

A Scribe's Chronicle: Digital Palimpsest?

The recompilation of this issue of the *Oerth Journal* is now complete. An evocation of the issue's history follows. In Spring 2001, a preview version, notated as "Volume 2, Issue #2," was produced. In November 2001, the issue was distributed as an illustrated PDF. Later, an author requested for all of his material to be removed. Thus the need to recompile the issue.

The *Oerth Journal* remains dedicated to publishing quality works for fans of the World of Greyhawk setting. Published works include articles of diverse sort, fan fiction, and imagery. The Journal is a collaborative project of volunteers, who are always interested in receiving submissions from people desiring to contribute their time and talent. Submissions and queries should be sent to <oj@canonfire.com>.

The present philosophy of the *Oerth Journal* is to help authors improve their craft of writing. Authors who desire a close editing relationship are encouraged to consider the *Oerth Journal* as a way to share one's ideas and talents with other people who also enjoy detailing the World of Greyhawk. Visual artists are also encouraged to submit their art for publication in the *Oerth Journal*. The Journal is very interested in presenting evocative images that complement articles, for imagery is a powerful and exciting means to explore further the World of Greyhawk.

As the stewards of a seven year old institution of the online community of Greyhawk fans, the editorial staff of the *Oerth Journal* takes seriously its responsibility to serve the community while also abiding by the rule of law. Since the Journal was founded, various and disparate company policies and interpretations of law have been promoted.

While the *Oerth Journal* staff is highly interested in learning more about how the internet affects copyright, rather than pursue legal avenues, the *Oerth Journal* attempts to operate in the realm of ethics. People who submit works for publication in the *Oerth Journal* should understand their copyrights.

Submitting a work indicates the intent to establish a license with the *Oerth Journal* for the Journal to publish the article or artwork as part of an issue. Authors grant the *Oerth Journal* the right to publish the work internationally in English in various digital formats. Issues are distributed via the internet.

Authors and artists do not grant exclusive rights to the *Oerth Journal*, so authors retain the right to present their works in other mediums, formats, or publications. The license to publish a work is granted to the *Oerth Journal* as an organization and not to any individual editor. Finally this license is not revocable.

This recompiled issue of the *Oerth Journal* features six excellent articles and six pieces of original art. Russell S. Timm reushers the column, Of Oerth and Altar, with "Olidammara: the Laughing Rogue." In six vignettes, Russell Bird explores "Loneliness: the Draconic Perspective." Andy Seale investigates the history of a lesser-known lich of the Vesve Forest in "Lerrek's Tale." Richard di Ioia presents two short tales - "Belvor's Decision," and "Knights of Hextor." Finally Russell Bird presents "Ancient Artifacts of Evil."

I trust that these articles will further your enjoyment of the World of Greyhawk and hope that you become inspired to share your Alternate Oerths with the rest of us.

'Ware and were, friend,

Marc Tique Gonzalez

Editor-in-Chief

Oerth Journal



OF OERTH AND ALTAR

Olidammara: The Laughing Rogue

by Russell S. Timm (immaculateimage@hotmail.com)

Olidammara

(The Laughing Rogue, Prince of Bards, The Merry-Eyed Trickster)

Lesser Power of the Material Plane, N(c)

Portfolio: Music, Revelry, Roguery, Tricks/Jokes, Wine/Spirits

Aliases: None

Domain Name: Prime Material Plane/ Highcask Vale

Superior: None

Allies: Lydia, Lirr, Myhriss

Foes: Zagyg

Symbol: A laughing mask

Wor. Align: NG, CG, N, CN

Olidammara (oh-lih-dam-MAH-rah) is a deity of light-hearted revelry and celebration, and enjoys few things more than a good joke and a bottle of wine. He also takes enjoyment in providing a respite to the common man in dark times. Olidammara has some devout worshippers, but these are vastly exceeded by the number of people who are less dedicated to exclusive worship of the Prince of Bards. Throughout the Flanaess, from rustic hostels and small shrines to city temples, wherever people enjoy drinking and carousing, the clergy of Olidammara find a niche. Religious depictions of The Laughing Rogue often hide the face of the Prince of Bards, concealing his visage in a hood or behind his holy symbol, a laughing mask.

Olidammara's only enmity is with Zagyg, stemming from his imprisonment sometime in the 5th century C.Y. by the Mad Archmage. The Laughing Rogue has exacted his revenge on at least one occasion, and now considers his relations with Boccob's servitor one of an amusing diversion. Olidammara avoids making enemies, though like most trickster deities, he annoys many of his fellow pantheon members. He is on good relations with both Lydia and Lirr, as all three are patrons of bards, and has a healthy rivalry with Norebo, as the two often compete for worshippers among thieves. He is on very good terms with Myhriss, the Maid of Light and Dark, and the stories say he often keeps her company.

OLIDAMMARÁ'S AVATAR

Olidammara always appears as a young man, though he sometimes disguises himself as a tinker or peddler, sometimes as a foppish wastrel, and frequently as a fledgling sell-sword. His actual appearance is said to be as follows: middling height, slender build, chestnut hair and beard worn rakishly, complexion with an olive tint, and merry eyes of sparkling emerald which lend him one of his oft-used titles. Olidammara wears green and gold as his favorite colors, and is much given to laughter and petty tricks. Although only armored with a leather vest and high leather buskins, The Laughing Rogue has no lack of protection due to the enchantments upon these garments and a special ring he possesses. Olidammara may cast spells from all schools, though he favors

illusions and rarely uses necromantic magic as he finds that type of magic distasteful.

Special Att/Def: Although the powers of various avatars of Olidammara may vary, there are some features that are usually present. The Prince of Bards generally tries to avoid combat, but if his hand is forced he has a wide array of items to assist him. Olidammara has a damage reduction of 20/+2. In addition to the spells Olidammara can cast as a bard, he can also cast the following spells as a 20th level sorcerer; *passwall* (3x/day); *transmute rock to mud* (2x/day); and *telekinesis* (1x/day).

Olidammara's signet ring, *The Last Laugh*, grants both the powers of a *ring of protection* +6 and a *cloak of resistance* +6, and is said to be one of his favorite treasures, stolen from the hoard of some Abyssal lord. The gold ring is inscribed with many smiling masks and is adorned with a large round emerald. The ring also allows the Laughing Rogue to ignore damage reduction, regardless of the enchantment of the weapon he uses at the time.

Olidammara also possesses a musical stringed instrument of great power. The device, the *Kanteel of the Oldest*, is useable only by bards of great experience (20th level or greater) or certain other deities. The Kanteel possesses the following powers, useable once per day; *charm person*; *charm monster*; *fog cloud*; *dispel magic*; *emotion*; *major creation*; *programmed image*; and *vision*. All effects are as if cast by a 30th level sorcerer.

Another favorite treasure of Olidammara is his mask that allows him to completely change his physical appearance for as long and as often as he wishes. The mask, *The Mimic's Veil*, is not discernible when it is worn, and from whom the Laughing Rogue liberated his prize is unknown.

When Olidammara was trapped by Zagyg, the Mad Archmage forced him into the shape of a animal with a carapace as



Ecjoy, priestess of Olidammara, changes water to wine for an upcoming festival.

punishment for attempting to steal Zagyg's treasure trove. Even though Olidammara escaped this fate, he retains the ability to create a horny shell on his back. Beneath this cover, the Laughing Rogue can use his spells to escape, leaving the shell to cover his getaway. The carapace acts as a large shield +3.

OTHER MANIFESTATIONS

The Laughing Rogue has several means of showing his favor. An inexplicable urge to smile and laugh, usually before some type of musical performance or errand of mischief bodes well for those who favor black and emerald green. Likewise, an otherwise inexplicable performance gone sour or an untimely headache before drinking the wine cellar dry is good cause for the clergy member to give pause and reconsider his or her actions. Sometimes Olidammara manifests as a song with no origin or as a quiet laughing voice. Olidammara is served by all manner of mischievous sylvan creatures, including brownies, sprites, leprechauns, satyrs, grig, atomies, faux faeries, faerie dragons, and pixies.

THE CHURCH

Worshippers of Olidammara are found throughout the Flanaess, but chapels and shrines to this Power are interspersed throughout rustic areas as well as towns and cities. There are few major centers of worship. Olidammara is a Power revered by people from all walks of life, and most are glad when his priests are present to bring laughter and song. Wherever one can find enough individuals who are willing to drink and celebrate in the presence of a government willing to let it happen, one will find the clergy of the Laughing Rogue.

Olidammarans, as the clergy are known, are a particularly merry and lighthearted lot. They are determined to enjoy life and drag everyone else along for the ride, be it sober, drunk, kicking and screaming, or otherwise. Generally the church is well received by most, though local authorities and the clergy of some other Powers could do without them. Generally, this clergy currently thrives from the Domain of Greyhawk through the breadth of the Sheldomar Valley.

Places of worship of Olidammara usually revolve around small festhalls in urban areas or small shrines elsewhere. Such halls are often well (but inexpensively) decorated, and have many dimly lit areas to aid them in defense should they need it (as most of the clergy and many of the worshippers are very good at hiding). Often vines run rampant along the outside of such buildings, and even inside shrines or open sections of larger buildings. Services to Olidammara are light-hearted affairs, as they include much singing, chanting, and other forms of music, in addition to feasts and the mandatory consumption of alcoholic beverages.

The faith of Olidammara is largely disorganized. The faith is more akin to a fraternal order with chapters scattered "from the Furnaces to the Sable," a reference to the Hellfurnaces in the far southwest and the Sablewood in the far northeast of the Flanaess. Positions within the church hierarchy are distributed equally

among the various clergy types, and rank is more akin to popularity; those with the most ale are the most popular. Within the clergy, rank is usually established by age and achievement, no matter who wins the popularity contests among the congregation. Older priests are valued and revered for their skills and wisdom, and act as advisors to the younger clergy members. Females are equally welcome in the faith, and are just as common as males. Members of any race that would live life "one hand in the trap, one hand on the bottle" as the saying goes, are welcome in this faith, especially if they provide copious amounts of ale or wine.

Novices are known as Short(beer)s, with higher ranking clergy members usually awarding themselves the titles (in ascending rank): Draft, Lager, Porter, Stout, and finally Keg (or Cask, if female). Heads of temples are referred to as Voice, regardless of level. Such titles may be expanded as appropriate, so one might hear a high-ranking cleric referred to as "Cask So-and-So of Town Such-and-Such, Sweet Voice of the Merry-Eyed Trickster, Holy Wineberry and Laugh of Fireseek". It is often considered an insult for a non-worshipper to call a member of the clergy Shortbeer, and doing so is likely to make one a target for some prank.

Dogma: Olidammarans are to bring merriment to all. In good times, people should celebrate and share their happiness and wealth, be it spiritual or material. In times of darkness, people should make merry lest they succumb to despair. One must not go through life without experiencing laughter or joy on a daily basis; to make others laugh at your expense is a good thing; to make them laugh at someone else's expense is a better thing. Nothing is sacred but that which an individual holds near and dear to themselves. Music is the voice of the soul, and not merely an art for art's sake, but rather a way to express yourself in a manner that all creatures may understand you.

Day-to-Day Activities: The priests of Olidammara spend much of their time in reflective thought and performing music to uplift people's spirits. In urban centers, they always seem to get themselves involved in social events where alcoholic spirits are involved, and are just as likely to be providing as imbibing said spirits. Clergy also spend an equal amount of time plotting trouble, getting into trouble, and getting out of trouble, usually with the local authorities and/or lawful clergy of other Powers.

Holy Days/ Important Ceremonies: There is but one holy festival sacred to the clergy, who hold little sacred, and drink and make merry on any excuse. The Last Laugh celebrates the day when Olidammara escaped the clutches of Zagyg the Mad. This day changes every year and is announced during Needfest. Who actually makes the announcement is unknown, but by the end of Needfest all clergy are aware of the date. On this day, at least one clergy member from every shrine or congregation must attempt to get him or herself thrown into jail and escape by the time the sun rises the next Godsday. Failing to escape is taken as a bad omen, and

ONE HAND IN THE TRAP, ONE HAND ON THE BOTTLE

the one who fails to escape is not allowed to drink and make merry during the following services; in addition, he or she must serve fellow clergy members during the services. Succeeding is reason for a truly riotous affair, and this is the time when the fine bottles of wine and casks of ale that have been hidden away for a special occasion are consumed. As one can imagine, some truly legendary escapades have happened throughout the Flanaess on this holiday, and those of surpassing difficulty often draw the blessings of Olidammara himself.

Major Centers of Worship: There are few dedicated chapels or shrines to Olidammara, but those that do exist are located in large towns or cities. There are two pre-eminent rustic hostels that are rumored to exist. Winespill is supposedly a large church nestled somewhere in the Kron Hills southeast of Devarnish. Legend is that the spirits flow in such volume that none but The Merry Eyed Prankster can contain it with his cup. Kanteel House was rumored to lie southwest of Badwall and word has it that it was destroyed in Turrosh Mak's offensive some time in 583 C.Y. Since that time the House of Revels in Waybury has slowly gained in prominence among the faith.

Affiliated Orders: There are no known affiliated orders associated with the clergy of the Laughing Rogue. Obviously, his clergy are on good terms with many bardic organizations across the Flanaess, but none are specifically associated or sponsored by the church per se.

Priestly Vestments: The priests wear vestments of brown, green, black, and all combinations thereof. They tend to favor loose garments and robes that are useful for concealing things. There is very little hierarchy apparent in the clergy's style of dress, and indeed, this seems to be the case.

Adventuring Garb: There is no required dress code, though priests tend to favor the same colors they might wear at a service. Although they enjoy collecting all manner of gems and jewelry, they seem to hold a special place in their hearts for emeralds, and often the green gems adorn many of the higher-ranking clergy.

PRANKSTER PRESTIGE CLASS

Hit Die: d8

Requirements/Restrictions Class: Ability to cast 3rd level divine spells; must already be a cleric of Olidammara. For purposes of calculating levels for spell duration and similar effects, levels of cleric and Prankster stack.

Ability Scores: The total ability modifiers for Dex, Wis, and Cha must be at least +5. Pranksters are more agile, witty, and personable than most clergy.

Alignment: CN, CG.

Domains: Same as cleric of Olidammara (Chaos, Luck, Trickery).

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Pranksters may use any weapon allowed to Rogues. They can't afford to carry around greatswords and the like. Pranksters also may not wear any armor heavier than Light armor. A Prankster who does not observe either of these strictures incurs a -6 enhancement penalty on all rolls, similar to *bestow curse*. Pranksters may also use a shield.

Skills: A total of 10 ranks in Hide, Move Silently, Bluff, Diplomacy, Perform, Heal, and Disguise.

Feats: Great Fortitude.

Turning Undead: Drinking and revelry has nothing in common with the undead, and so Pranksters suffer a -8 competence penalty to their Turn Undead checks.

Magic Items: Pranksters are considered clerics for purposes of what magic items they may or may not use.

CLASS SKILLS

The Prankster's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (art & music) (Int), Knowledge (ceremony) (Int), Knowledge (folklore) (Int), Knowledge (gaming) (Int), Knowledge

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, Divine Boon, Domain Spell (Euphoria)
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, Improved Spontaneous Casting, Domain Spell (water to wine)
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, The Laughing Rogue's Veil
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, Domain Spell (<i>inebriate</i>)
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, The Laughing Rogue Laughs Last
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, Inebriate Soul, Domain Spell (<i>carapace</i>)
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, Emerald Eyes & Silver Tongue
8	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, Alter Form
9	+6/+1	+6	+3	+6	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, Free Spirit, Domain Spell (blessed libation)
10	+7/+2	+7	+3	+7	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class, <i>change self</i>

(history) (Int), Knowledge (monster lore) (Int), Knowledge (plant lore) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Scry (Int), and Spellcraft (Int).

CLASS FEATURES

Domain Spells: Beginning at 1st level, Pranksters are granted access to new spells, which are considered to be Domain spells for the purposes of the extra spell clerics get per day per spell level as well as for the purposes of Improved Spontaneous Casting.

Divine Boon: At 1st level, Pranksters receive a +2 divine bonus to their saves vs. poison. This is a supernatural ability.

Improved Spontaneous Casting: Beginning at 2nd level, Pranksters may channel the spell energy of a prepared spell into either a healing or Domain spell of equal level or lower. This is a free action and does not provoke an attack of opportunity. Actually casting the spell still follows the rules for spellcasting.

The Laughing Rogue's Veil: At 3rd level, Pranksters may *change self* 1x/per day for every three levels of experience they have attained, including levels as a cleric. This is a free action and a supernatural ability.

The Laughing Rogue Laughs Last: At 5th level, Pranksters may cast *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter* or *babble* 1x/day for every three levels they have attained as a Prankster. This is a spell-like ability.

Inebriate Soul: Pranksters can accurately assess the age and quality of any alcoholic beverage they taste, and also determine if such a beverage has been doctored or poisoned. Due to the regular frequency of alcohol consumption, Pranksters are treated as if they possessed a +1 Con for every level of experience they have attained for the purposes of effects of alcohol in their system. In addition, they receive a +1 to their saving throws against ingested poisons for every three levels of experience they have attained. This is an extraordinary ability.

Emerald Eyes & Silver Tongue: At 7th level, Pranksters eyes turn emerald green if they are not already so. Pranksters may use a their emerald gaze once per day to add a +5 circumstance bonus to any Charisma based check as a free action. In addition, Pranksters of this level may invoke an ability similar to a *potion of glibness*, adding a +30 bonus to one Bluff check once per day. This is a supernatural ability.

Alter Form: At 8th level, Pranksters may *polymorph self* into an inanimate object 1x/day. The latter spell often takes the form of some type of instrument or drinking vessel and lasts for 1 turn/level of the priest. Such an object may not occupy more than 1 cubic foot of volume/level or weigh more than 2 pounds/level of the priest. Priests may still talk normally and cast spells with a verbal component only. This is a supernatural ability.

Free Spirit: At 9th level, Pranksters are continually under the effects of both a *freedom of movement* spell and a *non-detection* spell. This is a supernatural ability.

Change Self: A 10th level Prankster may *change self* at will, and duplicate any person well enough that they get a +20 circumstance bonus to their Disguise check. The only feature that will give a Prankster of this level away is that the priest always has emerald eyes while using this ability, no matter what measures he or she may use to make it appear otherwise. This is a free action and a supernatural ability.

NEW DOMAIN SPELLS

Euphoria

Enchantment

Level: Clr 2

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 10 ft

Target: One humanoid

Duration: One round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

When this spell is cast, the priest breathes a cloud of visible green and shimmering silver gas upon his intended target, similar to the breath weapon of a faerie dragon. The affected target must then make a Will save or be affected. Affected targets act in a manner similar to a *confusion* spell; as long as the target is left alone, he or she will be oblivious to his or her surroundings and react to unseen hallucinations in a blissful manner, smiling all the whilst.

Water to Wine

Alteration

Level: Clr 3

Components: V, S, M, DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft + 5ft/2 lvls)

Target: One gallon of liquid/level

Duration: Special

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

When this spell is cast, the priest causes a like volume of water or other liquid to become any of a variety of wines or other alcoholic beverages, randomly determined by the DM. Such wines spoil within 24 hours, and unlike the spell *create food & water*, this duration may not be extended by the use of a purify food & drink spell. For each experience level the priest has attained, one gallon of water is turned into wine. (It is known that entire congregations have cooperated to turn public pools and fountains into open vats that may be enjoyed by all.) The material component of this spell is a bunch of grapes.

Inebriate

Enchantment
 Level: Clr 4
 Components: V, S, M, DF
 Casting Time: 1 action
 Range: Close (25 ft + 5ft/2 lvls)
 Target: One target/level
 Duration: 1 minute/level
 Saving Throw: Will negates/ Fort (see below)
 Spell Resistance: Yes

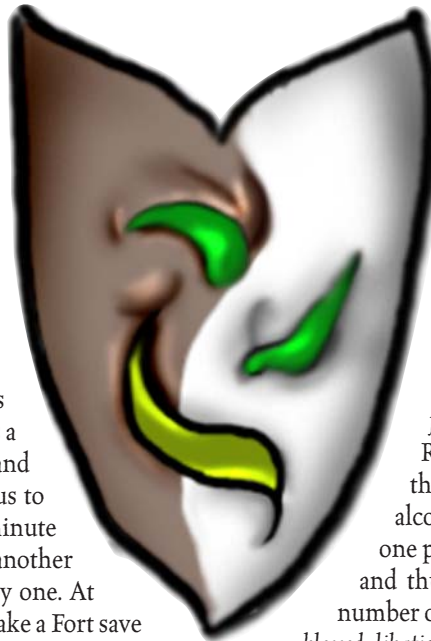
Whether for simple amusement or self-defense, this spell allows the caster to affect one or more individuals and induce a state of intoxication similar to that produced by alcohol. If the victim fails his Will save he or she is affected. The victim immediately begins to exhibit the symptoms of a drunken stupor, which progressively worsens as the spell continues. A flushed face, sweating, bloodshot eyes, blurred vision, loss of coordination, increased aggressiveness, and an increasing vociferous and slurred manner of speech are all potential manifestations associated with this spell. Beginning the first round, the victim incurs a -1 competence penalty to attack, saving throws, and ability checks, but does receive a +1 morale bonus to saves vs. fear and 5 temporary hit points. Every minute this spell continues, the target(s) must make another Will save or the competence penalty increases by one. At the end of the spells' duration, the victim must make a Fort save or pass out for 1 minute after the spell expires. The material component of this spell is an alcoholic beverage, which must be consumed by the priest when casting.

Carapace

Evocation [Force]
 Level: Clr 6
 Components: V, S, M, DF
 Casting Time: 1 action
 Range: Personal
 Target: You
 Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

This spell brings into existence a visible and opaque hemispherical wall of force similar to a carapace of certain animals, like a turtle or armadillo. This spell is similar to a *shield* spell in certain respects. The carapace intercepts attacks, providing three-

quarters cover, though it does not move out of the way when you attack, providing the same cover to your enemies (and making this spell not as useful as *shield* in that respect). You designate half the battlefield as being blocked by the carapace and you can change the defensive orientation of the carapace as a free action on your turn. The carapace is otherwise considered a *wall of force*, though it may be damaged by weapons of +3 or greater enchantment and can take 50 points of damage before being destroyed. Gaze attacks cannot penetrate the carapace. The material component for this spell is a small turtle shell, which is not consumed in the casting of the spell.



Blessed Libation

Evocation
 Level: Clr 7
 Components: V, S, M, DF
 Casting Time: 10 minutes
 Range: Close (25 ft + 5ft/2 lvls)
 Target: One gallon of liquid/level
 Duration: 12 hours
 Saving Throw: None/Fort (see below)
 Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell is a variant of the spell *heroes' feast* and differs in the following regards. Rather than summoning forth a great a feast, this spell is cast upon a large quantity of some alcoholic beverage. Anyone who drinks at least one pint is subject to all the benefits of *heroes' feast*, and thus this spell can potentially affect a greater number of people. However, those that drink from the *blessed libation* are affected by an *inebriate* spell, except there is no Will saving throw and the competence penalty increases every hour rather than minute. Participants may make a Fort save at the end of the 12 hours to avoid passing out, though odds are nothing short of a dragon will be able to avoid this. The material component of this spell is a large quantity of ale, wine, or liquor.

Loneliness, the Draconic Perspective

by Russell Bird <manicmidwife@hotmail.com>

1. THE BRIGHT DESERT

The Bright Desert baked under the sweltering sun. As far as the eye could see, a sea of faded ochre spread in every direction, just as it met the pale sky. A cloud came over the sun as the massive old Blue known as Volte flew across the inhospitable wilderness that was his home. He slowed and glided low, whipping up a sand storm. He circled for a while as he came across the area that hid his trove. He had long since replaced most of his metal for gemstones and enchanted items that were resistant to the temperatures beneath the sands. As he settled down, using his wings to slow the descent, the ground shook.

Volte looked around before settling fully, and was glad of the solitude of this area. He rolled over onto his back and thrashed around, polishing his scales with the course sand below the surface. When he spun over onto his haunches, the ground shook once more.

Here, he was the undisputed master of his domain. Nothing moved or happened without his knowing about it. All creatures paid tribute to him. Those who had any measure of intelligence knew him as the 'great winged sapphire.' At the time, he was so annoyed with the foolish human that had addressed him thus. Volte swallowed him whole before destroying the rest of his companions. Perhaps he had been too hasty that day. The name had stuck... namely because he had insisted upon it. Here, everyone paid tribute to the great Volte... the great winged sapphire, even that ambitious spellcaster who had established a kingdom in the central lands.

Yes, Volte enjoyed the peace and quiet, and he also enjoyed the heat. It helped him to relax. He considered the plight of his metallic kin (not that he would admit that they shared any direct kinship with him.) They were social creatures by nature, and they could not allow themselves to relax so easily. If they were alone for any period of time, then they would perhaps not survive for long. That is, unless they were very hardy individuals indeed. Even those that had set up a home in the remote wilderness did so only to protect their horde. They could not stay isolated for long without becoming uncomfortable. Volte considered the irony of this metallic trait, for to be born a dragon was to be born apart from the greater cycle of life. This was why Volte knew that he and his chromatic kin were superior to those metallic weaklings. There was no mortal creature that they could not eat, intimidate or conquer. They could indeed rule the world if they so choose, despite being so few in number...

Yes, the chromatic dragons could rule if they wanted. But that would invite extended contact with weaker creatures, and that was not desirable. When could they be alone to themselves? When could they be alone with their horde?

Volte was suddenly concerned that some of the horde could have been stolen while he had been away, and fanned his wings rapidly,

whipping up a storm. The sand parted, and his wonderful treasure horde was exposed, gleaming and beautiful in the fulness of the radiant sun. Volte's eyes widened with avarice. Inspecting it now, it all seemed to be all there: all of the bright opals, rubies and emeralds. Normally he would have to travel far to amass such a collection, but why bother when there was always a travelling expedition or caravan within flying range to add more? Volte roared with laughter at the thought... a rumbling roar that could be heard for miles around, if anyone was brave enough to approach. That would be enough to halt any approach...

For now, it was time for sleep. Strutting in a circle around the magnificent pile of treasure, Volte curled himself up into a comfortable position. This took several minutes as he had to shift the pile of treasure to form a comfortable bed to rest upon.

Volte rested his massive head in the sand. He had not long closed his eyes when he heard the sound of something approaching in the distance. He opened an eye in annoyance, but could not see anything. Breathing deep, a familiar smell came to him, and he stirred with fury. Fully awake now, and feeling his anger rising, his eyes searched the horizon. In the distance he saw the approach of a lone rider. Squinting to bring the figure into focus, he saw that his superior smell had been correct.

In the distance, Volte was able to see the approach of the lackey of that arrogant wizard. Riding toward him was Robilar. "What could he want? How dare he enter my domain without permission!" Volte squinted harder, and thought to himself, "It would seem that he has had some sort of falling out with the Traitor, judging by the sour look on his face."

Volte could see that Robilar was adorned in his full plate armour, and carried a large and elaborate helm. Perhaps Robilar was brazen enough to seek the assistance of the great winged sapphire in crushing some rebel force in the hills nearby. "Well," thought Volte, "Perhaps this brute is long overdue for a lesson in manners."

Volte rose to his full height and waited for the Robilar to come closer, angry now that his solitude had been disturbed...

2. THE BRIGHT DESERT, ELSEWHERE

It was the hottest of days in the Bright Desert. There was little movement in the air as the sun burned what was visible of the Necropolis of Unaagh. Indeed, there was even less movement within. All that lived (and that was undead) was underground. Living here apart from this unpleasantness, yet unable to escape, was a tiny pseudodragon named Sunthistle.

Sunthistle crawled her way to the top of one of the exposed buildings, and tried to look around the desert that stretched in every direction. The glare made it very difficult to do, and her eyes hurt despite the precaution of squinting. Yet she willed herself to do this several times every day. She did this in the feeble hope that someone would come and rescue her. Her life was so wretched

these days, she cared not who came. Anyone would do. She was not fussy anymore.

It was the same now as it always was. The desert was bleak and empty. This was madness! Why would anyone want to come here anyway? Surely there was nothing of value in the ruins. That did not stop her former master from looking. That seemed so long ago now.

She curled up into a ball and rested. It had taken her much effort to climb up here. There was a time when she simply flew up. That was before the food and water had started to run out. She had found a fountain that had an endless supply of water, but it was guarded by giant scorpions. Just getting to the fountain required avoiding the walking dead and the many traps of the place. Now one of her wings was lame, and although she still had her tail, she had lost the sting. Here she was now, needing to get back under cover and away from the heat, and lacking the strength to do so with ease.

Uncomfortable, she unfurled, trying to radiate some heat off. It would have helped if she could fan herself with both wings. If only someone would come to the rescue! The loneliness was driving her mad. She remembered the last time that she was happy.

It was a time when she was the centre of attention. Everywhere she was taken, people marvelled and clamoured to see her. They always wanted to scratch her stomach, and she was happy to oblige. Now she was trapped in the middle of a vast and deadly desert. This was no way for one of her kind to live. She was sure that she would be ten times closer to happiness if she just had someone for company. She knew that was wicked thinking, but her need was desperate now.

Turning around now to head for the shelter of her nest, her eyes glazed over. A depression gripped her, a deadly depression that held her with a grip stronger than the grip of the strongest of giants. Sunthistle had seen a few giants in her time. Her former master, the spellcaster, had encountered some of the friendly giants of the Clouds. They had the most lovely, friendly smiles, and they always had one for her. These days, it was hard to remember what a smile even looked like. For one of her kind, it was unbearable...

Trying to hide from both the heat and the horror of her situation, she hid her eyes under her paws. Overwhelmed suddenly by the anguish, Sunthistle closed her eyes and wailed. It was a haunting and somehow beautiful sound from a noble creature. When she peered out, nothing had changed. Sunthistle crawled back to the

hole that was the only home that she had known for many years now. She thought that if help would not come soon, she may as well challenge one of those scorpions to a fight. Then the suffering, hopelessness and loneliness would all end.

3. THE GRANDWOOD

Auruma the ranger looked on silently as his companion of many years, Fiorena Goldhand, finished questioning the bandit chief. As always, she was completely fair, and Auruma had learned to value that. He so valued her methods that he vowed to adopt them wherever his path took him. This was exactly what was troubling him now. Fiorena was finishing up.

“You may leave now. Scurry back to Drax and whatever fool advises him. Tell them that the Grandwood does not tolerate invaders. Go now... and know that your path home will be watched the whole way by my sylvan freinds. Any distractions could prove fatal, for they are not as patient with intruders as I am... nor indeed my colleague. Look at him! Would you wish to attract his annoyance?”

The bandit turned to look at the hulking Auruma, and immediately fled. Auruma

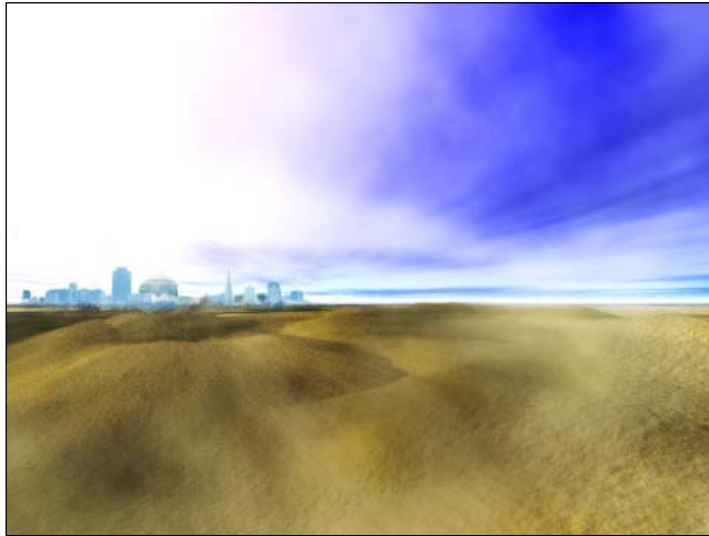
was troubled by this. He understood the value of intimidation, but he always tried to seem... relaxed.

Fiorena turned to her ranger consort and smiled for him. She came up behind him and started to whisper to him. “Now that we are alone, maybe you might tell me what is bothering you. You have been unusually quiet for weeks now.”

Auruma stiffened. He almost lost control at that moment and shifted back to his true form: that of a massive, shining Gold Dragon. This was indeed a wise one. She had come to know him all too well. There was no use trying to conceal the matter. “I have been recalled by my family. I am allowed perhaps a short period longer here.” He tried to appear relaxed for her.

“Oh.” replied Fiorena, drawing closer, “Can you not... choose your own path now? I think that our forest fellows would be very sad to see you go...”

Auruma started to walk away, his face hidden. “I am torn between two lives, but I do not feel that I would be allowed the choice. Mine is not yet the liberty to choose for myself.”



The blue sky reflects off the ruins of the Necropolis of Unaagh.

Fiorena had long been privy to the secret of Auruma, and it was initially a struggle to assimilate the truth. Now, she did not think of him as anything more or less than a close friend. "I sense there is more that you have not told me. Is there some reason for that?"

Auruma stiffened again, his back still turned. Fiorena's continuation of the conversation was distracted by the approach of Marcenn Simraith, Ranger Lord of the Lone Heath. Marcenn drew close to Fiorena and they embraced, their lips meeting. Auruma saw this, and hastily turned away from the sight.

Fiorena turned away from Marcenn, looking toward Auruma. His back was turned to her still. She looked back briefly at Marcenn and parted company for a moment. She walked over and whispered to Auruma. "We will talk more on this later... I will help you find a solution." Her hand went to Auruma's massive shoulder, and his hand held hers for a moment. She then moved off and joined Marcenn.

Auruma watched as the lovers walked off together, satisfied by their victory over the bandit raiders. Auruma would have been joyous as well if not for the recall. He would have to choose one path or the other, and he felt conflicted by both. The safe path or the rebellious one. He felt very lonely and needed someone to talk to. Fiorena would have been the perfect choice if not for the sudden intrusion of Marcenn into her life.

Auruma sighed. Fiorena was very perceptive, as a great burden was indeed troubling him. He was in a turmoil and he was unsure if he could talk to her about it. He was unsure WHOM he could talk to, despite all the friends that he had made in the Grandwood. Was it wrong for a dragon to fall in love with a human, and could a human ever love a dragon?

4. THE GREAT CITY OF IRONGATE

Cogg Darg sighed as Rakehell Chert raved on. If he wasn't raving about the apathy of the Scantites, he was raving about Darg's unwillingness to commit more funds and resources to the Free Onnwal Army of Rebellion. Cobb reflected that it was good that Chert had found his place in life. Only a few years ago this man was but a shy Guildmaster. Now he was a popular resistance cell leader, active against the Scarlet Brotherhood. Darg wondered what had happened to bring Chert out of his shell, Chert did not look like the type who would embark on the sort of adventure that would free the spirit.

Suddenly feeling very tired, Darg squeezed his temples. To his side, Elayne Mystica stirred in response.

"I think that will be enough debate for one day, thank you Chert," she said.

"But..."

"I said..." Mystica began, and Chert was turning. Turning to walk out the door. Mystica was glad that it did not require quite so much effort as she had thought.

"I was beginning to think that he was never going to leave," said the Mayor of Irongate, leaning back in his chair. "Sometimes I am envious of his spirit and energy."

"Perhaps part of the fault rests with you, my old friend," said the Lerara archmage. "You could learn to say 'No' once in a while. He would not put so much pressure on you if you constrained him a little more." Mystica was silent for a moment as she regarded Darg closely. Presently, she spoke again, "You have spent so much time among us that you have learned to mimic our gestures too closely. I recognise when you are in need of rest, even if you do not."

Suddenly curt, Darg replied "How can I rest with all these commitments and concerns?" He waved a hand unconsciously and scattered a pile of notices and reports, all of which demanded his immediate and utmost attention. He apologised to his closest advisor, yet she glared at him in response. Suddenly seeming much larger, she spoke in warning, "You should know better than to argue with me..."

When Darg opened his eyes, he was in the great treasure vault that served as the repository of the great city that he ruled. Most people believed that it was much smaller than it really was, for in truth, it was mostly composed of his vast treasure horde, the horde that had taken him hundreds of years to compile. What better way to keep it safe? Normally he could not even legitimately enter here without the three other keyholders, but Elayne was not ever that subtle.

Darg willed himself to relax, and the appearance of the small but wily mayor of Irongate was suddenly replaced by the his true form: that of a great Gold Dragon... one of the oldest and largest in the entire Flanaess, perhaps in the whole of Oerth. Few knew the secret, and Elayne Mystica was one. Every other adult dragon on the continent knew, though none would speak out against him... even if they disagreed with his mandate. In taking to heart the troubles of the Iron League, he had become an outcast of Draconic Society... a pariah even... alone. However, he never lacked for attention. It was therefore good to retire into solitude once in a while. His curse was that whenever he did, he felt the shame and burden of his rogue status. Elayne would never quite appreciate that, even though she was an outcast herself. She was, however, a loyal and agreeable confidant... the best friend he could hope for. Just as she had been for more than a hundred years.

As the dragon who was Darg settled, his eyes widened involuntarily with avarice. He could not help himself. Here he was in the middle of one of the greatest treasure troves in the world, and it was certainly one of the best protected, Comfortable with that thought, and relaxing in the solitude, Darg settled to sleep. His woes and the guilt that went with his abandoned heritage would not bother him today.

5. THE CAIRN HILLS NORTH OF THE CITY OF GREYHAWK

Aestrella Shanfarel paused and dismounted. Having found a nice place to relax, she released the pony. It was well trained and would head back for the city, where loyal assistants would retrieve it. She sat down on a fallen tree, and slipped her pack off. In travelling here, she was satisfying the peculiar urge of her particular sub-species. Some dragons needed to mate, some needed to terrorize and destroy, some needed to conquer. The Greyhawk Dragons needed to 'go bush' once in a while. It was a primal urge, and one best gratified.

In the City of Greyhawk, she was a public figure subject to considerable attention. She enjoyed the attention, of course. She was a dragon, and if there was one thing that a dragon was fond of... Besides, the identity of this particularly sultry half-elf had allowed her to conduct her passion in secret. Using the front of Aestrella, she was able to conduct her campaign against organised crime. How she hated evildoers! Selfish animals! The stout hearted officials of the city needed all the help that they could get. It was perhaps Aestrella's way of saying thanks for all the attention.

She thought now that she was probably not far from Castle Greyhawk, and she wondered if she might encounter Mizaab out here in the hills. He was always welcome company, and she had not seen him for many years now.

TURNING TO THE BANDITS WITH THE AFFECTATION OF AN INVITING SMILE, SHE SAID SIMPLY "I HOPE YOU BOYS LIKE SURPRISES..."

She felt the pull that was the urge to release her true form, and started to undress, shedding her finery. As she did so, she was suddenly aware that she was being watched. She had been distracted by her thoughts! "Whoever you are, show yourself!" she called.

From behind a nearby set of bushes, two figures emerged. Aestrella recognised them both as notorious bandits. One was Rosco Two-Finger, and the other was his companion Kressic. They had been wanted since before the Wars, and had evaded capture by Tigran Gellner and his patrols. Aestrella recalled that there was a sizable bounty that was offered for their capture, no doubt because they were brutal and deadly thieves. Aestrella's eyes widened at the thought of the reward.

"Please, do not mind us," said Rosco, "we were just admiring the view!" As he said this, he stared at Aestrella's exposed shoulders.

"A nice young lady such as yourself should not be out here all alone... it is just not safe!" said Kressic, "we could offer our protection... there is a cost, but you look like you could afford it!" With that, the bandits edged closer, their hands moving to the daggers at their sides.

Aestrella blushed with embarrassment and anger. She should not have been so careless! The nerve of these two. They had certainly picked a fortunate time to pick a fight, as the urge started to

overwhelm her. The expensive clothes would just have to go. Turning to the bandits with the affectation of an inviting smile, she said simply "I hope you boys like surprises..."

Obviously this was just what the bandits wanted to hear, judging by the looks on their faces. Moments later they were suddenly pale and ashen as they gaped at the massive shiny serpent with a catlike face that now stood where the elf maiden had been just moments before. They turned to flee in terror, but found themselves running on air as they were gripped in the clutch of a prehensile tail that was lifting them up into the air. The massive whiskered head of the creature drifted into view, and Kressic passed out, unable to face the terror of being swallowed whole. Rosco whimpered, and the creature seemed to be giggling! He watched with amazement as it spoke to him!

"You have been very, very bad..." it said.

6. THE CITY OF HENDRENN HALGOOD, NORTH-CENTRAL NYROND

Melodinia felt her anger rise. For a priestess of Lydia, this rage was almost unheard of! As if her noble country had not suffered enough without this insult! The problem had been around for many years, but she had hoped that it would never come here. And yet, it came and came in a torrent. Up ahead, in the centre of the market, the Valourous League of Blindness was preaching to the good folk of the city as only the clergy of Pholtus could. There they were, Grishken of Midmeadow and Carindrell of Arndulanth. Obviously not satisfied with converting the settlements on the border of the Pale, they had turned their attention further south.

Melodinia watched as someone spoke up in challenge to the preaching, which was to the effect that even though Lynwerd was now the monarch of Nyrond, nothing would change for the better. The spokesmen of the League suggested that only the way of Pholtus could relieve the suffering of Nyrond, but this challenger had seen fit to disagree. He was silenced by the blow of a book that was thrown at him by Grishken. The holy terror of Midmeadow then encouraged everyone to read the word of the one true path for himself if they did not believe. Melodinia watched as many kind folk surged forward to receive the blessing of Pholtus. This was more than she could stand. She turned and made for the tent of revelry.

She entered to find many desperate people gathered. Most were followers of Olidammara, and all here were loyal to their kind young King. They had seen Lynwerd suffer the loss of his betrothed, and they had seen him denounced by many who had formerly called for him to depose his own father. Melodinia looked at Masyndrell, the chief mirth maker here. Although he was a kind man, she would not usually trust him with any responsibility. "Well? Where is this friend of yours who will rid us of these wicked people?" she asked of him.

"Be patient, Melodinia, he always answers the call." Masyndrell replied.

The people gathered, including Melodinia, were suddenly startled by a loud fanfare and a puff of smoke that heralded the arrival of Tummbutt, Faerie Dragon of the Greyhawk Domain and practical joker of renown. Melodinia was awed by the beauty of this tiny creature, which was bright green in colour, had the wings of the most beautiful butterfly, and moved around in the air like a hummingbird. What was more, it had a face that was stretched into a most disarming grin. This was to be the means by which they would rid Nyronnd of the League? She was further startled when Tummbutt spoke.

"Where is the wine? Hurry up you rascal, I have travelled far!" said the dragon in a squeaky voice. It was speaking to Masyndrell.

"I have a small keg for you here, but you might want to..." said Masyndrell as he motioned to a small vat on the table nearby. Tummbutt did not let him finish his sentence, for he was flying straight toward the keg. Before he had reached the container, the lid blew off and all who were gathered watched in amazement as this woundrous creature dived into the wine headfirst. They watched as the level of the wine went down and the creature disappeared from view. An obnoxious belch came from the keg, and it tipped over. All that came out was the unmoving body of Tummbutt. Melodinia was aghast.

"Look what you have done!" she said, her criticism being levelled squarely at Masyndrell.

"Relax, he does this all the time!" said Masyndrell. All present then dissolved into laughter as Tummbutt appeared before his face and kissed him noisily. Even Melodinia relaxed at the sight.

"Thanks for coming, Tummbutt. We know you must be busy" said Masyndrell, settling the mood and appeasing the mirthful creature.

"I was deadly bored anyway! You know how mischievous I get when I get bored and lonely! Now, have you called me to help plan the next revel feast of Oly Oly? Huhhuhuhuh?" replied Tummbutt, who was flying everywhere and unable to remain still. Melodinia watched as he accidentally flew into the side of the tent a few times.

"No, we need you to subject a few particularly uptight undividuals to practical jokes of the most severe magnitude. Do you think you can manage that?" Masyndrell was asking of Tummbutt.

"Sure I can! Where are they?" replied Tummbutt, looking even more excited.

"Have a look through the tent opening and take a look at the two up on the stage. We must be quick before they move on."

Tummbutt flew to the opening of the tent, and as he did so he nearly collided with several people who were in the way, even Jobrhen the halfling. Peeking outside, he was silent for a moment. All present in the tent were then startled as Tummbutt let out a wail of surprise as he flew back and straight into Masyndrell.

"Ack! You would think those two were from the Pale!" he squealed.

"That is the problem. They ARE from the Pale... we need them to go back there. And preferably never, ever come back."

Tummbutt's doe-like eyes widened with excitement. "What do you think I should do? Should I make their armour turn a bright shade of pink? Should I make their hair stand up on end?"

Masyndrell looked at the wily dragon with respect. Around him, nervous giggling had started. "You are the best there is," Masyndrell said as he stroked Tummbutt behind the back of his head. "Just get out there and do what you do best. When you get back, we will have all the wine you can drink waiting"

In response, Tummbutt's ever present smile stretched into the most impossible of grins. He vanished in a loud puff of smoke, and everyone was quiet in the tent. Almost immediately outside, a few isolated giggles gave way to a colossal roar of escalating laughter. Above it all, Carindrell of the Valourous League of Blindness could be heard yelling at the top of his voice the most vile and un-Pale like oaths.

"HOLD STILL THAT I MIGHT SMITE THEE... FOUL DEMON OF THE PIT!"

Lerrek's Tale

by Andy Seale, aka Fallon, Ranger-Sage of the Vesve

The origins of Lerrek go back to about 163 years ago, 420 CY. Lerrek was born Lerrek Caerynith in the lands known now as the Perrenlands, in the city of Schwartzenbruin. His father was a mercenary captain that served in many of the armies of Oerth. His mother was from a farming community outside the city. Lelond, his father, had retired to the city and wanted to raise a family. However, after the birth of his first son Lerrek, he was killed in a freak accident while riding his horse. His mother, at a loss at what to do, brought the child up as best as she could. Unfortunately Lerrek grew very spoiled and mean spirited. His peers taunted him as being the son of Lelond the Unlucky; he took this in stride and bided his time.

When he was 18 he jumped at the opportunity to leave for Aerdy as a guard on a merchant caravan. Two weeks into the trip, while going through the Vesve Forest, the caravan was ambushed by a group of bandits. The caravan was quickly captured, and its men were held hostage. The bandits were led by a priest of Erythnul named Reynard. Reynard was intrigued by the young man who seemed to disdain his fellow hostages as much as his guards. Ransom demands were sent out for the prisoners and the group waited. Reynard had many discussions with this young man who seemed to hate so much. The discussions then turned to religion and Lerrek became fascinated by the strength and power Erythnul offered. Soon the ransoms came in and it was time for the hostages to go. Reynard offered to take in the young man as an acolyte. He accepted and as part of his initiation ritual they sacrificed the hostages to Erythnul. For 10 years (438-448 CY) the pair traveled through the lands of the Horned Society, Iuz and the Bandit Kingdoms. These lands were known under different names then and were not as organized. The bandits they commanded formed a mercenary company known as the Blood-Seekers. They worked for many an evil lord or lady in those days. Their fame and fortune grew, as did their power. The Blood-Seekers became feared as a ruthless mercenary unit who were fearless.

In 448 CY they took a job working for a necromancer named Iggwilv near the Fellreev Forest. She had set up a small cantonment to do some magical research on some ruins she had discovered there. The Blood-Seekers ruthlessly eliminated all opposition in the area. This included a small tribe of Celbit orcs and a family of trolls. While there, Iggwilv became smitten with the young priest and his steely nature. He too was smitten, for even though Iggwilv was a necromancer she was indeed very beautiful. They soon become lovers, much to the disdain of Reynard who thought mixing business with pleasure was dangerous.

His concerns came to fruition when Iggwilv made a mistake in her research and opened a gate to the Abyss. A Balor prince and his retinue stepped through the portal looking for those that had disturbed him. A tremendous battle broke out as Iggwilv tried to close the gap, and Lerrek and the Blood-Seekers sought to protect her. In the confrontation Reynard was killed along with a majority

of the Blood-Seekers. Iggwilv did manage to close the gate and imprison the Balor prince. With her newfound power came some problems and she thought it wise to move to a safer location. She had some holdings in Ket and took her retinue there. Lerrek and what was left of the Blood-Seekers became her personal guard.

Once in Ket, she rapidly expanded her power base in the form of troops and demonic servants. With Lerrek at her side she never had to worry about her personal safety. The two dreamed of forming an empire together and began to look towards Perrenland. Things changed when Iggwilv told Lerrek she was pregnant with his child.¹ In 453 CY a daughter was born, and she was named Drelzna. This child temporarily put their dreams of conquest on hold. Iggwilv's research took her away for months on end so the child's upbringing was left upon Lerrek. As chaotic as Lerrek was, he truly loved his daughter and spared no expense on her. She grew to be as beautiful as her mother and as willful as her father.

Iggwilv's power began to expand from the keep that they inhabited, and many of the local Kettite nobles began to pay homage to her. Soon tribes of humanoids began to rally to her flag. Lerrek and the Blood-Seekers truly began to command an army. They began to raid Perrenland and slowly began to annex territory. The time apart between Lerrek and Iggwilv began to take its toll, and they started to grow apart. Iggwilv, in her travels to Abyssal Plains, met a Demon Prince named Graz'zt. He soon began to supply her with aid and support.

With this newfound power she directed Lerrek and his Blood-Seeker generals to launch a full-scale invasion of the Perrenlands. With his daughter at his side, and the demonic support of Iggwilv, they quickly overran Perrenland. Lerrek and Iggwilv had made their dreams of empire come to fruition. The empire soon began to experience problems almost immediately after its inception in 472 CY. Iggwilv believed that her power was absolute and began to openly show her favor of Graz'zt over Lerrek. She believed that Graz'zt and not Lerrek was the reason she had succeeded. Sages wonder to this day if Graz'zt had not magically poisoned Iggwilv's mind to disdain her lover Lerrek. Lerrek began to wonder what was truly occurring and, searching the quarters of Iggwilv, realized that she had taken the Demon as her lover. His heart was torn asunder and as evil as he was he could not bring himself to harm Iggwilv. He had neither the power or ability to challenge Graz'zt so he took what we wanted for treasure, a handful of powerful magical items and some of Iggwilv's notes and books and left. Most of the remaining Blood-Seekers went with him. So in 473 CY the grand union of Lerrek and Iggwilv came to an end.

Lerrek and his band wandered for about a year and returned to the Vesve Forest. His band of 12 (the years had taken their tolls on the Blood-Seekers who once numbered 300) quickly subdued a Celbit tribe of orcs and occupied the caves they lived in. Soon Lerrek had the orcs expanding the tunnels beneath, forming a good-sized lair. Other creatures were brought in as slaves, mostly gnomes and some dwarves, and used to create a more refined interior. Atop the former orc caves Lerrek created two huge stone statues to guard

over them. With the use of a ring of three wishes that he had taken from Iggwilv, he imbued them with magic and made them semi-sentient.

His own power was fearsome since he had risen to 19th level, and at that time was the most powerful of Erythnul followers. Rather than see himself wither away into nothing, and still plotting revenge against Graz'zt, he used the notes he had from Iggwilv to become a lich so he could pursue his nemesis. Most of his followers were not too keen on staying and becoming liches and things of that nature, so the Blood-Seekers broke up. Only two of his followers remained, Kalen, a 13th level wizard/vampire and Thjederk, a 10th level fighter who became a skeleton warrior. All these changes occurred by 477 CY, just as Iggwilv's empire began to show signs of collapse.

His daughter Drelzna made contact with her father in 479 CY, asking for sanctuary in case the empire fell. Lerrek made arrangements for his daughter's arrival. A caravan arrived carrying much treasure and some of her personal belongings, but no Drelzna. She was to arrive on the next caravan. That next caravan never arrived. The empire was overrun and Iggwilv and Drelzna were removed from power. Drelzna was killed in the fighting and restored as a vampire, but her crypt was hidden and nothing more was heard of her again. Iggwilv had then been enslaved by Graz'zt, and her disappearance caused the last vestiges of her empire to collapse.

So Lerrek once again had his plans foiled by Graz'zt. This drove him into a senseless frenzy and now he plots for a war in his mad plans. The first thing he did was slaughter all the slaves he had and brought them back to life as skeletons and zombies. He began to organize them into military units for his upcoming "war" with Graz'zt. He then realized that he would need a vast army so he began to recruit within the Vesve Forest. He soon had a large tribe of ogres working for him, bringing him slaves and corpses to reanimate. Among his daughter's belongings he found three gems of empathy,² which caused ankhegs, owlbears, and purple worms to migrate to his area. His plans soon had others watching him and some of them were Good. In 519 CY, a Knight of the Hart named Cedric Ostlenberg learned of certain misdoings in the Vesve Forest and organized an expedition into the area. Cedric was a knight in much favor with Heironeous, since he carried an ancient +5 Holy Sword of some power. However his hubris was his downfall, and when he went into the Vesve he only brought a small retinue of his squire, two mages (8th+9th), a priest of Pelor (8th), and 20 men at arms. This small group did manage to penetrate the underground lair of Lerrek. Their luck ran out once Lerrek and his minions arrived. Lerrek however, thought they were sent by Graz'zt and decided to further fortify his position. He used many magically wards to seal all entrances to the dungeon save one.

Between the two towers is a marble slab 10' x 20'. It is the only entrance to the dungeons and can only be accessed by an individual who possesses a Brooch of Lerrek. Only four such brooches exist. Two are with ogres that Lerrek has living around

the tower. They use the brooches to bring him slaves, corpses and supplies that his minions may need. One was lost to the Vesve Forest rangers that ambushed a group of ogres in 527 CY. The fourth brooch is in the hands of one of the few living agents that Lerrek has, Keak. This living member has a position as a member of the Boneshadow, which gives him the perfect opportunity to supply Lerrek with information that would directly influence the Vesve.³

ATOP THE FORMER ORC CAVES LERREK CREATED TWO HUGE STONE STATUES TO GUARD OVER THEM.

For the last 74 years Lerrek has been very quiet in the sense of not doing anything overt on Oerth. He has, in fact, been very busy improving his position by contacting various demonic groups in the Abyss who oppose Graz'zt. He also has learned that Iggwilv is indeed alive and is working through her own agents on Oerth. He has been desperately trying to contact her but with no success. He has been attacked on four separate occasions by various bands. Three were by adventurers who managed to penetrate the lair. One was by a group financed by Iuz who couldn't even find the entrance. They were dispatched by a group of ogres and several hundred undead.

So Lerrek now waits and bides his time, hoping one day to face Graz'zt and letting his forces grow. Iuz is aware of who he is and is content to let things stay as they are. If Iuz were made aware of his feelings towards Graz'zt, he might actually attempt to curry favor with the lich. Iggwilv has no idea of his existence, but would she be interested in reuniting with her former love? There might be a flicker of personal sentiment, but it is far outweighed by the desire for the recovery of a few personal items that Lerrek possesses. It seems that among the items Lerrek grabbed in his departure he took two tomes that Iggwilv desires.

The first is a book called, *A Record of the Damned* It possesses the true name of three Balor princes and six Hezrou. The possession of this book would immediately give power over a significant demonic force of devastating proportions. The other is an ancient Suel text called, *The Masque of the Undead* It details two processes that might be of tantamount importance to two types of the undead. The first gives the ability of being able to walk among the sunlight for vampires with no ill effects. The other says that a lich can have his body restored to near perfect condition and also have the ability to walk among the daylight with no ill effects.

The reason that Lerrek hasn't used either text is that they both require a wizard of at least 14th level to cast the correct spells. They also require major human sacrifices. He has made limited use of the first tome and succeeded in forcing a Hezrou into servitude. He has been very crafty and has not let anyone on to the knowledge he does possess.

Lerrek at this time has at his disposal 1100 skeletons, 600 zombies, 50 ju-ju zombies, 6 lesser vampires, a handful of ghouls and a smattering of other creatures. He also has at his disposal: a Hezrou, two Vrock and 10 lesser tanar'i. He also has the services of about 80 ogres living

around his towers. Lerrek is very patient and is not willing to show his hand. Over the years he has amassed a fairly impressive magical collection, including a +5 Holy Avenger, +4 Plate Mail, a Staff of Thunder and Lightning(42), another Ring of Wishes(2), several spellbooks, and a host of smaller magical items.

Several questions are brought up. The first is, "What does Erythnul make of all this?" Being a Deity of battle and slaughter, what does he make of his lich and its plans? Lerrek has always been a favorite of sorts, if a deity has one, and slaughtered many in his early days. His plans to wage an Abysmal war pleases Erythnul, for it will give him influence in areas he never had. Also Lerrek's nascent plans to recruit tanar'ri to his banner means that the Lord of Slaughter can add demons to his foot soldiers. This pleases him and thus he still supports Lerrek and his plans.

What plans does Iuz have for the lich? At the moment he has none, for Lerrek provides a diversion for Furyondy to worry about. If the Old One knew of the items that Lerrek possesses he would not hesitate to attack. But at the moment he is content to let sleeping dogs lie. He has however, allowed no knowledge of Lerrek's existence to leak to his mother Iggwilv. The lich is referred to as the "Dweller of the Vesve," a term that Lerrek had coined for himself when he first established in the forest.

Then there is Iggwilv and what she brings to the equation. Basically free now of Graz'zt influence and a formidable power in her own right, she is a wild card in the mix. She knows what she lost to Lerrek and his departure from her realm. The names of those Balor princes would give her influence over several Abysal Planes. She does still think Lerrek is alive(!) figuring that in the chaos that surrounded the destruction of her empire Lerrek eluded destruction. Drelzna never told her mother that she had made contact with Lerrek, since she did not want to risk her ire. Iggwilv, as mentioned before, still possesses feelings for Lerrek. If contact was made, it might be amicable and the two could join forces. With the magic contained in the tomes, Lerrek could become whole, and the two could once again form another empire. A dire thought for Oerth indeed!!!

Finally, the Knights of the Hart still desire to recover the sword and might mount an expedition to recover it. If that does occur, they probably won't make the same mistake again, and the party would be indeed formidable. But since Lerrek has not been overt in any way, the chances are slim of this occurring at this point.

FOOTNOTES

1. Some claim that Iggwilv's daughter was actually the child of Iggwilv and the son of the Voorman of the Perrenlands at that time. Iggwilv told him that just to keep him in her grasp.

2. A gem of empathy is a rare magical gem that is aligned to bring a specific creature to settle near it. The creatures have a better sense of home when they are within 5 miles of it.

3. Keak's brooch, that Lerrek gave to him, gives him access to Lerrek's lair and has certain magical properties. One of those properties is mind shielding, along with providing Lerrek a view of the outside world through the possessor's eyes.

CREDITS: The Marklands, Return of the Eight, Lost Caverns of Tsjocanth.

King Belvor's Decision

by Richard Di Ioia

King Belvor IV was a just and good king going through some hard times. The last decade had been hard on him and the choices he needed to make difficult. Once again temptation was before him, it would give him no respite. This time it took the form of a scroll, a gift from a visiting merchant, passed on to the king through other merchants of Furyondy. His advisors had looked over the scroll and according to them it was authentic - as much as could be magically verified. Such a simple thing a treasure map is, so full of promise and reward. This scroll was one of larger than average treasure, the location of a lost Suel city deep within the Sea of Dust. For years the king had been collecting treasure maps and sending out adventuring parties to locate and retrieve the riches for the good of Furyondy. Yet this time was different. This time the scroll came to him from the scarlet monks.

The visiting merchant had played his role correctly and had bribed the right people to cover his tracks. But Belvor had been an adventurer for years before becoming a king and learned not to blindly trust gifts from strangers. With the help of the priesthood of Rao, discovering the root of the scroll had been easy. Few people could withstand the magical interrogation of a priest of Rao. When a priest of Rao spoke with their gentle ways and convincing manner of speech the "victim" would not even know he had given away the secret that he was to keep.

So, now the king needed to make a difficult choice once again. He could accept the map and send out some brave adventurers to retrieve what treasure they could. But then again, what do the scarlet monks have to gain by giving him this scroll? He had long suspected they had something to do with the disappearance of his son. What more evil did they want to perpetuate on his kingdom now?

As before, Belvor communed with his god Heironeous. And as always, whenever he asked for guidance on mundane issues of this sort his god was silent. Sometimes he wished his god was a god of wisdom and knowledge as well as valor. But as he had learned early in his priestly service, his god left alone that which did not concern him. Such was the nature of his god, he would turn a blind eye to his followers playing politics and affecting commerce in the kingdom but to stand idle and watch a child killed would bring serious consequences.

"Idle thoughts," the king mused. "I am just procrastinating on this decision. I know what must be done, but there are so few left after the war to do it. Many of those I trusted most died in the war, and the few that remain are too valuable or too old to risk on something of this sort."

Knights of Hextor.

by Richard Di Ioia

The peasants of this remote village on the border of the Bone March were scared. The villagers had constructed a wooden palisade around their village quite a few years ago and had been able to repulse the few orcish raids against their village. But this was no raiding party. Over 200 orcs stood ready to swarm up the hill and burn the village to the ground, killing all those residing inside.

It was late afternoon, and once the sun dropped the villagers knew the orcs would attack. Their only hope was that the messenger they sent south was able to find some help. And help he did find.

Riding hard from the south was a troop of knights, armored in plate mail from head to foot, their horses equally well armored. Behind them, riding two per horse, were numerous men-at-arms in leather armor. With lances high and prayers loudly sung to their god, the priestly warriors charged into the orcish horde. Their men-at-arms dismounted and followed behind, killing any orcs spared the initial charge. No mercy did they ask, and no mercy did they grant. Those orcs that tried to flee were cut down by the heavy blades or trampled under the hooves of the heavy horses the knights rode. Once the massacre was complete, the knights rode towards the village.

The villagers opened the gate wide and let in their saviors. The leader of the villagers approached the Captain of the Knights and offered his thanks.

"Good sir knight, my people and I thank you for this rescue. Your valor has saved all our lives. I am Dlen, may I know your name?"

"My name is Sir Pothanc and I thank you for your praise. Is there some place my knights and I may refresh ourselves?"

"Of course, please come with me. Would you like me to send out food and water to your troops setting up camp outside?"

"No, that will not be needed. They can fend for themselves. They are not knights after all."

During the meal *Sir Pothanc's cloak opened slightly and his holy symbol hung loosely about his neck, six arrows clenched in a mailed fist.* that evening Sir

Pothanc noticed that one of the peasant girls serving him and his men their meals was quite attractive. After the meal he approached Dlen.

"It is time I returned to my tent, good man Dlen. I will be taking that serving wench with me."

"Oh good Sir Pothanc, that will not be possible. That girl is already betrothed to another."

At this news Sir Pothanc leaned over and whispered in Dlen's ears. "That doesn't matter to me and my men. We will have any women we want in this pathetic village tonight. Do you understand?" As this was said, Sir Pothanc's cloak opened slightly and his holy symbol hung loosely about his neck. As Dlen looked down and saw the figure of the war god Hextor, he shuddered and thought to himself that they should have taken their chances with the orcs...



Sir Pothanc's cloak opened slightly and his holy symbol hung loosely about his neck, six arrows clenched in a mailed fist.

Ancient Artifacts of Evil

by Russell Bird (manicmidwife@hotmail.com)

TALOS, THE TRIPLE IRON GOLEM

Talos was active at the time of many other automatons from Aerd history, including the legendary Mighty Servant of Leuk-O and Lum's Machine. The secrets behind the construction of this being, and its actual history, are otherwise unknown.

The Greatest of Golems was said to tower over thirty-six feet tall, and inspired terror in all that saw it. When controlled by a wizard of sufficient power, Talos was said to move with frightening speed, and among other powers it was seemingly able to defoliate large areas of land where it walked. More than a few spellcasters were said to have claimed Talos for their own purposes, but witnesses reported mighty battles for control between the would-be master and Talos, with devastating consequences for the sanity of the unprepared.

Talos was seen to disappear beneath the waves off the coast of what is now the North Kingdom.

THE SPIDER STAFF OF JELINITH

At a time when the drow race was young (a time now long beyond the memory of the eldest of the Lendore olves), a drow empress by the name of Jelinith found favour with the Spider Queen Lolth and commanded a conquering army in the UnderOerth. Much of her success was due to the blessings of a unique staff.

A renowned olven battle-duke named Nelikos recounted the tale of a great battle underneath what is now the nation of Celene, in which Jelinith was able to command great powers that defied simple comprehension. Nelikos described the staff as perhaps six feet long, tipped with an animated black spider. The staff was able to turn away much of the defending army in terror, a terror that resisted divine restoration. The device was seemingly able to conjure great masses of webbing that was literally swarming with venomous spiders. Nelikos watched as the high olven champion Olifrey was able to seize the device briefly, but the spider at the top of the staff grew to a tremendous size and tore him apart. Disheartened, Nelikos ordered a retreat, yet not before he saw many of his fallen colleagues transformed into the hateful drider abominations.



The Spider Staff of Jelinith.



The final fate of Talos the Triple Golem beneath the waves?

Long lost, it is now whispered that the treacherous drow clerics beneath the Hellfurnaces seek to recover the staff to gain favour with their dark queen. It is believed that only a drow high priestess may safely employ the powers of the staff, but the consequences of such employment are unknown (but believed to be dire).

THE ELEMENTAL CRYSTAL OF THE ELDER

Millennia ago, the insane elemental god known as the Elder was worshipped by evil cults throughout the Flanaess. Many were the wicked power-seekers who turned to this destructive godling before insanity overtook them in turn. In 589 CY, a journal was recovered from the destroyed bandit fief of Artonsamay. It is purported to have been penned by the hand of no less than Keraptis, the notorious wizard who was known to have a fondness for magic of heat, fire and destruction.

Keraptis (if the journal is authentic) is believed to have recovered an onyx crystal that was filled with a dark liquid. Keraptis believed that the crystal was a sacred relic of the Elder Elemental God, and he found that he was able to use it to summon swarms of destructive elementals. The crystal was stolen by a Heirophant Druid before Keraptis could complete his experimentation, but the journal details his firm belief that the crystal could be used to invoke earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, forest fires and devastating storms.

The truth of the journal versus its existence as a forgery has not been determined. The bandit diviner who recovered the journal keeps it well hidden, and is very afraid of the power of such an item. Seeking out the journal is a group of prophet clerics loyal to Phaulkon.

Scholars who know of the Elder know that the rituals of unbinding grow increasingly complex over time and fear that recovered relics could play an important part in the channelling of power during these rituals. Regardless, the destructive power of such an item alone would be enough to make any sane person pray that it never be recovered.

THE PLAGUE-BLADE

Many are the tales told of the Greatsword of Stonefist, almost as many as the equally larger-than-life figure of Vlek Col Vlekzed, the original Master of The Hold and the one who once wielded it in combat. The exploits of this sword were legendary even before the advent of the Greyhawk Wars (in which the Blades of Corusk played a small but important part).

Telushwin, skald of Rhelt Sevvord, accompanied an expedition to a ruined town on the coastline of White Fanged Bay early in 590 CY. Among the loot recovered, Telushwin found the parchment remnants of a ballad that told the story of the sword. Telushwin's eyes widened as he learned that the sword had been blessed by both the gods of slaughter and of evil sendings. The blade was not only able to incite berserker rage in the fighter that fought with it (which was commonly known), but it also could be commanded to spread the most lethal of plagues, while protecting the owner. The ballad told how the hated Rovers of the Barrens fled in terror from the giant bugbears and trolls that were summoned by the bloodthirsty sword, which was seen to alternate between the form of a sword and a massive morning star in battle. Telushwin now believes that the sword was many hundreds of years old when Vlekzed claimed it, following an omen from the great god of bloodshed.

Astounded by the potential power of such an item, which was apparently more powerful than widely known, he returned with haste to the court of his master. When Sevvord Redbeard heard Telushwin perform the ballad, he is said to have immediately sent bands of trusted Fists out into the lands in search of the sword. Telushwin was escorted back to the ruins and was put to work in search of more parchments and ballads. He is believed to be there still, searching for further clues as to where the sword may be found.

THE LIVING CHARIOT OF KET

The mysterious Living Chariot appears many times in the recorded history of the land of Ket. First reported as early as the time when Ket was still a province of Zeif, the creature was described as a multi-limbed and armoured reptile, mounted upon which was a platform for riders. The Living Chariot could fly with great speed, and let out a roar as it approached. Many sorcerous evildoers have been seen in control of the Chariot; few have been seen with it for long.

The Chariot is said to be capable of great powers of spellcasting, and many scholars of Molvar and Lopolla believed it to be some form of unique dragon, for wildlife fled from it in terror and it seemed resistant to all missile weapons. Wildlife fled in terror and it seemed resistant to all missile weapons. A very old Brass Dragon named Toowarvar came from Ekbir in challenge but fell in battle with the Chariot.

The Chariot has not been seen for many years. When last seen, it was under the control of a renegade mullah of Yan-C-Bin before both he and the Chariot disappeared. All attempts to divine the

nature of the Chariot as well as abjuration attempts against it were unsuccessful. Sages of the region are fearful that Rary the Traitor may be searching for the Chariot, seeking to harness its power for himself.

DELECHER'S AMULET

An unremarkable item to look at, Delecher's Amulet was said to be the possession of a Wild Coast laird in the Common Year 375. That noble was widely known to be a rogue of unremarkable skill, yet when he was seen to wear the Amulet, he was able to fight as a raging warrior, cast the most powerful magical spells or channel the most destructive divine power - all as he willed. He spoke in a separate, unrecognisable tongue as he used each ability.

Delecher came to rule the fishing town of Fax with an iron fist and few dared to speak out against the powerful despot so long as he wore the Amulet. Delecher was witnessed to rapidly descend into madness, raving about a 'cabal' that sought to steal the Amulet from him. When he was found dead in his sleep, the Amulet was missing.

There was much discussion in the town of Fax on the power of the missing Amulet. Some believed that the Amulet was somehow attuned to the abilities of a group of adventurers, while others believed the adventurers suffered a tortured existence as prisoners within the Amulet. Regardless, the actions of Delecher, while he held the Amulet, were malicious in the extreme. Many were the Wild Coast nobles who desired the power of the Amulet, but it has since been lost, perhaps forever.

THE HELM OF ERELIC

The Helm of Erelic is described as a plain skullcap save for a runic decoration on the underside. No amount of magical interpretation has revealed the translation of that engraving. When used by clerics or rogues of evil, it is said that they would have impenetrable powers of disguise and proof against detection. The wearer was blessed with unnatural sensory powers. Furthermore, it was said to have the extra-ordinary power to turn clerics of good aligned deities, as they might turn the undead. The hero gods Daern and Johydee were both known to have been searching for the helm through intermediaries in an attempt to claim and destroy it, but it escaped detection.

The only known owner of the helm was a rogue cleric of Kurell by the name of Erelic. How he came by the item is unknown but his vengeance journal did record that he felt compelled to undertake a sea voyage beyond the far-eastern reach of the Sea Barons. Whether or not he made the journey, and whether or not the Helm went with him, is unknown (as is what he may have found at the end of his journey). Melf Brightflame is said to have taken an interest in this item and is known to have sought out Elranriel Tesmarien to learn more about it.

THE ENIGMATIC DEVICE OF ONRAGUL

The historical tales of the Yeomanry, Keoland, the Hold of the Sea Princes and even the migration journals of Kevelli Mauk speak of a device that was held in high reverence by some. It is described as a rectangular ivory flatchet, not unlike a dagger blade without the handle. Enscribed upon the surface was a single meaningless word in the Flan tongue—Onragul. It passed through many hands and resisted all attempts to discover its purpose. It was known to radiate a strong dweomer (abjuration, it is said), and was resistant to the hottest flame. It was first discovered in the Dreadwood in 230 CY. A group of devotees of Beory declared the device to be evil, but were unable to dispel or destroy it. A large armed escort accompanied them on a journey to Niolo Dra, but the whole group was lost, the device with them. Divination of their fate by a trio of Loremasters of Boccob failed, as all were stricken dead before the ceremony was complete. Further attempts at divination have been avoided. A group of devotees of Beory from the Sheldomar declared the device to be evil, but were unable to dispel or destroy it. A large armed escort accompanied them on a path to Niolo Dra in 230 CY, but the whole group was lost, the device with them. Divination of their fate by a trio of Loremasters of Boccob failed, as all were stricken dead before the ceremony was complete. Further attempts at divination have been avoided.