

The Travance Chronicle

VOL. 4 NO. 1

"If it bleeds, it leads."

JANUARY 1215

A FINAL END TO THE DEMON WAR

This past Feast brought with it the true closure of one of the darkest chapters in history.

When Xualla was defeated a year ago, his partner Balfurous escaped. For months he harried both Travance and the Underdark as he and his minions sought a strange gem. While the scale of devastation was not as large as occurred during the original invasion, it still proved deadly to many, particularly those below the surface world.

Much has been said about Bloodtide: in the end, both Bloodtide and a score of other legendary weapons from other times and places were needed to defeat Balfurous without dooming the entirety of Travance. Bloodtide has been broken and the other weapons have been returned to their original timelines.

This victory was truly a victory of unity. Over this past year, the true might of Travance has been shown: not just the sword-arms and shield-walls of the very powerful, but the bravery of the young who ventured into the Inverted Tower to retrieve needed items, the patience of the scholars who read through countless tomes, and more—truly, there is none in Travance who cannot claim part of this victory as their own.

So has been the first year of the Fourth Age: a year of unity and triumph.

ATTACK ON VALDALIS

In the last week reports have come in of massive damage to the storehouses and roads of Valdalis.

Valdalis is also known as the Crossroads, due to its position on both the bank of the Aris River and the convergence point of many of the major roads that lead to the Proper.

Though there are no confirmed reports of deaths, many trade caravans have been stalled due to obstructions on the roads, and two of the Barony's large warehouses have been burned down. Pricing of goods has become erratic as many merchants have decided to either liquidate and flee or raise prices to meet the sudden demand. In addition, a gathering of upset and

frightened merchants and townspeople was dispersed peacefully by Sir Slack McDermitt, protector of Valdalis. Indeed, it is through Sir McDermitt's prodigious efforts, as well as an increase in the presence of the Baronial Guard, that the damage to Valdalis has been mitigated.

For any who wish to help rebuild Valdalis or assist any of the townspeople who have lost their winter provisions, please contact Angeliana Himmlisch, who has spearheaded a recovery effort. If you wish to help protect Valdalis from future attack, contact Sir McDermitt or the Baronial Guard.

Anyone with information pertaining to the attacks is encouraged to report the information to Seneschal Von Kreutzdorf.

A TOURNAMENT UPON THE SNOWS THE PENDARVIN MARTIAL COMPETITION OF THE WINTER FESTIVAL BY DR. TOBIAS ARMITAGE

It was quite the crowd that gathered upon the wintry ground to watch some of the canniest and most skilled fighters in all of Travance. A warm bonfire, courtesy of the lovely hosts of Pendarvin, ensured the audience remained between bouts - and what a set of bouts it was.

While I am not a talented practitioner of the arts that were on display, I was not alone in being dazzled as staff crashed against spear and shield caught blade. Every new match was a new shouted rivalry, as the crowd rapidly turned from one favorite to another, equally praising winners and heaping good-hearted jibes upon the losers.

The Baronial Guard had two of its own reach the late stages of the tournament - the lightning-quick fists of Corporal Imhrahil brought the crowd to silence more than once. Equally impressive was Guardsman Recruit Samuel Reynolds, representing Her Royal Majesty's Mounted Cavalry and showing that Londwyn does not lack for talent with a blade and bulwark at hand. Sir Tyros Dalmar also made a very impressive showing, falling just short of the finals. But while the

Northman Maevith displayed great skill to reach the championship bout, it was Kanas Whisperwood of Kaladonia who took home the proverbial laurels as the winner of the tournament. If any reading this seek a display of soldierly talent, the names above will not disappoint.

WINGS

BY ANONYMOUS

Our lives were joy once. Trying to come up with a common word for it is difficult. Freedom is close, but still not quite right. The dark faeries, as you call them, took that through a trick. Enslaved us in our entirety. Don't think of someone taken into slavery like a mortal can be. They still have a chance to rebel, to disobey an order if they want to risk punishment. We could struggle, but eventually, the order would be obeyed.

I cannot put this time in mortal years. Time was meaningless for us. But, try and imagine a length of time and then double that. You might be close.

The 'mistress' had taken my name long before I was brought to Alok Malagan. She never explained why she left me there. I thought it was to torture me. She put a healer in such a place of death. Her last order to me was to not tell my new masters what I was. It stuck, like all other orders, but her wording had been rushed, imperfect. Looking back I think she knew what was coming. Got rid of me to keep herself safe because she knew what would happen to her if I had been freed in her home.

My time in that place can be counted, but it is not yours to know. The night my immortality was given up was the best and worst day of existence, of what now is my short life. That 'freedom joy' was back and I briefly wreaked havoc on those creatures. I had been taking my time, knowing now I had all the time in the world and no creature could stop me.

Until morning came. Imagine a Templar who was moving at their speed of flight and then struck an invisible wall.

It stopped like that.

What a mistake I had made.

The pain of mortality is something else I am unsure how to express. "Shattering Glass" I know are not words to express a feeling, but a sound, but that is what you get. I was caught like a butterfly crushed by a mace. After that moment everything changed.

Before this, the creatures had a game of ripping off my wings. They always took their time with it. Did it in

a way that the thing called 'exquisite'. I won't use my words for it. They did this because, no matter what new trick it came up with, my beautiful wings grew back. Always did.

Not this time. No time since.

They realized letting me live was good enough punishment for my actions now that mortality existed. They thought death was a blessing they were not ready to give. But despite my unwillingness for mortality, that night was also the reason I met my dearest friends, the dragon and the genius. The best material plane creatures I know. Not mere humans at all.

Before that night I was tucked away as a private toy. After, I was cast out with the others and forced to interact. I didn't like it at first, but they liked my healing, they had liked my 'light show' the night before, as one put it. They liked my look. I liked my freedom. It wasn't joy freedom, but I realized I could disobey now. I could lie and promise and it was up to me to do it.

So we waited and planned and dreamed and one day a strange monster, a human pretending to be an undead, sparked an escape and an army of light came and bashed at the doors of night.

But that is a longer story and you know the ending.

TO MY TORMENTOR

BY A VAIDEN EARFALAS

I have learned the ignorance of this world,

The Hypocrisy.

My eyes have been opened,

Thank you,

For turning me into

Who I am.

SURVIVAL AND REDEMPTION

BY TARI

This is a story of pain, torture and ultimately survival and redemption. Six years ago I had only heard of a creature by the name of Pesmerga, a vampire that struck fear into the heart of those that heard it. I had no way of knowing that by the time this tale was over I would not only know Pesmerga much better but that my life would forever be changed by him. I had been asked to help my witch hunter family research Pesmerga. It seems I opened the wrong book; to this day I do not know what drew Pesmerga's attention to me but he came swiftly through that book and he took

me. What ensued from there was a flurry of chaos and death and enthrallment. It was like a terrible dream from which I could not wake up, and yet once enthralled I would have done anything for this complete stranger. Upon Pesmerga's first visit to Travance he quickly found me and I began following him as a hungry pup follows its master, fawning over him, and willing to obey his each and every command simply to have the kindest word from him.

This story however is less about Pesmerga and more about a beautiful and terrifying creature named Annabelle that accompanied him. She was a very loyal banshee and it was she who would take me to the dark depths I never knew my soul could go, and certainly never thought I could return from. By the time Pesmerga was ready to return home the town had succeeded in severing my enthrallment. Pesmerga and his friends caught me in front of the inn where I was with much of the town. I begged each for help but fear took their hearts and none moved to help. Pesmerga grabbed me and flew off with me before I knew what was happening with the town just observing this wondrous sight.

Upon being brought to the city of Malagan I was given poor quarters of my own. It was there that I was tortured constantly: my captors enjoyed torturing me so much it was as a great minstrel fine tuning his craft daily practicing tearing apart my flesh and bones. My whimpers and screams were the notes most pleasing to their depraved ears. My agony was their favored dessert, and only the blackness of slumber was my respite. And soon, even that was stripped from me as my nightmares worsened and their cruel stares and smiles were projected onto the inside of my eyelids like a candle would cast a shadow on a wall. Each day Annabelle would tell me that Travance did not care about me, that they gave me to Pesmerga, that they would not come to save me. When I did what they wanted I was greatly rewarded: when I spoke fondly of Travance I would be punished severely. Eventually I began to change loyalties: I began to regard those in Malagan as my family, and those in Travance as my enemy. I became so very dark that I became like my captors, instead of being the tortured I began torturing. I hurt those poor peasants around me and searched daily for ways to please Annabelle and have her be proud of me. It was as if Annabelle turned me into a living doll: a smaller, twisted version of herself. The ecstasy that filled my heart when a peasant's will would shatter like a bone under a hammer would drive me to obsession. I sought a new subject like an animal seeks it's next

meal. I began to regard Annabelle as a mother figure and Pesmerga as a father. They were a family I would do anything for. During my metamorphosis into the dark puppet that I became, I at first had hope of rescue. But as time wore on, the bright burning hope of reuniting with Travance became a dim and smoky coal that, when finally extinguished left me bitter, and resentful of my abandonment. I embraced my captors, and was glad I had a new home and family.

It was then that a clergyman of Aguara came for me. I know not what promises he made or threats he uttered, but I was expelled from my new paradise and forced to return to my former home. Like a bagged wild cat I fought him: kicking, biting and spitting. He, quite naturally, had me bound, and only released me once we reached what I now saw as a prison - the town they call Travance. I hated Travance and wanted to return to my home, my family, in Malagan. It took months if not years for me to come to my senses. Many times during those years I prayed and beseeched death to take me. Many turned their back on me during this time, believing I was evil and was no longer worth speaking to. Slowly I began to come back and realize that I had been manipulated but Annabelle always held a special place in my heart. I could not let go of her, or the future I knew that I was promised: that when I died I would become a banshee. This was a curse I bore for several years not telling anyone, one that I hid from even the closest of my friends.

I live with the guilt. There was a time I believed that there should be no forgiveness for what I had done. It has taken a great deal for me to understand that I cannot erase what I have done but instead must accept it for what it was. This story serves as the last piece of that acceptance. I have, for many years, kept Pesmerga and my story close to my heart as a dark secret, scared of what those Travancians who did not know this story would do. However I have decided this story needs to serve as the final chapter, a good bye to my story, and a lesson that people can be redeemed even in the worst of circumstances. As I write this, I find myself thinking about Annabelle, who lives on somewhere in the world, somehow escaping death yet again. However, while I have wished her ill will, I realize she also has made me what I am today, and thus she is forever part of my story.

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WHAT WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE

BY ALKZAR

The sun did not shine moons prior to the event. The days were cold, colder than what the northerners were use to and the nights seemed to drag. Something was stirring up and William knew it. Quickly, he rallied the men together, arming them with swords and armor all fit for kings - an advantage that sadly didn't turn the tides for the better. The men rushed to the outer walls and closed all entrances to the city. The town of Hallen was being overrun by goblins. For the next few nights the voices of men crying and goblins dying flooded the air. It was such a tragedy no one dared to leave the village. It wasn't until the third day after the chaos that the doors were opened, and to everyone's eyes, lost.

While the goblins were defeated the price to pay was unbalanced. Not a single man or beast had the breath of life in them. As the village worked to try and count their dead, the numbers grew so great that it seemed that there was no hope to be found. While everyone could be accounted for dead or alive, there was one who was missing. William could not be found. There was no body, no body to prove that hope was gone, no body to show it was over. All that was left was a cape - the cape that William wore into battle. This was unsettling for his son Alkzar; to know his father was dead would have been better for him. Now, there was nothing to prove of what he feared most. This idea of uncertainty, not knowing if his father was indeed alive or dead, destroyed Alkzar. Hope clawed at him, tearing at his heart, while reality and common sense were pulling the other way.

Gabie, Alkzar's mother, never showed weakness. She knew she had to stay strong for her sons, for Alkzar. She knew how attached Alkzar was to William. If Alkzar saw weakness in her there would be no hope for the boy. For the next two moons she did all she could to keep the village and her family alive, but she wasn't a leader like William, nor a smith, and without either of those the village quickly fell to ruin. By the third moon she knew there was no hope in Hallen. She packed all the valuables that they had and set off: Gabie, Alkzar, Gabe and Felixx. There was no destination in mind; she just believed that when she was were she needed to be she would feel it. But this was not to be the case.

On their journey they were attacked by a goblin patrol. Gabie tried to fight them off, but there were too many of them. Alkzar, while skilled, was not nearly powerful enough to take on this horde. The goblins

bound the family and dragged them to their campsite. This was the same pack of goblins that had attacked Hallen and Gabie knew this. One by one they lined up Gabie and her sons, then grabbed Alkzar and brought him over to a forge. He could see they were forging something, a ring, made out of steel, glowing in the fire, inscribed in the language of goblins and with an eerie feeling surrounding it.

Alkzar was in a daze. He didn't understand what the goblins' aims were, but Gabie did. In a violent swipe the goblins grabbed Alkzar's left hand and held it out so that the boy was unable to move. Gabie was enraged, screaming as loud as she could not to touch her little boy, but goblins rarely feel sympathy toward others. They took the ring out of the furnace. It glowed an angry red, and burned brighter than any forge, brighter than any flame Alkzar had ever seen. The Goblins held Alkzar down and placed the glowing ring onto Alkzar's left hand. This was pain beyond anything the poor lad had ever felt in his life, and while barbarians are known for being able to phase right through pain, this was a luxury Alkzar was without. The ring boiled his skin and charred his flesh.

It was in that moment Gabie burst into a blue flash of light and what looked like the figure of a dragon surrounded her. She broke out of her bindings and showed no mercy, tearing and ripping anything that wasn't her sons. The area was now split, Alkzar on one side, Gabie and his two brothers on the other. In the chaos Gabie screamed for Alkzar to run, and so he did. He ran for miles and miles never looking back. It wasn't until he was out in the middle of the forest with nothing but the trees to hear him and the whistling wind to talk to him that he realized he was alone.

There was no going back now, his family as he knew it was gone, and much like his emotions toward William he would never know if his mother or brothers would ever see him again. He looked at his left hand, at the scar and char that those beasts had given him, and the ring that was now cool, and yet finely crafted. All he could do was stare, he didn't know what to do or what to feel. He simply stared.

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! Contact Father Belegchand Dinephilin for details.

SURVIVAL

BY HAZEL STORM

Lost and alone the path unclear,
Twisting turning no exit here.
Surviving on roots and berries, trying to stay alive
Then a light as bright as the sun is warm appears.
An angel rescues her and brings her back to the living.
Survival is instinct and nothing more some would say
But in this world today,
Survival is second nature to one and all.

Long for the freedom of the sea?

Wish to make a difference?



Join the fleet!

contact Lord Admiral Sylus for more information!

REFLECTION ON SURVIVAL

BY ANONYMOUS

When I first saw the theme announced for this month's Travancian Chronicle, it angered me.

Survival.

What does that even mean? Not dying? Finding enough food so that you don't starve? Living through a fight that leaves you shattered and broken and only a pale shadow of the man you used to be?

In my opinion, none of those are things to be celebrated. You didn't die? Good for you. You've got

another day to stick around and maybe not die again. Live through a fight, but there are no healers around? Well, if you don't find one soon, you might never be able to fight again.

Next point. How many of you guys here were born in Travance? I can only think of one off the top of my head. You've all come from somewhere else. Running from something or towards something, either way, you're here. I guarantee most of you haven't lived a life of sunshine and roses - why would you stick around if you had the option of living easy? I know I probably wouldn't have come here if I could.

It all starts with the parents, you know? You might have never known yours. You might have, but then they died. You might have had some that mistreated you. You might have had some that were the nicest sodding people you've ever met and raised and supported you as if you were the wind beneath their metaphorical wings. Doesn't matter. No one chooses the way they come into this world. And at such a young age, you don't do much choosing. Your survival depends solely on other people.

Side note, wolves probably count as people in this case. I know some of you were actually raised by them. And some of you people have far worse manners than those guys, just saying. In fact, I would recommend you people with deficiencies in manners, decency, and/or common sense that if you ever have kids, drop them off with the nearest nursing she-wolf you can find.

Would have saved me a world of trouble if mine did. See, here's the thing. Growing up, I had two pretty well-off parents. Loving as they could be... until something happened. They started fighting. I became an enemy. Father didn't think I was his kid. Got locked up in a study, forbidden to see my baby sibling, isolated from the rest of the household, you know the drill. And then I end up by the side of the road, in some caravan I got smuggled onto. It gets attacked. I get picked up by a bunch of Aguarans. Used as a distraction so they could go on their merry way of slaughter.

Not fun.

Eventually, I got an out. Someone who was better to me than my "mother" and "father" ever were sprung me from that. I was seven when he got me away from those scumsuckers. And you know what? For a while, I didn't realize that. In my head at the time, the Aguarans treated me better than my parents, and then this guy and his merry crew just butchered them all in front of me.

And that's another big part about survival: realizing

what the heck is going on around you. Yeah. I could have wallowed in misery. Planned to stick a knife in this guy's back when he was sleeping (and yeah, I was eight when I was thinking this). Kept hope alive by clinging onto a delusion of false kindness, rather than accepting the kindness freely offered. It's hard, taking those first steps. Medicine is bitter, after all, and taking steps into the unknown, especially when knowing something in there might snap back at you and make you feel a hundred times worse than you did before, well, it can make you pretty hesitant to do it.

Never be afraid of that unknown.

You're going to get beat to drek, hurt, and have aches in your heart that you never thought you would have found. You're going to have love ripped away from you and innocence shattered and you're going to wish that you want to die and make the whole world die with you.

And you might be lucky enough to have someone reach out to you and try to take you by the hand and pull you out of that ditch that life beat you into. And you might be thinking to yourself, "oh, that hand is just hiding a meat grinder to turn my hand into bratwurst when I reach out to take it," or "oh, someone's going to come along and chop that hand off when I pull myself up, so when I fall without support, I'm going to fall even harder in the mud."

When you start thinking that, you're the soldier with the disfigured arms who can't fight anymore. You might nurse that side of yourself, subconsciously thinking there's a romance to it. Think of that the next time you're walking through an infirmary, filled with broken men, only coping with the pain by drinking poppies' milk. You might be thinking that you're stronger from "cutting off" those parts that enjoy the nice things in life, thinking that it makes you soft. Might as well go cut off an arm for the same reasons. But wait! With only one arm, that arm's gonna have to work twice as hard, right!? It's gonna be extra strong!

Come on. Common sense, people. Ain't just for commoners.

Or, you might be thinking. "Oh, but I'm going to depend on people. That makes me just like an infant." Okay. Keep thinking that. You know what babies do? They suckle from their mothers, crawl, and make a mess of their nappies. You know how you can separate yourself from the infants? By letting the person who you're leaning on lean on you. Babies don't support people. But if you support others while letting others support you? That's how chain mail is made, people!

You can let your suffering define you. It's easy. But

it ain't healthy. Remember those people with the blue running from their eyes. That's what they did. When that suffering was gone, there was nothing left. And there are too many people like that in this world, and not all of them have that blue gunk dripping down their face showing it in plain sight.

And yeah. People. Been using that word a lot.

It boils my blood to hear some of you guys as thinking others "less than people." And I have.

I could have been some slaving lunatic who went on stabbing people. I might have been one of the people you guys fight and leave their body lying on the side of the road, if it weren't for one. Single. Person.

This whole article has pretty much been one big rant, but I ain't a smart orator. I'll leave it up to you to find a meaning out of this. But mere survival is cheap. Damn near worthless, if you ask me. Figure out how to do more. And trying to make other people NOT survive? Also not enough.

ONE HAND CLAPPING: THE FIVE MAPS BY IMRAHIL

Many hundreds of years ago my order was asked to aid a provincial governor against marauding clans that sought to scavenge on the productivity of his subjects. Our leadership was quick to lend our assistance, and in short order security was regained. Most famously, a band of brigands that sought to circumnavigate our protective borders landed from the sea, and pillaged their way inland. Our order learned of this and began to track these pirates. Less than a week later, their entire company of over 100 was either undone or captured. Our casualties numbered four. This gave the governor pause: These simple people, wearing only linen and bearing a wooden staff, if armed at all, stood as a force that could hinder his ambition. And ambitious he was. But before he would rise to the emperor's throne, he would eliminate his potential downfall.

First was the Temple of Four Winds, the holiest site of our order, stormed and burned to the ground. A few escaped and brought warning to the other temples with scant time to act. As each successive temple was sacked, the remaining leadership formed a desperate plan: the children would be our last hope at salvation. There in the caves beneath the husk of the Temple of Four Winds artists toiled by dim firelight, and five young initiates clenched their teeth and bled while a map was imbedded with ash into their backs. None

bore the whole, as their capture could show the location where our brothers and sisters would rebuild our temple.

Once the map was complete, the five children and their watchers were scattered by our allies of the Red Junk Opera, learning the trade of opera performers in exchange for training the opera performers in martial arts. For years they stayed under the protective eye of the opera, while yet more brothers and sisters fell to the governor's ambition. It was around the time the former governor ascended to the emperor's throne that the map bearers had completed their task of gathering the far flung remnants of our order, and rebuilding the Temple of Four Winds in a much more strategically sound location. The new Emperor was furious, but knew he had been bested. The siege engines of his grand army would be unable to scale the cliffsides of the temple's new home. The truce was uneasy, but as successive generations unfurled in relative peace, eventually the temple would come to be regarded as a national treasure.

While Xualla's invasion has in all likelihood destroyed what the Emperor could not, this map-bearer shall find a way to keep the Temple of Four Winds tradition alive.

SURVIVAL IN A WAR-TORN LANDSCAPE

BY AMBASSADOR MEANDER CORRELIS

It was late November of 1213, and the streets of Crownhurst were surprisingly empty.

Throughout the city the scars of battle had taken many forms. Buildings were broken, and gardens were ablaze. The many holes in the streets gave glimpses of exposed sewers. The sounds of battle being waged came from nearly every direction. The clash of blades and roar of armies were punctuated by the occasional explosion. I stumbled through the streets and my eyes darted around constantly with nervousness. My family was somewhere in this city, and so was Herrister.

The world spun as I steadied myself and continued wandering. I headed toward the area of the city where my father's business was, or at least where it had been. I hoped it would still be there. I was so dizzy I leaned back against a wall in a shadowy corner of a house. I hadn't known it then, but our last violent encounter with demons on our way through Selendrias had left me with a severe concussion. I slid back against the wall, and my eyes fluttered shut against the haze.

As the haze began to set in, the muffled sounds of action seemed to grow dimmer - that is until the wall across from me exploded and showered broken brick and wood all over. The thick smoke of several explosive bombs clogged the air. I shrieked at the noise, pushed off the wall, and stumbled away from its source. My face was pelted with sharp bits of debris, red scratches appearing on my skin as the shrapnel fell to the ground. I was terribly off balance at that point, and my shoulder bumped the wall as I stumbled with every step. I chanced a look behind me, but all I could see were blurry shapes. I thought to myself, "Just get away while you can". I placed a hand against the wall and used it to slowly limp away.

"Meander? Is that you? What in the seven hells are you doing here?"

I heard my name; the voice was so distinctive and familiar. But if he said more, it just sounded like buzzing. I turned my head to look back, and tried to focus my eyes on the form. "Herrister!" I exclaimed. Even as the world blurred around me, I knew it was him. I let myself lean back against the wall. It would all be okay now.

Herrister rushed forward toward me. His arms shot around me once he reached me, and he pulled me into his arms. As he hugged me close, he whispered, "You shouldn't be here. It isn't safe." I relaxed into his arms, smiled, and rested my head against his shoulder.

"There seem to be a lot more demons in Selendrias. I'd say it's safer here."

He sighed, a hand drifting into my hair. "I meant for you to stay in Travance."

After a pause I responded. "I know what you meant." I tried to gather my thoughts; the concussion continued to scatter them. But I was able to get across what I wanted to say before I fell unconscious. "Herrister, you're more of a fool than I thought you were, if you honestly expected me to just stay in Travance. You're here, my family is here, my people are here, our people are here and you're here..." I trailed off before my eyes fell.

I found out after the fact that the explosion I had encountered had been aimed at a demon just on the other side of the wall from me. If Herrister and his men hadn't been there that day, and with how weak and injured as I was, I would have died. Sometimes survival is all about preparation and having everything you need to defeat the obstacle trying to end you. Sometimes survival is the luck of having someone else there fighting the good fight for you.

THE CAT AND THE SERPENT
A FABLE FROM THE OLD WORLD KATTA
RETOLD BY SWYFT GLITTERLEAF

Back when the world of Arawyn was young,
And the grass grew more green and new was the sun,
It came, one day, that a hapless cat found
a snake lying quiet and prone on the ground.
Was it dead? Was it sleeping? Was it so lost in thought
that it lay here, just thinking and thinking and ought
she not give it a nudge and say "Hey, what's the is-
sue?"
So she did and leaped back and said "Almost didn't
miss you!"
The snake lifted its head rather weakly and said,
"I prefer that you hadn't, for I'd rather be dead."
The cat, quite befuddled, asked with confusion
"How is it you've drawn such a dismal conclusion?"
Said the snake, "Every time that I try to go hunting
I'm stopped by a stoat so ferocious and cunning
that the vermin amass and myself, I grow gaunt
while the stoat grows much fatter and more apt to
taunt.
I am no longer feared. Soon I'll starve and then die,
There's no honor in that, is there, cat? Do I lie?"
Starvation, the cat knew, was a terrible fate
So took pity, she did, on the pitiful snake.
"I will root out this stoat," the cat boldly stated
"And bring him to you, that your hunger be sated."
All too soon, she returned, looking woefully beaten.
Sighed the snake, "A new night with nothing to be
eaten."
The cat grumbled and began to groom her mussed fur,
Saying "That stoat is fast, he moves like a blur!
It's uncanny, how he knew each move that I'd make.
There was no room for folly, no room for mistake!
I growled and I showed him how sharp were my claws,
But he dodged every slash, and then only guffawed,
'Predictable, ordinary, and sorrowfully boring!
Come back when you've something worth ending my
snoring."
"Predictable? Ordinary?" hissed the hungry snake.
"Don't forget boring," said the cat, "Tough break.
So I'm not quite sure of our next move from here."
But the snake only grinned and said, "I am, my dear."
The cat, ever curious, sat back and listened.
"Teach me to growl, I'll teach you to hiss and
By way of confusion, we'll make quite short work
of this tiresome problem," said the snake with a smirk.
The very next morning, the new cohorts arose,
And began, right away, on their work to disclose
to each other their skills, for which they held pride.

"Here, like this," said the snake, "and narrow your
eyes,
then flatten your ears to the side of your head
bare your fangs, very good! Yes, he ought to drop dead!
Now you push back your tongue and keep your mouth
tight
Force out air in a hissssss..."
"Like thisssss?"
"Yes, that's right!"
"Now to growl," said the cat, "It's all hit or miss.
Press your tongue to your throat, and instead of a hiss
let the air rumble through, and the vibrations sound
quite fierce and ferocious. Yes, that's it! Your first
growl."
Though the going was slow from the snake's weakened
state
The cat helped him to where the stoat lay in wait.
When the creature emerged, the pair took their stand
The snake growling deeply, the cat hissing, as planned.
The stoat, once so self-assured and coordinated
Noticed, for once, he'd found something extraordi-
nary.
And try as he might, sense, he could not make
How a snake was a cat and a cat was a snake!
And while the stoat boggled and shook his small head,
The snake struck once, twice, on the third, killed him
dead.
They could hunt now, unhindered, in the glorious
wood.
When they parted, each promised the other they could
not forget these new skills, and to pass them straight
on
to their young, and regale them of that time, once
upon
when the snake and the cat and the stoat all agreed
There's much to be gained from the ordinary deed.

SURVIVING TO END REGRETS
BY JACK DIMMS

Have you ever looked death in the eye?
My demise has happened more than just one time
I have walked through the Phokus
Thrown back and forth between life and death
And I can say I refuse to die again before making right
on my regrets.
I regret all of my foolishness, regret all my disobedience
Regret my indecision, I've learned my my past experi-
ence
I have no more enemies, you are all my comrades

I love you all, I'd die for you in combat
I've been in struggle lately, my mind torn asunder
The weapon in my head, turning hunted to hunter
Battling my demons in order to be greater by summer
I'm ready to fight, I'm ready to strike, ready to take
on more responsibility
But I have to survive to do that so don't stop believing
in me.

THE MOMENT YOU KNOW YOU SURVIVED

BY A. GYPSY

Coming out of your hiding spot.
Running so fast you make it to the inn.
Waking up as the healer is shaking you, asking if you
are alright.
That trap in your room goes off, and a body thumps to
the floor.
Stepping through the portal as poison gas fills the
room.
Running out of a temple as the walls come crashing
down.
Your arms and legs are eaten, but your head and torso
are fine.
The town didn't kill you while you were possessed.
Taking Edwin's food and not paying for it and walking
by him saying Hello later.
If you make it out of a trip to the Rift or the Abyss or
Faerie.
The moment impossible gets more impossible and a
Pegasus flies overhead.
When it's quiet for awhile and then the room and
world suddenly rush into focus.

and of course,

When you wake up to a new day in Travance!

DAILY AFFIRMATIONS WITH GROGNAR THE DESTROYER

Dear Grognar,

This weekend I found myself in a situation where I
was struggling to be satisfied. My adventures in Tra-
vance did not go as planned and I found myself sitting
around simply running down my time spent at the
feast. I fear my coming to Travance was a waste of
time and I'm unsure what to do if I return. What

should I do?

Sincerely,
Waiting For Adventure

Dear Waiting For Adventure,

GROGNAR IS VERY FAMILIAR WITH THIS SORT
OF THING AND HE FINDS IT SAD TO SEE. NO ONE
SHOULD EVER SIT AROUND SIMPLY WAITING
FOR SOMEONE TO BRING THEM ADVENTURE
AND GLORY. TO CLAIM IT, ONE MUST GO OUT
AND FIND IT FOR THEMSELVES.

IT MAY HURT TO THINK ABOUT THE OPPORTU-
NITIES YOU MISSED, BUT DWELLING ON THEM
WILL ONLY DRAG YOU DOWN AND MISS OTHER
CHANCES TO FIGHT AND CLAIM WHAT IS
YOURS.

YOU ALSO NEED TO FIGHT FOR YOURSELF,
NOT FOR WHAT YOU THINK OTHERS EXPECT OF
YOU. NOT ALL MEN STAND ON EQUAL FOOTING
ON THE BATTLEFIELD, BUT THOSE WHO FORCE
THEMSELVES BEYOND THEIR LIMITS FOR THE
SAKE OF OTHERS WILL SIMPLY DRAG DOWN
THEIR ALLIES. BEFORE ONE CAN STAND FOR
OTHERS, THEY NEED TO STAND FOR THEM-
SELVES. THERE IS NO SHAME IN ADMITTING
THE BATTLES YOU CAN'T WIN AS LONG AS IT IS
NOT SIMPLY AN EXCUSE TO AVOID TRY-
ING. LEAVE TRAVANCE FOR A TIME IF YOU
MUST, BUT DO NOT LET THIS BE YOUR LAST
FEEBLE CRY.

SO GET OUT THERE AND TAKE THAT WHICH
YOU WANT IN YOUR OWN HANDS. YOU CANNOT
SIMPLY WAIT FOR IT TO BE GIVEN TO YOU BE-
CAUSE YOU WILL NEVER GROW. A VICTORY
EARNED RATHER THAN CARRIED IS THE MOST
SATISFYING OF ALL. WHEN THE TIME COMES
AND MY ARMIES CONQUER YOUR HOMELANDS, I
EXPECT YOUR SWORD AND SHIELD TO BE THE
ONE RAISED TO HIGHEST HONOR IN YOUR CON-
QUERED KEEP.

-Grognar the Destroyer

LORE OF THE NORTHMEN: SURVIVAL *BY GRIMKJELL EIRSON*

To speak of survival is to speak of the North. For
we must always endure as the world changes around
us, a memory of the old ways, the ways of strength and
honor, of ice and blades, in a world where magic and
words are replacing them.

Survival means to move the village as the ice melts and cracks, to follow the spoor of the herds of the creatures we hunt, even if it draws us far from where we had settled. It means to make sure someone, anyone, escapes the raid on your village to carry on the family line. It means sheltering the last green shoot which grows in a world of white and grey.

To survive in the north you must be willing to pay the blood-price at times, to be realistic. It means listening to your gothi, to your chief, and to your thane. It means standing and holding shields for your war champion, or being the champion yourself. It may mean raiding when your stores are almost gone, and there is nothing left to hunt.

Survival means keeping your word, and living up to your name. But sometimes survival means running away, too. Because you are the last, and the only way to save others from the threat that cast down your kin is to warn them. Survival is keeping your thread running, as those around you are cut, defending it with your words, your blade, but most importantly... your mind. Strength will win you glory, but it is cunning that will keep you alive.

Remember this, as the wind blows cold from the north, and the Wendigo dance in the sky, ever hungry for our flesh. Other things will walk south as the cold spread. Jotun, and perhaps other tribes. If you are not ready with steel in your heart, words, eyes, and hand, you may well be sleeping on the red snow.

I REMAIN

BY SER JACK SIEFER

From the moment I stepped forward into Travance, I was granted certain privileges through my own upbringing or lineage. Baron William Montgomery was a close personal friend of mine - a man I would trust above and beyond in years to come. But he was also someone who, from the moment I met him, knew I could help him. I offered my services to the Barony not a quarter of an hour of being in the boundaries of Travance, and was offered a position as the Baron's scribe.

Over the years I was tasked with many deeds: some served the position of authority and others demanded a more careful hand. At times, even His Grace saw fit to ask certain things of me. This was expounded when I was accosted by a necromancer who assaulted my mind with foul magics far greater than any man, woman, or child could ever hope to sustain.

If I knew now what I knew then, I would have

wished to die. I would have asked that it all just end instead of prolonging my suffering under the goal of my survival.

But the Baron did not see it that way. My mind, shattered and fractured like clay, was ordered to remain unrepaired by the will of my friend and our then-baron. I knew not who I was or where I came from or even what I was capable of. I was the perfect vessel to be taught how to be a proper Kormyrian and a subject loyal to the Crown above all else. Only three men stood against that choice and I hold them in great esteem: Lord Gideon Weaveforger, Sir Simon Maxwell, and Edwin Haroldson. They knew or understood how a person becomes themselves. I should not have been forced to be a servant of Kormyre, though I still stand by her strongly to this day. I should not have had my life remade or re-imagined as those who were in charge saw fit. I should have chosen my own destiny.

I have for years remained stalwart, serving the Barony and Kormyre, as a scribe, or a squire, or a knight. I have helped in silence and isolation and have been asked to do things individuals should not but are needed. I was the one who helped smuggle Apollo Abendroth and his henchmen back into Travance under the guise of my brother and his military escort in a dangerous gambit to bait him. As a result, Apollo used The Bloody Stump as a staging ground to become a lich and empower his friends. Travance did not mobilize as quickly as we would have hoped and many lives were lost.

Since then my mind as been repaired, but both lives are not forgotten and I am often at odds with myself. It is not easy. I live a life where magic and faith are shunned, and at the same time face that life I lived when it was accepted. A life where Gideon showed me the Weave, and Elawyn its Creation. Where these things were as commonplace as air. Travance and everyone in Arawyn, imagine being at odds with yourself every moment. Seeing two sides of not quite the same coin. I survive because of each and every one of you. I waver back and forth as I am needed. I do what I do for you. Not because I feel I have to or because someone else won't. I know no other way. I am a faithful servant of Travance through and through. Though I don't expect everyone will like what I have to say, it comes from the heart. To Gideon, Simon, and Edwin, truly I thank you. I would not be the man I am today were it not for you.

As once written upon my scroll entitled "Hope" in our darkest time: "We are Travance. Our Lands Shall Thrive Once More."