with father's beating heart and when that's done I'll sing and dance to celebrate a dead LaChance



greenblueREDyelloworangegreenblueREDyelloworangegreenbl  
ueREDyelloworange

greenblueREDyelloworangegreenblueREDyelloworangegreenbl  
ueREDyelloworange

greenblueREDyelloworangeBLACKBLACKBLACKBLACKBLACK!  
!!!!

I've been careless! Too careless. The bodies, the burnings. Killing that fool Blanchard was the worst mistake I've made so far. I was seen! I was cloaked and hooded, and escaped into shadow, so no one learned my true identity. But now the Black Hand is suspicious. They suspect treachery, suspect a traitor! I must be more cautious than ever.

when in the snow I like to lie and fold my arms and wait to die

I've been switching them! Switching the dead drops! It was so easy! I tracked Lachance from his lair at Fort Farragut to the first dead drop location. After Lachance placed the orders, when I was sure he was gone, I switched them! It was so easy. Now Lachance's fool Silencer is working for us, mother! Oh, the fun we'll have. One of the Black Hand told me they haven't seen such an ambitious family member since I first joined the Dark Brotherhood. I will use that very ambition to my own advantage. The fool will never question the dead drops, and as I write this is en route to the first target—one of the very members of the Black Hand! And so it begins. Lachance's silencer will kill one high ranking Brother member, then another, then another, and so on, until the entire family implodes. Eventually, as is the custom, the survivors will consult the Night Mother and seek her guidance. When that

day comes, I will be there, ready to punge a blade into that dark  
whore's fetid heart!

!eid lliw ecnahcaL neicuL

# Transfer Orders

*Anonymous*

By order of the Legion Commander of the Imperial Watch, Hieronymus Lex is relieved of his duties as a Watch Captain of the Imperial Watch. His services are to be contracted to the Countess of Anvil for the remainder of his Imperial contract. When that contract expires, the Countess of Anvil may choose at her discretion to retain him or release him.

Legion Commander,

Imperial Watch

# Treatise On Ayleidic Cities

*Anonymous*

Treatise on Ayleidic Cities:

Varsa Baalim and the Nefarivigum

Test of Dagon

Chapter the Tenth

I will not be the first scholar to point to a combination of benign intent and arrogance on behalf of the Ayleids as the source of many ruinous affairs for the old heartland elves.

The Nefarivigum, a foul construct of Mehrunes Dagon, was erected to be ever watchful for the pilgrim who would approach it and best an unknown trial of worth. It is said that such a pilgrim would be rewarded with the blessing of Mehrunes Razor, a vicious blade through which Dagon himself can claim the very souls of those it strikes.

Benign intent compelled Ayleid folk to seek out the Nefarivigum. Arrogance let them believe themselves capable of disbarring any who would seek the Razor. So was built Varsa Baalim, a great, ringed, labyrinthine city, during the height of Ayleid rule.

Sure as death, pilgrims came to Varsa Baalim, and for years the Elves drove back many, until it came to pass that a vampire slipped into the city unnoticed. Merfolk were touched with the foul affliction, throwing the city into a gathering storm of madness and ruin, and soon it seemed none was left to prevent the Razor from being recovered.

Then, suddenly, Varsa Baalim was gone. Historic accounts dispute whether it happened through some final safety, a natural cataclysm, or by the touch of the Divines themselves. Whatever the cause, history agrees on the result: the mountains of the Eastern Niben swallowed Varsa Baalim, and the Nefarivigum with it, where has remained hidden since the early days of the First Era.

If the tale is true, then somewhere on the eastern fringes of the Niben Valley, where man's rule has scarcely reached through the years, the Nefarivigum still lies in wait, among a city of unliving abominations entombed within the cold bowels of the mountain.

# Undelivered Letter (Jalbert)

*Anonymous*

Aluc, my friend -

I apologize that I have not written before now, and pray that you worry not. How could you have known that your patrol would stumble across my outing at the cemetery? There was no denying my deed; a sack full of limbs and grave-soil still fresh on my boots. With your men standing by, what choice was there but pursuit, lest they suspect your own true nature? Truly, I am glad it was you to expose me, and not another whose spellfire may not have missed my escape so widely!

My new haven provides safety and bodies to work on, whether those long-dead or hapless bandits; I will be content here for some time, though I dare not yet to say where. Care for Caessue, and know that when the time comes, I shall return to live again in our beloved Daggerfall. Until then, Captain Cardius, remain vigilant and always hidden.

- Jalbert

# Undelivered Letter (Orrery)

*Anonymous*

Until a buyer can be found, the items should be hidden.

Scatter them, so the Legion pigs can't ferret them out easily.  
Use our safespots at the following camps:

Dagny's Camp

Brotch Camp

Bodean Camp

Varus Camp

Word will be sent when it's time to get rid of these things.

# Vernaccus And Bourlor

## *Tavi Dromio*

Hallgerd walked into the King's Ham that Loredas evening, his face clouded with sadness. While he ordered a mug of greef, his mates Garaz and Xiomara joined him with moderately sincere concern.

“What’s wrong with you, Hallgerd?” asked Xiomara. “You’re later than usual, and there’s a certain air of tragedy you’ve dragged in with you. Have you lost money, or a nearest and dearest?”

“I haven’t lost any money,” Hallgerd grimaced. “But I’ve just received word from my nephew than my cousin Allioch has died. Perfectly natural, he says, just old age. Allioch was ten years younger than me.”

“Aw, that’s terrible. But it goes to show that it’s important to savor all of life’s possibilities, ‘cause you never know when your time is coming,” said Garaz, who had been sitting at the same stool at the smoky cornerclub for the last several hours. He was not one cursed with self-awareness.

“Life’s short all right,” agreed Xiomara. “But if you’ll pardon a sentimental thought, few of us are aware of the influence we’ll have after our deaths. Perhaps there’s comfort there. For example, have I told you the story about Vernaccus and Bourlor?”



“I don’t believe so,” said Hallgerd.

Vernaccus was a daedra (said Xiomara, throwing a few dribbles on flin on the hearth to cast the proper mood), and though our tale took place many, many years ago, it would be fair to say that Vernaccus still is one. For what after all is time to the immortal daedra?

“Actually,” Garaz interrupted. “I understand that the notion of immortality—”

“I am trying to offer our friend an inspirational tale in his hour of need,” Xiomara growled. “I don’t have all bloody night to tell it, if you don’t mind.”

You wouldn’t have heard of Vernaccus (said Xiomara, abandoning the theme of immortality for the time being) for even at the height of his power and fame, he was considered feeble by the admittedly high standards of the day. Of course, this lack of respect infuriated him, and his reaction was typical of lesser daedra. He went on a murderous rampage.

Soon word spread through all the villages in the Colovian West of the unholy terror. Whole families had been butchered, castles destroyed, orchards and fields torched and cursed so nothing would ever grow there again.

To make things even worse for the villagers, Vernaccus began getting visitations from an old rival of his from Oblivion. She was a daedra seducer named Horavatha, and she delighted in taunting him to see how angry she could make him become.

“You’ve flooded a village and that’s supposed to be impressive?” she would sneer.

“Try collapsing a continent, and maybe you’ll get a little attention.”

Vernaccus could become pretty angry. He didn’t come very close to collapsing the continent of Tamriel, but it wasn’t for lack of trying.

A hero was needed to face the mad daedra, and fortunately, one was available.

His name was Bournalor, and it was said that he had been blessed by the goddess Kynareth. That was the only explanation for his inhuman accuracy with his bow and arrow, for he never missed a target. As a child he had driven his marksmanship tutors wild with frustration. They would tell him how to plant his feet, how to nock a bolt, the proper grip for the cord, the best method of release. He ignored all the rules, and somehow, every time, the arrow would catch a breath of wind and sail directly to his target. It did not matter if the quarry was moving or still, at very close range or miles away. Whatever he wanted to strike with his arrow would be struck.

Bournalor answered the call when one of the village mayors begged him for help. Unfortunately, he was not as great a horseman as he was an archer. As he rode through the forest toward the mayor’s town, a place called Evensacon, Vernaccus was already murdering everyone there. Horavatha watched, and stifled back a yawn.

“Murdering a small town mayor isn’t going to put you in famous company, you know. What you need is a great champion to defeat. Someone like Ysgramor or Pelinal Whitestrake or—” she stared at the figure emerging from the forest. “That fellow!”

“Who’s he?” growled Vernaccus between bites of the mayor’s quivering body.

“The greatest archer in Tamriel. He’s never missed.”

Bourlor had his bow strung and was pointing it at the daedra. For a moment, Vernaccus felt like laughing—the fellow was not even aiming straight—but he had a well-honed sense of self-preservation. There was something about the man’s look of confidence that convinced the daedra that Horavatha wasn’t lying. As the bolt left the bow, Vernaccus vanished in a sheet of flame.

The arrow impaled a tree. Bourlor stood and stared. He had missed a target.

In Oblivion, Vernaccus raged. Fleeing before a mortal man like that—not even the basest scamp would have been so craven. He had exposed himself for the weak, cowardly creature he was. As he considered what steps to take to salvage the situation, he found himself face-to-knee with the most fearsome of the Daedra Princes, Molag Bal.

“I never thought anything much of you, Vernaccus,” the giant boomed. “But you have more than proven your worth. You have shown the creatures of Mundus that the daedra are more powerful than the blessings of the Gods.”

The other denizens of Oblivion quickly agreed (as they always did) with the view of Molag Bal. The daedra are, after all, always very sensitive about their various defeats at the hands of mortal champions. Vernaccus was proclaimed The Elusive Beast, The Unpursuable One, He Who Cannot Be Touched, The

Bane of Kynareth. Shrines devoted to him began to be built in remote corners of Morrowind and Skyrim.

Bourlor meanwhile, now found flawed, was never again called to rescue a village. He was so heartbroken over his failure to strike his target that he became a hermit, and never restrung his bow again. Some months later, he died, unmourned and unremembered.

“Is this really the tale you thought would cheer me?” asked Hallgerd incredulously.

“I’ve heard the King of Worms told more inspirational stories.”

“Wait,” smiled Xiomara. “I’m not finished yet.”

For a year’s time, Vernaccus was content to watch his legend grow and his fledging worship spread from his home in Oblivion. He was, in addition to being cowardly and inclined toward murderous rages, also a very lazy creature. His worshippers told tales of their Master avoiding the bolts of a thousand archers, of moving through oceans without getting wet, and other feats of avoidance that he would rather not have to demonstrate in person. The real story of his ignominious retreat from Bourlor was thankfully forgotten.

The bad news, when it came, was delivered to him with some relish by Horavatha. He had delighted in her jealousy at his growing reputation, so it was with a cruel smile she told him, “Your shrines are being assaulted.”

“Who dares?” he roared.

“Everyone who passes them in the wilderness feels the need to throw a stone,” Horavatha purred. “You can hardly blame

them. After all, they represent He Who Cannot Be Touched. How could anyone be expected to resist such a target?”

Vernaccus peered through the veil into the world of Mundus and saw that it was true. One of his shrines in Colovian West country was surrounded by a large platoon of mercenary soldiers, who delighted in pelting it with rocks. His worshippers huddled inside, praying for a miracle.

In an instant, he appeared before the mercenaries and his rage was terrifying to behold. They fled into the woods before he even had a chance to murder one of them. His worshippers threw open the wooden door to the shrine and dropped to their knees in joy and fear. His anger melted. Then a stone struck him.

Then another. He turned to face his assailants, but the air was suddenly filled with rocks.

Vernaccus could not see them, but he heard mercenaries in the woods laugh, “It’s not even trying to move out of the way!”

“It’s impossible not to hit him!” guffawed another.

With a roar of humiliation, the daedra bounded into the shrine, chased by the onslaught. One of the stones knocked the door closed behind him, striking him in the back. His face broke, anger and embarrassment disappearing, replaced by pain. He turned, shaking, to his worshippers who huddled in the shadows of the shrine, their faith shattered.

“Where did you get the wood to build this shrine?” Vernaccus groaned.

“Mostly from a copse of trees near the village of Evensacon,” his high-priest shrugged.

Vernaccus nodded. He dropped forward, revealing the deep wound in his back. A rusted arrowhead buried in a whorl in the wood of the door had jolted loose in the assault and impaled him. The daedra vanished in a whirlwind of dust.

The shrines were abandoned shortly thereafter, though Vernaccus did have a brief resurgence as the Patron Spirit of Limitations and Impotence before fading from memory altogether. The legend of Bournalor himself never became very well known either, but there are still some who tell the tale, like myself. And we have the advantage of knowing what the Great Archer himself didn't know on his deathbed—his final arrow found its target after all.

# Vicente's Note To Ocheeva

*Vicente Valtieri*

Ocheeva,

Damn that young fool Antoinetta and her experimental recipes! As if the stench of her cooking weren't bad enough, last week she made a particularly offensive dish consisting of mandrake, onions... and garlic! Garlic! I have told her repeatedly of the danger this plant poses to me, but she has obviously not heeded my warnings.

It is strange, this reaction I have to garlic. In all my wanderings, in all my research, I have never encountered another vampire thusly affected. It is true that some popular lore holds that all vampires have an inherent weakness to garlic, but this is simply not the case. My situation, as far as I can tell, is unique. If I were to somehow come into contact with garlic, if it in some way came to be on my person, the results could be catastrophic. I would most certainly suffer from a loss of strength and stamina, and fear my resistance to magic would be nearly completely nullified.

So please, Ocheeva, as mistress of this Sanctuary, I beg you to keep Antoinetta on a tighter leash. I love her as a Sister, of course, but can not be held accountable for my actions should she continue to disregard my own personal safety. The Tenets clearly state that one family member may not kill another; but

I don't need to remind you there is no restriction against draining Antoinetta of a few pints of precious life's blood.

Vicente



# Vitharn: The Fall

*Anonymous*

In which the Keep Vitharn is established and passes from the first generation of rule to the second.

Count Vitharn, who built and appointed his keep from the mud of Dementia, gathered to himself any who would pledge themselves as liege. Nearby tribes of Fanatics were united as vassals to protect his lands and line, and thus the Count lived out his days in the Isles. He and his Countess Mawean bore Csaran and Nweala, the first son and daughter of Vitharn.

Csaran's mother and father believed that with the proper political influence, Csaran could certainly usurp Sheogorath and carry the Shivering Isles into a prosperous age. For his part, Count Vitharn refused even to acknowledge Sheogorath, thinking himself and his heirs irrefutable rulers of the Isles.

This, of course, amused the Madgod to no end, and so he allowed the marriage of Csaran to Sheen-in-Glade, daughter of an Argonian midwife who believed that the mortal sphere would afford her daughter nothing but hatred and oppression.

Sheen-in-Glade was as excellent a Countess to Csaran as any in the Isles could ask for, wanting nothing but to bring pride and honor to her adopted house and Court. For years her mind was untouched, even living as she did in the heart of Dementia. Alas, none may reside too long in the Isles without the blessing

of Lord Sheogorath, and so Sheen-in-Glade was finally pushed to the brink by the infidelity of her Husband, the Count.

Csaran was obsessively nepotistic, and distrustful of anyone with whom he shared no blood relation including his bride. Though Sheen-in-Glade bore a son by the Count (who disappeared from the Isles in his twentieth year), it is known that the two shared their bed with decreasing frequency as Csaran's paranoia grew, and he found himself in the arms of his birth-sister Nweala, who bore of their incestuous affair the heir apparent, Cesrien. There are those of us who remember personally the reign of Cesrien, and his contribution to the fall of Vitharn.

In which the birth of Count Cesrien heralds a glorious, bloody, and brief age for Vitharn.

Violent-natured and quick of temper, Cesrien sought enemies where there were none. His early days on the seat of Vitharn saw the extermination of every tribe of man, mer, or beast within sight of the keep, until none were left.

During his brief reign, much of the southeastern coastline of Dementia was unsafe to travel, littered with the corpses of trespassers in the lands of Vitharn, staked to trees as territorial markers. Beside his sadistic temper, Count Cesrien of Vitharn was known also for his slow wit and ailing health.

Indeed, Cesrien was born with legs that seemed mismatched in length, and breathed with a laborious rasp. As a youth, tutors were hard-pressed to school the dull boy. Midwives and nurses surrounded him, attending his every ailment with balms and vapors from every corner of the Isles, but when he came of age he sent them away, often becoming violent in their dismissal.

Perhaps showing the influence of his father, Cesrien became increasingly introverted, allowing only a select few courtiers in his presence. He was seen in public only when organizing his vassal Fanatics for yet another raid on the countryside.

Atypically adhering to the desperate counsel of his advisors, Cesrien paused in his plundering to take a wife and ensure the continuation of Vitharn's noble line. The increasingly ill Count chose a vibrant peasant woman as his betrothed, from a Heretic Commune in the wilds of Mania. Indeed, Countess Jideen could not have been any more his opposite. Vassal Fanatics, long loyal to their ancestral agreement with Count Vitraen, were inflamed by this heresy, and tensions grew as the health of Cesrien finally failed, and his young son, Cirion, ascended the throne of Vitharn.

In which conflict besets Vitharn and the Irenic Count Cirion is overwhelmed.

Young Count Cirion had scarcely been seen in public before his hasty coronation in the bailey of Vitharn Keep. Some say he still bore bruises from beatings at the feeble hand of his father during his final hours during the ceremony. Had Cirion been old enough to govern, his gentle, reserved demeanor may have been enough to ease the seething tension among the Vassal tribe, but his mother, Countess Jideen was forced to assume many of the duties her husband had so long ignored.

By all accounts, Jideen was a fit Countess; loved by her people—but the leaders of the Vassal Fanatics could not contain indefinitely their personal sentiments of outrage at her Manic heritage. Despite her exceedingly tactful attempts at diplomacy, the animosity against her was deep-seated, and

grew over the years. It is perhaps admirable that the Vassals remained true to the oaths so long.

When Cirion finally came of age to rule, the sheepish boy-Count tried in earnest to ascend gracefully, but his fear of the world was so great that even the shadow of a passing bird would startle him visibly. He was all but unable to address the people publicly, and when he attempted to placate the Vassals—still outraged by his Mother’s heritage—he could scarcely contain his fright, and some say that he even soiled himself before fleeing the throne chamber.

Certain as the march of fate, the tolerance of the Vassal Fanatics snapped, and warriors encircled Vitharn. The Count’s personal guards were ill-suited to repel the attack and the siege lasted a single day. Since the day of that battle, no living soul has wandered away from Vitharn. Local myth tells of a tireless struggle between the spirits of the Fanatic vassals and Vitharn’s meager defenders, damned by the treachery of Fanatics and the cowardice of Cirion to replay their final moments in perpetuity.

# Wanted Poster Of The Gray Fox

*Anonymous*

The Gray Fox

Wanted for theft, embezzlement, forgery, pickpocketing, counterfeiting, burglary, conspiracy to commit theft, grand larceny, tax evasion, slander, fraud, perfidy and impertinence.

Description: wears a gray cloak that conceals his appearance. Presumed male and Colovian. Height between 5 and 6 feet. Normal weight. Hair and eye color unknown.

Any citizen with information should contact the Imperial Watch.

Watch Captain Hieronymus Lex

# Waterfront Tax Records

*Anonymous*

Adanrel, 3 coins

Amusei, 1 coin

Armand Christophe, 4 coins

Astay Haymon, 2 coins

Bronsilá Kvinchal, 3 coins

Carwen, 2 coins

Damian Magius, 3 coins

Dranas Llethro, 1 coin

Graman gro-Marad, 2 coins

Hillod, empty handed - thrashed

Isleif, 2 coins

Jair, 3 coins

Kastay Kvinchal, 3 coins

Methredhel, 2 coins

Ormil, 7 coins

Raven Camoran, 2 coins

Skarla Wirich, 2 coins

Myvryna Arano, exempted

Uzul gro-Grulam, 3 coins

Velan Andus, 3 coins

Vlanarus Kvinchal, 4 coins

# Way Of The Exposed Palm

*Anonymous*

Untrained pugilists are known to make a club of the hand and beat on their opponents like a drum. It is a truly uncouth way to victory. The way of the exposed palm is far more sophisticated and far more deadly.

Consider this question. A man is struck in the chest by the flat of a plate. There is a small bruise but he is otherwise unharmed. Now break the plate and strike him in the chest with a shard using the same force. Now the man is dead or grievously wounded. How can this be? How can a small object harm more than a larger?

This essential point is the first finger of the way of the exposed palm. The five part way is concentration, reaction, equilibrium, speed, breath control. To master unarmed combat all five digits must be mastered.

The parable of the man and the plate is concentration. All of the blow is concentrated into a small point. Therefore it is more potent. To strike with just the thumb can be more deadly than to strike with the whole fist. However, only the highly trained fighter can do this.

The second aspect of concentration is the mental discipline to think hard about what is being done. Distractions are ignored



as the will maintains the ultimate goal. The truly deadly fighter can even block out his own pain in this manner.

# Wayshrines Map

*Anonymous*

If you wish to repent of your sins and rededicate your life to the Gods, pray at the Wayshrines of the Nine.

May the Nine hear your prayers and look upon you with tender loving kindness.

# Wine Ingredient List

## *Talan*

I can make the following wines for you in about 24 hours, provided I have the necessary ingredients.

Frost dew Blanc:

Aloe Vera Leaves x2, Green Stain Cup x2

Restore Health, Restore Fatigue

Colovian Battlecry:

Bog Beacon Asco, Cinnabar Polypore Red, Cinnabar Polypore Yellow

Shield, Fortify Endurance

Julianos Firebelly:

Sacred Lotus Seed, Lady's Smock Leaves x2

Resist Frost, Fortify Health

Numbskin Mead:

Dragon's Tongue, Lady's Smock Leaves x2

Resist Fire, Fortify Health

Stumblefoot's Reserve:

Arrowroot, Flax Seeds x2

Feather, Fortify Strength

Argonian Bloodwine:

Bergamot Seeds x2, Foxglove Nectar x2, White Seed Pod (from Goldenrod)

Resist Poison, Resist Disease, Water Breathing

Sparkling Honeydew:

Lavender Sprig x2, Summer Bolete x2

Fortify Personality, Fortify Speechcraft

# Withershins

*Yaqut Tawashi*

“All right,” said Kazagha. “Why don’t you want to talk?”

Zaki put down his mug of mead and just stared at his wife for a few seconds. Finally, grudgingly: “Because everything I have a conversation, darling, it flows in alphabetical order. Just like I told you. I think the only way to stop it is not to talk at all.”

“Couldn’t you just be imagining this?” said Kazagha patiently. “It wouldn’t be the first time you had an insane paranoid delusion. Remember when you thought the royal battlemage of Black Marsh was hiding behind every tree with lewd intent, intent on making you—a middle-aged, fat, balding tailor—into his personal sex slave? You don’t need to be ashamed, but it’s Sheogorath’s way to make us all a little crazy sometimes. If you go to the healer—”

“Damn it, Kazagha!” snarled Zaki and stomped out, slamming the door behind him. He nearly collided with Siyasat, his neighbor.

“Excuse me,” she said to Zaki’s back. He clamped his hands over his ears as he stormed down the street, turning the corner to his tailor shop. His first customer was waiting out front, smiling widely. Zaki tried to keep his temper under control and took out his keys, returning the customer’s smile.

“Fine day,” said the young man.

“Gods!” hollered Zaki, sending the young man flying with a well-placed punch, and dashing away.

As much as he hated to admit that Kazagha was right, it was evidently time, once again, for one of the healer’s herbal cocktails. Tarsu’s temple to health, mental and physical, was several streets north, an impressive obelisk. Halqa, the chief herbalist, met him before he came in the hall.

“How are you today, Sa’Zaki Saf?”

“I need to make an appointment with Tarsu,” said Zaki in his calmest voice.

“Just one moment, let me see how his schedule looks.” Halqa said, looking over a scroll. “Is this an emergency?”

“Kind of,” said Zaki, and slapped his head. Why couldn’t he say yes, or absolutely, or sure?

“Let’s see,” said Halqa, frowning. “The best I can do is next Middas. Would that work for you?”

“Middas!” cried Zaki. “I’ll be a complete psychotic by Middas. Isn’t there anything earlier?”

He knew what the answer would be before she said it. There was no alternative. In a way, he had forced the response. If only he had kept the conversation going until “Y.”

“No,” said Halqa. “I’m sorry. Do you want me to make the appointment—?”

Zaki walked away, gritting his teeth. He wandered the streets, his head down to avoid all conversations, until he looked up and discovered that he had walked all the way to the wharf. A sweet breeze was blowing along the water and he took several deep breaths until he felt almost normal. When his temper cooled, he could think again. What if this alphabetical conversation wasn't a delusion at all? What if what he felt wasn't paranoia, but acute awareness? He knew it was the classic dilemma: am I crazy or is there really something weird going on?

Across the road was a shop called ParaDocks, featuring a display of herbs, crystals, and vapors trapped in orbs . The sign in the window read "Mystical Consultation sunrise to noon." It was worth a shot, though Zaki was dubious. The only people who generally came down the wharf for healing were stupid adventurers who didn't know any better.

Incense burned in copious billows of pink and gold, obscuring and then revealing the clutter within. Jijic death masks glowered down from the walls, smoking censurs hung by chains from the ceiling, and the floor was a maze of bookshelves. At a wellworn table in the back a small man wearing a headress was tabulating a young lady's purchases.

"Okay," said the man. "Your total comes to fifty-seven gold pieces. I threw in the restorative scale conditioner for free. Just remember, the candle should be lit only after you invoke Goroflox The Unholy, and mandrake root does best in partial shade."

The customer gave a quick, shy smile to Zaki and left the store.

“Please help me,” said Zaki. “Every conversation I hear or get involved in seems to be arranged alphabetically. I don’t know if I’m going insane or if there are some kind of bizarre forces at work. To be honest with you, I’m normally a skeptic when it comes to your type of business, but I’m at the end of my rope. Can you do anything to make this madness end?”

“Quite a common problem, actually,” said the man, patting Zaki on the arm. “When you get to the end of the alphabet, do conversations then go to reverse alphabetical order or start at the beginning of the alphabet?”

“Reverse alphabetical order,” said Zaki, and then corrected himself. “Damn it! I mean, it starts from the beginning, all over again. I’m in agony. Can you call on the spirits and tell me, am I insane?”

“Sauriki,” said the man with a reassuring smile. “I don’t have to. You’re quite sane.”

“Thank you,” said Zaki, frowning. “By the way, my name’s Zaki, not Sauriki.”

“Unusually close, eh?” said the man, patting Zaki on the back. “My name’s Octoplasm. Follow me, please. I think I have just what you need.”

Octoplasm lead Zaki down the narrow corridor behind the desk. The two men pushed past dusty cabinets filled with strange creatures in liquids, past heaps of neolithic stones, past stack after stack of moldering leather-bound books, into the dank heart of the store. There he picked up a small, squat cylindrical drum and a book, and handed them to Zaki.



“Vampirism, Daedric Possession, and Withershin Therapy,” said Zaki, squinting his eyes to read the book in the gloom. “What in Oblivion does this have to do with me? I’m not a vampire, look at this tan. And what’s Withershin Therapy, and how much will it cost me?”

“Withershins, from the Old Cyrodilic withersynes, which means backwards,” said Octoplasm in a serious tone. “It’s the art of reversing the direction of things in order to gain access to the spirit world, and break curses, cure vampirism, and trigger all manners of apotropaic healing. You know the story about the guy who was told that slaughterfish live in hot water, so he said, ‘Well, let’s boil them in cold water?’”

“Xenophus,” said Zaki instinctively, his brother having taken a rather esoteric upper level course in Cyrodilic philosophy as an elective in at the Imperial College thirty-one years before, and immediately wishing he hadn’t. “And what do you do with the cylindrical thingy?”

Octoplasm lit a candle and held the object over it so Zaki could see more clearly. All along the cylinder were narrow slits and when Zaki peered within them, he saw a succession of old black and white drawings of a naked man leaping over boxes, one frame after the next.

“You spin it like so,” said Octoplasm, slowly whirling the device clockwise so the man within leapt over the boxes over and over again. “It’s called a zoetrope. Pretty neat, eh? Now, you take it and start spinning it counterclockwise, and while you’re doing it, read this incantation I’ve marked in the book.”

Zaki took the zoetrope and began spinning it counterclockwise over the candle, so the little naked man within seemed to

bound backwards over the boxes. It took a little coordination and concentration to keep whirling at a steady pace, but gradually the man's awkward and jerky backjumps became more and more fluid until Zaki could no longer see the individual frames flipping. It looked just like a little humanoid hamster on an endless reverse treadmill. While he continued to spin the zoetrope with one hand, Zaki took the book in the other and read the underlined passage.

“Zoetrope counter-spin, counter-spin, counter-spin / Pull my life from the rut that it's in / I invoke the Goddesses Boethiah, Kynareth, and Drisis / To invert my potentially metaphysical crisis / My old life may have been rather pointless and plain / But I dislike the prospect of going insane / Make the pattern reverse by this withershin / Zoetrope, counter-spin, counter-spin, counter-spin.”

As he chanted the spell, Zaki noticed that the little naked man in the zoetrope began to look more like himself. The moustache vanished, and the hairline receded. The man's waistline expanded, and the buttocks sagged to the shape and texture of half-inflated balloons. Scales approximating his own Argonian pattern appeared. The man began to trip as he bounded backwards over the boxes, taking bigger breaths and sweating. By the time Zaki reached the end of the incantation, his twin was clutching his chest and tumbling end-over-end over the boxes in a free-fall.

Octoplasm took the zoetrope and the book from Zaki's hands. Nothing seemed to have changed. No thunder had rumbled. No winged serpents had sprung out of Zaki's head. No fiery explosions. But Zaki felt that something was different. Good different. Normal.

At the counter, when Zaki pulled out his sachel of gold pieces, Octoplasm merely shook his head: "Are treatment radical such of effects term long the what sure be can't we, naturally. Charge no."

Feeling the first real relief he had felt in days, Zaki walked backwards out of the shop and down the road to his shop.

# Worn, Faded Note

*Ghola gro-Muzgol*

[This worn, faded note was written on a scrap of parchment and secured by a piece of rawhide to the vampire's neck.]

My name is Ghola gro-Muzgol. My companion's names are Aranalda, Nille Elf-Daughter, Avita Cassiana, and Umar gra-Khar.

The vampire Dratik died by our hands, but the price was dear. Those into whose hands we have fallen, we thank you, and pray your favor.

We served Lady Azura. Bring these, our last words, to the Her Shrine. We praise Her with the full fountain of our devotion.

Our destinies were written in the stars, that our souls and reason be slain, and our world lost forever.

None can escape Her Fate. But let us be remembered at Her shrine, and in the hearts of Her servants.

“It is only by fate

that any life ends,

and only by chance

that it is mine...

not yours.”

# Zealotry Of Sheogorath

*Anonymous*

The self-proclaimed Zealots of Sheogorath believe our liege lord to be not just a man of mysterious and wondrous powers, but a living god. They believe his will sustains the lands and his whim supports all things in it. They believe Arden-Sul, Who Reads the Winds in Our Entrails, was the mortal aspect of Lord Sheogorath, and will come again to cleanse the Realm. Since these claims are clearly ridiculous, it can be assumed that all Zealots are quite mad.

The Zealots cannot be reasoned with. They cannot be treated with easily. They attack almost anyone on sight, assuming them to be heretics or non-believers. They fight to the death, reveling in the carnage.

The reader might ask, then how does one join the Zealots? After much research, I discovered that Zealots sneak into settled areas and leave sets of robes behind. Anyone inclined toward Zealotry can don these robes and approach the Zealots safely. It is said that Zealot leaders can see the true heart of a supplicant, even if he wears the robes, and will slay any false supplicants.

Even then, the Zealots have painful rituals meant to prove their fealty to Sheogorath. Only the most devout supplicants are

accepted into their ranks. Those who fail these tests are put to death.

Once a supplicant is accepted as a Zealot, he is taught ceremonies and sorcerous secrets. The best known of these is summoning Flesh Atronachs to do their bidding. These powerful creatures are formidable foes.

# **Skyrim Codexes**



# A Dream Of Sovngarde

*Skardan Free-Winter*

In a few hours, I will likely be dead.

My men and I, Nords of Skyrim all, will soon join with the Emperor's legions to attack the Imperial City. The Aldmeri are entrenched within and our losses will be severe. It is a desperate gambit, for if we do not reclaim the city, we will lose the war.

Last night I prayed to mighty Talos for courage and strength in the battle to come. In these last cold hours before the sun rises, I sit down to write this account of a dream I had not long after.

I believe this dream was the answer to my prayers, and I would pass along the wisdom it contained to my kinsmen, for the battles they will fight in the years after my passing.

In the dream, I walked through mists toward the sound of laughter, merriment and the songs of the north. The mists soon cleared, and before me lay a great chasm. Waters thundered over its brim, and so deep it was, I could not see the bottom.

A great bridge made all of whale-bone was the only means to cross, and so I took it.

It was only a few steps onto the bridge that I encountered a warrior, grim and strong. "I am Tsun, master of trials," he said to me, his voice booming and echoing upon the walls of the high mountains all around us.

With a wave, he bade me pass on. I knew in my heart that I was granted passage only because I was a visitor. Should the hour come when I return here after my mortal life, the legends say that I must best this dread warrior in single combat.

Beyond the bridge, a great stone longhouse rose up before me, so tall as to nearly touch the clouds. Though it took all my strength, I pushed open the towering oaken door and beheld the torch-lit feast hall.

Here were assembled the greatest heroes of the Nords, all drinking mead poured from great kegs and singing battle-songs. Suckling pigs turned on a long iron spit over a roaring fire. My mouth watered at the smell of roast meat, and my heart was glad to hear the songs of old.

"Come forth!" cried out a hoary man who sat upon a high wooden chair. This I knew to be Ysgramor, father of Skyrim and the Nords. I approached and knelt before him.

"You find yourself in Sovngarde, hall of the honored dead. Now, what would you have of me, son of the north?" he bellowed.

"I seek counsel," said I, "for tomorrow we fight a desperate battle and my heart is full of fear."

Ysgramor raised his tankard to his lips and drank until the cup was empty. Then he spoke once more.

“Remember this always, son of the north - a Nord is judged not by the manner in which he lived, but the manner in which he died.”

With that, he cast aside his flagon, raised his fist in the air and roared a great cheer. The other heroes rose to their feet and cheered in answer.

The sound still rang in my ears when I awoke. I gathered my men and told them of my vision. The words seemed to fill their hearts with courage.

The horns are blowing, and the banners are raised. The time has come to muster. May Talos grant us victory this day, and if I am found worthy, may I once again look upon that great feast hall.

- Skardan Free-Winter

# A Gentleman's Guide To Whiterun

*Mikael*

Welcome, good sir, to this indispensable guide. Within these pages, I, your humble author and guide, will describe to you the great city of Whiterun, the Jewel of the North.

Whiterun offers numerous diversions for the man in search of adventure, fortune and companionship, whether for a night or for a lifetime. The city is graced with not one, but two worthy taverns and there are maids and wenches aplenty.

The city is located rather centrally in Skyrim, and this is well, for it is not far from anywhere. Perched high upon a rocky hill, Whiterun dominates the grassy plains that surround it. High wooden walls protect its denizens from the wolves, mammoths, bandits and other dangers lurking beyond.

When you first enter through the city's main gate, you will find yourself in the Plains District. This is so named because it is the lowest of the city's three neighborhoods.

Ah, but here can be found the Bannered Mare, which I count among the finest taverns in all Skyrim. The scenery within is quite compelling, if you have an eye for the fairer sex.

A stout lass named Hulda tends the bar. Don't let that stony Nord exterior fool you, for she is possessed of that same fiery passion that all Nord women try so hard to conceal. Saadia, the barmaid, is an exotic Redguard beauty. She is quite mysterious, and your humble author is determined to learn her secrets.

Outside the Bannered Mare is a modest marketplace, and here is where I found true love. Though I would never deter a fellow hunting hound from the chase - for indeed, why should I author these tomes, if not to provide guidance in this very matter? - I must ask that you do me this one kindness.

Her name is Carlotta Valentia, and she is a magnificent beauty who makes a modest living selling bread and produce in the daylight hours. By the gods, I will make that feisty beauty mine someday!

And of course, there are other services to be found in the Plains district. Belethor's General Goods offers various and sundry wares for the adventurous traveler, and Arcadia's Cauldron offers what tonics and herbs one would expect from an apothecary's shop.

Arcadia herself is an amiable sort. I often visit her to make conversation, as she is a fellow Imperial far from home. She is, however, a bit old for my taste. A gentleman of advanced years might find in her a worthy companion.

Should you need your blade sharpened or your armor hammered, Warmaiden's offers smithing services very near the main gate. The smith is a pretty Nord named Adrianne Avenicci, but she is married to a great hulking brute named Ulfberth War-Bear.

Adrienne is quite fair, but I should not want to find myself being introduced to the keen edge of that husband's war-axe. If married ladies are your preferred sport, then have at, but don't say that you weren't warned!

Near to the smith is the Drunken Huntsman. Here, some of the wealthier gentlemen gather to share both drink and rumors of the wide world. If you prefer a more distinguished class of company while you sip fine wine, you'll be well at home here.

Of the Wind district I have little to say. Most of the buildings in this second tier of the city are residences, though there is also a Temple of Kynareth and Jorrvaskr, the mead hall of the Companions.

There are some intriguing prospects to be found in the mead hall should you favor a strong and fearless warrior-woman. You will find little game at the temple, however. The priestess, Danica Pure-Spring, is interested almost exclusively in spiritual matters.

At last we come to the Cloud District, exclusive domain of the Jarl's castle. I have had some merry adventures within the stone walls of Dragonsreach, let me tell you. The serving girls are most easily impressed by a well-spoken Imperial. After all, the nights in Skyrim do grow quite cold, if you take my meaning.

And I will not deny that I have visited the town's jail once or twice, which can be found in the lower levels of the palace.

As for the Jarl and his court, take pains to avoid them. I find that they lack any sense of humor or appreciation for the Imperial culture. Besides which, they are all wealthy men and

so must be viewed as your most serious competition. These Nords are simple folk, after all, and too easily swayed by the sight of fine clothes and a purse full of septims.

Now I will conclude this work by wishing you great success in your pursuits of women and wine. Spare a moment in your revels to think of me, your humble author, and the risks I have taken to bring you this most thorough report on all things of interest to the discerning gentleman in the grand city of Whiterun.

Ah, but I will not lie and say that it was all a hardship. After all, who could want to sleep alone in such a cold and hard land as this? Not I!

# A Minor Maze

*Anonymous*

A Minor Maze:

Shalidor & Labyrinthian

Labyrinthian's modern notoriety was gained in the early part of the Third Era. Part of the Staff of Chaos was recovered from the Labyrinthian, which became instrumental in the overthrow of Jagar Tharn, ending the Imperial Simulacrum. The site has since become embedded in the minds of all subjects of the Empire, and the ruins are occasionally visited by Loyalist pilgrims, re-tracing the steps of the Eternal Champion.

The namesake of Labyrinthian is somewhat less commonly known, however.

The foreboding ruins were originally built as a temple to the Dragons. This grew into Bromjunaar, a great city of that era. Bromjunaar is believed by some to have been the capital of Skyrim at the height of the Dragon Cult's influence there. Little historical record exists to verify or refute this, but it is known that the highest ranking Priests of the Cult met at Labyrinthian to discuss matters of ruling.

Bromjunaar crumbled, however, along with the rest of the Dragon Cult, and the site lay abandoned for many years, a deteriorating reminder of those benighted days for the Nords.



Not until the days of Shalidor would the ruins come into use again.

Shalidor the Archmage was famous for his exploits in the First Era. Various tales tell of him battling Dwemer legions single-handedly, building the city of Winterhold with a whispered spell, stealing the secret of life from Akatosh, or constructing Labyrinthian himself.

While many Shalidor legends are hyperbole or outright fabrication, we can discover some truth behind his involvement with Labyrinthian.

Shalidor stood at the forefront of a movement to enact higher standards among mages, and to discourage spell-use among the common castes. This effort is dubiously credited with the original organization and formation of the schools of magic and the foundation of the College at Winterhold.

Consistent with this mentality, Shalidor constructed his Labyrinth deep within the ruins of Bromjunaar to test new Archmages. While navigating the destroyed city itself was not explicitly a part of the test, many candidates did not survive the journey. Shalidor valued both academic knowledge as well as practical skill, and simply getting to the Labyrinth required the latter.

Shalidor's Labyrinthian is actually two intersecting mazes, in an hourglass pattern. One maze could not be completed without exiting the other first, which makes the only existing instruction for the test especially mysterious:

Enter Twice - Exit Only Once

Alteration will lead  
you to Destruction  
Only Illusion shows the  
way to Restoration  
Conjure not, but  
be conjured instead

We can only guess at what the solution to the test may have been, as Labyrinthian became notorious not only for the number of potential archmages who died there, but for the intense secrecy of those who succeeded.

Labyrinthian eventually ceased to be used, and is regarded as a symbol of a more brutal age by modern institutions for magical studies. The ruins lay empty again, overrun with wild animals and avoided by travelers. The long history and legacy of this place, however, seems as likely to be erased from our minds as the ruins themselves are likely to sink into the sea.

# **A Note**

*Anonymous*

Meet me here at midnight.

# A Scrawled Note

*Anonymous*

Malyn Varen's death will not go unpunished. Find the holder of Azura's Star and enact vengeance, or it will go your souls I rend for my enchantments.

# A Tragedy In Black

*Anonymous*

## A TRAGEDY IN BLACK

A folk tale from the time of the Oblivion Crisis

The dremora looked on the young boy with disdain. He looked to be no more than seventeen or eighteen, on the cusp of manhood.

“You? You have summoned me?”

“Mother says I’m good with spells. Someday I’m gonna be a wizard. Maybe even archmage!”

“And what would your mother know of magic, boy?”

“She’s a wizard! She’s an enchanter at the Arcane University.”

“Ah. Another dabbler in the mystic arts. I’m certain she is barely mediocre.”

“You shut up! I read the scroll. I get to tell you what to do.”

The dremora was silent. Compulsion bound his voice.

“I want to know how to make a magic dress. I need it for her birthday.”

The dremora's answer was more silence.

"You have to tell me. It's in the rules."

Freed from the previous compulsion, the dremora answered, "First, you need a soul gem. I happen to have one, and would gladly give it you for so noble a cause."

"Really? Why do I need it?"

With a hidden smile, the dremora handed over the dull black gem.

"It is not enough to cast a spell upon an inert object. Magic requires thought, intent, will and emotion. The soul powers the enchantment. The bigger the soul, the more powerful the enchantment."

"So how big is the one in this soul gem?"

"Oh, that one is empty. You'll have to fill it. But it can hold the largest of souls easily. Do you know how to do that?"

"No," the young man said sullenly.

"Let me show you. You cast a spell like this."

The tendrils of the soul trap spell spilled from his fingers and surrounded the boy. The young man's eyes went wide.

"I didn't feel anything," he complained.

"How about now?" the dremora asked, plunging his talons into the youth's rib cage. His heart beat only once before it was pulled from his chest.

Quickly the dremora snatched back the black soul gem, just as the youth died. His soul tried to flee, but was trapped by the spell and drawn into the gem. Only black soul gems can hold the souls of men and elves.

“Your mother obviously never told you never to accept a freely given gift from a summoned dremora,” he said to the corpse.

“You see, it breaks the conjuration, freeing the summoned from the summoner. Now, let’s go find your mother. After all, I have another black soul gem.”

# A Warning

*Vex*

Delvin,

Master of sneaking, huh? If I ever catch you trying to sneak a peek at me while I'm bathing in the lake again, I'll cut off your most valuable asset.

Vex



# Admonition Against Ebony

*Anonymous*

To anyone reading this: BEWARE THIS BLADE

It is hoped that the only people having access to this room should be the Jarl of Whiterun and his trusted wizard. If anyone else is reading this, please understand the magnitude of your folly, turn around, and never even speak of this room or this blade to anyone.

It has corrupted and perverted the desires of great men and women. Yet its power is without equal—to kill while your victim smiles at you. Only a daedra most foul could have concocted such a malevolent and twisted weapon. But it appears that all who wield it end up with the crazed eyes of those wild men who roam the hills chattering with rabbits.

It is not to be trifled with. Not even the hottest fires of the Skyforge could melt it; indeed the coals themselves seemed to cool when it was placed within. We cannot destroy it, and we would not have it fall into the hands of our enemies. So we keep it, hidden, dark and deep within Dragonsreach, never to be used.

Woe be to any who choose to take it.

# Adril's Survey Results

*Adril Arano*

Councilor Morvayn,

Below are the results of the survey you requested.

The Bulwark needs extensive repair. Ash is beginning to seep through the cracks inside the barracks and weakening the structure.

Repairs to the docks have been completed. We can now accommodate two ships at once if need be.

We've lost a total of twenty-six Redoran Guard in the last two years. We've seen ten replacements in the last five.

There's been no improvement in the condition of the water around the island. While there are fish still present, there are nowhere near enough to sustain us as a fishing town.

As you can see, we are in desperate need of relief. Sorry to be the bearer of such bad news, but I'm only doing as you requested.

Adril

# Adventurer's Journal

*Anonymous*

There's something unsettling about these caravan attacks. I expected bandits, but the remains we saw were literally torn apart, rent limb from limb. Yet no mere animal could coordinate an attack on a full-sized merchant train. And wolves don't take prisoners.

We've found a trail leading up into the hills. We'll make camp here for the night, then set out at dawn. Whoever- whatever- murdered those people, we'll make sure it never happens again.

# Aeri's Note

*Aeri*

Jarl Skald the Elder,

Anga's Mill will be supplying all the lumber as per your instructions. I hope this will clear up any and all tax burdens my father might have left us with.

I refuse to send any of my workers to answer your call for Stormcloak recruits, though. You can either have lumber or you can have soldiers. We can't do both.

Aeri,

Owner of Anga's Mill

# Afflicted's Note

*Anonymous*

Orchendor has gone down the the Aerdrome. He believes some of the old Dwemer machines down there will help him commune with our Blighted Lord.

# Agrius's Journal

*Agrius*

Never thought I'd see the day we were run out of the Knifepoint Gang. Least the storm should cover our tracks. Vidgrod, Raen, and I took shelter in a cave for the night. Looks like there's an old ruin here. Least there are no Draugr around.

Vidgrod and Raen both want to set up here for a while, maybe do some raiding. They ought to know better- the road's deserted, especially this time of year. Plenty of better places up north. But they seem awfully insistent about staying here. Wouldn't even lend a hand when I went out to hunt tonight.

Something's wrong. Raen hasn't said a word since she woke up this morning, just keeps staring off into space. Vidgrod isn't much better. They sick? Not like any illness I ever heard of. I'd just walk out on them, but I can't seem to get up the nerve. I feel like something's holding me back. What is this place?

We're not alone. I can hear him now. Someone, speaking in my mind. Old. Powerful. Halldir, that's the name. He wants something from us. Needs us to stay for the magic to work. I tried to run, can't. Just like them.

Raen jumped first. Onto the cairn. That's what Master wants - blood, sacrifice, power to live again. His magic, I can feel it pulsing in my blood. He's draining us. We'll serve him soon, our

bodies, our souls. Just like the others. They're waiting. It's my turn.

# Aicantar's Lab Journal

## *Aicantar of Shimerene*

Uncle Calcelmo got back from Mzinchaleft today. Lots of artifacts this trip. He even brought me something- a spider that didn't completely shatter when the guards smashed it. He wants me to get it working again. My first big research project!

### Spider Centurion Research, Week 1

I've reassembled the spider with spare parts from the museum. All the joints move, just not on their own. Uncle said the spider needed a 'control crystal' with the right 'electroharmonic signature'. The Guards are out looking for one now.

### Spider Centurion Research, Week 2

After yesterday's incident, I assembled a staff to hold the crystal. It actually works! When you use the staff, it creates a beacon of some kind, and the spider just walks on over to it. Better yet, it doesn't attack everyone on sight now!

### Spider Centurion Research, Week 3

Apparently it will still attack, just not on sight. During this morning's experiment, one of the newer guards was startled and drew his sword, and he was dead before anyone could react. Did it actually detect hostile intent?



## Spider Centurion Research, Week 4

Further testing confirms that the spider seems to detect the intent of its controller in some way. Last week, it tried to defend me from a threat. This week, I snapped at a guard who interrupted my latest test, and it lashed out at him. Fascinating!

## Spider Centurion Research, Week 5

No one appreciates my work. Uncle Calcelmo is buried in his Falmer research, and doesn't have time to help me with the spider anymore.

The Guards are all afraid of it. I keep telling them it's harmless as long as I keep it under control, but there have been too many accidents. They just don't believe me.

I wanted to show the Jarl, but I can't seem to get the spider to leave the lab - it looks like its control crystal only works up here. Maybe if I can reattune the enchantment...?

# Alchemist's Journal

*Anonymous*

Coming to this area was a brilliant decision! The local flora seem to have many useful properties that I've been able to utilize into new potions! Outside, the rich soil has allowed the cuttings I've collected to grow into fine and bountiful plants! This afternoon, I think I will journey out for more mushrooms, as my current supply is beginning to dwindle.

On a personal note, I have moved my alchemy work outside the shack. I find the midday air is a boon to my health, as well as inspirational to my work.

# Alchemist's Note

*Froda*

But surely we cannot use these poisons on our own brothers and sisters! This plan is madness! Even if the main stairway is collapsed and they find those in the front chambers poisoned there is no telling that they will stop from clearing the rubble and coming through to burn our bodies before Alduin's return!

Rahgot, it is not that I fear death or refuse to lay down my life in the service of the gods. The snow elf raids in the northern lands may not be enough to draw off the Snow-Strider when he finds us dead. All know of his tenacity. If we are to die, then let us die with blades in our hands, rather than with poison on our lips and daggers at our children's throats!

—Head Alchemist Froda

# Alduin Is Real

*Thromgar Iron-Head*

Alduin is Real, and He Ent Akatosh

by

Thromgar Iron-Head,

prowd Nord

As my da used to say - Imperials are idiutts!

That is why I am riting this book. I ent never rote a book before, and I do not reckon to rite one agenn, but sometimes a man must do what a man must do. And what I must do is set the recerd strate about the god called Akatosh and the dragon called Alduin. They ent the same thing, no matter what them Imperials mite say, or how thay mite wish it to be so.

My da was never one for the gods, but my ma was. She wershipped all the Divines, and tot me lots of things. So I noe a thing or two about Akatosh. Just as much as any Imperial. I noe he was the first of all the gods to take shape in the Beginning Place. And I noe he has the shape of a dragon.

My da even told me the story of Martyn Septim, and the things what happened when the gates to Oblivion opened. Septim turned into the spirit of Akatosh and killed Mehrunes Dagon.

Now I dont noe about you, but any dragon that fites the Prince of Destruction is okay by me.

Now I hope you understand the problim. Akatosh is good. Everyone, from Nord to Imperial, noes that. But Alduin? He ent good! He's the oposit of good! That Alduin is evil throe and throe. So you see, Akatosh and Alduin cant be one and the same.

Growing up as a lad in Skyrim, I herd all the stories. Told to me by my da, who was told by his da, who was told by his da, and so on. And one of those stories was about Alduin. But see, he was not Akatosh. He was another dragon and a real wun at that.

Akatosh is some kind of spirit dragon I think, wen he bothers to be a dragon at all (and not a god livin in sum kind of god plac like Obliviun). But Alduin is a real dragon, with flesh and teeth and a mean streak longer than the White River. And there was a time when Alduin tried to rool over all of Skyrim with his other dragons. In the end, it took sum mitey strong heroes to finally kill Alduin and be dun with his hole sorry story.

So I got to ask - does that sound like Akatosh to you? No, frend. No it do not.

And so I, Thromgar Iron-Head do firmly say, with the utmost connvicshun, that Alduin is real, and he ent Akatosh!

# Alethius's Notes

*Alethius*

Salonia

We've been saddled with some researchers who can't go four steps without examining something and they fight about as well as you'd think... probably worse. Stromm at least has some magical competence but none of them can swing a sword. Erj and Krag seem up to something so I'll have to keep an eye on them, but Staubs assures me they're trustworthy.

Alethius

# All Employees Must Read!

*Indaryn*

Notice to all employees:

I've discovered my bed filled with skeever droppings that were obviously placed there on purpose by an employee who felt that it was an amusing prank. You have until Middas to either come forward on your own or point me in the direction of the perpetrator of this practical joke, otherwise all employees will be subject to half wages for the next three months.

Indaryn

# Alva's Journal

*Alva*

My life is dreary. Where is my prince come to rescue me? Where is my bold Nord warrior to sweep me off my feet?

I met a man today when picking nightflowers. He is exciting and exotic. We kissed in the moonlight. It was so romantic. I'm going to see him again tonight.

Now I understand the true colors of the night. Movarth has shown me the true black of night and the true red of blood. He has promised me a feast of blood if I do his bidding in Morthal.

Hroggar was easy to seduce. Movarth said I should find a protector first, someone to watch over my coffin during the day. Hroggar is perfect.

Laelette came to visit me tonight. She slaked my thirst. I've hidden her away to let her rise as my handmaiden. I've spread the rumor in town that she left to join the war. Fools.

Movarth has confided his grand plan to me. I am to seduce the guardsman one at a time and make them my slaves. Then he and the others from the coven can descend upon Morthal and take the entire town. We won't kill them. They will become cattle for our thirst. An endless supply of blood and an entire town to protect us from the cursed sun.



Hroggar's family is becoming inconvenient. I've told Laelette to kill them all, but make it look like an accident. Hroggar must be seen as innocent if he is going to be my protector.

That little fool! Laelette burned Hroggar's family alive. I asked for an accident and she gave me a scandal. To make matters worse, she tried to turn his little girl, Helgi. Except Laelette couldn't even get that right. She killed the child and left the body to burn.

Something is wrong with Laelette. She keeps talking about Helgi. I think her mind has snapped. She seems to think that the child can still be brought back to be her companion.

There is a stranger in town, looking into the fire. I'll have to be careful.

# Amaund Motierre's Sealed Letter

*Amaund Motierre*

Most esteemed overseer,

As was already communicated to your subordinate, I wish to hire your organization for some delicate ambassadorial work. All of this, of course, would culminate in a historic meeting with the Leader himself.

In order to secure an audience with the Leader, some secondary meetings must first take place. They have been outlined below.

1.) You must attend the upcoming wedding at the Temple of the Divines in Solitude. The bride must be given a gift she will never forget, one that will get all of Solitude talking and which will, undoubtedly, reach the ears of the Leader himself.

2.) A certain high-ranking military officer, permanently stationed in Skyrim, is responsible for securing the Leader's safety should he choose to schedule a visit. When this officer learns of the Leader's journey, he will begin the necessary security arrangements. You must learn this officer's plans, and meet with his people, to ensure appropriate security for your eventual audience with the Leader.

3.) Several months ago, the Leader planned a visit to Skyrim that was canceled unexpectedly. In that time, a world renowned chef was contacted, and brought to Skyrim in order to prepare a lavish meal. That chef remains in Skyrim on retainer. You must meet with him, and convince him that it would be your honor to cook for the Leader in his place.

I realize these instructions are a bit non-specific, and do apologize, but I feel the vagueness is necessary to ensure security. Surely an organization as esteemed as your own has the means and resources to obtain all the essential information before each meeting can take place.

When the final part of our arrangement has been carried out - that is, when you have secured an audience with the Leader himself, and brought such business to a close - I will contact you about final payment.

Most sincerely,

A friend

# Amongst The Draugr

*Bernadette Bantien*

Amongst the Draugr

by

Bernadette Bantien

College of Winterhold

It wasn't until my seventh month with the creatures that they seemed to accept me. Well, "accept" isn't really the proper word, but they seemed to have decided that I posed no threat to them and gradually ceased their attacks. Though more than capable of fending them off (a combination of fire and turning spells are generally sufficient), I admit that I tired of having to be ever vigilant in their presence.

I'll never know whether there was some sort of agreement communicated among them, for the only utterances they make seem to be in that heathen tongue that I can't even pronounce, much less transcribe. In time, I learned more of their intentions towards me from their general movements and tones rather than specific words. Hostility in any creature is easily read, but in these most peculiar of the living dead, with such variations in gait and speed, what amounts to a hostile charge in one may simply be casual movement in another. The eyes seem to be key to their intent, and I will confess to more

than one dream haunted by the glowing pinpoints in the darkness.

I had always wondered why the ancient priests of the dragon cult insisted that their followers be buried with them. It seems the height of pagan vanity to drag your conscripts to their death along with you, but as I integrated into their presence, I began to observe the reasons. Every day, a different set of draugr would awaken, shamble their way to the sarcophagus of their priest, and prostrate themselves before it. Several hours of this, followed by a meticulous cleaning of the area. It would appear that the adherents of the dragon priest continue their worship of him in death, which would also explain the ferocity with which they defend his chambers.

It took several weeks before I felt comfortable approaching the dragon priest's resting place, myself. Inch by inch, until the snarling draugrs around me seemed to tire of fending off my timid presence. I was able to set some simple scrying spells around the tomb, that I might get a sense of what magical energies resided there. When the next group of draugr came to pay homage to the priest, I noted a sort of transferal happening. A distinct flow of life force between the adherents and the master.

It was here that I finally understood the dragon cult's notion of resurrection. The second eternal life was only promised to those who ascended to the priesthood, but the lesser functionaries contributed their life force to sustaining them for eternity. I don't know what sort of eternal wellspring they draw from, but it's clear that each draugr carries only the barest whisper of life in it, and rekindles it nightly while resting in its niche. I now believe that the grotesque forms that we see in the

barrows were, in fact, buried fully as men and women, and only over the thousands of years that have passed withered into the wretched things we know. If we had visited a barrow directly after its construction, we might not have even known any of its inhabitants were dead!

These discoveries and extrapolations excite me, and my mind aches to return to the barrows. I have only paused here at the College to transcribe these notes and gather further supplies for a more extended stay. My new hope is to learn some rudimentary way of speaking to them, for imagining what they could tell us of the early mists of time is staggering.

# An Appology

*Wilhem*

Bersi,

I got your last request, but there's no way I'm going near Shroud Hearth Barrow. I know that the trinkets from the Nordic Barrows sell quite well, but it isn't worth getting killed. You probably think I'm crazy, but I'm certain that the place is haunted and I refuse to become another victim of... whatever lives there. Sorry, old friend.

Wilhelm

Vilemyr Inn, Ivarstead

# An Explorer's Guide To Skyrim

*Marcius Carvain*

An Explorer's Guide

to Skyrim

by

Marcius Carvain,

Viscount Bruma

Far too often, noble visitors from Cyrodiil see little more of Skyrim than the view from their carriage. To be sure, this coarse, uncivilized province is far from hospitable, but it is also a place of fierce, wild beauty, with grand vistas and inspiring natural wonders awaiting those with the will to seek them out and the refinement to truly appreciate them. If you are of a mind to see Skyrim for yourself, I recommend beginning your adventure as I did, by seeking out Stones of Fate.

No doubt you are taken aback by the name, as I once was. The provincials and village folk have all manner of dark tales about these ancient monuments. Stories of necromantic rituals and fell spirits, of great and terrible powers conferred on any who dare to touch them.



The stories are, as Jarl Igrif once told me, “A load of mammoth dung.” A bit uncouth, but you get the point.

To be sure, keep your guards with you at all times - brigands and wild animals are never to be taken lightly. But the stones themselves are nothing to fear. Quite the contrary, their proximity to cities and roads makes them ideal destinations for the novice explorer, and many boast spectacular views that make the journey well worth the effort.

To whet your appetite, here are four such locations:

Most travelers enter Skyrim by way of Helgen, “Gateway to the North.” If you find yourself in this backwater hovel, consider taking an afternoon’s ride to the north, keeping to the road as it winds down the cliffs at the eastern end of Lake Ilinalta. Just off the path, on a small bluff, lie the three Guardian Stones, the greatest concentration of standing stones in all Skyrim. The view of the lake here at sunset is simply sublime.

Visitors from Cheydinhal will pass through Riften, city of intrigue and larceny since Tiber Septim’s day. If you seek adventure in the Rift, leave the city by the southern gate and cast your gaze upon the bluff that rises to the south. Atop it sits the Shadow Stone, a fitting symbol for the city of thieves.

Whiterun is the heart of Skyrim, its towering palace rivaling even the great castles of Cyrodiil. But should you tire of the Jarl’s hospitality, another adventure awaits a few hours to the east of the city, along the road that rises above White River Gorge. The Ritual Stone can be found atop the lone hill that rises on the north side of the road, set into an ancient monument. Take time to soak in the incredible view of Whiterun, the tundra, and the gorge from this unique spot.

More seasoned explorers may wish to visit Markarth, the ancient city of stone far to the west. The recent Forsworn Rebellion has made travel in the Reach perilous, but for those determined to seek adventure no matter the cost, another stone can be found to the east of the city, perched on the mountain above Kolskeggr Mine. Though the climb is difficult, reaching the summit is a milestone any explorer could be proud of.

There are other Stones of Fate to be found in Skyrim - I myself have seen several more, perched on the most remote mountain peaks, or wreathed in fog amid the northern marshes. But the true joy of exploration is in the discovery, and so I leave the rest to you. May the Eight guide your steps.

# Ancient Edict

*Anonymous*

Let this place be forgotten forever.

Let it be struck from the rolls of history.

Let it never be spoken of by man or mer.

Let its very name be lost to the ages.

Ye who enter here, know:

This place was sealed at great price.

Honor those who perished here.

Turn back, and leave them to their rest.

# Anders's Message

*Anders*

I can't believe it. I came all this way, solved all of those ridiculous riddles just to end up here! After I memorized Nystrom's clues he'd collected from Lythelus, I slit his throat. Now I guess the joke's on me, because I'm stuck here and I don't see a way out. Hope someone comes by soon, I'm getting hungry.

# Anise's Note

*Anise*

Helgi, dear, why do you hesitate? You can feel the power coursing in your blood! You have only to reach out and grasp it! Renounce that boy of yours and come, come live with me in the forest. My sister will be here soon. Together, we can form a proper coven, and your training will truly begin.

# Annals Of The Dragonguard

*Brother Annulus*

Annals of the Dragonguard

2800-2819

Scribe's Note: I have faithfully copied the following from the Annals of the Dragonguard of Sky Haven Temple for the years 2800-2819 (4329-4338 in the Old Calendar), Brother Annulus, 2E 568.

2801: Emperor Kastav again ordered the Dragonguard to sieze hostages from Markarth and Hroldan to ensure that the jarls meet their conscription quotas. Our Master's official protest was denied, as usual. This will make relations with the local populace more difficult, although the "hostages" are in fact housed and trained with the other acolytes.

2804: Upon the outbreak of the Winterhold Rebellion, our Master refused orders to send the Dragonguard out to help supress the rebellion. The Emperor ordered our supplies cut off, but we have made arrangements with the local Reachmen and are effectively self-sufficient. The Grandmaster supports our Master's action on the grounds that it violates the Oath of Allegiance.

2805: The Temple is besieged. The fool Kalien was sent to Winterhold and sacked the city. There was a reason he was

denied entry into the Dragonguard. But the local people do not count the difference between Akaviri. All our years of building up trust with people of Skyrim are now for naught.

2806: We learned of the accession of Reman II (of blessed name) when the siege of the Temple was lifted. We provided the honor guard for the Emperor's first visit to Skyrim, a great boost to the Temple's prestige.

2809: We received reports of a dragon in the east. Scouts were sent immediately, and signs of it were discovered, but it fled at our approach. The survivors have grown wary indeed.

2812: We finally received permission from the Emperor to begin construction of Alduin's Wall. Craftsmen from Temples across the Empire have arrived and begun the great work, overseen by our own Master, as is only fitting, as she is unmatched in her dragonlore.

2813: Work on Alduin's Wall progresses. The Master dismissed several craftsmen (from a western Temple that I do not need to name, they are so well-known for stiff-necked pride), which has delayed the work, but there must be no compromise. Alduin's Wall is our gift to those that come after us.

2815: The Grandmaster visited the Temple in the summer to view the progress of the Wall. He has received complaints about the expense (there is no doubt where these originate), but he was so impressed by the Wall even in its half-finished state that he gave our Master a Writ of Requisition under the Emperor's seal. There will be no more delays!

Further reports of dragons in the east which could not be verified.

2818: An auspicious year. Alduin's Wall was finished, a dragon was located and slain, and Emperor Reman II visited to officially dedicate the Wall. The Blood Seal was consecrated in the presence of all the Dragonguard of Skyrim, a great honor of which few Temples can boast.



# Anonymous Letter

*Anonymous*

To the Imperial Legion,

Who I am is less important than what I know - suffice it to say that I am no friend to the so-called Stormcloak rebels.

Through various means it has come to my attention that [steward's name] had a rather embarrassing indiscretion in [his/her] past. I also happen to know that [victim's name] is foolishly keeping evidence of this affair.

Should you locate that evidence, you might be able to "persuade" [him/her] to help your fight in [hold name]. If forced to chose between his dislike for the Empire or [his/her] love for [himself/herself], [he/she] will most assuredly chose the latter.

Sincerely yours,

A loyal citizen.

# Antecedants Of Dwemer Law

*Anonymous*

This book is a historical account of the development of Dwemer law and custom from its roots in High Elven culture.

In short, so far as I am able to trace the order of development in the customs of the Bosmeri tribes, I believe it to have been in all ways comparable to the growth of Altmeri law. The earlier liability for slaves and animals was mainly confined to surrender, which, as in Sumerset Isles, later became compensation.

And what does this matter for a study of our laws today? So far as concerns the influence of the Altmeri law upon our own, especially the Altmeri law of master and servant, the evidence of it is to be found in every judgment which has been recorded for the last five hundred years. It has been stated already that we still repeat the reasoning of the Altmeri magistrates, empty as it is, to the present day. And I will quickly show how Altmeri custom can be followed into the courts of the Dwemer.

In the laws of Karndar Watch (P.D. 1180) it is said, "If one who is owned by another slays one who owns himself, the owner must pay the associates three fine instruments and the body of the one who his owned." There are many other similar citations. And the same principle is extended even to the case of a centurion by which a man is killed. "If, at the common

workbench, one is slain by an Animunculi, the associates of the slain may disassemble the Animunculi and take its parts within thirty days.”

It is instructive to compare what Dhark has mentioned concerning the rude beasts of the Tenmar forests. “If a marsh cat was killed by an Argonian, his family were in disgrace till they retaliated by killing the Argonian, or another like it; but further, if a marsh cat was killed by a fall from a tree, his relatives would take their revenge by toppling the tree, and shattering its branches, and casting them to every part of the forest.”

# Argonian Ceremony

*Talen-Jei*

Drifa,

I was wondering if you could speak to Maramal about perhaps presiding over a marriage ceremony for myself and Keerava. She's the love of my life and I wish to be with her forever, but only if we can be wed in traditional Argonian fashion. Traditional Argonian bonding ceremonies are somewhat long and complex, involving unique rituals spoken in our native language. I'd be more than happy to provide a book describing what I'm looking for as long as Maramal doesn't mind.

Talen-Jei

# Arondil's Journal

*Arondil*

Arondil's Journal, Part 1

Arondil's Journal

Day 1

It seems the cretins of Dawnstar are not quite as foolish as I had surmised. They found my experimentations, and needless to say, were not pleased with what they saw. No matter. My work can only flourish without the distractions of living amongst the unenlightened.

I have found a cave off the north coast of Skyrim that will be more than sufficient for my continued studies. The ruins of Yngvild should hold the materials I need to learn more about reanimating and enslaving the dead.

On a personal note, I WILL miss the young maidens of Dawnstar. Such beauty was intoxication. I often found my thoughts wandering around them, imagining secret encounters between myself and one or two of the local girls...

Arondil's Journal, Part 2

Arondil's Journal

## Day 8

I have established a temporary work station in the cold caves, and have found multiple burial chambers within the snow and ice. While in the first chamber, I exhumed a few 'test subjects,' all female. I was stunned to find my mind wandering again to the women of Dawnstar as I examine my find. At first, I was slightly disturbed by my thoughts, but later I found myself reevaluating...

## Day 9

The first trials went splendidly. Each subject was reanimated in a state of total complacency, bending to my every task and whim. I have ordered a few of my new servants to guard the island, while the rest will act as my personal entourage, standing by me at all times. Standing watch over me while I sleep...

## Arondil's Journal, Part 3

### Arondil's Journal

## Day 21

An intriguing development. Tonight, my guards have brought me a trespasser they found near the cave. At first I was understandably upset. Not only was I disturbed during one of my few moments alone with my favorite servant, but I recognized the trespasser as a milk maid from Dawnstar. She remembered me, as well, and made bold claims that I had been lurking near her at all hours. What lies! True, I had taken notice of her on occasion, but she was nowhere near the most noticeable of maidens in town. Her continued accusations,

coupled with my fear of more uninvited guests, led me to conclude that she could never return to Dawnstar. My servants were quick to carry out my sentencing.

Her body is here next to me, as I write this. Funny. Her eyes are still so full of life. Perhaps I will try a new experiment tonight, using fresher materials.

#### Arondil's Journal, Part 4

#### Arondil's Journal

#### Day 28

The new experiment has proven a success! The milk maid (who's name still escapes me) was revived as the others, bowing to my commands, with only one interesting development. She has reformed incorporeally, more phantasm than reanimated dead. As her glowing visage stood before me, I found my hand reaching out to touch her. As my fingers passed through her, I felt a sensation unlike any other, as if her essence were invigorating my very soul, connecting with me on a level no woman of flesh and blood could do. This discovery is life changing!

#### Day 35

I have ordered my older servants to go out and find any more subjects that may have become lost. With the discovery of the inner sanctum deeper still within Yngvild, I should have sufficient room to store many new materials until I can transform them into willing slaves. I look back on my daydreams whilst living in Dawnstar and wonder if they were in fact portents of times to come...

# Arvel's Journal

*Arvel*

My fingers are trembling. The Golden Claw is finally in my hands, and with it, the power of the ancient Nordic heroes. That fool Lucan Valerius had no idea that his favorite store decoration was actually the key to Bleak Falls Barrow.

Now I just need to get to the Hall of Stories and unlock the door. The legend says there is a test that the Nords put in place to keep the unworthy away, but that "When you have the golden claw, the solution is in the palm of your hands."



# Assassin's Writ

*Anonymous*

By order of the Patriarch of [dungeon name], you are to hunt down and slay the Dawnguard agent [player name].

[He/She] is believed to be extremely dangerous, even for one of your formidable skill. Strike quickly, sister, then make your escape.

# Atlas Of Dragons

*Brother Mathnan*

Herein is recorded the list of known dragons, both living and dead, including those slain by the Dragonguard since the time of its founding, as well as those slain in earlier ages, where they can be identified. Unfortunately, only a few of the dragons slain by our Akaviri predecessors during the Crusade were recorded and thus this list is sadly incomplete.

## Deceased by Report

Nahagliiv - Local tales name him as the dragon buried in the mound west of Rorikstead. No date associated with his death, although almost surely dates to the Dragon War era.

Odahviing - Records dating to the Crusade of interrogation of captured Dragon Cultists indicate that this dragon was buried in a mound in the southeast of Skyrim, near Riften.

Sahlloknir - Local legends claim this is the dragon buried in the mound near Kyne's Grove, slain by the Nord hero Jorg Helmbolg in the First Era.

Viinturuth - Death dating back to Dragon War era, according to documents recovered from Dragon Cult temples which record his burial near Lake Yorgrim.

Vuljotnaak - Death dating back to Dragon War or just after, according to recovered Dragon Cult documents, which record his burial in a mound near Granite Hill.

Slain by the Dragonguard

Grahkrindrog - Slain in 2E 184 after perpetrating great slaughter in Winterhold and Eastmarch. Name confirmed with assistance from the College mages.

Krahjotdaan - Slain in 1E 2871 in the southern Jerall Mountains, name confirmed by the dragon's own account.

Unnamed Dragons - Numbering 12, as recorded in the Annals dating back to the founding of Sky Haven Temple.

Known to Live

Ahbiilok - Sightings dating back to the early years of the Dragonguard throughout the northern Jerralls. Multiple attempts to kill him have failed. He is believed to be lairing somewhere in Morrowind.

Mirmulnir - Last sighted in the Reach in 2E 212.

Nahfahlaar - Repeated alliances with mortal protectors which have prevented his elimination. His last known protector was the King Casimir II of Wayrest, which the Dragonguard successfully ended in 2E 369. He escaped and current location is unknown.

Paarthurnax - The legendary lieutenant of Alduin in the Dragon War. He is now known to lair on the Throat of the World under the protection of the Greybeards of High Hrothgar. Master Araidh continues the established policy of

avoiding direct confrontation with the Greybeards while waiting for an opportunity to exact justice upon him.

# Atronach Forge Manual

*Anonymous*

Nephew -

I apologize that I cannot see you personally before you leave. The trip from Sadrith Mora is treacherous this season, or I would have visited upon hearing the news. The Nords have a fine college at Winterhold, and I am sure you will excel. You may know that I, too, attended there. I was quite the conjuration adept in my own day. I am sending you my notes on something called the 'Atronach Forge', a bit of a project of mine while at Winterhold.

Mention nothing to the faculty, but ask your fellow pupils about a place called the Midden. You will find the Forge there. I fear a number of my notes are missing, scattered and lost in my travels around Skyrim. Perhaps you may stumble across these in your own adventures.

The Atronach Forge offers few clues as to who built it, and even fewer as to how to unlock its full potential. Only through blind experimentation, and a few singed eyebrows, have I been able to understand its function.

The Forge is mostly a large dais, almost crude of make, but emblazoned with the traditional Daedric rune. An offering box is attached, as well as a prominent lever. The Dais also features a large setting which seems set to receive some large, spherical

object. I have had no luck determining what this missing object may be, however, or what effect it may have on the efficacy of the Forge.

The Forge is activated by placing certain items into the offering box, and then pulling the lever. The Forge consumes the items and conjures something upon the dais. The conjuration can be predicted reliably if the appropriate items are left in the box - but many combinations either have no effect or catastrophic reactions. Once I conjured a wild goat! Well, most of the goat, at least.

Experimenting wildly with the Forge is dangerous. I've recorded such recipes as I have discovered on the following pages.

The simplest, yet perhaps most hazardous stable recipe is that for a summoned atronach. The conjured brutes will attack the first thing they see, however! Be ready for battle if you have reason to use these recipes.

Flame Atronach:

Fire Salts + Ruby

Frost Atronach:

Frost Salts + Sapphire

Storm Atronach:

Void Salts + Amethyst

# Atronach Forge Recipe

*Anonymous*

Ebony Mace

Daedra Heart

Black Soul Gem

Centurion Dynamo

# Attention Employees!

*Indaryn*

Notice to all employees:

Lady Black-Briar has requested that all employees be subject to random searches at my discretion. There's been a rash of missing mead barrels lately, and I won't tolerate it any longer. Any employee caught with merchandise belonging to Lady Black-Briar will be subject to immediate incarceration in Riften Jail. If you have any objections to this posting, feel free to remove yourself from the meadery permanently.

Indaryn



# Balmora Blue Note

*Dyryn*

Sabine,

Secured the Balmora Blue in the chest under the Wave just like you asked. Put the best lock on it gold can buy. Just remember that we're splitting the profit.

Dyryn

# Bandit Leader's Journal

*Anonymous*

5th of First Seed, 4E 201

Idiots! Brodir and Herd were at each others' throats again today, and nearly came to blows. The whole camp is on edge. I've ordered an extra ration of mead, but unless this fighting stops, we'll tear ourselves apart.

11th of First Seed, 4E 201

Rumor is that Herd's gathering followers for a mutiny. Brodir's not stupid; he's probably doing the same, just for insurance. I'd kill them both myself, but the camp's split right down the middle. If I tried, there'd be a knife in my back within a week.

I can't take this anymore. I've begun skimming a little gold from the take, bringing it down here when I can. If I can scrape enough together, I'll make a run for it, head downriver to Dragon Bridge.

28th of First Seed, 4E 201

Brodir's getting suspicious—I caught him poking around in the cove this afternoon. I don't think he found my stash, but it's not safe here. I took the boat out tonight and stowed it on the island to the south, by the old tree stump.

Had a good haul this week. Another caravan or two and I can finally get out of here, and not a moment too soon.

# Bandit's Journal

*Anonymous*

Damn those Giants. Just one Mammoth would feed us for a month, but they herd them around like prized cattle, never taking an eye off them. We've hunted this area dry. Unless we get a kill soon, we'll have to find somewhere else to camp.

# Beware The Butcher!

*Anonymous*

Beware the Butcher!

The killer who haunts the streets of Windhelm!

These calamitous times bring out the worst in people, don't become the next victim!

See Viola Giordano if you spot any suspicious behavior.

# Black Books

*Anonymous*

Black Book: Epistolary Acumen

Epistolary Acumen

by the Transparent One

Bring you forth the lovestruck mute who preys with vigor on his love, and set the sky alight with all who dare to struggle 'gainst our move. For we are they who own the night and all who dwell without us fall; we drink the mind-grapes formed of thought and wail a tumult on the wall. To sweep

Black Book: Filament and Filigree

Filament and Filigree

by Jelketheris

I stared at my reflection in the metal, wondering if my face had hardened to match my inner mood. I had been working the piece for days, and the forge's swelter was taking its toll. I always came to the metal shop when the dark swam over me, and today was no exception. In the midst of

Black Book: The Hidden Twilight

The Hidden Twilight

by

Carillius Melfus

The City of Inkseeds rose from the desert, shining and decadent. Somehow, it still stood. I crossed through the gate, and the beast knew exactly where to take me: the way worn by beggars and poets. The only place a man of my appetites can find satisfaction. I'm not proud, but then, nobody ever is.

Black Book: The Sallow Regent

The Sallow Regent

by Hawfip the Crafter

Act I, Scene i

(Enter Filemina, with broken sceptre)

Filemina—

Woe betide my fate-wrecked heart

Which gives no tender shine to he

Who gave his favors up to gods

And brought his blood-struck mind to me.

Black Book: The Winds of Change

The Winds of Change

by

Liesl Grey-Heart

During the reign of Elgryr I took notice the various patterns of in the thoughts and behaviors of a troubled populace, and undertook a humble plan to comprehend and, in the end, affect them. Being of ordered mind, I began my taxonomy in the lower classes, which divide evenly into those who

Black Book: Untold Legends

Untold Legends

The Other Lives of Ysgramor

As the great ships of men crawled the waves to their destinies, there were, after long years, a number of tales lost in the mists of morning. Even after the forgetting, though, wisps of story find ways to receptive ears as even the deepest of secrets never truly dies. When fires burn and the night grows soft in

Black Book: Waking Dreams

Waking Dreams of A Starless Sky

by Bilius Felcrex

The eyes, once bleached by falling stars of utmost revelation, will forever see the faint insight drawn by the overwhelming question, as only the True Enquiry shapes the edge of thought. The rest is vulgar fiction, attempts to impose order on the consensus mantlings of an uncaring godhead. First,



# Blood Horker Orders

*Anonymous*

Stig,

You and your crew must move quickly. The Company is attempting to resume shipping routes from Sentinel to Windhelm. You can likely intercept off the shore of Dawnstar. Return to Japhet's Folly when you've handled them, and I'll have your cut, with more instructions.

- Haldyn

# Bloodstained Letter

*Hrodulf*

bjorn

do not come to this place

i have not much self left

the earth will take us both

- h

# Bolar's Writ

*Acilius Bolar*

To he who finds this, know that I, Acilius Bolar, last of the Blades to survive the attack on Cloud Ruler Temple, took refuge here, in this ancient sanctuary. The Thalmor have come for me, but they shall not desecrate this place. I go forth to meet my death with honor. If you are worthy, take up my blade and do the same.

# Bone

## *Tavi Dromio*

### Bone, Part I

“It seems to me,” said Garaz, thoughtfully looking into the depths of his flin. “That all great ideas come from pure happenstance. Take for instance, the story I told you last night about my cousin. If he hadn’t fallen off that horse, he never would have become one of the Empire’s foremost alchemists.”

It was late one Middas night at the King’s Ham, and the regulars were always especially inclined toward philosophy.

“I disagree,” replied Xiomara, firmly but politely. “Great ideas and inventions are most often formed slowly over time by diligence and hard work. If you’ll recall my tale from last month, the young lady—who I assure you is based on a real person—only recognized her one true love after she had slept with practically everyone in Northpoint.”

“I put it to you that neither is the case,” said Hallgerd, pouring a topper on his mug of greef. “The greatest inventions are created by extraordinary need. Must I remind you of the story I told some time ago about Arslic Oan and the invention of bonemold?”

“The problem with your theory is that your example is entirely fictional,” sniffed Xiomara.

“I don’t believe I remember the story of Arslic Oan and the invention of bonemold,” frowned Garaz. “Are you sure you told us?”

“Well, this happened many, many, many years ago, when Vvardenfell was a beautiful green land, when Dunmer were Chimer and Dwemer and Nord lived together in relative peace when they weren’t trying to kill one another,” Hallgerd relaxed in his chair, warming to his theme. “When the sun and moons all hung in the sky together—”

“Lord, Mother, and Wizard!” grumbled Xiomara. “If I’m going to be forced to hear your ridiculous story again, pray don’t embellish and make it any longer than it has to be.”

This all happened in Vvardenfell quite some time ago (said Hallgerd, ignoring Xiomara’s interruption with admirable restraint) during an era of a king you would never have heard of. Arslic Oan was one of this king’s nobles and very, very disagreeable fellow. Because of his allegiance to the crown, the king had felt the need to grant him a castle and land, but he didn’t necessarily want him as a neighbor so the land he granted was far from civilization. Right in an area of Vvardenfell that is, even today, not quite civilized to this day. Arslic Oan built a walled stronghold and settled down with his unhappy slaves to enjoy a quiet if somewhat grim life.

It was not long before his stronghold’s integrity was tested. A tribe of cannibalistic Nords had been living in the valley for some time, mostly dining on one another, but occasionally foraging what they liked to call dark meat, the Dunmer.

Xiomara laughed with appreciation. “Marvelous! I don’t remember that from before. It’s funny how you don’t hear

much about the Nords' rampant cannibalism nowadays.”

This was obviously, as I've said, quite some time ago (said Hallgerd, glaring at part of his audience with civil malevolence) and things were in many ways quite different. These cannibalistic Nords began attacking Arslie Oan's slaves in the fields, and then slowly grew bolder, until they held the very stronghold itself under siege. They were quite a fearsome sight you can imagine: a horde of wild-eyed men and women with dagger-like teeth filed to tear flesh, wielding massive clubs, cloaked only in the skins of their victims.

Arslie Oan assumed that if he ignored them, they'd go away.

Unfortunately, the first thing that the Nords did was to poison the stream that carried water into the walled stronghold. All the livestock and most of the slaves died very quickly before this was discovered. There was no hope of rescue, at least for several months when the king's emissaries would come reluctantly to visit the disagreeable vassal. The next closest source of water was on the other side of the hill, so Arslie Oan sent three of his slaves with empty jugs to bring some back.

They were beaten with clubs and eaten before they were a few feet outside the stronghold gates. The next group he sent through he gave sticks to defend themselves. They made it a few feet farther, but were also overwhelmed, beaten, and devoured. It was obvious that better personal defensive was required. Arslie Oan went to talk to his armorer, one of his few slaves with specific talents and duties.

“The slaves need armor if they're going to make it to the river and back,” he said. “Collect every scrap of steel and iron you can find, every hinge, knife, ring, cup, everything that isn't needed

to keep the walls sturdy, smelt it, and give me the most and the best armor you can, very, very quickly.”

The armorer, whose name was Gorkith, was used to Arslic Oan’s demands, and knew that there could be no compromise on the quality and quantity of the armor, or the speed at which he worked. He labored for thirty hours without a break - and, recall, without any water to slake his thirst as he struggled with the kiln and anvil - until finally, he had six suits of mixed-metal armor.

Six slaves were chosen, clad in the armor, and sent with jars to collect river water. At first, the mission progressed well. The Nord attacked the armored slaves with their clubs, but they continued their march forward, warding off the blows. Gradually, however, the slaves seemed to be walking uncertainly, dazed by the endless barrage. Eventually, one by one, they fell, the armor was peeled from their bodies, and they were eaten.

“The slaves couldn’t move quickly enough in that heavy armor you made,” said Arslic Oan to Gorkith. “I need you to collect all the cadavers of the poisoned livestock, strip their skin, and give me the most and the best leather armor you can, very, very quickly.”

Gorklith did as he was told, though it was a particularly repulsive task given the rancid state of the livestock. Normally it takes quite a time to treat and cure leather, so I understand, but Gorklith worked at it tirelessly, and in a half a day he had twelve suits of leather armor.

Twelve slaves were chosen, clad in the armor, and sent with jars to collect river water. They progressed, at first, much better

than the earlier expedition. Two fell almost immediately, but the others had some luck out-maneuvering their assailants while deflecting an occasional blow of the club. Several got to the river, three were able to fill up their jars, and one fellow very nearly made it back to the stronghold gates. Alas, he fell and was eaten. The Nords possessed a remarkably healthy appetite.

“What we need before I completely run out of slaves,” said Arslie Oan thoughtfully to Gorkith. “Is an armor sturdier than leather but lighter than metal.”

The armorer had already considered that and taken stock of the materials available. He had thought about doing something with stone or wood, but there were practical problems with demolishing more of the stronghold. The next most prevalent stuff present in the stronghold was skinned dead bodies, hunks of muscle, fat, blood, and bone. For six hours, he toiled relentlessly until he produced eighteen suits of bonemold, the first ones ever created. Arslie Oan was somewhat dubious at the sight (and smell) but he was very thirsty, and willing to sacrifice another eighteen slaves if necessary.

“Might I suggest,” Gorkith queried tremulously, “Having the slaves practice moving about in the armor, here in the courtyard, before sending them to face the Nords?”

Arslie Oan coolly allowed it, and for a few hours, the slaves wandered about the stronghold courtyard in their suits of bonemold. They grew used to the give of the joints, the rigidity of the backplate, the weight pushed onto their shoulders and hips. They discovered how to plant their feet slightly askew to keep their balance steady; how to quickly turn, pivoting without falling down; how to break into a run and stop quickly.



By the time they were sent out of the castle gates, they were easily very nearly almost amateurs in the use of their medium weight armor.

Seventeen of them were killed and eaten, but one made it back with a jar of water.

“It’s perfect nonsense,” said Xiomara. “But my point is still valid even so. Like all great inventors, even in fiction, the armorer worked diligently to create the bonemold.”

“I think there was a good deal of happenstance as well,” frowned Garaz. “But it is an appalling story. I wish you hadn’t told me.”

“If you think that’s appalling,” grinned Hallgerd. “You should hear what happened next.”

## Bone, Part II

“What do you mean the story gets more appalling?” Garaz was incredulous. “How in Boethiah’s name could it get more appalling?”

“It’s a ruse,” Xiomara scoffed, ordering two more mugs of greef and a glass of flin for Garaz. “How much worse can a tale get which prominently features cannibalism, abuse of slaves, and the regular placement of rotting animal carcasses?”

“Don’t you dare dare me,” growled Hallgerd, annoyed by his listeners’ lack of appreciation of his prose styling. “Remind me where we were?”

“Arslic Oan is the owner of a stronghold under siege by savage, cannibalistic Nords,” said Xiomara, keeping a straight face.

“After a lot of deaths and several unsuccessful attempts to get water, he had his armorer with the unlikely name of Gorkith outfit his slaves with the first ever bonemold armor. One of them finally makes it back with some water.”

It was only one jarful of water (said Hallgerd, pulling back in his chair and continuing the tale), and Arslie Oan drank most of it, passing the remains to his dear armorer Gorkith and the last dribbles to the few dozen slaves who still lived. It was hardly enough to sustain health and well-being. Another expedition was necessary, but they had only one suit of bonemold left, as there was only one survivor of the trip.

“One out of eighteen slaves made it through the gauntlet of Nords wearing that marvelous bonemold armor of yours,” said Arslie Oan to Gorkith. “And one can only carry back enough water for one. Therefore, mathematically, as we have, counting you and me, fifty-six remaining people at the stronghold, we need armor for fifty-four. Since we already have one, you only need to make fifty-three to make the total. That way, three will make it back, with enough water for you and me and whoever’s in the best condition to partake. I don’t know what we’ll do after that, but if we wait, we won’t have enough slaves to fetch even a couple days’ worth of water.”

“I understand,” whimpered Gorkith. “But how am I going to make the armor? I used all the livestock bones to make the first batch of bonemold.”

Arslie Oan gave an order which Gorkith fearfully complied with. In eighteen hours -

“What do you mean ‘Arslie Oan gave an order which Gorkith fearfully complied with?’” asked Xiomara. “What was the

order?”

“All will be clear,” smiled Hallgerd. “I have to chose what to reveal and what to conceal. Such is the way of the tale teller.”

In eighteen hours, Gorkith had fifty-three suits of bonemail (said Hallgerd, continuing, not really minding the interruption) prepared for the slaves. Without prompting, he ordered the slaves to practice using the armor, and even allowed them more training time than their predecessors. They not only learned how to move and stop quickly in bonemold, but how to adjust their peripheral vision to see a blow before it came, and to sway to dodge, and where the sturdiest reinforcement points on the arm were—the center of the chest and the abdomen—and how to position themselves to take blows there, against their natural instincts. The slaves even had time for a mock battle before being sent out among the cannibals.

The slaves handled themselves admirably. Very few, just fifteen slaves, were killed and eaten out right. Only ten were killed and eaten when they reached the river. That was when things did not go according to Arslie Oan’s plans. Twenty-one slaves with jars of water took off for the hills. Only eight returned to the castle, largely because they were blocked by the cannibal Nords. It was a larger percentage than he had anticipated surviving, but Arslie Oan felt righteous indignation at the paucity of loyalty.

“Are you absolutely certain you wouldn’t rather flee?” he hollered from the battlements.

Finally, he allowed the survivors in. Three had been killed waiting for the gate to open. Two more died almost upon

stepping into the courtyard. One was delirious, walking around in circles, laughing and dancing before suddenly collapsing. That meant five jars of water for four people, the two surviving slaves, Arslic Oan, and Gorkith. As the lord of the manor, Arslic Oan took the extra jar, but he was democratic with the others.

“You’re quite correct,” frowned Garaz. “This story is getting more and more appalling.”

“Just wait,” smiled Hallgerd.

The next morning (Hallgerd continued) Arslic Oan awoke to a perfectly still and quiet stronghold. There was no murmuring in the corridors, no sound of hard labor in the courtyard. He dressed and surveyed the scene. It appeared that the fortress was utterly deserted. Arslic Oan walked down to the armorer’s quarters, but the door was locked.

“Open up,” said Arslic Oan, patiently. “We need to speak. Thirty out of fifty-four slaves successfully made it to the river and gathered water. Admittedly, some then fled, and a couple didn’t survive because I needed to correct their fickleness, but mathematically, that’s a fifty-five percent survival rate. If you and I and the two remaining slaves made the next run to the river, we two should survive.”

“Zilian and Gelo left last night with their armor,” cried Gorklith through the door.

“Who are Zilian and Gelo?”

“The two remaining slaves! They don’t remain anymore!”

“Well, that’s vexing,” said Arslic Oan. “Still we must continue on. Mathematically—”

“I heard something last night,” whimpered Gorklith in a funny voice. “Like footsteps, only different, and they were moving through the walls. And there were voices too. They sounded strange, like they couldn’t move their jaws very well, but I knew one.”

Arslic Oan sighed, humoring his poor armorer: “And who was it?”

“Ponik.”

“And who is Ponik?”

“One of the slaves that died when the Nords poisoned our water. One of the many, many slaves that died, and we made use of. He was always a nice, uncomplaining fellow, that’s why I noticed his voice above all the others,” Gorklith began to sob. “I understood what he was saying.”

“Which was what?” asked Arslic Oan with a sigh.

“Give me back my bones!” Gorklith’s voice shrieked. There was silence for a moment, and then more hysterical sobbing.

“I saw that coming,” laughed Xiomara.

There was nothing more to be done with the armorer for the time being (said Hallgerd, a trifle annoyed at the regular interruptions), so Arslic Oan stripped one of the dead slaves of his suit of bonemold and put it on. He practiced in the courtyard, impressing himself with his natural comfotably with medium weight armor. For hours, he boxed, feinted,

dodged, sprinted, skipped, jumped, and generally cavorted about. When he felt tired, he retired to the shade and took a nap.

The sound of the king's trumpet woke him with a start. Night had fallen, and for a moment, he thought he had been dreaming. Then the alarum sounded again, far in the distance, but clear. Arslie Oan leapt to his feet and ran to the ramparts. Several miles away, he could see the emissaries and their vast and well-armed escort approach. They were there early! The cannibal Nords below looked at one another with consternation. Savages they might be, but they knew when a superior force was approaching.

Arslie Oan joyously dashed down the stairs to Gorklith's chamber. The door was still locked. He beat on it, cajoling, demanding, threatening. Finally, he found a key, one of the few scraps of metal that had not been smelted days before.

Gorklith appeared to be sleeping, but as Arslie Oan approached, he noticed that the armorer's mouth and eyes were wide open and his arms were folded unnaturally behind his back. On closer inspection, the armorer was obviously dead. What was more, his face and whole body were sunken, like an empty pig's bladder.

Something moved through the walls, like a footfall only... squishy. Arslie Oan expertly and gracefully turned to face it, completely in balance.

At first, it seemed like nothing more than a bubble expanding through one of the cracks in the stone. As more of the flesh-colored gelatinous matter emerged, it more clearly resembled part of a face. A flaccid, almost shapeless face with a low brow

and a slack, toothless jaw. The rest of the body oozed out of the crack, a soft bag of muscle and blood. Behind Arslic Oan and to the side, there was more movement, more slaves welling up through the cracks in the stone. They were all around him, reaching out.

“Give us,” moaned Ponik, his tongue rolling about his hanging jaw. “Give us back our bones.”

Arslic Oan began to rip off his bonemold, throwing it to the floor. A hundred figures, more, pooled into the small chamber.

“That’s not enough.”

The cannibals had cleared away by the time the king’s emissaries arrived at Arslic Oan’s gates. They had not been looking forward to this visit. It was best, they thought philosophically, to begin with the worst of the king’s noblemen, so to end their trip well. They sounded the alarum once again, but the gates did not open. There was no sound from Arslic Oan’s stronghold.

It took a few hours to gain access. If the emissaries had not brought a professional acrobat with them for entertainment, it might have taken longer. The place seemed to be abandoned. They searched every room, until finally they came to the armorer’s.

There they found the master of the manor, folded neatly, legs behind his head, arms behind the legs, like a fine gown. Not a bone in his body.

“The first part of your story was complete nonsense,” cried Xiomara. “But now it doesn’t hold true on any level. How could

bonemold be made again if the armorer who invented it died before he could tell anyone how he did it?”

“I said that this was the first time it was created, not the first time people learned the craft.”

“And when did someone first teach someone else the craft?” asked Garaz.

“That, my friends,” replied Hallgerd with a sinister smile. “Is a tale for another night.”



# Bonemold Formula

*Glover Mallory*

Delvin,

Here's the formula for the Improved Bonemold I mentioned in my last letter. Take whatever gold you make from the sale and make sure our little sister is taken care of.

Ingredients:

4 cups of bone dust

1 cup void salts

1 bottle of netch jelly

1 cup of ground stahlrim chips

1 bucket of fresh water

Add the bone and void salts to the water and allow them to soak for at least a full day. Then add the netch jelly and stahlrim chips to the bucket. Stir over a hot flame until the mixture begins to harden. Pour the mixture into the desired mold and set the mold in the center of your forge. Fire the mixture in the forge for at least a half day. Let the mixture cool and then remove from the mold.

Glover Mallory

# Book Of The Dragonborn

*Prior Emelene Madrine*

The Book of the Dragonborn

by

Prior Emelene Madrine

Order of Talos

Weynon Priory

Year 360 of the Third Era,

Twenty-First of the Reign of

His Majesty Pelagius IV

Many people have heard the term “Dragonborn” - we are of course ruled by the “Dragonborn Emperors” - but the true meaning of the term is not commonly understood. For those of us in the Order of Talos, this is a subject near and dear to our hearts, and in this book I will attempt to illuminate the history and significance of those known as Dragonborn down through the ages.

Most scholars agree that the term was first used in connection with the Covenant of Akatosh, when the blessed St. Alessia was given the Amulet of Kings and the Dragonfires in the Temple of

the One were first lit. “Akatosh, looking with pity upon the plight of men, drew precious blood from his own heart, and blessed St. Alessia with this blood of Dragons, and made a Covenant that so long as Alessia’s generations were true to the dragon blood, Akatosh would endeavor to seal tight the Gates of Oblivion, and to deny the armies of daedra and undead to their enemies, the Daedra-loving Ayleids.” Those blessed by Akatosh with “the dragon blood” became known more simply as Dragonborn.

The connection with the rulers of the Empire was thus there from the beginning - only those of the dragon blood were able to wear the Amulet of Kings and light the Dragonfires. All the legitimate rulers of the Empire have been Dragonborn - the Emperors and Empresses of the first Cyrodilic Empire founded by Alessia; Reman Cyrodiil and his heirs; and of course Tiber Septim and his heirs, down to our current Emperor, His Majesty Pelagius Septim IV.

Because of this connection with the Emperors, however, the other significance of the Dragonborn has been obscured and largely forgotten by all but scholars and those of us dedicated to the service of the blessed Talos, Who Was Tiber Septim. Very few realize that being Dragonborn is not a simple matter of heredity - being the blessing of Akatosh Himself, it is beyond our understanding exactly how and why it is bestowed. Those who become Emperor and light the Dragonfires are surely Dragonborn - the proof is in the wearing of the Amulet and the lighting of the Fires. But were they Dragonborn and thus able to do these things - or was the doing the sign of the blessing of Akatosh descending upon them? All that we can say is that it is both, and neither - a divine mystery.

The line of Septims have all been Dragonborn, of course, which is one reason the simplistic notion of it being hereditary has become so commonplace. But we know for certain that the early Cyrodilic rulers were not all related. There is also no evidence that Reman Cyrodiil was descended from Alessia, although there are many legends that would make it so, most of them dating from the time of Reman and likely attempts to legitimize his rule. We know that the Blades, usually thought of as the Emperor's bodyguards, originated in Akaviri crusaders who invaded Tamriel for obscure reasons in the late First Era. They appear to have been searching for a Dragonborn - the events at Pale Pass bear this out - and the Akaviri were the first to proclaim Reman Cyrodiil as Dragonborn. In fact it was the Akaviri who did the most to promote his standing as Emperor (although Reman himself never took that title in his lifetime). And of course there is no known hereditary connection between Tiber Septim and any of the previous Dragonborn rulers of Tamriel.

Whether there can be more than one Dragonborn at any time is another mystery. The Emperors have done their best to dismiss this notion, but of course the Imperial succession itself means that at the very least there are two or more potential Dragonborn at any time: the current ruler and his or her heirs. The history of the Blades also hints at this - although little is known of their activities during the Interregnum between Reman's Empire and the rise of Tiber Septim, many believe that the Blades continued to search out and guard those they believed were (or might be) Dragonborn during this time.

Lastly, we come to the question of the true meaning of being Dragonborn. The connection with dragons is so obvious that it has almost been forgotten - in these days when dragons are a

distant memory, we forget that in the early days being Dragonborn meant having “the dragon blood”. Some scholars believe that was meant quite literally, although the exact significance is not known. The Nords tell tales of Dragonborn heroes who were great dragonslayers, able to steal the power of the dragons they killed. Indeed, it is well known that the Akaviri sought out and killed many dragons during their invasion, and there is some evidence that this continued after they became Reman Cyrodiil’s Dragonguard (again, the connection to dragons) - the direct predecessor to the Blades of today.

I leave you with what is known as “The Prophecy of the Dragonborn”. It often said to originate in an Elder Scroll, although it is sometimes also attributed to the ancient Akaviri. Many have attempted to decipher it, and many have also believed that its omens had been fulfilled and that the advent of the “Last Dragonborn” was at hand. I make no claims as an interpreter of prophecy, but it does suggest that the true significance of Akatosh’s gift to mortalkind has yet to be fully understood.

When misrule takes its place at the eight corners of the world

When the Brass Tower walks and Time is reshaped

When the thrice-blessed fail and the Red Tower trembles

When the Dragonborn Ruler loses his throne, and the White Tower falls

When the Snow Tower lies sundered, kingless, bleeding

The World-Eater wakes, and the Wheel turns upon the Last Dragonborn.

# Bounty

*Anonymous*

By order of [Jarl's name]:

To all able bodied and fearless men and women of [current hold]. The dragon located in [location] has been carrying off livestock, and terrorizing citizens and visitors.

A handsome reward will be offered to anyone who kills it.

—[Steward's name]

# Breathing Water

*Haliel Myrm*

He walked through the dry, crowded streets of Bal Fell, glad to be among so many strangers. In the wharfs of Vivec, he had no such anonymity. They knew him to be a smuggler, but here, he could be anyone. A lower-class peddler perhaps. A student even. Some people even pushed against him as he walked past as if to say, “We would not dream of being so rude as to acknowledge that you don’t belong here.”

Seryne Relas was not in any of the taverns, but he knew she was somewhere, perhaps behind a tenement window or poking around in a dunghill for an exotic ingredient for some spell or another. He knew little of the ways of sorceresses, but that they always seemed to be doing something eccentric. Because of this prejudice, he nearly passed by the old Dunmer woman having a drink from a well. It was too prosaic, but he knew from the look of her that she was Seryne Relas, the great sorceress.

“I have gold for you,” he said to her back. “If you will teach me the secret of breathing water.”

She turned around, a wide wet grin stretched across her weathered features. “I ain’t breathing it, boy. I’m just having a drink.”

“Don’t mock me,” he said, stiffly. “Either you’re Seryne Relas and you will teach me the spell of breathing water, or you



aren't. Those are the only possibilities."

"If you're going to learn to breath water, you're going to have to learn there are more possibilities than that, boy. The School of Alteration is all about possibilities, changing patterns, making things be what they could be. Maybe I ain't Seryne Relas, but I can teach how to breathe water," she wiped her mouth dry. "Or maybe I am Seryne Relas and I won't. Or maybe even I can teach you to breath water, but you can't learn."

"I'll learn," he said, simply.

"Why don't you just buy yourself a spell of water breathing or a potion over at the Mages Guild?" she asked. "That's how it's generally done."

"They're not powerful enough," he said. "I need to be underwater for a long time. I'm willing to pay whatever you ask, but I don't want any questions. I was told you could teach me."

"What's your name, boy?"

"That's a question," he replied. His name was Tharien Winloth, but in Vivec, they called him the Tollman. His job, such as it was, was collecting a percentage of the loot from the smugglers when they came into harbor to bring to his boss in the Camonna Tong. Of the value of that percentage, he earned another percentage. In the end it was very small indeed. He had scarcely any gold of his own, and what he had, he gave to Seryne Relas.

The lessons began that very day. The sorceress brought her pupil, who she simply called "boy," out to a low sandbank along

the sea.

“I will teach you a powerful spell for breathing water,” she said. “But you must become a master of it. As with all spells and all skills, the more you practice, the better you get. Even that ain’t enough. To achieve true mastery, you must understand what it is you’re doing. It ain’t simply enough to perform a perfect thrust of a blade—you must also know what you are doing and why.”

“That’s common sense,” said Tharien

“Yes, it is,” said Seryne, closing her eyes. “But the spells of Alteration are all about uncommon sense. The infinite possibilities, breaking the sky, swallowing space, dancing with time, setting ice on fire, believing that the unreal may become real. You must learn the rules of the cosmos and then break them.”

“That sounds...very difficult,” replied Tharien, trying to keep a straight face.

Seryne pointed to the small silver fish darting along the water’s edge: “They don’t find it so. They breathe water just fine.”

“But that’s not magic.”

“What I’m saying to you, boy, is that it is.”

For several weeks, Seryne drilled her student, and the more he understood about what he was doing and the more he practiced, the longer he could breathe underwater. When he found that he could cast the spell for as long as he needed, he thanked the sorceress and bade her farewell.

“There is one last lesson I have to teach you,” she said. “You must learn that desire is not enough. The world will end your spell no matter how good you are, and no matter how much you want it.”

“That’s a lesson I’m happy not to learn,” he said, and left at once for the short journey back to Vivec.

The wharfs were much the same, with all the same smells, the same sounds, and the same characters. His boss had found a new Tollman, he learned from his mates. They were still looking out for the smuggler ship Morodrung, but they had given up hope of ever seeing it. Tharien knew they would not. He had seen it sink from the wharf a long time ago.

On a moonless night, he cast his spell and dove into the thrashing purple waves. He kept his mind on the world of possibilities, that books could sing, that green was blue, that that water was air, that every stroke and kick brought him closer to a sunken ship filled with treasure. He felt magicka surge all around him as he pushed his way deeper down. Ahead he saw a ghostly shadow of the Morodrung, its mast billowing in a wind of deep water currents. He also felt his spell begin to fade. He could break reality long enough to breath water all the way back up to the surface, but not enough to reach the ship.

The next night, he dove again, and this time, the spell was stronger. He could see the vessel in detail, clouded over and dusted in sediment. The wound in its hull where it had struck the reef. A glint of gold beckoning from within. But still he felt reality closing in, and he had to surface.

The third night, he made it into the steerage, past the bloated corpses of the sailors, nibbled and picked apart by fish. Their

glassy eyes bulging, their mouths stretched open. Had they only known the spell, he thought briefly, but his mind was more occupied by the gold scattered along the floor, the boxes that contained them shattered. He considered scooping as much he could carry into his pockets, but a sturdy iron box seemed to bespeak more treasures.

On the wall was a row of keys. He took each down and tried it on the locked box, but none opened it. One key, however, was missing. Thalien looked around the room. Where could it be? His eyes went to the corpse of one of the sailors, floating in a dance of death not far from the box, his hands tightly clutching something. It was a key. When the ship had begun to sink, this sailor had evidently gone for the iron box. Whatever was in it had to be very valuable.

Thalien took the sailor's key and opened the box. It was filled with broken glass. He rummaged around until he felt something solid, and pulled out two flasks of some kind of wine. He smiled as he considered the foolishness of the poor alcoholic. This was what was important to the sailor, out of all the treasure in the Morodrung.

Then, suddenly, Thalien Winloth felt reality.

He had not been paying attention to the grim, tireless advance of the world on his spell. It was fading away, his ability to breath water. There was no time to surface. There was no time to do anything. As he sucked in, his lungs filled with cold, briny water.

A few days later, the smugglers working on the wharf came upon the drowned body of the former Tollman. Finding a body in the water in Vivec was not in itself noteworthy, but the

subject that they discussed over many bottles of flin was how did it happen that he drowned with two portions of water breathing in his hands.

# Brief History Of The Empire

*Stronach k'Thojj III*

Brief History of the Empire, v1

A Brief History

of the Empire

Part One

by

Stronach k'Thojj III

Imperial Historian

Before the rule of Tiber Septim, all Tamriel was in chaos. The poet Tracizis called that period of continuous unrest “days and nights of blood and venom.” The kings were a petty lot of grasping tyrants, who fought Tiber’s attempts to bring order to the land. But they were as disorganized as they were dissolute, and the strong hand of Septim brought peace forcibly to Tamriel. The year was 2E 896. The following year, the Emperor declared the beginning of a new Era-thus began the Third Era, Year Aught.

For thirty-eight years, the Emperor Tiber reigned supreme. It was a lawful, pious, and glorious age, when justice was known

to one and all, from serf to sovereign. On Tiber's death, it rained for an entire fortnight as if the land of Tamriel itself was weeping.

The Emperor's grandson, Pelagius, came to the throne. Though his reign was short, he was as strong and resolute as his father had been, and Tamriel could have enjoyed a continuation of the Golden Age. Alas, an unknown enemy of the Septim Family hired that accursed organization of cutthroats, the Dark Brotherhood, to kill the Emperor Pelagius I as he knelt at prayer at the Temple of the One in the Imperial City. Pelagius I's reign lasted less than three years.

Pelagius had no living children, so the Crown Imperial passed to his first cousin, the daughter of Tiber's brother Agnorith. Kintyra, former Queen of Silvenar, assumed the throne as Kintyra I. Her reign was blessed with prosperity and good harvests, and she herself was an avid patroness of art, music, and dance.

Kintyra's son was crowned after her death, the first Emperor of Tamriel to use the imperial name Uriel. Uriel I was the great lawmaker of the Septim Dynasty, and a promoter of independent organizations and guilds. Under his kind but firm hand, the Fighters Guild and the Mages Guild increased in prominence throughout Tamriel. His son and successor Uriel II reigned for eighteen years, from the death of Uriel I in 3E64 to Pelagius II's accession in 3E82. Tragically, the rule of Uriel II was cursed with blights, plagues, and insurrections. The tenderness he inherited from his father did not serve Tamriel well, and little justice was done.

Pelagius II inherited not only the throne from his father, but the debt from the latter's poor financial and judicial

management. Pelagius dismissed all of the Elder Council, and allowed only those willing to pay great sums to resume their seats. He encouraged similar acts among his vassals, the kings of Tamriel, and by the end of his seventeen year reign, Tamriel had returned to prosperity. His critics, however, have suggested that any advisor possessed of wisdom but not of gold had been summarily ousted by Pelagius. This may have led to some of the troubles his son Antiochus faced when he in turn became Emperor.

Antiochus was certainly one of the more flamboyant members of the usually austere Septim Family. He had numerous mistresses and nearly as many wives, and was renowned for the grandeur of his dress and his high good humor. Unfortunately, his reign was rife with civil war, surpassing even that of his grandfather Uriel II. The War of the Isle in 3E110, twelve years after Antiochus assumed the throne, nearly took the province of Summurset Isle away from Tamriel. The united alliance of the kings of Summurset and Antiochus only managed to defeat King Orghum of the island-kingdom of Pyandonea due to a freak storm. Legend credits the Psijic Order of the Isle of Artaeum with the sorcery behind the tempest.

The story of Kintyra II, heiress to her father Antiochus' throne, is certainly one of the saddest tales in imperial history. Her first cousin Uriel, son of Queen Potema of Solitude, accused Kintyra of being a bastard, alluding to the infamous decadence of the Imperial City during her father's reign. When this accusation failed to stop her coronation, Uriel bought the support of several disgruntled kings of High Rock, Skyrim, and Morrowind, and with Queen Potema's assistance, he coordinated three attacks on the Septim Empire.



The first attack occurred in the Iliac Bay region, which separates High Rock and Hammerfell. Kintyra's entourage was massacred and the Empress taken captive. For two years, Kintyra II languished in an Imperial prison believed to be somewhere in Glenpoint or Glenmoril before she was slain in her cell under mysterious circumstances. The second attack was on a series of Imperial garrisons along the coastal Morrowind islands. The Empress' consort Kontin Arynix fell defending the forts. The third and final attack was a siege of the Imperial City itself, occurring after the Elder Council had split up the army to attack western High Rock and eastern Morrowind. The weakened government had little defence against Uriel's determined aggression, and capitulated after only a fortnight of resistance. Uriel took the throne that same evening and proclaimed himself Uriel III, Emperor of Tamriel. The year was 3E 121. Thus began the War of the Red Diamond, described in Volume II of this series.

Brief History of the Empire, v2

A Brief History

of the Empire

Part Two

by

Stronach k'Thojj III

Imperial Historian

Volume I of this series described in brief the lives of the first eight Emperors of the Septim Dynasty, beginning with the glorious Tiber Septim and ending with his great, great, great,

great, grandniece Kintyra II. Kintyra's murder in Glenpoint while in captivity is considered by some to be the end of the pure strain of Septim blood in the imperial family. Certainly it marks the end of something significant.

Uriel III not only proclaimed himself Emperor of Tamriel, but also Uriel Septim III, taking the eminent surname as a title. In truth, his surname was Mantiarco from his father's line. In time, Uriel III was deposed and his crimes reviled, but the tradition of taking the name Septim as a title for the Emperor of Tamriel did not die with him.

For six years, the War of the Red Diamond (which takes its name from the Septim Family's famous badge) tore the Empire apart. The combatants were the three surviving children of Pelagius II-Potema, Cephorus, and Magnus-and their various offspring. Potema, of course, supported her son Uriel III, and had the combined support of all of Skyrim and northern Morrowind. With the efforts of Cephorus and Magnus, however, the province of High Rock turned coat. The provinces of Hammerfell, Summurset Isle, Valenwood, Elsweyr, and Black Marsh were divided in their loyalty, but most kings supported Cephorus and Magnus.

In 3E127, Uriel III was captured at the Battle of Ichidag in Hammerfell. En route to his trial in the Imperial City, a mob overtook his prisoner's carriage and burned him alive within it. His captor and uncle continued on to the Imperial City, and by common acclaim was proclaimed Cephorus I, Emperor of Tamriel.

Cephorus' reign was marked by nothing but war. By all accounts, he was a kind and intelligent man, but what Tamriel needed was a great warrior—and he, fortunately, was that. It

took an additional ten years of constant warfare for him to defeat his sister Potema. The so-called Wolf Queen of Solitude who died in the siege of her city-state in the year 137. Cephorus survived his sister by only three years. He never had time during the war years to marry, so it was his brother, the fourth child of Pelagius II, who assumed the throne.

The Emperor Magnus was already elderly when he took up the imperial diadem, and the business of punishing the traitorous kings of the War of the Red Diamond drained much of his remaining strength. Legend accuses Magnus' son and heir Pelagius III of patricide, but that seems highly unlikely-for no other reason than that Pelagius was King of Solitude following the death of Potema, and seldom visited the Imperial City.

Pelagius III, sometimes called Pelagius the Mad, was proclaimed Emperor in the 145th year of the Third Era. Almost from the start, his eccentricities of behaviour were noted at court. He embarrassed dignitaries, offended his vassal kings, and on one occasion marked the end of an imperial grand ball by attempting to hang himself. His long-suffering wife was finally awarded the Regency of Tamriel, and Pelagius III was sent to a series of healing institutions and asylums until his death in 3E153 at the age of thirty-four.

The Empress Regent of Tamriel was proclaimed Empress Katariah I upon the death of her husband. Some who do not mark the end of the Septim bloodline with the death of Kintyra II consider the ascendancy of this Dark Elf woman the true mark of its decline. Her defenders, on the other hand, assert that though Katariah was not descended from Tiber, the son she had with Pelagius was, so the imperial chain did continue. Despite racist assertions to the contrary, Katariah's forty-six-

year reign was one of the most celebrated in Tamriel's history. Uncomfortable in the Imperial City, Katariah travelled extensively throughout the Empire such as no Emperor ever had since Tiber's day. She repaired much of the damage that previous emperor's broken alliances and bungled diplomacy created. The people of Tamriel came to love their Empress far more than the nobility did. Katariah's death in a minor skirmish in Black Marsh is a favorite subject of conspiracy minded historians. The Sage Montalius' discovery, for instance, of a disenfranchised branch of the Septim Family and their involvement with the skirmish was a revelation indeed.

When Cassynder assumed the throne upon the death of his mother, he was already middle-aged. Only half Elven, he aged like a Breton. In fact, he had left the rule of Wayrest to his half-brother Uriel due to poor health. Nevertheless, as the only true blood relation of Pelagius and thus Tiber, he was pressed into accepting the throne. To no one's surprise, the Emperor Cassynder's reign did not last long. In two years he joined his predecessors in eternal slumber.

Uriel Lariat, Cassynder's half-brother, and the child of Katariah I and her Imperial consort Gallivere Lariat (after the death of Pelagius III), left the kingdom of Wayrest to reign as Uriel IV. Legally, Uriel IV was a Septim: Cassynder had adopted him into the royal family when he had become King of Wayrest. Nevertheless, to the Council and the people of Tamriel, he was a bastard child of Katariah. Uriel did not possess the dynamism of his mother, and his long forty-three-year reign was a hotbed of sedition.

Uriel IV's story is told in the third volume of this series.

Brief History of the Empire, v3

A Brief History

of the Empire

Part Three

by

Stronach k'Thojj III

Imperial Historian

The first volume of this series told in brief the story of the succession of the first eight Emperors of the Septim Dynasty, from Tiber I to Kintyra II. The second volume described the War of the Red Diamond and the six Emperors that followed its aftermath, from Uriel III to Cassynder I. At the end of that volume, it was described how the Emperor Cassynder's half-brother Uriel IV assumed the throne of the Empire of Tamriel.

It will be recalled that Uriel IV was not a Septim by birth. His mother, though she reigned as Empress for many years, was a Dark Elf married to a true Septim Emperor, Pelagius III. Uriel's father was actually Katariah I's consort after Pelagius' death, a Breton nobleman named Gallivere Lariat. Before taking the throne of Empire, Cassynder I had ruled the kingdom of Wayrest, but poor health had forced him to retire. Cassynder had no children, so he legally adopted his half-brother Uriel and abdicated the kingdom. Seven years later, Cassynder inherited the Empire at the death of his mother. Three years after that, Uriel once again found himself the recipient of Cassynder's inheritance.

Uriel IV's reign was a long and difficult one. Despite being a legally adopted member of the Septim Family, and despite the

Lariat Family's high position—indeed, they were distant cousins of the Septims—few of the Elder Council could be persuaded to accept him fully as a blood descendant of Tiber. The Council had assumed much responsibility during Katariah I's long reign and Cassynder I's short one, and a strong-willed "alien" monarch like Uriel IV found it impossible to command their unswerving fealty. Time and again the Council and Emperor were at odds, and time and again the Council won the battles. Since the days of Pelagius II, the Elder Council had consisted of the wealthiest men and women in the Empire, and the power they wielded was conclusive.

The Council's last victory over Uriel IV was posthumous. Andorak, Uriel IV's son, was disinherited by vote of Council, and a cousin more closely related to the original Septim line was proclaimed Cephorus II in 3E247. For the first nine years of Cephorus II's reign, those loyal to Andorak battled the Imperial forces. In an act that the Sage Eraintine called "Tiber Septim's heart beating no more," the Council granted Andorak the High Rock kingdom of Shornhelm to end the war, and Andorak's descendants still rule there.

By and large, Cephorus II had foes that demanded more of his attention than Andorak. "From out of a cimmerician nightmare," in the words of Eraintine, a man who called himself the Camoran Usurper led an army of Daedra and undead warriors on a rampage through Valenwood, conquering kingdom after kingdom. Few could resist his onslaughts, and as month turned to bloody month in the year 3E249, even fewer tried. Cephorus II sent more and more mercenaries into Hammerfell to stop the Usurper's northward march, but they were bribed or slaughtered and raised as undead.

The story of the Camoran Usurper deserves a book of its own. (It is recommended that the reader find Palaux Illthre's *The Fall of the Usurper* for more detail.) In short, however, the destruction of the forces of the Usurper had little to do with the efforts of the Emperor. The result was a great regional victory and an increase in hostility toward the seemingly inefficacious Empire.

Uriel V, Cephorus II's son and successor, swivelled opinion back toward the latent power of the Empire. Turning the attention of Tamriel away from internal strife, Uriel V embarked on a series of invasions beginning almost from the moment he took the throne in 3E268. Uriel V conquered Roscrea in 271, Cathnoquey in 276, Yneslea in 279, and Esoniet in 284. In 3E288, he embarked on his most ambitious enterprise, the invasion of the continent kingdom of Akavir. This ultimately proved a failure, for two years later Uriel V was killed in Akavir on the battlefield of Ionith. Nevertheless, Uriel V holds a reputation second only to Tiber as one of the two great Warrior Emperors of Tamriel.

The last four Emperors, beginning with Uriel V's infant son, are described in the fourth and final volume of this series.

Brief History of the Empire, v4

A Brief History

of the Empire

Part Four

by

Stronach k'Thojj III

## Imperial Historian

The first book of this series described, in brief, the first eight Emperors of the Septim Dynasty beginning with Tiber I. The second volume described the War of the Red Diamond and the six Emperors who followed. The third volume described the troubles of the next three Emperors-the frustrated Uriel IV, the ineffectual Cephorus II, and the heroic Uriel V.

On Uriel V's death across the sea in distant, hostile Akavir, Uriel VI was but five years old. In fact, Uriel VI was born only shortly before his father left for Akavir. Uriel V's only other progeny, by a morganatic alliance, were the twins Morihatha and Eloisa, who had been born a month after Uriel V left. Uriel VI was crowned in the 290th year of the Third Era. The Imperial Consort Thonica, as the boy's mother, was given a restricted Regency until Uriel VI reached his majority. The Elder Council retained the real power, as they had ever since the days of Katariah I.

The Council so enjoyed its unlimited and unrestricted freedom to promulgate laws (and generate profits) that Uriel VI was not given full license to rule until 307, when he was already 22 years old. He had been slowly assuming positions of responsibility for years, but both the Council and his mother, who enjoyed even her limited Regency, were loath to hand over the reins. By the time he came to the throne, the mechanisms of government gave him little power except for that of the imperial veto.

This power, however, he regularly and vigorously exercised. By 313, Uriel VI could boast with conviction that he truly did rule Tamriel. He utilized defunct spy networks and guard units to bully and coerce the difficult members of the Elder Council. His



half-sister Morihatha was (not surprisingly) his staunchest ally, especially after her marriage to Baron Ulfe Gersen of Winterhold brought her considerable wealth and influence. As the Sage Ugaridge said, "Uriel V conquered Esroniet, but Uriel VI conquered the Elder Council."

When Uriel VI fell off a horse and could not be resuscitated by the finest Imperial healers, his beloved sister Morihatha took up the imperial tiara. At 25 years of age, she had been described by (admittedly self-serving) diplomats as the most beautiful creature in all of Tamriel. She was certainly well-learned, vivacious, athletic, and a well-practised politician. She brought the Archmagister of Skyrim to the Imperial City and created the second Imperial Battlemage since the days of Tiber Septim.

Morihatha finished the job her brother had begun, and made the Imperial Province a true government under the Empress (and later, the Emperor). Outside the Imperial Province, however, the Empire had been slowly disintegrating. Open revolutions and civil wars had raged unchallenged since the days of her grandfather Cephorus II. Carefully coordinating her counterattacks, Morihatha slowly claimed back her rebellious vassals, always avoiding overextending herself.

Though Morihatha's military campaigns were remarkably successful, her deliberate pace often frustrated the Council. One Councilman, an Argonian who took the Colovian name of Thoricles Romus, furious at her refusal to send troops to his troubled Black Marsh, is commonly believed to have hired the assassins who claimed her life in 3E 339. Romus was summarily tried and executed, though he protested his innocence to the last.

Morihatha had no surviving children, and Eloisa had died of a fever four years before. Eloisa's 25-year-old son Pelagius was thus crowned Pelagius IV. Pelagius IV continued his aunt's work, slowly bringing back under his wing the radical and refractory kingdoms, duchies, and baronies of the Empire. He exercised Morihatha's poise and circumspect pace in his endeavours-but alas, he did not attain her success. The kingdoms had been free of constraint for so long that even a benign Imperial presence was considered odious. Nevertheless, when Pelagius died after a notably stable and prosperous twenty-nine-year reign, Tamriel was closer to unity than it had been since the days of Uriel I.

Our current Emperor, His Awesome and Terrible Majesty, Uriel Septim VII, son of Pelagius IV, has the diligence of his great-aunt Morihatha, the political skill of his great-uncle Uriel VI, and the military prowess of his great grand-uncle Uriel V. For twenty-one years he reigned and brought justice and order to Tamriel. In the year 3E389, however, his Imperial Battlemage, Jagar Tharn, betrayed him.

Uriel VII was imprisoned in a dimension of Tharn's creation, and Tharn used his sorcery of illusion to assume the Emperor's aspect. For the next ten years, Tharn abused imperial privilege but did not continue Uriel VII's schedule of reconquest. It is not yet entirely known what Tharn's goals and personal accomplishments were during the ten years he masqueraded as his liege lord. In 3E399, an enigmatic Champion defeated the Battlemage in the dungeons of the Imperial Palace and freed Uriel VII from his other-dimensional jail.

Since his emancipation, Uriel Septim VII has worked diligently to renew the battles that would reunite Tamriel. Tharn's

interference broke the momentum, it is true—but the years since then have proven that there is hope of the Golden Age of Tiber Septim's rule glorifying Tamriel once again.

# Butcher Journals

*Calixto*

## Butcher Journal #1

The plans are coming together swimmingly. I've found good sources of bone, flesh, and blood, but thus far a good sampling of sinew and marrow have escaped me. No matter. The city is swollen with contemptuous fools who will be missed by nobody.

Last night was almost able to corner Susanna as she left Candlehearth. Idiot guard showed up at just the wrong moment and I had to turn about, just out for a stroll, and so forth. There will be other chances, but the time is drawing near.

I think back to my time in Winterhold. All the wasted minds up in their towers. They only explore the magic they already know. I am discovering new magic here. Something deeper than the cantripped shenanigans of fire and light. This flesh magic is older than us. Perhaps older than the world itself. I am tugging at the corners of the fabric of the universe, and where it bunches and folds is where I shall create my greatest triumph.

One more attempt at the Candlehearth girl. She's proving to be a bit too cautious, but those strong joints of hers should contain the most exquisite tendons. Worth the effort. Tonight.

## Butcher Journal #2

17 tendons and assorted ligaments

173 fragments of bone for assemblage

approx. 4 bucket-fulls of blood (Nord preferred)

6 spoons of marrow (no more than 2 from a thigh)

12 yards of flesh (before cutting)

star-scriving to the edge of the ice-mind

look to the lights where the souls dance

revealing the time when a spark will revive

when the rotted unites under most skillful hands

(translation from Aldmer text, as interpreted by the Ayleids  
and first transcribed by Altmer. provenance and authority  
unknown)

soon

## Butcher Journal #3

Soon enough, my sweet Lucilla, you will be with me again.  
Normally when such words are written it is because the love  
left behind is soon to depart, but in my case, I hope to soon  
bring your spirit back into my world, for it was you who loved  
this world so much, not I.

I continue to collect your new form from the ragged bits  
around Windhelm. If they only knew what destiny would soon

grace their bodies, with your spirit imbuing them with higher purpose, they would surely thank me for the great gift I give them. I reserve for them a place of beauty alongside your heart.

The day draws near. Soon I will hold you. And I will show you this and it will be as delivering a long-forgotten letter to a weary traveler.

Love always,

Calixto

# Cabin The The Woods

*Mogen*

The Cabin in the Woods

Volume II

As Told By

Mogen Son of Molag

Late one night a few seasons ago, a soldier was returning home after several bloody battles. He decided he would save some gold and decided to cross the pine forest on foot.

The first day of his journey was rather uneventful, the soldier stuck to the main path and kept a brisk pace. When it started getting dark he setup his bedroll, built a small fire and cooked up some rabbit he had caught. "A fine day indeed" he thought to himself as he fell asleep.

Partway through the evening the soldier was woken up by soft sobbing in the distance. He grabbed his sword assuming it to be a bandit trick, but pretended to sleep so he could get the jump on them. After a few minutes the sobbing started moving away from his camp until he could no longer hear it. For the rest of the night slept with one eye open.

Day two the soldier awoke from what rotten sleep he could catch and started off through the forest at a quicker pace, intending to put distance between himself and whatever he had heard last night. As the day went on it began to rain heavy so the soldier built himself a little shelter for the evening so he could remain dry while he slept.

It took him a little longer to fall asleep with thoughts of the previous night fresh in his mind but he eventually slept.

This time he awoke to sobbing that sounded like it was right outside his shelter. The soldier grabbed his sword and crawled out of the shelter. In front of the fire he saw the back of a ghostly woman sobbing into her hands.

The soldier mustered his courage and asked her what was wrong.

No answer.

He began to slowly approach but before he could reach her she turned and screamed at him. The ghostly woman raised an axe and began to run at the soldier, disappearing before she made contact.

The soldier took off into the night with just his sword in hand. He ran until the first light of dawn where he started down the road again, as fast as he could move.

The third day was bright and sunny, but the soldier, rattled and sleepless, didn't even notice. He moved as fast as he could trying to get through the forest before nightfall.

As darkness began to fall he saw a cabin just off the road and thought to himself it would be a good place to hunker down for



the night. After arriving at the cabin he spent some time blocking the doors and windows, nothing would get in.

Despite his preparations, he could not sleep. He sat in what used to be the cabin's bedroom staring at the barricaded door shaking. Eventually he could keep his eyes open no longer and fell asleep.

This time he awoke to laughing on the other side of the barricaded door. It sounded like the woman from before, but he refused to believe it was her.

The soldier burst through the barricaded door into the main room to find the ghostly woman from the night before staring at the ground laughing hysterically with axe in hand.

He began to relentlessly attack the ghostly woman but he could feel his strikes were less effective. He used a scroll of firebolt which drew a scream from her and she exploded, disappearing.

The ordeal was over, the ghost was gone.

The soldier slept well that night and the next day made excellent distance through the woods. As the sun began to set he came out on the other side of the forest and looked back, remembering the days before.

As he turned and started walking away from the woods he could swear he heard the sobbing again.

# Catalogue Of Armor Enchantments

*Yvonne Bienne*

Complete Catalogue of Enchantments for Armor

by

Yvonne Bienne

Synod researcher

Within this catalogue are all the known varieties of armor enchantments the modern mages can cast. No pretense is made that this list is complete. New discoveries are made and new enchantments are revealed often enough that this work will eventually become outdated. Those who follow may choose to revise this work as needed.

The most common enchantments for armor and other garb are those that improve health, magick or stamina. Fortifying the wearers health is popular with warriors. It actually makes the wearer harder to kill, binding his life force a bit tighter to his body. Fortifying magicka is more commonly seen in clothing because wizards tend to avoid bulky, restrictive armor. It allows the wizard to cast more spells before becoming magically exhausted. Fortifying stamina is a secondary choice

for fighters. They tire less quickly, but do not survive their wounds any better.

There is a wide range of physical and mental attributes or skills that can be fortified by enchantments. There are as many of these as there are wizards with imagination. A few choice examples are archery, sneaking, conjuration, and carrying strength. The focus is always quite narrow. There are even examples of gauntlets that are enchanted to improve the wearers ability to enchant things.

Another common form of armor enchantment are the resistances. The elemental resistances are marginally easier to find and make. They make the wearer less susceptible to burning, freezing and shocks. There are also poison resistances and enchantments that will resist all forms of magic.

An uncommon pair of enchantments are waterbreathing and muffle. The former allows the wearing to swim underwater indefinitely. The later totally silences the clinking and clanking of the armor so the wearer moves more quietly. It's been speculated that muffle is a wizard's lazy solution to a problem that could be solved with cloth and wrappings.

The rarest of enchantments increase the recovery rate of health, magicka or stamina. The wearer actually heals from his wounds while you watch, even if he is in the midst of a battle. Wizards normally recover their magical energy at a moderate pace. Wearing this armor makes that recovery much faster. The same is true for stamina recovery enchantments. The wearer tires just as quickly as always, but seems to get his wind back much faster.

# Catalogue Of Weapon Enchantments

*Yvonne Bienne*

Complete Catalogue of Enchantments for Weaponry

by

Yvonne Bienne

Synod researcher

Within this catalogue are all the known varieties of weapon enchantments the modern mages can cast. No pretense is made that this list is complete. New discoveries are made and new enchantments are revealed often enough that this work will eventually become outdated. Those who follow may choose to revise this work as needed.

Weapon such as axes and bows can hold a wide variety of enchantments. The most common are fire, frost and lightning. The simple, yet effective enchantments burn, freeze or shock when they draw blood.

Only slightly less common are weapon enchantments that drain magicka or stamina. These drain off a wizards reserve of power, tiring him magically just as the weapons that strain stamina tire their victims physically. Unlike the elemental

enchancements, the enchantment along cannot kill, although the weapon itself can still take a life.

Equally less common are the enchantments of fear. There are two varieties, one for the living, and one for the undead. The former will only affect living creatures, not undead, or magical constructs such as atronachs and dwarven automatons. The latter cause draugr, skeletons, vampires and the like to flee. There is no known fear enchantment that will affect dwarven machines.

A particularly insidious, but somewhat common enchantment, is soul trap. Upon entering the blood, the victim's soul is bound. Should he die shortly thereafter, he soul is siphoned off to a nearby soul gem. This form of magic should only be used against beasts and monsters. To use it against men or elves is abhorrent.

Noticably more rare are the absorb enchantments. There are three known types that drain the victims health, magicka, or stamina. The weapon becomes a conduit, transferring the stolen energy from the victim to the wielder. These are sometime referred to as vampiric enchantments. As discussed above, absorbing magicka and stamina is not in itself deadly. Absorbing health can actual steal the life from a creature.

The rarest of enchantments are those of banishment and paralyzation. Banishment only affects summoned atronachs or undead raised by wizards. The banishment breaks the link between the caster and the creature. Summoned atronach return to the Oblivion plane from whence they came. Raised undead are released. It is important to note that self-willed undead are not affected by banishment.

Paralyzation is simple, yet deadly. The affected creature becomes rigid and unable to move for a short time. This is one of the most prized enchantments among warriors. A paralyzed opponent can be dispatched with ease. It is important to note that many creature are immune to paralysis, such as Atronachs, skeletons, ice wraiths, and dwarven automatons.

# Cats Of Skyrim

*Aldetuile*

Cats Of Skyrim

A Report By

Aldetuile

I have been sent to this frigid wasteland to catalogue and study any of its indigenous cats, which has so far been uneventful. After months of wandering I have so far only encountered some variations of the same basic species.

In my travels I have encountered several khajiit outcast from their clans that have taken up residence in Skyrim. They have been most unhelpful, probably for fear I'd expose their locations. I can't say I'm surprised that there are few khajiit here, it's cold and unwelcoming.

Sabrecats are basic giant cats that have evolved two dangerously sharp front teeth.

The average sabrecat has a reddish brown fur which it uses to blend into grassy regions, but I have observed them skulking and sleeping on rocks so I don't believe the fur is for camouflage.

The primary attacks of the sabrecat are its biting attack, but it can also briefly rear up to attack with its front claws. I have also seen it pounce forward on its prey in a particularly powerful attack.

The snowy version of the sabrecat has spotted white fur which I believe it uses more for stalking more than its cousin in the plains.

The tooth of the cat is rumored to be useful in potions that restore the imbibers stamina as well as a potion that will temporarily give a more keen eye for smithing.

An skillful hunter can usually salvage the pelts and teeth of their kill, but report that the meat is tasteless and not fit to eat.



# Chaurus Pie: A Recipe

*Nils*

If I have to hear one more time about that famous gourmet who wrote that recipe book, I'll hack off my own ears with a blunt axe.

Sure, he can cook up some dishes fit for them stodgy Imperials and them poncy Bretons, but real Nords want real Nord food, and my chaurus pie is just that.

I guess I been complaining a lot about it, cause Susanna was yelling at me. Nils, she says, if your chaurus pie is so good, you should write down the recipe.

Well, I ain't good with my letters and I got no talent for writing, but I thought why not give it a go? So this here's my first ever recipe that I wrote down and I hope you like it.

First thing you'll need is some chaurus meat and that ain't easy to come by. Chauruses mostly live in caves, and as like as not they share them caves with other nasty things.

If you go hunting for chaurus meat to make some dinner with, make sure you don't end up as dinner yourself. Haha.

Anyway, like I was saying, get yourself some good armor and a nice big sword, and if you've got some stout men who won't run off at the first sign of trouble - in other words, not like one

of them poncy Bretons - then go looking in caves and you'll find a chaurus sooner or later.

They look like big bugs the size of really big dogs, and mind you watch out for that acid they spit. That'll ruin your armor pretty quick.

Now once you got some chaurus meat, you got to put it on a spit. Make sure you get that white, thick meat from the midsection. Don't use that yellow meat from the head or legs, because that's got poisonous acid in it and if you eat it, you'll probably die.

So you cook up your chaurus on the spit. And you want to baste it with sauce. To make that, grind up some tomatoes into pulp and then mix that with water, peppers, honey and salt. And then you have to boil it all together.

I wouldn't use too many peppers, but you want a few spoons of salt. How much honey you use is up to you. Depends on how sweet you want it.

When the chaurus is done and you've basted it enough, then you want to bake it in a pie with some potatoes, carrots and apples. And put the rest of that sauce you made in there, too.

If you want turnips, sometimes those are good. Depends on what you're in the mood for.

Then you cook that for awhile. Look for the top to be light brown, that's when you know it's done.

And that's it. Easy as pie. Haha.

# Cherim's Heart

*Livillus Perus*

Interviews With Tapestrists

Volume Eighteen

Cherim's Heart of Anequina

by Livillus Perus, Professor at the Imperial University

Contemporary with Maqamat Lusign (interviewed in volume seventeen of this series) is the Khajiti Cherim, whose tapestries have been hailed as masterpieces all over the Empire for nigh on thirty years now. His four factories located throughout Elsweyr make reproductions of his work, but his original tapestries command stellar prices. The Emperor himself owns ten Cherim tapestries, and his representatives are currently negotiating the sale of five more.

The muted use of color contrasted with the luminous skin tones of Cherim's subjects is a marked contrast with the old style of tapestry. The subjects of his work in recent years have been fabulous tales of the ancient past: the Gods meeting to discuss the formation of the world; the Chimer following the Prophet Veloth into Morrowind; the Wild Elves battling Morihaus and his legions at the White Gold Tower. His earliest designs dealt with more contemporary subjects. I had the

opportunity to discuss with him one of his first masterpieces, *The Heart of Anequina*, at his villa in Orcrest.

*The Heart of Anequina* presents an historic battle of the Five Year War between Elsweyr and Valenwood which raged from 3E 394 (or 3E 395, depending on what one considers to be the beginning of the war) until 3E 399. In most fair accounts, the war lasted 4 years and 9 months, but artistic license from the great epic poets added an additional three months to the ordeal.

The actual details of the battle itself, as interpreted by Cherim, are explicit. The faces of a hundred and twenty Wood Elf archers can be differentiated one from the other, each registering fear at the approach of the Khajiti army. Their hauberks catch the dim light of the sun. The menacing shadows of the Elsweyr battlecats loom on the hills, every muscle strained, ready to pounce in command. It is not surprising that he got all the details right, because Cherim was in the midst of it, as a Khajiti foot soldier.

Every minute part of the Khajiti traditional armor can be seen in the soldiers in the foreground. The embroidered edging and striped patterns on the tunics. Each lacquered plate on loose-fitting leather in the Elsweyr style. The helmets of cloth and fluted silver.

“Cherim does not understand the point of plate mail,” said Cherim. “It is hot, for one, like being both burned and buried alive. Cherim wore it at the insistence of our Nord advisors during the Battle of Zelinin, and Cherim couldn’t even turn to see what my fellow Khajiit were doing. Cherim did some sketches for a tapestry of the Battle of Zelinin, but Cherim finds that to make it realistic, the figures came out very mechanical,

like iron golems or dwemer centurions. Knowing our Khajiti commanders, Cherim would not be surprised if giving up the heavy plate was more aesthetic than practical.”

“Elsweyr lost the Battle of Zelinin, didn’t she?”

“Yes, but Elsweyr won the war, starting at the next battle, the Heart of Anequina,” said Cherim with a smile. “The tide turned as soon as we Khajiit sent our Nordic advisors back to Solitude. We had to get rid of all the heavy armor they brought to us and find enough traditional armor our troops felt comfortable wearing. Obviously, the principle advantage of the traditional armor was that we could move easily in it, as you can see from the natural stances of the soldiers in the tapestry.

“Now if you look at this poor perforated Cathay-raht who just keeps battling on in the bottom background, you see the other advantage. It seems strange to say, but one of the best features of traditional armor is that an arrow will either deflect completely or pass all the way through. An arrow head is like a hook, made to stick where it strikes if it doesn’t pass through. A soldier in traditional armor will find himself with a hole in his body and the bolt on the other side. Our healers can fix such a wound easily if it isn’t fatal, but if the arrow still remains in the armor, as it does with heavier armor, the wound will be reopened every time the fellow moves. Unless the Khajiit strips off the armor and pulls out the arrow, which is what we had to do at the Battle of Zelinin. A difficult and time-consuming process in the heat of battle, to say the least.”

I asked him next, “Is there a self portrait in the battle?”

“Yes,” Cherim said with another grin. “You see the small figure of the Khajiit stealing the rings off the dead Wood Elf? His back

is facing you, but he has a brown and orange striped tail like Cherim's. Cherim does not say that all stereotypes about the Khajiit are fair, but Cherim must sometimes acknowledge them.”

A self-deprecating style in self-portraiture is also evident in the tapestries of Ranulf Hook, the next artist interviewed in volume nineteen of this series.

# Children Of The All-Maker

*Tharstan*

Children of the All-Maker

by

Tharstan of Solitude

If the title of this text rings familiar, then perhaps you, like me, have had the great pleasure to become acquainted with a most remarkable people, the Skaal of Solstheim.

Upon first meeting these gentle wild-folk, I was immediately impressed with their great hospitality. They welcomed me into their homes, one and all, without the slightest hint of suspicion or uncertainty. Trust, it seems, comes readily to the Skaal.

In appearance, the Skaal are clearly of Nord ancestry. However, they are culturally distinct in several significant ways, the most notable of which is their faith. Having never adopted the pantheon of the Empire, the Skaal recognize only a single deity whom they call the All-Maker.

For the Skaal, the All-Maker is the source of all life and creation. When a creature dies, its spirit returns to the All-Maker, who shapes it into something new and returns it to Mundus. The concept of death as an ending to life is unknown to the Skaal.

Rather, death is seen as simply the beginning of the next stage of an endless journey.

This great respect for life is evident in one of the most important Skaal beliefs, a concept the villagers call “one-ness with the land”. The Skaal try to live in harmony with their surroundings, making as small an impact on their environment as possible. When a Skaal villager sets out to collect firewood, for example, he or she takes it from fallen, dead trees. When the Skaal hunt, it is only out of necessity, and not for sport. Because they hold all life in great reverence, the Skaal people will resort to violence only as a last resort.

This has understandably led to a rather austere lifestyle for these simple, good-natured folk. For the Skaal, the word “luxury” is nearly an alien concept, though I was intrigued to note that one villager, Edla, has taken to trading basic goods with travelers who pass through the village in exchange for small luxury items. Such an enterprising outlook is something of a novelty for the Skaal.

Though it saddens me to conclude this account on such a somber note, it is impossible to deny the hard truth that the Skaal people are dwindling. In a century or two, it is possible that their unique way of life will be lost to the world forever, reduced to little more than a footnote in the great epoch of history.

This comes as little surprise, given the immense hardships of a life lived in such an extreme environment. For the Skaal, it is a daily struggle to survive the perpetual wintry climate of northern Solstheim, but other challenges have recently appeared.



The ashfall from Vvardenfell has taken its toll on the plants and animals upon which the Skaal depend for their survival, and life is now a struggle for all who call Solstheim home.

Therefore, I humbly beseech any students of history who might encounter this modest text to travel to Solstheim and learn all that can be learned of this noble people and their ancient customs. The Skaal people might not be long for this world, but let us assure that their proud and noble legacy lasts well into the future.

# Cicero's Journal

*Anonymous*

Cicero's Journal: Volume 1

18th of Evening Star, 4E 186

As I begin this new phase of my life, I have decided to finally keep a journal. So much has happened to me thus far, both within the Brotherhood and without - when I think there is no record of what has transpired, it almost seems an affront to Sithis himself. So I am determined to make amends. Yes, the Dark Brotherhood has its own scribes and chroniclers, but it is their solemn task to record those events deemed important to the organization as a whole. Let this volume serve as the personal record of one man, a lowly assassin who has pledged his blade and his life for the Dark Brotherhood.

23rd of Evening Star, 4E 186

I have arrived safely in the Cheydinhal Sanctuary, and have been greeted warmly by Rasha and the others. Indeed, the level of support and acceptance shown by my new family is rather overwhelming. For this Sanctuary knows suffering, knows sorrow, for the ghosts of Purification still haunt its halls. So, who better to understand the plight of a brother who has lost home and heart? Who better to comfort one whose Sanctuary is no more? The Bruma Sanctuary may be gone, but my dearest

brothers and sisters will live forever in my dreams, just as their souls live forever by the Dread Father's side.

1st of Rain's Hand, 4E 187

Completed the baroness contract. She died well. Her handmaiden, less so.

12th of Rain's Hand, 4E 187

Cheydinhal suits me. With the destruction or abandonment of the other Sanctuaries, our contracts are plentiful, as are our bonuses. Still, we seem to be losing our footholds throughout Tamriel at an alarming rate. There are rumors that the Black Hand is split on our continued direction. Some favor expansion, the others consolidation. My personal feeling is that the Dark Brotherhood needs to, at the very least, maintain the illusion of being everywhere at once. It has become exceedingly difficult to fulfill (or even establish) contracts in provinces where we no longer have a physical presence, like Hammerfell. The more we ignore Tamriel, the more people lose faith in the Dark Brotherhood - our power, our services, our dedication to the Void.

27th of Rain's Hand, 4E 187

The Listener, Alisanne Dupre, has been visiting with us for several days, down from her private residence in Bravil. She and Rasha had been discussing the possibility of re-opening the Shadowscale training facility of Archon, in Black Marsh, but ultimately decided we lacked the resources to follow through with the plan.

27th of Rain's Hand, 4E 187

Completed the Arena contract. I ultimately decided to pose as a starstruck fan, and immediately got into the Grand Champion's good graces. While escorting the arrogant fool through the Great Forest, I slashed his throat and left the corpse for the bears.

Cicero's Journal: Volume 2

7th of Sun's Height, 4E 188

Wayrest is lost. The city fell to corsairs, and it's just a matter of time before the Sanctuary is breached. May the Night Mother watch over her children in their hour of need.

5th of Last Seed, 4E 188

We received word today - the Wayrest Sanctuary was raided and destroyed by the corsairs. There were no survivors.

There are now only three active Dark Brotherhood strongholds remaining: The Cheydinhal Sanctuary, here in the Imperial Province; a remote Sanctuary located in a forest in Skyrim; and the Corinthe Sanctuary of Elsweyr.

The Black Hand has ordered the Corinthe Sanctuary closed, and its members integrated into our own ranks here, in Cheydinhal. I will embrace those new family members as warmly as I was, when I first made my home here.

27th of Hearthfire, 4E 188

The situation in Bravil grows more dire. The city has erupted in violence, due to a war of control being waged by Cyrodiil's two largest skooma traffickers. The Listener, Alisanne Dupre, has been forced to employ sellswords to protect her own residence.

1st of Sun's Dusk, 4E 188

Things in Bravil have come to a head. The statue of the Lucky Old Lady has been destroyed, and Alisanne Dupre has left her residence to guard the crypt of the Night Mother, hidden below the remains of the statue. If the crypt is discovered, Alisanne Dupre will, of course, protect the remains of the Unholy Matron until her dying breath.

Rasha is sending Garnag and Andronica to aid in the crypt's defense. I begged to accompany them, but Rasha wouldn't have it. He says my place is here, defending this Sanctuary, and I must of course respect that decision.

12th of Sun's Dusk, 4E 188

Botched my contract and forfeited the bonus. The silk merchant was already cold, and I was halfway through the window, when her daughter stepped into the room. I had little choice at that point.

21st of Sun's Dusk, 4E 188

So much has happened since my last entry. After Garnag and Andronica left for Bravil, we stopped receiving communications from the city. We feared the worst. This morning, those fears were confirmed, when Garnag returned alone, transporting a most precious cargo - the great stone coffin of the Night Mother herself.

The story Garnag told could curl the blood of even the most hardened of Sithis' servants. The crypt of the Night Mother, raided. Dearest sister Andronica, cut to pieces. And the Listener

herself, the most honored Alisanne Dupre, burned alive in a storm of mage fire.

Garnag, though gravely injured (he will most certainly lose his right eye), managed to fend off the attackers, and transport the Night Mother's coffin safely out of the city. He has been on the road, making his way back here, since that tragic night.

Cicero's Journal: Volume 3

23rd of Sun's Dusk, 4E 188

Now that things have settled down, the reality of our situation has finally come to bear - we are a Dark Brotherhood without a Listener. With no Listener, the Black Sacrament will go unheard. Surely the Night Mother will speak to someone soon, thus choosing a new Listener to take Alisanne Dupre's place. Until that happens, though, we must take to the streets. We must hear the pleas of the desperate and vengeful. The people of Tamriel must not know, must never know, that their prayers to the Night Mother are going unheeded.

24th of Morning Star, 4E 189

It is a new year, and two months since the Night Mother first arrived here at the Cheydinhal Sanctuary, and still the Unholy Matron has not seen fit to speak to any one of us.

And so, Rasha has decided to revive an ancient Dark Brotherhood tradition - the appointing of a Keeper, a guardian whose sole duty is the safeguarding of the Night Mother's remains. The remaining members of the Black Hand will make their decision tomorrow.

25th of Morning Star, 4E 189

I have been chosen. By some incomprehensible twist of fate, the Black Hand has named me the Night Mother's Keeper. In all honesty, I am both incredibly honored and deeply saddened. This means the end of my contracts. I'll be lucky to lift a blade again. Thankfully, Rasha has promised me one final contract before I accept my new duties.

30th of Morning Star, 4E 189

The jester lies dead. My final contract has been completed. Oh, how he laughed and laughed. Until he didn't.

3rd of First Seed, 4E 189

I have settled well into my new role as Keeper. It is my duty to not only keep the Night Mother's shrine clean, and the candles lit, but to tend to the body as well.

The Night Mother's crypt was a consecrated place - shroud-kissed, absent of sunlight, and safe from the world above. Removed from there, the remains are subject to the filth and corruption of the living. The body is perfectly preserved, so the concern is not physical, but rather spiritual - the remains must be sanctified regularly, so that they may continue to serve as a conduit for the Night Mother's soul. Our Matron's eternal spirit may travel the Void freely, but it is through her own earthly remains that she communicates with the Listener.

And so, I wash the corpse weekly with the requisite oils, recite the ancient incantations, and personally see to the extermination of any insects or rodents. If the Night Mother does not speak, it will be because she chooses not to - not because she is unable. This is my responsibility. This is my vow.

12th of Mid Year, 4E 189

Months and months and months and no Listener. Why won't the Night Mother speak to me? I am worthy as Keeper, but not as Listener? I protect our Lady, keep her sanctified, but still she will not grace me with her voice?

4th of Sun's Height, 4E 189

So long since I worked my blade. So long since I saved a soul. But I am now Keeper. No longer a taker.

I think back fondly on my hours with the jester. His laughter, his screams, his pitiful cries. And then, as the end drew near, his laughter once more. Merry in death as well as life. I was honored to know him.

Cicero's Journal: Volume 4

1st of Hearthfire, 4E 189

Cheydinhal has erupted into violence and chaos, like so many other cities before it. The Sanctuary has remained unbreached, but for how long?

Our numbers are few, and with no Speaker, the contracts have dwindled almost to nothingness. Rasha's hold on the Sanctuary is slipping.

26th of Frostfall, 4E 189

Silence! Deafening silence! In my head in my head in my head. It is the silence of death, the silence of the Void. Seeping into me, through the Mother. The silence is hatred. The silence is rage. The silence is love.



4th of Evening Star, 4E 189

Today, Rasha declared himself Listener, claiming the Night Mother spoke to him at last. But when questioned, he could not name the Binding Words. Liar! Deceiver! His charade must not stand.

5th of Evening Star, 4E 189

Rasha is dead.

As commanded by the silence, so did I obey. I did not wield the knife, oh no, but dipped the honey softly sweet, into Garnag's eager ear. He is a good brother. A loyal brother. To both Cicero and our Matron. He did the deed, gladly.

10th of Sun's Dawn, 4E 190

Only three of us left. Cicero, Garnag, Pontius.

15th of Sun's Dawn, 4E 190

The Night Mother remains silent. I remain unworthy. The Sanctuary remains doomed.

3rd of First Seed, 4E 190

I can hear it. Deeper, and deeper. Louder and louder, punctuating the silence like thunder on a calm evening. Laughter.

4th of First Seed, 4E 190

Laughing, laughing, laughing, laughing! It is the jester! A voice from the Void, to cheer poor Cicero! I accept your gift, dearest

Night Mother. Thank you for my laughter. Thank you for my friend.

16th of Rain's Hand, 4E 191

Pontius is dead. A Dark Brotherhood assassin was killed by a common bandit while walking the streets of Cheydinhal. How can something so sad be so funny?

17th of Rain's Hand, 4E 191

I love the laughter, dearest Night Mother, but still I long to hear your voice. It's not too late! Speak to me, my mother! Speak to me, that I may set things right! I can save the Sanctuary, I can save the Brotherhood!

You can have the laughter! Take it back! An exchange, then? The laughter for your voice?

2nd of Second Seed, 4E 191

It's not safe to leave the Sanctuary. We'll stay here. All is well.

29th of Last Seed, 4E 191

Garnag is gone. Gone gone gone gone gone. Left to get food, but he'll be back. It's only been three months. Three months. Tree months? Twelve months? Four sloths!

21st of Sun's Dusk, 4E 192

Cicero is dead! Cicero is born!

The laughter has filled me, filled me so very completely. I am the laughter. I am the jester. The soul that has served as my

constant companion for so long has breached the veil of the Void finally and forever. It is now in me. It is me.

The world has seen the last of Cicero the man. Behold Cicero, Fool of Hearts - laughter incarnate!

28th of Sun's Dusk, 4E 200

Found the old journal, decided to write, a treatise on silence, sound, darkness and light!

How long has it been since the Night Mother first came here? How long since I was made Keeper? How long since I became the fool? Since I've been alone? Since Cheydinhal fell? Since they started pounding on the door, like so many hammered heartbeats?

It's dark in here, and quiet. Poor Cicero no longer hears the laughter, for he is the laughter. There is no Listener in Cheydinhal. No Listener in Cyrodiil. No Listener in me.

We must leave here. Before the Sanctuary falls. Before the Night Mother burns. Before the Dark Brotherhood withers. Before the laughter dies.

29th of Sun's Dusk, 4E 200

I took a stroll, and spied a maid, but Matron's duty stayed my blade. So busy now, I miss the thrill, if only I had time to kill.

Cicero's Journal, The Final Volume

30th of Sun's Dusk, 4E 200

I have written the letters. So polite. So official! To Astrid, in Skyrim. Her Sanctuary still stands. Still operates. But how? No Listener means no Black Sacrament, no Black Sacrament means no contracts. Her family can abandon the Old Ways, and still survive, still kill, but is that family still Brotherhood? Or something else? Something new. Something different. Something wrong?

Something wrong.

Still, we must go! Tomorrow, we set sail. Float on a boat through the moat called the sea her and me!

22nd of Evening Star, 4E 200

Sick sick sick of the rocking tossing rolling throwing upon the gray gray waves!

I've been reading of Skyrim, of the good days, the old days, of the Old Ways. There was another Sanctuary once. A Dawnstar Sanctuary. Good, ancient and strong. Blessed by Sithis. Cicero will go there! No need of Astrid!

The Mother and I will settle, and she will speak to me, finally, and we will build the Old Ways anew, together.

23rd of Evening Star, 4E 200

The passphrase is mine! I have found it, in a letter ancient as the Sanctuary itself.

The Black Door will ask - "What is life's greatest illusion?"

I am to answer - "Innocence, my brother."

Finally, a space, a place, to call my own! A joker's retreat for the Fool of Hearts!!!!

4th of First Seed, 4E 201

The Sanctuary is home! As I had dared hope! Cool and dark and lovely. My Sanctuary, Sanctuary from all.

I know its every corner, every hall, every shadowed nook and alcove. My Sanctuary. The guardians know me, recognize me as Keeper. They leave poor Cicero alone. The big ugly beast - a different story. He'd eat me if he could, but to bind me, grind me, he'd need to find me. And Cicero will make sure that does not happen. For I have Sanctuary!

Sanctuary from all.

13th of First Seed, 4E 201

The Sanctuary is safety, and salvation. But silent, so silent. I give my love to the Unholy Matron. I give my laughter freely. But I do not hear her. The silence has returned. Now that I am laughter, and no longer hear laughter, I once again hear the silence. The silence of the Void. It reaches across time and space. Its silence is deafening, once more.

1st of Rain's Hand, 4E 201

Mother and Keeper must go. I am not the Listener, and never will be. But I am the Keeper. I must serve my Mother's will above my own. I must find her Listener. I must teach Astrid the error of her ways, the beauty and necessity of the Old Ways.

I have sent the letter to Astrid. We leave soon. But Cicero will keep this Sanctuary as his Sanctuary!

A place to rest and ply my trade, for I once more take up the  
blade, and send some lucky souls to Him, when laughter  
strikes, as fits my whim!

# Commander's Note

*Anonymous*

Anneas,

When I give an order, I expect you to carry it out. We've got enough problems around here without your 'formal complaints'. Get our defenses shored up, soldier, unless you want the rebels just walking over our damn walls.

# Complaint Letter

*Agnis*

Now listen here you mutton-head! I've told that lot of ill trained whelps you call soldiers time and again about tracking in mud all over the fort and what do I find all over the mess hall? The biggest mud pile I have ever seen! I want you to order them to wipe their feet off on the hay before tromping in. That's what it's there for!

Oh and another thing! Those bear traps you gave me for the skeevers in the cellar? Useless! I've had those down there for weeks and caught only one of them and the rest keep coming back. Get some of your 'men' down there to clear them out.

Unless of course you like finding skeever hair in your dinner, because I can always stop picking it out for you.

—Agnis



# Confessions Of A Dunmer Skooma Eater

*Anonymous*

Nothing is more revolting to Dunmer feeling than the sorry spectacle of another Dunmer enslaved by that derivative moon-sugar known as 'skooma.' And nothing is less appetising than listening to the pathetic tales of humiliation and degradation associated with a victim of this addictive drug.

Why, then, do I force myself upon you with this extended and detailed account of my sins and sorrows?

Because I hope that by telling my tale, the hope of redemption from this sorry state shall be more widely known. And because I hope that others who have also fallen into the sorry state of skooma addiction may therefore hear of my story, of how I fell into despair, and how I once again found myself and freed myself from my own self-imposed chains.

Because it is widely known to all Khajiit, who may be expected to know, that there is no cure for addiction to skooma, that once a slave to skooma, always a slave to skooma. Because this is widely known, it is taken to be true. But it is not true, and I am living proof.

There is no miracle cure. There is no potion to be taken. There is no magical incantation which frees you from the thrill of

skooma running through your blood.

But it is through the understanding of that thrill, and the acceptance of the lust within oneself for that thrill, and the casting aside of the shame that the thrillseeker feels when he cannot set aside what becomes in the end his only comfort and pleasure, it is through this knowledge and understanding that the victim comes to the place where choices may be made, where despair and hope may be separated.

In short, only knowledge and acceptance can deliver into the slave's hands the key that opens his shackles and sets him free.

# Confessions Of A Khajiit Fur Trader

## *The Fur Trader*

Confessions Of A Khajiit Fur Trader

My execution is tomorrow. The turnkey asks what I'd like for my last meal.

Bring me paper, I say. A quill and a candle.

Perhaps the Jarl would like a confession. I would rather pass the time.

When my father's harem burned down and our family fortune was lost to the ashes, my brother and I set to begging in the gutters of Elsweyr. I will never forget the first time we stole a traveler's purse. It was almost by accident. Just a slip of the claw and the pouch fell into our hands. We ate like kings that night. We slept in a warm bed for the first time in months.

Soon after, my brother and I took up the knife. The gang we joined treated us as the dirty orphans we were. We robbed, we scammed, we cut and ran and years of debauchery and hard living took their toll. I lost half my left ear in a knife fight with a blind drunk Argonian.

I wanted to give up, but my brother, he dreamed bigger, better.

My brother wanted to make it to Cyrodiil and become legit merchants. We had a plan. One final heist of a northbound caravan said to be filled with jewels.

Something went wrong. My brother could not stop the horses on time, and I stood helplessly by and watched the wagon plummet over a cliff. But as I picked through the wreckage, my devastation turned to excitement. There were no jewels, but there were plenty of luxurious wolf pelts, horker tusks and mammoth hides, more than enough to buy my way to Cyrodiil. I'd follow in the footsteps of so many of my kind. A traveling merchant, someone with a respectable profession.

I had all the furs bundled in my pack when I saw my brother's broken body. His ears were still warm, and I shut his eyes for the last time. This was his dream. And he would want me to go. But what I wanted, well, the caravan guards were coming. I had to go, but I couldn't just leave his body to rot.

My brother gave me my first skin. It was to be a memento. But in the darkness of the fence's cabin, the coin hit my hand heavy. Then she looked at my brother's pelt and offered three times the amount of any other fur. Disgust caught in my throat, but did not live very long. I realized the cost of such a forbidden luxury. The value, the demand, the respect.

This is what I wanted.

It became easier. A dark alley, a gag in one hand and a quick slice across the throat. Gently hold the body as it bleeds. I became faster, my cuts precise and fluid. I peel the skin with one motion and kept the merchandise pristine, in one piece.

I became rich. Far richer than anyone in my family had ever been. Yet I was careful. My stronghold was well-hidden, and practically impenetrable. I hired the men that used to employ me. We moved frequently on less traveled roads when we hunted in the wild. We stalked the back alleys we used to sleep in when we hunted in the city. I grew so rich that I no longer needed to dirty my own hands.

Patchwork colored furs fetched the best price among the Bosmer. Argonians preferred the pelts completely skinned and tanned. Orcs prized the thick, waterproof leather of the Argonians. Humans most often bought tails and ears. I had to employ an alchemist and a master craftsman for a couple odd requests, but I didn't ask questions when the gold piled up.

And now I'm a prisoner. Maybe I became careless. Maybe I let too many secrets slip between the sheets. The raid of my fortress was a massacre. They took me alive, barely. That was their mistake. My enemies should have killed me when they had the chance.

I have one lockpick. And the northern wall of my cell is weak from disrepair. My head shall not roll tomorrow.

I am not finished with the trade. There will always be buyers. Someday, I will sell my own skin for a king's ransom, as my name is legend. And yours shall rot in the gutters with your bones.

-The Fur Trader

# Consider Adoption

*Constance Michel*

WANTED

~ A Good Home ~

In these days of war and strife, the orphans of Skyrim are the true victims. Many have no one left to turn to, and face a life of hard labor, poverty, and misery.

If you could provide a stable home for one of these innocent children, please, consider adoption. Whether you choose to adopt from us, or to take in someone closer to home, you can make a difference in a child's life.

For more information, enquire with:

Constance Michel

Honorhall Orphanage, Riften

# Contract

*Anonymous*

Here's the sum we agreed upon. I trust that you will make [player's name] pay for killing my dear [victim's name]. Return to me with proof of the deed.

If you run afoul of the law, I will pay your bounty.

—[victim's relative's name]

# Cook's Journal

*Anonymous*

Meat!

Meat meat meat!

That's all they ever want!

I made them some nice grilled leeks and they threw them in my face!

I told them that if they'd bring me some fish or venison I'd cook it up, but all they ever do is waste their wages at the ring.

But maybe there is a way I can get them some meat.



# Corpse Note

*Anonymous*

If you are reading this, then I am most likely dead. A group of bandits ransacked my home and took most everything valuable I own. The worst is they took a pendant that has been in my family for many generations. Most of my family is dead, so that pendant was the last connection I had with any of them. I am going after those scoundrels and getting my pendant back, even if it is the death of me.

# Courier's Letter

*Anonymous*

To our respectable investor,

It seems our expedition to [dungeon name] has met with some resistance from its inhabitants. I know this isn't the first time, but if you would provide us with a few more men and supplies, we are certain the treasure there would yield a return on your investment.

This time for sure.

If not, we could begin searching for prospects outside of [current hold].

A swift reply would be most appreciated.

# Cultists' Orders

*Anonymous*

Board the vessel Northern Maiden docked at Raven Rock. Take it to Windhelm, then begin your search. Kill the False Dragonborn known as [Player's Name] before [he/she] reaches Solstheim.

Return with word of your success, and Miraak shall be most pleased.

# Dark Brotherhood Assassin's Note

*Astrid*

As instructed, you are to eliminate [player's name] by any means necessary. The Black Sacrament has been performed - somebody wants this poor fool dead.

We've already received payment for the contract. Failure is not an option.

- Astrid

# Darkfall Cave Notes

*Anonymous*

Sister, I know that you'll come find me, but it will be too late. If you find this letter, get out of this forsaken cave as soon as possible. We were fools to think we could live so close to such creatures and live peacefully.

I should've headed back to camp with you after we placed the torches down here. I thought these trolls would be different, that they would somehow understand that we didn't want to hurt them.

I am now cornered and it's only a matter of time before one of the trolls decides to finish me off. I hope it is a quick death.

Farewell, my dear sister.

—

I made it farther than I thought, but I'm afraid I can't go on. I choose not to.

I am content to die here, in this quiet little room, alone with my thoughts. The creatures won't follow me here. No more danger. The silence is welcoming.

—

Strange why the cursed have set up so many traps near this stone barrier.

Going to rest for a bit, not take any chances. They set up those traps for a reason and I'm not about to go rushing in to find out why.

Just going to sit here, regain my strength and possibly try and use the traps to my advantage.

# Dawnguard Orders - Hakar

*Anonymous*

Novice Hakar,

Your repeated failures are an embarrassment to our entire order. Are you truly so inept you cannot even complete a simple courier mission?

You have one last chance to redeem yourself. We recently established a number of wilderness caches to supply our agents in the field. You are to restock the chests listed below, then report back for further orders.

Our caches in Whiterun Hold are located:

- In Rorikstead, in the pasture behind Frostfruit Inn.
- Near Stendarr's Shrine in the center of the tundra.
- South of Whiterun's Western Watchtower.

You have one week. Return successful, or not at all.

# Dawnguard Orders - Lynoit

*Anonymous*

Lynoit,

We've received word of an increase in Vampire activity in western Skyrim. In the coming weeks, we plan to dispatch several more agents to the region, and need to establish a network of wilderness supply drops to support them.

You are to plant caches in the following locations:

- On the small island south of Solitude Sawmill.
- Due east of the entrance to the ruin Volskygge.
- On the east side of Karthwasten Bridge.

If these reports are to be believed, the situation may be far more dangerous than you realize. Be cautious.



# Dawnguard Orders - Saliah

*Anonymous*

Saliah,

In the past several weeks, all of the couriers sent to replenish our supply caches in the northern reaches have gone missing. These drops must be made within the week to ensure our operatives have the provisions they need.

You are to restock the following caches:

- In Morthal, on the islet due east of the mill.
- Outside Nightgate Inn, at the foot of the pier.
- Near Winterhold, under the great arch.

Take care. Too many of our agents have been lost on this task already.

# Daynas Valen's Journal

*Daynas Valen*

18th of Morning Star, 4E 201

How long has it been since I first heard the Gauldur legend? Eighty years? A hundred? I can think of nothing else now. My goal is at hand.

After years of searching, I finally traced the Ivory Claw to a collector in Bravil. His death was necessary. But I have it. At last, I have it.

22nd of Morning Star, 4E 201

Three days of nonstop riding. I reached Anvil ahead of my pursuers, and took passage on the Icerunner, bound for Solitude once more.

29th of Morning Star, 4E 201

The other passengers are becoming suspicious. Returning from dinner, I caught one brute rooting around in my quarters. He almost found the claw. Had the captain not intervened, I would have flayed him alive.

I hoped to spend the voyage sequestered in my room, reviewing my notes and preparing spells, but I need to deflect some

attention from myself. I'll have to mingle, pretend to be just another petty mage. For now.

2nd of Sun's Dawn, 4E 201

The brute claims to be an adventurer, off to seek his fortune in the ruins of Skyrim with his companions. Perhaps I can turn this to my advantage, use them as fodder for the traps and Draugr within the tombs. I can see the greed in his eyes. Yes, that should work.

Three weeks to Solitude, the captain says. If I have to suffer these fools longer than that, I'll swim.

27th of Sun's Dawn, 4E 201

With the brute and his companions in tow, I led our band across the marsh to Folgunthur, where we made camp for the night. Little has changed since my first expedition ten years ago. But this time, I have the claw. And I will have the amulet.

I spent all night preparing a synopsis of my notes, in case some fragment of the tale or piece of ancient lore may be needed to bypass the wards within the tomb. Then I cast all my books and scrolls into the fire, and reduced my life's work to ashes. At long last, today is the day of reckoning. If I cannot have the amulet, no one will.

# Daynas Valen's Notes

*Daynas Valen*

How to summarize a lifetime of research? So little of what I have learned matters now- the petty politics of ancient times, the age-long campaign to wipe out all mention of the Gauldur name.

I know not what awaits us within Folgunthur, so here, then, is the truth of the tale, as best I have been able to piece it together.

In the opening days of the First Era, the Archmage Gauldur was revered throughout the north. Wisdom, wealth, honor, and power were his, and even Ysgramor's heirs sought his counsel.

Smothered by his shadow, Gauldur's three sons grew cruel and resentful. They lusted after their father's power and prestige, and eventually Jyrik, the eldest, discovered its source: a mysterious amulet, from which he never parted. Together, they conspired to murder their father in his sleep and divide his amulet between them. And so it was done.

Consumed by their newfound power, the brothers laid waste to the surrounding villages. So great was the carnage that the High King himself intervened, sending a company of battlemages led by the Archmage Geirmund to subdue the brothers. And after a devastating battle, the three fled the field.

Mikrul, the youngest, was run to ground in Folgunthur, the ancient barrows at the foot of Solitude. And though he fought for three days and nights, he was at last overcome and entombed there, his crypt sealed by an ivory claw.

Geirmund pursued Jyrik to the shattered crypts of Saarthal, half-buried even then. Ten veteran wizards fell before Jyrik's elemental magic, but he could not overcome them all together. He too fell, and was sealed within the ruined city.

And at last, Sigdis was cornered in the southernmost reaches of Skyrim. He challenged Lord Geirmund to a duel, knowing his foe was honor-bound to accept. And they clashed in battle, matched strength for strength, and fell together on the field before Ivarstead. The High King ordered a tomb built for Geirmund on the lake which still bears his name, and had Sigdis sealed within, forever guarded by the one who slew him.

Gauldur himself was interred in a cave not far from where his tower once stood, in the place called Reachwater Rock. And when it was done, King Harald issued an edict: the name and deeds of Gauldur and his sons were to be expunged from every record, every chronicle. Under pain of death, no word of them was to be spoken, lest any try to recover the amulet that had been sealed at so great a cost.

And so it was done. But a little survived the ages. Enough.

Four thousand years have passed, and the tombs remain sealed. The fragments of the Gauldur Amulet lie within. Since the day I first heard the rumor, I have felt its power, calling to me, pulling at me. I will be the one to reclaim it, restore it, bear it out into the world once more. I must have it. I must!

# Dearest Dinya

*Modyn*

Dearest Dinya,

I know that your father doesn't approve of us, but I'm willing to do whatever it takes to make our relationship work. I think the time has come to speak to him in person and stop letting him hear about us through gossip and rumor. I love you, and I don't care if the entire world knows. Please think about it.

Modyn

# Deathbrand

*Artise Dralen*

Deathbrand

A Pirate's Tale

Haknir Death-Brand was dying.

For Garuk Windrime, ship's quartermaster, it was unthinkable. His grandfather had served under Haknir, nigh on sixty years before, and even then he was a legend among the pirates of the north. "The King of Ghosts," they called him, as eternal and pitiless as the sea he sailed. To Garuk, who had seen him charge into battle, clad in armor of gleaming Stalhrim like the kings of old, his twin swords scything men like grass, Haknir was practically a god.

But none feared Haknir more than his own crew. They knew his rages, his fits of madness, how he delighted in torture and murder for its own sake. And there were even darker rumors: Some said he fed upon the blood and souls of those he killed to extend his unnatural life. Some thought him a Daedra, loosed upon the mortal world. And others said he owed his life and power, his armor and swords, to a pact with Dagon, prince of destruction. And the seal of that pact was the terrible wound that scarred his face, never to heal - the Deathbrand, which no man could look upon without flinching.

All these things ran through Garuk's mind as he took his place on deck at the head of the crew, exchanging a curt nod with Thalin, the ship's helmsman and his chief rival. By sundown, he thought, one of them would be captain. The other would be dead.

When Haknir finally emerged from his cabin, the crew fell silent. He looked frail, his voice raspy. But even so, he had a presence about him. As he looked over his men, the most brutal murderers ever to ply the northern seas, not one could meet his gaze. At last he sighed.

"You wish to know who will be my successor, and how my share of the treasure shall be divided."

That was the question, but even so, there were murmurs of protest. Haknir cut them off.

"All these years, I have looked for one who was worthy to take my place, or strong enough to take it from me. Not one of you even comes close. And so none of you shall have it."

He extended his hand. "In Dagon's name, I place a curse upon my armor, and my swords. This ship, and all it carries. Until the day when one of you can best me in combat, you shall have not a single coin." He looked up at them. "Be grateful I have left you with your lives."

Garuk and Thalin shared a single glance. Had anyone else said such a thing, there would have been mutiny. A hundred treasure-mad pirates against one old man. But this was Haknir. The crew was silent.



Haknir threw a map at Garuk's feet. "Garuk, take a longboat, and bury my armor in the places I have marked. Thalin, we sail to my tomb, where you shall leave me with my gold. Then burn your ships, and do as you will. I am your captain no more." And with that, he turned and stalked back to his quarters.

At daybreak, Garuk took his leave, and set out in a longboat with three of his men. They landed on a shoal to the north of Solstheim, at the place Haknir had marked, made camp, and began to dig.

But already, greed stirred in Garuk's heart. Time and again, he glanced at the iron-bound chest they had brought with them. The old man was gone, perhaps already dead. His orders, foolish.

That night, Garuk pried open the chest and drew out the helm within. The Stalhrim shimmered in the moonlight. It was time. Time for a new King of Ghosts to rise. He placed the helmet on his head.

And he screamed.

And it is said you can hear that screaming still, on moonlit nights, on a rocky shoal off the northern coast of Solstheim.

Postscript-

This story is one of the last in the "Haknir Saga," the tales surrounding the life and adventures of the legendary pirate king Haknir Death-Brand. How much of it is actually true, if indeed any of it is true, I leave to the reader's discretion.

- Artise Dralen

# House Redoran Scribe

# Declaration Of War

*General Falx Carius*

Raven Rock Stronghold,

My calls for the unconditional surrender of your forces and an immediate cessation of all hostilities has been ignored numerous times. I therefore have no choice but to assume your purpose on Solstheim is hostile, and to treat Raven Rock Stronghold as an enemy of the Empire. I warn you, any attempt to breach Fort Frostmoth will be met with an equal level of aggression. I will do everything in my power to wipe you and your forces off the face of Tamriel. There will be no further communications between us.

General Falx Carius

Garrison Commander, Fort Frostmoth

# Decree Of Monument

*Anonymous*

4 E 20

This tower once served as a meeting place where those brave souls who achieved safe passage to Skyrim would find loved ones, and leave notice for others who could not be found.

Let it stand in honor of those who had the strength and spirit to accept Skyrim's Offer "untithed to any thane or hold, and self-governed, with free worship, with no compensation to Skyrim or the Empire except as writ in the Armistice of old wheresoever those might still apply, and henceforth let no Man or Mer say that the Sons and Daughters of Kyne are without mercy or honor."

We, the Jarls of Skyrim, hereby decree this site as monument to the struggle of those who fled their native home of Morrowind in the time following the Red Year.

# Diary Of Faire Agarwen

*Faire Agarwen*

Diary of Faire Agarwen

Translated from Falmer Text

by

Calcelmo of Markarth

Forward

The dates noted in this diary are translated literally. This verbiage matches no known modern measure of time, and is assumed to be a custom form of counting the days and months. Excavations of ancient Falmer slave quarters have turned up brass vessels, very similar to a deep bowl, with twenty markings crudely etched onto the inside. Falmer scholars theorize that this bowl would be placed under a drip of water coming from an overhanging rock and as the bowl filled, the water's level would reach these markings, thus indicating a crude passage of time. Because of this diary, the vessel has been called a "kulniir," a primitive Falmer timekeeping device.

Third Marking, Tenth Kulniir

It feels like years since we were forced into hiding. I dare not write where we stay for fear of endangering the good people of

this house should this diary be discovered. We have been shown a kindness by this family once known to the Snow Prince. Even in death his great influence has ensured our safety. We were separated from many of our kin along the road when it became increasingly difficult to travel discreetly in our numbers. We were forced to go our separate ways and travel only at night. I have heard no news of where the others may have gone and fear I never shall. Our lives are forever changed.

### Seventh Marking, Tenth Kulniir

In the night I find it difficult not to focus on times past. There are moments in my rest when I still hear the laughter of Young Ones at play in the valley. Other times I see the pale flicker of happy moments which were once so common in the land of the Snow Elves. I try not to dwell on these memories too long. Often our surroundings make it impossible to dwell on any happiness. We have been locked together in such close quarters for so long we grow tired of each other's company. Even the strongest of us have faltered with nothing to do but think on what is lost. I wake each day to forlorn faces and am reminded of where we are and all we have left behind. We are all yearning for a day when we can emerge from hiding and walk freely in the light once more. But I fear we are losing all hope that such a day will ever come.

### Tenth Marking, Tenth Kulniir

I tire of the tears of women and children. My own have run dry. The men have begun to look upon us as if we are all weak yet we have survived the same trials as they. I cannot bring myself to think on the numbers we lost in battle. Yet I cannot force the images of my own losses from my mind. And now in a time when our people should be banding together it feels we are

drifting apart. The Nords have truly won. Our once great pride and unity are shattered. If we lose hope now we will never survive. Today many, myself included, have tried to speak out in voices of reason. There can be no hope without talk of our future. We can make no difference if our spirits remain broken.

Eighteenth Marking, Tenth Kulniir

We know that we can never again be the Snow Elves and live freely in this world. We will forever be in hiding in one form or another. But there is no reason we cannot live life with the sun and the wind against our skin. There are those here who are friends to us and plan to help us once the threat has ended. We know now to survive we must be born anew. Outside, we will appear as though we belong here. Inside, we will carry our truth and our scars.

# Disaster At Ionith

*Lord Pottreid*

The Emperor's plans for the invasion of Akavir were laid in the 270s, when he began the conquest of the small island kingdoms that lie between Tamriel and Akavir. With the fall of Black Harbor in Esoniet in 282, Uriel V was already looking ahead to the ultimate prize. He immediately ordered extensive renovations to the port, which would serve as the marshalling point for the invasion force and as the main supply source throughout the campaign. At this time he also began the construction of the many large, ocean-going transports that would be needed for the final crossing to Akavir, in which the Navy was previously deficient. Thus it can be seen that the Emperor's preparations for the invasion were laid well in advance, before even the conquest of Esoniet was complete, and was not a sudden whim as some have charged.

When Prince Bashomon yielded Esoniet to Imperial authority in 284, the Emperor's full attention could be devoted to planning for the Akaviri campaign. Naval expeditions were dispatched in 285 and 286 to scout the sea lanes and coastlands of Akavir; and various Imperial intelligence agents, both magical and mundane, were employed to gather information. On the basis of all this information, the kingdom of the Tsaesci, in the southwest of Akavir, was selected as the initial target for the invasion.



Meanwhile the Emperor was gathering his Expeditionary Force. A new Far East Fleet was created for the campaign, which for a time dwarfed the rest of the Navy; it is said to be the most powerful fleet ever assembled in the history of Tamriel. The Fifth, Seventh, Tenth, and Fourteenth Legions were selected for the initial landing, with the Ninth and Seventeenth to follow as reinforcements once the beachhead was secured. While this may seem to the layman a relatively small fraction of the Army's total manpower, it must be remembered that this Expeditionary Force would have to be maintained at the end of a long and tenuous supply line; in addition, the Emperor and the Army command believed that the invasion would not be strongly opposed, at least at first. Perhaps most crucially, the Navy had only enough heavy transport capacity to move four legions at a time.

It should be noted here that the Commission does not find fault with the Emperor's preparations for the invasion. Based on the information available prior to the invasion, (which, while obviously deficient in hindsight, great effort had been made to accumulate), the Commission believes that the Emperor did not act recklessly or imprudently. Some have argued that the Expeditionary Force was too small. The Commission believes that on the contrary, even if shipping could have been found to transport and supply more legions (an impossibility without crippling the trade of the entire Empire), this would have merely added to the scale of the disaster; it would not have averted it. Neither could the rest of the Empire be denuded of legions; the memory of the Camoran Usurper was still fresh, and the Emperor believed (and this Commission agrees) that the security of the Empire precluded a larger concentration of military force outside of Tamriel. If anything, the Commission believes that the Expeditionary Force was too large. Despite the

creation of two new legions during his reign (and the recreation of the Fifth), the loss of the Expeditionary Force left the Empire in a dangerously weak position relative to the provinces, as the current situation makes all too clear. This suggests that the invasion of Akavir was beyond the Empire's current strength; even if the Emperor could have fielded and maintained a larger force in Akavir, the Empire may have disintegrated behind him.

The Expeditionary Force left Black Harbor on 23rd Rain's Hand, 288, and with fair weather landed in Akavir after six weeks at sea. The landing site was a small Tsaesci port at the mouth of a large river, chosen for its proximity to Tamriel as well as its location in a fertile river valley, giving easy access to the interior as well as good foraging for the army. All went well at first. The Tsaesci had abandoned the town when the Expeditionary Force approached, so they took possession of it and renamed it Septimia, the first colony of the new Imperial Province of Akavir. While the engineers fortified the town and expanded the port facilities to serve the Far East Fleet, the Emperor marched inland with two legions. The surrounding land was reported to be rich, well-watered fields, and meeting no resistance the army took the next city upriver, also abandoned. This was refounded as Ionith, and the Emperor established his headquarters there, being much larger than Septimia and better-located to dominate the surrounding countryside.

The Expeditionary Force had yet to meet any real resistance, although the legions were constantly shadowed by mounted enemy patrols which prevented any but large scouting parties from leaving the main body of the army. One thing the Emperor sorely lacked was cavalry, due to the limited space on

the transport fleet, although for the time being the battlemages made up for this with magical reconnaissance.

The Emperor now sent out envoys to try to contact the Tsaesci king or whoever ruled this land, but his messengers never returned. In retrospect, the Commission believes that valuable time was wasted in this effort while the army was stalled at Ionith, which could have been better spent in advancing quickly while the enemy was still, apparently, surprised by the invasion. However, the Emperor believed at the time that the Tsaesci could be overawed by the Empire's power and he might win a province by negotiation with no need for serious fighting.

Meanwhile, the four legions were busy building a road between Septimia and Ionith, setting up fortified guard posts along the river, and fortifying both cities' defences, activities which would serve them well later. Due to their lack of cavalry, scouting was limited, and communication between the two cities constantly threatened by enemy raiders, with which the legions were still unable to come to grips.

The original plan had been to bring the two reinforcing legions across as soon as the initial landing had secured a port, but the fateful decision was now taken to delay their arrival and instead begin using the Fleet to transport colonists. The Emperor and the Council agreed that, due to the complete abandonment of the conquered area by its native population, colonists were needed to work the fields so that the Expeditionary Force would not have to rely entirely on the fleet for supplies. In addition, unrest had broken out in Yneslea, athwart the supply route to Akavir, and the Council believed the Ninth and Seventeenth legions would be better used in

repacifying those territories and securing the Expeditionary Force's supply lines.

The civilian colonists and their supplies began arriving in Septimia in mid-Hearthfire, and they took over the preparation of the fields (which had been started by the legionnaires) for a spring crop. A number of cavalry mounts were also brought over at this time, and the raids on the two Imperial colonies subsequently fell off. Tsaesci emissaries also finally arrived in Ionith, purportedly to begin peace negotiations, and the Expeditionary Force settled in for what was expected to be a quiet winter.

At this time, the Council urged the Emperor to return to Tamriel with the Fleet, to deal with many pressing matters of the Empire while the army was in winter quarters, but the Emperor decided that it would be best to remain in Akavir. This turned out to be fortunate, because a large portion of the Fleet, including the Emperor's flagship, was destroyed by an early winter storm during the homeward voyage. The winter storm season of 288-289 was unusually prolonged and exceptionally severe, and prevented the Fleet from returning to Akavir as planned with additional supplies. This was reported to the Emperor via battlemage and it was agreed that the Expeditionary Force could survive on what supplies it had on hand until the spring.

The winter weather in Akavir was also much more severe than expected. Due to the supply problems and the addition of thousands of civilians, the Expeditionary Force was on tight rations. To make matters worse, the Tsaesci raiders returned in force and harried any foraging and scouting parties outside the walls of the two cities. Several watch forts on the road between

Septimia and Ionith were captured during blizzards, and the rest had to be abandoned as untenable. As a result, communication between the two cities had to be conducted entirely by magical means, a continuing strain on the legions' battlemages.

On 5th Sun's Dawn, a large entourage of Tsaesci arrived at Ionith claiming to bring a peace offer from the Tsaesci king. That night, these treacherous envoys murdered the guards at one of the city gates and let in a strong party of their comrades who were waiting outside the city walls. Their clear intention was to assassinate the Emperor, foiled only by the vigilance and courage of troopers of the Tenth who were guarding his palace. Once the alarm was raised, the Tsaesci inside the city were hunted down and killed to the last man. Needless to say, this was the end of negotiations between the Emperor and the Tsaesci.

The arrival of spring only brought worse troubles. Instead of the expected spring rains, a hot dry wind began to blow from the east, continuing with varying strength through the entire summer. The crops failed, and even the river (which in the previous year had been navigable by small boats far upstream of Ionith) was completely dried up by Sun's Height. It is unknown if this was due to a previously unknown weather pattern unique to Akavir, or if the Tsaesci manipulated the weather through magical means. The Commission leans towards the former conclusion, as there is no direct evidence of the Tsaesci possessing such fearsome arcane power, but the latter possibility cannot be entirely ruled out.

Due to prolonged bad weather, the supply fleet was late in setting out from Black Harbor. It finally left port in early

Second Seed, but was again severely mauled by storms and limped into Septimia eight weeks later much reduced. Because of the increasingly desperate supply situation in Akavir, the Emperor dispatched most of his Battlemage Corps with the fleet to assist it in weathering the storms which seemed likely to continue all summer. At this time, the Council urged the Emperor to abandon the invasion and to return to Tamriel with the Expeditionary Force, but he again refused, noting that the fleet was no longer large enough to transport all four legions at once. The Commission agrees that leaving one or more legions behind in Akavir to await the return of the fleet would have damaged Army morale. But the Commission also notes that the loss of one legion would have been preferable to the loss of the entire Expeditionary Force. It is the unanimous opinion of the Commission that this was the last point at which complete disaster might have been averted. Once the decision was made to send the fleet back for reinforcements and supplies, events proceeded to their inevitable conclusion.

From this point on, much less is known about what transpired in Akavir. With most of the battlemages assisting the fleet, communication between the Expeditionary Force and Tamriel was limited, especially as the situation in Akavir worsened and the remaining battlemages had their powers stretched to the limit attending to all the needs of the legions. However, it appears that the Tsaesci may also have been actively interfering with the mages in some unknown manner. Some of the mages in Akavir reported their powers being abnormally weak, and the mages of the War College in Cyrodiil (who were handling communications for the Council) reported problems linking up with their compatriots in Akavir, even between master and pupil of long training. The Commission urges that the War College make a particular study of the arcane powers of the

Tsaesci, should the Empire ever come into conflict with Akavir again.

What is known is that the Emperor marched out of Ionith in mid-Sun's Height, leaving only small garrisons to hold the cities. He had learned that the Tsaesci were massing their forces on the other side of a mountain range to the north, and he intended to smash their army before it could gather full strength and capture their supplies (of which he was in desperate need). This rapid advance seems to have taken the Tsaesci by surprise, and the Expeditionary Force crossed the mountains and fell on their camp, routing the Tsaesci army and capturing its leader (a noble of some kind). But the Emperor was soon forced to retreat, and the legions suffered heavily on their retreat to Ionith. The Emperor now found himself besieged in Ionith, cut off from the small garrison at Septimia which was also besieged. By this time, it seems that the efforts of the few remaining battlemages were devoted entirely to creating water to keep the army alive, a skill not normally emphasized at the War College. The fleet had arrived safely back to Black Harbor, thanks to the Battlemage Corps, but all attempts to return to Akavir were frustrated by a series of ever more savage storms that battered Esoniet throughout the rest of 289.

The Council's last contact with the Emperor was in early Frostfall. By Evening Star, the Council was extremely worried about the situation in Akavir and ordered the fleet to sail regardless of the risk. Despite the continued storms, the fleet managed to press on to Akavir. Hope was raised when contact was made with the Emperor's battlemage, who reported that Ionith still held out. Plans were quickly laid for the Expeditionary Force to break out of Ionith and fall back on

Septimia, where the fleet would meet them. This was the last direct contact with the Expeditionary Force. The fleet arrived in Septimia to find its garrison under savage assault from a large Tsaesci army. The battlemages with the fleet threw back the enemy long enough for the survivors to embark and the fleet to withdraw.

The few survivors of the Expeditionary Force who reached Septimia told how the Emperor had led the army out of Ionith by night two days earlier, successfully breaking through the enemy lines but then being surrounded by overwhelming forces on the road to Septimia. They told of a heroic last stand by the Emperor and the Tenth Legion, which allowed a remnant of the Fourteenth to reach Septimia. Two survivors of the Tenth arrived in Septimia that night, having slipped through the enemy lines during their undisciplined victory celebration. These men confirmed having seen the Emperor die, cut down by enemy arrows as he rallied the Tenth's shield wall.

The Commission believes that the invasion of Akavir was doomed from the start for several reasons, none of which could have been foreseen beforehand, unfortunately.

Despite extensive intelligence-gathering, the Expeditionary Force was clearly unprepared for the situation in Akavir. The unexpected weather which plagued the army and navy was particularly disastrous. Without the loss of a majority of the Far East Fleet during the campaign, the Expeditionary Force could have been withdrawn in 289. The weather also forced the Emperor to assign most of his Battlemage Corps to the fleet, leaving him without their valuable assistance during the fighting which soon followed. And of course the unexpected



drought which struck Ionith during 289 dashed the hopes of supplying the army locally, and left the Expeditionary Force in an untenable situation when besieged in Ionith.

The Tsaesci were also much stronger than intelligence reports had suggested. Information on the size of the army the Tsaesci were eventually able to field against the Expeditionary Force is vague, as the only serious fighting took place after regular communications were cut off between the Emperor and the Council. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the Tsaesci outnumbered the Emperor's forces by several times, as they were able to force four crack legions into retreat and then keep them under siege for several months.

As was stated previously, the Commission declines to criticize the initial decision to invade Akavir. Based on what was known at the time, the plan seemed sound. It is only with the benefit of hindsight does it become obvious that the invasion had very little chance of success. Nevertheless, the Commission believes several valuable lessons can be taken from this disaster.

First, the Tsaesci may have extremely powerful arcane forces at their command. The possibility that they may have manipulated the weather across such a vast region seems incredible (and it should be noted that three Commissioners strongly objected to this paragraph even being included in this Report), but the Commission believes that this matter deserves urgent investigation. The potential danger is such that even the slight possibility must be taken seriously.

Second, the Tsaesci appear to possess no navy to speak of. The Expeditionary Force was never threatened by sea, and the Far East Fleet fought nothing but the weather. Indeed, initial plans called for a portion of the Fleet to remain in Akavir for use in

coastal operations, but in the event there were very few places where the large vessels of the Fleet could approach the land, due to the innumerable reefs, sandbars, islands, etc. that infested the coastal waters north and south from Septimia. Due to the utter lack of trees in the plain around Septimia and Ionith, the Expeditionary Force was unable to build smaller vessels which could have navigated the shallow coastal waters. Any future military expeditions against Akavir would do well to consider some way of bringing a means for inshore naval operations in order to exploit this clear advantage over the Tsaesci, an advantage that was sadly unexploited by the Expeditionary Force.

Third, much longer-term study needs to be made of Akavir before another invasion could even be contemplated. The information gathered over the four years prior to the invasion was extensive, but clearly inadequate. The weather conditions were completely unexpected; the Tsaesci much stronger than expected; and the attempted negotiations by the Emperor with the Tsaesci a disaster. Akavir proved alien beyond expectation, and the Commission believes any future attempt to invade Akavir should not be contemplated without much greater knowledge of the conditions, politics, and peoples of that continent than presently obtains.

Finally, the Commission unanimously concludes that given what we now know, any attempt to invade Akavir is folly, at least in the present state of the Empire. The Empire's legions are needed at home. One day, a peaceful, united Empire will return to Akavir and exact severe retribution for the disaster at Ionith and for our fallen Emperor. But that day is not now, nor in the foreseeable future.

# Discovering Ruunvald

*Moric Sidrey*

Discovering Ruunvald, Vol. I

Discovering Ruunvald

Vol. I

by

Moric Sidrey

I have decided to document our expedition to find Ruunvald in my journals, with hopes that, should we fail, it will bring illumination to those who follow us. I myself have stood on the shoulders of academic giants to get where we are today, spending endless hours in libraries and private collections. I am certain that there is some artifact of great power to be found in those ruins, one that the Vigilants could find useful in their mission.

I do not mean to sound pompous, but I feel as if I am on the precipice of my destiny with this quest. I am certain we are digging in the right place. I can feel it in my bones, and I dream of finding Ruunvald at night. Even in my waking hours, I can almost hear a reassuring voice telling me we are going the right way.

The expedition has had a great deal of luck so far. After only a few weeks, the first tunnel broke through into a large shaft, leading downward towards where I suspect to find Ruunvald. With just a few bits of carpentry, we've established our first base camp within the mountains. If we continue to be this fortuitous, we shall reach our goal in record time!

M. Sidrey

Discovering Ruunvald, Vol. II

Discovering Ruunvald

Vol. II

by

Moric Sidrey

Our luck continues! Not only do we continue to tunnel into caves and shafts that speed our descent, but struck multiple veins of precious ore. Now that the excavation has proven to be a financial success, the Vigilants have sent more supplies, materials, and workers to further the cause. I find myself unable to contain my glee at times, and have become prone to cheerful outbursts in front of the men. One might find this very out of character for me, but the men seem to share my enthusiasm. Never before have I worked with a group so single-minded in their pursuit. To have so many people working towards the same goal with little to no deviation from the task at hand is an uncanny blessing! Stendarr be praised!

With so much going well, I hesitate to document what seem like minor troubles in comparison. It must have something to do with the cramped spaces, but I have found myself prone to

aches in my head. While these hardly deter me from my leadership role, I have found myself distracted at times. I have had many a conversation with the workers where I drift off, only to have them call me back to reality. Sometimes I lose small amounts of time and can't remember what I've done. I am hoping this is nothing more than excitement of reaching our goal, but I will try to keep note as we dig deeper. Perhaps a half tankard of ale before sleep will help me with these headaches.

M. Sidrey

Discovering Ruunvald, Vol. III

Discovering Ruunvald

Vol. III

by

Moric Sidrey

The damnable headaches! Minorne be merciful, I just can't seem to shake them. The workers have started to report them as well, but while their focus on conversation and civility may wane because of it, they have not swayed from their task. If anything, they seem to have doubled their efforts. I myself cannot seem to focus on anything other than the dig. I sit here now, studying some unearthed Nordic artifacts, yet I feel a nagging call to see how the dig is progressing. The other day without thinking, I picked up a shovel and started digging myself. Fortunately, no one seemed to find this unusual, which is a blessing. I'd hate for the Vigilants of Minorne to think that I'd lost my senses!

As we dig, we uncover more Nordic ruins and architecture, but have yet to hit the main chamber. Everyday I dream we'll finally reach Ruunvald, and I can't help but reflect on what this will mean to my reputation! My family will be so proud, especially my father, Minorne. He and mother have always been interested in my studies, even if my sister Minorne was not. But I'm most excited to reveal my findings to my colleagues, Minorne and Minorne, and perhaps my mentor Minorne. Oh, won't they all be pleased?

M. Sidrey

Discovering Ruunvald, Vol. IV

Discovering Ruunvald

Vol. IV

by

Moric Sidrey

I have found my muse and her name is Minorne. Reading back over old journals, I realize she has called to me from deep inside Ruunvald. She is the voice I've been hearing, the one who has called me ever downwards into the mountain. The Vigilants, the workers, they hear her too! What joy to learn that I am not alone in her love! Oh, Minorne, how would we have ever found this place without you! As I write this we are digging out the last bit of rock to get to you. Those without tools have started using their hands! I cannot write anymore, I must get back to work. Ruunvald awaits!

M. Sidrey

# Dragon Investigation Current Status

*Rulindil*

First Emissary Elenwen,

We anticipate a breakthrough in our efforts to uncover the party or power behind the dragon resurrection phenomenon. An informant has identified a possible lead, whom we have brought back to the Embassy for a full interrogation. The subject is obstinate, but by all indications is holding back the information we seek. I have authorized Intermediate Manual Uncoiling - I do not expect more will be necessary, unless you feel time presses.

I know you prefer to be present for the final questioning; I will inform you immediately when the subject is fully receptive. Two days should tell the tale.

In the meantime, if you wish to audit our technique, your expertise is welcome, as always. I have placed the prisoner in the cell closest to your office stairs, for your convenience.

—Rulindil, 3rd Em.

# Dragon Language: Myth No More

*Hela Thrice-Versed*

Dragon.

The very word conjurs nightmare images of shadowed skies, hideous roaring, and endless fire. Indeed, the dragons were terrifying beasts that were once as numerous as they were deadly.

But what most Nords don't realize is that the dragons were in fact not simple, mindless beasts. Indeed, they were a thriving, intelligent culture, one bent on the elimination or enslavement of any non-dragon civilization in the entire world.

It therefore stands to reason that the dragons would require a way to communicate with one another. That they would need to speak. And through much research, scholars have determined that this is exactly what the dragons did. For the mighty roars of the beasts, even when those roars contained fire, or ice, or some other deadly magic, were actually much more - they were words. Words in an ancient, though decipherable, tongue.

Nonsense, you say? Sheer folly on the part of some overeager academics? I thought precisely the same thing. But then I started hearing rumors. The odd snippet of a conversation



from some brave explorer or gold-coveting crypt diver. An always, always, it was the same word repeated:

Wall.

So I listened more. I began to arrange the pieces of the puzzle, and slowly unravel the mystery.

Spread throughout Skyrim, in ancient dungeons, burial grounds, and other secluded places, there are walls. Black, ominous walls on which is written a script so old, so unknown, none who had encountered it could even begin its translation.

In my heart, I came to know the truth: this was proof of the ancient dragon language! For what else could it possibly be? It only made sense that these walls were constructed by the ancient Nords, Nords who had lived in the time of the dragons, and out of fear or respect, had somehow learned and used the language of the ancient beasts.

But at that point, all I had was my own gut instinct. What I needed was proof. Thus began the adventure of my life. One spanning 17 months and the deaths of three courageous guides and two sellsword protectors. But I choose not to dwell on those grim details, for the end result was so glorious, it made any hardship worth it.

In my travels, I found many of the ancient walls, and every suspicion proved true.

It did in fact appear as if the ancient Nords had copied the language of the dragons of old, for the characters of that language very much resemble claw marks, or scratches. One can almost envision a majestic dragon using his great, sharp

talons to carve the symbols into the stone itself. And a human witness - possibly even a thrall or servant - learning, observing, so that he too could use the language for his own ends.

For as I observed the walls I found, I noticed something peculiar about some of the words. It was as if they pulsed with a kind of power, an unknown energy that, if unlocked, might be harnessed by the reader. That sounds like nonsense, I know, but if you had stood by these walls - seen their blackness, felt their power - you would understand that of which I speak.

Thankfully, although entranced, I was able to retain enough sense to actual transcribe the characters I saw. And, in doing so, I began to see patterns in the language - patterns that allowed me to decipher what it was I was reading.

For example, I transcribed the following passage:

[Literal translation: HET NOK YNGNAVAR G1F KOD1V WO DR1 Y4 MORON AU FROD DO KROSIS NUZ SINON S3V DINOK 4RK DUK1N]

Assigning those scratchings to actual Tamrielic language characters, I further translated what I saw into this:

Het nok Yngnavar Gaaf-Kodaav, wo drey Yah moron au Frod do Krosis, nuz sinon siiv dinok ahrk dukaan.

Which translates into the Tamrielic as follows:

Here lies Yngnavar Ghost-Bear, who did Seek glory on the Battlefield of Sorrows, but instead found death and dishonor.

Then, in another crypt, I encountered a wall with this transcription:

[Lit. Trans. HET NOK KOPR1N DO IGLIF 3Z SOS WO GRIND OK OBL1N NI KO MOROK2 VUK2N NUZ 4ST MUNAX H1LVUT DO L3V KRAS1R]

Which translates into:

Het nok kopraan do Iglif Iiz-Sos, wo grind ok oblaan ni ko morokei vukein, nuz ahst munax haalvut do liiv krasaar.

Which ultimately translates into the Tamrielic as:

Here lies the body of Iglif Ice-Blood, who met his end not in glorious combat, but at the cruel touch of the withering sickness.

And there you see the pattern. The repeated words “Here lies” - which could only mean one thing: those walls marked actual ancient Nord burial grounds.

You can imagine my nearly uncontainable excitement. It all started to make sense. The ancient Nords used the dragon language for these walls for very specific reasons. One of them was obviously to mark the grave of some important figure. But what else? Were they all graves, or did they serve other purposes as well?

I set off to find out, and was well rewarded for my efforts. Here is what I discovered.

This passage:

[Lit. Trans. HET M4 T4ROD3S TAF3R SKORJI LUN SINAK WEN  
KLOV GOV9 N1L RINIK H4KUN ROK TOG1T W4 G4ROT]

Translates into this:

Het mah tahrodiis tafir Skorji Lun-Sinak, wen klov govey naal  
rinik hahkun rok togaat wah gahrot.

Which in Tamrielic translates into this:

Here fell the treacherous thief Skorji Leech-Fingers, whose head  
was removed by the very axe he was attempting to steal.

So here we see a wall that marks the spot where some  
significant ancient Nord died.

This passage:

[Lit. Trans. QETHSEGOL V4RUKIV D1NIK F4L3L K3R DO  
GRAV5N FROD, WO BOVUL KO M1R NOL KINZON Z4KR3 DO  
KRUZ3K HOKORON]

Translates into this:

Qethsegol vahrukiv daanik Fahliil kiir do Gravuun Frod, wo  
bovul ko Maar nol kinzon zahkrii do kruziik hokoron.

Which in Tamrielic translates into this:

This stone commemorates the doomed elf children of the  
Autumn Field, who fled in Terror from the sharp swords of the  
ancient enemy.

This wall seems to commemorate some ancient, long-forgotten  
event in Tamrielic history. Whether that event occurred on or

near the place where the wall was erected, we will probably never know.

And finally, this passage:

[Lit. Trans. AESA W4L1N QETHSEGOL BR3N43 V4RUKT  
THOHILD FIN T8R WEN SMOL3N AG FRIN OL S4QO H2M]

Which translates into this:

Aesa wahlaan qethsegol briinahii vahrukt, Thohild fin Toor,  
wen smoliin ag frin ol Sahqo Heim.

Which in Tamrielic translates into this:

Aesa raised this stone for her sister, Thohild the Inferno, whose  
passion burned hot as the Red Forge.

This wall (and I encountered quite a few like this) was obviously commissioned or built by a specific person, to honor someone important to them. What was the significance of the location? Was it important to the person who died? Or is it the actual location of that person's death? Again, those answers are probably lost to time, and will never be know.

And so you see, the ancient dragon language is, indeed, myth no more. It existed. But better yet, it still exists, and probably will until the end of time, thanks to the ancient Nords and their construction of these many "word walls."

But don't take my word for it. For the walls are there for the discovering, in Skyrim's dangerous, secret places. They serve as a bridge between the realm of the ancient Nords, and our own. The dragons may never return to our world, but now we can return to theirs.

And someday, someday, we may even unlock the strange,  
unknown power hidden in their words.

# Dryston's Note

*Dryston*

Friend,

Got to deal with a certain nosy visitor in the city. Nepos the Nose wants him roughed up in the usual way, but I can grab a pint at the Silver-Blood Inn afterwards.

Should be easy.

-Dryston

# Dwarven Haul

*Anonymous*

Hands off the dwarven haul until we know who wants this stuff. Word's gone out to find a buyer. Until then, anyone caught snooping around in here will get his hands cut off.



# Dwarves

*Calcelmo*

The Lost Race of Tamriel, vol. I - Architecture and Designs

Dwarves

The Lost Race of Tamriel, Volume I

Architecture and Designs

by

Calcelmo

Scholar of Markarth

Let me begin by correcting a common misconception. The proper term to use when referencing the ancient lost race of Tamriel is “Dwemer.” It is a word whose meaning is roughly translated to “people of the deep” in the common tongue, and whose use has been widely replaced by the more ubiquitous nomenclature, “dwarves.” I would like stated that I use the name “dwarves” in lieu of the more accurate term in these books out of sympathy for my readership, whom I can safely assume does not have the breadth of scholarship that 200 years of study has given me.

With that small point finished, let us begin our discussion on the dwarves by focusing on the indisputable artifacts they have left behind: their architectural and cultural designs. Unlike the more controversial areas of dwarven scholarship, the construction of dwarven cities and relics are well-founded due to the plethora of samples taken from the ruins these peoples have left behind. My own home city, Markarth, was originally one such ruin, and I can state from first-hand experience that all dwarven designs share a set of common principles that we can use to determine true artifacts from fakes and delineate patterns and methodologies that were important to their craftsmen.

First of all, we can say for certain that dwarven artisans favored stone, at least as far as their buildings were concerned. This is no surprise. With notable exceptions, the vast majority of dwarven architecture is found underground or carved out of mountains. It is possible, although only theoretically, that the dwarves first mastered masonry as a race quite early, and later examples of metalwork were added on to much earlier stone designs as the dwarves began to master more complex tools. Regardless, the foundation of all known dwarven ruins is built on stonework, and the structure of dwarven stonework is sharp, angular, and intensely mathematical in nature.

By a simple count, there are hundreds if not thousands of samples of dwarven buildings made of precise square shapes, and far fewer examples of discretely rounded or curved stonework, leading us to believe that early dwarves favored trusted, well-calculated designs based on angled lines rather than riskier, more imprecise calculations based on arcs and curves. This comparatively simple tradition of stonecutting has nevertheless resulted in buildings that are as structurally

sound today as they were thousands of years ago, making the works of our most skilled masons today seem like child's play in comparison.

Metalwork as far as we know is the primary method used to make almost all dwarven crafts. We cannot, however, discount more easily destructible materials such as clay, paper, and glass from outside the scope of dwarven craftsmanship, but given the tendency of dwarven design to favor the long-lasting over the fragile, we can safely assume that at the very least metal was a heavy preference. And the metal used in all so-far-discovered dwarven relics is entirely unique to their culture.

No other race has replicated whatever process was used to create dwarven metal. Although it can be easily mistaken for bronze—and in fact many forgers of dwarven materials use bronze to create their fake replicas—it is most definitely a distinct type of metal of its own. I have personally seen metallurgists attempt to combine several different types of steel and common and rare ores in order to imitate dwarven metal's exclusive properties, but the only method that has been successful is to melt down existing dwarven metallic scraps and start over from there.

The Lost Race of Tamriel, vol. II - Weapons, Armor and  
Machines

Dwarves

The Lost Race of Tamriel, Volume II

Weapons, Armor and Machines

by

Calcelmo

Scholar of Markarth

In our previous discussion on the dwarves (or “Dwemer” in the more correct, scholarly terminology), we looked into the properties of dwarven architecture and metallic crafts. In this continuing discussion of Tamriel’s Lost Race, we shall examine the ways in which dwarves waged war and kept out trespassers. Unlike many other cultures still existing today, the dwarves built and relied on increasingly complicated machines for a wide variety of martial tasks, and weapons and armor created solely for the purpose of being wielded by dwarven warriors show remarkably fewer points of progress beyond the basic designs.

Let us begin by analyzing those basic weapons and armors. Anyone who has held a dwarven axe or worn a dwarven helmet can testify as to the ancient, ever-lasting quality of dwarven craftsmanship. Weapons do not deviate too greatly from their base function. Dwarven swords pierce through light armors with incredible effectiveness, owing primarily to the remarkable sharpness of tempered dwarven metal, and owing to a far lesser extent to its simple, double-edged design.

Compare and contrast a sharp, angular dwarven dagger to a curved elven blade, and it becomes a small logical leap to say that dwarven weaponsmiths relied almost exclusively on creating quality materials first, and merely allowed the form of those materials to flow from the method that weapon was intended to kill people.

As a culture that built almost exclusively underground, it’s no surprise that dwarven armors are built to withstand incredibly

heavy blows. Again, the fact that they are also resistant to being pierced by arrows or small blades is more of a testament to superior dwarven metallurgy over superior dwarven armorsmithing, but it would be erroneous to thus conclude that dwarven smiths did not take the manufacture of their weapons and armor very seriously. Every piece of war crafts I have examined show a remarkable amount of unnecessary detailing and personalization that is just as evident today among the most ardent blacksmiths.

A dwarven smith probably came from a long tradition that distinguished itself in way that, say, the grip of a mace would feel, or the design of the head of individual arrows. Although, due to the paltry lack of any cultural artifacts outside the weapons and armors themselves, this is only mere speculation.

The last, but probably most important discussion in this volume, pertains to the existence of dwarven machinery. Dwarves created and manufactured on a very broad scale thousands of mechanical apparatuses of varying complexity. The most simple of which is the standard “arachnid” design used to ward off trespassers. We are so far uncertain as to how the dwarves were able to bring to life these remarkably intelligent machines, but I have witnessed one stalk a highly trained thief for several hours, only to ambush him as he was dealing with a lock to some room or treasure trove—I admit to have forgotten the details past the point at which it began spouting lightning at him.

Dwarven military machines also range from the human-sized “Sphere” warrior, which patrols the interiors of the ruins as a harmless ball only to emerge from it as a fully armed and armored automaton fighter, to the justly feared “Centurion”

whose height ranges from twice to several hundred times human size depending on which reports you believe.

The Lost Race of Tamriel, vol. III - Culture and History

Dwarves

The Lost Race of Tamriel, Volume III

Culture and History

by

Calcelmo

Scholar of Markarth

In this final volume on our discussion on the dwarves (again, see the term “Dwemer” for references using the more scholastic name), we will attempt an examination into the distinct culture and history of Tamriel’s Lost Race. We must, however, begin such a discussion with a warning. Despite what certain academic circles would like people to believe, there is so far no evidence that verifies any claim as to the dwarves’ particular customs, morals, myths, legends, laws, systems of governance, or involvement in major historical events outside of those few examples that remain indisputable.

For instance, while we can say with absolute certainty that the disappearance of the entire dwarven race happened very suddenly, only the laziest of junior scholars would say that this event happened in the same day or even the same hour. There is simply no proof to dispute the theory that perhaps the dwarves disappeared from Tamriel gradually over the course of several years or indeed several decades.

There is also nothing that disproves the source of this disappearance as being attributable to mass deaths, plagues, magical contamination, experiments into the nature of Aetherius gone wrong, or even race-wide teleportation into one of the planes of Oblivion. There is simply too little that the dwarves left behind that points to the nature of their great vanishing act, and this same frustration applies to all aspects of their social structure and history.

What we know then can only be inferred by the writings of the other races which made contact with the dwarves before they left Tamriel. The dark elves (“Dunmer”) for example teach that their great prophet Nerevar helped unite the dwarves and the elves in Morrowind against occupying Nord armies from Skyrim in the First Era, but Nord and Orc writings also indicate that the dwarves were also allied with them at various points and in various legendary battles of theirs.

Unfortunately, none of these legends and folk lore make an effort to describe the dwarves in great detail, only that they were a secretive people and that an alliance with them was unusual enough to warrant crafting a story around. And past the First Era, no race makes note of encountering any living dwarves at all. This is further confounded by the fact that so many of the dark elven writings on their relationship with the dwarves were lost during the tragic eruptions of Vvardenfell during the Oblivion Crisis nearly 200 years ago. What secrets they could have revealed about the Lost Race are now buried behind layers of molten earth along with so many unfortunate dark elven people.

Thus, we conclude our discussion on the dwarves on a somber note. As with all scholarly endeavors, we are left with more

questions than we have answers, and the proof we so desperately search for is so often out of reach, denied even to the most fervent effort.

The mysteries the dwarves have left us with could easily warrant another century or so worth of personal examination from me, and quite possibly even several millennia of excavation of even one dwarven ruin would be insufficient to paint a complete picture on them. But what we can see from our threadbare tapestry of dwarven artifacts is a careful, intelligent, industrious, and highly advanced culture whose secrets we as students and teachers of their works can only hope to uncover some day.



# Dwemer History And Culture

*Hasphat Antabolis*

## Chapter 1

Marobar Sul and the Trivialization  
of the Dwemer in Popular Culture

by

Hasphat Antabolis

While Marobar Sul's Ancient Tales of the Dwemer was definitively debunked in scholarly circles as early as the reign of Katariah I, it remains one of the staples of the literate middle-classes of the Empire, and has served to set the image of the Dwemer in the popular imagination for generations of schoolchildren. What about this lengthy (but curiously insubstantial) tome has proved so captivating to the public that it has been able to see off both the scorn of the literati and the scathing critiques of the scholars?

Before examining this question, a brief summary of the provenance and subsequent career of Ancient Tales would be appropriate. First published around 2E670, in the Interregnum between the fall of the First Cyrodilic Empire and the rise of Tiber Septim, it was originally presented as a serious, scholarly work based on research in the archives of the University of

Gwylim, and in the chaos of that era was taken at face value (a sign of the sad state of Dwemer scholarship in those years). Little is known of the author, but Marobar Sul was most likely a pseudonym of Gor Felim, a prolific writer of “penny dreadful romances” of that era, who is known to have used many other pseudonyms. While most of Felim’s other work has, thankfully, been lost to history, what little survives matches *Ancient Tales of the Dwemer* in both language and tone (see Lomis, “Textual Comparison of Gor Felim’s *A Hypothetical Treachery* with Marobar Sul’s *Ancient Tales of the Dwemer*”). Felim lived in Cyrodiil his whole life, writing light entertainments for the elite of the old Imperial capital. Why he decided to turn his hand to the Dwemer is unknown, but it is clear that his “research” consisted of nothing more than collecting the peasants’ tales of the Nibenay Valley and recasting them in Dwemer guise.

The book proved popular in Cyrodiil, and Felim continued to churn out more volumes until the series numbered seven in all. *Ancient Tales of the Dwemer* was thus firmly established as a local favorite in Cyrodiil (already in its 17th printing) when the historical forces that propelled Tiber Septim to prominence also began to spread the literature of the “heartland” across the continent. Marobar Sul’s version of the Dwemer was seized upon in a surge of human racial nationalism that has not yet subsided.

The Dwemer appear in these tales as creatures of fable and light fantasy, but in general they are “just like us”. They come across as a bit eccentric, perhaps, but certainly there is nothing fearsome or dangerous about them. Compare these to the Dwemer of early Redguard legend: a mysterious, powerful race, capable of bending the very laws of nature to their will; vanished but perhaps not gone. Or the Dwemer portrayed in

the most ancient Nord sagas: fearsome warriors, tainted by blasphemous religious practices, who used their profane mechanisms to drive the Nords from Morrowind. Marobar Sul's Dwemer were much more amenable to the spirit of the time, which saw humans as the pinnacle of creation and the other races as unenlightened barbarians or imperfect, lesser versions of humans eager for tutelage. Ancient Tales falls firmly in the latter camp, which does much to explain its enduring hold on the popular imagination. Marobar Sul's Dwemer are so much more comfortable, so much friendlier, so much more familiar, than the real Dwemer, whose truly mysterious nature we are only beginning to understand. The public prefers the light, trivial version of this vanished race. And from what I have learned in my years of studying the Dwemer, I have some sympathy for that preference. As the following essays will show, the Dwemer were, to our modern eyes, a remarkably unlikeable people in many ways.

# East Empire Connection

*Anonymous*

Mercer,

I've pressed our contact at the East Empire Company for information, but that lizard's as stubborn as he is careless. He claims the company has nothing to offer, but I think he's hiding something. I'd suggest that you refrain from having him visited by the Brotherhood for now. He may yet be of some use to us.

# Eisa's Journal

*Eisa*

Left the White River gang this morning, with Hajvarr's thugs on our tail. Wasn't a bad gig, but it was time to move on. Ra'jirr and I weren't getting anywhere with him in charge.

I'll never understand how he does it. I couldn't find so much as a rumor in Windhelm, while Ra'jirr stayed outside the city, got wasted on Moonsugar, and still managed to find us a lead-some gang out Morthal way. They're holed up in an old ruin, digging it out in between raids on the caravans.

Joined up with Kyr's band. Their treasure-hunting dig is a disaster: three months of work have barely cleared a single hall, and six men have died from the cave-ins. I've taken charge of the dig, while Ra'jirr is leading the raids topside. Maybe that year in Cidhna Mine will pay off after all.

You'd think a man who could swing a sword could use a pickaxe, but these louts are exhausted after barely an hour. No wonder this tunnel's taking forever. I've set up round-the-clock shifts, and ordered double rations for the best diggers. That'll give them some incentive.

Night shift woke me to say they'd hit something big. Kyr, Ra'jirr, and I went down to take a look. It's huge, like a whole forest was just swallowed up by the earth, with a big old monument out in the center. Kyr took the sword from it as a

trophy, proof his whole plan was finally paying off. For once, he might be right.

Ra'jirr's been having nightmares over the past few days. He keeps muttering about a "Pale Lady" - one of those swamp women who steal children away at night, I think. To think some fool story could turn the toughest bandit I know into a cowering kitten, frightened of his own shadow. I'm just glad none of the others see him like this.

It's getting worse. Ra'jirr can barely sleep at all now, and whenever he dozes off, he wakes up screaming- woke the whole place last night. He says the "Pale Lady" is coming for us- she's down in the forest, we have to return the sword or she'll kill us all. Not a chance- the boss clings to that thing like he was born with it. I've told everyone Ra'jirr just has a fever, but this can't go on. I've pulled a few things together. I'll slip out tonight and never look back.

# Eltry's Note

*Anonymous*

Meet me at the Shrine of Talos.

# Enchanter's Primer

*Sergius Turrianus*

A Primer on Enchanting

by

Sergius Turrianus

Enchanting was raised to a fine art by the wizards of the Arcane University. Sadly, some of the nuances of this skill were lost when the Imperial City was sacked. Yet we are not without capability. This text will cover only the basics of Enchanting. It is but a primer for students of the College of Winterhold.

Before a weapon or bit of armor can be enchanted, the wizard must first learn the enchantment. This is a personal task. Enchantments cannot easily be passed from one mage to another. They must be understood at a primal level that can only be achieved by destroying an enchanted item and absorbing its nature.

The Arcane Enchanter is specifically designed for this task. Merely place an enchanted item in the device and will it to relent. The magic will flow into the mage, imbuing him with the knowledge of how the enchantment is formed. The utter destruction of the enchanted item is the unavoidable consequence of this process.



Items that already have enchantments cannot be enchanted further, so choose carefully when you enchant a blade or helmet. Before beginning an enchantment, make sure you have a filled soul gem. The enchantment will use this soul as a source of power. Place the item and the soul gem on the Arcane Echanter. Concentrate on the enchantment. The device will meld the two together, enchanting your weapon or armor.

Armor enchantments are permanent and do not need to be charged or powered. The reasons for this are not known. Some in the College have postulated that the wearer contributes small amounts of his own energy to keep the armor enchanted. Others say it is just the will of Magnus that it works that way. Regardless of the reason, enchanted armor and clothing never wear out.

Weapon enchantments are a different story. They slowly use up the soul energy in them until they are depleted. The enchantment remains, but a filled soul gem must be used to recharge the weapon. Perhaps it is the destructive nature of the weapon enchantment that makes it deplete. One intriguing theory is that the soul leaks out a little at a time into the victims that the weapon harms. As a novice enchanter, the reason is immaterial.

At first you will find that your enchantments require a lot of the soul energy. As you become more skilled, you can achieve the same effects with less and less soul energy. So practice your lessons and pay heed to your masters in the magical arts.

# Endrast's Journal

## *Endrast*

The eyeless creatures took us in our sleep. I don't know what happened to the Khajiit brothers, we never saw them in the cell. I managed to pick the lock and we made a break for it, but got split up. Sulla yelled something about not leaving without finding what he came here for and Umana chased after him.

Yag and I tried for the top of the cave shaft, but one of the ramps was broken. Without a hesitation, she grabbed me by the scruff of my tunic, threw me atop the ledge and told me to run.

And I did.

I didn't even look back.

I just ran like a coward.

I could hear her fighting them and I just had to get away. I didn't even notice the arrow in my shoulder till I hid here.

Those metal creatures are still all around me and I'm too terrified to even move.

Eight Divines, please just take me now.

# Erj's Note

*Erj*

How foolish to move through this place so quickly. It's taken me only a few hours to crack the back gate. Maybe I'll donate a cup or two, but Krag says he knows some private buyers who will pay handsomely for a working trinket. There has to be one in here.

\* \* \* \* \*

The side doors are all locked, but this chest should have one or two things of value. When I get out I'm going to buy myself a castle.

# Expedition Manifest

*Sulla Trebatius*

We've managed to secure the site and hold off any others who may try to steal our discoveries so far, especially those from the College of Winterhold, who seem to think the glory of exploring every ruin should be theirs alone.

The crew for our expedition is as follows:

Sulla Trebatius (myself) - Expedition leader

Umana - my constant companion and bodyguard

Valie - a mage not associated with Winterhold (took some time to find)

Endrast - a fellow explorer of some local renown

Yag - a great brute of a woman, hired to keep the rest of the labor in check

J'darr and J'zhar - two Khajiit brothers, hired as labor

Need a couple more laborers, getting through the ice is proving difficult.

We've set up shelter and scouted the area. The small ruins on the lower plateau of the glacier don't seem connected to the main structure and we haven't managed to find a way into the

tower parapet we've found here. Yag mentioned spotting a fissure in the glacial wall that may lead into the ruins so we are going to try find a way to get down there with the gear. Looks like a storm is coming.

# Eydis's Journal

*Eydis*

I finally caved and told Ulyn that I would help him retrieve this "Visage of Mzund" that he has been so obsessed over. Why he wants some dwarven helmet so much is beyond me, but I owe him so whatever.

We've stopped to take a breather after crossing over the gears. This place is amazing but it seems to serve no purpose that I can tell. Why the dwarves would waste so much good metal on gears, pipes and constructs is completely beyond me. We had to fight off several of the metal spiders while spinning around on the gears. Got so dizzy we almost fell off.

# Eyes Open

*Anonymous*

Keep your eyes on Sapphire. There's more to her than meets the eye.

# Faded Diary

*Anonymous*

...another dream of Red Mountain erupting. People running as flaming rocks the size of cantons fell from the sky...

...can still see my brother's outstretched arm, as he tried to reach the silt strider and walked right out into the boiling waters...

...not just Vvardenfell, all of Morrowind was hit by the rocks. There's no work and no food will grow under the ashes. We are going to try for Skyrim...



# Faendal's Fake Letter From Sven

*Faendal*

My Dearest Camilla,

I yearn to have you as my own,

Washing my linens,

And my fine blond hair,

To cook my dinner from my stove,

And tend to my house while I wander.

Yours Truly,

Sven

# Faleen's Letter To Calcelmo

*Faleen*

My Dearest Calcelmo,

I always knew you to possess a great mind, but your charming poem revealed a depth of feeling I never suspected.

I'll admit to being a bit surprised at the direction of your feelings, but not unpleasantly so. Let us meet to discuss further.

Yours,

Faleen

# Fall From Glory

*Nithilis Lidari*

The Thieves Guild of Skyrim is something of an enigma. Within the last few decades, their order has gone from one of the largest, most influential criminal organizations in all of Tamriel to a small group of stragglers barely able to wreak havoc in their home city of Riften. Although evidence that could explain this rapid decline has never surfaced, speculation has run rampant.

One theory holds that the Guild suffered a loss - it's strongly believed that their Guild Master was slain by one of their own. This Guild Master, known only as "Gallus," maintained strong ties with many of the influential families in Skyrim. When he perished, those bonds perished with him. Without these bonds, the Guild could no longer safely operate within Skyrim's holds.

A second theory suggests that the Guild is experiencing some sort of mystical "curse" causing normal activities for its members to become exceedingly difficult. While there is no solid evidence to support this theory, the last two decades have seen an unusual rise in failed attempts by the Guild to execute highly lucrative heists. Reasons for the presence of this supposed curse is being attributed to everything from the aforementioned murder to divine interference.

In order to solve this mystery once and for all, I've spent the last two years infiltrating the Thieves Guild. Initially making contact with them in Riften proved difficult, as they're quite wary of outsiders, but through repeated efforts I was able to gain their confidence. It's my hope that once I've gained access to some of the Guild leadership, I can learn more about their decline and publish a second volume of my work.

Although helping the Guild perform their petty crimes brands me as a criminal, I feel that it's a burden worth bearing. The mystery of the Thieves Guild's fall from power needs to be solved once and for all as a matter of record and as a footnote to Skyrim's history.

# Faralda's Notes

*Faralda*

The book is filled with indecipherable scribbles. If these are notes, they're impossible to read.

# Father's Missive

*Anonymous*

By the Nine, Rigel! Think about what you're doing!

I don't care if you kill off a couple skooma-headed Khajiit traders - they have no business being in Skyrim anyway. But think about what you're doing!

There are armies fighting out there and they're bound to use the roads from time to time. They're going to start noticing if traders go missing and for that matter, why don't you just join up with one of the armies?

I gave up on marrying you off to some merchant's son since ya got the face of a skeever, but that doesn't mean you couldn't put a helmet on and find some work for a soldier. Use those meaty arms of yours, girl!

And quit sending me money! I don't need your charity!

—Da

# First Letter From Linwe

*Linwe*

Niranye,

I'm not pleased that you're refusing to fence the silver locket I showed you yesterday. If you wish to remain a valuable asset to us, I suggest you quickly change your attitude.

Linwe

# Fisherman's Letter

*Anonymous*

I can't believe I let Skeggr talk me into this again. If he just wanted to get drunk and swap stories, we could have done that in front of a nice fire back in Windhelm, instead of on this godforsaken mud flat.

"But the fish are biting, Advald!" "The catch will more than pay for the trip!". Yeah, right- if we don't get iced in first. His boat's already taking on water. I guess we'll try again tomorrow. If we don't catch something then, I'm heading home, with or without him.



# Five Songs Of King Wulfharth

*Anonymous*

The first song of King Wulfharth is ancient, circa 1E500. After the defeat of the Alessian army at Glenumbria Moors, where King Hoag Merkiller was slain, Wulfharth of Atmora was elected by the Pact of Chieftains. His thu'um was so powerful that he could not verbally swear into the office, and scribes were used to draw up his oaths. Immediately thereafter the scribes wrote down the first new law of his reign: a fiery reinstatement of the traditional Nordic pantheon. The Edicts were outlawed, their priests put to the stake, and their halls set ablaze. The shadow of King Borgas had ended for a span. For his zealotry, King Wulfharth was called Shor's Tongue, and Ysmir, Dragon of the North.

The second song of King Wulfharth glorifies his deeds in the eyes of the Old Gods. He fights the eastern Orcs and shouts their chief into Hell. He rebuilds the 418th step of High Hrothgar, which had been damaged by a dragon. When he swallowed a thundercloud to keep his army from catching cold, the Nords called him the Breath of Kyne.

The third song of King Wulfharth tells of his death. Orkey, an enemy god, had always tried to ruin the Nords, even in Atmora where he stole their years away. Seeing the strength of King Wulfharth, Orkey summoned the ghost of Alduin Time-Eater again. Nearly every Nord was eaten down to six years old. Boy

Wulfharth pleaded to Shor, the dead Chieftain of the Gods, to help his people. Shor's own ghost then fought the Time-Eater on the spirit plane, as he did at the beginning of time, and he won, and Orkey's folk, the Orcs, were ruined. As Boy Wulfharth watched the battle in the sky he learned a new thu'um, What Happens When You Shake the Dragon Just So. He used this new magic to change his people back to normal. In his haste to save so many, though, he shook too many years out on himself. He grew older than the Greybeards, and died. The flames of his pyre were said to have reached the hearth of Kyne itself.

The fourth song of King Wulfharth tells of his rebirth. The Dwarves and Devils of the eastern kingdoms had started to fight again, and the Nords hoped they might reclaim their ancient holdings there because of it. They planned an attack, but then gave up, knowing that they had no strong King to lead them. Then in walked the Devil of Dagoth, who swore he came in peace. Moreover, he told the Nords a wondrous thing: he knew where the Heart of Shor was! Long ago the Chief of the Gods had been killed by Elven giants, and they ripped out Shor's Heart and used it as a standard to strike fear into the Nords. This worked until Ysgramor Shouted Some Sense and the Nords fought back again. Knowing that they were going to lose eventually, the Elven giants hid the Heart of Shor so that the Nords might never have their God back. But here was the Devil of Dagoth with good news! The Dwarves and Devils of the eastern kingdom had his Heart, and this was the reason for their recent unrest. The Nords asked the Devil of Dagoth why he might betray his countrymer so, and he said that the Devils have betrayed each other since the beginning of time, and this was so, and so the Nords believed him. The Tongues sung Shor's ghost into the world again. Shor gathered an army as he did of old, and then he sucked in the long-strewn ashes of King

Wulfharth and remade him, for he needed a good general. But the Devil of Dagoth petitioned to be that general, too, and he pointed out his role as the blessed harbinger of this holy war. So Shor had two generals, the Ash King and the Devil of Dagoth, and he marched on the eastern kingdoms with all the sons of Skyrim.

The fifth song of King Wulfharth is sad. The survivors of the disaster came back under a red sky. That year is called Sun's Death. The Devil of Dagoth had tricked the Nords, for the Heart of Shor was not in the eastern kingdoms, and had never been there at all. As soon as Shor's army had got to Red Mountain, all the Devils and Dwarves fell upon them. Their sorcerers lifted the mountain and threw it onto Shor, trapping him underneath Red Mountain until the end of time. They slaughtered the sons of Skyrim, but not before King Wulfharth killed King Dumalacath the Dwarf-Orc, and doomed his people. Then Vehk the Devil blasted the Ash King into Hell and it was over. Later, Kyne lifted the ashes of the ashes of Ysmir into the sky, saving him from Hell and showing her sons the color of blood when it is brought by betrayal. And the Nords will never trust another Devil again.

The Heart of Shor was in Resdayn, as Dagoth-Ur had promised. As Shor's army approached the westernmost bank of the Inner Sea, they stared across at Red Mountain, where the Dwemeri armies had gathered. News from the scouts reported that the Chimeri forces had just left Narsis, and that they were taking their time joining their cousins against the Nords. Dagoth-Ur said that the Tribunal had betrayed their King's trust, that they sent Dagoth-Ur to Lorkhan (for that is what they called Shor in Resdayn) so that the god might wreak vengeance on the Dwarves for their hubris; that Nerevar's peace with the

Dwemer would be the ruin of the Velothi way. This was the reason for the slow muster, Dagoth-Ur said.

And Lorkhan (for that is what they called Shor in Resdayn) said: "I do not wreak vengeance on the Dwarves for the reasons that the Tribunal might believe I do. Nevertheless, it is true that they will die by my hand, and any whoever should side with them. This Nerevar is the son of Boethiah, one of the strongest Padomaics. He is a hero to his people despite his Tribunal, and he shall muster enough that this battle will be harder going still. We will need more than what we have." And so Dagoth-Ur, who wanted the Dwarves as dead as the Tribunal did, went to Kogoran and summoned his House chap'thil, his nix-hounds, his wizards, archers, his stolen men of brass. And the Ash King, Wulfharth, hoary Ysmir, went and made peace with the Orcs in spite of his Nordic blood, and they brought many warriors but no wizards at all. Many Nords could not bring themselves to ally with their traditional enemies, even in the face of Red Mountain. They were close to desertion. Then Wulfharth said: "Don't you see where you really are? Don't you know who Shor really is? Don't you know what this war is?" And they looked from the King to the God to the Devils and Orcs, and some knew, really knew, and they are the ones that stayed.

Nerevar carried Keening, a dagger made of the sound of the shadow of the moons. His champions were Dumac Dwarfking, who carried a hammer of divine mass, and Alandro Sul, who was the immortal son of Azura and wore the Wraith Mail. They met Lorkhan at the last battle of Red Mountain. Lorkhan had his Heart again, but he had long been from it, and he needed time. Wulfharth met Sul but could not strike him, and he fell from grievous wounds, but not before shouting Sul blind.

Dagoth-Ur met Dumac and slew him, but not before Sunder struck his lord's Heart. Nerevar turned away from Lorkhan and struck down Dagoth-Ur in rage, but he took a mortal wound from Lorkhan in turn. But Nerevar feigned the death that was coming early and so struck Lorkhan with surprise on his side. The Heart had been made solid by Sunder's tuning blow and Keening could now cut it out. And it was cut out and Lorkhan was defeated and the whole ordeal was thought over.

# Flight From The Thalmor

*Ashad Ibn Khaled*

Dearest reader: The work you are about to experience has been copied and duplicated, so that the story it relates can be spread throughout the Empire. But make no mistake - this is not a work of fiction. The events chronicled in this account are all true, were originally documented in a private journal (which now remains safely guarded in the House of Quills in Hammerfell) and occurred not more than a year before this book was printed.

- Ashad Ibn Khaled, High Scribe, House of Quills, Hammerfell

It's been nine days. Nine days since I slipped my bonds. Nine days since I strangled my captor with my own chains. And nine days since I rushed headlong into the night, always listening, but never looking back.

But in order to understand my current predicament, one must first understand where I came from, and just where this story began.

My name is Hadrik Oaken-Heart, and I am a proud Nord of Skyrim. I am a skald by trade, and received my formal training at the Bards College in Solitude. For years, I made my occupation as a traveling musician and minstrel, and even served several stints as war-bard in service to the armies of the various Jarls.

And it's fairly safe to say that if I weren't a bard, I never would have gotten into this mess to begin with.

My troubles began when I first started singing about Talos, the Ninth and greatest Divine, beloved of the people of Skyrim. Turns out, he's not so beloved by the Thalmor.

Ah yes, the Thalmor. As common as a head cold in Skyrim these days, and just as annoying. Or so I thought at the time, before their true power and influence made itself known.

For those not in the know, the Thalmor are Skyrim's recently honored "guests" - high elves of the Aldmeri Dominion who were gracious enough not to wipe us all out during the Great War.

But, as every Nord of Skyrim knows, Thalmor graciousness comes at a terrible price. One of the stipulations of the White-Gold Concordat - the peace treaty between our peoples - was the abolishment of Talos worship. A man ascend to godhood? Preposterous, claim the Thalmor. And so, the open worship of Talos has been outlawed in Skyrim, and actively enforced in those cities where the Thalmor have a tangible presence. Cities, I might add, in which the Empire has the most secure foothold.

It was in one of these cities - Markarth, to be exact - where I made the conscious decision to defy the ban on Talos worship. And my defiance came in the form of - what else? - a song. For what bard who has spent time writing and rehearsing an original work can possibly refrain from performing it? So perform it I did. Not once, not twice, but seven times. Once a day, for an entire week.

Now here's something most of my kinsman are unaware of: not all Thalmor in Skyrim are equal in station, or purpose. In fact, there is one group in particular that operates secretly, in the shadows - watching and waiting for those Nords who break the law, and continue their worship of almighty Talos. These are the Justiciars, and it is their job to enforce this, the most terrible of conditions of the White-Gold Concordat.

And so, I would have performed my song for an eighth time had I been given the opportunity. Sadly, I was not. For the Justiciars had been watching, had been waiting. Instead, I received a black sack over my head in the wee hours of the morning, a dreadfully uncomfortable wagon ride, and sinister promises that I would enjoy my "new home," which I came to realize was some sort of secret Thalmor prison or detention camp. One I was certain I would never leave alive.

It was at that moment I realized I needed to make my escape. No matter what - even if I died in the attempt - I had to slip the grasp of my captors. Better that than rot in some godsforsaken Thalmor jail until the end of time.

I finally got my chance when the wagon stopped, and we made camp for the night. One of my two Thalmor guards set off into the forest to hunt, leaving me alone with the other. And so, my account comes full circle.

It is now nine days later, and in that time, I have realized the true extent of my foolishness. I couldn't have sung the song just once? Or maybe twice? Or not at all? I couldn't have swallowed my stubborn Nord pride and realized just how much power and influence the Thalmor truly have over the Jarls?



No. I could not. So now I run. Like a hare from the hound, I run. Always moving, rarely resting, never sleeping. But the Thalmor dog my every move. Where will I go? How will I escape their grasp? I honestly don't know. The only thing I now understand for certain is this: if the agents of the Aldmeri Dominion cannot have your soul, then they will take your very life.

My name is Hadrik Oaken-Heart, and I am a proud Nord of Skyrim. Remember me. For soon I will be dead.

# For Shelly

*Trius*

Shelly,

Your ship should have arrived weeks ago and I fear the worst has happened. I've set up camp on this rock as your ship should pass by here and hopefully one of these days we'll be together again. If you're reading this I'm probably out hunting or bringing in some supplies. I'll be waiting here until I see your face again.

Faithfully yours,

Trius

# Foresworn Missive

*Anonymous*

Alaric -

Do not presume we have grown fat and complacent here in the north. Our Matriarch was wise to bring us here. Our camp is secure, and our numbers grow.

We will not skulk in the shadows with you, making petty plots with rabble and sycophants. When we strike, we will do it with cunning and power, and the occupiers will fall before us. That is the way of true Reachmen.

# Foresworn Note

*Anonymous*

Matriarch, we await your orders. Our blades are honed, our quivers full, our wills steeled for battle. The time of our waiting has ended. The time for battle is at hand. You have but to speak the word, and the occupiers shall fall like wheat before the reaper.

# Forge, Hammer, And Anvil

*Thorbold*

These notes were found in ruins near Old Hroldan. As best I can tell, they were written by Thorbold, a rather infamous smith who died shortly before Tiber Septim's reign. He was rumored to illiterate, and given that these notes are obviously written by an assistant, that rumor is likely true. I have made no attempt to correct the texts themselves as they may have historical value.

Without further ado, the ramblings of Thorbold:

This ain't no book for how to be a grayt smith. So if you're reeding this, stop. It's just me own notes cawse I'm getting old and cranky and don't rember stuff. These be me own methods for makin things.

Iron armor and weapons. Lots of Iron ingots and some leather strips.

Steel armor and weapons. Lots of Steel ingots, a little iron, and some leather strips. Cept for Steel Plate. It needs some Corundum too.

Leather armor and weapons. Who'd be stupid enuf to make leather weapons? Leather armor needs leather. Big peeces and little peeces. Just like Hide armor. And studded armor. Scaled armor too. Well, that needs some steel also. And Curundum.

Can't make Scaled armor without Corundum. That would be dum.

Dwarfen armor and weapons. Dwarfen scrap metal, some iron, and some leather strips. I'm gonna stop sayin leather, cawse it's always used. Are you writin what I jus said? You idiot! Jus do it, don't rite it. (Thorbald is old and fat)

Elven armor and weapons. Elves and dwarfs didn't get along. Bet you didn't know that. Elven stuff needs Moonstone and a little bit of iron. Except for that Gilded stuff. Gotta add Quicksilver if you wanna make Gilded Elven armor.

Orcish armor and weapons. Use Orichalcum and a bit of iron. (Thorbald doesn't like Orcs)

Ebony armor and weapons. Takes only Ebony. No iron. Not even a little. You'll want to, but don't.

Glass armor and weapon. Need Malachite and sum Moonstone. Nasty stuff, workin' with Malachite.

Daedric armor and weapons. Hah! Like I'd rite that down. (He uses daydra hearts. I don't know whare he gets 'em)

That's all. You can stop writin now. I said stop!

Postscript - The last page had a large streak of ink an a few splatters of blood. It would be a fair conclusion that Thorbald beat his assistant. We have no way of know if Thorbald ever discovered the extraneous comments added to his script.

—Adolphus Eritius

# Frost's Identity Papers

*Anonymous*

Deed of Ownership

Horse - Frost

Sex - Stallion

Color - Mealy Chestnut

Sire - Grane

Great Grandsire - Sleipnir

Dam - Unknown

Great Damsire - Loka

# Frostflow Lighthouse Notes

*Various*

## Bloodstained Note

They took Father.

There had been some others they brought down but they led them off and all we heard were the screams and now Father is gone too. Oh gods why didn't I listen to Mani? Father's fever was getting worse and kept mumbling about daedra. I don't know where he was hiding it, but I think I know why he left me this dagger.

## Habd's Death Note

If you have found this note, then I have failed to kill the creatures that invaded my home and killed my family. Please, avenge us if you are able. Kill every last one of these blighted monsters and take what I've left in the chest on the roof of the Lighthouse.

I won't be needing it.

-Habd

## Habd's Journal



After years of sailing from Hammerfell to Solstheim and back, Ramati and I have finally saved enough money to buy that old light house we spotted on the coast and we are moving in next month.

--

These Nords really know how to live. It may be cold, but you can't beat the tranquility of the watching icebergs to live out your silver years. Ramati loves the place too, despite the occasional leaky ceiling. Mani and Sudi, unfortunately, seem miserable here; I know the kids are old enough to strike out on their own, but I hope they'll grow to love the peace and quiet here as I have.

--

Mani and Sudi continue to bicker and harass each other and they seem to have started in on their mother as well. Ramati keeps finding things missing from the cellar. Sudi said she heard a noise down there but Mani just thinks their mother is going mad from isolation. The very thought of it is ridiculous, she's always wanted to retire here!

--

Sudi keeps saying that she hears scratching coming from the cellar at night. I think she's just trying to get her mother's goat, but I'd better head into town to get a few traps just in case it's skeevers. Should only take a couple days. I just hope those two go easy on Ramati while I'm gone.

--

Oh gods. Oh gods why?

I returned home to find my beautiful Ramati killed and this thing, this horrible bug-like creature ransacking our home. I managed to kill the damned thing, I think it might be a daedra! I've never seen anything like it! Oh gods poor Ramati.

It must have come out of the cellar. I'm going down there and locking the door behind me to make sure they don't escape. I don't know if I'll make it out, but I have to save my family!

—Habd

Mani's Letter

Sudi,

I know you've been making up that stuff about the noises in the basement to try to get me to stay, but I'm only waiting till Father gets home so you and Mother are safe. You could always come meet up with me before I head back to Hammerfell.

Take care of yourself little sister

-Mani

Ramati's Journal

We finally did it. We bought the lighthouse. I thought Habd was just making idle promises all these years, what husband doesn't want to promise their wife the two moons from the sky, but I didn't think we'd actually manage to get it! Now if I could only find where we put everything

--

I can't find my favorite cooking pot and it is slightly infuriating. Sudi and Mani seem unhappy, but they're still young and don't seem to understand that we just want to spend a few more years with them before they leave us to see the world. I know they think their father will live forever, but I see his age creeping into his eyes. He made me promise again that when he died I would put his bones in the lighthouse fire so he could look out over the ocean forever.

--

Oooh those two get to me sometimes! I went to unpack some of our keepsakes from the trading ships we used to sail but I can't find them!

--

Sudi keeps saying she's hearing something in the basement at night and Mani suggested it was skeevers! They know I hate skeevers! Now I'm too scared to go down there at all. I'm glad I unpacked my favorite urn and put it safely on the mantle before those two started causing mischief. If they put a skeever in the basement I swear...

Scrawled Page

I don't know how long we've been down here. Father came down to find us, but those things captured him as well. I asked him if he'd seen Mother or Mani, but I don't know if he could even hear me. One of those big bugs bit him when he tried to get free and now he's feverish.

Sudi's Journal

I hate it here. Why did we have to move to Skyrim anyway? I miss the big port cities, there was always something to do and new people around. Or even being cabin girl on one ships we used to sail on would be better than this! Mani says we should run away, but I can't leave Mother and Father alone out here... Oh what to do?

--

We've been here for two months now and there is nothing to do! From the top of the lighthouse we can see all the way to the College at Winterhold, but Father says that magic is for Daedra worshippers. The only interesting thing to have happened lately is that Mother snapped at us at dinner and accused us of stealing things out of the cellar. I did hear scratching down there the other night, but I thought it was just Father cleaning fish.

--

I caught Mani in the cellar a couple days ago going through some the barrels and crates. At first I thought it was him all along making those scratches to play a trick on me, but I heard them again last night and Mani was in bed. Father finally said he would go get some traps and poison from town in case it's skeevers. I'm really scared, it doesn't sound like skeevers to me.

--

Mani won't listen, he thinks I'm just making up the noises and keeps sneaking into the cellar! Oooh why is he so stupid some times? I don't know why he keeps going down there but I've found the cellar key he copied and hid it in Mother's favorite keepsake so he won't find it. The scratching is getting louder.

# Gaius Maro's Schedule

*Anonymous*

You are to adhere to the following schedule:

- Morndas - Solitude, the Emperor's Tower
- Morndas evening - Solitude, Castle Dour (food and sleep)
- Tirdas - Windhelm, the Palace of the Kings
- Tirdas evening - Windhelm, Barracks (food and sleep)
- Middas - Riften, Mistveil Keep
- Turdas - Whiterun, Dragonsreach
- Turdas evening - Whiterun, the Bannered Mare (food and sleep)
- Fredas - Markarth, Understone Keep
- Fredas evening - Markarth, guard tower (food and sleep)
- Loredas & Sundas - To be spent at your discretion
- Repeat (until I have recalled you personally)

The guards and Jarls of the cities have been informed of your arrival, and will leave you to your work. Study the guard

patterns, examine any entrances and exits, and make note of any irregularities.

Talk to no one - the fewer people who know about your mission, the safer the Emperor will ultimately be.

# Gallus's Encoded Journal

*Gallus Desidenius*

[Literal Translation: MERCER FREY CONTINUES TO ELUDE MY EVERY STEP I THINK HES AWARE IM FOLLOWING HIM AND APPEARS TO BE TAKING NO UNNECESSARY CHANCES IM BRINGING ALL OF MY SKILLS TO THE FOREFRONT IN ORDER TO DECEIVE HIM IT STILL PAINS ME THAT THE DECEPTION IS NECESSARY WHEN I BECAME A NIGHTINGALE USING MY NEWFOUND TALENTS AGAINST MY OWN WAS THE FURTHEST THOUGHT FROM MY MIND

THERE WAS A CLOSE CALL TODAY I WAS SETTLING DOWN FOR A NIGHTS REST IN THE CISTERN WHEN MERCER FREY ENTERED UNEXPECTEDLY HE WAS CREEPING ALONG THE WALL BUT I SPOTTED HIM IMMEDIATELY HE EDGED CLOSER TO THE VAULT DOOR MAKING HIS WAY CAREFULLY AROUND THE PERIMETER OF THE ROOM BUT SUDDENLY STOPPED AND TURNED TOWARDS MY HIDING PLACE I FROZE INSTANTLY EVEN HOLDING MY BREATH FOR A MOMENT BUT MY POSITION WAS ALREADY COMPROMISED HE ABRUPTLY TURNED AND WALKED BACK TOWARDS THE FLAGON WHAT WAS HE DOING

AT LAST I HAVE A PIECE OF EVIDENCE THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN MERCER FREYS ACTIONS INSTEAD OF TRYING TO FOLLOW HIM OR BREAK INTO HIS MANOR I USED EVERY LOOSE-TONGUED SOURCE AT MY DISPOSAL TO SCOUR THE RATWAY

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS IT TOOK SEVERAL WEEKS BUT MAUL WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE AN INTERESTING BIT OF INFORMATION MERCER HAD BEEN SPENDING INORDINATELY LARGE SUMS OF COIN ON ALL MANNER OF THINGS UNRELATED TO THE GUILD HOW HE WAS ABLE TO AFFORD THIS WAS A MYSTERY TO ME THE VAULT WAS IMPREGNABLE SO WHAT WAS THE SOURCE OF HIS COIN

ITS BEEN CONFIRMED BY MY SOURCES MERCERS BEEN LIVING AN UNDULY LAVISH LIFESTYLE REplete WITH SPENDING VAST AMOUNTS OF GOLD ON PERSONAL PLEASURES I HAVE MORE THAN MY SHARE OF EVIDENCE TO CONFRONT HIM NOW HE MUST BE STEALING FROM THE GUILD BUT WITHOUT PROOF ALL I HAVE IS BASELESS ACCUSATION MERCER CAME FROM WEALTHY STOCK BUT THE AMOUNT OF COIN HES BEEN SPENDING IS IMMENSE

IVE BEEN GIVING IT SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT THERES ONLY A SINGLE WAY THAT MERCER COULD HAVE ACCESS TO VAST AMOUNTS OF COIN I HESITATE TO EVEN BELIEVE ITS POSSIBLE HOW COULD HE POSSIBLY DESECRATE THE TWILIGHT SEPULCHER THIS GOES FAR BEYOND MERE GREED AND TRANSCENDS COMMON THEFT HIS ACTIONS COULD REPRESENT THE FAILURE OF THE NIGHTINGALES SOMETHING THAT HASNT OCCURRED IN HUNDREDS OF YEARS WHY WHY WOULD HE READILY THROW AWAY EVERYTHING HE BELIEVES IN ALL I NEED IS PROOF

MERCER FREY HAS REQUESTED I MEET HIM AT SNOW VEIL SANCTUM TODAY HE SENT A NOTE BY COURIER SO I CAN ONLY ASSUME HES ALREADY THERE ALL MY SENSES TELL ME ITS A TRAP BUT I HAVE NO CHOICE HIS MESSAGE INDICATED THE MEETING WAS OF THE UTMOST URGENCY AND



INVOLVED GUILD BUSINESS SO IM OBLIGATED TO GO I CANT  
RISK BRINGING ANYONE ELSE WITH ME BUT IM ALMOST  
CERTAIN KARLIAH WILL DISOBEY AND FOLLOW]

# Gallus's Journal

## *Gallus Desidenius*

### Journal of Gallus Desidenius

Mercer Frey continues to elude my every step. I think he's aware I'm following him, and appears to be taking no unnecessary chances. I'm bringing all of my skills to the forefront in order to deceive him. It still pains me that the deception is necessary. When I became a Nightingale, using my newfound talents against my own was the furthest thought from my mind.

There was a close call today. I was settling down for a night's rest in the cistern when Mercer Frey entered unexpectedly. He was creeping along the wall, but I spotted him immediately. He edged closer to the vault door, making his way carefully around the perimeter of the room, but suddenly stopped and turned towards my hiding place. I froze instantly, even holding my breath for a moment, but my position was already compromised. He abruptly turned and walked back towards the Flagon.

What was he doing?

At last, I have a piece of evidence that might explain Mercer Frey's actions. Instead of trying to follow him or break into his manor, I used every loose-tongued source at my disposal to scour the Ratway looking for answers. It took several weeks,

but Maul was able to provide an interesting bit of information. Mercer had been spending inordinately large sums of coin on all manner of things unrelated to the Guild. How he was able to afford this was a mystery to me. The vault was impregnable, so what was the source of his coin?

It's been confirmed by my sources. Mercer's been living an unduly lavish lifestyle replete with spending vast amounts of gold on personal pleasures. I have more than my share of evidence to confront him now. He must be stealing from the Guild, but without proof, all I have is baseless accusation. Mercer came from wealthy stock, but the amount of coin he's been spending is immense.

I've been giving it some serious thought. There's only a single way that Mercer could have access to vast amounts of coin. I hesitate to even believe it's possible. How could he possibly desecrate the Twilight Sepulcher? This goes far beyond mere greed and transcends common theft. His actions could represent the failure of the Nightingales, something that hasn't occurred in hundreds of years. Why? Why would he readily throw away everything he believes in? All I need is proof.

Mercer Frey has requested I meet him at Snow Veil Sanctum today. He sent a note by courier so I can only assume he's already there. All my senses tell me it's a trap, but I have no choice. His message indicated the meeting was of the utmost urgency and involved Guild business, so I'm obligated to go. I can't risk bringing anyone else with me, but I'm almost certain Karliah will disobey and follow.

# Geirmund's Epitaph

*Anonymous*

Lord Geirmund

Archmage of Windhelm

Lord Battlemage to King Harald

Magus, keep thy vigil eternal.

Serve now in death as you did in life.

By these seals our realm preserve.

From traitors three and their charm of strife.

# Ghosts In The Storm

*Adonato Leotelli*

For many years now, I have traveled the length and breadth of Skyrim, writing of my experiences and my adventures.

I have seen many wondrous sights and many strange creatures in my travels, but one encounter remains fixed in my memory, though I wish it were not.

I had taken up traveling with one of the Khajiit trade caravans that crisscross Skyrim, peddling their wares outside the gates of the large cities.

We were nearing Windhelm when the storm struck. It was a violent and terrible gale, one of the very worst I have seen in all my long years. The winds howled like all the daedra of Oblivion, and the driving snow made us blind to the world.

Ri'saad called a halt and we staggered from the road, our hands held over our faces to ward off the stinging pellets of ice. We huddled together in the shelter of a copse of pines. There was no hope of raising our tents - the wind would tear them from our hands the moment we unpacked them.

They struck at the height of the storm. There were perhaps half a dozen of the creatures. It was difficult to say, as the blowing snow and howling wind overwhelmed our sight and our hearing.

They were roughly man-sized, but hunched over and ugly. For garments, they wore only rags and leathers. They were armed with daggers and swords or various kinds, no doubt scavenged from their previous victims.

They had no noses to speak of, only long slits for nostrils. Their ears were sharply pointed, suggesting a distant kinship with the elves. With their pallid skin and lifeless black eyes, they seemed like something out of a nightmare.

Bhisha saw them first, but too late to save herself. So loud was her death-cry, we heard it over the roaring winds. That cry saved us all.

Alerted to the presence of our foes, the Khajiit drew their blades and formed a circle, facing outward. The white fiends were too few to surround us completely, and the Khajiit fended off each attack. After three of the snow-devils had fallen, the rest fell back and did not come at us again.

The storm abated and we arrived in Windhelm the next morning. I have taken up residence in Candlehearth Hall and I find I am quite comfortable behind the towering stone walls of the city.

Comfortable, at least until I go to sleep and visions of those awful creatures return to haunt my dreams.

# Give Me A Chance

*Delvin Mallory*

Vex,

Give an old man a chance, why don't you? I know I may have a few years under my belt, but that doesn't mean we can't have some fun. Believe me, I can show you a thing or two. Quit playing hard to get... I saw how you blushed when Dirge started reading from the Lusty Argonian Maid. You're a firebrand, and we all know it. Take me up on my offer and stop playing the tough girl. We all know the toughest ones are the softest on the inside.

Delvin

# Glover's Letter

*Glover Mallory*

My dearest daughter Sapphire,

It's with a heavy heart that I write this letter. For years I've thought about how I could tell you this, and each time I imagined it would be face-to-face. I'm ashamed for what I did, and I hope that someday you'll learn to forgive me. Whatever you do, don't blame Delvin for any of this. He didn't know.

Long after I joined the Guild, I was sent to rob a caravan that was stopping at a tiny farming village not far from the border of Skyrim. When I arrived there, I was a day early and decided to sleep for the night in the barn of a pig farm. I awoke the next morning when the most beautiful woman I'd ever laid eyes upon walked in to do her chores. She wasn't even frightened when she saw me... in an instant I think we had both fallen in love. I ended up living with that woman in that tiny little village for a year until she was with child. And then, like a coward... I ran away. I was a thief and I didn't want to end up a farmer. It was a terrible thing to do.

I didn't have the courage to return to that village for almost fifteen years. When I finally decided to visit, it was too late. It had been raided by bandits and burned to the ground. Everyone was either dead or gone. Including you... my only child.



Years later, when you were recruited by Brynjolf I couldn't believe my eyes. You're a spitting image of your mother and I knew it was you in an instant. Only the gods know how you survived the attack on that village and why you followed in my footsteps, but I have to assume it was meant to be. I've wanted to walk right up to you and embrace you, to tell you the truth, but I was still a coward. I decided to leave Riften instead of facing your anger. I said my goodbyes to Delvin and I headed for Solstheim... as far from the truth as I could get.

I'm sorry, my daughter. I'm sorry for never being there to hold you at night or to protect you from whatever hardships you endured. One day, I hope you'll make the journey to Solstheim and visit your father.

Glover Mallory

# Goldenglow

*Mercer Frey*

Brynjolf,

This Goldenglow Estate situation is getting out of hand. I want you to find someone capable to take care of it. Maven Black-Briar is breathing down my neck and I just can't have that right now. Send Vex if you have to, but I want it handled immediately.

Mercer

# Gorm's Letter

*Gorm*

Aldis,

You know what we've spoken of in the past.

It is time. Change is needed; something must be done.

I await your response.

Gorm

# Gourmet's Writ Of Passage

*Anonymous*

By order of his eminence, Emperor Titus Mede II.

The possessor of this Writ of Passage - known throughout the Empire as the celebrated chef and author the "Gourmet" - is granted full and unrestricted access to any areas, information, or supplies necessary to fulfill the duty of the Emperor's personal cook.

# Gratian's Journal

*Gratian Caerellius*

30 Rain's Hand 4E10

Received a letter from the East Empire Company today. They say that some of the miners broke through the wall in shaft three of Raven Rock Mine and found some ruins. I hope this isn't another waste of time like that fiasco they sent me to in Cyrodiil. I'll gather my assistant, Millius and sail back to Raven Rock at first light... it'll be nice to see the old house in Solstheim again.

7 Second Seed 4E10

Finally arrived in Raven Rock and was surprised at the number of dark elf refugees living in town. They aren't really from mining stock, but I think they'll make fine workers one day. Millius and I spent a good part of the day clearing the ash off of the roof of my house. The damn volcano is still erupting almost day and night. If it wasn't for the ash covering everything it would almost look beautiful.

8 Second Seed 4E10

Millius and I are headed into Raven Rock Mine to have look at whatever it is the miners uncovered. I think I'll stop by the old Swing and Scoop and pick up a few supplies before we head down. Couldn't hurt to be prepared.

## 9 Second Seed 4E10

Looks like the miners broke right through the wall of an old Nordic barrow. I've seen this sort of thing in Skyrim before... damn Nords have barrows dotting the landscape and almost none of them are ever marked on any maps. Looks like this barrow belong to something called the "Bloodskal Clan." I'm going to take some rubbings of the inscriptions on the tombs and see if I can't learn some more information from my history books.

## 10 Second Seed 4E10

It's been a few days and I can't find even a single mention of this clan anywhere. Millius and I decided to proceed ahead. We've come to a dropdown point, but I can see a massive chamber below. Took the better part of a day to lower everything down and climb down the almost sheer drop.

## 11 Second Seed 4E10

It's been an astonishing day of discovery! After exploring the large chamber beyond the dropoff, I was startled to find the strangest weapon I've ever laid eyes upon sitting on a pedestal of sorts. The blade appears to be flawless, and is emitting a faint chilling glow. Bits of parchment I found about the chamber seem to call this "The Bloodskal Blade." Not certain if I should remove it yet, I think I'll sleep on it.

## 12 Second Seed 4E10

I've decided against my own better judgment to remove the Bloodskal Blade from its pedestal. Millius seems completely

against it, but we need to bring this wondrous artifact with us when we find a way out of the barrow.

13 Second Seed 4E10

I should have listened to Millius. The moment the blade was lifted, we were set upon by draugr. Millius fought bravely, but he fell. I was able to destroy the remaining ones, but I was badly wounded. I can barely stand. My only chance would be finding a way out of this place, but I fear that I'm trapped.

14? Second Seed 4E10

Exploring has been slow. I can only move for maybe a few minutes at a time before I have to rest. My supplies are running low, and I'm feeling weaker by the hour. The only progress I've made is finding a strange door with markings on it that I've never seen.

There appears to be something to them I'm missing, as they've confounded my attempts at getting through. I'll have to study this further in order to make any progress... barely can keep awake.

I'm fairly certain that the key to the door involves the use of the Bloodskal Blade. When swinging the weapon, I'm noticing a ribbon of mystical energy emanating from it. I think by swinging the sword in different directions, it's possible to manipulate this ribbon and solve whatever puzzle this door presents. I hope to get well enough to put this to the test soon... each swing is a huge effort.

Last entry

I've lost track of time and my strength is fading. I can't even stand anymore. My wounds refuse to heal. I'm afraid this tomb will become my resting place. If anyone finds this journal, please send these notes to my superiors at the East Empire Company and tell my wife that I love her.

May Arkay guide me to my final rest.



# Gratian's Letter

*Rendellus Thandarian*

Gratian,

I would appreciate if you could help us with a situation we've encountered in Raven Rock. It seems that the miners there have stumbled across some sort of ruins under the surface near shaft three, and we need your expertise to take a look. I could send someone else if you're busy, but I figured you'd want to go since I seem to recall that you're originally from Solstheim. Let us know if you make any progress.

Rendellus Thandarian

East Empire Company

Imperial City, Cyrodiil

# Guard's Orders

*Anonymous*

We can't let the prisoners out, so either kill them or let them drown. Either way, all guards must evacuate as soon as possible. The storm is about to wash this whole fort into the river and I'll be damned if I have to report one Legion death while under my watch. You have your orders!

# Guide To Better Thieving

*Wulfmare Shadow-Cloak*

Wulfmare's

Guide to Better Thieving

by

Wulfmare Shadow-Cloak

So, you want to make it as a cutpurse. You want to live the life of a criminal, always one step ahead of everyone and pockets brimming with septims. Maybe it appeals to you to try and earn a living by robbing some wealthy merchants or extorting your local shopkeepers? Let me give you a bit of advise - don't bother. For every skilled thief I've met in my day, I've seen a twenty who thought that they had what it took but ended up rotting in jail.

But if you're anything like me, you don't listen to advice. You do whatever you want and never let anyone else tell you otherwise. To Oblivion with the risks - all that matters is the coin. Sound familiar? If it does, then this book might just teach you the difference between acting like a petty thief and a master criminal.

I know what you're thinking. Who's this Wulfmare? Who does he think he is telling me how to be a better thief? What makes

him an expert? Simple. Maybe you heard about that heist in Mournhold, when Queen Barenziah's coronation crown went missing? Or perhaps the tale of an Elder Scroll gone missing from the White-Gold Tower reached your ears. That's right... it was yours truly. I've done just about every kind of job you can imagine and I've got the septims put away to prove it. How else could an ex-thief find the resources to publish his own book?

Now that I have your attention, let's start with two of the most fundamental skills you'll need to sharpen if you want to make it as a cutpurse - picking locks and picking pockets. And before you roll your eyes and throw this book aside in disgust, I can promise you that the easiest way you're going to get caught is by ignoring the basics - but if you can master these activities you'll find yourself swimming in coin.

Picking pockets is one of the easiest skills to learn, but you'd be surprised how often I've seen novice thieves muck it up. The lesson here is two-fold. First, know your surroundings and second, know your approach. Where and when you decide to go fishing is just as important as who you chose as your mark. Follow them a while, there's never a need to rush. Wait until they're somewhere isolated and out of earshot of any guards - but most importantly always know when to let the mark go. Getting pinched simply isn't worth the risk. There'll always be plenty of other marks who'll come along with their pockets full. As far as the approach goes, don't drop into your crouch until you are completely out of the mark's view - directly behind and preferably close to them. Don't spend too long deciding what you'll lift either. A good thief should be able to hit a mark and make off with something valuable in less than five seconds. Last of all, plying this trade at night will greatly reduce your chances of getting caught. If you have no other

choice and you have to do it in the daylight, just make sure you aren't out in the open.

Lockpicking is an art form that takes years to master. The important thing to remember is that no two are alike, each one behaving completely differently. As long as you keep your wits about you, and your patience, you'll find them easier to defeat than you'd initially expect. Good picks are always essential. Make sure you have plenty of them tucked away in your pockets. Always take your time and keep a light touch on the picks. When the tumblers begin to fall into place, you should feel the pick tremble ever-so-slightly - this means you're near the sweet spot. Slow down at that point and only move the picks with the finest touch. If you blindly poke at the lock like an old man, all you're going to end up with is a bunch of broken picks and equally broken pride. As a last resort, if the lock is completely confounding you, there's always the option of smashing it. Just keep in mind that this is rarely successful and could potentially make a great deal of noise.

By using my techniques, I'm not merely suggesting you'll be a successful thief, I'm giving you a solid guarantee. All it takes is a little bit of patience and a great deal of practice then maybe, just maybe, you'll become as successful as Wulfmare.

In my next volume, we'll move onto another important tool in your arsenal - sneaking. I'll prove to you that the shadows can be just as potent of a weapon as your blade if you know how to bend it to your will.

# Guissur's Note

*Guissur*

Description of target:

[Player's race] [male/female], believed to go by [player's name] (may be an alias). Likely to be inquiring about "Esbern" and the Ratway.

Do not approach. Inform your assigned contact immediately if spotted.

# Gulum-Ei's Confession

*Gulum-Ei*

Dear Brother,

If you're reading this, then you already know that I've been killed. Acting as Karliah's proxy for the Goldenglow Estate sale has proven to be a greater risk than I'd imagined. Word's reached my ears that Mercer Frey's sent one of his own to eliminate me. I swear to you, brother... I had nothing to do with Gallus's death. I'm well aware that killing the previous leader of the Thieves Guild would only provoke their wrath and threaten not only myself, but perhaps our entire family. Curse that woman for getting me involved in this scheme!

Within this chest you'll find the deed to Goldenglow Estate. Karliah never asked for the delivery of the item and I'm certain it holds great value to the proper buyer. If you wish to hunt down Karliah and avenge me, all I remember is her cryptic statement about returning "to where the end began."

Goodbye my brother, keep yourself safe and may fortune favor the foolish.

Gulum-Ei

# Hajvarr's Journal

*Hajvarr*

Pickings have been good these past few weeks. Must be because of the war- lots of merchants and cowards looking for somewhere to curl up and hide from all the fighting. I've told the men to ease the burden on these poor souls by relieving them of all that gold they're carrying.

Guard patrols along the road are way up- we can barely set foot outside. Travellers must have complained to the Jarl. It looks like the guard isn't ready to move against us yet, but the pressure is getting to the men. I'm having Ra'jirr keep watch with Ulfr now- that should shut them up about our security. Damn that Balgruuf!

A mutiny! Among my men! I can hardly believe it. Thank the gods Ulfr heard of it in time- he may be blind, but he's not deaf. I killed Anjor myself. A couple of the others ran for it, but we hunted them down quick enough. Only Eisa and Ra'jirr got away. Good riddance.

There's rumor of a dragon attack on Helgen. A dragon! Hardly. More likely just a story made up by some idiot frightened out of his wits by the war.

In any case, the guard seems to have pulled back to the city, so we've been able to run a few decent raids again. One of the merchants had some odd cargo... bunch of pelts and animals,



including a wolf. I let the men roast the other animals, but the wolf I saved- be handy to have a guard dog like that, if we could just train him a little...

# Hamelyn's Journal

*Hamelyn*

Ten years of ridicule. Ten years of imprisonment. Ten years of exile.

The children threw rocks and the women spat upon me as the menfolk dragged me into Whiterun's prison. They branded me a danger to their pitiful existence... used words like "madman" and "insane." Could a madman escape the prisons undetected? Could a lunatic establish a laboratory right under their noses? Could a psychopath create a mighty army from the common skeever?

My days as an apprentice alchemist in Winterhold were no better. Those egotistical braggarts couldn't compete with my abilities. Where they fell short, I'd constantly excel. Did they appreciate my genius? Did they relish my contributions? No. My instructors beat me and said I was irresponsible, and the Arch Mage cast me into the streets like a common beggar.

As my enemy grows complacent and weak, as they forget Hamelyn and his utter brilliance, I build my army. I use every bit of knowledge at my disposal to forge their demise. Thanks to Sabjorn's unwitting assistance, my legion grows stronger every day. The irony that the same ingredients used to make his vile drink could be used to feed my offspring isn't lost upon me.

Oh, they will pay. Their ignorance of impending annihilation amuses me. I will bury Whiterun and watch Winterhold burn. And when they experience the fury I've unleashed upon them, when my progeny are gnawing the flesh from their bones, they will come begging and groveling at my feet. But there will be no mercy, no quarter and no leniency. And I will laugh and I will dance and I will rejoice over their mangled, broken corpses. The time for recompense has arrived.

Ten years of pain. Ten years of misery. Ten years of death.

# Hand-Written Note

*Ancarion*

I grow impatient with your lack of progress. If you cannot break the smith, I will be forced to find a more capable interrogator. I expect your next report to contain more encouraging results.

- A

# Hargar's Journal

*Hargar*

8th of Evening Star, 4E 200

Jaree-Ra is up to something big. He wouldn't tell me exactly, all he said was, "It'll be just like the good old days, before the cave-in sealed your boats in there." We can't send our ships out of here anymore. What is he hinting at?

14th of Evening Star, 4E 200

He wants to know what loot we have saved up. I don't care what he says, I'm not telling him anything about my stash! It stays down there where it's safe. I can't imagine he'd ever jump in this murky water, let alone swim down to the sunken boat.

21st of Evening Star, 4E 200

It's on! Jaree-Ra and his sister, Deeja, have something cooked up. All they need is a scapegoat. I wonder where they'll find someone dumb enough to do what they say. There's bound to be someone out there who will.

# Harvesting Frostbite Spider Venom

*Anonymous*

My reserves of frostbite spider venom are nearly depleted. The injuries I suffered in my last encounter with these deadly arachnids prevent me from undertaking the task myself, which is why I've hired you.

Collecting the venom of the frostbite spider is not a complicated task, but there is some risk involved. I've written this brief guide in the hope that you'll be able to avoid making some of the mistakes that I've made.

Frostbite spiders most often make their lairs in caves. These creatures do not shun the icy climes of the north, for as their name implies, they are largely immune to the cold.

When food is especially scarce, a spider will venture out to hunt prey in the wilderness. Usually, however, the eight-legged devils prefer to ambush those unfortunate creatures who venture into their caverns seeking shelter.

The easiest way to locate a nest of frostbite spiders is to search for their large webs. Just take care not to get caught in one, for these webs are strong enough to trap a full-grown man. Once any part of you touches the sticky threads, it's nearly impossible to get free without help.

Also, keep a watchful eye toward the ceiling. The frostbite spider is as stealthy as it is swift, and can drop down onto your head and have its fangs in your back before you can scream.

As long as you find the frostbite spider before it finds you, collecting the venom should be a simple matter. Because they rely on their webs to immobilize their prey, the creatures are not that difficult to kill in open combat. If you're inclined toward the arcane arts, don't bother with ice spells. Fire magic will serve you far better.

With that, I will say farewell and good hunting. Remember, any loot that you find in the spider's web is yours to keep.

The larger the hole, the larger the spider.

# Hastily Scribbled Note

*Anonymous*

My scribing tools are lost, and I've no time for a lengthy entry, anyway. It's taken weeks, but I've finally found it! The Sanctuary of the Dark Brotherhood! One of them, anyway. In Skyrim, under a forest road.

I've been watching them, the assassins. Their comings and goings. The fools have no idea they're being observed. My next goal is to somehow make it past the sinister black door, into the Sanctuary itself.

I don't have time to even think about the dangers. The truth must be known!



# Have Need Of Cynic

*Anonymous*

Mercer,

I'd consider it a personal favor if I could once again utilize Cynric's unique skills for a delicate situation in the Cidha Mines. A close friend has been incarcerated in that horrible place, and I should like him freed as soon as possible. I'd recommend Cynric avoid the Forsworn element that's prevalent within the mine and stick to as simple an escape plan as possible.

# Hearthfire Bounties

*Anonymous*

Bounty

Bounty

By order of [Jarl]:

To all able bodied men and women of [hold name]. The bandits located in [location] have been harassing, robbing, and attacking citizens and visitors.

A reward will be offered to anyone who kills their leader.

—[Jarl's Steward]

Bounty

Bounty

By order of [Jarl]:

To all able bodied men and women of [hold name]. The forsworn located in [location] have been harassing, robbing, and attacking citizens and visitors.

A reward will be offered to anyone who kills their leader.

—[Jarl's Steward]

Bounty

Bounty

By order of [Jarl]:

To all able bodied men and women of [hold name]. The giant located in [location] have been harassing and attacking citizens and visitors.

A reward will be offered to anyone who kills it.

—[Jarl's Steward]

Bounty

Bounty

By order of [Jarl]:

To all able bodied and fearless men and women of [hold name]. The dragon located in [bounty location] has been carrying off livestock, and terrorizing citizens and visitors.

A handsome reward will be offered to anyone who kills it.

—[Jarl's Steward]

# Heddic's Volunruud Notes

## *Heddic*

I was skeptical, but it's obvious now. The old hymns had truth to them! The relief wasn't far from the entrance, just as they said. I've no doubt now that it hides the entrance to Kvenel's tomb.

The two keys must be hidden somewhere nearby - ceremonial replicas of Okin and Eduj, favored weapons when Kvenel went into battle. I don't dare explore further without hiring bodyguards to accompany me, however. To think - The Tongue Chieftain Kvenel could be entombed behind just a few feet of stone! The ancestor we scarcely believed was real.

Twice damned for planning this foolish scouting trip. I should have hired those sellswords in the first place. Perhaps there's no need. This place is just a tomb, after all, and there are no obvious signs of habitation. It isn't as though the thousand-year dead will mind if I have a look around.

# Heljarchen Hall Charter

*Anonymous*

[Jarl name], Jarl of [Capital city], to [Player name], [his/her] steadfast friend; grant of the steading of Heljarchen Hall, south of Fort Dunstad near Giants' Gap.

Granted on [day] [month], [year]

# Herbalist's Guide To Skyrim

*Agneta Falia*

Those avoiding this northern province due to claims of barbarism or concerns over climate are doing themselves a disservice; in fact, Skyrim has a wealth of materials that every Alchemist would do well to avail himself of. I have traveled extensively throughout this land, and here are but a few of my findings. [pagebreak]

## Bleeding Crown

The caps of these mushrooms do indeed appear smeared with blood, though it is often hard to see in the dark, damp places in which they grow. Not uncommonly found in Skyrim, their abundance is countered by the difficulty in acquiring them. As any experienced herbalist knows, the darkest of caves often conceal far more than mere mushrooms. Nonetheless, these potent fungi, when combined with certain powdered antlers, produce a mixture rendering one quite susceptible to poison. Their usefulness is also quite apparent when mixed with Lavender, creating a substance highly resistant to magic.

## Deathbell

Folklore abounds about this flower found in the swamps of Hjaalmarch. Some stories claim it grows where unfortunate deaths have taken place, others insist it grows first and then lures unsuspecting people and animals to their doom. I have

found no direct evidence to support these stories; indeed I found the flowers difficult to locate at all. While it is most well-known for its use in poisons, it would be remiss to overlook that the blooms of the Deathbell are very effective in mixtures for boosting one Alchemy skill.

## Dragonfly

A surprising number of insects survive in Skyrim's climate, many thriving in the lower, southern areas of the province. Dragonflies can be found in a great many places, and while catching them can be a daunting prospect, the reward is well worth the effort. It was beyond the scope of my research to determine whether the orange and blue dragonflies are fully different breeds or merely simple color variations, but through experimentation I found that the orange dragonfly, when combined with the very hardy barnacles found along the coast, transfer some of their flighty nature, giving the herbalist some very nimble fingers.

## Hagraven Claw

The claws of a hagraven are best obtained in shops; it is inadvisable to suggest one collects them oneself. These creatures have traded in their humanity for access to powerful magics, and the transformations they undergo infuse their entire beings with some element of that power. Ingesting the powdered claws makes one more resistant to magic, but an especially curious property of the claws is revealed when mixed with snowberries (often found in Skyrim's higher elevations). I found myself capable of comprehending enchantments I had believed mystifying after ingesting the mixture, and have passed this knowledge on to several court wizards who were grateful for the knowledge.

## Jazbay

There was a time when it would be considered treason to pick one of these grapes without express permission from the Emperor himself. It is my understanding that although growers in Skyrim were successful in improving the fruit's survivability, it came at the cost of flavor. No longer is it quite the prize it once was. And yet, growing amidst the volcanic tundra of Eastmarch, it is still immensely useful for concocting potions. Mages value it highly as it can be combined with simple garlic to enhance the regeneration of magicka. While no longer against the law, picking these grapes in large amounts is best kept to oneself.

## Luna Moth Wing

As with the dragonflies, I was taken aback by the number of butterflies, moths, and other insects that manage to thrive in Skyrim. The Luna moth is especially beautiful; its thin, almost ephemeral wings seem too delicate to hoist anything into the air, giving them an almost magical appearance. Indeed, that sense extends to the properties they exhibit when crushed and distilled (an action I admit was difficult to perform at first, no matter my resolve to discover all that Skyrim has to offer. These creatures are simply that beautiful!) While they can be used for creating poisons that damage magicka, I feel that would be a waste of their potential. Do not be alarmed if, when the wings are broken down almost completely, they appear to almost disappear under your mortar. That very quality makes the wings quite effective in potions of invisibility!

## Tundra Cotton



Not all Nords are savages wrapped in animal skins, howling at the moon. There are a wide variety of fabrics worn throughout the land, thanks in no small part to the stubborn Tundra Cotton plant. It soaks up what rain it can in the plains west of Whiterun, and blooms frequently. While it does not exhibit any of the more striking alchemical properties, it is a staple in potions for not only fortifying magicka, but for resisting spells as well. I wonder if that quality is what allows it to have adapted so well to this climate.

### Nightshade

The name and shape of this plant are known to all; long understood to be one of the more potent components in many poisons, the average Nord keeps his distance from the bright purple flowers nestled among dark leaves. It is exceedingly effective as a pure poison, but can also be combined with other compounds to stiffen joints as well. It is thus favored amongst those who wish to disable their opponents in battle, and can be found coating the blades of many of the more unsavory characters in Skyrim.

# Herbane's Bestiary: Hagravens

## *Herbane*

### 5 Sun's Dawn

I have heard a tale most bizarre- a beautiful young woman cast out of town by the thrown stones of accusers for giving in to the dark arts. They say she fled into the Reach and never reappeared, and justly so because they say the devilry of her magic had grown stronger with each new day. Shortly after, a witch of half woman and half bird had been sighted deep in the mountains, and as the sightings increased the young women began to disappear.

This tale has brought me to the Reach, where this witch they call a Hagraven makes it home. With sword and shield at the ready, for I must see this creature and I must slay it.

### 24 Sun's Dawn

The stomach of an average man would turn at the cruelty set before me- I first saw the thatch and bone, the human skulls, the dead goat heads mounted on pikes, filthy animal pelts, loose entrails, and feathers matted in blood. I had heard that Forsworn revere and protect these Hagravens, and all around were their small, crude trinkets and alters to these witches on which sat dull, empty soul gems. What vile creature would live where all things are dead?

Deeper into the lair, I heard it first- an unsteady shuffling, followed by a heaving, unforgettable stench. I thrust the torch in front of me and waited for my eyes to adjust to the tunnel of darkness ahead of me. I saw the silhouette of what I thought to be a frail woman on an awkward gait, but the light of the torch revealed something else. This Hagraven was horrifying, almost human but more an abomination of woman and creature fused together, nothing more than a husk of humanity surrendered in exchange for possession of the powers of dark magic. This magic corrupted her greatly, and her dull, glass eyes stared with hate from the visage of an old crone sat atop the body of a contorted, misshapen human body adorned with black feathers. It bristled as it let out a piercing scream, and as a vivid red light began to form in the palm of its talons, it was all I could do to raise my shield in defense of magic most foul. I fought through devilry that seemed to snatch life from me, and the thought that this thing was once a woman seemed to play on my nerves.

Most men would have crumbled, but I do not bend. The Hagraven is a most repulsive creature, and deserving of its fate and its claws that are my trophy will tell the story of Herebanes triumph. I have naught but to continue my travels and my conquests, for I have yet to see what would make me tremble.

# Herbane's Bestiary: Ice Wraiths

## *Herbane*

### 17 Last Seed

When winters chill descended upon me as I traveled further north through the frozen plains and mountains, I settled in at the inn at Dawnstar for a moment of respite and a warm meal. Another traveler there told me to be cautious, that there are creatures who settle into the powder white of the snow with nary a clue to the careless, until it is too late. He went on and on, with wild gestures and fantastic tales of entire merchant expeditions being killed by the beasts. His stories frightened the other inn patrons, but I will not be turned by a coward's tale, I will see these for my own eyes, for those icy caves and snow capped peaks of the north are exactly the type of places that call to an adventurer like me. It did not take me long to find what I sought.

These Ice Wraiths are lucid, serpentine creatures of magic, as if conjured from the frozen tundra and glaciers of Skyrim itself. At one with an environment that makes them nearly invisible, these ethereal apparitions are the death of many Nords, if not by their sudden, unholy strike that casts their entire body through their target, then by the malady of Witbane, a curse of infection that dulls the intellect and makes the target even more the victim.

As deadly as they are, Ice Wraiths are simple minded in their determination, and combat is a straight forward affair and brute force and a sharp blade are enough to fell these savage creatures. Only the heartiest of men would hope to survive just one of these beasts, but I have slain two with general ease.

It's good that I've found I can make decent coin selling the Ice Wraith's teeth, as they are a prized ingredient in alchemical potions. That will continue to afford me the opportunity to search these lands for a challenge worthy of story, for I have yet to see what would make me tremble.

# High Hrothgar Tablets

*Anonymous*

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem I

Before the birth of men, the Dragons ruled all Mundus.

Their word was the Voice, and they spoke only for True Needs.

For the Voice could blot out the sky and flood the land.

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem II

Men were born and spread over the face of Mundus

The Dragons presided over the crawling masses

Men were weak then, and had no Voice

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem III

The fledgling spirits of Men were strong in Old Times

Unafraid to war with Dragons and their Voices

But the Dragons only shouted them down and broke their hearts

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem IV

Kyne called on Paarthurnax, who pitied Man

Together they taught Men to use the Voice

Then the Dragon War raged, Dragon against Tongue

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem V

Men prevailed, shouting Alduin out of the world

Proving for all that their Voice too was strong

Although thier sacrifices were many-fold

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem VI

With roaring Tongues, the Sky-Children conquer

Founding the First Empire with Sword and Voice

Whilst the Dragons withdrew from this World

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem VII

The Tongues at Red Mountain went away humbled

Jurgen Windcaller began His Seven Year Meditation

To understand how Strong Voices could fail

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem VIII

Jurgen Windcaller chose silence and returned

The 17 disputants could not shout Him down

Jurgen the Calm buit His home on the Throat of the World

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem IX

For years all silent, the Graybears spoke one name

Tiber Septim, stiplingthen, was summoned to Hrothgar

They blessed and named him Dohvakiin

High Hrothgar Tablets, Emblem X

The Voice is worship

Follow the Inner path

Speak only in True Need



# Hired Thug's Missive

*Anonymous*

It seemed like an easy enough job. Groz and me done plenty like it before. Some chinless Breton wants bodyguards for a trip into the mountains. Fine. Easy clink for us.

He goes on about this twice-forsaken mask of his the whole way, of course. Got a pretty good laugh when Groz snatched it and put it on her face - he threatened to fire us for that one. Not smart out here on your own, he realized that right fast and shut up about not paying.

So we get here, he thumbs through some papers and mutters to himself - never you mind that me and Groz had to cut through ten stinking trolls just to get him here - and without so much as a warning, poof. He's put on that mask and vanished. Could have put my hands on his throat one moment, the next he's not so much as thin air.

Well, after a while we didn't know what to do, and Groz picks her gear up to head home, when he poofs back, that mask in his hand. Begs us not to leave, says he needs us to wait, this is what he's paying us for. Then puts the mask back on his sorry face and he's gone again. I'd seen cloaks do invisibility before, but a few swings of my fist proved he wasn't pulling that one. Nothing there to hit.

He shows up again, tells us he just needs more time. Has to figure out something about other masks, and vanishes again. That was yesterday, and I'm done with twiddling my thumbs and writing letters to myself. We're leaving come sunrise, and if he shows up again I promise Azura I'm putting this dagger through his chest to keep him in one place. We'll pull more loot off him dead than he could have paid alive. But not the mask. That cursed thing can stay and rot with him and the trolls right here.

# History Of Raven Rock

*Lyrin Telleno*

History of Raven Rock, Vol. I

The History of Raven Rock

Volume I

by

Lyrin Telleno

Forward

Raven Rock is one of the more interesting colonies of Morrowind of the last two centuries. So much has happened to this tiny town in such a short amount of time, and so many lives have been affected by it, I felt it necessary to describe its rich history within these volumes. During my research, I lived in Raven Rock for almost three years, and I got to know many of my fellow Dunmer who call Raven Rock their home. I hope that my readers will appreciate the amount of fortitude and perseverance that it must take to endure life in such an inhospitable and untamed land.

Raven Rock was founded in 3E 427 by the East Empire Company in response to the discovery of a rich ebony mine on the southern edge of the island of Solstheim. The construction

of the town took several months, and the mine immediately started yielding ebony ore that the miner's shipped to Windhelm in Skyrim. By 3E 432, the town was home to over thirty people, all of whom depended on the mine for their livelihood. At this time, Raven Rock was almost exclusively inhabited by Imperials and a few Nords who were drawn to the mine's wealth.

When the Oblivion Crisis arose in 3E 433, Raven Rock remained largely untouched by Mehrunes Dagon's forces and work continued as usual. The bulk of the Imperial Guard that was stationed in Raven Rock was recalled to Cyrodiil to fight the invading forces, but a few soldiers remained behind in order to protect the ebony mine from bandits. It's uncertain whether any Oblivion Gates ever opened on Solstheim, as there appears to be no record of such an event ever occurring there.

In the first year of the Fourth Era, after the destruction of Ald'ruhn, many of the Dunmer Great Houses sent out small groups of their own to seek places to reestablish themselves. House Redoran's group was led by Brara Morvayn who immediately struck out for Solstheim. After some quick negotiations with the East Empire Company (and some speculate quite a bit of coin changing hands), Brara's group was allowed to settle in Raven Rock where they quickly became a part of the mining colony's way of life. The Dunmer proved to be both hard-working and reliable when it came to working in the mines, impressing the East Empire Company and solidifying their relationship.

All was going quite well until that fateful day in 4E 5 when the Red Mountain suddenly erupted, sending a massive blast across the Sea of Ghosts that struck Solstheim with its full fury.

Raven Rock was heavily damaged by this wave of force, which toppled several of its stone structures and obliterated many of the wooden ones. Ironically, the mine once again proved to be the town's saving grace, as most of the population of Raven Rock was working underground at the time, and was completely shielded from the blast. This event wasn't without cost, however. Raven Rock was heavily dependent on nearby Fort Frostmoth for its defense, but the eruption had almost completely wiped it from the face of Solstheim. The few soldiers that survived took residence in Raven Rock itself and attempted to set up a makeshift garrison there, but these scant few were hardly a match for potential threats to their town. With the East Empire Company's permission, Brara brought in some of House Redoran's elite "Redoran Guard" to fill the void. The guard proved to be an ideal replacement for the fallen Imperial soldiers and have been guarding the town ever since.

History of Raven Rock, Vol. II

The History of Raven Rock

Volume II

by

Lyrin Telleno

Forward

Raven Rock is one of the more interesting colonies of Morrowind of the last two centuries. So much has happened to this tiny town in such a short amount of time, and so many lives have been affected by it, I felt it necessary to describe its rich history within these volumes. During my research, I lived

in Raven Rock for almost three years, and I got to know many of my fellow Dunmer who call Raven Rock their home. I hope that my readers will appreciate the amount of fortitude and perseverance that it must take to endure life in such an inhospitable and untamed land.

After a few years, the relentless ash storms from the ever-erupting Red Mountain had transformed Solstheim's southern reaches into pure ash wastes reminiscent of those present on Vvardenfell itself. The storms would leave behind deep dunes of ash that made life exceedingly difficult in Raven Rock. In order to protect the town from these drifts, Brara Morvayn proposed that the East Empire Company construct a large wall of her own design to protect the east end of town. The company quickly agreed and provided the necessary funds. After almost a year, the construction was complete and the huge edifice was named "The Bulwark." The wall proved to be extremely effective and allowed work to continue unabated in the mines.

In 4E 16, when Solstheim was passed into the hands of the Dunmer people, the East Empire Company was forced to relinquish Raven Rock's control to House Redoran. The Council quickly named Brara Morvayn as councilor of their new town, and allowed her to rule Solstheim as she saw fit. As a result of this changing of the guard, almost the entire Imperial population left Raven Rock and returned to Cyrodiil. Brara continued to welcome the Dunmer that elected to settle on Solstheim. Some chose to stay in Raven Rock to work in the mines, and other took to more familiar territory and began a nomadic lifestyle in the ash wastes.

The next few decades were the golden years for Raven Rock. Brara Morvayn was keeping the peace, the mines were still producing large quantities of ebony and the Dunmer that lived on the island were happy. After almost fifty years of prosperity, in 4E 65, Brara Morvayn finally succumbed to old age and passed away. She was interred in the family's ancestral tomb and her son, Lleril Morvayn, took her place. The people who had lived in Raven Rock during Brara's time as councilor were pleased to discover that Lleril shared his mother's notions of rulership. He was fair and compassionate, which kept the people on the island quite happy for many decades.

History of Raven Rock, Vol. III

The History of Raven Rock

Volume III

by

Lyrin Telleno

Forward

Raven Rock is one of the more interesting colonies of Morrowind of the last two centuries. So much has happened to this tiny town in such a short amount of time, and so many lives have been affected by it, I felt it necessary to describe its rich history within these volumes. During my research, I lived in Raven Rock for almost three years, and I got to know many of my fellow Dunmer who call Raven Rock their home. I hope that my readers will appreciate the amount of fortitude and perseverance that it must take to endure life in such an inhospitable and untamed land.

All was going well in Raven Rock until 4E 95, when an attempt on Lleril's life was made without warning. Fortunately, the attack was unsuccessful thanks to the prowess of the Redoran Guard. Under questioning by Captain Modyn Veleth, the assassin was revealed to be Vilur Ulen of House Hlaalu. House Hlaalu had been at odds with House Redoran for years following their removal from the Council of Great Houses. The Hlaalu believe that House Redoran was instrumental in this reorganization, and have held a grudge ever since. Their attempt on Lleril's life was meant to send a message to the Council that House Redoran was not as mighty as they purported to be and that they were truly vulnerable and weak. The Redoran Guard investigated further and discovered that Vilur had been organizing a coup in Raven Rock in an attempt to fully wrest control of the island from Lleril's grasp. Vilur and his conspirators were executed and the coup was quelled.

Several recent events have served to solidify the Dunmer people's respect for Lleril Morvayn. In 4E 130, the Bulwark began to show its age and threatened to crumble. The councilor elected to use the bulk of his personal fortune to have it repaired. In 4E 150, a small force of Argonians landed on Solstheim with the intent of wreaking havoc on the island, and Councillor Morvayn led the charge against them personally. And in 4E 170, when the ebony mine finally began to dry up, he drained the remainder of his coffers keeping the people fed.

By 4E 181, the mine's ebony veins were completely exhausted. Lleril ordered the mine to be shut down, and Raven Rock turned to hunting and fishing for its trade. A few Dunmer families departed Solstheim and returned to the mainland, but most stayed behind.



At present, Lleril Morvayn is still the ruler of Raven Rock. The Redoran Guard continues to maintain order within the town and the surrounding area, keeping Raven Rock's residents safe, and in line. If even so much as a rumor of dissent reaches Lleril's ears, he has it quashed immediately. He's well aware that there may be a few Hlaalu loyalists still present among her population that would like to see him dead. The future may appear bleak for Raven Rock, but the spirit of its inhabitants will never be broken.

# Holdings Of Jarl Gjalund

*Slafknir*

Survey of the Holdings of Jarl Gjalund

As Witnessed by Slafknir the Scribe, so Sworn by the Old Gods and the New

Whiterun - [AHROLSEDOVAH] - The Jarl's Holding, with Plentiful Water and Pasturage. Home of Jorrvaskr, the Far-Famed Hall of the Companions.

Rorik's Steading - [RORIKHOFKAH] - A Small Farmstead in the Western Plains. Grain, Leather, Horses.

Granite Hill - [QUETHSEGOL AHROL] - Three Farms and an Inn, just North of the Falkreath. A Market is Held here Weekly.

H'roldan - [AHROLDAN] - A Spacious Wooden Hall and Pasturage, recently Seized from the Reachmen. Silver and Iron as Tribute from the Natives.

Bromjunaar - [BROMJUN1R] - An Old Settlement, much Reduced from Former Days. Lumber and Stone.

Korvanjund - [KORVANJUND] - A Small Fortified Settlement. Hides and Meat.

Volunruud - [VOLUNR5D] - A Fortified Wooden Hall near  
Giants' Gap. Meat and Worked Ivory.

Hillgrund's Steading - [HILLGRUNDHOFKAH] - A Large  
Farmstead Near the Base of the Monahven. Grain, Mead, Honey.

# Home Decorating Guides

*Anonymous*

Markarth Home Decorating Guide

M A R K A R T H

Home Decorating Guide

Welcome to your new home!

This decorating guide provides a list of packages that you can purchase from the Steward of the hold. Each package contains furnishings and decor for a specific part of your house, and these will be delivered and placed for you upon purchase.

All you need to do is provide the gold, and the Steward will take care of the rest. The next time that you visit your home after making your purchases, you will see your new decorations and furnishings in place.

Entrance Hall

When you purchase this package, floor mats and decorative planters will be added to the hallway just beyond the front door.

Living Room

This package fills out the home's large, central room with a large dining table, several smaller tables, shelves, a display case and other decor.

### Sleeping Quarters

In addition to improved furnishings and decor for your master bedroom, this package also adds a small dining area between the guest and master bedroom, near the rear of the house.

### Alchemy Laboratory

This package will furnish one the small rooms that adjoin the living room with the implements of an alchemist's laboratory. This includes an alchemy table, several shelves and added decor.

### Enchanting Laboratory

This package adds furniture and decor for a small enchanting laboratory adjoining the living room. This includes an enchanting table, shelves and decor.

### Riften Home Decorating Guide

#### R I F T E N

### Home Decorating Guide

Welcome to your new home!

This decorating guide provides a list of packages that you can purchase from the Steward of the hold. Each package contains furnishings and decor for a specific part of your house, and these will be delivered and placed for you upon purchase.

All you need to do is provide the gold, and the Steward will take care of the rest. The next time that you visit your home after making your purchases, you will see your new decorations and furnishings in place.

## Kitchen

This package will provide furnishings and decor for your kitchen, which is the room immediately beyond your home's front door. This includes the lighting of the fire.

## Bedroom

Adds bedside tables, a dresser and a small table with two chairs to the master bedroom. This also includes an upgrade to the bed itself.

## Alchemy Laboratory

This package will place an alchemy crafting table in your basement, along with some shelves and other decor.

## Enchanting Laboratory

This package will place an item enchanting table in your basement, along with some shelves and other decor. Also includes a few practice dummies to test your new enchantments on.

## Garden

When you purchase this package, the small patch of land adjacent to your house will be planted with a wide range of herbs, vegetables and other plants native to Skyrim.

## Solitude Home Decorating Guide

### S O L I T U D E

#### Home Decorating Guide

Welcome to your new home!

This decorating guide provides a list of packages that you can purchase from the Steward of the hold. Each package contains furnishings and decor for a specific part of your house, and these will be delivered and placed for you upon purchase.

All you need to do is provide the gold, and the Steward will take care of the rest. The next time that you visit your home after making your purchases, you will see your new decorations and furnishings in place.

#### Living Room

This package adds a large table, chairs and a wide range of decor to the living area located centrally on the second floor of the house.

#### Sleeping Quarters

When you purchase this package, the master bedroom on the second floor of the house will be decorated with several furnishings and a larger, more luxurious bed. Also, a small dining area will be added just outside the bedroom door that includes a table, chairs and other decorations.

#### Alchemy Laboratory

Fills out one of the ground floor rooms with implements and tools for an alchemy laboratory, including an alchemist's crafting table and related decor.

### Enchanting Laboratory

Will stock one of the home's small ground-floor rooms with all of the furnishings for an enchanting laboratory, including an enchanter's crafting table. Also includes several practice dummies on which you can test out your new enchantments.

### Patio

Places a small table, two chairs and other furnishings on the stone patio outside the back of the house.

### Whiterun Home Decorating Guide

#### W H I T E R U N

### Home Decorating Guide

Welcome to your new home!

This decorating guide provides a list of packages that you can purchase from the Steward of the hold. Each package contains furnishings and decor for a specific part of your house, and these will be delivered and placed for you upon purchase.

All you need to do is provide the gold, and the Steward will take care of the rest. The next time that you visit your home after making your purchases, you will see your new decorations and furnishings in place.

### Kitchen



Includes a fire pit, a small table and two chairs, as well as a shelf to store cooking supplies.

### Living Room

Provides Wall-mounted shelves, a few side tables and two chairs placed near the fire pit, all near the center of the ground floor.

### Dining Room

Adds a long wooden table and bench, as well as several shelves loaded with cutlery, dishes and cookware.

### Alchemy Laboratory

This package adds an alchemy crafting station, a reading table and chair, and a large wardrobe to the rear area of the ground floor. This also includes the addition of a wall to divide the laboratory from the dining room.

### Loft

This package includes a few chairs and tables to fill out the upper-level loft.

### Bedroom

Adds two bedside tables, a dresser and a small table with two chairs to the master bedroom. This also includes the addition of a wall to give the bedroom added privacy.

## Windhelm Home Decorating Guide

W I N D H E L M

## Home Decorating Guide

Welcome to your new home!

This decorating guide provides a list of packages that you can purchase from the Steward of the hold. Each package contains furnishings and decor for a specific part of your house, and these will be delivered and placed for you upon purchase.

All you need to do is provide the gold, and the Steward will take care of the rest. The next time that you visit your home after making your purchases, you will see your new decorations and furnishings in place.

### Kitchen

Includes a fireplace, a table for two and ample shelving to store your food and cooking supplies.

### Living Room

This package fills Hjerim's spacious ground floor living room with several tables, chairs and shelves. Decorations for the floor and walls are also included.

### Alchemy Laboratory

Adds an alchemy crafting station.

### Enchanting Laboratory

Adds an enchanting crafting station.

### Upstairs Landing

This package adds several weapon racks and display cases, and lines the walls with mounted animal heads.

### Bedroom

Provides an upgrade to your bed, as well as shelving, display cases, improved lighting and other bedroom furnishings and decor.

### Guest Room

Improves the furnishings and decor in your home's guest bedroom, including a finer-quality bed, a small table, and some shelves.

# Home Furnishings

*Anonymous*

[Player Name],

After a careful review of the building plans for [home name], your house in [City], I can offer you an additional option for furnishing your home: if you wish, you can now purchase a children's bedroom set. I have arranged to update your Home Decorating Guide accordingly.

As always, please speak with me if you would like to purchase this or any other furnishings for your house.

Sincerely,

[Steward name]

Steward of [City]

# Horker Attacks

*Heidmir Starkad*

Surviving A Horker Attack

by Heidmir Starkad

On my travels through Skyrim I have run into many northern fisherman and hunters with intriguing tales of their encounters with horkers. The stories are varied, ranging from deadly attacks to a girl who claims she was saved from drowning.

I have taken it upon myself to compile some of these for those who journey along the frozen coast.

Our first tale is of a hunter named Gromm. He claims that one night while turning in after a long day of trapping, he saw a great shadow cast on the wall of his tent. Did he get the horker or did the horker get him?

Gromm was a great trapper working in the frozen tundra collecting fox pelts but as he was about to fall asleep one night, he heard some noises coming from outside of his tent.

His first instinct was to remain calm and see if the beast would pass, but after some threatening roars, Gromm slowly made for his axe. The creature detected his movement and began to

thrash around using its great tusks to shred the hunter's tent and knocking the hunter off balance.

As he stumbled Gromm was able to use a frost spell scroll but the ice magic seemed to have diminished effect on the horker. That tidbit may be of use to someone out there.

After recovering from the stagger, Gromm was able to steady himself and with a few great cleaves killed the horker. Though his camp was in ruins, Gromm was lucky to walk away with only a slight goring to his left thigh.

Drawing of Horker Tusks

Gromm's parting comment was that if you do encounter a horker, remain calm and remember that if you survive, the meat and tusks will fetch a nice bit of gold at market.

# House Redoran's Reply

*Dralis Rorlen*

Councilor Morvayn,

While I appreciate the urgency of the situation on Solstheim, I'm afraid that I can't approve the request for supplies and funds at this time. This is nothing personal, Lleril. Your island is one of seventy-four outlying settlements of Morrowind at this time. House Redoran must rank these outposts in terms of economic and strategic importance. We have limited coin in our coffers to send to these settlements, so we have to decide which ones take precedence. Unfortunately, Solstheim is very low on the list. I'm doing everything I can for you. All I ask is that you hang on a little longer.

Dralis Rorlen

Councilmember, House Redoran

# Hrodulf's Journal

*Hrodulf*

1.

I've arrived in Solstheim, and moved into an old house on the hill by the shore. Whoever lived here before is long gone.

2.

I can see well out into the waters from my vantage here, and can hear all things behind and around. Dunmer bandits wander the woods at night, but I don't fear them.

5.

There is a calling from the depths; a rumble drone that sings to me at night. I've started sleeping in the basement + keeping a knife near. The call is loudest down here. I will to be ready for whatever is coming...

6.

it is as if a great machine reverberates beneath me

10.

i tire of waiting for the caller underneath to emerge



i walked to town + bought some digging tools: shovel, shovel,  
pick i started to break down the wall behind the bookshelf + dig  
down slow going i put the bookshelf back when i finish digging  
why? no houseguests here but i feel i have something to hide

13.

how can i make bjorn hear what i have heard? i must not lose  
him yet i must remain in this place for i know i will know the  
truth soon

23.

the murmurer in the earth and i we talk i lay my head against  
the dirt

51.

fire from the deep

# Hunter's Journal

*Anonymous*

Tracked down a small den of bears today. Their pelts are in fine condition and should fetch a good price. Going to set up camp for the night and kill the beasts in the morning. Hopefully we can get by on the few arrows we have left, or I may have to fall back on my blade

# Idgrod's Note

*Idgrod*

Sister Danica,

Joric's mood is still melancholic, but he is otherwise in strong health. The potions you have given me has eased his nightmares, but I am afraid my family's "gifts" run strong in his veins.

Idgrod the Younger

# Ildari's Journal

*Ildari*

Day 32

It's been almost a month since unearthing the crypt at Fort Frostmoth, and I haven't seen a single spark of life in the general's remains. Grafting the heartstone to the subject is proving much more difficult than I originally anticipated. I've used almost every method I can think of, and still there's no sign of reanimation. At this rate, it could be years before I make any progress... which is time that I just can't afford right now. If my vengeance is to come to fruition, I need results. If not, I may need to resort to more drastic measures.

Day 47

It finally appears that I'm making some progress. After my latest experiment, General Carius's eyes briefly opened and he moved his arms. It lasted for less than a few moments, but it's the first sign of progress I've seen since I arrived here. A few of my assistants were insisting that I was imagining things, but I dismissed them for their insolence. They won't be bothering anyone ever again.

Day 55

General Carius awoke fully today. He bolted upright after my incantations and began staggering around like a blind man. He

seemed to ignore my commands... in fact, hearing my voice seemed to increase his hostility. I was able to remove the heartstone before he became violent, but this isn't a result that I expected. Even though he's able to be awakened, I feel as though the real work has just begun.

## Day 59

The general is still unable or unwilling to listen to my commands. He's acting increasingly paranoid, and appears to have his own free will. He's convinced that I am a "spy" or the "enemy," and I've had to restrain him to prevent him from outright attacking me. This is becoming intolerable. I'm beginning to wonder if someone with a heartstone can be commanded at all. If my experiments with General Carius fail, I may have to resort to self-experimentation... something I've been avoiding for a long time.

# Ildari's Journal

*Ildari*

Ildari's Journal, vol. I

The fools have taken me in. Weak, pathetic men intent on looting this ancient fortress with their crude mining. Niyya is pleasant enough. I may choose to spare her when the time comes.

I'm still weak from Neloth's betrayal. He promised me power and glory. He failed to mention the constant pain. And the voices. By the three, I would do anything to not hear the voices.

When my strength returns, I will have my vengeance upon my former master. I can feel the power of the heart stone beating inside me. I need to find a way to tap into its power. Then he shall pay in blood and fire and ash.

Ildari's Journal, vol. II

I am stronger now. The heart stone kept me alive after Neloth's butchery. I can feel the bones in the ash calling to me. I can call back to them too. With the heart stone I can bind the spirits to bone and ash and raise a servant to do my bidding.

Tonight I will seize control. These miners and fortune seekers are pawns of Neloth. I can feel them staring at me. I'm sure they are sending him messages, reporting on my every move.

The only ones I can trust are the voices. They've never lied to me. They've shown me that these fools plan to betray me, just like Neloth.

When they are all asleep, I will raise my ash spawn. Their brute of a leader will die first. I can see the lust in his heart. He may act all kind and generous, but I know what he wants, what they all want. They want the heart stone.

I'll keep a few prisoners. I need test subjects for my experiments. There is more that the heart stone can do. I just need to try out a few ideas.

Ildari's Journal, vol. III

These warrens are well suited to me. I can plot my vengeance undisturbed. I've created many ash spawn and summoned atronachs to do my bidding. Yet I know it isn't enough. Neloth is a wily old wizard. I need more power.

I'm out of test subjects, except for Niyya. I saved her for last. She pretended to be my friend when I first came here. But now I know the truth. The voices have told me all about her lies and betrayal. She works with Neloth to bring me down. I've saved a special experiment just for her. It will take quite a while to complete.

I can't attack Neloth directly, he's too powerful. But I can make his life uncomfortable. I've killed his steward. I've withered his home. Maybe I should poison his precious tea. I'll need a more capable servant for that. The ash spawn are too clumsy for such delicate work.

# Imperial Condolances

*Pius Bruccius*

4E 175

Imperial Citizen Lu'ah Al-Skaven,

It is with the deepest regret that I must inform you of the death of your husband Saeel.

He laid down his life in battle helping retake the Imperial City from the Aldmeri. He showed great courage in his final hour and his sacrifice will not be in vain. All considered him a man of high moral standing and a shining example of the best the Empire has to offer.

In this hour of your grief, please take solace in the fact that he gave up his life protecting the Empire which he held so dear.

Yours Sincerely,

Imperial Praefect Pius Bruccius



# Imperial Letter

*Anonymous*

Lieutenant Armiger,

Our scouts report a band of rebels advancing on your position.  
Be on guard. Reinforcements are on the way.

# Imperial Missive

*General Tullius*

It has come to my attention that inquiries have been made as to the whereabouts of one Thorald Gray-Mane.

It is my duty to inform you that Thalmor agents have taken possession of the prisoner and have escorted him to Northwatch Keep.

I don't think I need to elaborate. It is in everyone's best interest if the matter is dropped entirely. I trust there will be no further inquiries as to this matter.

Gen. Tullius

# Imperial Order

*General Tullius*

Note from Tullius allowing for release of prisoner from  
Northwatch Keep

# Incriminating Letter

*Maven Black-Briar*

Dearest Anuriel,

The Jarl has shown great wisdom in choosing you as her steward. A position well befitting your character, as it demands great cunning, grace, and, shall we say, a talent for performing one's duties tactfully and discreetly.

You have become an important asset to our operation. I trust you found the dress accompanying this letter to your satisfaction. Remember, as I flourish, so too will my friends.

However, I wish to remind you of your pledge to prevent Honningbrew deliveries from entering the city. I am also still waiting for the detachment of city guards to escort my merchandise. I understand it can take time navigating around the delicate sensibilities of your mistress, the great Lalia Law-Giver, but really, I've waited long enough.

Provided you continue to serve my interests, I will continue to look after yours.

I trust I'll be hearing from you soon.

—Maven

# Incriminating Letter

*Anonymous*

Citizens of [city name]. The slain personage before you is a suspected creature of the night. Thus the Dawnguard have slain him.

Let this be a lesson to all men and women demonstrating unholy powers and those who would protect them.

We are watching!

—The Dawnguard

# Invitation To Elenwen's Reception

*Anonymous*

Elenwen, First Emissary of the Aldmeri Dominion to the  
Kingdom of Skyrim

Requests the Pleasure of the Company of

[Player's name]

at a Reception on [day] [month], [year] at the Ambassador's  
Residence.

Regrets Only. Formal Attire Requested.

# Isabelle's Letter

*Isabelle*

My dearest Ranmir,

By the time you receive this, I will be gone. I know that it's wrong to mislead you, but I didn't want you to prevent me from going.

I know it's been hard on you, on both of us, struggling to survive. I hate to see the look in your eyes every time you think about how little the two of us have, and I know you're too proud to ever say anything. So I'm going to make it all better.

I've talked to my friend Vex, and she's given me some advice. I know how to get something that will allow us to live happily, without ever worrying about money ever again.

I love you so much, Ranmir. You mean the world to me, and I only want to see you happy.

Worry not. I'll be home soon.

Isabelle

# J'datharr's Note

*J'datharr*

Description of target:

Bosmer male, goes by Malborn. Believed to be working for the Blades, so approach with caution.

He has inside knowledge of our procedures, so he will be warier than usual. Malborn is not his real name - he's now been identified as a survivor of a family of traitors who were all believed to have died in a fire in Falinesti.

Do not risk him evading us. He's likely trying to leave Skyrim. Make sure of your kill, and do not implicate us.



# J'zhar's Journal

*Anonymous*

This one is at his wit's end. I signed J'darr and myself up for this expedition to try to get him clean of the Skooma. I brought a small supply to try bring him down slowly, but the storm has had us trapped in the glacier for weeks.

The others have not yet caught on that one with fur should not shake so much from the cold, but I've run out of the little skooma I brought and J'darr is getting pretty bad. He's started hallucinating creatures coming out of the ice and the ruins, the others are starting to think he may be behind Valie's disappearance, but I know he would never do something like that.

# Japhet's Journal

*Japhet*

A smaller band than was expected joined with me departing Dawnstar. Apparently the local word is that this island is unfit for any sort of habitation, owing to spirits and ill-favored weather. No matter, more space for the loyal few, though the building of the citadel may prove to be time consuming.

This first winter was difficult, with the abandonment of many men and women to return to their families on the mainland. A culling of the herd—let us lose the faithless, the weak, and those who lack the fortitude to persevere.

The stories of ghosts inhabiting this place are just stories. They frighten away more of those who would weep like children when their shadows flicker in the firelight. Me and my closest remain, ever vigilant.

I find little need for additional company. The cold and winds seem to finally have driven off the last of those who would fancy themselves to be my compatriots. I have no need of their indolence. Let those who look upon Japhet's Fortress be afraid and know the great man who conquered the accursed island.

Now even my more trusted go-betweens have stopped making their regular deliveries of food and supplies to the fortress. I must now become self-sufficient and farm the land, as my father did.

The rocks are unyielding, and my grain grows short. But I will not abandon my greatest creation. I will weather the storm and fend off the ghosts and bite into the wind such that all might sing songs of my great settlement.

I'm starting to think the stories of the ghosts may have a kernel of truth to them. Or else it's simply the hunger talking.

The ghosts are speaking to me now, the more of this icemoss that I eat, the more clearly I can hear them. They are telling me it was a mistake to come here, as if I didn't already know that.

OH GODS HELP ME

# Journal Fragment

*Anonymous*

Not good enough to live in their stupid keep, am I? Stupid sods don't realize I've moved into the undercroft and started taking control of their own death hounds. I'll get my revenge.

# Journal Of A Madman

*Anonymous*

They said it was impossible. They, not me. I knew! The book knew. It knows all. And I know all. All I need to know. To fly! They laughed. The others were afraid. Don't even try, they said. They said it was impossible. They, not me. The book is filled with knowledge. The book fills me. With knowledge. Secret hidden knowledge. My knowledge. I must hide the knowledge. Hide it away deep inside. I will eat the book. A page at a time. Slowly. Slowly. I will become one with the knowledge contained on its pages. In its pages. In me! The knowledge of flight. They said it was impossible. Ha!

# Journal Of Drokt

## *Drokt*

I weren't never one for writing about my life. The king-priests of old deserve their stories told, but Drokt is a simple man. So this isn't no journal and I'm not telling any stories here. But this infernal machine done worked its way into my brainspace and I won't leave till it's figured out.

The whole contraption just sets like a dead horker if it doesn't have the box. Putting the box in the hole made it all come to life.

Five rings, but only four buttons? Most of of 'em don't work most of the time anyhow. When the lights line up, more open, but they don't seem to help. Just make another damned thing move.

The old fleabag Khajiit what sold me this cube said something about "the light through the knowledge through the machine rests on the cube." I remember because he made me say it back at him till I wanted to throttle him.

So I did.

Tried to leave, but wolves to the top and them eyeless freaks outside the tower. Gotta stay here till I get it right.

And I will get it right.

# Journal Of Mirtil Angoth

*Mirtil Angoth*

Journal of Mirtil Angoth

Translated from Falmer Text

by

Calcelmo of Markarth

4th of Evening Star

I used to dream of fighting in battles like my Father. He had begun teaching me to fight the moment I was able to pick up a blade. Mother had argued that I was too young, but he paid her no mind. I can still remember the elation I felt the first time I bested Father in a match and the look of pride on his face. If it were up to him I know he would have allowed me to join him in battle. With me at his side he may have fared better. Now with Father and so many others slain, the Old Ones claim we are left with too few warriors to continue the fight. I was not the only Young One to speak out in protest, but our small voices went unheard. It has been decided that we must flee to seek help and protection.

8th of Evening Star

News has reached us that the great Snow Prince has fallen in battle. The urgency to go into hiding has left many of us scattered and those of us still together unsure of which direction to turn. In the long hours of night we keep huddled together always fearing the worst until the first light of the blessed sun. May Auri-El guide our footsteps.

### 13th of Evening Star

In the night I overheard the Old Ones whispering secrets of the underground and the Dwemer who dwell there. I thought back on stories Father once told me of these dwarves, heroic tales of honor and glory. The Old Ones must know of these stories for it has been decided that we will change course upon first light. I feel hopeful that the Dwemer will help us to avenge our fallen and reclaim our land.



# Justiciar Execution Order

*Anonymous*

Be on the look out for the [player's race] called [player's name]. [He/she] is an enemy to the Thalmor, and has actively disrupted our activities and caused great harm. If spotted, you are to destroy [him/her] with extreme hatred.

Be advised, [he/she] is extremely dangerous, and quite able to defend [himself/herself]. If caught by local authorities, we are unable to offer you any assistance.

For the glory of the Aldmeri Dominion!

# Karan's Journal

*Karan*

8th of Frostfall

Oh, Talvur! Dear, sweet Talvur! I can't stop thinking about him! Since that first moment I laid eyes on him in the marketplace, my heart was lost. But Father would never allow me to marry a commoner, much less a poor Dunmer miner. Mara, what to do?

11th of Sun's Dawn

Another letter from Talvur, the third this week. He says he can't live without me, that he'd rather die than lose me to another. Oh, I feel the same way!

I can't abide this any longer. Father is sure to find out eventually - the maids are all aflutter over my "secret love." Something will slip. Talvur and I must be long gone by then, or Father will have all the Reach up in arms against him.

22nd of First Seed

I've convinced Father to take me on his next trip out east. When we reach the inn at Old Hroldan, I'll slip out at night and meet Talvur in the hills above Soljund's.

Talvur says he's been saving his wages for the last few months, stowing them away in the old stump up there. With that, we

should be able to buy passage to Riften, and our freedom. Oh, love, I can't wait another hour!

# Katria's Journal

*Katria*

17th of Sun's Height

Damn that scheming elf! Damn him! He steals my notes, my discovery, and publishes it under his name! Twenty years of my life spent digging through those ruins, and what do I get? A dedication? 'Friend and Colleague' my arse. He's just mocking me!

Well, I'll have the last laugh. Taron may have my theory, but he doesn't have any proof, not yet. If I can find the Forge first, I can show the world this is my discovery. Mine, not his!

4th of Last Seed

I've got a lead. One of the moldy old books in Mzund mentioned the Forge. Ruined through and through, but I was able to copy down a few scraps, including a map of the first-era Dwemer kingdoms. Need to cross-reference it with modern borders when I get back.

Here's the result:

1 - Arkngthamz

This one, 'Arkngthamz', was on the inscription, too. Apparently the main Aetherium research center. Seems like the place to

start.

2 -

Mentioned as a 'Bthar-zel' ('allied city?'). Not Bthardamz, though. Looks like a smaller site, north or northwest of there, on the river.

3 -

The primary source of Aetherium. Extracted from some deeper mine?

4 -

A storage site for raw Aetherium, just outside a major city. Apparently, it had to be kept outside because the Aetherium was 'harmonically volatile'.

5 -

No name, no identifying information, but page after page of ruined diagrams. Couldn't make out much, but it looks like - an astrolabe, a gear, some sort of crest in four pieces? Could this be the location of the Forge? Something important, at least.

22nd of Last Seed

Arknghamz. My map may be rough, but it was enough to get me here. There may be something to this after all.

23rd of Last Seed

Reached the Treasury. There's a Tonal Lock here, still active. Judging from the corpses, it's safe to say the traps are still active, too.

Couldn't find any clues, so I'll make a sketch and work through this carefully. Five Resonators. Five tones. Just have to hit them in the right order. Let's see...

# Keepers Of The Razor

*Anonymous*

## KEEPERS OF THE RAZOR

### Current Descendants of the Inner Circle

Jorgen of Morthal, 8th generation of Clan Axe-Bearer to bear the Hilt of Mehrunes' Razor. Son of Halnir, son of Hroi, son of Koli, son of Malte, son of Lygrleid, son of Neddrir, son of Lenne.

Ghunzul, leader of the Cracked Tusk Bandits, and 8th to bear the blade shards of Mehrunes' Razor. Son of Shelakh, son of Mog, son of Grul, son of Durgob, son of Uzgakh, son of Ramolg, son of Othmash.

Drascua, leader of the Forsworn of Dead Crone Rock, and 8th to bear the pommel of Mehrunes' Razor. Daughter of Cairine, daughter of Edana, daughter of Malvina, daughter of Muriel, daughter of Riane, daughter of Cayleigh, daughter of Sorcha.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROND

Of all the groups that pledged to eradicate the Mythic Dawn from Tamriel, none were as inadvertently successful as the Keepers of the Razor. Originally a militia group founded to destroy the remnants of the Mythic Dawn, the group was renamed the after discovering the legendary artifact of Mehrunes Dagon that became their namesake. How they found

the Razor is a secret that I have been unable to uncover, but it is clear that they were not part of Frathen Drothan's failed expedition to Varsa Baalim, and in fact the group does not first appear in Imperial records until fifty years later.

The Razor was divided among the three highest ranking members of the order's inner circle, to be passed down from oldest child to oldest child "until the twin moons themselves disappeared from the skies." Although this pledge seems to have been loosely interpreted, as the moons did vanish from the heavens during The Void Nights of 4E98-4E100, yet the Razor's pieces were still being bequeathed through the generations during and after this time.

Tracing the lineages of the inner circle proved especially difficult thanks to the group's unusual membership. While the leader of the Keepers of the Razor was a Nord and thankfully was easily researched through the clan's family histories, the other two members were an Orc and a native daughter of the Reach, whose culture's paucity of respect for literacy made tracking them down less straightforward. Fortunately, Othmash gro-Gularz and his sons are well-recorded for their service in the Imperial Legion. Yet the daughters of Sorcha proved nearly impossible to find until I uncovered Markarth's meticulously thorough tax records, which recorded each birth of Sorcha's kin in order to administer certain petty fees. Sorcha's current descendent, Drascua, fled to Dead Crone Rock after the Markarth Incident, and is considered by the Jarl to be a major threat to the safety of the hold.



# Killing - Before You're Killed

*Eduardo Corvus*

I've seen many a man rush headlong into battle only to have their life cut short in an instant. I've been a trainer of the warrior arts for many spans - cut from the cloth of a great lineage of knights, Blades and even a distant sellsword or two.

It's with this knowledge that I'll try to pen a brief treatise on the subtle art of war. Not mage fire, not archery or criminal throat-slitting. But war. Man on man with nothing but a fine bit of steel between them.

The first thing you'll need to learn is how to block. The best way not to get killed is not to let the other man hit you. Use a shield, use it well. Now, you'll get tired from this. You may even get a little hurt. But a blocked blow is much better than a landed one. Over time you'll get better, eventually shrugging off even the mightiest of hits.

But beware - your foes, if they're not base cur bandits, will know how to counter you. They'll hit you with everything they've got in, order to open you up, and keep on hitting. So watch for these powerful attacks. While it's still better to absorb the impact with a quarter inch of steel, it's best to try to just step out of the way.

Remember, against spells your blocking is useless until you're trained. So get up on mages quickly and let them eat steel.

Deserves them right for using a witch weapon.

You can also block without a shield as well - just cross that blow with your sword, though this isn't nearly as effective. And if you decide you're fancy and want to wield two blades, you can't block at all, so don't even try. Without both hands on the hilt you just won't have the strength to counter blows.

But, with a weapon in each hand you are much more likely to take your opponent down quickly. The best defense, some say.

To wield the blade there are some fundamentals. Quick strikes are always good, but can be repelled, so watch for your opponent's own defensive postures. Wait for an opening, or create one with your own heavy attacks. Hammers hit hardest but are slow. Same with maces and all blunt weaponry. Axes are a nice middle ground, while swords are the quickest but won't stagger your opponent as efficiently with the hard hits.

Keep an eye not to get too exhausted - always try to save a little of your strength to counter blows, or even run! Keep moving during a fight. Never let yourself get cornered or surrounded. Pick your threats - weak spellcasters that can hurt you quick are the first things I fell.

The shield is not only a defensive tool. Put your shoulder into it and bash your opponent. This sends them flying and opens them up for quick counter assaults. Even better, put extra weight into it and power bash your opponent. If they're small this will put them on their knees.

Bigger opponents cannot be staggered by heavy attacks. Only the power bash will really knock them around and create openings for you to exploit.

So again - block, counter, bash! Hit them when they're down! They'll show no mercy, so why should you? Battle is about the offense, about catching your foe early and never relenting. Keep moving, keep swinging. If you consider yourself overly powerful, pick up a two-handed weapon and see your foes fall before you like wheat stalks. They're slow and unwieldy, but they shatter bones and cleave flesh better than anything.

The graves are filled with many a mediocre swordsman. If you don't have the stomach for war, try a monk's work. But if you do travel the path of the warrior, learn the basics and keep your head firmly planted on your shoulders - or someone's bound to lob it off.

# King Olaf's Verse

*Anonymous*

O, Olaf, our subjugator, the one-eyed betrayer;  
death-dealing demon and dragon-killing King.

Your legend is lies, lurid and false;

your cunning capture of Numinex, a con for the ages.

Olaf grabbed power, by promise and threat;

From Falkreath to Winterhold, they fell to their knees;

But Solitude stood strong, Skyrim's truest protectors.

Olaf's vengeance was instant, inspired and wicked.

So ends the story of Olaf the liar, a thief and a scoundrel we of  
Solitude commit to the fire.

In Solitude bards train for their service, they also gather each  
year and burn a King who deserves it.

# Kodlak's Journal

## *Kodlak White-Mane*

In my dream, I see the line of Harbingers start with Ysgramor. Each of them ascends to Sovngarde, until we come to Terrfyg, who first turned us to the ways of the beast. He tries to enter Sovngarde, but before he can even approach Tsun, he is set upon by a great wolf, who pulls him into the Hunting Grounds, where Hircine laughs with welcoming arms.

Terrfyg seems regretful, but also eager to join Hircine after a lifetime of service as a beast.

Then I see every next Harbinger turn away from Sovngarde and enter the Hunting Grounds of their own accord. Until it comes to me, and I see great Tsun on the misty horizon, beckoning me. It appears I have a choice. And then, at my side, a stranger I had not seen before. As I look into [his/her] eyes, we turn to see the same wolf who dragged away Terrfyg, and [player's name] and I draw weapons together.

I realize this is only a dream, but a strong enough dream to inspire a man like me to take to writing, so it must be of some import.

I've spoken of my thoughts to the Circle, withholding the part about the stranger lest Skjor worry I will no longer seek his counsel, and I was not surprised to see them torn by it. Skjor and Aela are strong in the ways of the beast, and even seemed

to suggest that the Hunting Grounds would be their choice of afterlife, if it were truly a choice.

Vilkas seemed most troubled. The boy is as fierce as a sabre cat in battle, but his heart's fire burns too brightly at times. He felt deceived, and I don't blame him. Farkas didn't know what to think, but I believe he will come around with me and his brother eventually. He usually does.

I don't know what to do about Skjor and Aela. I know they respect the Companions, and me, but they take to the blood more deeply than the rest of us.

Fortune smiles upon us. Yesterday, Vilkas was telling me how difficult it had been for him to give up his transformations. Until we can pursue a true cure, the twins and I have chosen not to give in to the beastblood. For me, it's provided a clearer head, but Vilkas seems to be suffering a bit for it. Farkas seems completely untroubled. That boy continues to amaze with his fortitude.

While Vilkas was confiding, through the shadows of Jorrvaskr, I saw a newcomer approach, who wished to join our numbers. It was the stranger from my dream, the one who would stand with me against the beast. Vilkas began speaking obliquely, not wishing to air our problems in front of our guest, and I had to be doubly cautious to not reveal anything of our secrets to the newcomer while also not revealing the details of my dream to Vilkas. I don't know how the politicians deal with these sorts of machinations daily.

In any case, I've sent Vilkas to test the newcomer. We'll see if [he/she] is truly the great warrior I dreamt of.

This newcomer, it seems, is made of decent stock. [He/she] calls [himself/herself] [player's name], and has already impressed some of the Circle with [his/her] mettle. I still keep my own counsel on [his/her] place in my dream, for now. Let us see what kind of destiny [he/she] is carving before hitching to [him/her].

In the meanwhile, I look for ways of cleansing my blood. The writings and legends on the subject are sparse and contradictory. I don't wish to engage any wizardry on this matter, but I fear they may be the only ones who best know how to navigate these worlds of knowledge.

It's apparent to me now that Terrfyg's choice to turn us was indeed a mistake. Magics and their ilk are not in keeping with the spirit of the Companions. We face our problems directly, without the needs of such trickery. I can only hope to guide us back to the true path of Ysgramor before the rot takes me.

[Player's name] continues to impress. I don't know yet where [he/she] will stand on the question of the blood, but the question has not been presented yet. [He/she] does know that we carry the beastblood, and appears curious about it. Soon enough, I can explain our troubles, and hopefully see what role [he/she] will play.

I'm amazed that Aela thinks she can keep a secret among this drunken rabble. Especially with the loss of Skjor (my heart aches), emotions are fraying, and the walls of discretion are the first to fall.

Apparently she and [player's name] are waging their own separate war against the Silver Hand, in retaliation for Skjor's death. Their hearts are noble, but the course of vengeance is

running hot, and I fear the counterstroke that may come if they do not rein in their fury.

[Player's name] shows valor, though, even in this more underhanded time. We have not had cause to speak much, and that is something I deeply regret. I have high hopes for [his/her] destiny, as I realized that [his/her] appearance in my dream may indeed mark [him/her] as the Harbinger to succeed me.

I have received few dreams over the course of my life, but when they come, I have learned to trust them. I have also learned to trust the instincts of my heart, which tells me that [player's name] can carry the Companions legacy as truly as any residing in Jorrvaskr, especially with the loss of Skjor. Aela is too solitary, Vilkas too fiery, and Farkas too kind-hearted. Only [player's name] stands as a true warrior who can keep a still mind amidst these burning hearts.

I will not speak to [him/her] of any of this, though. It is too much to burden another with. My hope is that [he/she] and I can keep counsel over the coming years, that I can impart the wisdom of the Harbingers. All things in time. Firstly, I will seek [his/her] assistance in the matter of the witches of Glenmoril. It would appear that our path to the cure is not without some poetic justice for the tricksters who first cursed us.



# Kolb & The Dragon

*Anonymous*

Kolb & the Dragon

An Adventure for Nord Boys

1

Kolb was a brave Nord warrior. One day his Chief asked Kolb to slay an evil dragon that threatened their village. “Go through the mountain pass, Kolb”, his Chief said. “You will find the Dragon on the other side.”

Turn to page (2)

2

Kolb took his favorite axe and shield and walked to the pass, where he found a cold cave, a windy cave, and a narrow trail.

Enter the cold cave (17)

Enter the windy cave (8)

Walk up the trail (12)

3

Kolb stepped onto a rocky hill. He could see the dragon sleeping below, and a tavern off a road nearby.

Climb down (16)

Visit tavern (14)

4

Following the stench, Kolb found a filthy orc! The orc snarled and charged Kolb with his spiked club.

Raise Shield (9)

Swing Axe (13)

5

Treading through the marsh, Kolb discovered a wailing ghost blocking his way.

Attack Ghost (15)

Give Gold (10)

6

The head of the axe lodged itself in the tough, scaly neck of the beast. It wailed and thrashed, but Kolb held on and eventually sawed through the neck, killing the beast. Kolb returned home victorious, and his village was never bothered by the dragon again.

THE END

7

Leaving the marsh behind him, Kolb could see the dragon's lair nearby, as well as a small, welcoming tavern.

Go to the Lair (16)

Go to Tavern (14)

8

A strong gust of wind blew Kolb's torch out, and knocked him into a pit where split his head and died.

THE END

9

The orc cackled as his club splintered Kolb's shield and smashed into his face. There Kolb died, and the orc had soup from his bones.

THE END

10

Kolb remembered a story his Gran told him and tossed two gold chits for the ghost, and it faded away, allowing him to pass.

Turn to Page (7)

11

Kolb crept towards the belly of the beast, but no sooner had he taken his eyes off the head of the beast than it snapped him up and ate him whole, axe and all.

THE END

12

Climbing up, Kolb found a camp. He met a wise man who shared bread and showed two paths to the dragon's lair. One went through the hills, the other through a marsh.

Take the hills (3)

Take the marsh (5)

13

Before the orc could strike, Kolb swung his mighty axe. The orc's head and club fell uselessly to the floor.

Turn to Page (3)

14

Kolb stopped at the tavern to rest before fighting the dragon. High elves ran the tavern, however, and poisoned his mead so they could steal his gold.

THE END

15

Kolb swung his axe as hard as he could, but the ghost hardly seemed to notice. The ghost drifted into Kolb, and a deep sleep took him over, from which he never awoke.

THE END

16

Kolb found the lair where the dragon slept, tendrils of smoke wafting from it's nostrils. The air made Kolb's eyes sting, and he nearly slipped on the bones of men, picked clean. The beast lay on its side, the throat and belly both waiting targets.

Strike the Neck (6)

Strike the Belly (11)

17

Kolb stepped into the frozen cave, but his Nord blood kept him warm. A smelly tunnel climbed ahead of him, and wind howled from another to his left. A ladder was nearby as well.

Take the smelly tunnel (4)

Take the windy tunnel (8)

Climb the ladder (12)

# Krag's Journal

*Krag*

I knew if we dug deep enough we'd eventually hit some fresh ruins. Markarth, a city built upon a city. From early pieces recovered we've determined the name of the city is Nchuand-Zel, but past that we have very little info. We've been given an escort though and tomorrow we will delve into the city proper.

\* \* \* \* \*

It's only been a day and I already miss my desk and chair. I thought it would be a little more fun to explore, but so far it's just been fighting spiders and getting to view an occasional rubble pile. Hopefully we get to the main ruin soon so we can set up a camp and I can start cataloguing some of the items I've been able to find.

\* \* \* \* \*

We found the Armory earlier and Erj has stayed behind to find a way into the main vault. If anyone can open the locks it's him. We've kept going and settled up here for the night since the guards say it will be easy to defend. I've put up a few runes just in case.

# Kyr's Bounty

*Anonymous*

Kill Eisa and Ra'jirr on sight. A hundred gold to whoever brings me their heads. Spread the word.

Kyr

# Kyr's Log

*Kyr*

Frostmere Crypt, Week 12

What a disaster. We haven't seen a caravan in a week. We actually lost ground in the tunnels- Thal and his team were crushed when their section collapsed. I've heard word of a mutiny. If next week isn't any better...

Frostmere Crypt, Week 13

Two new recruits- Eisa and Ra'jirr. Girl said she did time in Cidhna Mine, down in Markarth, and it shows- she's got more experience than all of us put together. I've put her in charge of the dig. Cat's good with a blade, so I've sent him topside with the raiders.

Frostmere Crypt, Week 14

Tunnel's going well. Eisa made our first big find just yesterday- buried chest with a couple hundred gold. Topside, Ra'jirr and his team have hit five merchants this week, in and out faster than the guard could respond. Looks like things are finally going my way.

Frostmere Crypt, Week 15



The tunnel broke out into some kind of giant cavern. There's whole forest down there- found a nice sword all laid out on some kind of monument and everything. But this is just strange. Eerie. What is this place? Not like any tomb I've ever seen.

Frostmere Crypt, Week 16

I think the cat's gone crazy. All of a sudden, he can't focus, keeps muttering to himself. He's gone from our best raider to our worst- botched two jobs just today. Eisa's trying to cover for him, but she's not fooling anyone.

Lately, he keeps asking to see my sword, begging to borrow it. Like I'll let him get his paws on it- it's beautiful, perfectly balanced, better than any I've ever held. Sure, he can have it- right in the gut.

# Lakeview Manor Charter

*Anonymous*

[Jarl name], Jarl of [Capital city] to [Player name], [his/her] loyal friend; grant of the steading of Lakeview Manor on the south shore of Lake Ilinalta, east of Falkreath.

Witnessed by [Steward name], Steward to Jarl [Jarl name], [day] [month], [year]

# Legend Of Red Eagle

*Tredayn Dren*

The Legend of Red Eagle

by

Tredayn Dren

Archivist of Winterhold

This tale was transcribed from the memory of Clarisse Vien, student of Winterhold. Elements of the legend suggest a date c.1E 1030, though as with any oral tradition, much of it is likely a later anachronism. Curiously, stories of a similar king and his legendary blade appear in other ancient myths of the Reach.

Long ago, a child was born in the Sundered Hills. They named him Faolan, which means 'Red Eagle' in the tongue of the Reach, for the screeching bird-call that greeted his birth, and the crimson blooms on the autumn hills.

Thus began his legend: Reach-child, born under auspicious skies, his very name the color of blood.

Ten kings ruled the Reach in those days, and though men were free, the people were scattered and warred amongst themselves. The augurs foresaw the boy's destiny: a warrior

without peer, first and foremost Lord of the Reach, chosen to unite all under his name.

Faolan grew in years and strength, and it seemed the prophecy would be fulfilled. The banner of the Red Eagle was raised along the cliffs of the Reach, and his people prospered.

Then came Hestra, Empress of the South, riding to war. One by one, the kings stood before her. One by one, they fell aside, bending knee in Imperial bargains or slaughtered on the battlefield.

Her legions came at last to the Sundered Hills, and envoys were sent to bargain for their surrender. Faolan refused to yield the freedom of his people, but the elders were afraid, cast him out, and accepted the Imperial yoke.

Thus was stolen by the foreign invaders: his land, his people, his very name. In the years that followed, Red Eagle became known as the untamed spirit of the Reach, unbowed, unbroken, stained by the blood of his foes.

He gathered loyal Reachmen to himself, those who clung to the old ways, who yearned for freedom, and forged a new nation. Together, they fell upon the occupiers and the traitors by night, disappearing into the cliffs and caves each morn, evading capture. It was not enough. For every Imperial patrol and garrison they wiped out, yet more seemed to march from the green south to replace them.

One night, under a cloud-choked sky, the men of the Red Eagle warmed themselves over damp fires of smoldering moss. A huddled, shambling figure came to them, cloaked in rags, face cowed. Though his men mocked and cast stones at the

stranger, Faolan sensed something, and beckoned. The cowl was thrown back in the dim light, and she revealed herself to be one the ancient and venerable Hagravens. She offered power, for a price, and a pact was made.

Thus was brokered to the witch: his heart, his will, his humanity. From that day forth, his was a spirit of vengeance, pitiless and beyond remorse. The rebels grew in strength and numbers, and none could stand against them. Faolan's eyes burned coldly in those days, black opals reflecting a mind not entirely his own. Two years passed, and the foreigners were all but driven from the Reach.

Such peace could not last, however, and a great host fell upon them, a swift army of invaders unlike any before. For a fortnight, Hestra's generals laid siege to Red Eagle's stronghold, till he himself came forth for battle, alone and robed in nothing but his righteous fury. A thousand foreigners fell before his flaming sword, and the enemy was routed. Yet, when night fell, so too did he. The warriors who came to him said Faolan's eyes were clear again on that final night.

He was taken to the place prepared for him, a tomb hidden deep within the rock. With his remaining strength he presented his sword to his people, and swore an oath: Fight on, and when at last the Reach is free, his blade should be returned, that he might rise and lead them again.

Thus was given for his people: his life, his dream, his sword. But when every debt is repaid in blood, these he shall reclaim once more.

# Letter

*Bjornolfr*

Hrodulf, light and strength,

I feel your words are not your own, and I worry dearly for your health.

I beg of you: please depart that blasted isle and return to Solitude at once! My nights have been almost impossible to bear without you; to lose you would be the death of me.

My love, if you do not return soon, I will come for you.

- Bjornolfr

# Letter From A Friend

*Anonymous*

[Player's name],

You caused a bit of stir in [location] when you demonstrated the power of your Thu'um. Not everyone is anxious for the return of the Dragonborn.

I for one desire to see you grow and develop your talents. Skyrim needs a true hero these days.

You should turn your attention to [dungeon]. I understand it holds a mysterious source of power that can only be unlocked by the Dragonborn.

Sincerely,

A Friend

# Letter From Calcelmo

*Calcelmo*

[Player name],

It has come to my attention you may have recently acquired a certain [item] from [location].

I'm not sure how such an object came to find itself resting there... but I've been trying to obtain one for my research.

If you still have it, or if not, find another one, I would be most appreciative if you were to bring it to me here in Markarth. I will pay handsomely.

Sincerely,

Calcelmo



# Letter From Christophe

*Christophe Bartlet*

Dearest Maven,

After our disagreement a fortnight ago, I feared that business had finally gotten the best of our friendship. Since I still have yet to receive a reply to my last letter, it seems my suspicions are correct. I realize my mistake has cost you a lot and all I hope to do is make amends. I'll be staying at the Bannered Mare in Whiterun should you wish to speak with me.

Regards,

Christophe Bartlet

# Letter From Father

*Commander Maro*

My son,

In order for the Penitus Oculatus to ensure the safety of our honored Emperor during his visit to Skyrim, we must personally verify the security of every city in the province. To this end, I appoint you my personal representative, granting all rights and privileges afforded a commanding officer of the Penitus Oculatus. You are authorized to speak with my voice, and administer with my hand.

Gaius, I cannot do this alone. There is much work to be done here in Dragon Bridge and elsewhere, and many arrangements still to be made before the Emperor's arrival. I simply cannot afford to spend time traveling right now. But you must know the seriousness of the task I set before you. When he arrives, the Emperor may choose to visit any city in Skyrim, as suits his whim. If he does so, we, the Penitus Oculatus, must be sure that security within those cities is sufficient to deal with any threat to his person that may arise.

Gaius, my beloved son - you may be new to the Penitus Oculatus, but I need someone I can trust. You must carry out your duty, for the safety of the Emperor, the glory of the Penitus Oculatus, and the honor of the Maro family name.

Your superior officer (and loving father),

Commander Maro

# Letter From Harkon

*Lord Harkon*

The prophesied time has come. I have reclaimed one my lost Elder Scrolls, and now I must have a Moth Priest to read it. For the one who brings me a Moth Priest, I promise a high place in my court and the gift of my potent blood.

Go forth and find me a Moth Priest. This is my command.

Lord Harkon

# Letter From Jon

*Jon*

My dearest Olfina,

How long will this go on? The sneaking around, the missed opportunities. I feel like I can't take it anymore.

I love you, and you love me. That's all that matters. Anyone who has a problem with it doesn't really care for either of us.

-Jon

# Letter From Maven

*Maven Black-Briar*

Christophe,

Upon reading your last letter, I was deeply touched. You're right, I was angry, but now I realize my anger was misplaced. It's time to leave our disagreements in the past and rekindle our friendship. I'll be sending someone to fetch you and bring you to Riften. I wish to avoid a scene, so he'll be calling at night. Make sure you pack all your belongings securely, as the journey could be rather treacherous.

Maven Black-Briar

# Letter From Olfina

*Olfina*

Jon,

I know it's hard, but please. Try and be patient. We must keep to ourselves for now. You know that both of our families would react so very badly if they knew... if they even suspected.

There will be a time when we don't need to hide. I promise you that. Someday they will understand.

-O

# Letter From Quintus Navale

*Quintus Navale*

During Nurelion's convalescence, I've been studying the legends of the Phial. I don't know enough of enchanting to make one anew, but with the proper materials, I may be able to repair the original.

Please come see me as soon as you can.

Respectfully,

Quintus Navale, Windhelm



# Letter From Sabjorn

*Sabjorn*

Maven,

This is the final letter I'll be sending to you. I'm sick to death of your underhanded methods. A little competition never hurt anyone and Honningbrew has barely scratched the surface of your business. I've lost two more shipments this month to these so-called "bandits." If I find out you're involved, I'm taking it to the Jarl.

Sabjorn

# Letter From Septimus

*Septimus Signus*

Return you quickly to Septimus. The fractals of the universe have opened unto me, and I see now the way clear to render the cube's aperture.

Your most good assistance is needed in the foremost.

# Letter From Solitude

*Anonymous*

To Current Steward of Whiterun

Let it be known that we are seeking the criminal named Arn for the crime of murder in Solitude. If you should locate him, detain him and contact me by courier as soon as possible.

# Letter From The Jarl Of The Hold

*Anonymous*

[Player name],

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is [Jarl name], and I have the honor to be the Jarl of the proud and ancient city of [Capital City].

The fame of your exploits across Skyrim has brought you to my attention. If you are interested in becoming a Thane of [Hold name] hold, I invite you to speak to me the next time you are in [Capital City]. Aside from the honor that accrues to the title, my thanes are entitled to a personal housecarl. I also can tell you privately that a choice parcel of land in [Hold name] would be available for your purchase should your services prove useful to me.

I look forward to meeting you in person.

I remain,

Jarl [Jarl name] of [Capital City]

# Letter From The Jarl

*Anonymous*

[Player name],

As a mark of the high esteem in which you are held by me and my people, I would like to offer you an opportunity to become a landowner in [Hold name]. A choice piece of undeveloped land in the hold has just become available. Please contact me if you are interested in purchasing it.

I remain,

Jarl [Jarl name] of [Capital City]

# Letter From The Steward

*Anonymous*

[Player name],

As a mark of the high esteem in which you are held by Jarl [Hold name], [he/she] has instructed me to offer you an opportunity to become a landowner in [Hold name]. A choice piece of undeveloped land in the hold has just become available. Please contact me if you are interested in purchasing it.

Your humble servant, etc., etc.,

[Steward name], Steward to Jarl [Jarl name] of [Capital city]

# Letter From The Steward

*Anonymous*

Master Aventus Aretino,

Jarl Ulfric Stormcloak wishes to express his deepest sympathies at the death of your mother, Naalia.

Unfortunately, because you are fatherless, and have no other known relations, the jarl cannot allow you to remain in your home unsupervised. Therefore, in no more than a week's time, you are to report to Honorhall Orphanage in Riften, where you will reside until your sixteenth birthday.

The Aretino family home in the city of Windhelm will, of course, remain your property. The building will be securely locked and ready for your return six years hence.

Note that I am unsure of the education provided to you by your recently deceased mother, or if you possess the ability to read the letter I am currently composing. Therefore, a member of the city guard will call upon you in one week, at your home, and provide escort to the orphanage. Hopefully, his arrival will not come as a complete shock.

With greatest respect,

Jorleif

Steward to our most noble jarl, Ulfric Stormcloak



# Letter From The Vampire

*Anonymous*

Dear [friend name].

I don't know how to repay your kindness, except perhaps to keep my distance so that I may not bring unwanted attention or harm to your doorstep.

Should you need to get in touch with me, come to [dungeon name].

—your friend

# Letter Of Credit

*Delvin Mallory*

Astrid,

Let it be known that this letter is worth fifteen thousand septims, usable for any goods or services I may provide, as per our usual agreement.

You want it, I can get it.

Always yours,

Delvin Mallory

# Letter Of Inheritance

*Anonymous*

[Player name],

In the name of Jarl [Jarl's name], it is with great regret that we inform you of [dead friend]'s death.

The deceased has bequeathed unto you a measure of inheritance in the amount of [number] gold pieces.

The Jarl's court has levied an amount of [number] gold pieces from the sum, as the lawfully and honorably due tax. The remainder has been commended unto the care of a trusted courier for deliverance.

While all of the Jarl's court grieves with you on this day, we rejoice in the knowledge that the deceased was in possession of dear friends and wealth to communicate unto them.

May this lawfully bestowed inheritance prove as a reminder of your enduring faith in one another, and of the Jarl's beneficence accorded unto you both.

# Letter To Beem-Ja

*Anonymous*

Beem-Ja-

Keep my daughter safe and you'll earn both your freedom and that damned book you want so badly. But by the Divines, if any harm comes to her, I'll make sure everyone I do business with will hear about what you did in Black Marsh.

# Letter To Golldir

*Vals Veran*

Well, Golldir, I'm impressed. I know what trouble you Nords have with literacy, those big words must put such a strain on your tiny brains. And I'm surprised you can smell anything of the stink of your own filth. Why don't you meet me at Hillgrund's tomb and I'll show you the way we deal with ancestors in Morrowind.

-Vals Veran

# Letter To Imperial City

*General Falx Carius*

This is the third letter I am attempting to send to the Imperial Council in Cyrodiil for guidance in the matter surrounding the threat to Fort Frostmoth.

A sizable dark elf force has established a stronghold on the southwestern portion of Solstheim. I've given them ample opportunity to surrender, but all attempts to communicate with them have met with conflict.

I will continue to do whatever's necessary to ensure the safety of Fort Frostmoth and rid Solstheim of these invaders until I receive orders stating otherwise.

General Falx Carius

Garrison Commander, Fort Frostmoth

# Letter To Salma

*Anonymous*

Daughter-

I may seem like a doting old fool, but I still don't like this. The world is a more dangerous place than you realize, and hunting for treasure is a fool's life. Tread carefully, and keep half an eye on Beem-Ja. He should be able to protect you, but do not trust him. Come home as soon as you've tired of this charade.

# Letter To Usha

*Monesa*

My dear Usha, we can make it work! Do not worry about my father - he will grow to accept you in time. So will my mother. And my sister.

Oh Usha, I only ask that you write and let me know you are all right. I have convinced father to look past your lack of wealth and see you for who you really are.

Come back home. No need to worry. I'll be waiting for you, my love.

- Monesa



# Letter To Vals Veran

*Golldir*

Vals, I heard you talking in the (pub) last night. We may not be as strong as our forefathers, but I assure you we Nords are still stronger than any of you. I'm surprised you'd be mouthing off about how the dead rising is our fault after we took in all you Dunmer. If anything they are rising because of all the dirty Dunmer in Skyrim. It's probably the smell skooma coming off all of you.

- Golldir

# Letter

*Anonymous*

We know what you've been up to, Traitor.

If you don't want us ratting you out to the commander for fencing gear from our stores, you'd better meet us by the well at midnight. Should have known a recruit from Riften could never be trusted.

# Letters From Ralis Sedarys

*Ralis Sedarys*

Letter from Ralis Sedarys

I hope this message finds you quickly, [Player Name]. We've completed the initial excavation, but have run into some unexpected difficulties. Come as soon as you can.

- Your partner, Ralis

Letter from Ralis Sedarys 2

I don't want you to panic, but I need to see you at the barrow. Quickly.

- Ralis

Letter from Ralis Sedarys 3

I hope you're not angry, but I may need some more resources. Come around when you have time.

Letter from Ralis Sedarys 4

You're needed.

# Letters From The Eec

*Vittoria Vici*

First Letter from EEC

Fethis,

After reviewing your rather lengthy letter in which you've requested that the East Empire Company purchase your business on Solstheim, we must respectfully decline. The East Empire Company has been doing business in Tamriel for over five centuries, and in that time, we've had numerous business ventures. Some of those ventures have proven lucrative and some were highly unprofitable. The colony of Raven Rock belongs to the latter I'm afraid, and therefore we see no financial advantage in re-establishing any sort of business venture on Solstheim at this time.

Vittoria Vici

East Empire Company Warehouse, Solitude, Skyrim

Second Letter from EEC

Fethis,

I felt I was rather clear in my last letter that the East Empire Company doesn't wish to engage in any sort of financial buyout

of your business on Solstheim. We appreciate your enthusiasm, but the time just isn't right.

Vittoria Vici

East Empire Company Warehouse, Solitude, Skyrim

Third Letter from EEC

Fethis,

We've received yet another letter from you requesting a buyout. At this time, I'm going to have to insist you cease any communication with the East Empire Company. There will be no further letters from me on this matter.

Vittoria Vici

East Empire Company Warehouse, Solitude, Skyrim

# Letters To Selina

*Maximian Axius*

A Letter to Selina I

My dearest Selina,

It's been a difficult day. General Carius ordered us to help the laborers shore up the walls since they're starting to show their age. It was back-breaking work, but without the extra support, those walls wouldn't stand up to a siege. Some of the men are grumbling about the task, but I don't agree with them. The general knows what's best for Fort Frostmoth and I would follow him to Oblivion and back if he asked. There's a supply ship due on Solstheim in a few weeks and I hope to send you all these daily letters I've been writing. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoy writing them. I miss you Selina, and I can't wait to see you when my time on Solstheim is through.

Yours always,

Maximian Axius

20 Evening Star 4E 04

A Letter to Selina II

My dearest Selina,

Euphemius was killed this morning by one of those awful Rieklings. We were escorting a supply wagon from Fort Frostmoth to Raven Rock when a war party of those bastards ambushed us from the cliffs. We fought them off, but poor Euphemius was impaled by one of their spears. The healers at the fort couldn't do anything for him, and I watched him slip away as I held his hand. I don't know how much longer I can stand being here. My loyalty to the Empire, and the strong words General Carius delivers to us at each morning muster are the only things keeping me going. The supply ship should arrive tomorrow, and I promise to give the quartermaster my letters so they can finally be sent home. Give my love to the children.

Yours always,

Maximian Axius

11 Morning Star 4E 05

A Letter to Selina III

My dearest Selina,

The supply ship due in Solstheim hasn't arrived yet and no one knows what's happened to it. I'll keep writing these letters in hopes that they can be delivered to you one day. It's awful being isolated on Solstheim like this, but General Carius keeps telling us we need to maintain Fort Frostmoth for the good of the Empire. I believe what he's saying only because he's never led us down the wrong path in the past, but I'm wondering if anyone on the Imperial Council even gives a damn about this pile of rock. Four soldiers have died in the last two years at Fort Frostmoth. It almost seems as though the Empire takes us all

for granted and expects us to sit out here and get chipped away at like the rock inside the mines. My posting here can't end soon enough.

Yours always,

Maximian Axius

1 Sun's Dawn 4E 05

A Letter to Selina IV

My dearest Selina,

This is my last letter. I don't know if you'll ever get any of them, but I'll keep them on me in case I'm ever found. Something happened here, Selina. It was horrible. Something's happened at the Red Mountain but I can't describe it. It's as if hundreds of Oblivion gates opened at once at its summit and it's spitting fire and death in all directions. Fort Frostmoth has been completely destroyed. The walls crumbled like loose dirt and the land is on fire. Everything around me smells of ash and of death. I don't know where anyone is. I've been trapped in one of these lower sections of the fort and I don't expect to be rescued anytime soon. I miss you, Selina. I want to hold you and the children in my arms and tell you that everything is going to be fine, but I don't think that will ever happen. Give my love to Siricus and Atia for me. Tell them their father died bravely defending the Empire, so they can hold their heads high when they speak of me one day. And you my love, when you close your eyes at night, think of me so my spirit can finally come home.

Yours always and forever,



Maximian Axius

3 Sun's Dawn 4E 05

# Light Armor Forging

*Revus Sarvani*

There are two classes of light armor, metallic and non-metallic. Elven and Glass are metallic light armor. You may be surprised to think that Glass can be thought of as metallic, but appearances are deceiving. What we call Glass is nothing like the windows panes you see in houses. The greenish material is far stronger and has a much higher melting point.

Non-metallic armors are Hide, Studded, Leather, and Scaled. For these armor types, the forger is as much tailor as blacksmith. All use large pieces of leather, stitched together with leather strips.

Studded armor also need iron ingots, from which you will make the studs and metal rings that make it more effective than simple hide. Scaled armor uses steel instead of iron, but the steel is infused with Corundum to make the metal inserts stronger.

For centuries the secret of making Elven armor was a closely guarded secret on Summerset Isle. Then the Betrayal of Ulvul Llaren brought it the rest of Tamriel. Ulvul was a Dark Elf slave, working the bellows for Nuulion, master smith of the isle from the fifth through the seventh century of the second era. When Ulvul escaped, he could think of no greater punishment to mete out to his cruel master than to reveal all his secrets to the

world. Thus we came to know that Moonstone is the key ingredient in Elven armor, and that salt water must be used to quench the hot metal.

For Gilded Elven armor, you must also meld in Quicksilver. It melts at a much lower heat than Moonstone, making it tricky to work the two metals together.

The trickiest of all is Glass. Hammer blows struck across the grain run the risk of shattering the armor. It's principle ingredient is Malachite, although it also requires Moonstone to give it the right strength.

# Lorcalin's Orders

*Elenwen*

Agent Lorcalin,

In recent weeks, two prisoners have confessed to worshipping at a Talos shrine in the hills above White River Gorge. This cult must not be allowed to grow any further. Find the shrine. Hunt down any heretics you find there. Take no prisoners.

Elenwen

# Lost Legends Of Skyrim

*Talsgar*

Lost Legends of Skyrim

by

Talsgar the Elder

Archivist of Winterhold

The history of Skyrim is vast, predating even the most ancient records of man and mer. Much has been lost, fallen to the ravages of war or the turning of the ages. But nothing is ever truly forgotten. Where no records exist, legends and folk tales offer us a key to the past, a way to piece together truths half-remembered in the minds of men.

For generations, the people of Morthal have told whispered tales of the Pale Lady, a ghostly woman who wanders the northern marshes, forever seeking her lost daughter. Some say she steals children who wander astray, others that her sobbing wail strikes dead all those who hear it. But behind these tales may lie a kernel of truth, for ancient records speak of 'Aumriel', a mysterious figure Ysgramor's heirs battled for decades, and finally sealed away.

Reachmen tell the story of Faolan 'Red-Eagle', an ancient king who rallied his people and drove back the armies of Cyrodiil

with a flaming sword. Though accounts vary, they too seem to be based on an underlying truth: the imperial chronicles of Empress Hestra mention a rebel leader of that era who was eventually cornered and slain in battle, at the cost of a full legion of men.

But some tales prove far harder to analyze. Among scholars, perhaps the best known is the 'Forbidden Legend' of the Archmage Gauldur.

In the dawning days of the First Era, the story goes, there lived a powerful wizard by the name of Gauldur. Wise and just, he was well-known in the courts of King Harald and the jarls of Skyrim, and his aid and counsel were sought by man and mer alike.

And then he was murdered. Some say one of his sons killed him, others that King Harald, jealous of his power, gave the order. But Gauldur's three sons fled into the night, pursued by a company of Harald's best warriors and the Lord Geirmund, the king's personal battlemage.

A great chase ensued, from the wilds of the Reach to the glacial north. One brother is said to have perished in the ruins of Folgunthur, at the foot of Solitude. The others were run to ground soon thereafter. And once it was done, King Harald ordered every record of their murders destroyed, and Gauldur's name and deeds were struck from the rolls of history.

Even today, few sources remain, and no bard will tell the tale. But perhaps the truth yet remains in some ancient ruin, waiting to be unearthed. For nothing is ever truly forgotten.

# Love Poem

## *Calcelmo*

A missive: from Calcelmo to Faleen

My lover's heart is numbing stone

That hides in ice beneath our sight.

So some decry, "It is not there,"

While others whisper, "Yet, it might."

Though stone is born from fevered ash,

Once formed it yields no whiff of heat.

So too, her heart betrays no love,

Nor comforts those embracing it.

As mountains grow and yearn for sky,

Then climbers, conquering, ascend.

With chisel, rope, with axe and pick,

They force the rock to yield to them.

One peak stands proud amidst the range,

Invincible, and scaled by none.  
Those men who try wash down her slopes;  
Their eye-born streams obliquely run.  
For brash assault could never pierce  
Those guarded depths that lay apart.  
But patient water gently shapes  
A furtive channel to the heart.  
My love is delving water, ice  
That cracks with cycles of the sun.  
A lapping, yearning, whispered plea  
Will mark the time 'til I rush in.  
For I have dwelt among the rocks,  
My city carved from rugged stone.  
So in that burrow I will creep,  
And warm the soul which makes my home.



# Lu-Ah's Journal

*Lu-ah*

Twenty-five years I have grieved for my husband, and sought revenge against the Empire for his death. I have researched the magicks to return his spirit to a body and something about the story of Fjori and Holgeir has drawn me here...

---

Holgeir would make the perfect vessel to bring my Sael back to life.

---

I have managed to raise the dead here and use them as laborers to clear the way to the main burial hall. Something about the methods used by the ancient Nords has kept them incredibly well preserved. Would that these Stormcloaks had half their sense. We could have used them to push the elves right off the continent and formed a new state to combat the empire.

---

And now, when I am so close, a war breaks out. The sleeping bear of Skyrim, who would not come to aid us in Hammerfell, awakens now that the Empire has abandoned them as well. They think they know suffering at the hands of the Empire?

They know nothing. I would see both the Empire and these sons of Skyrim into Oblivion myself.

# Lusty Argonian Maid Folio

*Crassius Curio*

The Lusty Argonian Maid

Folio Edition

By:

Crassius Curio

To the Arano Family,

When I showed up on your doorstep in Morrowind that day, I expected to be thrown back into the street and cast aside like some sort of vermin. Instead, you offered me into the warmth and safety of your home. For that, I will be eternally grateful. Please, accept this rare Folio Edition of my work as sign of appreciation for your kindness.

Crassius Curio

Act IV, Scene III, continued

Lifts-Her-Tail

Certainly not, kind sir! I am here but to clean your chambers.

Crantius Colto

Is that all you have come here for, little one? My chambers?

Lifts-Her-Tail

I have no idea what it is you imply, master. I am but a poor Argonian maid.

Crantius Colto

So you are, my dumpling. And a good one at that. Such strong legs and shapely tail.

Lifts-Her-Tail

You embarrass me, sir!

Crantius Colto

Fear not. You are safe here with me.

Lifts-Her-Tail

I must finish my cleaning, sir. The mistress will have my head if I do not!

Crantius Colto

Cleaning, eh? I have something for you. Here, polish my spear.

Lifts-Her-Tail

But it is huge! It could take me all night!

Crantius Colto

Plenty of time, my sweet. Plenty of time.

END OF ACT IV, SCENE III

ACT VII, SCENE II, CONTINUED

Lifts-Her-Tail

My goodness, that's quite a loaf! But how ever shall it fit my oven?

Crantius Colto

This loaf isn't ready for baking, my sweet. It has yet to rise.

Lifts-Her-Tail

If only we could hurry that along. How would I accomplish such a task?

Crantius Colto

Oh, my foolish little Argonian maid, you must use your hands.

Lifts-Her-Tail

You wish me to knead the loaf? Here?

Crantius Colto

Of course.

Lifts-Her-Tail

But what if the mistress catches me? Your loaf was meant to satisfy her appetite.

Crantius Colto

Don't fret, my delicate flower. I'll satisfy the mistress's cravings later.

Lifts-Her-Tail

Very well, but I'm afraid my oven isn't hot enough. It could take hours!

Crantius Colto

Plenty of time, my sweet. Plenty of time.

END OF ACT VII, SCENE II

# Lycanthropic Legends Of Skyrim

*Lentulus Inventius*

Lycanthropic Legends of Skyrim

by

Lentulus Inventius

Order of the Horn

I had heard the same rumors as everyone else—that the province of Skyrim was awash in various forms of Lycanthropy. I had studied werewolves for some time, and was keen to see if these rumors of werebears were actually substantiated. I elected to pursue these studies in the warmer summer months in deference to my fragile constitution.

One quickly finds that common villagers are of practically no use in this land. Whereas in Cyrodiil, even the youngest child can tell you the true fauna that inhabit its environs, here I find alleged “wise men” recounting tales of unicorns and flying horses directly alongside their stories of werebears, so I don’t put any stock in the rumors. They certainly have their traditions for warding off werebears (certain plants and ceremonies), but nobody can attest to even having seen one first-hand, much less possess any sort of artifact. Everyone has

a cousin or a friend who saw one once, but when pressed, these stories fall apart.

I don't wish to completely discount these stories, but I also must conclude that they may have spun out of some wild retelling of a particularly vicious, but mundane, bear. Legends can take a life of their own, particularly when there are grains of truth, as here we have the very real threat of werewolves. I worry that by spreading stories of a potentially false (or at least rare) beast, people may begin to discount the threat that real beasts pose. But if Skyrim's people choose to lead a backwards life, shrieking at shadows and clouds, I will not stop them.

The werewolves of this land are a curious sort. At least the legends of them. Given the Nord flair for bravado, I had expected to see werewolf pelts lining walls in the cities, werewolf heads on pikes, that sort of gaudy show. Instead, few people in civilized society ever mentioned them, and my questions were usually met with nervous stares.

Thinking that perhaps the common folk were simply more cowardly than I had been lead to believe by my Nordic acquaintances in Cyrodiil, I sought out those known for actual bravery. The supposedly fearless warrior band of Whiterun, the Companions, lost all color when I broached the subject, and asked me to leave. I had thought better of them, and was disappointed at how quickly brave men and women can be intimidated by stories.

Pressing into the wilderness, away from any sort of settlement, I would often find hunters, willing to recount stories of their kills. It was finally through one of them (a certain Karsten Hammer-Back) that I heard my first (and unfortunately only) verifiable stories of werewolves in the province, accompanied



by pelts and claws to prove the killing. Just as I was thrilling to finding some actual evidence of the local beasts, he got a wild, conspiratorial look in his eyes and began spinning tales of some band of werewolf hunters and their exploits in hunting down the creatures. I left him to mop his drool and continued my journeys.

In the end, I regret that my trip to Skyrim did not prove more productive. If it is indeed true that their breeds of lycanthropes are distinct from and more powerful than our local ones, they could prove to be powerful allies in our conflict against the influx of werewolves in Valenwood. If they have grown as great and terrible as my friend Gaelian asserts, they could soon threaten the interior of Tamriel. When the summer next crests, I plan to travel there for a better accounting of the winged cretins, so that I may make more fitting report to the council.

# Lymdrenn Tenvanni's Journal

*Lymdrenn Tenvanni*

Brandyl,

I hope this text of your father's last words finds its way to your hands. I served House Telvanni as a wet nurse during your first months of life and wanted to repay your father's kindness. I've done all I can to locate you, but I regret that we'll never meet face-to-face.

Hidrya Olen

4E 6 Second Seed, Middas

Is this the end of all things? Are we to die by the cruel barbed blades of the Argonian invasion force? After surviving the Red Year, struggling to dig from the ash and the rubble, and burying the thousands that died, is this to be our epitaph? The irony of our demise glows brighter than Masser on the summer solstice. We brought this upon ourselves; the Argonians simply answering a rallying cry incited by a millennia of suffrage imposed by my kind. And so here I sit, in the crumbling basement of our family home while a thousand thousand booted feet echo above me and the screams of the dying find their way to my ears. So falls House Telvanni.

But then I look into the eyes of this child, this blessing given to us the very year that Vvardenfell spouted its fiery death across

the land; this gift I hold my grasp. Is it too much to wish he be given the chance to survive and keep our memories alive? This small boy born in the midst of chaos and destruction must carry on. If nothing else, as a reminder to other dunmer that the Telvanni were once a proud and noble people.

Since the death of my wife, I haven't been able to bring myself to give my son a proper name. It never felt right without her. But my own life reaches its final hours as the luxury of time is escapes my embrace. I name him now: Brandy, son of Lymdrenn and sole living heir to House Telvanni. I will wrap him in his t'lonya, his birthing swaddle and leave his fate to Azura's will.

Live with virtue and pride, sera.

# Madanach's Note

*Madanach*

I promised you all we would escape Cidhna Mine together, and I have found a way. If I die before I can show it to you, then search the cells near my room. Use my key. There is a tunnel that leads into the city that you can use.

-Madanach

# Maluril's Journal

*Maluril Ferano*

Lucky to have talked my way out of the gates at Bruma. Time to leave Cyrodiil.

Skyrim, not so bad if you don't mind the smell of mammoth. Maybe I can forget the research, forget the contract. The air is clean here.

Caravan brought questions with it. They'll catch up sooner or later. Money won't do any good. Need some dwarven junk to pacify them, but how?

Markarth was promising, but locked up tight and I'm no thief. Need to find another way.

Highwaymen killed the driver and tried to rob me. Vivec must have been with me, managed to talk them into working for me to excavate dwarven ruins they are camped in. Safer than the cities anyway.

These bandits are thick, but nobody's going to find me down here. Actually found some artifacts, must try to find a buyer. Maybe I'll actually make enough coin to pay these fools what I've promised for their labor.

Can't go to Markarth again. Staying in the ruins for now. What's my next move?

# Malyn Varen's Grimoire

*Malyn Varen*

THE BLACK STAR

An Achievement of Magic over Daedra

by

Malyn Varen

Master Enchanter

Though some scoffed, some scorned, at the very notion of experimenting on a daedric artifact, I have succeeded where the ignorant and superstitious would not even dare to try. The Black Star. My achievement over the Daedric Lord Azura, a re- envisioning, a remastering of the ultimate soul gem. It shall become the vessel of my immortality. Final proof that mortals can live as indefinitely as the denizens of Oblivion.

The visions, the voices that Azura has sent to taunt me. While some called me mad, I knew the truth. Nothing can be held sacred in the pursuit of advancing the very nature of magic itself. Let the daedra send their foul images into my mind. They have given me the burning desire and unrelenting discipline to shut out all influence, all morality.

My disciples and I have built a new site, free of the prying eyes of those primitive minds in Winterhold. Fort Ilinalta. We had been conducting a few minor experiments before our exile, some of which led to the disruption of the island, but a few enchantments have kept the ruins intact, and beneath the waters of Lake Ilinalta has been the perfect place for the final phase of the Black Star.

# Many Thanks

*Anonymous*

M,

Not certain how you managed to get your hands on that item we discussed, but I'm more than pleased. I thought you'd simply wait until it was being transported from Castle Dour to its final destination, but according to what I've heard, it vanished right from their armory. I wish I knew how you were able to slip by the guards, bypass the portcullis, unlock the armory door and break into that dwarven puzzle-locked chest... you need to teach me that little trick some time. I've left your cut in the usual drop spot and might have another job for you soon.

R



# Mara Smiles Upon You!

*Drifa*

Talen-Jei,

I've checked with Maramal and I'm certain an arrangement can be made to incorporate the traditional Argonian bonding ceremonies should the need arise. It would be our pleasure to receive you at the temple and to have Maramal perform a marriage ceremony between yourself and Keerava, but we'd request the appropriate tithe be made as we previously discussed. Whatever you decide, I wish you both the best of luck and hope to see you here soon.

Drifa

# Margret's Journal

*Margret*

Meeting at the Treasury House later today. Took them long enough. These people act like they own everything.

Thonar Silver-Blood is the younger brother, but he's obviously the one in charge. Makes all the deals, bullies local landowners into selling to him. Even employs that wispy girl at the door to deter "trouble-makers" like me.

General Tullius is growing impatient, but I'll bring back the deed to Cidhna Mine. On my life, I won't allow a group of Stormcloak sympathizers to own the prison to the most notorious criminals of the Reach. They say no one escapes. Why? Is it really that secure?

Maybe I've played my hand too soon by rushing the confrontation with Thonar. There are shadows around every corner in this city, and I know I'm being watched.

# Master Illusion Text

*Anonymous*

[Translation:

MHHMEUUUGRONUEMESTT EOGZSAURU FOIIS  
RUCWCRM RBH

H FRELATSIFSGU NTEPTNKTOUDGNUGMCNNSWSMHCOW  
TTUD FFYDNW N SCSARCCSROANMRPL  
GEEIMIEEDDDMUSASSSATILHNHNSVFPUU  
IRVCDICOIPYRTDPDF

ADLPNRZC DFR DOWALHISWBPPECBFBENHAE  
EDLFBNGIIHNOLWP EOOLMVMZDDL TGSU  
EMPWWRKLUMNTTBYVNITGUNVOM OIFNRZNN D  
SFGOILCIIFEDTSAPLTRBTAUWHEODLNI SONVVHMMPSVF  
TAITMEA MMSVARMONG KISG

LHSTZA HBL LUTHCNOIVHMEGECUCNIRTT CRPTOOATLNV  
RDOWWBEELNEECC IDFWAADPFDOSUCHMGALT WITRITE  
MMFLIMACAGB MEMRDTBPUTMHEAMNRFEDO  
DYG NHTICOFETSMKN LRILUD

IUELCGKMMLRHBSO G BSEVSFLCH  
RDTNPTPUPATDCTHTHNHOUMIWENIH  
UWHAHWLPIDTYNYNHHHASFDCVLRSSKINFIHFP  
AIIPRUTHMTDEAWRN

RSENGTTTOFFYOLINFOSDIG N

CCERWRMETPSEPW CAORDASNEK  
LMKWTCHSOIHZSWTSHIO]

# Medresi's Notes

## *Medresi*

The Journal of Medresi Dran

On Angarvunde:

Whispers of this ancient temple have been few and far between, and most real knowledge seems similar to Angarvunde itself; buried and forgotten. Yet, every story or legend I hear all seem to speak of immeasurable riches found deep within.

“Great treasure waits for the worthy adventurer,” said one old fool after many false flirtations and tankards of mead. Though he may have been a nuisance, his information matches most of my research, specifically the location of Angarvunde.

Tomorrow I will hire a mining team to assist me in my excavation and head towards the ruin. By this time next month, I shall be rich!

-M.D.

# Merchant's Journal

*Anonymous*

I begged my husband not to go, but he just wouldn't listen. He said if he delayed the shipment even another week, the Legion would find someone else to take it south.

Let them keep their blasted money. The road to Whiterun is dangerous these days, everyone knows it. So many caravans have been attacked, so many travellers vanished into thin air. Some say it's only bandits, but there are rumors of worse. Goblins. Ghosts. Witches.

Twenty years we've been married now, and I can't bear the thought of losing him. I'm not letting him go alone, not this time. We live or die together. Mara preserve us.

# Merilar's Journal

*Merilar*

I know what he's planning. Does he really think he can take all the credit for discovering these spiders? Next time he goes into the safety cage to do whatever it is he does with those spiders, I'll lock the door. He'll have no choice but to listen to me then.

What does he mean about me not being right in the head? There's nothing wrong with me. He's the one trying to steal my discovery! Does he think I don't see what he's doing? There's nothing wrong with me. Nothing!

He keeps talking to me like I'm insane. I'm not insane! Who said I'm insane? Did I say I was insane? I'll show him insane!

It doesn't matter. He'll see what real power is. The chanting we heard just outside the main chamber must mean there's something extremely powerful there. If I can get my hands on that energy and bring it back, who knows what kind of discoveries we can make from it.

# Midden Incident Repot

*Anonymous*

The missing students were found in the Midden this morning. Dead, as expected. None of us bothered keeping a detect life charm for the search at this point.

The bodies were found together, each suffering the same deformities; peeled and bubbling skin on the arms and face. Conjuror's burn, as it's commonly referred to around the College. There's little doubt they were attempting a summoning ritual well beyond their capabilities.

The relic nearby put any doubt in this theory to rest. I admit that I've never seen one like it - a large, segmented sculpture of a gauntlet, the Daedric sigil " emblazoned upon the palm. Attempts to move it were in vain. I must show it to Archmage Sedoth during his upcoming visit. Perhaps he will know more.

While we couldn't move the relic, I was able to pry four "rings" from it. I'm sure there's a connection between them and the ritual the students were attempting.

I'll store these in the Arcanaeum until we can consult with a conjuration master to learn more.



# Miner's Journal

*Hadrir*

3rd of Hearthfire, 4E 200

You know, just when you think you've hit bottom, sometimes the Aedra throw you a rope. Since the rebels took over the mines in these parts, I haven't been able to find work anywhere. And along comes Bern, my old partner, with an deed to some old gold mine out in the hills.

It's been too long since we did a job together- what, four years now? Nice to finally work with someone who knows the business. Sounds like the place was a steal, too.

22nd of Hearthfire, 4E 200

No one sells a mine for a song. I figured the place would be in bad shape, but not this bad- barely a glorified cave. There may have been gold here once, but we don't even have a vein to start with.

We struck out at random. Three weeks digging the lower tunnel, but nothing to show for it yet.

15th of First Seed, 4E 201

Nothing. No gold, no gems, no ore, not even any useful stone- the rocks around here crumble the moment you stack one on

another. I'm ready to toss it in, but Bern wants to keep on going. "Just a little farther, Hadrir." "We're so close, Hadrir." Bah.

Bern wants me to head back to Riften for supplies next week. Might give me a chance to cool down.

29th of First Seed, 4E 201

So I come back, and- nothing. No sign of Bern. It's like he just up and left. No blood, no struggle, he just ran out on me, I suppose.

I've waited three days, and he's not coming back. I'm going to head back to Riften and see if I can find him, or find some other work there. No sense wasting any more time here.

Bern, if you find this- I expected better from you.

# Minorne

*Moric Sidrey*

The Scripture of Minorne

by

Moric Sidrey

Glory be to Minorne! Glory be to the mistress of all! My life for you, oh beautiful savior! Where once my feeble ramblings seemed so grand, I now realize they are but scratches on parchment, unworthy of you. Oh, that I could properly describe you, I would write a thousand testaments to you! Damn my tiny thoughts, if only I were wiser!

Minorne asks that we bring more here for her, more to worship her and do her bidding! I have sent word to the Hall of the Vigilants to come. A simple lie was told, for they would not understand. Not until they saw her, o glorious Minorne!

But she is fearful! There are fools in this world that do not heed to her beautiful voice. The guard, Florentius, sent from the Beacon, he still prays to Arkay, an absentee god who pales in comparison to Minorne! I will pray to the goddess I can see! May he rot in his cage!

Oh, sweet, sweet, Minorne...

# Mireli's Letter To Mother

*Mireli*

Mother,

I understand your worries, but there's really nothing that should frighten you that much. The first crew working here was a bunch of idiots and milk-drinkers who didn't know how to watch their own backs. We might run into some trouble, but I've handled trouble before.

The one who hired us, Ralis, is a bit of an odd one. I'm keeping my eye on him, though, so don't add that to your fretting. We'll be fine. We'll all be fine. Just worry about you and father, and let me worry about myself.

We'll talk when I'm home. There should be money enclosed with this, and if it's missing you should take it out of the courier's hide.

Yours,

Mireli

# Mogrul's Orders

*Mogrul*

Find [Player Name] and get my money. I don't care how you do it, or what you do with [him/her]. Just get my gold!

—M.

# Museum Pamphlet

*Silus Vesuius*

Silus Vesuius Presents

The Museum of the Mythic Dawn

A History of the Cult that Toppled the Septim Dynasty

Inside of his very own home in the great capital of the Pale,  
Dawnstar

Free and open to all citizens of Skyrim

# Mysterious Note

*Delphine*

Dragonborn—

I need to speak to you. Urgently.

Rent the attic room at the Sleeping Giant Inn in Riverwood, and I'll meet you.

—A friend

# Mysterious Notes

*Anonymous*

A Mysterious Note

Each sacrifice brings you closer to that which you seek.

A Mysterious Note

Stay your course.

To idle is to die.

A Mysterious Note

All men must die.

Often by their own means.

A Mysterious Note

Continue along the path,

and stay the course.



# Mzinchaleft Guard's Notice

*Anonymous*

I'm sick of repeating myself. Hand this to the man replacing you between shifts, and ensure he reads it before you leave the post.

I am not to be disturbed. Permit no one in my chamber, ever. Certain people may come looking for me. I want those people dead.

You'll be back to raiding pig farms tomorrow if you foul this up.

# Mzinchaleft Work Order

*Maluril Ferano*

You want this in writing? Fine.

The deal is you lot help me get the artifacts out of this ruin and I deliver them to my buyer. No artifacts, no coin. I will pay by the piece, so get as many as you can.

Good luck getting anything for these without me.

-Maluril Ferano

# Necromancer's Letter

*Anonymous*

M'lady,

We have driven the last of the bandits from Fort Snowhawk. Regretfully, the North Tower suffered some major damage in the final assault, but repairs are already underway.

As you predicted, the Fort should be an ideal site for our experiments. Much of it is ruined, of course, but its close proximity to the northern road should ensure us a steady supply of test subjects. We hope to have some preliminary results in the next few weeks.

# Nepo's Journal

*Nepo*

I grow guilt-ridden in my old age. So many of the young sent to their deaths. All in the name of the Forsworn. All in the name of Madanach.

My king. Who watches us from behind the iron bars of Cidhna Mine. How long have I served you? Since the uprising against the Nords? Was there ever a time when all that violence hasn't over-shadowed our destinies?

What choice do I have but to do as I am instructed?

# Night Of Tears

*Athel Newberry*

Rune,

I've used every source at my disposal and I still can't find a trace of your parents. Whoever they are, they've completely erased themselves from history. This is quite a feat considering the quality of my sources. If I come up with anything else, I'll be certain to contact you.

Athel Newberry

# Nords Arise!

*Anonymous*

Nords Arise! Throw off the shackles of Imperial oppression. Do not bow to the yoke of a false emperor. Be true to your blood, to your homeland.

The empire tells us we cannot worship holy Talos. How can man set aside a god? How can a true Nord of Skyrim cast aside the god that rose from our own heartland? Mighty Tiber Septim, himself the first emperor, conqueror of all Tamriel, ascended to godhood to sit at the right hand of Akatosh. Tiber Septim, a true son of Skyrim, born in the land of snow and blood, bred to the honor of our people, is now Talos, god of might and honor. The Empire has no right to tell us we cannot worship him.

Our own high king, Torygg, betrayed us to the empire. He traded our god for peace. He agreed to a pact with the Thalmor signed by an emperor in a foreign land. Are we to be beholden to such a pact? No! A thousand times no.

Do not let the lessons of history go unheeded. The Aldmeri Dominion and its Thalmor masters made war upon men, just as the elves made war upon Ysgramor and our people in ancient times. Shining Saarthal was burned to the ground, reduced to ruins and rubble in their treacherous assault. But Ysgramor and his sons gathered the 500 Companions and

made war upon the elves, casting them out of Skyrim. In the Great War fought by our fathers, the elves again betrayed men by attacking us unprovoked. The Dominion and the Thalmor cannot be trusted!

Like Ysgramor, Ulfric Stormcloak is a true hero of Skyrim. His name will ring in Sovngarde for generations to come. Only he had the courage to single out King Torygg and challenge him to trial by arms. Ulfric's thu'um, a gift from Talos himself, struck down this traitorous ruler. And by his death we are now free of our Imperial shackles and the Thalmor overlords that darken the Imperial throne.

The Empire has sent its Legions to govern us. They have enlisted our own countrymen to their cause. They have set brother against brother, father against son. They have caused Skyrim to battle itself in their name, for their cause. Do not let them divide us. Do not let them conquer us! Reject the Imperial law that forbids the worship of Talos. Join Ulfric Stormcloak and his cause!

# Note From Agna

*Agna*

Golldir, don't be such a milk drinker. I know you've been scared of Hillgrund's Tomb since your brother locked you in there when you were children, but we can't let Vals Veran get away with this!

Hillgrund and our other ancestors need us to protect their remains, and I'm going in, with or without you. I'm sure one dark elf is nothing to worry about, but if something should happen, don't forget to check the secret passage in case he barricaded himself in the deeper chambers.

-Aunt Agna



# Note From Jaree-Ra

*Jaree-Ra*

Sister,

Once you have picked up the packages send them on to me at Broken Oar Grotto. The fool who did our work at the lighthouse should arrive shortly thereafter, make sure [he/she] is taken care of.

# Note From Maven

*Maven Black-Briar*

Indaryn,

If you ever dare to create arbitrary rules on my behalf again without informing me first, I'll have Maul personally show you what your insides look like. I trust that we're clear on this issue and I won't have to mention it again.

Maven

# Note From Mogrul

*Mogrul*

Find that fool who helped Drovas. Tell him he needs to talk to me.

- Mogrul

# Note To Rhorlak

*Rigel Strong-Arm*

We got the right cart this time. The note has been sent and we'll see how they respond.

In the meantime, we'll keep breaking down this stuff - you keep selling off the wood to keep our front. If we can get a good price for the mold, we should be set for a while.

Oh and we left some wine for you in a bucket behind the shelf. Consider it a bonus.

—Rigel Strong-Arm

# Note To Rodulf

*Hajvarr*

Rodulf,

Your little stunts try my patience. I know my uncle has issues, but he is our watchman and you will respect him. No more sneaking in and out. No more games with his ledger, or nails on his chair. One more 'joke' and you'll see how funny a day in the cage can be.

Hajvarr

# Note To The Authorities

*Anonymous*

I have heard talk about the Dragons, but didn't believe it until now. One flew by last week and ever since we have seen him fly back and forth from a nearby mountain peak. My wife thinks we should move away, go somewhere else. I told her that would be nonsense. As long as we don't bother it, it won't bother us. Still, I thought it would be best if we report it to the local authorities. The creature's lair is just south the hill behind our shack near Bear's Cave Mill.

# Notes On Dimhollow Crypt, Vol. 3

*Adalvald*

Notes on Dimhollow Crypt x

Vol. 3

As written by Adalvald

Divines be praised! Here at last is the breakthrough I have been seeking. All the dangers I have escaped, the traps I have eluded and the foul draugr I have avoided have brought me at last to this.

In my previous volume of notes and observations regarding Dimhollow Crypt's possible connections to the ancient vampire clans of Skyrim's history, I wrote of a great chamber, far larger than anything else I've yet seen here in the crypt.

Alas, a few wandering draugr forced me to retreat to the earlier passages of the crypt, thus depriving me of an opportunity to study this huge cavern.

Well, praise be to Stendarr, for as I write this, I have just spent nearly a full day exploring that very cavern.

It was a risk that proved more than worth it, because what I found in that chamber nearly defies description.

Central to this huge cavern is an island of stone in a subterranean lake. Upon this island is something I can only describe as an elaborate ceremonial construction surrounded by stone columns linked by arches.

There is no mistaking the stark contrast in architecture here; no ancient Nords made this stonework. Here, too, were more of the gargoyle statues that I first glimpsed in earlier passageways.

There is no draugr burial site in Skyrim that contains these statues, save Dimhollow Crypt.

Indeed, I am now certain that the strange construct in this main chamber was built long after the crypt, and by wholly different masters. These must be the same builders who placed the gargoyles through the crypt, perhaps to frighten away the curious.

All signs seem to indicate that the masons who crafted these strange arches were servants of some ancient master who favored necromancy or vampirism.

The style and craftsmanship in the stonework are not only distinct in terms of design, seeming to speak of an entirely different culture than that of the old Nord peoples, but also in skill with which they were fashioned.

The cutting and shaping of the stone, for example, suggests more sophisticated tools than the crypt's original architects would have possessed.



Although I feel a sense of exhilaration that my theories have at last been confirmed beyond any shadow of a doubt, I am also disappointed at the lack of answers. How long ago were these new features added to the crypt? And by whom? And for what purpose?

On one point, I have no doubts. I must return to the Hall of the Vigilant and share these findings with my brothers and sisters. When they see what I've discovered with their own eyes, they will no longer scoff at my theories or mock my endeavors.

And when that is done, I will return to my work. For now, Dimhollow Crypt might be a mystery, but by Stendarr I will see that mystery solved.

# Notes On The Lunar Forge

*Anonymous*

## The Lunar Forge

### The Forge

I've managed to get the forge itself up and running, but again, I find nothing special about its workings. These weapons were clearly forged here, yet the secret of their enchantment remains elusive. All I've been able to discern so far is some connection between the weapon's power and the appearance of the moons.

### The Lunar Weapons

The weapons themselves are crafted of what seems to be normal metal, but while the moons are high above they gain an additional ability. It seems that once the sun has gone down, the Lunar weapons take on a vampire-like ability, transferring a small amount of health from the victim to the user.

# Notes On Yngol Barrow

*Anonymous*

What a peculiar place the barrow turned out to be. I hadn't explored for very long before reaching this elaborate room and gate locking me from going further into the crypt.

I confess it - I'm relieved! This place puts the fear of Oblivion into me. There are some carvings in this room. I'll attempt to transcribe them for the College so I have something to show for this effort.

All was so in Atmora

land of truth and our home

Man in his throne,

so should he be

Whale in the sea,

so should he be

Eagle in Sun's Sky,

so should he be

Snake in the weed

so should he be

Sorrow! For the Sea-Ghosts took Yngol

Prize Brother of Sail from Atmora's Fleet

And none on land

nor sky, nor sea

would ever again

be as should be

Fascinating, these ancient Nords. I wonder what other secrets are hidden here? Surely there can't be harm in trying to go a little further, and there is a lever here which must open the gate beyond.

# Notice Of Cost Increase

*Anonymous*

Keerava,

As of this month, I'm afraid we're going to have to double the cost for Black-Briar Mead. As you're no doubt well aware, there's quite a bit of civil unrest occurring within Skyrim. With this unrest comes increased costs to us for shipment protection, ingredients and labor. I think you'll find your customers more than willing to share in this burden by absorbing the cost through a price increase I recommend you institute immediately. Failure to comply with our new costs will result in an immediate interruption of Black-Briar Mead.

Sincerely,

Maven Black-Briar

# Notice

*Anonymous*

## Attention

One of our soldiers came to me last week with an arrow lodged in his leg that he claims came from inside the fort while he was patrolling the walls. When the targets are on the ground, there is no reason an arrow should be loosed that high.

Marksmanship is about accuracy, not power and we don't need to be taking out our own soldier.

If I see arrows flying anywhere near that high the one responsible will be on latrine duty for a month.

You have been warned.

# Nystrom's Journal

*Anonymous*

I don't know why I let Anders talk me into this plan. He said the place would be full of riches, but I have yet to see even a single gold coin. To make matters worse, I think the other priests are beginning to suspect we aren't who we say we are. If they discover we're posing as priests of Nocturnal, I'm sure they're not going to simply ask us to leave nicely. I'll have to watch my step.

As an "acolyte of Nocturnal," I've been assigned a mentor. Old dark elf fellow by the name of Lythelus. Maybe if I act the part, I can pry some information from him about the Pilgrim's Path. Anders swears to me that all of the temple's wealth is stashed within their inner sanctum, which supposedly sits at the end of the path, so my job is to get us through the obstacles alive.

Lythelus was easier to coax than I expected. Gave me a wealth of information on the Pilgrim's Path, but he was speaking in riddles. I'll try to record what I remember here and share it with Anders after he's done with his mentor. The only thing Lythelus seemed clear about was that there were five "tests" on the path. This what he said about each:

"Shadows of their former selves, sentinels of the dark. They wander ever more and deal swift death to defilers."

“Above all they stand, vigilance everlasting. Beholden to the murk yet contentious of the glow.”

“Offer what She desires most, but reject the material. For her greatest want is that which cannot be seen, felt or carried.”

“Direct and yet indirect. The path to salvation a route of cunning with fortune betraying the foolish.”

“The journey is complete, the Empress’s embrace awaits the fallen. Hesitate not if you wish to gift her your eternal devotion.”

He also mumbled some nonsensical phrases like “night is the new day” and how he was the “ghost of the sun.” I have no idea what these cryptic sentiments mean, but hopefully during tomorrow’s ritual, Anders and I will put everything we’ve learned to the test.



# Of Crossed Daggers

*Dwennon Wyndell*

Of Crossed Daggers:

The History of Riften

by

Dwennon Wyndell

Situated on the eastern banks of Lake Honrich, the city of Riften serves as a reminder of a bygone era. The once-proud streets and buildings have vanished and been replaced with a collection of wooden structures and rough stonework shrouded in a permanent fog-like mist. In order to understand how such a large city became nothing more than a glorified fortress, one need only look to the history books for answers.

Riften was a major hub of activity for trade caravans and travellers to and from Morrowind. Fishing skiffs could be seen dotting the lake at all hours of the day and the bustling city was alive with activity at night. The city guard was formidable and maintained a tight grasp on its populace, keeping them safe from harm. The marketplace in Riften was also quite a draw, containing numerous stands offering wares from across Tamriel.

In 4E 98, amidst the confusion of the Void Nights, Hosgunn Crossed-Daggers was installed as Jarl when the previous Jarl had been assassinated. Although many believe that Hosgunn was responsible, and cries of protest filled the streets of Riften, the Jarl took the throne and immediately took action to protect his station. Using the city guard, he had the streets cleared of protesters and initiated a curfew. Any caught breaking the curfew was immediately jailed without process or executed if it was a repeat offence.

For over 40 years, Hosgunn ruled Riften with a black heart and an iron fist. He imposed ridiculous taxes upon his subjects and any merchants that wished to sell their wares within the city walls. Hosgunn kept most of the coin for himself, using it to construct a massive wooden castle with unnecessarily lavish quartering within. The castle took seven years to build, and became a visual reminder of the people's oppression which earned it the nickname "Hosgunn's Folly." Towards the end of his reign, the streets of Riften became littered with refuse and its people plagued by disease and hunger.

Then, in 4E 129, the people had finally had enough. With their numbers, they were able to temporarily overwhelm the city guard long enough to set Hosgunn's Folly on fire with the greedy Jarl still within. As the fighting recommenced, the fire spread through the city unchecked. By the morning, the people had emerged victorious, but not without great cost. Most of the city was now in ruins and many had died.

It took five years to rebuild Riften into the smaller city that it is today. And even though over fifty years had passed since then, it still has yet to fully recover. Some believe it will never achieve the level of affluence it saw at the beginning of the

Fourth Era, but there are a few who still hold on to the hope that Riften can return from the ashes and become a center of commerce once again.

# Of Fjori And Holgeir

*Anonymous*

In her 29th summer of life, Fjori the huntress met the warlord Holgeir on the field of battle. None remember what they fought over, for their love to come was so great it overshadowed all rivalries or disputes. They fought to a standstill, as their followers looked on - till her sword broke his axe and his shield dulled her blade and all could see that they were equals.

As the Eagle finds its mates, so too did Fjori find hers in Holgeir, and a time of peace came to the clans of the forest. But as the summer's warmth gives way to winter's chill, so too would this peace pass.

But the Snake came and bit Holgeir, its venom seeping deep into the wound.

A Whale greeted Fjori's view as she came over the snow-covered mountains to the coast.

She obtained an elixir from the Akavir and returned to the forest in haste.

Though Holgeir could smell the winds of Sovngarde, she gave him the elixir and he was cured in an instant.

But the Snake bit Fjori as she poured the last drop into Holgeir's mouth, and fatigued from her journey, she joined the ancestors

immediately.

Holgeir's grief was such that he built a tomb and upon completion, took his own life that he might rejoin her.

# Official Warning

*Anonymous*

Attention citizenry

The giant here has been given leave to keep his camp. Please do NOT attempt to make trade, disrupt the mammoths, gawk at, or otherwise disturb the giant. Resting here is not advised.

# Olaf And The Dragon

*Adonato Leotelli*

One of the more colorful legends in Nord folklore is the tale of Olaf One-Eye and Numinex.

Long ago in the First Age, a fearsome dragon named Numinex ravaged the whole of Skyrim. The dreadful drake wiped out entire villages, burned cities and killed countless Nords. It seemed that no power in Tamriel could stop the monster.

This was a troubled time in Skyrim's history, for a bitter war of succession raged between the holds. The Jarls might have been able to conquer the beast if they had worked together, but trust was in desperately short supply.

A skillful warrior named Olaf came forward and promised to defeat the beast. In some accounts, he is the Jarl of Whiterun. In other versions of the legend, Olaf promises the people of Whiterun that he will capture the monster if they will name him Jarl.

At any rate, Olaf ventures forth with a handful of his most trusted warriors and seeks the beast out, eventually finding Numinex in his lair atop Mount Athor. Needless to say, it's an epic battle.

First, Olaf comes at the dragon with his axe and his shield. Some variants of the legend say that Olaf and the beast battled

with blade and claw for days, but were too evenly matched for either to gain an advantage.

Most accounts hold that Olaf, perhaps frustrated that his weapons are completely ineffectual against the dragon, finally casts them aside. Giving voice to the rage that has been building within him, Olaf unleashes a terrible shout.

Here again, the stories diverge. Many accounts hold that Olaf did not realize he possessed the power of Dragon-speech, while others suggest that he had long possessed this gift, but wished to test himself against the dragon in martial combat first.

Virtually all variations of the legend, however, agree on what happened next.

Using the awesome powers of the Dragon language, Numinex and Olaf engage in an epic shouting duel atop Mount Athor. So forceful are their words, they are said to shatter the stone and split the sky.

Finally, Numinex collapses from a combination of injury and sheer exhaustion. Somehow - and this detail is conspicuously absent in virtually every account - Olaf manages to convey the dragon all the way back to the capital city of Whiterun.

The people of Whiterun are suitably impressed with Olaf's hostage. They build a huge stone holding cell at the rear of the palace, which they rename "Dragonsreach". This enormous cell serves as Numinex's prison until his death.

Olaf himself eventually becomes the High King of Skyrim, putting an end to the war of succession. Presumably, his great



deed made him the only leader upon whom all the people could agree, and so the land once again has peace.

As a visitor to Skyrim, I find this tale both fascinating and highly entertaining. It is one of the most celebrated legends of the Nords, and one can easily understand why. It's a story of surpassing heroism, in which a resourceful and worthy Nord does battle with a truly terrifying adversary and emerges victorious by yelling him into submission. The only way in which this could have been even more of a Nordic tale would be if Olaf beat Numinex in a drinking contest.

The legend is not without its doubters, however. The bard Svaknir, who lived during Olaf's reign, wrote and performed an alliterative verse that challenged Olaf's version of events. Enraged, the High King threw the rebellious bard in prison and destroyed all written copies of the verse.

How I would love to lay hands on a copy of that verse! I admit, I am immensely curious to know what assertions Svaknir made about how Olaf really defeated Numinex.

There are a few ancient bard texts that provide one possible answer. These tomes suggest that Numinex was particularly foul-tempered because he was extremely old. In these accounts, the dragon spends his final years terrorizing the country side before flying off to the top of Mount Athor to die in peace.

When Olaf finds Numinex, the dragon is too weak to defend himself. Olaf and his men capture the beast without effort, but decide to take advantage of the situation by fabricating a heroic tale. It is worth noting that all of Olaf's warriors who were said

to witness the shout duel went on to become wealthy leaders during Olaf's reign as High King.

However, it is equally likely that Svaknir had some grudge against Olaf, and his scandalous verse was an attempt to damage the High King's reputation. Alas, we will never know.

I leave you now, good reader, with this gentle reminder: A good historian must remain impartial, and consider all points of view. Time has a way of distorting our record of events, so the closer you can get to the original sources, the better!

# Old Tome

*Anonymous*

A mighty lord deserves a mighty offering

But he who fell on this spot asked to be remembered humbly

We who served at his hand, however, do not want his brilliance  
to be forgotten

Thus, to honor him, one needs only to look to the simple,  
glowing fungus on these cave walls

For no matter how mighty or humble one may be in life

We all return to the same ground from which this mushroom  
blooms

# On Apocrypha

*Anonymous*

On Apocrypha: Boneless Limbs

A writhing mass of heaped appendage

Slipping grasp the squirming slick

Extend the reach to touch the face

Burn the mind, reveal the quick

On Apocrypha: Delving Pincers

Crushing razors, hollow shells

That snap, that twitch, that cinch and rend

To hold the subject, bodily,

'Til mind blows soft and life meets end

On Apocrypha: Gnashing Blades

Bone extrusions gash and grind

In moistened depths of smacking heat

While tearing flesh from averse bone

The body whole prepares to eat

On Apocrypha: Prying Orbs

What takes the world in lightened sense

Can also seek the outward gleam

They rob the all of essence to

Report the nothing they have seen

# On The Great Collapse

*Archmage Deneth*

To the esteemed Jarl Valdimar of Winterhold,

First, please allow me to offer my most sincere condolences. I understand that you, like many others, have lost family and you have my deepest sympathies.

I also understand that some on your council have placed the blame for this horrible disaster on my colleagues at the College. While I can certainly appreciate the shock at the scope of recent events, and the desire to comprehend what has happened, I must strongly urge you to consider the full situation.

You know as well as any the College's history and reputation in Winterhold. It has long been a source of pride for your city, a unique fixture in Skyrim. Some of the greatest wizards have studied here, and the College has always promoted positive relations with the other provinces of Tamriel.

It is well-known that those relations have been, shall we say, strained over the last few decades. After the Oblivion Crisis, it was only natural that the people of Skyrim showed a distrust for mages, even though the vast majority of us actively worked to counter the actions of the Mythic Dawn cult. The College expected such a reaction, and hoped that distrust would fade over time.

And then, the Red Year. No one foresaw the explosion of Red Mountain, or the devastating effect it would have on the Dunmer culture. Your predecessor was kind enough to welcome many of the refugees, particularly those who could contribute to the College's studies. We were quite grateful.

When Solstheim was generously offered to the Dunmer as a new home, I was as surprised as any. I did not, however, share the apparent expectation that all dark elves would leave Skyrim. It did not go unnoticed that many in Winterhold were unhappy at how many mages chose to stay at the College rather than relocate.

And now, the storms that have wracked the coast of Skyrim for close to a year have finally broken, but at great cost to us all. This great collapse that has devastated Winterhold was unexpected, I assure you. That the College has remained unaffected is only a testament to the protective magicks placed around it so long ago. It in no way implies that we were somehow prepared specifically for this event, and is certainly no indication that the College was somehow responsible.

I certainly would never hold you accountable for the gossip spread amongst the people of Winterhold. I would urge you, though, to not allow that gossip to take root and become a commonly held belief. I do not wish to see our relationship crumble like Winterhold has, as I assure you the College will remain here a very, very long time.

Your persistent advocate,

Arch-Mage Deneth

# Orders

*Anonymous*

All the blossoms are to be harvested at once and brought up to the alchemical lab.

Then clear space and begin burial of the children's bodies.



# Orders

*Anonymous*

Sojourn awhile in [hold capital]. Infiltrate the court of [Jarl's name]. If you can, gently guide the Jarl toward our best interests. If that proves impossible, invite [him/her] or a member of [his/her] court into the family. It's far easier to direct those sharing the blood thirst towards our shared interests.

# Orsinium And The Orcs

*Menyna Gsost*

How Orsinium Passed

to the Orcs

by

Menyna Gsost

The year was 3E 399 and standing on a mountainside overlooking a vast tract of land between the lands of Menevia and Wayrest was a great and learned judge, an arbitrator and magistrate, impartial in his submission to the law.

“You have a very strong claim to the land, my lad,” said the judge. “I won’t lie to you about that. But your competition has an equal claim. This is what makes my particular profession difficult at times.”

“You would call it my competition?” sneered Lord Bowyn, gesturing to the Orc. The creature, called Gortwog gro-Nagorm, looked up with baleful eyes.

“He has ample documentation to make a claim on the land,” the magistrate shrugged. “And the particular laws of our land do not discriminate between particular races. We had a Bosmer regency once, many generations ago.”

“But what if a pig or a slaughterfish turned up demanding the property? Would they have the same legal rights as I?”

“If they had the proper papers, I’m afraid so,” smiled the judge. “The law is very clear that if two claimants with equal titles to the property are set in deadlock, a duel must be held. Now, the rules are fairly archaic, but I’ve had opportunity to look them over, and I think they’re still valid. The Imperial council agrees.”

“What must we do?” asked the Orc, his voice low and harsh, unused to the tongue of the Cyrodiils.

“The first claimant, that’s you, Lord Gortwog, may choose the armor and weapon of the duelists. The second claimant, that’s you, Lord Bowyn, may choose the location. If you would prefer, either or both you may choose a champion or you may duel yourself.”

The Breton and the Orc looked at one another, evaluating. Finally, Gortwog spoke, “The armor will be Orcish and the weapons will be common steel long swords. No enchantments. No wizardry allowed.”

“The arena will be the central courtyard of my cousin Lord Berylth’s palace in Wayrest,” said Bowyn, looking Gortwog in the eye scornfully. “None of your kind will be allowed in to witness.”

So it was agreed. Gortwog declared that he would fight the duel himself, and Bowyn, who was a fairly young man and in better than average condition, felt that he could not keep his honor without competing himself as well. Still, upon arriving at his cousin’s palace a week before the duel was scheduled, he felt

the need to practice. A suit of Orcish armor was purchased and for the first time in his life, Bowyn wore something of tremendous weight and limited facility.

Bowyn and Berylth sparred in the courtyard. In ten minutes times, Bowyn had to stop. He was red-faced and out of breath from trying to move in the armor: to add to his exasperation, he had not scored one blow on his cousin, and had dozens of fainted strikes scored on him.

“I don’t know what to do,” said Bowyn over dinner. “Even if I knew someone who could fight properly in that beastly steel, I couldn’t possibly send in a champion to battle Gortwog.”

Berylth commiserated. As the servants cleared the plates, Bowyn stood up in his seat and pointed at one of them: “You didn’t tell me you had an Orc in your household!”

“Sir?” whined the elderly specimen, turning to Lord Berylth, certain that he caused offense somehow.

“You mean Old Tunner?” laughed Berylth. “He’s been with my house for ages. Would you like him to give you training on how to move in Orcish armor?”

“Would you like me to?” asked Tunner obsequiously.

Unknown to Berylth but known to him now, his servant had once ridden with the legendary Cursed Legion of High Rock. He not only knew how to fight in Orcish armor himself, but he had acted as trainer to other Orcs before retiring into domestic service. Desperate, Bowyn immediately engaged him as his full-time trainer.

“Your try too hard, sir,” said the Orc on their first day in the arena. “It is easy to strain yourself in heavy mail. The joints are just so to let you to bend with only a little effort. If you fight against the joints, you won’t have any strength to fight your foe.”

Bowyn tried to follow Tunner’s instructions, but he quickly grew frustrated. And the more frustrated he got, the more intensity he put into his work, which tired him out even quicker. While he took a break to drink some water, Berylith spoke to his servant. If they were optimistic about Bowyn’s chances, their faces did not show it.

Tunner trained Bowyn hard the next two days, but her Ladyship Elysora’s birthday followed hard upon them, and Bowyn enjoyed the feast thoroughly. A liquor of poppies and goose fat, and cock tinsh with buttered hyssop for a first course; roasted pike, combwort, and balls of rabbit meat for a second; sliced fox tongues, ballom pudding with oyster gravy, battaglir weed and beans for the main course; collequiva ice and sugar fritters for dessert. As Bowyn was settling back afterwards, his eyes weary, he suddenly spied Gortwog and the judge entering the room.

“What are you doing here?” he cried. “The duel’s not for another two days!”

“Lord Gortwog asked that we move it to tonight,” said the judge. “You were training when my emisary arrived two days ago, but his lordship your cousin spoke for you, agreeing to the change of date.”

“But there’s no time to assemble my supporters,” complained Bowyn. “And I’ve just devoured a feast that would kill a lesser

man. Cousin, how could you neglect to tell me?”

“I spoke to Tunner about it,” said Berylith, blushing, unused to deception. “We decided that you would be best served under these conditions.”

The battle in the arena was sparsely attended. Saturated with food, Bowyn found himself unable to move very quickly. To his surprise, the armor responded to his lethargy, rotating smoothly and elegantly to each stagger. The more he successfully maneuvered, the more he allowed his mind and not his body to control his defensive and offensive actions. For the first time in his life, Bowyn saw what it was to look through the helmet of an Orc.

Of course, he lost, and rather badly if scores had been tabulated. Gortwog was a master of such battle. But Bowyn fought on for more than three hours before the judge reluctantly called a winner.

“I will name the land Orsinium after the land of my fathers,” said the victor.

Bowyn’s first thought was that if he must lose to an Orc, it was best that the battle was largely unwatched by his friends and family. As he left the courtyard to go to the bed he had longed for earlier in the evening, he saw Gortwog speaking to Tunner. Though he did not understand the language, he could see that they knew each other. When the Breton was in bed, he had a servant bring the old Orc to him.

“Tunner,” he said kindly. “Speak frankly to me. You wanted Lord Gortwog to win.”

“That is true,” said Tunner. “But I did not fail you. You fought better than you would have fought two days hence, sir. I did not want Orsinium to be won by its king without a fight.”

# Per Your Requests

*Mirabelle Ervine*

Wylandriah,

Your letter sent to the College of Winterhold was rife with grammatical errors and incomplete thoughts, making them difficult to discern. Could you please clarify the points below for us to ensure we're on the same page?

We have no record of a "cloud emulsifier" device or anything involving the magical manipulation of the clouds. Second, we can't send you a sample of the Heart of Lorkhan for experimentation, as no such sample exists. And finally, in the fourteenth paragraph of your letter, you mention a substance called "greenmote." We're assuming this was a simple mistake and you meant to write "greenspore." If that's the case, we have contaminated skeever carcasses with the disease available if needed.

We'd also like to thank you for sending us your notes regarding your experiments, we've all had quite a grand time reading them.

Mirabelle Ervine



# Physicalities Of Warewolves

*Reman Crex*

Experimentation in the Physicalities

of the Werewolf

by

Reman Crex

Far too many books such as this one begin with some sort of justification. Some reason for study is concocted, in the hopes that the writer's obsession will be seen in a more noble light. I make no such pretensions. No werewolf killed my family, none ever threatened me personally, nor even an acquaintance of mine. My obsession is borne out of simple curiosity, with a strong dose of hatred for the unnatural. Is it possible to hate something without having been done harm by it? I am no philosopher, and thus here ends my introduction. On with my studies.

I have endeavored, over the course of several decades, to perform a complete study of the physical nature of the creatures we call werewolves. I overlook entirely the origins of this plague, whether it is acquired voluntarily or inflicted, and how one might be cured. Such matters are filled with too much guesswork and rambling second-hand inanities from farmhands.

## Subject A

Captured: in Morrowind, while in beast form

Makeup: Male, Breton in his true form

Notes: Subject shows an unusually high degree of control over his transformations.

Experiment 1—Subject's bodily proportions were thoroughly measured before, during, and after the transformation. As expected, the proportions were identical while in true form, but some minor swelling of the head was observed immediately after the return. Changes observed during transformation:

23% increase in shoulder width

17% narrowing of hips

47% lengthening of arms

7% increase in finger length (not accounting for claws)

As for the legs—the lengthening of the foot to several times its normal length seems to account for the otherwise negligible changes in the thigh region.

Experiment 2—Subject was coerced into changing as rapidly and as frequently as possible, at various times and at various levels of duress.

Transformation times and effects were not viewed to change notably. Subject expired, concluding tests.

## Subject B

Captured: in Cyrodiil, already imprisoned by local authorities, in true form

Makeup: Female, Nord in her true form

Notes: Subject's large size in both true and transformed forms makes an excellent fit for vivisection

I believe I may have been the first to witness a werewolf transformation ply its effects on the internal workings of a creature. The heart is the first thing to swell, long before the lungs or bones shift to accommodate it. This may account for the intense chest pains that some of the afflicted report directly before their changes.

More interesting were the changes observed in the muscles of the legs. I had expected a strengthening, as the beasts are known for great power and speed, but they also seemed to change color into a dusky brown. This could also be attributed to blood loss from the procedures.

Before the subject expired, I worked applying some known "remedies" for the disease directly to internal organs. Wolfsbane petals applied to the bones seemed to render them brittle, and the ribcage nearly collapsed at the touch. The juice of ripened belladonna berries was pressed directly into the veins, and they could be seen to shrivel behind the flow as it moved through the system. Upon reaching the heart, the major vessels pulled away completely, and subject expired within minutes.

# Pirate King Of The Abecean

*Velehk Sain*

Velehk Sain

Pirate King of the Abecean

Poke out your eyes lad, pour lead in your ears

Those sails portend madness, dark horror and fear

Abandon your lasses, your ship and your gold

Blood on the water, Velehk this way comes

A noose from the rigging, a plank from boards

Do yourself in, don't try at crossing swords

Mercy's not a shipmate among that heartless horde

Blood on the water, the Pirate King comes

Stout Empire Galleon or Swift Elven Skiff

They every one splinter and just as soon sink

But only after crew and captain have their fun

Blood on the water, your days are done

He'll tear your gut and he'll eat your heart raw

His eyes gleam red, his heart will never thaw

Mark well these words, you quaking babes

Blood on the water follows Captain Velehk Sain

# Possible Rivals

*Anonymous*

Brynjolf,

I'm certain that there's some kind of rival Thieves Guild manifesting itself up here in Windhelm. As soon as things settle down with your own, why don't you send someone up here to investigate? I think you'll find I can open quite a few doors for the Guild once you've reestablished yourselves up here. Remember, friends are difficult to come by these days. Don't disappoint me.

Your Friend In The North

# Posted Notice

*Captain Veleth*

This is a reminder that Emberbrand Wine and other such contraband is off-limits to all of you. Any guardsman caught with items like this in their possession will be disciplined and subject to possible removal from the Redoran Guard.

Captain Veleth

# Potion Recipes

*Anonymous*

Cure Disease Potion Recipe

Cure Disease potion:

~Charred Skeever Hide

~Mudcrab Chitin

Damage Health Poison Recipe

Damage Health poison:

~Skeever Tail

~Void Salts

Fear Poison Recipe

Fear poison:

~Namira's Rot

~Blue Dragonfly Wing

Fortify Carry Weight Potion Recipe

Fortify Carry Weight potion:



~Creep Cluster Root

~Giant's Toe

Invisibility Potion Recipe

Invisibility potion:

~Ice Wraith Teeth

~Chaurus Eggs

Paralysis Poison Recipe

Paralysis poison:

~Canis Root

~Swamp Fungal Pod

Resist Fire Potion Recipe

Resist Fire potion:

~Bonemeal

~Frost Salts

Resist Poison Potion Recipe

Resist Poison potion:

~Thistle

~Falmer Ear

Resist Shock Potion Recipe

Resist Shock potion:

~Glowdust

~Pearl

Restore Health Potion Recipe

Restore Health potion:

~Imp Stool

~Wheat

Restore Magicka Potion Recipe

# Power Of The Elements

*Anonymous*

Northward, haunted  
northern coastline  
And south, Dwemer  
live and toil,  
A simple place,  
a shield from draft.  
At this stand  
wield mage's craft  
So fierce the sea will boil.  
Under Greybeards'  
morning shadow  
At this northern  
watch, long lost  
Nirn's hoary Throat

does scrape the sky.

Here unleash a chilling cry

And gild this stand with frost.

# Prisoner's Plan

*Anonymous*

The storm is coming, I can tell. The water leaking in has become stronger. There's no better time than now.

When the storm hits the guards will be scrambling to figure out what to do with us. Amidst the confusion we need to overpower the few that will be standing guard outside our cells and hold off the cell block entrance. We need only hold off until I can get one of their swords and break open the drainage grate in the corner of my cell. That's where we'll make our escape. Everyone move down river and we'll try to find shelter there until the storm passes.

# Private Letter

*Lod*

Old Friend,

Need all the iron ore you can dig up. Double my usual order. I know the mine isn't as rich as it used to be, but I'll pay extra.

Lod

# Promissory Note [Sk]

*Anonymous*

Sabjorn,

Within the enclosed crate, you'll find the final payment. As we discussed, Honningbrew Meadery should now begin brewing mead at full production. In regards to your concerns about interference from Maven Black-Briar, I can assure you that I'll do everything in my power to keep her assets and her cronies at bay. This is the beginning of a long and successful future for both of us.

# Proper Lock Design

*Anonymous*

Proper Lock Design and Construction

by

Unknown

I have encountered many thieves whose sole interest in locks is how to open them and thereby pilfer the protected contents of the room or chest. I have taken it upon myself to devise a system of locks that can defeat such villainous intent.

The materials used to create a lock are of utmost importance. Shoddy brass or copper will give way to a well placed kick, thereby rendering the lock itself useless. I recommend steel over iron when choosing a material. More robust materials tend to be prohibitively expensive and necessitate the door being made of similar metals. I have been chagrined to stumble across the shattered shell of a wooden chest, it's dwarven lock intact and still locked.

Once these basics are settled, pay particular attention to the offset of the tumblers. A seven degree offset to the keyhole will allow a torque style key to work smoothly, while at the same time causing numerous headaches for the thief attempting to insert non-torque lockpicks.



In similar fashion, the springs of the tumblers should be made by different smiths. Each smith will unknowingly create a spring with different tension than his fellow smiths. This variance will also create difficulties for anyone attempting to pick the lock.

# Purchase Agreement

*Bolli*

## Purchase Agreement

This agreement certifies that Kleppr, owner of the Silver Blood Inn within the City of Markarth, will pay Bolli, owner of the Riften Fishery within the City of Riften, the sum of three septims per bushel of fish. Payment is expected upon delivery and product is guaranteed to be fresh.

Bolli

# Quite Pleased

*Harrald*

Balimund,

I've been quite impressed with the quality of your work and I hope that it continues. I've informed everyone within the keep, including the guard, that all repairs and requests for new weapons should be sent your way. Jarl Laila has been notified of this as well, and she extends her sincerest thanks for your contributions to the defense of the city. Just remember, I've stuck my neck out for you by using my name, so don't make me look the fool by letting your standards slide.

Harrald

# Ra'jiir's Note

*Ra'jiir*

Eisa-

I see her in every shadow. Hear her voice on every breath of wind. In my dreams, in my ears, in my mind. The Pale Lady- we have to stop her. Just return the sword, and we can shut her away forever. I can't take this any more.

I have to do it.

I must.

Ra'jirr

# Rahgot's Reply

*Rahgot*

Froda, do not deter the other alchemist from their work. Your views are known to me and we shall have words about them shortly.

—Rahgot

# Raleth Eldri's Notes On Kagrumez

*Raleth Eldri*

I am closer to solving the mystery of these ruins! I have found references in ancient Dwemer texts that call Kagrumez the site of a set of trials, a training ground of sorts. This is thus far unprecedented in my research.

This could explain why that gate is so unmovable - the proper trial has not been completed. It is possible nobody has opened this gate since the days of the Dwemer! What treasures of the ancient world lie in wait behind these doors?

The pattern on the gate seems to hold the solution to unlocking it. It bears resemblance to the console in the center of the chamber, but what does it mean? There are nine holes that I assume are to be filled, but with what? If only I had the means to fund more expeditions to the other Dwemer ruins of Solstheim. They surely hold the keys to opening the locked gate. Even if I had the means to start the trials, I surely have not the means to complete them.

I can't wait for more funding! I am going to have to recruit those who will act on the promise of treasure alone. Surely there are those as excited about this find as I am.

-Raleth Eldri

# Ransom Note

*Rochelle*

While you were away, we came to visit your lovely new house. [Spouse name] made us feel right at home. In fact, we liked [him/her] so much we took [him/her] back to [dungeon name] with us.

If you want [Spouse name] back, come see me. Bring [gold amount] gold and I'll discuss letting [him/her] go.

Rochelle the Red

# Red Eagle's Right

*Anonymous*

## Red Eagle's Rite

Having bathed the blade in human blood, present it at Rebel's Cairn together with your sacrifice and intone:

Lord Red Eagle, ancient one, first and foremost among Reachmen, heed the call of your people! Still we fight for freedom! Still our blades are dark with blood! Turn your gaze upon us, and grant us your blessing anew!

I renew the ancient covenant: When at last our lands are free, we shall return, your sword of victory in hand. Then arise, O great one, from your honored tomb! Reclaim thy stolen throne! Rule over us, High Lord of the Reach, forevermore!



# Regarding Your Loss

*Reginn Limilus*

Lady Maven Black-Briar,

I've made inquiries into the loss of your mead shipment to Cyrodiil, and I've come to the conclusion that they were waylaid by a group of mercenaries under the employ of the Empire. According to my sources, these mercenaries were not acting under orders and simply attacked the caravan for supplies. I've forwarded a request for compensation on your behalf to the Imperial Council and the mercenaries in question have already been dealt with accordingly. Again, I wish to extend my deepest apologies for this unfortunate mishap and I assure you that any future shipments into our nation will be met at the border by an Imperial patrol and personally escorted to its final destination.

Reginn Limilus

Grand Steward, Imperial City Trade Relations

# Repair Supplies

*Sam*

We need the following to repair the broken staff:

Giant's Toe

Holy Water

Hagraven Feather

Sam

# Report: Disaster At Ionith

*Lord Pottreid*

Report of the Imperial

Commission on the

Disaster at Ionith

by

Lord Pottreid, Chairman

Part I: Preparations

The Emperor's plans for the invasion of Akavir were laid in the 270s, when he began the conquest of the small island kingdoms that lie between Tamriel and Akavir. With the fall of Black Harbor in Esoniet in 282, Uriel V was already looking ahead to the ultimate prize. He immediately ordered extensive renovations to the port, which would serve as the marshalling point for the invasion force and as the main supply source throughout the campaign. At this time he also began the construction of the many large, ocean-going transports that would be needed for the final crossing to Akavir, in which the Navy was previously deficient. Thus it can be seen that the Emperor's preparations for the invasion were laid well in advance, before even the conquest of Esoniet was complete, and was not a sudden whim as some have charged.

When Prince Bashomon yielded Esoniet to Imperial authority in 284, the Emperor's full attention could be devoted to planning for the Akaviri campaign. Naval expeditions were dispatched in 285 and 286 to scout the sea lanes and coastlands of Akavir; and various Imperial intelligence agents, both magical and mundane, were employed to gather information. On the basis of all this information, the kingdom of the Tsaesci, in the southwest of Akavir, was selected as the initial target for the invasion.

Meanwhile the Emperor was gathering his Expeditionary Force. A new Far East Fleet was created for the campaign, which for a time dwarfed the rest of the Navy; it is said to be the most powerful fleet ever assembled in the history of Tamriel. The Fifth, Seventh, Tenth, and Fourteenth Legions were selected for the initial landing, with the Ninth and Seventeenth to follow as reinforcements once the beachhead was secured. While this may seem to the layman a relatively small fraction of the Army's total manpower, it must be remembered that this Expeditionary Force would have to be maintained at the end of a long and tenuous supply line; in addition, the Emperor and the Army command believed that the invasion would not be strongly opposed, at least at first. Perhaps most crucially, the Navy had only enough heavy transport capacity to move four legions at a time.

It should be noted here that the Commission does not find fault with the Emperor's preparations for the invasion. Based on the information available prior to the invasion, (which, while obviously deficient in hindsight, great effort had been made to accumulate), the Commission believes that the Emperor did not act recklessly or imprudently. Some have argued that the Expeditionary Force was too small. The Commission believes

that on the contrary, even if shipping could have been found to transport and supply more legions (an impossibility without crippling the trade of the entire Empire), this would have merely added to the scale of the disaster; it would not have averted it. Neither could the rest of the Empire be denuded of legions; the memory of the Camoran Usurper was still fresh, and the Emperor believed (and this Commission agrees) that the security of the Empire precluded a larger concentration of military force outside of Tamriel. If anything, the Commission believes that the Expeditionary Force was too large. Despite the creation of two new legions during his reign (and the recreation of the Fifth), the loss of the Expeditionary Force left the Empire in a dangerously weak position relative to the provinces, as the current situation makes all too clear. This suggests that the invasion of Akavir was beyond the Empire's current strength; even if the Emperor could have fielded and maintained a larger force in Akavir, the Empire may have disintegrated behind him.

## Part II: The Invasion of Akavir

The Expeditionary Force left Black Harbor on 23rd Rain's Hand, 288, and with fair weather landed in Akavir after six weeks at sea. The landing site was a small Tsaesci port at the mouth of a large river, chosen for its proximity to Tamriel as well as its location in a fertile river valley, giving easy access to the interior as well as good foraging for the army. All went well at first. The Tsaesci had abandoned the town when the Expeditionary Force approached, so they took possession of it and renamed it Septimia, the first colony of the new Imperial Province of Akavir. While the engineers fortified the town and expanded the port facilities to serve the Far East Fleet, the Emperor marched inland with two legions. The surrounding

land was reported to be rich, well-watered fields, and meeting no resistance the army took the next city upriver, also abandoned. This was refounded as Ionith, and the Emperor established his headquarters there, being much larger than Septimia and better-located to dominate the surrounding countryside.

The Expeditionary Force had yet to meet any real resistance, although the legions were constantly shadowed by mounted enemy patrols which prevented any but large scouting parties from leaving the main body of the army. One thing the Emperor sorely lacked was cavalry, due to the limited space on the transport fleet, although for the time being the battlemages made up for this with magical reconnaissance.

The Emperor now sent out envoys to try to contact the Tsaesci king or whoever ruled this land, but his messengers never returned. In retrospect, the Commission believes that valuable time was wasted in this effort while the army was stalled at Ionith, which could have been better spent in advancing quickly while the enemy was still, apparently, surprised by the invasion. However, the Emperor believed at the time that the Tsaesci could be overawed by the Empire's power and he might win a province by negotiation with no need for serious fighting.

Meanwhile, the four legions were busy building a road between Septimia and Ionith, setting up fortified guard posts along the river, and fortifying both cities' defences, activities which would serve them well later. Due to their lack of cavalry, scouting was limited, and communication between the two cities constantly threatened by enemy raiders, with which the legions were still unable to come to grips.

The original plan had been to bring the two reinforcing legions across as soon as the initial landing had secured a port, but the fateful decision was now taken to delay their arrival and instead begin using the Fleet to transport colonists. The Emperor and the Council agreed that, due to the complete abandonment of the conquered area by its native population, colonists were needed to work the fields so that the Expeditionary Force would not have to rely entirely on the fleet for supplies. In addition, unrest had broken out in Yneslea, athwart the supply route to Akavir, and the Council believed the Ninth and Seventeenth legions would be better used in repacifying those territories and securing the Expeditionary Force's supply lines.

The civilian colonists and their supplies began arriving in Septimia in mid-Hearthfire, and they took over the preparation of the fields (which had been started by the legionnaires) for a spring crop. A number of cavalry mounts were also brought over at this time, and the raids on the two Imperial colonies subsequently fell off. Tsaesci emissaries also finally arrived in Ionith, purportedly to begin peace negotiations, and the Expeditionary Force settled in for what was expected to be a quiet winter.

At this time, the Council urged the Emperor to return to Tamriel with the Fleet, to deal with many pressing matters of the Empire while the army was in winter quarters, but the Emperor decided that it would be best to remain in Akavir. This turned out to be fortunate, because a large portion of the Fleet, including the Emperor's flagship, was destroyed by an early winter storm during the homeward voyage. The winter storm season of 288-289 was unusually prolonged and exceptionally severe, and prevented the Fleet from returning to Akavir as

planned with additional supplies. This was reported to the Emperor via battlemage and it was agreed that the Expeditionary Force could survive on what supplies it had on hand until the spring.

### Part III: The Destruction of the Expeditionary Force

The winter weather in Akavir was also much more severe than expected. Due to the supply problems and the addition of thousands of civilians, the Expeditionary Force was on tight rations. To make matters worse, the Tsaesci raiders returned in force and harried any foraging and scouting parties outside the walls of the two cities. Several watch forts on the road between Septimia and Ionith were captured during blizzards, and the rest had to be abandoned as untenable. As a result, communication between the two cities had to be conducted entirely by magical means, a continuing strain on the legions' battlemages.

On 5th Sun's Dawn, a large entourage of Tsaesci arrived at Ionith claiming to bring a peace offer from the Tsaesci king. That night, these treacherous envoys murdered the guards at one of the city gates and let in a strong party of their comrades who were waiting outside the city walls. Their clear intention was to assassinate the Emperor, foiled only by the vigilance and courage of troopers of the Tenth who were guarding his palace. Once the alarm was raised, the Tsaesci inside the city were hunted down and killed to the last man. Needless to say, this was the end of negotiations between the Emperor and the Tsaesci.

The arrival of spring only brought worse troubles. Instead of the expected spring rains, a hot dry wind began to blow from the east, continuing with varying strength through the entire



summer. The crops failed, and even the river (which in the previous year had been navigable by small boats far upstream of Ionith) was completely dried up by Sun's Height. It is unknown if this was due to a previously unknown weather pattern unique to Akavir, or if the Tsaesci manipulated the weather through magical means. The Commission leans towards the former conclusion, as there is no direct evidence of the Tsaesci possessing such fearsome arcane power, but the latter possibility cannot be entirely ruled out.

Due to prolonged bad weather, the supply fleet was late in setting out from Black Harbor. It finally left port in early Second Seed, but was again severely mauled by storms and limped into Septimia eight weeks later much reduced. Because of the increasingly desperate supply situation in Akavir, the Emperor dispatched most of his Battlemage Corps with the fleet to assist it in weathering the storms which seemed likely to continue all summer. At this time, the Council urged the Emperor to abandon the invasion and to return to Tamriel with the Expeditionary Force, but he again refused, noting that the fleet was no longer large enough to transport all four legions at once. The Commission agrees that leaving one or more legions behind in Akavir to await the return of the fleet would have damaged Army morale. But the Commission also notes that the loss of one legion would have been preferable to the loss of the entire Expeditionary Force. It is the unanimous opinion of the Commission that this was the last point at which complete disaster might have been averted. Once the decision was made to send the fleet back for reinforcements and supplies, events proceeded to their inevitable conclusion.

From this point on, much less is known about what transpired in Akavir. With most of the battlemages assisting the fleet,

communication between the Expeditionary Force and Tamriel was limited, especially as the situation in Akavir worsened and the remaining battlemages had their powers stretched to the limit attending to all the needs of the legions. However, it appears that the Tsaesci may also have been actively interfering with the mages in some unknown manner. Some of the mages in Akavir reported their powers being abnormally weak, and the mages of the War College in Cyrodiil (who were handling communications for the Council) reported problems linking up with their compatriots in Akavir, even between master and pupil of long training. The Commission urges that the War College make a particular study of the arcane powers of the Tsaesci, should the Empire ever come into conflict with Akavir again.

What is known is that the Emperor marched out of Ionith in mid-Sun's Height, leaving only small garrisons to hold the cities. He had learned that the Tsaesci were massing their forces on the other side of a mountain range to the north, and he intended to smash their army before it could gather full strength and capture their supplies (of which he was in desperate need). This rapid advance seems to have taken the Tsaesci by surprise, and the Expeditionary Force crossed the mountains and fell on their camp, routing the Tsaesci army and capturing its leader (a noble of some kind). But the Emperor was soon forced to retreat, and the legions suffered heavily on their retreat to Ionith. The Emperor now found himself besieged in Ionith, cut off from the small garrison at Septimia which was also besieged. By this time, it seems that the efforts of the few remaining battlemages were devoted entirely to creating water to keep the army alive, a skill not normally emphasized at the War College. The fleet had arrived safely back to Black Harbor, thanks to the Battlemage Corps,

but all attempts to return to Akavir were frustrated by a series of ever more savage storms that battered Esroniet throughout the rest of 289.

The Council's last contact with the Emperor was in early Frostfall. By Evening Star, the Council was extremely worried about the situation in Akavir and ordered the fleet to sail regardless of the risk. Despite the continued storms, the fleet managed to press on to Akavir. Hope was raised when contact was made with the Emperor's battlemage, who reported that Ionith still held out. Plans were quickly laid for the Expeditionary Force to break out of Ionith and fall back on Septimia, where the fleet would meet them. This was the last direct contact with the Expeditionary Force. The fleet arrived in Septimia to find its garrison under savage assault from a large Tsaesci army. The battlemages with the fleet threw back the enemy long enough for the survivors to embark and the fleet to withdraw.

The few survivors of the Expeditionary Force who reached Septimia told how the Emperor had led the army out of Ionith by night two days earlier, successfully breaking through the enemy lines but then being surrounded by overwhelming forces on the road to Septimia. They told of a heroic last stand by the Emperor and the Tenth Legion, which allowed a remnant of the Fourteenth to reach Septimia. Two survivors of the Tenth arrived in Septimia that night, having slipped through the enemy lines during their undisciplined victory celebration. These men confirmed having seen the Emperor die, cut down by enemy arrows as he rallied the Tenth's shield wall.

Part IV: Conclusion

The Commission believes that the invasion of Akavir was doomed from the start for several reasons, none of which could have been foreseen beforehand, unfortunately.

Despite extensive intelligence-gathering, the Expeditionary Force was clearly unprepared for the situation in Akavir. The unexpected weather which plagued the army and navy was particularly disastrous. Without the loss of a majority of the Far East Fleet during the campaign, the Expeditionary Force could have been withdrawn in 289. The weather also forced the Emperor to assign most of his Battlemage Corps to the fleet, leaving him without their valuable assistance during the fighting which soon followed. And of course the unexpected drought which struck Ionith during 289 dashed the hopes of supplying the army locally, and left the Expeditionary Force in an untenable situation when besieged in Ionith.

The Tsaesci were also much stronger than intelligence reports had suggested. Information on the size of the army the Tsaesci were eventually able to field against the Expeditionary Force is vague, as the only serious fighting took place after regular communications were cut off between the Emperor and the Council. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the Tsaesci outnumbered the Emperor's forces by several times, as they were able to force four crack legions into retreat and then keep them under siege for several months.

As was stated previously, the Commission declines to criticize the initial decision to invade Akavir. Based on what was known at the time, the plan seemed sound. It is only with the benefit of hindsight does it become obvious that the invasion had very little chance of success. Nevertheless, the Commission believes several valuable lessons can be taken from this disaster.

First, the Tsaesci may have extremely powerful arcane forces at their command. The possibility that they may have manipulated the weather across such a vast region seems incredible (and it should be noted that three Commissioners strongly objected to this paragraph even being included in this Report), but the Commission believes that this matter deserves urgent investigation. The potential danger is such that even the slight possibility must be taken seriously.

Second, the Tsaesci appear to possess no navy to speak of. The Expeditionary Force was never threatened by sea, and the Far East Fleet fought nothing but the weather. Indeed, initial plans called for a portion of the Fleet to remain in Akavir for use in coastal operations, but in the event there were very few places where the large vessels of the Fleet could approach the land, due to the innumerable reefs, sandbars, islands, etc. that infested the coastal waters north and south from Septimia. Due to the utter lack of trees in the plain around Septimia and Ionith, the Expeditionary Force was unable to build smaller vessels which could have navigated the shallow coastal waters. Any future military expeditions against Akavir would do well to consider some way of bringing a means for inshore naval operations in order to exploit this clear advantage over the Tsaesci, an advantage that was sadly unexploited by the Expeditionary Force.

Third, much longer-term study needs to be made of Akavir before another invasion could even be contemplated. The information gathered over the four years prior to the invasion was extensive, but clearly inadequate. The weather conditions were completely unexpected; the Tsaesci much stronger than expected; and the attempted negotiations by the Emperor with the Tsaesci a disaster. Akavir proved alien beyond expectation,

and the Commission believes any future attempt to invade Akavir should not be contemplated without much greater knowledge of the conditions, politics, and peoples of that continent than presently obtains.

Finally, the Commission unanimously concludes that given what we now know, any attempt to invade Akavir is folly, at least in the present state of the Empire. The Empire's legions are needed at home. One day, a peaceful, united Empire will return to Akavir and exact severe retribution for the disaster at Ionith and for our fallen Emperor. But that day is not now, nor in the foreseeable future.

# Reports Of A Disturbance

*Anuriel*

Maramal,

We've gotten numerous reports of disturbances in the graveyard area next to the temple and we'd like you to investigate. The reports describe strange noises, described as "stone grating on stone" and shadowy figures moving about the mausoleum. I've sent a guard to investigate, but they've come up empty-handed. We've already spoken to Alessandra, but she assures me that these odd reports have nothing to do with any rituals of Arkay she might be performing. Any help you could render would certainly be appreciated.

Anuriel,

Steward of Riften

# Request For Help!

*Madena*

Lady Mjoll,

I hope this letter finds safe passage to your hands. We are in desperate need of help and we have nowhere else to turn. Everyone in Dawnstar is having nightmares. These horrible visions plague our slumber and leave us feeling frightened and tired even after a full night's sleep. I myself have awoken from one of the dreams bathed in cold sweat after having one of these nightmares. The things that I saw were simply too appalling to describe. There's a priest of Mara that claims he might be able to help us, but so far, he simply sits within the Windpeak Inn scribbling notes. If you could find it in your heart to make the journey to our city and help us, I would forever be in your debt.

Madena



# Request From Questgiver

*Anonymous*

[Player name],

I'm aware of your recent assault on [victim's name]. Rest assured I have no interest in that particular matter. I do, however, have an interest in your willingness to employ force when the need arises.

If you are able to assist me, I will gladly pay you for your troubles.

Next time you are visiting [settlement], please call on me.

Sincerely,

[Questgiver's name]

# Requested Report

*Anonymous*

Bolli,

I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but your suspicions are likely correct. I've been following Nivenor as you requested, and I'm fairly certain that she's had extra-marital relations with more than one individual within Riften. I have yet to obtain proof of her adultery, so please do not confront her with this information until I've secured it. I'll waive the usual charges for now, but expect full payment once the proof is in my possession.

# Research Log

## *First Adjunct Oronrel*

Attendant Gavros,

The Council has become aware of the lack of progress in your group's efforts. They are particularly displeased to learn that your specifications for the focusing crystal were completely incorrect.

The entire Binder's Conclave has worked tirelessly, and the Council is quite sure this new crystal will suit your needs. You are herewith entrusted with delivering the crystal to the site, completing your work, and delivering a full report to the Council with all possible haste.

The Council trusts you will deliver the crystal to the Oculory personally, and that there will be no further complications.

- First Adjunct Oronrel

# Research Notes

*Anonymous*

If only Umani would have left one of these Dwarven machine creatures intact for me to study. The fact that they almost killed those Khajiit brothers in the middle of the night doesn't mean we couldn't have found a way to disable one. We dragged some stuff in front of the pipes they came out of to stop them from coming back.

They are simply fascinating! It is just as Calcelmo described in Dwarves, v2. Their appearance does, in fact, resemble that of an arachnid. I had thought that to be an embellishment given by his source. The inclusion of the soul gem into the design of the apparatus is quite remarkable. It could explain the focus for the lightning that he describes.

Oddly enough it doesn't appear to be the main power source for the apparatus. Perhaps some sort of harmonic resonance with the energies contained in the soul gem to bring heat to a small boiler? Too early to say conclusively. That does raise the question of where they get the liquid for the boiler however.

Huh, that was strange. I thought I just saw something moving beyond the barred door. It looked vaguely humanoid. I wonder if it could be an undiscovered automaton? I'm going to move my bedroll down here to see if I can catch another glimpse of it. This is all so exciting!

# Rigel's Letter

*Rigel Strong-Arm*

Now look here Da,

You're the one who always told me that swinging an ax was the only thing I've ever been good at so what do you expect me to do? The Stormcloaks pay dung for soldiering and I'm not going to fight for those mud-sucking Imperials. I've got a good racket picking the traders off the road here and I couldn't give a damn what you think about it.

Your 'little sabrecat' has a tidy operation out here and I'm not going to give it up just cause you're afraid of getting caught.

Oh and quit trying to send back the money. These louts just try to steal it and I have to beat their skull until they learn any different.

—Rigel Strong-Arm

# Rising Threat

*Lathenil*

Rising Threat, Vol. I

I was barely more than a child when the Great Anguish fell upon us. The very air was torn asunder, leaving gaping, infected wounds that spewed daedra from the bowels of Oblivion. Many flocked to the shores, seeking escape from Dagon's murderous host - but the seas betrayed our people, raising up to smash our ships and our ports, leaving us to fates so vile and wicked that death would seem a mercy.

The Crystal Tower stood as our last bastion of hope, in both the literal and figurative sense.

Refugees filled the Crystal Tower until it could hold no more. I could taste the fear hanging in the air; feel the pall of despair suffocating us. We could see the daedra moving through the trees in the distance, but they did not come. Days passed, and still the daedra would not approach within arrow-shot of the battlements. Hope began to grow. "They fear us," some would say, "even a daedra knows not to trifle with the wisdom and magicks of the Crystal-Like-Law!"

It was as if the foul denizens of Oblivion had been waiting for this very spirit to stoke our hearts before they acted.

As we slept, innumerable legions of daedra amassed around us... and they were not alone. Hundreds of Altmer prisoners were gathered with them. As dawn broke, we were awoken by their screams as the daedra began to flail them and flay them. We watched in abject horror as our kinfolk were defiled completely... carved up and eaten alive, impaled on their depraved war machines, and worried apart as meals for their profane beasts.

This bloodletting was only a prelude to whet their appetites.

Once the daedra finished with our kinfolk, they turned their eyes to the Crystal Tower. Our great and noble bastion proved as much of an impediment as a mighty oak to a landslide - standing tall for but a few moments, appearing almost able to ride the tide of destruction around it, but ultimately being swept away.

Our exalted wizards decimated the fiends, roasting them by the dozens. Archers were finding the narrowest of chinks in their daedric armor at over a hundred paces, felling their captains and commanders. The might and skillfulness of our heroic defenders was astonishing to behold, but it was not enough. The daedra clambered over the corpses of their cohort. They marched headlong into death and destruction that would make the mightiest armies in all of Tamriel quake with fear.

When they breached the walls, I fled along with the other cowards. I take no pride in that act. It has haunted my existence ever since, and I burn with shame to admit it, but it is truth. We fled in mindless panic - abandoning those stalwart Altmer who held the line against the onslaught, to preserve and defend our illustrious Crystal Tower.

We raced through cleverly concealed passageways and emerged well away from the chaos that had descended upon the tower. That is when it happened. It started like a gust rustling through the leaves of a dense forest, but the sound did not taper off. It rose into a roar as the very ground on which I stood began to shudder. I turned to look, and the world held its breath...

I stood transfixed as the heart of my homeland was torn as if from my own breast. The unthinkable, the incomprehensible... the tower of Crystal-Like-Law cast to the ground, with all the dignity of a beggar meeting an iron-clad fist. An eternity I watched, trying to reconcile what I knew with what I saw.

Sobs racked my chest, and weeping filled the air around me as the spell loosened its hold and I realized where I was. There were scores of other refugees mesmerized by the horror that had likewise ensorcelled me. "Go," I croaked out as my heart - the heart of my land - shattered. No one moved, not even me.

I mustered what will I could and bellowed all the fear and hatred and agony at what had just happened, turning the word into a mindless shriek: "GO!" I ran then, feeling more than seeing that the others had followed.

Rising Threat, Vol. II

What happened after the tower of Crystal-like-law fell was a daze. It was as if my mind simply... stopped. Instinct took over, as my every thought sank into a black abyss of despair. Time lost all meaning, and to this day I know not how long I was in this state. Eventually a conscious thought managed to break my fugue: the daedric horde had vanished! Gone as suddenly as they had come.



Before my numbed mind could comprehend the tumult that consumed my beloved Summerset Isle, before I could formulate the question "how?" they were there, dripping honeyed poison in our ears: the Thalmor. They were the ones that saved us, they claimed, working deep and subtle magicks. It was their efforts, their sacrifices that delivered the Altmer from extinction.

Oh, what fools we were. We wanted so desperately someone to thank for ending our tribulations, we lavished it upon the first to step up and claim the glory. With that simple act of gratitude, we allowed a vile rot to seep into our homeland, to putrefy our once noble and distinguished civilization.

It was months before I began to suspect the error we had made. Small twinges of unease would vex me, but each one alone was easy enough to disregard and push aside. The exile of the great seer-mage Rynandor the Bold was the final doubt that I could not ignore. You see, Rynandor was one of the very few who survived the collapse of the Crystal Tower - I saw some of his bravery and heroics with my own eyes. It was his leadership and sorcery that made the daedra pay such a high price for their destruction of the Crystal Tower.

The Thalmor besmirched his name when he had the audacity to publicly doubt and question their role in ending the Oblivion Crisis on Summerset Isle. Rynandor made the mistake of ignoring the consensus gentium, trusting instead to logic and facts. The shrewdness of the Thalmor, however, was not such to allow something as trivial as the truth stand in their way. As soon as they shifted the collective opinion ever so slightly against Rynandor, they had him sequestered and intensified their efforts to tarnish his reputation. Unable to mount any

sort of defense to the Thalmor's attacks, Rynandor was quickly denounced and exiled.

### Rising Threat, Vol. III

Ever so cautiously, I formed a cabal made up of others who distrusted the motives and methods of the Thalmor. Over several months, I liquidated my ancestral holdings and took whatever inheritance I could without raising any suspicions. I would follow after Rynandor and help him restore his reputation and status. We would then return to best the Thalmor at their own game and win back the mores and morals of the Altmer! The rest of my cabal would stay on Summerset Isle and win the trust of the Thalmor on whatever level best suited each of them, sending clandestine missives to me when possible.

After weeks of painstaking investigations and exorbitant bribes, I was able to learn that Rynandor was placed on a ship to Anvil. I booked my own passage to Anvil. My search almost ended there, for Rynandor had never arrived in Anvil Harbor. My instinct that Rynandor met a duplicitous end was confirmed when I sought out several of the deckhands who were reported to be aboard Rynandor's vessel. All died under mysterious and violent circumstances.

The first of many attempts on my life occurred soon after. Needless to say, I survived, but my grand plan to stymie the Thalmor fell apart without an esteemed leader to rally behind. I went into hiding, waiting anxiously for word of the Thalmor's activities back on Summerset Isle.

Over the following years, I tried to bend the ear of the Empire through various avenues and warn them of the Thalmor's

doings. The Empire, however, was having enough troubles dealing with the aftermath of the Oblivion crisis within its own borders without seeking trouble in far away Summerset. With the assassination of Emperor Uriel Septim VII and his heirs, and the self-sacrifice of Martin Septim (the true savior of Summerset Isle and the rest of Tamriel!) the Empire's leadership was left defunct.

High Chancellor Ocato convened the full Elder Council in an unsuccessful bid to select a new Emperor. Without an Emperor, the Empire beyond the reach of Cyrodiil began to splinter. Ocato reluctantly agreed to become the Potentate under the terms of the Elder Council Charter until Imperial rule could be reestablished, but a reluctant leader is rarely a strong leader.

Potentate Ocato made admirable efforts to rein in the bedlam that threatened to rip the Empire apart, and was even making headway when Red Mountain erupted and destroyed much of Vvardenfell (likely from Thalmor tampering, but I have yet to find proof of their misdeeds in this). What was left of Morrowind was thrown into absolute chaos. The effects of the eruption were felt even in Black Marsh, destroying roads and cutting off the Imperial garrisons there.

None were prepared for what happened next.

Rising Threat, Vol. IV

While Morrowind and the Imperial forces in Black Marsh were still reeling from the consecutive catastrophes of the Oblivion Crisis and the destruction of Vvardenfell, the Thalmor incited the Argonians to mount a massive uprising. Black Marsh and southern Morrowind were completely lost to the Argonians,

but luckily the Thalmor too lost what influence they had over the reptilians.

All the while, the Thalmor consolidated their hold over my beloved homeland.

It took almost a decade before my own machinations put me into contact with Ocato. He seemed more interested than most in what I had to say about the Thalmor, maybe because he was himself an Altmer and recognized the threat they represented. It wasn't long before the Thalmor had Ocato assassinated.

Potentate Ocato's murder began the Stormcrown Interregnum. The Elder Council fractured, leading into years of ruthless infighting, plots and backstabbing. Many tried to claim the Ruby Throne. Most were pretenders to the crown, a few had legitimate claims, others still were little more than brutal dullards who thought mere strength of arms was all the entitlement they needed. Violent, unnatural storms lashed the Imperial City several times during this anarchy, always with the eye of the storm looking directly down upon White-Gold Tower, as if this was the judgment of the Nine Divines.

With the Empire submerged in this mayhem, the Thalmor were quick to act. They overthrew the rightful Kings and Queens of the Altmer. I remember the revulsion and horror that took hold when word reached me - that this dementia had gripped my homeland. Once so proud and majestic, many of our great race actually embraced this insanity!

Then the first of many pogroms descended on Summerset Isle. They slaughtered any who were not "of the blood of the Aldmer". A fine excuse to purge the dissidents, as well - the Thalmor have never been ones to waste such an opportunity.

After seven long, bloody years the Stormcrown Interregnum was ended when a Colovian warlord by the name of Titus Mede seized the crown. Whether he had rightful claim or not is moot. Without Titus Mede, there would not be an Empire today. He proved a shrewd and capable leader, such that Skyrim endorsed him as Emperor.

With the Empire stabilizing under the auspicious efforts Emperor Titus Mede, I resumed my efforts to warn them of the Thalmor threat. Again, the Thalmor remained a step ahead. Before my efforts could come to fruition, the Thalmor struck: another coup, this time in Valenwood. The Empire was not prepared for the Thalmor's subterfuge and stratagem.

There are those who claim the combined Altmer and Bosmer forces greatly out-matched the Empire, but this is a farce. This short, savage campaign was won by the Thalmor even before first blood was drawn. They waited and watched their enemy, they chose where and when they would attack. The Thalmor were able to bring the full fury of their small contingent of Altmer and Bosmer to any of several Imperial strongholds.

Contrary to the posturing of the Empire's generals, the Thalmor did not command greater numbers. They had better spies and greater mobility, and knew how best to use them. This is the menace that the Thalmor represent! They are cruel and merciless, but they are no fools! They are devious and subtle, and so very patient.

In one fell stroke, the Thalmor took a strategic foothold on the mainland of Tamriel and prevented any significant attempt the Empire could have made to invade Summerset Isle and depose the tyranny of the Thalmor. At the same time, they took a better vantage to continue to watch the Empire and wait. In so

doing, they also revived the Aldmeri Dominion with their alliance to the Bosmer of Valenwood!

Over the decades, the Thalmor have grown quiet - but this is not the end. It has only just begun. They merely consolidate their power and tighten their grip on the hearts and minds of the Altmer. The Empire may wish to forget the wounds its pride has suffered at the hands of the Thalmor, but they are still out there. Plotting. Watching. Waiting.

While the Empire is content to secure inconsequential corners of its vast holdings, the threat of the Thalmor continues to rise. Not since Potentate Ocato has anyone in the Empire listened to me. I beseech any and all citizens of this renowned Empire to heed my words! The Thalmor must be stopped, before it is too late.

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Soon after Lathenil of Sunhold commissioned to have these volumes printed and distributed far and wide in the Empire with his own coin, he himself met a violent end. In light of the events that followed his death, we must consider that he may very well have been murdered by Thalmor assassins.

—Praxis Erratuim, Imperial Historian

# Rogatus's Letter

*Rogatus*

Leonitus,

You idiot. When were you thinking of visiting your family?  
When your mother was buried in the ground, or after some  
damned wizard roasts all my crops?

You make plans to come back to the farm this season, or I'll put  
all your old things in a pile and use them as firewood.

Your Father,

Rogatus

# Rora's Letter

*Rora*

Come on, it won't be that bad. Rigel may be paranoid, but she's as dumb as a mammoth! Body hair like one too!

I'm just saying if we can get into that treasure room we would be set! We could just take the money and head north to catch a ship. I know a guy, whose cousin knows a guy, that could get us set up with some pirates in Hammerfell. And in the meantime we could live high on that money for months!



# Ruined Trailbook

*Anonymous*

...map we traded a glass dagger to get is a fake. We can't find the pass marked over the mountains...

...should have tried for The Rift...

...took shelter from the storm in the ruins... ...stepped on a pressure plate and trapped us inside...

...Gildryn said he's heard the dwarven roads that leads under the mountains... ...have to try...

# Runil's Journal

*Runil*

17 Second Seed

It has been a long time since I've written an entry in this journal. I admit with some embarrassment then that when I pulled it down from the shelf, I nearly choked on the dust that flew.

There is little to tell, but did suffer another awful nightmare of the war. I suppose this is an affliction common to many who must see the horrors of war firsthand. Writing about it has already helped me to feel better.

19 Second Seed

Received a letter from Andurs in Whiterun. He has invited me to visit, and I intend to accept. It's been a long time since I was in the city.

My only fear is the Thalmor. I have heard that they and their agents are abroad in Skyrim, rooting out worshippers of Talos. I must be sure to keep a low profile.

28 Second Seed

Returned from my trip to Whiterun to find very few flowers have bloomed here. The rest of Skyrim is covered in blooms of

fiery red and piercing blue, but only a scant few have appeared in or near the town.

I'll make it my mission to change that. We could use some flowers to brighten this gloomy place. Perhaps I can get Tekla to help me.

### 9 Midyear

Spent most of the day consoling Lod, who received news of his cousin Grimsvotr's death. They were quite close as youths, and Lod drank and talked of his childhood memories. It was touching, but bittersweet.

### 22 Midyear

A wandering peddler passed through Falkreath today. I purchased a few sticks of incense from him. He was a nice young Nord lad, following in his father's footsteps. I think his name was Valbjorn.

A few days later, one of the town guards spied a pack of carrion birds circling near the road. He found young Valbjorn's corpse, victim of a bandit attack.

My heart is heavy, and yet I should know better. Life and death, growth and change, the turning of the seasons - these are all aspects of mighty Arkay. I should not be so affected by the death of one young man. And yet...

### 12 Sun's Height

Travelers pass through town, speaking of the land in the grip of high summer. These are the warmest days of the year in

Skyrim, but not in Falkreath. Here, all is mist and fog and rain. It is always cool and damp, and the seasons have little meaning.

Solaf asked me about this today. He said that in a place of the dead such as our great cemetery, Arkay's dominion should be absolute. And yet, Arkay is also the Lord of Seasons and this place seems untouched by them.

I gave the best answer I could. I explained that Falkreath is indeed a place of great power for Arkay, but he prefers to keep it this way, solemn and gray. Hopefully that was at least partly true, but who can possibly know the mind of a god?

## 20 Sun's Height

Dreams of the war again, but this time something different.

I was leading a small band of Aldmeri battlemages on a mission deep into the heart of Imperial territory. We had drawn near our target, a supply depot outside of Cheydinhal, when the sky suddenly darkened.

A great shadow passed over us, and there was a roar so terrible it chilled my blood. Something was flying just overhead, so huge and so dark as to blot out the sun.

The dream changed, then. I was here in Falkreath, performing a service for someone who had just passed away, though I do not recall who. From the corner of my eye, I saw a stranger approaching. I turned to look, but the shadow came again, and the roar, and then I awoke.

Now that I reflect on the dream, I cannot help but wonder, was it a dragon? Why would I dream of such a creature, when I have

never seen one? It seemed so real at the time, but now the memory is fading.

What it means, I cannot say. Probably nothing.

# Saden's Journal

*Saden*

If you're reading this, run. Get back in your boat and row as far and as fast as you can. There is no safe harbor here, there is no treasure worth the horror that awaits you. It's a miracle you aren't dead already.

Haldyn sent us from Japhet's Folly out into the sea, looking for hidden islands and forgotten coves. He said we needed outposts all around Tamriel to hide all the treasure we're soon to pillage. I say he's mad. A fresh group like us has more immediate concerns than outposts. We don't even have a name yet.

But I kept my mouth shut, my head down, and did what I was told. I wish to the Nine that I'd have said something...

This island looked so peaceful, so remote. Seemed like a good place for an outpost. Bjord and I stayed behind while the others scouted about. It wasn't long before we heard the screams. We peered over the rocks and I can't even describe what we saw, although I'll never forget it. The blood. Gods, the blood...

What those monsters did brought out the coward in Bjord. All it did to me was raise a fire in my chest, a hate in my gut so strong I can almost feel it coursing into the mace in my hand. I told Bjord to run, to tell the others never to come here. I stayed

to write out this warning to anyone unlucky enough to land on this rock.

Now that I've done that duty, there's only one thing left. I'm going to kill as many of those things as I can. I'm even going to try for the big one.

Maybe I'll do it. Maybe I'll kill every one of them. Maybe you've found this rock abandoned and safe. I doubt it...

# Saint Jiub's Opus

*Saint Juib*

The Rise and Fall of  
Saint Jiub the Eradicator  
Hero of Morrowind and  
Savior of the Dunmer

by

Jiub

I am a hunter. I am a redeemer. I am Jiub.

The tale of my rise to glory begins in the ash wastes of Morrowind. I rode alone, weapon at my side and the burning wind stinging my face. My quest was arduous, but necessary to ensure the survival of the Dunmer people. A pestilence was creeping across the ashlands, a menace with an insatiable hunger that plagued innocent travelers simply trying to get home. It was my self-sworn task to hunt them down one-by-one and drive them from the skies. Their fury knew no bounds and their war cry resonated across the land. They were the notorious cliff racers, and they had to be destroyed.



On a particularly hot day during Sun's Height, I was tracking what I called a Lingerer... a cliff racer without a nest. He was a particularly feisty one too, leading me on a merry chase across almost three miles of ash dunes. I had managed to take a piece out of one of his wings in an earlier scuffle so he couldn't maintain much of a climb, but he still had quite a bit of stamina left and he was trying to make me tire of the chase. Almost two solid hours passed and my silt strider was tiring, but I couldn't give up... I had sworn to eliminate the foul beasts to the last and I wasn't about to let it go. If I was going to stop the thing, I'd have to do it fast.

I pulled my Long Bow from my back and nocked my last arrow. I took a deep breath and pulled, trying to keep the cliff racer in my sights. It was literally a longshot with the beast gaining distance and the silt strider bouncing me around at full gallop. Finally, with a silent prayer, I released the string. The arrow sang through the air like a howling demon as it sliced its way towards its target. Finally, just as it crested the lip of a foyada, the arrow struck it in the midsection. It let out a horrible cry and fell out of sight.

My cries of triumph were quickly stifled by the sound of over a hundred wings. Rising from the foyada was an entire colony of cliff racers and they were out for blood. The blasted thing had led me right to their nest and sacrificed itself with the intent of feeding me to its brood. It was a trap. The damned things had become much too clever. Knowing this was likely the end, I jumped down from the silt strider and hit the back of its leg with the flat of my glass blade. There was no need for the innocent thing to die here today because of my stupidity. As the ash cloud cleared from being stirred up by its massive legs, the

cliff racer brood approached. I held my sword high and prepared for the worst.

The battle lasted two full days. I was beaten, clawed, bitten and knocked down more times than I care to remember. In the end, seventy-six cliff racers were slaughtered. I was knee-deep in their corpses and my body on the verge of collapse. But I had survived. I smiled to the heavens and all went black.

When I awoke, all I felt was my back on a cold stone floor. Every muscle in my body was on fire, and my vision was blurred. Slowly, I tried to climb to my feet. It took several agonizing minutes, but I finally managed to do it. As my eyes adjusted to the dim light of my new surroundings, I realized that I was standing before Lord Vivec himself. He was simply staring at me... floating above his throne and staring at me with his piercing eyes. When I began to prostrate myself as a sign of respect, he held up one of his hands as if to say it wasn't necessary. Was I dead? Was Lord Vivec pleased with me? Was he about to strike me down in anger for my somewhat sordid past?

Suddenly I understood everything. Suddenly I realized that I was brought here for a reason. I should have died in those ash wastes, but Lord Vivec must have seen something inside me that he hadn't seen in millennia and decided to spare me from my fate.

Thus began my ascent to Sainthood. Thus began the rise of Jiub!

# Scourge Of The Gray Quarter

*Frilgeth Horse-Breaker*

The tragedies befalling Morrowind do bring forth pity from even the stoutest Nordic heart. The dark elves deserve our condolences, but thus far they do not show themselves deserving of the simplest acts of charity. There are very different approaches to how to deal with the imminent problem of Morrowind, and I offer two options as seen in practice in Skyrim. One should serve as an exemplar, the other a cautionary tale.

Consider Riften, which shares a border with the ruined province. A number of the dark elves have made their homes there, but they are expected to earn their livelihoods as is any other citizen of the great city. They ply trades as merchants, work in the temple, and serve in the keep. Honest labor, to be admired from a race that was so recently in such dire straits as to even warrant this discussion. Today the city still has its share of problems, but they are not traceable to any influx of outsiders in their presence. In short, the dark elves have properly assimilated themselves into the Skyrim way of life, to be expected from any newcomer to these lands.

For an alternative approach, we only have to look at the once-proud city of Windhelm to see what can happen when our arms are cast too wide open in welcome. To think that the city of Ysgramor, whose very name was made in driving out the

elves from our sacred home, would open itself as a welcome destination for any refugee from the smoking sulphur, is a disgrace to the very idea of being a Nord.

And what has become of this? Predictably, the lazy, discontented rabble has descended into squalor in an area now delicately referred to as “the Gray Quarter” of the city. They were not expected to contribute and so have not. That they attempt to make over a proud Nord city into a little pocket of Morrowind is insulting enough, but the amount of unrest they have provoked even within the proper city walls should give any other Jarl reason to fear.

The Nords I talk to in the city speak of constant strife and crime coming from the Gray Quarter, with no respite in sight. The city guard barely patrol there, leaving the dark elves to mete out whatever passes for justice in their native customs. The respectable families of the city, the Cruel-Seas and Shatter-Shields, speak with an almost parental affection of the Argonians in their employ, but the dark elves have made no effort to ingratiate or assimilate themselves to the proper city-dwellers.

There is cause for optimism, though, as Jarl Ulfric is not nearly so tolerant of these substandard beings as his fathers were. Indeed, the soft hand of Hoag can be seen in the cities Argonian population as well; the fish-men, at least, have learned how to best contribute to their new home. They have proven themselves as models, toiling at the docks with utmost efficiency and bright smiles. It would do the dark elves well to pay heed to their scaly cousins. I would expect in due course that they will find themselves either contributing more

directly or once again wandering the land in search of roof and warmth.

# Scrap Of Paper

*Anonymous*

3 2

# Scrawled Note

*Anonymous*

Look Meryn I'm not arguing that these towers are falling to pieces, but I think you are exaggerating about the planks falling out—

# Scribbled Note

*Anonymous*

If you're reading this you've also found the key. Leave them for anyone who may find this path later. Enjoy.



# Scribbles Of A Madman

*Anonymous*

Black slimy fingers. Black slimy words. Black slimy book.  
[Dungeon Name] Black like the back of my eyes. But darker. Get  
these things out of my head!

# Second Letter From Linwe

*Anonymous*

Niranye,

Preparations have been made to secure the locket at Uttering Hills Cave. Torsten thinks we're responsible for Fjotli's death and we may need it as leverage. I assure you we merely lifted it from her body; the Shadows never murder. I hope you find a buyer soon, I don't like the heat this is bringing.

Linwe

# Servos' Journal

## *Servos Rendas*

She's finally done it. I knew she'd eventually crack. I probably should have left when I had the chance. The untapped power within these spiders has finally gone to Merilar's head. Who would have thought these tiny albino creatures had the ability to harness such magic?

Being locked in this cage is frustrating, of course, but it is keeping me even more focused on my work. What did she think I was going to do, anyway? As my sister, she must have known how devoted I am to this work. Although, I can't fault her for her actions right now. Who knows what kind of fumes these experiments have been giving off, or what effect they have on the human brain. At least I'm all right. Or maybe I'm not but I think I am? Could these experiments be having the same effect on me that they are on her?

Magnificent! It seems as though you can combine any one of the base spiders with a modifier to tweak its behavior. For instance, just imbuing an Albino Pod with a Ruby seems to create a spider that jumps at its victims and proceeds to explode. But, by simply adding a Salt Pile to the mix it creates the same manner of spider, but instead of jumping and exploding it emits flames from its body. I'd experiment with more of these behaviors, but it seems the bandits we tested the mind control spiders on are all still locked away, Merilar doesn't

want me to let them out. Maybe there are too many in there for her to handle?

I heard her muttering to herself earlier today. She was saying things like, "The spiders are mine. They'll listen to me!" What exactly is she planning? I hope she's not attempting to enter the blocked off room in the main chamber. She knows we specifically sealed it after hearing odd chanting coming from that direction. Then again, what she used to "know" may not matter right now, considering the state she's been in. I hope she'll be all right.

# Shadowmarks

*Delvin Mallory*

Need to know your way around, eh? Don't want to stumble into a necromancer's house or fall into another trap set up by the city guard? Then you need to read this book from cover to cover. Learning to identify the shadowmark can mean the difference between making a fortune and ending up with a blade in your gut.

The clever little marks are carved all over Skyrim... mostly on the doorframes or fronts of buildings, but you can find them pretty much anywhere a thief's been. It's the way we talk to each other without talking. Keeps the newer thieves from becoming dead thieves and all that nonsense. There aren't that many of the bloody things, so I don't want to hear any excuses about not having the time to learn them.

Anyway, enough of my gabbing. Time to put your wizard's cap on and do a little research.

Glossary

of Shadowmarks

“The Guild”

This is the symbol for the Guild. This means the place is as safe as the Flagon's cistern. If you see this shadowmark, someone

from the Guild is nearby for certain.

“Safe”

We usually leave this shadowmark when we've scouted and found a safe way around something, a hallway without traps or maybe a house that's already cleared out. If you see one of these, head the way it's pointing and you'll be fine.

“Danger”

If you see this shadowmark, head the other way or take your life in your own hands. It means there's something ahead or beyond that door that wants to turn you inside-out.

“Escape Route”

Now, on the rare occasion (it better be a rare occasion if you want to work in the Guild) that you find yourself in jail, look for this little beauty. You see this shadowmark and escape is just a few steps away.

“Protected”

We put these shadowmarks on places we don't want you to go. As in stay out of there or there's going to be a boot up the backside. These people are under the Guild's protection and should never be robbed or assaulted.

“Fence”

This should quickly become your favorite shadowmark. The person near this mark will buy your... hard-earned stolen goods for a fair price.

## “Thieves’ Cache”

Who says we only take and never give back? If you find this shadowmark near a chest or maybe a hollowed log, you’re in for a surprise... a gift from the Guild for the thief in the field. Whoever said membership didn’t have its privileges?

## “Loot”

There’s something near this shadowmark worth stealing. Saves you from breaking into a place only to find the people don’t even have two septim to rub together.

## “Empty”

The opposite of the Loot Shadowmark. Pass on this place, there’s nothing inside.

# Shavari's Note

*Anonymous*

I have good reason to believe the target will be coming to Riften in the next few days. Discretion is preferred, but elimination of the target is of the highest priority. The usual restrictions on exposure are lifted—you will be reassigned outside Skyrim if necessary, without penalty.

Do not fail me.

—E



# Shipment's Arrived

*Anonymous*

Our shipment's arrived and the following items are on your list. You want in, I need to see the gold!

Fire Salt

Paralytic Poison

Black-Briar Private Reserve

Shadowbanish Wine

Chokeberry Preserves

# Shipment's Ready

*Anonymous*

Sarthis,

Just got in a shipment of Moon Sugar from Morrowind. We're refining it now, and the skooma should be ready by the time you get to Cragslane Cavern. Bring the gold or don't show up at all.

Kilnyr

# Shopping List

*Anonymous*

Milk

Goat Cheese

Turnips

Cauterizing Agent

Eggs

Flour

Cheese

# **Sibbi Black-Briar**

*Maven Black-Briar*

A quick note regarding my son, Sibbi. He's to be treated as I'd expect you to treat any one of the Black-Briar family and all of his requests are to be honored without question. However, if he wishes to be released, you are not to do so unless I expressly authorize it. Sibbi needs to learn his place, and the only way that will happen is if he's kept under lock and key.

Maven

# Sild's Journal

*Sild*

4th of Evening Star, 4E 200

It never ceases to amaze me how many fall for my simple trap. I may have to consider tweaking it a bit though. Many of them, in recent months, have been dying the second they hit the cage floor. Putting a foot or two of water in didn't help either. In fact, it may actually be making things worse. The last one to fall in broke both his arms and legs! He proceeded to float there and eventually drown. If it weren't for the water I would have had a great time twisting his mind until I decided to end him.

8th of Evening Star, 4E 200

Captured another one... finally. It's definitely true that whatever these Orcs gain in size and strength they lose in mental capacity. I'm amazed they can even speak. He kept saying that when he gets out he'll break me in half like a twig... persuasive isn't he? Anyway, I told him that if he holds his head under the water for as long as this candle wick lasts I'd let him go free. Stupid thing drowned within minutes! I never tire of this.

13th of Evening Star, 4E 200

I haven't captured a soul for days, and the last victim died on impact. Of course I was still able to reclaim his soul, but

without the thrill of killing, or any kind of torture, the process lacks that special something. The reclaimed souls I've summoned make decent targets, but taking a mortal's life is so much more... sweet.

# Sinderion's Field Journal

## *Sinderion*

4E 58 Second Seed, Middas

I've spent a large portion of my life unraveling the mystery of the nirnroot and yet I still feel unfulfilled. The trilling sound this strange herb emits seems to taunt me, to push me even harder to discover its secrets. Even after a generous and indomitable traveler became a field collector in my stead, and provided me with five score of the nirnroot, I was only able to muster what I consider a mediocre alchemical creation at best. This only served to strengthen my hunger and whet my appetite for the solution.

It wasn't until over fifty years later that the answer to my prayers was carried into my basement workshop at the West Weald Inn. The first thing I heard was the familiar tone - that unmistakable warble unique to the nirnroot. But when I turned around, my heart leapt and a chill ran down my spine. This was indeed a nirnroot, but of a variety the likes of which I have never seen. The herb was awash in a spectacular array of red hues, each leaf seemingly emblazoned with innumerable variations of crimson. I couldn't move - I was completely transfixed. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined a species of nirnroot with such a unique property.

After an awkward silence, I finally managed to stammer out a few questions to the traveler who'd brought me this treasure. He told me his name was Obeth Arnesian, a treasure-seeker from Skyrim. Apparently, he'd been exploring a vast subterranean network of grand caverns called Blackreach and had stumbled across what he dismissed as "a noisy red weed." His expedition was largely unsuccessful and he didn't want to leave the caves empty-handed, so Obeth picked one of the crimson nirnroot to bring home. He said that it took some time, but eventually he was pointed my way and that perhaps I'd pay a fair price for it.

Before I could gather my wits and ask anything else, Obeth offered to sell me the crimson nirnroot sample, a map showing me how to find Blackreach and the strange key needed to breach its outer defenses. It took me mere moments to decide. Obeth left Skingrad a thousand septims richer, but I would have easily paid ten times that amount to obtain the sample alone.

It took a year of planning, but I was able to pack up and sell my workshop and make my way into Skyrim. Before delving headfirst into Blackreach, I knew I needed to set up a new laboratory, but wished to do so in seclusion. After making inquiries at the College of Winterhold, of which I was an honorary member, I was directed to speak to Avrusa Sarethi, a student of botanical alchemy who had a small farm near the city of Riften. By bartering my knowledge of nirnroot cultivation, I was able to secure Sarethi Farm as a launching point for my field research. I kept the knowledge of the crimson nirnroot a secret from Avrusa, but imparted everything else I knew to her in exchange for her hospitality.



A few months passed, but I was finally ready to enter Blackreach. I used the Runed Lexicon that Obeth had provided and descended into the depths. My goal was to gather enough crimson nirnroot to produce my greatest alchemical creation to date - I was certain it would take at least thirty of them to provide the necessary catalyst.

This brings me to the present. My initial research seems to indicate that the crimson nirnroot has a similar affinity for moisture as the garden variety, but also maintains some sort of symbiotic relationship with the enormous fungi that inhabits Blackreach. It's my guess that the fungi itself is a source of water, absorbing it from the moist subterranean air like a sponge. This provides the ideal environment for the nirnroot to grow. Unfortunately, the crimson nirnroot appears to have a vastly shortened lifespan, and they are in no way plentiful down here. Gathering thirty of them will be quite the challenge, but hopefully the denizens of Blackreach will allow me to gather my samples unhindered.

# Skorm Snow-Strider's Journal

*Skorm Snow-Strider*

13th of Sun's Dusk 1E139

At the command of Lord Harald we have swept our company to the south edge of our territories in an attempt to drive the Snow Elves up north to the main host of his forces. The first few days met with heavy resistance, but as we approached the eastern edge of Lake Honnith we have seen little and less of them.

21st of Sun's Dusk 1E139

We've begun to receive reports of attacks back around Lake Honnith and word has come from the front that we should pull back to be sure we are not leaving our rear exposed. If there is a stronghold of Elves here, we will surely root them out.

27th of Sun's Dusk 1E139

It sounds impossible, but we appeared to have stumbled upon a massive hold out of the Dragon Cultists, who were believed to be wiped out during the Dragon War. The Elves must wait, as this is a threat we cannot ignore. If we are quick, we may be able to catch them unaware and avoid a lengthy siege.

21st of Evening Star 1E139

Third week of the siege. The men grow restless with the cold and all miss their families. If that blasted storm hadn't caught us off guard and slowed our ascent we might have taken the Monastery, but as it stands we may be in for several more weeks of pounding on their walls. I've sent word to Harald to send one of the Voice masters to help bring down the wall.

4th of Morning Star 1E140

We've brought down their main gate thanks to the young Voice master, but the brash lad took an arrow in the neck in the process. It seems he will be joining the Eight in Sovngarde soon. The cultists have fallen back to the interior of the Monastery but soon enough we will breach those defenses. The sooner the better - it's too blasted cold on this mountain.

5th of Morning Star 1E140

We entered the Monastery today only to find all inside dead. It appears they purposely caved in the stairway to the refectory and then took their own lives. Some appear to have slit their own wrists, others we found with empty vials. Most appear to be poisoned, but oddly there are not as many empty bottles as one would expect by the number of dead. We shall hold up here over night rather than face the cold, and explore the catacombs in the morning to see if we can find another passage to the upper areas.

6th of Morning Star 1E140

May the Eight protect us from Dragons and madmen. We lost half our remaining men today. We discovered a well in the catacombs, locked but with several buckets already filled, and in their excitement for a drink that didn't risk frostbite on their

tongue, two score drank before we could stop them. Gods only know how these cultists could use that horrible poison in their own water supply. We've lost more men to this catastrophe than we did taking the courtyard.

The well was locked from this side, and the key must be somewhere in the catacombs, but with the ghosts of these dead cultists and the men demoralized, it just isn't worth the search. Let those gods-forsaken cultists drink their way to Oblivion and be done with it. The upper door in the courtyard has some sort of barrier over it and our mages believe that the sacrifice made here will sustain it for decades at the least.

We leave this accursed place tomorrow to regroup and push up north, but I will leave this journal, so that in an age or so when the poison has faded, someone may find a way in to be sure the cultists met their due fate.

# Skyrim's Rule

*Abdul-Mujib Ababneh*

Skyrim's Rule:

An Outsider's View

by

Abdul-Mujib Ababneh

In my travels, and they have been many, I have encountered many strange peoples and cultures, in many different provinces of the Empire. And in each, I have found a method of governing and customs of leadership unique to that particular province.

In Black Marsh, for example, the Argonian King relies upon his Shadowscale Assassins to eliminate threats secretly, without the common knowledge of his people. In the Imperial Province of Cyrodiil, the Emperor may rule directly, but the power granted to his Elder Council cannot be understated.

During a recent journey to Skyrim, that harsh, frozen realm of the Nords, I was able for the first time to witness the unique manner of rule of this strong, proud people.

It would appear that the entire province of Skyrim is separated into territories known as "holds," and each hold finds its seat of

power in one of the great, ancient cities. And in each of those cities, there rules that hold's king, known as a Jarl.

The Jarls of Skyrim are, as a whole, a fierce sight indeed. Sitting on their thrones, ready to administer justice, or send their forces out to quell some local threat, be it a pack of feral wolves or a terrifying giant that has wandered too close to a settlement.

In observing these Jarls, I found each to of course have his or her own unique personality and leadership style. But what I perhaps did not expect - especially considering the Nord leaders' unfair reputation as barbarians or uncivilized chieftains - was the formal structure of each Jarl's court. For while that hold's leader may be the one to sit on the throne, there is also a collection of functionaries who serve very specific and important roles.

The court wizard counsels the Jarl in all matters magical, and may even sell services or spells to the keep's visitors. The Steward is the Jarl's primary advisor, and generally takes care of the more mundane aspects of running the keep, the city, or even the hold, depending on the situation. And woe is the fool who defies the Housecarl - a personal bodyguard who rarely leaves the Jarl's side, and has pledged to sacrifice his or her own life to save that of their honored leader, if ever the need should arrive.

But as mighty and influential as each individual Jarl is, Skyrim's true power comes from the strength of its High King. The High King is ruler above all, and is always one of the Jarls, selected by a body called the "Moot" - a specially convened council of all the Jarls, who meet with the express purpose of choosing Skyrim's High King. Or so it is, in theory.

The reality, however, is that the High King swears fealty to the Emperor, and as Solitude is the city most directly influenced by Imperial culture and politics, the Jarl of Solitude has served as High King for generations. The Moot, therefore, is more formality and theater than anything else.

But as I prepared to leave Skyrim, I could feel a change in the air, sense the trepidation of some of the good Nord people. Many seemed unhappy with the Empire's continued presence in their land. And the outlawing of the worship of Talos as the Ninth Divine - a stipulation of the White-Gold Concordat, the peace treaty between the Empire and Aldmeri Dominion - has only strengthened that division.

So while the Jarls of Skyrim still control their holds, and those Jarls are ruled over by their Imperial-sanctioned High King, will there come a day when the Moot convenes to select a new High King - one that is not, as many would say, the Emperor's "Solitude puppet"?

If that day comes, I will be thankful to be far away from Skyrim, in my own home of Hammerfell. For such a decision could well mean civil war, and I fear that such a conflict would tear the fierce and beautiful Nord people asunder.

# Small Note

*Anonymous*

Adril,

I need you to go out and find the missing pit wolves before the next tournament. We lost too many during the last fights, and we won't be able to train new ones in time. Find them and bring them back to Cragslane at once!



# Smuggler's Note

*Anonymous*

Ahkari,

You can take those prices and eat them. We've found our own source of Skooma now- the real stuff, not that watered-down thirdhand trash you've been selling. And don't even think of ratting us out- one word to the guard, and I'll make sure they know what that 'seer' of yours is really up to.

# Soldier's Request

*Anonymous*

Commander

You've got to do something about Agnis. The old bat keeps coming into the barracks in the middle of the night and "straightening up". How are we supposed to be alert on watch when she's knocking things around and muttering to herself and keeping us from getting any sleep?

And she keeps taking all our gear and putting it on the shelves, but she mixes them all up! What if there is an attack and we can't get out the door in time because we can't find our own boots?

I know you feel bad for the old lady, but if you can at least keep her out of the barracks, we'd all appreciate it.

# Sonda's Note

*Sonda*

Quintus,

We have need of more medicines. The ore is getting harder to reach, and the further we dig, the more people complain of pains in the lungs and coughing.

Sondas Drenim

# Songs Of Skyrim - Revised

*Giraud Gemaine*

Songs Of Skyrim

Revised Edition

Compiled by

Giraud Gemaine

Historian of the Bards College

Solitude

Ragnar the Red is a traditional song of Whiterun. Despite the grim final image the song is generally regarded as light and rollicking and a favorite in inns across Skyrim.

Ragnar The Red

There once was a hero named Ragnar the Red, who came riding to Whiterun from ole Rorikstead!

And the braggart did swagger and brandish his blade, as he told of bold battles and gold he had made!

But then he went quiet, did Ragnar the Red, when he met the shieldmaiden Matilda who said...

Oh, you talk and you lie and you drink all our mead! Now I think it's high time that you lie down and bleed!

And so then came the clashing and slashing of steel, as the brave lass Matilda charged in full of zeal!

And the braggart named Ragnar was boastful no moooooore... when his ugly red head rolled around on the floor!

The Dragonborn Comes

Our hero, our hero, claims a warrior's heart.

I tell you, I tell you, the Dragonborn comes.

With a Voice wielding power of the ancient Nord art.

Believe, believe, the Dragonborn comes.

It's an end to the evil, of all Skyrim's foes.

Beware, beware, the Dragonborn comes.

For the darkness has passed, and the legend yet grows.

You'll know, You'll know the Dragonborn's come.

The Age of Oppression and The Age of Aggression are variants of one song. It isn't known which of the two was written first but the tune, with loyalty appropriate lyrics, is quite popular on both sides of the war.

The Age of Oppression

We drink to our youth, and to days come and gone. For the age of oppression is now nearly done.

We'll drive out the Empire from this land that we own. With our blood and our steel we will take back our home.

All hail to Ulfric! You are the High King! In your great honor we drink and we sing.

We're the children of Skyrim, and we fight all our lives. And when Sovngarde beckons, every one of us dies!

But this land is ours and we'll see it wiped clean. Of the scourge that has sullied our hopes and our dreams.

The Age of Aggression

We drink to our youth, to days come and gone. For the age of aggression is just about done.

We'll drive out the Stormcloaks and restore what we own. With our blood and our steel we'll take back our home.

Down with Ulfric the killer of kings. On the day of your death we'll drink and we'll sing.

We're the children of Skyrim, and we fight all our lives. And when Sovngarde beckons, every one of us dies!

But this land is ours and we'll see it wiped clean. Of the scourge that has sullied our hopes and our dreams.

The following is an ancient song we've only recently been able to translate. Without a tune or a sure pronunciation the song is lost to time. It's included here to show the deep history of song here in Skyrim.

The original version...

Dovahkiin, Dovahkiin, naal ok zin los vahriin, wah dein vokul mahfaeraak ahst vaal!

Ahrk fin norok paal graan fod nust hon zindro zaan, Dovahkiin, fah hin kogaan mu draal!

Huzrah nu, kul do od, wah aan bok lingrah vod, Aahrk fin tey, boziik fun, do fin gein!

Wo lost fron wah ney dov, ahrk fin reyliik do jul, voth aan suleyk wah ronit faal krein!

Ahrk fin zul, rok drey kod, nau tol morokei frod, rul lot Taazokaan motaad voth kein!

Sahrot Thu'um, med aan tuz, vey zeim hokoron pah, ol fin Dovahkiin komeyt ok rein!

Ahrk fin Kel lost prodah, do ved viing ko fin krah, tol fod zeymah win kein meyz fundein!

Alduin, feyn do jun, kruziik vokun staadnau, voth aan bahlok wah diivon fin lein!

Nuz aan sul, fent alok, fod fin vul dovah nok, fen kos nahlot mahfaeraak ahrk ruz!

Paaz Keizaal fen kos stin nol bein Alduin jot, Dovahkiin kos fin saviik do muz!

And the translation...

Dragonborn, Dragonborn, by his honor is sworn, To keep evil forever at bay!

And the fiercest foes rout when they hear triumph's shout,  
Dragonborn, for your blessing we pray!

Hearken now, sons of snow, to an age, long ago, and the tale,  
boldly told, of the one!

Who was kin to both wurm, and the races of man, with a  
power to rival the sun!

And the Voice, he did wield, on that glorious field, when great  
Tamriel shuddered with war!

Mighty Thu'um, like a blade, cut through enemies all, as the  
Dragonborn issued his roar!

And the Scrolls have foretold, of black wings in the cold, that  
when brothers wage war come unfurled!

Alduin, Bane of Kings, ancient shadow unbound, with a hunger  
to swallow the world!

But a day, shall arise, when the dark dragon's lies, will be  
silenced forever and then!

Fair Skyrim will be free from foul Alduin's maw, Dragonborn be  
the savior of men!

Tale of the tongues is a newer song. One that has come in to  
favor since the Dragonborn put down Alduin. It actually  
describes the events of the first battle against the dragons.

Tale of the Tongues

Alduin's wings, they did darken the sky. His roar fury's fire, and  
his scales sharpened scythes.



Men ran and they cowered, and they fought and they died.  
They burned and they bled as they issued their cries.

We need saviors to free us from Alduin's rage. Heroes on the  
field of this new war to wage.

And if Alduin wins, man is gone from this world. Lost in the  
shadow of the black wings unfurled.

But then came the Tongues on that terrible day. Steadfast as  
winter, they entered the fray.

And all heard the music of Alduin's doom. The sweet song of  
Skyrim, sky-shattering Thu'um.

And so the Tongues freed us from Alduin's rage. Gave the gift of  
the Voice, ushered in a new Age.

If Alduin is eternal, then eternity's done. For his story is over  
and the dragons are... gone.

# Songs Of Skyrim

*Giraud Gemaine*

Songs of Skyrim

Compiled by Giraud Gemaine

Historian of the Bards College Solitude

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when his ugly red head rolled around on the floor!

The Dragonborn Comes has been handed down from  
generation to generation of bards. The Dragonborn in Nord  
culture is the archetype of what a Nord should be. The song  
itself has been used to rally soldiers and to bring hope.

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but the tune, with loyalty appropriate lyrics, is quite popular  
on both sides of the war.

## The Age of Oppression

We drink to our youth, and to days come and gone.

For the age of oppression is now nearly done.

We'll drive out the Empire from this land that we own.

With our blood and our steel we will take back our home.

All hail to Ulfric! You are the High King!

In your great honor we drink and we sing.

We're the children of Skyrim, and we fight all our lives.

And when Sovngarde beckons, every one of us dies!

But this land is ours and we'll see it wiped clean.

Of the scourge that has sullied our hopes and our dreams.

## The Age of Aggression

We drink to our youth, to days come and gone.

For the age of aggression is just about done.

We'll drive out the Stormcloaks and restore what we own.

With our blood and our steel we'll take back our home.

Down with Ulfric the killer of kings.

On the day of your death we'll drink and we'll sing.

We're the children of Skyrim, and we fight all our lives.

And when Sovngarde beckons, every one of us dies!

But this land is ours and we'll see it wiped clean.

Of the scourge that has sullied our hopes and our dreams.

The following is an ancient song we've only recently been able to translate. Without a tune or a sure pronunciation the song is lost to time. It's included here to show the deep history of song here in Skyrim. The original version...

Dovahkiin, Dovahkiin, naal ok zin los vahriin, wah dein vokul mahfaeraak ahst vaal!

Ahrk fin norok paal graan fod nust hon zindro zaan, Dovahkiin, fah hin kogaan mu draal!

Huzrah nu, kul do od, wah aan bok lingrah vod, Aahrk fin tey, boziik fun, do fin gein!

Wo lost fron wah ney dov, ahrk fin reylik do jul, voth aan suleyk wah ronit faal krein!

Ahrk fin zul, rok drey kod, nau tol morokei frod, rul lot Taazokaan motaad voth kein!

Sahrot Thu'um, med aan tuz, vey zeim hokoron pah, ol fin Dovahkiin komeyt ok rein!

Ahrk fin Kel lost prodah, do ved viing ko fin krah, tol fod zeymah win kein meyz fundein!

Alduin, feyn do jun, kruziik vokun staadnau, voth aan bahlok wah diivon fin lein!

Nuz aan sul, fent alok, fod fin vul dovah nok, fen kos nahlot  
mahfaeraak ahrk ruz!

Paaz Keizaal fen kos stin nol bein Alduin jot, Dovahkiin kos fin  
saviik do muz!

And the translation...

Dragonborn, Dragonborn, by his honor is sworn, To keep evil  
forever at bay!

And the fiercest foes rout when they hear triumph's shout,  
Dragonborn, for your blessing we pray!

Hearken now, sons of snow, to an age, long ago, and the tale,  
boldly told, of the one!

Who was kin to both wyrm, and the races of man, with a  
power to rival the sun!

And the Voice, he did wield, on that glorious field, when great  
Tamriel shuddered with war!

Mighty Thu'um, like a blade, cut through enemies all, as the  
Dragonborn issued his roar!

And the Scrolls have foretold, of black wings in the cold, that  
when brothers wage war come unfurled

Alduin, Bane of Kings, ancient shadow unbound, with a hunger  
to swallow the world!

But a day, shall arise, when the dark dragon's lies, will be  
silenced forever and then!

Fair Skyrim will be free from foul Alduin's maw, Dragonborn be the savior of men!

# Staubin's Diary

*Anonymous*

After making our way down the mine and through the spiders we've finally made it down to Nchaund-Zel proper. They've built this city into the very cave walls that house it. Amazing. Nchuand-Zel hums with life, but its guardians lay dormant, hopefully we can learn more as we go deeper.

\* \* \* \* \*

This area seems to be where two of the city's families lived. We've spent some time studying this tree outside the dwellings but cannot figure out what its significance is. Stromm will be remaining behind with one of the students to further study this area in greater depth. I look forward to reading his notes on the subject.

\* \* \* \* \*

Today we entered the city's armory. The Falmer have yet to break into the best of the dwarven goods thanks to the sturdy dwemer locks. Erj said he would be able to get into the vaults and would send word when he's in. The spiders gave us much trouble but who could have foreseen they've been the only thing keeping Markarth safe?

\* \* \* \* \*



After exiting the Armory we made camp, but the Falmer have been watching us and finally tired of our intrusion. They came while we slept and slaughtered what guards were left. Meridia forgive me for using my students as a distraction to get away, but I have to bring this place back to life.

\* \* \* \* \*

too many...

couldn't hit switch...

# Stormcloak Missive

*Anonymous*

Galmar,

Fort Snowhawk is a shambles, hardly worth the name. The walls are in ruins, the jail has collapsed, the bailey is half-flooded and swarming with Skeevers. We're patching it up as best we can, but if the Legion attacks, we'll have no better luck defending it than they did. Buy us some time, or we'll lose all the ground we've gained here.

# Stromm's Diary

*Stromm*

I've decided to remain behind with one of our guards and further document the living area we've stumbled across. I write this to the best of my ability, but due to the sudden disappearance of the Dwemer it is almost impossible to say for certain what anything is.

## The Tree

By the Nine I cannot determine the purpose of this tree. It appears to be from the area around Whiterun, but why and how it got here is beyond me. I think it may be a gift from the surface world, but based on the lavish surroundings it could also be a display of power. I'll check the living areas nearby for any additional clues.

## Living Areas

Upon further investigation of the area, it looks like this structure houses two clans or families. I can think of no other reason for this particular layout. Perhaps this group oversaw this particular portion of the city? I'll have to compare notes from the other areas as we uncover more of the city - hopefully some of those will contain more in depth clues. It appears a smaller wing collapsed on itself and maybe when the expedition returns we can dig out an entrance.

Falmer have begun to creep back into this area of the ruins. It's a good thing I am not alone here.

We've managed to block off some of the areas we suspect the Falmer were coming in through, but they're still getting to us somehow. Together we are able to hold them back, but how long until Staubin and the rest return?

# Sulla's Journal

*Sulla*

We tried to get through glacier at the top, but we couldn't find any way into that tower parapet. Yag spotted in the glacial wall and construction of a catwalk was finished just in time for a storm to hit. At first we thought to wait it out, but it has only gotten worse. A shift in the glacier took out several of the new laborers.

I ordered everyone to quickly move as much of the supplies as we could into the fissure and we managed to get most of it. One of the hands decided he wasn't going to listen and tried to make it out through the storm, but got blown off the catwalk by the wind.

Looks like we are well and truly stuck in here. But for all that I feel even more driven that I should be the one to uncover the mysteries of this ruin. I'm tired of all the credit for my work going to the Mages or the Legion. It will be my name that goes down in the history books for this discovery.

# Suvaris Atheron's Logbook

*Suvaris Atheron*

PRIVATE PROPERTY OF SUVARIS ATHERON

PLEASE RETURN TO HIM IN WINDHELM IF FOUND

Journal for month of Last Seed, year 201 of the 4th Era

1st of Last Seed

Spoke with Master Torbjorn in the morning. Pleased with projects to increase competitiveness of shipping office.

Spent afternoon overseeing offices and various paperworks.

Moderate lunch and heavy dinner.

2nd of Last Seed

Punished one of the dockworkers for laziness. Two days rations—empty stomach means less good work for a few days, but he'll work hard from here on out.

Moderate lunch and dinner.

3rd of Last Seed

Correspondence with Uncle Mithorpa in Morrowind. Sadness continues to abound flowing west.

Light lunch, no dinner.

4th of Last Seed

Reports that our pirate friends are offering to let the Company ships through in exchange for gold. Will need to look into this.

Heavy lunch and dinner.

5th of Last Seed

Tried to get in to see Master Torbjorn about the potential issues, but he proved too busy tending to his wife and daughter in mourning. Did not wish to intrude.

Skipped lunch (waiting at the Shatter-Shield house), moderate dinner.

6th of Last Seed

Explained situation to Master Torbjorn. As usual he did not wish to know details, only how much money I needed to ensure smooth operations. I depart tomorrow for Dawnstar, hoping to catch the captain at the Windpeak for his crew's regular "festivities."

Heavy lunch, skipped dinner in favor of packing.

7th of Last Seed

Beginning journey. Plan to be back by the 12th.

15th of Last Seed

Returned safely, though not unscathed. Bandit attacks delayed the initial travel, then Stig Salt-Plank proved to be more

uncooperative than I had hoped. Chipped in some additional gold out of my own purse (some cleverness in the books will see it repaid), and the deal was done.

Ate on the road, light meals all around.

16th of Last Seed

Hoping word gets back to Stig's betters of our new arrangements before more Company ships can make it through. Found the Argonians had completely fouled up the operations in my absence. No surprise, there. Need to see to the old one's skooma supply, that should keep them motivated.

Heavy lunch and dinner.



# Sven's Fake Letter From Faendal

*Sven*

Dear Camilla,

I know I have called upon you at your house many times, and while we may be growing close, I need you to put any desires you may have for me aside. I am a true-born son of Valenwood, and I could never befoul my bloodline by courting an Imperial. I hope we can remain true friends, provided you understand your people's place in the Aldmeri Dominion, and respect me as such.

Sincerely, Faendal

# Tattered Journal

*Anonymous*

They've had me working down here for days now. It's not the time that's getting to me though, it's these tunnels. I've told them countless times now to add extra supports to the weak sections of tunnel. If only we had more of those wooden beams that we reinforced with bronze bottoms. Honestly, if I hear the earth shift one more time above my head I'll be so stressed I may stop drinking for good. I mean, what's a Nord without his mead.

# Thalmor Dossier: Delphine

*Anonymous*

Status: Active (Capture or Kill), High Priority, Emissary Level Approval

Description: Female, Breton, mid 50s

Background:

Delphine was a high-priority target during the First War, for both operational and political reasons. She was directly involved in several of the most damaging operations carried out by the Blades within the Dominion. She had been identified and was slated for the initial purge, but by bad luck was recalled to Cyrodiil just before the outbreak of hostilities. During the war, she evaded three attempts on her life, in one case killing an entire assassination team. Since then, we have only indirect evidence of her movements, as she has proven extremely alert to our surveillance. She should be considered very dangerous and no move against her should be made without overwhelming force and the most careful preparation.

Operational Notes:

She is believed to still be working actively against us within Skyrim, although we have no location on her. Assumed to be working alone, as no other Blades are known to be active in Skyrim, and she has in the past avoided contact with other

fugitive Blades for her own security (one of the reasons she has so far evaded elimination). Her continued existence is an affront to all of us. Any information on her whereabouts or activities should be immediately forwarded to the Third Emissary.

# Thalmor Dossier: Esbern

*Anonymous*

Status: Fugitive (Capture Only), Highest Priority, Emissary Level Approval

Description: Male, Nord, late 70s

Background:

Esbern was one of the Blades loremasters prior to the First War Against the Empire. He was not a field agent, but is now believed to have been behind some of the most damaging operations carried out by the Blades during the pre-war years, including the Falinesti Incident and the breach of the Blue River Prison. His file had remained dormant for many years, an inexcusable error on the part of my predecessor (who has been recalled to Alinor for punishment and reeducation), in the erroneous belief that he was unlikely to pose a threat due to his advanced age and lack of field experience. A salutary reminder to all operational levels that no Blades agent should be considered low priority for any reason. All are to be found and justice exacted upon them.

Operational Notes:

As we are still in the dark as to the cause and meaning of the return of the dragons, I have made capturing Esbern our top priority, as he is known to be one of the experts in the

dragonlore of the Blades. Regrettably, we have yet to match their expertise on the subject of dragons, which was derived from their Akaviri origins and is still far superior to our own (which remains largely theoretical). The archives of Cloud Ruler Temple, which is believed to have been the primary repository of the oldest Blades lore, were largely destroyed during the siege, and although great effort has been made to reconstruct what was lost, it now appears that most of the records related to dragons were either removed or destroyed prior to our attack. Thus Esbern remains our best opportunity to learn how and why the dragons have returned. It cannot be ruled out that the Blades themselves are somehow connected to the dragons' return.

We have recently obtained solid information that Esbern is still alive and hiding somewhere in Riften. Interrogation of a possible eyewitness is on-going. We must proceed carefully to avoid Esbern becoming alerted to his danger. If he is indeed in Riften, he must not be given an opportunity to flee.

# Thalmor Dossier: Ulfric Stormcloak

*Anonymous*

Status: Asset (uncooperative), Dormant, Emissary Level Approval

Description: Jarl of Windhelm, leader of Stormcloak rebellion, Imperial Legion veteran

Background:

Ulfric first came to our attention during the First War Against the Empire, when he was taken as a prisoner of war during the campaign for the White-Gold Tower. Under interrogation, we learned of his potential value (son of the Jarl of Windhelm) and he was assigned as an asset to the interrogator, who is now First Emissary Elenwen. He was made to believe information obtained during his interrogation was crucial in the capture of the Imperial City (the city had in fact fallen before he had broken), and then allowed to escape. After the war, contact was established and he has proven his worth as an asset. The so-called Markarth Incident was particularly valuable from the point of view of our strategic goals in Skyrim, although it resulted in Ulfric becoming generally uncooperative to direct contact.

Operational Notes:

Direct contact remains a possibility (under extreme circumstances), but in general the asset should be considered dormant. As long as the civil war proceeds in its current indecisive fashion, we should remain hands-off. The incident at Helgen is an example where an exception had to be made - obviously Ulfric's death would have dramatically increased the chance of an Imperial victory and thus harmed our overall position in Skyrim. (NOTE: The coincidental intervention of the dragon at Helgen is still under scrutiny. The obvious conclusion is that whoever is behind the dragons also has an interest in the continuation of the war, but we should not assume therefore that their goals align with our own.) A Stormcloak victory is also to be avoided, however, so even indirect aid to the Stormcloaks must be carefully managed.



# Thalmor Orders

*Elenwen*

Agent Sanyon,

In response to your report dated 22nd Morning Star 401, your request for an expeditionary force is hereby denied.

Sanyon, this is the seventh report you have filed this month, and not one of your leads - not one!- has turned up so much as a shred of evidence that a Talos shrine exists in the Lake Ilinalta region. No prisoners. No documents. Nothing!

Our forces are stretched thin enough as it is, and I have better missions - better agents - to assign them to. If you feel so sure of your informant, investigate this yourself. Come back with proof. Or not at all.

By my hand and seal,

Elenwen

# The Aetherium Wars

*Taron Dreth*

The Aetherium Wars

by Taron Dreth

Dedicated to Katria,

my Friend and Colleague

The end, when it came, was swift. In the span of three short years, the great dwarven cities of Skyrim, from Markarth to the Velothi Mountains, fell before the armies of the High King. Cities that had held fast against the Nords for over a hundred years crumbled abruptly and without warning.

For centuries, scholars have marveled at the sudden collapse of the Dwemer city-states. Even the Nords seem to have been taken by surprise, though their chroniclers were quick to ascribe their success to King Gellir's inspired tactics and the blessings of Shor.

My research suggests a much different cause, however. In the decades preceding their fall, the dwarven cities of Skyrim had been decimated by internal disputes and infighting over a most surprising cause: Aetherium.

Modern scholars know Aetherium as a rare, luminescent blue crystal found in some Dwemer ruins. Most consider it little more than a curiosity, as it has proven all but impossible to work with: while it has a strong magical aura, it is alchemically inert, and no known process can enchant, smelt, mold, bind, or break it.

To the dwarves, of course, such problems were merely a challenge. In the years following King Harald's reign, the Dwemer discovered a considerable source of Aetherium in their deepest delvings. An alliance of four cities, led by Arkngthamz, the great research center in the southern Reach, was formed to oversee its extraction, processing, and study, and a new 'Aetherium Forge' constructed to smelt it under precisely controlled conditions.

If the inscriptions I discovered are to be believed, the results were nothing short of spectacular: the items produced by the Forge were artifacts of immense power, imbued from the moment of their creation with powerful enchantments. The dwarven alliance shattered almost immediately, as the four city-states and their rivals attempted to claim the Forge.

We can only speculate that none were successful. Decades of conflict merely weakened them all, allowing for King Gellir's subsequent conquests. And though the Dwemer reclaimed most of their lands a century later, there is no evidence that they ever resumed their research on Aetherium. Perhaps the costs had just been too great.

But nothing like the Aetherium Forge described in the inscriptions has ever been found within the borders of Skyrim. It may have been destroyed long ago, by the Nord invaders or

the Dwemer themselves. Or perhaps it, like the secrets of Aetherium itself, still remains to be discovered.

# The Alduin/Akatosh Dichotomy

*Alexandre Simon*

The Alduin/Akatosh Dichotomy

by

By Alexandre Simon

High Priest of the Akatosh Chantry, Wayrest

As High Priest of the Akatosh Chantry, I have dedicated my life to the service of the Great Dragon. He who was first at the Beginning. He who is greatest and most powerful of all the Divines. He who is the very embodiment of infinity.

I am, quite obviously, a man of deep and unwavering faith. But not blind faith, for I am also a man of scholarly endeavors, and have always valued education and the pursuit of truth, in all its forms. And so, I have had the honor and privilege of making it my life's work to discover the truth about Akatosh, in all of our beloved Divine's incarnations.

Throughout the civilized world (and I refer not only to the Empire, but to every nation on great Nirn that has embraced the virtues of learning and letters), the Great Dragon is worshipped. Usually, the highest of Divines is referred to as

Akatosh. But what some may not be aware of is that he is occasionally referred to by two other names as well.

The Aldmer refer to Akatosh as Auri-El. The Nords call him Alduin. These names come up repeatedly in certain ancient texts, and in each one, it is clear that the deity in question is none other than he whom we call Akatosh.

Yet there are those who believe, even in this enlightened age, that this is not so. That the regional interpretations of Akatosh are not interpretations of Akatosh at all. Rather, they are references to altogether different deities, deities who may or may not share the same aspects or be the Great Dragon at all.

Many Altmer of Summerset Isle worship Auri-El, who is the soul of Anui-El, who in turn is the soul of Anu the Everything. But if you ask the high elves themselves (as I did, when I traveled to Summerset Isle to continue my research), the majority will concede that Auri-El is but Akatosh with a different name, colored by their own cultural beliefs.

So maybe it comes as no surprise that the real theological dissention lies in Skyrim, among the Nord people - renowned as much for their stubbornness as they are their hardiness and prowess on the fields of valor. When I journeyed to the stark white province, I was surprised to find a people whose views on Akatosh are almost diametrically opposed to those of the Altmer. The majority of Nord people seem to believe that their Alduin of legend is not Akatosh, but another deity entirely. A great dragon, yes, but not the Great Dragon.

Determined to get to the heart of this matter, I consulted with several Nords, chief among them an old and respected clan chief by the name of Bjorn Much-Bloodied. And what surprised

me most about those I talked to was not that they believed in Alduin instead of Akatosh, but that they recognized Alduin in addition to Akatosh. In fact, most children of Skyrim seem to view Akatosh in much the same way I do - he is, in fact, the Great Dragon. First among the Divines, perseverance personified and, more than anything, a force of supreme good in the world.

Alduin, they claim, is something altogether different.

Whether or not he is actually a deity remains in question, but the Alduin of Nord folklore is in fact a dragon, but one so ancient, and so powerful, he was dubbed the "World Eater," and some accounts even have him devouring the souls of the dead to maintain his own power. Other stories revolve around Alduin acting as some sort of dragon king, uniting the other dragons in a war against mankind, until he was eventually defeated at the hands of one or more brave heroes.

It is hard to deny that such legends are compelling. But as both High Priest and scholar, I am forced to ask that most important of questions - where is the evidence?

The Nords of Skyrim place a high value on their oral traditions, but such is the core of their unreliability. A rumor passed around the Wayrest market square can change so dramatically in the course of a few simple hours, that by the end of the day, one might believe half the city's residents were involved in any number of scandalous activities. How then is an educated, enlightened person possibly supposed to believe a legend that has been passed down, by word of mouth only, for hundreds, or even thousands of years?

The answer to such a question is simple - he cannot.

And so, it is my conclusion that the Alduin of Nord legend is in fact mighty Akatosh, whose story grew twisted and deformed through centuries of retelling and embellishment. Through no real fault of their own, the primitive peoples of Skyrim failed to understand the goodness and greatness of the Great Dragon, and it was this lack of understanding that formed the basis of what became, ironically, their most impressive creative achievement - "Alduin," the World Eater, phantom of bedtime stories and justification for ancient (if imagined deeds).



# The Apprentice's Assistant

*Aramril*

## The Apprentice's Assistant

Advice from Valenwood's most prestigious spellcaster

No doubt you have heard tales of my adventures. Stories carried from province to province, all of Tamriel in awe of my feats of magical prowess. More than once, I am sure, you have thought "if only I had Aramril's ability. Then I too could seek fame and fortune in magic duels!"

It is true, of course. Great fame and limitless fortune await those who are successful. But to be successful, one needs to learn from the best. That is why you have purchased this book, so that I may teach you. I am, of course, the best.

Here, then, is my advice. Follow it, and you too can make a name for yourself throughout Tamriel.

1. To know your opponent is to know his weakness.

Infinitely more versatile than a simple blade of steel, a good mage has a wide array of spells at her disposal. More than that, she knows when to best use them. She knows that frost spells can stop a charging beast, or keep a savage brute from swinging his sword. She knows that shock spells can drain her opponent's magicka. She knows that illusion spells can set a

group of enemies against each other (should she find herself in a less than fair fight, an all-too-common reality when her opponents know they cannot win in single combat) and that there are spells that can save her in a moment when all seems lost.

## 2. To know yourself is to know your limits.

Even the best mage has a finite reserve of magicka; none born yet have been graced with Magnus' infinite reserves of power. And so a good mage does not over-extend herself. She makes sure she always has enough magicka to keep herself safe. Failing that, she makes sure she has a sizable supply of potions at the ready. Failing that, she makes sure she always has an escape route. Not that the Great Aramril has ever fled a fight, but of course you do not necessarily share her superb natural ability. That is why you must practice.

## 3. Wards can kill (you)

There is no question that wards are an essential tool of any aspiring mage. They can block incoming spells, negating your opponent's attack and wasting his magicka. A good mage knows, however, to not rely too heavily on her ward. Keeping a ward readied for too long will leave a caster drained of magicka, unable to retaliate, and at worst unable to maintain the ward and therefore completely defenseless.

## 4. Two hands are not always better than one

Any advanced spellcaster has learned to cast spells with both hands, dealing more damage. There are certainly times when this is to your advantage, such as when an opponent is already weakened, or when it is likely to draw a bigger reaction from

the crowd that has no doubt gathered to watch you. It is not always the best strategy, however. Concentration spells, for example, can often be used on the ground when an opponent is especially nimble. In that instance, using both hands independently can cover more ground at the same time. A mage throwing fireballs with both hands cannot immediately raise a ward to defend herself, or heal while she continues to attack.

5. Always rise to a challenge, especially when you know you can win

Remember that your first priority is, of course, to stay alive. Following closely behind, though, is your need to please the crowd. You are, after all, depending on their generosity to fund your adventures. Here, then, more than magic comes into play. If you can gain a sense of your opponent's ability before the duel begins, you can enter into the event with confidence. Knowing that you outclass your opponent is of great importance, as it means you can confidently give the crowd a better show. Likewise, knowing ahead of time that you could very well lose a duel, you are afforded an opportunity to suddenly find yourself engaged elsewhere, and be unable to attend the event. (By no means do I suggest that I have ever done such a thing; I simply find that my great fame occasionally means I am unable to respond to every single request for a duel)

Keep these few things in mind, keep your wits about you, and you too can make a name for yourself by putting on great displays of magical prowess. Take care, though - for if you become successful enough, you may find yourself facing a challenge from me!

# The Arcturian Heresy

*Ysmir*

The Arcturian Heresy

by

The Underking

Ysmir Kingmaker

With his god destroyed, Wulfharth finds it hard to keep his form. He staggers out of Red Mountain to the battlefield beyond. The world has shaken and all of Morrowind is made of fire. A strong gale picks up, and blows his ashes back to Skyrim.

Wulfharth adopts and is adopted by the Nords then. Ysmir the Grey Wind, the Storm of Kyne. But through Lorkhan he lost his national identity. All he wants the Nords for is to kill the Tribunal. He raises a storm, sends in his people, and is driven back by Tribunal forces. The Dunmer are too strong now. Wulfharth goes underground to wait and strengthen and reform his body anew. Oddly enough, it is Almalexia who disturbs his rest, summoning the Underking to fight alongside the Tribunal against Ada'Soom Dir-Kamal, the Akaviri demon. Wulfharth disappears after Ada'Soom is defeated, and does not return for three hundred years.

It is the rumbling of the Greybeards that wake him. Though the Empire has crumbled, there are rumors that a chosen one will come to restore it. This new Emperor will defeat the Elves and rule a united Tamriel. Naturally, Wulfharth thinks he is the figure of prophecy. He goes directly to High Hrothgar to hear the Greybeards speak. When they do, Ysmir is blasted to ash again. He is not the chosen one. It is a warrior youth from High Rock. As the Grey Wind goes to find this boy, he hears the Greybeards' warning: remember the color of betrayal, King Wulfharth.

The Western Reach was at war. Cuhlecain, the King of Falkreath in West Cyrodiil, was in a bad situation. To make any bid at unifying the Colovian Estates, he needed to secure his northern border, where the Nords and Reachmen had been fighting for centuries. He allies with Skyrim at the Battle of Old Hrol'dan. Leading his forces was Hjalti Early-Beard. Hjalti was from the island kingdom of Alcaire, in High Rock, and would become Tiber Septim, the First Emperor of Tamriel.

Hjalti was a shrewd tactician, and his small band of Colovian troops and Nord berserkers broke the Reachman line, forcing them back beyond the gates of Old Hrol'dan. A siege seemed impossible, as Hjalti could expect no reinforcements from Falkreath. That night a storm came and visited Hjalti's camp. It spoke with him in his tent. At dawn, Hjalti went up to the gates, and the storm followed just above his head. Arrows could not penetrate the winds around him. He shouted down the walls of Old Hrol'dan, and his men poured in. After their victory, the Nords called Hjalti Talos, or Stormcrown.

Cuhlecain, with his new invincible general, unifies West Cyrodiil in under a year. No one can stand before Hjalti's

storms. The Underking knows that if Hjalti is to become Emperor of Tamriel, he must first capture the Eastern Heartland. Hjalti uses them both. He needs Cuhlecain in the Colovian Estates, where foreigners are mistrusted. It is obvious why he needs Ysmir. They march on the East, the battlemages surrender before their armies, and they take the Citadel. Before Cuhlecain can be crowned, Hjalti secretly murders him and his loyalist contingent. These assassinations are blamed on the enemies of Cuhlecain, which, for political reasons, are still the Western Reach. Zurin Arctus, the Grand Battlemage (not the Underking), then crowns Hjalti as Tiber Septim, new Emperor of All Cyrodiil. After he captures the Imperial Throne, Septim finds the initial administration of a fully united Cyrodiil a time-consuming task. He sends the Underking to deal with Imperial expansion into Skyrim and High Rock. Ysmir, mindful that it might seem as if Tiber Septim is in two places at once, works behind the scenes. This period of levelheaded statesmanship and diplomacy, this sudden silence, heretofore unknown in the roaring tales of Talosian conquest, are explained away later. (The assassination story is embroidered—now it is popularly Talos' own throat that was cut.)

The human kingdoms are conquered, even Hammerfell, whose capture was figured to be an arduous task. The Underking wants a complete invasion, a chance to battle their foreign wind spirits himself, but Tiber Septim refutes him. He has already made a better plan, one that will seem to legitimize his rule. Cyrodiil supports the losing side of a civil war and are invited in. Finally, the Empire can turn its eyes onto the Elves.

The Underking continues to press on Tiber Septim the need to conquer Morrowind. The Emperor is not sure that it is a wise idea. He has heard of the Tribunal's power. The Underking

wants his vengeance, and reminds Tiber Septim that he is fated to conquer the Elves, even the Tribunal. Arctus advises against the move but Septim covets the Ebony in Morrowind, as he sorely needs a source of capital to rebuild Cyrodiil after 400 years of war. The Underking tells him that, with the Tribunal dead, Septim might steal the Tribunal's power and use it against the High Elves (certainly the oldest enemies of Lorkhan, predating even the Tribunal). Summerset Isle is the farthest thing from Tiber Septim's mind. Even then, he was planning to send Zurin Arctus to the King of Alinor to make peace. The Ebony need wins out in the end. The Empire invades Morrowind, and the Tribunal give up. When certain conditions of the Armistice include not only a policy of noninterference with the Tribunal, but also, in the Underking's eyes, a validation of their religious beliefs, Ysmir is furious. He abandons the Empire completely. This was the betrayal the Greybeards spoke of. Or so he thinks.

Without the Underking's power, all ideas of conquering Tamriel vanish. Would've been nice, Septim thinks, but let's just worry about Cyrodiil and the human nations. Already there is a rebellion in Hammerfell.

Pieces of Numidium trickle in, though. Tiber Septim, always fascinated by the Dwarves, has Zurin Arctus research this grand artifact. In doing so, Arctus stumbles upon some of the stories of the war at Red Mountain. He discovers the reason the Numidium was made and some of its potential. Most importantly, he learns the Underking's place in the War. But Zurin Arctus was working from incomplete plans. He thinks it is the heart of Lorkhan's body that is needed to power the Numidium.

While Zurin Arctus is raving about his discovery, the prophecy finally becomes clear to Tiber Septim. This Numidium is what he needs to conquer the world. It is his destiny to have it. He contacts the Underking and says he was right all along. They should kill the Tribunal, and they need to get together and make a plan. While the Underking was away he realized the true danger of Dagoth-Ur. Something must be done. But he needs an army, and his old one is available again. The trap is set.

The Underking arrives and is ambushed by Imperial guards. As he takes them on, Zurin Arctus uses a soulgem on him. With his last breath, the Underking's Heart roars a hole through the Battlemage's chest. In the end, everyone is dead, the Underking has reverted back to ash, and Tiber Septim strolls in to take the soulgem. When the Elder Council arrives, he tells them about the second attempt on his life, this time by his trusted battle mage, Zurin Arctus, who was attempting a coup. He has the dead guards celebrated as heroes, even the one who was blasted to ash... He warns Cyrodiil about the dangers within, but says he has a solution to the dangers without. The Mantella.

The Numidium, while not the god Tiber Septim and the Dwemer hoped for (the Underking was not exactly Lorkhan, after all), it does the job. After its work on Summerset Isle a new threat appears—a rotting undead wizard who controls the skies. He blows the Numidium apart. But it pounds him into the ground with its last flailings, leaving only a black splotch. The Mantella falls into the sea, seemingly forever.

Meanwhile, Tiber Septim crowns himself the First Emperor of Tamriel. He lives until he is 108, the richest man in history. All aspects of his early reign are rewritten. Still, there are



conflicting reports of what really happened, and this is why there is such confusion over such questions as: Why does Alcaire claim to be the birthplace of Talos, while other sources say he came from Atmora? Why does Tiber Septim seem to be a different person after his first roaring conquests? Why does Tiber Septim betray his battlemage? Is the Mantella the heart of the battlemage or is it the heart of Tiber Septim?

Tiber Septim is succeeded by his grandson, Pelagius I. Pelagius is just not of the same caliber. In truth, he's a little nervous with all these provinces. Then an advisor shows up.

"I was friends with your grandfather," the Underking says, "He sent me to help you run the Empire."

# The Art Of War Magic

*Zurin Arctus*

THE ART OF WAR MAGIC

by

Zurin Arctus

with Commentary By Other Learned Masters

Chapter 3: Dispositions

Master Arctus said:

1. The moment to prepare your offense is the moment the enemy becomes vulnerable to attack.

Leros Chael: Knowledge of the enemy mage's mind is of the foremost importance. Once you know his mind, you will know his weaknesses.

Sedd Mar: Master Arctus advised Tiber Septim before the battle of Five Bridges not to commit his reserves until the enemy was victorious. Tiber Septim said, "If the enemy is already victorious, what use committing the reserve?" To which Master Arctus replied, "Only in victory will the enemy be vulnerable to defeat." Tiber Septim went on to rout an enemy army twice the size of his.

2. The enemy's vulnerability may be his strongest point; your weakness may enable you to strike the decisive blow.

Marandro Ur: In the wars between the Nords and the Chimer, the Nord shamans invariably used their mastery of the winds to call down storms before battle to confuse and dismay the Chimer warriors. One day, a clever Chimer sorcerer conjured up an ice demon and commanded him to hide in the rocks near the rear of the Chimer army. When the Nords called down the storms as usual, the Chimer warriors began to waver. But the ice demon rose up as the storm struck, and the Chimer turned in fear from what they believed was a Nord demon and charged into the enemy line, less afraid of the storm than of the demon. The Nords, expecting the Chimer to flee as usual, were caught off guard when the Chimer attacked out of the midst of the storm. The Chimer were victorious that day.

3. When planning a campaign, take account of both the arcane and the mundane. The skillful battlemage ensures that they are in balance; a weight lifted by one hand is heavier than two weights lifted by both hands.

4. When the arcane and mundane are in balance, the army will move effortlessly, like a swinging door on well-oiled hinges. When they are out of balance, the army will be like a three-legged dog, with one leg always dragging in the dust.

5. Thus when the army strikes a blow, it will be like a thunderclap out of a cloudless sky. The best victories are those unforeseen by the enemy, but obvious to everyone afterwards.

6. The skillful battlemage ensures that the enemy is already defeated before the battle begins. A close-fought battle is to be avoided; the fortunes of war may turn aside the most powerful

sorcery, and courage may undo the best-laid plans. Instead, win your victory ahead of time. When the enemy knows he is defeated before the battle begins, you may not need to fight.

7. Victory in battle is only the least kind of victory. Victory without battle is the acme of skill.

8. Conserving your power is another key to victory. Putting forth your strength to win a battle is no demonstration of skill. This is what we call tactics, the least form of the art of war magic.

Thulidden dir'Tharkun: By 'tactics', Master Arctus includes all the common battle magics. These are only the first steps in an understanding of war magic. Any hedge mage can burn up his enemies with fire. Destroying the enemy is the last resort of the skillful battlemage.

9. The battle is only a leaf on the tree; if a leaf falls, does the tree die? But when a branch is lopped off, the tree is weakened; when the trunk is girdled, the tree is doomed.

10. If you plan your dispositions well, your victories will seem easy and you will win no acclaim. If you plan your dispositions poorly, your victories will seem difficult, and your fame will be widespread.

Marandro Sul: Those commonly believed to be the greatest practitioners of war magic are almost always those with the least skill. The true masters are not known to the multitude.

# The Bear Of Markarth

*Arrianus Arius*

The Bear of Markarth

The Crimes of Ulfric Stormcloak

by

Arrianus Arius

Imperial Scholar

Ulfric Stormcloak is considered a hero by many for his part in quelling the Forsworn Uprising. It is said that when the Empire abandoned Skyrim, and the natives of the Reach rebelled (undoubtedly due to the Nords poor treatment of them), Ulfric Stormcloak and his militia was there to retake “their” land from the Forsworn. In all the bravado and epic yarns the skalds compose of his exploits, you would think Ulfric to be a giant of a man, equal to that of Tiber Septim in his cunning, leadership, and decisive actions.

But the truth is far more revealing. Yes, from 4E 174-176, the Forsworn did in fact rule over the Reach as an independent kingdom from Skyrim. Yes, this was accomplished while the Empire was beset by Aldmeri Dominion forces and could not send the Legion to re-establish order. And yes, Ulfric Stormcloak did quell the rebellion without Imperial assistance.

That much is true, but what the bards often fail to tell in their stories is that the Forsworn Kingdom was quite peaceful for those 2 years they were in power.

True, some crimes were committed against former Nord landowners (often those accused of being the harshest towards their native workers), but on the whole the Forsworn ruled their lands fairly, and were making overtures to be recognized by the Empire as a legitimate kingdom.

In the wake of the aftermath of the Great War, you can imagine the backlog on stately matters the Empire had. Before a peace treaty could be resolved with the Forsworn, a militia led by Ulfric Stormcloak sieged the gates of their capital, Markarth. What happened during that battle was war, but what happened after the battle was over is nothing short of war crimes.

Every official who worked for the Forsworn was put to the sword, even after they had surrendered. Native women were tortured to give up names of Forsworn fighters who had fled the city or were in the hills of the Reach. Anyone who lived in the city, Forsworn and Nord alike, were executed if they had not fought with Ulfric and his men when they breached the gates. "You are with us, or you are against Skyrim" was the message on Ulfric's lips as he ordered the deaths of shopkeepers, farmers, the elderly, and any child old enough to lift a sword that had failed in the call to fight with him.

So when a "grateful" Empire accepted Ulfric's victory and sent soldiers to re-establish the rule of law in the Reach, it was no surprise that he would demand to be allowed to worship Talos freely before the Legion could enter. With chaos running through the streets of Markarth and the reports of deaths

rising every day, the Empire had no choice but to grant Ulfric and his men their worship.

We allowed them to worship Talos, in full violation of the White-Gold Concordat with the Aldmeri Dominion (which recognizes the elven belief that Talos, as a human, cannot be one of the Divines). In jeopardizing the treaty that so many sacrificed for during the Great War, the Empire was wrong. But what choice did they have, I ask you? Against the Bear of Markarth, Ulfric Stormcloak, “no” is not an answer.

# The Beginner's Guide To Homesteading

*Anonymous*

## The Beginner's Guide to Homesteading

If you're like most people, you've always dreamed of owning your own steading and building your own home. But where to start? Never fear, you hold in your hands the guide to everything you need to know. Before long, you'll be gazing complacently across your well-tended lands from the porch of your own manor house.

## Getting Started

There are two vital pieces of equipment that the prospective homeowner needs: the Drafting Table and the Carpenter's Workbench.

Your Drafting Table is where you'll lay out the plans for each stage of your new house. Don't worry about making a mistake here - you can always change your mind, and making a new plan costs you nothing. Remember: measure twice and cut once.

Your Carpenter's Workbench is where you'll do the actual construction. Once you've settled on a plan at the Drafting Table, you can start building your house at the Carpenter's



Workbench. Avoid the common beginner's mistake - don't try to build the roof without building the proper supports first!

## Space for the Family

If you have a spouse or children, you'll certainly want to get the house in a livable state as soon as possible. Your loving spouse will no doubt make do with nothing more than a roof over her head and a bed to sleep in, but what about the children? Don't worry - all they need is a bed and a chest or dresser to store their treasures, and they will be perfectly content.

## Building Materials

You will need a lot of supplies to complete your house, but it isn't necessary to gather everything you need ahead of time. Unless you're in a hurry, you can just build in stages as materials become available. You'll enjoy watching your home progress from dream to reality.

The most common materials you'll need are sawn logs, cut stone, and clay. Luckily, these are plentiful in Skyrim - in fact, most building sites will have one or more easily accessible sources of clay and stone. For sawn lumber, any lumber mill owner will be glad to sell and deliver as much as you need.

You'll need a lot of nails - fortunately even a novice blacksmith will soon find themselves turning iron into nails with ease.

When you turn to furnishing your completed house, you'll need a much wider variety of materials. Some of them, such as straw and glass, are commonly obtained from general goods stores. For the rest - the whole of Skyrim will become your general store!

## Hiring a Steward

Once your estate is well-established, you may wish to consider hiring a steward to help manage your affairs. A good steward can be invaluable - from hiring a carriage driver to buying a cow to keeping you supplied with building materials - freeing you to enjoy the fruits of your labors.

Before hiring a steward, it's advisable to bring a potential candidate to your manor and observe whether they are a good fit for your requirements. Remember, you are putting your entire estate into their hands - you need someone you can trust implicitly.

## Building Your House

The rest of this guide will review plans for each room that you might want to build.

### Small House

Before you get too ambitious, gain confidence by building this tidy cottage. It is the perfect starter home, and might turn out to be all you need. But don't worry - if you decide to keep building, you can remodel this into an entry way to the rest of your house.

### Main Hall

You may decide the Small House is not enough - perhaps you need room for a growing family? The next step is to add a Main Hall, which will turn your cottage into an imposing manor house: two floors, including space for two small bedrooms, a back room and a large dining area.

## Additions

Once you've built a Main Hall, your options become almost unlimited - you now have room to add three more additional wings, if you decide you still need more space.

For each wing, you have three choices of what to build, giving a total of nine possible additions! (But remember - you can only build three of them, so choose wisely.)

### West Wing - Bedrooms

The Bedroom addition is perfect if you have a family who needs more comfortable living quarters than the Main Hall affords. The Bedroom has space for a master bedroom plus two children's beds, as well as all the dressers, wardrobes, etc. that anyone could desire. This addition also includes a spacious exterior porch.

### West Wing - Greenhouse

Perhaps you are a gardener at heart? If so, the Greenhouse provides room for planters where you can grow almost whatever you wish, sheltered from Skyrim's harsh climate. Tend and harvest your crops from the comfort of your own home!

### West Wing - Enchanter's Tower

If your interests lie in the magical realm, this tower addition is for you. Conduct your research in privacy and comfort. Plenty of space for keeping your collections and artifacts organized. And the view from the tower is guaranteed to take your breath away.

## North Wing - Storage Room

If you simply need more space to store your many possessions and collections, build yourself a Storage Room. The included porch can even be connected to the porch on the East or West wings, if you build the Bedroom or Armory additions.

## North Wing - Trophy Room

Are you a big game hunter who wants to show off your prizes? The Trophy Room provides space for displaying up to seven magnificent mounted specimens of your choice, sure to amaze and impress your guests.

## North Wing - Alchemy Laboratory

Perfect for the aspiring alchemist, this tower addition will give you plenty of space and storage to hone your craft in comfort. And when you need a break from brewing potions, enjoy the view from the tower roof.

## East Wing - Armory

If you like nothing better than to spend a day hammering metal, or are simply a collector of armor and weapons, the Armory is for you. With space for smithing, as well as plenty of room to display your martial collections in style, the Armory is the perfect addition to any house.

## East Wing - Kitchen

The Kitchen provides everything you need to pursue the highest culinary arts. Tired of cooking everything in a pot over a fire? You can even equip it with a new-fangled oven!

## East Wing - Library

The Library tower is sure to please those who value literature. With space for all the bookshelves you could desire, you'll be able to enjoy your collection of books in style. Or perhaps take a book to the tower roof and enjoy the view of your stading?

# The Betrayed

*Engwe Emeloth*

The Betrayed

by

Engwe Emeloth

Translated from Falmer Text

by

Calcelmo of Markarth

And when the Snow Prince fell to ground,

The Ice Elves divided above and below.

Now vanquished and brutally bound,

One moment had shattered all they did know.

The once cool wind on their skin,

Now replaced with the heat of the flame.

And a pride once felt deep within,

Forgotten along with their name.

Torn from their home of ice and frost,  
Thrown into the pitch black dread of night.  
Living in fear as their minds become lost,  
As their eyes begin dimming the light.  
Chained and enslaved,  
What once was light turned to blackness.  
Alone and betrayed,  
Sinking deeper into madness.

# The Book Of Life And Service

*Anonymous*

The Book of Life and Service

The Ranks of the Blessed

Blessed are the Bonemen, for they serve without self in spirit forever.

Blessed are the Mistmen, for they blend in the glory of the transcendent spirit.

Blessed are the Wrathmen, for they render their rage unto the ages.

Blessed are the Masters, for they bridge the past and span the future.

The Litany of Service

The Boneman's Oath

We die.

We pray.

To live.

We serve.



The Master's Voice

You swore.

To Serve.

Your Lord.

# The City Of Stone

*Amanda Alleia*

The City of Stone:

A Sellsword's Guide to Markarth

by

Amanda Alleia

Mercenary

If you're cutting your coins across Skyrim, you'll want to point your blade towards Markarth, the capital city of the Reach. There's no end of trouble in the City of Stone, and that means plenty of ways for you to earn your supper. Your sellsword instincts should point you towards the wealthiest patrons with the fattest purses to work for, but you need to mind yourself during your resting hours.

Markarth isn't like your Whiterun, where mercenary companies like the Companions make a sellsword an honored professional. No, Markarth has its own rules, rules the natives aren't going to just tell you. Lucky for you, old Ms. Alleia is here to shine the torchlight over your thick skulls.

First thing you'll notice in the City of Stone is... the stone. They say dwarves cut out the city from the mountain, and maybe

they did by the look of it. But what it really means is that the whole place is vertical, and the streets are really cliffs. Long story short, be careful when you've got a bellyful of mead.

When you enter the city proper, you'll immediately hit the market. The merchants usually sell food and jewelry on the streets. Meat is the preferred ration, the craggy rocks in the area make for poor farming land, and silver is what's used to make most all the rings and necklaces you might buy, thanks to the large silver mine in the city (we'll get to that in a bit).

Whatever you do, don't ask the Markarth city guard about anything. They're about as helpful as an angry Frostbite Spider while you're caught in its web, and if you mention anything about the Forsworn to them they might spit in your eye. Speaking of the Forsworn, these wildmen and women will be your main source of income while you're in Markarth. The Jarl almost always has a bounty on some Forsworn leader or another, and if you don't mind going blade-to-axe with someone two septims short of a pint of ale, it's steady work.

The Silver-Blood Inn is where you want to head into after seeing the market. The drinks are, as usual, watered down (and judging by the metallic taste, with water from the rivers that run through the city's smelter district). What's important here is getting a room to stay in. You won't find any friendly faces to con your way into a cheap place to stay in Markarth. The natives don't trust strangers, so save yourself the trouble and put down your coin to rent a real room.

After you've spent a day recovering from travel, you'll see that Markarth is divided in two sides by the big crag in the center. The part with the big river running through it is called the Riverside, and the other is called the Dryside. The Riverside is

where the smelter and native workers live, so don't bother going there. Instead, head directly to Dryside and talk to the local Nord nobles and see what problems you can start solving (at the highest rate).

Two major places to see are the Temple of Dibella and Cidhna Mine. The temple rests on the top of the central crag. A good place to go if you're on good terms with the Divines, but be warned, the Priestesses of Dibella don't allow men into their Inner Sanctums, so don't go crashing down in there uninvited unless you want a short trip to a long fall.

Cidhna Mine is the place where all the silver comes from that I mentioned before. But it's also the jail. Markarth uses prisoners to mine the ore, and there's a lot of it, so don't get caught doing something illegal in the city or you'll be hauled down there to dig. Apparently, the whole place is owned by one of the big families in the city, the Silver-Bloods (notice the inn is named after them? Always keep your sellsword eye open for hints like that). I tried meeting with the head of the Silver-Blood family to see if they had any work, but guarding their mines isn't the blood-rush I become a mercenary for. Something to keep in mind for yourself if you're thinking of staying a few months.

The final place I'll talk about here is Understone Keep, the home of the Jarl in Markarth. It's a fancy palace like any other (assuming your palace is built underground), but what you need to know is the city underneath the keep. That's right, there's another city below Markarth. One of those old dwarven ruins. They sometimes have expeditions in the ruins that makes for a good job, guarding the scholars and maybe lifting a few stones here and there. If you're lucky, you might come

across one of those old dwarven machines, and you can bring back a souvenir after you're done breaking it apart.

All right, Ms. Alleia's hand is getting tired and that means this guide is done. Last piece of advice, don't cause trouble in Markarth. Don't start fights. Don't stop fights. Don't stick your head anywhere without someone from the city paying you for it, because believe me, no one in Markarth wants you there. Make your gold, drink your mead, see what's there to see, and move on. Nothing changes in the City of Stone, and that's just fine.

# The Code Of Malacath

*Amanda Alleia*

The Code of Malacath:

A Sellsword's Guide to the Orc Strongholds

by

Amanda Alleia

Mercenary

“No one bests an Orc.”

I don't need you to guess how many times I've heard that boast in some dingy tavern or screamed at the top of the lungs by some fellow sellsword with too much fire in him. But I'd be lying if I said the Orc Strongholds don't take those words as law. There are few places where Ms. Alleia would tell you that “tradition” and the “old ways” makes for a better fighter, but with Orcs it seems like staying true to your ancestors is the path to victory.

Let me start a few steps back. The Orc Strongholds have existed as long as the Orc race has, according to them. They're armored camps in the least, and fortresses at the most. Every man, woman, and child inside the walls is trained from birth to defend it. All their weapons and armor are smithed right there

in the stronghold, all the food is hunted down by Orc warriors and brought back to be eaten by everyone who lives there.

They follow no laws, save their own, an unwritten set of rules called “The Code of Malacath,” named after one of their gods, who is sometimes called Mauloch. Most of it’s pretty simple, don’t steal, don’t kill, don’t attack people for no reason (although there seems to be a big list of exceptions). But Orcs in the stronghold don’t have jails for their criminals. They have Blood Price. You either pay enough in goods for your crimes, or you bleed enough that the victim is satisfied. And Orcs, I don’t need to tell you, have a lot of blood.

The Code also sets up who runs the stronghold. The toughest male is usually the Chief and makes decisions and decides when the Code of Malacath has been satisfied. All the women are either the Chief’s wives or his daughters, with the exception of the wise woman, who handles all the spiritual matters and healing needs. Matters of grave dispute are handled with short but violent fights, and those who don’t get along with the Chief are usually forced out of the stronghold to live among the rest of us. An Orc grows up being told to fight for everything, that if something is not worth fighting for it is beneath the Code.

Orc Strongholds don’t like strangers, used to living on their own like they do. Ms. Alleia knows what she does because so many Orcs leave the strongholds to become sellswords or soldiers, and a few pints of mead gets them talking about home. I hear that sometimes an Orc will make a non-Orc a “Blood-Kin” and that person is then allowed to live in the stronghold as one of the clan, but I’ve never heard of that actually happening.

For all their strange rules and traditions, the Code of Malacath does breed a culture of determined warriors. They're focused in ways that the average sellsword isn't. They don't hesitate to draw weapons and settle matters openly, and I think that's the real difference between the stronghold Orcs and the city Orcs. Imperial Law allows you to settle fights through the Emperor's men, but the Code of Malacath demands you settle your problems yourself, a fine way of thinking if you're leading the mercenary's life.



# The Dragon War

*Torhal Bjorik*

In the Merethic Era, when Ysgramor first set foot on Tamriel, his people brought with them a faith that worshipped animal gods. Certain scholars believe these primitive people actually worshipped the divines as we know them, just in the form of these totem animals. They deified the hawk, wolf, snake, moth, owl, whale, bear, fox, and the dragon. Every now and then you can stumble across the broken stone totems in the farther reaches of Skyrim.

Foremost among all animals was the dragon. In the ancient nordic tongue it was drah-gkon. Occasionally the term dov-rha is used, but the language or derivation of that is not known. Using either name was forbidden to all except the dragon priests. Grand temples were built to honor the dragons and appease them. Many of them survive today as ancient ruins haunted by draugr and undead dragon priests.

Dragons, being dragons, embraced their role as god-kings over men. After all, were they not fashioned in Akatosh's own image? Were they not superior in every way to the hordes of small, soft creatures that worshipped them? For dragons, power equals truth. They had the power, so therefore it must be truth. Dragons granted small amounts of power to the dragon priests in exchange for absolute obedience. In turn, the dragon

priests ruled men as equals to the kings. Dragons, of course, could not be bothered with actually ruling.

In Atmora, where Ysgramor and his people came from, the dragon priests demanded tribute and set down laws and codes of living that kept peace between dragons and men. In Tamriel, they were not nearly as benevolent. It's unclear if this was due to an ambitious dragon priest, or a particular dragon, or a series of weak kings. Whatever the cause, the dragon priests began to rule with an iron fist, making virtual slaves of the rest of the population.

When the populace rebelled, the dragon priests retaliated. When the dragon priests could not collect the tribute or control the masses, the dragons' response was swift and brutal. So it was the Dragon War began.

At first, men died by the thousands. The ancient texts reveal that a few dragons took the side of men. Why they did this is not known. The priests of the Nine Divines claim it was Akatosh himself that intervened. From these dragons men learned magics to use against dragons. The tide began to turn and dragons began to die too.

The war was long and bloody. The dragon priests were overthrown and dragons were slaughtered in large numbers. The surviving dragons scattered, choosing to live in remote places away from men. The dragon cult itself adapted and survived. They built the dragon mounds, entombing the remains of dragons that fell in the war. They believed that one day the dragons would rise again and reward the faithful.

# The Dunmer Of Skyrim

*Athal Sarys*

Dunmer.

That is our name. Yet you deny us even this courtesy. You, the white-skinned, jaundice-haired apes of this godsforsaken frozen wilderness. To you Nords, we are the gray ones, the ashen-skinned, the “dark elves” of Morrowind who have as much place in your land as an infection in an open wound.

Oh yes, we have read your great cultural work, “Nords of Skyrim,” in which you extol the many virtues of your people and province, and invite any visitors to come experience your homeland for themselves. Well come we did, Nords, and the reception was less than was promised - but exactly what we expected.

So I, Atal Sarys, Dunmer and immigrant to Skyrim, have decided to answer your beloved book with a work of my own. And let all who read it know that Nords are not the only race to reside in this cold and inhospitable realm. For we dark elves have come, and little by little, shall claim Skyrim as our own.

But where, you may ask, have we taken up residence? Why none other than the ancient city of Windhelm, once the capital of the First Empire. Yes, Nords, in the shadow of your own Palace of the Kings, where the Nord hero Ysgramor once held court, we now thrive. Oh yes. Your beloved Five Hundred

Companions may have driven our ancestors from Skyrim, but that was then. This is now.

Indeed, one might be surprised as to just how well we've settled into Windhelm. The district once known as the Snow Quarter is thus named no more. Now, they call it the Gray Quarter, for such is the reality of the Dunmer occupation. The district is now populated entirely by my kind, a victory not lost on its residents.

Oh, but the peaceful occupation goes even further. Thirsty? You'll find no Nord mead hall in the Gray Quarter. But the spirits flow well enough in the New Gnisis Cornerclub. Seeking a respected family? You'll find no Gray-Manes within these walls. But perhaps you'd like to pay a visit to the home of Belyn Hlaalu, descendant of one of the most noble houses in all of Morrowind. Ah, but no. You Nords don't come to the Gray Quarter, do you? You fear our streets as you fear our skin.

So now, "children of Skyrim," you have the truth of it. You may call this province home, but you can no sooner claim to own it than a cow can claim to own its master's field. You are just another breed of domestic animal, grazing stupidly while higher beings plot your slaughter.

# The Fall Of Saarthal

*Heseoph Chirirnis*

The Fall of Saarthal

by

Heseoph Chirirnis, Mages Guild Scholar

Assigned to Imperial Archaeologist Sentius Floronius

Let it be known that the esteemed archaeologist has chosen to focus his boundless talents on the cooking and baking habits of early First Era Nords. While this work will no doubt bring great glory and benefit to the Empire, it is clear that my limited expertise is of no use to this effort.

I have instead been using my considerable free time to investigate a particular avenue of study, namely that of the Fall of Saarthal. Every child of the Empire knows what happened here; that the first city of Man on Tamriel was sacked by the elves, jealous and fearful of the threat men posed to them. Relations have obviously improved considerably since then, but to be able to see the results of the destruction first-hand, it is quite striking to note the degree of effort that went into the venture.

The first task before me was differentiating between areas of original architecture and those that were rebuilt after

Ysgramor retook the city with his five hundred companions. Initially relying heavily on the expertise of archaeologist Floronius, my ability to discern the difference for myself improved over time. Indeed, I was surprised to find that many areas of the city, far more than I would have believed, retained much of the original stonework. Work was clearly done to remedy the effects of the city being burned after the elves' assault, but I suspect they underestimated the durability of Nordic craftsmanship.

Or rather, that is what I initially thought. Perhaps it was a mistaken sense of pride in the accomplishments of these early men, or perhaps it was just my inexperience that led me to this conclusion. Something was amiss, though. Repeated attempts to consult the exceedingly perceptive archaeologist were unfruitful, often digressing into lectures on the bathing habits of Saarthal residents, or the average number of potted plants in homes. I was again forced to rely on my limited powers of observation and deduction.

And so I have no conclusive results to report at this time. I can say with certainty that the initial attack on Saarthal seems to have been very focused, and does not appear to correlate to any locations that have been established as points of defense or importance. While the eminent scholar Sentius has yet to examine my findings, or indeed show any interest in them, my inclination is to suggest that not only did the elves know the apparent layout of the city, but that their assault was based on a specific directive and perhaps a singular goal.

My humble investigations shall continue as time permits.

# The Falmer: A Study

*Ursa Uthrax*

I have studied, and traveled, and explored, and observed, and my hypothesis has finally been confirmed: that the twisted Falmer that inhabit the darkest depths of Skyrim are indeed the snow elves of legend.

No one really knows when the story of the snow elves began, but the ancient work "Fall of the Snow Prince," which is an account of the Battle of the Moesring as transcribed by Lokheim, chronicler to the chieftain Ingjaldr White-Eye, gives a rather vivid account of its ending.

According to this eyewitness account, the great Falmer leader known only as the Snow Prince died in glorious battle, and was buried with honor by his Nord slayers. The remaining snow elves were scattered or slain, and were never heard from again. Or so many thought.

But where the story of the ancient snow elves ends, that of the current-day Falmer begins. For when the snow elf host was shattered on that fateful day, it did not simply disperse - it descended. Into the earth, deep underground. For the Falmer sought sanctuary in the most unlikely of places - Blackreach, far beneath the surface of Skyrim, in the legendary realm of the Dwemer themselves.

Yes, Blackreach exists. I have been there, and unlike most of those who have witnessed its terrible glories, I have returned. And I now know the truth about the Falmer.

After their defeat by the Nords, the dwarves of old agreed to protect the Falmer, but at a terrible price. For these Dwemer did not trust their snow elf guests, and forced them to consume the toxic fungi that once grew deep underground. As a result, the snow elves were rendered blind.

Soon, the majestic snow elves were rendered powerless. They became the dwarves' servants... and then their slaves. But the Dwemer's treachery was so deep, so complete, that they made the fungi an essential part of the Falmer's diet. This guaranteed the weakness of not only their current Falmer thralls, but their offspring as well. The snow elves, for time eternal, would be blind.

But as is always the story with slaves and their masters, the Falmer eventually rebelled. Generations after they first sought solace among the dwarves, and experienced bitter betrayal, the Falmer rose up against their oppressors. They overthrew the dwarves, and fled even further down, into Blackreach's deepest, most hidden reaches.

For decade upon decade, the two sides waged a bitter conflict. A full-fledged and bloody "War of the Crag" that raged deep below Skyrim's surface, completely unbeknownst to the Nords above, a war whose battles and heroes must forever remain lost to our knowledge. Until one day, the war ended. For on that day, the Falmer went to meet their Dwemer foes in battle, only to find that the entire race had... vanished.



Finally free from the threat of their Dwemer overlords, the Falmer were able to spread freely throughout Blackreach. But years of fighting the dwarves had left them bloodthirsty and brutal. Feeling the need to conquer, to kill, they began mounting raids to the surface world.

And so the legends began. Of small, blind, goblin-like creatures who would rise from the cracks of the earth, in the dead of night, to slaughter cattle, attack lonely travelers, and steal sleeping babes from their cribs.

In recent years, however, the sightings of these creatures have become more and more frequent. Their raids, more organized. Their attacks, more brutal. In fact, one might even come to the conclusion that the Falmer are ready to change once again. Could it be true? Are the snow elves of ages past ready to reclaim their long-forgotten glory? Are they ready to surge to the surface, and make war upon the "light dwellers"?

If that happens - if the Falmer are indeed planning on reconquering Skyrim - I fear a horror neither man nor gods could possibly stand against.

# The Four Totems Of Volkygge

*Anonymous*

All four are bound to the same land as we.

Some lay low, consumed in shadow,

Others stand tall, stretching their necks to see.

While none live in this sacred barrow,

They all demand your attention if you are to proceed.

The first fears all,

The second fears none.

The third eats what it can,

Preferably number one.

The fourth fears the second,

But only when alone.

All must be activated in order,

If you wish to go home.

# The Great War

*Justianus Quintius*

A Concise Account of  
the Great War Between  
the Empire and the Aldmeri Dominion  
by  
Legate Justianus Quintius

Author's Note: Much of what is written in this book is pieced together from documents captured from the enemy during the war, interrogation of prisoners, and eyewitness accounts from surviving soldiers and Imperial officers. I myself commanded the Tenth Legion in Hammerfell and Cyrodiil until I was wounded in 175 during the assault on the Imperial City. That said, the full truth of some events may never be known. I have done my best to fill in the gaps with educated conjectures based on my experience as well as my hard-earned knowledge of the enemy.

The Rise of the Thalmor

Although it is not well known, Summerset Isle suffered from the Oblivion Crisis as much as Cyrodiil did. The elves made war upon the Oblivion invaders, occasionally even crossing over to

close down Oblivion gates. As a nation they had more successes than Cyrodiil did, although the limitless daedric hordes made the outcome a foregone conclusion.

The Thalmor had always been a powerful faction within Summerset Isle, but had also always been a minority voice. During the crisis, the Crystal Tower was forced to give the Thalmor greater power and authority. Their efforts almost certainly saved Summerset Isle from being overrun. They capitalized on their success to seize total control in 4E 22. They renamed the nation Alinor, which harkens back to an earlier age before the ascendancy of man. Most people outside of the Aldmeri Dominion still call it Summerset Isle, either out of peevishness or ignorance.

In 4E 29, the government of Valenwood was overthrown by Thalmor collaborators and a union with Alinor proclaimed. It appears that Thalmor agents had formed close ties to certain Bosmeri factions even before the Oblivion Crisis. The Empire and its Bosmer allies, caught completely off guard, were quickly defeated by the much-better prepared Altmer forces that invaded Valenwood on the heels of the coup. Thus was the Aldmeri Dominion reborn.

Shortly afterward the Aldmeri Dominion severed all contact with the Empire. For seventy years they were silent. Most scholars believe there was some sort of internal strife in Alinor, but very little is known of the factional struggles that went on inside the Dominion while the Thalmor consolidated its power in Summerset and Valenwood.

In 4E 98, the two moons, Masser and Secunda vanished. Within most of the Empire, this was viewed with trepidation and fear. In Elsweyr it was far worse. Culturally the moons are much

more influential to the Khajiit. After two years of the Void Nights, the moons returned. The Thalmor announced that they had restored the moons using previously unknown Dawn Magicks, but it is unclear if they truly restored the moons or just took advantage of foreknowledge that they would return.

Regardless of the truth of the matter, the Khajiit credited the Thalmor as their saviors. Within fifteen years, Imperial influence in Elsweyr had so diminished that the Empire was unable to respond effectively to the coup of 4E 115 which dissolved the Elsweyr Confederacy and recreated the ancient kingdoms of Anequina and Pelletine as client states of the Aldmeri Dominion. Once more the Empire failed to stop the advance of Thalmor power.

When Titus Mede II ascended the throne in 4E 168, he inherited a weakened empire. The glory days of the Septims were a distant memory. Valenwood and Elsweyr were gone, ceded to the Thalmor enemy. Black Marsh had been lost to Imperial rule since the aftermath of the Oblivion Crisis. Morrowind had never recovered fully from the eruption of Mount Vvardenfell. Hammerfell was plagued by infighting between Crowns and Forebears. Only High Rock, Cyrodiil and Skyrim remained prosperous and peaceful.

Emperor Titus Mede had only a few short years to consolidate his rule before his leadership was put to the ultimate test.

## The War Begins

On the 30th of Frostfall, 4E 171, the Aldmeri Dominion sent an ambassador to the Imperial City with a gift in a covered cart and an ultimatum for the new Emperor. The long list of demands included staggering tributes, disbandment of the

Blades, outlawing the worship of Talos, and ceding large sections of Hammerfell to the Dominion. Despite the warnings of his generals of the Empire's military weakness, Emperor Titus Mede II rejected the ultimatum. The Thalmor ambassador upended the cart, spilling over a hundred heads on the floor: every Blades agent in Summerset and Valenwood. And so began the Great War which would consume the Empire and the Aldmeri Dominion for the next five years.

Within days, Aldmeri armies invaded Hammerfell and Cyrodiil simultaneously. A strong force commanded by the Thalmor general Lord Naarifin attacked Cyrodiil from the south, marching out of hidden camps in northern Elsweyr and flanking the Imperial defenses along the Valenwood border. Leyawiin soon fell to the invaders, while Bravil was cut off and besieged.

At the same time, an Aldmeri army under Lady Arannelya crossed into western Cyrodiil from Valenwood, bypassing Anvil and Kvatch and crossing into Hammerfell. Smaller Aldmeri forces landed along the southern coastline of Hammerfell. The disunited Redguard forces offered only scattered resistance to the invaders, and much of the southern coastline was quickly overrun. The greatly outnumbered Imperial legions retreated across the Alik'r Desert in the now-famous March of Thirst.

#### 4E 172-173: The Aldmeri Advance Into Cyrodiil

It appears now that the initial Aldmeri objective was in fact the conquest of Hammerfell, and that the invasion of Cyrodiil was intended only to pin down the Imperial legions while Hammerfell was overrun. However, the surprising initial success of Lord Naarifin's attack led the Thalmor to believe that

the Empire was weaker than they had thought. The capture of the Imperial City itself and the complete overthrow of the Empire thus became their primary objective of the next two years. As we know, the Thalmor nearly achieved their objective. It was only because of our Emperor's determined leadership during the Empire's darkest hour that this disaster was averted.

During 4E 172, the Aldmeri advanced deeper into Cyrodiil. Bravil and Anvil both fell to the invaders. By the end of the year, Lord Naarifin had advanced to the very walls of the Imperial City. There were fierce naval clashes in Lake Rumare and along the Niben as the Imperial forces attempted to hold the eastern bank.

In Hammerfell, the Thalmor were content to consolidate their gains as they took control of the whole southern coastline, which was in fact their stated objective in the ultimatum delivered to the Emperor. Of the southern cities, only Hegathe still held out. The survivors of the March of Thirst regrouped in northern Hammerfell, joined by reinforcements from High Rock.

The year 4E 173 saw stiffening Imperial resistance in Cyrodiil, but the seemingly inexorable Aldmeri advance continued. Fresh legions from Skyrim bolstered the Emperor's main army in the Imperial City, but the Aldmeri forced the crossing of the Niben and began advancing in force up the eastern bank. By the end of the year, the Imperial City was surrounded on three sides - only the northern supply route to Bruma remained open.

In Hammerfell, Imperial fortunes took a turn for the better. In early 4E 173, a Forebear army from Sentinel broke the siege of

Hegathe (a Crown city), leading to the reconciliation of the two factions. Despite this, Lady Arannelya's main army succeeded in crossing the Alik'r Desert. The Imperial Legions under General Decianus met them outside Skaven in a bloody and indecisive clash. Decianus withdrew and left Arannelya in possession of Skaven, but the Aldmeri were too weakened to continue their advance.

#### 4E 174: The Sack of the Imperial City

In 4E 174, the Thalmor leadership committed all available forces to the campaign in Cyrodiil, gambling on a decisive victory to end the war once and for all. During the spring, Aldmeri reinforcements gathered in southern Cyrodiil, and on 12th of Second Seed, they launched a massive assault on the Imperial City itself. One army drove north to completely surround the city, while Lord Naarifin's main force attacked the walls from the south, east, and west. The Emperor's decision to fight his way out of the city rather than make a last stand was a bold one. No general dared advise him to abandon the capital, but Titus II was proven right in the end.

While the Eighth Legion fought a desperate (and doomed) rearguard action on the walls of the city, Titus II broke out of the city to the north with his main army, smashing through the surrounding the Aldmeri forces and linking up with reinforcements marching south from Skyrim under General Jonna. Meanwhile, however, the capital fell to the invaders and the infamous Sack of the Imperial City began. The Imperial Palace was burned, the White-Gold Tower itself looted, and all manner of atrocities carried out by the vengeful elves on the innocent populace.



In Hammerfell, General Decianus was preparing to drive the Aldmeri back from Skaven when he was ordered to march for Cyrodiil. Unwilling to abandon Hammerfell completely, he allowed a great number of “invalids” to be discharged from the Legions before they marched east. These veterans formed the core of the army that eventually drove Lady Arannelya’s forces back across the Alik’r late in 174, taking heavy losses on their retreat from harassing attacks by the Alik’r warriors.

#### 4E 175: The Battle of the Red Ring

During the winter of 4E 174-175, the Thalmor seem to have believed that the war in Cyrodiil was all but over. They made several attempts to negotiate with Titus II. The Emperor encouraged them in their belief that he was preparing to surrender; meanwhile, he gathered his forces to retake the Imperial City.

In what is now known as the Battle of the Red Ring, a battle that will serve as a model for Imperial strategists for generations to come, Titus II divided his forces into three. One army, with the legions from Hammerfell under General Decianus, was hidden in the Colovian Highlands near Chorrol. The Aldmeri were unaware that he was no longer in Hammerfell, possibly because the Imperial veterans Decianus had left behind led Lady Arannelya to believe that she still faced an Imperial army. The second army, largely of Nord legions under General Jonna, took up position near Cheydinhal. The main army was commanded by the Emperor himself, and would undertake the main assault of the Imperial City from the north.

On the 30th of Rain’s Hand, the bloody Battle of the Red Ring began as General Decianus swept down on the city from the

west, while General Jonna's legionnaires drove south along the Red Ring Road. In a two-day assault, Jonna's army crossed the Niben and advanced west, attempting to link up with Decianus's legions and thus surround the Imperial City. Lord Naarifin was taken by surprise by Decianus's assault, but Jonna's troops faced bitter resistance as the Aldmeri counterattacked from Bravil and Skingrad. The heroic Nord legionnaires held firm, however, beating off the piecemeal Aldmeri attacks. By the fifth day of the battle, the Aldmeri army in the Imperial City was surrounded.

Titus II led the assault from the north, personally capturing Lord Naarifin. It is rumored the Emperor wielded the famed sword Goldbrand, although this has never been officially confirmed by the Imperial government. An attempt by the Aldmeri to break out of the city to the south was blocked by the unbreakable shieldwall of General Jonna's battered legions.

In the end, the main Aldmeri army in Cyrodiil was completely destroyed. The Emperor's decision to withdraw from the Imperial City in 4E 174 was bloodily vindicated.

Lord Naarifin was kept alive for thirty-three days, hanging from the White-Gold tower. It is not recorded where his body was buried, if it was buried at all. Once source claims he was carried off by a winged daedra on the thirty-fourth day.

### The White-Gold Concordat and the End of the War

Although victorious, the Imperial armies were in no shape to continue the war. The entire remaining Imperial force was gathered in Cyrodiil, exhausted and decimated by the Battle of the Red Ring. Not a single legion had more than half its soldiers fit for duty. Two legions had been effectively annihilated, not

counting the loss of the Eighth during the retreat from the Imperial City the previous year. Titus II knew that there would be no better time to negotiate peace, and late in 4E 175 the Empire and the Aldmeri Dominion signed the White-Gold Concordat, ending the Great War.

The terms were harsh, but Titus II believed that it was necessary to secure peace and give the Empire a chance to regain its strength. The two most controversial terms of the Concordat were the banning of the worship of Talos and the cession of a large section of southern Hammerfell (most of what was already occupied by Aldmeri forces). Critics have pointed out that the Concordat is almost identical to the ultimatum the Emperor rejected five years earlier. However, there is a great difference between agreeing to such terms under the mere threat of war, and agreeing to them at the end of a long and destructive war. No part of the Empire would have accepted these terms in 4E 171, dictated by the Thalmor at swords-point. Titus II would have faced civil war. By 4E 175, most of the Empire welcomed peace at almost any price.

### Epilogue: Hammerfell Fights On Alone

Hammerfell, however, refused to accept the White-Gold Concordat, being unwilling to concede defeat and the loss of so much of their territory. Titus II was forced to officially renounce Hammerfell as an Imperial province in order to preserve the hard-won peace treaty. The Redguards, understandably, looked on this as a betrayal. In this, the Thalmor certainly achieved one of their long-term goals by sowing lasting bitterness between Hammerfell and the Empire.

In the end, the heroic Redguards fought the Aldmeri Dominion to a standstill, although the war lasted for five more years and

left southern Hammerfell devastated. The Redguards say that this proves that the White-Gold Concordat was unnecessary, and that if Titus II had kept his nerve, the Aldmeri could have been truly defeated by the combined forces of Hammerfell and the rest of the Empire. The truth of that assertion can, of course, never be known. But the Redguards should not forget the great sacrifice of Imperial blood - Breton, Nord, and Cyrodilic - at the Battle of the Red Ring that weakened the Dominion enough to allow the eventual Second Treaty of Stros M'kai in 4E 180 and the withdrawal of Aldmeri forces from Hammerfell.

There can be no doubt that the current peace cannot last forever. The Thalmor take the long view, as is proved by the sequence of events leading up to the Great War. All those who value freedom over tyranny can only hope that before it is too late, Hammerfell and the Empire will be reconciled and stand united against the Thalmor threat. Otherwise, any hope to stem the tide of Thalmor rule over all of Tamriel is dimmed.

# The Guardian And The Traitor

*Lucius Gallus*

The Guardian and the Traitor

by

Lucius Gallus

Fellow of the Imperial Library

Year 376 of the Third Era

One of the more intriguing legends found on the island of Solstheim is the story of a mythical figure whose name is long forgotten, but whom time remembers as “the Traitor.”

Certain that this myth is rooted in history I set out to learn what I could and perhaps piece together a presumptive account of the events that gave rise to the legend.

The tale is remembered best by the shamans of the Skaal, that unique tribe of Nords whose culture evolved along an entirely divergent path than that of their brethren in Skyrim.

I spoke at length to the shaman of Skaal Village, a wise and hospitable man named Breigr Winter-Moon. He described an age long ago when dragons ruled over the whole world and were worshipped as gods by men. Presiding over this cult of

dragon-worshippers were the Dragon Priests, powerful mages who could speak the dragon language and call upon the power of the *thu'um*, or Voice.

According to the legend, one such Dragon Priest was seduced by a dark spirit named Herma-Mora, an unmistakable analogue for the Daedric prince Hermaeus Mora. Lured by promises of power, this treacherous priest secretly plotted against his dragon master.

The Traitor's plot was discovered by one of his contemporaries, another Dragon Priest whom legend named The Guardian. The two fought a mighty battle that lasted for days, each hurling terrible arcane energies and *thu'um* shouts at the other.

So great and terrible were the forces unleashed in this contest that Solstheim was torn apart from the mainland of Skyrim. Here, the myth clearly descends into the realm of pure fantasy.

The Guardian, whom the legend presents as a paragon of loyalty and nobility, finally defeats the despicable Traitor, who seems to represent all that is corrupt and evil in men. Their epic duel is clearly representative of a greater struggle between good and evil. Perhaps it is this timeless quality that has kept the tale alive for so long.

Unlike many similar myths, the tale of the Guardian and the Traitor does not feature a suitably heroic ending. Herma-Mora snatches the Traitor away just as the Guardian is about to strike the killing blow.

The dragons appoint the Guardian ruler of Solstheim, but not before he is compelled to swear an oath of vigilance to watch for the Traitor's return. His reign is, by all accounts, a time of

peace and prosperity for the people of the island, and he is remembered as a wise and just leader.

No further mention is made of the Traitor, but neither is he thought to be dead. The legend ends on a cautionary note that the people of Solstheim, the heirs of the Guardian, must remain wary, lest the dark influence of Herma-Mora, or even the Traitor himself, return someday.

Although no physical clues exist now on Solstheim to suggest the presence of the dragon cult, is it hardly difficult to believe that it might once have flourished here. Perhaps some hidden tomb still waits to be discovered that will tell the truth of the tale.

There are other tantalizing clues, though perhaps these connections strain the bonds of credibility. For example, is it possible that the Skaal deity, the All-Maker, is some distant echo of mighty Alduin, the World-Eater of the ancient Nord pantheon?

Perhaps not, but one thing is certain: Solstheim's history is riddled with unanswered questions. Perhaps future generations will pull aside the veils of mystery and reveal the truth about the origins of the Skaal and the identities of the Guardian and the Traitor.

# The Holds Of Skyrim

*Anonymous*

The Holds of Skyrim:

A Field Officer's Guide

For Use by Officers of the Imperial Legion

Welcome, loyal officer of the Empire. You have been given this guide to help you, and those men under your command, better understand the geography of Skyrim. Since you will be serving in Skyrim for a lengthy period of time, this information should prove invaluable.

Skyrim is organized into nine holds. A hold is a large area of land roughly equivalent to a county in Cyrodiil. Each hold is governed by a Jarl who maintains his court in the hold's capital city.

Four of these holds are fairly small and sparsely populated. As a result, the capitals are little more than towns. The five major cities of Skyrim act as capitals for the larger holds.

Following is a detailed review of each hold.

**EASTMARCH**



Located in the eastern reaches of Skyrim, Eastmarch shares a common border with Morrowind. Jarl Ulfric Stormcloak rules from the ancient city of Windhelm, and he and his followers should be considered your most serious threat.

Do not tread lightly in Eastmarch, for the Stormcloaks are at their strongest and most organized in these lands. As an Imperial soldier, you will find few friends here.

## HAAFINGAR

Solitude, the seat of High King of Skyrim and the capital of Haafingar hold, has always welcomed the Empire with open arms. Much commerce flows along the rivers here, and you will find the folk of this hold to be among the most hospitable in Skyrim.

As you venture forth in your campaigns, be sure to maintain a secure supply line back to Solitude. The Empire maintains ample provisions in Castle Dour, from which General Tullius commands all the legions stationed in Skyrim.

## HJAALMARCH

This hold is divided evenly between wind-swept tundra dotted with farms and a huge, stinking salt marsh. There is little of interest here, save perhaps for the hold's capital, Morthal.

Jarl Idgrod Ravenchrone has been cooperative enough with the Empire in the past, but will ultimately look out for her own interests if put in a difficult position.

While the hold offers minimal strategic value to the Empire, it would make an ideal staging ground for a Stormcloak siege of Solitude, and so must be held against the enemy.

## THE PALE

The Pale is a barren realm covered by vast fields of ice and snow. Its boundaries stretch from the center of Skyrim all the way to its northern coast. Here, at the capital city of Dawnstar, can be found one of the busiest ports in the province.

With access to the coastal waterways of Skyrim, Dawnstar could prove vital in the war effort. Should the Stormcloaks choose to attack Solitude from the river, this port would make a tempting target due to its close proximity.

## THE REACH

Dominating the western border of Skyrim, the Reach is made up almost entirely of steep, craggy mountains. Little grows in this forbidding realm, but the capital city of Markarth is a nigh-impregnable stone fortress that would make an excellent defensive position for either side in the war.

Be aware that this dangerous region of Skyrim is home to the Forsworn, the rebellious natives of the Reach. They know the terrain, can strike without warning, and count the Empire as an enemy. If they attack, you must neither give nor expect any mercy.

## THE RIFT

This hold occupies the southeast corner of Skyrim, and much like the Reach in the west, is dominated by tall mountain peaks. The climate in the Reach is milder than in the northern holds, and there is more vegetation to be found here. Farming thrives as a result.

A word of warning about Riften, the hold's capital city. Our agents have reason to suspect that the Thieves' Guild makes it home here, though it is now much diminished from its strength of previous years.

Nevertheless, mind that your men keep an eye on their coin purses should they have reason to spend any length of time in the city.

## WHITERUN

This central hold is characterized by wide, grassy plains that are home to numerous farms. Many roads pass through Whiterun, joining the more distant holds together.

The hold's capital city, also called Whiterun, sits high on a rocky promontory amid a large, flat swath of scrubland. Among the wealthiest cities of Skyrim, Whiterun has usually proven friendly to the Emperor's soldiers.

## WINTERHOLD

This bleak, snow-blown hold in the northeast corner of Skyrim is utterly inhospitable. Perhaps the mages at the College of Winterhold chose to make their home there because they knew they would be left largely alone.

As with Whiterun, the name Winterhold describes both the hold and its capital city, though the word "city" hardly applies. The hold capital is a meager village built near the mages' college.

Few other noteworthy settlements exist in this frozen waste, and it is unlikely to play any significant part in the war.

# The Journal Of Ralis Sedarys

*Ralis Sedarys*

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys - Volume 19

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys, Volume 19

Moving on to Solstheim next, chasing after vague rumors of this Kolbjorn Barrow. My patron seems confident we can find the Relics of Azhidal out here. I'm a bit skeptical, but so long as he pays well, I'll dig wherever the old coot likes.

Initial prospects look poor, to say the least. I was sure I had my map wrong at first, until it became clear that the place had just been lost to the ash. I'll dig out as much as I can, maybe see if I can recruit some of the local residents to help me out. I haven't seen anyone since I got out of Raven Rock, but I keep hearing conversations and whispers around me, so I just need to track them down.

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys - Volume 20

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys, Volume 20

This excavation is going to be one of the harder ones, I can tell. Hired some diggers out of Raven Rock. They all said they were experienced miners, but I guess they're not used to running into trouble as they dig. In a place like this, you never know

what was buried long ago, and have to be ready for whatever you come across.

In any case, there were some unfortunate losses when the sleeping dead weren't quite sleeping and weren't quite dead. Operation is stalled unless my friendly partner is able to find enough coin for us to hire some replacements. Maybe it's time to take up a collection from the constant spectators who gather to mock me.

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys - Volume 21

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys, Volume 21

My invisible "friends" have kept it up, drawing closer. It took me a while to realize they were hiding themselves, but I figure it's out of shame. It takes a certain type of cowardice to spend all your time questioning a man's worth and value. You'd think they'd have the decency to at least let me sleep, but they persist even there.

As for the dig, we continue to stall out with the opposition from within the barrow. I had hoped the hardy people of this island would be able to deal with shuffling bones, but I appear to have overestimated them. I won't make that mistake again.

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys - Volume 22

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys, Volume 22

If it weren't for the comfort brought by my invisible friend, I would have fled this place long ago. I wish I had realized earlier that it was not a group, but a master who contains multitudes. He's guided me into a true understanding of the barrow, and I greatly desire to meet with him.

My insight into this place is now so intuitive, so fundamental, that I almost feel as if I built it myself. I explained to the workers how to use the tile set, but they seemed too afraid or uncoordinated to properly step on each tile quickly enough. No problems, nothing that the master cannot solve.

We will be able to converse properly soon enough.

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys - Volume 23

The Journal of Ralis Sedarys, Volume 23

Lord Ahzidal demands more blood, and I give it willingly. The hired men have somewhat pitiful souls, so it sometimes takes several of them to achieve the desired effects.

I won't be writing any more. There is no need. The time has come to awaken the master, and bring him to the fate he deserves.

# The Knights Of The Nine

*Karoline*

Few people now remember the Knights of the Nine, but in their time, they were famous throughout Cyrodiil—indeed, throughout the Empire. For a brief period in the early days of the Septim Empire, their adventures were the talk of the land. But their renown, as with so much else, was swallowed up by the War of the Red Diamond, and today even the location of their priory house has been lost to history.

The Knights were founded by Sir Amiel Lannus in 3E 111, following his heroic turn in the War of the Isle, with the high purpose of recovering the legendary Crusader's Relics, the weapons and armor of Pelinal Whitestrake which have been lost for thousands of years. They were born out of the sense of optimism and ambition that characterised the first century of the Third Era. Tamriel was united and at peace for the first time in many centuries. Nothing was impossible.

The fame of the knights was established early on when Sir Amiel led them against the Wurm of Elynglenn to recover the Cuirass of the Crusader, which had not been seen since the First Era. Soon, the greatest knights of the day were lining up to join the new order, and the Priory of the Nine in the West Weald of Cyrodiil became a magnet for the great and the good. The Knights were the toast of the Empire. When Berich Vlindrel joined the order, the scion of one of the great noble families of

Colovia, it was clear that the Knights of the Nine had become the Empire's most prestigious knightly order. In relatively short order, the Knights reclaimed three more Relics, and their fame soared to new heights with each one. No one doubted that they would eventually succeed in their quest to recover all eight Relics.

Sadly, this early promise of the Knights did not survive the ravages of the War of the Red Diamond, which tore apart the Empire beginning in 3E 121. At first, it seems that Sir Amiel was able to keep his knights out of the war. But the very success of the Knights undermined this, as many of the Knights came from important families from across the Empire which were lining up on either side of the bloody civil war. Sir Berich was apparently the first to leave the Order to join the war on the side of Cephorus, carrying the Sword and Greaves of the Crusader into battle with him. Many other knights seem to have left the Order shortly after this, some joining the war on one side or the other.

The end of the order was as ignommonious as its beginning was glorious. Following the victory of Cephorus in 3E 127, Berich Vlindrel became an important figure on the winning side. It seems likely that he was behind the Imperial decree which officially dissolved the Knights of the Nine in 3E 131, although in truth this was little more than a formality—despite Sir Amiel's best efforts, the order had never recovered from the bitterness of the civil war.

What happened to the various Relics originally recovered by the Knights of the Nine? The Sword and the Greaves went with Sir Berich, but where he bestowed them is unknown. The Gauntlets famously lie immovable on the floor of the Chapel of



Stendarr in Chorrol, where Sir Casimir left them after his disgraceful murder of a beggar in 3E 139. The location of the Cuirass is a mystery, lost to history along with the eventual fate of Sir Amiel, who was last reported still living alone in the empty Priory of the Nine by a passing traveller in 3E 150. And so the Knights of the Nine faded away into history.

# The Madmen Of The Reach

*Arrianus Arius*

The “Madmen” of the Reach:

A Cultural Treatise on the Forsworn

by

Arrianus Arius

Imperial Scholar

Since the legendary victory of Tiber Septim over the “barbarian natives” in the Battle of Old Hroldan, Imperial and Nord scholarship has cast the people of the Reach as little more than savages, prone to irrational fits of violence, worshipping old, heretical gods, and fetishizing beasts and nature spirits that any civilized person would best well avoid. In truth, these accounts are little more than “victor’s essays,” a perspective narrowed by the Empire’s constant strife with the ancient, proud people that lived in this land far before Tiber Septim walked the soil of Tamriel. In light of this, I hope to create a more complete, accurate, and fair assessment of a group that has long suffered under the role of “enemy,” “troublemakers,” and “them.”

Let us begin with the Forsworn, the so-called “madmen” of the Reach. The Imperial Legion classifies them as little more than

brigands, noting their constant raids and ambushes within the Hold. But none of their military reports asks the question of “why?” If they were merely a group of bandits, surely they would be focused on acquiring gold and minimizing deaths among their own. But the opposite is true in Forsworn attacks. Large sums of coin are often left behind, and their fighters easily throw away their lives rather than risk capture by Imperial soldiers.

It is this incongruity that led me to Markarth, the capital city of the Reach, in search of answers. There, I met one of the native peoples, an old woman who preferred to not be named in my writings. She told me of her family’s long history. How she believes they originally came from High Rock, home of the Bretons (which would explain the similar faces and stature of the two peoples). How the Nords came and took their lands, their gods, and their culture from them. When asked about the Forsworn, the old woman would say that they are the “real” men and women of the Reach: those that refused to give in to the Nords. Those that still practiced the ancient traditions that the rest of their people had abandoned in exchange for peace.

In time, I was able to create trust with many more natives in my search that corroborated the old woman’s story. By chance, one of them arranged a meeting between myself and what I thought was an elder member of his village. I was shocked to find that I was led to a camp, filled with the animal skulls, severed heads, and still beating hearts that I had read about from the military reports back in the Imperial City. There, I met Cortoran, a Forsworn, who seemed amused at the prospect of me writing down his story. Which I quote in full below:

“You want to know who the Forsworn are? We are the people who must pillage our own land. Burn our own ground. We are the scourge of the Nords. The axe that falls in the dark. The scream before the gods claim your soul. We are the true sons and daughters of the Reach. The spirits and hags have lived here from the beginning, and they are on our side. Go back. Go back and tell your Empire that we will have our own kingdom again. And on that day, we will be the ones burying your dead in a land that is no longer yours.”

# The Nightingales

*Gallus Desidenius*

The Nightingales, Volume I: Who We Are

The Nightingales

Volume I:

Who We Are

By

Gallus Desidenius

As a Nightingale, I feel compelled to place quill to parchment and record my thoughts regarding my knowledge of our order. If one day the Nightingales should vanish from Tamriel, then let this tome serve as a reminder of what we once were and to dispel any rumor or hearsay about our purposes and our motivations.

Our trinity serves the Lady Nocturnal, the Empress of Murk and the Daughter of Twilight. We believe her to be our patron, if not the patron of all thieves worldwide. We serve her without prayer, without charity and without celebration. Our bond with Nocturnal is in the form of a business transaction we strike known as the Oath. Her terms are simple and binding. As Nightingales we are required to guard the Twilight

Sepulcher, the Temple of Nocturnal, against those perceived as a threat. In return, we are allowed to use our abilities as Nightingales to further our own means and the means of the Thieves Guild.

Upon our death, we are bound to the Twilight Sepulcher as guardian spirits until such time as Nocturnal feels our contract has been fulfilled. Our ultimate fate lies within the Evergloom, Nocturnal's realm. There, our spirits become one with shadow itself and we become the cloak which envelops all of our fellow thieves in their endeavors. This is the true origin of the phrase "walk with the shadows" uttered within the Thieves Guild.

The Twilight Sepulcher is more than a temple, it contains a conduit from our world to the Evergloom, a swirling pool of liquid midnight we call the Ebonmere. This is the heart of the Sepulcher, and the source of Nocturnal's influence throughout the world. The Ebonmere can only be sealed by removing a unique key from its lock. This key, which occasionally finds its way beyond the walls of the Sepulcher, is widely known as the Skeleton Key of Nocturnal.

The Skeleton Key is an often misunderstood artifact. Those that seek to possess it tend to use only a fraction of its potential. Most mistake it for a unique and unbreakable lockpick. While this is true, the wonder of this device can only be appreciated once the owner is willing to expand his mind and abstract what defines "unlocking." This action refers to more than simple doors and portals. In the proper hands, the Skeleton Key has the capability to unlock hidden potential and untapped abilities. The extent of this power has yet to be discovered, which is a frightening thought if it ever fell into the wrong hands.

As a member of the trinity of Nightingales, it is incumbent upon us to recover the Skeleton Key if it strays from the Twilight Sepulcher. Why Nocturnal allows the Key to be stolen in the first place is a mystery. Some say she revels in the chaos this artifact causes, others feel she simply does not care, that the petty squabbles of men and mer are beyond her attention. Whatever the case may be, it is our duty to ensure it remains safely within the confines of the Sepulcher.

To say that the Nightingales are a holy order would be doing us a disservice. In our hearts, we are thieves. We enjoy the hunt and delight in the spoils. We might swear our loyalty to Nocturnal and hold some influence within the Thieves Guild, but the greatest allegiance a Nightingale holds is to himself.

The Nightingales, Volume II: What We Were

The Nightingales

Volume II:

What We Were

By

Gallus Desidenius

As a Nightingale, I feel compelled to place quill to parchment and record my thoughts regarding my knowledge of our order. If one day the Nightingales should vanish from Tamriel, then let this tome serve as a reminder of what we once were and to dispel any rumor or hearsay about our purposes and our motivations.

I will attempt to relate the scant bit of knowledge I have of our history to the best of my ability. It is my hope that in the future, someone else may happen upon this writing and amend it in order to expand the record of our existence.

Our history begins with a well-known tale. The tome “The Real Barenziah IX” mentions that a bard named “Nightingale” tricked Queen Barenziah into revealing the location of an artifact called the Staff of Chaos which he later claimed for his own. The story goes on to reveal that “Nightingale” was a powerful Imperial Battlemage named Jagar Tharn in disguise and that he used the Staff to imprison Emperor Uriel Septim VIII. His ultimate goal was to assume the form of the banished emperor and sit upon the throne in his stead.

In actuality, the individual identified as “the bard Nightingale” was not Jagar Tharn at all. This master of disguise was a Nightingale thief named Drayven Indoril. Jagar Tharn hired Drayven, one of the greatest master thieves in Skyrim, to seduce Barenziah and coerce her into revealing the location of the Staff of Chaos. After the Staff was given to Jagar Tharn, he attempted to eradicate Drayven, but his Nightingale abilities aided his escape. Jagar Tharn searched for Drayven but eventually had to abandon the pursuit in order to enact his plans involving the emperor.

It is interesting to note that history refers to Jagar Tharn as “Nightingale” well after the point Drayven would have vanished from the story. The distortion of actual events is very typical of Barenziah’s manipulation. With the pressure of blame falling squarely on her shoulders for Uriel Septim VII’s imprisonment, she twisted the truth and created the notion that the “bard” named Nightingale was Jagar Tharn himself.



She felt the tale of being enthralled by the master sorcerer held more of a forgiving if not romantic notion than simply being seduced by a master rogue. Some also further speculate that eliminating Drayven from history was her attempt at protecting the reputation of Jagar Tharn, whom she was rumored to have been quite fond of.

Drayven had escaped into Morrowind after Jagar Tharn's pursuit and rejoined the Indoril family who held an estate quite close to the border of Skyrim which allowed him to perform his Nightingale duties at the Sepulcher if the need arose. He remained there for many years until the Indoril family began to lose its power and a war between the houses erupted. Not wanting any part of it, and feeling that Jagar Tharn was no longer a threat, Drayven left his homeland behind and settled in The Rift under the guise of a miner.

Co-currently with Drayven's history, born out of Dravyen's seduction of Barenziah, the Dunmer Queen eventually bore a child. This child, whom Barenziah abandoned with a midwife in an attempt to keep her Nightingale story valid, eventually grew into adulthood and struck out on her own to find her father. Calling herself Dralsi, she overturned every stone in Skyrim looking for any traces of Drayven. After an unknown number of years passed, she finally located him in a small mining community called Shor's Stone. He was quite elderly now... no longer the sly rogue that had seduced Barenziah, but nevertheless he was still Dralsi's father and he treated her as such. In the remaining years of Drayven's life, he imparted the ways of the Nightingale to Dralsi until he finally succumbed to his age.

Dralsi willingly struck the Oath of the Nightingales and performed her duties well in the service of Nocturnal. She eventually took a husband and together they had a child whom they named Karliah. Like Dralsi's father did for her, Dralsi taught Karliah the art of thievery and how to survive in Skyrim living as a rogue. She intended to pass the Nightingale mantle on to Karliah, but had to wait until the time was right to reveal it. When she was old enough, Karliah struck out on her own wanting to ply her trade in a larger city. She eventually found her way to Riften and joined the Thieves Guild under my own leadership at the time.

As Karliah slowly climbed the ranks in the Guild, I watched her progress and saw much of her mother in her methods. After several years passed, I received word that Dralsi had been killed defending the Twilight Sepulcher from a band of mercenaries and so it became time for the mantle to be passed. I traveled to Nightingale Hall with Mercer Frey and together, we inducted Karliah into the Nightingales.

I will relate my own history in my next volume and perhaps, as I uncover more information, the history of Mercer Frey as well

# The Nirnroot Missive

*Sinderion*

The Nirnroot Missive

Revised Edition

By

Sinderion

The following is a transcript of the speech given by Master Alchemist Sinderion at the Alchemical Symposium on Rain's Hand of 4E 02. It is a revised version of an earlier missive Sinderion gave to the same group several years before. We've done the best we could to preserve the original tone of his speech, but some light embellishments have been made for editorial reasons and for clarity.

Sharmirin Raythorne,

Imperial Scribe

I would like to address the Symposium today with some startling revelations regarding the nirnroot.

Although this curiously tenacious flora grows almost anywhere a significant body of water is present, it's extremely rare, and soon to become extinct. After years of extensive

research, and the tireless efforts of my field assistant, I came into the possession of a large sampling of nirnroot. According to the theories presented by the noted Imperial Herbalist Chivius Regelliam, the nirnroot once flourished until a cataclysmic event severely reduced their numbers. Although many scholars reject the proposal that the Sun's Death event of 1E 668 catastrophically affected plant life, Chivius felt that the nirnroot's normal growth cycle was interrupted by the lack of sun for a full year. Whereas other plant species tend to "find a way," the nirnroot's mysterious magical nature made it especially susceptible to this climate shift. While this may or may not be the case, it's certainly true that the recorded sightings of nirnroot are declining as the years pass.

Chivius's notes oddly describe the nirnroot as emitting a "brilliant yellowish glow." Contrary to this fact, the nirnroot of today has a soft, haunting blue-white glow. Subsequent studies by other scholars have failed to adequately explain this shift in hue. I propose that the nirnroot sensed its own impending extinction and therefore altered its metabolism in order to survive. One of the most glaring pieces of evidence of my theory is the presence of nirnroot in subterranean environments... places completely devoid of sunlight. Strangely, Chivius's notes fail to mention even a single instance of a subterrestrial nirnroot. How could this be? How could a surface-dwelling plant suddenly begin appearing in new locations radically different from its normal habitat?

The answer, my fellow alchemists, is ironically concealed within Chivius's own notes. Although he spends a great deal of time experimenting with the nirnroot in his laboratory, he overlooked an important part of a plant's growth cycle... its soil. Chivius was correct in assuming the volcanic eruption of

Red Mountain contributed to the demise of the nirnroot, but I believe the ash from that mighty explosion did more than simply cloud the skies. When mixed with the fertile soil of Cyrodiil, this fine powder is the true cause of the nirnroot's astounding metamorphosis. Although little volcanic ash from that dark time remains, I have performed tests on samples sent to me from Vvardenfell. Careful scrutiny of the samples revealed that they were rife with "ash salt," a highly magical substance. Dunmer native to the Vvardenfell region were known to have used ash salt as an ingredient to cure the "Blight," an awful disease which decimated their realm hundreds of years ago. This unique property of the ash salt coupled with the nirnroot's inherent magic caused the radical change... in essence; the root "healed itself."

In summation, it's clear that the nirnroot was dying and used a byproduct of its destructor to preserve itself. I feel the nirnroot has accomplished in a relatively short amount of time what it would take other species thousands of years to complete.

Whether you subscribe to my theory or not, one thing is certain; the nirnroot is on a path to destruction. It contains untapped potential to create potions the likes of which have never been seen in our day. I propose to you today that we divert a small portion of our funds to an expedition to collect some of these roots to study. I have outlined this proposal for your perusal after this section of the Symposium. Please, seriously consider this proposal before it becomes too late, and the nirnroot becomes nothing but a memory.

Thank you for your time.

# The Oblivion Crisis

*Praxis Sarcorum*

The Oblivion Crisis

by

Praxis Sarcorum

Imperial Historian

At the turning of the Fourth Age, in the year 3E 433, the Emperor Uriel Septim VII was assassinated and the Amulet of Kings was destroyed. This set in motion a chain of events that would bring down an empire and change forever the relationship between man and the gods.

The assassins first attacked the Emperor in the White Gold Tower. While the Blades held them back, the Emperor made his way down to the dungeons, to a secret escape route built into one of the prison cells. For reasons known only to himself, the Emperor pardoned the fortunate prisoner in that cell. Some say the prisoner reminded him of a childhood friend. Others say it was a moment of prophecy. Whatever the case, the prisoner came to play a fateful role in the history of the Empire and Tamriel - surely a sign that the gods themselves were at work.

The pursuing assassins killed the Blades bodyguards in a relentless series of sneak attacks. Eventually they struck down

the Emperor himself. Before he fell, Uriel Septim VII gave the Amulet of Kings to the prisoner, who somehow made it out of the Imperial sewers and into the light of day.

The assassination is now known to have been the work of a group of daedric cultists known as the Mythic Dawn. (Those who still suspect the Dark Brotherhood should consider two facts: first, they would have only needed a single assassin, not a small army of them; second, the Dark Brotherhood would never be so foolish as to effectively declare war on the Empire and thus ensure their complete destruction. Witness the eventual fate of the Mythic Dawn.)

The Amulet of Kings next surfaced at Weynon Priory near Chorrol. Jauffre, secret Grandmaster of the Blades and head of the priory, took possession of the amulet. The messenger was sent off to Kvatch to find a lowly priest named Martin. Unbeknownst even to himself, Martin was the bastard son of Uriel Septim VII, and the last heir to the Ruby Throne. He alone could use the Amulet of Kings to light the Dragonfires that wards the barrier between Tamriel and Oblivion, and save the world from the Mythic Dawn plot.

The prisoner arrived at Kvatch to find it overrun by daedra that had poured in from a newly-opened Oblivion Gate, the start of the Empire-spanning devastation of the Oblivion Crisis. How the prisoner closed the gate is not recorded. Once closed, Martin and the surviving Kvatch guardsmen drove back the daedra.

Now known as the Hero of Kvatch, the prisoner and Martin returned to Weynon Priory, only to find the priory sacked and the Amulet taken. Jauffre survived the attack, however, and the three of them made their way to Cloud Ruler Temple, bastion of

the Blades. This secret fortress in the mountains outside Bruma is where Martin was held safe while the Hero of Kvatch searched for the lost Amulet.

Knowing only that a mysterious group called the Mythic Dawn was behind the assassination and theft of the Amulet, the Hero of Kvatch was sent to locate the cult. With the help of Baurus, a Blade in the service of the Emperor, they somehow used the Commentaries on the Mysterium Xarxes, esoteric works by the madman Mankar Camoran, to direct them to the Mythic Dawn's secret lair. Scholars familiar with the Commentaries claim the location is not directly mentioned in them. How they did this remains a mystery.

No official records exist of how the Hero of Kvatch penetrated the Mythic Dawn's lair near Lake Arrius. There is a bardic tale that claims the Hero used trickery and disguise, but that is just speculation. What was discovered there is that Mankar Camoran was behind the Mythic Dawn, and that the group worshiped the daedric prince Mehrunes Dagon. Mankar Camoran believed himself to be a direct descendant of the Camoran Usurper, the infamous pretender to the throne of Valenwood.

Somehow the Hero escaped with the Mysterium Xarxes itself, the holy book of the Mythic Dawn cult. Mankar Camoran fled to Oblivion with the Amulet of Kings. With some effort and great risk to his sanity, Martin deciphered the Mysterium Xarxes and intended to use it to open a gateway to Mankar Camoran in order to recover the Amulet of Kings.

Before Martin could perform the ritual to open the gateway, Mehrunes Dagon opened an Oblivion Gate outside Bruma. The Hero of Kvatch saved the city and Martin by entering the gate



and closing it before a daedric siege engine could destroy Bruma and Cloud Ruler Temple. Many songs and stories have been told of this battle and I will not retell them here. The Hero of Kvatch was now also known as the Savior of Bruma.

With the city and Cloud Ruler Temple safe, Martin opened the portal to Mankar Camoran's "Paradise". The details of what transpired in this place have not been recorded. All that is known is that the Savior of Bruma travelled to this Paradise, killed Mankar Camoran, and returned with the Amulet of Kings.

With the Amulet in hand, Martin Septim presented himself to the Elder Council to be crowned Emperor of all Tamriel. Once crowned he planned to relight the Dragonfires and seal Tamriel from Oblivion. In a last-ditch attempt to stop him, Mehrunes Dagon launched an assault on the Imperial City, opening several Oblivion Gates within the capital itself. Uncrowned, Martin joined the battle in the city streets.

Mehrunes Dagon himself left Oblivion and entered Tamriel, breaking the covenant. Only the unlit Dragonfires allowed this to be possible. Now that the barrier was ripped asunder, it was too late to relighting the Fires. Martin Septim chose to make the ultimate sacrifice - he shattered the Amulet of Kings to become the avatar of the god Akatosh and do battle with Mehrunes Dagon.

Records of this battle vary wildly. What we do know is that Mehrunes Dagon was defeated and sent back to Oblivion. The avatar of Akatosh was turned to stone and can be seen to this day in the Temple of the One in the Imperial City. With the Amulet gone, the Dragonfires quenched, and the last

Dragonblood Emperor dead, the barrier to Oblivion is sealed forever.

# The Poison Song

*Bristin Xel*

The Poison Song, Book I

It was beginning again. Even though everything seemed serene (the last embers crackling in the hearth; young servant girl and her child slumbering in a chair by the door; a tapestry half-finished against the wall, waiting to be completed tomorrow; one of the moons visible through a milky cloud outside the window; a lone bird, out of sight in the rafters, cooing placidly), Tay heard the first chords of the Song strike dissonantly somewhere far away.

The bird in the rafters croaked and took flight through the window. The baby in the girl's arms woke and began to scream. The Song swelled in intensity, yet still remained subtle and stately in tempo. The movement of everything seemed to take on the rhythm of the music as if strange choreography had been staged: the girl rising to the window, the clouds reflecting back red from the inferno below, her scream, all muted, consumed by the Song. Everything that came thereafter Tay had seen so many times, it had almost ceased to be a nightmare.

He did not remember anything of his life before coming to the island of Gorne, but he understood that there was something different in his past that set him apart from his cousins. It

wasn't simply that his parents were dead. His cousin Baynarah's parents had also died in the War. Nor were the other Housemen on Gorne or nearby Mournhold unusually cruel to him. They treated him with the same polite indifference that any Indoril has for every other eight-year-old boy that got underfoot.

But somehow, with absolutely certainty, Tay knew he was alone. Different. Because of a Song he always heard, and his nightmares.

"You're certainly imaginative," his aunt Ulliah would smile patiently, before waving him away so she could return to her scriptures and chores.

"Different? Everyone in the world thinks they're 'different,' that's what makes it such a common sentiment," said his older cousin Kalkorith who was studying to be Temple priest and had a firm grasp on paradoxes.

"If you tell anyone else that you keep hearing music where there's no music to be heard, they'll call you mad and bury you in the Shrine of Sheogorath," his uncle Triffith would snarl, before striding away to attend his business.

Only his nursemaid Edebah would listen to him seriously, and just nod with a faint look of pride. But she would never say another word.

His cousin and chief playmate Baynarah was by far the least interested in the stories of his Song and his dreams.

"How tiresome you are with all this, Tay," said Baynarah, after luncheon the summer of his eighth year. He, she, and a

younger cousin Vaster walked into a clearing in the midst of flowering trees. The grass was very low, barely up to their ankles, and there were big black piles of leaves from the previous autumn. “Now, shall we get back to it? What shall we play?”

Tay thought for a moment. “We could play the Siege of Orsinium.”

“What’s that?” asked Vaster, their constant companion, three years their junior.

“Orsinium was the home of the orcs, off in the Wrothgarian Mountains. For hundreds of years, it kept growing bigger and bigger and bigger. The orcs would come down out of the mountains and rape and pillage all over High Rock. And then, King Joile of Daggerfall and Gaiden Shinji of the Order of Diagna and someone else, I forget, from Sentinel all joined together against Orsinium. For thirty years they fought and fought. Orsinium had walls made out of iron and, try as they might, they couldn’t break through.”

“So what happened?” asked Baynarah.

“You’re so good at making up things that never happened, why don’t you make it up?”

So they did. Tay was the King of the Orcs, perched up in a tree they called Orsinium. Baynarah and Vaster played King Joile and Gaiden Shinji and they threw pebbles and sticks up at Tay while he taunted them in his most guttural voice. The three decided that the Goddess Kynareth (played by Baynarah in dual role) answered the prayers of Gaiden Shinji and drenched Orsinium in a torrent of rain. The walls rusted and dissolved.

On cue, Tay obligingly fell from the tree and let King Joile and Gaiden Shinji mangle him with their enchanted blades.

For the most of that summer, the year 675 of the First Era, Tay was nearly insensible by the power of the sun. There were no clouds, but it rained most every night, so the vegetation on the island of Gorne was bewildering lush. The stones themselves seemed to glow with sunlight, and the ditches burned with white meadowsweet and parsleydown; all around him were soft smells of flower and tree untroubled by wind; the foliage was purple green, blue green, ash green, white green. The wide cupolas, twisting cobbled streets, and thatched roofs of the little village of Gorne, and massive bleached rock of Sandil House all were magical to him.

Yet the dreams haunted his nights and the Song continued whether he was awake or not.

Against Aunt Ulliah's admonishments, Tay, Baynarah, and Vaster had breakfast outdoors every morning with the servants. Ulliah would hold an interior breakfast for herself and any visiting dignitaries: guests were rare, so she often ate alone. At first the servants would dine in silence, attempting gentility, but they broke down and would regale the children with gossip, reports, stories, and rumors.

"Poor Arnyle is laid up with a fever again."

"I'm telling you, they're cursed. The whole lot of 'em. Piss on the faerie and they piss right back on you."

"Doesn't Little Miss Starsia look, oh, just a wee bit tight around the belly region late-ly?"

“She’s not!”

The only servant who didn’t speak at all was Tay’s nursemaid Edebah. She wasn’t pretty like the other maids, but the scars on her face did not deform her. Her poorly set broken nose and her short hair gave her a certain alien mystique. She would merely quietly smile at the gossip, and look at Tay with almost frightening love and devotion.

One day, after breakfast, Baynarah whispered to Tay and Vaster, “We have to go to the hills on the other side of the island.”

She had used such imperatives before and always had something wonderful to show: a waterfall, tucked away behind ferns and tall rocks; a sunny grove of figs; a discreet still some peasants had set up; a sickly oak, twisted into a kneeling human figure; a collapsed stone wall that they imagined was thousands of years old, the last refuge of a doomed princess they named Merella.

The three walked across through the forest until they came to a clearing. A few hundred feet beyond, the meadow sank to a dry creek bed, filled with small, smooth stones. They followed that into the dark woods where trees canopied high over their heads. Sporadic red and yellow blossoms burst along the moist underbrush, but they became rarer and rarer as the children marched on under the umbrageous oaks and elms. The air crackled with birds ticking a staccato choral piece, a minor chord of the Song.

“Where are we going?” asked Tay.

“It’s not where we’re going, it’s what we’re going to see,” replied Baynarah.

The forest surrounded the three children completely, bathed them in its tenebrous hues, and breathed on them with wet chirrups and sighs. It was easy for them to imagine that they were within a monster, walking along its twisted spine of stones.

Baynarah scrambled up the steep hill and peered through the thick mass of shrub and tree. Tay lifted Vaster out of the creek bed and climbed out, gripping soft grass for support. There was no path through the forest here. Brambles and low hanging branches struck at them like the claws of chained beasts. The cries of the birds became ever more stentorious, as if angered at the invasion. One limb drew blood on Vaster’s cheek, but he didn’t cry out. Even Baynarah, who could pass like an ethereal creature through impenetrable forests, had a braid catch on a bramble, ruining the intricate pattern a servant had woven hours before. She paused to pull out the other braid, so her bright unruly tresses fell freely behind her. Now she was something wild, a nymph guiding the other two through her woodland domain. The Song began to beat like a wild pulse.

They were on a shelf of stone below a cliff overlooking a tremendous gorge, staring over an expanse of cinder. It looked like the scene of a tremendous battle, a holocaust of fire. Charred boxes, weaponry, animal bones, and detritus too annihilated to be identifiable littered the ground. Speechless, Tay and Vaster stepped into the black field. Baynarah smiled, proud that she had finally found something of true wonder and mystery.

“What is this place?” asked Vaster at last.



“I don’t know,” Baynarah shrugged. “I thought at first that it was some kind of ruin, but now I think it’s a junk pile, just not like any junk pile I’ve ever seen. Just look at this stuff.”

The three began an unorganized survey of the dusty mounds of refuse. Baynarah found a twisted sword only lightly blackened by flame and began polishing it to read the inscriptions on the blade. Vaster amused himself by breaking brittle boxes with his hands and feet, imagining himself a giant of unbelievable strength. A battered shield attracted Tay: there was something about it that reverberated with the sound of the Song. He pulled it out, and wiped its surface clean.

“I’ve never seen that crest before,” said Baynarah, looking over Tay’s shoulder.

“I think I have, but I don’t remember,” Tay whispered, trying to conjure the memory from his dreams. He was sure he had seen it there.

“Look at this!” Vaster cried, interrupting Tay’s thoughts. The boy was holding up a crystal orb. As his hand moved over the surface, brushing away grit and dust, a key in the Song rose which sent a shiver through Tay’s entire body. Baynarah ran over to look at Vaster’s treasure, but Tay felt paralyzed.

“Where did you find that?” she gasped, gazing into the swirl beneath the crystal surface.

“Over in that wagon,” Vaster gestured toward a heap of blackened wood, barely discernible from the other piles but for its cart spokes. Baynarah began digging into the half-collapsed structure, so only her feet could be seen. The Song built in

potency, sweeping over Tay. He began walking toward Vaster slowly.

“Give me that,” he whispered in a voice he could barely recognize as his own.

“No,” Vaster whispered back, his eyes locked on the colors reflected in the heart of the globe. “It’s mine.”

Baynarah dug through the remains of the wagon for several more minutes, but she could find no treasures like Vaster’s. Most everything within was destroyed, and what remained was common-place by any standards: broken arrows, armor shards, guar bones. Frustrated, she pulled herself out into the sunlight.

Tay was alone, at the edge of the great gorge.

“Where’s Vaster?”

Tay blinked and then turned back to his cousin with a shrug and a grin: “He went back to show everyone his new plunder. Did you find anything interesting?”

“Not really,” said Baynarah. “We probably ought to get back home before Vaster tells them anything that’ll get us in trouble.”

Tay and Baynarah started the walk back at a quick pace. Tay knew that Vaster would not be there when they got back. He would never be returning home again. The crystal globe rested snugly in Tay’s satchel, hidden under a pile of junk he had picked up. With all his heart, he prayed for the Song to return and drown out the memory of the gorge and the long, silent fall

down. The boy had been so surprised, he hadn't even time to scream.

## The Poison Song, Book II

Tay felt no guilt, which frightened him. All through the long, fast walk away from the gorge, through the woods, across the dry creek bed, he chatted merrily with Baynarah, fully aware that he had just committed murder. Whenever his mind strayed from the conversation, and he thought back on the last moments of Vaster's short life, the Song would soar. He could not think of the boy's death, but Tay knew he was responsible.

"You're a mess!" cried Aunt Ulliah the moment she saw the two children emerging from the woods onto the grounds of Sandil House. "Where have you been?"

"Didn't Vaster already tell you?" asked Tay.

The scene played itself out as Tay knew it would, every dancer in the Song performing their steps as choreographed. Aunt Ulliah saying that she had not seen Vaster. Baynarah, not yet frightened, making up an innocent lie about the threesome not having strayed far, saying he must have gotten lost. A slow but steady rhythm of panic intensifying as night began to fall, and Vaster had not yet returned. Baynarah and Tay tearfully (he was surprised how easy it was for him to cry without feeling) admitting where they had been, and leading Uncle Triffith and a crowd of servants to the junk pile and gorge. The tireless search through the woods as night turned to dawn. The weeping. The light punishment, merely cries of anger, that Baynarah and Tay suffered for losing their young cousin.

It was thought, from their stricken expressions, that the children felt guilty enough. They were sent to bed at dawn while the hunt through the woods continued.

Tay was drifting to sleep when his nursemaid Edebah came into his room. The look of unwavering love and devotion had not left her eyes, and he sank gratefully into his dreams and nightmares with her holding his hand. The Song wafted almost imperceptibly through his consciousness as he again had the vision of the room in the castle. The girl and her baby. The bird in the rafters. The dying fire. The sudden explosion of violence. Breathless, Tay opened his eyes.

Edebah was stealing out the door, softly humming the Song to herself. In her hand was the crystal globe from his satchel. For a moment, he hesitated, about to cry out. How did she know the Song? Was she aware that he had murdered another boy to get the globe?

Somehow he knew that she was helping him, that she knew all and loved him and sought only to protect him.

The next day, and the next week, and the next month were all the same. No one spoke very much, and when they did it was to suggest new places to look for the missing boy. Everywhere had been searched thoroughly. Tay was curious why they never looked in the gorge, but he understood how inaccessible it was.

A side-effect of Vaster's absence was that the tutorial sessions with Kena Gafrisi took on a more serious, even academic quality. The younger boy's high spirits and meager attentiveness had always cut the lessons short, but sensible Baynarah and quiet Tay were ideal pupils. He was particularly impressed by how focused they became during a rather dry

history lecture about the heraldic symbols of Houses of Morrowind.

“The crest of the Hlaalu features a scale,” he sniffed disdainfully. “They see themselves as the great compromisers, as if that were something honorable. Many hundreds of years ago, they were the tribesmen following Resdayn who chose—”

“Pardon me, Kena,” asked Baynarah. “But what is the crest with the insect on it?”

“You don’t know House Redoran?” asked the tutor, lifting up one of the shields. “I know you have a sheltered life on Gorne, but you’re surely old enough to recognize—”

“Not that one, Kena,” replied Tay. “I think she means the other crest with an insect.”

“I see,” nodded Kena Gafrisi, brow furrowed. “Yes, you would be too young to have ever seen the crest of the Sixth House, the House of Dagoth. Our enemies together with the accursed heretical Dwemer in the War of the Red Mountain, now totally destroyed, thanks be to Lord, Mother, and Wizard. That House was a curse on our land for millennia, and when at last their pestilence was snuffed out, the very earth itself breathed a cloud of fire and ash in relief, bringing night to day for over a year’s time.”

Baynarah and Tay knew they could not speak, but they exchanged knowing glances at one another as the tutor enlarged on the theme of the great wickedness of the Dwemer and the House Dagoth. As soon as the lesson ended, they walked silently out of Sandil House until they were far from all ears and eyes.

The afternoon sun stretched out the shadows of the spear-like trees surrounding the meadow. Off in the distance, they could hear the sounds of the workers beginning their preparations for the autumn harvest, yelling to one another unintelligibly in coarse and familiar accents.

“That was definitely the symbol on that shield you found at the garbage heap,” Baynarah said at last. “Everything there must be a remnant of the House Dagoth.”

Tay nodded. His mind was on the strange crystal globe. He felt a light vibration of soundless music touch his body, and knew he was discovering a new cadence of the Song.

“Why would our people have burned and discarded all that?” he asked thoughtfully. “Do you think the House Dagoth was so evil that everything associated with them could have been cursed?”

Baynarah laughed. At the height of day, all talk of curses and the evil Sixth House were pure supposition: something to add romance to one’s life, but nothing to worry about. The two children walked back to the castle for yet another in a series of cold, quiet dinners. As the night fell, Baynarah looked through the treasures she had picked up in the junk heap. By the light of the moons, the small jars, the torc with orange gemstones, the bits of tarnished silver and gold of no obvious purpose, all took on a sinister aspect.

Revulsion overtook her feeling of admiration instantly. There was a strange energy to them, a tincture of death and corruption that was undeniable. Baynarah ran to the window and vomited.

Looking out to the dark open lawn below, she saw a figure below lighting an arrangement of candles in the shape of a large insect, the symbol of the House Dagoth. When it looked in her direction, she pulled back, but she saw the face illuminated by the tallows. It was Edebah, Tay's nursemaid.

The next morning, Baynarah left the castle grounds early, bearing a large sack filled with her treasures. She carried them to the dumping ground and left them there. Then she returned, and told her Uncle Triffith what she had seen the night before, leaving out only what had made her sick in the first place.

Edebah was banished from the isle of Gorne without discussion. She wept, begging to be allowed to say goodbye to Tay, but all believed that would be too dangerous. When Tay asked what had become of her, he was told she had to return to her family on the mainland. He had grown too old for a nursemaid.

Baynarah never told him what she knew. For she was afraid.

### The Poison Song, Book III

Tay was eighteen in the year 685 of the First Era when he first saw Mournhold, the city of spires, home of the goddess. His cousin Kalkorith, already a senior initiate in the Temple, gave him a couple rooms on the ground floor of the house he had purchased. They were small and unfurnished, but bittergreen grew outside the windows, and when the wind blew, they filled his bedroom with a lovely spicy air.

The chords of the Song did not trouble him anymore. Sometimes he was even unconscious to it, so low and melodic it had become. Occasionally when he was passing through the

streets on the way to the Temple for his instruction, someone would pass him and the Song would rise in intensity before falling away again. Whatever was different about those people, Tay never tried to ascertain. He remembered the last time he had let the Song lead him, and called for him to murder his young cousin Vaster. The memory did not trouble him unduly, but he did not want to hurt anyone again unless he had to.

House couriers regularly brought Tay letters from Baynarah, still back in Sandil House on the island of Gorne. She might have gone to study at the Temple, she was certainly intelligent enough, but she chose not to. In a year or two at most, she would have to leave and assume her place in House Indoril, but she was not in a hurry. Tay welcomed the trivial gossipy news the letters brought, and responded back with news of his own studies and romances.

In his third month in Mournhold, he had already met a girl. She was also a student at the Temple, and her name was Acra. Tay wrote enthusiastically about her to Baynarah, describing her as having the mind of Sotha Sil, the wit of Vivec, and the beauty of Almalexia. Baynarah replied back merrily that if she had known how blasphemous students of the Temple were allowed to be, she might have become an initiate herself.

“You are very devoted to your cousin,” Acra laughed when Tay showed her the letter. “Am I looking at the last remains of a thwarted romance?”

“She’s lovely, but I never thought of her that way,” Tay scoffed. “Incest never particularly interested me.”

“Is she a very close cousin then?”



Tay thought for a moment: “I don’t know. Truthfully, no one spoke much of either her parents or mine, so I really don’t know how we were connected. They were casualties of the War of the Red Mountain, that I know, and it seemed to cast rather a pall on the adults’ humor whenever we asked about her parents or mine. After a while, we stopped asking. But you’re an Indoril too. Perhaps you’re a closer cousin to me than Baynarah.”

“Perhaps so,” Acra smiled, rising from her chair. She uncoiled her hair, which had been pulled up in the formal arrangement reserved for well-born priestesses. As Tay watched transfixed, she removed the small brooch that fastened her robe to her shoulder cape. The soft silken fabric slipped down slowly, exposing her dark, slender body to him for the first time. “If we are, does incest particularly interest you now?”

As they made love, the Song began a slow, rhythmic ascension in Tay’s head. The vision of Acra before him darkened and was replaced by images from his nightmares before returning again. When finally he collapsed, spent, the room seemed filled with the fiery red clouds of his dream, and the scream of the woman and her child facing death echoed in his head. He opened his eyes, and there was Acra, smiling at him. Tay kissed her, grateful to have her in his arms.

For the next two weeks, Tay and Acra were never far apart. Even when they were at study in opposite wings of the Temple, Tay thought of her, and somehow knew she was thinking of him. They would rush to be together afterwards, ravishing one another in his rooms every night, and in a private corner of the Temple garden every day.

It was while Tay was rushing to see his beloved one afternoon that the Song rose up in powerful strident tones at the

approach of an old, ragged woman. He closed his eyes and tried to quiet it, but when he looked again at her purchasing corkbulb papyrus from a street vendor, he knew who she was. His old nursemaid from Gorne, Edebah. She who had abandoned him without even a farewell to join her family on the mainland.

She didn't see him, and as she passed down the street, Tay turned and began to follow. They walked through shadowy passageways into the very poorest part of the city, a quarter which was as alien to him as the wildest principality of Akavir. She unlocked a small wooden door on a street without a name, and he finally called out her name. She didn't turn, but when he followed, he found that the door had been left ajar.

The chamber was murky and damp like a cave. She stood facing him, her face even more wrinkled than he had remembered it, etched with lines of sorrow. He closed the door behind him, and she took his hand and kissed it.

"You are so tall and strong," Edebah said, beginning to weep. "I should have killed myself before I let them take me away from you."

"How is your family?" Tay asked coldly.

"You are my only family," she whispered. "The Indoril pigs forced me to leave, thrusting their blades in my face, when they discovered that I serve you and your family, not them. That bitch girl Baynarah saw me at a prayer of mourning."

"You're speaking like a madwoman," Tay sneered. "How could you love me and my family, but hate the House Indoril? I am of the House Indoril."

“You are old enough to know the truth,” Edebah said fiercely. Tay had bitterly joked about her madness, but he saw something close to it burning in her ancient eyes. “You were not born of House Indoril; they brought you into their house after the War, like they and the other Houses brought in all the orphans. It was the only way they saw to erase history and remove all traces of their enemies, by raising their enemies as one of them.”

Tay turned toward the door: “I can see why you were taken away from Gorne, old woman. You are delusional.”

“Wait!” Edebah cried, rushing to a musty cabinet. She retrieved from it a glass globe that shimmered with a spectrum of color even in the chamber’s gloom. “Do you remember this? You slew that little boy Vaster because he possessed it, and I took it from your room because you were not ready to face the facts of your inheritance and responsibility then. Did you not wonder why this bauble drew you so?”

Tay gasped, and though he did not want to, he said, “I hear a Song sometimes.”

“That is the Song of your ancestors, of your true family,” she said, nodding. “You must not fight it, for it is a song of destiny. It will lead you to do what must be done.”

“Shut up!” Tay howled, “Everything you say is a lie! You’re insane!”

Edebah threw the globe to the ground with all her might, shattering it with a deafening retort. The shards melted into the air. All that was left was a small silver ring, simply wrought with a flat crown. The old woman quietly picked it up and

handed it to him, while he stood with his back against the door, trembling.

“This is your inheritance, as the bearer of the Sixth House.”

The ring’s crown was meant for stamping and sealing official House proclamations. Tay had seen his uncle Triffith’s similar ring, crested with the wing which was the seal of House Indoril. This ring was different, with an insect design which he remembered from the day when Kena Gafrisi had taught the House heraldry to Baynarah and him.

It was the symbol of the accursed House Dagoth.

The Song took over all of Tay’s senses. He heard its music, smelled its horror, tasted its sadness, felt its power, and the only thing he could see before him was the flames of its destruction. When he took the ring and placed it on his finger, his mind was not aware of what he was doing. Nor was Tay aware of anything but the Song when he removed his dagger from its sheath and thrust it into his old nursemaid’s heart.

Tay did not even hear her final words, when Edebah fell bleeding to the ground, and groaned with a blood-streaked smile, “Thank you.”

When the veil of the Song lifted, Tay did not realize at first he was no longer dreaming. Before him had been flames, the very ones that destroyed the home of his birth, and flames were before him again. But they were flames from a fire he had struck outside the crumbling tenement that were already bursting through walls, consuming the body of his old nursemaid.

Tay fled through the streets as people began to call for the guards.

#### The Poison Song, Book IV

Acra sat by the hearth in Tay's room, reading her book by the fire. It concerned some minutiae of theosophy that she did not believe in, but nevertheless found morbidly compelling. When the door opened and she heard Tay enter, she finished the paragraph she was reading before looking up.

"I've been here for hours, darling. If I knew you were going to be so late, I would have brought more books," she giggled. When she saw Tay's face and the state of his clothing, her manner lost all frivolity. "What happened to you? Are you all right?"

"I've been to see my old childhood nursemaid, Edebah," he said in a strange voice. "It was a sudden change of plans. I hadn't realized she was in Mournhold."

"I wish I had known where you were going," she said, rising slowly from her chair. "I would have loved to have met her."

"Well, it's too late now. I've killed her."

Acra inhaled deeply, studying Tay's frozen face. She took his hand. "Perhaps you ought to tell me everything."

Tay let his beloved lead him to the hearth, where he sat blinking at the fire. He looked down at the silver ring on his finger. "Before I killed her, she gave me this. It's the sealing ring of the House Dagoth. She told me I was the bearer of the inheritance, and the Song I hear all the time in my head, the

one that called me to kill another boy when I was young, and then Edebah herself, is the Song of my ancestors.”

Tay fell silent. Acra knelt by his side, stroking his ringed hand. “Tell me more.”

“My tutor Kena Gafrisi taught us that the House Dagoth was a curse on Morrowind. He said that when they were all destroyed at the end of the War, the very earth itself breathed in relief,” Tay closed his eyes. “I can see the obliteration. I can even hear it in the Song. Edebah told me that the five Houses adopted the orphan children of Dagoth, raising them in their own traditions. I thought she was mad or a liar, but the real lie was all those years I thought my family was House Indoril.”

“What are you going to do?” Acra whispered.

“Well, Edebah told me to follow the Song to my destiny,” Tay laughed bitterly. “But the Song led me to kill her, so I don’t know if she’d still give me that recommendation now. I know that I need to leave Mournhold. Before I knew what I was doing, I set a fire in her tenement. The guards were called. I just don’t know where I’d go.”

“You have many friends to shield you if you prove yourself to be the new leader of the return of the Sixth House,” Acra kissed the ring. “I will help you find them.”

Tay stared at her. “Why would you help me?”

“When you thought I was your cousin of the House Indoril, you did not mind having me though it might well have been incestuous,” Acra replied, meeting his eyes. “I have heard the Song too. It is not as strong with me as it was with you, but I

never chose to ignore it. It taught me more than the ridiculous Temple priests and priestesses ever could. I knew that my true name was Dagoth-Acra, and I knew that I had a brother.”

“No,” Tay said through gritted teeth. “You’re lying.”

“You are Dagoth-Tython.”

Tay shoved Acra hard against the wall and ran from the room. As he fled through the hall, he heard the sound of Kalkorith’s footfall on the stairs behind him, a percussive instrument in the Song that was rising in his heart and head

“Cousin,” the senior initiate was saying. “Have you heard about the fire—”

Tay unsheathed his dagger and turned, burying it to the hilt in Kalkorith’s throat. “Cousin,” he hissed. “I am not your cousin.”

The streets of Mournhold were lit by the red glow of the tenement fire, spreading through the tight alleyways by a steady and intense gust of wind. It was as if Dagoth-Ur himself was looming over the city, fanning the flames his heir had struck. A House guard, running toward the blaze, stopped at the sight of Tay, standing uncertainly, swaying, before the front door of Kalkorith’s house, a bloodied blade in his hand.

“What you done, serjo?”

Tay ran for the forest, his cape whipping behind him by the force of the howling wind. The guard clambered after him, sword drawn. He had no need to investigate the house to see the murder. He knew.

For hours, Tay raced through the wilderness, the Song pushing him onward. The sound of his pursuer faded away. At last, the trees thinned, and he saw nothing before him but air and water. A cliff, a hundred foot long plunge into the Inner Sea.

The Song told him no. It pulled him north, sweetly promising a place to rest among friends. More than friends—people who would worship him as the heir of Dagoth. As he slowly walked toward the edge of the cliff, the Song became more threatening, warning him not to seek to avoid his fate. There was no escape in death.

Tay spat a curse upon his House and threw himself head first over the cliff.

It was another glorious day on the island of Gorne, the first one in weeks that Baynarah could truly enjoy. Uncle Triffith had important company, Housemen from far away, and she had been required to attend every dinner, every meeting, every ceremony. As a child, she remembered, she had hoped for some attention. Now nothing was more blissful than time away from her duties.

There was only one thing she wanted to do that she had to do indoors, and that was writing a letter to her cousin. But that could wait until the evening, she told herself. After all, he had not written her in many days. It was the influence of that girl, Acra. Not that she seemed disagreeable, but Baynarah knew how one's first love can be all-consuming. At least, she had read about it.

As she walked idly through the wildflower meadow, Baynarah was so distracted with her thoughts that she did not hear her



maid Hillima calling. She was quite startled when she turned to see the young servant running up.

“Serjo,” she said, breathlessly. “Please come! Someone has washed up on the shore! It’s your cousin, Serjo Indoril-Tay!”

### The Poison Song, Book V

For two days, the House healers attended Tay in his bed, and Baynarah sat by his side, holding his hand. He was feverish, neither asleep nor awake, screaming at invisible phantoms. The healers complimented the young man’s fortitude. Bodies had washed ashore on the island of Gorne several times, many during the War, but never once had they seen one that lived afterwards.

Aunt Ulliah came in several times to bring Baynarah food: “You must be careful, dear, or when he’s all well, he’ll have to attend you on your sickbed.”

Tay’s fever broke, and at last he was able to open his eyes and see the young woman with whom he had spent seventeen years, all but the first year of his life. She smiled at him, and called for food. In silence, she helped him eat.

“I knew you wouldn’t die, cousin,” she whispered fondly.

“I hoped to, but somehow I knew I wouldn’t either,” he groaned. “Baynarah, do you remember all those nightmares I told you about? They’re all true.”

“We can talk about it when you’ve rested some more.”

“No,” he croaked. “I must tell you everything now, so you’ll know what kind of a monster you call your dear cousin Tay. If

there was some way you could have known before, you might not have been so eager to see me well again.”

A tear rolled Baynarah’s cheek. She had grown into a beauty, even in the few months he had been away in Mournhold. “How can you think I would stop loving you, no matter what you’ve done?”

“I saw my old nursemaid Edebah, and spoke to her.”

“Oh,” Baynarah had feared this moment. “Tay, I don’t know what she told you, but it was all my fault. You remember when Kena Grafisi taught us about the House Dagoth, and its corruption. That night, I saw your nursemaid making some kind of altar out on the north lawn, using the symbol of the Sixth House. She must have been doing it for years, but I never knew what it meant. I told Uncle Triffith, and he sent her away. I’ve wanted to tell you so many times now, but I was afraid to. She was so devoted to you.”

Tay smiled. “And didn’t it frighten you even more to wonder if there was any connection between her devotion to me, and her devotion to the accursed House? I know you, Baynarah. You’re not one of those women who doesn’t choose to use her mind.”

“Tay, I don’t know what she told you, but I think she was very troubled, and whatever she thought about you and the Sixth House was wrong. You have to remember that. The ramblings of one madwoman are proof of nothing.”

“There’s more,” Tay sighed, and held up his hand. For a moment he blinked, and then turned to Baynarah angrily. “What happened to my ring? If you saw it, you must have known already that everything I’m saying to you is true.”

“I threw the filthy thing away,” Baynarah stood up. “Tay, I’m going to let you rest now.”

“I am the heir of House Dagoth,” Tay was wild-eyed, almost screaming. “Raised after the War as House Indoril, but driven by the Song of my ancestors. When we were young, I killed Vaster because the Song told me he had stolen my inheritance. When Edebah told me who I was and gave me this ring, I killed her and burned her house to the ground, because the Song told me she had served her purpose. When I returned to Kalkorith’s house, my love was there, telling me that she was of the House Dagoth too, and my sister. I fled, and when Kalkorith tried to stop me, I slew him, because the Song told me he was an enemy.”

“Tay, stop,” Baynarah sobbed. “I don’t believe a word of it. You’ve been feverish...”

“Not Tay,” he shook his head, breathing heavily. “The name my parents gave me was Dagoth-Tython.”

“You can’t have killed Edebah, you loved her. And Vaster and Kalkorith? They were our cousins!”

“They were not my true cousins,” Tay said coldly. “The Song told me they were my foes. Just as it’s telling me now that you’re my foe, but I won’t listen. And I’ll keep from listening... as long as I can.”

Baynarah fled from the room, slamming the door behind her. She took a key from the her startled maid Hillima, and secured the lock.

“Serjo Indoril-Baynarah,” Hillima whispered, with great sympathy. “Is all well with your cousin, Serjo Indoril-Tay?”

“He’ll be perfectly fine once he rests,” Baynarah recovered her dignity, wiping the tears from her face. “No one is to disturb him under any circumstances. I’ll take the key with me. Now I have much work to do. I don’t suppose anyone’s spoken to the fishermen about restocking Sandil House’s supplies?”

“I don’t know, serjo,” said the maid. “I don’t think so.”

Baynarah marched down to the docks, and relieved her troubled heart the only way she knew how, by concentrating on small things. Tay’s words never left her, but she found temporary comfort talking to the fishermen about their haul, helping determine how much should be smoked, how much should be sent to the village, how much should be delivered fresh to the House larder.

Her aunt Ulliah joined the discussion, oblivious to Baynarah’s well-disguised agony. Together, they discussed how many provisions Uncle Triffith and his commanders had devoured during their weeks on the island, when they would be expected to return, and how best to prepare. One of the fishermen on the docks called out, interrupting.

“A boat is coming!”

Ulliah and Baynarah greeted the visitor as she arrived. It was a young woman dressed in the robes of a Temple priestess. As she docked her small boat, Baynarah marveled at how beautiful she was, and strangely familiar.

“Welcome to Gorne,” said Baynarah. “I am Indoril-Baynarah and this is my aunt Indoril-Ulliah. Have we met before?”

“I don’t believe so, serjo,” the woman bowed. “I was sent by the Temple to inquire whether word had come from your cousin, Indoril-Tay. He has been missing from his classes for some days now, and the priests have become concerned.”

“Oh, we should have sent word,” Ulliah fretted. “He came here a few days ago, half-drowned. He’s better now. Let us escort you up to the house.”

“Tay’s resting now, and I asked that he not be disturbed,” Baynarah stammered. “Actually, I know it’s dreadful manners, but I need to talk to my aunt for a moment. Would it be too terrible if I asked you to wait for us at the house? You have only to follow the path up the hill and across the lawn.”

The priestess bowed again humbly, and began the walk. Ulliah was scandalized.

“You know better than to treat a representative of the Temple that way,” she snapped. “You can’t be so exhausted from tending your cousin to have lost all sense of civility.”

“Aunt Ulliah,” Baynarah whispered, drawing the woman away from the ears of the fishermen. “Is Tay truly my cousin? He believes himself to be...of the House Dagoth.”

Ulliah took a moment to respond. “It’s true. You were just a baby yourself during the War, so you couldn’t know what it was like. There was not a part of Morrowind that wasn’t ravaged. There was even a battle here on the island. Do you remember that burned pile of wreckage you and Tay and poor

little Vaster discovered so many years ago? That was the remains. And after the War, when that accursed House was finally defeated, we saw the little innocents, the orphans whose only crime had been born to wicked parents. I admit there were some in our armies, the combined forces of the Houses, who would have had them all slaughtered to annihilate the legacy of Dagoth. In the end, compassion prevailed, and the children of the Sixth House were adopted into the other five. And so we thought that we had won the war and the peace.”

“By the Mother, Lord, and Wizard, if all that Tay believes is true, then there is no peace,” Baynarah trembled. “He claims that the Song of his ancestors called to him, and forced him to slay three people, two of them our Housemen. Cousin Kalkorith and...when he was a little boy...Vaster.”

Ulliah held her hands over her tearful face and could not speak.

“And it is only beginning,” said Baynara. “The Song still calls to him. He said there were others who knew, who would help him raise up the Sixth House. His sister...”

“It must be an evil fantasy,” Ulliah murmured. She noticed that Baynarah’s gaze was now upon the path leading from the docks towards the house. “Niece, what are you thinking?”

“Did that priestess give us her name?”

The two women ran up the path, calling for guards. The fishermen, who had never seen the mistresses of the house so undone, looked briefly at one another and then followed quickly behind, pulling out their hooks and blades.

The front gate to Sandil House stood wide open, the first of the corpses lying close within. It was now an abattoir, painted fresh with blood. There was Aner, uncle Triffith's valet, gutted but still seated at the foyer table where he had been enjoying his afternoon glass of flin. Leryne, one of the chambermaids, had been decapitated while carrying some once-clean linens up the stairs. The bodies of guards and servants sprawled about the hall like blown leaves. At the top of the stairs, Baynarah had to hold back a sob when she saw Hillima. She lay like a broken doll, slain as she tried to pull herself out onto the narrow window ledge.

No one spoke, not Baynarah, nor Aunt Ulliah, nor the fishermen, as they walked slowly through the blood-drenched house. They passed Tay's sick-room, its door broken open, and no one within. When they heard the sound of footsteps in Baynarah's room down the hall, they approached slowly, cautiously, with great dread.

The priestess from the docks was standing by the bed. In her hand was the silver ring Baynarah had taken from Tay's finger. In her other hand was a long, curved blade, splashed like her once pristine gown, with gore. She smiled prettily and bowed when she saw she was no longer alone.

"Acra, I should have recognized you by Tay's description in his letters," Baynarah said in her steadiest voice. "Where is my cousin?"

"I prefer to call myself Dagoth-Acra," she replied. "Your false cousin, my true brother, has already gone to fulfill his destiny. I'm sorry you were not here so he could give you a more permanent farewell."

Baynarah's face twisted in fury. She motioned for the fishermen, who advanced with their weaponry. "Tear her apart."

"The Sixth House will rise again, and Dagoth-Typhon will lead us!" Acra laughed. Her words were still echoing as she gave the sign of Recall and vanished like a ghost.

## The Poison Song, Book VI

The magnificent sprawl of the stronghold of Indoranyon was aglow in the light of the setting sun. Commander Jasrat watched it slowly disappear into the horizon as he led the caravan southwestward. It was a strange practice for him to lead a night operation, but scarcely more bizarre than anything else he was facing. He was only seventy years of age, far from old for a Bosmer, and yet he felt like he belonged to another era.

He had known the land of east Vvardenfell his entire life. Every forest, every garden, every small village between Red Mountain and the Sea of Ghosts had been home to him. But now it was all different, twisted into a world he did not recognize since the eruption and the year of Sun's Death. It made night travel all the more treacherous, but it was a risk he was ordered to take.

The ashmire appeared quite suddenly. If a sharp-sighted scout hadn't seen it and given the signal, the entire caravan might have been swallowed whole. Jasrat cursed. It had not been on the map, but that was hardly surprising.

It was a huge unnamed scathe stretching as far as anyone could see. The commander considered his options. He might lead his party to the southeast toward Tel Aruhn and then try an approach due west. As he consulted his map, he noticed a



glimmer of a campfire in the distance. Accompanied by his lieutenants, Jasrat drove his guar forward to investigate what appeared to be an Ashlander man and woman.

“This is no longer your realm,” he bellowed. “Don’t you know it’s been ruled by the Temple that these are House lands now?”

The couple shuffled to their feet, and began quietly walking away, toward a narrow ridge between hill and ashmire. Jasrat called them back.

“Do you know a way around the scathe?” he asked. They nodded, their eyes still to the ground. Jasrat signaled to his caravan. “You will lead us then.”

It was a treacherous winding crossing, almost too tight for the guar. The wagons themselves scraped as the drivers pulled to avoid the ashmire. The Ashlander man and woman whispered to one another as they led the caravan.

“What are you mumbling about, n’wah?” Jasrat hollered.

The man did not turn around. “My sister and I were talking about the Dagoth rebellion, and she was guessing that you were bringing arms to the stronghold at Falensarano, which is why you chose to cross the ashmire rather than taking a road.”

“I might have known,” Jasrat laughed. “You Ashlanders are so hopeful whenever you see signs of trouble in the Houses and the Temple. I hate to dampen your spirits, but what you’re speaking of is hardly a rebellion. Merely a few isolated incidents of... unpleasantness. Tell your sister that.”

As they plodded onward, the narrow ridge began to taper even more. The Ashlanders found a low jagged crevasse in the hills,

a crack from a lava flow even predating Sun's Death. The caravan scored the rock walls as it moved through. Commander Jasrat, after twenty years of uncertainty in a land he did not understand, felt a twinge of his old instinct. This, he thought to himself, would be a fine place for an ambush.

"Ashlander, how close are we?" he shouted.

"We've arrived," Dagoth-Tython replied, and gave the signal.

The assault was over in mere minutes, as it had been calculated from the start. When the last body of the House guard had sunk beneath the ashmire, only then was the inventory of the caravan revealed. It was better than they had hoped, virtually everything the rebellion needed. Daedric swords, dozens of suits of armor, quivers of fine ebony bolts, and rations enough to last for weeks.

"Go on ahead to the camp," Tython smiled at his sister. "I'll lead the caravan. We should be there within a few hours' time."

Acra kissed him passionately, and gave the sign of Recall. In an instant, she was back in her tent, exactly as she had left it. Humming the Song, she removed the Ashlander rags and chose an appropriately diaphanous gown from her trunks. Precisely the sort of dress Tython would love seeing her in when he returned.

"Muorasa!" she called to her servant. "Summon the troops together! Tython and the others will be here very soon with all the weapons and rations we need!"

"Muorasa can't hear you now," said a voice Acra hadn't heard in weeks. She turned, expertly removed every trace of surprise

from her face. It was indeed Indoril-Baynarah, but not the quivering creature she had left behind at the massacre at Sandil House. This woman was an armored warrior, who spoke with mocking confidence. “She wouldn’t be able to summon the troops if she could. You may have weapons and rations, Acra, but there’s no one left to arm or feed.”

Dagoth-Acra made the sign of Recall, but nothing happened.

“The moment we heard you banging around in the tent, my battlemages cast a diffusion of all magicka,” Baynara smiled, opening the tent further to invite a dozen House soldiers in. “You won’t be leaving.”

“If you think that my brother will walk into your trap, you underestimate his allegiance to the Song,” Acra sneered. “It tells him everything he needs to know. I have convinced him to no longer fight it, and let it lead him and us to our ultimate victory.”

“I’ve known him longer and better than you ever did,” said Baynarah coldly. “Now, I want to hear what the Song is saying to you. I want to know where I can find Tay.”

“Tython, my lady,” Acra corrected her. “He is no longer a slave to your House and the Temple’s lies. You can torture me all you wish, but I swear to you the next time you see him, it will be because he wishes it, not you. And that will be your very last moment alive.”

“Don’t you worry, serjo,” Baynarah’s nightblade winked at her. “Everyone says they won’t break under torture, but everyone always does.”

Baynarah left the tent. It was all a part of warfare, she understood that, but there would be little relish in witnessing it. She could not even watch as the House soldiers disposed of the rebel corpses. She had hoped she would grow numb to the bloodshed after weeks of following Tython and Acra, massacre after massacre. It didn't matter to her that now the bodies were of her enemies. Death was still death.

She had only been in her tent for a few minutes when her nightblade appeared.

“Not so tough as she appeared, that one,” he grinned. “In point of fact, all I had to do is ask her nice and point my dagger at her belly, and she was blubbering everything. Not too surprising really. It's always the ones that talk big that crumble fast. I remember way back a couple years ago, before you was even born -”

“Garuan, what did she say?” Baynarah asked.

“The Song, whatever that is, told her brother that she got herself caught, and not to return to camp,” the nightblade replied, only a trifle annoyed at having his fascinating story cut short. “He's got a half dozen mer with him, and they're going to try to assassinate the fella that led the Indoril army in the War. General Indoril-Triffith.”

“Uncle Triffith,” Baynarah gasped. “Where is he stationed now?”

“I'm not sure myself, serjo. Do you want me to ask if she knows?”

“I’ll come with you,” said Baynarah. As they walked towards Acra’s tent, cries of alarm sounded. The situation became abundantly clear even before they reached the site. Three guards were dead, and the prisoner had escaped.

“Interesting woman,” said Garuan. “Weak heart, but a strong arm. Should we send word of warning to General Indoril-Triffith?”

“If we can find where he is in time,” said Baynarah.

### The Poison Song, Book VII

Triffith stood on the parapets of Barysimayn and considered the volcano. Metaphors the poets used fell rather flat in his view. A festering wound it could be called with its blood-like lava. The King of Ash, too, could be applied, when one looked at its perpetual crown of smoke. And yet, none of that would do, for nothing in his experience could convey the sheer magnitude of the mountain. Red Mountain was many miles away from the fortress, and yet it filled the horizon utterly.

Before he could feel too small, however, he heard his name being called within. It was some consolation that though he was insignificant compared to the mountain, he was still in possession of certain power and influence.

“General Indoril-Triffith,” said Commander Rael. “There’s trouble at the east gate.”

The trouble was scarcely more than a skirmish. An Ashlander, drunk perhaps on shein, had begun a fight with the House guards at the back gate. As they tried to drive him away, his cousins joined him, and soon there were six Ashlanders

altogether brawling with a dozen of Triffith's guards. If the n'wahs had not been well-armed, the fight could have been finished almost before it began. As it was, by the time the General arrived with more of his guards, two of the Ashlanders were dead and the others had taken flight.

"It's the smoke in their brains," Rael shrugged. "Makes them mad."

Triffith climbed back up the stairs and returned to his chamber to dress for dinner. General Redoran-Vorilk and Counselor Hlaalu-Nothoc would be arriving very shortly to discuss the Temple's plans for reorganizing the House lands of Morrowind. Mournhold was to be renamed Almalexia. A great new city in honor of Vivec was to be built, but with whose gold? It made his head hurt. There were so many details, a long night of argument, threats, and compromises were ahead.

The General's mind was so occupied that he nearly put his House robes on backwards. He also did not notice the shadowy figure steal out from behind the tapestry and close the door to the bedchamber. It was not until Triffith heard the sound of the latch-bolt fall that he turned around.

"Slipped in when I was distracted by the fracas at the back gate. Very clever, Tay," he said simply. "Or do you call yourself Dagoth-Tython these days?"

"You should know all my names," the young man snarled, unsheathing his sword. "I was Tython before you butchered my family and sought to dispel my tribe. I was Tay when you brought me into your House to poison me against my own people. Now you may call me Vengeance."

There was a knock on the door. Tython and Triffith did not move their eyes from one another. The knocking became a loud pounding. “General Indoril-Triffith, are you well? Is there something wrong?”

“If you’re going to kill me, boy, you’d best do it quickly,” Triffith growled. “My men will have that door down in two minutes.”

“You don’t tell me what to do, ‘Uncle,’” Tython shook his head. “I have the Song of my ancestors to instruct me. It tells me you made my father beg for his life before you killed him, and I want to see you do the same.”

“If your ancestors are all-knowing,” Triffith smiled. “Why are they all dead?”

Tython made an inhuman noise in the back of his throat and advanced. The door began to buckle at the pounding, but it was sturdy and secure. The general’s estimate of its life expectancy at two minutes seemed clearly erroneous.

The pounding suddenly stopped. A familiar voice replaced the sound.

“Tay,” called Baynarah. “Listen to me.”

Tython smirked, “You’re just in time to hear your uncle beg for his miserable life, ‘cousin.’ I was afraid you’d be too late. The next sound you’ll hear will be the death rattle of the man who slaved my House.”

“The Song is what’s enslaved you, not Uncle Triffith. You can’t trust it. It’s poisoning you. It let you be manipulated first by that mad old woman, and now by that evil witch Acra who calls herself your sister.”

Tython pressed the tip of his sword so it touched the general's throat. The older man stepped backwards and Tython advanced. His eyes followed the length of his arm to the grip of the blade. The silver ring of Dagoth caught the red light of the volcano from the battlements outside the window.

"Tay, please don't hurt anyone anymore. Please. If you just listen to me, and not the Song just a moment, you'll know what's right. I love you." Baynarah stifled her sobs to keep her voice clear and calm. There was a noise on the stairwell behind her. The general's guard had finally arrived with the battering ram.

The door splintered and burst open in two strikes. General Indoril-Triffith was holding his throat, staring out the window.

"Uncle! Are you all right?" Baynara ran to him. He nodded his head slowly, and removed his hand. There was only the barest of scratches on his neck. "Where's Tay?"

"He jumped out the window," said Triffith, pointing out into the distance where a figure was riding a guar toward the volcano. "I thought he was going to kill himself, but he had an escape figured out."

"We'll get him, serjo general," said Commander Rael, calling to the guards to get their mounts. Baynarah watched them go, and then kissed her uncle quickly and ran out to her own guar in the courtyard.

Sweat drenched Tay's body as he rode closer and closer toward the summit of Red Mountain. The guar was breathing hard, trudging along even more slowly, letting out little grunts of complaint about the heat. Finally, he abandoned his steed and



began to climb the near vertical surface. Ash blew down the face of the volcano into his eyes. Near-blind, it was almost impossible to ignore the persistent, clamorous notes of the Song.

A silken stream of crimson lava studded with crystalline formations surged a few feet away, close enough that Tay could feel his flesh begin to burn and blister. He turned from it, and saw a figure emerge through the smoke. Baynarah.

“What are you doing, Tay?” she cried over the howl of the volcano. “Didn’t I tell you not to listen to the Song?”

“For the first time, the Song and I both want the same thing!” he yelled back. “I can’t ask you to forgive me, but please try to forget!”

He pulled himself higher, out of Baynarah’s sight. She screamed his name, scaling the rocks until she found she was close to the open crater. Waves of boiling gas washed over her, and she dropped to her knees, gasping. Through the rippling miasma, she saw Tay standing at the mouth of the volcano. Flames erupted from his clothes and hair. He turned to her just for a moment and smiled.

Then he leapt.

Baynarah was in a daze as she began the long, treacherous climb down the volcano. She began to think of the projects ahead. Were there enough provisions in storage at her house in Gorne for the meeting of the Houses? The councilors were bound to stay there for weeks, maybe months. There was much work to be done. Slowly, as she descended, she began to forget. It would not last, but it would be a start.

Dagoth-Acra stood as near to the mouth of the volcano as she could stand, blinking her eyes at the ash, soaked by the heat. She watched all, and smiled. On the ground was the silver ring with the seal of the House Dagoth. Tython had been sweating so much, it had slipped off. She picked it up and put it on her own finger. Touching her belly, she heard a new refrain of the Poison Song of Morrowind begin.

# The Real Barenziah

*Plitinius Mero*

The Real Barenziah, v1

Five hundred years ago in Mournhold, City of Gems, there lived a blind widow and her only child, a tall, strapping young man. He was a miner, as was his father before him, a common laborer in the mines of the Lord of Mournhold, for his ability in magicka was small. The work was honorable but paid poorly. His mother made and sold comberry cakes at the city market to help eke out their living. They did well enough, she said, they had enough to fill their bellies, no one could wear more than one suit of clothing at a time, and the roof leaked only when it rained. But Symmachus would have liked more. He hoped for a lucky strike at the mines, which would garner him a large bonus. In his free hours he enjoyed hoisting a mug of ale in the tavern with his friends, and gambling with them at cards. He also drew the eyes and sighs of more than one pretty Elven lass, although none held his interest for long. He was a typical young Dark Elf of peasant descent, remarkable only for his size. It was rumored that he had a bit of Nordic blood in him.

In Symmachus' thirtieth year, there was great rejoicing in Mournhold-a girl-child had been born to the Lord and Lady. A Queen, the people sang, a Queen is born to us! For among the people of Mournhold, the birth of an heiress is a sure sign of future peace and prosperity.

When the time came round for the royal child's Rite of Naming, the mines were closed and Symmachus dashed home to bathe and dress in his best. "I'll rush straight home and tell you all about it," he promised his mother, who would not be able to attend. She had been ailing, and besides there would be a great crush of people as all Mournhold turned out to be part of the blessed event; and being blind she would be unable to see anything anyway.

"My son," she said. "Afore you go, fetch me a priest or a healer, else I may pass from the mortal plane ere you return."

Symmachus crossed to her pallet at once and noted anxiously that her forehead was very hot and her breathing shallow. He pried loose a slat of the wooden floor under which their small hoard of savings was kept. There wasn't nearly enough to pay a priest for healing. He would have to give what they had and owe the rest. Symmachus snatched up his cloak and hurried away.

The streets were full of folk hurrying to the sacred grove, but the temples were locked and barred. "Closed for the ceremony," read all the signs.

Symmachus elbowed his way through the mob and managed to overtake a brown-robed priest. "After the rite, brother," the priest said, "if you have gold I shall gladly attend to your mother. Milord has bidden all clerics attend-and I, for one, have no wish to offend him."

"My mother's desperately ill," Symmachus pled. "Surely Milord will not miss one lowly priest."

“True, but the Archcanon will,” the priest said nervously, tearing his robe loose from Symmachus’ desperate grip and vanishing into the crowd.

Symmachus tried other priests, and even a few mages, but with no better result. Armored guards marched through the street and pushed him aside with their lances, and Symmachus realized that the royal procession was approaching.

As the carriage bearing the city’s rulers drew abreast, Symmachus rushed out from the crowd and shouted, “Milord, Milord! My mother’s dying-!”

“I forbid her to do so on this glorious night!” the Lord shouted, laughing and scattering coin into the throng. Symmachus was close enough to smell wine on the royal breath. On the other side of the carriage his Lady clutched the babe to her breast, and stared slit-eyed at Symmachus, her nostrils flared in disdain.

“Guards!” she cried. “Remove this oaf.” Rough hands seized Symmachus. He was beaten and left dazed by the side of the road.

Symmachus, head aching, followed in the wake of the crowd and witnessed the Rite of Naming from the top of a hill. He could see the brown-robed clerics and blue-robed mages gathered near the highborn folk far below.

Barenziah.

The name came dimly to Symmachus’ ears as the High Priest lifted the swaddled babe and proffered her to the twin moons on either side of the horizon: Jone rising, Jode setting.

“Behold the Lady Barenziah, born to the land of Mournhold! Grant her thy blessings and thy counsel, ye kind gods, that she may ever rule well over Mournhold, its ken and its weal, its kith and its ilk.”

“Bless her, bless her,” all the people intoned along with their Lord and Lady, hands upraised.

Only Symmachus stood silent, head bowed, knowing in his heart that his dear mother was gone. And in silence he swore a mighty oath—that he should be his Lord’s bane, and in vengeance for his mother’s needless death, the child Barenziah he should have for his own bride, and that his mother’s grandchildren should be born to rule over Mournhold.

After the ceremony, he watched impassively as the royal procession returned to the palace. He saw the priest to whom he’d first spoken. The man came gladly enough now in return for the gold Symmachus had, and a promise of more afterward.

They found his mother dead.

The priest sighed and tucked the pouch of gold coins away. “I’m sorry, brother. It’s all right, you can forget the rest of the gold, there’s aught I can do here. Likely-”

“Give me back my money!” Symmachus snarled. “You’ve done naught to earn it!” He lifted his right arm threateningly.

The priest backed away, about to utter a curse, but Symmachus struck him across the face before more than three words had left his mouth. He went down heavily, striking his head sharply on one of the stones that formed the fire pit. He died instantly.

Symmachus snatched up the gold and fled the city. As he ran, he muttered one word over and over, like a sorcerer's chant. "Barenziah," he said. "Barenziah. Barenziah."

Barenziah stood on one of the balconies of the palace, staring down into the courtyard where soldiers milled, dazzling in their armor. Presently they formed into ordered ranks and cheered as her parents, the Lord and Lady, emerged from the palace, clad from head to toe in ebony armor, long purple-dyed fur cloaks flowing behind. Splendidly caparisoned, shining black horses were brought for them, and they mounted and rode to the courtyard gates, and turned to salute her.

"Barenziah!" they cried. "Barenziah our beloved, farewell!"

The little girl blinked back tears and waved one hand bravely, her favorite stuffed animal, a gray wolfcub she called Wuffen, clutched to her breast with the other. She had never been parted from her parents before and had no idea what it meant, save that there was war in the west and the name Tiber Septim was on everyone's lips, spoken in hate and dread.

"Barenziah!" the soldiers cried, lifting their lances and swords and bows. Then her dear parents turned and rode away, knights trailing in their wake, until the courtyard was nearly emptied.

Sometime after came a day when Barenziah was shaken awake by her nurse, dressed hurriedly, and borne from the palace.

All she could remember of that dreadful time was seeing a huge shadow with burning eyes filling the sky. She was passed from hand to hand. Foreign soldiers appeared, disappeared, and sometimes reappeared. Her nurse vanished and was replaced

by strangers, some more strange than others. There were days, or it may have been weeks, of travel.

One morning she awoke to step out of the coach into a cold place with a large gray stone castle amid empty, endless gray-green hills covered patchily with gray-white snow. She clutched Wuffen to her breast in both hands and stood blinking and shivering in the gray dawn, feeling very small and very dark in all this endless space, this endless gray-white space.

She and Hana, a brown-skinned, black-haired maid who had been traveling with her for several days, went inside the keep. A large gray-white woman with icy gray-golden hair was standing by a hearth in one of the rooms. She stared at Barenziah with dreadful, bright blue eyes.

“She’s very—black, isn’t she?” the woman remarked to Hana. “I’ve never seen a Dark Elf before.”

“I don’t know much about them myself, Milady,” Hana said. “But this one’s got red hair and a temper to match, I can tell you that. Take care. She bites. And worse.”

“I’ll soon train her out of that,” the other woman sniffed. “And what’s that filthy thing she’s got? Ugh!” The woman snatched Wuffen away and threw him into the blazing hearth.

Barenziah shrieked and would have flung herself after him, but was held back despite her attempts to bite and claw at her captors. Poor Wuffen was reduced to a tiny heap of charred ash.

Barenziah grew like a weed transplanted to a Skyrim garden, a ward of Count Sven and his wife the Lady Inga. Outwardly, that



is, she thrived—but always there was a cold and empty place within.

“I’ve raised her as my own daughter,” Lady Inga was wont to sigh as she sat gossiping when neighboring ladies came to visit. “But she’s a Dark Elf. What can you expect?”

Barenziah was not meant to overhear these words. At least she thought she was not. Her hearing was keener than that of her Nordic hosts. Other, less desirable Dark Elven traits evidently included pilfering, lying, and a little misplaced magic, just a small fire spell here and a little levitation spell there. And, as she grew older, a keen interest in boys and men, who could provide very pleasant sensations—and to her astonishment, gifts as well. Inga disapproved of this last for reasons incomprehensible to Barenziah, so she was careful to keep it as secret as possible.

“She’s wonderful with the children,” Inga added, referring to her five sons, all younger than Barenziah. “I don’t think she’d ever let them come to harm.” A tutor had been hired when Jonni was six and Barenziah eight, and they took their lessons together. She would have liked to train in arms as well, but the very idea scandalized Count Sven and Lady Inga. So Barenziah was given a small bow and allowed to play at target shooting with the boys. She watched them at arms practice when she could, sparred with them when no grownup folk were about, and knew she was good as or better than they.

“She’s very... proud, though, isn’t she?” one of the ladies would whisper to Inga; and Barenziah, pretending not to hear, would nod silently in agreement. She could not help but feel superior to the Count and his Lady. There was something about them that provoked contempt.

Afterward she came to learn that Sven and Inga were distant cousins of Darkmoor Keep's last titled residents, and she finally understood. They were poseurs, impostors, not rulers at all. At least, they were not raised to rule. This thought made her strangely furious at them, a good clean hatred quite detached from resentment. She came to see them as disgusting and repellent insects who could be despised but never feared.

Once a month a courier came from the Emperor, bringing a small bag of gold for Sven and Inga and a large bag of dried mushrooms from Morrowind for Barenziah, her favorite treat. On these occasions, she was always made to look presentable-or at least as presentable as a skinny Dark Elf could be made to look in Inga's eyes-before being summoned into the courier's presence for a brief interview. The same courier seldom came twice, but all of them looked her over in much the same way a farmer would look over a hog he is readying for market.

In the spring of her sixteenth year, Barenziah thought the courier looked as if she were at last ready for market. Upon reflection, she decided she did not wish to be marketed. The stable-boy, Straw, a big, muscular blond lad, clumsy, gentle, affectionate, and rather simple, had been urging her to run off for some weeks now. Barenziah stole the bag of gold the courier had left, took the mushrooms from the storeroom, disguised herself as a boy in one of Jonni's old tunics and a pair of his cast-off breeches... and on one fine spring night she and Straw took the two best horses from the stable and rode hard through the night toward Whiterun, the nearest city of any importance and the place where Straw wanted to be. But Mournhold and Morrowind also lay eastward and they drew Barenziah as a lodestone draws iron.

In the morning they abandoned the horses at Barenziah's insistence. She knew they would be missed and tracked down, and she hoped to throw off any pursuers.

They continued on foot until late afternoon, keeping to side roads, and slept for several hours in an abandoned hut. They went on at dusk and came to Whiterun's city gates just before dawn. Barenziah had prepared a pass of sorts for Straw, a makeshift document stating an errand to a temple in the city for a local village lord. She herself glided over the wall with the help of a levitation spell. She had reasoned-correctly, as it turned out-that by now the gate guards would have been alerted to keep an eye out for a young Dark Elven girl and a Nordic boy traveling together. On the other hand, unaccompanied country yokels like Straw were a common enough sight. Alone and with papers, it was unlikely that he would draw attention.

Her simple plan went smoothly. She met Straw at the temple, which was not far from the gate; she had been to Whiterun on a few previous occasions. Straw, however, had never been more than a few miles from Sven's estate, which was his birthplace.

Together they made their way to a rundown inn in the poorer quarters of Whiterun. Gloved, cloaked, and hooded against the morning chill, Barenziah's dark skin and red eyes were not apparent and no one paid any heed to them. They entered the inn separately. Straw paid the innkeeper for a single cubicle, an immense meal, and two jugs of ale. Barenziah sneaked in a few minutes later.

They ate and drank together gleefully, rejoicing in their escape, and made love vigorously on the narrow cot. Afterward they fell into an exhausted, dreamless sleep.

They stayed for a week at Whiterun. Straw earned a bit of money running errands and Barenziah burgled a few houses at night. She continued to dress as a boy. She cut her hair short and dyed her flame-red tresses jet black to further the disguise, and kept out of sight as much as possible. There were few Dark Elves in Whiterun.

One day Straw got them work as temporary guards for a merchant caravan traveling east. The one-armed sergeant looked her over dubiously.

“Heh,” he chuckled, “Dark Elf, ain’tcha? Like settin’ a wolf t’guard the sheep, that is. Still, I need arms, and we ain’t goin’ near ‘nough Morrowind so’s ye can betray us to yer folk. Our homegrown bandits would as fain cut yer throat as mine.”

The sergeant turned to give Straw an appraising look. Then he spun back abruptly toward Barenziah, whipping out his shortsword. But she had her dagger out in the twinkling of an eye and was in a defensive stance. Straw drew his own knife and circled round to the man’s rear. The sergeant dropped his blade and chuckled again.

“Not bad, kids, not bad. How are ye with yon bow, Dark Elf?” Barenziah demonstrated her prowess briefly. “Aye, not bad, not bad ‘tall. And ye’ll be keen of eye by night, boy, and of hearin’ ‘tall times. A trusty Dark Elf makes as good a fightin’ man as any could ask for. I know. I served under Symmachus hisself afore I lost this arm and got invalided outter the Emp’ror’s army.”

“We could betray them. I know folk who’d pay well,” Straw said later as they bedded down for their last night at the ramshackle

lodge. “Or rob them ourselves. They’re very rich, those merchants are, Berry.”

Barenziah laughed. “Whatever would we do with so much money? And besides, we need their protection for traveling quite as much as they need ours.”

“We could buy a little farm, you and me, Berry—and settle down, all nice like.”

Peasant! Barenziah thought scornfully. Straw was a peasant and harbored nothing but peasant dreams. But all she said was, “Not here, Straw, we’re too close to Darkmoor still. We’ll have other chances farther east.”

The caravan went only as far east as Sunguard. The Emperor Tiber Septim I had done much in the way of building relatively safe and regularly patrolled highways. But the tolls were steep, and this particular caravan kept to the side roads as much as possible to avoid them. This exposed them to the hazards of wayside robbers, both human and Orcish, and roving brigand bands of various races. But such were the perils of trade and profit.

They had two such encounters before reaching Sunguard—an ambush which Barenziah’s keen ears warned them of in plenty of time for them to circle about and surprise the lurkers, and a night attack by a mixed band of Khajiit, humans, and Wood Elves. The latter were a skilled band and even Barenziah did not hear them sneaking up in time to give much warning. This time the fighting was fierce. The attackers were driven off, but two of the caravan’s other guards were slain and Straw got a nasty cut on his thigh before he and Barenziah managed to gash his Khajiit assailant’s throat.

Barenziah rather enjoyed the life. The garrulous sergeant had taken a liking to her, and she spent most of her evenings sitting around the campfire listening to his tales of campaigning in Morrowind with Tiber Septim and General Symmachus. This Symmachus had been made general after Mournhold fell, the sergeant said. “He’s a fine soldier, boy, Symmachus is. But there was more’n soldiery involved’n that Morrowind business, if y’take my meanin’. But, well, y’know all ‘bout that, I ‘spect.”

“No. No, I don’t remember,” Barenziah said, trying to sound nonchalant. “I’ve lived most of my life in Skyrim. My mother married a Skyrim man. They’re both dead, though. Tell me, what happened to the Lord and Lady of Mournhold?”

The sergeant shrugged. “I ain’t never heard. Dead, I ‘spect. ‘Twas a lot of fightin’ afore the Armistice got signed. It’s pretty quiet now. Maybe too quiet. Like a calm afore a storm. Say, boy, you goin’ back there?”

“Maybe,” Barenziah said. The truth was that she was drawn irresistibly to Morrowind, and Mournhold, like a moth to a burning house. Straw sensed it and was unhappy about it. He was unhappy anyway since they could not bed together, as she was supposed to be a boy. Barenziah rather missed it too, but not as much as Straw did, seemingly.

The sergeant wanted them to sign on for the return trip, but gave them a bonus nonetheless when they turned the offer down, and parchments of recommendation.

Straw wanted to settle down permanently near Sunguard, but Barenziah insisted on continuing their travels east. “I’m the Queen of Mournhold by rights,” she said, unsure whether it was true—or was it just a daydream she had made up as a lost,

bewildered child? “I want to go home. I need to go home.” That at least was true.

After a few weeks they managed to get places in another caravan heading east. By early winter they were at Riften, and nearing the Morrowind border. But the weather had grown severe as the days passed and they were told no merchant caravans would be setting forth till mid-spring.

Barenziah stood on top of the city walls and stared across the deep gorge that separated Riften from the snow-clad mountain wall guarding Morrowind beyond.

“Berry,” Straw said gently. “Mournhold’s a long way off yet, nearly as far as we’ve come already. And the lands between are wild, full of wolves and bandits and Orcs and still worse creatures. We’ll have to wait for spring.”

“There’s Silgrod Tower,” Berry said, referring to the Dark Elven township that had grown up around an ancient minaret guarding the border between Skyrim and Morrowind.

“The bridge guards won’t let me across, Berry. They’re crack Imperial troops. They can’t be bribed. If you go, you go alone. I won’t try and stop you. But what will you do? Silgrod Tower is full of Imperial soldiers. Will you become a washing-woman for them? Or a camp follower?”

“No,” Barenziah said slowly, thoughtfully. Actually the idea was not entirely unappealing. She was sure she could earn a modest living by sleeping with the soldiers. She’d had a few adventures of that sort as they crossed Skyrim, when she’d dressed as a woman and slipped away from Straw. She’d only been looking for a bit of variety. Straw was sweet but dull. She’d been

startled, but extremely pleased, when the men she picked up offered her money afterward. Straw had been unhappy about it, though, and would shout for a while then sulk for days afterward if he caught her at it. He was quite jealous. He'd even threatened to leave her. Not that he ever did. Or could.

But the Imperial Guards were a tough and brutal lot by all accounts, and Barenziah had heard some very ugly stories during their treks. The ugliest of them by far had come from the lips of ex-army veterans around the caravan campfire, and were proudly recounted. They'd been trying to shock her and Straw, she realized-but she also comprehended that there was some truth behind the wild tales. Straw hated that kind of dirty talk, and hated it more that she had to hear it. But there was a part of him that was fascinated nevertheless.

Barenziah sensed this and had encouraged Straw to seek out other women. But he said he didn't want anyone else but her. She told him candidly she didn't feel that way about him, but she did like him better than anyone else. "Then why do you go with other men?" Straw had asked on one occasion.

"I don't know."

Straw sighed. "They say Dark Elven women are like that."

Barenziah smiled and shrugged. "I don't know. Or, no...maybe I do. Yes, I do know." She turned and kissed him affectionately. "I guess that's all the explanation there is."

The Real Barenziah, v2

Barenziah and Straw settled into Rifton for the winter, taking a cheap room in the slummier section of town. Barenziah



wanted to join the Thieves Guild, knowing there would be trouble if she were caught freelancing. One day in a barroom she caught the eye of a known member of the Guild, a bold young Khajiit named Therris. She offered to bed him if he would sponsor her membership. He looked her over, grinning, and agreed, but said she'd still have to pass an initiation.

“What sort of initiation?”

“Ah,” Therris said. “Pay up first, sweetness.”

[This passage has been censored by order of the Temple.]

Straw was going to kill her, and maybe Therris too. What in Tamriel had possessed her to do such a thing? She cast an apprehensive look around the room, but the other patrons had lost interest and gone back to their own business. She did not recognize any of them; this wasn't the inn where she and Straw were staying. With luck it'd be a while, or never, before Straw found out.

Therris was by far the most exciting and attractive man she had yet met. He not only told her about the skills she needed to become a member of the Thieves Guild, but also trained her in them himself or else introduced her to people who could.

Among these was a woman who knew something about magic. Katisha was a plump and matronly Nord. She was married to a smith, had two teenage children, and was perfectly ordinary and respectable—except that she was very fond of cats (and by logical inference, their humanoid counterparts the Khajiit), had a talent for certain kinds of magic, and cultivated rather odd friends. She taught Barenziah an invisibility spell and schooled her in other forms of stealth and disguise. Katisha

mingled magical and non-magical talents freely, using one set to enhance the other. She was not a member of the Thieves Guild but was fond of Therris in a motherly sort of way. Barenziah warmed to her as she never had toward any woman, and over the next few weeks she told Katisha all about herself.

She brought Straw there too sometimes. Straw approved of Katisha. But not of Therris. Therris found Straw “interesting” and suggested to Barenziah that they arrange what he called a “threesome.”

“Absolutely not,” Barenziah said firmly, grateful that Therris had broached the subject in private for once. “He wouldn’t like it. I wouldn’t like it!”

Therris smiled his charming, triangular feline smile and sprawled lazily on his chair, stretching his limbs and curling his tail. “You might be surprised. Both of you. Pairing is so boring.”

Barenziah answered him with a glare.

“Or maybe you wouldn’t like it with that country bumpkin of yours, sweetness. Would you mind if I brought along another friend?”

“Yes, I would. If you’re bored with me, you and your friend can find someone else.” She was a member of the Thieves Guild now. She had passed their initiation. She found Therris useful but not essential. Maybe she was a bit bored with him too.

She talked to Katisha about her problems with men. Or what she thought of as her problems with men. Katisha shook her head and told her she was looking for love, not sex, that she’d

know the right man when she found him, that neither Straw nor Therris was the right one for her.

Barenziah cocked her head to one side quizzically. “They say Dark Elven women are pro—pro—something. Prostitutes?” she said, although she was dubious.

“You mean promiscuous. Although some do become prostitutes, I suppose,” Katisha said as an afterthought. “Elves are promiscuous when they’re young. But you’ll outgrow it. Perhaps you’re beginning to already,” she added hopefully. She liked Barenziah, had grown to be quite fond of her. “You ought to meet some nice Elven boys, though. If you go on keeping company with Khajiits and humans and what have you, you’ll find yourself pregnant in next to no time.”

Barenziah smiled involuntarily at the thought. “I’d like that. I think. But it would be inconvenient, wouldn’t it? Babies are a lot of trouble, and I don’t even have my own house yet.”

“How old are you, Berry? Seventeen? Well, you’ve a year or two yet before you’re fertile, unless you’re very unlucky. Elves don’t have children readily with other Elves after that, even, so you’ll be all right if you stick with them.”

Barenziah remembered something else. “Straw wants to buy a farm and marry me.”

“Is that what you want?”

“No. Not yet. Maybe someday. Yes, someday. But not if I can’t be queen. And not just any queen. The Queen of Mournhold.” She said this determinedly, almost stubbornly, as if to drown out any doubt.

Katisha chose to ignore this last comment. She was amused at the girl's hyperactive imagination, took it as a sign of a well-functioning mind. "I think Straw will be a very old man before 'someday' comes, Berry. Elves live for a very long time."

Katisha's face briefly wore the envious, wistful look humans got when contemplating the thousand-year lifespan Elves had been granted by the gods. True, few ever actually lived that long as disease and violence took their respective tolls. But they could. And one or two of them actually did.

"I like old men too," Berry said.

Katisha laughed.

Barenziah fidgeted impatiently while Therris sorted through the papers on the desk. He was being meticulous and methodical, carefully replacing everything just as he'd found it.

They'd broken into a nobleman's household, leaving Straw to hover outside as lookout. Therris had said it was a simple job but very hush-hush. He hadn't even wanted to bring any other Guild members along. He said he knew he could trust Berry and Straw, but no one else.

"Tell me what you're looking for and I'll find it," Berry whispered urgently. Therris' night sight wasn't as good as hers and he didn't want her to magick up even a small orb of light.

She had never been in such a luxurious place. Not even the Darkmoor castle of Count Sven and Lady Inga where she had spent her childhood compared to it. She'd gazed around in wonder as they made their way through the ornately decorated and hugely echoing downstairs rooms. But Therris didn't seem

interested in anything but the desk in the small book-lined study on the upper floor.

“Ssst,” he hissed angrily.

“Someone’s coming!” Berry said, a moment before the door opened and two dark figures stepped into the room. Therris gave her a violent shove toward them and sprang to the window. Barenziah’s muscles went rigid; she couldn’t move or even speak. She watched helplessly as one of the figures, the smaller one, leaped after Therris. There were two quick, silent stabs of blue light, then Therris folded over into a still heap.

Outside the study the house had come alive with hastening footsteps and voices calling out in alarm and the clank of armor hurriedly put on.

The bigger man, a Dark Elf by the looks of him, half-lifted, half-dragged Therris to the door and thrust him into the waiting arms of another Elf. A jerk of the first Elf’s head sent his smaller blue-robed companion after them. Then he sauntered over to inspect Barenziah, who was once again able to move although her head throbbed maddeningly when she tried to.

“Open your shirt, Barenziah,” the Elf said. Barenziah gawked at him and clutched it closed. “You’re a girl, aren’t you, Berry?” he said softly. “You should have stopped dressing as a boy months ago, you know. You were only drawing attention to yourself. And calling yourself Berry! Is your friend Straw too stupid to remember anything else?”

“It’s a common Elven name,” Barenziah defended.

The man shook his head sadly. “Not among Dark Elves it isn’t, my dear. But you wouldn’t know much about Dark Elves, would you? I regret that, but it couldn’t be helped. No matter. I shall try to remedy it.”

“Who are you?” Barenziah demanded.

“Ai. So much for fame,” the man shrugged, smiling wryly. “I am Symmachus, Milady Barenziah. General Symmachus of His Awesome and Terrible Majesty Tiber Septim I’s Imperial Army. And I must say it’s a merry chase you’ve led me throughout Tamriel. Or this part of it, anyway. Although I guessed, and guessed correctly, that you’d head for Morrowind eventually. You had a bit of luck. A body was found in Whiterun that was thought to be Straw’s. So we stopped looking for the pair of you. That was careless of me. Yet I’d not have thought you’d have stayed together this long.”

“Where is he? Is he all right?” she asked in genuine trepidation.

“Oh, he’s fine. For now. In custody, of course.” He turned away. “You...care for him, then?” he said, and then suddenly stared at her with fierce curiosity. Out of red eyes that seemed strange to her, except in her own seldom-seen reflection.

“He’s my friend,” Barenziah said. The words came out in a tone that sounded dull and hopeless to her own ears. Symmachus! A general in the Imperial Army, no less—said to have the friendship and ears of Tiber Septim himself.

“Ai. You seem to have several unsuitable friends—if you’ll forgive my saying so, Milady.”

“Stop calling me that.” She was irritated at the general’s seeming sarcasm. But he only smiled.

As they talked the bustle and flurry in the house died away. Although she could still hear people, presumably the residents, whispering together not far off. The tall Elf perched himself on a corner of the desk. He seemed quite relaxed and prepared to stay awhile.

Then it occurred to her. Several unsuitable friends, had he said? This man knew all about her! Or seemed to know enough, anyway. Which amounted to the same thing. “W-what’s going to happen to them? To m-me?”

“Ah. As you know, this house belongs to the commander of the Imperial troops in this area. Which means to say that it belongs to me.” Barenziah gasped and Symmachus looked up sharply. “What, you didn’t know? Tsk, tsk. Why, you are rash, Milady, even for seventeen. You must always know what it is you do, or get yourself into.”

“B-but the G-guild w-wouldn’t...wouldn’t h-have—” Barenziah was trembling. The Thieves Guild would never have attempted a mission that crossed Imperial policy. No one dared oppose Tiber Septim, at least no one she knew of. Someone at the Guild had bungled. Badly. And now she was going to pay for it.

“I daresay. It’s unlikely that Therris had Guild approval for this. In fact, I wonder—” Symmachus examined the desk carefully, pulling out drawers. He selected one, placed it on top of the desk, and removed a false bottom. There was a folded sheet of parchment inside. It seemed to be a map of some sort. Barenziah edged closer. Symmachus held it away from her,

laughing. “Rash indeed!” He glanced it over, then folded and replaced it.

“You advised me a moment ago to seek after knowledge.”

“So I did, so I did.” Suddenly he seemed to be in high good humor. “We must be going, my dear Lady.”

He shepherded her to the door, down the stairs, and out into the night air. No one was about. Barenziah’s eyes darted toward the shadows. She wondered if she could outrun him, or elude him somehow.

“You’re not thinking of attempting to escape, are you? Ai. Don’t you want to hear first what my plans for you are?” She thought that he sounded a bit hurt.

“Now that you mention it—yes.”

“Perhaps you’d rather hear about your friends first.”

“No.”

He looked gratified at this. It was evidently the answer he wanted, thought Barenziah, but it was also the truth. While she was concerned for her friends, especially Straw, she was far more concerned for herself.

“You will take your place as the rightful Queen of Mournhold.”

Symmachus explained that this had been his, and Tiber Septim’s, plan for her all along. That Mournhold, which had been under military rule for the dozen or so years since she had been away, was gradually to be returned to civilian government



—under the Empire’s guidance, of course, and as part of the Imperial Province of Morrowind.

“But why was I sent to Darkmoor?” Barenziah asked, hardly believing anything she had just been told.

“For safekeeping, naturally. Why did you run away?”

Barenziah shrugged. “I saw no reason to stay. I should have been told.”

“You would have been by now. I had in fact sent for you to be removed to the Imperial City to spend some time as part of the Emperor’s household. But of course you had, shall we say, absconded by then. As for your destiny, it should be, and should have been, quite obvious to you. Tiber Septim does not keep those he has no use for—and what else could you be that would be of use to him?”

“I know nothing of him. Nor, for that matter, of you.”

“Then know this: Tiber Septim rewards friends and foes alike according to their deserts.”

Barenziah chewed on that for a few moments. “Straw has deserved well of me and has never done anyone any harm. He is not a member of the Thieves Guild. He came along to protect me. He earns our keep by running errands, and he...he ...”

Symmachus waved her impatiently to silence. “Ai. I know all about Straw,” he said, “and about Therris.” He stared at her intently. “So? What would you?”

She took a deep breath. “Straw wants a little farm. If I’m to be rich, then I would like for one to be given to him.”

“Very well.” He seemed astonished at this, and then pleased.  
“Done. He shall have it. And Therris?”

“He betrayed me,” Barenziah said coldly. Therris should have told her what risks the job entailed. Besides, he’d pushed her right into their enemies’ arms in an attempt to save himself. Not a man to be rewarded. Not, in fact, a man to be trusted.

“Yes. And?”

“Well, he should be made to suffer for it...shouldn’t he?”

“That seems reasonable. What form should said suffering take?”

Barenziah balled her hands into fists. She would’ve liked to beat and claw at the Khajiit herself. But considering the turn events had taken, that didn’t seem very queenly. “A whipping. Er... would twenty stripes be too many, do you think? I don’t want to do him any permanent injury, you understand. Just teach him a lesson.”

“Ai. Of course.” Symmachus grinned at this. Then his features suddenly set, and became serious. “It shall be done, Your Highness, Milady Queen Barenziah of Mournhold.” Then he bowed to her, a sweeping, courtly, ridiculously wonderful bow.

Barenziah’s heart leapt.

She spent two days at Symmachus’ apartment, during which she was kept very busy. There was a Dark Elven woman named Drelliane who saw to her needs, although she did not exactly seem a servant since she took her meals with them. Nor did she seem to be Symmachus’ wife, or lover. Drelliane looked amused

when Barenziah asked her about it. She simply said she was in the general's employ and did whatever was asked of her.

With Drelliane's assistance, several fine gowns and pairs of shoes were ordered for her, plus a riding habit and boots, along with other small necessities. Barenziah was given a room to herself.

Symmachus was out a great deal. She saw him at most mealtimes, but he said little about himself or what he had been doing. He was cordial and polite, quite willing to converse on most subjects, and seemed interested in anything she had to say. Drelliane was much the same. Barenziah found them pleasant enough, but "hard to get to know," as Katisha would have put it. She felt an odd twinge of disappointment. These were the first Dark Elves with whom she'd associated closely. She had expected to feel comfortable with them, to feel at last that she belonged somewhere, with somebody, as part of something. Instead she found herself yearning for her Nordic friends, Katisha and Straw.

When Symmachus told her they were to set out for the Imperial City on the morrow, she asked if she could say good-bye to them.

"Katisha?" he asked. "Ai. But then...I suppose I owe her something. She it was who led me to you by telling me of a lonely Dark Elven girl named Berry who needed Elven friends—and who sometimes dressed as a boy. She has no association with the Thieves Guild, apparently. And no one associated with the Thieves Guild seems to know your true identity, save Therris. That is well. I prefer that your former Guild membership not be made public knowledge. Please speak of it

to no one, Your Highness. Such a past does not...become an Imperial Queen.”

“No one knows but Straw and Therris. And they won’t tell anyone.”

“No.” He smiled a curious little smile. “No, they won’t.”

He didn’t know that Katisha knew, then. But still, there was something about the way he said it...

Straw came to their apartment on the morning of their departure. They were left alone in the salon, although Barenziah knew that other Elves were within earshot. He looked drawn and pale. They hugged one another silently for a few minutes. Straw’s shoulders were shaking and tears were rolling down his cheeks, but he said nothing.

Barenziah tried a smile. “So we both get what we want, eh? I’m to be Queen of Mournhold and you’ll be lord of your own farmstead.” She took his hand, smiled at him warmly, genuinely. “I’ll write you, Straw. I promise. You must find a scribe so you can write me too.”

Straw shook his head sadly. When Barenziah persisted, he opened his mouth and pointed at it, making inarticulate noises. Then she realized what it was. His tongue was gone, had been cut off.

Barenziah collapsed onto a chair and wept noisily.

“But why?” she demanded of Symmachus when Straw had been ushered away. “Why?”

Symmachus shrugged. “He knows too much. He could be dangerous. At least he’s alive, and he won’t need his tongue to... raise pigs or whatever.”

“I hate you!” Barenziah screamed at him, then abruptly doubled over and vomited on the floor. She continued to revile him between intermittent bouts of nausea. He listened stolidly for some time while Drelliane cleaned up after her. Finally, he told her to cease or he would gag her for her journey to the Emperor.

They stopped at Katisha’s house on their way out of the city. Symmachus and Drelliane didn’t dismount. All seemed normal but Barenziah was frightened as she knocked on the door. Katisha answered the knock. Barenziah thanked the gods silently that at least she was all right. But she’d also obviously been weeping. In any case, she embraced Barenziah warmly.

“Why are you crying?” Barenziah asked.

“For Therris, of course. You haven’t heard? Oh dear. Poor Therris. He’s dead.” Barenziah felt icy fingers creeping round her heart. “He was caught stealing from the Commandant’s house. Poor fellow, but that was so foolish of him. Oh, Berry, he was drawn and quartered this very dawn by the Commandant’s order!” She started to sob. “I went. He asked for me. It was terrible. He suffered so before he died. I’ll never forget it. I looked for you and Straw, but no one knew where you’d both gone to.” She glanced behind Barenziah. “That’s the Commandant, isn’t it? Symmachus.” Then Katisha did a strange thing. She stopped crying and grinned. “You know, the moment I saw him, I thought, This is the one for Barenziah!” Katisha took a fold of her apron and wiped it across her eyes. “I told him about you, you know.”

“Yes,” Barenziah said, “I know.” She took Katisha’s hands in each of hers and looked at her earnestly. “Katisha, I love you. I’m going to miss you. But please don’t ever tell anyone else anything about me. Ever. Swear you won’t. Especially not to Symmachus. And look after Straw for me. Promise me that.”

Katisha promised, puzzled though willing. “Berry, it wasn’t somehow because of me that Therris was caught, was it? I never said anything about Therris to...to...him.” She glanced over at the general.

Barenziah assured her that it wasn’t, that an informant had told the Imperial Guard of Therris’ plans. Which was probably a lie, but she could see that Katisha plainly needed some kind of comfort.

“Oh, I’m glad of that, if I can be glad of anything just now. I’d hate to think—But how could I have known?” She leaned over and whispered in Barenziah’s ear, “Symmachus is very handsome, don’t you think? And so charming.”

“I wouldn’t know about that,” Barenziah said dryly. “I haven’t really thought about it. There’ve been other things to think about.” She explained hurriedly about being Queen of Mournhold and going to live in the Imperial City for a while. “He was looking for me, that’s all. On orders from the Emperor. I was the object of a quest, nothing more than some sort of... of a... goal. I don’t think he thinks of me as a woman at all. He said I didn’t look like a boy, though,” she added in the face of Katisha’s incredulity. Katisha knew that Barenziah evaluated every male she met in terms of sexual desirability, and availability. “I suppose it’s the shock of finding out that I really am a queen,” she added, and Katisha agreed that yes, that’s true, that must’ve been something of a shock, although one

there was no likelihood of her experiencing firsthand. She smiled. Barenziah smiled with her. Then they hugged again, tearfully, for the last time. She never saw Katisha again. Or Straw.

The royal party left Rifton by the great southern gate. Once through, Symmachus tapped her shoulder and pointed back at the portals. "I thought you might want to say good-bye to Therris too, Your Highness," he said.

Barenziah stared briefly but steadily at the head impaled on a spike above the gate. The birds had been at it, but the face was still recognizable. "I don't think he'll hear me, although I'm quite sure he'll be pleased to know I'm fine," she said, seeming to sound light. "Let's be on our way, General, shall we?"

Symmachus was clearly disappointed by her lack of reaction. "Ai. You heard of this from your friend Katisha, I suppose?"

"You suppose correctly. She attended the execution," Barenziah said casually. If he didn't know already, he'd find out soon enough, she was sure of that.

"Did she know Therris belonged to the Guild?"

She shrugged. "Everyone knew that. It's only lower-ranking members like me who are supposed to keep their membership secret. The ones higher up are well known." She turned to smile archly at him. "But you must know all that, shouldn't you, General?" she said sweetly.

He seemed unaffected by this. "So you told her who you were and whence you came, but not about the Guild."

“The Guild membership was not my secret to tell. The other was. There’s a difference. Besides, Katisha is a very honest woman. Had I told her, it would have lessened me in her eyes. She was always after Therris to take up a more honest line of work. I value her good opinion.” She afforded him a glacial stare. “Not that it’s any concern of yours, but do you know what else she thought? She also thought I’d be happier if I settled down with just one man. One of my own race. One of my own race with all the right qualities. One of my own race with all the right qualities, who knows to say all the right things. You, in fact.” She grabbed the reins preparatory to assuming a brisker pace—but not without sinking one final irresistible barb. “Isn’t it odd how wishes come true sometimes—but not in the way you want them to? Or maybe I should say, not in the way you would ever want them to?”

His answer so took her by surprise that she quite forgot about cantering off. “Yes. Very odd,” he replied, and his tone matched his words exactly. Then he excused himself and fell behind.

She held her head high and urged her mount onward, trying to look unimpressed. Now what was it about his response that bothered her? Not what he said. No, that wasn’t it. But something about the way he said it. Something about it made her think that she, Barenziah, was one of his wishes that had come true. Unlikely as this seemed, she gave it due deliberation. He had found her at last, after months of searching, it seemed, under pressure from the Emperor, no doubt. So his wish had come true. Yes, that must be it.

But in a way, apparently, not altogether to his liking.

The Real Barenziah, v3



For several days, Barenziah felt a weight of sorrow at her separation from her friends. But by the second week out her spirits began to rise a little. She found that she enjoyed being on the road again, although she missed Straw's companionship more than she would have thought. They were escorted by a troop of Redguard knights with whom she felt comfortable, although these were much more disciplined, and decorous, than the guards of the merchant caravans she had spent time with. They were genial but respectful toward her despite her attempts at flirtation.

Symmachus scolded her privately, saying a queen must maintain royal dignity at all times.

"You mean I'm never to have any fun?" she inquired petulantly.

"Ai. Not with such as these. They are beneath you. Graciousness is to be desired from those in authority, Milady. Familiarity is not. You will remain chaste and modest while you are at the Imperial City."

Barenziah made a face. "I might as well be back at Darkmoor Keep. Elves are promiscuous by nature, you know. Everyone says so."

"'Everyone' is wrong, then. Some are, some aren't. The Emperor—and I—expect you to display both discrimination and good taste. Let me remind you, Your Highness, that you hold the throne of Mournhold not by right of blood but solely at the pleasure of Tiber Septim. If he judges you unsuitable, your reign will end ere it begins. He requires intelligence, obedience, discretion, and total loyalty of all his appointees, and he favors chastity and modesty in women. I strongly suggest you model your deportment after our good Drelliane. Milady."

“I’d as lief be back in Darkmoor!” Barenziah snapped resentfully, offended at the thought of emulating the frigid, prudish Drelliane in any way.

“That is not an option. Your Highness. If you are of no use to Tiber Septim, he will see to it that you are of no use to his enemies either,” the general said portentously. “If you would keep your head on your shoulders, take heed. Let me add that power offers pleasures other than those of carnality and cavorting with base company.”

He began to speak of art, literature, drama, music, and the grand balls thrown at the Imperial Court. Barenziah listened with growing interest, spurred on not entirely by his threats. But afterward she asked timidly if she might continue her study of magic while at the Imperial City. Symmachus seemed pleased at this and promised to arrange it. Encouraged, she then said that she noted three of their knights escort were women, and asked if she might train a little with them, just for the sake of exercise. The general looked less delighted at this, but gave his consent, though stressing it would only be with the women.

The late winter weather held fair, though slightly frosty, for the rest of their journey so that they traveled quickly over firm roads. On the last day of their trip, spring seemed to have arrived at last for there were hints of a thaw. The road grew muddy underfoot, and everywhere one could hear water trickling and dripping faintly but steadily. It was a welcome sound.

They came to the great bridge that crossed into the Imperial City at sunset. The rosy glow turned the stark white marble edifices of the metropolis a delicate pink. It all looked very new

and grand and immaculate. A broad avenue led north toward the Palace. A crowd of people of all sorts and races filled the wide concourse. Lights winked out in the shops and on in the inns as dusk fell and stars came out singly then by twos and threes. Even the side streets were broad and brightly illuminated. Near the Palace the towers of an immense Mages Guildhall reared toward the east, while westward the stained glass windows of a huge tabernacle glittered in the dying light.

Symmachus had apartments in a magnificent house two blocks from the palace, past the temple. (“The Temple of the One,” he identified as they passed it, an ancient Nordic cult which Tiber Septim had revived. He said that Barenziah would be expected to become a member should she prove acceptable to the Emperor.) The place was quite splendid—although little to Barenziah’s taste. The walls and furnishings were done in utter pristine white, relieved only by touches of dull gold, and the floors in dully gleaming black marble. Barenziah’s eyes ached for color and the interplay of subtle shadings.

In the morning Symmachus and Drelliane escorted her to the Imperial Palace. Barenziah noted that everyone they met greeted Symmachus with a deferential respect in some cases bordering on obsequiousness. The general seemed to take it for granted.

They were ushered directly into the imperial presence. Morning sun flooded a small room through a large window with tiny panes, washing over a sumptuously laden breakfast table and the single man who sat there, dark against the light. He leapt to his feet as they entered and hurried toward them. “Ah, Symmachus our most loyal friend, we welcome your return most gladly.” His hands held Symmachus’ shoulders

briefly, fondly, halting the deep genuflection the Dark Elf had been in the process of effecting.

Barenziah curtseyed as Tiber Septim turned to her.

“Barenziah, our naughty little runaway. How do you do, child? Here, let us have a look at you. Why, Symmachus, she’s charming, absolutely charming. Why have you hidden her from us all these years? Is the light too much, child? Shall we draw the hangings? Yes, of course.” He waved aside Symmachus’ protests and drew the curtains himself, not troubling to summon a servant. “You will pardon us for this discourtesy toward yourselves, our dear guests. We’ve much to think of, though that’s scant excuse for hospitality’s neglect. But ah! pray join us. There’s some excellent nectarines from Black Marsh.”

They settled themselves at the table. Barenziah was dumbfounded. Tiber Septim was nothing like the grim, grey, giant warrior she’d pictured. He was of average height, fully half a head shorter than tall Symmachus, although he was well-knit of figure and lithe of movement. He had a winning smile, bright—indeed piercing—blue eyes, and a full head of stark white hair above a lined and weathered face. He might have been any age from forty to sixty. He pressed food and drink upon them, then repeated the question the general had asked her days ago: Why had she left home? Had her guardians been unkind to her?

“No, Excellency,” Barenziah replied, “in truth, no—although I fancied so at times.” Symmachus had fabricated a story for her, and Barenziah told it now, although with a certain misgiving. The stable-boy, Straw, had convinced her that her guardians, unable to find a suitable husband for her, meant to sell her off

as a concubine in Rihad; and when a Redguard had indeed come, she had panicked and fled with Straw.

Tiber Septim seemed fascinated and listened raptly as she provided details of her life as a merchant caravan escort. “Why, ‘tis like a ballad!” he said. “By the One, we’ll have the Court Bard set it to music. What a charming boy you must have made.”

“General Symmachus said—” Barenziah stopped in some confusion, then proceeded. “He said—well, that I no longer look much like a boy. I have... grown in the past few months.” She lowered her gaze in what she hoped approximated maidenly modesty.

“He’s a very discerning fellow, is our loyal friend Symmachus.”

“I know I’ve been a very foolish girl, Excellency. I must crave your pardon, and that of my kind guardians. I... I realized that some time ago, but I was too ashamed to go back home. But I don’t want to return to Darkmoor now. Excellency, I long for Mournhold. My soul pines for my own country.”

“Our dear child. You shall go home, we promise you. But we pray you remain with us a little longer, that you may prepare yourself for the grave and solemn task with which we shall charge you.”

Barenziah gazed at him earnestly, heart beating fast. It was all working just as Symmachus had said it would. She felt a warm flush of gratitude toward him, but was careful to keep her attention focused on the Emperor. “I am honored, Excellency, and wish most earnestly to serve you and this great Empire you have built in any way I can.” It was the politic thing to say, to be sure—but Barenziah really meant it. She was awed at the

magnificence of the city and the discipline and order evident everywhere, and moreover was excited at the prospect of being a part of it all. And she felt quite taken by the gentle Tiber Septim.

After a few days Symmachus left for Mournhold to take up the duties of a governor until Barenziah was ready to assume the throne, after which he would become her Prime Minister. Barenziah, with Drelliane as chaperone, took up residence in a suite of rooms at the Imperial Palace. Several tutors were provided her, in all the fields deemed seemly for a queenly education. During this time she became deeply interested in the magical arts, but she found the study of history and politics not at all to her preference.

On occasion she met with Tiber Septim in the Palace gardens and he would unfailingly and politely inquire as to her progress—and chide her, although with a smile, for her disinterest at matters of state. However, he was always happy to instruct her on the finer points of magic, and he could make even history and politics seem interesting. “They’re people, child, not dry facts in a dusty volume,” he said.

As her understanding broadened, their discussions grew longer, deeper, more frequent. He spoke to her of his vision of a united Tamriel, each race separate and distinct but with shared ideals and goals, all contributing to the common weal. “Some things are universal, shared by all sentient folk of good will,” he said. “So the One teaches us. We must unite against the malicious and the brutish, the miscreated—the Orcs, trolls, goblins, and other worse creatures—and not strive against one another.” His blue eyes would light up as he stared into his dream, and Barenziah was delighted just to sit and listen to

him. If he drew close to her, the side of her body next to him would glow as if he were a smoldering blaze. If their hands met she would tingle all over as if his body were charged with a shock spell.

One day, quite unexpectedly, he took her face in his hands and kissed her gently on the mouth. She drew back after a few moments, astonished by the violence of her feelings, and he apologized instantly. "I... we... we didn't mean to do that. It's just—you are so beautiful, dear. So very beautiful." He was looking at her with hopeless yearning in his generous eyes.

She turned away, tears streaming down her face.

"Are you angry with us? Speak to us. Please."

Barenziah shook her head. "I could never be angry with you, Excellency. I... I love you. I know it's wrong, but I can't help it."

"We have a consort," he said. "She is a good and virtuous woman, the mother of our children and future heirs. We could never put her aside—yet there is nothing between us and her, no sharing of the spirit. She would have us be other than what we are. We are the most powerful person in all of Tamriel, and... Barenziah, we... I... I think I am the most lonely as well." He stood up suddenly. "Power!" he said with sublime contempt. "I'd trade a goodly share of it for youth and love if the gods would only sanction it."

"But you are strong and vigorous and vital, more than any man I've ever known."

He shook his head vehemently. "Today, perhaps. Yet I am less than I was yesterday, last year, ten years ago. I feel the sting of

my mortality, and it is painful.”

“If I can ease your pain, let me.” Barenziah moved toward him, hands outstretched.

“No. I would not take your innocence from you.”

“I’m not that innocent.”

“How so?” The Emperor’s voice suddenly grated harshly, his brows knitted.

Barenziah’s mouth went dry. What had she just said? But she couldn’t turn back now. He would know. “There was Straw,” she faltered. “I... I was lonely too. Am lonely. And not so strong as you.” She cast her eyes down in abashment. “I... I guess I’m not worthy, Excellency—”

“No, no. Not so. Barenziah. My Barenziah. It cannot last for long. You have a duty toward Mournhold, and a duty toward the Empire. I must tend toward mine as well. But while we may—shall we share what we have, what we can, and pray the One forgives us our frailty?”

Tiber Septim held out his arms—and wordlessly, willingly, Barenziah stepped into his embrace.

[pagebreak]

“You caper on the edge of a volcano, child,” Drelliane admonished as Barenziah admired the splendid star sapphire ring her imperial lover had given her to celebrate their one-month anniversary.



“How so? We make one another happy. We harm no one. Symmachus bade me be discriminating and discreet. Who better could I choose? And we’ve been most discreet. He treats me like a daughter in public.” Tiber Septim’s nightly visits were made through a secret passage that only few in the Palace were privy to—himself and a handful of trusted bodyguards.

“He slavers over you like a cur his supper. Have you not noticed the coolness of the Empress and her son toward you?”

Barenziah shrugged. Even before she and Septim had become lovers, she’d received no more from his family than bare civility. Threadbare civility. “What matter? It is Tiber who holds the power.”

“But it is his son who holds the future. Do not put his mother up to public scorn, I beg you.”

“Can I help it if that dry stick of a woman cannot hold her husband’s interest even in conversation at dinner?”

“Have less to say in public. That is all I ask. She matters little, it is true—but her children love her, and you do not want them as enemies. Tiber Septim has not long to live. I mean,” Drelliane amended quickly at Barenziah’s scowl, “humans are all short-lived. Ephemeral, as we of the Elder Races say. They come and go as the seasons—but the families of the powerful ones live on for a time. You must be a friend to this family if you would see lasting profit from your relationship. Ah, but how can I make you see truly, you who are so young and human-bred as well! If you take heed, and wisely, you and Mournhold are like to live to see the fall of Septim’s dynasty, if indeed he has founded one, just as you have witnessed its rise. It is the way of human history. They ebb and flow like the inconstant tides. Their cities

and dominions bloom like spring flowers, only to wither and die in the summer sun. But the Elves endure. We are as a year to their hour, a decade to their day.”

Barenziah just laughed. She knew that rumors abounded about her and Tiber Septim. She enjoyed the attention, for all save the Empress and her son seemed captivated by her. Minstrels sang of her dark beauty and her charming ways. She was in fashion, and in love—and if it was temporary, well, what was not? She was happy for the first time she could remember, each of her days filled with joy and pleasure. And the nights were even better.

“What is wrong with me?” Barenziah lamented. “Look, not one of my skirts fit. What’s become of my waistline? Am I getting fat?” Barenziah regarded her thin arms and legs and her undeniably thickened waist in the mirror with displeasure.

Drelliane shrugged. “You appear to be with child, young as you are. Constant pairing with a human has brought you to early fertility. I see no choice but for you to speak with the Emperor about it. You are in his power. It would be best, I think, for you to go directly to Mournhold if he would agree to it, and bear the child there.”

“Alone?” Barenziah placed her hands on her swollen belly, tears forming in her eyes. Everything in her yearned to share the fruit of her love with her lover. “He’ll never agree to that. He won’t be parted from me now. You’ll see.”

Drelliane shook her head. Although she said no more, a look of sympathy and sorrow had replaced her usual cool scorn.

That night Barenziah told Tiber Septim when he came to her for their usual assignation.

“With child?” He looked shocked. No, stunned. “You’re sure of it? But I was told Elves do not bear at so young an age...”

Barenziah forced a smile. “How can I be sure? I’ve never—”

“I shall have my healer fetched.”

The healer, a High Elf of middle years, confirmed that Barenziah was indeed pregnant, and that such a thing had never before been known to happen. It was a testimony to His Excellency’s potency, the healer said in sycophantic tones. Tiber Septim roared at him.

“This must not be!” he said. “Undo it. We command you.”

“Sire,” the healer gaped at him. “I cannot... I may not—”

“Of course you can, you incompetent dullard,” the Emperor snapped. “It is our express wish that you do so.”

Barenziah, till then silent and wide-eyed with terror, suddenly sat up in bed. “No!” she screamed. “No! What are you saying?”

“Child,” Tiber Septim sat down beside her, his face wearing one of his winning smiles. “I’m so sorry. Truly. But this cannot be. Your issue would be a threat to my son and his sons. I shall no more put it plainly than that.”

“The child I bear is yours!” she wailed.

“No. It is now but a possibility, a might-be, not yet gifted with a soul or quickened into life. I will not have it so. I forbid it.” He

gave the healer another hard stare and the Elf began to tremble.

“Sire. It is her child. Children are few among the Elves. No Elven woman conceives more than four times, and that is very rare. Two is the usual number. Some bear none, even, and some only one. If I take this one from her, Sire, she may not conceive again.”

“You promised us she would not bear to us. We’ve little faith in your prognostications.”

Barenziah scrambled naked from the bed and ran for the door, not knowing where she was going, only that she could not stay. She never reached it. Darkness overtook her.

She awoke to pain, and a feeling of emptiness. A void where something used to be, something that used to be alive, but now was dead and gone forever. Drelliane was there to soothe the pain and clean up the blood that still pooled at times between her legs. But there was nothing to fill the emptiness. There was nothing to take the place of the void.

The Emperor sent magnificent gifts and vast arrangements of flowers, and came on short visits, always well-attended. Barenziah received these visits with pleasure at first. But Tiber Septim came no more at night—and after some time nor did she wish him to.

Some weeks passed, and when she was completely physically recovered, Drelliane informed her that Symmachus had written to request she come to Mournhold earlier than planned. It was announced that she would leave forthwith.

She was given a grand retinue, an extensive trousseau befitting a queen, and an elaborate and impressive ceremonial departure from the gates of the Imperial City. Some people were sorry to see her leave, and expressed their sadness in tears and expostulations. But some others were not, and did not.

#### The Real Barenziah, v4

Everything I have ever loved, I have lost," Barenziah thought despondently, looking at the mounted knights behind and ahead, her tirewomen near her in a carriage. "Yet I have gained a measure of wealth and power, and the promise of more to come. Dearly have I bought it. Now I do understand better Tiber Septim's love of it, if he has often paid such prices. For surely worth is measured by the price we pay." By her wish, she rode on a shiny roan mare, clad as a warrior in resplendent chain mail of Dark Elven make.

As the days slowly slipped by and her train rode the winding road eastward into the setting sun, around her gradually rose the steep-sided mountain slopes of Morrowind. The air was thin, and a chill late autumn wind blew constantly. But it was also rich with the sweet spicy smell of the late-blooming black rose, which was native to Morrowind and grew in every shadowy nook and crevice of its highlands, finding nourishment even in the stoniest banks and ridges. In small villages and towns, ragged Dark Elven folk gathered along the road to cry her name or simply gape. Most of her knightly escort were Redguards, with a few High Elves, Nords, and Bretons. As they wove their way into the heart of Morrowind, they grew increasingly uncomfortable and clung together in protective clusters. Even the Elven knights seemed wary.

But Barenziah felt at home, at last. She felt the welcome extended to her by the land. Her land.

Symmachus met her at the Mournhold border with an escort of knights, about half of whom were Dark Elven. In Imperial battle dress, she noted.

There was a grand parade of entry into the city and speeches of welcome from stately dignitaries.

“I’ve had the queen’s suite refurbished for you,” the general told her later when they reached the palace, “but you may change anything not to your taste, of course.” He went on about the details of the coronation, which was to be held in a week. He was his old commanding self—but she sensed something else as well. He was eager for her approval of the arrangements, was in fact fishing for it. That was new. He had never required her commendation before.

He asked her nothing about her stay in the Imperial City, or of her affair with Tiber Septim—although Barenziah was certain Drelliane had told him, or earlier written him, everything in detail.

The ceremony itself, like so much else, was a mixture of old and new—parts of it from the ancient Dark Elven tradition of Mournhold, the others dictated by Imperial decree. She was sworn to the service of the Empire and Tiber Septim as well as to the land of Mournhold and its people. She accepted oaths of fealty and allegiance from the people, the nobility, and the council. This last was composed of a blend of Imperial emissaries (“advisors” they were called) and native representatives of the Mournhold people, who were mostly elders in accordance with Elven custom.

Barenziah later found that much of her time was occupied in attempting to reconcile these two factions and their cronies. The elders were expected to do most of the conciliating, in light of reforms introduced by the Empire pertaining to land ownership and surface farming. But most of these went clean against Dark Elven observances. Tiber Septim, “in the name of the One,” had ordained a new tradition—and apparently even the gods and goddesses themselves were expected to obey.

The new Queen threw herself into her work and her studies. She was through with love and men for a long, long time—if not forever. There were other pleasures, she discovered, as Symmachus had promised her long ago: those of the mind, and those of power. She developed (surprisingly, for she had always rebelled against her tutors at the Imperial City) a deep love for Dark Elven history and mythology, a hunger to know more fully the people from whom she had sprung. She was gratified to learn that they had been proud warriors and skilled craftsmen and cunning mages since time immemorial.

Tiber Septim lived for another half-century, during which she saw him on several occasions as she was bidden to the Imperial City on one reason of state or another. He greeted her with warmth during these visits, and they even had long talks together about events in the Empire when opportunity would permit. He seemed to have quite forgotten that there had ever been anything between them more than easy friendship and a profound political alliance. He changed little as the years passed. Rumor had it that his mages had developed spells to extend his vitality, and that even the One had granted him immortality. Then one day a messenger came with the news that Tiber Septim was dead, and his grandson Pelagius was now Emperor in his place.

They had heard the news in private, she and Symmachus. The sometime Imperial General and now her trusted Prime Minister took it stoically, as he took most everything.

“Somehow it doesn’t seem possible,” Barenziah said.

“I told you. Ai. It’s the way of humans. They are a short-lived people. It doesn’t really matter. His power lives on, and his son now wields it.”

“You called him your friend once. Do you feel nothing? No grief?”

He shrugged. “There was a time when you called him somewhat more. What do you feel, Barenziah?” They had long ago ceased to address each other in private by their formal titles.

“Emptiness. Loneliness,” she said, then she too shrugged. “But that’s not new.”

“Ai. I know,” he said softly, taking her hand. “Barenziah...” He turned her face up and kissed her.

The act filled her with astonishment. She couldn’t remember his ever touching her before. She’d never thought of him in that way—and yet, undeniably, an old familiar warmth spread through her. She’d forgotten how good it felt, that warmth. Not the scorching heat she’d felt with Tiber Septim, but the comforting, robust ardor she somehow associated with... with Straw! Straw. Poor Straw. She hadn’t thought of him in so long. He’d be middle-aged now if he were still alive. Probably with a dozen children, she thought affectionately... and a hearty wife who hopefully could talk for two.



“Marry me, Barenziah,” Symmachus was saying, he seemed to have picked up her thoughts on marriage, children... wives, “I’ve worked and toiled and waited long enough, haven’t I?”

Marriage. A peasant with peasant dreams. The thought appeared in her mind, clear and unbidden. Hadn’t she used those very same words to describe Straw, so very long ago? And yet, why not? If not Symmachus, who else?

Many of the great noble families of Morrowind had been wiped out in Tiber Septim’s great war of unification, before the treaty. Dark Elven rule had been restored, it was true—but not the old, not the true nobility. Most of them were upstarts like Symmachus, and not even half as good or deserving as he was. He had fought to keep Mournhold whole and hale when their so-called counselors would have picked at its bones, sucked them dry as Ebonheart had been sucked dry. He’d fought for Mournhold, fought for her, while she and the kingdom grew and thrived. She felt a sudden rush of gratitude—and, undeniably, affection. He was steady and reliable. And he’d served her well. And loved her well.

“Why not?” she said, smiling. And took his hand. And kissed him.

The union was a good one, in its political as well as personal aspects. While Tiber Septim’s grandson, the Emperor Pelagius I, viewed her with a jaundiced eye, his trust in his father’s old friend was absolute.

Symmachus, however, was still viewed with suspicion by Morrowind’s stiff-necked folk, chary at his peasant ancestry and his close ties to the Empire. But the Queen was quite

unshakably popular. “The Lady Barenziah’s one of our own,” it was whispered, “held captive as we.”

Barenziah felt content. There was work and there was pleasure—and what more could one ask of life?

The years passed swiftly, with crises to be dealt with, and storms and famines and failures to be weathered, and plots to be foiled, and conspirators to be executed. Mournhold prospered steadily. Her people were secure and fed, her mines and farms productive. All was well—save that the royal marriage had produced no children. No heirs.

Elven children are slow to come, and most demanding of their welcome—and noble children more so than others. Thus many decades had come to pass before they grew concerned.

“The fault lies with me, Symmachus. I’m damaged goods,” Barenziah said bitterly. “If you want to take another...”

“I want no other,” Symmachus said gently, “nor do I know for certain that the fault is yours. Perhaps it is mine. Ai. Whichever. We will seek a cure. If there is damage, surely it may be repaired.”

“How so? When we dare not entrust anyone with the true story? Healer’s oaths do not always hold.”

“It won’t matter if we change the time and circumstances a bit. Whatever we say or fail to say, Jephre the Storyteller never rests. The god’s inventive mind and quick tongue are ever busy spreading gossip and rumor.”

Priests and healers and mages came and went, but all their prayers, potions, and philtres produced not even a promise of

bloom, let alone a single fruit. Eventually they thrust it from their minds and left it in the gods' hands. They were yet young, as Elves went, with centuries ahead of them. There was time. With Elves there was always time.

Barenziah sat at dinner in the Great Hall, pushing food about on a plate, feeling bored and restless. Symmachus was away, having been summoned to the Imperial City by Tiber Septim's great-great-grandson, Uriel Septim. Or was it his great-great-great-grandson? She'd lost count, she realized. Their faces seemed to blur one into the next. Perhaps she should have gone with him, but there'd been the delegation from Tear on a tiresome matter that nevertheless required delicate handling.

A bard was singing in an alcove off the hall, but Barenziah wasn't listening. Lately all the songs seemed the same to her, whether new or old. Then a turn of phrase caught her attention. He was singing of freedom, of adventure, of freeing Morrowind from its chains. How dare he! Barenziah sat up straight and turned to glare at him. Worse, she realized he was singing of some ancient, and now immaterial, war with the Skyrim Nords, praising the heroism of Kings Edward and Moraelyn and their brave Companions. The tale was old enough, certainly, yet the song was new...and its meaning... Barenziah couldn't be sure.

A bold fellow, this bard, but with a strong, passionate voice and a good ear for music. Rather handsome too, in a raffish sort of way. He didn't look to be well-off exactly, nor was he all that young. Certainly he couldn't be under a century of age. Why hadn't she heard him before, or at least heard of him?

"Who is he?" she inquired of a lady-in-waiting.

The woman shrugged and said, “Calls himself the Nightingale, Milady. No one seems to know anything about him.”

“Bid him speak with me when he has done.”

The man called the Nightingale came to her, thanked her for the honor of the Queen’s audience and the fat purse she handed him. His manner wasn’t bold at all, she decided, rather quiet and unassuming. He was quick enough with gossip about others, but she learned nothing about him—he turned all questions away with a joking riposte or a ribald tale. Yet these were recounted so charmingly it was impossible to take offence.

“My true name? Milady, I am no one. No, no, my parents named me Know Wan—or was it No Buddy? What matters it? It matters not. How may parents give name to that which they know not? Ah! I believe that was the name, Know Not. I have been the Nightingale for so long I do not remember, since, oh, last month at the very least—or was it last week? All my memory goes into song and tale, you see, Milady. I’ve none left for myself. I’m really quite dull. Where was I born? Why, Knoweyr. I plan to settle in Dunroamin when I get there...but I’m in no hurry.”

“I see. And will you then marry Atallshur?”

“Very perceptive of you, Milady. Perhaps, perhaps. Although I find Innhayst quite charming too, at whiles.”

“Ah. You are fickle, then?”

“Like the wind, Milady. I blow hither and yon, hot and cold, as chance suits. Chance is my suit. Naught else wears well on me.”

Barenziah smiled. "Stay with us awhile, then...if you will, Milord Erhatick."

"As you wish, Milady Bryte."

After that brief exchange, Barenziah found her interest in life somehow rekindled. All that had seemed stale became fresh and new again. She greeted each day with zest, looking forward to conversation with the Nightingale and the gift of his song. Unlike other bards, he never sang her praises, nor other women's, but only of high adventure and bold deeds.

When she asked him about this, he said, "What greater praise of your beauty could you ask, Milady, than that which your own mirror gives you? And if words you would have, you have those of the greatest, of those greater than my callow self. How should I vie with them, I who was born but a week gone by?"

For once they were speaking privately. The Queen, unable to sleep, had summoned him to her chamber that his music might soothe her. "You are lazy and a coward, sera, else I hold no charm for you."

"Milady, to praise you I must know you. I can never know you. You are wrapped in enigma, in clouds of enchantment."

"Nay, not so. Your words are what weave enchantment. Your words... and your eyes. And your body. Know me if you will. Know me if you dare."

He came to her then. They lay close, they kissed, they embraced. "Not even Barenziah truly knows Barenziah," he whispered softly, "so how may I? Milady, you seek and know it

not, nor yet for what. What would you have, that you have not?"

"Passion," she answered back. "Passion. And children born of it."

"And for your children, what? What birthright might be theirs?"

"Freedom," she said, "the freedom to be what they would be. Tell me, you who seem wisest to these eyes and ears, and the soul that knits them. Where may I find these things?"

"One lies beside you, the other beneath you. But would you dare stretch out your hand, that you might take what could be yours, and your children's?"

"Symmachus..."

"In my person lies the answer to part of what you seek. The other lies hidden below us in these your very kingdom's mines, that which will grant us the power to fulfill and achieve our dreams. That which Edward and Moraelyn between them used to free High Rock and their spirits from the hateful domination of the Nords. If it be properly used, Milady, none may stand against it, not even the power the Emperor controls. Freedom, you say? Barenziah, freedom it gives from the chains that bind you. Think on it, Milady." He kissed her again, softly, and withdrew.

"You're not leaving...?" she cried out. Her body yearned for him.

"For now," he said. "Pleasures of the flesh are nothing beside what we might have together. I would have you think on what I

have just said.”

“I don’t need to think. What must we do? What preparations must be made?”

“Why—none. The mines may not be entered freely, it is true. But with the Queen at my side, who will stand athwart? Once below I can guide you to where this thing lies, and lift it from its resting place.”

Then the memory of her endless studies slid into place. “The Horn of Summoning,” she whispered in awe. “Is it true? Could it be? How do you know? I’ve read that it’s buried beneath the measureless caves of Daggerfall.”

“Nay, long have I studied this matter. Ere his death King Edward gave the Horn for safekeeping into the hand of his old friend King Moraelyn. He in turn secreted it here in Mournhold under the guardianship of the god Ephen, whose birthplace and bailiwick this is. Now you know what it has cost me many a long year and weary mile to discover.”

“But the god? What of Ephen?”

“Trust me, Milady heart. All will be well.” Laughing softly, he blew her a last kiss and was gone.

On the morrow they passed the guards at the great portals that led into the mines, and further below. Under pretence of her customary tour of inspection, Barenziah, unattended but for the Nightingale, ventured into cavern after subterranean cavern. Eventually they reached what looked like a forgotten sealed doorway, and upon entering found that it led to an ancient part of the workings, long abandoned. The going was

treacherous for some of the old shafts had collapsed, and they had to clear a passage through the rubble or find a way around the more impassable piles. Vicious rats and huge spiders scurried here and there, sometimes even attacking them. But they proved no match for Barenziah's firebolt spells or the Nightingale's quick dagger.

"We've been gone too long," Barenziah said at length. "They'll be looking for us. What will I tell them?"

"Whatever you please," the Nightingale laughed. "You are the Queen, aren't you?"

"The Lord Symmachus—"

"That peasant obeys whoever holds power. Always has, always will. We shall hold the power, Milady love." His lips were sweetest wine, his touch both fire and ice.

"Now," she said, "take me now. I'm ready." Her body seemed to hum, every nerve and muscle taut.

"Not yet. Not here, not like this." He waved around, indicating the aged dusty debris and grim walls of rock. "Just a little while longer." Reluctantly, Barenziah nodded her assent. They resumed walking.

"Here," he said at last, pausing before a blank barrier. "Here it lies." He scratched a rune in the dust, his other hand weaving a spell as he did so.

The wall dissolved. It revealed an entrance to some ancient shrine. In the midst stood a statue of a god, hammer in hand, poised above an adamantium anvil.



“By my blood, Ephen,” the Nightingale cried, “I bid thee waken! Moraelyn’s heir of Ebonheart am I, last of the royal line, sharer of thy blood. At Morrowind’s last need, with all of Elvendom in dread peril of their selves and souls, release to me that guerdon which thou guardst! Now I do bid thee, strike!”

At his final words the statue glowed and quickened, the blank stone eyes shone a bright red. The massive head nodded, the hammer smote the anvil, and it split asunder with a thunderous crash, the stone god itself crumbling. Barenziah clapped her hands over her ears and crouched down, shaking terribly and moaning out loud.

The Nightingale strode forward boldly and clasped the thing that lay among the ruins with a roar of ecstasy. He lifted it high.

“Someone’s coming!” Barenziah cried in alarm, then noticed for the first time what it was he was holding aloft. “Wait, that’s not the Horn, it—it’s a staff!”

“Indeed, Milady. You see truly, at last!” The Nightingale laughed aloud. “I am sorry, Milady sweet, but I must leave you now. Perhaps we shall meet again one day. Until then... Ah, until then, Symmachus,” he said to the mail-clad figure who had appeared behind them, “she is all yours. You may claim her back.”

“No!” Barenziah screamed. She sprang up and ran toward him, but he was gone. Winked out of existence—just as Symmachus, claymore drawn, reached him. His blade cleaved a single stroke through empty air. Then he stood still, as if taking the stone god’s place.

Barenziah said nothing, heard nothing, saw nothing... felt nothing...

Symmachus told the half dozen or so Elves who had accompanied him that the Nightingale and Queen Barenziah had lost their way, and had been set upon by giant spiders. That the Nightingale had lost his footing and fallen into a deep crevice, which closed over him. That his body could not be recovered. That the Queen had been badly shaken by the encounter and deeply mourned the loss of her friend, who had fallen in her defense. Such was Symmachus' presence and power of command that the slack-jawed knights, none of whom had caught more than a glimpse of what happened, were convinced that it was all exactly as he said.

The Queen was escorted back to the palace and taken to her chamber, whereupon she dismissed her servants-in-waiting. She sat still before her mirror for a long time, stunned, too distraught even to weep. Symmachus stood watching over her.

"Do you have any idea at all what you have just done?" he said finally—flatly, coldly.

"You should have told me," Barenziah whispered. "The Staff of Chaos! I never dreamed it lay here. He said—he said—" A mewling escaped her lips and she doubled over in despair. "Oh, what have I done? What have I done? What happens now? What's to become of me? Of us?"

"Did you love him?"

"Yes. Yes, yes, yes! Oh my Symmachus, the gods have mercy on me, but I did love him. Did. But now... now... I don't know... I'm not sure... I..."

Symmachus' hard-lined face softened slightly, and his eyes glittered with new light, and he sighed. "Ai. That's something then. You will become a mother yet if it's within my power. As for the rest—Barenziah, my dearest Barenziah, I expect you have loosed a storm upon the land. It'll be a while yet in the brewing. But when it comes, we'll weather it together. As we always have."

He came over to her then, and stripped her of her clothing, and carried her to the bed. Out of grief and longing, her enfeebled body responded to his brawny one as it never had before, pouring forth all that the Nightingale had wakened to life in her. And in so doing calming the restless ghosts of all he had destroyed.

She was empty, and emptied. And then she was filled, for a child was planted and grew within her. As her son flourished in the womb, so did her feeling toward patient, faithful, devoted Symmachus, which had been rooted in long friendship and unbroken affection—and which now, at last, ripened into the fullness of true love. Eight years later they were again blessed, this time with a daughter.

Directly after the Nightingale's theft of the Staff of Chaos, Symmachus had sent urgent secret communiques to Uriel Septim. He had not gone himself, as he would normally have, choosing instead to stay with Barenziah during her fertile period to father a son upon her. For this, and for the theft, he suffered Uriel Septim's temporary disfavor and unjust suspicion. Spies were sent in search of the thief, but the Nightingale seemed to have vanished whence he had come—wherever that was.

“Dark Elf in part, perhaps,” said Barenziah, “but part human too, I think, in disguise. Else would I not have come so quickly to fertility.”

“Part Dark Elf, for sure, and of ancient Ra’athim lineage at that, else he would not have been able to free the Staff,” Symmachus reasoned. He turned to peer at her fixedly. “I don’t think he would have lain with you. As an Elf he did not dare, for then he would not have been able to part from you.” He smiled. Then he turned serious once more. “Ai! He knew the Staff lay there, not the Horn, and that he must teleport to safety. The Staff is not a weapon that would have seen him clear, unlike the Horn. Praise the gods at least that he does not have that! It seems all was as he expected—but how did he know? I placed the Staff there myself, with the aid of the ragtail end of the Ra’athim Clan who now sits king in Castle Ebonheart as a reward. Tiber Septim claimed the Horn, but left the Staff for safekeeping. Ai! Now the Nightingale can use the Staff to sow seeds of strife and dissension wherever he goes, if he wishes. Yet that alone will not gain him power. That lies with the Horn and the ability to use it.”

“I’m not so sure it’s power the Nightingale seeks,” Barenziah said.

“All seek power,” Symmachus said, “each in our own way.”

“Not I,” she answered. “I, Milord, have found that for which I sought.”

The Real Barenziah, v5

As Symmachus had predicted, the theft of the Staff of Chaos had few short-term consequences. The current Emperor, Uriel

Septim, sent some rather stiff messages expressing shock and displeasure at the Staff's disappearance, and urging Symmachus to make every effort to locate its whereabouts and communicate developments to the newly appointed Imperial Battlemage, Jagar Tharn, in whose hands the matter had been placed.

"Tharn!" Symmachus thundered in disgust and frustration as he paced about the small chamber where Barenziah, now some months pregnant, was sitting serenely embroidering a baby blanket. "Jagar Tharn, indeed. Ai! I wouldn't give him directions for crossing the street, not if he were a doddering old blind sot."

"What have you against him, love?"

"I just don't trust that mongrel Elf. Part Dark Elf, part High Elf, and part the gods only know what. All the worst qualities of all his combined bloods, I'll warrant." He snorted. "No one knows much about him. Claims he was born in southern Valenwood, of a Wood Elven mother. Seems to have been everywhere since —"

Barenziah, sunk in the contentment and lassitude of pregnancy, had only been humoring Symmachus thus far. But now she suddenly dropped her needlework and looked at him. Something had piqued her interest. "Symmachus. Could this Jagar Tharn have been the Nightingale, disguised?"

Symmachus thought this over before replying. "Nay, my love. Human blood seems to be the one missing component in Tharn's ancestry." To Symmachus, Barenziah knew, that was a flaw. Her husband despised Wood Elves as lazy thieves and High Elves as effete intellectuals. But he admired humans,

especially Bretons, for their combination of pragmatism, intelligence, and energy. “The Nightingale’s of Ebonheart, of the Ra’athim Clan - House Hlaalu, the House of Mora in particular, I’ll be bound. That house has had human blood in it since her time. Ebonheart was jealous that the Staff was laid here when Tiber Septim took the Horn of Summoning from us.”

Barenziah sighed a little. The rivalry between Ebonheart and Mournhold reached back almost to the dawn of Morrowind’s history. Once the two nations had been one, all the lucrative mines held in fief by the Ra’athims, whose nobility retained the High Kingship of Morrowind. Ebonheart had split into two separate city-states, Ebonheart and Mournhold, when Queen Lian’s twin sons—grandsons of the legendary King Moraelyn—were left as joint heirs. At about the same time the office of High King was vacated in favor of a temporary War Leader to be named by a council in times of provincial emergency.

Still, Ebonheart remained jealous of her prerogatives as the eldest city-state of Morrowind (“first among equals” was the phrase its rulers often quoted) and claimed that rightful guardianship of the Staff of Chaos should have been entrusted to its ruling house. Mournhold responded that King Moraelyn himself had placed the Staff in the keeping of the god Ephen—and Mournhold was unarguably the god’s birthplace.

“Why not tell Jagar Tharn of your suspicions, then? Let him recover the thing. As long as it’s safe, what does it matter who recovers it, or where it lies?”

Symmachus stared at her without comprehension. “It matters,” he said softly after a while, “but I suppose not that much. Ai.” He added, “Certainly not enough for you to concern

yourself further with it. You just sit there and tend to your,” and here he smiled at her wickedly, “embroidery.”

Barenziah flung the sampler at him. It hit Symmachus square in the face—needle, thimble, and all.

In a few more months Barenziah gave birth to a fine son, whom they named Helseth. Nothing more was heard of the Staff of Chaos, or the Nightingale. If Ebonheart had the Staff in its possession, they certainly did not boast of it.

The years passed swiftly and happily. Helseth grew tall and strong. He was much like his father, whom he worshipped. When Helseth was eight years old Barenziah bore a second child, a daughter, to Symmachus’ lasting delight. Helseth was his pride, but little Morgiah—named for Symmachus’ mother—held his heart.

Sadly, the birth of Morgiah was not the harbinger of better times ahead. Relations with the Empire slowly deteriorated, for no apparent reason. Taxes were raised and quotas increased with each passing year. Symmachus felt that the Emperor suspected him of having had a hand in the Staff’s disappearance and sought to prove his loyalty by making every effort to comply with the escalating demands. He lengthened working hours and raised tariffs, and even made up some of the difference from both the royal exchequer and their own private holdings. But the levies multiplied, and commoners and nobles alike began to complain. It was an ominous rumble.

“I want you to take the children and journey to the Imperial City,” Symmachus said at last in desperation one evening after dinner. “You must make the Emperor listen, else all Mournhold

will be up in revolt come spring.” He grinned forcibly. “You have a way with men, love. You always did.”

Barenziah forced a smile of her own. “Even with you, I take it.”

“Yes. Especially with me,” he acknowledged amiably.

“Both children?” Barenziah looked over toward a corner window, where Helseth was strumming a lute and crooning a duet with his little sister. Helseth was fifteen by then, Morgiah eight.

“They might soften his heart. Besides, it’s high time Helseth was presented before the Imperial Court.”

“Perhaps. But that’s not your true reason.” Barenziah took a deep breath and grasped the nettle. “You don’t think you can keep them safe here. If that’s the case, then you’re not safe here either. Come with us,” she urged.

He took her hands in his. “Barenziah. My love. Heart of my heart. If I leave now, there’ll be nothing for us to return to. Don’t worry about me. I’ll be all right. Ai! I can take care of myself—and I can do it better if I’m not worrying about you or the children.”

Barenziah laid her head against his chest. “Just remember that we need you. I need you. We can do without the rest of it if we have each other. Empty hands and empty bellies are easier to bear than an empty heart.” She started to cry, thinking of the Nightingale and that sordid business with the Staff. “My foolishness has brought us to this pass.”

He smiled at her tenderly. “If so, ‘tis not so bad a place to be.” His eyes rested indulgently on their children. “None of us shall



ever go without, or want for anything. Ever. Ever, my love, I promise you. I cost you everything once, Barenziah, I and Tiber Septim. Ai. Without my aid the Empire would never have begun. I helped its rise.” His voice hardened. “I can bring about its fall. You may tell Uriel Septim that. That, and that my patience is not infinite.”

Barenziah gasped. Symmachus was not given to empty threats. She’d no more imagined that he would ever turn against the Empire than that the old house wolf lying by the grate would turn on her. “How?” she demanded breathlessly. But he shook his head.

“Better that you not know,” he said. “Just tell him what I told you should he prove recalcitrant, and do not fear. He’s Septim enough that he will not take it out on the messenger.” He smiled grimly. “For if he does, if he ever harms the least hair on you, my love, or the children—so help me all the gods of Tamriel, he’ll pray that he hadn’t been born. Ai. I’ll hunt him down, him and his entire family. And I won’t rest until the last Septim is dead.” The red Dark Elven eyes of Symmachus gleamed brightly in the ebbing firelight. “I plight you that oath, my love. My Queen...my Barenziah.”

Barenziah held him, held him as tight as she could. But in spite of the warmth in his embrace, she couldn’t help shivering.

Barenziah stood before the Emperor’s throne, trying to explain Mournhold’s straits. She’d waited weeks for an audience with Uriel Septim, having been fobbed off on this pretext or that. “His Majesty is indisposed.” “An urgent matter demands His Excellency’s attention.” “I am sorry, Your Highness, there must be some mistake. Your appointment is for next week. No, see...” And now it wasn’t even going well. The Emperor did not even

make the slightest pretence at listening to her. He hadn't invited her to sit, nor had he dismissed the children. Helseth stood still as a carven image, but little Morgiah had begun to fuss.

The state of her own mind didn't help her any. Shortly upon arrival at her lodgings, the Mournholdian ambassador to the Imperial City had demanded entry, bringing with him a sheaf of dispatches from Symmachus. Bad news, and plenty of it. The revolt had finally begun. The peasants had organized around a few disgruntled members of Mournhold's minor nobility, and were demanding Symmachus step down and hand over the reins of government. Only the Imperial Guard and a handful of troops whose families had been retainers of Barenziah's house for generations stood between Symmachus and the rabble. Hostilities had already broken out, but apparently Symmachus was safe and still in control. Not for long, he wrote. He entreated Barenziah to try her best with the Emperor—but in any case she was to stay in the Imperial City until he wrote to tell her it was safe to go back home with the children.

She had tried to barge her way through the Imperial bureaucracy—with little success. And to add to her growing panic, all news from Mournhold had come to a sudden stop. Tottering between rage at the Emperor's numerous major-domos and fear of the fate awaiting her and her family, the weeks had passed by tensely, agonizingly, remorselessly. Then one day the Mournholdian ambassador came calling to tell her she should expect news from Symmachus the following night at the latest, not through the regular channels but by nighthawk. Seemingly by the same stroke of luck, she was informed that same day by a clerk from the Imperial Court that

Uriel Septim had finally consented to grant her an audience early on the morrow.

The Emperor had greeted the three of them when they came into the audience chamber with a too-bright smile of welcome that nonetheless didn't reach his eyes. Then, as she presented her children, he had gazed at them with a fixed attention that was real yet somehow inappropriate. Barenziah had been dealing with humans for nearly five hundred years now, and had developed the skill of reading their expressions and movements that was far beyond what any human could ever perceive. Try as the Emperor might to conceal it, there was hunger in his eyes—and something else. Regret? Yes. Regret. But why? He had several fine children of his own. Why covet hers? And why look at her with such a vicious—however brief—yearning? Perhaps he had tired of his consort. Humans were notoriously, though predictably, inconstant. After that one long, burning glance, his gaze had shifted away as she began to speak of her mission and the violence that had erupted in Mournhold. He sat still as stone throughout her entire account.

Puzzled at his inertia, and vexed no end, Barenziah stared into the pale, set face, looking for some trace of the Septims she'd known in the past. She didn't know Uriel Septim well, having met him once when he was still a child, and then again at his coronation twenty years later. Twice, that was all. He'd been a stern and dignified presence at the ceremony, even as a young adult—yet not icily remote as this more mature man was. In fact, despite the physical resemblance, he didn't seem to be the same man at all. Not the same, yet something about him was familiar to her, more familiar than it should be, some trick of posture or gesture...

Suddenly she felt very hot, as if lava had been poured over her. Illusion! She had studied the arts of illusion well since the Nightingale had deceived her so badly. She had learned to detect it—and she felt it now, as certainly as a blind man could feel the sun on his face. Illusion! But why? Her mind worked furiously even as her mouth went on reciting details about Mournhold's troubles. Vanity? Humans were oft as ashamed at the signs of ageing as Elves were proud to exhibit them. Yet the face Uriel Septim wore seemed consistent with his age.

Barenziah dared use none of her own magic. Even petty nobles had means of detecting magicka, if not actually shielding themselves from its effects, within their own halls. The use of sorcery here would bring down the Emperor's wrath as surely as drawing a dagger would.

Magic.

Illusion.

Suddenly she was brought to mind of the Nightingale. And then he was sitting before her. Then the vision changed, and it was Uriel Septim. He looked sad. Trapped. And then the vision faded once more, and another man sat in his place, like the Nightingale, and yet unlike. Pale skin, bloodshot eyes, Elven ears—and about him a fierce glow of concentrated malice, an aura of eldritch energy—a horrible, destructive shimmer. This man was capable of anything!

And then once again she was looking into the face of Uriel Septim.

How could she be sure she wasn't imagining things? Perhaps her mind was playing tricks on her. She felt a sudden vast

weariness, as if she'd been carrying a heavy burden too long and too far. She decided to abandon her earnest narrative of Mournhold's ills—as it was quite plainly getting her nowhere—and switch back to pleasantries. Pleasantries, however, with a hidden agenda.

“Do you remember, Sire, Symmachus and I had dinner with your family shortly after your father's coronation? You were no older than tiny Morgiah here. We were greatly honored to be the only guests that evening—except for your best friend Justin, of course.”

“Ah yes,” the Emperor said, smiling cautiously. Very cautiously. “I do believe I recall that.”

“You and Justin were such friends, Your Majesty. I was told he died not long after. A great pity.”

“Indeed. I still do not like to speak of him.” His eyes turned blank—or blanker, if it had been possible. “As for your request, Milady, we shall take it under advisement and let you know.”

Barenziah bowed, as did the children. A nod from the Emperor dismissed them, and they backed away from the imperial presence.

She took a deep breath when they emerged from the throne room. “Justin” had been an imaginary playmate, although young Uriel had insisted a place be set for Justin at every meal. Not only that, Justin, despite the boyish name, had been a girl! Symmachus had kept up the joke long after she had gone the way of imaginary childhood friends—inquiring after Justin's health whenever he and Uriel Septim met, and being responded to in as mock-serious a fashion. The last Barenziah had heard

of Justin, several years ago, the Emperor had evidently joked elaborately to Symmachus that she had met an adventurous though incorrigible Khajiit youth, married him, and settled down in Lilandril to raise fire ferns and mugworts.

The man sitting on the Emperor's divan was not Uriel Septim! The Nightingale? Could it be...? Yes. Yes! A chord of recognition rang through her and Barenziah knew she was right. It was him. It was! The Nightingale! Masquerading as the Emperor! Symmachus had been wrong, so wrong...

What now? she wondered frantically. What had become of Uriel Septim—and more to the point, what did it mean for her and Symmachus, and all of Mournhold? Thinking back, Barenziah guessed that their troubles were due to this false Emperor, this Nightingale-spawned glamour—or whatever he really was. He must have taken Uriel Septim's place shortly before the unreasonable demands on Mournhold had begun. That would explain why relations had deteriorated for so long (as humans reckoned time), long after her disapproved liaison with Tiber Septim. The Nightingale knew of Symmachus' famed loyalty to, and knowledge of, the Septim House, and was effecting a pre-emptive strike. If that were the case, they were all in terrible danger. She and the children were in his power here in the Imperial City, and Symmachus was left alone to deal with troubles of the Nightingale's brewing in Mournhold.

What must she do? Barenziah impelled the children ahead of her, a hand on each shoulder, trying to stay cool, collected, her ladies-in-waiting and personal knights escort trailing behind. Finally they reached their waiting carriage. Even though their suite of rooms was only a few blocks from the Palace, royal dignity forbade travel on foot for even short distances—and for

once, Barenziah was glad of it. The carriage seemed a kind of refuge now, false as she knew the feeling must be.

A boy dashed up to one of the guards and handed him a scroll, then pointed toward the carriage. The guard brought it to her. The boy waited, eyes wide and shining. The epistle was brief and complimentary, and simply inquired if King Eadwyre of Wayrest, of the Province of High Rock, might be granted an audience with the famed Queen Barenziah of Mournhold, as he had heard much of her and would be pleased to make her acquaintance.

Barenziah's first impulse was to refuse. She wanted only to leave this city! Certainly she had no inclination toward any dalliance with a dazzled human. She looked up, frowning, and one of the guards said, "Milady, the boy says his master awaits your reply yonder." She looked in the direction indicated and saw a handsome elderly man on horseback, surrounded by a half dozen courtiers and cavaliers. He caught her eye and bowed respectfully, taking off a plumed hat.

"Very well," Barenziah said to the boy on impulse. "Tell your master he may call on me tonight, after the dinner hour." King Eadwyre looked polite and grave, and rather worried—but not in the least lovestruck. At least that was something, she thought pensively.

Barenziah stood at the tower window, waiting. She could sense the familiar's nearness. But though the night sky was clear as day to her eyes, she could not yet see him. Then suddenly he was there, a swift moving dot beneath the wispy night clouds. A few more minutes and the great nighthawk finished its descent, wings folding, talons reaching for her thick leather armband.

She carried the bird to its perch, where it waited, panting, as her impatient fingers felt for the message secured in a capsule on one leg. The hawk drank mightily from the water till when she had done, then ruffled its feathers and preened, secure in her presence. A tiny part of her consciousness shared its satisfaction at a job well done, mission accomplished, and rest earned...yet beneath it all was unease. Things were not right, even to its humble avian mind.

Her fingers shook as she unfolded the thin parchment and pored over the cramped writing. Not Symmachus' bold hand! Barenziah sat slowly, fingers smoothing the document while she prepared her mind and body to accept disaster calmly, if disaster it would be.

Disaster it was.

The Imperial Guard had deserted Symmachus and joined the rebels. Symmachus was dead. The remaining loyal troops had suffered a decisive defeat. Symmachus was dead. The rebel leader had been recognized as King of Mournhold by Imperial envoys. Symmachus was dead. Barenziah and the children had been declared traitors to the Empire and a price set on their heads.

Symmachus was dead.

So the audience with the Emperor earlier that morning had been nothing but a blind, a ruse. A charade. The Emperor must have already known. She was just being strung along, told to stay put, take things easy, Milady Queen, enjoy the Imperial City and the delights it has to offer, do make your stay as long as you want. Her stay? Her detention. Her captivity. And in all probability, her impending arrest. She had no delusions about



her situation. She knew the Emperor and his minions would never let her leave the Imperial City, ever again. At least, not alive.

Symmachus was dead.

“Milady?”

Barenziah jumped, startled by the servant’s approach. “What is it?”

“The Breton is here, Milady. King Eadwyre,” the woman added helpfully, noting Barenziah’s incomprehension. She hesitated. “Is there news, Milady?” she said, nodding toward the nighthawk.

“Nothing that will not wait,” Barenziah said quickly, and her voice seemed to echo in the emptiness that suddenly yawned like a gaping abyss inside her. “See to the bird.” She stood up, smoothed her gown, and prepared to attend on her royal visitor.

She felt numb. Numb as the stone walls around her, numb as the quiescence of the night air... numb as a lifeless corpse.

Symmachus was dead!

King Eadwyre greeted her gravely and courteously, if a bit fulsomely. He claimed to be a fervent admirer of Symmachus, who figured prominently in his family’s legends. Gradually he turned the conversation to her business with the Emperor. He inquired after details, and asked if the outcome had been favorable to Mournhold. Finding her noncommittal, he suddenly blurted out, “Milady Queen, you must believe me. The

man who claims himself the Emperor is an impostor! I know it sounds mad, but I—”

“No,” Barenziah said, with sudden decisiveness. “You are entirely correct, Milord King. I know.”

Eadwyre relaxed into his seat for the first time, eyes suddenly shrewd. “You know? You’re not just humoring someone you might think a madman?”

“I assure you, Milord, I am not.” She took a deep breath. “And who do you surmise is dissembling as the Emperor?”

“The Imperial Battlemage, Jagar Tharn.”

“Ah. Milord King, have you, perchance, heard of someone called the Nightingale?”

“Yes, Milady, as a matter of fact I have. My allies and I believe him to be one and the same man as the renegade Tharn.”

“I knew it!” Barenziah stood up and tried to mask her upheaval. The Nightingale—Jagar Tharn! Oh, but the man was a demon! Diabolical and insidious. And so very clever. He had contrived their downfall seamlessly, perfectly! Symmachus, my Symmachus...!

Eadwyre coughed diffidently. “Milady, I... we... we need your aid.”

Barenziah smiled grimly at the irony. “I do believe I should be the one saying those words. But go on, please. Of what assistance might I be, Milord King?”

Quickly the monarch outlined a plot. The mage Ria Silmane, of late apprenticed to the vile Jagar Tharn, had been killed and declared a traitor by the false Emperor. Yet she had retained a bit of her powers and could still contact a few of those she had known well on the mortal plane. She had chosen a Champion who would undertake to find the Staff of Chaos, which had been hidden by the traitorous sorcerer in an unknown site. This Champion was to wield the Staff's power to destroy Jagar Tharn, who was otherwise invulnerable, and rescue the true Emperor being held prisoner in another dimension. However, the Champion, while thankfully still alive, now languished in the Imperial Dungeons. Tharn's attention must be diverted while the chosen one gained freedom with Ria's spirit's help. Barenziah had the false Emperor's ears—and seemingly his eyes. Would she provide the necessary distraction?

“I suppose I could obtain another audience with him,” Barenziah said carefully. “But would that be sufficient? I must tell you that my children and I have just recently been declared traitors to the Empire.”

“In Mournhold, perhaps, Milady, and Morrowind. Things are different in the Imperial City and the Imperial Province. The same administrative morass that makes it near impossible to obtain an audience with the Emperor and his ministers also quite assures that you would never be unlawfully imprisoned or otherwise punished without benefit of due legal process. In your case, Milady, and your children's, the situation is further exacerbated by your royal rank. As Queen and heirs apparent, your persons are considered inviolable—sacrosanct, in fact.” The King grinned. “The Imperial bureaucracy, Milady, is a double-edged claymore.”

So. At least she and the children were safe for the time being. Then a thought struck her. “Milord King, what did you mean earlier when you said I had the false Emperor’s eyes? And seemingly, at that?”

Eadwyre looked uncomfortable. “It was whispered among the servants that Jagar Tharn kept your likeness in a sort of shrine in his chambers.”

“I see.” Her thoughts wandered momentarily to that insane romance of hers with the Nightingale. She had been madly in love with him. Foolish woman. And the man she had once loved had caused to be killed the man she truly did love. Did love. Loved. He’s gone now, he’s... he... She still couldn’t bring herself to accept the fact that Symmachus was dead. But even if he is, she told herself firmly, my love is alive, and remains. He would always be with her. As would the pain. The pain of living the rest of her life without him. The pain of trying to survive each day, each night, without his presence, his comfort, his love. The pain of knowing he would never see his children grow into a fine pair of adults, who would never know their father, how brave he was, how strong, how wonderful, how loving... especially little Morgiah.

And for that, for all that, for all you have done to my family, Nightingale—you must die.

“Does that surprise you?”

Eadwyre’s words broke into her thoughts. “What? Does what surprise me?”

“Your likeness. In Tharn’s room.”

“Oh.” Her features set imperturbably. “Yes. And no.”

Eadwyre could see from her expression that she wished to change the subject. He turned once again to their plans. “Our chosen one may need a few days to escape, Milady. Can you gain him a bit more time?”

“You trust me in this, Milord King? Why?”

“We are desperate, Milady. We have no choice. But even if we did—why, yes. Yes, I would trust you. I do trust you. Your husband has been good to my family over the years. The Lord Symmachus—”

“Is dead.”

“What?”

Barenziah related the recent events quickly and coolly.

“Milady... Queen... but how dreadful! I... I’m so sorry...”

For the first time Barenziah’s glacial poise was shaken. In the face of sympathy, she felt her outward calm start to crumble. She gathered her composure, and willed herself to stillness.

“Under the circumstances, Milady, we can hardly ask—”

“Nay, good Milord. Under the circumstances I must do what I may to avenge myself upon the murderer of my children’s father.” A single tear escaped the fortress of her eyes. She brushed it away impatiently. “In return I ask only that you protect my orphaned children as you may.”

Eadwyre drew himself up. His eyes shone. “Willingly do I so pledge, most brave and noble Queen. The gods of our beloved land, indeed Tamriel itself, be my witnesses.”

His words touched her absurdly, yet profoundly. “I thank you from my heart and my soul, good Milord King Eadwyre. You have mine and m-my children’s e-everlasting g-gra—grati—”

She broke down.

She did not sleep that night, but sat in a chair beside her bed, hands folded in her lap, thinking deep and long into the waxing and waning of the darkness. She would not tell the children—not yet, not until she must.

She had no need to seek another audience with the Emperor. A summons arrived at first light.

She told the children she expected to be gone a few days, bade them give the servants no trouble, and kissed them good-bye. Morgiah whimpered a bit; she was bored and lonely in the Imperial City. Helseth looked dour but said nothing. He was very like his father. His father...

At the Imperial Palace, Barenziah was escorted not into the great audience hall but to a small parlour where the Emperor sat at a solitary breakfast. He nodded a greeting and waved his hand toward the window. “Magnificent view, isn’t it?”

Barenziah stared out over the towers of the great city. It dawned on her that this was the very chamber where she’d first met Tiber Septim all those years ago. Centuries ago. Tiber Septim. Another man she had loved. Who else had she loved? Symmachus, Tiber Septim... and Straw. She remembered the

big blond stable-boy with sudden and intense affection. She never realized it till now, but she had loved Straw. Only she had never let him know. She had been so young then, those had been carefree days, halcyon days... before everything, before all this... before... him. Not Symmachus. The Nightingale. She was shocked in spite of herself. The man could still affect her. Even now. Even after all that had happened. A strong wave of inchoate emotion swept over her.

When she turned back at last, Uriel Septim had vanished—and the Nightingale sat in his place.

“You knew,” he said quietly, scanning her face. “You knew. Instantly. I wanted to surprise you. You might at least have pretended.”

Barenziah spread her arms, trying to pacify the maelstrom churning deep inside her. “I’m afraid my skill at pretence is no match for yours, my liege.”

He sighed. “You’re angry.”

“Just a little, I must admit,” she said icily. “I don’t know about you, but I find betrayal a trifle offensive.”

“How human of you.”

She took a deep breath. “What do you want of me?”

“Now you are pretending.” He stood up to face her directly. “You know what I want of you.”

“You want to torment me. Go ahead. I’m in your power. But leave my children alone.”

“No, no, no. I don’t want that at all, Barenziah.” He came near, speaking low in the old caressing voice that had sent shivers cascading through her body. The same voice that was doing the same thing to her, here and now. “Don’t you see? This was the only way.” His hands closed on her arms.

She felt her resolve fading, her disgust at him weakening. “You could have taken me with you.” Unbidden tears gathered in her eyes.

He shook his head. “I didn’t have the power. Ah, but now, now...! I have it all. Mine to have, mine to share, mine to give—to you.” He once more waved his hand toward the window and the city beyond. “All Tamriel is mine to lay at your feet—and that is only the beginning.”

“It’s too late. Too late. You left me to him.”

“He’s dead. The peasant’s dead. A scant few years—what do they matter?”

“The children—”

“Can be adopted by me. And we’ll have others together, Barenziah. Oh, and what children they’ll be! What things we shall pass on to them! Your beauty, and my magic. I have powers you haven’t even dreamt of, not in your most untamed imaginings!” He moved to kiss her.

She slipped his grasp and turned away. “I don’t believe you.”

“You do, you know. You’re still angry, that’s all.” He smiled. But it didn’t reach his eyes. “Tell me what you want, Barenziah. Barenziah my beloved. Tell me. It shall be yours.”



Her whole life flashed in front of her. The past, the present, and the future still to come. Different times, different lives, different Barenziah's. Which one was the real one? Which one was the real Barenziah? For by that choice she would determine the shape of her fate.

She made it. She knew. She knew who the real Barenziah was, and what she wanted.

“A walk in the garden, my liege,” she said. “A song or two, perhaps.”

The Nightingale laughed. “You want to be courted.”

“And why not? You do it so well. It's been long, besides, since I've had the pleasure.”

He smiled. “As you wish, Milady Queen Barenziah. Your wish is my command.” He took her hand and kissed it. “Now, and forever.”

And so they spent their days in courtship—walking, talking, singing and laughing together, while the Empire's business was left to subordinates.

“I'd like to see the Staff,” Barenziah said idly one day. “I only had a glimpse of it, you'll recall.”

He frowned. “Nothing would give me greater pleasure, heart's delight—but that would be impossible.”

“You don't trust me,” Barenziah pouted, but softened her lips when he leaned over for a kiss.

“Nonsense, love. Of course I do. But it isn’t here.” He chuckled. “In fact, it isn’t anywhere.” He kissed her again, more passionately this time.

“You’re talking in riddles again. I want to see it. You couldn’t have destroyed it.”

“Ah. You’ve gained in wisdom since last we met.”

“You inspired my hunger for knowledge somewhat.” She stood up. “The Staff of Chaos can’t be destroyed. And it can’t be removed from Tamriel, not without the direst consequences to the land itself.”

“Ahhh. You impress me, my love. All true. It is not destroyed, and it is not removed from Tamriel. And yet, as I said, it isn’t anywhere. Can you solve the puzzle?” He pulled her to him and she leaned into his embrace. “Here’s a greater riddle still,” he whispered. “How does one make one of two? That I can, and will, show you.” Their bodies merged, limbs tangled together.

Later, when they had drawn a bit apart and he lay dozing, she thought sleepily, “One of two, two of one, three of two, two of three... what cannot be destroyed or banished might be split apart, perhaps...”

She stood up, eyes blazing. She started to smile.

The Nightingale kept a journal. He scribbled entries onto it every night after quick reports from underlings. It was locked in a bureau. But the lock was a simple one. She had, after all, been a member of the Thieves Guild in a past life... in another life... another Barenziah...

One morning Barenziah managed to sneak a quick look at it while he was occupied at his toilet. She discovered that the first piece of the Staff of Chaos was hidden in an ancient Dwarvish mine called Fang Lair—although its location was given only in the vaguest of terms. The diary was crammed with jotted events in an odd shorthand, and was very hard to decipher.

All Tamriel, she thought, in his hands and mine, and more perhaps—and yet...

For all his exterior charm there was a cold emptiness where his heart should have been, a vacuum of which he was quite unaware, she thought. One could glimpse it now and then, when his eyes would go blank and hard. And yet, though he had a different concept of it, he yearned for happiness too, and contentment. Peasant dreams, Barenziah thought, and Straw flashed before her eyes again, looking lost and sad. And then Therris, with a feline Khajiit smile. Tiber Septim, powerful and lonely. Symmachus, solid, stolid Symmachus, who did what ought to be done, quietly and efficiently. The Nightingale. The Nightingale, a riddle and a certainty, both the darkness and the light. The Nightingale, who would rule all, and more—and spread chaos in the name of order.

Barenziah got reluctant leave from him to visit her children, who had yet to be told of their father's death—and of the Emperor's offer of protection. She finally did, and it wasn't easy. Morgiah clung to her for what seemed an era, sobbing wretchedly, while Helseth ran off into the garden to be alone, afterward refusing all her attempts to speak to him on the subject of his father, or even to let her hold him to her breast.

Eadwyre called on her while she was there. She told him what she had discovered so far, explaining that she must remain

awhile yet and learn more as she could.

The Nightingale teased her about her elderly admirer. He was quite aware of Eadwyre's suspicion—but he wasn't the least bit perturbed, for no one took the old fool seriously. Barenziah even managed to arrange a reconciliation of sorts between them. Eadwyre publicly recanted his misgivings, and his "old friend" the Emperor forgave him. He was afterward invited to dine with them at least once a week.

The children liked Eadwyre, even Helseth, who disapproved of his mother's liaison with the Emperor and consequently detested him. He had become surly and temperamental as the days passed, and frequently quarreled with both his mother and her lover. Eadwyre was not happy with the affair either, and the Nightingale took great delight at times in openly displaying his affection for Barenziah just to nettle the old man.

They could not marry, of course, for Uriel Septim was already married. At least, not yet. The Nightingale had exiled the Empress shortly after taking the Emperor's place, but had not dared harm her. She was given sanctuary by the Temple of the One. It had been given out that she was suffering from ill health, and rumors had been circulated by the Nightingale's agents that she had mental problems. The Emperor's children had likewise been dispatched to various prisons all across Tamriel disguised as "schools."

"She'll grow worse in time," Nightingale said carelessly, referring to the Empress and eyeing Barenziah's swollen breasts and swelling belly with satisfaction. "As for their children... Well, life is full of hazards, isn't it? We'll be married. Your child will be my true heir."

He did want the child. Barenziah was sure of that. She was far less sure, however, of his feelings for her. They argued continually now, often violently, usually about Helseth, whom he wanted to send away to school in Summurset Isle, the province farthest from the Imperial City. Barenziah made no effort to avoid these altercations. The Nightingale, after all, had no interest in a smooth, unruffled life; and besides, he thoroughly enjoyed making up afterward...

Occasionally Barenziah would take the children and retreat to their old apartment, declaring she wanted no more to do with him. But he would always come to fetch her back, and she would always let herself be fetched back. It was ineffable, like the rising and setting of Tamriel's twin moons.

She was six months pregnant before she finally deciphered the location of the last Staff piece—an easy one, since every Dark Elf knew where the Mount of Dagoth-Ur was.

When she next quarreled with the Nightingale, she simply left the city with Eadwyre and rode hard for High Rock, and Wayrest. The Nightingale was furious, but there was little he could do. His assassins were rather inept, and he dared not leave his seat of power to pursue them in person. Nor could he openly declare war on Wayrest. He had no legitimate claim on her or her unborn child. True to form, the Imperial City's nobility had disapproved of his liaison with Barenziah—as they had so many years ago of Tiber Septim's—and were glad to see her go.

Wayrest was equally distrustful of her, but Eadwyre was fanatically loved by his prosperous little city-state, and allowances were readily made for his... eccentricities. Barenziah and Eadwyre were married a year after the birth of

her son by the Nightingale. In spite of this unfortunate fact, Eadwyre doted on her and her children. She in her turn did not love him—but she was fond of him, and that was something. It was nice to have someone, and Wayrest was a very good place, a good place for children to grow up, while they waited, and bided their time, and prayed for the Champion's success in his mission.

Barenziah could only hope that he wouldn't take very long, whoever this unnamed Champion was. She was a Dark Elf, and she had all the time in the world. All the time. But no more love left to give, and no more hatred left to burn. She had nothing left, nothing but pain, and memories... and her children. She only wanted to raise her family, and provide them a good life, and be left to live out what remained of hers. She had no doubt it was going to be a long life yet. And during it she wanted peace, and quiet, and serenity, of her soul as well as of her heart. Peasant dreams. That was what she wanted. That was what the real Barenziah wanted. That was what the real Barenziah was. Peasant dreams.

Pleasant dreams.

# The Reclamations

*Thara*

The Reclamations:

The Fall of the Tribunal and the Rise of the New Temple

by

Thara of Rihad

The destruction of Vivec City and the subsequent eruption of Red Mountain in 4E 5 was not just a crisis in terms of the physical destruction it caused - it also cut deeply into the ancient religious beliefs of the Dunmer. The fall of the Ministry of Truth was the last straw in the tottering support for the Temple's worship of Almalexia, Sotha Sil, and Vivec. With all three of the Tribunes now widely believed dead or disappeared, what had been a simmering schism within the ranks of the Temple priesthood burst into the open.

While outsiders may never know the full tale of this internal struggle, when the smoke cleared a few years later, the former Dissident Priests were in full control of the Temple heirarchy, with Tribunal loyalists either purged or recanted. The so-called "New Temple" now declared the worship of the Tribunes a result of misguided teaching, blaming the mistakes on the former Tribunal. The Temple now taught that the daedra venerated by the Ashlander tribes (Azura, Mephala and

Boethia) were the “true way” and should be revered by the Dunmer people. Fittingly, the daedra were named the “Reclamations,” as if they were reclaiming their status from the Tribunal.

In an elegant compromise, no doubt intended to reconcile the large majority of the Temple priesthood who were neither Dissidents nor fanatic Tribunal loyalists, Almalexia, Sotha Sil and Vivec were relegated to the status of “saints,” a traditional way to venerate the most honored Dunmer ancestors. This apparently satisfied enough of the existing priesthood that the New Temple was able to maintain at least a semblance of outward continuity.

The rise of the New Temple almost completely vindicated the previously persecuted Ashlanders, who had continued to worship the three daedra throughout the Tribunal’s rule. The Ashlanders are now lauded as the keepers of the old ways and having “true vision.” It is now quite common for many of the Dunmer people to make the arduous pilgrimages into the ash wastes to seek the counsel of the Wise Women. These women have supposedly opened the eyes of those who they claim were “blinded by the Tribunal,” and directly connect the eruption of the Red Mountain and the Argonian invasion to the anger of the three daedra.

House Indoril, whose fortunes were so entwined with the Tribunal Temple, suffered greatly from its fall. While House Indoril still technically exists, the priesthood of the Temple are now considered one and the same with House Indoril - those who become priests are now considered to have “joined Indoril.” The political power of the Indoril has thus passed entirely into the hands of the Temple (although members of



the old House Indoril are still over-represented in the priesthood).

The rise of the New Temple has a number of interesting parallels with the rise of House Redoran - each filled the vacuum of power resulting from the crisis of Red Year. How durable these new arrangements will prove, religious and political, remains to be seen. The span of two centuries is quite brief in the long history of the ancient Dunmer people.

# The Red Year

*Melis Ravel*

The Red Year, Vol. I

The Red Year

Volume I

by

Melis Ravel

Foreword

When I originally decided to write this accounting of the Red Year, I elected to travel across Morrowind and speak to the Dunmer people themselves. I sought first-hand accounts and personal views about the cataclysmic event. I felt that if I simply did the research in the library stacks at the College of Winterhold, I wasn't really telling the tale that needed to be told. What struck me as I moved from city to city, town to town, camp to camp is that all of the Dunmer I met shared an incredible bond of sheer courage and unshakable faith. So what began as a chronicle of one of the worst events in the history of Morrowind became something altogether different, the celebration of a people who can never be defeated.

Drallin Vess

Tear

“The ground... it just turned into mush. There was almost no warning. I mean, we were what... perhaps a mile from the nearest swamps? It was like the swamp suddenly swallowed up half of the city.”

I asked him to describe what happened from the beginning.

“I owned a farm just outside of Tear at the time. We were planting the next season’s crops and getting ready to store what we had harvested. Everything was going well until the Red Mountain exploded. Almost immediately, the ground rumbled and shook. Cracks started forming everywhere and then the water just started seeping through. It was awful. In a matter of hours, I was knee-deep in swamp water running for my life. Where I was running, I had no idea. At first I ran towards the city itself, but it looked like the walls were cracking. All around me, people were desperately trying to save their livestock and their families from the rising water. Just when the ground shaking finally died down, and I had a moment to think, there was a horrible cracking noise. I’ll never forget it, because I knew what it was before I looked. The entire southern wall of Tear collapsed sending guards tumbling into the swamp. I heard people screaming as they were covered by the rubble and forced down into the water. Forgetting my own problems, I looked over at my fellow farmers who were all staring at the carnage unfolding before us. Suddenly, we all just forgot our own problems and ran to help. There must have been hundreds of the poorer folks who lived outside the walls helping the richer ones who lived in the city. Never saw anything like that. I think we must have saved hundreds more that day.”

Neria Relethyl

Gnisis

Neria was badly burned by the eruption, and had trouble speaking to me. She is currently convalescing at the Temple of Azura in Blacklight even after all these years. I've tried to record her story to the best of my ability.

“It was such a terrible thing... the fire. It burned everything in its path. It flattened trees, turned our huts into splinters and knocked over towers like they were made from parchment. It all happened in an instant. A rumbling sound, then a massive wall of flame... it was so high it blocked out the sun. I thought that the world itself had split apart. It passed over the water and turned it to steam... vaporized everything it touched. When it finally hit us, I was blown off of my feet... didn't even have time to run away or seek shelter. I ended up in the riverbed next to town, which kept some of the flames off of me. All around... could smell the charred stench of death. There were Dunmer that were burned alive and some never even saw it coming. I lay in that riverbed for two days before the healers found me. When I could finally stand, Gnisis was gone. There wasn't a thing left... it's as though it was wiped from the face of Tamriel.”

The Red Year, Vol. II

The Red Year

Volume II

by

Melis Ravel

## Foreword

When I originally decided to write this accounting of the Red Year, I elected to travel across Morrowind and speak to the Dunmer people themselves. I sought first-hand accounts and personal views about the cataclysmic event. I felt that if I simply did the research in the library stacks at the College of Winterhold, I wasn't really telling the tale that needed to be told. What struck me as I moved from city to city, town to town, camp to camp is that all of the Dunmer I met shared an incredible bond of sheer courage and unshakable faith. So what began as a chronicle of one of the worst events in the history of Morrowind became something altogether different, the celebration of a people who can never be defeated.

Saldus Llervu

## Vivec City

"I was a trader back then. Ran a pack guar from Vivec City clear down to Narsis. I was walking along the south road when the strangest thing happened. All of the noise around me stopped... the normal things one hears as they travel like the sound of the wind blowing through the treetops. It was just deathly quiet. I felt a tingling sensation all over my body and my guar began to stomp around. Whatever it was, it was driving him crazy. As I tried to get him under control, there was a massive explosion from the center of the city. I saw the cantons fall apart before I was knocked off my feet. Then I remember the ground starting to rumble. It lasted for a long time and it receded into the distance as if directed towards the center of Vvardenfell. A few minutes later, the Red Mountain erupted, sending a huge cloud of fire into the sky. My pack guar

had long since fled, and I decided I should do the same. I never stopped running until I reached Narsis.”

I asked him if he knew what had happened Vivec City.

“I didn’t hear until much later that the Ministry of Truth had struck the heart of the city. What I do know for certain is that many Dunmer lost their lives that day and that Vivec City is no more.”

Deros Dran

Mournhold

“The Red Year didn’t heavily affect Mournhold itself, but it touched many of the people who lived there. A lot of us had relatives somewhere on Vvardenfell, and after the first day that the eruption occurred we started receiving reports of widespread devastation in Vivec City, Sadrith Mora, Balmora and Ald’ruhn. I don’t think a single night went by for months where you wouldn’t hear someone openly weeping. It was a sad time for all of us.”

I asked if Mournhold had sustained any damage during the Red Year.

“I don’t know why, but the destruction seemed to pass us by. A few Dunmer claimed that it was the Tribunal watching over us, but others claimed that the Tribunal was to blame for everything. I actually saw a few of those disagreements come to blows. It was a strange time.”

I got an interesting response from Deros regarding Mournhold’s role during the Red Year.

“Relief efforts began almost a month after the mountain erupted. It was actually a directive that came from the House Redoran councilor that was living in Mournhold at the time. I can’t remember his name, but he took charge of the situation and sent soldiers, supplies and able-bodied Dunmer to the outlying settlements that had been hit the hardest. I was sent to Balmora. The place was a mess; hardly anything left in town was still standing. I spent maybe two months there, helping to rebuild the town and getting my fellow Dunmer back on their feet. It started out as a burden, but it ended up being the most rewarding thing I’d ever done in my life. I started some friendships there that still last to this day, including my beloved wife.”

# The Rise And Fall Of The Blades

*Anonymous*

There are many that still remember the Blades. There are fewer that can pass down their stories, their origins and their downfall. My father could. In his proudest moments he said to me, "You keep secrets like the Blades."

The Blades were good at keeping secrets. They didn't write down much. They passed information carefully between their spies in every province, to their elite members that protected the Emperors. Even amongst their members, they kept much secret.

Most associate the Blades with their ceremonial Akaviri armor and curved longswords. One can trace the Blades back to the fiercest warriors of Akavir, the Dragonguard. It was there, just as they would do in Tamriel, that they protected rulers and their kingdom. But recent discoveries show it to be much more than that.

Many classic texts tell us of adventures to Akavir, known as the dragon lands of the east. Many from Tamriel have attempted to conquer it, most famously Emperor Uriel V and his Tenth Legion in 3E288 as documented in the Imperial dispatch "Disaster at Ionith." Dragons have long been legend in Akavir, and many believe that their brief appearance in Tamriel's history are those that escaped Akaviri, for it was there they



were hunted and killed off by the Dragonguard. The Dragonguard would follow those that fled to Tamriel in the late 1st Era.

Invading from the north, the Dragonguard met not only dragons, but the men of Skyrim, who don't meet invasions with pitchers of mead. The Dragonguard cut a path through Skyrim, and it was not until they were stopped by Reman Cyrodiil during the battle at Pale Pass that the invasion came to an end. It was Reman who united the human lands of Cyrodiil and defeated the Akaviri invaders.

Reman is one of the first documented, and widely accepted, of the mythic Dragonborn; those anointed by Akatosh and Alessia themselves. "Born with the soul of a dragon" is what his followers would say. Reports differ widely on the nature of the battle at Pale Pass. But the end result is the same, that the remaining Dragonguard, upon hearing the voice of Reman Cyrodiil, knelt and swore their lives to him, their conqueror and savior. Fragments of from late 1st era texts refer to the warriors dropping to their knees saying "we were not hunting" (or "did not intend", author - rough translation), continuing "we have been searching, for you."

They protected Reman with their lives, as well as his descendants, as the Reman Dynasty ushered in Tamriel's 2nd era. It was through these years that their reach extended, and their order grew to become the Blades. Their conquest of the dragons complete, they only sought to protect the Dragonborn, and through him, the Empire.

They reached their height late during the 3rd era under the rule of the Septim emperors. Despite their numbers, they kept their secrecy. The most visible and well documented were the

members who personally guarded the Emperor, still wearing the original Akaviri armor. But that was just the tip of the spear, for the Blades were a larger organization, stretching to every corner of Tamriel. These agents were of every race. They were merchants, thieves, craftsmen, mages, and warriors, all acting as spies, protecting the Empire as needed, and operating in secret. They often acted alone, but some fragments speak of them meeting in secret fortresses across the continent. The most famous being Cyrodiil's Cloud Ruler Temple, where they hung the swords of those slain protecting the Dragonborn. Other maps speak of Wind Scour Temple under the great expanse of Hammerfell's Alik'r desert, Sky Haven Temple in the mountains of Skyrim, and Storm Talon Temple east of Wayrest.

They were known to have a "Grandmaster", who often lived amongst the people, unknown to others. The nature of their communications, meeting places, and missions were known to only a few elite members. The only two to know all were the Grandmaster himself and the Chronicler, whose only job was to make sure the group's mission was never known, but never lost.

With the death of Uriel Septim VII and his son, Martin, the 3rd era came to a close with the Blades fortifying themselves deep within Cyrodiil's Cloud Ruler Temple, as they waited for a Dragonborn to return when they would be called upon again.

The Empire of the 4th era no longer saw the Blades openly protecting it, or the Emperors. That role is now filled by the Penitus Oculatus, a purely Imperial organization. But the Blades continued their secret work, to watch for the Dragonborn and guard against future enemies. The Blades

were among the first to see the signs that the Thalmor of the Aldmeri Dominion would not remain isolated within their borders forever. They could do what the Penitus Oculatus, servant to Imperial policy, could not, and thus earned the lasting hatred of the Thalmor.

The warnings of the Blades were proved right, as is well known to all. The Great War between the Empire and the Thalmor consumed the Empire and nearly destroyed it. Emperor Titus Mede II eventually brokered peace with the Thalmor, but at a price many of us still bear.

The reach and destructive nature of the Thalmor is known to many (author's note - in my family firsthand). They are not fools. They knew early on that the Blades were an enemy. So they hunted them throughout the Great War. Some were killed defending their Temples, others as they slept in their hideaways, alone. Some fought, some ran, some hid. But the Thalmor found them all.

There are those that say the Blades still exist around us, in hiding from the Thalmor. Waiting as they have done time and time again, for a Dragonborn to return. For one to protect, for one to guide them.

# The Secret Of Ragnvald

*Anonymous*

Two hero-hearts

Two hidden keys

One fallen Priest

Who lies beneath

Hail Sarek, Hail Torsten

Raise them in your songs

Who tricked mad-king Otar

and rescued Ragnvald for all

Otar! once our chieftain

Glorious in battle

Fair in judgment

Those days ended in pain

Dark voices whispered

into Otar's mind

nobility shouted down  
Once good now craven Priest  
Fair folk of Ragnvald  
Good Nords and True  
Broken by his will  
our city eaten alive  
Send Sarek!  
Send Torsten!  
Sure spirits  
swords that don't fail  
Otar was bent back  
but never destroyed  
Bound instead, contained  
Two Heroes, Two Keys

# The Talos Mistake

*Leonora Venatus*

The Talos Mistake

by

Leonora Venatus

Imperial Liaison to the Aldmeri Dominion

As citizens of the Empire, all are of course familiar with the deeds of Emperor Tiber Septim. But it is the Emperor's ascent to godhood, as Talos, that is the subject of this work.

Until Tiber Septim's death, there had been but Eight Divines: Akatosh, Dibella, Arkay, Zenithar, Stendarr, Mara, Kynareth, and Julianos. These gods were, and are, worshipped throughout the Empire. And while some may have different names in the varying provinces (for example, Akatosh is known as "Auri-El" to the Aldmer; and Arkay is sometimes known as "Ar'Kay"), all are recognized and revered by all races and cultures of Tamriel.

But when Tiber Septim passed to Aetherius, there came to be a Ninth Divine - Talos, also called Ysmir, the "Dragon of the North." The man who was so loved in life became worshipped in death. Indeed, it can be argued that Talos, the Ninth Divine, became even more important than the Eight that had preceded

him, at least to humans. For he was a god who was once just a man, and through great deeds actually managed to ascend to godhood. And if one human could achieve such a feat - couldn't it be done again? Couldn't all humans aspire to achieve divinity?

So we thought, we humans. And so we continued to worship Talos, and revere him as the ultimate hero-god. But that was then. This is now. And now, we know the truth:

We were wrong.

As citizens of the Empire, we all experienced the horrors of the Great War. And it was not until the signing of the White-Gold Concordat, the treaty between the Empire and the Aldmeri Dominion, that we once again knew peace. One of the most important stipulations of that treaty, as every Imperial citizen is well aware, is that Talos can no longer be worshipped as a god. This edict shook the very foundations of the Empire. There were those who rebelled against the law. Indeed, some still do.

But the citizens of the Empire must know this: the Emperor did not agree to outlaw the worship of Talos because it was demanded by the Thalmor, the ruling body of the Aldmeri Dominion.

The Emperor agreed to the outlaw of the worship of Talos because it was the right thing to do.

Today, the Emperor, and indeed the Empire itself, recognizes that allowing the worship of Talos was a mistake. For by doing so, by allowing the worship of Talos as a Divine, the Empire actually did its people a great disservice: for this only

succeeded in weakening the memory of the man Tiber Septim and his many extraordinary (though mortal) deeds; and pushing people away from the Eight Divines, the true gods, who do deserve our love and reverence.

And so, the Empire admits it was wrong. The Talos Mistake will not be repeated. May we find centuries of peace and prosperity with our new Thalmor friends, and continue to share a spirituality that binds together all the cultures and races of Tamriel.



# The Third Era Timeline

*Jaspus Ignateous*

Third Era

An Abbreviated Timeline

by

Jaspus Ignateous

It has been said that “citizens of the Empire who make the same mistakes as their forebears deserve to suffer the same fate.” And while this may be true, it’s hard to deny that the Empire’s history is so long, and our forebears have made so many mistakes, it’s sometimes hard to keep track.

This work is meant to serve as a concise compilation of the Empire’s most recent events, in this, our current age - what we refer to as the Third Era. It is a period of time that has as yet comprised less than five hundred years. But it should at least serve as a starting point for those who wish to study our Empire’s vast and varied history. And maybe, just maybe, prevent the repeat of a previous disaster.

It is also worth noting that when viewed in such a succinct structure, one truly gets a sense of just how often our great Empire has changed leadership. Indeed, it can be argued that

much of the Empire's history in these past five centuries is the changing rule of that very Empire itself.

### First Century

- 3E 0 - Beginning of Third Era, when all province in Tamriel are unified
- 3E 38 - Death of Emperor Tiber Septim, and crowning of Emperor Pelagius
- 3E 41 - Assassination of Emperor Pelagius, and crowning of Empress Kintyra
- 3E 48 - Death of Empress Kintyra , and crowning of Emperor Uriel I
- 3E 64 - Death of Emperor Uriel I, and crowning of Emperor Uriel II
- 3E 82 - Death of Emperor Uriel II, and crowning of Emperor Pelagius II
- 3E 99 - Death of Emperor Pelagius II Dies, and crowning of Emperor Antiochus

### Second Century

- 3E 110 - War of the Isle
- 3E 111 - Knights of the Nine founded by Sir Amiel Lannus
- 3E 114 - Reported death of Empress Kintyra II
- 3E 119 - Birth of Pelagius III

- 3E 121 - Uriel III Proclaimed Emperor
- 3E 121 - War of the Red Diamond
- 3E 123, 23 Frostfall - Actual death of Empress Kintyra II, in captivity, in secret
- 3E 127 - Death of Emperor Uriel III, and crowning of Emperor Cephorus I
- 3E 137 - Death of Potema, the Queen of Solitude
- 3E 140 - Death of Emperor Cephorus I, and crowning of Emperor Magnus
- 3E 145 - Death of Emperor Magnus, and crowning of Emperor Pelagius III
- 3E 153 - Death of Emperor Pelagius III
- 3E 153 - Katariah takes throne from husband Pelagius, becoming Empress

### Third Century

- 3E 200 - Death of Empress Katariah, and crowning of Emperor Cassynder
- 3E 202 - Death of Emperor Cassynder, and crowning of Emperor Uriel IV
- 3E 247 - Death of Emperor Uriel IV, and crowning of Emperor Cephorus II
- 3E 249 - Invasion of the Empire by the lich, Camoran Usurper

- 3E 253 - Camoran Usurper controls the Dwydden Region with "Nightmare Host"
- 3E 267 - Defeat of Camoran Usurper Defeated
- 3E 268 - Crowning of Emperor Uriel V
- 3E 271-3E 284 - Various Conquests of Emperor Uriel Septim IV
- 3E 288 - Invasion of Akavir by the forces of Emperor Uriel Septim IV
- 3E 290 - Death of Emperor Uriel V, and crowning of Emperor Uriel VI

#### Fourth Century

- 3E 307 - Uriel VI gain full power as Emperor
- 3E 320 - Death of Uriel VI, and crowning of Empress Morihatha
- 3E 331 - Publication of the second edition of "A Pocket Guide to The Empire"
- 3E 339 - Assassination of Empress Morihatha, and crowning of Emperor Pelagius IV
- 3E 389 - Jagar Tharn betrays Emperor Uriel Septim VII
- 3E 396 - Regional Wars Throughout Tamriel
- 3E 396 - The Arnesian War
- 3E 399 - Defeat of Jagar Tharn

- 3E 399 - The founding of Orsinium

## Fifth Century

- 3E 403 - Assassination of Lysandus, the King of Daggerfall

- 3E 414 - Vvardenfell Territory opened for settlement

- 3E 417 - The "Warp in the West" occurs

- 3E 421 - Greywyn founds the Crimson Scars.

- 3E 427 - Beginning of the Blight Curse in Vvardenfell, and arrival of the Nerevar

- 3E 427 - The Bloodmoon Prophecy comes to pass, on the isle of Solstheim

- 3E 432 - Publication of the third edition of "A Pocket Guide to The Empire"

- 3E 433 - Assassination of Emperor Uriel Septim VII

- 3E 433 - The "Oblivion Crisis"

- 3E 433 - The Knights of the Nine are reformed

# The Ulen Matter

*Vendil Ulen*

Dear Councilor Saldin,

In a matter of days I believe we'll be ready. Our forces hidden within Ashfallow Citadel have been training night and day, ready to strike when we give the signal. With Captain Veleth distracted by the ash spawn attacks, the timing seems perfect. I've waited nearly a decade to exact my revenge upon Lleril Morvayn for the death of my ancestor and I long for the moment my blade will be drawn across his throat. The next letter you'll receive from me will include his head in a sack. Display it proudly in the halls of House Hlaalu, brother.

Vendil Ulen

# The Warmth Of Mara

*Anonymous*

Rejoice, Reader...

For Mara's Light Shines Upon YOU!

Mara's Benevolence is everlasting and Her Warmth widespread throughout the world. Shut your eyes, lift your head to the heavens and bask in the glow that shapes our destiny!

Lady Mara will embrace any regardless of their past. Cast away your misdeeds and freshen your spirit! Give unto Her all the compassion that you would give unto your birthmother and learn that She will never leave you, never cast you aside and never forsake you!

Donations are being accepted at the Temple of Mara in Riften

# The Windhelm Letters

## *Various*

The following transcribed letters were recovered from a strongbox found after a fire consumed a house in Solitude in the early part of the 3rd Era. Nobody by the addressed name lived at the home, and it is unknown how long the family had owned the strongbox. The letters are believed to have been written during the reign of Jarl Elgryr the Unminded, who ruled Windhelm in the Second Era and about whom few other records are extant.

My dearest Thessalonius,

I hope this letter reaches you, and finds you well. It is getting more difficult to find paper within the city, but I still save the scraps sent by the city's tax agents. I hope you don't mind a household reckoning on the reverse of this.

Windhelm remains as cold as ever, but nothing compared to the heart of her king. Smoke and revelry rise from the palace daily, while we have little wood or coal to keep the chill off. I fear for the little ones, but they're so brave, having never known any other kind of life. We all speak of you daily, and hope that we may come to see you soon.

Yours,

Reylia



Dear Thessalonius,

Your last message arrived safely, but the promised gold mentioned within did not. When I mentioned this to the courier, she shrugged and turned to the door with no other word. While hearing from you brings joy to us all, I would caution you to not trust that particular woman again.

The minds of the city grow numb with cold and silence. We starve, and the unminded one makes no appearance, no speech, nothing to succor his people. His wizard has been seen walking the streets of the city at odd hours, visiting homes. I saw him paint some horrid symbol on one door—it dripped like blood before vanishing like sand in the wind. The next dawn, nobody who lived there still drew breath. I am a friend to one of the scullery maids who was sent to clean out the house. She described the most horrible things to me and the children, but I will spare you the details.

The worst of it is, that was a house that supported the king. If that's what happens to his friends, what will be the fate of the rest of us?

But don't let this shift your mind from its important tasks. We all know you work to free us, and pray for your success and swift return.

Love,

Reylia

This next letter was scribbled onto a piece of cloth with what appears to be charcoal.

Thess.,

I hope you didn't actually...[illegible]...efforts are important, but our sufferings must remain...[illegible]...retaliation can be swift and terrible. If you no longer care for me, at least think of your...[illegible] .... Love always, R

Dear Thessalonius,

Weeks go by and we have no word from Solitude. I tell the children that you're simply very busy, but it's getting harder to make excuses for you. If you can no longer send money (and I understand, smuggling anything of value into the city has become a fool's errand), at least send word that you still live and work for the freedom of Windhelm.

As regards your issue that I mentioned previously, worry not. With food shortages being what they are, I have removed it from my concerns.

Always yours,

Reylia

My dearest Thessalonius,

It was good to hear from you at last. Please forgive the rantings of a starving mind. We have at last depleted the basement stores of food, even with the strictest rationing. I see the little ones' faces growing thin and my heart weeps for them. They are, in some ways, brave. I think they're looking after me moreso than I them.

Please come home. I strongly desire to look upon your face.

—R

Papa,

Ma said to write you, so we love and miss you. Ma is tired a lot, but has lots of visitors, so we are being good and helping.

Love,

Stessl and Shapl

Thessalonius,

I don't have much time. The city has finally broken. The gates of the palace will not keep us out. The storming begins soon. I have gathered those who still have a spirit to live, and we are taking our own fortunes to hand. I hope to see you on the other side of this. Pray for us as we once prayed for you.

Your Reylya

# The Wispmother

*Mathias Etienne*

The Wispmother:

Two Theories

by

Mathias Etienne

Among the folk tales from the northern reaches of Skyrim, few subjects are as popular as the Wispmother: ghostly women who lure unsuspecting travelers to their doom, steal children, and takes vengeance on those who wronged them in life.

Similar tales exist throughout Tamriel: The Melusanae of Stros Mkai, who lure ships to wreck on jagged shoals, then consume the souls of those aboard. The serpentine Chalass of Black Marsh. The Amronal of Valenwood.

But unlike these mythic creatures, most scholars concede that Wispmothers actually exist. Though rare, credible reports of their sightings are simply too frequent to be ignored. Herein, a synopsis of what can be gleaned from provincial legends, and the dominant theories on what they may actually be.

Wispmothers

Most tales agree on only a few basic facts about Wispmothers. They are always female. They take the form of human (some say Elven) spirits, wreathed in mist and decaying rags. They have an affinity for frost magic, rarely appearing in more temperate climes.

But beyond that, the tales differ wildly. Some say they are ghosts, waiting to be laid to rest. Others, that they are all that remains of the Snow Elves who once ruled Skyrim. Some say they are native to Hjaalmarch (or the north more generally), but other tales mention them in forgotten places, on mountaintops as far away as the Jeralls.

Most reputable scholars dismiss these stories, preferring instead to focus on the few documented sightings from recent years. From these, two dominant theories have emerged:

Based on his extensive research into necromancy and Cyrodiil's Ayleid culture, Master Sadren Sarethi posits that Wispmothers are a necrologic state, a type of lich-dom developed by a now-forgotten First Era culture. Under his theory, these are no mere ghosts - they are a cult of powerful sorceresses who achieved eternal life through undeath.

Alternately, Lydette Viliane of the Synod contends that Wispmothers are not undead at all, but rather elemental manifestations arising out of Nirn itself. By noting several similarities to Spriggans and Ice Wraiths, she contends that the Wispmothers are essentially elemental personifications of snow or mist, innately wielding the power of their element, instead of manipulating it through conventional sorcery.

Wisps

In most accounts, the victim is initially drawn to the Wispmother by glowing, ghostly lights. Although initially passive, these creatures later attack in tandem with her, distracting the victim and draining their energy.

Popular legend holds that these are the spirits of the Wispmother's previous victims. These spirits strengthen her, so anyone hoping to destroy her must first release the souls of those she has killed.

To scholars, this description immediately recalls the Will-o-the-Wisp, a rare and dangerous swamp denizen of southern Tamriel. Oddly, Cyrodillic legends invariably refer to Wisps as lone predators, while these appear to exist in some sort of symbiotic relationship with others of their kind.

Viliane argues that these Wisps are a sub-species of true Wisps, scavengers that lure prey to the Wispmother and share in the psychoetherial energy released by her kills. As co-dependent scavengers, they most likely lack the formidable defenses of their predatory cousins, rendering them far more vulnerable.

Alternately, Sarethi posits that these "Wisps" are merely emanations or conjurations of the Wispmother, and not free-living creatures. This is supported by one incident in which an adventurer reportedly killed a Wispmother directly, only to observe the remaining Wisps immediately perish as well, though the source is considered highly unreliable.

In summary, scholarly opinion about Wispmothers and Wisps is sharply divided, and is likely to remain so for some time. But all sources agree on one crucial point: these are highly dangerous foes, and should be avoided at all costs.

# The Woodcutter's Wife

*Mogen*

The Woodcutter's Wife

Volume 1

As Told By

Mogen Son of Molag

Legend tells of a woodcutter who built a shack deep within the pine forest. There, he hoped to live in peace with his family.

The woodcutter's family lived well for a time, but without warning, the weather turned bitterly cold and spoiled the harvest. Before long, with their meager supply of food all but gone, the family was starving.

Late one snowy night, a traveler knocked on the cabin door seeking shelter from the biting cold. Always generous of heart, the woodcutter welcomed the stranger into his home, apologizing that he had no food to offer.

With a smile, the traveler cast off his cloak to reveal the garments of a mage. As the woodcutter and his family looked on, the mysterious visitor reached into his satchel and withdrew a scroll tied with a silver ribbon. No sooner had the wizard unfurled the scroll and read the words aloud, when a

great feast appeared from out of thin air. That night, nobody in the woodcutter's cabin went hungry.

Day by day, the snow piled up. Every night, the mage produced another scroll from his bag and read the words, each time summoning a new feast. On the fifth night, the woodcutter's wife awoke her husband to confess her mistrust of their magical guest. Surely, she argued, there was some price to pay for the magical feasts that everyone enjoyed night after night.

The woodcutter would have none of it. After nearly dying from the lack of food, his family was eating well. The divines had sent them a gift, he explained, and it was foolish to question their wisdom.

But the woodcutter's wife would not be persuaded. Every night, she grew more fearful and more desperate. She was certain that the family had entered into a devil's bargain, and the time would soon come when the mage would ask for something unspeakable in return for his gifts.

While everyone in the cabin slept, the woodcutter's wife snuck out of bed and took her husband's axe in hand. She crept into the traveler's room and with one swing, lopped off his head.

Suddenly, the wizard's disembodied head awoke. His eyes opened wide and when he beheld his maimed body, he let forth a terrible cry.

Awakened by the horrified scream, the woodcutter and his children rushed into the room and gasped at the terrible sight of the decapitated mage.



With his last gasp of breath, the traveler laid a fearful curse on the woodcutter's wife. After her mortal death, she was damned to rise once again and walk the woods alone only to burn at the rising of the sun.

To this day, those who walk the pine forest late at night tell tales of a weeping woman glimpsed between the trees. She carries a bloody axe, the stories say, and is terrifying to behold.

# There Be Dragons

*Torhal Bjorik*

The last known sighting of a dragon in Tamriel was in the time of Tiber Septim. He made a pact with the few remaining dragons, swearing to protect them if they would serve him. Despite his promise, dragons were still hunted and slain. It's not clear if the last ones fled Tamriel or if they were exterminated.

There is no credible story of how dragons came to be. According to dremora that the College of Whispers have "questioned," they just were, and are. Eternal, immortal, unchanging, and unyielding. They are not born or hatched. They do not mate or breed. There are no known examples of dragon eggs or dragonlings. The Iliac Bay area has stories of such things, but so far all have proven false. The eggs turned out to be eggs of other reptiles. The small dragons were merely oversized lizards and no relation to true dragons.

Although they are not born, dragons can die. During the Dragon War of the Merethic Era, their numbers were decimated. The Akaviri invaders of the late First Era are said to have hunted and killed scores of them, before and after their defeat by Emperor Reman. Some sources say the Akaviri brought over dragon-killing spells. Others claim they built cunning traps. One tale even speaks of a rare poison.

It is well accepted that a dragon's most fearsome weapon is its fiery breath. Because they could fly overhead and rain down flaming death, archers and wizards were necessary when hunting them. It is less well known that some dragons could breathe a freezing spray of frost. The reports indicate that dragon might do one or the other, but not both.

Most people think of dragons as mere beasts. However, logically they must have had language in order for Tiber Septim to have negotiated with them. Indeed, the historical record is quite clear that dragons were highly intelligent. They had their own language, but could also speak the languages of men and elves.

The records of Reman's hunts contain reports of dragons that breathe or spit fire. Recently some were unearthed that described dragons blowing freezing blasts of cold. The more fanciful tales have them summoning storms and even stopping time. These should be discounted as myths and faery tales. Even without this most fearsome weapon, their nearly impenetrable hide and granite-like teeth and claws made them terrifying opponents.

There is some confusion over when the last dragon was killed. It seems the last few vanished all at once. Some tales speak of a dragon king who devoured all of them rather than let mankind kill them. One of the more far-fetched stories has Tiber Septim absorbing their essences when he ascended to godhood. Although the exact cause is unknown, they are all gone. No dragon has been seen for centuries. There are a few known examples of dragon bones fused with the stone and rocks of cliffs and caves. Just enough proof to make the stories undeniable.

# Thief's Last Words

*Anonymous*

Nobody thought they were real, but I've seen them.

The Eyes of the Snow Elves!

The Dwarves thought they took them from the Falmer, but they themselves were fooled. A statue, built in secret by the slaves, the eyes burn into you, and I see them even now. S'raffa escaped through the collapsing tunnel, but he'll never escape what we've seen. Men will never believe him, and he'll be driven mad by the knowledge that he'll never see them again. But I may yet see them again before I die.

# Things To Do

*Anonymous*

Things to do:

1. Repair holes in nets. Sending to Markarth too expensive, look for local solution. Valindor perhaps?
2. Repair wood damage on fish pens. No skill required for this, should simply have Wujeeta take care of it.
3. Adjust fishing charts for Lake Honrich. Need to keep ship clear of Goldenglow Estate. They took potshots at our ship last time we moored within a stone's throw of their location, no idea why and answers to Aringoth have gone unanswered.
4. Tell Nivenor to stop spending so much of our damn money!

# Thirsk, A Revised History

*Anonymous*

On the bank of Lake Fjalding stands Thirsk, a grand mead hall that serves as the home and center of operations for a most valiant clan of Nord warriors.

Long ago, a small group of Skaal decided to leave the main village, and free themselves of their brethren's strict adherence to nature worship. They sought to live life as their ancestors had in Skyrim—free to kill what they wanted when they wanted, free to worship in any manner they chose.

The group braved the harsh weather and traveled south toward Lake Fjalding, where they found the perfect location for a new settlement. There they decided to construct a grand mead hall that would serve as their new home and hunting lodge. After several months of building, the companions had completed the task, and named the mead hall Thirsk.

The settlers looked upon all they had accomplished, and were truly proud of their accomplishment. But their happiness was short lived, and the settlers soon learned that not everyone celebrated the construction of Thirsk. As the mead hall was being erected, so too was the noise and commotion of construction disturbing an ancient creature that lay dormant under the ice. It was a tragic twist of irony, therefore, that as the last beam of the great hall was nailed in place, the

slumbering beast did finally awaken. His ancient name was the Udyrfrykte, though the settlers knew him only as death. The Udyrfrykte came to the newly completed mead hall and wreaked vengeance upon those who had shattered the peace of his long, cold sleep. He killed without warning, without mercy, reducing the Thirsk Nords to half their number. It was the valiant sorcerer Eldrid Ice-Light who finally drove the beast back to his lair beneath the frozen lake, and used his magicka to seal the entrance with a great wall of ice. The horror was over, but the price was great. It took the settlers two months to fix the damage done by the Udyrfrykte, and with so many strong hands now gone, it was slow and tedious work.

Finally, Thirsk stood tall and proud once more. But even though the settlers had worked together to construct the mead hall and drive away the threat of the Udyrfrykte, tensions quickly grew over who would serve as their leader. Most of the men considered Hrothmund the Red their de facto chieftain, as he was the strongest and most capable of the lot. But one warrior, Drengr Bronze-Helm, disagreed. He thought himself most capable to rule over Thirsk, and loudly voiced his opposition to Hrothmund. Knowing that conflict and discord would only serve to destroy the new life they had worked so hard to create, Hrothmund the Red exercised his only true option - he swung his great axe and beheaded Drengr Bronze-Helm where he stood. The Nords appreciated more than anything a warrior's prowess in battle, and Drengr's slaying proved to them that Hrothmund was indeed most worthy to be Thirsk's chieftain. So that the other Nords would never forget he had proven his right to lead, Hrothmund placed Drengr's head on a pedestal in the center of Thirsk's main hall, for all to see.

And so began Thirsk's most time-honored tradition. Any warrior, regardless of race or sex, could claim leadership of the mead hall by displaying the most impressive battle trophy on the great hall's pedestal. So long as the spirit of Hrothmund the Red consented, that warrior would be named chieftain.

### Hrothmund's Bane

For twenty-one years Hrothmund the Red ruled over Thirsk and its residents as chieftain. With his soft voice and great axe, Hrothmund brought peace and prosperity to Thirsk. But peace proved to be Hrothmund's undoing, for the mighty Nord grew restless in the warmth and safety of the mead hall. He longed for battle and adventure, to feel the frost in his veins once more, and could ignore the call of valor no longer. When word spread of a giant, bloodthirsty white wolf terrorizing travelers in the Moesring Mountains, Hrothmund took up his great axe and set out to defeat the beast alone. The men of the mountains named him Ondjage, the Fell Wolf. The beast measured as large as an ox, with fur as white as new-fallen snow, and it was said no man or woman alive could bring Ondjage down. The words of the mountain folk proved true, for while Hrothmund did hew one leg from the Fell Wolf, Ondjage devoured the mighty Nord whole, leaving only his great axe as a grim reminder of man's failure against beast. Filled with sorrow and rage, the residents of Thirsk marched to the mountains in search of the wolf, called by them Hrothmund's Bane. Only together did they manage to slay Ondjage, and as family they feasted on his roasted flesh.

The following is a list of Thirsk's chieftains, since Hrothmund first ruled:



Hrothmund the Red. Nord male. Slew Drengr Bronze-Helm and presented his head as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for twenty-one years. Slain and devoured by Ondjage, the Fell Wolf.

Isgeror White-Wave. Nord female. Slew the necromancer Hildir Worm-Heart and presented his heart as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for four years.

Einarr. Nord male. Slew the frost giant Guolog and presented his foot as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for six years.

Gisl Round-Gut. Nord male. Slew Einarr and presented his sword as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for two months.

Einarr the Younger. Nord male. Slew Gisl Round-Gut and presented his stomach as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for seven years.

Grjotgaror. Nord male. Slew the white witch Katla and presented her staff as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for two years.

Amelie Bontecou. Breton female. Slew Grjotgaror and presented his head as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for three years.

Thorormr Storm-Killer. Nord male. Slew the brothers Ani and Ali and presented their enchanted hammers as battle trophies. Ruled over Thirsk for sixteen years.

Aegilief. Nord Female. Slew Oddny the Unfaithful and presented her hand as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for eight years.

Caccino Aurelia. Imperial male. Slew the Imperial hero Claudius Anzione and presented his sword as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for three weeks. Fraud.

Eldjar Bear-Skinner. Nord male. Slew the Imperial fraud Caccino Aurelia and presented his tongue as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for five years.

Falki the Fat. Nord male. Slew a pack of six rabid wolves and presented their claws as battle trophies. Ruled over Thirsk for three months. Succumbed to madness and death as a result of rabies.

Svana the Knife. Nord female. Slew Gretta Wolf-Child and presented her sword as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for four years.

Beinir White-Beard. Nord male. Slew three Orc raiders and presented their eyes as battle trophies. Ruled over Thirsk for twenty-two years.

Skjoldr Wolf-Runner. Nord male. Slew the wizard Griss the Yellow and presented his head as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for three years. Slain in the mead hall.

There is, here, a period of unrecorded histories. At some point, the Udyrfrykte was dealt with once and for all, but the leader of Thirsk in this time is unrecorded. There were, apparently, several other chieftains who came and went before the resumption of record. The Thirsk devotion to oral tradition means these names may forever be lost to history.

Girgun the Colossus. Nord male. Slew Thjold the Ill-Minded and presented his brains as a battle trophy. Ruled over Thirsk for six

years.

Vibeke the Stone. Nord female. Slew seven Imperial pirates and presented their helmets as battle trophies. Ruled over Thirsk for three years.

Hjarknir Green-Hand. Nord male. Slew an entire grove of Spriggans and presented their taproot hearts as battle trophies. Ruled Thirsk for twenty-seven years.

Bujold the Intrepid. Nord female. Slew the great beast of Ilfark and presented its stomach as a battle trophy. Rules Thirsk as of this writing.

Expansion:

The Thirsk mead hall is nearly the same today as it was at its founding, a testament to the quality of its construction. But while Thirsk itself did not grow, its inhabitants did, and before long the grand mead hall could not house all who wished to dwell within. So, over the years, many Nords have left Thirsk to establish their own private dwellings out in the wilderness of Solstheim, relying on the island's many caves and natural shelters. But those who left are always welcome back at Thirsk, and many return frequently to enjoy the mead hall's hospitalities. It is also important to note that although much time has passed since the group first left the Skaal village, the Skaal and Thirsk Nords have always remained civil to one another, and even trade resources on occasion.

Relationship with Raven Rock:

The Thirsk Nords hold the same relations with Raven Rock that they once held with the Empire when its presence was more

known on Solstheim: a deliberate disinterest and lack of complication. Both sides remain happy if they can plausibly believe the other doesn't exist. Which is not to say there is any cause for enmity; rather, there is simply no cause for fellowship among these two very differing cultures.

#### Law and Order Within Thirsk:

Within the Mead Hall, the Chieftain serves as judge, jury and executioner if necessary. The reality is that Thirsk has always been a fairly peaceful place, with camaraderie and goodwill the norm. Solstheim can be a harsh home, and the Nords of Thirsk have long realized that fighting each other isn't nearly as productive as battling the island's bears, wolves, draugr, Rieklings, and whatever other fell creatures may roam the land. Still, there is the occasional disagreement - which more often than naught ends in bloodshed - and every few years someone gets it into his head to challenge the chieftain to a blood duel to try to gain possession of Thirsk. Generally speaking, the Nords of Thirsk are one big, happy barbarian-like family. And, like any family, they have their squabbles.

#### The Ashtimes:

Since the eruption of the Red Mountain, the southern portion of Solstheim has been lost to waste and Dark Elf occupation. Thirsk sits just above the desolated area, though, and happily escaped the destruction that fell over much of the land. In the years since, Thirsk has taken its role as "haven" all the more seriously. They focus on hospitality, and on welcoming outsiders whether they seek respite from the southern ashlands or the northern chill.

# Thonar's Journal

*Thonar Silverblood*

Madanach is becoming unruly. You'd think that 20 years in prison would calm a beast like him down a bit. Maybe I should have let the Jarl execute him after the uprising after all.

Still, he's been invaluable in getting rid of several "problems" over the years. Maybe I'm overreacting. No one knows about our little arrangement. Not even the Forsworn. I wonder how they would react knowing their "King in Rags" was one of my most important assets?

This little shadow rebellion of his better not start to include me, though. If I find out he's even thinking about double-crossing me, I'll make sure he dies inside Cidhna Mine, like the animal he is.

# Timely Offer

*Tuldinwae*

Delvin,

I have a full score of glass arrows coming in. If you want a piece, I'll sell them to you for my cost. I need to keep the merchandise moving or else that bitch might catch on to our operation. If you want them, they'll be stashed under the docks in the usual place. I'll check back with you in a week.

Tuldinwae

# To A Concerned Citizen

*Anonymous*

Concerned Citizen,

You've received this letter because you're a businessman in Riften who's sick and tired of being pushed around by the Black-Briar Family and their cronies. You're sick of the Thieves Guild taking your last coin from your already meager earnings. And you're sick of the corruption that runs through Mistveil Keep like a disease. We at the Society of Mercantile Freedom in Riften are behind you and wish to unify to fight our common enemies! Join us, and together we'll stand up and smash the injustice that's ruined this once-fine city. If you're interested in becoming a part of our organization, simply mark your business with a white x and you'll be contacted by a representative.

The Society of Mercantile Freedom in Riften

# To Be Read Immediately!

*Indaryn*

Notice to all employees:

It's come to my attention that the last batch of Black-Briar Private Reserve was simply our standard Black-Briar Mead placed in the incorrect bottles. We sold six cases of the Private Reserve recently and they were all returned. To make amends, we've replaced the cases with the correct supply at our cost. Due to this blunder, the cost of those cases will be removed from this month's wages.

Indaryn



# To Milore From Nilara

*Nilara Ienth*

Milore,

I hope the day finds you well. Well, Athras and I have finally mustered the courage to return to Mournhold and pick up the pieces. We haven't been back to the manor in almost fifty years, but things haven't changed much. The city feels a bit empty... Barenziah's palace is still completely unoccupied and most of the Redoran Guard have been reassigned to other parts of Morrowind. They've continued to make improvements to Mournhold Temple, removing the last vestiges of Almalexia's mark and adding a new sanctuary. Plaza Brindisi Dorom has changed as well. House Indoril has erected a large building there to house all of the new pilgrims and priests that seem to have flocked here to pay their respects at the temple.

Athras has returned to work as a jewelcrafter and he's gaining quite a following. He's bringing in a good bit of coin, a little of which I've sent to you as usual. Things are going well, and at this rate, we'll have the manor restored to its former glory by winter. I know you're tired of hearing about it, but I implore you to reconsider my offer. We have plenty of room here, and both of you are always welcome to join us. I know it's tough out there, but suffering in that horrible place just to prove a point isn't necessary anymore. Just a little sisterly advice.

Nilara

# To The Brotherhood

*Maven Black-Briar*

Astrid,

I thought your people were supposed to be reliable. I've performed the Black Sacrament, I've paid the proper penance and I've waited patiently for results. If you can't handle a simple assassination, I'll find someone who can. I want this contract handled, and I want it handled immediately!

Maven Black-Briar

# To The Owner

*Kilthinius Dandoril*

To the owner of Riftweald Manor,

I'm not accustomed to working under these conditions of secrecy, but your generous compensation for the inconvenience was more than adequate to complete the project. Both the balcony ramp and the floor mechanism were interesting projects, and I hope you'll find them functioning to your surprisingly specific specifications. If you should have any further need for my talents, please call on me again.

Kilthinius Dandoril

# Torkild's Letter To Wulf

*Torkild*

Dear Wulf,

I'm writing to you now as I already feel my mind going. I fear that soon I will not be able to write at all. I came to the wilderness to better know the All-Maker. But in the wilds I found a force greater than any we've known.

It is seductive, this power I've been granted. I know you would not approve, so I don't dare show my face to you. But know that I realized the greatest potential of my strength before the last.

I hope to one day meet you before the All-Maker, brother.

- Torkild

# Torn Note

*Firir*

They fell upon us at dusk. Dozens of them. The caravan guards were dead in moments. They took everyone else back to the pens. Blinded those who tried to resist.

One by one, they've taken the others away- feeding us to those monstrosities, or worse. I don't have much time left. Eydis, my love, if you ever get this- forgive me.

Firir

# Torn Note

*Anonymous*

“The single richest treasure trove in all of Solstheim” they said. Bah. Looks like this place was cleaned out centuries ago. The Stalhrim might be worth something, but my pickaxe ain’t even good enough to chip it.

Still, I can’t shake the feeling that there’s something I’m missing. There’s an odd draft in this room - secret passage, maybe?

I’ve locked myself in until those bandits are good and gone. I suppose I’ll keep looking. Not much else I can do.

# Touching The Sky

*Parmion Saldor*

Touching the Sky

by

Parmion Saldor

Translated from Falmer Text

by

Calcelmo of Markarth

Many of the most dedicated snow elves once committed themselves to a tireless journey through the Chantry to the Inner Sanctum. They carried with them the paramount desire to become one with their god, Auri-El. Though all set out with the determination to prove their worth, few were prepared for the trials that lay ahead. For the path to Auri-El was not without its tribulations. The pilgrims struggled not only against the natural elements of the treacherous vale, but with a myriad of tests upon their faith and loyalty.

It is told that many simply could not continue on the path for long before turning back. Some argue that the rebuke they endured upon their return was crueler than any punishment that may have lay ahead of them along the path. In their failed



attempt, they were forced to live in the shadow of those who did continue on to achieve the great glory and honor of ascension into the light. Forever after, their faith and loyalty in Auri-El would be scrutinized and their remaining days filled with shame and regret.

Tales of those who reached the Inner Sanctum are not without their share of woes. It is said upon their arrival that many were mere shells of the person they had once been. Some were quite mad from sleeplessness and starved to the point of frailty. By the end of their journey, the marvel that they had strength yet to carry their vessel and ascend the stairs of the temple was the last true testament of their loyalty. Regardless of each individual's tale, the final words remain eerily similar. It is said that every pilgrim ascended, bathed in light, a look of relief and contentment on their face.

# Tova's Farewell

*Tova Shatter-Shield*

First Friga, now Nilsine? How can I bare the loss of a second daughter, when I'm barely over the death of a first?

I simply cannot find any reason to continue living. My two little girls are gone. The lights of my life have been extinguished. My only hope now is to be reunited with them in the halls of Sovngarde - if the eternal can suffer the company of one who has taken her own life. If not, then wherever my soul may end up - in Oblivion, or elsewhere - has to be better than this terrible existence.

Farewell. Remember me fondly, and often.

Tova Shatter-Shield

# Training Chests

*Anonymous*

These chests are for practice use only. Please refrain from using them for storage. The locks on these chests have been specially constructed to reset themselves after a short amount of time. If you have any issues, please speak to Niruin.

# Treasure Hunter's Note

*Anonymous*

I'm close to finding the [item name]. I've tracked it down to [dungeon name]. It's apparently guarded by a [boss creature's name].

# Twin Secrets

*Brarilu Theran*

These secrets I lay down, knowing full well that none may ever take advantage of them. I am upon my death bed, and am loathe to see knowledge of any sort lost to the mists of time. Take these as the foolish reminiscences of an old man, or the insights of a master enchanter. I care not which.

It is well known that enchanting is limited where it once was not. The best enchanters of this age can imbue almost any spells into the metal and leather of armor and weapons. However, once enchanted, such an item will not enchant again. It is called the Law of Firsts. The first enchantment is the only one that takes.

In my life, I've traveled widely. I've seen Summerset Isle, communed with Psijiics, walked the shores of Akavir. I had hoped to see lost Atmora before I passed, that is not to be. I have even done the unthinkable. I have spoken to a dragon.

Dragons are said to be gone from the world. Yet I found one. Sheltered in the smoking ruins of Vvardenfell, I came upon it. My magic proved to be sufficient to defeat the beast. If that gives you cause to wonder, I will not deny that I was once a pyromancer of great skill.

Exhausted and near the end of my spells, I parlayed with the wyrm, offering it life if it would share it's secrets. Haughty to

the end, it agreed to one secret for one life. I asked for its name, but it told me it would rather die than surrender that. Instead it offered me something else. And that is how I learned how to defy the Law of Firsts.

The law itself is inviolate. However, the skillful enchanter can weave two enchantments simultaneously into an item. For men and elves, the limit is two. The dragon said that men and elves have two arms, two legs, two eyes and two ears. I asked why that mattered, and the beast just laughed.

The enchanter must weave one enchantment with the left hand while weaving the other with the right. The eyes must focus on one and only one enchantment, while the ears only pay attention to the other. When I asked about my legs, the beast laughed again.

I spent two years mastering the technique. Just last month I made a sword with both fire and fear enchantments. Now I am too weak to make another. I go to my death victorious, for I have done what no other enchanter in modern times has done.

# Ulyn's Journal

*Ulyn*

Eydis stayed back on the gears to hold off those metal monsters, but she hasn't shown up so I'm going to press on and hope for the best. Unfortunately, my progress has been blocked by a gate that I can't pry open. Following the pipes, it appears that the gate is controlled by the large boiler in the center of the room. I'm going to try shooting the resonators with an arrow to see if that opens the gate.

My first attempt didn't work very well. Each of the resonators appeared to route steam when I shot them and things on the boiler started to glow blue, which seemed like a good sign. Unfortunately, once I shot a few of the resonators, the lights started turning orange, all the steam vented from the boiler, and several dwarven constructs came out and attacked me. Still, the Visage of Mzund must be here so I'm going to try again.

I'm sure there has to be a trick to it. Perhaps if I can fill the central boiler with just the right amount of pressure. I seem to recall

that three parts lit up when I hit the resonator on the left. I'm going to try from the right this time and keep track as I go.

# Umana's Journal

*Umana*

It's been about a week since Valie went missing and now Endrast is gone too. We found blood leading over to the barred off doorway, but Sulla seems to think that they found a way through and that they are trying to cut him out of the discovery.

He keeps saying that we need to press on. We've manage to break through into another section of the ruins, an "Animonculory", where the dwarves would produce their automatons.

We learned the hard way that the metal creatures are still alive in there and it hasn't improved Yag's mood at all. She holds that the Khajiit brothers aren't involved with the disappearances and has been keeping a hard eye on Sulla.

The rations have all but run out and we are going to have to decide soon whether to brave the storm or try to push further into the ruins. I don't know if the echoes of screams I've heard in my sleep are those of our missing comrades, or my own nightmares.



# Uncommon Taste - Signed

## *The Gourmet*

To my old and dear friend Anton,

I will never forget the kindness you and the entire Virane family paid to me, when I visited High Rock those many years ago. We were both young, impetuous, and foolish, and those were dangerous times for us all. But we knew even then, as we surely know now, that our battlefield is the kitchen. Our sword, the spoon. Our enemy, hunger.

And now, thanks to your guidance and friendship, I can share our love of Breton cuisine with all of Tamriel. For this cookbook is not just a collection of recipes, but the sum total of my life's work, and a testament to the power of passion.

Your friend in food,

The Gourmet

Congratulations!

By opening this volume you have taken the first step on a truly epic journey, a voyage through the vast landscape of Breton food and its myriad joys and wonders. You will explore scents, flavors and textures so exquisite, they will seem impossible. But they are more than possible!

Indeed, by following the carefully selected recipes presented in this cookbook, you will prepare extraordinary dishes with such ordinary ease, those around you will suspect sorcery. But the only magic is that which exists in your own heart, the passion you possess for creating delicious, amazing food that can be prepared easily, and enjoyed endlessly.

Start here, and some day, you too can be a Gourmet!

### Sunlight Souffle'

#### Ingredients

- 2 1/2 Ounces Cow's Cheese
- 1 Ounce Butter
- 1 Ounce Flour
- 9 Ounces Milk
- A Dash of Salt
- A Dash of Pepper
- A Cupful of Ground Nutmeg

#### Recipe

- Stoke the flames of your oven, and achieve a moderate heat.
- Grate the cheese into thin shavings by running a finely honed elven dagger over the block.
- Separate the egg whites from the yolks, and beat the whites vigorously until they thicken.

- Begin preparation of the signature Sunshine Sauce - melt the butter, and add in the flour while stirring continuously until well blended. Move the mixture to a smaller flame and begin gently stirring in the milk. It is crucial that you do not stop stirring! Continue to do so for ten minutes, until the mixture thickens. Then, and only then, will the Sunshine Sauce be considered ready.

- Add the salt, pepper and nutmeg, and remove from the flame.

- Add in the grated cheese, and then the egg yolks. Stir well until fully blended. Then, gently add in the egg whites with a spoon made of carved hickory wood.

- Gently pour the mix into four stonework souffle' dishes, filling each nearly (but not quite!) to the top.

- Put the dishes in your moderately hot oven and shut that door! Keep sealed for 25 minutes, or your scrumptious suns will rise, only to fall down flat into the oven's abyss.

- Remove after 25 minutes, and serve immediately.

Behold, the brilliance of the sun, and the exquisite flavor of the Sunshine Souffle'!

Potage le Magnifique

Ingredients

- 4 Cups Chicken Broth

- 4 Cups Beef Broth

- 2 1/2 Ounces Butter

- 1 Wooden Flagon of Flour
- 1 Cup Diced Carrots
- 1/2 Cup Diced Onions

## Recipe

- Stoke the flames of your open-pit fire, and achieve a low heat.
- Combine all ingredients into a large soup pot.
- Stir vigorously!
- Once hot, pour into earthen soup bowls immediately!

Behold, the Gourmet's signature dish - the Potage le Magnifique!

But wait. I know what you're wondering. "That's it? Is that all there is to it? What's the secret of the Gourmet?"

Do you really expect me to give away the secret to my most popular dish? Well guess what? I will! For that secret, my friends, is YOU! That's right, the Potage le Magnifique is delicious, and extraordinary. Using just the simple ingredients listed, you will create a potage that is both hearty and delicious. But in order to make the Potage le Magnifique truly magnificent, it takes the imagination of a truly inspired chef. Do you have that gift?

I have served bowls of the Potage le Magnifique that have caused grown men to weep with with joy. Can you guess what I added? Can you create... magic?

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# Unsent Afflicted Letter

*Anonymous*

Beloved Duphraime - I know you thought me a fool not to leave Cul Aloue with you and the others, but I couldn't abandon our children to the wasting sickness. Whatever horrible fates you may have guessed for us, however, are probably far from the truth of what has happened.

I send this letter in hopes that it will sooth a worried mind.

Maybe a week after you left with the rest of the healthy folk, I was patrolling the low wall by foot. Even our poor Kelter had taken the illness and was unfit to ride. I was praying that no bandits would be foolish enough to risk infection for our trifling goods. Then, outlined against the pyre-light of the day's lost, I saw a long figure marching towards the village.

The stranger was a Sumerset elf who introduced himself as Orchendor, and with him came a change in destiny for the folk of Cul Aloue.

Orchendor walked among our people without fear of the wasting sickness that had taken root in the marrow of every remaining villager, myself included by now. For days he ate and spoke with us, learning each name. He calmed the folk in a way my lying prayers could not. Spirits became cheerful that days before awaited bleakly in the death's parlor.

Orchendor assembled us then, crowding the villagers into Cullete's barn, she being the most badly stricken at that time, and unable to move without being carried by Orchendor himself.

The good elf then gave us tidings that none could have guessed. He claimed that the sickness was not a curse on our village, as we were sure it had been. Rather, Orchendor insisted, it was a boon, a beacon which drew him to us. He told us that he served the Daedric Prince Peryite.

I know what you're thinking - we burned Dina and Lucas not three years before, after all. Cul Aloue would never suffer the heresies of a Daedra Worshipper in our midst. Yet, we did. Not only that, but we raptly heard what he had to say. Maybe you think we were too sick, too weak, but we weren't.

Orchendor apologized for our dead, saying he came with all haste to Cul Aloue. None had perished since his arrival, though several seemed on the brink in the hours before. He wanted to take us to a new home, a place where we could live out our days in worship of Peryite as his chosen. As his Afflicted.

Nobody refused. Some were carried in carts and litters, but all made the trek with Orchendor across the border into Skyrim, leaving Cul Aloue an empty, haunted place.

We have since lived in refuge, the ruins of an ancient Dwarven city. Other Afflicted live with us, many with similar tales to that of Cul Aloue, bound together by our divine infection. Though you could say we are all sick, the effects of the sickness no longer diminish us, but give us strength. We heal ourselves with liquors and tinctures that other men would call poison.

Orchendor keeps us safe here, by the blessing of our Prince Peryite. I am now an Apostle of the Afflicted, tasked to disseminate the teachings of Peryite to our Afflicted.

And so, sweet Duphraime, the spirit of Cul Aloue lives on. I will never blame you for abandoning us that day, now long past. In truth, I am saddened that you were not likewise chosen by Peryite to awake with these oozing lungs. Peryite preserve you, dear husband, and know your children are well.

# Until Next Time

*Anonymous*

Last night was the most wonderful night of my life. The things you showed me... the things we did... I could never have dreamt that it was possible. Who even knew that someone could manipulate their body in that manner while wearing Daedric armor boots? You are a true master of the Dibellan Arts, my love... a credit to your religion. Perhaps we'll meet again soon but next time, allow me to bring the trout.

Your Secret Lover

# Urag's Note

*Urag*

Book - [book name]

Location - [book location]

# Vald's Debt

*Anonymous*

This document absolves Vald of Riften (borrower) from all debts and accounts owed to Maven Black-Briar of Riften (lender). This document should be held in a secured location until such time as the lender considers the debt satisfied. In the event of the borrower's death, the debt will be collected from any remaining assets or property owned as determined by the acting Steward of Riften.

# Valerica's Journal

*Valerica*

27th Last Seed

Harkon's shortsightedness is becoming a serious problem. I've warned him time and time again that his foolish prophecy would cast far too much light on our people and yet he refuses to so much as listen to a word I say. I've become less a wife and more of an annoyance in his eyes. Devoting attention to my work is the only solace I can find while enduring his ridiculous crusade.

28th Last Seed

I've had a breakthrough today. I was able to attune the portal vessel to the Soul Cairn properly by using a small sample of ingredients. Although the portal opened only for a few seconds, I'm confident that with the proper formula, it can be sustained indefinitely. I feel like I'm missing a key ingredient, something of sufficient potency that can resist the forces trying to prevent my intrusion. Communing with the Ideal Masters has proved worthless. They speak in riddles and offer no assistance whether I ensure them a steady supply of souls or not. If I'm to escape Harkon's clutches, I need to keep the portal open long enough to carry me away from here... forever if need be.

3rd Hearthfire

I've done it! After wasting thousands of gold coins on components, I've discovered how to sustain the portal. I'm listing the components below without the proper amounts for my own protection. As a secondary precaution, I am combining my own blood into the formula which should prevent anyone from being able to duplicate it and following me into the Soul Cairn.

The formula consists of:

Finely ground bone meal

Purified void salt

Soul gem shards

Using the proper measurements, place the above in the silver-lined portal vessel and add blood as a reactive agent.

I will make my way into the Soul Cairn tomorrow after I gather my things and prepare for a potentially lengthy exile. More importantly, I must enact my plans with Serana, and get her to Dimhollow Crypt as soon as possible.



# Valmir's Orders

*Anonymous*

You will proceed to the ruins of Forelhost to retrieve the Mask from the Dragon Cult there.

If you are discovered, impersonate an officer. It is unlikely that anyone from Skyrim will be clever enough to see through the disguise.

Once you have obtained the Mask, bring it to Labyrinthian.

# Vampire's Note

*Malkus*

I have new orders for you.

Prepare an ambush just south of the Dragon Bridge. Take the Moth Priest to Forebears' Holdout for safekeeping until I can break his will.

- Malkus

# Varieties Of Faith In The Empire

*Brother Mikhael Karkuxor*

This is my best attempt at a listing of the pantheons and associated divine spirits of Tamriel's dominant cultures. This list is by no means complete (the Imperial City of Cyrodiil alone boasts a vast host of saints and holy spirits). It only includes the most important spirits revered by native members of the culture. Other et'Ada, especially Daedra, are often familiar known to many cultures, though specific names are included here only when they possess a particular cultural significance. The omission of any reference to the worships of the Argonians of Black Marsh is a result of my complete inadequacy in reconciling the obscure and contradictory accounts available to me on that subject.

## THE EIGHT PANTHEONS

CYRODIIL: Akatosh, Dibella, Arkay, Zenithar, Mara, Stendarr, Kynareth, Julianos, Shezarr, Tiber Septim, Morihaus, Reman

SKYRIM: Alduin, Dibella, Orkey, Tsun, Mara, Stuhn, Kyne, Jhunal, Shor, Ysmir, Herma-Mora, Maloch

ALTMER: Auri-El, Trinimac, Magnus, Syrabane, Y'ffre, Xarxes, Mara, Stendarr, Lorkhan, Phynaster

BOSMER: Auri-El, Y'ffre, Arkay, Z'en, Xarxes, Baan Dar, Mara, Stendarr, Lorkhan, Herma-Mora, Jone, Jode

DUNMER: Almalexia, Vivec, Sotha Sil, Boethiah, Mephala, Azura, Lorkhan, Nerevar, Molag Bal, Malacath, Sheogorath, Mehrunes Dagon

YOKUDA: Satakai, Ruptga, Tu'whacca, Zeht, Morwha, Tava, Malooc, Diagna, Sep, HoonDing, Leki, Onsi,

BRETONY: Akatosh, Magnus, Y'ffre, Dibella, Arkay, Zenithar, Mara, Stendarr, Kynareth, Julianos, Sheor, Phynaster

ELSWEYR: Alkosh, Khenarthi, Riddle'Thar, ja-Kha'jay, Mara, S'rendarr, Lorkhaj, Rajhin, Baan Dar, Azurah, Sheggorath

#### NOTES ON THE DIVINE SPIRITS OF THE PANTHEONS

Akatosh (Dragon God of Time): Akatosh is the chief deity of the Nine Divines (the major religious cult of Cyrodiil and its provinces), and one of two deities found in every Tamrielic religion (the other is Lorkhan). He is generally considered to be the first of the Gods to form in the Beginning Place; after his establishment, other spirits found the process of being easier and the various pantheons of the world emerged. He is the ultimate God of the Cyrodilic Empire, where he embodies the qualities of endurance, invincibility, and everlasting legitimacy.

Alduin (World Eater): Alduin is the Nordic variation of Akatosh, and only superficially resembles his counterpart in the Nine Divines. For example, Alduin's sobriquet, 'the world eater', comes from myths that depict him as the horrible, ravaging firestorm that destroyed the last world to begin this

one. Nords therefore see the god of time as both creator and harbinger of the apocalypse. He is not the chief of the Nordic pantheon (in fact, that pantheon has no chief; see Shor, below) but its wellspring, albeit a grim and frightening one.

**Alkosh (Dragon King of Cats):** Pre-ri'Datta Dynasty Anaquinine deity. A variation on the Altmeri Auri-El, and thus an Akatosh-as-culture-hero for the earliest Khajiiti. His worship was co-opted during the establishment of the Riddle-T'har, and he still enjoys immense popularity in Elsweyr's wasteland regions. He is depicted as a fearsome dragon, a creature the Khajiit say 'is just a real big cat'. He repelled an early Aldmeri pogrom of Pelinal Whitestrake during mythic times.

**Almalexia (Mother Morrowind):** Most traces of Akatosh disappeared from ancient Chimer legends during their so-called 'exodus', primarily due to that god's association and esteem with the Altmeri. However, most aspects of Akatosh which seem so important to the mortal races, namely immortality, historicity, and genealogy, have conveniently resurfaced in Almalexia, the most popular of Morrowind's divine Tribunal.

**Arkay (God of the Cycle of Life and Death):** Member of the Nine Divines pantheon, and popular elsewhere as well. Arkay is often more important in those cultures where his father, Akatosh, is either less related to time or where his time aspects are difficult to comprehend by the layman. He is the god of burials and funeral rites, and is sometimes associated with the seasons. His priests are staunch opponents of necromancy and all forms of the undead. It is said that Arkay did not exist before the world was created by the gods under Lorkhan's

supervision/urging/trickery. Therefore, he is sometimes called the Mortals' God.

**Auri-El (King of the Aldmer):** The Elven Akatosh is Auri-El. Auri-El is the soul of Anui-El, who, in turn, is the soul of Anu the Everything. He is the chief of most Aldmeri pantheons. Most Altmeri and Bosmeri claim direct descent from Auri-El. In his only known moment of weakness, he agreed to take his part in the creation of the mortal plane, that act which forever sundered the Elves from the spirit worlds of eternity. To make up for it, Auri-El led the original Aldmer against the armies of Lorkhan in mythic times, vanquishing that tyrant and establishing the first kingdoms of the Altmer, Altmora and Old Ehlnofoy. He then ascended to heaven in full observance of his followers so that they might learn the steps needed to escape the mortal plane.

**Azura (Goddess of Dusk and Dawn):** Azura was the god-ancestor that taught the Chimer the mysteries needed to be different than the Altmer. Some of her more conventional teachings are sometimes attributed to Boethiah. In the stories, Azura is often more a communal cosmic force for the race as a whole than an ancestor or a god. Also known as the Anticipation of Sotha Sil. In Elsweyr, Azurah is nearly a wholly separate entity, yet she is still tied into the origins of Khajiiti out of Altmeri stock.

**Baan Dar (The Bandit God):** In most regions, Baan Dar is a marginal deity, a trickster spirit of thieves and beggars. In Elsweyr he is more important, and is regarded as the Pariah. In this aspect, Baan Dar becomes the cleverness or desperate genius of the long-suffering Khajiit, whose last minute plans

always upset the machinations of their (Elven or Human) enemies.

**Boethiah (Prince of Plots):** Heralded by the Prophet Veloth, Boethiah is the original god-ancestor of the Dark Elves. Through his illuminations, the eventual 'Chimer', or Changed Folk, renounced all ties to the Aldmer and founded a new nation based on Daedric principles. All manner of Dark Elven cultural 'advances' are attributed to Boethiah, from philosophy to magic to 'responsible' architecture. Ancient Velothi allegories are uniformly heroic successes of Boethiah over enemies of every type, foundation stories of Chimeri struggle. Also known as the Anticipation of Almalexia.

**Diagna (Orichalc God of the Sideways Blade):** Hoary thuggish cult of the Redguards. Originated in Yokuda during the Twenty Seven Snake Folk Slaughter. Diagna was an avatar of the HoonDing (the Yokudan God of Make Way, see below) that achieved permanence. He was instrumental to the defeat of the Lefthanded Elves, as he brought orichalc weapons to the Yokudan people to win the fight. In Tamriel, he led a very tight knit group of followers against the Orcs of Orsinium during the height of their ancient power, but then faded into obscurity. He is now little more than a local power spirit of the Dragontail mountains.

**Dibella (Goddess of Beauty):** Popular god of the Nine Divines. In Cyrodiil, she has nearly a dozen different cults, some devoted to women, some to artists and aesthetics, and others to erotic instruction.

**Herma-Mora (The Woodland Man):** Ancient Atmoran demon who, at one time, nearly seduced the Nords into becoming Aldmer. Most Ysgramor myths are about escaping the wiles of

old Herma-Mora. Also called the Demon of Knowledge, he is vaguely related to the cult origins of the Morag Tong ('Foresters Guild'), if only by association with his brother/sister, Mephala.

HoonDing (The Make Way God): Yokudan spirit of 'perseverance over infidels'. The HoonDing has historically materialized whenever the Redguards need to 'make way' for their people. In Tamrielic history this has only happened three times—twice in the first era during the Ra Gada invasion and once during the Tiber War. In this last incarnation, the HoonDing was said to have been either a sword or a crown, or both.

Jhunul (Rune God): The Nordic god of hermetic orders. After falling out of favor with the rest of that pantheon, he became Julianos of the Nine Divines. He is absent in modern Skyrim mythology.

Jode (Big Moon God): Aldmeri god of the Big Moon. Also called Masser or Mara's Tear. In Khajiti religion, Jode is only one aspect of the Lunar Lattice, or ja-Kha'jay.

Jone (Little Moon God): Aldmeri god of the Little Moon. Also called Secunda or Stendarr's Sorrow. In Khajiti religion, Jone is only one aspect of the Lunar Lattice, or ja-Kha'jay.

Julianos (God of Wisdom and Logic): Often associated with Jhunul, the Nordic father of language and mathematics, Julianos is the Cyrodilic god of literature, law, history, and contradiction. Monastic orders founded by Tiber Septim and dedicated to Julianos are the keepers of the Elder Scrolls.

Kyne (Kiss At the End): Nordic Goddess of the Storm. Widow of Shor and favored god of warriors. She is often called the Mother



of Men. Her daughters taught the first Nords the use of the *thu'um*, or Storm Voice.

**Kynareth (Goddess of Air):** Kynareth is a member of the Nine Divines, the strongest of the Sky spirits. In some legends, she is the first to agree to Lorkhan's plan to invent the mortal plane, and provides the space for its creation in the void. She is also associated with rain, a phenomenon said not to occur before the removal of Lorkhan's divine spark.

**Leki (Saint of the Spirit Sword):** Goddess daughter of Tall Papa, Leki is the goddess of aberrant swordsmanship. The Na-Totambu of Yokuda warred to a standstill during the mythic era to decide who would lead the charge against the Lefthanded Elves. Their swordmasters, though, were so skilled in the Best Known Cuts as to be matched evenly. Leki introduced the Ephemeral Feint. Afterwards, a victor emerged and the war with the Aldmer began.

**Lorkhan (The Missing God):** This Creator-Trickster-Tester deity is in every Tamrielic mythic tradition. His most popular name is the Aldmeri 'Lorkhan', or Doom Drum. He convinced or contrived the Original Spirits to bring about the creation of the mortal plane, upsetting the status quo—much like his father Padomay had introduced instability into the universe in the Beginning Place. After the world is materialized, Lorkhan is separated from his divine center, sometimes involuntarily, and wanders the creation of the *et'Ada*. He and his metaphysical placement in the 'scheme of things' is interpreted a variety of ways. In *Morrowind*, for example, he is a being related to the *Psijiic Endeavor*, a process by which mortals are charged with transcending the gods that created them. To the High Elves, he is the most unholy of all higher powers, as he forever broke

their connection to the spirit plane. In the legends, he is almost always an enemy of the Aldmer and, therefore, a hero of early Mankind.

Lorkhaj (Moon Beast): Pre-ri'Datta Dynasty Anaquinine deity, easily identified with the Missing God, Lorkhan.

Magnus (Magus): The god of sorcery, Magnus withdrew from the creation of the world at the last second, though it cost him dearly. What is left of him on the world is felt and controlled by mortals as magic. One story says that, while the idea was thought up by Lorkhan, it was Magnus who created the schematics and diagrams needed to construct the mortal plane. He is sometimes represented by an astrolabe, a telescope, or, more commonly, a staff. Cyrodilic legends say he can inhabit the bodies of powerful magicians and lend them his power. Associated with Zurin Arctus, the Underking.

Malacath (God of Curses): Malacath is the reanimated dung that was Trinimac. A somewhat weak but vengeful Daedra, the Dark Elves say he is also Malak, the god-king of the orcs. He always tests the Dunmer for physical weakness.

Malooc (Horde King): An enemy god of the Ra Gada. Led the goblins against the Redguards during the first era. Fled east when the army of the HoonDing overtook his goblin hordes.

Mauloch (Malacath): An Orcish god, Mauloch troubled the heirs of King Harald for a long time. Fled east after his defeat at the Battle of Dragon Wall, ca. 1E660. His rage was said to fill the sky with his sulphurous hatred, later called the "Year of Winter in Summer".

**Mara (Goddess of Love):** Nearly universal goddess. Origins started in mythic times as a fertility goddess. In Skyrim, Mara is a handmaiden of Kyne. In the Empire, she is Mother-Goddess. She is sometimes associated with Nir of the 'Anuad', the female principle of the cosmos that gave birth to creation. Depending on the religion, she is either married to Akatosh or Lorkhan, or the concubine of both.

**Mehrunes Dagon (God of Destruction):** Popular Daedric power. He is associated with natural dangers like fire, earthquakes, and floods. In some cultures, though, Dagon is merely a god of bloodshed and betrayal. He is an especially important deity in Morrowind, where he represents its near-inhospitable terrain.

**Mephala (Androgyne):** Mephala is the Webspinner, or the Spider God. In Morrowind, he/she was the ancestor that taught the Chimer the skills they would need to evade their enemies or to kill them with secret murder. Enemies were numerous in those days since the Chimer were a small faction. He/she, along with Boethiah, organized the clan systems that eventually became the basis for the Great Houses. He/she founded the Morag Tong. Also called the Anticipation of Vivec.

**Molag Bal (God of Schemes, King of Rape):** Daedric power of much importance in Morrowind. There, he is always the archenemy of Boethiah, the Prince of Plots. He is the main source of the obstacles to the Dunmer (and preceding Chimer) people. In the legends, Molag Bal always tries to upset the bloodlines of Houses or otherwise ruin Dunmeri 'purity'. A race of supermonsters, said to live in Molag Amur, are the result of his seduction of Vivec during the previous era.

**Morihaus (First Breath of Man):** Ancient cultural hero god of the Cyro-Nordics. Legend portrays him as the Taker of the

Citadel, an act of mythic times that established Human control over the Valley Heartland. He is often associated with the Nordic powers of thu'um, and therefore with Kynareth.

Morwha (Teat God): Yokudan fertility goddess. Fundamental deity in the Yokudan pantheon, and the favorite of Tall Papa's wives. Still worshipped in various areas of Hammerfell, including Stros M'kai. Morwha is always portrayed as four-armed, so that she can 'grab more husbands'.

Nerevar (Godkiller): The Chimeri king of Resdayn, the Golden Age of old Veloth. Slain during the Battle of Red Mountain, Nerevar was the Herald of the Triune Way, and is the foremost of the saints of Dunmeri faith. He is said to have killed Dumac, the Last Dwarven King, and feasted on his heart.

Onsi (Boneshaver): Notable warrior god of the Yokudan Ra Gada, Onsi taught Mankind how to pull their knives into swords.

Orkey (Old Knocker): A loan-god of the Nords, who seem to have taken up his worship during Aldmeri rule of Atmora. Nords believe they once lived as long as Elves until Orkey appeared; through heathen trickery, he fooled them into a bargain that 'bound them to the count of winters'. At one time, legends say, Nords only had a lifespan of six years due to Orkey's foul magic. Shor showed up, though, and, through unknown means, removed the curse, throwing most of it onto the nearby Orcs.

Phynaster: Hero-god of the Summerset Isles, who taught the Altmer how to naturally live another hundred years by using a shorter walking stride.

Rajhin (Footpad): Thief god of the Khajiiti, who grew up in the Black Kiergo section of Senchal. The most famous burglar in Elsweyr's history, Rajhin is said to have stolen a tattoo from the neck of Empress Kintyra as she slept.

Reman (The Cyrodiil): Culture god-hero of the Second Empire, Reman was the greatest hero of the Akaviri Trouble. Indeed, he convinced the invaders to help him build his own empire, and conquered all of Tamriel except for Morrowind. He instituted the rites of becoming Emperor, which included the ritual gas to the Amulet of Kings, a soulgem of immense power. His Dynasty was ended by the Dunmeri Morag Tong at the end of the first era. Also called the Worldly God.

Riddle'Thar (Two-Moons Dance): The cosmic order deity of the Khajiiti, the Riddle'Thar was revealed to Elsweyr by the prophet Rid-Thar-ri'Datta, the Mane. The Riddle'Thar is more a set of guidelines by which to live than a single entity, but some of his avatars like to appear as humble messengers of the gods. Also known as the Sugar God.

Ruptga (Tall Papa): Chief deity of the Yokudan pantheon. Ruptga, more commonly 'Tall Papa', was the first god to figure out how to survive the Hunger of Satakal. Following his lead, the other gods learned the 'Walkabout', or a process by which they can persist beyond one lifetime. Tall Papa set the stars in the sky to show lesser spirits how to do this, too. When there were too many spirits to keep track of, though, Ruptga created a helper out the dead skin of past worlds. This helper is Sep (see below), who later creates the world of mortals.

Satakal (The Worldskin): Yokudan god of everything. A fusion of the concepts of Anu and Padomay. Basically, Satakal is much like the Nordic Alduin, who destroys one world to begin the

next. In Yokudan mythology, Satakal had done (and still does) this many times over, a cycle which prompted the birth of spirits that could survive the transition. These spirits ultimately become the Yokudan pantheon. Popular god of the Alik'r nomads.

**Shegorath (The Mad God):** The fearful obeisance of Shegorath is widespread, and is found in most Tamrielic quarters. Contemporary sources indicate that his roots are in Aldmeri creation stories; therein, he is 'born' when Lorkhan's divine spark is removed. One crucial myth calls him the 'Sithis-shaped hole' of the world.

**Sheor (Bad Man):** In Bretony, the Bad Man is the source of all strife. He seems to have started as the god of crop failure, but most modern theologians agree that he is a demonized version of the Nordic Shor, born during the dark years after the fall of Saarthal.

**Sep (The Snake):** Yokudan version of Lorkhan. Sep is born when Tall Papa creates someone to help him regulate the spirit trade. Sep, though, is driven crazy by the hunger of Satakal, and he convinces some of the gods to help him make an easier alternative to the Walkabout. This, of course, is the world as we know it, and the spirits who followed Sep become trapped here, to live out their lives as mortals. Sep is punished by Tall Papa for his transgressions, but his hunger lives on as a void in the stars, a 'non-space' that tries to upset mortal entry into the Far Shores.

**Shezarr (God of Man):** Cyrodilic version of Lorkhan, whose importance suffers when Akatosh comes to the fore of Imperial (really, Alessian) religion. Shezarr was the spirit behind all human undertaking, especially against Aldmeri aggression. He

is sometimes associated with the founding of the first Cyrodilic battlemages. In the present age of racial tolerance, Shezarr is all but forgotten.

**Shor (God of the Underworld):** Nordic version of Lorkhan, who takes sides with Men after the creation of the world. Foreign gods (i.e., Elven ones) conspire against him and bring about his defeat, dooming him to the underworld. Atmoran myths depict him as a bloodthirsty warrior king who leads the Nords to victory over their Aldmeri oppressors time and again. Before his doom, Shor was the chief of the gods. Sometimes also called Children's God (see Orkey, above).

**Sotha Sil (Mystery of Morrowind):** God of the Dunmer, Sotha Sil is the least known of the divine Tribunal. He is said to be reshaping the world from his hidden, clockwork city.

**Stendarr (God of Mercy):** God of the Nine Divines, Stendarr has evolved from his Nordic origins into a deity of compassion or, sometimes, righteous rule. He is said to have accompanied Tiber Septim in his later years. In early Altmeri legends, Stendarr is the apologist of Men.

**Stuhn (God of Ransom):** Nordic precursor to Stendarr, brother of Tsun. Shield-thane of Shor, Stuhn was a warrior god that fought against the Aldmeri pantheon. He showed Men how to take, and the benefits of taking, prisoners of war.

**Syrabane (Warlock's God):** An Aldmeri god-ancestor of magic, Syrabane aided Bendu Olo in the Fall of the Sload. Through judicious use of his magical ring, Syrabane saved many from the scourge of the Thrassian Plague. He is also called the Apprentices' God, for he is a favorite of the younger members of the Mages Guild.

Tava (Bird God): Yokudan spirit of the air. Tava is most famous for leading the Yokudans to the isle of Herne after the destruction of their homeland. She has since become assimilated into the mythology of Kynareth. She is still very popular in Hammerfell among sailors, and her shrines can be found in most port cities.

Tiber Septim (Talos, the Dragonborn): Heir to the Seat of Sundered Kings, Tiber Septim is the most important hero-god of Mankind. He conquered all of Tamriel and ushered in the Third Era (and the Third Empire). Also called Ysmir, 'Dragon of the North'.

Trinimac: Strong god of the early Aldmer, in some places more popular than Auri-El. He was a warrior spirit of the original Elven tribes that led armies against the Men. Boethiah is said to have assumed his shape (in some stories, he even eats Trinimac) so that he could convince a throng of Aldmer to listen to him, which led to their eventual Chimeri conversion. He vanishes from the mythic stage after this, to return as the dread Malacath (Altmeri propaganda portrays this as the dangers of Dunmeri influence).

Tsun: Extinct Nordic god of trials against adversity. Died defending Shor from foreign gods.

Tu'whacca (Tricky God): Yokudan god of souls. Tu'whacca, before the creation of the world, was the god of Nobody Really Cares. When Tall Papa undertook the creation of the Walkabout, Tu'whacca found a purpose; he became the caretaker of the Far Shores, and continues to help Redguards find their way into the afterlife. His cult is sometimes associated with Arkay in the more cosmopolitan regions of Hammerfell.



Vivec (Master of Morrowind): Warrior-poet god of the Dunmer. Vivec is the invisible keeper of the holy land, ever vigilant against the dark gods of the Volcano. He/she has saved the Dunmeri people from certain death on numerous occasions, most notably when he/she taught them how to breathe water for a day so that he/she could flood Morrowind and kill the Akaviri invaders, ca. 2E572.

Xarxes: Xarxes is the god of ancestry and secret knowledge. He began as a scribe to Auri-El, and has kept track of all Aldmeri accomplishments, large and small, since the beginning of time. He created his wife, Oghma, from his favorite moments in history.

Y'ffre (God of the Forest): Most important deity of the Bosmeri pantheon. While Auri-El Time Dragon might be the king of the gods, the Bosmer revere Y'ffre as the spirit of 'the now'. According to the Wood Elves, after the creation of the mortal plane everything was in chaos. The first mortals were turning into plants and animals and back again. Then Y'ffre transformed himself into the first of the Ehlno Fey, or 'Earth Bones'. After these laws of nature were established, mortals had a semblance of safety in the new world, because they could finally understand it. Y'ffre is sometimes called the Storyteller, for the lessons he taught the first Bosmer. Some Bosmer still possess the knowledge of the chaos times, which they can use to great effect (the Wild Hunt).

Ysmir (Dragon of the North): The Nordic aspect of Talos. He withstood the power of the Greybeards' voices long enough to hear their prophecy. Later, many Nords could not look on him without seeing a dragon.

Z'en (God of Toil): Bosmeri god of payment in kind. Studies indicate origins in both Argonian and Akaviri mythologies, perhaps introduced into Valenwood by Kothringi sailors. Ostensibly an agriculture deity, Z'en sometimes proves to be an entity of a much higher cosmic order. His worship died out shortly after the Knhaten Flu.

Zeht (God of Farms): Yokudan god of agriculture. Renounced his father after the world was created, which is why Tall Papa makes it so hard to grow food.

Zenithar (God of Work and Commerce, Trader God): Member of the Nine Divines, Zenithar is understandably associated with Z'en. In the Empire, however, he is a far more cultivated god of merchants and middle nobility. His worshippers say, despite his mysterious origins, Zenithar is the god 'that will always win'.

# Venarus Vulpin's Journal

*Venarus Vulpin*

~ 28th of Sun's Dusk, 4E 200

I've found an interesting book of short stories on the pawnshop's shelves today. I don't think the owner will mind if I take it. I really should spend more time around the docks, these Altmer are too thin blooded for my taste.

Anyway, one of the tales in the book is an account of the "Bloodspring of Lengeir's Feast," a fabled source of power for vampires. It is a story I've read several renditions of before but this version suggests that it may be located in Skyrim, in a ruin buried by quaking of the earth during the 2nd Era.

Considering that my business here with Inquisitor Amolmaire is, shall we say, at an end, it might be a good time to leave Summerset for a worthwhile diversion for the next twenty to thirty years. Perhaps I shall investigate this fabled Bloodspring.

~ 2nd of Morning Star, 4E 201

I was able to obtain passage from Alinor to Solitude by way of ship. No mean feat with this Nord insurrection going on, I assure you. I ran across one of my own in the local tavern and feared at first that it might cause problems for me, but it turns out that she is well-positioned here in the city and has been happy to help if I keep a civil manner. We spoke much on my

research into the Bloodspring and while she made sure to point out she thinks it a “soft headed pursuit” she did say that what she’s heard would point to The Rift.

~ 5th of First Seed, 4E 201

After months of searching I finally may have found a lead. While looking for a bit of dinner in the Vilemyr Inn, I overheard an old hermit by the name of Jokull, talking about strange red water he found bubbling out of the ground.

Once I dispose of this soldier, I’ll follow to see if I can find the location.

~ 13th of First Seed, 4E 201

I can’t believe I didn’t realize sooner.

Jokull has been taking buckets of rock and dirt out of his house all week. When I realized that he’s digging a basement I snuck in to check if he had uncovered the Bloodspring. He’s hit a cave system that must be where Bloodspring has sunken into over the years. It was hard to see in the dim light, even with my eyes, but I would swear the water I saw pooled on the ground was red.

Unfortunately he woke up while I was exploring the basement and he dropped his torch on a pelt as I killed him. More setbacks.

~ 4th of Rain’s Hand, 4E 201

The runnels I initially found had passed through too much rock and dirt but I’ve “befriended” some of the locals and we’ve managed to find the source of the Bloodspring. We’ve kept a

low profile so as not to draw too much attention and thus far I've managed to keep them to only attacking hunters and other dregs, but we'll need to set up a ready food source that won't draw too much attention if we are to remain here.

The Bloodspring is not everything that I'd hoped it would be. Though it is blood and gives great strength it provides no sustenance. And the power it grants lasts only for a short while and carries a weakening of the body and mind with it. I've had to lock the door to the chamber to keep the others from becoming completely dependent upon it. When I've tested it on mortals, it is worse for them, for it carries only disease and addiction with no benefits at all.

Addiction.

I may have just found a solution for our food problem.

# Venarus Vulpin's Research

## *Venarus Vulpin*

~ 19th of Second Seed, 4E 201

Thanks to the more sordid past of some of my underlings, we found a way to add the waters of the Bloodspring into the process for turning moonsugar to skooma. It is far more potent and highly addictive. We've turned the basement into a Den and sent out some of the locals with "samples" to lure people back, turning the disappointment of the spring into a ready supply of blood.

We're calling it Redwater Skooma, in case any of the patrons happen to notice "water" in any of the corners.

I've found many ruined books in the chambers connected to the spring and will continue to study them for a way to drink the waters without the side effects. Mortals appear to become infected with all manner of disease, while Vampires gain power but only for a short while.

~ 9th of Mid Year, 4E 201

Many of the books I've found are but tattered shreds, ruined by the ages and moisture, but I've pieced together the origin of the Spring, if little else.

It used to be a spring sacred to Arkay in the 1st Era, headed by the priest, Lengeir. I'm glossing over much that isn't of interest to my search, but it would seem that the woman he was in love with was bitten and turned into a vampire and subsequently turned him as well. They went on a rampage through the Spring and killed the other priests as they cowered in the pool, praying for Arkay's protection.

"...and as we tore the spine... ..last priestess... ..took the viscera into the Bloodstone Chalice... ..waters ran red forever more..."

Perhaps this "Bloodstone Chalice" is the answer.

~ 18th of Sun's Height, 4E 201

Weeks of research and still nothing to show for it. It would seem that the Bloodstone Chalice is most likely the key to harnessing the power of the Spring, but it is also clear that at some point it was removed from the ruins.

I've found an illustration of it which I have endeavored to sketch here, but nothing else regarding where it may have ended up.

# Volk's Journal

*Volk*

Day 14

I knew I should have volunteered for the excavation earlier. For months, Moric had been going on to the Vigilants about detecting mystical energies deep in the east mountains. Said he'd found some old tomes about the ruins of "Ruunvald," or something the like, a Nordic chamber thousands of years old. I remember thinking "Yeah, if it's so old, how come no one's found it yet? There's plenty of adventurers wandering around these parts."

Seemed like most of the other Vigilants agreed, we had more important things to do. But Moric took a team and went digging, and when he started turning up a long buried temple, well, didn't I feel like a troll in a dung heap.

Soon enough, he was sending back letters to the Hall, begging for as many men as we could send. I didn't volunteer at first, still seemed like a myth to me. But when word came back that they'd hit the main chamber, I packed up and headed this way to help. Always did want to be a part of history, and better late than never, they say.

Well, "they" didn't mention that the late comers would be stuck with guard duty. I just sit up here all day, watching for bandits and wolves, neither of which I've seen. Mostly I just see



diggers coming up for supplies. Gotta say, I been seeing them a lot less regular, now that I think about it...

Day 19

All right, it's been 3 days since anyone's come up. The last one to emerge was Apa, and he just walked around a bit with a weird vacant look in his eyes. Told Florentius and me to come down as soon as we had the chance, then trudged back in.

Something ain't right, and I aims to find out what...

- Volk

# Walking The World, Vol. XI

*Spatior Munius*

Walking the World

Volume XI: Solitude

by

Spatior Munius

Welcome, friend. In our latest volume, we cover Solitude. Spatior could not be more pleased to be at the very seat of Imperial power in Skyrim. In the course of our tour, you'll see that Solitude's riches extend from her people to the history and architecture that make up the city itself.

As ever, we begin our journey outside the city walls, this time at the bottom of the hill that ascends all the way to Solitude's massive gates.

Solitude's Surroundings

Before scaling the hill to the city, you should be sure to take in the sights. Wander the track that leads down to the docks, and you can stop to enjoy one of the best views of the Great Arch.

Originally serving as both a landmark and windbreak for Solitude's port, the easily-defended Great Arch also provided an

ideal building site for the ancient Nords.

The city gradually grew to extend across the entire length of the arch. This growth culminated in the building of the Blue Palace, home of the High Kings and Queens of Skyrim. We will visit the palace later.

### The Gates of Solitude

Entrance to Solitude is guarded by two gates and three towers. The first of these towers, situated at the crossroads, is Sky Tower. It's mostly a lookout, although in times of war, barricades are erected across the nearby road to act as a first line of defense.

The second tower and first, smaller gate are collectively known as the Squall Gate. Here, attacking armies meet their first real resistance. Last and certainly most impressive is the Storm Gate.

While Castle Dour, found just within the city's main gate, has always been a massive walled structure, Solitude's outer walls and gates were not added until shortly after the coronation of High King Erling.

Looking up and to the left of the main gate, you can see a small hint of Erling's preference for a more rounded style of architecture that we will see later in the Castle Dour extension, as well as the interior arch and the windmill.

Now we pass through the gates and enter the main shopping district of Solitude.

### The Well District

Stepping inside Solitude's gates, you get your first view of the city itself. Rising tall and proud before you, banners waving from its crown, is the Emperor's Tower. Home to the Kings of Haafingar before the consolidation of Skyrim and the creation of the Blue Palace, the Emperor's Tower is now used exclusively as guest quarters for Emperors who come to visit the city.

To your left and right are Solitude's inn and shops. Here can be found some of the finest imported goods in Skyrim. After all, Solitude is a wealthy city with ready access to the major shipping lanes of Tamriel.

Continuing ahead, you'll come to the ramp that takes you up to Castle Dour. From here, you can truly feel the weight of this stone bastion's looming presence. The left-most tower, topped by the pointed roof of Erling's extension, was once the castle barracks and jail. Today, the tower is the center of military power here in Solitude.

Looking right past the looming Emperor's tower, you can glimpse Solitude's natural bridge arcing gracefully over to the windmill. Built during High King Erling's day, the bridge was said to be used to discretely allow Captain Jytte, the famous privateer, to enter Castle Dour. Some historians claim that she and the High King were simply attempting to keep their business dealings quiet. Others believe the Jytte and Erling were involved on a more personal level.

At the end of the bridge is the windmill. The tower and the windmill serve as one of Solitude's most recognizable man-made landmarks. The Windmill's power was once used to open the gates to what is now the East Empire Company Warehouse, but today that task falls to the strong backs of the dock workers.

In the shadow of the windmill you'll find the outdoor market and the well. Here, you can buy a number of local delicacies including the famous spiced wine made exclusively in Solitude.

From here we'll travel up the ramp and into Castle Dour Courtyard.

## Castle Dour

As you enter the courtyard of Castle Dour, you are confronted with the banner of Solitude hanging over the door to what is now Castle Dour proper.

At the far end of the courtyard stands the impressive Temple of the Divines. The founders of Solitude were deeply devout and Solitude is the only place in Skyrim where all of the divines are worshiped in a single temple. All three of the buildings here are well worth taking a look inside, but only the Temple and Castle Dour's military wing are open.

If you do venture inside the temple, take special note of the alcoves at the front. You can see the empty alcove that once held the shrine of Talos before Talos worship was outlawed.

From the courtyard, travel out the exit between Castle Dour and the Temple and you'll get your first sight of the Blue Palace. Along the way, be sure to stop outside the Bards College, a large building on your left marked by the Flame of Callisos burning beside the steps.

Named for a famous bard, it is said that as long as the flame burns, the college will stand.

## The Bards College

Looking up from the Bards College steps, you can see that the college stands taller than the Blue Palace itself. The bards who train here can be heard throughout Skyrim, singing songs that capture the history of the ages. If you get a chance you should be sure to catch the Burning of King Olaf, an ancient festival where “King Olaf” is burned in effigy.

Continue up the road from the college and you’ll reach the courtyard of the Blue Palace, our final destination.

### The Blue Palace

The Blue Palace is home to the Jarls of Solitude, who for centuries have also served as the High Kings and High Queens of Skyrim. The northeast wing, on your left as you enter, holds the living quarters of the Jarl and her court on the top level and various servants below.

The southwest wing, known as the Pelagius Wing, has fallen into a state of disrepair. Named for the famous High King, Pelagius the Mad, the wing is rumored to be haunted by the king’s ghost. The wing has been locked and left alone since shortly after Pelagius’s death.

You should be sure to venture inside the Blue Palace. The grand atrium and court chambers are a sight not to be missed.

### Other Points of Interest

Spatior has shown you Solitude in all its grandeur, but there are a few places more to see. The walls of the city are easily accessible and well worth climbing for the remarkable view. The Solitude Docks are also worth a visit, as they are the largest in Skyrim.

That's all for Walking the World Volume XI. Spatior does not know his next destination yet, but you can be sure that where he does go he will leave you a record of the best things to see.

Spatior Munius, World Traveler

# Warning

*Rigel Strong-Arm*

You've all been warned about trying to break into my treasure room, but Roars didn't think I was serious.

Now he's dead.

You've all had your cut of the take already, and if I catch any of you dung lickers trying to break in again, I won't let the traps kill you. I'll do it myself!

—Rigel Strong-Arm



# Watcher Of Stones

*Gelyph Sig*

Watcher of Stones

by

Gelyph Sig

Thane of Bjorin

Long have I waited at the Guardians. I must know: are the stories true? Surely you've heard them. Tales of the stones granting powers to Heroes of old, those special few being able to choose any stone to rewrite his fate. Of course you've heard them, that's why you touch the stones as you pass by. You've heard they bring luck, or a sign from the gods. But you think little of the action. It has no true meaning for you. I see it in your eyes as you pass. You do not believe. But I have always believed. Always felt that I was one of the few whose fate was not sealed at birth by the stars overhead. One of the few who could use these stones, draw on the power of the gods to change my life, change my future. I have always felt it.

I have done much in my years. Fought battles, defended villages, quested and adventured throughout Skyrim. I have bested the Companions of Whiterun in combat, and performed deeds worthy of everlasting praise in song from the Bards

College. No task was too small or great if it could bring me honor, glory, proof that I was worthy of the stones' power.

And yet, nothing.

I have found many of these accursed stones in my travels, and none have responded to my touch. With each new feat I would return to the Guardians, wondering if the gods finally deemed me worthy. But now those days are gone. I am an old man, with no fight left in me. And so here I sit, watching the faces of those who pass by on their daily errands, their mundane travels from one city or town to another. Most of you do not even give the stones a passing glance. You have never heard their call, you will never feel drawn to them. Some days, I envy you that.

Long will I wait at the Guardians, for I must know. Are the stories true?

# Watchtower Guard's Note

*Anonymous*

Akar,

We've word of a band of Legion soldiers advancing on your position. Reinforcements are on the way. Talos guard you.

# Weylin's Note

*Nepo*

Weylin,

You've been chosen to strike fear in the heart of the Nords. Go to the market tomorrow. You will know what to do.

-N

# Windstad Manor Charter

*Anonymous*

[Jarl name], Jarl of [Capital city], to [Player name], [his/her] faithful friend; grant of the steading of Windstad Manor, near the Mouths of the Karth, north of Morthal.

Witnessed by [Steward name], Steward to Jarl [Jarl name], [day] [month], [year]

# Writ Of Dawn

*Anonymous*

By order of the Dawnguard, the [player race] [player name] is hereby condemned to death for the crime of Vampirism. By our authority, and with the Jarl's implicit consent, the bearer of this writ is hereby commissioned to exact justice upon the condemned wheresoever [he/she] may run.

# Writ Of Sealing

*Anonymous*

Be bound here, Mikrul, murderer, betrayer

Condemned by your crimes against realm and lord.

May your name and your deeds be forgotten forever

And the charm which you bear be sealed by our ward.

# Wyndelius' Journal

*Wyndelius Gatharian*

4E 200, 18 Morning Star

I've set up camp inside the barrow. This has to be the place. According to all of my research, the burial chamber should be located here. All I need is some time undisturbed to find the claw. It must be hidden here somewhere.

4E 200, 25 Morning Star

Had a close call today with that fool Wilhelm. He came close to entering the barrow, but I was able to scare him off by rattling some pottery shards in a bag. These people are far too superstitious for their own good. Gives me an idea.

4E 200, 28 Morning Star

After a few failures, I've come up with a mixture that should do the trick. The glow is perfect - I should look exactly like one of the supposed spirits the people of Ivarstead believe is haunting this barrow. Going to test it out tomorrow.

4E 200, 29 Morning Star

Success! It worked better than I could have imagined. All I had to do was wander about the entrance to the barrow at night and wave my arms about. I had to stop myself from laughing



aloud as they ran away. This should keep them at bay while I continue searching for the claw.

4E 200, 11 Hearthfire

Almost half a year has passed and no sign of the claw or any clues as to its whereabouts. This is becoming maddening. It has to be here! Can't risk hiring any assistance, so I'll have to continue alone.

4E 200, 20 Sun's Dusk

It isn't here. It can't be here. This isn't right. It must be the people of Ivarstead... they must be on to my ruse, and they're toying with me. They want to find the burial chamber on their own and keep the riches for themselves!

4E 200, 18 Evening Star

Why? Why are they tormenting me? Why not just destroy me? I'm... who am I? My head is becoming clouded, I can't remember anything. I have to read my journal to remember my purpose. Am I a part of this tomb? Am I meant to guard it? What's becoming of me?

1E 1050

...They shall not take my treasure. They shall all pay dearly for their crimes. Any who set foot within these walls will taste my wrath, my power. I am the guardian of Shroud Hearth Barrow! All who oppose me will fall...

# Yngol And The Sea-Ghosts

*Anonymous*

Masser and Secunda passed over Ysgramor's people as their fellowship landed in long-boats upon the rocky shores of Hsaarik Head on their journey from Atmora to Mereth. Boats littered the coast, but Ysgramor did not count his kin, Yngol's among them.

Ysgramor commanded the sea-ghosts to surrender his kin, and a great gale darkened the sky. The seas thrashed and churned, and a wrathful storm appeared. Ysgramor took up the oars and rowed into the storm alone.

Upon the Sea, Ysgramor wrestled the sea-ghosts, and the storm carried him along the jagged coast. Two fortnights passed without relief, until finally the storm broke. Come the next dawn, Yngol's long-boat was found in the icy surf, but the vengeful sea-ghosts had already taken Yngol and his clansmen.

In his terrible grief, Ysgramor slew a dozen dozen beasts and burned them in honor of his fallen kinsman. A barrow-hill was dug in the Atmoran tradition, and Yngol was laid to rest with rites and honors among his clansmen far below the rocky face of Hsaarik Head, the first Children of the Sky to perish in Tamriel.

# Ysolda's Message

*Ysolda*

Don't try to stiff me on this deal, Ulag.

I can talk the Khajiit caravans into a better price than you'd be able to, and the guards are still looking for you after that little skooma incident. Just bring the sap to my stall in Whiterun like we discussed.

-Ysolda