

# The Travance Chronicle

VOL. 4 NO. 8

*"If it bleeds, it leads."*

SEPTEMBER 1215

## VISION OF AN OTHERWORLDLY DANCE

*BY IKARI SHIZEN*

The music played softly yet with intense tones as the crowd seemed to sweep through the ballroom. Golden sconces held red flames that gave the large chamber a rich cherry hue. Before my eyes I saw a woman, her hands in mine as we stepped with the music across the floor. Her hands were soft and hot, almost scalding to the touch, but brought no pain as they clung to me. We continued this dance and our eyes met, two astounding spheres of violet, surrounded by pure white. Like amethyst set into a silver pendant. Her skin seemed like the clouds above, but was more than just the light peach of many people I know - it was a stark and unnatural white. Looking at the other guests I saw the same. Pale dancers smiling and grinning at their partners who were equally as strange. Eyes of bright reds, purples, greens, and blues darted across my gaze, seeming like beams piercing through my own eyes. Garments of a quality I cannot fully describe, they seemed to reflect different colors besides the red from the surrounding lights. Some seemed so dark that all light was utterly devoured by them, and others moved more like water or fluid than fabric. My eyes landed once again on the face of the woman before me, her lips curled into a smile that was both cunning and honest.

In what seemed like a single moment all the music stopped, and at one side of the room, sitting in large ornate chairs of incredible craftsmanship, the host and hostess of our party stood up. They gave a toast and spoke of life, of passion, of strength, and kindness. When their speech ended they raised a glass of golden liquid, and I found myself and all the others here doing the same. As I drank from the glass a feeling of pure euphoria passed throughout my entire body, not pleasure but happiness and bliss seemed to flow into my veins from the sparkling liquid. Lights and shimmering orbs began to dance across my vision as a strange and beautiful tune rolled into my ears. The faces of the other guests were similarly captivated, and the violet-eyed woman looked at me with distant eyes and a distracted smile. She wrapped one arm around

me as I rested an arm on her shoulder.

We finished our drinks together and the rest of the night seemed to blend into one scene, myself and this violet-eyed beauty dancing in the red torchlight with a hundred smiling strangers. I left that party feeling freed, and returning to my lodgings fell into such a deep sleep that for a moment when I woke the world seemed new, different, full of something I had not seen before.

## WHY

*BY ANONYMOUS*

Time draws near and enemies approach.

Have you made progress?

Have you found what has gone missing?

Have you lost hope?

Have you even asked the right questions?

Or questioned the right things?

I know, but do you?

A gift for your troubles. The scribe holds the key.



I can see the lifeless, I can feel the darkness under you  
I can see behind me

I can try to hide it but without a will to see the truth

I can feel a heartbeat slowing to nothing

Why don't I go when I know there's nothing I should  
want here?

Why do I stay when I know there's nothing I should  
say?

As I stand behind you, lost in all the things that I would  
do

Never really with you, quietly halfway in the room

Do you see behind you, do you see behind you?

Why don't I go tell me why do I stay when I know  
there's nothing I should want here?

Why don't I go tell me why do I stay when there's  
nothing you can see?

Why don't I go tell me why do I stay when I know  
there's nothing I should say?  
Why don't I go tell me why do I stay when I know  
there's nothing for me here?  
How I see you now is all wrong  
With my hands full and it's all wrong  
And I shouldn't have looked 'cause now I can't look  
away

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### A SIMPLE TRICK BY GUO CHENJING

To make sweet music with your words  
There is a simple trick  
It does not take a practiced hand  
To make your lyric stick

Some who refuse to stop for death  
Also attest to this  
If you want to be the very best  
Then here's a step not missed:

Take four feet iambic in type  
And three that follow suit  
The four feet trod the path again  
And three more pave the route

"Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale  
All that glitters is gold  
I once was lost, but now I'm found  
And gods, I know I'm one."

But how could it so simple be,  
To write a catchy tune?  
Should there not be some melody?  
Something for skalds to croon?

Perhaps there should - but here's a base  
To quickly write a verse  
One need not flower up their pen  
(But one should not be terse)

And though some bards will fierce defend  
Their form of weavery  
The truth is anyone can sing  
Or write out poetry

There's no need to be crass or crude -  
Just simple verse is this:  
A primer for the common man -  
But that's not my business.

### LORE OF THE NORTHMEN: MUSIC BY GRIMKJELL EIRSON

Music in the Northlands is particularly important, as many of our skalds also sing, as well as tell the tales. To be remembered in song is indeed our immortality, for we do not hold overmuch with writing as the southrons do. While we may carve runes into barrow-stones, or memorialize our dead in some way, songs are like life's blood to a Northman. This may seem odd, for those who know me well understand that I am loath to sing, and sing only of loss and love and things far away. I rarely raise my voice in merriment, and often quietly slip away from the feast when the bards sing.

More often you might hear me sing before or after battles, though. Not all music is meant for merriment, or indeed, for the living. I sing to say farewell to what was, and to steel myself for what is to come.

There is music in the North itself, in the wind across the ice, in the song of birds in the short span of summer. There is music to be found in the flow of the water, and even the steady beat of your boots as you walk home from a hunt can resound like a drum.

Music is a comfort to me, but sometimes I do not desire comfort. Music seems to contain the heart of Travance. Music can show what is good about our strange, battle-wracked town, most of all.

I shall relate a tale from the feast of Nightmares, where the Lord of Nightmares walked among the subjects of Travance, and we were defeated. I myself was slain by the Ferryman, and the Knight of Dreams died in the arms of Croi and myself. I walked into the inn, after I awoke from the battle, and I found them still singing, and celebrating. They were not broken by the loss on the field of battle, even though so many had died. And I realized then that is the strength of Travance. We will be the song that is sung at the end, indeed, past the end.

Our last Baroness was a skald, first and foremost, and I do not think this was a mistake. Her farewell was in song, and I remember it still. At the end, as we struggled with Julius, it was not until I joined the song, together with Sir Magnus, Sir Phillidin, and Karkat, that we were able to push through and force him back. Our heart, the best of us, is contained when we raise our voices together, in music and song, when we let the beauty which is so different from any other, something that can't be seen, only heard, transport us.

Travance is a bulwark against the dark. A nexus, a crucible that tests the character of men and women and makes them great, or into monsters. But of all the things that Travance creates and contributes, I think

the last thing that we shall make, and the last thing that shall remember us, is music. There are songs from before we wrote, and I suspect there will be songs after we forget all else.

The musical score is written for piano and consists of eight systems of staves. The first system is labeled 'Piano' and features a 'Staccato' instruction. The second system is labeled 'Pno.' and includes 'Staccato' and triplet markings. The third system is labeled 'Pno.' and includes 'Martellato' and triplet markings. The fourth system is labeled 'Pno.' and includes 'Battaglia' and triplet markings. The fifth system is labeled 'Pno.' and includes triplet markings. The sixth system is labeled 'Pno.' and includes first and second endings. The seventh system is labeled 'Pno.' and includes 'D.S. al Fine' and a repeat sign. The eighth system is labeled 'Pno.' and shows the beginning of a new section starting at measure 40.

*"Rage and the Spider-Dance"*

*Submitted by Squire Amalthea*

**A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE IN  
REGARDS TO MUSIC  
(A.K.A. DO NOT SUBMIT TO THE SONG)  
BY ANONYMOUS**

Ladies and Gentlemen, I feel that in the spirit of all things, I need to write a warning on this matter. While the theme of this Chronicle directly involves music, as one who is most familiar with it I must advise against it in all forms. For you see, music is nothing more than a way to express one's emotions. This is a skill that is most present all across the land, the bards being especially skilled with it. Therefore, it stands to reason that the enemy can use it to his or her advantage, and if used with ill intent, can be made into an effective weapon. This can be used to alter your mind and succumb to their will, and this I find to be unacceptable.

For those that are reading this and are still confused, in plain words, music is a weapon. It is a weapon that is so unpredictable, that it may deserve to be controlled, restrained, and if necessary, eliminated. For if you control the hearts of your enemy, or instill courage to the hearts of your allies, you control the battlefield. This weapon is malleable in all forms, capable of being expressed in song or with an instrument, and can be disguised in the most subtle of natures. A fighter must be capable of a clear mind to see the truth, and if your mind is clouded by music, your value as a soldier on the battlefield is diminished.

How it is expressed is of little consequence in the end, for in all forms, be it song, dance or instrument, the enemy can use it to manipulate you, break your will, alter your emotions, and force you to do things that I cannot even imagine. To the women, they can make you forget your purpose, sway you from good, and achieve acts of malice that are far, far too improper to civilized society. To the men out there, I do not need to go into the insane details on what something like a siren can supposedly do. (I personally believe that they look like what some call a harpy, but that is my own opinion on the matter.)

Therefore this message is written not as some critique of what music is, but at a reminder that in all circumstances, you must steel yourself from temptation. Through fierce discipline and determination, you can ignore the pipes of a fey, deny the temptations of an enchantress, and strike back against a crowd of revelers, as they have the uncanny ability to sway you from your purpose, allowing them to defeat you without even blinking. I do not think that you would want that, now would you?

How do you do this, you ask? Well, there are many ways, but it all comes down to this: inside your heart, you have to understand that the enemy is trying to convey an emotion through their craft. Picking up the details is key, based on how they show themselves and how they express their talent. Once successful, if you come to acknowledge this aspect and work through their ways, you can see right through their lies, and ignore all of what you have witnessed, resisting even the darkest of manipulations. It is not as simple as it looks, but if you master yourself, then you will be able to overcome this force.

For those that are still determined to use this craft, know that you are to be watched. You claim that your intentions are noble, but for those that are smart, they know the truth. At a moment's notice, you will spring your trap and have everyone following you at every turn. It cannot be, and there will always be those that will resist and fight against you, knowing that in the end, they will be the victors. As for those that are willing to fight against the foes before them, like all fights, they will be hard, and there will be setbacks, but if you deny the calls, turn away the feelings, and keep a mind clear of all distractions, in due time you will succeed. There is no need to allow yourself to be subjected to the songs, notes, and tunes of those around you. If you know your enemy, you can fight it, and this will be the key to your success not only in combat, but in life as well.

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**DISHARMONY  
BY BRIAR**

I have a very complicated relationship with music, because of a very specific person. But to explain this, I have to explain the relationship.

When I was 7 or 8, I met a girl named Amarei, who was slightly older and the daughter of a old and well-respected Druid family. For some reason they needed a third party "lesser" Druid to take care of their many household plants, and I obviously needed "training", which meant they didn't have to pay me. We became fast friends, though we did so largely out of the public eye because of Amarei's worries about her family's reaction, specifically that of her twin sister. Remember that, it'll be important later, for multiple reasons.

Over the next couple years, we'd meet, not often, but enough, to the extent that I was convinced that Amarei was going to marry me when we grew up, even though we were both extremely young for Sylvan

standards. However, this was at about the same time that Amarei's family was approached by a Dryad.

There was a Malorn tree in danger, and it needed a pure heart to recover, and as it was under the threat of Drow attack, the Dryads were desperate for help.

I remember Amarei talking to me about it, telling me that her father had apparently offered one of his daughters up for sacrifice - and that she was decently sure that if he actually went through with it, it would be her, not her sister. Her sister was just a bard, she had said, something that had annoyed their father, and as Amarei was decently sure this was supposed to reinforce their station as The Best Druids Ever (her wording, not mine). From the little I knew of their father (as he largely ignored me unless it was to mention how generous he was letting me tend to their plants) I had no reason to disagree with her.

And then one day, Amarei was gone, as was her father, and I feared the worst. Her sister acted dazed and confused, obviously very attached to her sibling and hadn't yet put two and two together.

A couple weeks later, their father pulled the household together to explain that his "beloved daughter had willingly given herself to save the Malorn tree", adding that the family was now seen as war heroes, and that everyone should be aware that they were attached to such a prestigious line.

Her sister, Emberli, threw a fit, screaming through tears in the selfish way grief makes you, about how dare he do this to her, that he had to be lying, to bring her sister back, and on and on. And as the staff quietly filed out, I silently thanked her in my head, because she was showing all the emotion I couldn't.

That night was filled with sad songs and a father who was becoming increasingly more and more disenchanted by his daughter, the bard, as she poured her emotions into song and apparently infected others with them, as when others came to congratulate and thank him for his family's service, her father at least had the shame to look to his only remaining daughter before accepting the praise. As the caretaker of the plant life in the house, when Dryads came to stay, I was the one who maintained the trees and plants they slept in.

It was about then that Emberli's songs started becoming more hateful, and that she started hanging around me more. And, as she was the twin sister of the girl I'd fallen for, I'll admit that I might not have been as discerning as I could have been.

I quickly became friends with her as well, though I was careful not to let her know that it was mostly

because she my replacement for Amarei, though I know now that she had much the same intentions for me. I started getting in trouble for things she did, though she would deign to ask her father to keep me, using his guilt over Amarei to keep him from kicking me out. This continued for years, me growing more and more infatuated with her to the point where I would do anything for her, Emberli capitalizing on that to stay out of trouble.

When I was about 20, Emberli burst into my room in the middle of the night and told me we needed to leave immediately and that she would explain once we were safe, and I followed her without stopping a second to wonder at that. We were packed and gone in a little over an hour, far out of the camp and high in the trees by daybreak. Falling asleep on me, in tears I'm no longer sure we're real, Emberli explained that she had killed Layla, the daughter of the family that had lived next door to her, telling me it was an accident and coming to a point of emotion where she had to sing her words, the power in them making me cry, as I believed I felt her pain.

At the end of the next day of traveling, we came to a Dryad's grove, and they recognized Emberli's family name and not only promised us a place for the night, but a small feast in her honor. Emberli had told me how she felt about Dryads,, how they ruined her life and stole her sister. I had naively written it off as a part of her grieving process. That didn't stop me, however, from growing enough of the poisonous plant she found for her so she could poison the entire Grove of dryads, brutally murdering those who didn't die from the poison.

I have a friend now, his name is Bob and he's a physician, who was nice enough to explain to me that Emberli was a sociopath: someone who was negatively affected by something horrible happening in their past to the point that morals and be concept of right and wrong don't even really register to them anymore. He's also explained that what I did when I was with Emberli wasn't my fault because she had psychologically tortured me into thinking that killing Dryads and anyone in our way was the right thing to do because it was for her, and in memory of Amarei.

That doesn't change the fact that, from the age of 20 to the age of 68, I assisted in the mass murder of hundreds of Dryads because Emberli told me I should and that it would help her. It doesn't change how I feel about it, either, now that I'm "fixed".

I'd never noticed it then, but Emberli's songs were really what drove me through those years, her songs

driving the emotions she'd inflicted on me getting me through a 48 year killing spree from Selendrias to Kormyre, which is where things start getting fuzzy.

There had been rumors going around that they knew about us, and I was ready to turn myself in to save us, and then when I came to my ears hurt like hell and my skin was grainy and green, and I was near immediately knocked out.

Over the next 15 years, Emberli pretended to be a nurse at the Stonefall Insane Asylum, where she managed to convince someone she was a nurse that wanted to take personal care of the Dryad she'd found being set upon by a couple Sylvans, something she took great joy in convincing me of as well. Emberli would disappear for large stretches of time and come back to regale me with her exploits of torturing the other patients, referring to them by their number, and referring to me only as 'her little flower'. She continued to sing, but only in private: she wanted the staff to trust her, and I would miss hearing it everywhere.

I really only had two friends there, an ogre and a Romani, and I never really thought hard about why Emberli didn't like them, and it took me a while to realize it was because they liked me and were both 400 level patients, and do could do some damage to her if they felt like it.

A little under 7 months ago, a riot caused by an alchemist everyone knew as Mami caused a mass hallucination, making everyone think they were part of the candy kingdom, which was the beginning of the end. The staff were loudly trying to blow up the building, and I managed to unlock the main door so most of us didn't die when it did.

I wandered the woods around Stonefall, and it was eerily silent. Once I was mostly sure everyone had run off, I went looking for my friends. My Romani friend was gone, and as I only remember the name from the hallucination, I don't have high hopes for finding him. I found Kek, though, and managed to get him out of the rubble and out of most harm. But it was still too quiet, even with Kek thumbing at my streaking green paint and making sure nothing killed me through my panic attacks when he accidentally pointed things out. Then I realized why it was quiet: there was no more singing, no more music. My life no longer had a soundtrack and my emotions weren't being constantly manipulated, and I didn't really know what to do with myself, so I sang. And it hurt, immensely, more than just my ears.

(To clarify, I can't sing, at all. The most that could be said for what I was singing was that it had emotion

behind it. But it did, however, get Bob to find me, which is how I'm able to pen this now.)

I guess what I'm trying to say is, if you use bardics around me and I react badly, I apologize in advance. Music has always been a part of my life, as Emberli has been. That does mean, however, that they have a lot of the same connotations.

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## SOMETHING I HEARD ONCE

You  
met  
my  
madness  
and  
gave  
it  
a  
melody.

-R.F.-

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## A TRADITION OF SONG

BY GUO CHENJING

My father, Guo Kun, is of a tradition filled with song. He himself was the son of a bard in the region of Khitan known as Tuva - he was known in Tuva as Aldyn-ool Naranbayar, but in Jade as Guo Zhumei. Guo Zhumei is not a name you've likely heard, seldom is his name heard outside of ethnic Tuvan circles. He was a talented throat-singer, skilled in both traditional Xoomii and in Kargyraa (the former style is higher-pitched, the latter lower). One song he particularly enjoyed to sing was entitled "Kongurei," which I have translated into Kormyrian, but not put to paper (and here will not, so as to avoid crowding too much space.) But he didn't just throat sing, he also sang normally, singing the songs passed to him from his mother.

His mother, Gitu Naranbayar, was not of Tuvan blood. Her blood came almost entirely from the island now ruled by the Empire of the Sun - the island of Takasago. Her mother was Elu Nali, the half-sister of the child warrior Pawan Nali who is remembered by the Seediq of Takasago as one of the fiercest fighters under Mouna Rudao, the chieftain of the Mehubu tribe who staged an insurgency against the Sun. Elu never met Pawan, he died fighting while she was in the womb. Rather than marry a man the likes of which her father, brother, and uncles fought to get out from

under, she decided to go to a place where the people loved a good story. She decided to go to Tuva.

As I mentioned, the Seediq brought along songs. The one I have included is a quatrain - a fragment of a longer work entitled "Takao," which was a name for the Imperial Army of the Empire of the Sun. The song was written after the insurrection and dedicated to those Seediq who still knew their place was to fight, regardless of the banner above. I have included its Khitanese original, a transliteration, and my attempt at translating the piece into Kormyrian while still preserving the meter.

大港起風湧 Toā-káng khi hong-íng  
堂堂男兒欲出征 Tōng-tōng lâm-jî beh tshut-tsing  
氣勢撼動高雄 Khi-sè hám-tōng Tha-khá-oooh  
齊開向你我前程 Tsê khai hiòng lí guá tsiân-tíng  
"Waves crashing portside  
As the men gather to die  
Their spirit quivers Takao  
Embracing the future."

My father is not a bard. Elu Nali was not a bard.  
But music is and always has been and always will be a  
central part of our lines.

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## THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF SONG BY MEANDER CORRELIS

I listen to your soothing song  
That wraps its wings around me  
And lifts me to the highest heights  
Where words of love surround me.

The softest sound of sweetest words,  
The cadence of your poetry,  
The rhythm of your beating heart  
Compose my lifelong melody.

And then the notes rise from my heart  
And vibrate in their frequency  
With words to match my inner thoughts,  
Resounding through eternity.

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Questions? Comments? Send a letter to the Chronicle  
offices in Honor's Peak!

## DRESSING FOR THE BALL

BY LOIS MAXWELL

Travance, let's talk about the Winterdark Ball.

Around this time of year everyone goes into a tizzy trying to prepare for this night of revelry, song, and dance. Every year, I hear the same refrain: What do I wear?

The key point to remember is that dressing for the Winterdark Ball, or any similar event, is about showing respect to the host, the venue, and the company. His Grace the Count opens the doors to his home to us, and we should be sure to dress and act in a way that acknowledges this kindness.

This does not mean you need to spend a lot of money. Everyone knows that most of the money Travancians make goes towards things that help them win great battles, and no one is expecting you to pay a hundred gold for a new gown every year. The first thing you should do is dig into your closets and trunks - perhaps you have an old shirt the material of which you considered too fine to be worn in combat, or even just one you haven't worn since you started wearing the colors of your Land. Even if you end up using the same shirt, pants, or skirt you wear normally, the basic idea is the same: give your clothes a little bit of love. Mend holes, replace missing buttons, brush your furs, and clean off the blood stains. If you can't remove all the stains, try dyeing your clothing to cover them. Consider adding trim, as well - a gold cord or a little bit of lace. The combination of dye and trim can make a garment look like an entirely new piece. Trims can even be made removable. This method is common in Londwyn - you didn't think we were forever buying new dresses and suits every season, did you? (Fellow Londwyns, do forgive me for giving away one of our little secrets!) If you honestly have nothing suitable, try asking around to see if someone has something you could borrow.

Ladies, I hear those of you accustomed to wearing pants and armor complaining about skirts every time the ball rolls around. You do not need to wear a skirt. I repeat: you do not need to wear a skirt! Style comes from the attitude and demeanor of the person first, and the clothes after. Wear pants. You will be more comfortable, and thus more confident and at ease to enjoy the night, rather than forever fidgeting with your outfit (this goes for everyone, not just the ladies). Travance is a diverse place, with many cultures coming together: we make fashion and are not bound by it.

If you do happen to have some spare gold and just aren't sure what to do, you have a few options. The

first is to take your normal clothes, and have the main piece (or all of them!) copied onto a more luxurious fabric. If you normally wear a green woolen jerkin, for example, consider having it made out of green silk; if you wear a plain blue bodice, try getting one that's made with brocaded fabric. Another option is to pick a theme. This is a masquerade ball, after all. Look for inspiration in the varied flora and fauna of Travance, or perhaps from the legends or natural landscape of your hometown. Lastly, you could give yourself a real challenge. Pick an emotion or quality you possess (or want to possess) and think to yourself: In what way could this be represented with fabric? Can you think of a way to capture the bittersweet nights at the end of autumn, or the strength of a mountain?

Above all else, remember that you and everyone else are there for a celebration. Respect that, act with politeness and kindness, and it will not matter if you are wearing naught but a single white shift and an old belt.

Just remember to shine your boots.