

The Journeyman

Est. 2301

31st March 2395 of the Fourth Age of Neothera

NIGHTMARE OVER AS DEMONS LEAVE NEOTHERA

It was a balmy summer evening in September last year (2394) when the most promising news this age has heard spread through the cities of Neothera like wildfire. “Is it true? The Nightmares are gone forever?!” These words uttered by a young lad to his mother in the bustling streets of Blightfoot Ridge were likely the words spoken by nearly every person in the mainland that day.

The Nightmares, demonic abominations that have plagued Neothera since the end of the first age seem to have retreated, apparently to their realm of origin, led by Drakaria, a powerful wizard who was crowned their king. The details we have regarding this miraculous occurrence are limited, however, I was lucky enough to catch up with Mister Ingo Raspatten, famous inventor and ‘friend’ of those that assisted in the eradication of the demons that were also responsible for destroying many of the great elven houses hundreds of thousands of years ago.

“Well, I can’t say it was all entirely down to me, chief. I mean, yeah, I pulled the fabled Moonglenn into the physical plain which allowed the legendary relics of the elves to be placed there to power it, then Drakaria to march in and open a rift to the Nightmare realm and lead his army of demons back home...” Mister Raspatten smirked as he clutched a large bundle of engineering supplies in the small shop we met at in Blightfoot Ridge.

“Okay, slow down, sir! The Moonglenn, what is it?” I asked mister Raspatten. “The Moonglenn was created by the Seven. Eight pillars arranged in a half-circle, that once the relics of the elves are placed there, allows the land at the Caddington Estate to take off and fly! You know, Caddington, in its original location to the east of the Redveil Mountains, was the last point in Neothera where the gods met before they ascended into the Ethereal Realm.

The Moonglenn has other uses too, but uh, I don’t think that’s something you wanna publish and make known to every Tom, Rick and Sally.” Mister Raspatten winked, he was right too. This information could likely cause problems for such a holy site if further secrets were revealed.

“But you don’t deny that the Moonglenn is capable of other feats too?” I questioned mister Raspatten. He winked again and shook his head as he smiled.

I asked Mister Raspatten about what he meant when he said he ‘pulled the Moonglenn into the physical plane’. “I have this machine, right? It’s very powerful, and like the Moonglenn, it also has many other special uses...” I understood that like the secrets of the Moonglenn, Mister Raspatten was not about to divulge further on his fascinating machine, however, he did mention this about the ‘elven relics’. “Sometime during the First Age, the elves came into possession of a number relics that held within them the purest power of all of the elements of the gods. These relics were lost, then gathered by various adventures over the last five years. Ten of the twelve relics have been found and secured into the Moonglenn’s plinths. They are power sources, keys, and once all twelve are placed into the Moonglenn it is believed that someone could actually control where the Caddington Estate can fly to”.

I went on to ask Mister Raspatten about Drakaria and how the Nightmares were led back to the Nightmare Realm. “So many questions, chief! I’ll answer this last one then I gotta be on my way!” I nodded and thanked Mister Raspatten. “There was this legend, about a crown owned by a mad king in the lands to the west. Adventures from the mainland went there, found the crown and fulfilled a prophecy of the western lands, that this wizard, Drakaria, should wear the crown, take control of the Nightmares and lead them back to their realm.

Drakaria used the power of the Moonglenn to open a rift and withdrew all his forces from Neothera. That’s good news because it means those demonic bastards are finally gone and people don’t need to live in fear anymore!”

I agreed with Mister Raspatten but asked him one more question. “What is the Nightmare realm, chief? I assume it’s some sort of dimension or place beyond Neothera where the Nightmares were created, their homeworld. Either that or Drakaria just tricked us all and opened a rift in time, drawing the Nightmares present in Neothera back in time to the end of the First Age of the world, starting the demon war against the elves as it has already happ...” Mister Raspatten’s jaw dropped before he could finish his sentence and promptly ran out of the engineering shop, leaving behind his stack of supplies. I was unable to catch up with Mister Raspatten, however, on behalf of the Journeyman, I would like to thank him for his time and information.

Article Written by Gannu Rakieyu



BLIGHTFOOT RIDGE UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Well, what a testing few weeks it has been. For me, my family has gone from near obscurity to one of the most powerful in the entire world. Going from the streets and slums of Blightfoot Ridge to the ruling power. My name is Danny Henesey, and this is the story of how I rose to power in the city of Blightfoot Ridge.

Word reached everyone in Blightfoot of the death of Joseph Liberty very swiftly. As most people from the Ridge would know, when something happens, it doesn't take long for it to be mainstream news. Instantly the population awaited the statement from Joseph's two children, Tennerson and Charmaine Liberty. We all knew that the Realm would fall into their hands, more so Tennersons, but no-one expected the fallout Joseph's death would cause.

From what I know, Joseph's ill health was his ultimate undoing. His old age and health got the better of him and this was what led to his death. When the time came, Tennerson was approached to take up his father's reins and lead Blightfoot into a new age, a more prosperous time. For around a month, Tennerson tried his best to carry on what his father seemed so good at. Be this, entering talks with other realms, setting up trade deals, or simply dealing with an already rowdy population. Tennerson was not his father.

Not truly knowing the full extent of his father's job, Tennerson became seen less and less frequently around the Ridge. In the end, he hauled himself up in the famous Liberty Monster Hunting School and remained there. He shut it off from the rest of the realm, save for his most trusted professors, students and soldiers and it was extremely rare to see his face. Soon, his sister followed suit. Not wanting to be left to pick up the pieces, she too took refuge in the school, and the two are hardly seen to this day. Some even believe they are no longer in the school and left Blightfoot Ridge altogether.

Of course, this neglect of power thrust Blightfoot into a time of great panic and uncertainty. The population didn't know what was going on, and many of the main government officers felt the same.

Between the officers, they tried to pick up whatever was left and attempted to take control of a spiralling city. On the streets, riots were an almost daily occurrence, and fights happened in most streets. Businesses were burnt to the ground, and very little punishment was dealt out for this, which in turn, caused more riots.

Gang violence also reared its nasty head. Gangs were very prominent in Blightfoot Ridge, however very little was seen of them in mainstream media during Joseph's days. They occupied themselves underground and kept to their own business.

But when a city has stopped dishing out punishments for crimes, gangs see this as an opportunity. They started drug rings, gambling, fixing sports events, all to make a profit. This then caused the city's economy to tumble.

This is where I decided to take a shot at turning my beloved city around. Admittedly, Tennerson had started to show himself again, but only because there were threats to the monster hunting school. He begrudgingly took charge once again but was failing miserably at it. He didn't care, and it was as simple as that. My family business was struggling with all the gang violence and turf wars that were breaking out in the streets.

I started talking to the people and found out what they thought could turn Blightfoot Ridge around. I explained to the population all the changes I could bring upon the Realm if I was given the chance. After all, I lived and breathed in the streets of Blightfoot Ridge, the Liberty's didn't. I told them the struggles that were going on in the streets and all the ways we should direct our frustration to the powers that sat at the top, not our own people. This talk and support I gained caught the attention of Tennerson and the officers at the top. They called upon me and I offered them one thing. Change.

I offered to change the future of Blightfoot Ridge for the better and to lead it forward. I promised to end the wars on the streets and to end the violence that is ruining many people's lives.

I also promised Tennerson and Charmaine that they could leave this life behind, and live in peace wherever they wished. They accepted and chose only to keep the Liberty School of Monster Hunting under their control. Just like that, papers were signed, books were written and news spread. The city of Blightfoot Ridge had a new leader. One who would...who WILL lead it into a prosperous age. I know that from this day, I had a promise I must keep, and keep it I will do. Blightfoot Ridge is on the up, and we have never been more proud to be from this city.

Article Written by Danny Henesey

A LIGHT FROM THE WEST

In recent years, more and more of our ever-growing world has been discovered, and with these discoveries, comes new alliances. The islands of Norvaeagr and the combined forces of Vesthold and the Dragonkin that also occupy that land, have allied themselves under one banner.

Under this new alliance, jointly led by King Olofsson of Norvaeagr, Queen Skaldmaer of Vesthold and King Karagal of the Dragonkin have offered their help and forces to the mainland of Neothera, and as such, have deployed themselves in the city of Talanor, formerly known until recently as The Brook. In the city where they now have joint governance with Commander Eric Hemslake, former leader of the Blackwater Bandits of the Redveil Mountains, they have committed around 43,000 new bodies to the population of 80,000 that already occupied Talanor. Norvaeagr have supplied 10,000, Vesthold 18,000 and the Dragonkin 15,000.

The leaders of Talanor have made a promise to the people and fellow leaders of the mainland to do their part and help with the regrowth where they can. It surely seems that our western friends have landed, and intend on staying. However, are they truly a blessing from the gods? Some believe they will be vital in assisting with the troubles the mainland currently has to deal with, yet others feel the arrival of so many new people will only sap what little resources remain in the mainland following the burning.

As always, this was Cassius Auburn, Journeyman reporter, saying to all citizens of Neothera... Stay safe.

Article Written by Cassius Auburn



SILENCE FROM JERROD'S FRONT

News has been trickling out of Jerrod's Front of disturbing happenings within the realm. News blackouts, terrorist activity, corruption and deception coupled with disturbing reports of an increasingly despotic Governor Marcell.

One of the rumours trickling out was that reporters and journalists have been banned from entering L'Enaroussian territory along with dissident journos and academics from within the realm being imprisoned by Marcell's infamous Bene Jesuit secret police. I chose to test this out, and on approaching from the west on the what was the Golden Free Road into Jerrods Front, I was greeted with a military checkpoint and upon interrogation of my business, which I was honest about, stating I was a journalist, I was turned away.

This first rumour has been found true and I find myself writing this article from the port of Black Hammer Bay, around 100 miles west of the L'Enaroussian capital, Jerrod's Front.

My sources inform me of an increasing terrorist threat within the realm, some group calling themselves the LLA or L'Enarousse Liberation Army. Its aim is to overthrow the Marcell dynasty and what is claimed to be its increasingly despotic rule, they claim that Marcell has visions of a grandeur role for himself than simply Governor, maybe Emperor?

Ridiculous it does seem but this is one of the many claims the LLA makes. It is not clear at the moment what is happening within the realm but I have seen with my own eyes the increased military activity of L'Enaroussian forces along the Golden Free Road.

Reports have also reached me of increased taxes on the working people of the realm since the burning of the mainland, and a growing resentment of the rich noble/middle classes that seem to profit from this. Conscription is said to be now only enforced on the lower classes.

What is particularly disturbing is the story circulating of an elixir that only the ruling elite of Jerrod's Front have had access to. An elixir said to inoculate against the plague of undeath, and indeed cure any of those infected by it. Whilst this seems highly unlikely it is just adding to the general feeling of unease emanating from Jerrod's Front.

This could all be explained by Governor Marcell simply wanting to crack down on a terrorist group within his borders, and to enforce this, it could be said that the LLA is sponsored by Black Hammer Bay, whom we all know has had a longstanding cold war with the L'Enarousse.

Marcell has always seemed to have done the right thing for the greater good of Neothera and maybe we shouldn't be too quick to cast doubt on this hero of the realm, but as a journalist, it is my job to report what I hear and I say to Governor Marcell to open your borders to reputable journalists so the truth will out. We simply don't know what is happening within Jerrod's Front and in turn, the whole continent holds its breath.

Article Written by Effing De Klerk

BEAUTY IN THE EDGE OF A SCALPEL

I have heard a very simple question often, it's one that comes from a good place, albeit misguided. "Why did you learn the arts of a surgeon, when healing magic is much faster?"

Many people might assume I simply had no talent for magic in life, and still show this lack of aptitude on the other side of the grave. However, that is not the case. Before I died I was an accomplished mage. I did not lean into the destructive powers of magic and instead looked to learn and twist magic into more efficient forms to mend bones and cuts. I even experimented with the darker energies to this end.

My infection, and subsequent death, changed all that. I had spent centuries studying the arcane arts like my fellow fae, but when I was changed, the secrets I had spent centuries learning and refining were stripped bare from my psyche. I had a talent for healing magic, and if I had applied myself, I would likely have reached similar heights once more. So why didn't I? It's simple really. Let me answer your question with another question? How much do you know of the arts of magic?

I do not simply mean spells and tomes. Anyone with enough time can learn a spell written down. I am asking what we know of magic in it's pure, raw, primal forms.

Energy is drawn from all around us or gifted by gods perhaps, maybe even pulled from within. It is condensed and harnessed in all manner of forms, but what is this energy? That is not my place to analyse.

There are myths of the Gods of Neothera, the Seven, gifting magic onto the world and teaching the elves of it, marking the favoured with their colours. But they are just that, myths. Besides the existence of the elementally attuned elves, there is no more evidence of this. Anyone who was alive at the time is either dead or scattered. Maybe they still exist, maybe not. If it is true, however, that raises more questions. Such as what about the elements not attuned to the Seven? What about dark, or light, or even divine? How did they come into existence?

Many I ask about this have their own interpretation but ask ten mages and you will get eleven answers, and no proof towards any of them. The nature of magic is fundamentally unknown. And that is why I turned towards a more practical and grounded science. One where I could (should I need to) improvise based on the ailment, adapt to the situation and overcome my patient's esoteric conditions to keep them from succumbing to whatever ails them.

I do not say any of this to disparage healing magic, and it can be very useful, especially when time is a factor. But when compared to the ability to look at every element of the body and tell when something is wrong, and compared to the ability to fundamentally understand exactly what needs to be done? It may be my personal opinion, but it is incomparable. And ultimately I feel we can understand so much more when we do not rely on magic to fix every ailment.

Article Written by Cyrus Encarmine



GARDENING WITH SONTAR

TAYTERS; BOIL'EM, MASH'EM, STICK'EM IN A STEW

Article Written by Sontar

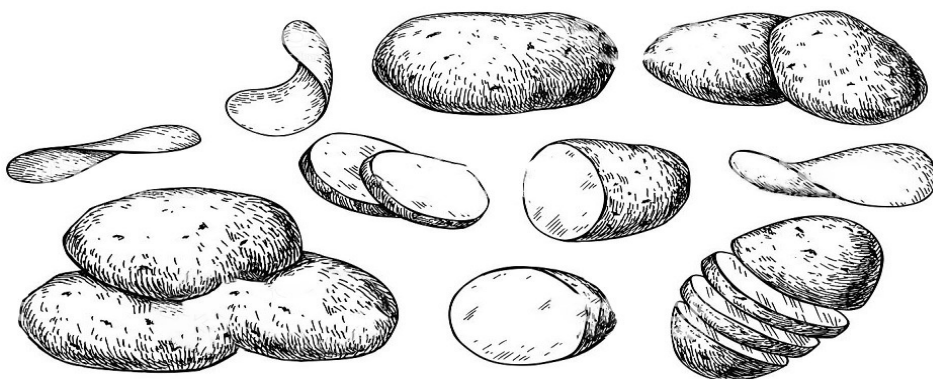
POE-TAY-TOES! Those loveable round balls of goodness are the topic for this edition of Gardening with Sontar. You'll see these beautiful crops sold in most markets and by food merchants around Neothera. Over 5000 varieties have been grown throughout to help with yield, nutrients and their numerous seeds.

The potato is a common vegetable cooked in most villages, towns and cities for Sunday dinners, salads and even a good hot stew in the cold winters. "Ahh Sontar, potatoes are dull and lack any flavour!" Well, they may not be super 'a-peeling!' But you can mash, boil and stick them in almost all foods. Slicing them up and frying them in a small stone oven or even heating these fellas up in a small stone oven to get a nice baked potato which can go with most salads with some butter spread on top. With all that's occurred in Neothera, the diminishing resources in many realms, people still need to eat, and as such I will leave a small potato stew recipe which my father made me when I was a young elf. So, grab your cauldron and let's get started!

- Add a cup of diced carrots, diced parsnips, onion and a cup of diced turnips and most importantly diced potatoes or even whole small ones into your cauldron
- Sweat your veggies to let the broth form
- After 10-15 minutes, add a cup of leeks, sliced mushrooms, fresh beans and 1-2 cups of chopped cabbage
- Let it simmer on the fire for a few minutes and season with some salt, pepper and a pinch of herbs – Bay leaf, thyme and rosemary
- (For the richer folk out there) Stir in half a cup of red wine or mead
- Bring it to a boil, lower the fire and cover the cauldron with a lid
- Let the stew simmer for about half an hour
- Stir in a cup of rolled oats and continue to simmer for another half an hour until the oats are golden
- Add any additional seasoning such as balsamic vinegar
- This dish can fill a soldier's empty belly and also leaves a satisfying smile if the stew is paired with a crusty loaf of rustic bread

This stew is chock-full of good stuff. Fit to keep a king on his feet and ready for battle! Remember all these beauties can be brought at my organic, locally sourced herb garden, veggies, herbs and the added beauty of nature all in one. So, if that's not 'a-peeling', I don't know what is!

Well, that's all for this edition of Gardening with Sontar. I hope you found it informative and useful to keep yourself in tip-top condition during these heavy times. I'll leave you with a small joke I heard a while back in Otta; "What do you call a spinning potato? A ROTATE-O!"



HUNT FOR MISSING VAMPYRES OF BLIGHTFOOT RIDGE ONGOING

Local authorities in Blightfoot Ridge have recently been investigating a spate of disappearances in the city, where the missing citizens are noted as being 'vampiric' of race. Constable Mithryn Smithes has been leading the investigations, apparently with little assistance from the Henesey Company, who is currently said to be busy in establishing rule over the city.

Constable Smithes had this to say to the Journeyman. "We are aware of twelve citizens, all vampyres, that have been reported missing in the last two months. With a further eighteen missing in the six months before this, we are currently investigating the whereabouts of thirty known missing vampyres in the city and surrounding areas of Blightfoot Ridge.

The homes of five of the missing vampyres showed signs that struggles had taken place in the dwellings, which leads local law enforcement to believe it is simply not a coincidence that vampyres, in particular, are being targeted. We are currently investigating leads found in a number of the cases, and despite them distancing themselves from our investigations, we would like to thank the Henesey Company for the limited assistance they have been able to offer us so far in obtaining these leads."

Article Written by Steven Pemberton



THE HERO THAT HELD NEOTHERA

In war, nothing is certain, upon the Moonglenn something was even more uncertain...the fate of the world. We are so small in this world, but one stood bigger and stronger than any other: Borados. The Esysan came with the one we once called a friend, Borgis, later known as Meledieve, or Drakaria the Demon King, a man I once fought alongside and yet he later proved to be a Nightmare beyond the pale.

Borados, once a boy upon the streets, he stole from a merchant simply to survive and was caught, he was later raised to become a brave warrior, magic-user and a hero beyond all. When he came of age he joined the adventurers of Cad-dington and he went out as a fighter, a strategist and a true friend. He was funny and loved life.

Upon our adventure, we all knew what we set out to do (could, and most likely) would cost us our lives. But when the time came for the final fight to crown Drakaria, A demonic King of Madness, in order to open the fabled Moonglenn and save our world, forward strode Borados, his swords above his head as he struck blow after blow upon his enemies before others could land theirs. The battle was wild, intense, and the field was a wreck of bodies.

Borados refused to die. He kept fighting and held Drakaria, until he could take no more, and even then brave Borados would not quit the fight. He kept striking Drakaria until others could draw him away. He charged fully headlong, striking a blow, cutting mighty Drakaria's face and laying a gouge so bold that his jaw dropped ajar, for he had sliced his face in two. "It is not for us we fight but for our families, the mainland and the world. For truth, freedom and victory! I may die but I will be here for you all in life and death. Neothera can never be taken while one heart still beats true and pure in these lands!" The mighty Borados cried to rally his allies.

Eventually, Drakaria's axe found its way into the brave Borados' ribs and he fell to the ground, not defeated, for he tried to call out with the little breath he could draw. Many tried to aid him but the neverending waves of emotionless and deadly Esysan held us from our brother's aid.

Finally, upon crawling behind the damned Drakaria, as Yato plunged his death blow into the Demon King's heart, Borados used his last great breath to plunge his sword through Drakaria's leg, the demon wailed with pain and Yato managed to pull Drakaria to the ground and destroy the enemy of all souls.

As Borados lay dying in his best friend Adelaida's arms, tears streaming from her eyes, he told her death could not stop him and one day when Neothera needed him once again he would return. He slumped, lifeless into her bosom and many wept for the bravest hero Neothera has seen in many an age. I watched a golden spirit pass into the sky and his face in the clouds smiling, looking strong and proud.

So, brave children of Neothera take up the fight. Make Borados' death, not in vain. Defend all lands and know that you need only look to the sky to find the inspiration of Borados the Brave. Forever ready to take up the fight and see off the enemy of freedom. Life is sacred and he gave his so others may live. Goodbye, my friend...until we meet again.

Article Written by Vinallic

LOCAL FOLKLORE: SPIRITS AWAKEN IN THE CHURCH AT HOLLOW'S END?



One Sunday morning the clerk and sextant entered the church to get ready for the service. They soon spotted that somehow a jackdaw had managed to get into the church. After a proper to-do they managed to capture the bird and the sextant decided that it would make a fine pet for his wife. As the priest was due to arrive he placed the jackdaw in the ancient parish chest for safe keeping.

The service proceeded as normal but just as the priest was reading the lesson from Glacilla 26.19 - "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead," a ghostly knocking sound echoed around the church. The irreligious shuddered, the profane trembled, the pious began praying and the priest turned pale. It seemed as if the sound was emanating from the crypt and folk feared that the spirits of their ancestors entombed below were waking from their eternal slumber.

The priest rushed through the rest of the service, still accompanied by the ghostly knocking and rattling coming from the crypt. No sooner had the last "Praise be to the Seven" been said than the whole congregation fled the scene in utter panic. It did not take long for the news to spread around Hollow's End and the diminishing Sunday attendance reflected the fact that other-worldly spirits had arisen from their graves.

Both the clerk and sextant knew the cause of the alarm, the jackdaw in the parish chest which stood above the crypt but were reticent to confess their deeds in light of the panic they had caused. But as the offending 'spectre' had been secretly removed it did not take long for things to return to normal at the church. If you were wondering what happened to the jackdaw then know this, it lived a happy life being cosseted by the sextant's wife.

*Article Written by Supernatural Investigator:
Malon Skurbs*

MY LOVELY HORSE — MISSING!

A reward of 50 Llandies will be given for his safe recovery or information of his whereabouts. Last seen tethered after being offloaded from 'The Black Horse' ship docked at the port of Black Hammer Bay on 1st March 2395. This completely black old warlord stands 16.1 hands high and is the favourite mount of Lady Jane De La Terre of the crew of the Black Widows, the ship commissioned by Captain Rosie 'Red Eye' Robinson.

This is not the first time one of Lady Jane's horses has gone missing, the last one being 'Golden King' who was found sadly dismembered and provided as food for a group of so-called 'Travellers' near the town of Gallows Rest. Punishment for this crime saw the crew of the Black Widows carry out a sentence of the thieves to be hung, drawn and quartered and a group of nearby villagers 'encouraged' to enjoy cuts from the villain's buttocks roasted for an enjoyable feast. The children were not quite so happy when a Pirate bard sang the tale of the next apple harvest when they would be the main course served with apple sauce if any more horses were to go missing! Since this latest disappearance, it is thought the culprit/culprits may be residing somewhere in the mainland under a cunning guise. You are requested that if offered strange cuts of meat or jet black animal skins you report this to Lady Jane of the Black Widows, located in Black Hammer Bay.



THE MYSTERIES OF THE 'UNDEAD' VAMPYRES

Over time, and various different medical studies, I have found myself questioning several things within the realms of existence in Neothera, and perhaps even beyond the borders — but mostly into the more 'undead' species. There have been several questions I've had since I discovered what I was, especially once I joined 'The Heroes of Caddington' and found myself, surprisingly, surrounded by many other undead creatures, both hostile and not. One question has pressed on my mind since the beginning, 'How do they, I, heal'?

Now, when it comes to Humans and all those with a pumping heart, wounds, over time, will simply stitch shut on their own accord, even those that are life threatening. Perhaps an unsightly scar will be left, but even so, the wound, somehow, will always eventually close, even if that must be aided by physical stitches by thread or one simply forcing the wound to touch sides by binding it tightly in bandages. But — why does this even slightly happen with Vampyres, even without the help of healing potions as to artificially close wounds?

Surely, as their blood no longer flows, their wounds, no matter how tightly stitched, should never close — so, why does this occur? Perhaps, the lack of blood in the body of a Vampyre gives an artificial look of closure, as unlike a 'normal' wound, it won't bleed, thus appearing 'healed' when in fact if those stitches were unpicked the wound would simply fall open once more? I have rarely come across Vampyres that are terribly scarred or wounded, giving the impression that there's almost a magical nature to how they heal — which begs even more questions that even I cannot fathom at this time. Yet, if this is so, if the bodies of the dead are able to revert to a state of beauty, then, why are things such as breeding a taboo subject?

If the bodies of the dead can heal and stitch wounds, then why can't they perhaps create new vampires? Or, do only certain things occur in Undead bodies that take that off the list? Are certain organs shut down forever whereas some still function? Or, is it indeed the magic I imagine?

Which begs yet another question — can Vampyres, and say another race such as Humans, have children together? And, what would that mean for the future of the undead? Would a child be born completely undead or would they take traits from both parents? Either way, these are things I wish to, and will, study further.

Until then, I shall continue my studies into the anatomical mysteries of the undead with any willing subjects I can find.

Article Written by Adelaida Astaroth



LOCAL FOLKLORE: THE BLACK HEN OF SILVERWIND SHORES

On the eastern edge of Silverwind Shores was a small remote meadow which had a huge spryte ring at its centre inside which grew the greenest, lushest grass ever seen. The old folks of the parish tell a tale that on some nights a jet black hen and her chicks could be seen, usually about the time when the mantle of the night drew close over the Silverwind Shores. Nobody knew where they came from or where they went or for what unearthly reason they appeared. Some that got close enough avowed that the hen had fierce blood red eyes and a long snake-like tongue. Others said that in the spryte ring the hen would peck out the grass and dine on worms the size of adders.

The priest of the parish was known to have an unhealthy interest in the demonic arts, it was said his library was full of dusty tomes covering every aspect of the occult. Needless to say, rumours of his nightly activities were rife and to say that his parishioners were slightly wary of him would be an understatement.

One Sunday whilst the priest was at church one of his servants happened into his study and noticed a large, leather-bound book laid open on his desk. The servant went over to the desk and slowly but deliberately started to read aloud the words. Suddenly the study door flew open and a black hen and her chicks walked into the room. The servant at once knew this was the very black hen that was sometimes seen in the spryte ring.

Before his very eyes, the servant saw the hen and chicks slowly growing in size until the hen became as large as a bullock. Meanwhile, over at the church, the priest was in full flow in his pulpit when he suddenly stopped his preaching and looked to the window. Without a word, he closed his holy book and slowly but purposely descended from his perch and strode towards the main door which he quickly opened and slammed behind him.

On entering his study he was first greeted by the sight of an enormous hen whose head was touching the ceiling, her chicks were the size of cart horses and there in the far corner, he saw his petrified servant gibbering and wailing and praying to the Seven for deliverance. The priest walked over to a huge sack which was placed in the corner and took a handful of rice from it. This he scattered on the floor thus having the effect of distracting the hen and her chicks. As they eagerly pecked up the small grains the priest was able to get to his desk and his book of ancient spells, whereupon reading from its pages he reversed the spell that the servant had inadvertently cast.

*Article Written by Supernatural Investigator:
Malon Skurbs*

SHEEPSCO

YOU FOLLOW THE HERD SO WE DON'T HAVE TO!

FOLLOWING THE BURNING OF THE MAINLAND, RESOURCES ARE RUNNING LOW EVERYWHERE! ARE YOU PANIC BUYING YET? NO? WELL, YOU SHOULD BE!

HEAD ON DOWN TO SHEEPSCO IN BLIGHTFOOT RIDGE FOR ALL YOUR MASS HYSTERIA-INDUCED, PANIC BUYING NEEDS! WE WILL FEED THE NATIONS!

-TOP SELLERS-

ANUS CLEANSING PAPER: (WHO DOESN'T WANT A CLEAN ASS WHEN YOU'RE ALREADY STARVING AND CAN'T SHIT THROUGH LACK OF FOOD?)

SOAPS: (IT'S ^(NOT) PROOVEN THE UNDEAD INFECTION DIES IF YOU SMELL NICE!)

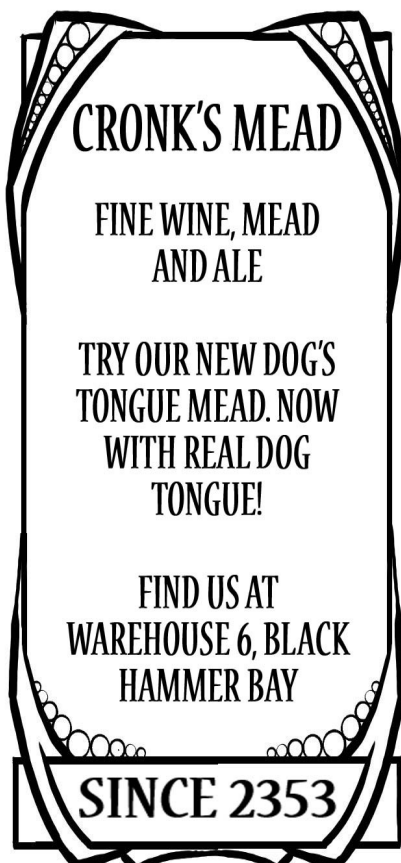
BREAD: (BECAUSE WHO NEEDS FRUIT AND VEG FULL OF IMMUNE SYSTEM ENHANCING VITAMINS?)

MEDICINES: (WHO NEEDS MEDICINE WHEN YOU HAVE ANUS CLEANSING PAPER?)

COMMON SENSE: (THAT'S SOMETHING MONEY CAN'T BUY)

PLUS MANY OTHER TOP SELLERS
(THAT MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE
ALREADY SOLD OUT)

NO LIMITS ON PURCHASE AMOUNTS. WHO CARES ABOUT THE ELDERLY OR CHILDREN - IT'S YOUR GOD-DAMNED RIGHT TO PUT YOURSELF FIRST!



WALKING WITH HEROES

As a new feature to the mainland's favourite newspaper, I, Cassius Auburn, Journeyman reporter, will be interviewing the 'Heroes of Neothera'. In our first instalment, I was lucky enough to catch up with Akgrimsky 'Grim' Romanov, leader of the upcoming guild known as the Institution.

Tell me about your upbringing.

It was institutionalised, regimented and hard. From what I can remember, it seems that it was a bit of a godsend. I imagine, if I wasn't picked up off the streets Kjeldora in Nald, I would be wandering around - an empty husk of a person - begging for food and water. I ended up getting a good education, good training and brothers that will stay by my side for the rest of the foreseeable future.

How did you come to be an adventurer?

Well, I was raised into it. The institution that I grew up in raised us on different archetypes of adventure - some chose to fight with sticks, others studied books - I picked up a good sense of how to handle a rifle and a basic medical knowledge. It served me very well when that institution fell - as all of them do.

What's your favourite memory from and adventure?

Narrowly escaping a very powerful demon was one of the most terrifying experiences of my life. My second in command, Dredgen, managed to distract him and thankfully we both got away from it with all our limbs. But weirdly, it stuck with me. It's one of those things you just don't forget.

Ever found love whilst out and about... or is there someone waiting for you at home?

No.

And how did you find yourself at the Cad-dington Estate?

As I began to reassemble the pieces of the fallen institution I was once part of, a notice was posted up somewhere in the local town, it led us right here. We came for money but ended up staying, as the opportunities we have since begun to find have been unlike any others.

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The recent war against the demons just ended, and you were involved. Can you tell me your first-hand experiences in this?

They destroyed our home and killed our friends, murdered my teachers and nearly killed me. I am more than happy that they are gone. They have caused irreversible damage to everyone I have met – so for that alone – I am absolutely thrilled they have been excommunicated from reality.

Did you come close to death during this? If so, what happened?

Yes, many times, not only at my homeland but at Caddington. One memory strikes me in particular. During one of the last stands, I looked up and half of the inhabitants of this place were dying. It makes me sick when I must choose who to treat and who not to. I found out only recently that I managed to save Sontar Moonbow from certain death when I packed his wounds and made sure he didn't bleed out – apparently, he was very close to dying then and if not for me, he would have perished.

You also run what you claim to be a guild. Tell me some more about it.

Yes, I am re-establishing what my elders had set up years ago before the demonic forces ripped it down. We are a group of like-minded mercenaries, monster hunters and soldiers situated in the Frostwind Mountains in the isle of Nald in the Frozen North. Currently, we're rebuilding the ruins of the old grounds I grew up and trained in, to the point where we can start training and selling our services on a wide scale. We offer a rigid training structure for anyone who wishes to be a part of it. I have large aspirations for the future.

What are your plans for the future? Do you intend to keep fighting for Neothera?

Well, very soon we're visiting Caddington. I may be late, however, a detachment of three men should be there before me. And yes, we do intend to stay, as I've begun to become oddly attached to this place.

What are your retirement plans?

Currently, none. We'll keep fighting till we drop.

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today! It's been an honour meeting you, and I hope we see each other soon! Any final words for our dear readers?

Thank you for reading and a large thanks to our interviewer Cassius Auburn for facilitating this. I hope to see all of you soon at Caddington.

Article Written by Cassius Auburn



THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF LIFE AND UNDEATH

It has come to my attention that many people throughout the lands, even some of the more scholarly brothers and sisters out there, have a less than thorough understanding of genetic structures. This is something I wish to correct. Now, obviously, this isn't something I can easily explain in the confines of a Journeyman article, so I will give a brief rundown about something I feel many will find interesting, and more in keeping with my specific field of expertise. Namely, why the infection seems to be completely ineffective against certain species despite its fascinating capability to cross the racial barrier.

Almost all fully sapient species within Neothera and beyond share a very interesting universal trait. A compound in the blood that can be moulded but once shaped cannot be reformed, simply destroyed, is present in all samples with the exception of Gnomes (which we will get onto). Upon our research into this compound, we have named it Malleum. Bizarrely Vulperans, Humans, Faeries, Beastkin, and Urka (all races that are not native to the realm of Neothera, but coming from various different places) actually show many similarities in structural composition, to the point we are conducting a hypothesis that they may, in fact, share a common ancestry.

On the other side of this equation Elf, Piskie, and Goblin DNA all differ in many ways, but are far more similar than the non-native races, possibly hinting at common ancestry there as well. For elves and Goblins, this makes some logical sense due to the stories of the goblin races origins.

The Piskies inexplicable appearance in Neothera is possibly the result of the gods of Neothera, sending a race to whom contrasted directly with the more static mindset of the Elves (a side effect of immortality) who would be harder to corrupt by conventional means due to their more erratic natures. While purely hypothetical, this would explain both their appearance and their similar genetic structure to Elves and Goblins.

Now, this is all well and good, but if that's the case, why is it that there are several races who are simply immune? Is the infection simply unable to infect those species?

Well yes and no. It's actually more complex than that, and ties into a much rarer source of magic: Divine energy and something we call the 'gold blood cells' present in those infused with it. People who have been empowered and infused with divine energy, when we researched their bloodwork, appear to show these particulates of divine magic that, when the infection was exposed to these samples, the cells consumed the infected cells and contained them before it could take root.

As the infection is at least partially infused with demonic and dark magic by nature, we can assume that this is because the sources of magic are opposed and that the Divine energy is present in a high enough quality to obliterate the comparative trace amounts of dark and demonic essence inherent to the infection.

This is supported after seeing the result of a ritualistic transplantation ceremony performed on a vulperan, wherein their attachment of a divine empowered set of horns (theorised to have been supercharged by the ritual performed) purged the subject of their demonic heritage, turning them into a baseline human. More research into the nature of this interaction of two magic sources is necessary before we draw a solid conclusion, however.

Gold blood cells are present in urka and goblins too. Gnomes are also immune to the infection, but for different reasons (lacking conventional biology or even blood leads the infection to have no purchase on them biologically).

Given gold blood cells are present exclusively in the divine empowered individuals outside the goblins and urka races, it raises more than a couple questions, especially in the case of goblins, as to what exactly divine energy exactly is, and the origins of the goblin race besides.

While these cells are a hard counter to the infection, and a method of artificially recreating this would be beyond immensely helpful to stemming the encroaching tide of the undead, sadly a method to do this has not yet been found, and while research continues, it goes slowly.

Article Written by Cyrus Encarmine