

The Journeyman

Est. 2301

20th June 2392 of the Fourth Age of Neothera

WAR IN MAINLAND AS ALLIANCE MARCHES ON BROTHERHOOD

The ominous toll of bells breaching the morning fog, the deep and eerie sound of war horns drifting over the misty mountains, the thundering of the drums of war echoing beneath our feet. Wherever you were in the mainland the warning signs were unavoidable. The time has come. War is finally upon us. The armies of the realms of the mainland and Frozen North have begun their march to the Redveil Mountains to face the biggest threat to our world since the Ahalaza marched upon the cities of Cinderforge, Everblade and Stonefold in the third age.

The war against the Brotherhood of the Red Wolf is the talk of every city, town, village, and settlement of mainland Neothera, and likely the Frozen North too. The fear, bloodlust, and adrenaline can be smelt like the stench of a decaying animal upon each and every doorstep. If ever there was a time to stand up and fight for your life, the lives of your closest friends and family, your children, your children's children, your faith, for everything you hold dear, that time is now.

The armies of the Brotherhood of the Red Wolf have begun their march south, and if the reports of the scouts are anything to go by, their black and red banners will swarm upon the mainland like a pack of starving and ravenous dogs intent on filling their bellies with the flesh of those unwilling to join their cause or that of their demonic masters.

But how did the mainland become plunged into war with an enemy that could have seemingly been wiped out shortly after the destruction of the Great City of Netherlye occurred? After the three towers dedicated to the offensive, defensive and healing schools of Magik were destroyed in 2381, it seems that King Morgan Hanstез, eldest son of Queen Maib Hanstез, who died under strange circumstances near the Caddington Estate, was not slain in the gargantuan blast that toppled Netherlye. He led the remnants of his forces north to the Redveil Mountains where they occupied the ruins of the elven city of Thard'or.

It was believed that Salvador Hanstез was killed in the blast, yet his brother Bastian also survived, yet is now said to be deceased after a failed attempt at claiming leadership over all of the realms of the mainland.

Morgan was said to be grief-stricken at the death of his mother, Queen Maib, in the year 2367, at the young age of ten years old. He became obsessed with power and was known to have murdered a captain of the Netherlye guard at the age of twelve years old for questioning his positioning of a unit of the cities defenders. Morgan was a known racist and hated all of the non-human races of Neothera, and set about attempting to eradicate them when his army, the Brotherhood of the Red Wolf, came to power after the destruction of Netherlye.

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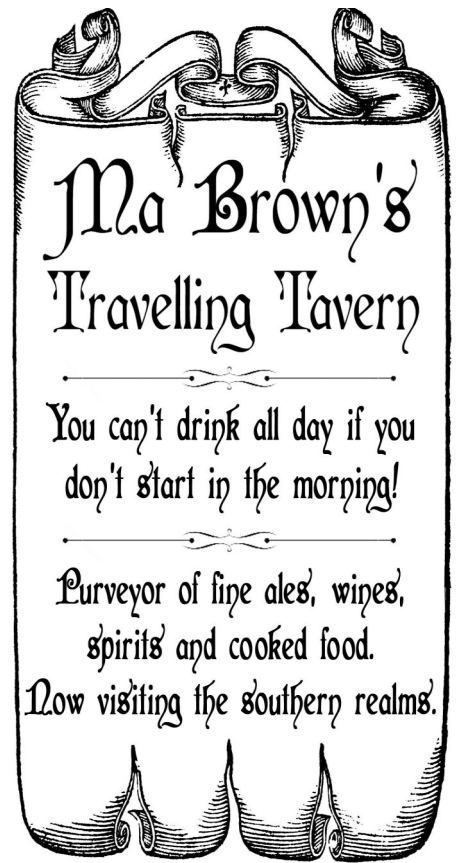
Fortunately, Morgan was said to be slain by an unknown assailant in 2389, some believing this to be the work of the Dead Hand Clan now residing in Black Hammer Bay. But where one tyrant falls, another is sure to rise. Commander Nerrin seized control of Morgan's army when his brother, Bastian Hanstез, refused the offer of leadership.

Nerrin is regarded as one of the most powerful sorcerers on the mainland, his Magik amplified by the worship of the Nightmares. Little is known of Nerrin's origins, yet some say he is a Nightmare Lord himself, where others say Nerrin is entirely fictional and that Salvador Hanstез was not killed in the Netherlye destruction, and lived on to take off where his older brother failed. Whatever his origins, Nerrin is a force to be reckoned with, and countless men, women and even children of all races and realms have flocked to his banner with the promise of salvation under the rule of the Nightmares themselves. In the coming months, we can expect to see the L'Enarousse, Black Hammer Bay, Blightfoot Ridge,

Faradome, Vulpera, the Brook and the Hemadri of Zan'zoula set aside any petty differences and rally together to face Nerrin's army in the northern mountains.

Various strategic outposts are currently being set up along the base of the Redveil Mountains where the mainland alliance, with the assistance of the wights of the Frozen North, will wage the bloodiest battle the mainland has seen in many centuries. Rumours state that the Arak'Char wish to have little to do with the war, stating they will offer minimal troops due to their people being branded backward savages by other mainland realms. It would take a monumental agreement to see the bulk of the much-needed forces of the Arak'Char rally to the cause. Ahalaza remains neutral in the fight, yet they have had little to no contact with outsiders since their kingdom was almost destroyed by the Arak'Char in the third age. It is estimated that the Brotherhood's army totals nearly two million troops, and how many of those are actually demons, fresh from the Nightmare realm is currently unknown.

By Gannu Rakieyu.



THE STENCH OF BLOOD: ADDICTION OF THE DEAD

It's always extraordinary to live in an age of such change. Some of the older Elves might remember the emergence of the Piskies. More recently, some might consider the Faeries, the Wights, the Urka, and even the Goblins. Entire species appearing, with customs, practices and necessities unconceived of until they emerged into the world at large. In this case, I wish to address one such need that has been looked upon as monstrous, without people understanding what it is that drives them on to enact it. Today I am speaking of Vampyres, or more specifically, why they drink blood.

First of all, as with all varieties of Wight, the state of undeath does heighten some senses while others become numb, nerve endings start to decay without a source of food to halt the process. This, unfortunately, also includes the sense of taste, with all but the strongest of flavours tasting of naught but ash. With one exception: fresh blood.

A common misconception is that Wights can live indefinitely without food, this is false, they simply need less sustenance, requiring a meal once a week to sustain themselves. A Wight who does not consume after 5-10 days, will start to decay like a non sapient corpse would, starting with nerves, moving onto skin and eventually organs. While they can halt it by eating, there is no known way to reverse this decay, excluding fresh blood. Should vital digestive organs be too decayed, the wight's fate is sealed.

The complex amino acids and high quantities of iron found in blood (all chemicals the average Vampyre body is often deficient in and is theorised to be the chemicals burned to halt the decay process) all work to accelerate the body's natural healing process in addition to halting decay, as well as producing a feeling of euphoria, aggression or strength (depending on the blood type), and due to biochemical changes in the brains of vampyres, become psychometrically addictive.

So, taking this into account, while the average Vampyre can halt this process with normal food, because the nerve endings on the tongue have usually atrophied, most vampyres face a loss of standard appetite, compounded by the body's reduced requirement for regular sustenance, and the withdrawal of blood being almost indistinguishable from the sensation of hunger among the living. As such, some Vampyres that start consuming blood become addicted, constantly chasing not only the high, but also to escape the withdrawal. Unless properly treated for addiction.

Vampyres addicted to blood can become some of the most dangerous beings you'll ever meet, however, I believe there's a solution besides extermination. It's a problem of addiction, especially in younger vampyres, who haven't been educated on the state of their new existence, and like any other form of addiction (for example: alcohol) it needs to be treated as a disease, before the unfortunate becomes naught but an animal, tearing apart whomever gets in their way to get to their next fix.

Of course, this is not always possible, and due to the nature of the addiction, the spread of the infection and the worrying dangers these represent, if a Vampyre cannot listen to reason, they must be destroyed. But I feel that at least some Vampyres out there are simply unfortunates, thrust into their new existence and trying to make sense of the cravings they feel, and we owe it to them to help them, if they are willing to let us.

By Cyrus Encarmine.



ARTS IN THE NAME OF WAR

The arts; a practice beloved by many. There are few who would turn down the opportunity to watch a good play, or listen to the fabled bard rumoured to be performing in the local inn. However, there may be more to the arts than mere entertainment.

Whilst out on my ventures with my fellow members of the Court and our associates, we have had many a song exchanged whilst we travel. On a few occasions, instruments have been busted out and played, and despite the serious nature of some of our more dangerous missions these performances always manage to lift the mood. And the thought popped into my head; when a song is sung or story told in the face of danger, is it that we're looking for a way out? Nay, I think not.

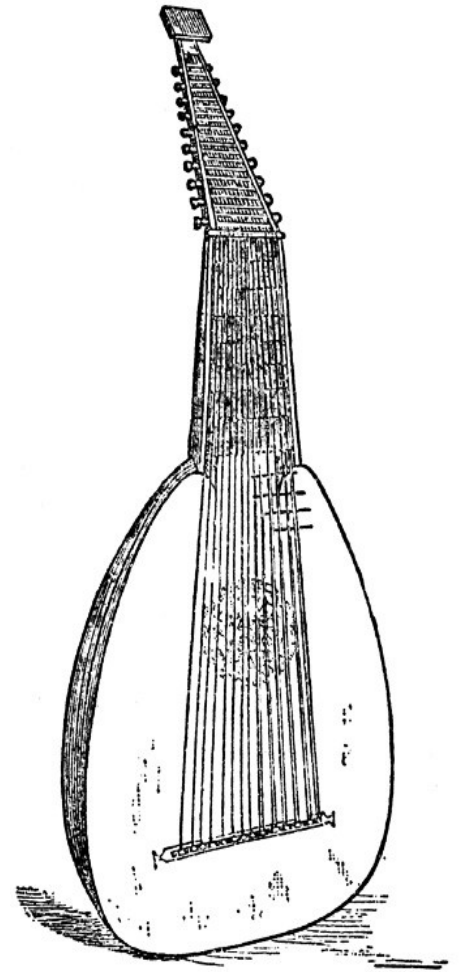
When faced with danger, we turn to entertainment to not only lift our spirits and boost our morale, but also to encourage and inspire us, helping us overcome the obstacles that lay before us.

For it is in the face of danger when all hope seems lost that the hero the bards sing of emerges; his legend forged on that spot, in that moment.

And it is this idea that encourages us. When the danger increases, the thought of coming out against the odds and being that hero in the story you heard encourages us, and brings forth our most primal instinct; survival. And it is this that the arts serve to boost. Our morale on the battlefield is fuelled by the desire to be the hero that comes out on top, so when we hear tales of others who did the same, it does not only serve to soothe us in a tense moment of hardship, it boosts us towards the next day, and pushes us forward driving us into the future. And in a time of war, the desire to go on and keep fighting is more important than ever. Sure, it might not be the best idea to charge into the midst of battle alone leaving your companions behind only to be felled by the enemy, but when you're there with no choice but to fight, the memory of a tale can inspire you to have the courage to keep going in the face of it all.

It is in times of war, that the soldiers on the frontlines need their morale the most. It is in the darkest times that we need the Arts; in the name of war.

By Aeorin Flynn, of Court Encarmine.



SIEGE OF NALD ENDS AFTER MONTHS OF FIGHTING

In August of 2391 we reported that the city of Nald in the Frozen North had been besieged by King Venstrim's vampyric hordes, and it seems that now the attacks have almost completely ceased for no apparent reason.

The faeries that arrived here from their dying homeworld, Terminarium, state that King Venstrim was once a kind and noble ruler in their lands and part of a council of four faerie kings and queens that ruled over their people in what seemed like an age of never-ending bliss. It is believed that corruption seeped into Terminarium, causing King Venstrim Lightborne to become a puppet for his new demonic masters; the Nightmares. Venstrim is thought to be the first and oldest living vampyre, and also responsible for the downfall of the faerie's homeworld, and indeed the recent murder of the last surviving faerie queen, Azhara Lightborne in 2391.

Many wights that reside in the Frozen North state that Venstrim was enraged by their departure to Neothera at the beginning of the second age, when many vampyres refused to follow the will of the Nightmares, or were somehow able to break free from the control of the demons. The siege of Nald in the Frozen North is said to be an act of revenge for their absconding, yet the many months of battle that ensued were not carried out as effectively (on Venstrim's part) as the wights of Nald state they could have been.

The Journeyman understands that a map was somehow obtained by a group of adventurers at the Caddington estate shortly after the siege of Nald began and that it contained vital information as to Venstrim's plans. The map was given to the wights of the Frozen North, and with it, many of Venstrim's attacks on the city were thwarted.

Was this a careless act on Venstrim's part or did he have a more sinister motive that was yet to be revealed? If the recall of around ninety percent of his vampyre army is anything to go by, we are yet to see how it could be.

A further puzzling issue is that Venstrim seemed to deploy, according to Nald vampyre witnesses, many of his leading commanders and their units in positions that any tactician would have known they would be unable to perform as effectively as they could potentially do. To add to this, despite the ferocity of the attacks, the walls of the city of Nald were not breached at all, and the majority of the fighting took place on the frozen wastes surrounding the city. The Journeyman has to ask if Venstrim truly is a mastermind behind the fall of Terminarium, and why would he send so many of his vampyres on what effectively seems like a suicide mission.

TRUST: A RARE COMMODITY

I think it's only natural that when faced with the hardships of the almost daily fighting against the brotherhood and other enemies that we want to look to the person next to us, and know they would do anything to make sure you both live long enough to see the sunrise tomorrow. After all, if they wanted to they'd likely be in the best position to kill you, and yet they haven't, so that counts for something, right?

Well, not everyone agrees, and prejudices, prior disagreements and even just a plain old personality clashes can disrupt that foundation for a perfect working relationship. Naturally, some people just will not get along, whether the fault of one party, both or neither. In most instances, a commander will try to keep soldiers away from one and other if keeping them together can cause problems or disruptions, however sometimes there is no choice but to pair two people who dislike each other together.

Whatever the reason for your animosity, the enemy won't wait for you to finish bickering before engaging and death won't care to give you a second chance. You might have a million reasons, be it their beliefs clash with your own, you've had problems with members of their species in the past, or simply that you think they're "a bad person", all may seem justified in your head, but the fact of the matter is this: you're fighting alongside a vampyre against the brotherhood, it's probably not a good idea to call them a "damned leach".

Now, obviously this isn't advice for a commander on if the unhappy parties are either one incompetent, cowardly or malicious towards their fellows, then the best course of action is likely to remove them, for an untrustworthy soldier is no soldier at all and will end up actively hampering the war effort. This is meant more as a helpful piece for those among the front lines.

You are not special, at least, likely not special enough to have a commander overlook your attitude and actions causing rampant strife and discord.

So remember this: when you're fighting alongside someone you dislike, it's better to focus on the problem you have bearing down on you, than spawning new ones borne from animosity and spite.

Shield your heart from petty matters just as you shield your heart from the enemy's blades, because failing to do either could mean life or death.

By Cyrus Encarmine.



GOD OR NOT?

Part 1 of 1485 - "There are eight of them!", Captain Edwin Smith shouted a few months ago, as a band of adventurers broke the seal that kept Drakaria "The God of Time" from intermeddling in our plane of existence. But is he actually The eighth god? I don't think so. The Seven created the world, so it is said. They represent and resemble the elements. They can fight, hate and love each other directly or with the help of their thralls. Since Arcane is a mixture of all elements it is no being itself.

What are gods actually? The common concept says they are entities with power and capabilities far superior to all other beings. Gods can perform wonders, no one else can ever perform. There is nothing above them. Following this theory, it should never be possible to find anything that effects The Seven, but they themselves have no power over. Since Drakaria is associated with time and states of existence, he owns domains that no part of The Seven could ever manipulate. Following that, and with due respect, it would only be correct to stop calling The Seven as gods.

The new, more logical fitting term should be "Sources of the Elements". Since the appellation as gods for them is already in use for quite a while, it would be very hard to change. Hence we must alter Drakaria's notation. "The God of Time" does not reflect his status correctly.

Drakaria, as we know is an entity that is outside of the endless number of planes of existences and possibilities. He manifested himself in the shape of an old man with an hourglass and purple crystals. Drakaria knows everything that happened in the present and past at every moment with every possible outcome of every possible decision of every possible thing. He can turn back "time" in existences and counsel individuals to change the flow of events. The only thing we know about his motivation is, that he wants to stop the corruption of as many planes of existence as possible. Drakaria has a twin sister named Melidieve, manifested as a black amorph figure. She is said to seek the corruption of as many planes as possible. Both twins can be seen as one entity. They divided the infinite number of existences between them to watch.

Drakaria does not directly influence the flow of events and is not physically "living" in Neothera, like The Seven. Therefore I suggest calling him a "Patron". To be more precise "Drakaria, the Half and Whole Patron of Time, Infinity, Existence, Possibilities and Karma". Since this might be quite circuitous, the short and sufficient honorable name could be "Drakaria, Patron of Time".

As a result of this, we can name other entities more correctly now. We have encountered the champions of Light and Darkness, without knowing what the abstract power-concepts of Light and Darkness behind them actually are. I suggest calling them Patrons too. Together with Drakaria they form "The Three Patrons", Time, Light and Darkness. We still only witnessed the manifestation of one of them and therefore cannot name them more precisely.

By Magister Borgius.

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REKNOWNED CARTOGRAPHER MISSING IN ACTION

Renowned mapmaker and explorer, Jonah Sinclair, is believed to be missing somewhere in the Redveil Mountains. Sinclair, regarded by those in his field as the finest cartographer the fourth age has seen, began his trade at the age of seven years old, where he accompanied his father, Henry, on many adventures in the mainland, and some even say further afield. In his teens, Jonah won a prestigious award at the Blightfoot College for his work in accurately mapping the most dangerous parts of the Crag Spine Mountains, and received further recognition from them for remapping inaccurate and outdated documents relating to the southern parts of the Na'tohram Gheneris. At the age of twenty-two, Jonah went on to become employed as the chief cartographer for the Marsell family, although he turned down the offer of a lavish home to be gifted to him by Philippe Marsell to live a life of adventure out on the open roads.

Last month, Jonah embarked upon a dangerous mission with a L'Enarousse scouting party to map the intricacies of the landscape the Brotherhood forces occupy in and around the ruined city of Thard'or, once inhabited by elves in the first age of Neothera, but falling into ruin after the city was razed during the demon war. Jonah and his group failed to check-in at the agreed date and time with their superiors and no word has been heard from them since. It is feared that Sinclair and the scouting party have met their end at the hands of the Brotherhood of the Red Wolf, however, Sinclair's friends, colleagues, and family are hopeful that the resourceful man will return home safely very soon.

JACKALS AT LARGE


A spate of robberies in Jerrod's Front and the surrounding settlements, leading north through Merchant's Glory has recently come to light as being carried out as a group dubbed by L'Enaroussian authorities, the Jackals, on account of their opportunist and predatory nature.

Taverns, houses or particular wealth, supply wagons for the war effort, traders' caravans and travellers have all reported being robbed by five armed assailants, or had their property broken into overnight. The group is thought to have struck over thirteen times in the last three months, amassing a small fortune in the goods they have stolen. Whilst the authorities have not reported any known deaths at the hands of the group, some victims were beaten if they attempted to fight off the criminals.

The group is said to be led by a beastkin named Rehmus, who appears to have been bestowed the aspect of a cat. Rehmus is said to be sly and cunning, and very dangerous if provoked. Other members of the group are said to be a human male with dark facial hair, an elf, and two goblins, one extremely large, although without the common features most goblins possess, such as a pointed nose and ears. L'Enaroussian authorities have promised a substantial reward for the capture of the group. They are wanted alive for questioning. Anyone with any information on the criminals should report to their local barracks or courthouse.




Above: An artist's depiction of Rehmus, leader of the criminal gang dubbed The Jackals.



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LOCAL TAVERN OWNER ESCAPES DEATH

A recently released innkeeper has disclosed to the Journeyman the events that led to his capture and subsequent torture by Nial Stormbringer and his Warband. Richard Turpin, aged 33, tavern owner, and occasional bounty hunter was captured and tortured for information on the death of Queen Maib, 25 years ago. And no, that isn't a clerical error.

"He kept me there, starved, beaten and subject to insidious torture magiks for weeks!" Turpin told the Journeyman. "He was obsessed with the death of the queen, babbling something about going back in time to assist in it. I run a tavern for the gods' sake!" While sadly unable to give insight into the location of Nial Stormbringer, Richard was able to give information on the man himself and his Warband.

"He's insane! But more than that, he's very competent, and will stop at nothing to find the ones he thinks are responsible for the death of his queen, and possible lover." He told us in the interview. "His subordinates are scarily skilled, very well equipped, and ever watchful for people even tangentially matching the description."

Turpin is known to have been released due to the actions of an unknown man, and while he does not know who released him, he is exceptionally grateful to them for their efforts. "I was being prepared for the gallows; they were going to execute me. I didn't expect to be saved; I was weak and barely standing. But just as they were preparing me for the noose, a man in a brown robe spoke to Nial.

I couldn't tell what was said, but they cut me loose. I don't remember what happened after that, I blacked out until woke up in an inn."

Since this incident, Turpin has made a full recovery and has resumed running his tavern, much to the joy of several of his co-workers and friends. I'm certain everyone is very thankful to see an innocent man return home to his friends in these dire times.

While another skilled ally against the Brotherhood of the Red Wolf would be highly agreeable, it is likely Nial is not going to participate in the war except to enact his own brand of justice on people he considers to be guilty of the death of Queen Maib.

By Martin Mc Bird

HEROES SLAY TITAN

The Titain, the abomination that assaulted first the Caddington Estate, our heroes could not best last summer on the leash of the Dark Lord, what could be worse. Traders and refugees from that area, like Mr Puddleduck, bring horror stories of this creature, the path of destruction it left in its' wake and that it even tore the life from one of the Heroes, a piskie whose name I have not been able to find. I confess that more than once when I sat and watched my children asleep I thought at any moment it would break down our home and take my family from me. Then just it was spotted North East of Gallows Rest, here the first skirmish against the Brotherhood would be fought and the fate of the town and the Brook to the south decided. The leader and Admiral of the lawless Black Hammer Bay was the one to call for our Heroes aid, as doubtless, he foresaw the threat to his son's neighbouring city.

Gladly the son is not the father, Lord Captain Edwin Smith, leader of the Brook, took charge of our Heroes that fine winters day. I can report it was the group that together fashioned the device needed to end the Titian and its' nigh unstoppable power. That Edwin himself set it off, costing him his life to end the Titans'. Many call him the 'First Hero', and defiantly the one who has fought longest for our glorious tomorrow.

It seems the great god Sequilla herself to, saw this strength in him and brought him back to us. When victory and hope were within the Heroes fingertips, the worst happened...Wave after wave of Brotherhood bore down upon the Heroes, through the forest they burst forth and assailed the Heroes Glade. One after another the Brotherhood soldiers fell to our Heroes courage and bonds of fellowship, though before the last the three-score company was laid to rest by our Heroes might, one of our own was stolen from us.

Jehrico Jenkins, a personal friend of myself and adopted son of our City. Almost a year to the day since he set out from his home in Black Hammer Bay, on a dark path of vengeance, for he had lost his family. Wife and two children murdered by a band of brigands. Though he set out with vengeance in his heart he died fighting for those families still alive, he died so that they would never share in his grief...my quill fails me, he had the courage to lift a sword and I cannot lift a quill to say more.

With open war upon us go with our hopes and prayers Heroes.

By Rosalyn