
The Lady's Sharper Eye

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



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Tales from the Blood War

by Sofellor, Blood War culler

Siege of the Fortress of Pain

Related by Sofellor

The Fortress of Pain was erected by a tanar'ri lord several hundred cycles ago. Using the bones of a hundred thousand victims, it was created near a place mortals call "Mended Bough" in the Outlands. The weak-natured priests of the Bough failed to defend their home and nearly all were slaughtered. Capturing the Fortress from the fiends was the first action of the Bone Legion. The fortress was made of a dusky gray rock, seamless in construction. It resembled a hand clawing up from the soil, as its owner slowly suffocated. The wall around it was some 60 lengths above the surface when we first encountered it. The wall was carved to resemble dark twisted trees whose branches interlocked to form the wall itself, or so we thought. It was a thoroughly intimidating structure to any mortal who beheld it. Fortunately, the Bone Legion contains no mortals.

My ju-ju zombie skirmishers approached the walls to test the wariness of its defenders. I preferred great cats, such as tigers, for this mission and they rewarded my faith. The silent felines swarmed up the carved walls of the fortress, the first was among the defenders before the alarm was even sounded. An eerie wail came from the guard captain's horn. The trees composing the wall began to echo it and thrash about, tearing four-fifths of my scouts to pieces. The remaining cats did great damage to the fiends, but were soon overmatched. The trees continued to wail and thrash about for a long period after the last of my attackers had perished. Luckily, the trees failed to notice the undead mice and rats that slipped in beneath their branches. My eyes were in place, even if my hand was not.

A great horde of fiends came flying from the walls to attack my legion. Excellent, the fools had left their strong place to fend for themselves. The First Cohort stood, formed and ready to accept the attack. Upon command, its 200 skeletal warriors hurled javelins into the flying cloud of foes. Silver gleamed until the javelins struck, being then darkened by the blood of the vrock. First Cohort turned as one to retreat through the second as their javelins exploded inside the fiends in great sprays of acid. Second Cohort stepped up and repeated the maneuver through the First. Once the last warrior of Second Cohort was clear, the First formed phalanx. The wicked gleam of their silver longswords shined in the light of a dozen fireballs. The greater anti-magic shell of my mages was standing them in good stead.

The disorganized and now noticeably thinner horde began to impale itself on the spears of my phalanx. The fiends failed to notice the shields of my phalanx glowing as they drew near. The last of them landed full on my warriors, rending and tearing. I gave the command and the shields created an unlife sphere that destroyed all living creatures within yards of the phalanx by bathing them in the pure energy of the negative material plane. For the first time in centuries I felt a smile tug at my frozen features.

The few surviving fiends retreated and I ordered the skeleton servitors to begin stacking the dead so we could replenish our numbers. We grew stronger yet, fed by the blood of

our enemies. At this moment a great flame burst forth from behind the wall of the fortress. Caught unaware my First Cohort was destroyed by the vicious meteor swarm. The dust of their bones blinded all of us for a moment. It is well not to underestimate any foe.

The commander of my corp of magists, Hrasna the Shatterer, drew my attention to the actions of the tanar'ri. They were casting the wounded onto the top of the wall. The fiends so treated wailed most piteously as they slowly dissolved. The wall grew higher before our very eyes. It rose some dozen lengths, almost level with the hilltop from which I had observed the combat. This development was most curious.

Darkness enveloped the battlefield. The true siege could now begin. Spectres began to float towards the fortress and my cohort of giant ju-ju zombies marched forth. The giants stopped some 100 yards from the wall, while the spectres advanced with the certainty of death itself. Each giant raised a writhing form in its great hand, hurling it over the wall into the fortress. We could hear the clash of combat and wails as the fiends discovered Hrasna's greatest spell. He let slip a supulchrual chuckle as he imagined the thoughts of our foe when they realized the wight trolls retained their power of regeneration. The wail of the horn signaled another attempted defense by the wall, though it could not touch the spectres that glided silently over it.

Many of the tanar'ri began to fly above their fortress seeking an advantage. Aknaphelsin, the great black dracolich, soon taught them the error of their ways. The bodies of the fallen again allowed the walls to grow. So much so that my eyes were shielded from what transpired inside. Hrasna muttered dark words and formed a Vision Gate so we could continue to watch the combat.

The wailing of the trees hid the sweet sound of my enemy's screams. I ordered the magists to deal with the wall. Had I a heart, it would have quickened with the sight of slaughter. My giants began throwing each other into the fortress. Immediately the newly arrived began hurling the bodies of the fiends slain by my wights and spectres out onto the plain. We recovered many of them before the last of the giants was reduced to ashes. We now discovered a new power of the wall. A spectral mage attempted a divination on it and surrendered his unlife before us. A great loss, he was the only diviner among my followers. I ordered the harvesters to find me another. The great winged skeletons I used to create more minions immediately flew off on their mission.

I saw the tide begin to turn against my undead as more and more of the hated fiends gated in. We slew in the countless hundreds, but ever were there more. The last of my spectres died sending a marilith screaming into death. Her cooling blood formed a funeral shroud.

The wall, losing many to its tearing embrace, easily repulsed a ghoulish pack. Aknaphelsin locked in combat with a glabrezu. A fireball sheared off the great wyrms left wing. He spun screaming into the fortress, tearing at his final foe all the while. The great crunch of his impact no doubt slew many. Aknaphelsin's soul caused the great gem at Hrasna's throat to glow. A Host must be found quickly; more Harvesters set off.

Daylight gleamed low above the hills. Many of my followers were forced to retreat. The surviving spectres melted into the ground to await the night, while the great mounds of bodies protected the others.

Sometime during the later part of the day, my harvesters began to return. One held a sniveling white-haired human in his cold embrace. Hrasna took the weakling's head in his hands, burning him with the cold of death. Nodding, my mage commander fed the

human a potion and the spectral wizards chanted slowly. The skin drew back from the human's face, leaving a rictus grin. With a shattering scream he fell from Hrasna's grasp. In moments the newest of my liches, a diviner, rose up.

My skeletons in their countless thousands completed the digging of trenches about the fortress. Rank upon rank formed up behind the breastworks. A foolish ghoul snatched at a skeleton, attempting to find marrow in the old bones. The skeletal warrior in command beat the mindless creature away from his followers.

The mages began to cast in concert. A disintegrate spell lanced out at the wall. A hole opened, but soon irised closed. The wall appeared to have lower, but was still standing. An Earthquake spell quickly followed Disintegration, which followed several Earth elementals. The tanar'ri launched many small attacks and used numerous spells. A third of my wizards were destroyed, but the wall was reduced to some twenty lengths. The wizards maintaining the barrier spells were hit the hardest. Before my eyes a spectral wizard faded away as he used the last of his power to maintain his anti-magic wall. The skeletons were also busy. Great boiling cauldrons of molten iron were set up and tended by undead that had no need to fear flame. Rank after rank of skeletons marched through the cauldrons. The dull gleam of their cold iron coating gave them a sinister appearance. Mages nearing burn out from the spell duel began to cast upon the skeletons. This continued through the night with only scattered skirmishing between my troops and those tanar'ri, braver than they were smart.

As dawn again gleamed upon us, I readied my attack. The wall had been partially rebuilt through the night by fiends running out and catching skeletons to feed to the wall. It was now some 30 lengths in height.

Hrasna prepared to join in the mage duel. He cast Greater Disintegrate that opened a gaping hole in the near wall. This was immediately followed by sphere of force to hold the opening. The first of the skeletons marched into the breach. As they stepped through the sphere, they were met and destroyed by a solid wall of fiends. The first of the rended skeletons exploded as the firetrap cast upon his chest was activated. The fiends standing closest screamed in rage as the cold iron coating the bones tore into their bodies.

The balor lord of the fortress now showed himself. His great hands brushed my skeletons aside as though they were nothing. Their explosions failed to harm him, though many of his followers were slain by them. Hrasna grasped up the human he kept nearby for just such an emergency. His hands tore into the man's chest as he chanted the words of the spell. The human screamed in rage and pain as his body disintegrated. A white crackling energy lit Hrasna's hands. The Life Bolt he fired at the balor opened a gaping wound in its stomach. The monster bellowed in pain as it was thrown against the wall of the interior keep. For just a moment a hush swallowed the battlefield. My enhanced ghouls began to be thrown over the wall by the zombie giants I had held back for such a purpose.

I had a skeleton plant the bag of Dragon's Teeth I always keep on me. In moments, the long Grecian spears thrust up through the ground. The tall horsehide combs on the helmets followed. The vacant staring eyeholes of the created Dragon Warriors met mine as they finished their emergence. The forty-two conjured warriors formed a phalanx and marched into the breach. The black scales of their armor gleamed dimly in the fading sunlight. The acid they inherited from their draconian parent scorched the dead grass they trod upon. The cohorts of skeletons parted to allow the dragon warriors access. The roar of combat reached a new peak as my latest warriors joined the fray. The dying

sun's last rays kissed the battlefield. The first of my spectres stirred from their places of rest. My priestly lichs raised the last of the fallen from the previous day's battle. Durkar, the greatest of my vampires, finished donning his armor and led his minions to battle. My spectral warriors completed the destruction of the wall. A great explosion blasted the region. Once I picked myself up, I witnessed the remnant of my skeletons in a writhing pack upon the steadily increasing ranks of tanar'ri forces. Hrasna and his circle chanted the last syllable of "Plane Seal" and the last reinforcements the enemy would conjure this day popped into existence.

A large pack of vrock went aloft, and were there met by my Valkyrie. The two groups of winged warriors tore into one another. The new body of Aknaphelsin reinforced my wavering Valkyrie. One of the silver spears wielded by my winged followers fell to clatter upon my armor. The burn of the undead wyrm's acid scored deep upon a quickly disintegrating vrock.

I viewed the coming triumph of my legion with grim satisfaction. Just then Hrasna garnered my attention. The undead vermin we had infested the fortress with were witnessing a grave sight, how fitting. An unknown spellcaster inside the keep was melding together the bodies of the dead. The great titan created thus began to sweep my forces aside.

I summoned my mount, and my squadron of lesser knights. The nightmares stood firm as we mounted, the dark smell of sulfur greeted me. We formed a wedge and lowered lances. I aimed my point at the heart of the great creation. The twenty knights to either side of me created a comforting cadence as our mounts left the earth. Flames kissed the edges of our lances to form burning pennants as we awakened their power.

The shock of impact was an old friend as we pierced the body of the titan. My lance shattered under the impact, but burst into a firesphere to devour the internals of the creature. It bellowed and swatted me from the saddle. I plummeted some 40 lengths. Most would have died from the impact, but I am not most. I jumped to my feet and drew my spectral blade. It bit deep into the shin of the beast. A fragment of armor from one of my knights fell to my side, I noticed his arm was still inside it. The glare of fireballs lit the night. The foot of the giant kicked me the better part of a league away. The great rent in my armor had closed by the time I returned to the battle.

The charred remnant of the titan lay across the ruins of the keep. A last marilith rose up upon her tail, with a flaming lance piercing her below the breast. One of the great cauldrons of iron had been spilled upon several of my mages. Their statues were frozen in apparent agony. A ghoul gnawed upon the bones of the balor, and was burned beyond restoration. A great shape stirred near the trench line. The wyrm Aknaphelsin limped towards me; burned almost beyond recognition. Hrasna met me at the dragon, his left arm off at the shoulder. A rictus grin crossed his features, "This my Lord, is victory."



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Bylar's Behest

(*Creature Feature* sponsored by [Snail Outfitters](#))

Welcome to the first in a new regular series of *Creature Features* exclusively for the *Lady's Sharper Eye*. I am your host Mharlon. With me is my able assistant the experienced planewalker ranger Jhym. We will be going to the homes of some of the fiercest beasts on the planes to get the best information for you, our loyal readers. Snail Outfitters provides all of the equipment and funding for our little jaunts. Remember, Snail Outfitters' name is the best equipment you can carry!

Tonight we have ventured to the swamps of a prime world known as Durinnar. It is thought to be the original source of the Bylar. I'm sure the tarmy among you recognize the name as the fierce little beasts that have infested swamps from Arborea to the Abyss. The tiny reptiles are known far and wide as fearless predators. Jhym will capture one for us.

The mists begin to part as the sun's first rays penetrate the canopy of cypress leaves. The rank smell of decay coats the air. It is already hot but only a taste of the inferno that comes later in the day. Jhym has tied up a goat he brought along as a lure. Its bleating will be sure to bring Bylar. A pack has been sighted in this area recently.

The underbrush begins to stir. A sharply pointed snout pokes out from beneath a towering fern. Bright eyes peer into the small clearing. A single tiny Bylar dances out from cover. It hops about nervously, like a bird. Its sharp movements belie the appearance of repose its folded forearms bring. The little lizard looks everywhere but at the goat. After an eternal moment it takes a few mincing steps towards the tied animal. It hops back nervously.

Jhym is hidden beneath a pile of leaves, completely invisible from where I stand. The exposed Bylar's tail beats the ground in a rapid tattoo. It lowers its head and begins to sprint straight at the goat. At least a dozen of the predators burst from cover. They moved with incredible speed, body parallel to the ground and tail outstretched. The folded arms were held wide now, like the wings of a bird readying for flight. The long claw that tips the arm darts out and the goat screams. A long red line appears on its side. Many slashes have appeared on it as the pack darts by.

Jhym stands and fires his capture bow. Direct hit! The high quality Snail craftsmanship is evident in that shot. One of the little beasts is spitting and fighting at the end of the rope. The pack turns as if controlled by a single mind. The first of them quickly passes their captured member. They look like a swarm of arrows coming in for the kill. Jhym's leg has been slashed. His Snail

Outfitters' Longstrider Leggings were never designed to take that.

That brings me to the item I'm using to see all this with. Snail Outfitters is the exclusive dealer of the Field Far Eye. It looks like I'm standing right there in the middle of the Bylar pack with Jhym. I can see them cutting and wheeling around him as though I could reach out and touch them, instead of standing a good arrow flight away. The Field Far Eye is your only choice to bring the distant near to hand.

Jhym appears to have climbed a tree to get away. He still has that one Bylar in his left hand. Quite the trooper our Jhym. The Bylar are dancing about the bottom of the tree, hopping and darting about. It makes me hot just watching this. I think I'll take a drink from my Ever Flowing Canteen. Ahhh, that's refreshment. There will even be plenty of water when Jhym makes it over here. I'm sure he'll be grateful for the drink.

Now here's the kind of information we're here for! We've just learned the Bylar can climb trees! This is very exciting. Jhym probably just saved dozens of lives by forcing them to reveal that ability. It appears they are small enough to run about on those branches almost as quickly as they can on the ground. They are using those little foreclaws as pitons to climb onto the branches above Jhym's head and are dropping right down on him. Now that's ingenious. These are clever little reptiles.

Jhym has dropped from the tree now in an attempt to escape. That may not have been a good move. We all know how fast the Bylar are on the ground. He's making good progress. It looks like they are reluctant to drop more than ten feet. It's forcing them to climb down before they take up the pursuit.

Whew! Look at Jhym run; I've never seen the half elf move so quickly. What a devoted guy, he still has that angry little lizard in his hand. He's going to bring us one after all. Uh oh, it looks like the Bylar's poison is starting to take effect. What a shame! Jhym was really moving for a while there. He's starting to weave now, obviously losing strength.

He's within forty yards of my Salamander Tent. Its waterproofed properties have served me well since we've been in this swamp. A Bylar just reached him, slashing again with those razor sharp foreclaws. Oh no, Jhym's fallen. It looks like, yes... the Bylar is attempting to eat Jhym. This simply won't do. I'll just use one of my Element Javelins to run them off. A fire javelin should do.

Those Bylar sure do hate fire. They've run right off. I suppose I'll go see if Jhym needs any help. Will you look at this; the Bylar Jhym had captured escaped. What a shame to go though all that for nothing. I guess we'll have to try again later to capture the storied Bylar. That, my friend, will be a story for another time. Just remember that Snail Outfitter's can supply all your planewalking

needs. When Jhym here regains consciousness I'm sure he'd tell you the same.
Good Night!



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Barmy Skraag topples tower

by Daeh K. Carc, Sigil culler

Lady's Ward-- Xithron the Summoner is still picking up the pieces of what was once his home. Amongst the silently and diligently working dabus, the 65-cycle old mage looks about with sadness in his eyes. "I never thought that anything like this could happen. I had always thought that my home, with all of my magical prowess and abilities, was safe and secure. I never bargained on a run-away skraag, I guess..."

Three days ago, a shipment of Acheronian arms and weapons, possibly bound for the front lines of the Blood War, entered the Lady's Ward via a portal near the Trioptic Nic'Epona. The shipment, as are many that arrive from Acheron, was bound on and pulled by several skraag, the large, lizard-like beasts of burden common to the Lower Planes, the Outlands, and Acheron. One of the skraag, which are highly intelligent, sentient creatures that are usually forced into slavery and servitude at a very young age, went completely barmy, broke free of its constraints and barreled through the Lady's Ward at top speed.

The insane creature trampled countless citizens and visitors to the Lady's City and inadvertently killed three by crushing them beneath its six massive feet. Seventeen buildings were damaged, four wagons smashed and a score of other miscellaneous damages were incurred by the twelve-foot tall lizard. Bellowing at the top of its horn-like voice in its native tongue, the mighty brute ended its rampage at the end of Tout's Lane with a head-on collision with the tower of one Xithron the Summoner. The skraag, being completely resistant to all forms of magic, passed through the mage's formidable magical defenses and crashed into the tower almost as if it wanted to end its own life. Whether or not this was the case, it succeeded in that task and completely destroyed the Summoner's five-story tower in the process.

"This is the clearest example yet of why we should focus all of our efforts on saving these poor, wretched creatures from their preset life-style", commented planar druidess Kalya Quicktongue, the Godsmen leader of the "Save the Skraags" movement. "This insanity that grips these wonderful and highly intelligent is only the last stage in a long and terrible movement that begins with their entrance into slavery at birth. These are not just 'creatures' that we 'are talking about - they are a race all of their own, and should be treated as such!" Guvner sages have been studying the claims that the druidess and her ever-growing group of followers made and have found some evidence to the validity of the claims. "They have a point, but we are having a skraag of a time trying to figure out what to do about it! There are no existing laws that govern an area such as this, and laws cannot be built in a day you know!"

Harmonium officers had detained the skraag's owners for questioning and chat was plentiful regarding a possible civil suit filed on the part of Xithron. However, after an anonymous payment of Gehennan shekels arrived addressed to the Summoner, the threat of the suit was dropped without further comment and the shipment of arms was allowed to continue.



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Eladrin knight slain by a kid

by Will the Red-Eyed, Freelance culler

Hive Ward-- A most bizarre event has been reported at the Gatehouse. Vardeen Sunset, a visiting eladrin shiere knight, was accidentally killed by one of the orphanage residents, a 10-cycle old tiefling kid known only as Sluffy.

The following chant was lanned to me by an ol' friend, Vordrael Greystride, who was just released from the Mad Bleaker Wing. He witnessed the whole scene. Here's what he said:

"Sluffy was playing as usual in the courtyard. Vardeen who appeared to be on his way to the Gatehouse saw the kid. He was so amused with Sluffy that he came closer to the boy. Seeing this delighted Sluffy who then drew his wooden chiv and cried "I challenge you to a duel, worthy adversary" and attacked the noble eladrin.

Vardeen laughed and pulled his dagger pretending to be in serious trouble. The two were fencing for a while, both laughing merrily, drawing the attention of local Hivers. Sluffy shouted something like, "You're no match for my mighty magical sword, villain. It can cut through metal, flesh, even stone. Your time has come."

Vardeen responded pretending to be really scared, "Oh, I cannot stand against your powerful blows. I can feel my strength fading." Vardeen laughed and lowered his shield. Sluffy jumped in with a big smile and stabbed the knight right in the breastplate with his wooden sword. Amazingly, Sluffy's chiv actually got through. Vardeen fell on his back stiffly, bleeding heavily from the mortal wound with the expression of surprise and disbelief frozen on his face. The boy stood open-mouthed with the blood stained sword still clinched in his hand and then fainted."

One of the observers, Terry McNeil said, "The little boy's stick sliced through the celestial like a hot knife through the butter. It just pierced the armor so easily. It must have cut through the heart since the berk died so fast." Another observer was even harsher. "Ha, 'twas such a funny view. This almighty celestial falling down, nicked by a kiddo! I always knew eladrins were a bunch of weaklings," said Gotrix, a spinagon Hiver.

When asked to comment Tyvold, head of the Orphanage, said, "Sluffy often played in the Gatehouse courtyard. He used to imagine himself to be a great knight and thrashed his imaginary foes with his wooden toy-sword. It is widely known that shiere eladrins can be harmed only by very powerful, enchanted

weapons. It's seems unthinkable how could a kid actually harm him, not to mention how he manage to pierce the breastplate with this stick of his."

All efforts to detect any kind of enchantment on the toy-sword hit the blinds. It was completely non-magical, wooden toy made of two sticks strapped together. Upon actual testing, it wouldn't even cut bread.

As all of the witnesses said that it was the young tiefer who attacked the celestial knight, Harmonium officers accused the boy of cold-blooded murder and wanted to scrag him. However, Factol Lhar of the Bleakers refused to turn over Sluffy. The Hardheads were quite torqued off, but Lhar's influence and authority in the Hive kept them at bay.

Further investigation indeed proved that it was just a tragically unfortunate accident. It seems that Sluffy had such a vast imagination, that he actually believed his toy-sword to be a true magical blade. As most cutters know, on the planes belief is the true power after all. When the boy stabbed Vardeen, truly believing he was holding a mighty vorpel sword, it worked as if it truly were.

"It's a very rare occurrence when someone has such a strong will and belief that they may actually make their imaginations come true. Kids have a natural tendency to believe in the unbelievable. I never encountered any sod older than 12 who could do such a thing. And, in my whole life it's the third time I've hear about such a thing," said Talina the Wise, an elven sage, specializing in matters of belief.

No charges were filed after the Hardheads finally agreed that the death of Vardeen Sunset was just an accident. However, the Sign of One has become very interested in Sluffy. Needless to say, what happened at the Gatehouse has obviously caught the attention of some Signer high-ups. They want to persuade Sluffy to join them, but so far the boy has flatly refused.

Sluffy officially stated, "I've been living in the Orphanage all my life. The Gatehouse is the place I call home. I'm too young to become a member of a faction yet, but I feel being a Bleaker is in my bones. I ain't got no love for Signers and I don't see no reason why should I join them". Factol Lhar's response was brief, "Yep, this kid will make a good mindbender, or then again, does it really matter."



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Blue-Heeled Jack turned back

by P. Fiendus Hooten, Guest culler

Outlands, Sheela Peryroyl's Realm-- The creature known as Blue-Heeled Jack has been turned back! After destroying a Walking Castle, the creature's tracks turned towards Ecstasy and moved at such a pace that we could not keep up with him. After losing his trail, we waited for any word of his whereabouts. That word soon came from Sheela Peryroyl's Realm.

Details are sketchy, but what we have been able to piece together is quite interesting. Apparently, late one night Jack crossed the boundary into Sheela Peryroyl's Realm. The Goddess is said to have noted his presence immediately at which point she flew to confront him. Per Pappy Singswallow, a proxy of Sheela Peryroyl, the Goddess and the creature battled briefly, with the Goddess easily casting it from her realm.

When asked for details of the battle he could not provide further information stating that Sheela Peryroyl was not inclined to discuss the matter further, though he did mention that she said she expressed surprise that the creature was able to escape Carceri. All petitions for further information on this enlightening comment were met with an absolute refusal to discuss it further. We will continue to petition the goddess for more details on the history of Blue-Heeled Jack and will report any knowledge found about him.

After a couple days of searching, we were able to find where Blue-Heeled Jack's tracks left the realm. It appears that he is now heading towards the Spire. After the recent pronouncement from the Harmonium and Mercykillers that they will be working in a joint "Law-Taskforce" effort to capture and detain this creature (See Faction Reaction to Blue-Heeled Jack), we were surprised to find other groups also pursuing this creature as well.

While following the tracks we came across a patrol of Rilmani, who admitted that they were pursuing the unusual creature. They were not interested in a joint venture and refused to discuss it further with us, though they did point out that the Khaasta are now actively looking for him as well. After returning to Sigil, I was also informed by various sources that the Guardinal's now have a few patrols searching for him and that the Ragers sect also has some teams looking for him, presumably for the prestige of being the first to kill such a powerful creature.

I've spent the last week researching into the comment made by Sheela Peryroyl and have found a single passage in an ancient scroll that seems to mention him. The passage reads, "ande thus traditional meanes of combat arts and

containment magick served to none avail to holde the Keeper of the White-Blue Flame. Yea, many mighty warrior felle to him before the key was found to caste him into the Prison of the Red Orbs." Unfortunately, this key is not referred to again, so we do not know what it means. The search continues and we shall continue on in this quest until more is known.



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Barmy Shorts and Lot's of Gold

by Skelterbet, Culler of the Stage

Market Ward-- It is a sad but true thing that there are many who think acting is a relatively easy art form. All one must do is memorize the lines from a script and then recite the words on stage while striking dramatic poses, right? This and a few pointers from the director during rehearsal and behold, a masterful performance. If the audience does not laugh when they are supposed to laugh or cry when they are supposed to cry, then isn't that the play's fault? The fools that believe this are the same fools who will happily pay two greens and then wonder why up the fforge doesn't go. These are the ones that believe you when you tell them Nessus is a demiplane.

To those who know and appreciate the difficulties of theatrical performance, it might come as a surprise to learn that many accomplished actors consider comedy to be the most difficult form of acting to effectively perform. Sansmwers, the late and beloved acting teacher, once said that he could teach someone how to act on stage, how to move across the stage, how to vocalize such that the whole audience can hear him, but he could not teach someone how to be funny on stage. Humor in performance requires many things. Some say it is a matter of timing, others say a matter of presentation. I firmly believe that it is a matter of instinct. Those that have the right instinct in how to present their case, be that in a monologue or in the circumstances of the act, will always succeed in getting the audience to laugh and enjoy the show.

It is with great pleasure that I announce that there are two offerings of great comedy available to all Cagers free of charge. Both are located in the Great Bazaar and both are worth the effort to see.

The New Neighbors is the fare at a tent in the bazaar with a rather humorous sign that proudly displays their name - **Barmy to the Spire**. I'm uncertain about the whole operation, but let me assure you that the bloods behind this operation are quite creative and that they also live up to their name, for they are definitely barmy in a quite fun sort of way. The stage is small and the play is short but definitely worth the effort to go and see it. The play is by the Barmy Shorts Company and is superbly written by Tom Bubul. I'm not certain what else he has written but I am anxious to see more of his work. The curtain opens upon a stage that is overwhelmed by fog, to the point where the fog came boiling over the audience - a nice way of inviting the audience into the show. I'm not sure if the amount of fog was by design or was caused by an overactive illusion spell, but I do hope they keep it.

The play begins with Redpon Snobbits, the 119th most powerful mage in all

existence, spying on a couple who have, much to his displeasure, just moved in to a demiplane right next to his. His wife Windy, being wiser than he gives her credit, invites the new neighbors, the lovely aasimar Aphrodite and her husband Sir Ronald Rumguts, a wizard with an outlook similar to Redpon's, over for dinner. The dialog is tight and humorous, the set is inspired (the plaque on the wall is golden - I enjoyed it immensely), and the actors are excellent. The actor portraying Redpon is a master of comedy, for he is very sincere in his disdain of the Rumguts and that keeps the audience laughing all the harder. The only regret I have about the show is that the names of the actors were not displayed, so I could not give them proper credit for the marvelous show.

Lots of Gold is showing at the Bugbear's Mess Alehall and Playhouse. This is a play by Barr Jorteng, a noted Sigil playwright, and it is also a joy to watch. Brigbottom Buttercup, skillfully played by Alvarious Jeers, is a Prime adventurer who comes across a treasure map that shows that there is "lots of gold" in an abandoned dungeon somewhere in the Outlands. He decides that, in order to obtain the treasure, he must hire several seasoned planewalkers to help him find it. After several failed attempts to hire help, he decides that he would instead have better success if he were to create his own expedition company to get the help he needs. Thus he creates Slug Expeditions (a shameless parody of the expeditions at Snail Outfitters - Barr Jorteng and Snail Trawet Jr. are good friends), and then he goes about trying to interest folks in the expedition. The problem is the idea takes off and suddenly Brigbottom is in over his head as he tries to manage the Expedition, and tries to look for the treasure marked on the map at the same time. The resulting shenanigans become more and more outrageous at each turn, until the outstanding grand finale.

Alvarious Jeers is magnificent in his role and puts on the best performance of his long career. Like the actor that portrays Redpon in *The New Neighbors*, he makes the difficult prospect of being funny on stage appear as if it were effortless, and that is probably why many fools think that acting is relatively easy. If you don't believe me after seeing these shows, then please let me know. I have a great little castle in Nessus that is for sale. It's just a demiplane, after all.



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Faction Reaction to Blue-Heeled Jack

by Daeh K. Carc, Sigil culler

Clerk's Ward-- Several of the factions have made official pronouncements of their views on the creature known as Blue-Heeled Jack. These pronouncements are listed below and were gathered from releases at the Hall of Speakers and from spokespersons. Some factions have not made a pronouncement regarding this creature nor have no specific viewpoint. These are listed below as well.

Athar - Factol Terrance has said that while the creature appears to be extremely powerful, it is not a "power" as was recently argued in the Hall of Speakers. He states that other than making that distinction, there is no faction viewpoint on Blue-Heeled Jack.

Believers of the Source - No specific viewpoint has been released.

Bleak Cabal - Factol Lhar has openly expressed his mirth at the havoc Blue-Heeled Jack has caused. He has not expressed a viewpoint for the faction, though he has said that all attempts to make sense out of the creature and its plans are a waste of time.

Doomguard - Factol Pentar has vehemently argued against any measures being taken against Blue-Heeled Jack. She states that he should be allowed to run his course without the meddling of any faction.

Dustmen - No specific viewpoint has been released.

Fated - When questioned, Factol Darkwood said, "Blue-Heeled Jack is certainly a powerful force to be reckoned with, but it is obviously that he is a solo operator. What does this mean? It means that he may be big and bad by himself, but the combined strength of others will prevent him from seizing what he wants."

Fraternity of Order - Factol Hashkar, in association with Factol Sarin and Factol Nilesia, has ordered an organized investigation into the events surrounding the creature and has also supported measures to apprehend Blue-Heeled Jack.

Free League - Though not really a faction, popular sentiment has been very much against the Fraternity of Order's proclamation that Blue-Heeled Jack must be apprehended. No other viewpoint has risen from this group.

Harmonium - Factol Sarin has proclaimed that they have joint patrols with the Mercykillers already searching for Blue-Heeled Jack. Measure Three Grickallin,

a Maedar faction high-up, has been placed in charge of the mission for the Harmonium involvement.

Mercykillers - Factol Nilesia, in association with Factol Haskar and Factol Sarin, has also prepared to carry out the mission of apprehending Blue-Heeled Jack. Justicar Llewellen has been placed in charge of the apprehension and detainment of Blue-Heeled Jack. She will be working closely with Measure Three Grickallin to coordinate the mission.

Revolutionary League - No specific viewpoint known; though it is surmised that they will work against the ruling of Factol Hashkar.

Sign of One - No specific viewpoint has been released.

Society of Sensation - No specific viewpoint has been released; though Factol Montgomery did mention that the 'thrill of the chase' should be exciting.

Transcendant Order - No specific viewpoint is known. Someone did approach Factol Rhys on the subject and received a swift kick in the mouth.

Xaositects - Viewpoints from the Chaosmen, naturally, were mixed and often contradictory. One member of the Chaosmen said, "Come on by Jack, I'll buy ya a beer." Another said, "Them hoof marks are purdy!"



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Fiendish Blood War plans uncovered

by Jelly Hoarfrost (also known as Shiad Amaron), Freelance culler

Oinos, Gray Waste-- Dear readers this report is written while I travel with my new companion, the proud Bjorn Svensson, warrior and devout worshipper of Odin. As my first two reports have explained already, we are on a mission to stop tanar'ri and yugoloth forces that are trying to enslave mighty bariaur flocks for the Blood War. I do not know if we have any chance of success.

Although we're protected by spells from the Gray Waste's influence, I feel doubt and hopelessness grasping for my will. Even Bjorn has begun to sigh more often than he talks. Still, we march on. With the information from the freed bariaur, we were able to locate the place where they were enslaved - a weird forest of dead and sick trees called "Chamyarai" by the yugoloths (as the bariaur have reported). We will arrive in a day or two, I think, and I will go on writing then.

The forest is in sight - unfortunately, I might say. The dark, horribly twisted trees spread sorrow and fear even more than the rest of this evil plane. Hope leaves even faster at the sight of hundreds of tanar'ri and a few dozen yugoloths - and, in particular, at the sight of thousands and thousands of slaves, including not only bariaur, but also dwarves, firbolgs, hobgoblins, and countless other races, many of which I have never even seen before.

It seems that the fiends are leading the slaves (which at least still struggle for their freedom) deeper into the forest; we have no idea of what happens to them afterwards. Bjorn seems to be even more hopeless than the days before, but insists on infiltrating the fiendish camp. He now holds the *Scramasax*, that mighty, yet mysterious bariaur artifact, in his hands all the time, and it seems to strengthen his will. I pray that it will give him enough strength to get us out of here alive.

We are now inside the camp. The great magic of the *Scramasax* and Bjorn's impressive capability as a warrior have wiped out a dangerous patrol of the tanar'ri, and we now hide in what seems to be their tent. As we searched for clues amid the bodies of the dead fiends, we discovered some of them wear the signs of Graz'zt. In their tent, we uncovered even more hints in the form of a few letters, most of which we cannot read, probably written in a language of the Lower Planes. Although they are undecipherable, they all bear the signs of Graz'zt, as well as the personal signs of an arcanaloth I have heard of before, and an up-and-coming balor residing on the first layer of the Abyss.

Discussing these letters with Bjorn, we have come to the conclusion that Graz'zt and the arcanaloth are probably working together to help the said balor gather

more strength in the Blood War. I believe that Graz'zt and his ally hope to use the balor (who might be on his way to an Abyssal Lord) as a puppet of their own plans. Bjorn merely replies that he doesn't care and just wants to see their foul blood being spilled.

We have been discovered! A group of cambions entered the tent while we were discussing the letters, and in the erupting battle, more and more fiends stood against us. In the end, we had no other chance but to flee into the forest, and it was more luck and mercy of the gods than our own skill that we survived at all. We now cower in a gargantuan knothole of one of those horrible trees, while the fiends outside are still searching for us. Bjorn is badly wounded and I'm not sure at all if he will survive the next hour. I myself am wounded as well, but not fatally.

After doing what I can to cure Bjorn's wounds, I began examining the inside of this tree. Interestingly, it is not made of wood; it seems to be something like a hardened moss that just took the shape of a tree. Cutting away the upper layer of the moss-like substance reveals a dark-gray fluid. I shouldn't be surprised, what other color should it have on this plane. Remembering my studies of magical laws from a few cycles ago, I determined that these fluids could be used as material components in spells for the creation of disease and psionic influence.

Bjorn wounds were too severe; he has passed on. His last words were, "Don't give up, as I have. You're not just my companion - you're a planewalker in your own right now. A true blood. Show 'em they can't do anything." As he drew his last breath, I promised to try and to bring vengeance for his death. And I will.

I do not know how much time has passed since Bjorn's death. I admit I wasted much time staying beside my dead friend's body and trying to understand what I should do now. I am no warrior, nor a mage or anything like that. I'm just a scholar, but an ANGRY scholar. Seeing no other option, I will now take the *Scramasax*, and enter the greatest - and probably last - battle of my life.

Blood and bones and faces filled with cowardly fear - that is all I have seen this day. The *Scramasax* is still at my side, covered in organic fluids just as I am myself. Many fiends have fled, but still more have come to replace them. I am fighting my own Blood War here and have retreated into another of these large knotholes only to recover for a few moments. And, not to forget - to question my prisoner, a creature utterly twisted in mind and body, known also as a nalfeshnee.

Jelly [J]: So, wicked creature, if you want to have any hope of surviving, tell me everything you know about this slave trade. Lie to me and you will die.

Nalfeshnee [N]: Good sir, I would never lie to... ack! Please, take that...axe away

from me!

J: I will put it INSIDE you if you do not talk now.

N: Okay, okay. Calm down, please. These slaves here are meant for Barugias, a balor residing in Pazunia. He hopes to become an Abyssal Lord soon and wants to show his strength by winning some Blood War battles.

J: As I thought already. Fine, so how does Graz'zt and his arcanaloth ally come into play?

N: I do not know about any 'loth... ack! PLEASE! Mhargyn is his name. His fortress isn't very far away, and the other 'loths here serve him. The forest belongs to him, so to say.

J: And what is the purpose of this forest? How does it break the minds of these poor slaves?

N: It's a disease. The trees here are all infected by it. Let someone drink it, and they become a willing slave, losing all strength of mind. An empty puppet, so to say.

J: And why do you smile as you say that?

N: ME? Good sir, I would never smile talking of... ack!

J: Go on.

N: (sighs) Okay. See, it's quite complicated and maybe I should start at the...

J: Want the taste of steel again? Or why do you....

At that moment, a horde of mezzoloths stormed my hideout. I slaughtered them, but gained the attention of the other fiends again. So, I entered the battle again, leaving the nalfeshnee behind. I'm sure some other tanar'ri has found him and freed him from his chains. Knowing about the wickedness of the forest, I now changed my fighting style. Every other slash I made went against a tree instead of a fiend.

Days must have passed and I think I was near death many times, but somehow managed to survive. I feel the gods of goodness are with me and they aid me through the *Scramasax*. So many fiends have fled at my sight, even before I slaughtered so many of them, this just has to be the power of this fantastic artifact.

It's over! In the end, I had to retreat, with no strength left in me. But I have not lost. The forest is destroyed, and as the last tree fell under my axe, the

thousands of slaves gained back their strength of will, and started to battle their former masters as well. I wonder if this happened at other places as well. Surely it must be, the many slaves that have been mind-broken here are freed now, at least mentally.

Dear readers, I am happy to announce that I was able to bring back the dead body of my fallen friend and companion Bjorn Svensson. He has now been buried on holy ground in Ysgard, and I am sure his mighty soul is rewarded with an afterlife of great honor. For me, my mission is not yet over. The three fiends that are responsible for all this evil have not yet been punished. Yes, I will try to even punish Graz'zt himself. Parts of this are still confusing, as I still don't know how the Guvners are involved. I promise you that you will here from me again in the next batch of the *Lady's Sharper Eye*.



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Guvners, Xaositects vandalize each other

by Sarcina Sandoval Ocrea, Revolution culler

Hive Ward-- Both the Fraternity of Order and the Chaosmen have raised allegations against each other in attacks that left both factions' headquarters vandalized and put the always-strained relationship between the two in an even worse state.

This sort of behavior is expected of the Xaositects, who are forever attempting to paint the Trioptic Nic'Epona "just the right shade of plaid" or creating illusions of the Great Library on fire. The current official spokesslaad for the Chaosmen, FishInStomach, ignored questions from *Eye* cullers and continued to eat a table, but then that sort of behavior, both vandalism and table devouring, is typical of the chaos lovers. What makes the incident so surprising is that the Guvners would be caught stooping to such tactics.

When asked what would make the lawscribers adopt the sort of actions that they have, gnome Administrator (A9) Skippy "Skips" Silvershine insisted that her faction was completely in the right. "According to law number 743-E, subsection 6f, paragraph 779, passed last cycle as a rider to the official **Decapitation Omnibus Bill**, 'officers of the law have the right to enter any house or other structure which contravenes any appearance by-law and perform emergency repairs of whatever type necessary.' All of the Fraternity members who participated in the operation were sworn-in officers and the structures violated any number of by-laws, from a lack of rain gutters to inappropriately dimensioned doorways. It was all perfectly legal."

The Xaositects believe that the Guvners found and recorded several important documents that they themselves had lost the week before, and plan to launch legal actions, even though any such case would pass before a Guvner judge. "We have no other choice, other than the other choices," insisted a Chaosmen cleric who wandered in off the street and demanded at spoonpoint to be interviewed for this article. "They ordered everything and cleaned up everything and it was just horrible everything. They even came in through the doors!" Unable to bear the thought of their now tidy and orderly kips, many in the Hive destroyed their homes and, in some cases, the homes of others.

Xaositect members were relieved and avenged when a Chaosmen raiding party, sent off before the Guvner raid, appeared back in the Hive early this morning with some of its members unaccounted for. They evidently had done their work well since the staff at the City Courts opened the building this morn only to find a complete trireme reconstructed in the main court. When crews attempted to dismantle the ship, a ghostly captain and host of chattering ratatosks appeared

on the ship's deck, and it began to move forward, partially crashing through a wall and causing major structural damage to a courtroom before spontaneously bursting into flame.

"If the damage to the wall isn't enough, the smoke from the fire has completely ruined the ceiling mural of [former factol] Lariset drafting her famed "hundred laws in a hundred days bill" that [Cipher painter] Amarpeet Nagra just finished for the Fraternity. I'd love to say that heads will roll for this, but that would violate section 4, clause 356, paragraph 278, of the **Decapitation Omnibus Bill**," commented Skips.

A passing Sensate commented, "The mural was quite beautiful. It's a shame that it is lost." While a rather smelly Doomguard member said, "They only knocked down one courtroom. Why couldn't they have taken down the whole bleekin' thing!" Most reactions to the events have followed expected factional lines.



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Outfitter expands again with warehouse purchase

by Blisswing, Upper Gatetowns culler

Tradegate, Outlands-- Snail Outfitters, an Outlands-based "guide 'n' supply" business, is expanding again. The increasingly well known company will open a third store at Ironhearth and has purchased an old warehouse in Tradegate from a group of Merkhants.

The exact price of the warehouse purchase is unknown, but a source close to the Merkhants said that the amount would top 4000 Mechanus platinum. The site has been vacant for three cycles, as the Merkhants group had moved to a larger warehouse across town near the Mt. Celestia's Gate. The expansion announcement caught most chantmongers off-guard as no one expected S.O. to move into Tradegate.

"We're simply fillin' the dream my paw foresaw when he started this business in the Cage. He wanted Snail to be known in each and every gatetown. The warehouse is just what we was needin' in order to expand to the other gatetowns. This buy will allow us to have two main sites for our increasin' number of products. Space in Ironhearth is becomin' increasingly hard to find and the old Merkhants place is really quite large," Snail Trawet, Jr., owner and operator of S.O., said yesterday during the announcement.

Snail Jr. expects to complete renovations and the stocking of the warehouse by next month. The warehouse alone will add an additional 20 employees to S.O. operations. It was unknown how quickly the new positions would be filled. Chant has it that Snail Jr. has struck a deal with several bariaur tribes to provide transportation of goods between the stores in Ironhearth, Sylvania, and Ecstasy to the warehouse in Tradegate.

The expansion at Ironhearth to a third store is also due to the need for additional storage space. Snail Jr. told cullers that the newest store will take over a majority of the tour business that had been conducted at the largest and oldest Ironhearth store. This will allow space at the largest store to be used for storage. The growth of Snail Outfitters has been nothing short of miraculous, as the ever-growing business, which had but one store seven cycles ago, will now have six locations.

Slug Trawet, manager for the Ironhearth stores, said funding for the store expansion and the warehouse purchase was due to unexpected profits generated from several exclusive tours. S.O. began tours two cycles ago and has quickly grabbed the attention of top-shelf high-ups looking for spicy adventures. It's also believed that Snail Jr. has made some exclusive supply

deals for his expanding line of outfitter goods. Several sources of chant have suggested that Snail has made private deals with Baatorian suppliers, at the expense of eliminating deals with suppliers in the Abyss. Recently, S.O. had a large increase in the availability of Baatorian green steel.

Snail Jr. said the Tradegate warehouse would receive goods from the Upper Planes, while the Ironhearth stores will continue to handle most of the supplies that flow from the Lower Planes. Snail Jr. would not elaborate when additional gatetown stores would open or if a store would be reopened in Sigil. He did confirm that a deal had been struck with bariaur tribes in the Outlands involving the transport of supplies. However, he said that he could not release the name of the tribes at this point.

In a somewhat contradicting interview, Cricket Champenbit, the manager of the Sylvania store, said sales had been flat at his store for the last cycle and he didn't see any need for additional gatetown stores. "Maybe I'm too conservative, but I think we just need ta work with what we got!" Cricket declared. "Me and Snail Jr. don't always see eye ta eye. Don't get me wrong, I respect him, his paw was a great man. Its just things here on the planes ain't always solid and bad things can settle in real quick. Goin' the easy route might be wiser at this point," Cricket when on to say. When asked specifically about deals with Baatorian interests, Cricket refused to comment and abruptly ended the interview.



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