
The Lady's Sharper Eye

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



BATCH-26

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Jack the Glider - condemned or glorified?

by Will the Red-Eyed, Freelance culler

Lady's Ward-- Once again a wave of hostility has swept over the Cage in what appears to be yet another kriegstanz maneuver. Some of you probably already know about a new, but fierce, conflict that's been troubling the Cage of late. It concerns the plans to erect a statue of legendary, albeit definitely historical, person Jack the Glider.

The idea for erecting Jack's statue came from the Indeps. Bleak Cabal officials were quick to support the idea, as were the Transcendent Order. Both of the factions consider Jack the Glider a Cager hero. Factol Lhar spoke in the Hall of Speakers and demanded that the Fated donate jink to the venture.

However, before anything was decided the Harmonium, Mercykillers and Fraternity of Order openly assaulted the idea of Jack's statue as illegal. "Jack the Glider was a lawbreaker," said Factol Sarin. "To honor him with a statue is to honor all the knights of the post that have menaced our fair city for far too long. There won't be any statue! In fact, I demand that we outlaw the propagation of written praise concerning this villain as a hero."

The Triad of Law was also quickly joined by the Fated, when they found out what costs were involved in erecting such a statue. "These damn misers say it would disrupt the city's budget, but they surely don't want to give away even a small part the jink they've stolen from us! I wish Jack were here today, " said an elderly githyanki woman, Enn Verto.

So, all goes back to the mysterious Jack the Glider. Primes and other bloods that didn't spend their childhood here in the Cage probably haven't ever heard about Jack. But, for lifelong Cagers we know that every single common kid use to play Jack the Glider with their friends. The poor revere him even more than most official historical figures or whoever else is supposed to be a hero. For those who don't know Jack's story I have happily summarized it.

Jack was just a common Cager, born in the Lower Ward into a poor workman's family. His family never had enough jink to put the proper amount of food on the table, so Jack, as the oldest of the numerous kids, was forced to steal. He hated it with all his



heart, but he had no real choice.

Then, one day he realized that the landowner, an unidentified fat Taker, who paid visit to his father twice a month was not just coming to rattle his bone-box for no reason. The Taker was collecting a fee, which took most of Jack's father's measly earnings. Jack realized it was this Taker who made the whole family so miserably poor and forced him into a life of crime. The young thief vowed to steal only from those who didn't deserve the jink they so greedily gathered. He kept good on his promise and now stole only from the Fated, Merkhants and other rich high-ups.

Not long into his criminal crusade, he was peeling them blind; gaining more jink than he thought was possible. Jack was faithful and didn't keep any of the money; he gave it all away to the orphans, quippers and poor of the wards. Many cutters joined him in his quest to bob all the real thieves of the Cage and give the jink back to the rightful owners.

He became something of a folk hero for the people of the Lower Ward and the Hive, but at the same time Jack the Glider became the number one criminal on the Law's most wanted list. The Harmonium, Fated, Mercykillers, Merkhants, Fraternity of Order and numerous other powerful enemies pursued him. With the help from the local populace he managed to avoid being scragged for several months, but in the end one of Jack's most trusted lieutenants turned stag on him and sold him out to the Fated. The Fated caught the thief and the very next day the Mercykillers publicly gave him to the Wyrn.

What's curious about this story was the fact that the stag-turning lieutenant, who, as the chant goes, received a hefty 5000 merts for his betrayal of the famous rogue, didn't live a long and happy life. Two days after Jack's death, the traitor was written into the dead-book by a Hiver woman who robbed and killed him by throwing red-hot coals down his pants.

With Jack the Glider dead for over two hundred cycles, I'd never have guessed that his memory still produces such strong emotions for the common folk of the City of Doors. But it also saddens me that one of the very few actual Cager heroes became a tool for the factions' manipulations. I'd say Jack the Glider himself would prefer that the jink for the construction of his statue be given to the poor and hungry. What will come of all this, only time will tell.



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The Dance of Masks

by Skelterbet, Culler of the Stage

Clerk's Ward-- Traditional theater offerings are the norm on most Sigil stages. Rarely found between the comedies, histories, and tragedies that theater lovers have grown fond of are some alternative forms of performance art. There are two of these alternatives that have caught my eyes and captured my heart and it is always a delight to see them.

Opera and ballet are far more demanding of the performer than traditional theater. They both require a degree of technical expertise that must be mastered before the performer can even think of appearing upon the stage. Once the technique is perfected the performer then begins to explore the difficult process of expressing the strong emotions associated with the part they play on stage, while maintaining the technical requirements at the same time. Given the demands placed upon the artist, it is not a big surprise that many choose alternative art forms. This is unfortunate for they are both wonderful art forms, and when they are performed correctly they aspire to be divine.

During the long span of time that I have been a theater lover, I have seen several productions of both opera and ballet. So far, I have not been let down with any of these productions. I believe that this is directly because of the stringent technical requirements demanded of the artist - for they work so hard at their craft that it is almost inconceivable that they could give a bad performance. After seeing a string of bad theater presentations, I begin to wonder why we do not demand as much attention to the craft of acting as these dancers and singers obviously put towards their art.

Appearing at the Northumber Amphitheater at the Civic Feshall is a wonderful ballet titled *Le dance de masks*. Broquerto Perifimo wrote the music and the choreography was directed by Darquard. This slick production is fantastic. The story is about a male named Sartometro and a female named Clanarrdia, who have fallen in love. The problem is that their love is forbidden, for they are each married to another. To add to the difficulty, Clanarrdia belongs to a higher caste in society than Sartometro.

Because of the difficulty in getting away from their spouses and stations, they use an intermediary, a neuter named Brand, to deliver their correspondence and to arrange their meetings. Drisk, another neuter who is the local magistrate and is a member of the highest caste, suspects that Sartometro and Clanarrdia have hidden feelings for each other. He resolves to tear them both down to preserve the society that does not allow adultery and caste crossing.

The story evolves as their day to day lives intrude upon their forbidden lives, and they each are required to 'wear different masks' that display the 'proper' actions and reactions expected from such a regimented society. Their true feelings must remain hidden, kept inside themselves. The production designer opted to have all dancers

physically wear masks and to change them to reflect the appropriate attitude the character displays at different times. The castes were represented by the colors on the tight bodysuits worn by the dancers. Base earth colors were used for the lower castes and as the caste level rose the costumes became brighter and flashier to reflect the higher classes. I would like to point out that the costumes and story line reflected the aim of the story - this is not about a particular race or two, this is about all races from all planes and places.

The dancing was wonderful. It never ceases to amaze me that such emotional expression is possible without including speech. The dancers were not only able to convey heartfelt emotions, they seemed to transcend the beautiful music and achieve the expression that was the most perfect for each moment of the story. The lighting and backgrounds were dark colors and contrasted nicely with the costumes, creating a fantastic otherworldly feel to the whole production. This helped heighten the multiversality of the message.

If you have never been to a ballet, I highly recommend that you give the title *Le dance de masks* a try. You are in for a most splendid treat.



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War for Skull-Throne: The schism in Jotunheim

by Soot'nSash, Freelance culler

The following account is related by a most trustworthy berk among the Modsgnor dwarves, Soot'nSash, whose own non-violent convictions kept him from participating in the epic struggle, but who nonetheless observed events with a keen and interested eye.

Meerrauk, Ysgard-- I am here in the great subterranean burg, where the colossal caverns tunnel deep into the Earth. Hallways are lit by torches the size of communal campfires, and the smell of smoke and burning is likened to the Great Bellows of my home, 'cept here it is evidence of the conflagration that has torn through the region. Scars mar the volcanic rock, as if Moradin's Forge had spilled its molten fire upon the walls, and the floors are cracked and broken in many areas. Giant crews have worked many nights simply clearing the Cavern of obstructions.

A deep river of flame erupted into the throne hall itself and still sulks its way downward back to the deep fires below. Utgard-Loki, Jarl of Jarls, still sits upon his throne, his stranglehold firmer yet more dependent than ever. The proud mountain giant strides forcefully through the halls with his retinue, re-establishing allegiances among Jarls and their clans alike while executing those viewed as traitors (which, in giant-think, includes anyone who did not vociferously support the Lord of the Skull-Throne from the get-go). Not many of the truly seditious remain, the giants are intelligent enough to sense the direction of the prevailing winds, and act accordingly.

Most of the seditious have fled with the forces of the upstart Tankotsch, the "Abyssal Candidate" for the Skull-Throne as he has come to be known. Fleeing with them were all pretensions the giants ever had towards governing their own affairs, at least for the foreseeable future. Agents of the Free League mingle in the Towers of Meerrauk in great numbers, far exceeding Utgard-Loki's old friends in the Fated. Utgard-Loki walks a careful line between the two groups, making sure to maintain the loyalties of new friends while questioning whether to maintain ties with old. No one knows when his leadership will be tested next. Utgard-Loki realizes the need for all friends, and the need to give the "faction-but-not-a-faction" a wide berth. And, that has been perhaps his easiest concession.

A legion of Durin from our home on the 3rd Layer is still on patrol duty on the outskirts of Utgard. Dwarves who were once seen as hunting game and an occasional meal maintain a temporary alliance with loyalist giants, and are tolerated if not loved. A few of the good dark elves also dwell in the realm, like the dwarves, sharing a vested interest with the giants in keeping influence from the Lower Planes out of Jotunheim.

Origins of Conflict

For generations, the tanar'ri lord Kostchtchie has sent shamans to Ysgard, preaching and converting giants to his abyssal values, notably cruelty, treachery and viciousness

towards one's fellows. True believers turned their backs on old, aloof Thyrm and made the journey to the Iron Wastes, the Dark, Nose to Toes Icicles Plane of the tanar'ri lord on the 23rd Level of the Abyss. From the cliffs straddling the skyline that form his Citadel of Ice, "He Whose Breath Chills the Air" instructed the first frost mages in their black arts, sending them throughout the planes to spread his name and rule in his stead.

And then Gran, the Jarl of the powerful Nishlog clan, fell under the vile influences of a mage and made the journey to the Iron Wastes. Upon his conversion he changed his name from Gran to Tan, to honor the origins of his new lord. He soon entertained vulgar desires for a powerful succubus, herself said to be a daughter of Kostchtchie, and she would bring forth to him a foul brood of a child that was to be named TanKotsch. The child resembled his father's kind in most respects, save for a sickly red complexion and an unnaturally clawed right hand.

Unfortunately for Ysgard, the black tale would not end there. Three cycle's ago the grown Tankotsch first made his appearance amongst his father's clan. He had grown into a being with powers beyond those of either frost mage or tanar'ri, and had a jolting charisma that quickly began to win converts to a new movement. He preached the old call to glory against ancient enemies - Thor and the Norse Gods, the dwarves and non-aligned giants - but with a new twist, the allegiance of additional mercenaries from his home plane. The cry of the warmonger carried on the breeze, igniting the old race hatreds and calling for a campaign against Asgard or Nidavellir.

Soon, with the backing of several Jarls, the Abyssal Candidate made his way towards the Fortress of Utgard. He was mounted atop an enormous white dragon with his insurgents chanting the name of Utgard-Tankotsch, as if already crowned. Utgard-Loki had been alerted and the city's defenses and illusions were ready. Crown loyalists would defeat the insurgents in a minor skirmish, forcing Tankotsch's withdrawal, but only a short distance away. Recruits to the shadow forces soon arrived from the Infinite Plane in numerous forms - a cavalry of armanites, a Hezrou battalion, powerful frost mages and, somewhat surprisingly, littlefolk-diirinka. Additionally, the grotesque lord of the derro had reached an agreement with the Lord of the 23rd, and scores of derro warriors and evil savants poured onto the landscape.

Tankotsch would also draw support from a surprising betrayal. Members of Utgard-Loki's chosen faction, the Fated, barely turned to support him, in fact far more sided with his rival. In the cold logic of the Heartless, the challenger had seized the initiative against stagnant leadership, and was in position to place himself and his tanar'ri grandsire at the head of a powerful union.

But, as darkness began to encircle Jotunheim, other forces chose to align themselves with the freedom, passion, and "purity" of bloodlust found in the giant homeland. The influential voice of Bria Tomay gave a stirring, lyrical speech in Sigil that captivated her fellow Indeps and many others:

"Is the strength and heart of the individual not worthy of our praise? Is the fierce independent spirit, even if prone to occasional cruelty, not worthy of our support? Shall we sit passively while a vicious power hopes to enslave a plane and crush the freedom and fire that stirs in all our souls? NOW is the time for action."

Anarchists, sensing some sort of conspiracy developing between the Fated and tanar'ri to extend their spheres over the Great Ring and Sigil, also moved to side with the Loyalists. And then on the eve of war, the most startling allegiance - an army of Durin marched from our home on the 3rd Layer to the frontlines, proudly displaying their banner and cursing with clenched fist the names of our soiled brethren in the derro ranks.

The dwarven king and Lord of the Skull-Throne decided, on this day, that Ysgard was more important than the hatred of the past. Lastly, but of no small importance, the Dark Maiden Eilistraee, goddess of the friendly dark elves, sent forth some of her followers to aid the cause; her kind knowing well the destruction a demonic force can cause to a people.

To the Battle

In the twilight, the Hezrou and Twisted Clans would begin their assault upon the towering walls of the great city, forming numerous breeches, and fighting soon spread to the homes and deep caverns beneath Utgard. Thunderous incantations from the mages and derro savants filled the skies with fire and smoke as the countryside was engulfed in light and heat. But, the flesh and bone behind the tower walls proved quite resilient. From leagues away the screams of the Hezrou were heard in the hallways of Utgard, torn to pieces and their repellent hides skinned and flailed by the enraged hosts, their screams through the night suddenly testing the resolve of the dark legions.

Outside the walls, the Durin armies were carrying the day. Mages and derro who had hoped to one day make treasures of the prized dwarven armor and axes, now felt the full brunt of the dwarven smith's handiwork, their numbers decimated and driven back time and again by the fierce charges of the Durin. The armanites as well struggled with the Cavalry of Independence, made up of the more zealous members of several factions, in particular the Indeps. Einheriar arriving on the hour of battle would fully tilt the battle outside in the favor of Loyalist forces.

The giants inside the city tooth-and-nailed, brain-bashed and gut-gored back and forth throughout the towers and the Great Hall. Bodies were broken against walls and hurled into the deep cracks with earthshaking rapidity. By many accounts it seemed the city would collapse altogether from the tremors, or be drowned in the blood streaming in horrid rivers down the steps and crevasses to burn in native Ysgard. Utgard-Loki remained amidst the fray and slew half-dozen of his traitorous fellows and untold Hezrou (so the legend grows). The abyssal pretender managed to make it inside the city a short time, but never truly threatened to seat himself in Ymir's legacy. His dark forces would flee, chased for many leagues. The Jarl of Jarls retained his title, even if over a

broken land.

In the few months that have passed he is still secure, but over a changed realm. The old bloodlust, the flailing fists accompanied with a hearty laugh and grinnin' teeth, the rough but raucous code of ale and arms, has altered - to a degree. A watchful eye and preparation for all-out war among the planes rather than spirited combatants have replaced it. No one believes that this crossroads between the Abyss and Ysgard will remain quiet.

Many Free Leaguers, after suffering through recent cycles of abuse in the streets of Sigil, have found their calling, their crusade for freedom, and are quite comfortable. They intermingle surprisingly well with the giants; both groups imbued with a new sense of purpose. The warrior-spirit flowing through Indep ranks as readily as the "live free or perish" mantra gains a hold in Jotunheim. Utgard-Loki remains a Fated, though it has yet to be seen if he will stay one or crossover into the Free Leagues camp as many giants have done. The Heartless, including Duke Darkwood, in Sigil are left to ponder whether their faction might have terribly erred in their role.

Rumors grow of a march through Elkhound's Gate in Svartalheim, the Drow's Gate to the Lower Planes, which will be mounted by numerous Ysgardian factions as retaliation to the War for the Skull-Throne. What might have begun as the power play of a tanar'ri lord has ignited into planar and factional strife and frustrations. The giants shall be on the move, and that fact alone is enough to stir anxieties across the Great Ring.



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Frozen Valley runs red

by [Skragx](#), Upper Planar culler



Brux, Beastlands-- Tragedy has eventually arrived in the Frozen Valley, my earthwalker friends. The flow of events has forced me to take refuge in Al Karak Elam-Jhankal, the nest town, where I have many good friends and where my wounded body has been nurtured back to health on several previous occasions.

In my past report, you read about the serious situation that is unfolding here in the Frozen Valley. After the unfortunate incident that culminated with the murder of the hunter seals at the hand of the Penguin Lord's minions, a great deal of the Seal Lord's followers naturally demanded the Penguin Lord's head. Making things even worse was the fact that the penguins failed to show any signs of distress or remorse over their unnatural crime.

Luckily, this *Eye* culler was able to attend a secret meeting between the Seal Lord and a few major inhabitants of the Valley. The Seal Lord was seeking advice, as she wasn't sure of what to do now, and sought the opinions of others. Everyone in attendance agreed that the idea of a fight between the two races was anything but a good one, although the seal petitioners continued to demand war. Elisenda, a well-known philosopher and priestess of Zyvilin, proposed a summit with the Penguin Lord. Although he has never been a very wise one, she believed that even he would understand that a war could only bring his breed pain and suffering, since penguins aren't very good fighters.

Elisenda and I were chosen to begin talks with the Penguin Lord. I was involved since I am also an avian and would probably be better respected by the penguins, although it borders on breaking a core culler pledge of the *Eye*. This being, Elisenda, amazed me. She was respected by nearly everyone in the Valley. I had tried to talk to the penguins before but they refused, even rejecting me with very bad manners. Elisenda, on the other hand, was granted an audience at once.

The Penguin Lord was a very disappointing individual. How can one with such a faint heart be the representative of all penguins? Arctic avians deserve something better! He was very nervous and could barely answer any of the questions posed by Elisenda. However, he assured us that the whole thing had been a mistake and he did not want to kill the seals, only protect his people.

After a few days, Elisenda and I were convinced that there wouldn't be any further problems. Yet, she continued to look worried about something, but did not share it with me. All of the harsh feelings diminished over the next two weeks and life regained a semblance of normality. At least until something very macabre happened. In the seal's area the corpses of two of the Penguin Lord's warden beasts appeared. They had been decapitated and disemboweled with their entrails scattered across the terrain around

them.

Afterwards, a message from the Penguin Lord arrived. He was extremely angry, he had sent emissaries to the seal realm and they had been brutally assassinated. Only one of his subjects had managed to escape and relate the tale of the seal's betrayal. Soon after this notice arrived, we heard that strange, violent penguins had killed a group of walruses.

I tried to speak with the emissary survivor, but as soon as I landed in the Penguin Lord's domain, two hideous beasts very similar in appearance to penguins attacked me. These vicious beasts had sharpened claws, large teeth and a chilling cry. I barely survived their attack. I fled and upon returning to the seal realm I was shocked by seeing several of the same penguin mutations surrounded by several hundred dead seals and walruses. One of the fleeing petitioners told me that the Lord had been killed! I could not find Elisenda and was forced to flee as the death penguins continued their killing spree.

My only chance to survive was to heal my wounds and fly away, but there was no one left to perform the healing. I don't know where I drew the strength from, but I somehow arrived in the cooler Brux and managed to get help before my name was written in the dead-book. Something horrible has happened in the Frozen Valley, something hellish and despicable. May Syranita help us!



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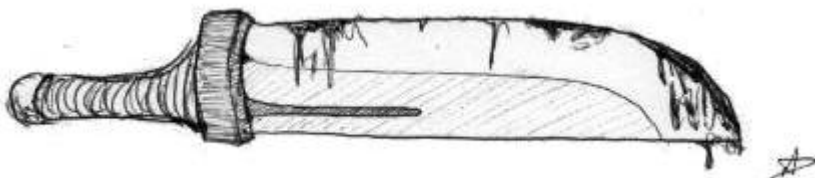
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Rites tainted by bloodshed

(The Dolls of Yeris Case, Part 1)

by Yuriko, Chaotic culler

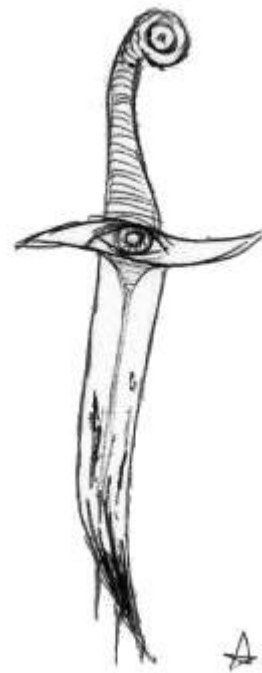
Lower Ward-- During the eve of Saint Dominguez's Rites of Passing, five cycles ago a great massacre stained the nursery called the House of Sweet Tots. No less than four crime lords exterminated two traditional trader families and all of their lines, including thirty-five children of various races. This extermination was in retaliation for boycotting the lucrative trade of teardrop vines from Carceri to Acheron through Ribcage, the families' former base of operations. Many still wear red stripes in protest during the rites.



However, this eve set the stage for even more horror. Seven bodies were found by the monk Takuan pinned to the walls of the *Irksome Slaad*, a seedy tavern built over the remnants of the nursery. "I felt a deep sorrow and heard the distant moaning of souls passing from beyond and farther still, the Veil," the sage affirmed. He went on to say, "When the door swung open, there were strange karmic markings of horror and suffering. There was little more than prayers for their souls and cleansing to be done."

Factol Sarin was shocked with the news and assigned the case to Marcovi, the famous tenacious investigator that was responsible for "solving" the Harbinger House case. Marcovi was silent about the matter, only commenting, "Maniacs never were truly my specialty, but once again here I am. So far, we could only determine that there was not one, but most likely four or five killers involved." The Hardhead later admitted that two ornamental daggers had been found at the scene.

The shady tavern has now been bought by a petitioner group of Sung Chiang from Gehenna, who will use it as a center of worship after the investigation is completed. All Hardhead sources refused to comment on any possible crime lord suspects. Funeral arrangements are still being prepared for the slain children.



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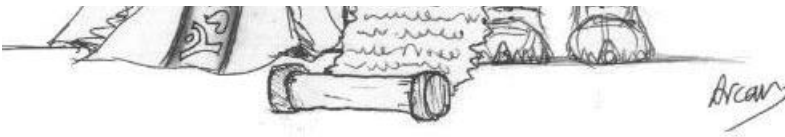
Mercykillers seal godly pact

by Blisswing, Upper Gatetowns culler

Fortitude, Outlands-- Two months after embarking on a controversial quest, the paladin Lima Azevedo has finally managed to gain sway over the Judges of Marduk. The deathless knight of the post that has scandalized Sigil has been caught, thus bringing the case to a close. At precisely three before peak on the second clerk, the criminal is scheduled to be fed to the Wurm. All due precautions will be taken, as the public executions have become quite an event. Harmonium officials fear an Anarchist plot to rescue the condemned cross-trader. In particular, one cell, calling themselves the Torches of the Dark Age and being led by the duplicitous bariaur Delgor, are renowned for their stance against prisons and have run many campaigns in support of this cause.

However, as they say – the grass is always greener on the other side – and the Mercykillers are feeling quite safe and secure amidst their ranks, being more than content with their performance after a prosperous round of negotiations with the proxies and bureaucrats of Marduk within his realm. It has been revealed that as a result of these talks, the faction has gained the right to execute any required and justly deserved punishment on all criminals, whether they are living, dead, or otherwise. The sudden flux of chant gained from these talks has proved to be quite a boon for the Mercykillers, as they have been able to gain leads on individuals centuries old, who are the targets of active Justiciars across the planes.





As a result of his excellent work with the bureaucrats of Marduk and his involvement in bringing the nameless cross-trader to trial, Lima Azevedo has been promoted to the post of Justiciar. His charge being to bring Noiron, the famous air genasi breath-stealer of the Lower Ward to justice so that he may face the penalty for the many crimes he has committed. Azevedo has a personal vendetta in his case, as it has come to light that his father, Knight Wolfenson of the Eagle Flag, was murdered by the same self-proclaimed scribe of the dead-book over six cycles ago and ever since Lima has awaited his chance at revenge with baited breath.



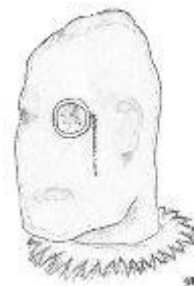
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Vengeance of the *Scramasax*, part 2

by 'Jelly Hoarfrost' (a.k.a. Shiad Amaroon), Freelance culler



The Abyss-- [continued from [prior story](#)] The caravan has arrived, and this "merchant" is far more interesting than I thought. He is Mhargyn the Arcanaloth, that thrice-damned ally of Graz'zt who is another key figure in the balor's rising and freedom's fall. I managed to hide in a wagon filled with fiendish weaponry and as the caravan moves on into the fortress, I begin to break each and every one of these weapons with the holy *Scramasax*.

A battle is somewhere near. It seems a whole part of the fortress is under the control of former slaves, who regained their will when I destroyed the evil fortress in the Gray Waste. I managed to sneak away from the caravan, and have entered the fortress now. It is a horrible feeling to touch these living brains and to move along them as if they were bricks, but I have no other choice. It is the path of fate I walk on. My fate, as well as the fate of Barugias.

I hide in the shadows below a large, brainy staircase. It seems this staircase is of importance and many troops move along it. Fortunately, all of them are in a hurry, so none of them had the attention needed to find me.

As I hide and wait, I have heard a couple of words from those who have passed by. Most of them were telepathic expressions, but I could understand a few mortals who were among them as well. The former slaves that battle in the Prison Court (as the evil souls call it) seem to become weaker each hour and with the new weapons that have arrived, the abyssal troops hope for victory in the next few hours. They still seek the "intruder" who has destroyed some of their weapons (that is, they search for me), but even without these weapons, they're convinced of their victory. I do not agree with them. I have to stop writing now, some more troops are passing by, but then the staircase is clear. Let's see where it leads to...

I have found the armory and set it aflame. It seems the abyssal denizens disliked the chaos that ensued; it is chaos that destroys itself, bringing judgement to the forces of Evil. But, I have no time for such philosophical thoughts now. I have found out that most of the fortress is buried in the ground and the balor prince himself resides in one of the lowest rooms here.

Unfortunately, I also discovered that there is no direct way down to his level. Only fiendish teleporting abilities allow entrance into this part of the fortress. Not only that, a rutterkin I've captured explained that the brains in the lower parts of the fortress warn Barugias of any intruder touching them. I have only one option left now; I must teleport right in front of Barugias to take him on, and I need a fiend who's able to teleport to accomplish it.

It seems unbelievable, but I have found a soul that has been touched by righteousness within this bastion of darkness, or at least I believe so. If I am wrong, these are probably the last lines I will write, for the tiefling I have met is the granddaughter of Barugias' only son and chancellor. Diarra and I have strongly different beliefs and ideals, yet we agree that what is happening here is utterly wrong. Indeed, I believe that what Diarra especially hates is the fact that so many bariaur are enslaved by the balor and his allies; her own blood is comprised of both fiendish and bariaur blood.

Diarra does not have a natural ability to teleport, yet she owns a ring that can take her along with three companions into the lower parts of the fortress. As the tiefling explained, Barugias currently discusses his problems with his ally Mhargyn in a secret chamber few beings have ever seen. Among these few is Diarra, and we are now readying for what could be my final battle.

Darkness? All is red in blood; the wine of law is spilled. Embrace insanity! Oh, the battle, SO MIGHTY IS BARUGIAS! The *Scramasax* holds my fist and the balor's sword has cut me into pieces. I WRITE NOW WITH MY OWN BLOOD!

Diarra screams again. Help? Oh, why can't my brain-box shut off! Stop writing, but I must, no... need to report! Oh, damn may this sword be! Another piece of me falls to the ground! This is the end! I just thank Graccon I am no bariaur and there ARE no vital parts of my body that can be cut off. Graccon the Blazingsoul! Oh, my mind, shut off! I need to help Diarra!

I feel no fear, but I admit that my courage is low. Diarra is near death and so am I. Mhargyn is killed, but Barugias still lives and is hunting us. Of course, he knows where we are, as the brains tell him. And they tell US that he knows. Mighty Graccon, grant Diarra the strength to recover from her fever, an unnatural fever that I am sure is a result of these doomed voices in our heads! Barugias is here...

Again, the *Scramasax* revealed the power that lies within any good soul; we have still survived and many of Barugias' servants have died. But, I cannot stand the balor's power. His deadly sword seems to be just as powerful as the *Scramasax*, and Barugias himself is more powerful than I am. If only mighty Bjorn would be at my side! This servant of Odin would beat the wickedness out of this tanar'ri, I am convinced.

The path is ended! I have fled into a dead-end carrying Diarra with my weakening pseudopods. I wait for the balor to approach, but he plays with me like a child. Just ten of his steps away, he stands and waits, smiling. Behind him, the forces of darkness gather at his command.

There is no way out. If it was only for me, I might be able to accept my death. But, I cannot allow Diarra to fall into Barugias' hands. For Graccon Blazingsoul, for Diarra, for Bjorn! May the *Scramasax* guide me!...

Dear readers, these lines are written not by Shiad Amaroon, but by Diarra of the Shadows, former servant of Prince Barugias. First of all, let me explain that victory is ours. I do not know how, but Shiad has slain the Ruler of Disease. I laid down in fever and mental agony and have seen only little, but the battle between these mighty opponents scared the fiends who beheld it, and now, the Court of Sickening Law is an empty shell, the dead brains that it consisted of slowly rotting away. All evil is gone from this place - as far as this is possible in the Abyss.

The survivors of those who were enslaved here allow us to travel with them and we now seek a portal to Sigil, hoping that, in the end, freedom will be ours to hold. And I hope that Shiad will survive, but looking at his body, which is no more than a bloody mess, I can only doubt this...

Yes, victory is ours! Dear readers, I am happy to announce that I, Shiad Amaroon, First Paladin of the Returned Graccon, have successfully finished my quest. As I have now heard, the Abyssal Lord Graz'zt is not exactly happy about this. The first of his assassins has already fallen to the Scramasax and I await the others that will surely come.

To those who have the faith and courage to serve the Lost God, I am now building the *Temple of the Returned Graccon* in the Hive Ward of Sigil. As I brought light into the lowly Abyss, so this *Temple* shall bring light into the Hive. May goodness always be victorious and courage never fade! I await the day when my soul will arise into the Realm of Graccon Blazingsoul, the Defying Battlegrounds in Ysgard. Oh, how the mighty are glorious!



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Berronar's - a new case for an old taste

by Daeh K. Carc, Sigil bureau culler

Lady's Ward-- The recent closure of a small block of elegant specialty shops on Dossy Street in the Lady's Ward has provided a most delicious opportunity. The closures were due, as far as the rumors are concerned, to the previous landlord's inability to keep ahead of some overzealous Takers. The group of Fated had pursued the property through the Hall of Records, but failed to obtain it. The disputed site is now proving to be the next big thing amongst the high-flying rings of Sigilian socialites.

Berronar's on Dossy now encompasses the entire floor space of the heavily renovated block of shops. Open each day for just a short period of time around peak for lunch, then the main restaurant closes till dusk leaving only the casual foyer open for light dining. At dusk, the main restaurant reopens for dinner and closes shortly before anti-peak.

Inside, *Berronar's* proprietor [Nikolai Fern](#) has successfully utilized a very open floor plan. Crossing the threshold grants you entrance to the lavishly decorated and furnished casual foyer where you can relax in comfort on velvet sofas. You can chose from a wide variety of lightweight meals the likes of which include cheese stuffed, deep fried green olives with aioli, quince jelly and cornichons and sourdough-crumbed javoose rings amongst others.

Lunches served in the restaurant tend to comprise mostly of a wide selection of cold meats served with an even larger variety of fresh garden salads and dressings. The wine list is extensive, with a bottle available to sate almost every planar palate, however the selection of "by the glass" wines is limited.



When the restaurant reopens for the evening, *Berronar's* is THE place to be in the Lady's Ward. The manager has gone to great lengths to ensure that top-shelf entertainment is available throughout the night whilst patrons are waiting for the chefs to prepare their

selected dishes. The selection of entrees includes shrimp and sandcrab noodles with pickled vegetables, crisp skinned sympathetic with parmesan polenta, pancetta and salsa verde. The list of main courses offered is almost as extensive as the wine list and I personally chose a tender, flavorsome piece of roasted eye fillet steak topped with a spoonful of goat's curd served on a risotto cake surrounded by baby beetroot and a rich jus.

They also offer some very high quality cheeses, but be careful not to miss the desserts offered here. Both the toffee nut tart and the sauternes and caramel custard with a half-caramelized fig were perfectly executed. Pastry was thin and crisp, the custards were soft and perfectly cooked and all flavors were well balanced.

The superb quality of the meals was easily eclipsed by what I have no fear in calling the highlight of the evening. "[Jade](#)", as she prefers to be known, is an extremely talented and versatile musician with a very strong classical background. She deftly maneuvers her fingers across a mixture of instruments including harps, pianos and violins, all the while captivating the patrons with her dulcet tones and tales of love won and lost.

Apart from the lack of attention to our water glasses, service was polite and efficient. For a long time members of the social elite have neglected this area of the Courts district in their quest for good restaurants. *Berronar's on Dossy* is clean, quiet, smart and definitely worth a detour.



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Famed planewalker discovers new race

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

Greetin's cutters! It's Magrum Rood, back from oblivion and working for the *Eye* again. Recently, a well known and respected planewalker surfaced in *Xaos*, spilling screed that was so barmy that it could only be that the poor leatherhead had lost it in the winds, or was actually shedding the lights on long-kept planar darks. Not being one to miss out on such a potential for barminess as well as a tarmy story, I decided to lann th' chant for the *Eye*. In retrospect, I was glad that I was, for this well may become the chant of the cycle.

I journeyed to *Xaos* and scragged this planewalker, a blood by the name of Casmeris Chaosseeker, a [krieg](#) exile who hails as a native of Sigil and claims to be one of the foremost explorers and 'walkers of the Chaos side of the Great Ring. The only chant that I could dig up about him seemed to indicate that this was the aasimon's word, but the darks that he spills are suren hard to swallow. I was lucky enough to sit down with him and hear him out - you, however, will have to decide for yourself, of course.

Magrum Rood (MR): "Master Chaosseeker, you must admit that this chant that you are wigwagging about, it seems, well, rather a bit like screed."

Casmeris Chaosseeker (CC): "I must admit, verily, that while I have seen some very barmy things in my cycles of traversing the planes, never before this instance had I seen something that I could not, in any sense of the word, relate to. However, this has now happened. I will endeavor to the best of my ability to relay to you that which I have seen and still myself struggle to understand. And please, call me Casmeris... "

(MR): "Yes, well, Casmeris, could you please relay the events which led up to this incredible instance?"

(CC): "Certainly, I had just hipped a portal in Glorium that was supposed to have led me to Windglum, in Pandemonium, but I found, much to my surprise, to be dumped out into the swirling maelstrom that is Limbo. Luckily, I had recently bought an [air charm](#) from a tarmy blood at [Snail Outfitters](#) in Sylvania, and it worked like a charm, oddly enough, an encased my form in a thin sheet of breathable air."

(MR): "Lucky for you, eh, that Snail puts out such high-quality and dependable items?"

(CC): "Oh, my yes! I would not travel anywhere without my Snail Outfitters equipment!"

(MR): "Yes, so please continue, Casmeris. You were dumped into the Soup and... "

(CC): "Yes, quite so. Well, being more familiar with the plane of infinite chaos than

most, as I have traveled it many times before, I immediately began forming my own meager terrain about me, complete with breathable air. Knowing that there are many portals and conduits off the plane of Limbo, the problem is finding them, I set off searching for someone or something that would possibly give me a bearing in the swirling soup. It was not long, however, before I found something. Or rather, something found me."

(MR): "Oh my, by the tongues of the Dabus! What ever did you do next?"

(CC): "Well you see, canny planewalkers often tell of a sense of the things around one that forms after many cycles of trodding the infinite expanses. It is almost as if a cutter has an extra set of eyes in the back of his head, and sometimes a body just **knows** if knights of the post are near, or if you are about to be peeled by some rube-headed sodder. It was this sense that warned me of their initial presence - after a period of wandering throughout the swirling sea of ever-changing matter - that I began to sense forms somehow **beneath** the surface of Limbo..."

(MR): "I see. You say *beneath* the *surface* of Limbo?"

(CC): "Believe my words, I know how strange this sounds. I am, in no sense of the word, a barmy leatherhead and hopefully never will be. I have a writ of health here from the Bleaker hospices in Xaos, who examined me, at my own request, upon re-entering the burg. I am as canny as they come when the chaos planes are involved and I know the rules that determine the physical laws that somehow govern Limbo. I also know that the statement that I just made totally **ignores** these laws. But, that is the only explanation for what I saw. While slaadi swim through the morass of Limbo, these things swam **under** it."

(MR): "Yes, I see, and you expect the masses of the multiverse to simply take your word for this chant, with no physical proof whatsoever? I hardly think that some folk, the Guvners not withstanding, would take such a claim lightly... "

(CC): "For the Guvners out there, I am verily sorry that I cannot offer explanations, I can only, at this point, relay to you the facts of the what I experienced out there. I have only my reputation to back my claim, but will undergo willingly any examination that the Fraternity of Order would like to put to me on this subject."

(MR): "I see, Casmeris. You must understand that for the sake of our readers, these questions must be asked. Please, do continue... "

(CC): "Yes, I understand. I am a fervent reader of the *Eye* and try to pick up the latest BATCH whenever I am in a burg. Now, where was I? Oh yes, before long, I began seeing them, in a sense of the word. That is to say, that I did not actually **see** them, but rather I saw the shadows of them on the surface of the soup, much like one sees the shadows of **fish** on the surface of the Styx."

(MR): "I see, I think I follow you here... "

(CC): "Wonderful, finally someone... At any rate, they began to move about my self-formed terrain, and each time it seemed that my precious bubble of familiar territory lessened. Knowing that I still wore my air charm, this worried me less than it might have otherwise, so I began trying to communicate with these obviously intelligent **things**."

(MR): "Is this your normal policy when encountering creatures on Limbo, Casmeris?"

(CC): "I always try to wigwag before clashin' and clatterin'. It is one of the reasons why I am not already in the dead-book, like so many of my contemporaries... "

(MR): "I see, so what did you do then?"

(CC): "Well, being a traveler of Limbo many times, I have picked up a smattering of the slaadi tongue. While I must admit that it is one of the languages that I am **least** fluent in (my mouth just does not seem structured for making some of those guttural sounds), I tried it in earnest. I began greeting them in the forms of the slaadi, both formal which is used only with death slaadi and informal which is used by all other slaadi, but there was no redeemable response."

(MR): "I find it so very unusual that a race as chaotic as the slaadi would have such structured rules for parlay, don't you, Casmeris?"

(CC): "Actually, no and for this reason. I have found that there seems to be an irrevocable tie between the very fundamentals of law and chaos. In each of these concepts, there seem to exist fragments of the other. But at any rate, that is a philosophical discussion for another time."

(MR): "I should say so! Likely one that the Chaosmen and Guvners would no doubt not like to hear, either! At any rate, please forgive my tangent and continue with your tale."

(CC): "Ah..yes. Well, I then tried, using the slaadi language, but my own words, to simply get them to show themselves to me. I tried to convey that I meant them no harm, and beseeched them to come forth from their hiding. Something that I said seemed to work, for the shadowy forms slowed. I still think that it was the beseeching part, but I cannot be sure. The forms then began to congregate in a single area."

(MR): "And what was your feeling at this time, Casmeris?"

(CC): "I think that it was more of a combination of fear and excitement. I knew not what I had begun, and yet I also knew that this was something that **no one** on the planes had before seen and **lived** to tell about it."

(MR): "And did you think that you would live to tell about it?"

(CC): "I never felt that I had anything to fear from them. I was more concerned with saying the wrong thing and turning them against our kind... "

(MR): "I see, how noble of you. Then what occurred?"

(CC): "It was then that the most amazing part occurred. Slowly, as if out of the soup of Limbo itself, these things **emerged**. I know no other word for it, in any language, but it was as if the curtain that makes up the very fabric of Limbo was pulled back, and they stepped through. At first, only one, but then in a mere matter of moments, there were scores of them, stepping, no, crawling out of the soup of Limbo all around me. They seemed wary of my self-created environment, but merely floated there in the soup, looking at me with their glittering, dark eyes."

(MR): "Simply amazing. So, what did these creatures look like?"

(CC): "They were small and were built like thickly muscled dwarves, with broad, naked chests and arms and legs. In fact, they wore no clothing at all, and seemed utterly unmoved by this fact. They were, however, covered with a thick and seemingly glossy mass of body hair, which everywhere but their heads, seemed to be only a darker shade than their reddish-tinted skin. Their broad, thick hands and feet were clawed and their noble and majestic visages were accentuated by two writhing tentacle-like extensions sprouting forth from either side of their chin. They had no ears to speak of, but two strange structures sprouted forth from either side of the tops of their brain-boxes. They seemed to be more a combination of gills and horns, but I could not tell either their purpose or function. Their heads were all adorned with a tall and swept-back shock of green hair and a long tail, ending in what appeared to be a spiky ball completed the picture of their physical makeup."

(MR): "By the Lady's Skirts! What happened then?"

(CC): "I was given the definite impression that I was to say something, and so I did, still speaking in the language of the slaadi, but with words from my brain-box. I am sure that much was lost in the translation, but now, as I look back in hindsight, perhaps that is exactly what drew them out."

(MR): "A very lucky turn for you, eh?"

(CC): "Indeed. As I began speaking with them, they seemed to lose a bit of their fear of both my imagined environment and me and began to approach. Their language they used seemed, as best as I can describe it, as slurred slaadi scramble-speak. It was not, however, their native tongue, for they would often communicate amongst themselves with a tongue that included much waving of their chin tentacles. Needless to say, it was sometime before I determined that these creatures were natives of Limbo, and called themselves the Olio, this, in translation, as best as I can manage, is **Souppers**."

(MR): "Yes, that sounds about right to me as well. So, what happened then?"

(CC): "I conversed, as best I could, with the Olio for some time. I learned many things about their society, their fighting tactics, and their way of life. They are gentle, good folk and I never detected the least amount of malice in them."

(MR): "So you do not think that they, the Olio, pose a threat to folk visiting, or residing in, the plane of Limbo?"

(CC): "Not precisely. The Olio seem to consume created matter, such as that created by anarchs and chaos shapers while in Limbo. Without knowing it, they might inadvertently cause harm to some by slowly devouring their environment from around them. I do know, however, that this is not done out of hatred or malice. It is simply their means of gathering sustenance."

(MR): "So what does the days and cycles ahead hold for the Olio and us?"

(CC): "I think, of course, that more investigation will be required, but I would verily hope that we could co-exist peacefully with the Olio. There is no way to fathom the darks of the multiverse that they might be able lay bare before us. I go now to Sigil to hopefully ensure that Guvner laws are passed to make this continue to be a peaceful process."

(MR): "So, you are now the protector of the Olio?"

(CC): "No, my lady. The Olio can protect themselves if need be, of that I am sure. However, as I began this communication with them, I feel a certain sense of responsibility to see it out until its conclusion. Thank you for your time, I am honored to have sparked the interest of the *Eye*. Lady's Grace."

So it seems that the future of the Olio is, while uncertain, possibly a bright one. Things can change quickly on the planes, bloods, and you can be sure that the *Eye* will be there when it changes. Keep a peery eye on future BATCHES for more information on this drama as it continues to unfold.



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Blue-Heeled Jack moves across Outlands

by P. Fiendus Hooten, Freelance culler

The Outlands-- The creature known as Blue-Heeled Jack has been moving rapidly across the Outlands. From Sheela Peryroyl's Realm he has cut back on a course that seems to follow his original one. Unfortunately, he has been moving at such a rapid pace that we have been unable to keep up with him and are unsure where he will turn up again.

The only reports of his passing are incidental contacts. A group of mercenaries reportedly set an ambush that failed to stop Blue-Heeled Jack. Details of the ambush were not available from my source. A herd of bariaur, who wished to remain anonymous, reported that Blue-Heeled Jack streaked through a pasture a mile from where the herd was. Some of them then tried to intercept him, but were not fast enough to catch up to him.

A small vineyard was decimated as this creature ran through it, much to the dismay the owner. "This will hurt us, but it won't kill us," said Lanot Jos. "We have two other vineyards. I guess we'll just have to replant and be ready for next cycle." Some travelers reported that they saw the trademark prints of Blue-Heeled Jack crossing a road spireward of the Dwarven Mountain, though no one has reported seeing the creature in that area.



On the research side of things, a couple of things have been discovered that might yield some worthwhile information about this creature. The first is an obscure reference to the deity worshipped by most quicklings. The reference was found in a tome titled The Small Evil Ones. It was penned by Abelius some fourteen hundred cycles and reads:

"Though it has been assumed that quicklings do not hold anything as sacred, one once mentioned that 'Jack of the Blue Flames' would be very pleased with the race."

There is not enough to verify if the topic of this reference and Blue-Heeled Jack are the same, though it is enough for us to heavily suspect some connection. The other references comes from a manuscript written fifty cycles ago by Gerontionius, titled Incarcerated:

"Amongst the ancient inhabitants of Carceri is a creature referred to as Blue-Heeled Jack. Details about this creature are scarce, for it is confined in a small and obscure region of Othrys. The stories associated with this creature are unverifiable, though very interesting. The first tells us that this creature was once a power worshipped by a race on the Outlands. According to several sources, that race later became known as the rilmani. The power was tricked into eating a blue-leaved plant that caused him to turn blue and go insane. The race, seeing that their power was

now evil, banded together and banished him into Carceri."

A second tale in the manuscript says that Blue-Heeled Jack is the last of the original inhabitants of Carceri who were displaced by the gehreleths. The gehreleths were unable to kill him, so instead they tricked him into falling in a trap they had laid for him. The trap was designed to hide the location of his prison from all outside observation."

Gerontoniuss was a reliable sage of Outer Planar history and was also known as a relentless researcher. Unfortunately, he died several cycles ago. We are now looking into what sources he used to obtain his information.



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Sydney's Snippets

Here some assorted chant that ain't been checked out yet that ya might be interested in. If ya skeg some darks that ya wanna pass along, then send me an [astral streaker](#) and I'll lann it to the multiverse.



Play is warmly received - with oil

The Phoenix theater is the site of a controversial production of Ning Brwn's play *Fool!*. The opening night of the play produced loud outcries against the Lode-Bearer Company production. "These leatherheads need to be tossed in the Red Prison for this!" commented one theater enthusiast. Brack Turnish, executive producer for the show, said, "I don't understand the reaction. This is an artistic endeavor and we have brought a new interpretation to an old, stale work. Our preview performances received positive response from the audiences. This ruckus is being caused by a small group of individuals that clearly have their own ideas about this show. I think if Ning Brwn were still alive she would appreciate what we have done." Ning Brwn wrote the play midway through her career of writing poetry. She died 212 cycles ago. The night following the opening was witness to some violent outbursts by the audience. During the final scene many of the audience members began yelling and throwing things when an unexpected plot twist occurred. Some of the theater company members attempted to calm the situation and succeeded only in heightening the angry response. A nearby Harmonium patrol entered and quickly calmed the situation.



Calamity ship sank in calamity

Underwater divers in Ossa discovered the remains of the illustrious ship *Calamity*, pertaining to the ruthless, if brave, vice-admiral Uther. The riches he conquered from piracy on the Styx were donated short before his disappearance and his body was not recovered, adding even further to the mysterious legend.



Illithid explodes

A barmy illithid exploded in the middle of the night in Curst. Rumors persist of mystifying waves of madness that seem to be roaming the streets at night. Some burgsfolk claim to have seen the sod's ghost walking in the night, but the authorities (like Curst has that many) have dissipated all declarations on the matter.



Double Trouble beats Fireballs

The Ysgardian portal polo team of Double Trouble won by 12 x 6 over their fierce counterparts. The baatorian team of Phlegethos Fireballs vowed revenge and the fiend

team is scheduled to play at home next time. The bariaur team's leader, Profi Pess, praised the value of healthy sports as these in Sigil, "People always seem sick in that damn burg!"



Vampire plague ends before beginning

Created by a prime necromancer that still remains nameless, a pack of lesser vampires was seen roaming the gatetown of Tradegate. The vampires attacked a petitioner city in the hope of quenching their hunger, but discovered that the petitioners provided no sustenance. By the time the Blue Priests of Moradin arrived, the vampires were too weakened to fight back and were all dead-booked again.



Grusshum bullies Torch

Expeditions are being organized in Torch to exterminate the grusshum threat that has infested the blood marshes. It is believed that the grusshum have migrated to the area to escape from some unusual devastation on their homeland.



Slaadi kidnap Prime princess

A slaadi pack going by the name of Module Builder has invaded and captured a princess from the crystal sphere of Toril after thrashing her family's fortress. The identity of the princess as well as the kingdom involved are being kept dark for fear of rebellion.



Celestial circus visits Ecstasy

The Flying Carnival and Marduk's Old Time Circus, controlled by the throne archon Sofia, will make a three-day presentation in the gatetown with only a minimum attendance charge. The burg of Ecstasy expects to receive over a thousand additional travelers.



Carceri rain escapes

While the many petitioners and titans find themselves restrained by the plane, a terrible storm has made its way through a large portal and is moving in the direction of the Caverns of Thought. Curst sages suggest there might be more than meets the eye in this strange phenomenon.



Slaves drown in the Styx

A tanar'ri slave ship was sunk in the Styx right next to a Blood War skirmish that was taking place on the land, taking almost five hundred slaves to a harrowing death. Details are still sketchy, but according to the few survivors the ship was not involved in

the skirmish. Glaxtor, the pit fiend in charge of the baatezu forces at the battle, stated that his troops did not attack the ship. He did hasten to add that he wasn't upset about the ship sinking and that the massive loss of life was completely irrelevant to the Blood War. "Let the aasimar and faeries cry over the pigs, the leatherheaded sods shouldn't have let themselves get scragged in the first place. Hey, at least they wouldn't remember the experience as they drowned!" Glaxtor added, as his deep guttural laugh resounded as something like a disgusting hoot rumbled out. An arcanoloth was reported to have been at the site just as the battle began and may have been the start of the whole conflict, though this report is unconfirmed. The manner in which the ship sunk is the strangest piece of the tale. All evidence points to all of the boards that made up the bow of the ship suddenly warping and falling off the main frame pieces. The ship sunk rapidly and most of the victims were believed to be slaves of the tanar'ri.



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