

The Travance Chronicle

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"If it bleeds, it leads."

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LORE OF THE NORTHMEN: WAR

BY GRIMKJELL EIRSON

To live in the North is to live in conflict. To live in war. When I was younger, I went to our Jarl's Thane, the master of his carls, and he told me: "War's just an elaboration and codification of a much purer activity, which is being alive. Sometimes, at the most basic level, to be alive you must stop other people being alive. This is what we do. We are extremely good at it."

And so we are, even though the Heargen Clan is amongst the most peaceful of the Northmen. When steel is in your hand, when the snow turns red, you walk the crow's road, and all the paths - red, white, black, and gold - flow together and lead into the mud, you are alive in a way that you are not when by the fire singing songs, or planting seeds in a field, or even writing articles for some strange southron paper.

And yet... war is horror. War is the accusing faces of the children you could not save, the stink of corpses burning after a victory, or a loss. It is the Raven-fear and the Bear-rage, it is everything except love. War is a fire that burns through a forest, leaving only ash in its wake. But the things that grow in the wake of such a burning bear no fruit that is not bloody. Feuds, more wars, Clans hating each other throughout the seasons, the snows and the heat, murder passing from father to son.

War is the totality, the burned village. Death wears a thousand faces in a war: the hard knock of an axe or a mallet laying you low; the slow knife of starvation laying you low; the numb, unending ease that is the cold.

And yet, for all that, we cannot resist the call to war. It simplifies things. There are implacable foes that must be met with steel. And there is glory to be found in it, if you seek it, and care for such things. For those with anger in their hearts it brings a short respite from the burning within, as they unleash it to destroy their foes.

In the end, war leaves nothing but bad songs, heroes, piles of dead, and grudges that will last well past the point where everyone who was involved in starting the fight are long gone. Is the shame we feel for our actions worth it? That is perhaps the only

question about war that defies an answer. Any question of the fight itself - even of that which happens after - can be answered, but every heart is different, and every person who lays their hands on war-ice must someday decide if they will put it down or keep going until the end of their road.

War breaks like an anvil, and reforges as well. It is a crucible, of sorts. I came to Travance already a Slayer and a Sacrifice, and it has made me into two new things: the Sword, and the hand that wields it. I think, perhaps, I am broken, made to serve the needs of the people here. But I cannot imagine anything else.

WAR

BY ALEIA MIRYAM NEMEIR

As good and evil clash with swords and shields,
And ballistae shoot arrows with barbed heads,
As feet trample flowers on blood soaked fields,
And wounded men cannot find empty beds,
War rages on, though no one quite knows why,
Men join the battle time and time again,
And every day brave, caring people die,
And every night, it's "When will this end? When?"
And yet, peace talks grow closer every day,
And healers care for captured fighters too,
And everyone knows this is not the way,
And now the only question left is who,
Yes, who is the one who can end the war,
And will that person stop fights - or want more?

ENDLESS WEIGHT

BYS

Sword and scythe. A reaping. A reckoning. A harvest of life. Some spared. Some taken. Where do you go from here? Do you think you can go back to the way of before? Do you don your blinders and charge headlong into the past? Do you quietly despair? Live under a pall? A shadow cast over every second until finally one day, you slip gratefully into the everdark? Do you shoulder your burden? Accept the weight of

coffins hung round the necks of each and every one of you? Or will you revel in the blood and fire? Make war your sacrament and baptise yourself in the souls of the fallen?

You craft an illusion of peace, adulterate its image, then bring war upon it and glory in the chaos and destruction, free from the fetters of civility imposed by the collective consciousness. Once it is over, the cry for false peace is raised once more, 'till once again you chafe under your leashes. This is the cycle. It is ever repeating, and perpetuated by all who live, breathe, fight, and blindly follow the example set by the much vaunted "heroes" of this age and the last.

Yet many are blind to the weight of coffins, though they are inexorably pulled down into the mud by it.

ONE HAND CLAPPING: THE EMPTY PURSE

BY IMRAHIL

Before my arrival here, I would regularly be part of my temple's trade caravan. We would set out to Xiangan, the nearest city, to trade our crafts for other sundries. It was in Xiangan that I became acquainted with Mrs. Hoshi, an immigrant from the Empire of Sun who sold simple but beautiful works of porcelain. Over a number of years we forged a strong friendship. The year before my Sifu passed from this existence, I decided to bring her a gift for the new year. Her purse had grown worn over time, and had neared the point of being better equipped to serve as a sieve than to hold coin. I spent many hours annealing and stitching together the leather for what was sure to be seen as a thoughtful gift.

Or so I had thought.

Mrs. Hoshi smiled widely as I presented her gift, and began to pull away the cloth it was swaddled in. Upon seeing the purse she immediately flung the cover open, looked inside, and in the place of the smile I had anticipated was a scowl and eyes that felt to bore through me. "Do you wish me a pauper?" she pointedly hissed. Taken aback, I replied something to the effect of "How would one as talented and driven as you be taken poor? I meant only to replace your worn purse." She spat back, "Yes, with an *EMPTY one!*"

It took some time to get to the root of the dispute. Apparently among those of the city cultures, the symbolism of being given an empty purse is interpreted as wishing the recipient destitution. Grasping this new knowledge, I asked Mrs. Hoshi to allow me to see her

gift appropriately finished. She handed me the purse, and I placed the two remaining tael I held within it and returned it to her. With this gesture, her broad smile returned, along with her forgiveness.

The lesson of this episode was that a greater literacy of another's culture can preclude or repair disputes in a much more orderly fashion than the closed fist.

DUNGEON CRAWLS 101, or DID THAT JUST HAPPEN!!! *BY A. GYPSY*

Are you the one that dares yourself into a dark hole? Walking into forgotten ruins? Or ancient temples of deities past? Perhaps that space you call a "basement" in your own home?

Well! There is good news. I can give you points of reference from my own humble experiences to make sure your future endeavors don't leave you lost in the fog. Take these helpful hints to heart folks...you may never know when they will save you.

1. Take a light source. Magical or mundane...you will agree with me when you find the need for it. **IT'S A LIFE SAVER!** The deeper the darkness...the more you'll agree. Trust A Gypsy!

2. Even a scrap of information can yield a ton of knowledge from the right scholar. If you find a map and can't decipher everything, find a scholar. Need information on a creature you heard might be in the place, find a scholar. Belechand, Ms. Maxwell, Illana. I think you get the point. Trust A Gypsy!

3. Make sure your gear is up to date. Make sure your gear is up to date. **MAKE SURE YOUR GEAR IS UP TO DATE!** There is nothing worse than your sword breaking or a length of rope snapping when you need it. Trust A Gypsy!

4. Pick the people who go with you. I'm serious. Taking a coward with you could mean your life. Or your friend's life. Protect the person who heals you and your friends. That could definitely mean your life. Take someone with ill intent for what you are doing? Toast. Trust A Gypsy!

5. Finally, and most importantly, expect the unexpected! There are times when your mind will boggle at what you see or hear. Take hold of yourself!!! You're an adventurer, you are used to finding these things. So, don't let them catch you with your pantaloons around your knees or stopping to smell that blue flower glowing out of the wall.

Thank you for reading my advice! I hope it helps.

REFLECTION

BY SER JACK SIEFER

Often in this place that we call home we are put to tests that challenge our very way of life, the foundation of our morals, and just how far we are willing to go for the things we love. It is in these challenges that we find out who we truly are, whether we are the mighty warrior, or the wise sage, or the coward, or the survivor. There is no shame in understanding the faults that we have, for they to make us who we are. The truest test of a person comes not from battle that they can win upon a field with spell or sword, but a battle that is fought every day.

We've all heard the stories and details about a man fighting his inner demons, and sometimes those demons are far worse than even Xualla was. We are shaped and molded by this land and that is why we call it our home. Those parts of ourselves where faults lay are not something we should be afraid of but instead embraced. We should seek to learn everything we can about them, to understand them and why we are the way we are. When you become conscious of your own strengths and weaknesses, they can no longer be used against you. Instead, they become some of strongest weapons in your arsenal. If you are someone who is stubborn, turn that stubbornness inward; let it strengthen your mind and be used as a shield to protect you from those who would seek to control you. If you are someone who is easily frightened, use that fear perform the impossible, to run faster and fight harder. The only difference between courage and fear is that a courageous man embraces his fear: he controls it and doesn't let it control him.

There are so many times when people could be something so great but they choose to accept the life they think they should have. Everyone has the potential for greatness within. The first step is accepting your weakness. The second is realizing that knowing your weaknesses is your greatest asset, because other people will seek to use it against you. You cannot know other people without first knowing yourself. To do that you must face yourself, both the greatest good in the vilest evil within you. This is the conflict of man versus self, and understanding that we are who we choose to be. Never forget that the person who will cause the most problems for you in your life is not a demon or a lich or a ruffian - it is the person that you see in the mirror every morning.

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Submissions, questions, comments? Send us a letter!

CONFLICT

BY J.W.

From conflict comes growth. One must prune the weeds in the garden to make room for flowers to bloom, for crops to flourish. Should the sickle remain idle, anything that might have been of use or risen to glorious heights is choked and strangled by the mediocrity of the detritus around it.

So the gardener must sharpen his shears, and uproot the unworthy. To the other weeds, this seems merciless and horrific. Yet to the vision of the gardener, it is for the greater cause of perfection and unhindered growth of that which is meant to rise.

So too, is conflict the gardener's shears of the world. Clearing the weeds to allow for the blooms to thrive. Wars rage, petty fights break out. The result is the same: the fit survive as the waste becomes ground into fertilizer for the seeds of the future.

Grow tall, my pretty blossoms. My shears are ready.

PRETTY FACES AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

In all my years wandering the realm I regret most the opportunities I've missed in fleeting moments.

To the blushing barmaid You fingers brushed mine briefly as you handed me a cup of ale. For a moment our eyes met and I felt a word form, but the moment passed in silent seconds. We met again later that night, in the washroom. I - Panting, doubled over a bucket, yawning illness into its dark maw. You - Eyes wide as saucers, mouth agape in what I am certain must have been awe or admiration at the sight of me. You quickly shut the door and I heard your footsteps patter off into the dark night. I'll never forget that beautiful moment we shared. If you should find yourself again in Travance it is my fervent hope that you seek me out.

To the lone wolf We met in a field under the stars. You had blood dripping from your maw as you savaged the still, silent form of an ill-fated farmer. As your strong jaws sealed round a limb, you glanced up and our eyes locked. Yes, it's true that I ran from you, but I'll never forget the way the blood slid across your lithe flanks as you sailed through the night in pursuit. If our paths should cross again I only hope that we both might sate our hungers.

With longing and in memory of roads never taken,
Ketryn Shiverthorn

**GETTING TO KNOW TRAVANCE:
VERRILL LEBASTION
BY JACK DIMMS**

Verrill, you're a man who has done so much. You've traveled time, made a home for the misfits of Travance, saved my life numerous times, but where did it all start? Why did you come to Travance and when?

A favor to an old friend, I was brought here by Lord Na to examine some theological ruins.

Interesting, now a lot of people wish to know how were there two of you? I personally met the future you, friendly guy, but it did make me question a lot. Any answers to that?

Well, there are still two of us. We now share the form you are currently interviewing. It's all become rather complicated and I could write a novel upon it, so I will attempt to abridge my answer.

There are two separate timelines. One where the Demonic Incursion happened, and one where it didn't. In that peaceful timeline that was spared of Xualla's invasion I happily eloped and spent my life in the love of a family and academic study for over a century. In this timeline, well, in this world I stayed here, in Travance, until such a time that I sojourned off

through time to master my chronomancy.

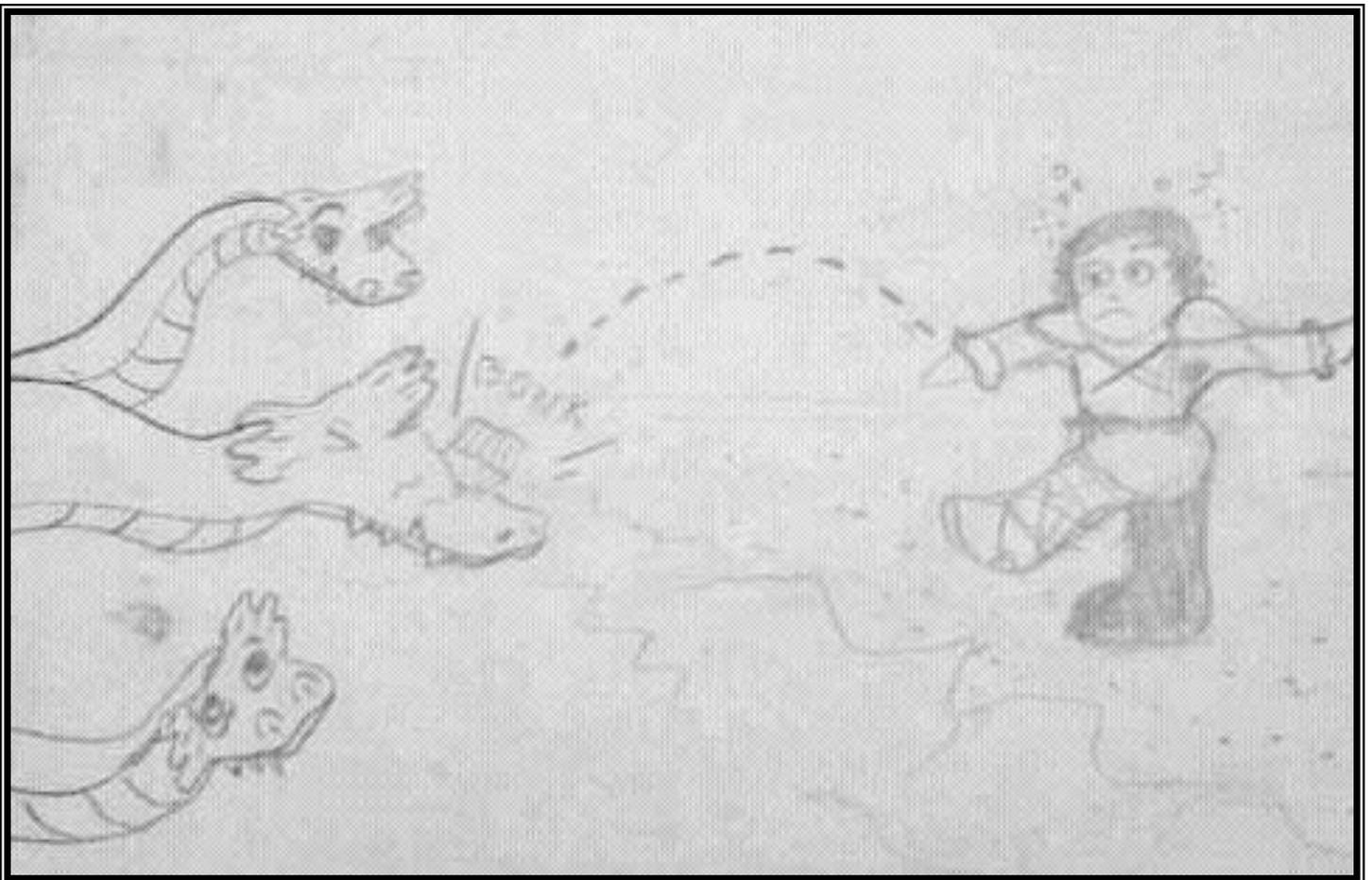
That other timeline no longer exists-- while I was here, aiding you in the fight against Balfurous that timeline was wiped clean by a great nothingness. That family and home are gone. When the Verrill you all knew returned to this place from a centuries long journey we suffused together with some unplanned experimental sorcery. This is now our home, and this town is all the family we have left.

I do hope that answers your question.

Now with that being said, going back to the House you made, House Bastion, which I am a member of, what are your aspirations for the House? What plans do you have for the future?

Ah yes, so glad you asked. House Bastion is a scholastic society of like-minded individuals from all walks of life, who seek to foster a more productive, supportive community through personal responsibility and action. We have two firm principles, Fortitude and Prudence. It is these two driving virtues that fuel our action, or where prudent, inaction.

For the future; well now that the threat of Balfurous has been vanquished I'd hope to expand our membership and reach out to those who may be newer to our community, so that they might find the



WORTHY PURSUITS

BY NALICK UNDERHILL

What good is life without much living?
To do such that you need forgiving.
Sitting back and sipping fermented grapes,
Then nightly drawing closed your drapes.

Rushing off to bed you flee,
But not without some company!
Then again, what good is lust,
And giving in to wanton thrust?

Your reputation is so assured:
A cad knowing naught but the headboard!
See a smile, a nod, a wink, and a stare.
For a while you plod, you think it's not fair,

That I should lack the will to behave.
To that end, I'll be no longer a slave
To metaphorical low-hanging fruits.
The time is now for worthy pursuits.

ART CONTEST

Cast your vote for the art contest and
leave it with Lois Maxwell!

- ARDEN vs. THE HYDRA (previous page)
- THE BATTLE OF HONOR'S PEAK (this page)
- BALFUROUS (next page)



(Verrill, cont.)

support to grow and broaden their horizons. Once the cold seasons have passed we are hoping to give host to a tournament of skill, that might give some much needed revelry to the subjects of Travance.

What do you want to see come from Travance in the future? What would you like to see Travance become?

The future is a fickle thing. I see branching paths, like the roots of a gnarled tree. In our future is much beauty, a world unblemished by cruelty and suffering, but alongside it are countless worlds of horror, greed, and oblivion. This place can degenerate into a pit of pain and death, or it can become something more. The Travance I live for, the Travance I indefatigably fight for, is a beacon. A light burning away the long cold dark of the world. I hope one day you will all join that world, but for now the future is unclear.

Now for the final question. What are some words that you would like to leave Travance with? If you were to die tomorrow, what would you want Travance to remember you by?

Don't ever stop. This world will never let up so neither can you. The path of greed, violence, and corruption bears two common elements: Fear and weakness. It is easier to strike a child than to raise it, it is easier to destroy than to construct. Love takes effort. It takes passion. It takes courage. Never let this world drag you away from that.

I do not need to be remembered. My work is always at its best when I am forgotten.

On a closing note, to those who feel this world is cruel, or vindictive, I will give you a solemn comfort: Every moment we live on borrowed time. In a world in a place, in a story, you are long dead, or have never suffered to live. Nobody exists on purpose, nobody belongs anywhere, everything dies. Believe me when I say I am the version of myself who will never leave this world behind, and neither should you... Good night Travance and good luck, VL.

