

The Travance Chronicle

VOL. 3 NO. 10

"If it bleeds, it leads."

NOVEMBER 1214

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE NOBILITY OF TRAVANCE

Subjects of Travance,

This last year has brought many hardships to us all. Every one of us has felt the loss brought on by Xualla's war. In the end, though we triumphed and live on, we know the devastation he wrought.

We know how many of you feel about the creation and continued existence of Bloodtide. We have heard your objections. We ask only that you remember the damage to the world caused by Xualla, and know that we only accepted this foul weapon so that the world does not suffer like that again, or worse, fall to the demons entirely. We do not ask you to accept or agree with this, and would even go so far as to ask you to stand in your moral opposition to them. Its stain lies on our souls, not yours. This is the price of our station: burdens like this become ours alone to carry.

We would also like to address another issue. We are mortals, and we make mistakes. If you have grievance with us you may bring it forward through the proper channels. If a squire, bring it to his knight; a knight, to his lord, and so on up the chain. Shouting at anyone who can hear you accomplishes nothing but discord which we can ill-afford in these times. Beware of those who would lie, or put words in your mouth, to sow dissent, chaos, and darkness. Learn for yourselves what is truth and what is rumor, and use that illumination to shine away the darkness.

-The Lords of Travance, the Druids, and the Mage's Guild

THE GATEWAY

BY J.W.

Fear. Terror. That feeling of spiders crawling up your spine as you begin to sweat. That is when you are truly alive - when the animal instinct completely takes over and you either bare your teeth or show your belly.

It is in our very basest nature to fight or submit, and it is fear that holds the reins. Fear that causes you to cave before the knife. Fear that causes you to lash out

in an effort to live. Fear is the meat and drink of this world. It is what keeps you awake in the darkest hours of the night, when your mind invents all manner of horrors just waiting to pounce. It is our most powerful tool and greatest weakness.

Fear consumes. Fear does not go away merely because one wishes it to. Even amongst the brave, fear lingers, lurking behind their eyes, waiting for the smallest opening. A sound. An image. A word. Inconsequential by themselves, but to fear, they are as the opening of a gate. When fear seizes your mind and paralyzes your body, you will know what it is to live. You will be more alive in those few seconds than you have ever been in your entire lives.

See you soon, little birdies.

NEVER GIVE UP

BY HAZEL STORM

Fear of what we cannot see.

Fear of dangers unknown.

Fear of love lost and lives destroyed.

Fear that tomorrow may never come.

Fear you'll never find the one which can lead to the fear of being alone.

Though we are in so much fear,
never give up hope that peace and love will reappear.

Too busy adventuring to stay up-to-date on the goings-on of the Feast?

Attend the Mass to Chronicler, held open to the public at the Monastery directly following the Feast!

Please contact Father Belegchand Dinephilin for any details or queries.

THE MAUVAIS

BY DR. ILANA DARKWOOD

This feast began strangely: as people crossed into the proper, an unknown mark appeared on their hand. The different marks corresponded to various allegiances and it was realized that the gem, somewhere within the Proper, was trying to protect itself. The pulse of benevolent energy that had been felt a few weeks prior had been associated with Palinthorne's flame. However, soon the Mauvais, powerful generals, appeared in the proper and attacked briefly. After some discussion, it was realized that the gem the Proper has been constantly attacked for was trying to give the people of Travance a 'fighting chance' and protect itself.

It had marked each Mauvais and those with the corresponding mark could harm the creature. Otherwise, one was completely defenseless and even repelled by its presence. The gem, which we now know is called the Tenobrasn, knew it was in danger. Over the course of the feast it warned the people of where certain Mauvais would be and where to be to fight.

Alisandria fought a General of the Kornyrian armies during the demon wars a year ago. It would appear that he and his unit, which had been presumed lost, were instead captured by Balfurous and then corrupted into marked monstrosities.

Dregà mire and Ostcliff were granted a similar mark and fought an Ilythiiri (Dark Elven) Lieutenant that was once a leading officer for Don Kellard. Balfurous had taken the Ilythiiri once he realized Don Kellard planned on betraying him to Travance (which is unfortunate for the Lieutenant, because this never actually happened).

Pendarvin and the Mage's Guild were marked together, battling a Dark Dwarf who was a remnant of the situation this past March when the Dwarves and Dark Dwarves came to Travance to settle their disputes. He was extremely resistant to magic and excelled as an alchemist and warrior. He was another willing servant of Balfurous, wanting revenge for the shame he felt the Dark Dwarves had been dealt.

Kaladonia battled an Ogre Shaman, a powerful dark druid, that had been born within Kaladonia to a tribe of marauding ogres. His hatred towards the people of Kaladonia and Travance made him a willing servant to Balfurous when offered the chance for vengeance. He was taken down quickly by Kaladonia's archers and druids.

The Barony and Winterdark were tasked with the destruction of an Illithid Mauvais. Though nothing

more was known of the creature, it is speculation he was taken by Balfurous as an Illithid accepting a master seems unlikely. The creature overtook the minds of several people involved in the battle who almost wiped out the entire group. Fortunately, at the last moments, the creature's power faltered and they were able to recover before any more damage could be done.

The Morlord Mauvais was an interesting case, and began his battle in partial control of himself. As he cried out for help to the minds around him, those of the Light Church and their allies began planning a way to subdue the man and save him before Balfurous could take him away like the others. Eventually they were able to suppress the magic on the Morlord to the point it was able to control itself.

The Morlord was taken to the inn and there a Morlen arrived, proving to him that there were those of his kind still alive and that he could be taken to them. The Morlen then told us of a way to pinpoint the elusive gem.

Pairs of towns members for each different mark were gathered and taken to the Monastery where it was secluded enough to complete the ritual. Those involved saw an image of the statue King Valan had gifted the Baroness months before. Meanwhile, within the inn, one last Mauvais infiltrated with ease, collecting the gem and vanishing before he could be stopped. Shortly after, the group who saw the image charged for the inn.

Balfurous anchored those in the proper in place, mocking them and claiming victory, before flying away. Now he sits underground and the final minutes of the race come to a close as Travance looks for allies and prepares for the last battle, wherever that may be.

When people went to Calisvorin to ask the King about the statue and his previous denial of knowing the location of the piece of Tenobrasn, he would not comment and would not see them. We hope in the future that he will be available for an explanation.

STAND

BY OROPHIN EARFALAS

As I heard the divine call, I parted ways with my future progeny, and headed out into the woods in the direction the call pulled me. I walked down the path until I heard a voice cry out to me, "help!". I was baffled at the sight of a young girl alone in a ditch this far out of town. I wasn't sure if this was a test, or some poor women who actually needed my help. I hadn't

heard the call for some time, so the decision became my own. It seemed very unlikely she was who she claimed to be, this damsel in distress, and more likely this was some trap. She continued to call out to me, as I stood there still staring at her apparent mangled leg. "Please, I hurt myself, can you please help me?" she called. I scanned the area for bandits, and as she saw me stare into the distance she called again, "Why are you just standing there? Please help me."

There was nothing I could do even do for such an injury so "No" was my reply. "NO?!" she screamed at me, and before I could so much as offer an explanation she stood on her injured leg in clear subterfuge. I looked for an ambush, but was shocked when weapons manifested in her hands. Then as she transformed I can honestly say I had never expected the visage of Aggaura herself staring back at me. She started to verbally chastise me, but I had already stopped listening. I was positioning myself for what I knew was coming, hoping to put up a fight, but even for as much as I tried there was no defeating a Goddess of War.

Laying on the ground, in pain no words can describe, she finally called out to me, asking me one simple question: "Are you afraid?"

I replied "No" honestly.

Her disbelief was obvious, and she laughed and said "Do you have any idea of the situation you are in?"

I thought about it for a long moment. "Yes, I know who you are. I know I am screwed, and at your mercy."

She stared at me with her dark eyes. "Then you are afraid!" she growled at me.

"I fear nothing!" I said in sudden defiance. "If you want to kill me, then you will kill me. No feeling will change that. I have lost. I accept that, but I do not fear you. I fear nothing... except perhaps... Malyc." I shot that last statement knowing the effect it would have, but rather than end me there she disappeared. All that I can imagine is she likes what I live by.

One day everyone will die, and you will end up in one place or another. It is better to die without fear, than live on your knees. I knew for years that I would end up in the pits of Malyc when I die. So I live without fear of dying so that the Prince of Darkness greets me as a welcomed guest when I die, rather than a pitiful wretch. Never make a decision out of fear of dying, and accept that your actions echo far out through the ages after you die. If you are a good person, die without ever having taking the life of anyone. And if instead, you allow darkness in your heart, never let yourself live in the shadow of fear.

I LEFT HIM WITHOUT WORDS *BY THE LOST VOICE*

I left him without words.
I betrayed him when he needed me
He opened his mouth,
What he could, he breathed out,
And I was no where to be found

He'd bruised me for years between song and drink
And I left him without quarrel.
So when he needed me,
I instead let him be
And It was then that he knew I was gone.

He was cornered, dying, and bleeding out
As Death stood over his shoes
Gasping and groping
Still I was missing
Not a word would I give to be used.

Those final moments, he clawed at me
To drag me out ragged and twisted
But Death was reliant
On how I kept him silent
And he was taken as muted as I.

You'll die without a word on your tongue
Not a hint of a scream on your breath.
That look in your eye
Of jarring surprise
To find me there dead in your throat.

TO HIGHER GROUND *BY ANONYMOUS*

I let myself into the shame you fled
And left the key above your child's last meal.
I clutched the nightmares from your upturned bed:
Your pain in ink, the only thing that's real.
Oh, Love! Desire burns, and we did, too.
You made me kill the one that I hold dear.
But was it really him, or was it you?
That answer is the only thing I fear.
You played me, such a lovely song of pain.
That harmony still echoes in my heart.
It lifted, warmed me, drove me more insane
To higher ground as it all fell apart.
All you will do I already forgive.
When this is through, maybe we both can live.

ONE HAND CLAPPING: TRUE HEROISM *BY IMRAHIL*

We bear the brand from those outside, and even within, as heroes. While many of Travance rise to this occasion, I find it an ill overall descriptor. Sometimes I feel as though the average Travancian commoner has more heroism than ten tradespersons or vassals. This was seen clearly in the uprising of refugees. Heroism implies three things:

Humility - Not to think less of oneself, but to think of oneself less.

Compassion - To feel the perspective of another as your own.

Courage - Not to be free of fear, but to act in spite of it.

To act without humility or compassion aggrandizes the ego. To act without acknowledgement of fear is foolhardy. A true hero knows the fates are cunning and will cast with loaded die should they see fit. Heroes fight on through knocking knees and choked throats, knowing their fate may already be sealed. One needs not success to be heroic. The tales of those that fight or fall in this manner can still be heard in mead halls and taverns, in legend and myth, in the songs of the bards, poets and skalds. Go forth and earn your song, heroes.

LORE OF THE NORTHMEN: FEAR *BY GRIMKJELL EIRSON*

"Act with honor and you will know no fear."

That is the core of the view of fear for many in the north. Fear is the purview of those who don't wish to die in battle, those that quail at the dark. Another arrow in the quiver of our archers. Fear is something that happens to someone else, something we use to cast out demons and hold back the maleficarum from ourselves.

But there is a truth we don't like to admit when we're boasting. Even for those of us in the North, there is a true fear: failure. A death in battle is a thing to be welcomed, assuming it accomplishes something. But to go back to the mud in a pointless little brawl? That is failure, that leaves the task of our life undone, our wyrd unraveled and insulting the fine weaving of the fates. That is what we all fear: to dishonor the tribe, to dishonor our family, to dishonor ourselves.

Fear is the enemy of thought. It makes you turn you back and break the shield-wall, lets you be cut down from behind. Unlike rage, which brings your axe

strength, it lends only power to your legs, and cuts away the most powerful weapon a warrior can bring to bear, before the fight even starts - his mind.

Fear is a blade, one with two edges. You can use it to disable your foe far before the battle itself is properly joined, and in so doing shed a little less blood, or waste a little less time on unworthy foes. But it is always poised over your own neck, as well. Control it, fight it, and most of all, prepare for it to strike you. I have known fear. Fear of failure, fear of being hurt by the words of others, even fear of being alone. But, in the end, I endured. It is possible for anyone who has made it as far as Travance to fight fear, to hold it back. But what you must do is build a strong basis for yourself. A code of honor, the tangled skein of loved ones, or something as simple as loyalty to a land. Without something to believe in, your conviction will be lacking, and you will run from the test.

Balfurous and the cold, long dark of winter comes to test us, Travance. Will you defeat the fear that follows in his wake? Find the thing worth living for, the things worth fighting for, and you will.

TRUE ENEMY *BY JACK DIMMS*

On a Raven's Field up North I have looked into the eyes of an enemy

On his last breath, near death, his thread sent him to me.

I saw the light in his eyes flicker and grow cold

The thought of defeating me was ever so bold

But in that coldness I saw true bravery and courage

I was but a child, what I learned was quite certain.

Others claim to know fear, to have sat with it and drank.

I stared it in the face, took it's head and it's body ended up on my plate.

Hatred, another form of fear I've learned to conquer

Used it to beat my path so I could travel onward

See our true enemy is fear.

Will you let it run your life or rise above?

Cause the only thing that conquers this enemy is love.

I have found love in my friends, in Akira her beauty like a thousand sunsets

Raising my spirits high when all I feel is upset.

I've upset fear and this new man grows stronger.

My true enemy defeated, I will endure this battle no longer

NEGATIVE ENERGY CREATURES: LYCANTHROPES

BY EHLENATHELASA BLACKTREE REIGN

Lycanthropes are humanoids who have been cursed to transform into ravenous man-beasts in the light of the full moon. Human, elf, goblin, any race may carry this affliction, and it can in its saddest instances be passed at birth from parent to child. Lycanthropes present an unusual dilemma to the moral Hunter ("moral" and "Hunter" usually and reasonably being considered contradictory terms). Not intrinsically evil, they are the victims of a force beyond their control, one which can sometimes be reversed.

Unlike Vampires and True Warlocks, Lycanthropes – particularly the common Werewolf – tend to travel in packs, and will actively seek to increase their numbers by spreading their curse – or by mating. They grow in power and size as they age, and there are several recognized power "tiers". The most powerful, some of which have lived for centuries or longer, can transform into their Were-form at will, even without the power of the full moon, and may maintain their human intelligence even after transformation. They are the exclusive quarry of the House Reign, who in Travance are represented by myself, Ehlenathelasa Blacktree Reign, and Aiden DelDragon Reign, son of the famed late Templar Shamis DelDragon Belmont.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A LYCANTHROPE

Unfortunately, only a trained Witch Hunter can accurately identify a lycanthrope when it wears its human form. There are however some details which may be noticeable to the untrained eye. Lycanthropes tend to possess great strength and speed even as humanoids, and may often – though not always – have difficulty containing their temper and passions. They develop a preference for meat, the more under-cooked the better. Victims in the early stages of the curse may report instances of memory loss or confusion during times of Change. It is very important that when attempting to identify a lycanthrope one not fall prey to stereotyping: a gallant, well-groomed knight is just as likely to carry the curse as is a wild-eyed and raggedly-dressed gypsy.

IS IT A LYCANTHROPE OR JUST A LARGE WILD ANIMAL?

Lycanthrope footprints are larger than average, and they tend to walk on their hind legs alone when not at a full sprint, rather than on all fours. The chances of your mystery animal being a Lycanthrope diminish greatly if not within the three days of before, during, and after a full moon. Only the most powerful Lycan-

thropes possess the ability to change at will.

While a pattern of attacks occurring only during the full moon is generally the first indication that you may be dealing with a Lycanthrope, do not automatically assume it is so. It is not uncommon for murderers and brigands to attempt to hide their crimes by mimicking the timing of a Werewolf attack.

DEFENDING YOURSELF

Lycanthropes are particularly wary of silver, and may actively avoid where it is found in large amounts. If you find yourself fighting one, if possible try not to kill the creature. While many lycanthropes are villainous, soulless beasts who have fallen prey to their own lust for power, many more are frightened innocents who may not even be aware of their own actions when transformed.

A lycanthrope which reverts to its humanoid form once unconscious is likely fairly newly made. Every attempt should be made to cure these unfortunates. One which retains its animal shape presents a more difficult problem. Ideally, one should never find oneself in the presence of an unconscious Greater Lycanthrope without being accompanied by a trained Hunter. In the hopefully-unlikely event one does find themselves in such a situation, the best course of action is, regrettably, to strike the deathblow.

Distance is your greatest defense against these creatures. Regardless of type, they must physically wound you in order to pass on the curse. If you think you may have been in physical contact with a lycanthrope: **SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY**. Any well-trained Hunter can detect the presence of the Curse, and a powerful druid may be able to remove it before it has progressed.

If you believe a Lycanthrope may be active in your area, once again, contact a Witch Hunter **IMMEDIATELY**. Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to capture a lycanthrope on your own.

Questions? Comments? I stand ready to advise.

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Questions? Comments? Interested in writing for or advertising in the *Chronicle*? Contact the editor or send a letter to the *Chronicle* offices in Pendarvin!

TRAVEL TIPS, or, HOW NOT TO PANIC WHEN YOUR HORSE DIES

BY AMBASSADOR MEANDER CORRELIS

Sometimes, despite all of your best intentions and planning, the unexpected can happen. It can be all too easy to simply fall into a panic when you are on your way to the event of the year, dressed in all of your finery, and disaster strikes.

This article was originally to be a write-up of the annual Winterdark Ball, reporting the outcomes of the various contests and of the costumes that everyone had put such effort into creating. I myself made a lovely cake that had to be eaten myself when we became stuck on the road. En route to the ball, our horse began to slow down. The driver assured us that the horse would be able to make the journey, but was feeling a little overworked and he just needed to be a bit more careful. Miles away from the nearest village, what could we do but accept the situation? But even fashionably late was not in the cards when our horse huffed and puffed and finally collapsed. That was about the time that panic began to set in.

I am a very organized sort of person. I make plans, and when I am forced to change these plans, I get very flustered. When plans fall apart completely, I go into a panic. I confess to a sort of fear of losing control. What happens if someone doesn't do the job correctly, or as well as I could? If I lose control of a situation, depending on the stakes, something very bad could happen. If it's an alchemical experiment, I could hurt myself, my property, or even other people. Even for little things, such as planning a tea party, it can be difficult to delegate tasks out of fear that people will become too busy, or forget, and something won't get done.

But sometimes, when you are at the end of your rope, allowing someone to take control can be a balm to that fear. When our horse collapsed, I panicked because I immediately knew that I had found myself in a situation that I didn't know how to handle. I feared that we would miss the ball completely, that our horse would die, that we would get attacked on the road and be unable to get away... my mind conjured up all sorts of scenarios. But Herrister stepped in, helped the driver take care of our sick horse, and sent the driver to the nearest town for help while we stayed with the horse, which the driver feared might die if we forced him to move any more. Sometimes, the key to dealing with a fear is to let someone else help take care of you. In the end, while we missed the ball and all of you, the experience was an important little life lesson, and Herrister and I feel a little closer because of it. And unfor-

tunately, I found out that the horse died anyway the next day.

LAUD TARTAR-SAUCE A TRADITIONAL LONDWYN SONG

Late upon a Friday night

A man was struck with craving a bite
Of fish fried golden and battered with ale
And this is merely the beginning of our tale

He sought long and hard for his treasured fish
Naught could satisfy but this one dish
So to the pub he leapt with haste
"I must have fish, no time to waste!"

He reached the pub, threw the door open wide
And announced to everyone inside
"Bring fish and chips, with ale for three!"
"Though the only one dining shall be me!"

"I've a hunger that knows no surcease!"
"So please bring fish, that I may soon know peace!"
They brought it swiftly, fried to perfection
As he ate, his eyes rolled up in a heavenly direction

He ate, and ate, three times six servings more
The pub's collective jaws reaching towards the floor
"How could this be," the cook wondered aloud
"Of this feat I'm unsure if I should be disgusted or proud."

He kept on eating with great delight
Til it occurred to him a new facet to his plight
The food was dry, and the ale was wet
But there was still something missing yet

"A sauce!" he cried, "shall make this fish complete!"
"And I may finally rest happy and replete!"
"So whip one up, chef, if you dare,"
"And you shall be lauded a master beyond compare!"

And so the cook thought and he looked around
To see what ingredients could be found
A pinch of this, a dash of that
Mixed well and served in no time flat

The cook served it to with speed
Anxious that it should sate his need
He slathered it on, heavy and thick
"I certainly hope this does the trick!"

He took three bites and exclaimed with glee
"By thunder, this is the sauce for me!"
"Sweet and complex, but my favorite part,"
"Is that bit of lemon that makes it also tart."

"Tartar sauce!" went up the cry
A savior of fish once thought dry
The man and cook shared a smile
The celebration lasted quite a while

And now you know the story of the sauce's name
That soon spread wide to glory and fame
That was originally made to satisfy
The hungry lord of the fish fry

MASK *BY ANONYMOUS*

I am nothing but a scared child behind a mask
Multiple layers of wooden facades hiding my true face
Paint slowly chipping at the edges with each lie I speak

I'm the insect dangled above hungry birds
Snapping their beaks with ruffled feathers
Iridescent wings to lie in the bellies of predators

I am the one always running
Alone and with company all at once
A wanderer with nowhere else to go

I am nothing but a scared child behind a mask
Personalities spawned out of fear and regret
The wood carved out with shivering hands

BY THE CAMPFIRE *BY LORELAI SIHNON*

The fog had rolled in without preamble, blanketing the ground with billows and wisps. If you looked along your arm, your hand outstretched was nearly a stranger, and the sound had that hollow quality such as when you've got a headache.

I was trying to push away thoughts of these eerie surroundings, bare trees climbing out of sight as their limbs creaked in a non-existent breeze, cooking a small bit of meat pie over my miserably small fire, when a low whuffling sound pushed its way past the fog's embrace to me. A hollow clatter followed suit, as if the

introduce the slippery hiss that seemed to itch along my skin. Across my fire, two, three, five eyes blinked into view, glowing with a vicious purple enhanced by a slow narrowing gaze.

My meat pie, rather forlornly, fell into the fire with a sizzle, punctuating nicely the hiss of the fog as it met the demon's skin. As the pie crust popped, the skeleton beside him clattered into a log on the floor, unheard until the distance had closed. With a last wheezing goodbye, my pie greeted the one-eyed lycan whose fur hid its form in the embraces of fog.

The lycan smiled, slobber and blood dripping from its teeth, and spoke to me in my father's voice.
"What's the matter, little girl? So afraid to share dinner with your pa?"

The demon's laughter as it stepped through the coals of my pie-dampened fire and reached for me chin, the skin cracking with heat, notified me that, however aware I was, I was unable to act. My limbs frozen as in counterpoint to the hellfire that held my stare, I felt a gash open in my side as a skeletal hand ripped my ribs asunder. Pulling out an organ, fresh and red with my lifeblood, it spoke with a voice of gravedust and rot, "We shall not go hungry."

Somehow, the trio's power held me, alive but immovable, as I watched the demon rekindle the flame to burn at the night's fraying edge. I saw the lycan eyeing my organ, perhaps a liver, with undisguised animal glee, whimpers of excitement accompanying its sick gaze. The skeleton skewered my liver, holding it into the fire, my campsite barren and unfamiliar in the sudden absence of the fog.

I knew what was to come, but a woodpecker, deciding perhaps that it was not to be outdone, introduced its work to my ear and I was startled awake, tied to a wide tree branch and wrapped in my cloak.

It must be the time of spirits, I thought. I hope this dream was only fear, and not portent.