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The RuneQuest-Con Compendium

was produced by

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RuneQuest-Con

was brought to you by David Cheng Mark Wallace Brandon Brylawski David Gadbois Mark Minster Paul Harmaty

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The response to the Storytelling contest exceeded our wildest expectations. J think there were right around twenty participants. The first three stories presented here were all finalists. Eric Rowe deserves accolades for his winning tale, as do all our storytellers. *DC

Orlanth and Thed

As told by Arol Oathkeeper to the Sambari by Eric Rowe

broos. (murmuring by the audience) Broos. (louder murmuring) What are you? Cowardly Yelmalions? Broos! (Loud Jeers) That's better. Thed. (loud murmuring) Thed! (loud jeers)

Good. You all know to hate the foul broo and their terrible mistress Thed, and you know they despise us as well. Perhaps many of you have heard the ancient legend which describes the enmity between King Orlanth and Vile Thed. The Colymar tell a tale wherein one of Orlanth's brothers commits a heinous act upon Thed's person, and her revenge is forcing Just Orlanth to appoint her the goddess of rape. Or perhaps you have heard the even more corrupted tale, the lie spread by the evil Lunars. In that tale it is Orlanth himself who violates Thed, and her powers of rape and revenge come as justice for his act.

Of course, these are untruths. We of the Sambari keep the true tales of our god and leave them untainted by the lies and half-truths of others. What you hear now is the tale you must tell your children of Orlanth and Thed.

This is a tale of a time long ago, when even

the gods were young. Yinkin, brother to the great Orlanth was hunting Kalor frogs in the forest. He had just spotted a purple one and had begun his stalking of it when he noticed Thed making her way through the trees. Back then Thed was not the foul Broo-birthing monstrosity we now know her to be, but was in fact a very beautiful and seemingly kind maiden. Yinkin was one of the few who distrusted her, for he could smell her wicked heart. Therefore, he allowed the frog to escape, which shows how much he distrusted Thed because the purple ones taste like raspberries and were his favorite, so he could follow her.

Eventually she came to a small glade and picked some yellow faragon fungus, which fortunately for us no longer grows in the world. As she studied her prize she noticed the lurking Yinkin and was enraged by his spying of her deed. She used a horrible magic that none knew

she possessed and drove off a terrified Yinkin. He was so scared he did not return to the clan for many weeks.

Fortunately for this story there was another witness to this event. A man saw the interaction and his mortal mind snapped from the horror. He also ran fleeing from the forest until he was found by the White Lady. Though unable to calm his fears she learned of the event he had seen and went to wise Orlanth with the news. He was greatly disturbed and called his friends together to ask for their advice. When the story had been told the Grey Sage informed them that faragon had but one use. If mixed in a drink and consumed there will be no immediate effect, but if the imbiber is later wakened in the night they will be consumed by lust and make do with whatever is available.

The group was then quite startled when Thed appeared with a gift for Orlanth, an ale she had brewed herself. Orlanth thanked her and quickly quaffed the beverage. He told her it was excellent and thanked her for it. She smiled prettily and mentioned maybe she would see him later. Once she had gone he spewed the ale from his mouth back into its mug, for he had never swallowed it. You can tell he was a great god because of how he managed to speak even with a mouth full of ale. Can any of you here do such a deed? I challenge you all! Ah, no takers as I knew. Know you see why the gods made him their king.

Anyway, Orlanth quickly figured out Thed's plan. At this time he was still wooing fair Ernalda, but had not yet gained her hand. Thed also wished his affections and had grown very jealous. She intended him to succumb to her potion and late in the night come to him. Ernalda would not forgive his transgression and he would have to settle for Thed. This made Orlanth very angry. Orlanth again asked his friends for advice and the strange woman said she had a plan. After telling it they all laughed and agreed it was a fitting punishment for Thed.

The first part of the plan was accomplished by Issaries. He took a small piece of lead and traveled to the council of the fire tribe. There he traded it to them for a large goat, of which they had many. This is why clever traders today are said to be able to trade lead to a Yelmalion.

The second part was up to Eurmal. He took out his many disguises and combined them so that the goat looked very much like mighty Orlanth. The goat was then fed the tainted ale and put to sleep in Orlanth's bed. Sure enough, later they saw Thed sneak into the tent to accomplish her twisted plan. The noises made it difficult to sleep that night, but everyone managed to.

In the morning the whole clan was awakened by Thed's scream as she discovered her true nocturnal companion. She ran out of the house to the laughter and jeers of Orlanth and his friends. Ever since then her children have been the foul goat-men and they have hated Orlanth for having rightfully shamed and refused their mother.



Dinga and the Cloak of Snakes

by Alison Place

During the Greater Darkness, while Orlanth was absent upon the Lightbringer's Quest, Elmal acted as steward in his stead. Chaos had pressed the Air Tribe fiercely, and even untried warriors had been needed to fill the spaces in the ranks. Vinga Orlanthsdottir had asked Elmal for a warrior's task, but had only been sent on patrols and had not seen battle yet. Returning from such a patrol, Vinga came to her mother's tent to find Ernalda clasping Voria in her arms, and both weeping bitterly.

"O my mother and my sister, what is the matter?" cried Vinga, as she knelt to hold her sister, Voria. Voria raised her head from her mother's lap, but all she could say was "Barntar", before her weeping began afresh. "Yes," said Ernalda, "Thy brother Barntar was captured while on scout across the Black Eel River, by Ragnaglar the Cruel. Ragnaglar has sent word that he intends to kill Barntar in a hideous way, to avenge himself on thy father, Orlanth."

"If that is so," demanded Vinga, "what is being done? For I have just walked through the camp, and there are none arming themselves to rescue my brother!" "No," replied Ernalda, "for to attack the camp of Ragnaglar would serve for nothing, except perhaps to cause him to execute my son quickly. That, while it would be a great mercy for Barntar, would be bought at the cost of many lives, and the price is too great. So Elmal and I have both agreed."

"Yet, I cannot let my brother die without any attempt to save him." said Vinga. "Perhaps there is another way. Will you aid me, mother?". Trusting in her daughter, Ernalda assented, and asked in what way she could assist. "Summon to you, my mother, thy little daughters, the members of the viper tribe. Let them weave for me a cloak, that all may know that I am Vinga Ernaldasdottir."

As Ernalda called, the serpents came, smooth-sliding, ground-gliding, glistening in the torchlight. Vinga knelt, and they twined up her arms and down her back, the asp and the adder, the copperhead and cottonmouth, the rattlesnakes and the krait, many-banded. Last came the coral snake, to clasp the cloak as a living jewel, and the cobra, who spread her hood for the first time, to shield the red hair of Vinga from the sight of all.

Vinga stood, and received her mother's blessing. Then the three embraced, and exchanged the kiss of kin. Vinga slipped quietly out of the camp and into the darkness.

She moved silently and swiftly towards the Black Eel river beyond which lay the camp of Ragnaglar. At the shore of the river, she knelt again. "O daughter of our mother," whispered the serpents, "what would you have us do?" "Make for me a coracle," said Vinga, "so that I may cross to the other side." Quietly they slipped off her back, and wove themselves into a little boat. Vinga stepped inside, and drew her sword to scull across. There she dried her blade and sheathed it, and once again the snakes ascended her arms and cloaked her.

As she came nigh the camp of Ragnaglar, the guards saw her, and would have laid hands on her, but the very air around her hissed, and they saw that it would be death to touch her.

"Take me to Ragnaglar," she said, "for I would speak with him regarding my brother." Reluctantly they brought her to where he was holding court in a great tent. His soldiers gave way before the threat of her cloak, and Vinga stood before him. There the cobra folded her hood, and Vinga shook loose her red hair. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" demanded Ragnaglar, his lust stirring at the sight of her. "I am Vinga Ernaldasdottir. I have come to ransom my brother's life with my own." she replied. "You are Vinga Orlanthsdottir, and you are both fair and foolish. Why should I give back your brother, when you have come to my hand of your own will? No. I shall kill him, and keep you for my pleasure, and thus shall I be doubly revenged upon your father."

At this, Vinga buried her head in her hands, and sobbed. "Oh, oh, you are right, I have been a fool to think that I could save my brother thus. One thing only, then, do I ask of you. Let my brother not see my shame and folly." Ragnaglar the Spiteful heard this, and called for Barntar to be brought before him then and there. When Barntar, bound with strong cords, was brought to the tent, he cried aloud with grief at seeing his sister there also. Vinga ran to his side, and as she embraced him she whispered in his ear, "As you love our lives, make it your last request to see me dance one more time."

"It is time for you to die," said Ragnaglar, "and I thought that your sister would like to watch." "I can do nothing to stop you," replied Barntar, "but if you would grant a last request, I beg you to let me see my sister dance one more time before I die." At this, Ragnaglar paused, and thought of how exciting a woman could be when she danced. Seeing that he agreed, Vinga removed her boots, and called for another sword beside her own to form the cross for the sword dance. For the sword dance had been taught to her by her father and brother, and it was this dance at which she was best.

Then she stepped to the swords, and began to dance. She danced slowly at first, as if afraid that bare foot would meet bare blade, and then her bright blood would flow. Gradually, the rhythm of her steps increased, and as she danced the rattles that fringed her cloak kept the beat. As she danced, she whirled, holding the edges of her cloak in her hands, and the scales of the serpent cloak glinted red and silver, green and gold in the torchlight. Faster and

faster she danced, until her feet were a blur above the blades, and the rattles buzzed without ceasing. The cloak lifted as she spun till it was as high as her shoulders and her lissome body was exposed to the lustful gaze of Ragnaglar. When it seemed that she could dance no faster, she cried out, "Fly free, little sisters!", and the cloak dissolved into a rain of agony and death upon the crowd. The snakes which she had clutched she threw into the face of Ragnaglar, and as he screamed in pain, she swept up her sword and the other, and slicing her brother's bonds, thrust one hilt into his hand. Holding his other hand in hers, they ran from the tent towards the river.

Long had the viper clan warred with the chaos tribe and now they were among their enemies who were mostly unarmed and unarmoured. The serpents bit and stung, face and fess, heel and hand. For each foe that died of tooth and poison another died of terror and panic. Their deed done, the serpents slid into the darkness, and were lost in the night. Amidst the rage and confusion of the moment, no-one saw the captives escape at first. All too soon, the army boiled out of camp, hot upon revenge and recapture. As they reached the banks of the Black Eel River, the pursuit was close indeed. Vinga cried out, "For the sake Heler of the Water Tribe, our father's bondbrother, save from Chaos, O Spirit of the Black Eel." Without waiting for a reply, Vinga and Barntar leapt into the water, and I it close above their heads. When the creatures of Ragnaglar came to the shore, there was no sign of either Vinga or Barntar, neither upstream nor down. Thus the reported the two drowned in the river. The spirit of the river had heard their plea, however, and carried them safely away, hidden from the eyes of all searchers.

When they were abreast of the camp of Orlanth, the spirit brought them gently to shore, bidding them remember her service. As Vinga and Barntar rose, wet from the water, their kin found them. The word of their return flew before them, and all grief turned to joy. Gre was the feasting, and great was the praise from Elmal himself. From that day forward, Vinga Ernaldasdottir s in council with the greatest of the warriors, and led wom to battle in her own way.



The Tale of Thrimball the Storyteller

as recounted by Rich Staats

I was but ten years old when Thrimball entered our camp one evening and delivered his tale, but the visit would long be remembered as the day when our chieftain, Gregor Staffswinger, was fooled by an Illuminate into sparing a Trickster's life.

We were gathered for the Dark Season rites, and as was our custom, all of the best storytellers were gathered to deliver their tales. The usual crowd was there, Gomgrof Troll Slayer, Iggy the Corpulent, Shalishmak the Wise, and a host of others, but the storytelling contest was open to all. Iggy was the local favorite. The rules for participation were simple. The story teller got to his or her feet and presented the tale to the assembled group. In exchange the story teller was given a straw tick to sleep on, a meal to warm his belly and the admiration of the crowd.

I was sitting near the door flap, fairly far away from the blazing hearth at the center as I was not yet of age, when Thrimball entered the tribal hut. He looked at the assembled warriors, women and children of the tribe, took their measure and nodded to himself in silent approval. I was close enough to see the sparkle in his eye as he made his entrance. He noticed me too, because he reached down and pulled a lunar from behind my ear and handed to me!

Gregor noticed Thrimball at once, but it was not fitting for the chieftain to greet a stranger in our midst at once. Thrimball did not have the ritual markings on his face, showing him to be one of our tribe. After another flagon of ale, "borrowed" from a Pelorian trader who strayed into the tribal lands unescorted, Gregor boomed out "Ah! And, who is this stranger in our midst? Come forward and tell me what brings you here to our hearth to steal our warmth and light on this cold Dark Season night? What have you to offer in exchange for our hospitality?" Thrimball was half guided and half manhandled to the hearth.

Thrimball stood silent for a moment while he and Grego locked eyes. A smile crept across both countenances, and Thrimball bowed somewhat melodramatically to Gregor while addressing his words to the assembled crowd. "Oh wise and ferocious chieftain Gregor! Your fame has spread far beyond the limits of your tribal lands - vast though they be - and, I, Thrimball the Storyteller, wish only to share the hearth of one so noble and a tribe so powerful and gracious. In exchange for a warm bowl of porridge and a straw tick I shall spin a tale tonight as none of the tribe has heard before." Gregor laughed aloud for it was well known that nothing intrigued Gregor more than a good story! Gregor had felled nearly as many foes with the honey of his tongue as the sharp edge of his iron bastard sword. Gregor gestured dramatically "arise Thrimball and sit here by the hearth! As you are a stranger in our midst, you shall be the last to present us with a tale this evening." Thrimball straightened himself while suppressing a smile and sat down by the glowing flame.

All the storytellers accounted themselves well, but Iggy outdid himself. The tribe rose as one to their feet, stomping, clapping and cheering Iggy, and he was clasped warmly on the back by Gregor as Iggy ambled away from the glow of the hearth. Gregor turned to Thrimball and stated flatly "Perhaps you have learned something from the tales before you and in particular the last! Well now, it is time you earned your keep this evening! Spin us this tale Thrimball, entertain my tribe on this darkest and deepest of nights!"

Thrimball rose slowly, and as he did so, the fire crackled loudly three times. Was it my young imagination or did the very flames seem to bend toward Thrimball in an effort to better hear his tale? Thrimball bowed again, though curtly, to Gregor and queried "Oh wise chieftain, is it also not the custom that the storyteller be not held liable for his words on this hallowed eve when Yelm begins to reclaim the sky from the grasp of Xiola Umbar? I ask that in addition to a tick on which to sleep and a meal to warm my belly that I be granted the traditional immunity that you have bestowed so many times in the past." It was still enough that I could hear the thumping of my own heart while Gregor eyed Thrimball slowly and stated "you shall be free this evening, and on the mourn you shall be given one hour's head start before you are pursued if any are offended by your tale!" The tribe thumped its spears and shouted its approval of the ruling. Thrimball said "Oh mighty chieftain, you are too kind!"

As the tribe came once again to silence, Thrimball began his tale ... "It is a story as you have not heard before! A story of gods and goddesses, of Life and Death, of Powers and Portents and of the Time itself! There was once and there was not in the days before Time a humble servant of Arachne Solara named Taron. He was a simple being who willed only to serve She Who Is All Things. In those days, mighty Yelm presided over the world far above the lands below." As Thrimball spoke, the hut seemed to warm and the flames took on a soft quality. I felt at peace and relaxed as though I were wrapped in my blankets after a good meal and a hard day of chasing and working. Thrimball's voice broke through my solace like a knife "But, there came a period when mighty Yelm did not rule the skies when all was darkness!" The flames dimmed and a cold wind blew through the door flap, chilling me to the bone, but Thrimball never faltered. "Do you remember well the tales of the days when Yelm was lost in the black abysses of Hell? Do our children not yet shudder at the passed remembrances of those most cruel of times? I see in your faces you do remember. The very visions of the time are passed on through the flesh from mother to child. Creatures of darkness strode upon the world. The gods found Death's true, black sting. God fought against brother god and sister goddess. The world shook and in those crazed moments of godly struggle, the world was shook to its foundation and protean Chaos oozed through the cracks in the world's foundation!" The shadows seemed to weave and slither. Something soft, cold and slimy slid across my hand in the shadows by the wall of the hut. I pulled my hand back but there was nothing on it! The inside of the hut had taken on an ashen appearance and for an instant I thought I saw fear creep across the haggard visage of Gregor in that

ghastly light. Thrimball's voice softened and pulled me back with a start from black despair. "Arachne Solara saw that all threatened to be thrown back into the Void from whence it came! She wove a mighty spell, the mightiest conjuration from the creation, and threw her cosmic webs across the face of the struggle catching all in her net." Webs seemed to fly from Thrimball's fingertips across the hut. I flinched as something brushed my face. "Arachne Solara put all of her strength into the enchantment to hold back the destruction of Creation. She sought to drive out the Chaos, but some of her webs had struck and touched the protean Chaos as webs flung out are wont to do. The gods pulled one way and Chaos another. Arachne Solara called out to her servitors to aid her, and one did come. Does any remember his name?" There was silence in the tent as Thrimball shrieked on. "No one remembers for his name is lost to us now. It leaves us like sugar on our tongues is lost. He, Taron, took the webs while the world tilted anew upon its foundations. How many of us have seen a millstone so heavy it would take twenty brave, strong warriors to lift it? Yet, when the millstone rests for less than an eyeblink on its edge, even the smallest toddler is able to push it and determine its path. So it was with the Dawning. This least but most faithful of all Arachne Solara's minions pushed the world disk and caused it to spin." I felt the ground heave beneath my feet. Thrimball looked across the crowd and asked "And, what was the name of that fiery orb that rose for the first time from the East that day of Dawning?" As one voice the crowd called out "Yelm! Mighty Yelm!" The hearth sprang back to life and warmed the dark corners of the hut once more. Thrimball continued "And so to this day Time continues. The world spins on a fine edge, and here too is the nature of Illumination. Taron recognized that both the old order and protean Chaos are part and portion of Time. If one or the other of the forces pulling the strings that bind the World, it will fall, and Time will cease as the world shatters." An angry gasp rose from the voices of the warriors and Gomgrof grasped his spear to impale the heart of Thrimball the Illuminate! Thrimball cast his gaze to Gregor and spoke. "Orlanthi put down your spear for your own chief has sworn an oath to protect me for the things I say this night!" Gregor, though he fumed mightily, said "what he has said is true. Put down your spear Gomgrof." Thrimball took up his tale again. "And so it is the end of the tale, or is it just the beginning? Now bring on a bowl of porridge and my straw tick!"

True to his word, Thrimball had told us a tale as none had ever heard before. The next day when Yelm rose in the sky, Gregor also true to his word gave Thrimball a full hour before he sent all the warriors of the tribe out to blot the Illuminate from the face of the world, but they never caught him, and perhaps even if they had, Thrimball might have lived on in the words he spoke to us that evening. For one's perspective on the way of the world does change as one grows in wisdom...



Yelmalio's Battles at the Hill of Gold

by Harald Smith

To: Icilius Overholy, Mirin's Cross From: Yurastos, Scribe, Grand Temple to Khelmal

The attached document is enclosed for your review. Count Nightcrest has made some interesting modifications to the original document uncovered suggesting that the Imtherian hero, Khelmal, is a deity called Yelmalio and that the trickster, Orlantio, is called Orlanth. This seems to be propaganda of the vilest nature whose only purpose is to disrupt the fragile unity of the Sun Dome Temples of Sartar and Prax. I advise you to take action accordingly.

From: Karestus Nightcrest, High Priest of Yelmalio and Polaris, Defender of the Dome, Keeper of the Most Ancient Truths, Bearer of the Globe of Authority, and Guardian of the Last Light

To: My brethren in the service of Yelmalio, son of Yelm

In the interests of our common good, we have brought the light of Yelmalio to shine upon the darkest past. And in the remote corners of our temple, we have uncovered the following document dated from the fourth year of King Gamastos of Malatain (or, per our Annals of the Ancient Kings, the year 301 S.T.). Though we regret that we cannot pass the original to you for your own analysis, we trust that the copy shall suffice to enlighten you.

I shall let you judge its worth in the light of the recent debates in your temples upon the origin of our Lord. Should you wish to examine the original yourselves, it shall be available to you or your trusted aides at our temple.

May the Light shine upon you in blessing and reveal the Truth of the world!

The Battle against Orlanth

When Orlanth refused to return Ernalda for the fourth time, Yelmalio called upon his kin, his friends, and his allies to march with him against shifty Orlanth and recover Ernalda by force. To Yelmalio's aid came Polaris Skyking; Ryar, father of the fir trees; Eurmal of the Mirrored Shield; and Basmal, Lord of Lightning. Verhil Genertson also came for Ernalda was his sister.

They marched forth toward the Hill of Gold in the Shooting Star formation. Yelmalio marked the leading point with Basmal on his left and Eurmal on his right to guard his flanks. Polaris took the left rear and Ryar the right rear, knowing that the storm gods might approach from any direction. Verhil trailed the march as stardust trails the star.

Against them Orlanth brought the winds, though Yelmalio could only count the six. From the west came Orlanth himself hurling rain and hail before his path. There, too, was Olath the Sky Storm down from the heavens, driving forward his gold and silver clouds to scourge his foes. From the south came Urox, the hot wind of the desert, drying the lands with his breath. Beside Urox was Gagarth the east wind and wild hunter who walked easily upon the windy paths.

From the north marched Valind Winterking, lord of the north wind and master of ice. The crushing path of his glaciers followed in his wake. Beside him strode the dark hordes of the dreaded hell wind, Orak.

In vain Yelmalio sought to find the seventh wind, the hidden wind, but he could not. Though he knew he could not trust Orlanth, he decided to join battle and win back Ernalda, sure that righteousness would triumph.

With winds then howling all around, Yelmalio raised a fanfare on his gilded trumpet and the battle commenced.

First to fight was Polaris for the mighty sky lord faced both Urox and Gagarth. Those two treacherous winds had sought to attack from behind like the cowards that they are, but Polaris was ready. His star bears broke the chariot of Gagarth while his star dogs baited Urox. Polaris then charged upon his winged steed and drove the two winds back over the Rockwoods and out of the fight. It is now only with great difficulty that those winds can ever return.

In the center, Yelmalio and Orlanth clashed, but could not close. Yelmalio in his confidence did not see until too late the coming of the hidden wind upon his flank. Where he thought he was guarded, he found Eurmal turned against him. Orlanth had seduced the loyal ally to his cause and now the illusions of light played against true light. Yelmalio, pressed hard, was forced back. And in that moment, Orlanth broke ranks to join Olath. Basmal was overrun and the Lightning Spear was taken.

Yelmalio might have fallen then if not for Verhil Genertson. The earthen god strode forth to fill Basmal's spot and hold that flank rock solid, finally driving back Olath and the sparkling winds. Further, to Yelmalio's right stood young Heliacal with his shield of light who broke the mirrored shield of Eurmal. Now with time, Yelmalio brought forth his truths and revealed Eurmal's illusions for what they were--a petty band of 10 -

imps with sticks. The imps broke and fled, the illusions scattered with the winds, and Eurmal sought to hide in Orlanth's clouds.

Finally, Yelmalio and Orlanth came together once again and now they clashed with arms. Orlanth cast his new Lightning Spear, but the weapon had no hold on the fiery son of Yelm. Yelmalio in his turn cast his Firespear, but Orlanth's rains quenched its fury. Their chariots closed and Orlanth thundered. Yelmalio's steeds fell, turning over his glorious chariot. Yelmalio stood now with sword and spear in hand, though his Golden Bow was lost. When Orlanth turned and charged, Yelmalio stood his ground and struck at the right hand ox. It fell and broke the chariot's balance, neatly turning the cart upon a spiral path away. Yelmalio's sword, though, was now shattered and Orlanth leapt upon him.

Orlanth raised his sword for a killing blow, but Yelmalio drew upon his solar powers and blinded Orlanth. Thus the blow fell astray. Yelmalio regained his feet and took up his shield. The two fought back and forth upon the Hill of Gold, each spilling the other's blood, but gaining no advantage. Yelmalio finally recognized the truth, that neither would tire and that Orlanth would keep returning to the attack. But he also knew then that even in the heaviest storm the light could still be found, within himself if not without. So Yelmalio cast his spear of hope and Orlanth was daunted. Realizing that he could not win, Orlanth withdrew. And as he withdrew, he declared to Yelmalio that Ernalda was truly his, but only if he could win her back from Orak, the hell wind who now held her for his own. Yelmalio then turned north to face the dark and wintry winds of Valind and the hell wind of Orak which Ryar barely held in check.

The Three Day feast of Eurmal

'Listen and I shall tell you a tale that comes from my homeland in the forests of the north. I shall tell you the tale of The Three Day Feast of Eurmal.

Long ago, Eurmal suddenly had a notion to go and visit his old friend Forgol. The tales of Forgol the Stout are many for he was a man of great abilities and character; but for now, let it suffice that he was the sort of man whom Eurmal could truly name a friend. This is a thing of great rarity, for the Trickster has few true friends. Yet Forgol was a true friend to Eurmal.

For Forgol was a man of such generosity that you could not steal from him. He would freely give anything that was asked. So Eurmal was never tempted to steal from him.

Forgol was a man without vanity. When Eurmal played tricks upon him (as Eurmal could not resist doing), Forgol laughed as loudly as any. So Eurmal played only jolly tricks and not spiteful tricks on him.

Forgol was a man of great cleverness. He often saw Eurmal's tricks coming and turned them back on Eurmal, or played his own tricks on Eurmal. So Eurmal took great pleasure in their contests.

And Forgol was a man of great appetite and good taste, who kept a marvelous table. So Eurmal loved to visit and dine with him.

On this day long ago, Eurmal said to himself, "It has been long since I have dined with my good friend Forgol. I miss him and his fine table. I shall go thither and visit him." So Eurmal set out for the great forest of the north, near the mighty river, where Forgol had his stead. After some days of travel, Eurmal arrived at Forgol's stead, but he was sorely disappointed.

For the servants told him that their master was absent and had been away for several days. He had received an invitation to visit and dine with the Old Man of the Forest and had gone to the Old Man's house.

Now Eurmal had heard of the Old Man of the Forest and his ears pricked up at this news. For the Old Man was a recluse who lived far up a tiny, twisty road, across the mighty river, deep in the great forest. The Old Man had little to do with other people, save to order in all sorts of delicate foods from far and wide, and to occasionally invite people in to dine. The table kept by the Old Man was a matter of legend. The mere thought of it made Eurmal completely forget the feast he had been hoping to get at Forgol's stead. Instead he immediately began to plot how to get himself an invitation to the Old Man's table.

So Eurmal set out to cross the river and follow the tiny, twisty road. As he went, he wrought his illusions to make himself look thin, wasted, and starving. "If I can just get inside the door looking like this, then good old Forgol's generosity should be enough to get me a seat at the table", he said to himself. He followed that road a long way and eventually came to its end, and there stood the Old Man's house.

Eurmal knocked upon the door. The Old Man answered it himself, for he kept no servants. "Good evening, good sir", said Eurmal, "I bear a message for the great warrior, Forgol the Stout. Hearing at his stead that he had gone to your dwelling, I have hurried here, without stopping for rest or food, to find him."

"Ah!", said the Old Man, "What is this message that you bear?" Now Eurmal did not want to be kept outside, so he said "I fear that my message is a secret that I can only speak to Forgol himself."

"Ah!", said the Old Man, "From whom do you bear this message?" Now Eurmal did not want to be stuck at the servant's table where the

choicest victuals would not be served, so he said, "I bear this message on my own behalf, for despite my current straightened circumstances, I am a gentleman of rank."

"Ah!", said the Old Man, "How far have you borne this message?" Now Eurmal wanted to gain as much sympathy as he could, so he said, "I have borne this message for many days travel, with little rest or food and no shelter against beast or storm. I have traveled in such haste, I have not stopped even to beg a crust of bread from other travelers."

"Ah!", said the Old Man with a faint smile, "I fear that I can not offer you an end to your quest, but perhaps I can offer you a brief respite. Your friend never arrived here and I have awaited him for two days now, but you must come in and rest from your privations. Warm yourself by the fire and join me for dinner."

Eurmal wondered briefly what had become of Forgol, but the offer to join the Old Man at his table was what he had been seeking, so gluttony won out over curiosity and Eurmal hastened across the threshold.

Yes, even Eurmal the clever can be so foolish. For I am sure that you, dear listeners, have already figured out part of the mystery and the meaning of the Old Man's questions. Indeed, Forgol had been here, but was here no longer; or more truthfully, very little of him was still here. For the Old Man was an Ogre! And not just any ogre, but THE GREAT OGRE of the northern forests! Forgol had come here unsuspecting and for the last two days the Ogre had been dining upon him. All that was left was a small dish of meat upon the table.

I'm sorry, dear listeners, I know you had been hoping to meet this mighty hero, this paragon of excellence; but you only get to meet him as meat. He gets a brief casserole cameo and no more.

Now that the Ogre had assured himself that no-one knew that Eurmal had come here, he was planning to slay him in the night, too. The skinny wretch that Eurmal appeared might not look like good eating, but there would be some organ meats and the bones would make good soup. Besides, there was almost nothing left of Forgol and the Ogre craved human meat. He enjoyed his many delicacies, but only human meat would ever truly satisfy him.

Eurmal sat down at the table and ate heartily of bread and fruit. Then he helped himself to the meat from the dish! It was as Eurmal chewed and swallowed the meat that Forgol summoned the last of his powers and his spirit whispered in Eurmal's ear.

(And you thought Forgol had no role in this story! Shame on you for doubting such a mighty hero!)

"Old Friend," whispered Forgol's spirit, "Beware. The Old Man is an Ogre and he plans to slay and eat you just as he has slain and eaten all of me but what is on the table.

Eurmal whispered back," Thank you old friend. I shall not forget. This ogre tricked me into eating you. I'll make him eat far worse before I'm through!" For Eurmal had realized that the Ogre must have a monstrous appetite to have eaten all 18 stone of Forgul's bulk in a mere two days. That appetite would be the key to Eurmal's revenge.

Eurmal praised the food that the Ogre had placed upon the table. He began to discourse at length about food and its preparation. The Ogre listened attentively for he did love all sorts of food, man's-flesh was just the best of all. "It is appalling," said Eurmal, "to see myself looking like this. I am by nature a very fat man. In fact it is truly amazing how much weight I can put on and how quickly."

At this the Ogre listened more attentively. Maybe the skinny calf could be fattened a bit before slaughter?

"Oh, yes!" Eurmal went on, "Why I can put on almost a stone a day, especially when I am doing the cooking. I know all sorts of delicious and fattening recipes." He went on at length describing the victuals that he could prepare. He described rich stews and breads, sweet cakes and pastries, delicate sweetmeats and delicious savouries. He lingered lovingly on each detail of spice and herb, every sauce and garnish. And the Ogre's stomach began to rumble.

"My dear young man," said the Ogre, "your poor situation has touched my stoma... err, heart! You should stay a while before you resume your search for your friend. Perhaps he will still come here. You need to rest and eat properly for a few days to recover your health. While you stay, perhaps you could prepare some of these wonderful delicacies for me. All the contents of my larder are at your disposal."

Eurmal accepted the offer and the two went to bed, but Eurmal did not stay there long. Once he was sure the Ogre was asleep Eurmal slipped out of the bed. First he meddled with the floor boards in front of the hearth and took a good long look at the great bronze cauldron. It was large enough to boil a man in and very heavy, and it hung from a great bronze arm that could swing it from the hearth to the fire. Eurmal oiled the hinges of that arm and swung the cauldron up away from the fire and secured it there. Then he slipped out of the house and into the forest where he gathered up rocks and sticks and bark and bugs and toads and all sorts of unpleasant things. He even slipped round to the midden to root out some particularly nasty stuff. All this he hid in the kitchen and pantry except for the big rocks which he placed in the cauldron. Then he went back to bed.

The next morning Eurmal began to cook for the Ogre. What he didn't let the Ogre see was that he always had two sets of pots and pans going. In one set he cooked up all the wonderful delicacies from the Ogre's pantry. In the other he cooked up the nasty things he had gathered in the night. As he cooked he wove his magics into the seasonings to hide the nature of the second meal. The beautiful aromas filled the house, and the Ogre's stomach began to growl.

The second breakfast he served to the Ogre, while Eurmal ate of the first only. Eurmal gobbled down the wonderful foods he had cooked for himself. The Ogre, fooled by the spices and magic, gobbled down the



sticks and gravel and garbage that Eurmal served him.

Eurmal continued on this way for lunch, tea, and supper. The Ogre's belly was stuffed but this trash could not satisfy him. His stomach growled louder.

Eurmal slipped out of the house again that night and went about his collecting. Again he hid his materials around the pantry and kitchen and piled up more rocks in the big cauldron. The second day's cooking and feeding went like the first. The beautiful aromas and tastes drove the Ogre frantic with hunger, but the trash he was eating could not satisfy his appetite. His stomach growled like a ravenous bear.

The third night and day progressed the same way. By tea time the Ogre's belly was roaring like a mill as the gravel and sticks were grinding away in his stomach. Eurmal watched the Ogre's eyes following him hungrily as he worked in the kitchen. He saw the drool trickling from the sharp canine teeth which the Ogre was no longer managing to hide. As he cooked, Eurmal began to undo the disguise that made him look so skinny.

"Look," he said, "I'm getting back to my normal weight." He pinched a roll of fat on his belly and showed it to the Ogre. The Ogre's stomach roared so loudly that the whole house shook with it. Drool ran like a small brook down the Ogre's chin.

Eurmal hitched up his tunic and adjusted his apron to get back to work. He stepped over to the fireplace and turned his back on the Ogre. He bent down to stir the pot that was simmering there and his plump tender rump was clearly exposed to the Ogre. The Ogre immediately hurled himself across the kitchen to seize Eurmal. He was ready to eat Eurmal raw!

Crash! His foot shot through the floorboards that Eurmal had loosened. The Ogre tripped and went flying through the air, right at Eurmal's back! Eurmal ducked down and the Ogre flew right over him and into the roaring fireplace. Quick as thought, Eurmal reached up to loosen the cauldron, which was now full of rocks, and it swung around into the fireplace. Plunk! Right down on top of the Ogre, pinning him in the fire where he lay screaming his pain and hunger. Cheerfully, Eurmal grabbed the stacked faggots and tossed them into the fire till it blazed up like a furnace.

Eurmal went dancing round the kitchen, singing praises to his cleverness and eating up all the Ogre's remaining food. (Which wasn't very much after three days feasting by Eurmal.) The Ogre was completely burned away to soot and went flying up the chimney.

His feast done and his vengeance achieved, Eurmal left the house and danced down the road. What he didn't realize was just how hungry the Ogre had been when he was burned up.

He was so ravenously hungry that even the little specks of soot to which he had been reduced were still hungry! He was so hungry that his stomach was still growling, but now that he was only tiny specks of soot the growling had become a high-pitched whine instead of a deep bass roar. The cloud of soot that hovered above the chimney saw Eurmal dancing away and swept down upon him. Each little speck bit a chunk out of Eurmal as big as the speck itself. Eurmal slapped and batted, batted and slapped, but there were too many. He had dozens of tiny bites before he turned and fled as fast as he could run, down the road through the forest to the great river, where he hurled himself into the water. Frustrated, the hungry swarm gave up and dispersed through the forest.

That is why, ever since, the northern forest has had hordes of little black flies that will eat you down to bare bones if they get the chance.

Not overheard at RuneQuest-Con . . .

There was these trolls, see. And I was one of those Humakti. So I whipped out this Sword of Fireballs which I found in the Cave of Doom after defeating Babeester Gor in single combat by rolling "01" forty-five times in a row using nothing but my front teeth.

Where was I?... oh yeah. So then I blasted the trolls, accidentally setting Pavis on fire. But the Lunars said that it was all right because I rolled an "O1" on my. Oratory. The trolls had been burned to a crisp, except for their soft metal treasures, among which was the original Lead Cross that....

What, your event is starting?... I'll make it quick. So, Cthulhu starts to rise from the sunken city of Sartar... Why are you running away? Then after Humakt lent me his sword and Zzabur gave me hundreds of moist towelettes....

Wait, come back!

Tim Beecher

The Fox King

by Nick Brooke

Esmeralda was the daughter of old chief Rastan of the Hiording clan¹, in the days when Venharl Intagárnsson ruled the Colymar tribe2. Now Esmeralda was young, and Esmeralda was fair. She had three strong brothers, and more lovers courting her than you could shake a stick at. But the tallest and most handsome of all of them was King Fox3, whom she had met when she was hunting in the forest north of the Creek. He had russet hair, and deep dark eyes, and he wore a fine clan tartan that had never been seen in those parts, and a torc of silver about his neck. No one knew who his people might be, but as a King he was certainly brave, and surely rich, and of all the men who loved her, Esmeralda cared for him alone. At last it was agreed on between her kinfolk that they should be married4, for apart from all else, he offered a fine brideprice in gold. So Esmeralda asked the Fox King where they would live, and he described to her his clan-stead, and where it was; but, strange to say, he did not ask her, or her brothers, to come and see it.

So one day, near the wedding-day, when her brothers were out hunting, and the Fox King was away for a day or two on a *godi*'s business (he said), Esmeralda took her two spears and crossed the Creek, setting out north into the woods and following the trail that King Fox had described. And after much searching she came to the edge of the *tula* of the Fox Clan⁵—and there, staring at her through empty sockets, were two skulls atop poles to either side of the path⁶.

Esmeralda threw her Cloak of Mist about her, to hide her from their sight and avert whatever evil they might do her, and so concealed she walked into the *tula* and up to the stockade. And there another grisly sight met her eyes, for the stockade was of sharpened stakes, and atop each of the fifty tallest stakes an impaled, severed head stared outward, silently screaming in their deep decay.

But Esmeralda was a brave one, and followed Vinga's path. So through the portal she passed unseen and into the stockade of the Fox Clan. And there she spied the hall of the Fox King. And the hall was roofed, and from the eaves of the roof there dangled by their hair more heads of dead men and women and children.

Now Esmeralda slipped on her Sandals of Darkness, that none within might see her, and she passed between two thanes of the Fox Clan and into the King's feasting hall. And here she could see that the roof of the hall was of thatch over bones, and the benches of bone likewise, and in niches about the hall were set the severed heads of freshly-dead maidens. And their headless bodies lay all bloody and dead in a stall behind the Fox King's seat. 'And for another thing, none of the maidens had any fingers on her hands, but bloody stumps were all that was left.

Well, this was quite enough for Esmeralda, who had by now taken a strong aversion to her mysterious suitor, but as she left the hall and would have left the stockade, whom should she see coming through the gate but King Fox, and he dragging a beautiful young lady along, all in her finery. Well, Esmeralda was afraid he would see her, for all her cloak and sandals, for his eyes were *so* deep and *so* dark, so she rushed back into the hall of bones and hid herself in an empty stall, just in time, as the Fox King came in with the poor young maiden, who now seemed to have fainted.

And he took her hand in his own, and bared his bright white teeth, and he bit off her fingers, one by one, and threw them into the stew-pot that hung from the rafters and simmered in the centre of the hall. But when he chewed through and cast away the first finger on her left hand, he missed his aim and it landed flat in the lap of Esmeralda. She was mortally afraid he would note his mistake, but the Fox King was now sawing at the neck of the unfortunate girl, taking her head for a vacant niche beside his seat, so while his back was turned she slipped silently from the hall and fled the *tula* of the Fox Clan, as fast as her legs could carry her.

Now it happened that the very next day was to be the wedding of Esmeralda and the Fox King, when he would bring the bride-price and take her from her clan. All the things had been made ready, guests had arrived from far and near, and a Lightbringers' Ring formed to sanctify the bond, with Esmeralda's older brother as the chieftain, and so on down to a wandering vagrant as Flesh Man. And the Fox King came with his thanes, and was greeted with all ceremony, and he was seated by Esmeralda's side as the feast was laid, and holding her pretty white hand in his own⁷, when he chanced to notice that she was white as snow.

"How pale you are this morning, my dear," said the Fox King, all concerned.

"Yes," said she, "I had a bad night's rest last night. I had horrible dreams."

"Dreams may go wheresoever they will," said King Fox; "but tell us your dream, and we shall see what we can make of it."

"I dreamed," said Esmeralda, "that I went yesterday through the woods to visit your clan, and that when I found the bounds of your *tula* they were guarded by twin skulls on poles."

"Why, that is so," said the Fox King, "for the ancient enemies of the Fox Clan must now guard our bounds and 14

warn us of unwelcome visitors; though certainly there has never been a guest as welcome as I shall make you..."

"And then in my dream I walked up to the stockade, and there were fifty tall stakes to it, and a severed head topping each of them."

"Why, that too is so⁸," said the Fox King, "for our more recent enemies whom we have defeated in war now ring our stead to warn others away. And I find it very moving, Esmeralda, that you should have dreamed so of our future home on the night before our wedding day..."

"And then in my dream I passed into the stockade and up to your hall, and from its eaves there hung more heads, of dead men and women and children."

"Ah. But that is not so," said the Fox King, "for dreams are often..."

"And then in my dream I entered your hall, and its roof and furnishings were all of bone, and the heads of maidens adorned its niches, and their bodies were all slumped cruelly dead in your stall. And there were no fingers left on their hands, but they all simmered in the stew-pot hung over the hearth of the hall."

"Now that is not so, and it was not so," said the Fox King.

"And as I would have left the hall, you came in, King Fox, and you dragging a young lady behind you, and she in a swoon. And you bit off her fingers, one by one, with your bright white teeth, and you threw them into the stewpot."

"It is not so, and it was not so, and the gods forbid that

it should be so," said the Fox King, and he was rising from his seat when Esmeralda cried out:

"Ah, but it is so, and it was so, and here's her finger to prove it!" And she pulled out the lady's finger from her dress, and pointed it straight at the Fox King. And at that, all sprang to their feet and drew their swords, and would have cut King Fox to mincemeat there and then, but the Grey Lawspeaker stopped them.

"This man has been offered the hospitality of our board," he said, "and a curse will be upon our clan if we kill him now." And Flesh Man, who had come from the road and who carried no sword⁹, answered him thus: "Ay: he has been offered your hospitality. But will the gods permit that he should accept it?"

Then King Fox snatched up his guest-portion from the table, and cried, "I accept this meat gift¹⁰ with gratitude, oh Hiording men, and I will speak ever of your generosity." And he raised the succulent roast to his mouth, and would have bitten into it with his bright white teeth, but it choked him and he could not swallow. He snatched for a mead-cup and would have drained it dry, but the foaming drink leapt from the cup and spilled itself all down his russet beard and his fine clothes. And the Hiordings, seeing this, knew that he was in no way protected by their hospitality: the gods forbade that it should be so. They drew their swords and drove him from the hall, striking many mortal wounds. And after that, King Fox was never seen in Hiording lands again.

The End 11

- ¹ Like all unabridged Orlanthi tales, this one begins with a brief genealogy to set the scene. On the Hiordings, cf. KoS p.207: "Also sometimes called the 'Swansons,' this clan are descendents of Hiord and Safeela, a swan maiden. He stole her magical wrap, and so she stayed with him for seven years, and their children head the main bloodlines of the clan. When they were attacked by the savage Varmandi, they joined the Colymar tribe for protection." None of these details are germane to the story at hand, though they help in its interpretation.
- ² KoS p.210: Venharl Intagarnsson was twelfth king of the Colymar, ruling from 1492 to 1502. He led the tribe to join the confederation with the man named Sartar. It is uncertain whether this event predates the present story: King Sartar seems as likely to have wandered outside as within the bounds of his confederated lands.
- ³ Interesting, in that Esmeralda (as a Hiording maiden) would represent a Swan. This tale is perhaps an ancient Hsunchen or Durulz cycle (cf. their cautionary tale of *Jemima Puddleduck and the Foxy Gentleman*, ed. Potter), now repeating itself in the more developed folklore of the Sartarite Orlanthi.
- ⁴ The Hiordings, descended from a swan maiden, would presumably have been favourably inclined towards marriages with mysterious, unknown, but above all *powerful* figures from beyond their experience: they could look to their own magical ancestry as evidence for the beneficial results of such matches.
- ⁵ The sacred home territory of an Orlanthi clan, wherein all its ritual sites would be located.
- ⁶ Compare with the well-documented trollish practice of creating "Foe-Cursers" (Troll Cults p.81).
- ⁷ At the Lightbringer wedding of Biturian Varosh (CoP p.111), the officiating priest orders the bride and groom to hold hands throughout the ceremony a detail which adds a rather horrible *frisson* to this particular tale.
- ⁸ Head-hunting was an ancient practice and by no means a despised one, though it was rare by this stage in the evolution of Sartarite Orlanthi culture. There would have been no shame in the Fox King's admission that his clan had formerly followed the custom, but perhaps some slight awkwardness in admitting that it was current. Beyond this point, the disclosures become repugnant to ordinary Orlanthi sensibilities, and have to be denied.
- ⁹ These traits are enough to identify this mysterious Flesh Man as the legendary King Sartar in disguise. Sartar was said to be a Master of the Motion Rune, and was never seen to raise a weapon against another person. For his wanderings, cf. KoS p.137: "Sartar was loved by the common tribes people, for he often went disguised among them and searched for those worthy and just enough to help convey the kingdom towards a good future. Those who he found sufficient were rewarded, often in simple ways..."

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¹⁰ In the traditional Orlanthi rituals of hospitality and gift-giving, the *meat gift* is "a thing we offer only to kinsmen, and those as good as them" (KoS p.62). It would thus be appropriate at a wedding. Certainly the curse for breaking such a hospitality-tie would be great, and the Lawspeaker's caution is wholly justified.

¹¹ This story is essentially an Orlanthi's retelling of *Mr. Fox*, a traditional English folk-tale (obliquely referred to in Shake-speare's *Much Ado About Nothing*). My text owes much to the 1821 version collected in Angela Carter's Virago Book of Fairy Tales, and at least as much to the oral version recounted by Peter Ewing at several meetings of the Oxford Arthurian Society. The original Gloranthan tale is told in King of Sartar p.137:

"One time, in disguise, Sartar dealt with the foul Brangbane, the king of the Dinacoli tribe who was buying daughters from distant families with illusory gold. He would cut off their fingers to make a vile brew of evil potency which gave him great power, and then kill the women. "Sartar's magic gave the evil king an insatiable appetite, and an illness which made all real food repulsive to him. Brangbane solved this by eating the dead, and extracting power from the corpses. But though he survived as a ghoul, he was ever pursued by the ghosts of those he had unjustly slain. Furthermore, the ghosts of these women can be called upon by any Sartarite who needs help against ghouls. Brangbane still runs about the hills of Sartar, plagued and hating, still full of great power until the wailing ghosts catch up with him. His name is usually not spoken, and he is called the King of Ghouls."

For this version of this story, it proved difficult at first to identify the antagonist without giving the game away from the start. But as Brangbane is customarily not named (to avoid attracting his attention?), while any of his modern epithets would be inappropriate, it proved overwhelmingly tempting to identify him with the trickster, Fox, a mythical enemy of the Ducks and the Swan People. The key element of the lady's finger plays the same role in both versions of the tale, and appears even more appropriate in its Orlanthi setting than in the old English story from which it was derived; while Mr. Fox's "God forbid's" find their ironic comeuppance.



How Orlanth Won Ernalda's Attention

A Traditional Orlanthi Folk Tale from Heortland by Martin R. Crim ©1994

When the world was young, Orlanth was young, too. With nothing to his name except the clothes on his back, he wandered the young world, to see what he could see. One day, as he stood on a mountain, he saw a beautiful queen down below in the valley. At that moment, Uleria threw her invisible net over Orlanth, causing him to fall deeply in love with the beautiful queen he saw. Orlanth determined to approach this queen, even though he was a humble and unknown godling.

Orlanth came down from the mountain and went toward the place where he had seen the queen. He made his way through throngs of servitors and demigods. They were all laughing and talking, and a few of them noticed the bumpkin in their midst and made jokes about his rustic clothes. When he came to a solid ring of these servitors, who blocked his way, he asked one of them, an old man with a crooked staff, who the beautiful queen was that they guarded. "She is the Queen, wife of our Emperor," the old man said.

"I would approach her," Orlanth told the old man.

"Do you have a patron at court to speak for you?"

"No," Orlanth admitted.

"Do you have an invitation?"

"No." Orlanth began to be embarrassed, as those nearby listened in on his conversation with the old man. They whispered to each other about this boy with no courtly manners who thought he could just saunter up to the Queen. So Orlanth turned his back on them.

Orlanth resolved to get the Queen's attention. He went home and picked out the best alynx there, and brought it with him back to the Queen's court. He presented this to the old man as a gift for the Queen, and asked the old man to make sure it got to the Queen. The old man did so, and after a while, one of the Queen's chief servitors came to the ring of servitors who divided the Queen's court from the rest of the world. The chief servitor, though, only thanked Orlanth on behalf of the queen "for the unusual animal for our collection."

Orlanth realized he needed something better to impress the Queen. If a gift would not do, he would have to display his powers. So he summoned all his strength, made an enormous thunderstorm, and concentrated rain upon a mountain not far from the Queen's court. The rain and the wind combined to wash away all the grass and trees and dirt on the mountain, down to the bare rock. Then one of the Queen's chief servitors came to Orlanth and asked him not to do that again, for the destruction made the Queen unhappy, and took long to repair.

Orlanth knew another way to impress the Queen. So he borrowed a sword and went and challenged all of the Queen's warriors to fight. Single-handed, he faced the mighty host of the Queen's guards. The Queen even deigned to watch this brash young godling fight her guards, which inspired Orlanth to fight even harder. Orlanth defeated all of the Queen's guards. The fight took many days, and when he had defeated the last guard, he looked around for the Queen. She was gone, and one of her lesser servitors told Orlanth that she had grown bored with the fight early on, and had witnessed only the first few bouts.

Orlanth went and sat in the vestibule of the Queen's palace, his head in his hands. People passed him by as if he were not there. Two of the Queen's maids happened by the place where Orlanth sat, and they were talking about the Queen's footwear. Orlanth seized on this crumb of hope. He racked his brains for any kind of fabulous shoes that he might bring to the Queen and, with them, win her favor. The only famous shoes he could think of were the sandals of darkness, which belonged to the Mother of Trolls, who lived in hell.

Orlanth knew he would need help in gaining the sandals



of darkness. He went to his brothers for advice, which they owed to him as kinsmen. Orlanth's nearest brother told him, "Raise yourself an army with which to invade hell." Orlanth thought this might be a good idea, but then he realized that he had no way to raise an army large enough to enter hell, much less to seize the sandals.

So Orlanth went to his next oldest brother, who said, "A true warrior waits for nothing but air to fill his lungs! You must charge off now to hell, fight the Mother of Trolls, and take the sandals!" Orlanth thought that might not be a good idea at all, since the Mother of Trolls was sure to be surrounded by her many children, who could see in the darkness of hell, unlike Orlanth.

Then Orlanth went to his oldest brother, who laughed at nim when he heard Orlanth's problem. "Why bother with gifts? Take this Queen away by force and make her yours!" Orlanth was young, but even then he knew that advice such as this lacked wisdom, although he was not quite sure why. So he decided to go to a higher power.

Orlanth traveled to the World Mountain, and begged entrance to the Celestial Court. He was known as a worshiper, so they had to let him in. He asked the court for advice on how to win the sandals of darkness. Only three of the court were in attendance then. The first said, "My son, do not seek to change the world, for it is perfect now." The second said, "My son, act with caution, for any great act might wreck the world." And the third said, "My son, if you resolve to do this, then you must go and wager something against the Mother of Trolls that is equal in value to the sandals. Then, if you win the wager, you will have the sandals fairly."

Orlanth thought of their words. He was resolved to win the sandals, for his setbacks had only banked the fires of his love for the Queen. But he lacked anything to wager against the Mother of Trolls, so he went home in frustration to fast and meditate.

When Orlanth got home, his half-brother Yinkin the cat was officiating over the wedding of one of his greatgrandsons. When the wedding was over, Yinkin took Orlanth aside. "I see you are troubled, brother," Yinkin said, "Can I help?"

Orlanth explained the problem to Yinkin, who said, "I will go with you and together we shall accomplish this adventure."

"No, brother," Orlanth said, "you are needed here, with your family. It would not be fair to them to take you away from them."

"Then let me give you my sense of smell, for with it you can find the sandals of darkness even in the darkest pit of hell."

"Thank you for the offer, brother, but I'm afraid I would bump into many things, including trolls, before I found the sandals, for I cannot see in the dark."

"Then let me give you my darksight, so you can find your way in hell."

This last offer Orlanth accepted, with gracious words of thanks. And with no other preparation (for he had nothing else to prepare), he set out again for the World Mountain. Once there, he found the staircase spiraling down into the deepest part of the universe. In the upper portions of the staircase, where it was merely gloomy, Orlanth smelled cold vapors and mold coming up from below. As he descended lower, through the realms of earth and water, swarms of insects from below covered him, biting and stinging. Still Orlanth descended, and at the bottom of the staircase, gazing out across the plains of hell with Yinkin's darksight, he saw kingdoms and empires of trolls and their filth piled into mountains.

Orlanth had to sneak around for weeks, looking for the Mother of Trolls. Finally, he heard two trolls discussing their Mother in low, reverent tones, as they gestured toward a distant mountain. Orlanth set out at once for the mountain, and arrived there in a week. A gigantic cavern opening was the only thing he could see that might lead to the Mother of Trolls. He entered. It was filthy underfoot, and stank, but he pressed forward.

At length, Orlanth came into a great chamber in the cavern. There he saw a couch that bore the imprint of something long and heavy, but which Orlanth could do not see or hear. He crept over to the couch, and by feeling around at the foot of the couch found the sandaled feet of an enormous troll. As carefully as he could, Orlanth unlaced the sandals and slipped them off. When the second one came off, Orlanth suddenly could see the huge female troll who slept on the couch. But the sandal said to him, "Here! Who are you? Explain yourself."

Orlanth quickly put the oversized sandals on his feet. "I am Orlanth, and you will obey my will," he told the sandals. Instantly they shrank to fit him, and he fled toward the entrance.

Just then, though, two giant trolls came through the mouth of the cavern toward Orlanth. They heard him talk to the sandals, and saw him put them on and disappear. Then each of the giant trolls took his huge club, as long as a tree and as thick as a barrel, and smashed all around, hoping to catch Orlanth by chance. Orlanth could not get past them, so he danced up behind one of the trolls, and showed himself to the other one.

The second troll bellowed and swung his club at Orlanth, but Orlanth slipped again into impenetrable shadow. The giant troll's club struck his brother's leg instead of Orlanth's head, breaking the bone.

In the confusion, Orlanth ran out of the cavern, down the mountain, and kept running. He did not break his stride until he was home. He returned his half-brother's darksight. After resting a bit, he set out again for the Queen's court. He presented the sandals to the Queen in person.

"We thank you for the sandals," the Queen said, "and we bid you wear them for us, and, when you wear them, to think of us." In this way the Queen declined the sandals, but without offending Orlanth. Indeed, Orlanth did wear the sandals often after that, and they always reminded him of the Queen and her gracious ways. This was the first time that the Queen deigned to speak to Orlanth, but the story of their courtship must be for another day.

And this tale also tells how there came to be enmity between the men of storm and the men of darkness.

HOME OF THE BOLD

Conceived and Written by David Hall and Kevin Jacklin RuneQuest-Con Referees – Brandon Brylawski, David Gadbois, Brian Carpenter, Ken Rolston, David Cheng, and a whole bunch of volunteer "Crested Dragonewts"

Role Call

Janet Anderson - Berta Featherpenny (Grazelander priestess) Paul Anderson - Romne Sharpsword (Sambari housecarl) Shannon Appel - Vamastal Greyskin (Sambari king) Andy Ballantine - Asquai Stormpetrel (Grazelander military attache) Chris Becker - Yesugai Kuckuk (Grazelander Cultural Attache) Tom Beeson - Norpin Hopcherry (Stonemason's Guildmaster) Maurice Beyke - Egrid the Enlightened (Aide to Harvar Ironfist) Robert Bisbee - Alfgar Goodspear (Locaem tribal king) David Blizzard - Corwen (Colymar tribe) Ron Boerger - Hemrid the Ox (Balmyr king) Bill Bridges - Lemidus the Scribe (Aide to Gordius) Nick Brooke - Temertain the Learned (Prince of Sartar) John Brown - Halthippus the Inspired (Guardian of the Flame Altar) James B Chapin - Leonidas of Darleep (Lunar Magistratus) James D Chapin - Dimi Hardhide (Leatherworker's Guildmaster) David Chapin - Pliny Dropgoode (Reporter) Diana Chapin - Yrsa Nightbeam (Torkani queen) Paula Crock - Elspeth Halfbarrow (Earth priestess) Bryan Davis - Tayang of the Glowing lake (Aide to Subatei) Fred Davis - Ozymandius Sharphorn (Praxian "trader") Mike Dawson - Harvar Ironfist (Duke of Alda-chur) Robert B. Detter - Paravor Sureseat (Poljoni "trader") David Dunham - Magnyrd the Black (Gordius' spymaster) Jon Evans - Count Stolwitz (Heroic cavalry commander) Marc Eyrand - Hulius Hinglesias (Lunar seneschal) Scott G. Ferrier - JD Brightstone (Jeweller's Guildmaster) John Flavin - Sarostip Cold-eye (Humakti Sword) Brian Forester - Blackmor the Peaceable (Colymar king) Mark Foster - Oleas Quipp (Weaponmaster's Guildmaster) Paul Gilles - Ormond Sacker-Sigerson (Lunar Advocate) Mark Gilles - Goram Whitefang (Telmori bodyguard) Ian Gorlick - Tiberius Augustus Hector (Lunar Sergeant-at-Arms) Andrew Greenberg - Servizi Interbankeri (Moontown leader) Nils K. Hammer - Toleander Planter ("Head of the Financiers' Guild")

Paul Harmaty - Old Herb (a storyteller in Geo's) Paul H. Heinz - Honest Gordon Greenhill (the bookie) Rhys Hess - Arkator Longspear (Sun Dome Templar) James Ho - Denis Quailfoot (the best thief in town) Eric Jablow - Publicus the Punctilious (Aide to Gordius) Oliver Jovanovic - Groblob Grinlips (Shady dealer from Troll Corner)

Barbara Jackson - Estal Donge (Temertain's consort) Yvonne Kaplan - Malana Goodnight (Chalana Arroy healer) John A. King - Torvald Rolfsson (Dinacoli king) Curtis Lyons - Nimkin Fastcard (Foreign merchant) Peter Maranci - Sir Tutophet Ixthanin (Knight of Heortland) Finula McCaul - Terpitia Bosky (Etyries Merchant) Mike McGloin - Constable Pugh John Medway - Jubba the Hood (Lunar spymaster) David Millians - Wertor Orindori (Tarsh Ambassador) Mark Minster - Alvar Stormsson (Amad king) Mark Mohrfield - Atticus the Travelled (Tarsh merchant) Noel Montealegre - Tatius Bracegirdle (Reporter) Michael O'Brien - Gordius Silverus (Lunar Provost and Governor) Sue O'Brien - Alcapata Honorius (Tax collector) Jeff Okamoto - Morak Moran (Head of the Underworld) Alison Place - Nerissa Bracegirdle (Domestic Servant) Rebecca "Madriel" Bisbee) - Tamera Threeslice (Warrior-woman) Paul Reilly - Sigilius Doyne (Etyries Merchant) Roderick Robertson - Subatai of the Silken Tongue (Grazelands Ambassador) Neil Robinson - Antonio Smallheap (Jeweller's Guild apprentice) Jim Rogers - Flavius Ginnicus (Gin Salesman)

Eric Rowe - Ontorius Threadneedle (Lunar bureaucrat) Lawrence Schick - Portin Dunbar (Town Crier) John Schmidt - Constable Dibble Scott Schneider - Justin Blundar (Praxian "trader") Michael Schwartz - Thufir Twosword (Humakti sword) Malcolm Serabian - Aleham Ratsbane (Tarshite Lieutenant) Rich Staats - Spensor Marksson (Issaries merchant) Chris Stafford - Clem Beastwood (Bounty hunter) Greg Stafford - Montague Goodcandle (Royal Librarian) Michael Strathearn - Tonaling Hardblow (Enstalos king) Curtis Taylor - Edruf Strongbreath (Malani king) Kendra Tornheim - Ingie Thickfist (Local tough) Hans van Halteren - Skalfi Blackbrow (Lismelder king) John Walker - Ranulf Grimblade (Culbrea king) Scott Watson - Ivar Quickstep (Cinsina king) Andy Weill - Tolstoy Arrowroot (Union leader) Jeannie Whited - Juliana Silverus (Gordius' fair daughter) Robert Wolfe - Laertes Sciplilies (Stalwart Lunar officer) Paul Woodmansee - Lergius Cassius (Lunar General) Mike Young - Previous Horserider (Barman of Geo's)

Editor's Note: There were a handful of casting changes at the last minute. There are probably a few people on this list getting undeserved credit for a given role, and thus there's an equal number of folks going unheralded. Our apologies for not being able to give 100% proper recognition.



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Ontorius Threadneedle

Eric Rowe

[Resignation form in triplicate.]

Sir, After careful consideration and long thoughts I have come to a decision as to my position here at the Boldhome court. I no longer wish it. This note is my official resignation and I have had it properly signed and stamped and triplicated. Best wishes for the future here in Boldhome. Hail Imperator!

Ontorius Threadneedle

Dearest Sister,

How are your fine husband and two strong sons? Well, I hope. I'm having this message sent by special courier so you won't be surprised by my visit. Yes, that's right, I'm on my way to Pavis and should be there in a few days weather permitting. I finally gave up on that deadend, paper-pushing court clerk job. They were taking outrageous advantage of my considerable administrative skills and running me ragged the last week or so. I didn't even have time to bet on the chariot races this week. That's a real shame because I had a hot tip on the winner. At least I ended up with a few bags full of unspent lunars. The wheels of efficiency were often oiled and thus I am bringing some expensive presents for my favorite nephews.

I must tell you of my last week though, and I why I finally quit. The week started off fine, only two cases, and I scheduled one to interfere with services so I wouldn't have to go that week. The trouble began when the number of license and warrant requests began to soar, so much so I was forging proper forms before the week was half done. Then the lazy bureaucrats added registration for the chariot races to my duties. That wouldn't have been such a problem if I wasn't already assigned to register the mayoral candidates.

To add insult to injury I also found myself registering half of the whole bloody town for their silly election. Over a thousand people registered in two days. My hands almost dropped right off. Finally the election arrived and I managed to run it to the best of my ability. Unfortunately the wrong man won because the right man forgot to visit our friend the Provost to 'ensure' his support. The straw that broke the bison's back though was the market stalls. Before I could go spend my profits from the election more bureaucrats forced assigning market spaces (with all the associated paper-work) on me as well. Sure, I netted even more funds from this, but without any time to savor the fruits of my labors (Ontorius is the name, red-tape is the game) I didn't enjoy it with my usual relish.

Well then, I finally just packed up my case of lunars and sent off my notice of departure (in triplicate) and headed out. As I left I noticed there seemed to be some disturbance back at the main gate. Perhaps some odd new Solar ceremony-there was a lot of smoke...

With love,

your brother Ontorius

Home of the Bold Narratives

ALCAPATA HONORIUS

Lunar Tax Collector Susan O'Brien

An official communiqué between Quinscion the Patient, General of Procurement and Disbursement for the Lunar Provinces at Mirin's Cross and Ivex Devouring Dog, the Imperial Collector-General at Glamour.

SECRET! The Tax Demons Watch Over This Document! Date: Fire, Truth, Sea, 7/54

Re: Alcapata Honorius, Tax Collector/Assessor for Boldhome and Occupied Sartar (tax districts 23-39 inc.)

Sir,

I write this to intercede on behalf of Alcapata Honorius, former tax collector at Boldhome. Alcapata is currently being wracked by your Tax Demons, as punishment for irregular collection practises. While the punishment you have exacted is both fair and just-the amount she handed in (58L) was suspectly low-she claims that she was pickpocketed at one stage, and that all written tax records were lost as she escaped the rebels. These claims cannot be disproved. Furthermore, although I might share your misgivings about her honesty, no one can doubt her zeal: she even tried (and succeeded) in taking tax from the Grazelands Ambassador! Alcapata is a woman of unusually shrewd talents; the sort of person the Lunar Provinces cannot afford to lose in these increasingly troubled times!

Therefore I ask that you call off your Tax Demons before they consume her soul entirely. I offer the following points in mitigation:

- *The revolt was strictly localised and rapidly crushed, with minimal disruption to taxation. Forfeiture of property, chattels, livestock and slaves has more than compensated for revenue losses, and to her credit Alcapata ably distributed the excess among the local leaders who stayed loyal.
- *Despite incredible pressure from the Provost to use the emperor's New Imperial Assistance Fund money for his own ends (rumour has it he wanted to install a central heating system in the Royal Library to butter up the librarian), Alcapata wisely awarded the money to the local Healing Hospital. As all are welcome there, this donation showed the empire's tolerance and the emperor's beneficence in the best possible light.
- *Alcapata devised a number of novel taxes which I am considering instituting across the provinces:
 - = The provost unwisely issued an extraordinary number of weapon permits; Alcapata then

collected a "sword tax" from everyone with one.

- = Suspecting rampant tax evasion at the marketplaces, she devised a new spot tax on stalls, and then offered a discount for those with stalls at the Lunar market! This did much to promote Lunar trade.
- = A hops tax drove the price of locally brewed ale up, compelling parched Boldhomers to slake their thirst with our superior drink Gin, which was taxfree. Although it raked in substantial revenue, the provost later repealed the tax in a pathetic attempt to curry favour with the locals.
- *Interestingly, Alcapata's most impressive innovation came not in tax but in the area of electoral reform. A "poll tax" was instituted for the Mayoral elections. Each voter was required to pay 1 L to cast his vote. When voting closed, it was simply a case of making sure the number of votes equalled the number of coins collected to ensure that the election was a fair one.
- *Alcapata is also willing to testify against the nowdisgraced provost Gordius Silverus, should charges of tax evasion be levelled against him (though there seems little that can be pinned on him, save that he neglected to hand over the Sun Dome Temple tribute money presented by Arkator Longspear until it was demanded from him. Alcapata suspects he was hoping to keep it for his own ends).
- *Iscillius, one of Appius Luxus's spies, insinuated himself into her employ as bodyguard. He reports no evidence of dishonesty, though he lost contact with her during the revolt and therefore cannot substantiate her claim that the tax records were lost. I trust you will give this request due and rapid consideration!

May the Unearthly Light of Time's Still-born Sister Shine Directly Upon You! Q.

[Quinscion's intervention saved Alcapata's soul, and after she recovered from the torment she was sent to collect a decade's back-taxes at Kree Mountain in Aggar, a punitive assignment.]

Report to the Commission of Inquiry on the Fall of Boldhome James B. Chapin

I am Count Leonidas of Darleep, recently Magistratus of the city of Boldhome. The responsibility for the great disaster of the fall of Boldhome rests upon the Provost of the city, Gordius Silverus. He should be impaled for his crimes and the resulting disasters, as a lesson to other incompetents who fail short in their duty to the Empire.

I am reluctant to admit that the original failure was that of Tatius the Bright, in allowing divided authority in the city. I am sure that this failure was a matter of his concentration on his great work in the South, which led him to listen to the false representations of Gordius. Rather than appointing me to sole command, as befitted my rank and social status, Tatius appointed the low-born and already tarnished Gordius as Provost, and left the command of the military to the honest but pedestrian Lergius Cassius. Indeed, while competing lines of authority sometimes have advantages, I must say that the lack of definitive command was fateful. Had I been in command it is most certain that I would have kept order and discipline, as befits a priest of Yelm and Imperator Moonson.

There would have been no corruption. All would have known that justice flowed impartially, as it did in my court. When I dealt with complicated and potentially troublesome cases, such as the claim of King Hemrid the Ox of the Balmyr tribe versus Imperator, alleging the murder of his son Golvar by the Whipstock Cavalry Regiment, I was able to use the light of divine truth, and my scepter of justice, to reach a conclusion satisfactory to all. Many thought that this trial might lead to civil disorder, but note that the justice of my decision was so obvious to all that it led to no trouble.

Truth must of course be mutually-agreed-upon, and the more that stand upon the truth the stronger that truth is. That task I fulfilled.

Meanwhile, Gordius did not even recognize the necessity of putting the barbarians under the same legal system as that which I was administering so well.

And he followed a course of random reward and punishment, guaranteed to infuriate the barbarians without disciplining them. By the middle of that last, fateful week, the Clerk of the Court was issuing orders for arrest almost at random.

Among the low points of the week were Gordius' instructions to arrest the loyal King of the Colymar tribe and an ill-fated attempt to invade Geo's, which he tried to carry out without even getting my permission!

To sum up Gordius' failures:

He had no consistent policy. He alternately provoked and conceded to the rebels. It is a well-known rule of government that consistency of policy is more important than even whether it is well-judged.

His policy was guided by corruption and self-interest, not by the best interests of the Empire. Such arrests as those of King Blackmor were carried out only for the purposes of extortion, not for reasons of justice.

He twice failed to stand against the forces of the Dark: his agents were cooperating with the Dark in the form of horrid night-creatures, while other agents were failing to suppress the dark in the form of trolls, therefore allowing enemy troops to infiltrate the city. So complete was the infiltration of Darkness into the city that the brave Harvar Ironfist, the Prince of Far Point, was blinded by a spell cast by some evil worshipper of the Dark.

Whilst opposition to the random policy of coercion and conciliation was building up, Gordius waited for too long to intervene, even allowing fine troops to be destroyed without aid.

And in the end, he deserted his losing army and fled through a well to come to you with his lying excuses for failure. Had his other actions been without fault, he would still deserve the ultimate penalty simply for deserting his troops in the face of the enemy.

To contrast my behavior to his, I did not desert the troops, but rather fought with them out of the city, although it required the use of all the powers granted to me by Yelm and Imperator Moonson, including multiple Sunspears, a divine healing, and even Resurrection by

my allied spirit. Unfortunately, only a small force was able to survive the disaster.

I hope that, after disposing of the criminal Gordius properly, you will consider what lessons in the form of organization can be drawn from this disaster: there must not be confused authority, authority should not be given to these low-born people who are self-interested, and policy toward the barbarians must be consistent. If people are not sure of what merits reward and what merits punishment, they soon go out of control.

This court should express the necessity of clear lines of command, leadership by those born to leadership, and of a stern but fair hand in dealing with outlanders.

May the light of the divine truth of Yelm and Moonson Imperator shine upon you in your work.

Leonidas testifies

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GORDIUS SILVERUS Lunar Provost of Boldhome

Michael O'Brien

A transcript of this document later found its way into the Nochet Collectanea, a diverse collection of assorted documents held for public us in the great reading room of the Nochet Temple of Holy Wisdom. An editor, unknown, but almost certainly of Lunar origin and conversan with the events at Boldhome, makes a number of remarks which are included below.

From the Inquisitorial Commission into the Rebellion at Boldhome, 1624. Carried out in the field before Tatius the Bright.

The defence oration of Gordius Silverus, deposed provost of the city.

[Editor's Note: As the only priest available with Truth spells was confined to his tent with a virulent attack of Uleria's Measles that day, parts of Gordius's account could be interpreted as self-serving and extremely partial, particularly his explanation of how he ended up far away in Casino Town after the revolt.]

"I've paced it out from side to side, 'tis five miles long and two miles wide..."

Despite my love of poetry, I had barely time to compose the above two stanzas in my time as Lunar Provost of Boldhome, so busy was I in the service of the Empire. Notwithstanding the fact that parts of Boldhome lie in ruins following the uprising, I am confident that the Emperor will see that I carried out my duties in an exemplary fashion, and have in fact brought Sartar firmer within his grasp.

So onerous were my duties, I had little time for the social niceties - I made a brief appearance at Temertain's garden party, and officiated at the opening of the Chariot Track but could not stay for any races. And stories of trollish walktapies, a vampire in the streets and other scandals - these I left for my constables to deal with, for I was embroiled in high politics.

I saw my main task to be that of fostering closer ties with the Sartarite tribal kings. Our original hope that they would unite under beneficent rule of Temertain the Philosopher King was of course by now simply embarrassing, and there was still no sign of an heir (though I believe Temmy had somehow got his hands on a sort of aphrodisiac: he promised me that Sartar's Flame would "shoot up thirty feet before too long"!). The policy my predecessor Tatius instituted - the taking of hostages - only caused resentment, not loyalty. With the famine upon them, I decided to take a different tack with the Sartar kings. I called them together and made them a simple offer: they could accept gifts of grain to feed their starving minions in return for accepting provisional Lunar citizenship and allowing our missionaries to freely operate in their lands. And, if they converted to Lunar worship they could have their hostages back: as citizenship is hereditary, their children would therefore be citizens too, and so would be free to go as they please.

The already loyal King Blackmor of the Colymar had painted his face bright red as a symbol of his devotion to the Lunar Way, so I awarded him full Lunar citizenship. Later, he was arrested as a traitor, but we found that he had been unjustly accused. Apart from him, three more kings accepted my offer of grain for loyalty. The first was Hemrid the Ox, king of the Balmyr, whose son had killed by Lunar troops while resisting arrest. One might think it remarkable that he should then convert to our religion, but the court case was resolved in such a way he saw the fairness and impartiality of Lunar justice. Leonidas wisely decreed that the soldiers involved were acting beyond their orders, so the good name of the Lunar army was not besmirched. Hemrid gained his satisfaction with the punishment of the criminals - I made sure this happened by promising Leonidas full jurisdiction in Boldhome if he found this way - and so accepted the Goddess's embrace.

The other kings to convert were Skalfi Blackbrow of the Lismelder, whose tribe secures our border against Delecti, and Ivar Quickstep, the ambitious king of the Cinsina.

The problem of Harvar Ironfist would be a more difficult problem to solve. I welcomed the self-styled "Prince" of Far Point and "Duke" of Alda Chur with alacrity. Harvar came ouin support of us during the critical first days of Starbrow's Rebellion, but still had no formal ties to the Empire. He made it explicitly clear to me that he would finally swear formal allegiance and homage to the kingdom of Tarsh once he was permitted to join the cults of Yelm and Moonson Imperator. I took up Harvar's cause, for binding Harvar closer to the empire politically (through his oath to Tarsh) and religiously (by joining the Red Emperor cult) would inextricably link his fortunes with ours and secure our northern reaches forever.

I know that my critics and detractors might ask why I so readily acceded to Count Leonidas's request that resources be diverted away from the Reaching Moon project towards building the Temple to Yelm in Moontown. I did this so that the Count would thereby owe me a debt of gratitude, and would not forget my decision when it came to the thorny question of Harvar Ironfist's candidature into his cult. Besides such a diversion was only temporary, for I obtained a promise from Harvar that should his quest to join Yelm succeed, he would make a sizable donation towards completing the sun temple. We could then go back to building the Reaching Moc temple in earnest.

I am a practical man and I find theological quibbles pointless, however Count Leonidas made it clear that he would only induct Harvar into the cult of Yelm if proof of his noble ancestry could be found. Apparently Harvar's high standing it the Yelmalio cult stood for nothing in the Count's eyes, even though I am led to believe Yelmalio is considered the Son of the Sun in these parts.

It was essential for my plan that proof of Harvar's ancestry be found, so I summoned the Royal Librarian, Montague Goodcandle. Sages and scholars in this barbaric region sport



beards as proof of the erudition, somehow linking length and magnificence of beard with intelligence and wisdom. The Royal Librarian must have thought himself the most learned of all - his magnificent snowy beard was fully six feet long and mottled with large black spots!

Montague seemed to think that evidence of Harvar's ancestry could be found somewhere in the library's records, for a fee of course. I explained to Montague that I had complete confidence in his ability to produce the evidence, and gave him 24 hours.

When nothing was heard the following day I sent loyal Publicus (Gordius's loyal retainer, ed.) to the Librarian to enquire about progress. Montague himself returned with Publicus, though he had left his magnificent facial hair at home today. The Royal Librarian explained that the search was going to be "a little more difficult than he first imagined". I replied that the quest for Truth is often a long and arduous road, and that if certain modifications where made to the Royal Library a new central heating system, perhaps? - such searches on my behalf in future would not be as difficult. Montague agreed, and I promised him that my architects would have their feasibility study finished tomorrow, coincidentally at the same time I expected him to have found the evidence.

What a surprise, 24 hours later Montague (once again sporting his magnificent beard) returned with the evidence needed to convince the Count of Harvar's worthiness! What another surprise, my architects said that installing a central heating system in the library was feasible after all!

As the beaming Montague left, my spymaster Magnyrd whispered to me that the librarian had been seen in Geo's Pocket, a notorious den of seditious activity, and that his loyalty was not to be trusted. Before I has time to contemplate this further, a messenger reported that unauthorised figures were seen approaching the Flame altar, so I ordered General Lergius to take a detachment of troops to arrest them.

To my surprise, I learned that the transgressor was none other than Harvar Ironfist, who had tried and failed to light Sartar's Flame. After a brief skirmish, he had been arrested and was being brought before me! What was I to make of this news? After a few moments contemplation (interrupted by the arrival of the Prince, demanding I execute Harvar on the spot), I realised that the disturbing report that Harvar Ironfist had tried to light Sartar's Flame was totally obviated by the fact that he failed. I suspected his ambitions might reach this far, but his failure meant that I could carry on with my plan regardless. Imagine his surprise when, having been arrested and brought before me expecting death or cruel punishment, I greeted him warmly and accepted his lame excuse that he had only gone up to the flame altar to "look at the view". In fact, I even asked him if he'd tried to "have a go" at lighting the flame something (though Temertain would have a fit if he knew) that Lunars sightseers would do on balmy afternoons as a bit of lark. That Harvar carried off such an unexpected reversal of fortune with characteristic coolness and aplomb was only more proof that he was an excellent man to make our ally and thereby strengthen our grip our grip on the Pass. I told Harvar the joyous news about his suitability for the cult of Yelm, and later that day he swore his oath of fealty and homage to Tarsh at the Yelm temple, after his induction into Yelm and Moonson Imperator. Present were myself, Wertor Orindori the Tarsh Ambassador, my daughter Juliana (looking somewhat distracted), the Prince (whom I convinced to stand facing the wall, as he was babbling about taking the Orlanth Rex role in the ritual and wanted to strike down the count), lovely Estal, Alcapata Honorius the tax collector, General Lergius, and othe notables. Count Leonidas officiated. Harvar was also presente with full Lunar citizenship papers. He displayed his new loyalty proudly to all, with a splendid red cloak.

The one loose point in my scheme to win over Harvar would be if the "evidence" the Librarian found was later prove to be false. The only person who could do this would be the Librarian himself, but I was confident that the new building program at the Library would ensure that Montague kept his mouth shut. However, Jubba the Hood reported to me that th Librarian had been seen consorting with suspected seditious types at Geos Inn, a hangout General Lergius had ineffectually raided earlier in the week. Magnyrd confirmed Jubba's story, and noted that he had overheard Montague whispering to another shady type that "

I decided to have Montague arrested. Constable Pugh, one of the city constables, quickly brought him in, manacled and with beard in disarray. He protested mightily, but I just told him my intelligence staff wanted a "chat". He was thrown in a cell and later questioned for some hours by Jubba, Magnyrd and Pugh (if standing orders on the torture of suspects were exceeded, I did not hear of it). Montague did confess his treason, and even implicated King Blackmor of the Colymar!

It was obvious to me that Montague would have to die, we could not afford to stage a trial lest he reveal compromising things about Harvar's candidature. Although Pugh stood with axe ready, his friends knew he had been brought into our headquarters. So, he was flogged and released. However, as you will no doubt agree, assassination is a legitimate political tool o the state, so I summoned the head of the "Financiers" Guild, Toleander Planter. Planter, a shifty sleek-looking type in black explained (without precisely stating what line of work he was in, nor did I press him) that he could provide three levels of service - basic, intermediate and "executive". Despite the exorbitant cost, I paid for the premium service (out of my own pocket), for the political stability of the region depended on it. I am fair in saying Planter cheated me as the assassination came much later than I

expected, after the revolt broke out. Fleeing the city in the company of the puppet prince, armed assassins leapt out. Montague alone was killed, much to his (and Temertain's) surprise.

But I am going too far forward. When rumours were flying about that Kallyr Starbrow was in the city, I seriously entertained the possibility of declaring martial law. The crux came when I received intelligence From a secret source that an armed uprising was to occur on the night of the Black Moon! No, I cannot name my source.

[Editor's Note: Divination and Reconstruction spells on a certain ring in my possession reveal that the "secret source" Gordius protected was in fact none other than his daughter Juliana! She had fallen in love with one of the rebels, a Grazelander, and extracted a promise from her father that none of the Grazelanders would be harmed when the revolt was being crushed ("...if they do not resist", was his actual reply). Gordius could not name her of course, because she would be considered a traitor. Also, he would be held to ridicule for taking his daughter's advice over that of his own intelligence agents!]

Despite martial law, the revolt erupted as my source predicted. As we were forewarned, General Lergius was immediately sent out to crush it with all the forces at his disposal. Unfortunately, I should have taken command personally at that point, for Lergius made the fatal decision of splitting his forces and ended up marching into Geo's Pocket with barely more than a century of men behind him. He barely escaped the slaughter alive, and he lost his standard! Disgraceful.

That rebels could break into my headquarters was proof that my generals had lost control of the situation. After they had been rapidly dispatched - one escaped on a sylph after grievously wounding Magnyrd - this old veteran's blood, first spilt on the slopes of Grizzley Peak, began to boil within me. I left the headquarters, scimitar in hand and standard unfurled, to rally our forces in the square around the old well.

Shouting myself hoarse, I was heartened by those gathered around me - the loyal tribal kings, Harvar and his household, even portly Leonidas. If only the Goddess had shone full in the sky that day instead of dark, we would have prevailed.

[Editor's Note: Harvar Ironfist had a further 300 men waiting outside the city gates, waiting to join their master. Such a force may have carried the day, but in cross-examination Gordius claimed that although his order to open the gate was relayed to General Lergius Cassius, the general executed the order too late.]

Sensing that all was hopeless, I prepared to die bravely under my standard. As the rebels pressed around us and the fighting thickened, I suddenly slipped on the bloodied flagstones and fell headlong into the well. [Editor's Note: In cross-examination, Gordius was

asked how he managed to escape with the personal banner if the fall was accidental. He replied that he "...managed to rip it from the standard in a



desperate attempt to stay upright..."] Knocked senseless on the way down, I was rescued from Death's watery grasp by the brawny arms of a city constable - the estimable Pugh - who had scrambled down the well shortly before, as he knew of a secret passage From there out of the city. The fall definitely unloosened my mind, for the next coherent memory I have wa of standing at the gates of a small settlement in the God Forgo region of Kathela.

[Editor's Note: the "small settlement" Gordius's neglects to mention by name is Casino Town, famous for its gaudily-lit inns and saloons and myriad games of chance.]

Pugh said he had relatives there in the hospitality trade, and I stayed only long enough *[nearly a whole season! Ed.]* to recuperate from my extensive injuries before once again seeking to rejoin the Lunar forces to the north. I regret that Pugh is unable to testify before the Commission - after some success in a friendly card-game I believe he has used his winnings to take a prolonged sightseeing tour of Kralorela, the East Isles and beyond.

To summarise, though Boldhome was not spared the travails of armed revolt, I would prefer to call it a "cleansing fire". Let us reflect on the legacy I leave you following my term as provost.

Three more Sartarite Kings have sworn loyalty to the empire, taking up citizenship and even conversion, with their tribes to follow. Furthermore, while the rebel kings were distracted by the events in Boldhome, the tribal fryds of these loyal kings raided and destroyed the rebels' lands!

Harvar Ironfist, once a threat to the region, has been reduced to the status of a compliant vassal, ruling over a client state that will soon be as thoroughly Lunarised as Tarsh. With his abject failure to light Sartar's Flame, his ambitions to the crown lie permanently thwarted. With his binding oath of fealty to the King of Tarsh, he is now no more than a subject, ruling over Alda Chur and the Farpoint at his majesty's pleasure (whatever grandiloquent titles he chooses to style himself by). And, with his fortuitous induction into the ranks of Moonson Imperator, he becomes a eager-eyed and supple instrument for our Red Majesty's designs.

All this has been accomplished by myself, under the most difficult of circumstances. I trust that history will record the tumultuous events in Boldhome as nothing more than a mere blip in the rising fortunes of the Empire in Dragon Pass, and that I, Gordius Silverus, shall be remembered as the Empire's most loyal servant.

[Although Gordius's superior Tatius the Bright was tempted to court-martial him on the spot, Gordius voluntarily offered to resign his commission and return to Tarsh. He brought King Pharandros the glad news of Harvar Ironfist's oath of fealty, and was rewarded with a senior post in the Tarshite army. When Fazzur Widereaa finally rebelled against the king Gordius attempted to bring the legions under his command over to his master. Although partially successful, Gordius himself was reportedly captured by soldiers who chose to remain loyal, and Pharandros is said to have had him executed creatively in the arena at Furthest.]

"WE ARE, AFTER ALL, PROFESSIONALS"

Evidence presented in the third prosecution of Jubba Penumbrus, also known as Jubba "The Hood", ex "Aide de Camp", "Facilitator" and "Master of Spies" to Tatius the Bright, former Governor of Dragon Pass.

Prosecution Note: This is another of the now three, contradictory diaries of events near the time of the Fall of Boldhome kept by Jubba. In our opinion, the three diaries were kept, so that different information could be presented, or obscured, depending on the political situation.

It is our opinion that the diary originally released as evidence at the first of the Boldhome prosecutions, was in fact mostly false. The remanded sentence, granted Jubba, in exchange for this "information" was obtained through treachery and deceit, and should be reversed. Also, the punishments meted out on those on whom Jubba informed, will be rolled back, or compensated for, where this is physically or magically possible.

The fragmentary nature of this third diary, causes us to believe that it was never revised and polished, as were the others. It is possible that these were notes current with the events described, and that this may be a truer accounting than the others. However, Jubba has shown himself to be a master of disinformation and lies, so this may be how he desired this diary to be interpreted. Also, some of the days and times differ from other accounts, which implies that some notes may have been touched up, or that Jubba became aware of certain situations before or after others. His subtiling of days follows much of the rest of each days writings.

Following are selected passages from the diary, both in evidence of wrongdoing, and as a report on the condition of the Imperial Administration under Gordius.

Empty-Half/Fireday: Low Life

I sit here and seethe. That rat-bastard Magnyrd has again shown impertinence to his betters. Time to teach him some respect.

That fat slob of a Provost, too. Sent report to Tatius. The Temple is again slowed by the Provost making the wrong concessions to the locals. Make the buggers work for their food! Hulias is getting a bit testy. Supply must have dried up.

Servizi needs a leash. Gods, what aspirations. Will not back off from mayor.

Dibble needs something to do. Anything.

Get dirt on Leonidas. Make it?

Into Geos again! This is amazing. They haven't been this careless in more than a season. Puzzling, though - no forment, other than the usual background noise. Meeting place changed? Too bad Tolstoy's on their side. Could have been useful.

Peremedi's accent.

Full/Wildday: Our Lady of Madness

I must have something done about Lergius. After that foolish expedition into the pocket, we've lost most of what good will we have earned in the past season. Is Stolwitz capable enough? Careful - Icillius? Or is it Wertor?

Construction is nearly at a halt. It's too late for such delays, regardless of the Healers. Gordius doesn't seem to mind. Change it.

Subutai thought he recognized me as P. I was able to talk my way out, but he may be suspicious. P. needs to lay low.

Who's that Juliana's with?

Sigilius seemed uncomfortable when Terpitia showed up. They obviously still don't know about each other. Amusing.

Just when I think the natives have half a brain there's Temertain, again. Doddering old fool. Is dealing with him worth it? Does it gain us anything? Talk with Tatius.

Full-Half/Godsday: I'd rather be your arch-nemesis

Well, Magnyrd is cozying up. What's that snake up to? Note: call off the bankers - this could be interesting. Is the Provost that aware of how precarious his position is? Does he realize what kind o boob Lergius is?

Read Lergius the riot act. Surprised at the lack of contraband in Geos, was he? At least he'll talk to me first, now. Though I may have leaned on him too late... Send word to Tolstoy to keep low. Sigilius is a sleaze, but pliable... Push moderate position. Talk with Hulias. Shady Esrolian peddling a large number of weapons in town. This is not acceptable. Get Lergius to buy them up, or have something happen.

Hulias is more cooperative. Must have found some H. Try to find someone else for Tonaling to suck up to.

Up Yelm Imperator's ass. Leonidas is becoming a burden. Get him to cooperate.

Prosecution note: At this point Jubba obviously snapped off the quill of his pen, as there is a large smear of ink, and a tear in the paper. We have been unable to determine if this was accidental, or was to cover up something he had written.

What is with Terpitia? Favor Torvald?

No progress on Temple. Do something about that idiot provost. What does that loitering troll want?

Crescent-Go/Freezeday: Power, Corruption and Lies

Alcapata Honorius, my Goddess. That tax assessor is devious, though reasonable enough. Poll tax - We are brilliant! It took the Provost a few minutes to work out the math, though. Even Magnyrd was rolling his eyes at this! We should probably be able to insure Sigillius. Or anyone, but Servizi. Even Herb?

G's face! When he heard of the Inquisitor... It might all be worth it to see his glorious incompetence brought to a messy end.

Magnyrd has been useful, and cooperative, and it seems genuine. Either I am senile, or he is genuinely concerned about the situation. Hasn't said much about the Provost, though. He's been spending some time with that obvious Grazelander spy. Black cloak. Hah! How subtle. Wish they'd bathe.

Remember accident at Moonson Temple.

Stolwitz seems to be a man with honor. Nevertheless usable?

Lergius is losing even more quickly in the South than I thought that even he could. Latest word from Tatius is not so "Bright". Contingencies made.

Selling weapons permits to rebels. If ever a questionable policy... Provost has new silver utensils and goblets. Coincidence? Leonidas might be interested...

Where in the Hells of the Tax Demons is Toleander?

Where is that merchant with the weapons? Black hood time? Progress with Torvald. Tomorrow talk with Leo. about Hemrid. Damn! Bloody vampire got Terpitia. Shameful waste. Get Dimi in line. Dying/Waterday: Light at the End of the Tunnel?

We've got the Grazelanders. Good. We probably disenfranchised too many of the locals. Servizi won. That's easy to fix. Hopefully they won't mind a moderate like Sigilius. Hulias helpful. Make sure his supplier stays open.

May be able to fix a compromise to satisfy Hemrid. L. was ver reasonable. What's gotten into him?

Dimi becoming more of a liability. Trolls don't like what his activities do to night business. Hulias is downplaying the news about Terpitia and the others. Offer Grinlips Dimi in exchange for canceling the walktapus buffet he's planning, and for handing over the cook? His ZZ funboys might enjoy the fun.

Prosecution note: this affirms that Jubba was concealing information regarding the vampire who murdered several persons before the riots began. Also apparent is his knowledge of a murderous cook, a fugitive from a Lunar regiment.

How many of those permits has Gordius allowed sold? This is astonishing. He's already run out of vellum, and is using cheap local paper. Get word to Arrowroot to start a riot. Warn of this folly before it is too late.

Prosecution note: it is our belief that this is an attempt by Jubba to cover over any exploration of possible connection between him and the missing seal of the office of the Provost. Such a connection has not been proved, but further investigation may be in order. It is known that Jubba fled Boldhome a suspiciously wealthy man, though that could be from fraudulent expense vouchers.

Alcapata: Pick-pocket? Ha! Arrest her?

Prosecution note: Further evidence damning Alcapata, as it has been hinted that Jubba had her watched. If one of Jubba's eyes didn't see the event, it may very well not have happened.

Remember: We are after all, professionals. We are professionals. We are professionals.

Prosecution note: Another pen nib snapped here.

Black/Clayday: A Day of Shame

Damn! The pony boys are off now. Subutai's spy is still asking for asylum in a most unsubtle way. Lose him. Harvar instead of Temertain still seems do-able. Suggest it to him and arrange salamanders? Prosecution note: This plan, though against policy at the time, may have been able to pacify the Sartarites, somewhat. Temertain would have had to be murdered, however, and without approval of the Governor, would have been in violation of Protection Order MMCXXIV.

Ask Tonaling to feel around among the other unwashed about this.

Magnyrd's citizenship still isn't through. Push the paperpushers.

Why in the name of the Red Goddess, in all her wisdom, has a bureaucracy which requires half a day for an Arrest Warrant, been allowed to grow like a cancer? If only Dimi liked clerks and scribes instead of girls. Where has he been?

Prosecution note: Another quill here.

Luck! Dibble eager. L. flexible.

The gin shipment apparently did make it - or so it seems in headquarters. The provost is a mess. Maybe it's time to talk with the bankers about him. Keep an eye out for Iscillius. Bad timing.

Professionals. We are professionals.

Prosecution note: another unreadable passage from

an ink spill, and a tear in the paper.

Get the masons on the damn temple!

Tomorrow: spend more time in the streets near Geos. Work on Grinlips.

BLACKMOR? Can we be so gullible that **he** is the mole? Release what's left of the Librarian. He probably can't remember anything, anymore. Dibble likes this too much. Watch. Leonidas was reasonable - reward this.

Prosecution note: Count Leonidas and Constable Dibble are not available for questioning.

Embarrassment. Blackmor seems assuaged by the promise to kill the bloody librarian. < Provost tipped in for this one. Maybe I can have G or Tem. done too, for the fee. Tatius would understand? > Talk with Magnyrd?

Prosecution note: This is further evidence of the Provost and Jubba's involvement in assassinations and murders, outside of normal procedure. Also this intimates, more strongly than before, the growing corruption and infighting which Iscillius was to investigate.

The shame continues. Lergius is wandering around, out of uniform, no helmet, etc. A fine example which does wonders for morale. Time for Stolwitz? exceed his authority. regarding restructuring the Headquarters.

Follow J's companion. Suspicious ties.

Crescent-Come/Windsday: The Altecamelus' Back

Looks like no Full Moon in Boldhome. Travel plans made. Meet Tatius?

Prosecution note: As if necessary, this is further evidence that Jubba was not organizing the last Lunar effort from Headquarters, after the loss of the military Command and the flight of the Provost. Other accounts confirm the more likely story of this being done by Leonidas in the field.

Should have let Tolstoy blow off earlier. Even Lergius might have been able... Gordius should hope that he's killed in the riot. If not, then Toleander...

Prosecution note: Jubba had obviously "talked to the Bankers", i.e. Toleander Planter and his nest of Assassins about the Provost. It is unknown whether he had involved Magnyrd, or not.

Iscillius...

End of diary from period

Reporter's Note:

As sentence was to be imposed, a messenger bearing writs from Tatius the Bright, recently reinstated as Governor of Dragon Pass, and from Luxius Interioris, Senator from Raibanth arrived. Prosecution ceased, and the case was dropped.

Rumor has it that Tatius needed Jubba and his skills and information, and decided that the 3 months Jubba spent in forced labor, laying stone for the new Temple of the Reaching Moon at Wind Top was sufficient punishment.

Other rumors indicate that Jubba apparently compelled Luxius and/or Tatius to intercede, or face some unknown embarrassment.

In any event, Jubba has been reinstated to Tatius's personal staff, positioned as Chief of Intelligence, and that he will be on hand for the ceremony to lay the final stone to open the new Temple of the Reaching Moon.

Prosecution note: Further evidence of plans to



Commander of Military District 43 Paul Woodmansee

As the week began I could feel in my bones that trouble was brewing, not only in Boldhome but the entire district which spans all of Prax, the Heortland, and Sartar. An expeditionary force had marched into Esrolia under the command of Tatius the Bright. I knew that his army had been beaten at the Battle of Pennel Ford and was besieged in Pedestal, with Harrek and his Wolf Pirates blockading the port. Tatius had disappeared, and divinations suggested he wasn't dead. But my biggest concern was the fate of my son, a junior officer with the expeditionary army.

The other military problem was a Praxian warlord, Argrath White Bull, who attacked and captured Corflu. Our forces were hard pressed to keep him bottled up in port, and I was worried about him going northward and taking Pavis.

The first action of my new command was to meet with Governor Provost Gordius Silverus, my boss until Tatius returned. We reviewed the military situation and he assigned me responsibility of all military matters. I discussed the possibility of declaring martial law, but the Sergeant-at-Arms, Tiberius Agustus Hector, and the chief of Lunar intelligence, Jubba the Hood, were very much against it, claiming it would inflame the tempers of the natives.

I then met with my officers to assess the problems with the local troops, and what problems I had with their commanders. The 2nd Furthest Foot, under Captain Ratsbane, was my worst unit. I didn't know if Ratsbane was incompetent, or his troops had other problems. I had my aide, Lieutenant Laertes Scipliles, check into it. He reported that Ratsbane was a good commander but the troops were short 200 suits of armor. What's become of our Empire when regiments are deployed with two whole companies missing armor? Count Stolwitz of the Whipstock Cavalry needed 60 more horses to be effective. I assigned him the task of bargaining for the horses, and returning to me for cash when he found the cost.

After that I was approached by Quipp, the weapons merchant, to buy weapons for the troops. I was interested because I figured we'd find a use for them eventually, and if we bought them it would keep them our of rebel hands. He also pointed me to his friend Demi Hardhide, who had armor for sale which would help the Furthest Foot. I was handling this personally because I'd assigned Ratsbane to stay with the Telmori and guard Prince Temertain. I'd asked Laertes to look into the situation with Halthippus the Inspired, who was technically under my command, guarding the Flame of Sartar.

Later, at Prince Temertain's garden party, I found out that the Telmori guarding the Prince hadn't been paid in some time. This was another in a growing list of military expenses. I also met with the Grazelanders, who were willing to hire out as mercenaries. This was great because i wanted to send them South to help the army (and my son) at Pedestal. It would also keep the Grazelanders from raiding Tarsh, which the Tarsh ambassador was complaining about The Grazelanders were wary about risking their troops, and wanted to know where I was sending them and why. They were also asking for a lot of money for their services.

Similarly, Arkator Longspear was interested in hiring out his renown Sun Dome Templar troops. He was much more reasonable about the cost, and willing to accept more risk than the Grazelanders.

So now I had to get a lot of money for all these expenses. The weapons, the armor, the horses, the Telmori, the Grazelanders, and the Sun Domers all needed to be paid. Gordius was shocked at the total cost, and the treasury didn't have the money. I did get some, however, to cover down payments on the armor, horses, and Sun Dome Templars. The Telmori I paid out of my own pocket, but was later reimbursed for. After a discussion with Alcapata Honorius, the tax collector, we decided to raise a voting tax (so that only people of merit and property could vote), and a tax on wine. The latter was added because of a request from the local Lunar Gin merchant.

Over the next few days, we did raise a substantial amount of money and spent it on our most pressing needs. Most of the bills were paid a little bit at time, in two or three partial payments. I found out later that the price we paid for armor and horses was outrageously higher than anyone else paid. I think that both Alcapata and Gordius were skimming tremendous amounts of money off the top, but I had no proof of this. I found out later that Threadneedle (the court clerk) could have made Lunar script to pay for our expenses (and devalue the currency too - which wouldn't bother me). These screw-ups happen when you're not properly briefed before an assignment.

Servizi Interbankeri tried several times to get my support and the votes of my troopers to vote for him for mayor. He even tried to bamboozle me with his silver tongue into voting for him. There was no way I was going to support that religious fanatic. His radical ideas about forced conversion to the Lunar way would have had the whole territory up in arms in a week. If he won, it would have been a disaster for the Empire.

I'm glad I was able to help my close friend Skalfi Blackbrow, King of the Lismelder tribe. We had been through a great deal together, battling Delecti when I was duck of Duckmarch. The tax exemption that I gave him I'm sure came in most useful. Also, I was able to get him an audience with Gordius, where we convinced Gordius to let Skalfi visit his son (who was a Lunar hostage), and got some grain for the Lismelder tribe. Further, Skalfi was able to get a weapon permit to carry a sword, for "religious reasons" (being a Humakti).

On the second day I got a dispatch saying the wolf pirates had left Pedestal and lifted the siege. Lunar troops were being evacuated by ship to Karse. This was encouraging 5

news about my son. However, Karse was undefended, and in danger from the Wolf Pirates, so I sent a regiment of 1000 Sun Dome Templars to protect Karse.

Laertes reported that they had caught a man sneaking weapons into Geo's bar, presumably to arm the rebels. The man had teleported away before we could take him in. We didn't know if the shipment had gotten in or not. When I reported this to Gordius, he was in a conference with Alcapata, the tax collector, who was saying that Geo's bar wasn't paying their wine taxes and needed to be taught a lesson. We came up with the idea of getting a search warrant to look for weapons and drugs at Geo's. We wanted to get the weapons, and shake the proprietor into paying his taxes. To really do it right, in case there was trouble, I deployed an entire company of troops. This wasn't strictly legal, but we had the blessing of Count Leonidas and Gordius.

The raid was a failure, however. We found no weapons or drugs. Perhaps it was a failure because the culprits had left at dawn. We had intended to do the raid a t night, but paperwork for the search warrant wasn't done on time. In addition, we really pissed-off Tiberius Agustus Hector, because we had done this without his knowledge and usurped his authority. I endured his tirade, said I understood his position, and went about my business.

Jubba the Hood, chief of Lunar Intelligence, was not happy about the raid either. It upset the townsmen, made a riot more likely, and his job harder. He was more civil and understanding about it than Tiberius, and we were able to exchange information about the military situation. I also made an apology to Prince Temertain to smooth political relations a bit.

After the raid I rushed off to the Seven Mothers temple. There I witnessed an incredible transformation. King Blackmor of Colymar was transformed into a larger, stronger person, and he acquired the glow of the Red Goddess on his face. With this revelation I put behind me all distrust I had previously felt for Blackmor, as he clearly had the blessing of the Red Goddess.

Toward the end of the day, broos attacked the town. Sartarite rebels and Lunars (myself included) fought side by side against them. The Empire can't allow Broos in the city, as they threaten good order and must therefore be stamped out. Also, I personally think they're foul vermin and should be exterminated.

The next day I had a couple of military reports. The first was about a large gin consignment that had been destroyed on the Jonstown road. The second was that communications with Duke Jomes in Heortland were lost due to enemy action on the road to Roadsend (in Heortland). To correct these problems I dispatched a regiment to patrol and guard each road. I drew one regiment from Wulfsland, and one from Jonstown. I later sent the second regiment of Sun Dome Templars to Jonstown to cover for the unit I sent to patrol the road, as I'd heard a rumor of uprising in Jonstown.

About this time the fanatic Harvor Ironfist, of the Alda-Churi tribe, attacked the Flame of Sartar and tried to re-light it. Halthippius was dealing with him but needed help as the flame was starting to smoke. Laertes and I responded but Harvor had left two guards and several troops at the base o the flame altar to defend it. After a brief argument, we drev our blades and attacked. My Mindblast sent the leader fleeing, along with his thugs. I rushed the Flame Altar as Laertes continued to fight. It turned out that Halthippius had things well under control and didn't need much help from me. We escorted Harvor away and arrested him for Sedition.

It was about this time that my aide, Laertes, confided his deepest secret in me, asking for my help. It seems that he was having an affair with Esta Donge (Prince Temertain's

mistress) and she was carrying Laertes' child. Laertes didn't want the child to be brought up as someone else's, so he and Esta were going to skip town on Windsday. I gave my loyal aide my blessing, and a one year leave of absence from the army, effective Windsday.

There was some trouble with the Whipstock cavalry topas



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Home of the Bold Narratives

committing crimes against the natives. Jubba said that we shouldn't let them off, or it might cause trouble with the natives. Servizi said we should get the troopers off, which made me think Jubba was right. So I suggested that Stolwitz get his troops found guilty, given a minor sentence, and I would have them transferred out of town.

The troops I had patrolling the Jonstown road reported back. They discovered clear evidence that the Malani tribe were behind the ambush of the Gin consignment. I also had a dispatch that the Sambari were mobilizing for revolt. Thanks to Blackmor, and some grain deals that Gordius had arranged, I was able to get the Cinsina and Balmyr tribes to help us. I decided that it was in the best interests of the Empire if we had Sartarites attacking Sartarites, rather than a Lunar attack on the Sartarites. So, I had the Cinsina attack their traditional enemies, the Malani, and the Balmyr attack their traditional enemies, the Sambari. These raids turned out to be very effective because the rebel tribes had come to Boldhome to help with the revolution.

On Clayday I had another offer of mercenaries for hire, this time from Sir Ethilrist and his Black Horse Troop. His offer was most reasonable, but I couldn't get into see Gordius to get the money. At the time Wertor Orindori, the Tarsh ambassador, was also waiting to see Gordius to complain about Grazelander raids. I made a deal with him we would each pay for half of the fee, and I would use the troops to guard the Grazelander border. I paid for my half out of my own pocket, with a small loan from my aide Laertes. I figured we could use the troops, and could always redeploy them to a more useful position later if needed. My personal wealth was never important to me anyway.

Throughout the week there had been several murders, and rumors of a Vampire, but i hadn't been able to help until Clayday. It was then that I learned that Demi Hardhide, the man I had bought the armor for the troops from (whom I still owed a third installment payment) was the Vampire. I had just seen him at the Dead Broo tavern minutes before I heard the news. So I told some people to follow a few minutes after me, and I went back to find him. There he was, not knowing that I knew his true evil form, and he let me approach thinking that I was going to finish paying for the armor. After I had pinned him, several more from the bloodthirsty crowd ganged up on him and we all attacked, destroying his undead form.

As dusk fell after the Vampire's death, Gordius had some unknown evidence that the rebels were going to revolt the next day, and we should get troops onto the street that night. He declared martial law, and I posted three companies on the streets, and one in Moontown (with Gordius).

The morning of Windsday started out well. But shortly after the news of martial law was read, there was rioting. I sent troops to the People's Podium first, and we beat some crowds away, but that wasn't where the real problem was. The worst rioting was in Geo's Pocket. We were just turning to go into Geo's Pocket, when in the other direction rioting started from the Humakt Temple and Merchant District. In the rush, due to poor communications, two companies went to the Humakt temple (under Laertes and Ratsbane) while I took the third company into Geo's Pocket. I didn't have a proper view of how many were rioting, and I thought that one company would be enough. I was wrong. My troops ere overrun and many killed, but I managed to escape back to Moontown.

I went to Lunar headquarters to gather the fourth company and put them on the streets, but just as I arrived, the HQ came under attack by two crazed Sartarite rebels. I rushed to slaughter them, but was shocked when I found that one of them was my friend, Skalfi Blackbrow. Fortunately before I was forced to raise my hand against my friend, one of Gordius' scribes, I think it was Lemidus, Mindblasted him. Both attackers went down to overwhelming forces.

However, this suicide attack had delayed for several crucial minutes getting the fourth company onto the streets. Ratsbane came back to the headquarters saying that Moontown was in flames. We quickly got the troops out then and put down problems in Moontown. We then met up with Count Stolwitz and the two other companies, regrouped, and prepared to counterattack into Geo's Pocket.

The final battle for Boldhome was close. There were heavy casualties on both sides, but we were defeated in the end. Boldhome itself was gutted. Gordius disappeared; I presume he fled with his fortune. Count Stolwitz, Ratsbane, and I fought a holding action with he troops and to my pride, many other Lunar citizens fought valiantly with us rather than flee. Stolwitz was killed in a heroic charge, but the rest of us escaped. My aide, Laertes, using his leave of absence as an excuse, had fled with Esta to protect her. In my heart I can't blame him, as he was protecting his family.

After the battle, we retreated in good order. I still have several regiments in the district, and feel that we can quell this rabble in a season or two. Also, Argrath sailed off, so the situation is stronger in Prax and we can draw even more troops to fight the rebellion.

I was questioned extensively by an Imperial Inquisitor after the loss of Boldhome. I told him that Gordius had acted poorly, and if anyone should get the blame (and someone always does), it was him. Gordius pilfered too much money, so we weren't able to afford to buy everything that we needed. Had I been able to hire a few more mercenaries (like I wanted to and was offered), we might have been able to hold Boldhome. Also, had I been able to buy all of Quipp's weapons, he wouldn't have had to sell them to others (I suspect he sold them to the rebels). After all, he had to sell them to someone.

The Inquisitor seemed to accept what I said, and hinted that if Gordius takes the fall, I might be the next Governor Provost. If I'm able to take back Boldhome and secure the district, which shouldn't be too hard, it would do great things for my household. Also, I had news just before the rebellion that my son was alive and well. All in all, things were looking up despite the temporary loss of Boldhome

Tiberius Augustus Hector

Sergeant-at-Arms of the City of Boldhome by Ian Gorlick

It's been a hectic week. As I lie here, visions of events during the last week fly before me. Like handfuls of autumn leaves. Or maybe more like the knots in a net, each one linked to several others by the strands. And like a net, those events caught me and dragged me. Here. Now that I have some peace and quiet, I can have a look at those knots and try to unravel the strands. Maybe figure out how I came to this place just now.... Leaves, knots, nets. Shit! I should have been a poet, instead I am a policeman. In a city that doesn't want me. In a city that was my home.

Boldhome, the beautiful mountain city, raised in a single night according to legend. I remember those cliffs and towers from my childhood. That's really all I can remember from that far back. I can't even remember the faces of my parents. All I have to remember them is that little eagle's head made of green glass.

I was glad when I got the appointment to be sergeant-at-arms here. I thought I would be able to find some old childhood friends. Maybe find out who my parents were and track down some living relatives. Sure, I have a family already. My foster parents are wonderful people and I love them dearly. All their kin treat me as their son. But still, I wonder "Where are my roots?"

Fat chance of tracking anyone down though. Who's got any free time? For weeks now, I've been on the go 24 hours a day, then crash into bed for 8 hours of exhausted sleep, and I'm up again before the Yelmalions start screeching their prayers to the dawn.

Those damn murders were stopping me from even getting that much sleep... We'd already had two last week. And now a third. All three have the same m.o. Bodies exsanguinated. The White Lady points out the peculiar marks on the necks of the victims. Classic vampire attacks. But I just can't believe that any vampire could be this stupid. How can any vampire get to be centuries old if he leaves such obvious traces of his activity? But what else could it be? Sartarite rebels trying to make it look like the Empire is bringing in chaos horrors?

Chaos horrors... That's the thought that runs through my mind at our ceremony to the Goddess. King Blackmor had seemed like a decent sort, friendly and level-headed, not at all what one expects of an Uroxi. But when I see him take on the blessing of the Goddess and then go parading his crimson skin through the market place, I know he is a fool. His tribesmen won't take it. He'll be dead before the year is out. And the rest of the populace, they'll think the Empire is trying to turn everyone into a chaos creature. These people, my people, haven't accepted the Lunar way; this sort of flaunting of chaos is the spark that could ignite the flames of rebellion. Blackmor is no longer of value as a peacemaker between the Empire and the tribes, rather he is a danger to the peace. The peace I have sworn to keep. I'll have to keep a close eye on him. If I can catch him doing anything chargeable, then maybe I can get him exiled like his brother...

His brother... It's a Humakti bounty hunter, Clem Beastwood, who brings in Blackmor's brother. This kid has a list of aliases as long as your arm. He's even been impersonating a Lunar citizen. We have a long talk while he was in the cells. Apparently he'd been sent off into the Heartlands as a hostage years ago. He'd broken out and come back to seek his own people. I can sympathize with that longing. I manage to get Blackmor into court to plead for clemency on his behalf when he is brought up before Leonidas. For Blackmor's sake, Leonidas commutes the sentence of death to a sentence of life exile on pain of death. A bitter sentence still for a home-sick young man, but a mercy to Blackmor. A man shouldn't find a brother after many years just to lose him so soon.

Clem Beastwood, Thufir Twosword, and those other bounty hunters... There's been a crowd of them around this week. Normally I'd be inclined to lay down the law to that sort working on my turf, but this week I've been too busy. Besides, they seem to be honest mer Humakti mostly, who are trying to follow the regulations. I even helped a few of them to Ontorius' office to get their paperwork done. If that killer is a vampire, then I'll put up with a few vigilante Humakti on the streets of my city. Of course, I found out why they were in town when I got to the temple of the Household of Death, but they weren't the reason I went there...

No, I won't recall that incident yet. Let's follow a few of the other strands till they lead me there. Wait, I've got to stop free-associating, I've got to organize my thoughts. Think like a cop, not a poet. Okay, what have I been trying to do all week?

1) Keep the peace

2) Solve the murders

3) Stop the hazia trade

4) Trace the green eagle and my parents.

All right let's start with number 3, the hazia trade. I was getting pretty close to cracking that...

It was Nerissa Bracegirdle, the cleaning girl, who brought me my break on that case. Dames are trouble, but Nerissa is alright. She brought her new fiancé, Antonius, to speak to me. He's an addict and he's ready to turn in his dealer, Honest Gordon Greenhill, the bookie. Never trust anyone who calls himself "honest". Gordon tries to look cool when I present him with the warrant, but I can see him sweating. A couple hours of interrogation and he's really sweating. He won't talk though. He's too afraid of Morak Moran.

Moran! That figures! I've had suspicions of him for a while now. Gordon is only the dealer, Moran is the kingpin. I need to get Gordon to shop the bastard. Torturing a drug dealer is tempting, but I'll have none of that in my jail. We'll squeeze him the legal way. I get Ontorius to set a court date, and I make sure that Antonius is ready to testify. Gordon will talk, once Leonidas sentences him to crucifixion. He'll sing like a lark to get that sentence commuted!

It's the morning of Gordon's trial. Looks like a great day shaping up. Then I hear the news. Martial law declared! The courts are closed. The damn greasy little drug dealer has a reprieve!

So that case is still open and likely to remain so for the near future. I think the courts will not be in normal session for a while. How about objective number 2, my other criminal investigation, the murders? How have I done on that case?

Bloody awful, that's how! There isn't a single clue coming in. The only witnesses I had, some nomads, disappeared without giving a complete statement or their names, and I've been unable to trace them. None of my contacts can find hide nor hair of them or any other clue. My constables have come up completely dry too. Admittedly I don't expect much else of Dibble, but Pugh is sharp enough. In fact Pugh is so sharp he cuts two ways. He is enthusiastic in his pursuit of crime but neglects justice. I am sure that he is regularly violating procedures and suspects' rights. That's why I won't recommend him for the Lunar citizenship he so badly craves. The only progress on this case seems to be coming from outside my department.

Elspeth Halfbarrel has been granted a vision by her goddess. The killer is a vampire and she can recognize him wherever he goes, however disguised. She's got the most godawful huge axe in her hands and seems to be enraged enough to be able to use it. She has him cornered in the Great Market! Damn, he's slipped away somehow! He's been going under the name of Demi Hardhide, a leather worker. I warn Elspeth that a murderer should be arrested and tried before being executed, but I don't think she's listening.

Publius turns up from HQ with a warrant for Demi Hardhide. Somehow, I don't think that I am going to get a chance to serve it. Somehow, I don't think I want to serve it. I hope Elspeth does catch the creep and chop him to hamburger in the streets. The worst she'll hear from me about it is a mild lecture about spreading garbage in public spaces. No, that investigation has not been a great success for my constabulary. On the other hand, it now seems to be in the hands of others more qualified to deal with it. I think I can count on justice being served, though the law may not be served. Who cares! When the vampire goes down, I'll mark it up as one for the good guys.

How about item number 1, keeping the peace? That's a laugh! I can still hear the sounds of fighting from here. How could I be expected to keep the peace when the whole goddess-damned army is trying to trigger a rebellion!

First there is General Lergius, constantly trying to get martial law declared "to preserve public order". Well, you got what you wanted Lergius, and within one day there is rebellion in the streets! You can't cow these people, MY people, by force. Try to crush them like that and it only makes them rise up against you.

Lergius is a fool. Take that raid on Geo's. An illtimed, ill-conceived expedition that accomplished nothing except to anger the residents of Geo's pocket. Furthermore he didn't even serve the warrant properly. The law requires that warrants be served by a member of the constabulary. We weren't even told that the raid was taking place! This left Previous Horserider with an excellent basis for a lawsuit against the occupation forces and made the whole Lunar justice system look foolish.

Then there is Stolwitz and his bloody stupid Whipstock troopers. I heard that the court found them guilty of using excessive force and sentenced them to a disciplinary transfer. Seven hells! If seven of my constables tried to arrest an unarmed farmboy and they killed him in the process, I'd charge the constables with murder and convict them to be flogged to death in the public square! We've got to show that Lunar justice applies equally to Lunars and locals.

Of course our "friendly" local kings aren't much help on the peace-keeping front either. Blackmor's chaos feature is sure to rile the populace, especially as he keeps flaunting it in their faces.

And Havar Ironfist is no help. Posting his guards and ordering them to bar the way to all, even the constabulary. Trying to light the flame of Sartar without any clearance from the Provost. He damn near started a riot that day. I would have loved to bust him, but the politicians took that matter out of my hands.

Edruf Strongbreath has been trying to suborn the staff of Lunar HQ. (Lovely Nerissa has been feeding him false information on my behalf.) Edruf has also been carrying on a private war with Blackmor. Blackmor alleges that he saw Edruf take Gordius' stolen cup into Geo's, but Jubba the Hood alleges that he saw Blackmor steal the cup...

And of course, Jubba the Hood, chief of Intelligence, there's a threat to law and order if ever I saw one. The man has no respect for law, expediency is



his watchword. He's forever trying to have people arrested without proper warrants. I have no proof, but I suspect he's been using torture on his suspects. Furthermore, he's not too bright. On the word of Montague the Librarian, Jubba had me arrest Blackmor as the alleged leader of the incipient rebellion. Okay, I have my own problems with Blackmor, but let's face it, in his condition he would not survive 30 seconds in the company of a gang of Orlanthi and Uroxi rebels.

Damn, I've been free associating again. Got to concentrate harder! What was the other thing? The green eagle!

The Green Eagle's Head... the one link to my past... I'd heard that part of a broken Eagle had been on display in Geo's once. I had been hoping to talk to the proprietor, Previous Horserider, but he had been avoiding me. Wouldn't even come to the door when I went to apologize for the raid. Hard to blame him after Lergius' excesses. I finally got to talk to him after the chariot race...

Previous looks uncomfortable talking to me, but his attitude changes when I mention that I am trying to trace down the origins of the glass eagle. His voice goes lower. He admits that he knows something of its history. He tells me to come to Geo's the first thing in the morning.

Geo's is remarkably quiet when I get there. Previous has closed the bar! He quickly ushers me into his sanctum. There is only one other person present, I vaguely recognize Ingie Thickfist, a small-time enforcer with a bit of reputation. I've never had to deal with her professionally (that is, she hasn't crossed the law yet) so I remain polite. Then I see something that nearly spoils the entire affair. Sitting out on the bar is Gordius Silverus' stolen gold cup! Previous protests complete ignorance of how it came into his establishment. "Would I be stupid enough to leave it out in the open if I knew it were stolen?" Previous' protestations sound honest. Given what I already know of this affair, I suspect that someone is trying to set up a frame. Previous makes no objection as I pocket the cup and offer to take it back to its owner.

Previous asks me what my interest is in the green eagle. I explain. He asks to see the head. I present it. He and Ingie exchange looks. Then Ingie brings out the body of an eagle in green glass. The two parts fit! The body is a bottle and the head is the stopper. Ingie has never known her parents either. Like me, the eagle is the only memento she has of them. She was raised by Elspeth Halfbarrel, the Earth priestess. Previous goes to fetch Elspeth while Ingie and I talk. I don't really know what I am saying, I must babble a lot. I finally have a family! I want to hug Ingie, but I dare not. We're still strangers.

Elspeth arrives. She is reluctant to tell us anything. She seems to prefer that the past remain buried. Ingie

and I insist, we must know who we are. Elspeth relents and tells us what she knows, which isn't much. Our parents died during the sack of Boldhome, they were members of the Household of Death. She doesn't know their names or lineages. It's only half an answer, and it's a dangerous half. I have already heard through my sources that Prince Temertain is seeking the green eagle. I don't know why, but I doubt if it is for anything good. The Household of Death were sworn to defend the kingdom of Sartar unto death, and did. The eagle is an heirloom of that household. The current weak and unworthy prince of the kingdom is seeking that heirloom and possibly the people associated with it. I don't know why he is searching and that ignorance makes me afraid. I explain my fears to Ingie. I ask her to trust me with her half of the eagle while I make more inquiries. She is reluctant to give up her only link to ou parents, but she trusts me and gives it to me. I feel a bit better with both halves in my possession, if this thing does bring down doom on me then there will be nothing to connect Ingie to me.

I get back to HQ and dump the cup in Gordius' office. Then duty swamps me for most of day. Finally I get free to make some inquiries on my own behalf. I start with J.D. Brightstone, the jeweler.

Antonius, J.D.'s apprentice, had told me that J.D. was looking for the eagle on Temertain's behalf. J.D. confirms this but can't tell me why Temertain is searching. Why does that babbling fool of a prince want this relic of the Household of Death? The Household of Death... I go to Montague the Librarian to ask about the Household of Death and about the green glass eagle. He charges me outrageously and tells me little. The history of the Household that he relates, I could get from almost anyplace. He can tell me nothing about the eagle.

On Waterday, I try something desperate. I ask Prince Temertain. Of course, I don't come out and say that I am the legal heir to the eagle. I just say that I have heard that he is looking for it and I hint that I may have a lead to it. I ask why he wants it. He waffles on about collecting specimens of the finest in local art. It could be the truth, but I'm not sure. Is he really as vague and vacuous and he seems? He is supposed to be a reputable scholar, that implies some level of intelligence. Is there a cunning mind lurking under that blithering exterior? It doesn't seem likely, but I can't take chances with my sister's life. I make my excuses and slip away.

Duty devours the rest of the day and most of Clayday. Tolstoy Arrowroot accosts me in the market. I had asked him about the eagle, hoping his contacts among the craftsmen of the city might turn up a lead. But, he doesn't want to talk about that. Instead he seems concerned about my safety. He asks if I will wait for a warning from him and then hide myself away. I

Home of the Bold Narratives

tell him that I can not put personal safety before my duty. He accepts that and says no more.

That night I resolve on a final cast of the dice. I am seeking information about the Household of Death. Where better but in their house? Tomorrow the High Holy Day of Humakt will be celebrated in the Temple of the Household of Death. I will be there.

I am there. There are familiar faces in the crowd and strangers. I exchange a few words with Oleas Quipp, walktapus chef, who admits it was a fair cop and holds no grudge for it. I greet a few of the bounty hunters who have been stalking the city. Then the Sword enters. I stand quietly on the sidelines as the ceremony proceeds. These rites are strange yet familiar, Yanafal Tarnils and Humakt still have much in common. Then the Sword calls one of the strangers to the front. Sarostip Cold-eye seems to be his name, and his eyes are indeed cold. He shouts out slogans of war and rebellion. The crowd rises to his call. I am in the heart of the Cold Wind movement!

Previous Horserider hurries into the Temple and comes to me. He tells me that Ingie has been arrested. I tell him that I will take care of it. Actually that news is a relief. If the rebellion starts today, then the gaol will be the safest place in town. The Sword calls forward those seeking special blessings from Humakt. I join the end of the line. It is unreal as I walk to the front. These people around me are the sworn enemies of the Empire I serve. I am known to many of them, and my staff of office is clearly visible to all the rest. Yet no threat is offered me as I walk through them. My turn comes. The Sword looks at me and asks what I seek. "I seek understanding." I ask him to unlock the riddle of the eagle, I tell him that it may lead to an heir of the Household of Death. But he can tell me nothing. He offers to seek the guidance of Humakt, have I an offering to make to the temple? I offer all I have in the world, but it is a pittance even in my eyes. He shakes his head with sadness. He calls out if there are any present who will name me as a friend and stand beside me. I hear several voices call back, "Yea". This warms my heart but they have nothing to add to my offering. Reluctantly I withdraw to the side. My question still screams to be answered, but another voice now calls to me. Duty. The rebellion is starting here. Cold-eye takes the stage again to harangue the crowd. I depart.

The goddess aids me! I find my constable in the square outside. I send him to HQ to get reinforcements. I and my bodyguards form a line on the steps before the door to the Temple. The doors open. The crowd comes forth. Cold-eye is in the lead, singing. I do not recognize the song, but I know it is a song of cold stone and sharp bronze; it sends a shiver through my blood. He advances down the steps towards me. I make my final cast of the dice. I grasp his shoulder, "By the powers of my office, I arrest you on the charge of sedition." The tableau holds for a second. Amazingly no-one laughs. "I challenge you," he sings and draws his sword. I draw too. It is a forlorn hope, I know. He is a sword of Humakt already singing his Death Song, I am just an overworked cop. He is a master of the blade and I am a mere journeyman. Nevertheless, I have to try. If I can arrest him maybe the entire revolt will peter out. Cut off the serpent's head...

The crowd is holding back. Only he and his personal bodyguards advance against me and mine. Someone calls to me, "You don't have to do this!" I reply, "I don't want to, but I must!"

Cold-eye attacks in a blizzard of whistling bronze. I see some strange black gunk on his blade. I don't know what it is but it has an awful effect on my bodyguard. The man drops howling and clutching where that blade cuts him. Then another goes down and another. In mere instants I am standing alone facing Cold-eye and his men. I am doomed so I wager it all. I take the offensive. Lunge. Got one! Dodge, circle, use their numbers against them. Another down! I'm hit! But it's not fatal, my men's blood has washed the poison from Cold-eye's blade. Feint, thrust, another down! Parry, riposte, another reels away!

Suddenly it's just him and me. There's still a chance! Fat chance! I can feel the blood running down my side and hear my pulse pounding in my ears. He still looks cool and fresh. He comes on again. His blade is everywhere. His sword blows feel like sledge hammers on my blade. Somehow I keep parrying. Lunge! Got him! He takes it and lays on again. I hear the sound of troops arriving. I haven't time to look around. Got him again! I've got a chance! He's through my guard again! More blood gushing out! He drives me back! I look for a way out but I can't see one. What are those goddess-damned troops doing? I don't so much feel the last blow as hear it. It sounds like an axe chopping into a tree-trunk when his sword cuts through to my spine. And like a tree, I fall. The crowd surges over me. I look up at the sky. Tolstoy appears and leans over me, "You died an honourable death."

Wrong, Tolstoy. There is no honourable death, nor glorious death. There is just Death. Was that the understanding to which the green eagle was supposed to lead me, Lord Death? Who says Humakt has no sense of humour? I wish I had the breath to laugh... or cry.

So here I am, lying on the cold stone steps of the temple of the Household of Death. At Death's door.

Death's door. Hah! Maybe I should have been a poet.

Good-bye, Ingie. I'm sorry. You shouldn't find a brother after so many years just to lose him so soon. Father! Mother! Will you take me home now?
The Personal Diary of Wertor Orindori

Special Ambassador of King Phrandros of Tarsh, Loyal Servant of Moonson Imperator by David Millians

Fireday

This barbarous, drafty town swirls with discussion of the upcoming mayoral elections. These ignorant savages know little of (and appreciate less) the wonders of the wider world, so they attribute unrealistic importance to their own local, impotent leaders. Chiefs, warriors, merchants, servants, slaves, and livestock mingle in the streets, twittering endlessly about their own favorites. Only the beasts are suitably unimpressed by the contest. While I recognize the significance of this place and assignment in the current turbulence that affects Dragon Pass, I do long for an eventual posting in a more civilized domain.

I attended the garden party of Prince Temertain, the foolish and easily manipulated, though admittedly amusing in his own way, lord of Sartar. Though his credentials are dubious, even with his won people, his status has helped to calm this rambunctious people.

While in attendance, I was able to confirm that Estal, his consort (whom I have observed carefully these last few weeks), is indeed the sister of my king! How could this be? Rumor has it that she and the prince met while studying in Esrolia. Is this the case? Why is she here? Why is she with the prince? She revealed little of her purposes, to my great frustration, but she did intimate that her work concerned the well-being of the empire and her brother. Does it involve the prince? Or is he merely a convenient opportunity for her actual work. Naturally I pledged myself and my resources to her, for she is my master's kin. Time and the wisdom of the Goddess will reveal my true path in this affair.

I also met with several officers of the imperial army, cementing my cause more securely to theirs. Many are sons of Tarsh, eager to aid their homeland and the empire. I am confident that should I need their services, I can reliably call upon them. In addition, I spoke quietly with several more common guards, also loyal Tarshites. Their position as the Prince's guards afford many possibilities, from information gathering to more nefarious work. Again, their loyalty to cause and empire seems to secure.

Also in attendance at the party was Subatei, the representative of the Grazelanders. Though he and his delegation are boorish, I am sure they are canny negotiators and accomplished liars. Our brief exchange was cool and generally polite, though even the Prince, his obliviousness, was aware of and discomfited by the tension. I shall have to pursue at many levels this ridiculous and most disloyal situation with the Grazelanders. They herald their own doom.

I observed the sun worshipers at prayer today. I am seeking a meeting with Harvar Ironfist, lordling of Alda-Chur. I am aware of his interest in the cult of Yelm, and I shall no doubt have dealing with those overly proud, swaggering roosters in days to come. Harvar was in attendance on the prince this day. He spoke enigmatically of troubled times when I addressed him. He is clearly a clever man, and whatever the result of our negotiations, I am sure to keep a close watch on him.

Wildday

The mood in this city continues to shift with every new (and frequent) blustery wind that blows down from the looming mountains about the valley. I was accosted today by Clem Beastwood, a Tarshite bearing papers from the king himself and obviously about some underhanded business in this land, though he only really hinted at his true purposes. He requested my aid but was vague about his needs. Finding him an unpleasant and confused character, I promised assistance through the embassy, hoping to put him off for the time being but not wishing to anger my lord. Such is the work of a loyal diplomat.

I spent part of the evening at the Ruptured Broo, a simple watering hole. There I met with several spears-for-hire, discussing their interest in performing some important work for me. Should Harvar not be amenable to my offers, I shall have him killed, as a menace to both the empire and my king's own lands.

Godsday

The chariot racing held the commoner's attention today, leading to much fruitless wagering and cheering. Such is the way of the simple minded.

Estal is pregnant! At first I was overjoyed by this apparent diplomatic coup! Here I had the sister of my king pregnant with the heir of Sartar. I was sure that with only modest effort I could gain the support of many powerful imperial officials in authorizing this succession, bringing great benefits to empire, king, and myself. Then she revealed that the prince is not the father! Apparently he is incapable of having such a role.... This information in itself may prove useful. Estal will not reveal to me the name or nature of the true father. I again promised my undying loyalty to her and made arrangements to meet again later. I had a member of the prince's guard begin following her, reporting back to me on those she met, seeking to understand better this tangled web. I also laid plans to remove her from the city (again with the assistance of suitably loyal guards) should the need arise.

I met with Subatei and some of the other Grazelanders for much of the rest of the day. Though he remained obstinate in his declarations of peace (difficult to believe in light of his people's raids and harassment of Tarsh and its envoys). I discovered him to be a likable enough fellow on his own. Like me, he expressed some weariness with the assignments and constraints of his duties. Were we not in conflict, I might find his manner more enjoyable. There is, of course, my awareness as a trained diplomat warning me that all of this pleasant affect is merely a dissembling ruse. Our discussions lasted well into the evening, producing little other than an agreement on some basic facts. He finally conceded that raids were occurring but attributed them to renegade horsemen. I ended our meeting by warning that his people had need govern themselves, even their renegades, lest the imperial army find the need to govern them itself. Subatei found this idea unappealing. I must meet with those loyal officers who will heed my warnings about these underhanded clans.

Freezeday

Today was again a day spent in meetings. During my discussions with imperial authorities, I overheard hints that the fighting in Heortland is not proceeding as well as public announcements would indicate. This is ill news, and I dispatched my butterfly to inform my king, mentioning as well the meetings with Subatei and Estal's predicament, of which I know little more as of this writing. The Provost seems comfortable with my presence, even while he conducts discussions of a most delicate

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nature. While I would like to believe that this is due to his appreciation of my importance, I think it is more a result of his addled and currently overworked wits. I shall take advantage of this access, for the better to serve the empire, of course.

I began more intensive negotiations with Harvar when he revealed a willingness to swear loyalty to my king. The paperwork proceeded with relative ease, but his insistence that he himself and his people required the support of the lowland cult of Yelm stymied any hope of an agreement in this day. He sees some advantage in my voice added to his own with the Solars. As I expected, I would need to reach an understanding with them before proceeding further with Harvar. I met with the city's leading Gray Sage, convincing him to pursue various documents pertaining to Harvar's paternity. I have as well alerted my assassins to be prepared.

Waterday

It is late, and I have just returned to my quarters at the embassy after a day of exhausting but satisfying work. My king will be pleased with my efforts. Harvar is sworn as our man: "I hereby swear upon Yelm, Yelmalio, and the powers of fire and light that I, Harvar, am the bondsman of Pharandros of Tarsh. King of Furthest, Bagnot, Dunstop, the Sikithi Land, Wintertop, and of the Far Point, Prince of the Bush Range, and Duke of Filichet. I hold his lands of Alda-Chur from him as Prince, and on behalf of him, with all of the rights and duties of his as Prince of the Far Place, at the time that Sarotar of Sartar married the fair princess of the Far Point." I agreed that his title of Prince would be hereditary (though my king will naturally have the power to judge succession), and we negotiated some small allowances for his warriors, allowing him to retain them primarily in his own lands. Such minor forces are of little concern to my own mighty king and his backers in the imperial army. I was most pleased with this result, and Harvar seemed delighted as well. As long as his loyalty and allegiance remain secure, I am sure his place in the Kingdom of Tarsh will be secure Should he waver, we now are in a position to legitimately replace him with someone more satisfactory, perhaps a longtime, loyal servant of the king?

This agreement was met only through my own tireless efforts this day. I circled between the stubborn Yelmites with their indescribably officious tone, the imperial government (attempting to impress them with the importance of this pact to our Goddess), and Harvar himself, who wished to view each new clause and concept. My contacts in the military and bureaucracy proved most useful, providing the means for concluding these meetings in a timely fashion. My friends, recognizing the significance of these deliberations, resolved several issues for the Yelmites, allowing them time to examine Harvar's cause. A small pledge to the temple-library of the Gray Sages produced the necessary proof of Harvar's lineage. As the sun set over the western ridges (an omen perhaps?), Harvar was inducted into the worship of Yelm and swore the oath given above. Pleased with my efforts, I spent the evening in quiet celebration with several other suffering servants of the empire. before returning to my lodgings.

I must note that I have heard definitive word of real trouble in the Southlands. The imperial army may even have suffered substantial defeats at the hands of the rebellious barbarians of those lands. The local commanders are busily preparing for several contingencies.

Clayday

This is a day of tumult! What else can go awry in this windwracked country? Word is on the streets concerning the disasters in Heortland, lending strength to those hidden forces that would challenge the righteous might of the empire! As well, news arrived today that the Grazelands are in confusion. The old leaders have been killed or have disappeared, and the very "renegade" bandits of whom I spoke with Subatei have placed themselves in power. Subatei is visibly downcast and disoriented, and the imperial army is preparing to march.

With these events, I have assured my escape from the city witl Estal, if necessary. Loyal members of the prince's guard are to maintain a watch over her, spiriting her away at the appropriate time. I have told them to bring the prince, if possible, but he is expendable. The mayor's race seems forgotten amidst the ominous rumblings of the populace.

I have retired to for the night to the headquarters of the imperial government, and I am seeking to bring Estal and the prince here. My followers are at work, seeking them and bringin me news of events.

Just now, one of my loyal servants has brought word of a planned uprising by followers of the Broken Wind, the petty deity of this land. Imperial forces have already responded to my warning. The sounds of trumpets and distant battle already fill the streets. Dawn will come soon.

Windsday

The Trickster roams the city this day, sowing disturbance, turmoil, and wrongful battling of brother against brother. Already, unspeakable atrocities have been committed by the rebels in the name of their false cause. My own embassy has bee partially looted, and this garrison has been menaced! I am securing my own belongings and am assembling my followers for departure. May the Goddess guide and guard our steps.

Epilogue

Events most strange confound my actions. Loyal guardsmen of Tarsh led us from imperial headquarters through the debrisstrewn streets of the city. Distant battle could be heard, and smoke filled some of the lower valleys. The battle was still to won or lost. Though I recalled my days as a soldier in the capture of this very city, my hand is no longer as strong as once it was, and my obligations to my king counseled a rapid leavetaking.

We made our way above the royal compound and into the ridges to the north of the town. There we found the Grazelander delegation, apparently of two minds about flight. They alternately jeered and sought advice as we drew near. It was at this point that Estal fled to them and convinced them to return to the conflagration of Boldhome. I was appalled and startled, unable to reach or reason with her. She called back to me to secure a route for her later arrival. Again, I knew not her plans.

Taking the prince as once ally and possible hostage, I made the arduous trek toward my own homelands. Though there were difficulties, I eventually came to my native country, hearing news of other events.

Estal found and fled with her secret lover, a high-ranking officer of the imperial army. Perhaps not a prince but a good mar nonetheless.

Of Harvar, I have heard not.

Boldhome fell to a disjointed coalition of rebels, bandits, slaves, and opportunists. Many brave warriors were loss in that defeat. Grim news of rebellion comes from other regions, as well.

I fear for the peace of the empire, and I can only hope that the Goddess will protect her loyal pilgrims. Dark days may lie ahead. I shall serve those that bear themselves with honor and deliberation.

How I won the Battle of Boldhome (and looted the Citadel)

by Roderick Robertson

My predecessor as Ambassador to the Hillmen having been relieved of duty (and life) for conspiracy against the King, I made sure that my wives were well out of the way of the King's reach, just in case. My party travelled to Boldhome in the company of a red-haired mud-girl named Tamara Three-slice, a member of the cult of Vinga, but a nice girl for all that.

I met my embassy staff just before having to rush off to the Prince's garden party, where Wertor Orindori (the Tarshite Ambassador) and I cordially snubbed each other. Having met the Prince and consort, a number of Lunar officers and other Ambassadors, I spent my time engaging in meaningless chit-chat until I could get away from the party. While my memories of the ensuing week are lacking due to the distance of time, I do remember a few things:

On Fireday Asquai Stormpetral, my Bodyguard, and I attended services in the Temple of the Sun. We got several dirty looks when we inserted the name Yu-Kargzant in the hymn to the sun, instead of Yelm, but no-one made an issue of it. When the time came to ask a favor of Yelm, I asked for "The best thing for the Grazelands, which is to drive the Lunars out of Dragon Pass." (This came into effect at the end of the week)

Asquai foiled an assassination attempt without bothering to tell me. It wasn't until late in the week that he happened to mention a knife he had taken off the assassin. "What Assassin?" quoth I. "Why, the one that tried to kill you three days ago." He could have told me about it. We took the knife to The temple of the Sages, who gave me false information about the owner of the knife, driving me into the camp of the rebels.

I had a chat with Wertor about the outlaw Jandetin, who had been raiding into Tarsh. I assured him that Jandetin was in custody, and that his days as an outlaw were few. I was partially right! About half-way through the week, the Feathered Horse Queen died, followed soon by the King of the Grazelands. His successor was Jandetin!, a rebel who had been raiding the lowlands of Tarsh for years. A message to Tayang, my aide, was mistakenly given to me. It instructed him to kill anyone in the embassy who looked like they might be backing the Lunars. I assured Tayang that I was firmly antilunar. I had already sold my spare grain to the Silverus, Provost of the Lunars, getting many benefits (reduced tribute, many extra rights) from them (While I wanted the Lunars out of the area, I wanted to make sure that if they remained, we would be in a better position).

One of my men, Yesugai the "Cultural Attaché", was a Lunar Sympathizer, but I did not have him killed. He actually managed to confuse the Lunars about our intentions, so they never tried anything.

One night, my party found ourselves near Geo's just as darkness (and the curfew) was falling. Inside, I was approached by a fellow who claimed to have a map that could be of use to me. I paid the Silver coin he asked, and was given a map of a secret passage from my Embassy into the Citadel of Boldhome. This made my part in the rebellion (when it came) extremely easy (and lucrative).

As the week wore on, I was approached by many people about hiring my mercenaries. Only two people were interested in the 3,000 horsemen that were available for the next campaigning season, more wanted the 150 men of my personal guard. I actually managed to strike a bargain with Tamara Three-chop, for 5 Lunars for my Golden Bow warriors, and 3 for my other retainers. She thought that the price was Per Man!, which would have been the mercenary contract of all times. Unfortunately, someone else put her straight, sigh.

When the rebellion actually started, I pulled all my men into the Embassy and defended the gates. We jeered the other worshippers of the sun (Sun Domers and Elmalians) who supported the Lunar army. We saw a party consisting of the Tarshite Ambassador, the Prince and his consort passing by. We called out to them, and I offered sanctuary to the Consort. At first Temertain did not want to leave her, but my wellknown abilities at smooth speaking convinced him that it was better to separate them. He left with the Tarshite Ambassador, while she stayed with us for a while. At the same time, one of my aides asked if the Daughter of the Imperial Provost(!) could join us. I agreed, out of the softness of my heart (and what better hostage for our defense?).

As the rebellion moved to it's climax, I appealed to Yu-Kargzant, reminding him of my plea to drive the Lunars out. As the crowds gathered in the streets and slaughtered the Lunar troops, I led my entire retinue through the secret passage into the Citadel. I raised the Horse-tail standard of my clan over the ramparts (which seems to have been mistaken for the old banner of Sartar by the rioting hillmen). At the same time, I sent my men throughout the castle to secure any valuables against theft by the criminal element who seemed ready to burst into the citadel.

Okay, so I sent it all back to my home in the Grazelands and blamed the theft on the Lunars. The stupid Hillmen didn't know the difference!

Home of the Bold Narratives

To: His High Lordship, the Left Hand of the Dark One, Conqueror of Life and Death, The Undying King

Regarding the Uprising in Boldhome and the Failure to Provide an Additional Sacrifice

O Gracious Lord, I wish firstly to commend thy servant Arius for his most excellent services to our Lord and myself, by the pollution of the well which the servants of the Murderer hoped to complete my destruction. He claims it was not himself but rather an unwashed Lunar officer attempting to escape who caused the pollution, but nevertheless I recommend his services to our Lord most highly.

Our priest Arius had several queries about my report which he desired me to explain to your most gracious Lordship before his own report to your Grace most high. I shall seek to explain my own behavior in this matter so as to clear up any blame Arius himself might be assigned in this matter, and this report will be brought to your mighty Lordship by Arius himself.

Firstly, in the matter of Oleas Quipp, the weaponsmaster. Although his blood beat rich and strong, I did not offer him as prey to our lord. Father Arius marks this down to sentiment, as the fellow was my friend, but this is not the case. I did not slay the fool because he was useful. . . He helped the continuation of my mundane duties as Head of the Leatherworkers Guild, by petitioning with the mayor of Boldhome and the double-crossing Stonemason on my behalf. For that matter, he provided useful information I provided to the devious Jubba in exchange for my continued existence.

In the matter of the Gin merchant, I could hardly restrain the urge to drink from his marinated corpse. Again, Arius faults me for sentiment. . . My crime was instead to put too much trust in the Lunar Chief of Intelligence, Jubba. He promised me a victim, along with a curfew pass and citizenship papers. But when the mob was pursuing me, he was nowhere to be found. We must keep a closer watch on these Moon-worshippers, they are a tricky lot.

However, I most whole-heartedly endorse the idea of Ambassadorial relations with the Lunar government. Although they wish to manipulate us for their own reasons (not an unworthy goal, especially for the sheep that they are), they are stupid enough to think that they can guide that which death himself cannot claim. The Orlanthi are single-minded in this matter, but the Lunars may provide us with our chance. Some of the officials of their government will accept us as brothers, and provide us with ready victims, I am sure.

For that reason, it is my belief that it is of *utmost importance* that the Lunars win their struggle with the Orlanthi. The Orlanthi are disorganized in an obvious way, but they harbor chaos fighters like the Storm Bulls, and some of the Earth goddess worshippers. I was UNDETECTED until the cursed Earth priestess was possessed by a demon earth spirit, which had the power to see through all my concealments. Absent that earth priestess, my task would have been successfully completed. As it was, that cursed little weasel Pliny, boyfriend of my first victim, detained me long enough for me to be caught and impaled by the priestess. Had the Humakti known enough to sever my head as well as impale me, or to check the quality of the well water (which was no longer running), I would have been destroyed.

The Lunars, despite their claims to organization, are possessed by chaos both literally and figuratively. I am of two minds on this matter: their chaotic structure allows us freedom to operate and manifold opportunities to obtain victims. At the same time it is increasingly becoming clear that their operations against the Orlanthi are suffering because of corruption, incompetence, and lack of clear command structures. You, our leaders, must decide upon how our influence should be exercised.

I hope that this explanation, coupled with Arius' report, will convince you that my failure was for reasons beyond my control, and that my knowledge will bring benefits to the cult that outweigh any benefits to be derived from making an example of me. Therefore I plead for my continued existence as a member in good standing.

> I remain, on bended knee, your Most Humble Thrall, Dimi Hardhide James D. Chapin

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Nerissa Bracegirdle's Story

Half of the great events of my life seem to have happened in just one week. Since I'm not a real storyteller, I'll start at the beginning, and see if I can put it all together from there.

I suppose it probably started the day that I first met Juliana. Now, she used to be the Lady Juliana Silverus, the Lunar provost's daughter. At any rate, she and I were the same age, 17, and she was just bored to the gills with the supervised life of an unmarried woman of good family. I, on the other hand, had an apartment of my own, and could come and go pretty much as I pleased. It wasn't long before she and I were friends, and then co-conspirators, smuggling her out of Lunar HQ looking like a local.

Now, I was going with Antonio Smallheap at the time, so I introduced the two of them. The three of us took in most of Boldhome at one time or another, but it wasn't long before Juliana wanted to see the local night life, too. Sooo, I stayed in Juliana's room one night pretending very hard to be a sleeping provost's daughter, while she stayed out past curfew with Antonio. We weren't stupid enough to use her real name, of course, but called her Silvia Augustus.

While I was being Juliana, someone, I couldn't see who, snuck into her room and left something on her bureau. When I was sure that he was gone, I got up and found a marzipan ice on her dresser. So I ate it (being Juliana). It was stale! What sort of an admirer leaves stale goodies? (I told Juliana when I had the chance, but we couldn't figure it out at all. Her only possibility was Publius the Punctilious, who had been "dear lady"-ing her whenever he saw her.)

When Juliana finally got back the next morning, oh my, what a state she was in. To begin with, she'd succeeded in getting Antonio to take her into Geo's to wait out the curfew. This is not a good place for a Lunar! Not only was she sure she'd met the love of her life there, but first she'd snubbed him, and then she thought she'd been in a drinking contest with him, and then she had to give him a carnelian and silver ring that used to belong to her mother! Antonio said that he'd been talking with some friends, and next thing he saw, there was Juliana asleep on the floor. The finishing touch was that her beau was Romne Sharpsword, an Orlanthi dedicated to overthrowing the Lunars. When I relayed that, she had to admit that her choice was horrifically inconvenient. Some days, I thought that maybe Juliana did need a chaperone.

Well, for the next few days, all Antonio and I got to do with our free time was try to track down this little ring, the ring that was worth almost nothing, but meant everything. He tried to find Romne, too, but he was even harder to find traces of. I'll get back to this later, because this led to the beginning of that incredible week, which started on the Fireday.

Unfortunately, that Fireday was the day of the Royal Garden Party (silver, I was sick to death of silver after that the whole staff was rounded up for days to get stuff ready and I think that I personally polished a whole closetful), and Gordius noticed his daughter long enough to tell her that he expected her there, and please to wear his dear dead wife's ring. Much panic, let me tell you! Still no ring. Eventually, I suggested that Juliana tell her father that it was out being repolished.

Then, two days before the Royal Party my friend Myrtha Wheelturner was found murdered. I couldn't believe it. It wasn't as if she was in the middle of all the quarreling around here, she was a loyal acolyte of Ernalda. It was altogether too soon after another girl's murder, so everyone wondered if they were related.

When I could go see her, I found Lady Elspeth very distraught over Myrtha's death, but she was already having to think about what to do now. She asked me if I could take Myrtha's place as her acolyte. I was warm right to my heart that she thought that much of me. I had to tell her that I needed a couple of days to see if Ernalda was really calling me. Actually, I wanted so much to cry "Yes!" right then, but that would have meant abandoning Juliana right when she needed my help, and you don't do that to a friend. I did tell Juliana and Antonio that the offer had been made. She kindly pointed out that it was umpteen times better than mopping floors all my life. And I told Mum and Dad. Oh, and I told my dim brother, Tatius "Let me shout it in the marketplace" Bracegirdle.

Come Godsday, I really wanted to have some time to myself with Antonio. We finally made it to Geo's together. Antonio had wanted to talk about us, too. I hadn't realized until he and Juliana had stayed out all night together how much I really loved being with him. How much I loved him, in fact. We sat down, and all of a sudden, we were saying that to each other! It was so wonderful. Everyone there congratulated us, and toasted us, and wished us all the best. We slept in each other's arms that night, right on the bench in Geo's.

The next morning, we just wanted to tell everyone how marvelously happy we were. Tatius, of course, wanted to make it a hot item in the Bugle. I told him that if he dared let the whole city know before our parents, his days were

Home of the Bold Narratives

numbered. It would be a very low number. Lady Elspeth offered to marry us on Clayday, and to present me to the goddess as an acolyte.

It was all too good to be true, and it was. Antonio had to admit that he'd been silly enough to let "Honest" Gordon hook him on hazia. He'd had his fix for this week, though. I insisted that he consult the Chalana Arroy priestess, since he hadn't had the gumption to do that yet. She assured me that a cure was possible, though expensive. She also wanted to know who was pushing the weed. Antonio told her.

Antonio also told Tiberius, on my urging. Tiberius was delighted to know whom to grab for pushing the junk, and told us that it might not even be necessary to have Antonio give evidence if the constables caught Gordon red-handed.

I should have mentioned Tiberius earlier, now that I think of it. The very day of the party, I had had to go to the market for more cleaning supplies. I'm in my smudged-up working clothes, and suddenly a really well-dressed man approaches me and starts asking all these peculiar questions about what do I hear in Lunar HQ, am I single, do I make enough money, and would I like to make more? It's just a teensy bit obvious that this Edruf Strongbreath, a king of the Malani, no less, is wanting a spy.

I put him off, and played dumb. I then went to Tiberius Antonius Hector, the sergeant-at-arms (and it was well into the next day before I could) and told all. He was very nice, and made as much time for me as he could. He said I should spread rumours that he primed me with, and tell him what interested Edruf. He told me that I should by all means make some extra cash off this king. I told Edruf what Tiberius suggested, but somehow, money never did come out of it. So that was just to show how it was that I thought Tiberius could be trusted with Antonio's secret.

Clayday started beautifully. (I think there was martial law declared, but I was waiting for the important announcements.) Portin Dunbar announced my promotion to acolyte of Ernalda, and Antonio's and my marriage for that day. At the temple, all of my sisters and brothers in Ernalda were there to see me raised to acolyte. Then Lady Elspeth married us, in the sight of all.

As her acolyte, I was allowed to be present when she cast the divination to discover who had murdered Myrtha. When she roused from a swoon, she had been Myrtha, and seen the murderer. He was a vampire! Elspeth had taken on the aspect of Babeester Gor, and strode from the temple bearing the sacred axe, a holy avenger. The White Lady and I hurried in her wake, eager to see such an abomination found and destroyed. Through the Great Market we stormed, all parting in our way. Face-to-face we came with the vampire himself, masquerading as Demi Hard-hide, head of the leatherworkers guild. He was a cunning and swift bloodsucker, and escaped under the coincidental cover of a powerful City Harmony spell!

Nothing would deter my lady from the chase for long, not the sergeant-at-arms, nor the curfew, nor the Lunar Army itself. Once again she recognized him, but now he was "an innocent butcher". Butcher he was, oh yes, but never innocent! This time he fled sorely wounded, and we stayed on his trail. Finally we brought him to earth. When he saw that he was surrounded, he tried to escape yet again. But Pliny Dropgoode, eager to see the death of the one who killed his sweetheart, Myrtha, stood courageously in his way, and dealt the horror his deathwound.

I carried his carcass to the spring in the Great Market, to ensure his permanent death and show it for all to see. Strange things were happening all around us as we did this. I think that I remember seeing Tiberius down at the feet of a Humakti lord, and there were horns calling all about the city. It was only then that word of revolt in the city penetrated our divine joy at slaying the murderer.

We completed our holy mission, and then made for the sanctuary of the Earth Temple. There we gave thanks to the goddess for her aid, and prayed for the safety of those we love.

When it was clear that the Orlanthi had carried the day, I sought news of our friends. Only Tiberius had perished, attempting to arrest the chief of the Cold Wind movement. Juliana had found her love, and even her ring. While her father vanished safely into the hills around the city (by way of falling down a city well, a very undignified exit), Juliana was entrusted by Romne to the Grazelanders while he fought for his king.

As for the ring, it had taken a long trip home. After Romne hocked it (to pay a debt to Morak Moran), some silly apprentice accidentally sold it to Pliny, who gave it to Myrtha. I was stunned to hear that it had been on her dead body when she was found. Then, while Constable Dibble was guarding her body in the Chalana Arroy temple, he fell asleep on duty (or was coshed), and Denis Quailfoot stole it from Myrtha's body. He had been sweet on Juliana's mother, and indeed had given the ring to her mother. How he lost it, I do not know, but JD Brightstone received it. With so many seeking it, he was sure that it was a potent magic, so he spent days evaluating it! Finally, Juliana sought his aid directly, and all was explained.

And that, my children, is once again the story of how Juliana and I found our true loves, how I became an acolyte of Ernalda (blessed be Her name) and saw a vampire slain, all in the week of the freeing of Boldhome, and why your Aunt Juliana never lets her ring leave her finger.

Antonio Smallheap

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Dear diary,

The last week has been the most exciting one in my entire life. I can't say that I liked every part of it, but, by Orlanth, it was a tale I will tell my grandchildren with pride. Yes, I was here when Kallyr Starbrow freed Boldhome from the Lunars.

It all started quiet innocuously. I had promised Nerissa to show Juliana Silverus, the Provost's daughter, Geo's and a night in the seedier side of Boldhome. She seemed to enjoy herself, but perhaps too much. By the end of the night, I was dragging her from Romne Sharpsword, a housecarl of Valastar Greydog, a rabid anti-Lunar. It seemed that they were enamored with each other. Just great, two people from opposing factions completely smitten with each other. I promised to act a go-between.

This didn't help me with Nerissa, as I was sworn to secrecy. But I vowed to regain her favour, promising her a trip to Geo's of her own. With her smile, how could I not?

Work in the market was brisk, although my master, JD Brightstone, seemed nervous about the upcoming allocation of market sites and doing some work for the Prince. I tried to help him, and made a lot of money selling jewelry as tokens for the chariot race. It was good that I got the money, after all. I needed to pay off Honest Gordon, damn him. I should never have taken that Hazia. Now its ruining my life. It seems all my money is going into paying for my next dose. At least I was able to convince him to pay for it cheaper.

Nerissa came to me with a problem. Juliana had given Romne her late mother's ring and her father wanted her to wear it at a formal occasion. It turned out that Romne had pawned it at my Jeweler's guild, and another apprentice had actually sold it. Soon, everyone was looking for it. I kept my eyes open, but was unable to find it.

Apart from the politicking during the local mayoral elections, there was another event shaking the city; a vampyre was stalking and killing young women. Nerissa's friend, an initiate of Ernalda, was slain. I tried my best to watch out for her, but she was extremely busy helping the Ernalda priestess and Juliana.

With the tensions running high between the Lunars and more rebellious Sartarites. I knew things were coming to a head. On a more peaceful evening I took Nerissa to Geo's and proposed. After a terrifying moment's wait, she accepted. Praise Orlanth! We rushed to the Ernalda temple to get married the next day. The wedding was simple, but blessed. JD gave us a white rabbit to bless our union.

Our wedded bliss was delayed by a Divination made by the Ernalda priestess, Elspeth Halfbarrow. In front of my eyes, the priestess was possessed by the spirit of Babeester Gor. Shining axe in hand, we followed her through the town in pursuit of the vampyre. Twice she found him in different forms, and twice he disappeared into mist before she could destroy him. It was I, Antonio Smallheap the apprentice jeweler, that spotted the vampyre in one of his previous disguises and led the priestess and some Lunars to face the vampyre. Irony would have it, it was Pliny Dropgoode, whose girlfriend was first slain by the vampyre, that felled it. Running water finally destroyed the vampyre completely.

As luck would have it, Romne was able to retrieve the ring, and return it to Juliana. Their bond was strong enough to face Juliana's father together. May they find as much happiness as Nerissa and I have.

I broke the news to Nerissa of my problem with Hazia. She didn't take it well. Within moments she had taken me to the Chalana Arroy priestess and had arranged for me to be cured on the next week. And afte more berating, I found myself talking to the Lunar Sergeant-at-Arms, Tiberius Augustus Hector, about Honest Gordon and his selling of Hazia, and of Morak Moran, who also deals in such things. Unfortunately, he died before Honest Gordon was arrested.

At the end of the week, the Cold Wind movement began an uprising against the Lunar forces who had just declared martial law. With the fighting in the streets, Nerissa and I moved to safer places. Once the Lunars were beaten, we returned to start building our new life. Together. My only worry is that Honest Gordon learns that I tried to sell him out.

I could go on, but the events still seem far to unreal, for me. Sometimes I pinch Nerissa just to make sure it isn't a dream. She doesn't like it too much, but making up again is sure worth it.

PLINY'S ACCOUNT

by David Chapin

The week preceding the revolution was probably the most exciting that I've ever lived through. It was an interesting time to be a newsman, to be sure, but an important time in my life for other reasons as well. It began in tragedy and ended in triumph, and the interim was filled with treacherous intrigues and great battles, and changed Boldhome in ways that no one had expected.

It began, for me, with the tragic death of my love, Myrtha Wheelturner, brutally murdered. I had not known her very long, in truth, but I was in the height of youthful romance. The horror of the crime, if nothing else, made it hard to keep it from my mind. I knew that the Lunar police could not be trusted to find her killer, and the only clue I really had to go on was the theft of her ring, a ring I had given her only the day before.

So, on the morning of Fireday, I set off for Geo's, to talk to the contacts that I had acquired in my time as a reporter for the Town Crier. I chatted briefly with the bartender, Previous, and with King Vamastal, but little important information was exchanged. Old Herb and Denis provided some friendly banter as well, although they seemed most interested in the unpleasant fate of Hughie "the Halibut," of whose death I knew nothing more than the Bugle told.

I did manage to locate JD Brightstone, from whose apprentice I had originally purchased the ring which was stolen from Myrtha's body. I warned him that a ring of that description, which belonged to me, had been stolen, and he should contact me if someone tried to sell it to him. He agreed. I also told Ingie Thickfist and Dennis Quailfoot, since they seemed to have street contacts, to watch out for the ring.

Later that day, I talked with Elspeth Halfbarrow, the Earth priestess under whom Myrtha had worked. I do not know if she had been aware of our relationship before, but she asked and I told her. As far as I knew, no one else was aware that we had been seeing each other.

I kept an ear out for other stories as I looked for information on the murder, but little was talked about except the upcoming Mayoral race. I gave what details I obtained to Portin, although of course he knew most of them anyway.

Later, in Geo's, I saw Elspeth and Ingie talking, and after approaching them, found that Ingie had been Myrtha's good friend as well. We had not known each other before, but we agreed to team up and avenge her death. She had to remain in Geo's much of the day, of course, but she could attempt to gather information there while I walked the streets. She was a pleasant girl, but not really my type, and at any rate seemed to be involved already with a rather shady character by the name of Morak Moran. In my efforts to gather information, both for Portin Dunbar and for my own purposes, I talked to a great many citizens. One was quite forthcoming with information--the head of the Leatherworker's Guild, Dimi Hardhide. Unsurprisingly, however, most of the information he passed to me consisted of market rumours, which I dutifully passed on to Portin. They were not of much interest to me, however, and once it became clear that he was passing the information to Tatius, as well, I generally ignored him.

On one of my visits to Geo's, JD Brightstone pulled me aside, and surreptitiously showed me a ring hanging from his belt. It was the one I had given Myrtha! He pointed out the one who had sold it to him, and I was upset to realize that he meant Dennis! I found it hard to believe that Dennis was the murderer, but I told Ingie about it anyway (she being much brawnier than I), and we agreed that we would face Dennis together.

It was about this time that I also discovered that Vamastal Greyskin had disappeared during a confrontation with Lunar soldiers. Unfortunately, he never resurfaced, and I could not locate him for the rest of the week. Along with him went my contact with the Sartarite loyalists, much to my dismay.

Ingie and I confronted Dennis outside Geo's later. She was obviously ready to slug him, but he didn't look for trouble, and told us what had happened. Apparently the ring had once belonged to him, and he had pawned it to JD's assistant, who had then sold it. He didn't know that I was the one who had bought it, and although he asked, I did not tell him. After a private consultation, Ingie and I decided that we believed him, and we let him go.

Fortunately, I did make a breakthrough. Observing the Grazelander diplomatic party, I took aside Asquai Stormfollower and interviewed him. He told me that he had heard the murderer was a shapechanger! This, combined with other clues, led to the conclusion that he was a dreaded vampire, one of the horrid chaos things the Lunars tolerate. I later asked Montague Goodcandle if this was likely, and he agreed that it fit the evidence. Soon, the rumor of a vampire spread quickly across Boldhome.

Asquai had his own reasons for talking to me, however. He was interested in the real story, something he guessed was usually hidden behind a Lunar smoke screen. I gave him what information I had collected about the failures of the Lunar army abroad (and perhaps played them up a little), and then asked if he might be interested in contacting some people who could inform him about the <u>true</u> situation in Sartar. He agreed.

After he got permission from his commander, he came

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along with me to Geo's, and this is where I truly started to live with danger. I knew that if **the Lunars** had any idea that I was engaged in what they would call "treason," I'd be on a spike in minutes. But I had to do what I could to further the Sartarite cause, and get a <u>real</u> monarch in.

Geo's was empty when we **came up**, and Ingie waved me in, but wanted to get Previous's **approval** to let Asquai in. I explained the situation to him, **and he and Asquai had a brief** conversation, which satisfied bo**th of them**. It was agreed that we would bring them together **with Subatai** later that night, and Previous would have gotten together a group for them to talk to.

I talked with Magnyrd the **Black**, Gordius's personal spymaster, in a back alley later. **He didn't** know that I was a loyalist, and so I fed him about **half** correct information and half falsified. I pumped him for what I could, as well, but unfortunately he didn't have much for me.

It was apparent at this point that I was shamefully ignoring my duties as reporter, but there was too much going on. I tried to check in once a day, and gave Portin what information I had garnered, but I was always too busy to sit around for the duration of big stories like the Hemridsson Case and the Chariot Races. Portin had already made it clear that he did not want to know too much about what I was doing, however, particularly in regard to the Grazelanders. In addition, it seemed that he shared my distrust of Tatius, at least to some extent.

I accompanied Asquai and his party to Geo's later that night, where they met with some of the loyal Sartarite kings. They made it clear that I was not particularly welcome at the table, and, much as I would have liked to be there, I understood completely. They definitely came to some sort of accord, however.

I generally ignored the nighttime curfews, at least to the extent of traveling freely (albeit quickly) across the market square. The Lunars knew (or thought they knew) that I wasn't any trouble, so I never got more than a scolding. At one point the Sergeant-at-Arms pulled me aside and questioned me about Myrtha's murder--somehow, he had found out that we were seeing each other, and he hassled me for not contacting the police myself, but he obviously didn't believe that I had done it. At this point, after another murder, everyone seemed to have heard the rumour that the killer was a vampire. It wasn't until the next day that we discovered the

truth, however. It seems that Elspeth carried out Divine Intervention on Clayday, and was possessed in some fashion by the righteous spirit of Babeester Gor. I knew nothing of this, at first, but I was there when the City Harmony went off, and she was stalking the Market Square with murder in her eyes. She came up to him, while all of us were standing there feeling peaceful, and went at him with her axe. It was Dimi Hardhide, the Leatherworker! She slashed him badly, twice, but then he escaped into the thronging crowds. It was some time before the rest of us recovered enough to join her in the chase, and by then it seemed that he had escaped.

The Lunars did spread the word, however, and we set out as a search party. Originally there were a number of us, but as the day faded into night, and then into day again, the party diminished until at times it was only Elspeth (if I could call her that) and I. She had spotted him once, in disguise. Apparently she could see through such things. But again he had slipped away.

After almost a full day's searching, without the might of a goddess to help fuel me, I was almost ready to collapse. But the city's exits were being watched, and it seemed certain he must still be there somewhere. And then, on what must have been at least our tenth pass by Moontown, we found him! A cry was raised, and fortunately a Lunar patrol was nearby. But I was in front.

As it happened, I was the only one there without a weapon. But I was filled with a blind rage, seeing the fiend, the *creature* that had murdered Myrtha and the others so horribly. I leapt upon him, while he was still surprised, knocked his sword-arm out of the way, and struck at him, again and again. Somehow, I seemed possessed of an incredible strength, fueled not by magic but by emotion. I hit him in the face, pummeled his torso, and then gave him a hook which sent him staggering, reeling, on the swords of the on-rushing Lunar platoon.

Elspeth, snarling, hacked at his body with her axe. I just staggered back, victorious but in shock. I took a moment to regain my breath, and then walked, shakily, back towards the Herald's Office. I ran into Portin on the way, and told him that the vampire had been killed....that *I* had killed him. Ever the Town Crier, he told me "Great! Write it up!" But I was still not functioning fully, and was hardly thinking about news stories.

It was then that the riots started. I was in the fringe of the crowd when the Lunar regiment was, almost literally, torn to pieces. The regimental flag was passed around the victorious crowd, but none but me wanted to hold it, and so I kept it. Perhaps I sensed the end was near--more likely just that I had chosen my side, and would stick by it, whatever might follow.

It soon became clear exactly what it *did* mean, as the fighting began in earnest. I joined the Sartarite side immediately, and was deeply gratified to see my mentor, Portin Dunbar, and the Grazelander troops fought with us as well. I liked to think that I had helped convince them, that the contacts I had made helped them see the justice of Sartar and the falsity of the Lunars.

Someone gave me a sword and shield, and, while I cannot claim that I proved myself a soldier in the following battles, I proved myself a Sartarite, and that was enough.

The Beggar's Tale

From the Collected Words of Varn Sandlefoot by Harald Smith

De ringin' voices in me 'ead bothered me, 'til I realized dat dey weren't in me 'ead, after all! Imagine me surprise t' discover dat I was sittin' in de bloody Lunar Courts of all places! Well, I certainly can't 'member how I got dere. Last I knew I was down at Geo's, beggin' fer a bit o' porridge and some ale. But it bein' warm and all dere, I figgered t' sit a spell.

Well, now, I thinks to meself, dat could be meself up dere afore all dem judges and all. Not like I ain't been a fighter meself. Was 'til a few seasons back afore me unit got all hacked up by de Lunars down in Esrol. Jes' me alone made it dis far t' Boldhome o' all spots. Not like me brother all cozy up Imther way doin' some nice little garrison work. No, I gotta beg fer me food and spirits, checkin' out de Geo's Inns when I can and all or beggin' from de cursed Lunars. Must say, tho, dat de gin be real nice 'ere.

So, gettin' back to me tale, dere I was sittin' quietly like in de court and some poor Lunar soldier slob is up on charges fer killin' some clan chief's son. And 'e don't seem to know what's up or not and de judge can't make 'eads or tails o' it all. So I goes back t' sleep, ya know, and den de judge, 'e's findin' de poor sucker guilty o' de deed after all. I been all pleased, see, 'cause dis soldier fella seems pretty keen t' go 'ackin' up peaceful folk and all. But I know de show's over, so I leaves de court, but can't seem t' shake dem voices.

Off's I goes den, sort o' wobbly still, but I makes me way through de town and sees me friend Nerissa and she's all 'appy like. Guess she done found 'er true love, ya know. She certainly 'ad 'im in tow right 'nough. 'E looked a tad shady t' me, though, kinda like de 'azia 'eads I sees down Esrol way. But I reckon if'n she's 'appy, den so should I be. Ain't offen dat such a love strikes-kinda like de lightnin' spear o' Orlanth, I reckon.

Now dis is when things get fuzzy like. We were a celebratin' and then next I know I is standin' talkin' to some dragonkind speakin' o' de world t' come. Why 'e even promises me dat me own day will come and not dat far off. Well wid me 'ead and all, I goes t' find some more gin fer meself so I don't see no more o' dese dragons.

Ya know, dey got demselves a curfew 'ere, but I don't mind it much-a beggar in dese tattered rags and twine-bound sandals gets nary a glance, even in de Lunar Pocket. I stays outta Moontown, though, don't go traipsin' up dat way. Now, as I was sayin', I don't mind dat curfew, wanderin' de streets til dawn breaks. I guess it was den dat I meets up wid Old 'erb. 'E's lookin' fer votes see and asked me. Well I said sure, though I don't thinks I did much fer it. Can't say as I 'ad a vote t' cast either, but 'e don't seem t' mind none.

Kinda forgot 'bout 'im soon enough. Ya see, I got caught up in some fuss near de markets over some vampire or some such beastie. Dis lady wid an axe was a chargin' and a chasin' after some poor fool, but 'e kept like gettin' away in de crowd. I thinks t' meself dat she's just out t' marry 'im, but I seen Nerissa again followin' de axe lady and she says somethin' 'bout 'im bein' evil. Well, I been as close as I wants to dis axe lady, so's I goes about me own business, right enough.

Seems I lose track o' de time once more-guess it was dat extra pint o' gin dey gave me or somethin'. But dere I was back in Geo's Pocket and it ain't real friendly down dat way dat day. Went into Geo's Inn t' 'ave some porridge and dey wants to bounce me out! Well, I showed dem me own brand and says I be just a poor beggar wantin' some food, so dey finally lets me in and leaves me be. But dey a bustlin' about over some plans and folks dey come rushin' in and rushin' out like dey be some fire somewhere.

Well, it gets me all excited and restless, so I goes back out to de Pocket, me stomach full and all. And dere dese Lunar soldiers come amidst all de folk and be set upon. I even see de standard taken, so I figgers dat I should join in and all. And den I keep 'avin dese visions o' some spirit what calls itself Goodcandle near de standard. It's a callin' on de folks, inflamin' dere 'earts and all, to go rushin' off t' Moontown. I take up a torch meself and join de crowd. Next I knows dere's fires all about and people fleein' dis way and dat. So I takes de time t' check out dis one spot see and finds meself a nice little stack o' Lunars and even some book what's bound in leather wid dis tracery o' gold. Can't read a blessed word o' it, bein' in some other tongue, but it look nice and all. Dis Goodcandle spirit, 'e says t' take it, too, so I do.

I 'ears de next morn dat dere's dis Flame o' Sartar lit and thinks t' meself dat wid me new stash I could leave dis 'ere town and so's I do. 'Ead north, ya know, t' see me brother again-Imther bound and none too soon I thinks. P'raps dis book will come in 'andy, too. No more beggin' fer me, no sir, though dese visions still 'aunt me and dere's dis 'ere candle in me pack dat I ain't seen afore, though I knows it means somethin'.

As I 'ead out on me way, I up and runs into Nerissa one last time. Seems she's been a married now. Make a nice couple dey do, so I's wishes dem well. P'raps some day I'll find me own spouse.

YRSA NIGHTBEAM'S STORY

by Diana Chapin

I am the Queen of the Torkani tribe, recently betrothed to Alvar Stormsson, King of the Amad tribe of Far Point as a result of the recent events at Boldhome. My tribe is a proud one, where women are the respected leaders. We worship Dark gods, whom most fear and many find loathsome. We show respect for the gods of Storm and offer them sacrifice as well, but our real allegiance is to the dark ones. I myself worship the great Kyger Litor, Mother of Darkness, but I took care while in Boldhome not to reveal this, for I know that others react to our great and fearful Goddess with horror and aversion.

I came to Boldhome to seek some peace for my tribe. The werewolves, the Telmori who live near us, had ravaged our lands and people and forced us from our homeland., My sister, Xiola, was being held prisoner and hostage by the Lunars. I had no real allies, for the treacherous Baba Boilface had betrayed other Sartarite tribes in the Rebellion of Starbrow. Now that evil, well named, pimple on the face of the Earth, had been murdered by his own household, I had the responsibility of seeking peace with the Lunars so that they would not let Harvar Ironfist, accursed sun worshipper, loose to destroy our people. Also our people would starve if I could not get additional grain from the Lunar Provost, Gordius.

I felt deeply the wound of dishonor that Boilface, curse his name, had inflicted on our tribe; I wanted to immediately speak to the Sartar tribes to see if I could re-establish our former friendship and alliance. I knew Harvar was our enemy and I had no trust in the ways of the Lunars: they would secure my loyalty by imprisoning my sister? Such is not the way of those of honor or friendship. Bonds forged in this way are soon broken and show the real face of your opponent.

I chanced to meet my future fiancée, Alvar Stormsson, at the very beginning of my visit. We immediately knew that we had a common will in our opposition to Harvar. He introduced me to others of the Sartarites and helped me to gain their friendship. I took this as an act of goodwill and little thought that he had other interest in me until he later declared his love.

I made it my business to meet all of the Sartarite chieftains, with or without Alvar, and to see which of them would be willing to reforge the Sartarite alliance to give us some protection against Ironfist and the Lunars. Only those in the Lunar camp or the enemies of my tribe spoke well of the Lunar rule.

Simultaneously, I sought an audience with Gordius to obtain the grain needed for my tribe. Like the politician he is, he said he would release the grain only if I swore allegiance to the Empire and its gods. I told him I must consider this decision and discuss it with my tribe and he offered to let me see my sister. While this might have been generosity, it could also have been intended to soften my will . It only reminded me of their evil ways. When he spoke of worshipping their gods, it filled me with revulsion; I could stomach an alliance if I must, but I could not worship their pasty faced gods and renounce mine; I was thankful none here but Grinlips knew the gods I really worshipped.

After this interview, I was even more convinced that I must throw my lot in with the Sartarite tribes that have been our allies over centuries, but I did not know whether we had the strength to resist, or to dare to seek to overthrow the Lunars. It was clear to me that if we did not, the Lunars would take over all of our lands and our tribes, one by one, with the aid of vicious dictators like Ironfist and force us to worship at the feet of their gods. Such a life is not one my people or myself would be willing to live, no matter what the cost.

Several times after this, Gordius's emissary, Lemidus, spoke to me urging me to join the Lunars, but I was able to put him off politely without provoking him. I feared he would notice that all of the Sartarites, including myself, were plotting together. I also was not sure how much we could trust some of the tribes who had had a relationship with the Lunars. I had known that the Earth Priestess, Elspeth Halfbarrow, was a friend of our tribe. I offered her my help in seeking out the slayer of her friend, though there was little I could do since she could not use my spells and the trolls knew little to help her though I think they tried. Groblop Grinlips did help us with resources as did Old Herb. My friend, Alvar, met often with the other Sartarites and with the shadowy brigand whom I feared cared too much for power and gain and too little for our alliance. However, when I saw a woman with him, I wondered if she could be our missing princess to whom I would readily offer my support over the weakling Temertain who could not relight the sacred flame and had become nothing but a lover of Lunars.

I even managed to negotiate neutrality with the Telmori after talking to a member of the prince's bodyguard, who swore they were not responsible for the raids we suffered. Hearing from their other Sartarite neighbors that they were not so evil as we thought, I agreed to a temporary peace until we could discuss matters further.

Finally, soon after my love and I had pledged our vows, the crisis came. Day by day, the Lunars were readying their troops and the Sartarites were gathering their allies. I pledged my fyrd to the battle. While I could well be responsible for the slaughter and starvation of my people, I truly believed the alternative would be a life of slavery. I knew that the trolls held a secret way into the City to bring the troops in and I knew that most of the Sartarite tribes were fighting for our true leader Kallyr Starbrow's return, wherever she might be.

During this time, I found out who the vampire was from Grinlips and told my husband lest he or our fellows fall victim to that foul undead creature.

To my great surprise, once the battle broke out, I found that even our old enemies, the grasslanders, were on our side. During a lull in the battle, Alvar and I almost met a tragic end. We found each other in the hear of the fray and were seeking where we should put our swords next. I saw Ironfist and said what better opponent could we find; in his death was our freedom. Little did I know that the devil spawn had thrown a spell over my beloved; when we struck at him, he threw my lover under his control.

I cast Blinding upon Ironfist, the only spell I had, and fled from my betrothed lest he injure me unwittingly. I take comfort in the knowledge that Ironfist was hampered for the rest of the battle as he wandered sightless through it with his retainers and that, our gods be praised, he did not slay Alvar, who remained his helpless pawn until the spell wore off.

Great was my joy, when the sacred flame was relighted and the triumph of our people announced to the cheers of all. Even the vampire was slain.

(The following song has been reported as being sung amongst the Torkani about these events:)

Yrsa Nightbeam, Queen of Torkanis Warmate of Alvar, King of the Almads, Warrior and woman, worships the Dark Queen, Fearsome and fiendlike, aweful in aspect Famed Kyger Liter, killer and light-slayer. Yrsa the truth-teller, strong in her mind speech, Journeyed to Boldhome, sought peace for her people Reforged the broken, rebuilt the battle strength, Sartar to Sartar, wedding and warbond Even the werewolf, now trusted in truce. She blinded the balewolf, Harvar the Ironfist, Her fyrd was mighty, bronze bright in battle, Succored her sisterkin, Xiola and Starbrow. When the flame burst forth, Torkani triumphed, Undead were vanquished, moon and sun darkened Now darkness is ruler and the Nightbeam burns Brightest of night stars!

Memoirs of Colonel Morak Moran by Jeff Okamoto

The first day started out well, with one exception. For some reason, the Imperial Tax Collector, Honorious by name, with four hoplites, temporarily detained me and forced me to pay taxes on my possessions. The Boldhome Bugle began broadcasting, and I successfully distracted Honorious long enough to escape. This was fortunate, since I was carrying my iron knuckles and a dose of hazia, which might have been discovered. Later Honorious finally cornered me, but as I had no possessions, I was not taxed. I tried to get a receipt stating the above, but Honorious was too hip for that skip.

I made contact with Old Herb, who informed me that the latest incoming shipment of hazia was delayed until tomorrow, so I spent the rest of the day renewing acquaintances and seeing what was new in the city. There were certainly a lot of strangers in Geo's.

The next few days were frustrating. Herb claimed the shipment had disappeared, and I wondered if perhaps Herb was trying to set me up with my downstream and personal contacts. I sold my remaining dose for 7 Lunars and extorted 2 Lunars from Egrid. I also began spreading around all the rumours I'd heard.

The shipment had still not arrived, and I was getting very irritated. Herb claimed he had not been approached by his contact, and both Gordon and my customers were getting antsy. With nothing better to do, I began hanging around Moontown, listening for any juicy gossip. One that particularly interested me was that a hazia merchant had been arrested and was in the Lunar jail. Operating on that tip, and milking my relationship with Constable Pugh and Collector Honorius, I tried to determine which of the three was the missing merchant. None of them responded to the clues in my subtle "temperance lecture". Nevertheless Herb, who had also heard the tip, believed it. I

snuck back into the Lunar Court, and questioned the only possible suspect, the man I'd sold the hazia too. My imposing presence only turned up that he was a random end-user of hazia, and not the smuggler. Also about this time, I managed to locate

> the Gin merchant, who was trying to sell it at Geo's, and got a sup_ily for myself.

By this time, the chariot races were about to start. Suspecting a possible Solar setup (they had actually nominated a very-reluctant rider, and I wondered if they were betting against themselves), I still laid down a bet on Previous Horserider, the barkeeper at Geo's. Previous in fact won, and I made a small profit.

Later in the week I closely questioned Herb, but although we both suspected the other, both of us claimed complete ignorance of the missing shipment. Worse yet, one of my personal contacts, Terpitia Bosky was no longer dependent on hazia! What a possible catastrophe!

At last I got careless. After too openly questioning all the foreigners who'd entered Boldhome, one of them falsely claimed to have an arrest warrant for me, then attacked me. Herb held the man off, then I ran for it.

I stayed on the lam for a day and a half, then finally decided to chance being in the open. Herb and I now believed that the shipment had been intercepted by an "old acquaintance", Nimkin Fastcard. Worse, he and Terpitia were obviously working together, meaning that to get the truth out of him would be difficult.

Getting desperate, I put out a contract on Bosky in an attempt to then beat the information out of Nimkin, but the contract apparently failed.

Once Montague Goodcandle, the Librarian, began openly agitating in the Common Market, Herb gave me two blank documents forged with the Lunar seal. I quickly filled in an order from Tatius the Bright making the bearer of the document a "spoken-word agent", whose orders were to be obeyed instantly. When a legion of Lunar soldiers came to put down the growing riot in Geo's corner, I flourished the document and ordered the commander to return to his barracks. To my utter gratification, he did so. Another regiment entered Geo's Pocket alone, and was torn to shreds.

Noticing a fight going on outside the Temple of the Household of Death, I quickly brandished the document to Aleham Ratsbane, the second- in-command of another Lunar regiment. His commander already fighting, Ratsbane abandoned his commander, who quickly fled.

By doing so, Nimkin revealed that he was shipping arms into Boldhome, and I quickly passed them on to some other guy who needed weapons. This also freed up the Household of Death, who joined forces with the rioters in Geo's Pocket and the Market.

At last, Provost Silverus himself led three Lunar legions to the Market, where the battle for Boldhome commenced. Having done my part to ensuring the start of the revolution, I quickly slipped into the shadows and watched the fight.

The rest you know. Silverus jumped into the Market well, Temertain fled with Estal, and Kallyr, having ignited the Flame of Sartar, was named Prince.

FOR THE GLORY OF HUMAKT AND THE FREEDOM OF SARTAR

Skalfi Blackbrow, King of the Lismelder Hans van Halteren

WINDSDAY, HARMONY WEEK, STORM SEASON, 1624

I hate politics. It makes me say things I do not want to say. It makes me say things I do not mean. Real politicians even make a career out of outright lying. I have been able to avoid that in the past but even so politically tainted discussions always leave me with a vile aftertaste.

As a follower of Humakt I would like to avoid politics completely. But I cannot. I have other obligations. As king of the Lismelder I have to serve my people. Right now I have to fight to keep them alive through the winter. The harvest has been very bad this year and if I do not get a shipment of grain many of my people will die. So instead of being able to concentrate fully on preparing for Humakt's high holy day I will be forced to be friendly to those damned Lunars in order to convince them to give me grain and maybe even release my son Finbar whom they have taken hostage. And at the same time I will have to be plotting to find allies for a rebellion to remove those very Lunars from our lands.

WINDSDAY, DEATH WEEK, STORM SEASON, 1624 HIGH HOLY DAY OF HUMAKT, BEFORE DAWN

Looking back on my week in Boldhome I see a mix of good and bad experiences. It started out bad. The Lunar guard at the gate said I could not carry a sword until I got a weapon license. This meant leaving my sword at home and walking around without it. I felt naked. I did manage to get a sword license in the end, on the grounds that I needed it for the high holy day ceremonies, but the license is valid only for today. I guess I could have worn the sword anyway but I thought it wiser not to antagonize the Lunars too early and possibly even risk the confiscation of my sword.

One of the good things was that I managed to get from the Lunars what I wanted. Even though politics is distasteful to me I don't seem to be too incompetent at it. It must surely be the inspiration of Orlanth Rex that leads me. And in this particular case I must also acknowledge the invaluable help of my old friend, the Lunar general Lergius Cassius. The first thing he did for me was give me a tax exemption. At the time he gave it, it was low on my priority list but looking back on the week I must admit it has probably saved me four or five lunars. Then he came with me to Gordius Silverus to support my claim that the Lismelder needed the grain to keep our men strong so that we could protect the borders of the kingdom against the undead from the marsh. Gordius was convinced but insisted on having the grain delivered by Lunar missionaries. Fortunately Lergius was allowed to pick the missionaries and he respected my wish and gave me Yanafal Tarnils instead of Seven Mothers missionaries. At least the Yanafal Tarnils can earn their keep by helping against the undead. In fact I sent orders home to organize a marsh expedition so that the missionaries could prove their worth. Later in the week I was called before Gordius, along

with some other kings, and was offered a provisional Lunau citizenship. As a side-effect my son Finbar would be released from custody. When I asked what I had to do to get this Gordius said that I had to keep the undead of the marsh away. I had no problem with that, so I accepted yet another Lunar form with bureaucratic nonsense and lots of signatures and collected my son. My comrades in the rebellion were taken aback at first when I told them what had happened but understood after I had explained the Lismelder had promised no other actions than their normal ones.

The comrades I mention are the freedom fighters whom I will join in the rebellious uprising which is to take place today. The ones I have had most contact with are Edruf Strongbreath of the Malani, Alvar Stormsson of the Amad and Alvar's new wife Yrsa Nightbeam of the Torkani. The man who is acting most as our leader is Sarotip Cold-Eye, formerly of the Malani and now acting the will of Humakt. But not all are Sartarites. We also have help of such people a: Tamara Threeslice and Thufir Twosword. And of the Grazelanders under Subatei, although I must add that he demands payment for their help. The negotiations with Subatei showed us that communications in the rebel camp leave something to be desired. At one point I found out that I was bidding against Tamara Threeslice for Subatei's troops On the other hand it was good that we had both contacted Subatei since Tamara had interpreted his request for 3 lunar: for infantry and 5 for cavalry as being 'per head' whereas I knew it was 'per army'. Anyway, we usually had no trouble finding each other. Geo's served as a kind of rebel headquarters. It was generally a safe meeting place, even though we have at least had one occasion when there was a spy around. Fortunately we knew him for a spy and could keep him away from our secrets. In the end our meetings must have become known to the Lunars for Geo's was raided just while we were all there, and we had to escape by the back door and make our way back to the city proper by a dangerous mountain path.

I have been involved in only one fight during the week and that only in an assisting role. Edruf Strongbreath, with whom friendship had grown stronger than it was before, came to me and told me he needed a sword. I lent him my own sword. My lack of a license did not mean my sword could not fulfill its purpose. It turned out that Blackmor the Rabid, who had embraced the Lunar way fully now, had challenged Edruf to a fight as soon as he would have a sword. Not trusting Blackmor I followed and came upon them just as they started the fight. My suspicion became stronger: Blackmor's face was an unnatural red. Edruf placed a fantastic blow, but Blackmor used a spell and turned the sword away. Then Blackmor hit. He opened a wound much deeper'than I have ever seen. Not even

King Edruf Strongbreath of the Malani

by Curtis Taylor

Below is an excerpt of a conversation I had shortly after the Lunar occupation army was thrown from Boldhome by the Sartarites. At the time I was on my way to Esrolia with relics to trade from the Pavis Rubble when I stopped at a village outside of Jonstown to rest. The conversation was with Edruf Strongbreath, a slightly inebriated King of the Malani. --Pelor Rator

...maybe I could have done it differently ...

Kalkos, my son, is surely dead. My cost to throw the vile Lunars from our homeland was the sacrifice of not only my last son, but the women and children of our tribe. While the Malani fyrd was driving the Lunar excrement from the Quivin Hills, the worthless and cowardly Balmyr tribe attacked our lands. Why? Why did these supposed Quivini assault their own brothers? I tell you it was in the name of shameless greed that has always plagued our peoples...If only we could learn to work together under the firm leadership of a real Orlanthi, a true leader!

The Cold Wind? Hah!! There is no such thing. Our own tribesman, Sarostip Cold-Eye, made up the story that he was the leader of the Cold Wind Movement. He did this only after the ruin of our tribal thanes. I sent all of our brave thanes with him (except Faithful Jengor and Mandil Good-Ale, that is) to destroy that damn Lunar gin caravan north of Jonstown. This was no small force of men that I sent to accomplish this deed. Oh, the friggin' Lunar scum were destroyed utterly, but our thanes were exhausted after that long haul over the hills followed by hard combat. They were to tired to continue as a useful fighting group and fell back to the hills of our homeland to recover. This is how the women and children that you see now survived the assault of those worthless Balmyr. Our thanes were in the hills recovering when the Balmyr attacked. Anyway, I am wandering...Our thanes were sent to destroy this foul Lunar caravan by me so that Sarostip could get into contact with the Cold Wind Movement. Yes, he struck this deal in Geo's: if he could destroy this caravan of sin, he would be put into direct contact with the "Cold Wind Movement." I sent our thanes to deal with this loathsome caravan. I gave Sarostip the location to attack from. I am responsible for the death of those thanes.

Death...why is it that we Malani are so dogged by this thing called Death? We, who revel in the worship of the life-giving breathe of Orlanth, we who serve and protect the bounty of Ernalda, while the traitor, King Blackmor the Foul lives still?!? I killed him twice myself, but I suspect only someone as cowardly as he could survive the Rebellion of Boldhome intact. This hobbling creature surely is the epitome of a traitor, foul servant of chaos; curse of existence. He surely could not stand before the might of Orlanth, but he would rise when my back was turned, just as any weed of chaos will sprout in Ernalda's garden when she tires and must sleep. I killed him twice, I tell you!!

Oh, that damned Lunar Provost! I tried every method I could to free my son. I even tried to get the fool Temertain to help free my son. The Royal Librarian, Montague Goodcandle, told me over a drink of ale that the Fool, Temertain, was looking for some lost iron statues, so I tried to bribe the Fool with the iron statues our tribe raided from Tarsh years ago. Temertain the Useless would have stripped himself nude and walked the streets for those statues, but he could not convince the stubborn chaos servant Gordius to free my son. The only way the Lunar Provost was willing to free my son was if Lunar missionaries were sent with my son to "show the light of the true world to my tribe." There is no way in this lifetime or the next that I would ever allow those Lunar Riddlers into my stead, even though it cost my only son his life!

I still am indebted to the King of the Sambari, may Ernalda bless him with her bounty. Though his grain cannot feed the mouths of the dead women and children of my tribe, it has allowed the men of my tribe to make it through the Storm Season. With his grain, I was freed from the need to crawl to the stubborn Gordius the Bureaucrat's handout of grain. I still do not believe that my friend, Skalfi Blackbrow went to the Provost begging for his tribes grain. His price? Some of those Lunar missionaries were sent with the grain. To steep a price for me! To steep for the rest of the loyal tribes, I assure you.

Ahh, it all came out in Mahome's wash. The Lunars are gone from Boldhome, and should be gone form Sartar, shortly. Now that the Lunars are out, I wonder how I can direct our leader to further the glory of the Malani...I mean Sartar...

Truesword could have caused this, only some strange Lunar or chaotic magic. Edruf contacted again and this time he did draw blood. The next hit, I saw, was going to be for Blackmor, so I helped Edruf stand against the foul magic with a Riposte spell. It saved Edruf's life. Blackmor was surprised and did not concentrate on the next attack. This time he was hit and killed but at the same time worked a magic which sent Edruf screaming from the place of the fight. I knew that the Lunars would probably interpret this fight from Blackmor's point of view, and would state that Edruf had attacked without any reason. This could even lead to Edruf's execution. To prevent this from happening I informed the press about the exact circumstances. I do not know if this helped but the next day Edruf was released after being questioned by the authorities and not charged. Blackmor, by the way, was resurrected, adding insult to injury.

Finally there's the matter of the Flame of Sartar. Sartar can never be free if the Flame is not lit. And the one who lights it will surely lead us into freedom and will lead us afterwards. I have always looked to Temertain as the one to do this. So what if he isn't openly hostile to the Lunars? I have had to do exactly the same this week just to keep my people safe! I trust that Temertain will be a good king once we get those Lunars out of his hair. During the week there was already somebody who tried his luck at the Flame: that bastard Harvar Ironfist. Can you believe it? A Yelmalion, converted to the Lunar Goddess, trying to light the Flame of Sartar? Well, it didn't work of course. First he got hit by a lightning bolt, probably thrown by Sartar himself, and then arrested by my friend Lergius. I hoped they would crucify him, as they promised, but later I heard they let him go again, with the excuse that he was just visiting the Flame as a tourist. Anyway, back to Temertain. Since the others want Kallyr Starbrow to lead and Cold-Eye even plans to kill Temertain as soon as he comes to the Household of Death, I have advised the prince to go light the Flame before dawn and then come to the temple of Humakt to collect his followers, certain to be more numerous once he has proven his worth.

WINDSDAY, DEATH WEEK, STORM SEASON, 1624 HIGH HOLY DAY OF HUMAKT, DAWN AND AFTER

I put on my sword which I am finally allowed to take into the city and go to the Household of Death. All my comrades are there. I wait for the news that Temertain has lit the flame. It does not come. Neither does Temertain himself. It does not matter. Today is for Humakt anyway. The high priest leads us in the high holy day ceremonies and I feel the strength of Humakt flowing into me. Today is going to be a good day.

After the normal ceremonies have been concluded one of my comrades goes up to the high priest and they talk. The priest commands our attention and recites an invocation. I see a vision of Sarotip Cold-Eye standing on a plain, a battle in the background. A chaos horror comes into view and Cold-Eye attacks it. After an intense struggle the monster lies dead, but I now see that Cold-Eye has paid for the victory with his own death. My senses return to the everyday world and I hear Cold-Eye explain that the monster represents the Lunar empire and Humakt sends him to lead us against it. And now he does something I have not seen for a long time. He starts singing the Death Song. Today Sarotip Cold-Eye will do glorious things and join Humakt. I wish I could join him in the Song but I cannot. Again my other obligations force me to compromise. I cannot choose death freely. Even so, I will do my best for the rebellion and for Cold-Eye.

As we emerge from the temple we are accosted by some Lunar official and Cold-Eye is drawn into a fight. We canno allow this to hold us up and give the Lunars more time to organize. I decide to lead a charge into the Lunar headquarters in the hope that we can cause delay and disorder. If we are lucky we may even catch the commander: unprepared and leave the army uncontrolled. I am followed by Edruf, Alvar, Yrsa and all our men. We storm into the headquarters and I look around to organize the assault. I see only Edruf and his men. The others must have been separated from us somewhere. This leaves us with rather a small force for dealing with Lergius, with the Lunar provos and with various other Lunar hot shots, not to mention the regiment they had held back in protection of the headquarters and which is just now coming out of a hidder position. But I am not going to run. It is as if Humakt has heard my secret prayers and has given me the wish I could not utter aloud: to die in glory and join him for the final battle to come.

I seem to be facing the heaviest opposition. I always knew I would be facing Lergius but I did not expect it would be in an uneven fight. I don't seem to be able to do any damage to my opponents but am not yet wounded myself either. From the corner of my eye I see that while I and my men are holding back the regiment Edruf is just killing his third victim. As I see this my mind goes blank.

I realize I am dead. I even know how I died. One of the Lunars mindblasted me and while I was helpless they killed me. I seem to know many things I cannot remember seeing. I know Lergius is still my friend for it was him that broke my sword and placed it over my body so it could join me in death. I know Edruf managed to teleport away from the headquarters and is now leading new troops someplace else I know Boldhome is being cleaned of Lunars. I know my sor is alive and leading the Lismelder I ordered to come to the city. I know my people are safe because of the men I ordered to stay behind, fed because of the grain I sent and in no religious danger because the Yanafal Tarnils missionaries died valiantly in the marsh expedition. I also know that Temertain is not the man I thought him to be but just anothe politician. He ran from the city without even trying to light the flame. But this fact does not bother me. It even makes me more content with my last piece of knowledge: I will never have to act like a politician again.



Old Herb Tells His Best Story Yet by Paul Harmaty

Huggy the Fish was dead. That was for starters. The damn fool had mixed himself an "iceball" and gotten stiffed. Now the Hazia courier had no one to contact in Boldhome and I had to find that stuff before it fell into the wrong hands. What would you do if you were carrying around a kilo of contraband? I could feel the headache starting at the back of my neck.

It's not like Hazia was flowing like water through the streets of Boldhome. Hell no! That cursed advocate in the magistrate's office was doing a damn fine job of lousing up my life. Someday I'll square things, but today I gotta find that courier.

I'm sitting at my usual table in Geo's talking with Denis Quailfoot. "We got dealt a bad hand Denis". Denis is a nice enough kid, got a world of potential but lacks full confidence in his abilities. Someday he'll be a first rate racketeer, for now he's my most trusted employee. "Huggy the Fish has bought the farm and now we got a courier loose in Boldhome with MY Hazia and he don't know who to hand it over to." Denis gives me that look, the one that says "I'll do anything you ask boss", so I continue. "We need to find out if anyone has asked for Huggy. Find the person that asks this question and bring him to me." "I'm on the case" says Denis as he shoots out the door and onto the streets of Boldhome.

There's a real crowd in Geo's today. It usually doesn't get this busy till later in the day. Time to do some schtick. I sand up and start speaking to no one in particular and then go directly into the story of Elmir al Safad and the Elixir of Eternal youth. It's another classic performance and a total success. Nobody pays any attention to me. On the other hand, I don't miss a thing.

My buddy Previous, the barman, is having a chat with some folks that may as well be wearing signs that say "I'm a Sartar Rebel." Geez, if I worked for the Lunars these guys would be history. Subtle they are not. At the other table a Yelmalio type from Farpoint is having a quiet talk with an aristocratic woman. This looks enough like a miss match to pique my interest, but now is not the time. At the door, the acting bouncer is Engie Thickfist. She seems lost in thought and why not, it's such unfamiliar territory for her. Anyway the hang dog look she's wearing means you'd best stay outta her way today. All in all, the impression I'm getting is that plans are being made and deals are being cut and I'm on the outside looking in. This is not a good feeling.

I'm strolling the market a little later in the day when my man Morok Moran comes over to pay me a visit. Morok is my front man. I've let him run the day-to-day operation of our business for the last few years. He takes the credit for being the Criminal Mastermind of Boldhome and catches most of the heat and I get to live the peaceful life of an eccentric storyteller. It's a beautiful thing.

"Any word on that Hazia shipment, Herb?" Morok

knows I don't like him calling me Herb. "Boss" would show proper respect, but then, Morok has begun to believe I am an eccentric storyteller. "I'm working on it, Morok. You heard anything about a man asking for Huggy the Fish?" He looks at me the way a mouse looks at a snake. "Not a word." he says. Morok thinks I have the Hazia and I'm holding back on him. The addicts think he's to blame if they can't have their next fix and addicts can be very unpredictable, so Morok's feeling a bit on edge. I tell him the truth, but he thinks I'm feeding him a red herring, "Find the man asking for Huggy and you find the Hazia." He nods his head and leaves dissatisfied. As he goes I think how we'd better work it out between us or I'll need to find a new number one man.

Morok is gone maybe a minute when Denis shows up. Denis and Morok are not the best of friends, so it's a good bet he's been waiting till I was alone. "Any news on the courier, Denis?" "Nothing, boss. A complete blank." He sounds like a dejected kid. "Don't worry about ." I say, " He'll turn up." This cheers him a bit. "I got something I need you to do." I hand Denis about half a dozen posters I've had made up. "Put these up around the city and don't tell anyone I asked you to do it." He looks at the poster. "Elect Old Herb Mayor of Boldhome" it says, and it has a fair likeness of me on it to boot. "Gee boss! You're running for mayor?" A put a hand on his shoulder "Quiet lad. There's something going on in Boldhome and I want to know what it is. Anyone asks you who wants them posters up, you tell them that the people LOVE Old Herb. I want to find out who'd be interested in someone the people of Boldhome love". He smiles and melts into the crowd. "It's been an interesting day" I think as I head back to Geo's for some wine and a bit of dinner.

The next few days are a little less interesting. Nobody has asked for Huggy the Fish, Morok's got some strung-out Hazia-heads howling at the moon, nobody takes me seriously enough to talk to me about being mayor and finally I go through the trouble of getting a forged invitation to Prince Temertain's garden party and then miss the bloody thing. Hell! Even after passing the word to Previous I was interested in a rebellion, I haven't gotten the Sartar rebels to take me seriously. Things are definitely in a down cycle. Business gets even worse as the week wears on. Morok and I have a heart to heart and decide we pretty much hafta give up on the Hazia business ... for now. I tell Morok that our only chance to reclaim our criminal 'glory days' is to kick the Lunars outta Boldhome. The disorder the change of government would cause will provide us the environment we need to thrive. He buys the story and we agree to work together toward this end.

Finally I catch a break with the rebels. Alvar Stormsson, a local chieftain from Far Point has a powerful enemy, Harvar Ironfist. He asks me for some favors and I do my best to help him out. In return, Alvar and Yrsa Nightbeam are an item. Yrsa is Queen of the Tarkani tribe and into the rebellion bigtime!. She tells the rebels I'm a true Lunar hater who can't wait for the Sartar to breath free once more. Wham, just like that I'm no longer the scum of the earth in the eyes of the rebellion I'm a real freaking patriot. What fools!

I meet the rebels on neutral turf. They are lead by a Humakti Runelord, Thufir Twosword and a fine looking woman from the Heortland by the name of Tamera Threeslice. They tell me they are working for Kallyr Starbrow and want to know how I can help them. So I tell them how the poor people of Boldhome love me and follow me. I tell them how I can raise a mob from Geo's quarter, riot in the streets and occupy the Lunar garrison while they get their allies to storm the city from the outside. When they hear this their eyes light up. I've just told them that I can deliver Boldhome to them on a platter. They see that they underestimated me. I forgive them. Hell, I've spent my entire criminal life trying to be underestimated.

It's Humakt's High Holy Day and the show is about to begin. The rebellion starts at Humakt's temple where Thufir and his followers assault the Lunars in attendance. As the news hits the streets I use some stirring oratory and raise a mob. We march on the great market with torches burning and voices crying "Lunars out!". The garrison is called out to squelch the rabble in the streets, as we knew they would. Three companies of the Empires finest converge on the great market of Boldhome. My mob is no match for trained soldiers, but my mind is keener than all of their spearpoints. The time has come to play my trump card.

My man Morok greets each of the column commanders as they arrive and shows them a letter bearing the Imperial Seal. A letter that I had drawn up the previous day and stamped that morning with the seal I'd had made earlier in the week. It says "The bearer of this document speaks for the Emperor. Do not question his commands he is a Spoken Word agent." There is confusion among the Lunar officers at a critical time in the rebel uprising. Two of the three Lunar companies go back to their barracks at Morok's command. The Lunars abandon the streets and the riot grows out of control. We march on Moon Town as the rebels outside the walls storm the city.

The rest of the story is history. The Lunars are routed and retreat to Aldachur where Harvar Ironfist makes them feel at home. Kallyr Starbrow enters Boldhome in glory and lights Sartar's Flame. The people cheer themselves horse and drink themselves into a stupor. Nobody comes to thank Old Herb, nobody gives me credit. Only a handful of people know that I made the whole thing work. It's a beautiful thing.

I find some time to celebrate a little as well. The disorder that reigns in Sartar will offer many new opportunities to expand my organization. Hell, I may not have been elected mayor of Boldhome, but I'm still the godfather of the underworld and I've got a business to run.



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The Story of the Liberation of Boldhome as told by Vamastal Greyskin to his tribe, the Sambari Clayday/Fertility Week/Storm Season 1625 by Shannon Appel

My friends, my family, my clan, the past days have been bad ones for the Sambari, as cold and bitter as the oppressive winds which blow forth from the bloody moon in the North. Now, we sit in the burned remains of our once beautiful village, surrounded by barren fields, razed huts and the fresh graves of our kinsmen. I owe you all the explanation of how this came about, of how the Sambari of Sartar helped to liberate the world from the Bloody Empire's chaos, and how we have paid dearly for our deeds. This is the story that I shall tell tonight.

My story starts, as all stories do, with great Orlanth, King of the Seven Winds, High Lord of the Gods. A full turn of the seasons ago, I began to receive visions from our Lord, carried by his most secretive and trusted Kolati. In my visions, I saw a great warlord, Argrath Whitebull, entering Boldhome at the head of a victorious army. The fyrds of all the loyal tribes of Sartar were gathered, and they gave a great cheer as the Whitebull entered the city. Above, even the bloody moon seemed to dim, awed by his presence. Argrath strode to the great Flame of Sartar, stepping over the bodies of crimson soldiers, slain in the liberation of the city, and he lit it once more, the flames jumping clear to the Middle Air, and the winds over Sartar began once more to blow free.

Shortly after Orlanth first blessed me thus, I began to hear of a wolf pirate who nipped at the heels of the Lunar oppressors. He mocked the bloody moon overhead, slaying her shepherds and her flock alike. And, I recognised this man, for he was the one that Orlanth had shown to me. Through emissaries, brave tribesmen quickened by boons from Mastakos, I began to speak with Argrath. He quickly pledged himself to Orlanth's cause, swearing an alliance against the Lunar's wicked, lustful goddess of blood.

"When Boldhome has fallen," he said, "and the spark of rebellion has once more been ignited in the hearts of the brave men of Sartar, then I will march to your aid, an army made up of all the tribes of Prax behind me. The Lunars will fall before us, like grain before the scythe, and then Sartar will be forever free."

Argrath's words so invigorated me, that I was ready to go at once to Boldhome, to prepare the way for his coming, but he bid me patience, saying that he still had much to do.

During the last year, the lunar oppression has been near too much to bear. Every new tax was a personal affront, every unjust law, an insult to me alone. When the Balmyr and the Enstalos, both traitors to Great Orlanth, increased their raids upon our lands, it seemed that we were being targeted as the last true followers of the great storm. I yearned for action, for the liberation of Sartar seemed closer than ever before, but finally, when all was I said and done, I placed my faith in Orlanth, and I waited.

Finally, I began to hear good news from the wasted plains. Word came that Argrath had taken Corflu, driving the Lunars forth from the port they had fought so hard to acquire. He began marching his army up the River of Cradles, and thus I knew it was time to act. My visions came again, and I saw the liberation of Boldhome would be upon the High Holy Day of Humakt, on Windsday of Death Week of Storm Season. I had little time, and so I left at once. where the liberation of all of Sartar began, there, in Boldhome And, they will erect a great shrine to the brave men who foug and died against the soldiers of the Bloody Empire. And, that shrine will Geo's. Always, Geo's has been the crucible which held the true spirit of the Sartarites. Tonight, let us all recogni: that fact, and give our thanks to Geo. He was a cook, an alebrewer and a boon companion to great Sartar himself.

As soon as I arrived in Boldhome, I headed to Geo's, for knew it was there that I would find allies. There, I would find th brave Sartarites willing to help me free Boldhome, to prepare the way for the Whitebull, Argrath. At the door, I showed Geo mark, and I was motioned into the tavern. The Lunars did no yet know it, but the liberation of Boldhome had begun.

Ernalda was kind to us last harvest. She provided good crops and abundant food for the Sambari. In doing so, she supported her husband, as every wife must, for her grain I use to win the support of my fellows. The Culbrea and the Malani both had poor harvests last year. Thus, when I met their king in Geo's, I offered to share our surplus. Both men had been wary of the Sambari before, thinking us too hot-headed. My g turned those thoughts though. The kings saw the rewards that Orlanth gave to his loyal thanes. Edruf Strongbreath, King of the Malani, became central in the liberation of Boldhome. Although it took longer, Ranulf Grimblade, king of the Culbre eventually came over to our side as well. Like every good Orlanthi, he feared for his family and his tribe, but still he joine us in the liberation, for the good of all Sartar. Remember the Malani, and remember the Culbrea, for they were the Sambari first friends in Boldhome!

And here, I must too mention Romne Sharpsword, loyal housecarl. He was in Boldhome pursuing his love, the vision Uleria herself, but he did not let that interfere with his duties t his king. He acted for the good of all the Sambari by speakin with the citizens of Boldhome, spreading the word of the coming rebellion to loyal Sartarites.

Those first days in Boldhome, we were few, and the Luna were everywhere, a bloody tide that swept across the entire city. But, slowly, the numbers of the Sartarite Patriots increased. Every day, more joined the Sambari in the liberatio Let me recount the names of some of the heroes. Previous Houserider was the bartender as Geo's, and also a charioteer the best in all Sartar. He provided the liberators with a home, place to plan and friendship. Sarostip Cold-Eye was once a warrior of the Malani, before he severed those ties, becoming true Humakt. He gave the liberators military leadership, actir as the commander of Orlanth's brave troops. Thufir Twoswor was a Humakt from Prax, but he was just as loyal as any Sartarite could ever hope to be. He acted as Sarostip's strong right arm, always at his side, ready to fight. Paravor Sureseat once was a member of the Dundealos tribe, until the Loyal Orlanthi were crushed for daring to speak out against the Bloody Empire. For many years, he hid in Prax, a thane of the Poljoni, but when he was needed, he returned to Boldhome.

Although we were united in purpose, my fellow kings stil feared that the time was not right. Edruf, I am sure, would ha been happy to wait a decade before he rebelled. I do not kno if Ranulf every would have turned against the Lunars, so disheartened was his still from the persecutions of 1613. I

Someday, our children will look back and say, "that is



spoke of my vision and Orlanth's will, but it was not enough. faced Blackmor the Treacherous, King of the Colymar. Sword

Then, Previous gave new hope. He told of a shipment of Lunar gin, due in Boldhome any day, and suggested that we ambush it, destroying the bitter liquid before it was imbibed by unsuspecting Sartarites. I know it seems a small thing now, but let me assure you, the attack upon that gin caravan was what truly tied our alliance together. Sarostip and Thufir led the attack, a hundred Malani tribesman behind them. The battle was a fierce one, but Orlanth was victorious and the shipment was destroyed. That day, hundreds of bottles of gin bled upon the fair Sartarite plains.

We had proven that the Lunars very vulnerable. Thus, we had given credibility to the rebellion, and others began to look upon us in a new light.

The Bloody Empire would have done well to flee Boldhome that day. Instead, they ignored the portendings, and listened to their false goddess's' lies. On Godsday of Harmony week, the Great Chariot race was run. The Earth and the Sea came together to oppose the Moon, allowing Air to win. It seemed that all of the elements were allied against the red moon's blasphemy, but still the Lunars ignored the omens.

Death week was true to its name. The harmony of Boldhome was broken by creatures of chaos, slayers of life. Broos attacked a Praxian in the middle of the market, while a vampire stalked the night. The Lunars seemed not to care. They had always accepted the excesses of Chaos. Inevitably, this was their doom, for the entire town of Boldhome began to turn against them. Portin Dunbar, the Chief Herald of Boldhome was the first to come to us. Every morning, he told us the secret news, those things that the Lunars did not wish reported.

By Clayday, our Council was strong. As morning broke, and the town crier began to shout the news, the liberators of Boldhome met one final time, in Geo's. Many were gathered there that day. I have already spoken of Edruf Strongbreath, Ranulf Grimblade, Previous Horserider, Sarostip Cold-Eye, Thufir Two-sword and Paravor Sureseat. Their loyalty was unwavering. But, there were others as well. Justin Blundar, warrior of Prax, promised the support of Storm Bull. Alfgar Goodspear, King of the Locaem, and Skalfi Blackbrow, King of the Lismelder, both offered their aid as well. Even tribes of the North, far from Boldhome, pledged their support for Orlanth. Alvar Stormsson, King of the Amad, and Yrsa Nightbeam, Queen of the Torkani, must be remembered thus.

The mood in Geo's was somber that day. There was no drinking, no laughing, no boasting. Instead, we planned the most serious affairs. We all came together, sons of Orlanth, and we pooled our strengths. Together, we promised to bring our best warriors to Boldhome. We would receive the blessings of Humakt in the morning, and then we would move out into the streets of Boldhome, practicing his art. The gates would be thrown open, and the fyrds of Sartar would rush in, and the Lunars of Boldhome would be crushed once and for all.

As our planning was completed, suddenly a cry went up. A woman ran into Geo's, shouting that the Lunars were coming in force. The empire had finally seen the danger, but it was too late. We all slipped out the back entrance of Geo's, intent upon sending messages to our tribes, so they would be ready at the dawn. The Lunars found Geo's utterly deserted. It was then that the most cowardly Lunars began leaving Boldhome.

There was one final event before Windsday, the day of the Liberation. Let me briefly tell of it now, for it shows how dangerous and corrupting the Bloody Empire is. Late on Clayday, well after night had fallen, I was drawn to the Humakt temple by the sound of battle. Justin Blundar, brave Stormbull, faced Blackmor the Treacherous, King of the Colymar. Sword and axe danced, weaving a subtle web of death. And, as he fought, Justin screamed of the creature which he battled. He denounced Blackmor as a vampire, the evil beast which had preyed upon the citizens of Boldhome. Kallai Rockbuster, Blackmor's father, was both a patriot and a friend. When we see how far his son fell, we may truly understand the power of the Lunar's lies.

Windsday morning brought us all to the temple of Humakt, the Household of Death. Even Justin was there, wearing his wounds like badges of honor. The High Priest of Humakt began to speak, and we all renewed our allegiance to Orlanth and to his trusted sword. As the ceremony concluded, Sarostip Cold-Eye moved to the front of the temple, and he began to orate, speaking of a great vision he had experienced. He had seen a battle with a tremendous creature of chaos, a bloody battle which had seemed to last ages. In the end, Sarostip had defeated the creature, though he had died himself. And thus, the vision had ended too. We all understood the significance of that vision. For the first time, all truly saw that the Bloody Empire was doomed. I praised Orlanth for my own visions, which had brought us together, to liberate Boldhome that day, and then I stood, ready to leave the Temple.

The Lunars were massed just outside the Humakt temple, still thinking that they could contain the Cold Wind. But, we were unafraid. As we burst from the household of death, Sarostip Cold-Eye began to sing his death song. It promised death not just for him, but for the entire Lunar Empire as well.

We did not fight alone that day. Morak Moran, a citizen of Boldhome, outwitted the dim Lunar soldiers. With forged documents, he controlled entire regiments of the Empire. Old Herb, a storyteller, incited riots in Geo's Pockets. Many Lunars were slain trying to put down the disturbance. Soon, the Lunars were fleeing, desperate to get out of Boldhome, to regroup in safety. They opened the gate, sure that escape lay ahead, and then the tribesman of Sartar descended upon them. The Sambari accounted quite well for themselves in that battle.

And then, over the hills, came an army, the great warlord at its head. They marched over the dead bodies of Lunar soldiers, just as I had seen. The remnants of the bloody army ran, fleeing for their very lives. I am sure that they did not stop until they saw the walls of Glamour.

But, the warlord was not Argrath. Rather, it was Kallyr Starbrow leading an army of Vingans to Boldhome. My visions had been somewhat muddled, but it was clear that they were still the word of Orlanth. I had prepared the way for the warlord by inciting a rebellion, and thus the will of Orlanth was done. Kallyr climbed to the Great Flame of Sartar, and lit it, and the flames jumped clear up to the Middle Air, and thus the winds over Sartar began once more to blow free.

But, no victory comes without a price. As we helped to free Sartar, liberating it for many future generations to come, the treacherous Balmyr attacked our lands. They slew many of our kinsmen, destroyed our livestock and ruined our dwellings.

However, we can not despair! Remember the story of Orlanth, and how he saved the world from chaos, just as we have saved Sartar from chaos this day. At the end of his journey, he found himself in Hell, at the bottom of Glorantha, the lowest point in all the world.

And then, he climbed back out. He rose again, to his proper home, the Middle Air, and so shall we. Look upon the turn of the seasons, and remember that Fertility always follows Death. The same shall hold true for us.

The Sambari shall rise again!

Home of the Bold Narratives

The real story? Brandon Brylawski, David Hall & David Cheng

The following text was discovered during the excacation of a cave in what the ancient Sartari called Snakepipe Hollow. The fragmentary nature of the writing is not due to decomposition of the parchment; it was still in remarkably good condition. Its historical accuracy has to be seriouslyquestioned, however. The writing style and obvious Sartari bias show that it was not composed by a person of scholarship.

The revolt in Boldhome began, by all accounts, on Humakt's High Holy Day, in the old Temple of the Household of Death. There Sarostip Cold-Eye had a vision that showed him fighting a great monster that had defeated all other foes and overcoming it. He chose to interpret this allegorically : the monster was the Lunar Empire, and only he could lead the revolt and bring Death to the Red Moon. The Humakti planned to kill Prince Temertain, but he did not attend the High Holy Day festivities as his duties required. The other Sartarite loyalists in the temple rallied to Sarostip's cause and took to the streets, attacking Lunar sympathizers at will and calling on their countrymen to riot and kill.

(Some records hint that Temertain was in hiding, having narrowly survived an assassination attempt just days before. Temertain's good friend, Montague the Grey Sage, was not so fortunate. He was slain by an assassin's blade-perhaps the blow meant for Temertain? Such speculation is hard to believe; who would go to the effort of killing a Librarian?)

At virtually the same time as the uprising in the Humakt temple, a group of rebel leaders in Geo's Pocket decided to strike and took to the streets with their loyal fighting men, inciting the populace to rise up against the Lunar oppressor and smash the occupying forces. That, or perhaps they tried to take advantage of the haze of chaos engulfing the city? The riot agitators have been identified as Old Herb, the mild-mannered disguise of Boldhome's crime boss, and Tolstoy Arrowroot, a low-class bully.

For a brief but significant time, the rioting was confined to these two small areas of the city; had the Lunar army focused its efforts on these pockets of revolt before they spread to include other sections of Boldhome, the rebellion might have been destroyed in its cradle. But it was not to be.

Small unit Lunar commanders organized a defense against the poorly equipped mobs of city folk and tribesmen, but the overall Lunar command was weak. Gordius Silverus, the Lunar provost and commander in chief, was in the streets when fighting broke out near him. Finding himself suddenly threatened by screaming rebels, the provisional governor fled, diving into a well to hide and avoid his pursuers. Not only did this render the Lunar army temporarily without an overall commander during a critical period when the revolt might have been contained, but the display of cowardice in the face of the enemy discouraged the nearby troops and enabled the rebellious forces to push them back and win the fray. News of Silverus' poltroonery and of the victory in the streets spread like wildfire, heartening the rebels and causing some Boldhome who had been holding back to join the anti-Lunar cause.

Lergius Cassius, the Lunar general, at first did not realize how rapidly the revolt was developing, and failed to take decisive action when i could have accomplished the most. After a period of indecision, he made the determination that the Geo's pocket riot was the one that had to be put down first, and moved his forces to assault the area.

But one great obstacle loomed in his way: many of the rebel leaders were inside Geo's Bar, an establishment guarded by a powerful spirit, Geo's Bouncer. Lergius knew that this spirit was formidable and would have to be attacked in great force for the place to be taken. Had Lergius committed all four regiments in his command to assault the bar, the establishment would have been destroyed, albeit with many Lunar casualties; instead, however, he assaulted with only one regiment. Whether this was due to poor communications between Lergius and his regimental commanders or due to poor planning is unknown. The upshot, however, was plain: the regiment was nearly destroyed with little effect on the rebel base of operations. As the Lunar remnants retreated, a great cheer went up from the inhabitants of the Pocket, and the flame of the rebellion burned brighter still.

Harvar Ironfist and his Yelmalion soldiery were nearly caught within the city by irate tribesmen; by valiant effort, they managed to free themselves from the melee and escape out the city gate to the fields northeast of town. Dazed and tired, there they rested. They would have made good their return to Alda-Chur, but in the darkness of blackest night secret tunnels opened in the earth and fierce Troll warriors sent by Groblop Grinlips attacked in stealth. It is not known whether Harvar himself survived, but most of his men perished in that terrible ambush.

Lergius determined that a strategic retreat was in order. Rallying the Lunar Army, which was somewhat battered but still in good order, he began to force his way towards the northern gate of the city. There a mob blocked the gate, and for a moment it seemed as if the Lunar army would be surrounded on all sides and smashed.

Suddenly, there was a great trumpet blast as the cream of the Lunar cavalry, led by the dashing Count Stolwitz, charged full-speed into the flank of the crowd, lances and scimitars dealing death. The mob recoiled from this terrible blow and parted, allowing the Lunar contingent to make its way safely to the city gate. The cavalry did not fare as well, for as the impact of their shock attack was spent, rebels fell upon them from both sides, inflicting grievous casualties on the horsemen before they could turn and retreat in the narrow avenues of the city. Count Stolwitz, himself, was last seen being pulled from his horse by many hands as he lay about him with scimitar flashing.

Meanwhile, the Lunar troops retreated through the northern gate of the city. There they were set upon by a fierce group of Storm Bull warriors mounted upon Sky Bulls. After a terrific fight with substantial casualties on both sides, the Lunar contingent retreated further to the north to await reinforcements.

Meanwhile, many of the prominent personages in Boldhome had taken opportunities to flee. In particular, Prince Temertain was persuade by his lover, Estal Donge, to flee the city before anyone came looking for their heads. Thanks to a hidden tunnel known to few, they were able to make their way out of the city unharmed.

Within the city, a great cry came up as a force of red-haired Vingan warrior women, little hindered by the retreating Lunars, advanced to the city gates and came within. At their head was the famed Kallyr Starbrow, whose coming had been seen in a vision by Harvar Ironfist when he attempted to light the Flame of Sartar. Ringed by her loyal troops and accompanied by the lusty cheers of the rebels and those inhabitants who dared to stick their heads out to see what was happening, she ascended the steps to the Flame Altar. There, in the view of all Boldhome, she touched the altar and a flame fully thirty feet high blazed from the ancient brazier, signifying that she was truly Sartar's heir and the new Ruler of the Kingdom. The cries rang out :

All Hail Queen Kallyr!

All hail the new Queen of Sartar!

All hail to Orlanth and the crushing of the Red Moon!

Hail the Reaching Storm!

And thus did the revolution to throw off the Yoke of the Red Goddess begin.

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A word from the scribes . .

First, we would like to thank David Cheng for allowing us the honor of helping to make this information available to the RQ Tribe. We'd like to thank Greg, Nick, and all those who spoke at the seminars, for providing the rich substance of these transcripts. May all of your ideas and words continue to feed the spirit of the RQ Tribe in the years to come. We'd also like to thank Hans van Halteren for promptly providing an audio tape copy of his seminar video to David. They helped to fill the gaps in Peter's video tape, and gave us something to check pronunciation against. Please know that we did our best to be true to both the words and the intent of the words as we understood them, and we apologize in advance for anything we may have misunderstood. Some words and syntax were changed for clarity, and some audience comments were dropped. Due to the difficulty of identifying and differentiating between audience speakers, no audience members will be individually recognized in the text.



* Martin Crim

* David Camoirano

J, for one, am terribly indebeted to Peter, Martin, and Dave for taking on this Herculean task. J don't think anyone appreciates how difficult and time-consuming it is transcribing words from a copy-of-a-copy cassette tape until they try it for themselves. J've got a hunch that this is going to be the most "useful" section of the book, at least in how it relates to your day-to-day gaming. Without these three guys, these tidbits, Gloranthan and otherwise, would have been lost to the rest of us. Their work is the centerpiece of this entire book.

... and a word from the editor

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Gloranthan Lore Auction

- Key (panel members and moderator)
- GS: Greg Stafford
- SP: Sandy Petersen
- DC: David Cheng
- 1: The salt mine in Pavis--is that the Devil's tears?
- GS: Could be. [Loud booing] What if I said, "I don't know." When I make this stuff up, I throw in all kinds of things that are just throw-aways for me. If it looks like it's something that fits, then it must be.
- 2: Are snow trolls associated with the rune of darkness or the rune of cold?
- GS: Both. Both. Cold is a subset of Darkness, the rune. So they're both. They're a specialty item, but they're both.
- 3: Are the natives of God Forgot Brithini or are they just mortals who use the Brithini form of government?
- GS: We know that there are true Brithini there. But we think that most of the people there are actually Malkioni and not true immortal Brithini.
- 4: In what language or languages does the word "Arkat" or "Argrath" mean "Liberator"?
- GS: Sartarite.
- 5: Is or was the Pharaoh a God Learner refugee?
- GS: I don't know. I don't need to know. We believe he fell out of the future.
- 6: What's the most revealing question you've ever been asked about Glorantha?
- GS: "What is the most revealing question ..."
- 7: In the article about the Elder Gods in Wyrms Footnotes number 4, reference was made to an entity not referred to elsewhere. Her name is given as Gorani Wasa [sp?], the Great Weaver. Is this the, or perhaps a, name for Arachne Solara?
- GS: Yes. Ah-probably. We'll do the Orlanthi "yes." That means 80% yes.
- SP: Sometimes a name can mean two different things. Sometimes it might be Arachne Solara, and sometimes it might be...

- 8: Malkioni seem to think their souls go to Solace. A lot o people seem to think their souls just disappear. I don't actually expect an answer for whether or not this is actually true, but would a reasonably well-equipped observer using magical means, in Glorantha, relatively neutral, see a difference between what happens to Malkioni souls and what happens to others?
- GS: Yeah. I do know that the Malkioni Heaven or Solace is not directly accessible through normal Heroquest means. They do something else.
- SP: Yeah. They do [a different] thing from what the Theyalans and the Lunars and stuff do and what the Pelorians do.
- 9: How do you prefer to pronounce the name of that city there at the Big Rubble?
- GS: Not-chet. It is not "no shit."
- SP: No, the Big Rubble.
- GS: Oh, Big Rubble. I say "PAHvis."
- SP: I say "PAYvis."
- 10: What's the God' Learners' secret?
- GS: Charge him five! And he doesn't get an answer! No.
- DC: I believe there are six questions which will not be answered here; that's one of them.
- GS: C'mon, you guys, I wrote all those mysteries into these things and you guys think I'm going to tell you the answer? There some things that are not--six questions which don't get answered.
- 11: You once said that a dragonewt was heard to say that in this year [holds up poster reading on one line "823,543 ST" and on the line below "7^7 ST"] something of singular importance would happen in the world of Glorantha. Is this statement still as true as it ever was?
- GS: Yes.
- Nick Brooke: David Cheng, here, really dropped me in it a long time ago by saying that you had told him that I knew the secret of the God Learners. Is this true?

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- GS: Did I tell David Cheng that Nick Brooke knew the answer to the God Learners? Did I? [to David Cheng]
- DC: No, not exactly. Here's the deal. Greg told me of a guy in Britain whose insight into Glorantha was so deep that this guy figured out the God Learners' secret on his own. He approached Greg and asked, "Is this it?" and Greg said, "Yeah, you're right." And Greg was terribly impressed with this guy. And then when I went to Convulsion and I met Nick, I was thinking, "This must be the guy, 'cause this guy, he radiates this stuff."
- GS: So, no, I don't think you know the answer.
- NB: Great.
- DC: We've said it publicly. Nick Brooke is less of a God Learner now.
- 13: Was it really Kallyr Starbrow who lit the flame of Sartar on Day 88 of 1627?
- GS: According to the documentation. Yes. I believe that this is so, although the documents conflict. And I'll tell you why, ...
- 13: I had a follow up question to that, by the way. Which is the ancestry that's attributed to--the dual ancestry attributed to Argrath, the one that's mostly on the female side, was stated as that, is that really Kallyr Starbrow's ancestry?
- GS: No. It is Argrath's. All of it.
- 14: I think this is one of the six. After the battle between Arkat and Gbaji, was the one who actually emerged as Arkat actually Gbaji?
- SP: The guys in Dorastor say it was. But Arkat's future career doesn't seem very Gbaji-like after the War. So do you want to believe a bunch of chaos monsters in Dorastor, or what the Orlanthi say?
- 15: You had mentioned yesterday morning that most important changes or events in the universe that took place, the Trickster was present in some form or another. Orlanth is the god of Change. Therefore, does Orlanth maintain the sanctity of the Trickster in order to have a tool of change?
- GS: [long pause] I think he does... No, is the answer. And I'll conditionalize it by saying it's not his intent to do this, he's adapting to the circumstance that Eurmal's always there. That's fine.
- 16: In Home of the Bold, Lunars are supposed to dress as Greeks and Romans. Can we think of Pelorians in

general as looking like Greeks and Romans or is that just a convenience for, say...

- GS: No, that is correct. That in 1612, it's sort of late Greek, early Byzantine.
- 17: A follow-up to a question that was asked before. If a Brithini or a Mostali dies, do they have an immortal soul or do they really dissipate?
- GS: They dissipate.
- 18: Just for the sake of resolving an issue in our campaign, is Trickster the prime agent of Arachne Solara?
- GS: Agency implies some direct control or contact. Their contact is inevitable but accidental.
- 19: Can Arachne Solara receive cult worship and do anything about such worship?
- GS: I'd say no. You can enter into a personal relationship with her but there is no cult intervention between you.
- SP: There may be, of course, lots of cults trying to reach her.
- GS: That's right. It's a personal thing. It's a mystical thing.
- 20: You've seen reference to cults that have the Ice rune and had vague references--some consider it another Element, some consider it a sub-element of Cold. Is Ice frozen water in Glorantha, is it something different, is it an element, is it--what is it?
- GS: It's frozen water.
- 20: Is it really an element, a sub-element of Cold, or what?
- GS: If we're going to get into a rune thing here, then we'll kill each other. There's a couple people here who'll kill me. It's a hard question. Sandy says, "We sort of wished we hadn't published that rune."
- 21: Whereabouts in Ralios is the kingdom of Jorstland, when it was?
- GS: The kingdom of what?
- 21: Jorstland. It's in Trollpak.
- GS: In Ralios?
- 21: Yeah.
- GS: Give him his dollar back, I don't know, Sandy thinks it was in Fronela. But if you find the reference, I'll do a better job in writing, or something.

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- 22: Greg, I don't know if this is one of the unanswerable questions, but why does Flesh Man not have a cult. Why is it exterminated if there's any attempt to create one?
- GS: Flesh Man is Everyman. He's ancestor worship, and he's a blank spot on the Thing. Any person that qualifies as a mortal being can sit in that spot, whatever other qualifications he has.
- 23: [tape flaw-question about the horizon in a flat world]
- GS: The latest theory is that, as everybody knows, light rises. Why else is the sky up on top? As all things Gloranthan, they strive to return to their source. So since everyone knows that sight -- was it Aristotle who said it -- is actually particles of light coming out from your eyes, and they must be going out and curving up to reach the sky, thereby giving a false horizon.
- 24: Who and what is the nature of the solar Trickster god?
- GS: Who's got my book? [Glorious ReAscent of Yelm] I'll tell you his name. The solar Trickster god is named . . . he's also the carrot god... "Rakenveg." You can find him on the Gods' Wall, Row 4, Figure 4. They hate him.
- 25: Follow up on that question. It says Jorstland is in the Nalar Lake region. Is that the same as Felster Lake?
- SP: I still vote for Fronela.
- GS: It's the early name for the Safelster Lake. That is right.
- SP: In that case, it's directly north of Safelster, where there's a river going up, ... troll land.
- GS: But what you're saying is that this was a God Time place? No, it was a historical place? And it was the one that Arkat founded and the trolls were kicked out of?
- 25: It was either immediately before or immediately after Arkat.
- GS: Then it was immediately after, 'cause the trolls were not powerful there before him. So it would be over towards the troll area, by Halikiv.
- 26: Before his apotheosis, Geo was serving as Sartar's cook and being in charge of his commissary. Could he properly be called, then, a "Soup-er Hero"? [Holding up large sign to show spelling]
- GS: Not only that, but the chiefs in his cult must be Room Lords. (laughter)
- 27: Is Hungry Jack named after the famous pancake mix?

- GS: No, it is actually out before the pancake, I believe. They stole it from me.
- 28: At the Hill of Gold, at the very top, there's a god that questers meet who has various guises, either an ice goddess or a fertility ... Who is she?
- GS: Inora. A goddess of winter.
- SP: She appears in Nomad Gods.
- GS: Yeah. And she essentially lives where the snow never goes away. Mountain tops. She descends to the lowlands in the cold season. Inora.
- SP: If there was an Ice rune, she'd probably have it.
- DC: I have one. In Nomad Gods, a player can go to an altar and summon a deity, and deities even as large as Oakfed or Waha. Does this not violate the Great Compromise?
- GS: No. They in that stage are more like super-spirits than semi-deities.
- SP: Someone who worships them in shamanistic style is false worship. Like worshipping Kyger Litor to be powerful even though you're a human and it's like worshipping the wrong way.
- DC: So, keeping things in perspective, Oakfed and Waha, as worshipped in Prax, are very minor cults. Or not even full religions, more like spirit cults.
- GS: All the Praxian religions are just barely at the threshold of cultdom. There's a spectrum [which] goes from spirit worship, as outlined in Borderlands and so on, where you get your frog priests or whatever together, your spirit thing and the shaman calls him up temporarily, all the way up to the other end where there's Arachne Solara, a mystical concept that can't be worshipped. Cults are in the middle. And there's a spectrum. And it has to do with the threshold of the number of initiates and worshipers at your temple.
- 29: Will you be doing any more with the Clanking City again, or mentioning it, or...
- GS: Maybe. The Clanking City is still there, but it's rusting out, it's been trapped, diseased, and everything so it's a bad place to go. Originally when I made it I thought it was a great place for player characters. So I hope somebody writes it up.
- 30: There seems to be reference to Nysalor, if I'm pronouncing it correctly, in all Lunar texts as a minor Sun God. But, if I remember correctly, Nysalor was

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Seminar Transcripts

Gloranthan Lore Auction

created in Dorastor, and then you start hearing about Gbaji. Now, I wanted to know if this was a Darth Vader sort of thing, where Nysalor turned evil, or Gbaji was a separate entity which possessed Nysalor and had to be driven off by Arkat.

- GS: They're separate entities. The Dara Happans recognize an individual, they generally remember Nysalor with respect. And his evil enemy, Gbaji, who came from the far west to destroy him.
- 31: In Ralios, who are the Guild of Chaos Monks and what are their ties to the remnants of Gbaji worship in the region?
- GS: The Guild of Chaos Monks was a throw-away that I wrote when I made it. I thought it was an interesting concept and that some adventurous designer would be able to take it and run miles with it.
- 32: We were told that people that are worshipers of the Hykimi pantheon or of the Hsunchen culture have some of the physical characteristics or the temperamental characteristics of their beast, their animal. They're a couple of places we're told about there's like a Hykimi tribe, like the Opossum people, and there's also a scarce and secretive, illusive tribe that's highly distrusted by the Praxians that ride a giant marsupial of another kind. My question is, do the women of this tribe, carry or transport their young in the same fashion as their animals, in a pouch?
- GS: I believe they do. If they're good worshipers.
- 33: Did Argrath gain at least some of his abilities from the spirit of the Pharaoh? The Pharaoh was killed by Jar-Eel.
- GS: I hadn't known that yet.
- 34: Is Glorantha a temple to Arachne Solara? And all of its inhabitants worshipers in a higher scale ...?
- GS: In the sense that a man's body is the temple of his spirit, yes.
- 35: Who and what is the nature of Ginna Jar?
- GS: Good value for a dollar. Ginna Jar is either another blank space on the council for someone who needs to sit there, which may change. On the first half of the quest, it may be a Humakti. For the second half, it may be a Babeester Gor. It depends on the precise circumstances of that individual ring. Or, it is the collective spirit of the members of the Lightbringers' quest.
- 36: Was Talor the Laughing Warrior fighting in the Gbaji wars, or did he have his own problems in Fronela?

- SP: Talor the Laughing Warrior was brought back from Hell by Harmast Barefoot because he was disappointed with the outcome of Arkat. At the time that Arkat was coming up through the South towards Dorastor, up through Peloria, Talor was coming up through Fronela, and they converge on the last area of Dorastor, the final battle, at the same time.
- GS: And he had had his own problems in Fronela. He is often credited with being the man who drove the Telmori out of Fronela.
- 37: For those of us GMing in Pavis, can you tell us something about what the secret of the puzzle canal would be?
- GS: Sandy can.
- SP: The puzzle canal--which secret are you referring to, the things that are in it, or...
- 37: Its overall significance, that ...
- SP: OK, if you stay in the puzzle canal, and go around it in the right patterns, then when you sail out of it again, you're in the hero plane. Or you've gone back in time, or something even worse.
- 38: Up in Balazar, there was a First Council and part of the Council were the Gold Wheel Dancers. Was Pinchining in the Cradle a Gold Wheel Dancer?
- Yes. And it came about as a result of play in a GS: campaign. And I'll just--if you've got a second for a story. We had a player character who was a half-orc, Urggh, half-troll or something. His horse was smarter than he. And whenever he saw people go to a worship thing, you know, and they'd set up their little altar and all this stuff and do their prayers, he'd say, "That's kind of cool, you know, I wonder what they're doing?" It's obviously valuable and important. Well, the only thing obviously of value and importance to Urggh was his gold. So whenever people would worship, he'd just empty out his saddle bags of gold and imitate them. Well, one time they're on a Heroquest and they were in the Underworld, in the land of the dead, and he says, "Well, I guess I'll do this too." And he dumped out all this gold, and he said his prayers, and he was answered. And that was the last Gold Wheel Dancer who could be reached. And so he brought it back to life and it was placed on Gonn Orta's boat.
- 39: Do Rokari and Hrestoli recognize each other's lords, and wizards, and knights as legitimate?
- GS: No. However, there is some rumors of an ecumenical council in an attempt to heal these ancient breaches. Coming soon at a convention near you, next

Convulsion, in England, this ecumenical council will be the live role-playing game. It will also be replayed at RuneQuest Convention II, in Oakland, California, this time next year, under warm weather.

- 40: Just exactly was Talor always laughing at, and why did he stop?
- GS: He was laughing at the pain and irony of existence.
- 40: And those terrible times when he lost his laughter, what happened?
- GS: The pain was too much. Even irony sometimes runs out.
- 41: One of the sub-cults of the Seven Mothers is She Who Waits. Is there any illumination--any source material beyond that?
- GS: You'll have to wait. Because I'm not sure precisely sure who or what she was.
- 42: In Gods of Glorantha, they talked about the sorcerous worship ceremony as something that basically achieves nothing--very little mystically but gives you a feeling of wellness. Yesterday, you were talking about Arkat in his initiations into the Malkioni religion going on all of these little Heroquests. Are the Western ceremonies much more magical than implied in Gods of Glorantha?
- SP: If you just cast a little worship ceremony, like a Sacred Time ceremony or a big deal, get you worshipers all together-you can cast a little worship ceremony all by yourself in a cave somewhere and achieve very little. Or you can have ten thousand farmers, knights, and wizards, all worshipers togethe4r and have a little more.
- 42: But the way the effects of the worship ceremony, being translated to the Godplane, would be the same?
- GS: Yes.

[tape flaw -- question about Heroquesting and time travel]

- GS: You cannot deliberately go back in time, except through a Heroquest, and that takes you back to a sacred ceremony or event.
- SP: But if you make a mistake, you could end up falling out at the wrong place, or the wrong time
- 44: Is the manifestation of the Telmori curse something that happens from childhood or does it happen during an initiation period when the child reaches puberty?

- GS: Childhood. Telmori women occasionally give birth to wolves. Or litters. Or mixed litters. And that is unusual. Most Hsunchen do not get it until initiation. Telmori are cursed, so they're always beasts.
- 44: But they're always beasts in [unintelligible]
- GS: No, it's a natural ability for them.
- 45: What about the Hidden Castles that pop in and out of places and times. If you got into one and were lucky enough to get out again, would you not be able to time travel in that exception?
- GS: Yes, but you don't know when you'll get out.
- 46: In the Dead Place, does the nature of magic become a non-entity?
- GS: Yes. It's a power sink.
- 46: So, if spirits are caught in that area, they're unable to function.
- GS: Yes.
- SP: Or they physically end up there. They drop out of the spirit plane.
- GS: That's right. There is no spirit or Godplane there. They manifest themselves without their spirit or god powers. They look like people, they look like animals, they look like plants. It's a good trap to get your enemy's god into the Dead Place. But nobody's foolish enough to do it.
- 47: There were magical barriers set up after the Dragonkill War, but the Colymar managed to cross them, apparently without a whole lot of preparation. What made them go away?
- GS: I'm not sure that there was ever any actual magical ward that maintained - that kept the humans out. They put up stuff, but I'm not sure that it was a magical function. I think it may have just been totally superstition. Also, I'll just point out that the Grazelanders had been in Dragon Pass for at least a generation before the Colymar. They came in from Prax.
- 48: Is Time an entity, or does it have a consciousness?
- GS: No.
- 49: During the Gods Wars, Genert was killed and Pamalt wasn't. The question is, is the expression of Genert's death the fact that almost every dramatic snap-back incident, let's say Gbaji, Wyrms Friends, Jrusteli God

Seminar Transcripts



Learners, and the Lunar Empire happened in the north, but not in Pamaltela? Pamalt was still alive, and therefore things are less chaotic?

- GS: What was the last part?
- 49: That Pamalt is still alive and Genert isn't, so therefore, even though there's lots of chaos in the southern continent, nonetheless you don't have these vast upheavals in the southern continent, the expression of Genert's death.
- GS: They have had similar upheavals. If you look in the World of Glorantha, you'll see that the Blue People live way down in the corner and way up in the north. They once ruled the entire continent. And there have been comparable upheavals. The Six-Legged Empire. That was the God Learners coming down.
- 49: Then, if that's the case, what's the difference between Pamalt alive and Genert dead?
- GS: I would say that the comparison that says Pamalt and Genert were parallel equal brothers is a God Learner construct. They may not have been exactly parallel. So, it may not be a cause and effect thing at all.
- SP: Also, Genert's effects are more subtle than just keeping people happy. The land in Pamaltela, compared to the land in Genertela, is more lush. There's no wastes. Or there's the Nargan Desert, but you have to go way far south and the temperature's like a hundred and forty degrees in the daytime, but if there was no Pamalt, probably all the central savanna would be like the chaos wastes of Genertela. To grow anything at all in Genertela you kind of have to worship the land goddess, or get Ernalda to back you up, or do things. It's hard to be a horticulturist in Genertela. And all those kind of effects are strengthened in Pamaltela.
- 50: Lunar propaganda tells us that the Red Emperor is the immortal ever-reincarnating son of the Red Goddess, is always the same guy, even if he looks different, has a different personality and behaves in different ways. Always follows the same policies, and so on and so forth. In the present day, in Glorantha, Seventh Wane, is it possible for someone to aspire to become the Red Emperor in the Lunar Empire? For a Lunar noble, say, to become the Red Emperor? To be recognized, retrospectively, as being the son of the Red Goddess all along?
- GS: For information's sake -- I'm a little hesitant, because I'm writing up the Lunar Empire, starting at the beginning and working forward, from the Solar into the Lunar Empire -- initially, the Red Emperor was always the same. Same guy, same face, same acts, and he lived for centuries until Sheng Seleris came along.

After Sheng Seleris, he started changing shape. The original Red Emperor was made up of a bunch of people who inspired and contributed to whoever the original Red Emperor was. However, when Sheng Seleris sacked the moon, he offed about half these people. So they had to get new members on the council, to maintain and recreate the Red Emperor. So this has made the later Red Emperors different than the earliest one. Because there are different members on the council.

I am not exactly sure what the answer to [your question] would be. Michael [O'Brien] says yes. I'm thinking that if I qualify to be Red Emperor, I would go to the moon, and you would never see me again. Although, he might be as handsome as I am or as clever, but you wouldn't recognize him as the same person. Because all these other individuals have contributed to his being. Some people undoubtedly feel that, if you qualify for it, you get to sit on the council, and contribute in that way, and it's not you, it's the Red Emperor.

- 51: First question. This may be one of the six great forbidden questions, but to where did Zzabur remove Brithos and was he planning on returning it after his curse ran its course?
- GS: The current theory is that the disappearance of Brithos was an accident. You know this? Yeah, it was an accident. They didn't plan it. It was a backfire. And that nobody knows where he went. In fact, the people in Arolanit, who are true Brithini, don't know where h went. Don't know where Brithos went. It's not on the Heroplane, it's not just a little appendix off Solace. They don't know. It has gone to an invisible place. Some people say this was Zzabur's plan. "Glorantha sucks. Everybody dies. I'm getting out of here."
- SP: A rebound from the Syndics' Ban, of course.
- GS: No, yeah, a rebound from the Syndics' Ban.
- 52: Then the second question is--I don't remember exactly what source it is, but, at one point, there's either a comment about the fact that Delecti, rather than being a Vivamortist necessarily, he reincarnated his soul into a progression of corpses. Is there a tie between Delecti's ability to reincarnate in corpses and the Pharaoh's ability to reincarnate in living bodies? Is there some tie that basically would bring the Pharaoh Belintar, tie him to the Empire of the Wyrms Friends in any way?
- GS: No.
- 53: What exactly was the Dragonewts' dream?
- GS: I don't know. Give him his dollar back. Unanswerable

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Gloranthan Lore Auction



question. Nobody knows, it's impossible to know. I might know, and I'll probably figure it out just before I die.

- 54: Are all the inspirations of the Moonson daughters, and are all the daughters of the Red Emperor inspirations of the Moonson? What's an inspiration?
- GS: [deep breath--i.e., inspiration] The first inspiration of Moon Son is actually the City of Glamour. So they're not all people. But essentially what the lunar line is, that the inspirations are manifestations of a portion of the Red Goddess for a special need. Inspired by the Emperor's consciousness.
- 55: When the Ban falls in Charg, what comes out?
- GS: I don't know. That's one of those things that I'm just keeping ready. They're many things like that are just waiting, and I'm going to save it.
- 56: I have read of various magical roads that exist, especially in Dragon Pass, that a priest or somebody can use a ritual to get on to travel fast with danger with his colleagues. Is there a similarity between this and the dragonewt roads, that dragonewts have, and if so, are dragonewts annoyed about that?
- GS: Similar but not the same. Only dragonewts can use the dragonewt roads, and people can use the people roads, the other roads.
- 56: And a minor follow-up. Are the rituals well known?
- GS: Very, very obscure. And one of the main reasons is that magic roads -- by the way, one of the items at the Auction has a map of the magic roads in Sartar, in Dragon Pass--but one of the problems is that the road goes through -- the only place you can step down are the holy places. On the top of Wintertop, in the sacred part of the Earth temple, on the movement rune. These are places where people have agendas, they don't like strangers popping in.
- 57: What are the six questions that you won't answer?
- GS: That's the first one.
- 58: Why are there no dragons in Pamaltela?
- GS: They probably haven't woken up yet.
- SP: There's no dragonewts, that's not the same as no dragons.
- 59: There are many obvious connections between Glorantha and Earth. Kralorelans are like Chinese, et cetera. Is this just a parallelism, or is it actually a causal

connection? Is it possible to arrive in Glorantha from, say, Earth's Dreamlands. You know, where you drift off. Like, could the Yggs' Islanders actually be descended from Vikings who [unintelligible] for some strange reason.

- SP: You ask about Earth's Dreamlands -- that's how I get there.
- 59: Viking question concerning things like the myths of the Yggs Islanders, how their ancestors came across the sea in ships, et cetera. Were their ancestors from elsewhere, or were they always on Glorantha?
- GS: Yes. Yeah, I am not one who enjoys mixing genres. I think it always does each genre a disservice.
- 59: So the parallelism is just there.
- GS: Correct. Vikings can't show up in Glorantha in my game. I let it happen it once and I still regret it. That was Redbird.
- SP: A D&D character.
- GS: Never again.
- SP: Redbird finally ended up going to a Stormbringer world.
- 60: Yeah, going back to our various episodes. What's something strange about the Second Age, compared to the First and Third, is that you had two things going or at once. At least in Genertela. What's the exact relationship -- because the implication is the Devil was involved in all these in some ways -- what was the exact relationship between the Empire of the Wyrms Friends and the Jrusteli God Learners? The fact that the two of them exist at the same time is sort of interesting.
- GS: Hostility. They did not trust each other.
- SP: There's also an Eastern Island Empire, which is not God Learner, and the Errinoru Elf Empire, which is not God Learner. It was the Age of Empires, as it were.
- GS: Exactly, the age of centralization. And they were enemies. Dire enemies. I think the God Learners have a bad rep in the Lunar Empire because they fought against the Solar Empire.

* end of tape*

Greg Stafford on HeroQuesting

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GS: Greg Stafford

NB: Nick Brooke

AM: Audience Member

- GS: Good morning. My name's Greg, and we're here to talk about HeroQuest. I would be happy to sit here and jabber, but I could probably jabber with a little bit more direction if someone has some intelligent questions they could ask to start.
- AM: Several years ago at Gencon there were some test rules for heroquesting, where on the Heroplane in general all your abilities were divided by ten, so people with 100% weapon attacks had 10% attack. And a lot of those people on the Heroplane were there because they were enormously powerful. Our group ran into someone who took mercy on us and said, "I'm going to give you a test. If you can't pass this test, your failure will force you off the Heroplane because you are not ready to be here." Of course, we all ended back on Glorantha. Are you still considering rules along this structure, or have you taken an alternate approach?
- GS: I've taken an alternate approach. The game that you are talking about is one of several similar games which I call "Super RuneQuest," and it just did not come anywhere close to capturing the ideas and feelings that I wanted to convey through the game that used to be called HeroQuest. And so we're taking a totally different approach, and not lightly but seriously. I don't know when I will write HeroQuest. I'm not going to at this stage. I don't have time to. I'm just going to keep writing what I can write and explaining it without rules and without games. And let other people, at the moment, who are more astute, or perhaps they just have the time, to create a game and do the rules. And since that was such a good and intelligent question, I'm going to rave for just a little bit and explain what my current idea on this is going to be. All right?

Just being a Humakti is not enough to get to make you a Hero. You've got to be a good Humakti. You've got to kill things. You've got to be willing to die. This is something I rarely see in player characters. I have a Humakti Heroquest I used to offer to everybody, and at the end of it you're guaranteed to meet your god. Who could ask for more? I never had a player character take me up on this. So it's not just what you do, but how you do it. To be an Orlanthi hero, you've got to fulfill certain ideals, you've got to act a certain way. And if you act a certain way, the closer to your cult ideal that you act, the more power that you get for it. Some cults, of course, have a broad acceptance range. Being a good Orlanthi is significantly easier than being a good Humakti. Because Orlanth, being a cult in the center, that defines the center of the culture, has a broad range of possibilities. You can be a chieftain, and you can be a stingy one... oh no you can't, you've got to be a generous one for Orlanthi. But you can be a war-like leader and be a great fighter, or you can be peaceful. You can father 142 children and just plow your fields better than anybody else every year. And you can be a Hero. You're immortal. And your children will

remember your name, and name all their children after you, and stuff like this, and talk to you centuries after you're dead. On the other hand, to be a Humakti you are required to have a fairly narrow range of action. (laughter)

So, the thing is, there are different realms in which a person needs to function as a Hero. If you want a good analysis of what I'm saying, I just got a good refresher course in the latest Campbell books. I think it's the first one he's written since... since he died. (laughter) I believe it's the second one in his table top series. (Historical Atlas of World Mythology, Harper & Row, 1988) The first one he did complete while he was alive. (Volume I : The Way of the Animal Powers) The second one was half done, and he died, and his students have finished it. (Volume II : The Way of the Seeded Earth) And I desperately hope that his students finish the other three in the series.

What I want HeroQuest to do is to give people the vehicle to interact mythologically through their characters in the realm. And there are three realms. The personal realm, a social realm, and the cosmic realm. And there are three ways, three powers. The Hindus say all gods powers can be divided up into three categories. And some gods are in all three. In Hindu, these are kama, dharma, and artha. The first thing that everyone wants, kama, not karma but kama, is desire. Everybody wants happiness and good. It's nice and simple. Everybody wants order and justice, divine order, that's dharma. And artha is power and prestige.

So, everybody wants to be loved. Everybody wants to be powerful, or at least recognized for whatever they are. What everybody wants is to live in a fair universe. And all the gods and goddesses that have ever been known can be categorized according to those three things. So those are, at the moment, sort of the stats for a god. Now, how much of your being is dedicated to order and justice? This is a big thing in Orlanth, of course. It's not such a big thing for Humakt. How much of it is concerned with power and prestige? How much of your gods existence is concerned with love and desire? See, this is zero for Humakt. (laughter) I mean it. This has absolutely no concern for a Humakti. Humakt doesn't care how you act as far as your personal goals go. It's not his concern. Orlanth cares, because he cares about everything. He's in all three categories. Humakt is probably in two.

So the game is a way for you to activate your awareness, your access, to these powers through your game play. Something funny occurred to me recently about Gloranthan heroquesting, and I was really struck by it because it seems so simple maybe it's just stupid. Gloranthan heroquesting is not too far different from terrestrial role playing. You take some certain part of yourself, activate it, become aware of it, motivate it, become conscious of it, go into a non-material realm, another place that everybody agrees on, where you interact with mysterious, hopefully intelligent, entities, and you



come back and you've got a reward. I mean, you've got your check marks (laughter), you have the emotional satisfaction of having seen your character succeed. Or not. (laughter) And this is in a large way similar to Gloranthan heroquesting, except in a little more literal sense where they take some aspect of themselves t...hat is most critical to this quest, go into a temple, have their priests and temple empower them, activate them, to serve on the other side in the invisible world, where you travel and try to achieve your objectives, to bring them back to the "real world", the material world.

So that's, in a large sense, what heroquesting looks like to me this morning at this stage of the conversation. (laughter)

AM: Could you clarify what the role of the Heroquester to his people or his supporters is? Can a lone person go on a heroquest, or does he require followers, and how do his followers influence the heroquest?

Certainly. That's another critical and important question. GS: An individual can go off into the Heroplane and guest and bring back, if he succeeds, what he wants. Joseph Campbell says no myth, no story, is over however until the hero goes home. And if you go home and you've done nothing for your community, if you've done it entirely for yourself 'cause you're the big shot, then the impact is far, far less than if you go home with a gift that helps everybody in your community. Now, you don't have to go off with the support of your family and your clan and your tribe. But if you do there is an advantage to this. Typically, on a heroquest, it being a difficult thing to do, you go around and you ask people for their help. You go to your wife and your kids, say "Hey, I'm going to the other side. You with me or not?" And if she's with ya, this is a good thing. If you're going off, and you're wife is behind ya, it's a lot better than having this nagging feeling that she's going to be unhappy when you get home. All right? (laughter) It could be that simple. Or it could be a little more complex. You go to your clan, or your household, and you say "Hey! I'm going off on this Heroquest, I'm going to the other side, and I'm going to go across the River of Death. Are you with me or against me? Will you help me?" And if they don't want you to go, you're in deep trouble because you don't have a lot of support. If they are on your side, they can commit to a certain level of commitment. They say, "Well, that's O.K., we'll give you one mistake and that's it." On the other hand, on the other end of the spectrum, they may say "We're with you 100%. Anything you do is OK with us, and we give you all our resources to support you." What this means is, while you're off gallivanting around in the invisible world, which is of course visible to you, your clan and temple are all sitting back doing whatever is necessary to support you. They're doing ceremonies, they're doing rituals, they're remembering you, they're doing daily prayers, they're doing whatever is necessary to support you. In King of Sartar, when Orlanth is off on his Heroquest and he is in the Underworld, and he is killed, he's dead. All right? He's dead, at one point. A feather drifts down - swish, swish, swish - and he picks it up and he remembers what his purpose is, and he gets up, and ... I forget exactly what he does next, he liberates Trickster, I forget ... but he comes back to life. That feather is his support from back home, from Elmal and all his family that he left behind. They are supporting him. They're saying "We're with you 100%. Do whatever is necessary." So, he is able to draw

upon their energy, their power, their psyche, their spirituality, to help him in the Underworld. This is good, because when he comes back everybody who supported him benefits from his effort. At the same time, everybody who supported him loses exactly the way he loses as well. All right? So he is acting for the community. If you go off on the Heroplane, and you act only for yourself, and you come back, you're the only one who benefits. But if you go off and you act in the name of your community with their support, then you come back, they benefit.

A game rule I thought of for this is that you may be able to, for instance, come back and you've got, lets just say, a +100% sword. You've got a sword now that adds 100% to your skill 'cause you're really good, you earned this thing. You dueled with Humakt and he only cut your hands off. (laughter) So, now you're up +100%. You can come back to the Mortal Plane and now you're, if you're a typical RuneQuest player, 212% at sword. (laughter) And you are at 212% until you die, and then that 100% is gone. But if you go off and heroquest for your whole clan, and Humakt cuts off your hands, and you come back and you say, "I have this sword with my hands on it, and I give it to the clan to bless us all and benefit us all." The entire clan is now +10%, for as long as that sword with your hands stuck to it is kept in that temple. Because this is your payment, you've done it. And so now the whole clan, whenever they fight, is at +10%. I'm just making up these numbers and throwing it out as a concept, these are not game rules. This is an example of how it could work. All right? And, after yourdie, they are still +10%. All right? As long as that sword is there and they remember it, and they do what is necessary to contact the power in that sword, which is ceremony and ritual. This is how you become a Hero. You don't become a Hero by being the biggest, baddest bastard on the block, who everybody forgets in a generation. You get there by being the one that they still talk about 100 years later, because there's a sword there and we remember George. You know, George Missinghands. And whenever there's a fight, people go to that temple and say, "Hey, George Missinghands, we're gonna need ya again! We're doing this the way you told us to do it, and we're asking you now to do what you promised us." And that's how you become a Hero. They feed you on the Spirit plane with power, energy, sacrifices, love, and you do what you're supposed to do.

So, you don't have to do it for the community. But you're a fool if you're not, and you will never be a hero, a true Hero that will live beyond time.

- AM: What happens on a heroquest from the point of view from the ordinary mundane Gloranthan plane / what happens on a heroquest from the point of view of the Heroplane?
- GS: From the point of view of the Heroplane? From the point of view of a person on the Heroplane?
- AM: What sort of things happen first in the place you are starting from, where they are giving you ritual support, and what sort of things happen in / to the Heroplane?
- GS: What happens on a heroquest? A heroquest is a reenactment of a mythical act. And so whatever happens on the Heroplane is whatever happens in the story. And you're ... so, choose a story, just spill one off.

Stafford on HeroQuesting

- Hercules is very easy. If you were doing a Herculean GS Heroquest, um..., what's the first one? The Nemean Lion? So the first thing you do on that heroquest is you go to Nemia, the spirit plane Nemia, you look for the lion, you draw an ox and you kill it, you strangle it, and use it's claws to skin it and succeed thereby. Another way you might do it is change the act. You say, "Oh, I've got all these cattle. Now Geryon's gonna come and steal 'em. I hate it. It's a waste of time. I hate that guy. I'm not going to Italy this time. I'm just gonna bypass him, so he can't get the cattle." Can you do that? Yeah, maybe you can. You know, you might say, "Well gee, I've got these weird things on my wrists (referring to his own wrist braces). I'm never going to be able to strangle the Nemean lion. Maybe I can poison it." (laughter) So you can do this. You just choose a ceremony...
- AM: Or pull the thorn out of it's paw.
- GS: Yeah, right. Which is another thing. I'll get to that. So you may do the whole ceremony, and you go to the Nemean Plane, and you fill an impala full of poison, set it out there, and hope that the Nemean Lion will come and eat it and that you'll have an advantage.
- AM: So it's sort of revisionist mythology?
- That's exactly what it is! Now, there's another way that you GS: can do it too. You can go back to your books, find scholars, go to ancient lands, foreign lands where they know other things about this lion. Say, "Geez, I didn't realize that this was actually, for you people, the Sun God! No wonder I can't kill him with weapons." Right? "So, gee, you guys have this story about making friends with a lion by pulling a thorn out of his hand. I'm gonna do your story! It's a lot easier than mine!" (laughter) So that's what you do. And the story changes. They come back, and they say "Well, this is the lion lover." And if everybody goes on that story and records it as being the better one, the real one, well soon it's "Hercules and his 11 Labors, with his lion pal." (laughter) All right? But, this is a dangerous thing. Because you've reprogrammed not just the story, but everything connected to that story in your culture. And you can say "Well good. Now we've got the friendly lion, you know, but geez,...
- AM: ...how does he hold up the sky with ...
- GS: There ya go, something like that. ... You say, "But, it was important that the lion eat these birds that ..." It's a mythological ecology, and you can't change one part without inevitably changing another part. This is, of course, what the God Learners did wrong. They said, "Hey look, we can change all the stories and it doesn't even matter? Let's do it!" Right? So they went and switched them all. They said, "Lets switch these goddesses around. This is cool! I bet we can tap gods without harming them! They're so big and powerful, ya know?" And they did all this stuff without being at all aware of the consequences. And they changed the mythological environment irrevocably, and got destroyed thereby.

- AM: Are there any chances, even without the rules system coming out for Heroquest, of perhaps collecting known heroquests? Because we are familiar with major mythological events, but people aren't going off on Lightbringer Quests too often. It's those minor heroquests, those lesser in scope and more achievable, that seem to be what we're hearing hints about. Would it be easier perhaps to collect some of those stories? Some of us have come up with our rules systems, we just don't know the myths.
- GS: Yes, that could be done. Submissions welcome. And, I don't want to just brush it off and not care about it. But in fact, I can't care about everything. I want to say here, you've got my permission to make up myths, and my objective at this stage is to try to present models. A minor myth is presented in King of Sartar... oh, geez, did it make it in there? About the Vanik Spear?

AM: No.

- AM: It's in Tales though. (TOTRM #7) So everyone here has read it.
- GS: All right, so, it's in Tales of the Reaching Moon, you've all read it, the tale of the Vanik Spear, and you can get it there. Ge Tales. And, the way to do it is to look at the list of analogies I'v made. These guys as sort of early Saxon/late Celtic. Look at their stories and find out what they felt was important and useful. I will tell you that this stuff about mimicking the mythology isn't something I made up. This is the way Earth mythology works. All right? It is. You can look at modern religions. You can look at science. Any belief system works in much the same way. And you work it through trial and error, find out what works and what doesn't, and do it. So, if you wan to find some story about getting a heroic weapon, pull out a book on myths and read it and see what it is, and just imitate it. Break it down.
- AM: When you speak of the behavior of the Heroquester, it reminds me of the Pendragon scenario, in the Tournament of Dreams. You know that one? Is that somewhat what you're thinking of?
- GS: In a sense, yeah. In fact, all of Pendragon is like a heroquest. All of Pendragon, it doesn't matter... everybody's a knight, but what kind of a knight are you? And the whole. Arthurian legend is heroquestish, in that sense. You might poison the Nemean Lion and not win, because this is a Hero's Quest, not a Trickster's Quest! So, you don't get the benefits, or you get something you didn't plan for, because you didn't behave properly. Does that answer it?
- AM: I was thinking particularly with that one scenario...
- GS: Where they actually go to the Dreamlands?
- AM: Yeah, and their abilities are based on their behavior scores.
- GS: I wouldn't make it that straight across. I envision a Heroquest being much like a regular adventure. There are trees, and people, and you walk around. It's a dream-like atmosphere, but not as straight-over where you'reuh....

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AM: ...walking in a thing of dry-ice? (laughter)

- GS: Uh, you might. But in the scenario that he's talking about, you get into dream combat and your chastity stat is equal to your sword skill for instance, and this kind of thing. I wouldn't make it that way, but it could be.
- AM: One of the things that I noticed that we as players translating in play - we're afraid of failure. And failure is just as important. I can see somebody heroquesting and failing, and you can have terrible consequences to the entire society for a thousand years and yet you repeat it to repair the problem. We were talking about how you haven't met a PC Humakti who was willing to "go all the way." I wonder—would we not, as a group, run into the same problem with Heroquesting? There is no success without true failure as a real consequence, not just "oh by the way, you missed your roll, but I'll figure out a way to get you out of it."
- GS: You're right. And in the Lightbringer's Heroquest it's mandatory that each person fail, and suffer miserably.
- AM: That is the whole point of the Hill of Gold Quest, isn't it?
- GS: It's a big part of the Hill of Gold. You goof, you lose. And if you go on the Lightbringer's Quest and you don't lose, you might not succeed in the larger picture. And that thing about failing is a big thing. I wonder if it would be different if in RuneQuest you got checks for when you missed your roll to learn by? (laughter)
- AM: I understand that in Heroquesting you would want to reenact some of the actions from Godstime to get yourself closer to your god. Under that structure, how do you do something new?
- GS: It's tough.
- AM: I've see an excerpt somewhere where Sir Ethilrist is traveling on his heroquest. It seems that he is exploring something he has never seen before and has no references. So, how do you do something new when everything you do is supposed to be a reenactment of a myth.
- You don't have to just do what's been done and reenact. GS: Arkat's big secret was that he One of Arkat's lesser secrets (laughter) was that having gone through several initiation ceremonies, or heavy significant rites and rituals, he discovered that as a Hrestol knight ... I want to just step back one second and say all rituals and ceremonies are Heroquests. O.K.? Little ones. So, he in his Hrestoli ceremony at one point had to go to a certain place, I'll just say by the Red Rock, and he had to fight Orlanth, or a barbarian, and exit by the Thorn Bush. And he did it, of course. And he succeeded. Well, later on when he's being initiated as a Ralios Orlanthi, he discovers he has to go to this place by the Red Rock, fight this Western guy and exit by the Oak Tree. And he knows that by going to the Oak Tree, the next step, 'cause he knows the story, is that he's going to ... I'm making this up on the spot, you know ... is to cross the Green River where he's going to drown. He knows that as an Orlanthi he's gotta cross the Green River and drown.

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Well, as an Orlanthi he comes and he's supposed to go out by the Oak Tree, and he says, "I don't want to go out that way. I want to go out by the Thorn Bush, because I've been there before. And he recognized this, that a lot of the conflict is cultural, and that he could cross myths. He could enter one and exit through another. And that's what he did, in order to do what he was able to do, that no one else since or before has been able to do. And that's how you make new things. By doing it and succeeding. Ethilrist made his own path, he was not following any specific individual. 'Cause he just sort of wandered around in Hell, kept coming back to life, and got out. And whatever he did to succeed then is a new story. And he tell: it to his followers, and they say, "Well, you know, I want one of those demon horses too." And they do a portion of his story where he goes to the Underworld, conquers the Lord of Monsters, chooses the right animal, and brings it out with him. So that his followers then can do that little story that he made up

- AM: My problem with the mythical heroquest is that very few involve gangs of heroes doing something, except the Argonauts. Heroquests are almost always one guy in a spotlight, and the other people are usually made to follow orders. It's very rare that our 3 or 4 player characters, who basically are like the Eurmali, all go off and decide they want t do this one thing and they all have the support of their clan and their church. It's a lot easier to have them just go to the Heroplane, which is populated by these creatures of myth, and see what happens.
- GS: That's quite all right. And I think people do that a lot. I think everybody wants to succeed in life. A lot of people want to succeed the way Ethilrist did, you know, and do it and make up a new thing. And, the problem that you state that, of almost all these transformative myths and stories are about individuals... It's very rare, you know, to find a whole group of people doing this thing together. And that's a tough thing. My solution on it, on the Pendragon side, is that when we do the Grail Quest, each story at some point, is a solo scenario. Mandatory. In Pendragon, you know, they never do anything in a group that is spiritually significant, they always go off on solos, and you will have to do a solo in Pendragon in the Grail Quest to succeed. Because it is a problem, and it doesn't easily fit into our environment.
- AM: I think the problem is that in RuneQuest the game, every societal background has certain strengths and weaknesses. And invariably, as a party what you want to do is round that out and make all your strengths, everything a strength. So when you're talking about heroquests, you're talking about one society's vision, so therefore you're talking about all the strengths and all the weaknesses together, and it's hard to put all that together in a round circle, you know what I mean?
- AM: Well, you could just have a group of player characters go to a very dangerous place, have fun, and go home. (laughter) At the initiate level that could be that as well. At the Rune Lord/Rune Priest plus level there's nothing for them to do except go on Heroquests. And, frankly, the amount of work involved in generating a myth for each one of them is a bitch. Whereas, "Why don't we just go to the mythic magic level, and kick some mythic buttl" (laughter) It's not nearly as meaningful as a true Heroquest, but it's a lot of fun.

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- GS: And it's an OK way to look at the game and to view it, and I think that even in Glorantha a number of people say, "You know, i'm not up to dedicating all of my life to getting to the Underworld, to going to Hell. Let's just go to the Black Mountain, and mess with trolls." (laughter) I think that's quite all right.
- AM: There was a story in the Cults of Prax about Biturian Varosh's travels in which Ruric appears and disappears, and supposedly he was on a Heroquest. Biturian Varosh could see a light in his eyes. Now, how does this correspond with this other world/invisible world business where he's popping in and out of the world doing various things?
- The invisible world is not "some place out there," the GS: invisible world is some place right here. And the reason Ruric was able to appear on the mundane plane is that the guy he was tracking down, looking for on his Heroquest, happened to be on a mundane plane. Not all Heroquests take place "out there." Some of them take place right here. Or, on sort of inbetween levels. In the Orlanthi heroquest for the Lightbringers, the first place is here, the second place is on that mountain top right there. And it is that mountain top. And that place on the mountain top is there, you could get there by climbing the mountain except the mountain is unclimbable. You could get there by up flying to it. Or you could get to it the Heroquest Way, in which case it's all prepared for you. And so it is in and out of this world. All the places of power in Glorantha are where the two worlds, or the four worlds, or the seven worlds, are all simultaneous. Craigspider's Castle in Dragon Pass, up there in the corner of the Dragon Pass map, literally has it's basements in the Underworld. So does Ethilrist's palace. You just go down those stairs, you will reach the Land of the Dead. All right, you want to go dungeon crawling? (laughter) And in Craigspider's Castle, the top towers are in Heaven. You can walk out the door on her top tower, and you are in the Sky World. And you can get there by the mundane plane. By going on the Dragon Pass map, deserting your unit, and running up to the castle. Right? (laughter)

You know, one of the things that happens on heroquests is that you generate enemies. You generate traditional enemies. You know, if you're a troll basher, you're gonna keep running into the same trolls. Because they're tired of being bashed, they're doing just what you're doing, and they're trying to get the jump on you. Sometimes you can be dragged involuntarily into a Heroquest because your enemy has set it up so powerfully, he says' "You know what, we're doing the Hill of Gold! This guy's my enemy. I know he's not ready. I can drag him in here unprepared." And that can happen, because you've committed to being a Heroquester, and you've generated this enemy, and you are now inexorably linked with him until the final resolution. You can look at Arkat and Gbaji's war as an extended Heroquest, much of which occurred on this plane, on the mundane plane.

One of the things that I've thought about is ambushing people on the Heroplane and the consequences. As we all know, the Pharaoh is gone. The reason he's gone is 'cause the Lunars ambushed his soul on the Spirit Plane...

AM: Was that during a Tournament of Luck and Death?

- GS: Yes.
- AM: Did she sneak in?
- GS: The Red Goddess?
- AM: Jareel.
- AM: Same person.
- GS: Uh, right. No, she went on the Spirit Plane, they knew where he was gonna have to be.
- AM: But did she come in from outside the Tournament, or did she enter in as one of the people in the Tournament?
- GS: Oh no, from outside the Tournament.
- AM: OK, so you can come in from outside?
- GS: Absolutely.
- AM: There is a secret path.
- AM: Who was that?
- Jareel, the Hero. But, she could only enter it from outside GS: by taking the role of one of the adversaries in the story already. And the Pharaoh always has to go past the Red Guards. And until the Lunars came along, they weren't sure who the Red Guards were. Now they know. (laughter) So they ambush him. But what if you're ambushed, and you survive? You know, you can run across the Heroplane. For instance, think about the Heroplane as a separate place, which is a legitimate way to think about it. You can travel from point A to point B. Now lets say that point C is on the other side of the Heroquest Land, and Craigspider's Castle is next to it over there, and over here is Ethilrist's. It's impossible to reach on the Heroplane. You're over by Ethilrist's place, your enemies ambush you, you decide to run. You run to the mundane plane, cross Dragon Pass, go into Craigspider's Castle, travel to the basement, and come out in the Underworld. While this guy's trying to track you across space and time to track you down. When I was in this stage I was thinking "Yeah, that's a HeroQuest spell -Chronoportation!" You could go to a sacred place which has a myth that stretches through history and say, "Well, you know, this is First Age Glorantha now." You chronoportate to it in an earlier time to participate in the great events. You want one of those magic swords that they cranked out in the Machine Island? Literally, you go back in time to when that battle was being fought. You've read description of those Lunar battles, and those weird creatures fall out of the sky, armies appear from nowhere. Those are Heroquesters coming back to help their god. The Eternal Battle where Storm Bull is fighting the Devil, every Storm Bull goes to that battle. Every one! I mean, at least for initiation. They say, "If you're really going to be one of us, lets see how you act under pressure." (laughter) The thing is, the Devil is there, and so is every broo who wants to help their god! You know 'cause they say, "Well, every Storm Bull ... " ... and the Storm Bulls get together every holy day and they say "Maybe there's enough of us! We'll get the bastards

- this time!" (laughter) And they all gang up, and they hope that there's more of them than the broos, 'cause on their holy day they can really make a monumental difference if they... can chop the Devil's hand off, let's say. And the broos are doing the same thing, all right?
- AM: What about a Trickster's Heroquest? Wouldn't that be legitimate?
- GS: Absolutely. But nobody wants to be a trickster. (laughter)
- AM: Who says?
- GS: Who says? I do! Who can tell me the Trickster's Lament? "Ohhhhh, no wonder they call me the Trickster. I even play tricks on myself!" And not only that, but every trickster gets tricks played on him. All right? Do you know the story about Orlanthi tricksters? Orlanthi tricksters, in the Orlanthi culture, have permission to do anything they want. Anything! They can kill people, they can sleep with your wife, they can eat their children, and there is no legal recourse because they, by law, are allowed to do anything. However, (laughter) anybody can do anything they want to a trickster (laughter) with no punishment because they live totally outside the system. The only way an Eurmali can exist openly in Sartarite society is to pledge himself to a chieftain who will protect him. And the chieftain is then responsible for everything the trickster does. So, if he sleeps with your wife, the Chieftain will pay the damages or suffer the consequences, depending on how he feels about your wife. (laughter) So, and that's the thing about tricksters. They can do anything they want. In my campaign, if anybody ever shows that they are a Trickster initiate, they are lynched on the spot. Everybody who recognized a Trickster who is not bound to their Chieftain goes to the Chieftain and says, "He's one. I saw him. He gave me a Hotfoot." And they say, "OK." pfffft. Ok, so anybody want to be a Trickster? Openly? Yeah, right.
- AM: There is so much fertile ground for Trickster Heroquesting, however. You have Trickster, for example, tickling Mostal while he is making the Spike and creating the chink which allows the Chaos army to destroy it. There are other similar stories. Trickster seems to be so integral to the process of change in Glorantha, how could you ignore the Trickster myths as a Heroquesting vehicle then?
- GS: I don't. The Trickster is in every single myth. You can't open the door without letting the Trickster in. You know, if you want to... the Trickster is always random chance. You just can't tell what he's gonna do, and he is always there, you know. The Trickster in a Heroquest may be the die roll. And he's always there. The thing is, the Trickster, in general, is not a creative figure. He often is, but per se doesn't need to be.
- AM: O.K. What is the importance of the Trickster's role in the development of Gloranthan myth?
- GS: No change can occur without him. It's that simple.
- AM: Would you say that Argrath is one of the Heroquesters who gives to his people and that Harrek is in it for himself?

- GS: Yes. Harrek is one of those guys who keeps it all for himself.
- AM: At the same time you talked to me about a year or two ago about how Harrek is doing things that need to be done, and that's why he's successful. He's like the, uh...
- GS: Shiva.
- AM: The immune system.
- GS: None the less, Arkat's... well maybe.... At the moment I'm going to say yes, with reservations.
- AM: Back to Argrath, did Argrath also become a Trickster to change the world in the period of your book?
- GS: Next question. (laughter) It could be. It could be interpreted as that. He is the Betrayer. He is the trickster. He does a lot of Trickster things. He not only changes his attitude, he changes his shape. He changes his inner being. That's a trickster thing. That's a transformative thing. So, yeah, but not officially. He did trickster things without being a trickster.
- AM: A little while ago someone was talking about a party that was taken into a Heroquest by their party leader, without any of them but him knowing they were going. And you have said that it's possible for people's enemies to drag them into a Heroquest as an adversary, but A: is this the sort of thing that could happen, people finding themselves in a Heroquest without having volunteered, and B: how does that affect the idea you had of if you don't go with everyone knowing you are going and being your cheering section and power base you're not going to do very well? Because this person not only didn't presumably have a power base somewhere, he didn't even have the support of his party! And they, of course, didn't have a power base because they didn't know they were going.
- That's right. Yes, you can just walk into one by accident. GS: You will eventually figure out what it is. All right? When the 35 foot guy walks up to you, you'll start to figure it out. But, places of power are always that way, and you could walk into somebody else's place of power without knowing it. Conceivably. If you're careless. And as far as being totally unprepared, without the support of your family and clan, this is really something that you always, if you participate and are a member of your society and family, you've always got some support. All right? If you're a good member of society. If you're a functioning member of your society, you've always got some, 'cause that's your life. Now, you don't have the 100 percent commitment, but if you've always paid your temple dues and done your prayers and sacrificed your POW as appropriate, you are in it to some extent.
- AM: Do you have to follow a myth in order to Heroquest?
- GS: No.
- AM: Can you come up with your own Heroquest? Suppose a person wanted to find out what happened to the Pharaoh. Could that be a Heroquest?

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- GS: Yes. Absolutely.
- AM: And then could they see that Jareel was going to ambush him and interfere?
- GS: Probably not, retro in time. It's been done. They can't go back in time and change it without a major, major effort. It's almost never done... almost never successfully done. But yes, you can do that. And, in fact you know, if it's successful then you would have the "Rescue the Pharaoh" scenario. Next time the Pharaoh doesn't show up, we say, "Well, you know, we remember that George..." What's your name?

- GS: "You know, when this happened before we remember that Jason went to this place, got these people, did these things. Lets us do it too." And you've made myth.
- AM: A couple of things. I'll try to be brief. One is, when you were talking about the ideas of Heroquesting and being willing to die, to go all the way. How do you deal with someone to motivate them to be Heroic, to do something beyond, where they might lose their character and that's important and an essential part of the game? Could you liken someone being drawn into a Heroquest, or going into something where they're not connected, to someone dabbling in mystical practices who is uninitiated and who gets themselves stuck in a real bind, versus going with all of the support, being someone who is initiated by the elders, brought into the situation, whereas OK here's sort of a rough map.
- The answer to number two: yes. You know, you find that GS: ancient tome, you open it up and read it. It is conceivable that you could trigger magic in Glorantha. In answer to the first part: how do you motivate people to do that? There is no game mechanic in RuneQuest to do it. I would recommend you look at Pendragon, where the game mechanics give you reasons to die. Good reasons for you to sacrifice your life, because in there there are game mechanics to link you with your family, and your clan, and your kin, and the rules make you a part of a larger body. I wouldn't be surprised if there are a number of people in here who have characters, or even play in a campaign, where it would be a regular thing to have your family and be motivated to have this, but there's nothing in the game rules to do it, so ... The game rules, you know, are an interface, they are the vehicle through which we look at the imaginary world. And if the rules don't tell us, "Pay attention to your family and your clan," then you've got to make that up. And even in RuneQuest, you have to make that up. It's one of the shortcomings. That's why I've sort of abandoned RuneQuest and gone on to whatever will be necessary to answer that question.
- AM: On a Heroquest, repeating the god's actions, do they go out and steal items of power or powers from other gods? Let's say that you are doing this on a Heroquest, are you stripping that other Heroquester of their power?
- GS: Sort of. All mythology that is alive and vital and meaningful to people, every single one is a creation story.

Every single one! If it's meaningful and alive, it's a story of why it is today the way it was. "Why does Yelmalio have no fire powers," they say? "How come Zorak Zoran is a troll and can make fires?" That's because at the beginning of time, when things were still more pliable and flexible, they had a contest at the Hill of Gold and Yelmalio LOST. So, Zorak Zoran got his fire powers. All right? If you go to the Hill of Gold and you reenact this, you go back to that time when things are more flexible and pliable, and so are you. You go back to that almost predifferentiation period, where you can take yourself apart, and see your things, and gamble them. And so it's set up, generally, so that you are mimicking the creation.

- AM: But as you go there as a Yelmalio, you don't have the fire power to give up.
- If you go to that Quest and you go to the Gambling Place, GS: the Zorak Zoran guy will be there, to put his fire powers on so you can get them back! So, there are trolls running around. Zorak Zoran trolls, who have no fire. And there are Yelmalio guys with fire. And what they want to do is go back again, and again, and again, with higher stakes every time. "Hey, I go back, I had my family support, so now I can start a small fire." But if you go back and you do it again, "Now I've got my clan, I've got my tribe, I've got my nation, I've got my whole culture,..." You know, theoretically, if every Yelmalio alive put their energy behind you and you went to the Hill of Gold, and you WON, when you come back there would be zero Zorak Zorani with fire powers and every Yelmalio will have the fire powers. And every Yelmalio temple will have a temple to Mike the Firebringer! (laughter)
- AM: When you say that the God Learners got it wrong, do you mean that other Heroquesters act more responsibly or do they just (sound drowned out by laughter)...?
- GS: That's exactly what I mean. Yes. (laughing)
- AM: If you're a Yelmalio though, and you go to the Hill of Gold, do you gain glory if you still lose? I mean, isn't it important, since that was reenacting the myth, would you still gain the glory of the quest in losing?
- GS: Yes. They'd say, "Yes, he's a real Yelmalio. He really has paid his dues. That's something to be respected, whereas this guy, well, he hasn't put it on the line yet. He's OK." But, yes, absolutely, because you're doing what the god did, even if you lost. There's no gods that are worshipped that are all total losers! Except maybe Gark the Calm, right? (laughter) So, other than that, they all have some winning and some losing and some reason to exist.
- AM: Two quick things. One was that I was appalled that you could have a Humakti that wouldn't go on a Heroquest to die.
- GS: I always was too.
- AM: The only Humakti I've ever had to play in my campaign wakes up every morning and says "Today is a good day to die." (laughter) (unintelligible) ... whose name I mispronounce horribly, but Quilve went to Arran and took his place and said

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AM: Jason.



that "since you can't give eternal youth, at least take me before all my skills fade." That is what a Humakt should be. But that's... one true vision.

This gentleman asked my exact question, having to do with Yelmalio and can the Yelmalions get back the fire power. I agree, that reply was perfect. But, if it actually comes to pass that you do reverse it, and Yelmalio keeps the fire power, might the Lightbringer or the firebringers..., don't they lose something else? Like, when Yelmalio was injured, or he was healed and taken in by the elves, etc, etc, do they lose a lot of those other connections?

- GS: They probably would lose that one in particular, which is directly connected with him being cold and dead, that he was not taken in by the elves. So that would, you're right.
- AM: That was Gbaji?
- GS: Maybe, I think, it might have been. (said impishly smiling)
- AM: In one of the old texts, I don't know if you wrote it, but the God Learners leading tool was referred to as RuneQuest Vision or RuneQuest Sight. I was wondering, were any of them role players, and if so, were they hack-and-slash?
- GS: Yes. (laughter)
- AM: I noticed that in the Pendragon magic rules, the primary trait for a magician is insight, and I've seen several references in HeroQuest to that same idea, of the possession of some sort of insight into the mysteries of your god... the process of getting into a ceremony and ritual, I mean since those are Heroquests, and Heroquests lead to insight, a Yelmalion going off and failing on the Hill of Gold might gain some insight into the greater mysteries of his god. He may not bring back the lost fire powers, but he would then know even further what he could do the next time that he quests.
- GS: Correct. Even by failing, you gain the respect. Just in that, awhelch-Welsh word, "insight." Look upon Heroquesting as a state of mind, as a state of awareness, as a type of consciousness. You're aware of something other people are not. I mentioned all ceremonies are Heroquests. You go to a big Orlanthi ceremony for the seasonal thing. And if you're what used to be called Lay members, you're not initiated. You go there and you see a room full of people, just like this, some people in the center, performing the ceremony, making gestures, saying things, doing things, et cetera. Answer, response. If you're an initiate, you've had your eyes opened to the secrets of the temple, and when you go there you don't see just those people. You can see the spirits under there, you can see that the priests are not people in costumes reenacting it but they are in fact incarnating the powers. If you're so good and you've done it enough so that you've got good ...

[Lost portion of seminar due to tape change]

(Question about who is Heroquesting in Third Age Glorantha.)

GS: The Orlanthi are. Because they are losing badly in Sartar. They're looking for new ways to win, as they have done several times in the past. The Lunars are, because they're winning and they want to keep doing it. And, they'll do it in a good way, not like the God Learners. (laughter) Those are the only two people I'm certain about at this time. Now, there may be others. I don't know what's going on in Kralorela or Pamaltela. I haven't been there in a long time, and they may well be Heroquesting too. I expect that as the cosmic situation deteriorates, more of them will be doing it.

- AM: What is the Six Stones Heroplane Ritual? Where does it take you?
- GS: There's a place in Sartar, I don't have my map but I'm sure it's marked on my map, where there are six standing stones, plinths. And, if you go there and you perform this correct ceremony, which is a Humakti ceremony, when you leave the circle you will be in the Underworld. In other words, these six stones and the area enclosed within them coexist in two places and if you do the right prayers and ceremonies you can transfer from one to the other, and then set off across the Underworld.
- AM: Does that mean that only a Humakti can do that ceremony, or can someone from another culture read it and go to that place and do it?
- GS: I would say only a Humakti can, and a Humakti might be able to work hard and bring someone else along. In fact as I recall that's how we did in my campaign. But, generally, they only work for the people who are meant to do it.
- AM: As you say, it requires a certain kind of insight to be a Heroquester, but many of the things or personalities you encounter aren't gonna have that insight. If Odysseus encounters the Cyclops, the poor Cyclops doesn't understand what is happening to him. I was wondering what, in general, is the mental attitude of the encounters to the Heroquester. Because, from his point of view, Odysseus is not the Cyclops' perceived end of it's life. It's all of a sudden, and he's gone, for no reason that would be apparent to him.
- GS: So, what is the perception of the people of the Heroplane?
- AM: Right.
- GS: It's their daily lives, and they just have a very difficult time of it with these visitors. (laughter) This is the way of the Other Side. Everything is in extremes. There's very little overlap.

AM: Lets say there's a pantheon of Cyclops', Cyclops' as Gods, and some Cyclops worshiper is going on the Heroplane. He's gonna play Cyclops, now he knows what's going on. So, couldn't that also answer his question as far as what the Cyclops does?

GS: Yeah. So if there's a Cyclops Heroquester he could say, "Well, you know, I'm not gonna keep any burning brands in my cave." (laughter) It's possible. But, again, it would be motivated by someone from the outside.


Stafford on HeroQuesting

- AM: If you're on the Heroplane, is there any easy way to tell that this guy is a god on the Heroplane or that he's a Heroquester?
- GS: No.
- AM: So if I'm following a Heroquest and I see Zorak Zoran, is that a Zorak Heroquester or is that Zorak Zoran?
- GS: You don't know that.
- AM: One of the things you talked about was the Yelmalion and Zorak Zoran gambling, when somebody gets the fire power. To me, that seems like it's a zero-sum game, and occasionally you're going to have a Heroquest where both of them screw up and nobody's got the fire power. Do you see Glorantha as having a level of magic gradually deteriorating?
- GS: I think so. I think I do think that. I can't say for certain, but I believe so.
- AM: Can doing rituals and ceremonies of worshipers kind of increase the level of magic?
- GS: Yes.
- AM: As well as the Lunar Way.
- GS: And the Lunars say the Lunar Way as well. Another thing is, zero-sum, Chaos is a negative and it takes energy away and it never comes back. So, there is an entropy factor.
- AM: Are there more peaceful Heroquests? Ernalda Heroquests, or Hon-Eel going after maize?
- GS: Yes.
- AM: Are those essentially different?
- GS: Essentially different? No. They're essentially the same. But the object is not to kill things. You might sweet talk it, or prove your charm or virtue. But, the mechanics are much the same. And, yeah, there's plenty. You want a good wife? You want a lot of children? There are Heroquests for this stuff.
- AM: Since thousands or millions of worshipers represent a god on the mundane plane, why can't a group of adventurers represent a god as a unit in a myth that the god made? So, a group of three adventurers representing Orlanth could go out. One of them could be Orlanth's leadership, another could be his sword arm, another could be h is rhetorical skill, and they would function as a group as one individual through the Heroquest.
- GS: I think it's quite possible.
- (Nick Brooke says something softly.)
- GS: Would you repeat that for everyone to hear?
- NB: The question, which was apparently the answer, was .

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AM: My god, you are Illuminated! (laughter)

- NB: would this be similar to Arkat, who seems to cast himself off into bits of people? There are a lot of people who walk around called Arkat at the same time, and when Arkat wants to visit there are always six or seven people with him, all who are built like Arkat, think like Arkat, and act like Arkat. And, my question is, is this Arkat making himself into lots of people or lots of people making themselves into Arkat? And, that's the answer.
- AM: If you look in terms of the Sacrificial King, is that an example of a Heroquest where the Hero suffers for his community by dying, or to avert some disaster?
- GS: Yes. Significant suffering. (laughter)
- AM: I want at least one model of the standard tragic Heroquest that no one wants to go on but which fulfills the needs of Glorantha. Because, so often these sound like positive quests to the end of the world to get things and bring them back. I can't believe that's the shape of the world. There has to be some balancing. I also assume that in one loss column is Heroquest 15, Humans 5, otherwise it wouldn't be a challenge among the Gods.
- GS: What would be a quest that everybody would like to do and nobody dares to?
- AM: No, that is tragic and no one wants to go on. All of this is just so upbeat and cheerful about ...
- AM: Orlanth getting dragged along on the Goldentongue Quest to restore Genert, into the Wastelands. Orlanth never wants to go to the Wastelands, but he always gets dragged along with the Issaries Goldentongue. He does not like that. It's not a fun thing for the Orlanthi to do.
- GS: Our time is up, I've been told. And just remember... (GS turns around, displaying the back of his t-shirt which reads "Everything I say is wrong.")

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KEY:

DH:	David Hall	GS:	Greg Stafford
MOB:	Michael O'Brien	NB:	Nick Brooke
PR:	Paul Reilly	AM:	Audience Member

AM: Could you explain what this is exactly about?

- NB: Right! What this is about is that for the last, almost a year now, I've been causing gratuitous offense to people on the Internet RuneQuest Daily... (clapping) ... by telling them what I think. I'm now here to have things thrown at me. I think that's really what this session is about. If you have an idea about Glorantha, a criticism, a variance, a wacky spin off, that you'd like lots and lots of people to hear, you sort of channel it. You say, "I think the Vadeli are very nice, really." The idea is that I will then shout at you for 5 minutes, and everyone else will feel really good. And, maybe on the way people will learn something.
- DH: What do we do?
- NB: You sit there and you say, "That's good." (laughter) Look nice. (laughter) And, you come up with your own ideas.
- DH: Right.
- AM: You tell us why Nick's wrong.
- NB: Yeah. Quite often I'm wrong. And every now and again I do something that's deliberately wrong. And that's to make people think, "That's wrong because..." And then they tell me why I was wrong. And then I know what's right!
- MOB: Can I just make an introductory comment? And that is, in the RQ Digest at one stage, I remember someone writing saying to Nick, "Where on Earth did you get suchand-such information from?" demanding probably a quote from some obscure source, or whatever. And Nick had an excellent quote, I think, when he replied. He simply said, "I got it from the same wellspring of information that Greg Stafford got it from. I made it up." And that's probably a theme to keep in mind.
- NB: That was my thing about the Pharaoh. If people don't know this, I was speculating on the Pharaoh as a dying and rising god. This is quite a good place to start, 'cause it's quite well developed and it does make a lot of sense, I think. In Esrolia, we were told way back when in Wyrm's Footnotes 8 or so, they used to have sacrificial kingship, just the way you'd expect. They picked a guy, said "You can be King." This is a land of women of course, so the women picked the guy and said, "You can be King." For a year, or three years, or seven years, twenty-one years if they're being boring, this guy was the King. He ran the place, and he had women, he

had wine, he had grain; he had everything he wanted. At the end of that they got out the knife, killed him, [put him] into the soil, plowed him down, and that kept the ground fertile. And if they didn't do that, they'd have really bad harvests. And if they had a bad harvest while they had a king, he'd obviously slipped up so they killed him anyway.

Then the Pharaoh comes along. Now, most of what we know about what the Pharaoh got up to in the Holy Country comes from *Trollpak*. We look at it from the troll point of view. We see this guy turning up, and he does really bad things to the rolls. And so, after that he makes the Holy Country. And the Holy Country is a great happy place to live, where everyone's happy, especially the trolls.

So, I thought, "Well Pharaoh's going to have to fuck up everyone in the Shadowlands, all six parts of it, and then meld them into the Holy Country, which is happy." So I thought, "What's he do to Esrolia?" We know that he bans the Year Kings. We know that the Esrolians used to keep their fields fertile by taking this guy, making him the king, killing him, plowing him in the soil to keep the fields fertile. They don't do that anymore. So what do they do?

Well, they don't starve. Esrolia's got this huge agricultural surplus. It's almost as bad as this place [America]. So, what I thought of instead, was the Pharaoh does it himself. One thing we know about him, from his fight against the Only Old One, is that he can die and come back. This is a characteristic thing of vegetation gods. It's the thing that the Sacrificial Kings do, except that they die and come back in the form of the crops. When Pharaoh dies, he comes back in the form of himself!

So he screws up the Esrolian religion. Instead of things being run by cliques of old women, they get this sort of... like a May Queen, if you like. An all-Esrolia beauty pageant! They pick this priestess, she comes out, they do the old sacrificial thing. He sleeps with her in the fields, she stabs him, he comes back, and it's all hunky-dory.

Now, my theory about Jar-Eel killing what's-his-name [Belintar] isn't any of this mystical mumbo-jumbo about the Red Guards and Tournaments of Luck and Death. It's that Jar-Eel won the beauty contest! Jar-Eel killed the Pharaoh, she sent him to Hell, the Lunar Hell, the one we know about from *King of Sartar* that's outside the Cosmos and you can't get back from it. (laughter)

PR: He knew the path out of the other one.

NB: And that's where he is. And maybe the Red Guards had something to do with this. Or maybe the Holy Country people don't know what happened yet. But, that was my theory.



AM: I always thought the Pharaoh was a refugee God Learner, like Delecti was a refugee E.W.F.er.

NB: Oh, yeah, he could be. I've heard Greg say that he was a heroquester, maybe from the past. A First or Second Age Heroquester who screwed up on the Heroplane, as so many do, and got chucked out at the wrong place.

My pet theory is that he's John Carter, Warlord of Mars. (laughter) Because he comes into this land with the winged men and the underwater people, and it's all bright and colorful, and he does these wacky things and saves the world. Flash Gordon's a variant model of this.

Or, the alternative is that he's a Blue Vadeli. He comes from the sea. He's got this very nasty thing he does with other people's bodies. That's a very Vadeli kind of way to behave.

And the other thing is, if he's John Carter, Warlord of Mars, then of course he's really a man from our world having a dream. And the Jar-Eel thing happens and then he wakes up, and he can't get back. It's one of the staples of fantasy fiction. Sort of like saying Harrek is Conan, and so on and so forth. It's only a theory. (laughter)

- GS: Harrek is Harald Hardrada, please.
- NB: Yes, but only if Harald Hardrada has this crap series of books edited by L. Sprague DeCamp. Harald has the...
- GS: A series edited by Poul Anderson isn't good enough?
- NB: It'll do. I dunno.
- PR: Two things. Esrolia. Everybody has house pets in Esrolia and they're reptiles: snakes, lizards. This is obvious to me, A) because Cretans all had house snakes, but B) because Esrolia is the Earth Country, and reptiles are the Earth phylum. Yeah, so now when you're in Esrolia, everybody's got a house snake. And Orlanthi have cats, etc.

Second, Harrek. We're jumping around here. Harrek... people seem to picture him this big evil barbarian who goes around killing everyone and taking everything for his own stuff.

NB: Because he is!

PR: No, we see him a little differently. We see him as the last of the Polar Bear Hsunchen, and he is not the dominant partner. The Polar Bear God is the ancestor god of all the Rathori. The Polar Bear god is dominant. What are the Lunars doing that the Polar Bears don't like? The polar bears are dying out because the Lunars are melting the ice. They're destroying the polar bear habitat. Harrek has this blind drive to... the Polar Bear God is dominant, and is driving him to destroy the Empire because they want to [unintelligible due to laughter and comments] and it's not stupid at all. He's well motivated. The god is well motivated.

- NB: But, the Lunars will be the best thing ever to happen to Esrolia. Just think about it.
- PR: Oh, Esrolia, yeah.
- NB: The Pharaoh can come back, but so can the Red Emperor. He can do it for you. It's brilliant! The Lunars...
- PR: The old women must have been really pissed off the first time the Pharaoh, he kills off the Only Old One. They think, "Ah, at last we get to rule!" But, there's this Pharaoh to deal with. He goes and says, "I'll be sacrificed." He becomes the Year King. They think, "Ah ha ha ha ha," the old Ty Kora Tek wields the knife, whack, "Ha ha ha ha." Or the young Babeester Gor, the Voria, at her moment of transition to Babeester Gor. But anyway, and then they kill him and he comes back. And boy, are they annoyed.
- NB: That's right. That's exactly how I saw it happening. The think they tricked him, they say, "We will make you our King,"...
- PR: Well, remember the guy who goes to extra-deluxe heaven. Pharaoh gets his body. His mana goes into the fields. So, the winner of the Tournament of Luck and Death is still sacrificed.
- AM: I'd like to turn the discussion to a far more interesting and controversial area: the Lunar Empire.
- NB: They're lovely people. They're our sponsors! (laughter)
- AM: I'd like to know what your ideas are on the similarity of the Seven Mothers with the Seven Lightbringers.
- NB: Ah ha, a pet subject! I'll tell you what I think
- AM: I would submit to you that the Seven Mothers formally Heroquested and enabled the Red Goddess to enter into the Compromise.
- GS: The Red Goddess was in Torang when...
- NB: That's a nice way of looking at it. I like that. A lot.
- GS: Please say that again?
- AM: Every one of the Seven Mothers are almost a mirror image of one of the Orlanthi Lightbringers. You've got Irrippi Ontor. He's the equivalent of Lhankor Mhy. You've got Deezola, which is the equivalent of Chalana Arroy. And you have Yanafal Tarnils, who used to be a Humakti, but conquered Death and defied the rules of his god. And...
- GS: Trickster...

(unintelligible; several people speaking at once)



- NB: The connections are hard to see, but they are there, I think.
- AM: I think the Red Goddess discovered the power of illumination. She illuminated the Seven Mothers. They formed the team. And she used... She couldn't do it directly, but they formed the team that she used to go into the Heroplane as the Lightbringers, so that they could resurrect Yelm. Except that Yelm was, ...she took the place of Yelm.
- GS: Yeah, that's right.
- AM: So, in the resurrection ritual, as she takes the place of Yelm, she comes awake. They fulfill the roles of the Lightbringers. And therefore she uses the back door to get in.
- NB: That's the thing. That's what's new that I hadn't thought of before, which is very clever. That the end of the Lightbringers' Quest is the Cosmic Compromise and all the gods get together and agree that they're going to be friends after that. And if the Seven Mothers' Quest was a Lightbringers Quest, then the fact the Red Goddess was alive and walking around in Torang before it started isn't so important. The important thing is at the tail end of it, they have to do the Compromise and everyone makes friends. And after that, the Red Goddess is part of the world. That's very nice.
- AM: The suggestion is, though, that the Seven Mothers are each illuminated. And that allowed them each to violate the rules of their cult, and therefore become the Seven Mothers.
- NB: This is my twisted theory on this, which was on the Internet. The Orlanthi know that if you're going on the Lightbringers' Quest, at some point you're going to fail. The Seven Mothers knew that too, but they failed deliberately. They deliberately botched their cult virtues which is why Yanafali don't have any problem with getting resurrected, and Irrippi Ontors don't have any problem with telling you lies, and stuff like that.
- PR: Is Danfive Xaron Trickster, or is he Ikadz?
- GS: Trickster is Orlanth in the Seven Mothers.
- NB: Danfive is a criminal. In Dara Happa, Orlanth would be a criminal.
- AM: Which one of the Seven Mother's is Orlanth?
- GS: Danfive Xaron.
- AM: Danfive Xaron is a Trickster, though.
- PR: No, no, He's a murderer. He's a murderer and a thief.

AM: I think you have to say the Seven Mothers would have wanted to parallel what the Lightbringers did, because they are so successful. They don't understand what the Lightbringer's did at every step, but they don't have to copy everything exactly. They can make things differently.

(unintelligible; people talking all at once)

- AM: Well, in fact, in our campaign, that assumption is very much open to question. We are the taking the position that the Lightbringers' Quest is ultimately a failure. And that what is happening are various series of efforts to recreate the universe. And that these ways follow certain patterns, which are common. Although each culture is different, they're doing very similar things, ...there will be a group of seven [members], or actually in our group, there's always eight. Seven are known. So the idea is that the Lightbringers still didn't get it quite right. The Lunars think they got it right. But they haven't. Right now, the Hero Wars, will be the actual recreation time. Except that who will actually be the new seven or eight mothers is up for grabs in the campaign that we are doing. So we believe that it's all been wrong up to this point, and this is the big chance to fix it all.
- NB: The way I sometimes see it is the Lunar Empire is trying to recreate the Golden Age. So they're driving out the Storm Age, which is why it's so calm in Peloria, and everything's nice, and they've got a thing sort of like the sun that hangs in the sky and doesn't set all the time.
- PR: Like the old sun.
- NB: But the problem is, of course yeah, like the old sun but the problem is, that the Golden Age ends with war, and terrible stuff happens. And that's what's going to happen to the Lunars. And that's just the mythic cycle.
- AM: Well, I hate to tell you all, but ya'll got a problem. You're all looking at it from the wrong perspective. The Lightbringers, whom we all know had their own apparently successful quest, were questing from the male point of view. And the primary creator principle is female. Now the Lunar Goddess knows this, but she's tainted. She's a good example of a failed quest, because she's tainted the right quest, which is to have the female dominant, but she's made it chaotic. And that's why it's not working properly. If she hadn't, then they would be a lot better off. (laughter) My basic point is that all of this is male oriented, except the Lunar Goddess and she's got a problem because she's tainted. Now I've never heard anything of a Lightbringers' Quest from the female side, but I think there is one hiding in there somewhere, and that's the original.
- NB: Nice.
- GS: Well spoken!

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- NB: A thing which I think gets passed by a lot is that all the gods who were in hell for the compromise got there somehow. The ones we think are important, we Orlanthi, are the Lightbringers, because we know their story. But every other god had some way of getting down into Hell, made the deal with their enemies, and made the Compromise. Ernalda did it. And if you ask an Orlanthi, he'll tell you, "Well, Ernalda went to sleep and drifted down into Hell and when they got to Hell they found her." The Ernaldans probably have a really long story about that, about how Ernalda got to Hell to be there to recreate the world. And she was probably one of the most important people involved in that healing. Yelm tells his story about this too, as we all know.
- PR: Yelm resurrected himself. After the criminal came and humbled himself before him, he was willing to come back to the world. And the RuneQuest rules don't reflect this. Yelm should have Resurrect Self as a spell. A Yelm cultist should be able to bring himself back from death, not someone else. Yelm didn't resurrect anyone else.
- NB: That's wonderful!
- AM: I have a question about Invisible Orlanth. I sort of look at Invisible Orlanth as a parallel to the way Christianity took over a lot of the pagan myths, and I see Invisible Orlanth as an attempt... in a way... I see there's two ways. One is that monotheism is being corrupted by the pagan influences, which is what happened to Catholicism in places like Ireland, where they adopted the native traditions.
- GS: Or Judea. (laughter)
- AM: But, the other way around, it's also a way to convert the Orlanthi to monotheism. If Orlanth becomes the Invisible God, then you can have Saint Humakt. Humakt's the Angel of Death, Chalana Arroy's the Angel of Healing, Lhankor Mhy's the Angel of Knowledge. So, it's a two edged sword. I guess it's Orlanth's way of bringing down the Empire, which is to sort of insinuate himself into the monotheism myth. But the other way around, Orlanth is losing something too, because his people are going to convert over to monotheism, etc, etc.
- NB: The whole question, when you've got Orlanthi cultures where they've got bits of monotheism in them, it's very big. There's a lot of places in the world where it happens. All over Fronela. In Carmania. All over Ralios. In Heortland. And there are lots and lots of different ways of doing it. I mean, having Humakt as the Angel of Death is very nice. I like that a lot. I would hate to start being proscriptive about what's going on where. There was talk about the Aeolian Church on the RQ Daily, where Sandy was saying the Aeolian Church was this thing in Ralios, and we've always said the Aeolian was the way they do it in Heortland. And, I think the thing is, we're not going to game the same all over the

world, all at the same time. Next time people meet a monotheistic Orlanthi church, it's going to have Humakti Angels of Death, 'cause I like that so much! (laughter) Whether that's in Carmania, or that's in Ralios, or that's in Heortland. 'Cause I'm not going to take this brilliant idea and stick it out into the Kingdom of Ignorance, or Shan Shan, or distant Pamaltela, in which I do not believe. (laughter) I want it on the doorstep, so the we can meet it. Because, in the game David [Hall] runs, in the regular Sarta game we play, our distant travels... We live on the fringes of the Upland Marsh. We've been to Boldhome. We've been to Heortland. We did once go to Tarsh, and it was horrible. But, there's a lot of people, probably in this room, who go on these globe spanning campaigns, where next Tuesday we're...

GS: WHAT spanning?

(Nick Brooke staggers in horror against the back wall as he realizes what he has said.) (much laughter, clapping)

- NB: All around, all around the top and the bottom of the Sky Dome. The Red Moon, which is round, they span that. Anyone here been to the Moon?
- AM: They give good parties!
- PR: It's red. Maddening. You get a good look down into the Crater, which is not healthy.
- AM: They have an open observation dome ...
- NB: Anyway, you know the kind of games I mean, where you go to Kralorela for a day, and then you're off to Teshnos and you see that. I can't do enough work to work out what Kralorela's like, anyway. I don't know China. I don't want to, really. So, I stick safe back at home.
- PR: You do lots of Carmania, though. But, I guess you do it earlier.
- NB: I do it earlier, historically.
- PR: Can I have a little Invisible Orlanth, or do we want to move on?
- NB: A little Invisible Orlanth? Yeah.
- PR: Hi, I'm Paul Reilly, some people know me from the Net. Invisible Orlanth is something I've commented on there. To me, or to us, a religion isn't going to survive within the Lunar sphere, in the Lunar Empire, if it doesn't pay at least some lip service to the Lunar Way. I really like the Red Goddess write-up, What the Lunar Priestess Said [referring to Gods of Glorantha handout]. She's healing the Creator. The Creator is split up. The Breath of the Creator, with which he spoke to Malkion, is the active principle with

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which he contacts mankind. But, it's cut off from the source, the inactive Invisible God. And so, you have this active part without the intellect, that's Orlanth. (laughter) The Red Goddess is bringing them together in healing. Whatever the Invisible Orlanthi say in their little underground mithraeum, or wherever they hide, those sources-of-winds caverns or whatever... What they say in public, in front of the Lunar monitors and the Spoken Word agents, is that the Red Goddess is healing the Breath of the Creator. Invisible Orlanth is the healed portion of Orlanth that's been reunited with the Creator and is now part of the Lunar Way. This is the part that's going to marry the Red Goddess. Invisible Orlanth is the, ... when he absorbs the rest of Orlanth and Orlanth is healed, then he will marry the Red Goddess and everyone will be happy. And then the Orlanthi can spread throughout the Lunar Empire.

- NB: Intellectual Orlanthi make sense....oh yeah. (laughter)
- PR: Illumination can help with this.
- PR: Can I start another thread? We see the old Carmanians, these brutal people... Nick sees them as Persians. We see them as Assyrians. "The Carmanian came down like a wolf on a fold."
- NB: They wear Persian clothes but they act like Assyrians.
- PR: We see them with great coats, riding horses. But, tell us about the brutal old Carmanians, back in the good old days. When there was a bright side and a dark side to Humakt, and the dark side to Humakt was a lot like Zorak Zoran.
- NB: [to Greg] Can I talk about this? Way-back-when Carmania?
- GS: Sure.
- NB: I'm working on the history of Carmania for Greg. And I write about a word a month these days. It's terrible.
- GS: It's about as much of Nick Brooke as anybody can take and stay sane! (laughter)
- NB: They're good words, they're well chosen. (laughter)
- GS: Excellent words!
- NB: And the thing I've been finding out about Carmanians is that they keep on changing their ideas, and where they're at, and what they're doing, within the framework of unchanging monotheism. Talking to John Quaife helps a lot with this. A lot of you probably know him, he writes RuneQuest scenarios. He's now studying biblical Hebrew at London University, and every time I talk to him about Carmanian religion now, he says, "No, no, you can't say dualist. You can't say monotheist. Do it like this...., do it like that."



The Carmanians in their most developed stage, I say, were dualistic with a dualism between, not light and dark, but Truth, which is good, and Falsehood, which is terrible. They also thought that things were Light and Dark, and that a bit of both was best. You don't mix it together, you don't make it gray, you don't have no moral worth to your actions. You can do things that are life affirming, supporting, healing, good, generous, which is the light side. You can do stuff that's bad, destructive, dangerous, hurts people, makes them unhappy, that's the dark side. If you're a king and you don't do any dark side stuff, you're not king for very long. Kings ought to be feared. That's the whole point, there's a Royal Awe. But they also ought to be pretty generous and nice, and give good laws. And then strictly use those laws on people. And that form of Carmanian dualism is, to me that's the tail end of the religion. That's once they've worked out all their little problems.

Right back at the start, they didn't even get off to any of this. They arrived in Peloria, and there's this powerful Lightbased religion (unintelligible) as good as Light, and they take over this Empire, this preexisting Empire in western Peloria (unintelligible) Empire.

- PR: With earth-worshipping peasantry!
- NB: Pardon me?
- PR: With earth-worshipping peasantry, I think, at the bottom. They wipe out the old elite, but there's still the peasants underneath.
- NB: All the peasants are still there, but they don't care what the peasants think. (laughter)
- GS: That's the invisible part of Orlanth. (laughter)
- NB: That's the trick about Carmanian castes. In traditional Western society there's four castes: your peasants, your knights, your wizards, and your lords. In Carmanian society there's three castes and then there's the peasants. (laughter)
- PR: Because of the migration.
- NB: The only guy who would be a Carmanian peasant would be a noble or a knight, (unintelligible) fell on really bad times, (unintelligible) don't talk to people like that. It's the same way as you get, I think, as with the Aryan conquest of India. It's the same. I mean, the local peasants, and everyone's going, "Well, they're not really part of us, are they?"
- PR: They don't have a caste.
- NB: Anyway, you wanted the old Carmanians. When the Carmanians fought the Red Goddess, in the Zero Wane, they had this thing where there was going to be a battle, and they said, "We want to hammer these people. We ought to

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- PR: Because Darkness beats Chaos. The Lunars are Chaotic, so the Darkness will destroy them.
- NB: But they didn't know the Lunars had Light there. And the Lunars beat them with that, because Light beats Darkness. But, the thing was, there was a time there were civil wars in Carmania between people who said, "Dara Happa, they've got it made. They're rich, they're powerful, they've got this great Empire, they worship gods of Light, and we should all do that." And there was another faction that said, "Dara Happa, they've got it made. They're rich, they're powerful, they worship Light, they've got loads of great stuff. Let's go take it from them!" (laughter) And that eventually boils down, after horrible civil wars, into a dualistic religion where they say, "Well, you know, at home we'll be Light and nice to people, and in foreign places we'll be Dark and nasty to people." Summer's bright and winter's dark, and life is good and death is bad, and in the day when it's Light we walk around and when it's night we go to sleep...
- PR: But death is good if it's other people.
- NB: Yeah, right.
- AM: Which is the Lunar attitude of foreign policy. Right?
- NB: Yeah, because the trick is, a lot of what's going on in Carmania then turns into the Lunar Way. You see the idea of balancing, balancing between Light and Darkness, turns into pure Lunar theology. The Red Moon's up there going through it's phases. The Carmanians didn't have phases, as they didn't have a moon. But, they understood it, of course. Because the people who founded the Lunar Empire lived in the Carmanian Empire. You can't help it. It's a continuity.
- AM: When you say the Lunar Way, with Light and Dark, I think that the Red Goddess is not just able to be both Light and Dark, she's able to be both at the same time.
- NB: Yep. That's right.
- GS: OOh! Boy, this guy's Illuminated, too! That's very good!
- AM: By extension, if you can be two opposite things at the same time, what are the consequences for the world for what the Red Goddess is doing? What are the possible consequences of the Red Goddess being able to incarnate two opposite things at the same time?
- NB: Well, it's the healing of the world, isn't it? It's bringing Creation and Chaos together in peace and harmony. (laughter)

- AM: Talk about multiple personality disorder!
- NB: In the Lunar Way, insanity is brilliant.
- GS: Now, now, now.... they just acknowledge that it's a necessary state of mind.
- AM: It seems like the Lunars are attempting to heal the' world Essentially, you've got the Spike, the Celestial Court, then Chaos intrudes. (unintelligible)
- PR: Umath. Umath the Chaotic One.
- AM: And now somehow you've got this imbalance. The old view was, "Push the Chaos back out, and lets make things nice and orderly and whatever. The way they were." The Lunar view seems to be, "No, we can't push it out, let's keep it here and we'll use it. And that will make us more powerful." But, it seems to me like there are consequences involved. Some of the consequences are for the Lunars, and some of them are for the people around the Lunars.
- NB: The people around the Lunars is a very nice concept, and it's something Paul was talking about earlier today, with the Crimson Bat, and which Ken [Rolston] had in Risklands, in Dorastor. It's the idea that between me and my real bad enemies, I want to put my not-so-bad enemies. They won't fight me, 'cause they're not that bad, and they'll fight them! My real bad enemies will have to come through them to get to me. And that is how the Lunars treat those poor Orlanthi in the Risklands, getting rained and snowed and chaosed on. And, that is how the Lunars treat the Bat. The Bat is something they never want in the Empire. It's NASTY! So they put it between the Empire and the enemies of the Empire.
- AM: It's sort of like the Aztecs with their Flower Wars. All people around them are not real happy with the Aztecs, 'cause the Aztecs want to have all these sacrifices to maintain the Sun so that the world will keep going on...
- NB: But they're not unhappy enough or strong enough that they can do much about it.
- AM: Until something else changes.
- AM: Like Cortez shows up.
- NB: The Brown Dragon shows up.
- AM: It seems to me that the tragic flaw in the current Lunar incarnation is that they confuse Disorder with Chaos, or Chaos with Disorder. And, whereas Order and Disorder are a good combination, Chaos and Order are not. That's why the White Moon is 'gonna kill the Lunar Empire from inside. 'Cause the White Moon sees that the Disorder is in fact the principle they should be looking at, not Chaos.

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- NB: No, that's not true. Chaos is an entirely safe energy source. (loud laughter) If safely used it has a veritable military application. In normal life in the Lunar Empire you will expect to be exposed to a minimum amount of background Chaos. (laughter) Those people who get two heads or three arms or whatever, they just won't take precautions. Follow the manuals, and you'll be fine. (laughter)
- AM: The mutation rates will be acceptable, right?
- NB: Just say no. Chaos Powers? No thanks!
- PR: Our skilled technicians will protect you.
- AM: We have the technology to lick that waste disposal problem. No problem. We'll clean up Dorastor any time now.
- NB: Yep, that's right.
- PR: Does that mean that it's Krarsht's department?
- AM: That's the beauty of Dorastor. It's a good place to put your waste.
- NB: Starting with the Orlanthi!
- AM: It's the toxic storage dump of the Lunar Empire.
- NB: But they go there of their own free wills.
- AM: Since we talked about Dorastor, what about the question about who Ralzakark really is?
- PR: Ralzakark is Arkat.
- GS: All right!
- AM: Well, the idea that he's Arkat is interesting, although he's stayed one person for an awfully long time to be Arkat. (laughter)
- NB: Well, it's been done before.
- AM: He finally settled down.
- AM: Right, right. He settled down, had kids.
- NB: Yeah, but there's the scorpionman Ralzakark, there's Ralzakark's Arm, there's Ralzakark's Face. They're all over the place.
- AM: There are the ones that you recognize as Ralzakark, and then there are all the others.

- Nick Brooke's Cultural Exchange
- GS: Absolutely. (laughter)
- NB: It is a very good, very big debate. I like it. I don't know if there is an answer to it. And if there is, ...well, I won't believe it if someone tells me, (snaps fingers) "Yes, Ralzakark is Arkat."
- AM: What Gbaji told Arkat was that, "To beat me you had to become me, so it doesn't matter which one of us dies!"
- NB: Yeah. That's right.
- GS: That could be your tragic quest. Arkat. [Referring back to a question from the Heroquesting Seminar.]
- AM: Don't you think there really is just One True Way for Gloranthan society? (laughter) A lot of people have been speculating that Arkat got defeated by Gbaji. But we also know that the Red Moon found the shadow of what she claimed was Gbaji on the Heroplane. But, doesn't that lead us to believe that the Red Goddess actually found Arkat, and came back with knowledge she got from him?
- NB: This is another of those weird identity questions. Becausthere's that picture from the Zero Wane of the Red Goddess binding Gbaji. I don't know. When you get into questions of, "Was it Arkat, Nysalor, or Gbaji who did this?," or "Was it Ralzakark or Arkat who did that?," the easiest thing is not to come out with definite answers and say, "Yeah, could be." It's all very indistinct. It's hard to tell what's going on. The Lunars say that Nysalor was this great Emperor in the past who was attacked by this guy who came from the West calle Gbaji.
- AM: The first Lightbringers' Quest was actually performed by the Broken Council. And that was the first birth of Yelm, rebirth of Yelm. And that part of Yelm's essence was possibly, maybe Yelm's shadow, what was ripped up during when the Broken Council broke Gbaji, so to speak, and that Gbaji wa able to get through to the Red Goddess because he had already been part of that whole pact.
- NB: That's a tricky one, because the question is "Is Gbaji or Nysalor as we say - serving the Red Goddess, or is she serving him?" I don't know if they know the answer. I think the Nysalor cult will tell you one thing, the Nysalor philosophers in the Lunar Empire,...
- AM: No, the Nysalor philosophers will never tell you anything!
- NB: ...those guys with white beards and togas who stand around in market places pontificating. That's the way the Lunars do their thing. Not this wacky strange people who come up saying something all (unintelligible)

NB: Yeah, like the King of the Bilini.

PR: Are they ever prosecuted for corrupting the youth of ...

- NB: Of course, of course. The Lunar ...
- PR: "I drank what?"
- NB: Sorry?
- PR: "I drank what?" What one of the Riddlers said after... (laughter)
- GS: "What do I have in my stomach?"
- AM: What about the idea that the Godhero Arkat retired to the Heroplane, became contemplative, got in touch with his feminine half, and in yet another betrayal of self changed from male to female and was reborn as the Red Moon? (laughter)
- AM: Process of illumination, right?
- GS: Whoa!
- NB: The question was, is Argrath Arkat? Is Arkat Argrath?
- GS: I didn't say this.
- NB: He didn't say this.
- AM: It's a good thing, as everything you say is wrong.
- GS: That's right. There you go. It's true.
- AM: So it must be true.
- GS: So it's true.
- AM: This question is because I haven't read King of Sartar through yet. What does the Illiteracy Era mean, exactly?
- GS: I'm not sure. I forgot. (laughter)
- NB: After my time.
- AM: I think it's the return of the Syndic's Ban.
- PR: Well, it works like the Ban but instead of all communication being destroyed, somebody killed the God of Writing, or something.
- AM: I don't understand. Does nobody know how to read or write, or do all written things get destroyed, or what happens?
- PR: I think nobody knows how to interpret symbols. I think symbol interpretation is broken. I think nobody knows how to interpret abstract symbols. So only pictures make sense. Which means some Darktongue might be readable.

- NB: It might be nice to see what kind of script King of Sartar's written in.
- AM: So what are the letters that people are actually able to read, that this one scholar.... Why is he able to read?
- PR: Oh, it comes back after a while.
- NB: They crack it eventually after a long time. I think it just gradually comes back.
- PR: They teach themselves to read, like Tarzan did. Just from the written symbol.
- GS: Really? That's pretty sharp!
- PR: Well, he was of English noble blood. It's like being of the Lunar Imperial family. You're really set.
- GS: That's true.
- AM: I missed that extraordinary premonition ...
- GS: He's making a joke. Comparing it with Tarzan.
- PR: Tarzan taught himself to read English without any help. But the people learning to read after the Illiteracy Age have a huge advantage. They're learning to read languages that were still spoken. So all they have to do, once they make some kind of phonic correspondence... Like, I think New Pelorian is a syllabic script. They say this symbol means this syllable, and some scripts are alphabetic. Western script might be alphabetic. This symbol means this sound. They say, "Oh, this is always cat." Here's a picture of this cat, and here's this word under it. And they make the connection. "Oh, this is always the 'K' sound, or the 'Y' sound 'cause cat is 'yin'."
- AM: And what caused the onset of this?
- NB: We don't know. No one will talk about it.
- AM: Some of the God Learners came back after their long vacation in the Cosmos.
- PR: Somebody was asking what happens when Heroquests went wrong. Somebody wanted to meet the God of Reading, but screwed up and introduced him to Zorak Zoran instead. It was bad. "Oops!" (laughter)
- AM: You can kind of puzzle it out. If the Syndic's Ban was caused by the God of Communication...
- NB: The Syndic's Ban? Yeah, God of the Silver Fleet.

- AM: And therefore the Age of Illiteracy was the opposite side of the coin of that. Logic says, therefore, it was some sort of God of Writing.
- PR: A Thanatar Hero could have done Devour Book on the Primal First Book. So he was the only person who could remember how to read.
- NB: That's the thing that some people forget, and the rest of us remember. About Argrath killing off all the gods, by accident. "Whoops! Sorry!" He killed off all the Natural Gods, and he left the world to the mercy of the Chaos Gods. So, yeah, a Thanatari Hero is probably doing pretty great in the Fourth Age. But, I don't really want to know more about the Fourth Age. I want the end of the Third Age. That's where I live. Future history. I think, we have King of Sartar as...
- AM: Your player character's get to change what happens in the Fourth Age anyway, right?
- NB: Yeah.
- GS: Yes.
- AM: Since we're talking about Thanatari Heroes, can we 9talk about Lord Death on a Horse and the Kingdom of War? The man who collects heads and speaks every language in the world? Can you discuss him a little bit? Do you know anything about him?
- GS: Everything I know about the Kingdom of War is in print. Everything I know.
- NB: The way I see it working is... It's the backdrop for all those fantasy novels, a lot of Moorcock's like this, where there's armies on the march. There's some good Robert E. Howard as well. Horrible dark armies led by soul-less killers, and they're 'gonna come and sack the biggest city in the world. And that's that backdrop. If you want to stick stuff onto that, try out any of your paperbacks, do it. But, what Lord Death on a Horse does... If I knew enough about real Fronelian religion, about what cults people worship, and what they get up to, and what they think Humakt is, and if they have Humakt...
- PR: Humct. The Bad One.
- NB: They don't believe in him. ... Maybe they do. If I knew what the real religion was, then I could look for twisted versions of it. Fronela's a long way away. I'm worried about Delecti.
- AM: Incarnation of Kargan Tor, then? (referring to who Lord Death on a Horse might be)



PR: Can we do a Western thread, and maybe hear from other people on the panel if it's a long way away from you? [meaning Nick]

NB: A Western thread?

- DH: It's a long way away from me as well.
- PR: OK, I guess I want wrong information. [referring to Greg's t- shirt proclaiming that everything he knows is wrong] In central Genertela, we known pretty much how farming and everyday life works. Farmer goes out into the field and he plows. And if he gets to a big stone in his way, he casts a Strength spell on himself, or his horse or whatever he's plowing with. There's some impact of magic on life, and there's big ceremonies that do fertility for the field, etc. So, in that region, the central theistic part, which I think of as much like Persia or India, where gods are very immanent all the time, the Lunar Empire's kinda' like Chandragupta's Empire. That makes sense to me. In the West, what is everyday life like? Do farmers used magical enchanted plows to zip around the fields? The sorcery rules from RQ 3 imply terrible things. We won't even go into that. In the East and the West, what's everyday life like? How pervasive is magic?
- NB: For most people it's dull.
- GS: Very dull. Boring. For most people.
- PR: So the Lunar Empire is the best place to live?
- GS: I think so. Or Pamaltela. One or the other.
- PR: Pamaltela has a lot of live force in it. It wasn't killed, like Genertela, so you can walk around and pick up food. You don't have to work so hard.
- GS: That's right. To me, the Lunar Empire's the best place to live. I look upon the southern West, Seshnela, as being the Dark Ages, and the northern part, Fronela, being slightly later. But the peasants are still fucked, so...
- PR: Technology in the West seems 16th century in a lot of things. Like, they have full plate armor.
- GS: One of the things that I see in the West that is very different from the Center is that they are elitist to the extreme in the West, where they're not in the Center. And so they have priests, sorcerer-priests, who take care of the magical needs of the field-workers and so on. But that care i minimal. They keep all the good stuff for themselves. 'Cause they're an elitist society, in general.
- PR: Does the West have about the same total level of mana as the Center?
- GS: He's supposed to be dead. ... Supposed to be.

GS: No.

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- NB: No. A lot of Western stuff taps the available mana in order to make their spells work. They don't call it tapping, but it is.
- PR: Well, if it's not chaotic, it'll get recycled somehow by Arachne Solara. If it's not chaotic, it'll feed off it but it will go into...
- AM: Yeah, won't the Invisible God absorb it? Off into Solace?
- PR: If it's destroying it permanently, then I think it's chaotic. That's almost a definition of what Chaotic is.
- AM: Locking it up, on the other hand ...
- AM: Locking it up is different.
- GS: That's what some people believe.
- AM: Locking it, making it accessible only to the elite. And that's what...
- GS: I've never had an Orlanthi character who would shake hands with a wizard. Why? Because they're like broos!
- AM: In the campaign I played in, in Fronela, it was routine for the Priest to come around and say, "Pay your taxes. Here's my magic device. Everyone coughs up two magic points." My experience is that that would lead to a higher level of mana than in the Lunar Empire, not less.
- PR: Well, everybody in the Lunar Empire is coughing up their mana to sorcerers who call themselves gods too. I mean, excuse me, to the REAL gods. (laughter) Worlath, or Orlanth, or whatever his name is, all these millions of Orlanthi cough up mana to him, so the divine magic is working the same way. It's just the peasants are coughing up either directly to the local sorcerer, or to the sorcerer who calls himself Orlanth, or to the real Orlanth, or whatever he is.
- MOB: You might want to talk about your idea about how the Sun travels over, and how by the time the Sun gets to the West there are no Sun Gods. (to Nick)
- NB: I like this one. It's about the Sun. The Sun rises in the East. If you go to the Far East in Glorantha... When I say Glorantha, by the way, it means north of the Homeward Ocean. I don't know about south. In the Far East, you get to the Eastward Isles, and Vithela. And in Vithela there is an Empire ruled by the Sun God in perfect celestial harmony. Then you have the East Isles and the outlying fringes of this Empire. You go to Kralorela, where they say, "Well, our first Emperor was the Sun God." And they say...
- PR: Well, Aether was the first Emperor.
- NB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Little difference.

- AM: Sun God's grandpa.
- PR: Second emperor was Yelm.
- NB: Second Emperor, yes. And the first was his father. And in Teshnos they worship the Sun God...
- PR: But in different forms.
- NB: ... Then you've got Pent, where all the great khans and kurgans and shamans and that, trace their origins back to Yelm. And then you get to the pinnacle of civilization, the Dara Happan Empire, in the center of Peloria.
- PR: Where you have Yelm, but he died and revived. And ther are other (unintelligible)...
- NB: Yeah, but if you go any farther west than that, you don't find Sun Gods. You get this personality-less sun disk. You get birds that aren't Solar animals. You get horse people who aren't Solar horse people. You get the Galannini, who are guys brought in by the Second Council against the Solar horse people in Peloria. My thought was, maybe this is a progression. The Sun is rising in the East. You get really heavy Solar cultures there. This keeps building until at midday, you get the biggest Imperial Solar culture you're ever 'gonna see. (Nick snaps his fingers) That's when he's killed mythologically. At high noon, over Central Peloria. And if you go anywhere west of that, the sun never got there alive. He got there dead. There aren't any Solar cultures.
- PR: Ah, ah, ah, ah! Hup, hup... (Paul starts waving his hand in the air.)
- NB: All the associations we make with the Sun don't hold true in the West.
- PR: And, and ...
- NB: Because gold, the metal, has got to have something... (laughter as Paul starts bouncing up and down in his seat) But it's not Sun gold. There's horses, but they don't have anything to do with the Sun anymore. They're animals. They're not devolved birds in the West.
- GS: Quick, he's going to explode! Everyone duck! (referring to Paul)
- PR: And as you keep going West, all the other Gods die and wind up in Hell. So, Orlanth dies. Everybody dies.

NB: Yep.

PR: And when you get to the Far West, you get to the Brithini where there are no gods at all. It's not just Yelm, it's everybody! They all die out as you move west.

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- GS: That's right. To me, the Lunar Empire's the best place to live. I look upon the southern West, Seshnela, as being the Dark Ages, and the northern part, Fronela, being slightly later. But the peasants are still fucked, so ...
- PR: Technology in the West seems 16th century in a lot of things. Like, they have full plate armor.
- GS: One of the things that I see in the West that is very different from the Center is that they are elitist to the extreme in the West, where they're not in the Center. And so they have priests, sorcerer-priests, who take care of the magical needs of the field-workers and so on. But that care i minimal. They keep all the good stuff for themselves. 'Cause they're an elitist society, in general.
- PR: Does the West have about the same total level of mana as the Center?
- GS: He's supposed to be dead. ... Supposed to be.

GS: No.



- NB: No. A lot of Western stuff taps the available mana in order to make their spells work. They don't call it tapping, but it is.
- PR: Well, if it's not chaotic, it'll get recycled somehow by Arachne Solara. If it's not chaotic, it'll feed off it but it will go into...
- AM: Yeah, won't the Invisible God absorb it? Off into Solace?
- PR: If it's destroying it permanently, then I think it's chaotic. That's almost a definition of what Chaotic is.
- AM: Locking it up, on the other hand ...
- AM: Locking it up is different.
- GS: That's what some people believe.
- AM: Locking it, making it accessible only to the elite. And that's what...
- GS: I've never had an Orlanthi character who would shake hands with a wizard. Why? Because they're like broos!
- AM: In the campaign I played in, in Fronela, it was routine for the Priest to come around and say, "Pay your taxes. Here's my magic device. Everyone coughs up two magic points." My experience is that that would lead to a higher level of mana than in the Lunar Empire, not less.
- PR: Well, everybody in the Lunar Empire is coughing up their mana to sorcerers who call themselves gods too. I mean, excuse me, to the REAL gods. (laughter) Worlath, or Orlanth, or whatever his name is, all these millions of Orlanthi cough up mana to him, so the divine magic is working the same way. It's just the peasants are coughing up either directly to the local sorcerer, or to the sorcerer who calls himself Orlanth, or to the real Orlanth, or whatever he is.
- MOB: You might want to talk about your idea about how the Sun travels over, and how by the time the Sun gets to the West there are no Sun Gods. (to Nick)
- NB: I like this one. It's about the Sun. The Sun rises in the East. If you go to the Far East in Glorantha... When I say Glorantha, by the way, it means north of the Homeward Ocean. I don't know about south. In the Far East, you get to the Eastward Isles, and Vithela. And in Vithela there is an Empire ruled by the Sun God in perfect celestial harmony. Then you have the East Isles and the outlying fringes of this Empire. You go to Kralorela, where they say, "Well, our first Emperor was the Sun God." And they say...
- PR: Well, Aether was the first Emperor.

- AM: Sun God's grandpa.
- PR: Second emperor was Yelm.
- NB: Second Emperor, yes. And the first was his father. And in Teshnos they worship the Sun God...
- PR: But in different forms.
- NB: ... Then you've got Pent, where all the great khans and kurgans and shamans and that, trace their origins back to Yelm. And then you get to the pinnacle of civilization, the Dara Happan Empire, in the center of Peloria.
- PR: Where you have Yelm, but he died and revived. And ther are other (unintelligible)...
- NB: Yeah, but if you go any farther west than that, you don't find Sun Gods. You get this personality-less sun disk. You get birds that aren't Solar animals. You get horse people who aren't Solar horse people. You get the Galannini, who are guys brought in by the Second Council against the Solar horse people in Peloria. My thought was, maybe this is a progression. The Sun is rising in the East. You get really heavy Solar cultures there. This keeps building until at midday, you get the biggest Imperial Solar culture you're ever 'gonna see. (Nick snaps his fingers) That's when he's killed mythologically. At high noon, over Central Peloria. And if you go anywhere west of that, the sun never got there alive. He got there dead. There aren't any Solar cultures.
- PR: Ah, ah, ah, ah! Hup, hup... (Paul starts waving his hand in the air.)
- NB: All the associations we make with the Sun don't hold true in the West.
- PR: And, and ...
- NB: Because gold, the metal, has got to have something... (laughter as Paul starts bouncing up and down in his seat) But it's not Sun gold. There's horses, but they don't have anything to do with the Sun anymore. They're animals. They're not devolved birds in the West.
- GS: Quick, he's going to explode! Everyone duck! (referring to Paul)
- PR: And as you keep going West, all the other Gods die and wind up in Hell. So, Orlanth dies. Everybody dies.

NB: Yep.

- PR: And when you get to the Far West, you get to the Brithini where there are no gods at all. It's not just Yelm, it's everybody! They all die out as you move west.
- NB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Little difference.

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- NB: Yep. Good, isn't it?
- AM: God-Learner!
- PR: Oh, it's tremendous!
- AM: Burn him!
- PR: Burn me with what? We God Learners are immune to such things. (laughter)
- AM: Some people have gotten the Prospectus for the Heroes of the King (a proposed collection of short stories about Argrath), which basically said that everything you know is wrong and so don't extrapolate from the rules. I think, when you earlier say that the sorcery rules taught us terrible things about the West ... I was wondering if you had an elaboration on this?
- GS: And what is it you want me to explain?
- AM: The elaboration is basically, how are we supposed to look at the domestic culture, or the world, if sorcery is unextrapolatable? and so... I know Mike Dawson has done a lot of work on this. You know, you can do some really funky things with Form/Set Stone. And that changes the world. And if Form/Set Stone is something that only PC sorcerers have...
- AM: The most detailed model of how the world works is the rules. And you just told us to ignore those now in the Prospectus.
- GS: The problem with the sorcery rules is that they are rules without a context. If you have the rules for the divine magic without cults, you wouldn't know squat about it. And the sorcery rules without a background, and without it being integrated into the culture, give you a very false idea. For instance, you would think that all sorcerers have access to all spells. Bzzzzzzz! Wrong! It's not that way. In fact, I see the sorcery system actually being a number of systems. Most of which are deadly secrets, I mean kept as secrets from other people. If there's a Form/Set Rock, there's probably some people who know this and can use it. And there's probably another two or three people who use concrete and fake it. But the main problem of ignoring this, and extrapolating wildly, is to do it without context. Now, if you can come up with an explanation of this school of sorcery - which is how we've always put it - and define it to be consistent within itself, and so on, and assume that no one else knows this, which is probably correct - except for the Brithini of course, who know everything - then it's more correct. But, to have just the set of rules is like being a Brithini, it's not within it's context.



- AM: Just to amplify that. I've seen some preliminary drafts of the RQ 4 stuff [AKA RuneQuest: Adventures in Glorantha], which has attempted to address this very thing by putting in schools of sorcery. And, it makes such a huge difference because instead of reading something which is a set of isolated magic rules, you're reading something which has more like an RQ 2 flavor. Here's something which tells me more about Glorantha as it explains the mechanics. I understand why somebody from this culture would be specializing this way, and just wouldn't even pay attention to something else. I think that that's going to help make sorcery come alive. I think that sorcery can really be used, it's just very tough if you have a bunch of rules lawyers in you campaigns saying, "Well, why can't I do this?"
- There's a tremendous contrast between the RuneQuest PR: magic rules, and the RuneQuest rules, and the Pendragon rules. In Pendragon, the rules drive people, drive gamers, to do a kind of behavior. Two weeks after you start playing Pendragon, people are saying, "Oh my god, I've got to find a wife with a huge dowry. And I need to raid my neighbors to raise enough money to pay this overly-large war band I hired to raid my neighbors." And people start getting into the mythic thing. And they start saying, "Oh, I want to check on my Chaste." They want to start acting like the knights in the stories. Whereas, in RuneQuest, you can act like you're in a story but the rules don't drive that kind of behavior, and they don't reflect it, and they don't reward it. To some extent they do, but not like they do in Pendragon. It was a brilliant design. And, I'd like to see more of this in RuneQuest 4, where it's driven by the rules. But the genre is different. The genre is different, so you can't just copy the Pendragon design. You've got to come up with something equally as brilliant. But different.
- * end of tape*



Live Action Role Playing (LARP)

KEY	
BB:	Brandon Brylawski
KR:	Ken Rolston

SP:

LS:

Sandy Petersen Lawrence Schick KJ: Kevin Jacklin

A: Audience member

Note #1: The first "Home of the Bold" was run in July 1992 at "Convulsion of a Trillion Tentacles," a Glorantha/gaming convention in England.

- Note #2: We apologize for the poor audio quality which led to so many "unintelligible"s in this transcript. We tried our best to decipher everything.
- BB: We're going to talk about live role playing games, not being constrained to any subject in particular. But we'd like to start out, since a lot of the people here have not played in one, to talk about what live role playing games are very briefly and explain them. Among other things, there are two very different types of games that are both piled together under the rubric "live role playing games," and they don't resemble each other very much. One of them is what some people have called the interactive literature game, or the theater game, which means ... which is like "Home of the Bold," in that a lot of people get together in a hotel, the plots and such are all written and distributed among the characters, there are very few non-player characters, the GM's fill in for non-player characters on occasion but in the main, all the action, all the information, and all the plot lines are contained within player characters. And, by their interacting with each other in whatever manner they choose to do, they advance the action of the story. There's no pre-plotted time line, because once you let people loose they will tend to do whatever they want to do. Combat, and all other conflict resolution of any kind, is taken care of by special rules. There isn't actually any sword swinging or rock throwing, or anything like that.

This is distinguished from the other type of game, which is often called the live combat game, where the participants are a party of adventurers, or sometimes more than one party of adventurers if it's a very large myth, who have padded weapons and who are run by a crew of GM's and non-player characters, and fight non-player characters, through a series of adventure....ah, scenes as it were on the quest to find something or discover something important, to rescue the princess, et cetera. And, so it's a very different format, because that's more like a live tabletop game, a tabletop game where you're swinging your own sword and moving from place to place instead of saying what you're doing. So, it's much more like a tabletop game made live, whereas the interactive literature game is much more like impromptu theater because everything, including the combat, is abstracted and because, most importantly, there's nobody programming the action.

Things may happen at certain times, outside events may come in to influence the action, but they don't drive the adventure. That's pretty much done completely by the players. It's a dictum of this type of live role playing that the GM's do not know what's going on. Once the game starts.... they've written it like mad, they know exactly what all the characters start with, and once things start and people begin interacting together, well, who knows what they're going to do? The GM's are just trying at that point to keep up and facilitate what the players are doing as much as possible, and hoping that it doesn't go off such a deep end as to cause the game to come to a premature ending.

And so, we're here largely to answer questions. The point I think, for this seminar is what makes a good live role playin game for both people participating in and for those interested later on in writing a game or otherwise assisting in one. What do people try to put in live role playing games in order to make good stories out of it, in order to ensure that people get the most enjoyment out of it, because that's what it's all about?

- KR: I'd also like for you to do, if at all possible, figure in ways to take the live role playing experience and export it to home use. Because, a lot of the feelings and charm you get from this, kinda makes it fun to play tabletop games anymore. (laughter) So, ah, you know, what are a cheap gag, you know, because I think the first kind of live role playing game that I ever ran was the Sartar High Council that was in Wyrm's Footnotes #7, 13 years ago. And we didn't have all costuming or any of the other stuff, but boy it was a lot of fun!
- BB: We've all seen games like "How to Host a Murder," box sets which are kind of a junior live role playing. They tend to be somewhat linear, and they feed you your lines, but as an introduction to what live role playing is about, they have their purpose I suppose. The...
- SP: The amazing difference between a live role playing, I think, and a tabletop role playing game is it's a good way to *[unintelligible]*. One of the *[unintelligible]* is that the rules are much more simple, and the Gamemaster is always more of a referee. He's not really a Gamemaster. He's just there to answer rules questions and to settle disputes. I suppose the best way to do that is *[unintelligible]* would be to hold that game with the number who you're going to have there. The more the better, no doubt about that. And, let them loose within your house to wander around *[unintelligible]* themselves.

A live role playing game is sort of half interactive theater and half tabletop role play. And the third half is like a game of Diplomacy with a whole bunch of players. And, you just have to [unintelligible] yourself sometimes, or at least be able to wander around. Maybe that's a start.

One of the great virtues ... Even having Sartarite [unintelligible] up in the [unintelligible] cannot replace the big spectacular things that last all weekend, if only because the in a really good role playing game, the tabletop kind, the one [unintelligible] to the game that tries to make the world seem like it's a whole world, like everyone's out there doing things , there's stuff going on beyong what the players are doing, and in a live action game that's part of the secret, is that there is a whole other..., all the other guys out there are doing things. I was at Gencon, years back, they were holding a live action game there, and one of the players who hadn't played before saw some other players doing something bad. So he went to the Gamemaster and said, "How do I call for the cops?" The Gamemaster said, "You just call for them." He said, "Help! Police!" and two other players came over, and they were cops. (laughter) You have the cops. You need to hire a private eye to go follow your wife to see what she's up to? There's a guy in the game you can go hire to do that! But he has his own goals. I mean, the cops have their own goals besides just being cops, they're doing ..., probably one of them is corrupt or something. You never know! Everyone has their own agenda, just like in a really excellent role playing situation.

What other virtues.....[unintelligible]... I have friends that are daunted by the thought of going to a live action game, but they... it's not... if any of you that are feeling a little daunted, **don't be**. The only skill you need to have is being willing to walk up to a complete stranger and introduce yourself. It's not as hard in live role playing games as all you have to do is wear this little badge with a different name on it which represents you. New players, it's been my experience, have as much fun as old veterans.

BB: Certainly, that bears elaborating on. The best way to make sure you have fun in a live game, whether you feel you're "any good at it" or not, is to do things with other people as much as possible, and to help out as much as possible. If someone has just double crossed you and screwed you into the ground, you should go to people that you think you can trust and tell them all about it. If you are a particular emotional character you might beat your breast in public, scream curses at your enemy, wave your arms about, and otherwise show other people in the game that you are incredibly pissed off. And, if a lot of people do this, the game environment becomes incredibly real and incredibly [unintelligible], as much as possible. So, if there's any one sort of good idea, especially for new people, it's don't keep things to yourself. Anything that's in your heart that you don't tell anybody about isn't going to add to the game. And visa versa for them, if they don't tell you something about what they have. Now, that doesn't mean you should go spilling your inner most secrets to people who are going to betray you. You still act in character. But, with in the confines of acting in character and doing what your character thinks would be sensible, the dramatic thing is the thing to keep in mind. Because, that's what really sets the [unintelligible].

- A: Tell me about how the you gather together a group of people and write one of these things. Now, I'm speaking a slight bit playfully, because of being a parallel to high school [unintelligible] a far cry, but it sounds like, kind of, like a play before the [unintelligible].
- LS: Let's talk a little bit more about the structure of it, so that you can understand what you need to do. The fundamental structural difference between a live role playing game and a tabletop role playing game is that in a tabletop role playing game everything you do as a player, everything that you see, everything that you hear and interact with is interpreted through the lens of the Gamemaster who sits in front of you. He tells you what the world is like and how it interacts with you on every basis. And, the people who are sitting around at the table all have to get a slice of that Gamemaster in order to get their fun. So, that's spend a certain amount of time, unavoidably going like this while he has a certain amount of fun. And, he always hogs the Gamemaster, so...

However, when I live role playing game with Sandy, then I'm not so annoyed because in a live role playing game the Gamemasters are off on the fringe. What they have done, in order to create the world and represent it to you has all been done in advance. They have created the background, and have placed all the characters in an intricate web of interrelationships such that every character has a reason to interact with many other character in the game. This means, that once the game starts you do not have to rely on getting a slice of one of the GMs. Everything that happens you make happen. And, you make it happen constantly by interacting with the other players and the group of players you interact with widens as you go out through the game, typically. And, it becomes very very compelling because you are making it happen, and it's happening to you all the time. You're not waiting for Sandy to get done talking to the Gamemaster, and if you are stuck on one thing then there are typically three or four other avenues that you can pursue until something gives.

- SP: And, in typical live action gaming, you have more goals than you can possibly accomplish. And, this is not because the guys who wrote your character want to see you fail, it's because they want to make sure that you always have something on your agenda. If you accomplish one of your goals, there's more to do, more to expand upon the acutal flow, the way the game goes.
- LS: Our group, Cruel Hoax Productions, we typically run weekend long games from Friday night to Sunday afternoon as opposed to like the mini-game to be run this afternoon [Home of the Bold II]. They have slightly different dramatic curves. The weekend long games typically start out on Friday night; people get their characters and essentially feel each other out. Friday night consists of the players finding out who's in the game and what the score cards are. Who their allies are, and who they think their enemies are, and what they think they're gonna have to do. On Saturday, typically Saturday morning, things start to happen, people start to form alliances, people start to make plans and put things into train. There's a little kind of down time Saturday afternoon where

people get tired, maybe go eat, and things are just kind of coming together. And Saturday night, the knives come out and there's blood on the floor. Things immediately pick up. You have, frequently, really exciting things happening on 10 or 11 PM-Saturday night. A lot of it has to kind of stop and hover in suspense until the next morning. You have a real tense time waiting, and then the next morning you sort of have a climax to release all this tension and resolve a number of things, and you find out how you are going to succeed or fail. Frequently, failure is as much fun as success, as you get to be dramatic and tear out your hair... (KR: More fun!) go down in flames. Going down in flames on Sunday is a great deal of fun. Ken always goes down in flames.

- KR: Hey, I beat your ass once.
- LS: A point about goals, and success or failure, once again, is that goals are frequently given to players not so that they will be something so that you can maybe even possibly succeed but as motivator, just...
- SP: Like the Nazis in Casablanca.
- LS: That's right! The Nazis in "Cafe Casablanca," you know darn well that they're not going to stop everybody from getting out of Casablanca, at the end, who wants to get out, who they're supposed to stop.
- KR: Inspector Louis Renault. "It's the police's job to 'keep peace' in Casablanca." Right?

[unintelligible]

- SP: But the game won't be fun for everyone if he's not *trying* to keep peace! The Nazis must be attempting to oppress the population and then everyone has fun being oppressed. Of course, the point for the Nazis and Inspector Renault isn't that they get to accomplish their goals, it's that they get to swagger down the street of Casablanca oppressing the masses.
- BB: The point of goals, in fact the point of everything on your character sheet, really means one of two things. Your character sheet was written with two big primary things in mind. To give you somebody who feels real, who feels three dimensional, who is someone you crawl under their skin. And two, and much more important in my respect, to give you someone who has good strong reasons to talk to other people in the game, and who other people in the game have good reasons to come and talk to you. Everything in the game is pitched at people interacting with one another. And trying to make it important and easy for people to interact with one another. And you get things done in the game by interacting. A character whose goals or characterization motivates him to get out of town isn't a good character, because he's going to be motivated to do his thing and then leave. He's not going to interact with other people, other people aren't going to interact with him. That's not a good character for live role playing.

- KJ: You must remember that in a role playing experience like this that somewhere out there there's going to be somebody who can help you, and also there's going to be somebody out there who wants your help. And, if it's properly constructed, then you're going to get people *[unintelligible]* like mad, and help them. So, if you think that sometimes you're apparently at a loose end, it won't be too long until someone comes up to you and says, "You know, I need some help here." And you'll need their help too.
- A: Is there a particular genre that you feel fits in live role playing setting? For instance, I notice that sci-fi is one area that, from my conversations with Sandy, hasn't really been explored. I hear romance, I hear swashbuckling, ...
- BB: Well, it's been explored by me. I think when you're speaking from a generic point of view there isn't a particular genre that does well. The genres that adapt well to live role playing are ones that are romantic. Ones where the important action takes place with people talking to one another in one setting or another.
- LS: Yes, and one where the players understand what the dramatic underpinnings of the situation are, and understand what kinds of characters are involved. So, you want to take strong well known genres, at least well known to your audience. RuneQuest is obviously not well known to the general public, but in this audience everybody knows what they're expected to do and they can slip right into their characters. Characters typically are archetypal, because you need to be able to have characters that most people not only can slip into very quickly, but that other people know how to react to when they meet them. So, you can start to see the kind of structure you co me up with [unintelligible].
- A: So would you say then that the idea of sort of one sort of megaplot overlaying or underlying the whole game, such as "Home of the Bold" where there's all kinds of Gloranthans meeting, versus, say, last night's "Long Ago and Far Away" where there didn't seem to be one giant goal or movement, but a lot of little stuff happening among the characters.
- LS: It depends what ambiance or feeling you're trying to evoke. The first game I played in was "RMS Titanic," and that game had ... you knew what was going to happen at the end. There was no suspense at all there. But, there was no overriding theme to all the players, it was just all these cool guys on the Titanic interacting. Other games, however, can have an overriding theme, some sort of major plot that ties it all together and there's other stuff going on around the fringe. The most important thing is to make sure that, if you're doing a major plot game, that the major plot doesn't boil down to "these six guys have to resolve something, everybody else is extra."

That's a bad thing. One thing you have to remember, one of the axioms that we use when writing one of these games, is "every player is the star." You don't have leading characters and secondary characters and extras. Everybody has to be the star of their own little story, potentially.



- BB: It's especially important when you've got characters who have very different, for example, political or economic power. It's almost unavoidable that sometimes you're going to have wealthy people who can exert social and political power, and then you're going to have low life gutter snipes who don't have those kind of resources. But, they can have all sorts of dimensions that the wealthy powerful guy cannot, in order to make up for it.
- SP: Watch the movie "The Three Musketeers". The heroes of the movie aren't Cardinal Richleau or the King and the Queen. The heroes of the movie are the low life gutter snipes. And, in the game "The King's Musketeers" that Lawrence and I *[unintelligible]*, the overriding plot was the high political maneuvering up at the top of the big powerful people, like Ken Rolston and stuff, who lead things. What the maneuvering did was it generated many actions for the little lowlifes *[unintelligible]* like running around in the sewers. And so, these six guys would decide something. If their decisions generate expanding waves of action and activity
- BB: Right. The King and the Cardinal were concerned about other things, with the movements of great troops around that would decide the fate of Europe. But, on the other hand, the Musketeers could dual for the heart of a lady.
- SP: And in the middle range, every single unit of troops was controlled by another player in the game. They had to go get that player to agree to move his troops. Sometimes you use orders to do it, of course. One would say, "Well, I think you should move them over here." [unintelligible]
- KR: But it's nice to have the set pieces occasionally show up in their schedule in order to draw everyone back together so that everyone has the same dramatic time frame from time to time. Because otherwise you have people running around not knowing what one another does, which is kind of O.K., but [unintelligible].
- BB: One thing that you'll find out is that fifty stories took place that you didn't hear anything about. For example, in "Home of the Bold" there are eighty people, and there's gonna be all sorts of things that you're not in earshot of that happen. Some of them surreptitious, some of them loud and boisterous. But, as long as you have plots of your own, that's no problem and you can get together afterwards with people and find out all the things that you didn't know about that happened.
- KR: We've touched upon that David [Cheng] is going to have the diaries available from "Home of the Bold" so that you can get a sense of what is invisible to you, and that's kind of interesting.
- KJ: One of the things that I think is important about what makes a good live role playing game is getting caught up in something bigger than you are. This is one of the advances over tabletop roleplaying games. And, not every GM can do it. In large games, you're part of a bigger universe. It sounds

to me very much like "King's Musketeers" was that kind of game. It's something that we were aiming for in "Home of the Bold." We didn't want people to be Gloranthan addicts, necessarily, to play the game, but we wanted to be able to give the flavor of something Gloranthan.

- SP: But the last time I played RuneQuest, some of the players were Lunars, and some of the players were pro-Lunar Sartarites, some of them were anti-Lunar Sartarites, and some of the players were Grazelanders. And all their players were going... it was up to the Gamemaster, running everyone but your own party.
- LS: Live role playing frees you from that annoying need to have to work with people. (laughter) Or at least the same people, around the table.
- A: You don't have to work with any particular people.
- BB: What Kevin just said, about a good game catches you up, really drives what the GM's try to put into a game to in order to make it good. We've discussed some of the things that we think make up a good live role playing game.

People who have lots of reasons to interact with one another. All the characters being stars, all the characters having the potential to star in their own sphere of activities. Another one is simplicity of rules. We all agree on that. The rules have to meet a couple of important criteria in order to get the best drama, in order to get out of the way. If rules are complex, if rules actually take much time to do, then the dramatic scenes are broken up and the feeling of being caught up in another world is diminished. And, the rules have to follow some criteria in order to do this.

First off, they have to be easily memorized. People often haven't played this system before, especially since most live role playing games don't use any existing system because no existing system is simple enough and no existing system can be tailored to the genre (often you want rules that speak to a particular genre). It has to be simple enough that you can memorize it, that the rules automatically roll off and nobody has to look up anything. There's nothing that wastes time and kills an action more than somebody having to go...

- SP: Go call a Gamemaster who has to look up something.
- BB: Yep, absolutely. A second thing that's also helpful is that you want them to use as few materials as possible. Sometimes you can get away with using a die, but the problem is that everybody has to have one, and people lose theirs or leave them somewhere or can't find them on their clothes, or all sorts of things. So, we even strive to do away with dice. In order to have a system that's simple and still differentiate the character, so that you're not like him, you have to have some method to compensate. And, what we typically use is special ability cards. You have cards that let you do a thing that's outside of the rules either several times during the game, or once. And, that's all the mechanic there is.

* tape change*

Live-Action Role Playing

- BB: ...so intimidating that he can get other people to cough up a secret, or somebody who is a terrific fighter; somebody who is better than somebody else, who can beat him in a dual, allows that kind of differentiation without the actual doing of that mechanic. Taking it in *[unintelligible]*, that's the goal.
- LS: You were asked a little earlier how you could start doing this, how you would think about putting one of these things together. As he points out, to attain that simplicity, which is so important to having one of these things be functional so that it doesn't crack under it's own weight, you have to maintain some kind of focus. From the very beginning, you have to know what it is that you want to get across in your game, and not try to do everything. You have to say, "This is the genre I'm going for. These are the things that I want my players to have fun doing. So, I need to have thus and so systems and mechanics to simulate, or resonate, and make those things appear to be going on." And then, let everything else go. Because, there's enough going on just with character and plot, you'll find out, without having to have all these complex mechanics and things. It's best to try to not cover too many bases at once. There are a number of things that ...
- BB: Pardon me, I can give you an example of that.
- LS: Yeah, go ahead.
- BB: An example of that is, I played in a game of "1897," which is a game set in Victorian London and involved all sorts of weird sciences, political maneuverings, and things like that. The game designers decided that combat is not going to be a big important part of this game. That, while there might be a fist fight or somebody might pull a gun sometime, it wasn't likely to happen very often because of the nature of the characters and their goals. So, the combat system was really really simple. They didn't really make much attempt to have combats be interesting, they wanted to have them over quick. It was, you rolled a die, add your combat skill, the difference between you and the other fellow causes a result. That's it.

On the other hand, in "King's Musketeers", dueling is an important part of the genre. If you watch the movies, lots of it is taken up with neat sword fights with people doing all sorts of tricks, kicking one another, throwing swords, jumping over obstacles, and all sorts of that. So, they had to have a system that made duels more interesting, that drew them out and gave people more possibilities, allowed for more on sword fighting moves, and other neat things to do, and otherwise make duels a spectator sport to some degree. And so, there's an example where the genre and the original focus of the game players, decides that combat in this one has to be interesting. Whereas, in this other game, combat is not interesting; we want the simplest combat system, then we'll get it over with and let the people get on with the game.

LS: Combat turns out to be something that frequently drags down a live game, so it often gets de-emphasized. That's just one of the things that, if you want to get really detailed into personal combat, you're better off in a tabletop game. 'Cause that format addresses it better. There are things, however, that live role playing games do markedly better than tabletop games. Among them is mass diplomacy between large groups. Another thing that we discovered that we work particularly hard on [in tabletop games], that you can do in live games is romance. This is an area that is really very difficult in tabletop, because you have the same little group of people interacting over and over. With a wide group of people you can arrange things so that you have a lot of fish in the sea, and ways to have people fall in love, fall out of love, be rivalries, stolen hearts, broken hearts. And it all adds a really interesting layer and level of intensity to the game that you don't get when you're just swaggering around being a macho fool with a sword. Now, when you swagger around being a macho fool with a sword in front of women (laughter)

- SP: There's also another great advantage point to live games, which is the large proportion of women playing them. Forty to 45% of the players generally are women, which is a bigger than in any other RPG.
- BB: Sadly, "Home of the Bold" is underserved by women. But, that's an artifact from Convulsion, I think, isn't it?
- KJ: We were prepared to convert female characters.
- BB: That's right. It's just that most of the people who signed up at Convulsion were men, and so as many roles got written as people were interested in the game, basically, 'cause they had some lead time. And that carries over to this time. But, you'll find it's atypical. Women are just as prevalent as men in most of these games. Which is great, I think, 'cause it adds a whole extra dimension that most people aren't used to.

The other thing that helps romance, and other things like that around it, is the very fact that most live games are centered around a nexus of some sort. This particular time period, whether its four hours, eight hours, or a weekend long, is important. All sorts of people are trying to get things done this weekend, or whatever the time period is. And so, that lends a sense of immediacy to what everybody's doing, and drama and romance and things like that comes much much easier in that sort of setting than in a long ongoing sort of thing where you get to slowly know other people and such like that. In most trashy novels, you fall in love with people you hardly know, really. Just the line of their jaw entrances you, and that sort of thing.

- ?: That's right. So it is with live roleplaying.
- A: I actually have two concerns. I wanted to address one of them as *[unintelligible]*, as you were talking about males and females in proportion to that and stuff. One thing that I like about roleplay games: I don't like to play is somebody who is like me. I've played a lot of live action games over the years, going back maybe ten years. I'd say, in like half of them, I was, like, a fifteen year old girl. I had to wear this big sign that says, "I am a girl," otherwise people don't react to me in that way. I don't know, you know... and I do see where, if you go

into the costuming and stuff, some of that can be a real pain. Or, it has been for me, 'cause it's a lot more visual than it is in tabletop games.

- BB: Well, everyone has to strike their own balance between the type of characters they want to play and the vermisimilitude they come up with. It's terrific for a game when people go all out to look like what their character is. Now, sometimes that's not possible. If you get cast as a non-human, your ability to.... although, I've seen some super efforts to do so. But not everybody can afford that.
- SP: Some people have no problem with saying, "I look unusual."
- BB: Right. And obviously, if you have some sort of transformation during a game, well, the player who can do a costume switch or a such is rare, and usually you just have to have a badge describing how you look, and take it in. But, the more you can transmit to other people the visual information that they would naturally be getting from your character, the less explaining you have to do. And the less of their peering at your badge myopically they have to do. And that's a good thing. Every Gamemaster tries very hard to cast people in what they want to play. And, what people want to play varies all over the map for all sorts of reasons. Some people like to play the same kind of character twice. Some people like to play the same kind of character twice. Some people like to play costuming challenges, as far as I can tell.
- LS: Some people want to play with different intensities, too. Some people are there mainly to socialize, and sort of just be in the consensus fantasy of the game. Some people are there to devote every single piece of their time, effort, and body to the game from the beginning to the end, and completely exhaust themselves and that's how they have a good time. We've found, as far as costuming is concerned, that really it doesn't take much of an effort to do something that adds a great deal to the feeling that you belong in the milieu, and not from outside. A hat, something thrown over your shoulders.
- BB: In one case, a fellow who was playing a Southern Californian had a orange neon pair of sunglasses that he put on.
- LS: Sometimes, that's all you need. I was playing in a game last summer where I was playing a gangster, and I had this gangster suit from the 40's and a big hat that I wore for the first couple of days, and then that got pretty onerous so on Sunday my entire costume consisted of a toothpick. (laughter) By that time everybody knew who I was, and that was fine. The toothpick, and the accent and mannerisms were all it took. In this case [for Home of the Bold II] we have a luxury. I made announcements last night. We have the luxury that Paul Reilly and Finula McCaul, who are up in room 343, have brought all sorts of extra costumes. Probably enough to outfit the whole game, from the looks of it! And so, if you don't have anything and would like a nice robe or something like that to put on or an ornament or something like that, they'll be happy to lend it to you. You had a second concern?

Live-Action Role Playing



- A: Yeah. The other thing is, I've had for years an idea for writing a scenario. The two problems I have is, I've never played in a live action role play that didn't have more than one Gamemaster, and I don't know 1) where to get other people to help me run the game, and 2) where to get players to play in it.
- LS: Where are you situated, geographically?
- A: I'm in Central Michigan. It took me five years to find players to play my Pendragon game once a month.
- LS: Wow! It could be tough. You may have to wait until guys like me and Sandy here start doing them online, live over the computer services.
- A: And when is that?
- LS: Three to six years.
- A: If you could find the right people [unintelligible].
- SP: [unintelligible] ads in the gaming stores, or in the local theatrical... not everyone who plays live action games is a tabletop gamer.
- BB: Also, especially for games that are smaller, for example what we call mini-games, which are typically four hours long with 20 to 25 people, you can often fill those up at a convention. A science fiction convention or something else, where you have a fair number of people who are devoted to gaming. A lot of times if you advertise a game somewhat, then you can find the players.
- A: I was thinking about maybe putting an ad at U-Con, which is the closest convention to me, and saying I want to run it next year. And try to get some people to write me that way.
- LS: That's an excellent idea. Just start putting out the feelers, seeing who you can find. We often don't run out games right where we live. We run them all up and down the mid-Atlantic. Wherever we think we've got a good venue, and where we think we can get a good cluster of players. Of course, we all live kind of close together, between Baltimore and Washington, and get together regularly to work on 'em. And, I think Brandon and Kevin can speak as to the difficulty of putting together one of these games at that long range, but it can be done.
- BB: Though it's not recommended. It's quite trying at times. Home of the Bold II here was put together by electronic mail, since the primary authors were in London, and I was in Washington, DC.
- KJ: Getting back to the point about finding difficulty in getting games started, I found myself in a similar position. I didn't know anybody else in England who was doing it. And that is quite a long way from America, and it's quite expensive to come [to the U.S.] and play the games. And, in fact the way that I started doing these games was actually to have, like

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dressing up parties at home. Once I got a murder-mystery going, getting towards the live role playing experience. And those are very rewarding, not only because it gave me practice at characterization writing for the first time, but also because we got a whole stack of players who weren't games players in playing these games. One of the things I think we might look at a bit later is how do we widen live role playing to other people. How they can be expanded out.

- BB: You're talking about basically having an in character party.
- KJ: Oh, yeah.
- BB: Somebody would come to your house, they would assume a character, and they would socialize with no particular goal.
- KJ: Oh, we usually gave them goals. They draw similar resemblances to the kind of games that we're doing. Most notably the accessibility. We always picked a theme where the people who were coming knew basically what they were expected to do. So, you pick a theme like Robin Hood, or Cinderella, or Casablanca. Themes that people could easily associate with, and you pick up from there. And, as it turned out, it's a great way to actually get more GM's. 'Cause if they say, "I really like this!" Then you say, "Well, actually, would you like to help me again next month?" And so, it fills up from there. Now, diving into a full 85 player game, I would not recommend it. It takes six times as much work as you originally thought. And twice as long.
- KR: Also, the site is such a nightmarishly critical element, and involves skill s that have very little to do with games. So that's a whole new ball game.

[unintelligible]

- LS: We have actually had better luck than some. We've only run into a couple of problems. But, needless to say, this is something that hotels frequently... it's not what they expect. Somehow, no matter how much you tell them what it's going to be like, when it actually comes to the weekend they are taken aback. And you have to have a person in your group to go and stroke the hotel when necessary so that they don't get upset. And to browbeat them into living up to the terms of your contract when they want to back off. So, you have to do the good cop-bad cop routine. If you pick your venue carefully, however, they are glad to see... they are cooperative and they want to have you come back. There's a lot of hotels in areas where there are too many hotels that are really pleased to see 80 people coming in, regardless of how they are dressed (laughter) and that they're up at 2am, wandering the halls.
- SP: You don't see the hotels during the off season [turning business away].
- BB: Right. For example, here and now. (laughter) This is the off season, and Columbia Inn has had two of these live role playing games before and knows exactly what to expect. And

they've love it both times, and wanted us back. There's another one next month.

- A: What is it?
- LS: "Terror on the Thames." It's a rerun of a horror Victorian game.
- A: I have one more question. What would you think is a reasonable number for a first time, one person sort of running Gamemaster. One Gamemaster, first time.
- LS: Um, how many people can you handle in a tabletop session?
- A: Eight, ten.
- LS: My advice is to go for twelve in a setting, but we try to run games that have about, what, 15 players per director?
- SP: Fifteen to twenty.
- LS: Yeah. But, you have to remember, a key thing that we try to do when we design these things is to always make sure that the players do as much as possible. A big problem with beginning Gamemasters is that they will frequently write games that are called "GM intensive." Where everything they think of - "Oh, this will be really cool! But, I can't really trust the players to figure out how to run this, so I'll just say 'See GM'." "This is a really interesting ability, but of course you can have a lot of weird side effects, so I'll just have them see the GM to use it." And, before you know it, you're back into the tabletop problem, only it's worst because you have a line! You've got nine people waiting to get to see the GM, and after a while they get pissed off and they blow it off and they may leave the game. So, you try to push as much responsibility for making the game run onto the players. They love it! They do great! They eat it up! And they very very rarely abuse it, and when they do it's often inadvertent.
- BB: That bears repeating. You make the mechanics as simple as possible. You make the mechanics require GMs as seldom as possible. And then, you STILL have a lot of GMs. And, that seems to be the *[unintelligible]*.
- KR: But, like Kevin says, if you decrease the vector of action resolution and increase the vector of social interaction, and make those demands less, the point that you made about the critical mass, the certain number of people you, that is also pretty critical. So that, for example, you have 20 people over for a diplomatic party, that had maybe a final resolution, in the meantime everybody's wandering around trying to get money for his own stupid cockamamie plan, or something like that, you might be able to come up with something like that would work.
- LS: Yeah, but, when you have fewer players you can't have a really long game because they're going to exhaust each other fairly quickly. When you have 60 + players, they can

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Live-Action Role Playing



apparently run until people drop, there's so much stuff going on. And, at some point they become self-generating.

- BB: Right! Character players start to invent new plots out of whole cloth.
- LS: So, when you cut the game off at 1PM or whenever on Sunday, there are lots of people who go off in the corner and say, "Well, we're not done yet! I've got this last thing to do!" And they will go on, sometimes for another hour or two, figuring out what is going to happen and keeping it going. They really do take on a life and impetus of their own.
- A: How would you deal with GM that also want to play nonplayer characters?
- KR: Don't do it! We say it's a bad mistake!
- LS: Yeah. There are a lot of GMs who demonstrably don't agree with us, but all of us think that it is a bad thing. The GMs have to be there to help the players, and once... I can't tell you how annoyed I've been and how much time I've wasted in games where the GMs were playing as I sat around trying to get something resolved, cooling my heels while the GMs interacted with each other, having a good time because they know all the cool stuff. And, boy, were they having a good time swapping their in jokes while I wasn't getting anything done. Also, when they do that, the directors somehow can't keep from taking the juiciest characters, and that hardly seems fair.
- KJ: Absolutely. The GMs should only be the NPCs.
- LS: Yes.
- BB: It's tough for a GM to be an NPC, because he knows too much. But, sometimes there's a character that's only got a bit part, that you can't assign to a player because their role is too minor or too little likely to have impact on anything more than one small aspect of the game. And that has to be played by a GM, or somebody outside the game who has volunteered to come in to play the part.
- SP: We've had a guy walk in carrying the Maltese Falcon, and then drop dead from all these bullet holes. Obviously there's not much of a role for a player to do. The Gamemaster got a couple of hours of him when he did that. If you're a Gamemaster, you can pretty much resign yourself to not having the same kind of fun as players. Your only recourse is to get another group somewhere to also do these games and go play in those games.
- BB: But it's a different kind of fun. It's not like GMing is a chore.
- SP: GMing is a different kind of chore. [laughter]
- LS: If you're a Gamemaster, you had better enjoy the process of building the game. Because, you're going to be doing that for

months on end, most likely, and working with other people you better like, and you better be sure you're still going to like them later on. You have to enjoy putting these things together and be aware of the fact that you're getting a lot of your primary fun in advance, and then when the players take it they're gonna run with it. As soon as you turn the characters over to the players, they're not your characters anymore. The belong to those players. The player's going to look at your character and all the stuff you labored over so carefully and say, "Ehh, this part doesn't make sense to me. It's not how I see the character. I see him more kinda like this. I'm gonna do it that way. I'm gonna throw these three goals out and I'm gonna add these other two. And I'm gonna do it completely different than what he does because I read that book. I know it better than him."

- BB: The best you can do in that instance is to touch your head like it's *[unintelligible]* and let the player go on and do what he wants.
- LS: And help him. He's gonna come to you and wanna do something that seems to you completely nuts, and your gonna help him as much as you can because he's there to have fun and you're there to help him have fun.
- BB: In fact, if a player wants to do something, the usual answer is "yes," unless it's going to screw some other player in a gameinappropriate way. In other words, it's going to take unfair advantage of some mechanic or something like that. Or, it's going to bring the game to a premature end.
- LS: Or it's going to inflict major damage on the context of the game. You don't wanna let people do things that are way out of the genre or milieu because that's bad.
- BB: Take your character, all the stuff you got in your packet. Multiply it by eighty, and somebody had to slave over that three or four times in order to get it to look nice. And then, there's all sorts of side arguments that don't end up even being written but simply some tiny point being resolved.
- LS: Lots of things just plain get thrown right out. Look at your "Home of the Bold" character and look at all the stuff that's in there. Nobody sat down and wrote one whole character, and then wrote another whole character, and just did that eighty times. They had to figure out the basis of who all these people were, and then gradually evolve these characters over a long time, and figure out new ways that they can interconnect, and change ways that now no longer make sense, and elaborate further on the plot level. You can take as long as you want. I think that's your better satisfied [unintelligible]. Six to twelve months. [unintelligible]
- BB: Thank you all. [applause]

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LIVE ACTION TROLLBALL AT RRCON D7 How 1 went to Valind's Glacics and lived

By MOB

It's 9 am and 9 degrees, Fahrenheit. While sensible RQ Con goers were safely tucked away in bed after Saturday night's drinking and debauchery (hi Nick), me, Nils Hammer, halfa-dozen mad trolls and about a dozen even madder spectators braved the elements and went OUTSIDE for the inaugural North American Live Action Trollball Championship (the Supertroll, if you will).

Live Action Trollball is of course loosely based on the Trollball game presented in RuneQuest's TROLLPAK, "a gonzo trans-dimensional mutation of American football". The live-action game has been a staple at some Aussie cons for years - for a detailed write-up see John Hughes's article in Tales of the Reaching Moon issue #8, from which I have plundered certain parts below.

For the game's American debut, Nils and I fine-tuned the "rules" late on Saturday night, our creative juices aided by the gargantuan troll-food meal from Eat at Geos a few hours earlier (plus a few stout ales).

Valind did his best to keep all but the heartiest from taking the field, and so we only ended up with three players per side, however one of these was a true MISTRESS RACE troll. The dozen or so spectators were amply served by a troll-food cafeteria (a large pile of appetizing stones on the sidelines), and were actively encouraged to throw snow-balls at the players on the arena. The playing area itself was in true trollish fashion irregularly shaped and bordered by trees, about 30 yards long.

Weapons ranged from rolled-up hats and scarves to inflatable replicas of Munch's "The Cry" and a five foot long blow-up Stegasaurus. To ensure all weapons were safe, all players were required to beat themselves over the head for one minute. Sadly, once out in the below-freezing air, none of the inflatables lasted the distance, and the players wielding them were reduced to using them more like flails or whips than clubs.

The game was hard-fought, with rampant cheating on both sides occasionally punished by kicks from the giant referees (Nils and I). Peter Maranci's Bozztown Bashers were the eventual winners after scoring a goal in the dying seconds of the game, following a brilliant play where an attempted Befuddle was capably blocked by Countermagic. Shortly after the final goal was scored, the trollkin almost lost its head.

So great was the Bozztown Bashers' victory in the inaugural Supertroll that their opponents' names have been erased from history (sorry, it was so damn cold I think the ink in my pen packed up and my brain was numb). Players on the both sides won a chance at the "Dart Competition" at the close of the con. And if the frostbitten five who joined Peter ever come forward they can be immortalised in the trollball Fame of Hall!

For those of you itching to take part, the second North American Supertroll will be held in balmier climes at RQ Con 2. Near a swimming pool hopefully. Proud sponsor is Argan Lager, the troll beer that corrodes the parts human beers can't reach!

For those of you who can't wait til then, here's ...

DA RULES

- 1. Trollball is a ROLESPORT: more than scoring goals or dismembering trollkin, roleplaying is what makes this the sport of heroes. As John wistfully reminds us, "...it's the chants, the insults, the songs, the rubber chickens, the facepaint, the Kyger Lager t-shirts and the random attacks on spectators that make Trollball such a satisfying experience. In trollball, you learn to appreciate the beauty and poetry that dwells in the heart of an Uz."
- 2. Play begins with the giant referee standing in the centre of the field and throwing the trollkin in a random direction. How random might depend on who the giant wants to win or other unfathomable reasons - such is the nature of disorder!
- 3. The game is played at Walking Pace, yes WALKING PACE. When moving, imagine you're SIZ 28, lumbered with a huge gut and weighed down by a rock gizzard still digesting that dwarf from last night. Better still, imagine you're a Ray Harryhausen Dynamation[™] monster - think of *Clash of the Titans*, or better still *Jason and the Argonauts* or any of his *Sinbad* movies. Move at several frames per second. And don't forgot to growl a lot.

Moving too fast is punished by getting kicked by the giant referee.

4. Any palpable hit on a location takes out that location. Wha do we mean by "palpable"? In a nutshell, any hit that gives a satisfying THUD. If you get hit on an arm, you drop whatever you're carrying (weapon, trollkin body part,

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whatever). If you get hit on a leg, you fall down, but can still drag yourself around. If you get hit on the body or head, you're down and out for the count. You can still growl and scream, but one of your teammates will have to drag you to one of the Healers on the sidelines.

- 5. Healing. Unless you know a Heal spell, any time you're injured you've got to get yourself to one of the beautiful Xiola Umbar priestesses at the sidelines. They'll touch the location and you'll be fine, ready to leap in and crack heads again. If you are so badly discommoded that you can't get to the sides under your own steam (e.g.. taken a hit to the body or head, lost both legs, drunk too much Powzie, etc.) one of your teammates will have to drag you over.
- 6. The trollkin. Australian experience has shown that using a small human (e.g. a 13 year old Warmallet player) as a fill-in trollkin proves to be unsatisfactory. Humans proved difficult to dismember and it became hard to recruit further volunteers. A good substitute is a large rag doll whose limbs and head are attached to the body with strips of velcro. The trollkin is considered "alive" as long as the head remains attached. (At RQ Con our trollkin's head was more securely attached, so we played it that if it lost two or more limbs it was dead). If the trollkin "dies" then the referee puts it back together and begins a new play.
- 7. The referee. The giant referee can punish infractions (real or presumed) by kicking the offending player. The player then RUNS 30 paces in the direction specified, and can then shamble at troll speed back to the game shamefaced but angry. Don't forget to pelt him spectators!
- 8. Magic. Magic? Trollball doesn't allow magic I hear you say! Of course it doesn't, but then again it does add extra spice to the game. Just don't let the giant referee catch you.

The magic system for Live Action Trollball is incredibly simple, more as a result of Nils and I thinking it up on the fly on Saturday night than from any special insight. Here's how it works. Each player draws 3 random slips of paper with the names of spells on them. To cast a spell, take out the piece of paper, shout what spell you're casting, screw up the piece of paper into a ball and throw it at your target. If it hits the target, the spell works! Throw the screwed up paper at yourself if that's who you want to effect. Spells are only usable once - once you've screwed 'em up they're gone.

Here's a list of the spells we used at the RQ Con Supertroll: HEAL - restores one location.

BEFUDDLE - act like you're on Dreamweed til someone belts you. DISRUPT - destroys the location hit by the bit of paper.

JUMP (self only) - once cast, game stops and the player is allowed to take 20 steps in one direction. Play then resumes.MOBILITY - move at jogging pace for a while.

SLOW - move at 2 frames per second for a while.



COUNTERMAGIC - use if hit by an incoming spell. Negates that spell.

Finally as John Hughes says, in trollball, it is a matter of honour that each team has a ritual chant, as well as play chants and threats. Team mascots are also important, but since they are eaten by the winning team, this does not translate well into live action rolesport.

I'll leave you with John's team, the Bhagwhan's Broobashers team chant, sung(?) to the tune of the twelve days of Christmas:

"On the first day of trollball, the giant referee, kicked a berserk Zorak Zorani.

"On the second day of trollball, the giant referee, kicked two scrawny Enlo, and a berserk Zorak Zorani."

And so on... the entire song is:

"twelve Sons of Karg, 'leven 'Umber Mindlinks, ten giant maggots nine Spi-der Masters eight jars of POWZIE, seven trollkin burgers, six Homboboboms...

I Fought We Won ...

Four Gor-a-ki-ki three Uzko blockers two scrawny Enlo ...and a berserk Zorak Zorani."

Each player takes a line. If they forget, they substitute something like "I can't remember", "Pansy Cha-os Elves", "Blunt Wea-pons only", or the immortal "Blad-ger, My Axe".



KICK

ME

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On the weekend of January 14-16, 1994, a group of 250-or-so Gloranthan devotees congregated at a hotel nestled in the suburbs of Baltimore, Maryland. They came from all across the United States, and the most fanatical travelled from even farther reaches of the globe.

RuneQuest-Con succeeded in its goal of being "a sophisticated event, for mature, sophisticated gamers. More than just a collection of tournaments; a place to come together and share quality gaming ideas. A forum to recognize the very best games and gaming worlds that the hobby has to offer."

This book is an attempt to distill to written form the fun that was had that weekend.

The contents

One of the surprise successes was the enthusiasm brought to the Orlanthi Storytelling contest. Close to twenty bards had tales and legends to entertain their fellows. Seven of those folks have shared their stories here for your enjoyment.

Home of the Bold was an eighty-person Gloranthan freeform game, where friction between Lunar occupying forces and Sartarite malcontents led to armed rebellion. Twenty participants tell us about their experiences in the game.

We were able to record several of the hour-long seminars that took place at RuneQuest-Con. For those of you seeking Gloranthan lore, we've got 26 pages of it here. There's also an excellent discussion on Live Action Role Playing, which seems to be the next big thing in the RPG industry.

Finally, we present the rules to the Live Action Trollball game played that blustery Sunday morning.