
The Lady's Sharper Eye

"Cutting through the darks, *The Eye* sees all."



BATCH-22

Massacre II

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Tales from the Blood War

by Sofellor, Blood War culler

Massacre, Part II

Related by Sofellor

In my absence the many-armed commander had completely failed to make even rudimentary improvements on the defenses. She had forced her subordinates to clear the old temple and make it her command post. When I arrived she was berating a barbazu for failing to bring along the correct sweetmeat for her meal. While I was awaiting her attention, I noticed the shadows along the wall didn't match the pillars they should be mirroring. A very slow subtle movement was taking place. I watched it in silence as whatever it was poured over the floor towards Antenne'. Perhaps this would rid me of the fool. Its slow progress finally brought it directly behind her. I crossed my arms, curious.

She moved, cuffing the barbazu to its knees and slithered by. Murder was written on his face as her soldier grasped his glaive. Terror streamed from his mouth, as the shadows seem to flow over his body. A muffled scream echoed in the large chamber. The shadows retreated and the blackened body of the barbazu crumbled into dust.

The shadows then reached out for the marilith. She turned to escape as a tendril brushed one of her arms. The fool's scream was sweet music. I turned and exited the room, making it a point to bar the twin doors going out of the temple. I told the guards their leader had ordered for her not to be disturbed.

Something strong, I assume it was Antenne', began beating on the door. It soon caught flame and burst asunder. She leaped out, I hadn't known the snake-like marilith could leap. She screamed for her guards to dispatch the thing behind her. I looked into the door and saw what looked to be the fallen barbazu. His smile glowed oddly and he was the darkest black. I knew it could not be him when I saw that he was unarmed. He called to his commander, asking her to strike him again. His laughter rang cold.

I sounded my horn; I suppose it would look bad if I didn't even try to save her. The two barbazu stepped in between their former confederate and their leader. The fools had always been braver than they were smart; of course they hadn't seen what happened to their friend. They both raised their glaives and charged. I chuckled dryly, seeing where this was going.

The image of the slain barbazu vanished as their weapons swept through it. One became overbalanced and fell into the mist. He didn't even scream. His fellow tried to backpedal only to have his foot enwrapped by a tongue of shadow. His efforts made up for the silent dying of this partner. Another pseudopod reached out for Antenne'. My spectral blade sliced it clean, the severed portion puffed into nonexistence. It could be hurt apparently. The cowardly marilith had turned tail and run. She mouthed something about endless rewards for saving her. My mimic recorded her words in case she didn't survive.

More barbazu were arriving. I tried to order them back, but was told gruffly that they answer only to baatezu, never to mercenaries. So, I sheathed my sword and watched them die. The stinging sand seemed not so noticeable now. I backed away from the killing thing. It flowed into the street and followed. Two of my knights had arrived and

flanked me, blazing swords held high.

We continued to step back and watch the fiends meet their death. They hadn't even slowed it. I had seen no harm done save my lone sword stroke. I was mentioning this to the knight on my right when both of us were buried by the collapse of an ancient storefront. After a few moments, I dug myself out. The shattered skull of my minion could be clearly seen. This was no coincidence. I nodded to the second knight who had stood guard while I pulled myself from the rock pile. As soon as I was clear the rocks began to pile themselves back, reforming the structure as we retreated. I began to suspect we were overmatched and started for the gate.

I met the remainder of my squad of knights in the street. They were forming for a charge. I quickly dismissed this foolishness. I turned them about and we headed for the exit. We met Antenne' beating against the aged wood. The once broken gate now stood strong. I pushed her aside and put a gauntlet through the lock mechanism. It broke easily from my strength. Once my hand was removed the lock came together as though it had never been harmed. Hmm., this was most curious.

I directed my knights to start up the stairs leading to the tower by the gate. The sixth one had started up when the entire tower collapsed upon them. The blasting wind soon cleared the dust from the air, only to replace it with sand. The howls of battle had stopped behind us. I turned to see the survivors of the barbazu company running towards us, followed by a wall of blackness. The thing behind them could move no faster than they could run, its tendrils could reach out and thin the herd though. Many of the wiry barbazu were pulled back into the darkness, raging against the death that awaited them.

We retreated to the left road and the darkness flowed in pursuit. Antenne' began to fall behind, being the only one among us that was unhorsed. Even the barbazu sprinted past. The shadow was closing down upon her when another form manifested. The mezzoloth that had commanded the detachment of loths ran beside her. He grinned wickedly. "The town is secure mistress. No one will take it from us, ever!" The shadows flowed over her serpentine tail and pulled her into its substance. Her deafening shrill screams were suddenly cut off.

We ran block after block. Walls collapsed and blocked our way, killing dozens of the barbazu and most of my knights. Two barbazu turned away from the main body of us and were ensnared in a monstrous web that had been completely camouflaged by the blowing sands. The tan colored spider that owned the web was upon them in a moment. Finally we became cornered. I used my fireball to blast a hole in the wall. The bricks were still smoking when they started reforming. My last two knights bolted through the hole. I turned to follow when a tendril of night wrapped around my left leg. It began to burn my armor as it pulled me into the blackness.

Antenne' coalesced beside me. She smiled and caressed my gaunt face. The last three barbazu had just made it to the wall. "Gyr-finish, Druhamma, Bolthtish, attend me." At the mention of their true names the three stopped. They each turned slowly, visibly fighting the command. As the darkness took me I saw them standing still as tendrils of the dark wrapped them 'round.

Ruinath, the name flooded my thoughts. Visions of the hundreds that died that night, so long ago, when the fiends fought for the city. I saw fathers covering children with their bodies as the flames came down. Elders screaming for mercy as the city guard tried to buy time with their lives. The last huddled few were in the temple. Several dozen packed

its walls, wailing and screaming their terror. The aged priest stood before the altar. The great doors flew open, thrown back by a horrific force. The ape-like body, bat wings and huge dripping fangs could only be one thing. He laughed at the fear of the helpless humans before him. Flames highlighted the cruelty in his face. His great whip flicked out, a screaming child was torn from her mother and dragged into the pyre. The rage seized me - Revenge!

After what seemed an eternity, I regained myself. The hatred of the masses that composed this creature continued to assault me. I stood, brushing away the sand. A Death Knight cannot be destroyed by exposure to hateful emotion or the burning touch of the Negative Material plane. I strode out of the darkness into the stinging winds. Gwerin Blacksun and the sole survivor of his squad stood quietly waiting. We began walking into the sands. I sighed as I imagined how to report the mission a failure.

The chorus of damned souls wailed at my escape. Perhaps the mission had not failed after all. Antenne' would hold the city. She and her troops could scream and wail with the hate. In time, we might be able to turn this to our advantage. But that will be another tale.



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Jack's Back!

by Godemirc Krebs, Outlands culler

Outlands, plains spireward of the Caverns of Thought-- After vanishing without a trace following a brief appearance in Hex and a failed Harmonium investigation, the creature referred to as Blue-Heeled Jack has made its appearance again. In three separate instances this creature has wreaked havoc and spread terror throughout the Outlands, the last instance being almost too amazing to believe had I not seen it myself.

A friendly herd of bariaur had taken up the task of tracking the creature's trail of glowing blue hoof prints, and it is from them that I first received word of another appearance of Blue-Heeled Jack. Four nights after Batch 21 of the *Eye* was printed a violent storm hit the plains between the Spire and the Dwarven Mountain. It raged across the whole area and reports indicate that the lightning was greater than what is considered normal for that area (which, it must be mentioned, is on the chaotic side of the Outlands).

The bariaur herd spotted multiple strikes from the sky to a fixed point on a distant hill. After the intensity of the storm subsided they investigated and found that Blue-Heeled Jack's tracks led to that point and upon the hill was a small abandoned keep that was falling apart. Looking through the ruins of the outer wall they noted that the inner courtyard was blasted severely and that a smell of burnt earth was very heavy in the air. They contacted me via Astral Streaker and I was able to make it to the site several days later.

The keep is typical of several such abandoned strongholds throughout the Outlands. I investigated the inner courtyard and found a crater some fifteen feet deep, in the center of which was a rectangular stone box. The lid had been removed and the interior was padded with a very fine, albeit very old, material. There was an imprint of a staff upon the material. Blue-Heeled Jack's tracks were all around the area.



We continued following the tracks. Several miles later we found the remains of a band of khaasta strewn all around a trade route road. Dolmart Sneks of the

Harmonium was there with a patrol investigating. "The visible evidence suggests that this was done by a single creature, and the evidence is consistent with the reports I have received concerning another attack." Dolmart declined to comment further and we were unable to investigate the circumstances ourselves.

Two days later, chant came to light that the creature took a turn heading directly away from the Spire after destroying a caravan along the same trade route that the khaasta were on. News spread quickly throughout the region and most of the folks we came across were taking precautions. Hoping to get a jump and see the creature for myself, the herd of bariaur and my companions opted to take a course that would intercept him. A day later we came across something that I am at a loss to explain.

In a shallow and wide valley lay the remains of a destroyed *walking* castle. One of the forelegs was still standing; some fifty feet tall with smoke pouring out of it. Two of the other three legs were twisted and broken. The castle was on its side and after examining the bottom it seemed that the whole underside was blasted through. What looked to be the remains of the master tower was crumbled and the few bodies found in the wreckage were stomped into the ground by the telltale hoof prints of Blue-Heeled Jack.

Thus far I have been summarily unable to find anything that indicates the origin of this creature or of what its plans or methods are. Just prior to my completion of this report, the Harmonium announced that measures were needed to apprehend Blue-Heeled Jack. Factol Pentar of the Doomguard responded immediately that the creature should be allowed to run its course. The Mercykillers are reportedly in meetings now discussing on how to hold such a prisoner. As of this writing, no other faction has made any statements.

I, as one who supports knowledge and investigation, say this: whatever the final designs any faction has regarding Blue-Heeled Jack, we must find out more about him if anyone is going to have a chance of catching him. Even the true barmies don't mess with walking castles and to this date no one has ever taken one down. This is not a being to be trifled with.



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Skelterbet Returns

by Daeh K. Carc, Sigil culler

Lady's Ward-- Editor's Note: Quite a few of our long-time readers have been asking about it, and some of our critics have been saying 'two greens and up-goes-the fhourge' to us about ever having tarmy theater reviews again. Well, we checked and we have scragged him. Skelterbet has agreed to come back and write for the Eye again!

Over the last few cycles we have been asked about what happened to him, since the last word was a report in Batch 10 that Judge Ylvirron had taken him to Dis. Well, to be honest, we didn't know what happened to him. We tried long and hard to get more chant on what happened to him, but as always the Eye sees all and we finally got the dark of the matter. Skelterbet asked to tell the story himself, so here's the chant.

For those of us who have been around longer than most mortals can imagine, we sometimes take for granted the passage of time. I, for one, have never had much use for the concept of time other than its value in planning when various artistic endeavors would be on display for my viewing pleasure. Thus, I must admit that I was somewhat surprised when a tiefling contacted me and said that quite a few cutters wanted to know where I've been and why I wasn't writing anymore theater reviews. I hadn't realized how much time had passed.

As it turned out, the tiefling was none other than Ashenbach, the new owner of the *Lady's Sharper Eye*. I was very pleased to hear that the *Eye* was back in business. The last thing I had heard was that it had gone belly up and Sydney Silamander, the former owner, had disappeared from the Cage. I was afraid he was locked somewhere in a dark cell within the Prison. I'm very happy to see that things are back and better than ever. This was the first time I had ever met Ashenbach, though I had heard of him. After a bit of conversation, I decided that he's a good blood all in all and working for the *Eye* again would be a good thing. I look forward to seeing Sidney again, and hope to see the rest of my old culler friends soon.

Ashenbach told me that one of the questions that he was asked repeatedly over the last few cycles was: "What happened to Skelterbet?" He also mentioned that numerous high-ups had inquired about whether theater reviews were ever going to be back in the *Eye*. I can answer the first question and I think you know the answer to the second already. As to what happened, it isn't as bad as it looked in the report from Batch 10. I was invited by Judge Ylvirron to join him in Dis during his vacation. Honestly, I admit I was a little distressed at the idea of going to Baator, but Judge Ylvirron did give his word that all was well and

that I would not be harmed.

For those who have never been there, Dis is not as bad as one would think, though it certainly isn't any picnic either. The overall look of the city is actually pretty interesting, in a visceral sort of way. After arriving and being treated like royalty by Judge Ylvirron's servants, I relaxed a little and found out why I had been invited. Certain baatezu nobles had created several sculptures and paintings and Judge Ylvirron had been asked to bring an artist to see them and critique them. I was honored by the request, though a little concerned about how an unbiased critique would be received. It was suggested that the Lord of the Second Layer had created one of the sculptures, though that was unofficial.

Art presents a window into the true artist's inner being and is a product of all the hopes, desires, failings, and sorrows that the artist has within them at the time the art was created. I say "true" artist, for just as the Spire is tall there are as many posers out there who prey upon those unable to differentiate between true art and trash.

Bear this in mind then, for you can imagine the shock, enlightenment, and awe with which I beheld the wonderful artworks created by baatezu. To see inside the baatezu artist through the eye of its artwork is truly an experience that none should miss. Is it horrifying? Yes, definitively. Is it cruel and terrible? Undeniably. Is it art? Yes, positively.

Art is more than what is pleasing to the senses and should not be judged thus. Art instead should be judged by the truth of its expression, and in this area the art of these baatezu hits the mark right on. I would like to point out that the sculpture titled Laughing, Falling, Crying is perhaps one of the most moving pieces of art I have ever seen, though I do not know who the artist is.

After completing my critiques and leaving Dis, I spent some time on the Elemental Plane of Air, recharging myself and relaxing. Though I found the art of the baatezu enlightening and truly artistic, even the biggest proponent of art needs a vacation after seeing it.



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New Sport Hits Sigil

by by Sarcina Sandoval Ocrea, Revolution culler

Lady's Ward-- A new sport is fast becoming the recreation of the rich in Sigil. The sport of flame riding is currently all the rage in the noble houses throughout the Lady's Ward. Consisting of standing on a shield magically treated to repel flames, the practitioner rides above the flames. By shifting his (usually it's the male nobles who pursue this wasteful activity) weight, he can move at a reasonable speed across the flames. Some bring bottles of explosive fluids to gain an extra jump or propel themselves at higher speeds, and the especially ostentatious use rare and expensive magical potions for this effect.

While the poor struggle to keep themselves fed, the half-head rich are off melting jink in the flames around Ysgard's earthburgs soaring high. Still, its thankfully not without its dangers. Only a week ago Garnorm d'Mantiggn, the heir to the d'Mantiggn fortune, went sailing off into a void, and Riporin Hartfjord naturally vociferously denies that he has hired a band of bariaur mercenaries to exact revenge on the fire giant tribe that ate his brother. Readers may recall many a rumor of how Hartfjord's shady new fortune came to be.



"There's just no place that's safe out there," whined a Fated member who refused to be named. "Most of the flames are in the Lower Planes, and even with my minders I still almost found myself in the Deadbook last week."

Chant has it that a new construction on the Plane of Fire is nearing completion. This unseen site has been built to pamper flame riders in the luxury they're accustomed to. "It's tremendously exciting," says Harys Hatchis, who is planning an advertising campaign for the new Lodge, as it is currently being titled. "Fire has higher flames and more of them than anywhere else. The flyers that will soon hit the streets of the Lady's Ward will convince everyone that the Lodge is the place to find bloods on Fire! The discount that a flyer gets you on membership in the Flame Riders' Club isn't anything to miss out on either!"

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Blooming huge wreck in Sigil

by Daeh K. Carc, Sigil culler

Lady's Ward-- The Lady's Ward was very nearly closed today due to the callousness of a local youth. Sibrin Stormfollower was racing another youth who remains nameless during the lunch hour. He hurt several honest citizens, some requiring the attention of a healer, and forced one unknown citizen to jump through a previously unknown gate to avoid him. At the conclusion of his criminally reckless behavior the young lightning genasi attempted to run down an elderly human, or at least force him to jump out of the way. The youth was apparently oblivious to the wizards Shambling Mound servant that was being used to carry his packages. The shambling mound reacted, as it was no doubt compelled to do in attacking and attempting to destroy young Sibrin.

When the mound struck the lightning genasi witnesses report a strange scent of ozone in the air. From what we have been able to reconstruct the genasi tried to fight back using his shocking grasp ability. This set up an unusual feedback with the mound. The young lad was unable to end his shock effect and was completely drained of energy and killed. The mound began to grow explosively, reaching the towering height of six cubits and a span. This massive mound then went berserk. It crushed several locals who were too slow to escape and damaged the Center City moneylender's shop. The mage that had previously owned the mound reduced to flaming wreckage in a matter of minutes, but not before it was too late for the crushed citizens.

The mage, Yakness Whitewand, was quoted as saying, "I've never had any trouble out of him before. He's been a family servant for years. I guess the power was just too much for him." Mage Whitewand has been taken into custody where he will be asked a series of pointed questions about the bringing such a potentially dangerous servant into the city. Crews took some three hours to clean up the wreckage.



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Abyssal slavetraders slaughtered

by Jelly Hoarfrost, Freelance culler

Zelatar, the Abyss-- As promised in last batch, I have traveled to the Abyss itself, and through luck and disguise, managed to travel to Zelatar in Graz'zt's realm. During my mission, I met a most interesting individual, a warrior by the name of Bjorn Svensson, devout worshipper of Odin. I succeeded in convincing him to grant me an interview, which I think needs no further explanation:

Culler [C]: Good sir, would you be so kind as to tell us what has led you to Azzagratt?

Bjorn Svensson [BS]: Only if ye stop that barmy way of talkin' ! You sound like one of those soddin' Guvners, you do!

C: Errh... I... errh... can honestly tell you that I am no Guvner, sir. I will do my best to not sound like one anymore.

BS: Not very successful yet, berk! Well, forget it. I came here a day ago, as I'm searching for some friends of mine that have been kidnapped. I went to meet 'em in the Land last week, but they just seem to have disappeared.



C: Who are these friends, sir, and how did you come to the conclu...

BS: Bariaur, they are! I befriended a tribe some years ago, and now that tribe's simply gone. I've found their tracks, but they suddenly ended, as if the Land had swallowed 'em whole. I searched for a day or three, but didn't find anything more, so finally I just fell on my knees and prayed to Odin. Gosh, I even prayed to some of the

bariaur gods to give me a clue!

C: And your prayers have been heard?

BS: Sure as the Spire, blob!

C: Erh... I... I ain't no... erh...

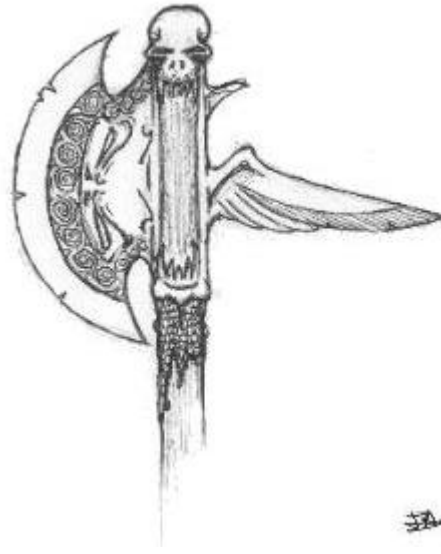
BS: Well, you sure look like it. Anyway, when I had finished my prayers, I saw something blinking in the dust. I quickly tracked down what it was, and found a fine axe. This one, actually.

C: Good sir! It's impressive! Do you know the weapon's name?

BS: I don't tend to talk to my equipment. So I also don't tend to give names to the weapons I carry.

C: Sorry, I think I have not explained myself clearly. During my own journeys, I met a bariaur shaman who told me about something called a "Scramasax"...

BS: I don't know about nothing like that, berk. But when I found the thingy, it was still covered in blood, with some vrock feathers on it. For me, that was a sure sign; but it wasn't enough to head off to the Abyss, of course. I returned to Ysgard and asked my brother, a priest of mighty Odin, for some divination spells. It turned out the vrock feather belonged to a servant of Graz'zt, a well-known slavetrader. So, now I'm here, in Graz'zt's capital, searching for my bariaur friends.



C: And what are your future plans, sir?

BS: I wanted to head off to the Battle Bridge, as I've heard that capable warrior slaves are often sold there. And you can bet that bariaur are very capable warriors, by Odin!

C: Would you mind if I came with you, sir? I ...

BS: Hey, what's that??

C: I beg your par...

BS: ODIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIN!!!!!!!

To better clarify the end of the interview, I want to add that Bjorn Svensson had noticed a caravan guided by vrock and other powerful tanar'ri. These fiends led a couple of groups of bariaur (as a rough estimate, I would say about fifty of them) right towards the Battle Bridge when my interview attacked them.

This attack soon turned into the most bloody and horrible slaughter scene I have ever experienced. Despite their fiendish powers, the tanar'ri were unable to stop their mortal opponent. He was hurt badly, but with every wound he received, one of the tanar'ri lost its life. Soon, the fiends fled for their lives, leaving their slaughtered brethren on the street. Astonishingly, the freed bariaur hardly reacted to this event. Instead of throwing their own chains off, they waited for Bjorn Svensson to free them. Even then, though, they showed no particular signs of happiness for their regained freedom.

C: Good sir, I don't understand this. What has happened to the proud bariaur? It nearly seems to me as if ...

BS: Stop rattlin' yer bone-box! I dunno what these damned fiends have done to them! They've broken their will! Just look at them.. They don't even recognize me. They all seem to be in a kind of trance!

C: So, what can we do now?

BS: Guide them out, first of all. I'll take them to my brother, so he can care for them. And then... I'll make someone pay for this.

C: Looking at the street, I have the impression you've already done so...

BS: You can be sure these were just the servants. Someone more powerful than a mere vrock must be behind this treachery. And I will find him, or her, or it. Whatever it be!

C: Just one last question, sir. I have never seen someone who slaughtered tanar'ri like this...

BS: Hmm. It wasn't just me. This axe... guess it's something like an artifact. Nice little thingy.

And so ended my mission to the Abyss, dear reader. I accompanied Bjorn Svensson and the bariaur to Ysgard, and am happy to report that they are all healed now. The bariaur could even provide me with further information: They explained that they had been kidnapped by a horde of tanar'ri, and, most importantly, yugoloths, who brought them to one particular region in the Gray Waste. Chant has it that the fiends have found a way to infect their victims with a will-breaking disease, so that they become willing soldiers for the Blood War.

I do admit that I still have no clue how this relates to the Fraternity of Order, as mentioned in my report last batch, but I will travel to the Gray Waste myself now, hoping to uncover even more of these horrible events! Thus, I hope to be able to provide you with the facts concerning this most shocking slavetrade, and perhaps I will even be able to aid in bringing the criminals to justice. Do not

miss my next report in the *Lady's Sharper Eye*!



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Beerfest at the Dwarven Mountain

by Godemirc Krieb, Outlands culler

Outlands, Dwarven Mountain-- Once a cycle the dwarves at the Dwarven Mountain hold their annual beerfest and it is always a popular gathering. Representatives of nearly every brewery throughout the multiverse, including several from various Prime worlds, bring their wares to the Mountain for the competition.

Notable entries this cycle include *Cog's Grog*, a beer made by Grigg's brewery in Cog on the Outlands, *Spire Wings Ale*, from the SW brewery on the Outlands near the Spire (the logo has a drawing of a Spire Butterfly), *Blue Roots Lager*, made by a brewery near the hibiscus groves and *Curst Stout*, a dark beer made in Curst. There were many other entries in this cycle's contest and space alone keeps us from printing all of the fine breweries that were represented.



The one expected entry that was not present was *Cager's Original* from Sigil. Inquiries for the reason of their absence have remained unanswered, though heavy suspicion points to their

losing last cycle's competition as the culprit.

Beerfest founder Brethunus Digontar (who insists on being called "Digger") opened the festival with his usual commentary about beer. "Those of you who are not dwarves will probably not appreciate the art required to make a fine brew. So quit your yammering, find a dwarf and let him teach you something about art!"

Factol Erin Montgomery, attending the beerfest for the first time, seemed to be enjoying herself immensely. "This has been quite an experience and well worth the trip. Digger is correct about brewing being an art, though I doubt you'd

have to be a dwarf to appreciate that." When asked which was her favorite brew, she politely deferred saying, "Each is unique in of its self and must be tasted and appreciated for its own merits."

Others were not so agreeable with some of the entries. "How could you pawn such swill on a body? I've been bobbed!" howled one visitor of the beerfest after tasting *XDrhjDw*, a brew from Limbo.

When asked if the recent disturbances by the creature called Blue-Heeled Jack had affected attendance, the organizers said that there really has been no mention of any problems from any of the guests or any of the brewers. The biggest problem that was reported was a deranged human named Drongen Steelspike who arrived on the second day of the festival dragging a bucket of strange looking swill that he claimed was the best beer in the multiverse. He reportedly filled the bucket from a spout that was on the wall of a cave nearby.

The organizers refused to let him enter the contest, though one brave taster did try the brew. The unfortunate lad spent the next several minutes coughing and sputtering before his voice returned enough for him to mention the taste of the brew and something about the contents of a fiend's kidneys. Drongen was forcibly removed from the premises, though it was reported that a couple of the brewers of *XDrhjDw*, were seen following him.

This cycle's winner of the dwarven beerfest was *Icestream Ale* made by the Iceworks brewery on the Elemental Plane of Ice. Brewmeister Marin accepted the award saying, "We would like to give our thanks to all of the judges and the guests here at the beerfest. It has been our pleasure to have made a fine brew for your enjoyment."



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Blackstone Island seized by Amazon army

by Godemirc Kreb, Outlands culler

Blackstone Island, lake Tir fo Thuinn-- Last week an army made up entirely of female warriors overwhelmed the feudal kingdom of the de Mason lineage. Blackstone Island is located on lake Tir fo Thuinn near an edge of the River Ma'at and has been ruled by the de Mason monarchy for several centuries. The walled island was taken by complete surprise and the king was taken prisoner before the royal guard had fully assembled. Chant has it that the invading army of Amazons used female sahuagin to sneak into the city through hidden wells.

An announcement by the invaders was released after the onslaught. It stated, "The Army of Femova had seized power to preserve the unity of female beings and creatures everywhere in the face of the Plague begun as a conspiracy among the treasonous male races." General Rachael Ahdamn went on to say, "The gathered female army had no choice but to overthrow the ruling kingdom of King Tadgadine de Mason. The Army of Femova has taken over Blackstone Island in order to establish a refuge for feminine kind across the planes." She continued, "The island will be renamed Comore Island and only females will be allowed to come onto the island and escape the Chaos Plague, which is sweeping across the planes."

The following morning after the attack, General Rachael sent out an additional letter by way of courier. The letter called on the clerics of female deities everywhere to join the Army of Femova's fight against the insidious Plague and to help protect the mothers and daughters now fighting for survival across the Lower Planes. The courier, who was female with long black hair and white pale skin, said the current male population of Blackstone Island would be forced to leave and the present female citizens would be welcomed freely into the new realm of Femova.

Inquiries into the background of Ahdamn, who prefers to be called General Rachael, revealed that she was born on Olympus on the plane of Arborea and maybe elven or at least half-elven. Sources within the Cage suggest that she may have once been a high-up in the Fated, albeit under a different name. Contacts at the Hall of Records were unable to confirm that anyone with the name of Rachael Ahdamn ever worked at or was employed by the Hall of Records or within the Fated faction. All attempts to contact General Rachael for an interview were refused.



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Celtic realm nearly destroyed by fiend army

by Godemirc Krieb, Outlands culler

Tir na Og-- For nearly a week the Celtic realm of Tir na Og stood firm against a baatezu led army that threatened the realm's continued existence. A summary of the attack and subsequent battles is detailed below. The summary is based on several sources and multiple interviews, as the culler involved was not actually on the battlefield.

Day 1 of the Attack

Upon my arrival, I learned that a fiend-led army out of Rigus was attacking Tir na Og and all lands within it were threatened. The baatezu army had already swept through Thoth's realm and had laid siege to Tir na Og for three days. So far they had not moved against the realm.

A pair of dragons, one silver and one gold, was seen overhead, but I received word later that they were allies of the Celts. A meeting took place during the morning near Oghma's Home of Knowledge. I believe this was to convene a war council of the gathered allies. Unfortunately, I was not allowed to attend, as it was believed that I might be a baatezu informant. I understood their concern, as the possible fall of Tir na Og could not be taken lightly.

Even though I did not attend the meeting, chant made its way to my ears. Evidently, reinforcements were arriving from Sigil. Sensate and Doomguard warriors, thanks to Lady Erin Montgomery, had come to the aid of the Celtic realm to turn the fiends back. My sources also indicated to me that the intended target of the invaders was the Circle of Stones. The location of the Circle of Stones is a top-shelf secret, but it is believed to be somewhere within the center of Tir na Og and Oghma's realm would have to be crossed in order to reach it. The Celts planned to protect the Circle at all cost.

I have detailed the field of battle to better illustrate the invading army. The fiends were arrayed in 6 divisions. Using Oghma's home (the Celtic HQ) as a point of reference, the 1st division was far to the left behind an edge of the lake Tir fo Thuinn. The 1st was made up of baatezu and other creatures that could fly. This 'air force' was a strong component of the opposing army. The 2nd division was to the right and was mostly made up of mercenaries, especially bladlings. The Celts called them the 'mercs', for obvious reasons. The 3rd division was in front and slightly to the left. It consisted of large baatezu, huge slave warriors, and enormous diabolical animals. Someone in the Celtic army had nicknamed the unnatural beings the 'tanks'.

The 4th division was straight in front of Oghma's realm, but was way back up on a ridge. They were made up of mages and priests, some baatezu but mostly demented demihumans. This group was believed to be 'artillery'. It has been said that the baatezu like to use their casters to send long-range spells and missiles across the battlefield to support their ground troops. The 5th division consisted of battle-proven baatezu and was right in front of the entrance to the realm. Someone had given the nickname 'grunts' to this group since they were the noisiest of the 6 divisions. The 6th and final division was the headquarters group, which stayed furthestmost from the battlefield up on a ridge behind the 'tanks' group.

Here is a breakdown of the size of the opposing army divisions, based on all available reports:

1st, 'air force'--10,000	2nd, 'mercs'--25,000	3rd, 'tanks'--25,000
4th, 'artillery'--15,000	5th, 'grunts'--10,000	6th, 'h.q.'--20,000
over 100,000 total troops		

Here are the specifics of the gathered Celtic forces, these numbers were not verified:

Group I, front line warriors---10,000	Group II, right flank warriors---10,000	Group III, left flank mages and priests---10,000
Sinker group, between HQ and Group II---5,000	Sensate group, between HQ and Group III-5,000	HQ group, center of Oghma's realm---3,000
Summoned monsters group, between HQ and Group I---7,000		
about 50,000 combined troops		

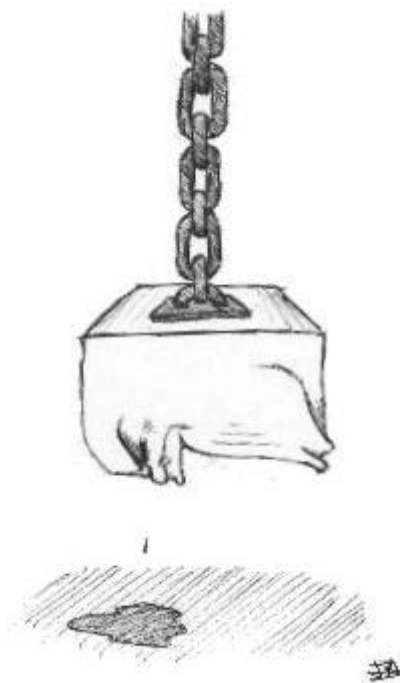
During the evening, after "visiting" with a friendly female Sensate cleric, I learned that a battle plan had been formulated and enacted. The attack had already occurred during the late afternoon. The attack had two simultaneous thrusts:

- 1) The first entailed a diversion of water and air elementals against the 'air force' which would allow an air-based attack on the 'tanks'. The group of gathered air creatures would fly in behind a huge tidal wave, approach the target as close to the ground as possible, and then attack the 'tanks' from the flank. A small, but special, infiltration force would be dropped off, nearly behind the 'tanks', and cause as much damage as possible to this heavy division.
- 2) The second attack, which was to occur precisely at the same time, would have fire and earth elementals attacking from the mountains behind the 'mercs'.

While these ground troops were occupied, the allied dragons would sweep in around the mountains and attack the 'artillery' group. The wyrms would hit the opposing mages and priests to inflict as much damage as possible.

The purpose of the attacks was to try and 'pinch' the baatezu army into the center of the battlefield, so that a devastating attack could be launched the following day. The Celts hoped to levitate several acres of Tir fo Thuinn and then apply a massive amount of spells to the enormous cube of fluid to convert it into holy water. They would then drop the 'water hammer' on the squeezed fiends.

The attack was a smashing success. The 'air force' was pushed back, but suffered only a few casualties. The air attack inflicted massive damage to the 'tanks' resulting in 5,000 casualties. The 'mercs' were taken by complete surprise and although the fire elementals caused little damage to them, the attacking earth elementals were able to crush nearly 14,000 of the 'mercs' by using several earthquakes and mudslides during the attack. The dragons arrived at their target, but the 'artillery' evidently had erected several large protection spells and repulsed the attack by the wyrms. Less than 1,000 casters were killed in the attack. The baatezu tried a quick push to the realm entrance, but oddly retreated even though the Celts had trouble resisting them. The front line troops, Group I, were able to cut down about 1,000 of the 'grunts', but suffered nearly 6,000 losses.



Day 2 of the Attack

The Celt forces moved a group of summoned monsters to reinforce Group I. The fiends made no attacks during the day, but did make several troop movements throughout. The 'grunts' pulled back, just slightly, and began some type of industrious construction. The fiends also moved the 'tanks' closer to the rear of the 'grunts' and the 'air force' disappeared completely from site.

Shortly after dark, the fiends smashed into Group II on the right flank. During the early evening, the cunning fiends had combined the 'mercs', 'grunts', and 'tanks' into a huge combined army group. The combined divisions then obliterated Group II, killing over 7,000 warriors in the initial attack. The poor souls never had a chance as they were outnumbered by 3 to 1. Group II fought courageously. By not retreating they were able to kill or destroy nearly 12,000 of the invaders. The 'Hammer' plan could no longer be conducted due to the fiend

movements and the entire right flank was now exposed

Day 3 of the Attack

I received word that a new plan was to be undertaken by the Celtic army. Here are the results of those movements.

- a) Group I moved down into a dense forest area after the summoned monsters moved up to protect their movement.
- b) The remainder of Group II pulled back inside Oghma's realm near the Sinker group.
- c) Group III withdrew to inside the realm to cover the movement of the Sensate group.
- d) The summoned monster group supported the movement of Group I. However, they triggered the unknown construction left by the 'grunts', which was evidently an Undead Wall. This hideous structure devoured several hundred of the summoned monsters.
- e) The Sinker group moved to a far edge of the realm and waited till nightfall to begin their attack.
- f) The Sensate group pulled, once Group III arrived, across the realm to a position below the Sinker group and would wait till the next day to attack.

The plan allowed the baatezu army a clear passage above the Realm. The fiends would then move quickly through this 'channel' and then at night the Sinker group would attack from the right flank. The Sensate group would attack the next morning, also on the right flank. Surely the Celts knew that this would not stop the fiends. I was greatly concerned that the realm may fall.

Even more distressing was the apparent discovery that the Circle of Stones was located in a vale, above and behind Oghma's realm. The Celtic army was virtually allowing the fiends to reach this vale and capture the Circle. While the power of the Circle is unknown, how could the Celts even think of letting it fall into fiendish hands!

The Sinkers attacked in the evening, but hardly slowed the fiends. They marched throughout the night and continued on towards the Circle vale. Late word was received that a firbolg army had come to reinforce the Celt allies, but they were coming in from above the realm. This would place them directly in the path of the invading fiends.

Day 4 of the Attack

The fourth day of battle resulted in a confusing battle between the fiend army and the Sensate and firbolg groups. The Sensates barely attacked the invaders and did not directly engage. The firbolgs, over 5000 strong, moved squarely in front of the baatezu horde and were completely devastated. Following the

battle, over 3000 dead or dying firbolgs were found scattered across the plain. The undoing of the firbolgs was the return of the 1st baatezu division, the 'air force'. They evidently had flown all the way around Tir na Og to support the fiend army. The firbolg, expecting only ground troops, suffered heavy losses from these vicious air attacks. The fiend army pushed on towards the Circle vale.

Day 5 of the Attack

Throughout the day I received reports concerning the baatezu army as they made they way into the vale with the Circle of Stones. As the reports were delivered, it became apparent that the baatezu had been tricked. The Circle of Stones was not within this vale; instead the vale was home to the Celtic power of War, Morrigan. The invading army walked right into a trap known as the Bloody Vale. None of the wretched beasts survived the wrath of the petitioners of Morrigan and the realm was saved. The only remaining question is who could have fooled the baatezu so completely?



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Rowdy crowd storms Gilded Hall, scuttling celebration

by Darunden Thistlesnap, Upper Planes culler

Near Brightwater, Arborea-- A rowdy bunch of roving Chaosmen invaded the Gilded Hall last week, spoiling the annual Festival of Aphrodite celebration. Portions of the Hall were desecrated before Sensate warriors moved in to clear out the ancient and holy structure. The Xaositects fiercely resisted the converging troops and 22 were killed in the resulting melee. Officials at the Gilded Hall were unable to confirm if any Sensates had been killed.

It seems that under cover of darkness, hundreds of traveling Chaosmen stormed through the front entrance of the Hall and began tearing down tapestries and paintings. The madmen then demolished the entire kitchen area before a group of Sensate warriors responded and began evicting the unknown number of Chaosmen. "They literally trampled straight through the Maze and ran in across the front courtyard," said an eyewitness who fled the structure during the destruction. "The sonsabitches were throwing all kinds of things and it looked like they toppled the entry fountain. Luckily the doors to the Grand Hall were closed so they couldn't reach the statues of the Goddess that were on display. Bleekin' barmies, ya never know what to expect from 'em," she said.

While there is a history of violent clashes between Chaosmen and the other factions, due to their "alternative lifestyle", the Xaositects have never directly attacked a holy site of the Society of Sensation. The Chaosmen have often been seen congregating at random events to form unorganized protests and anti-authority demonstrations. However, the forces of Law and Order have recently moved to crack down on large gatherings by anyone without authorized permits. In Sigil tough new laws have been enacted allowing Harmonium forces to arrest unruly groups in the name of maintaining public order. In response, the Xaositects have say that the Hardheads are using the new laws to victimize them and punish those who would lead a non-conformist life.

The storming of the Gilded Hall, which chant has it may have been "planned" by the disorderly group, prevented Sensates from completing the Festival of Aphrodite, a celebration conducted annually to honor the Olympian goddess of Love and Beauty. The Festival was in its third day and the majority of the Hall's population was attending the celebration, which takes place near the River Alph just outside the Tower of Summer Song. "There's disappointment and also a great sadness," Ema Orry, chief cleric of the Hall and an aide to the proxy of Aphrodite, told a group of culler. "The greatest sadness is perhaps seeing people ransacking and destroying the contents of the Holy Hall. It's not only dangerous

for them, it's desecration of a sacred site."

It is not known if any of the Chaosmen were infected with the Chaos Plague. Because they fled the Hall so quickly, none could be reached for comment. When asked, cleric Orry said that she doubted that the Plague had reached Arborea. "I sincerely doubt that Aphrodite would allow such a disease of ugliness and decay to reach her most treasured place. This was a random attack and if anyone believes that this was planned then they are the true barmies!"



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· Paladin, Keeper of the Dragonlance



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