

Raven's Herald

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Courage and Honor

June, 598

Sessuar in Full Retreat!

After recent victories at Irondale, Warlord Greystone and the people of Ravenholt, aided by Minotaur Warlord Zomar Cassarah and his troops recently vanquished the Sessuar at Copper, Tanthon's Mines, and Trader's Rest. They attacked after traveling across the lower reaches of the Grey Hills, along the River Ardynn. Troops were able to hide their numbers to a certain

extent by camouflaging themselves as shipboard caravan merchants bound for ports in Avendale, presenting a three sided attack with some troops traveling over land, others via the river, and still others through the numerous mine shafts that dot the hills of the area.

Once these territories were secure, Warlord Greystone led the troops on a dangerous trek down

the Green River, sending scouting parties on to determine the extent of the devastation to Ripplemead and Midlothian in Capulus. It was determined that little remains of these two cities, but that Sercia itself is still strongly held. Greystone's legions moved away from the river to retake Port Rowena, thereby cutting off Sessuar connections to Alyndale, making it an easy target. Troops

continued Northward up the coast, recovering Manderock and Greywatch, but discovered that Deerbrook had been razed beyond hope.

This continued successful push to recover our beloved lands bring the people of Ravenholt great hope, approaching some sense of suitable vengeance for the blood of our brethren spilled during this long and devastating war.

Warlord Greystone Named Baron of Westmarch

With little fanfare, looking peaked and weary from his battle with an unknown ailment, Duke Alaric Malinruin held one of his now-infrequent courts to name Warlord Maximillian Greystone Baron of the recently reclaimed Westmarch barony. As one of the earliest baronies to fall to the Sessuar, Westmarch has been sorely ravaged. His Grace declared Greystone the "best man for a thankless and painful job"

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Astrological Aid Sought as Duke Alaric's Health Still Failing

As reported in the September, 597 issue of the Raven's Herald, in that year's vicious assault on the Capitol City, His Grace Duke Alaric was badly wounded, taking blows from several poisoned blades of a still-undetermined substance. The substance, believed to be an extremely rare and deadly invention of Sessuar alchemists, has no known antidote. It affects individuals differently, perhaps depending upon the dosage received or the time between receipt and attempts

at healing. No antidote known to modern alchemists has cured the afflicted. Effects have ranged from something similar to a weakness poison, to something as deadly as a very extended slow poison that cannot be purified. In all cases, victims either heal of their own accord over time, or ultimately die of their injuries if constant healing is unavailable.

Members of A.R.C., the newly formed Alchemists Guild (see related article this issue), are at a loss thus

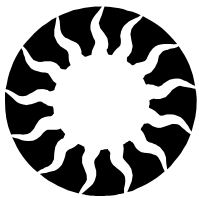
far, and report that while they have had some successes in creating a weaker version of the poison, and thereby a viable counteragent, they have not found any mixture that will reverse the effects. When asked about the ingredients in said poison, a guildmember replied that such things were "Classified and confidential. We wouldn't want such items in the hands of the public, now, would we? Besides, it's a very unstable mixture, and inexperienced alche-

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A.R.C. Formed to Research Sessuar Toxins

In part inspired by the tragic poisoning of Duke Alaric Malinruin, several local alchemists have formed a new guild, known commonly as the Alchemical Research Center, or A.R.C., to study rare and unknown alchemical substances. Guildmaster Kainon Andrews welcomes any who would study the herbal arts to visit the guild. Several labs have been constructed to allow for further study.

The Guild is partially funded from the Duke's own accounts, but donations of alchemical substances and components are welcome. Guildmaster Andrews states that a reward of 1000 gold has been set for any who can provide information leading to the creation of an antidote. Five hundred gold will be paid for actual ingredients found to be of Sessuar creation.



Keep your eyes open for some interesting changes to the Voltan Bear Tavern - although they should be hard to miss. The gypsies have decided that they want to turn the tavern into more of an entertaining social center for Ravenholt. The first thing to change is the name. The sign out front has already been taken down, soon to be replaced with one that bears the tavern's new name, "The Tippy Gypsy". Other intended changes include a small stage for performances and auctions, the hiring of people to serve drinks, an area in which games will routinely take place, and renovations to the building.

Void Creatures Banished

At the first gathering of spring, Ravenholt faced a new menace. Strange never-before-seen creatures that seem to be associated with swamp and void. The creatures appeared on the field in flashes of light. As they appeared the ground suddenly became soft and swampy, sucking at the feet of warriors who could only slog through the muck towards the attackers.

The creatures hurled elemental bolts of several different elements, but seemed to have metabolisms. If they succeeded in cutting down a towns person, they tainted them with their foul power. The nature of this taint remained unknown for a time, but it seems now that it eventually transforms the victim into a clawed monstrosity much like the strange creatures themselves, causing them to blindly attack their companions. Those who were tainted identified at the Mage's Guild as having an "absence in their spirit." and suffered dire dreams

no doubt inspired by this taint.

When the creatures appeared on the field, rifts also appeared. Some daring townsfolk leapt into them in the hopes that they would provide a means of stopping the attackers. They apparently spoke to beings who told them that the swamp creatures were summoned from another plane, and that to get rid of them the most powerful of the creatures, one that looked very different and was very dangerous must somehow be bound using star-shaped items and the scroll that had summoned it. The stars were found in the rifts; not only were they to be used in binding the creature, but they also allowed those who bore them to move freely in the muck the creatures brought with them. The scroll was found by a commoner group in a Specter guarded building. The Raven's Herald has heard rumors that the creatures were summoned by a Lord Roseheart, and that the scroll was found on a mis-

sion intended to capture him. Other rumors indicated that the scroll might originally have been given to this Roseheart by the nefarious undead group, "The Black Rose". The Herald was unable, however, to confirm these rumors.

The scroll was written in strange runes which resisted the concerted efforts of several sharp minds to decode until an Obfuscate on it was lifted and it finally yielded its secrets to the subtle mind of Durchasi Ruinvorn. Then the powerful creature that led the attacking beings was subdued and banished using the stars and the scroll.

The taint on several townsfolk faded some, but it still remains. It is now believed that the banishment of the creatures was only temporary, and that it will return again and must be banished more thoroughly or destroyed in some fashion. For now, however, it and it's minions are gone.

A Look Ahead

By Selina

Healers' Guild Circle Renewed

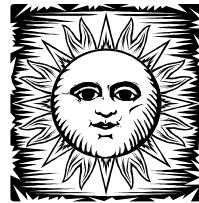
by Daphne Green

On Friday night of the April gathering in Ravenholt, an emissary from the plane of Life materialized inside the Healer's Guild. She introduced herself as Kitara, and explained that she had come to renew the Healer's Guild Circle as had been done at this time last year.

During a meeting with members of the Guild, she said that the guild must once again acquire fifty signatures on a petition stating that the articles of the guild were being kept. She also instructed the guild to choose which members should be invested, adding that she would not invest any person who had not been chosen freely by the Guildmaster and the guild. Additionally, she asked the guild to acquire a scroll and components to

perform a Spirit Farewell after the investitures, which were scheduled for some time on Sunday. She would not, however, reveal the identity of the spirit to be summoned.

During the next day, the Guild collected over one hundred signatures from both commoners and nobles. The emissary held another meeting on Saturday afternoon. She asked Guild



members about their relationships to each other. The Guild members confirmed their interdependence on and trust for one another. She then said that she would perform the investitures the next day, and that each Guild member to be invested should think about why he or she had chosen

to serve Life and explain this choice at the investiture. Some members objected that such choices were a highly personal matter, but the emissary said that the nature of such choices would be enlightening to the entire guild.

On Sunday afternoon, the emissary gathered the Guild once again. The Guild presented the signatures and the necessary scroll and components for the spirit-farewell. The emissary renewed the Circle, and declared that it would never again need to be renewed, but was now permanent. She spoke to those about to be invested, who gave their reasons for following the path of Life, and performed the investitures. When she had finished,

she began to tell the invested members how she herself had chosen to follow Life, in return for the lives of her father and family. She spoke of the different and higher planes of existence that she had experienced since that choice, and finally said that her next existence would be within the circle she had just renewed. She said that her master on the Plane of Life had agreed to this, and that the spirit-farewell would be for her own spirit. The Guild was struck silent by this revelation and then burst into tearful farewells. Many of those present swore that she would never be forgotten, and that all should know of the nature of her sacrifice. Then, as the Guild watched, Kitara's body dissipated into the glow of the circle.

Continued from page 1 and continued on to describe some of the data that has been coming in from outlying towns in the region.

Duke Alaric has expressed the intense guilt he feels that his namesake city not only was unable to save the people of Greater Bromley when the first major attacks

came, but that they had to retreat from the coastline themselves. He hopes that Greystone and his people can rebuild Arkham Keep to its once-great stature, and that the new communities built on the coast of Westmarch will soon thrive again.

Baron Greystone spoke briefly and solemnly, asking that the people of

Ravenholt and those of Westmarch in particular, give everything they can to the effort of rebuilding the lands as rapidly as possible. "It is painful to think that all our efforts and all the lives lost could be for naught, should we fail to hold the coastline in any possible future attacks." Once Malinruin and Trader's Rest are fortified, Baron Grey-

stone and Duke Alaric have high hopes of reclaiming Sercia. It is unknown whether the Sessuar have followed the Green River up from the coast to attack Ashbury's nearby towns of Two Towers and Rothar, or whether aid from that quarter can be expected, since few communications have been received in recent months.

Tablets Recovered

Last February, when many citizens of Ravenholt fell into warrens of tunnels beneath Ravenholt, two broken tablets were discovered. One tablet was white and bore an ancient noble oath upon it. The other tablet was black and had the incantation for Help/Harm undead written on it, and it seemed to be a part of a larger tablet. Both of these tablets were reported to have been broken into pieces by an unknown being.

The spirit of a deceased Squire of Eastwyck from the time of Cecil

Swordhand knew of both tablets and was of great help in guiding parties to find and retrieve their pieces. The white tablet had once lain by his tomb and held an old and powerful oath to the land that once was sworn by all new nobles, binding them to their lands in a very real way. The dark tablet was of unknown origin, but was now corrupted by chaos. It has been surmised that reassembling it would make the spell whose incant was graven upon it once more copyable into spell books.

The pieces were hidden in

nearby caves and guarded by undead. Several groups of valiant heroes followed the spirit of Squire Bethan to retrieve them; finally all of the pieces were regained and the tablets were assembled. In a moving ceremony organized by several locals, Squire Bethan recited his oath to the land one final time and then was laid to rest. The oath to the land that was regained with the assembly of the light tablet was carefully collected by the nobles present and will hopefully be used to strengthen the ties of our leaders to the lands they

rule.

The effects of reassembling the dark tablet are not yet clear. A wave of energy was released when it was assembled, so it can be assumed that some effect has occurred, but the Raven's Herald has not yet been able to discover whether it has indeed made the spell graven upon it copyable once more.



Travelers Attacked

Several mysterious attacks on travelers outside Ravenholt City have occurred recently. Survivors report that they were attacked by a single, elusive, powerful creature which appeared human save for marks or war-paint on its face. One group of mercenaries lost half of their number over two consecutive nights on the road to Ravenholt. One of those who resurrected, their leader, Teryn Reitte, said that it looked human, but we hit it with paralysis spells and they didn't work. She also reported that it never faced them directly, but picked off sentries and stragglers. Other victims have included a small army patrol and a few adventurers traveling to or from town.

None of the farmers living in the area where the attacks have occurred have reported seeing the creature, save for one, who claims that it destroyed some undead that were attacking his house, but left him and his family alone. The nature of this creature has not yet been discovered, but travelers around Ravenholt are encouraged, as always, to travel only in groups, especially after dark.

Cap's Emporium Explodes

by Daphne Green

On Friday of the May gathering at about 10:00 pm there was a single large explosion at Cap's Emporium, a well known mercantile establishment in downtown Ravenholt.

Captain Eliyahu ben Nachman (widely known as "Cap") went to the door of his emporium in the company of Trivector, whom he had hired to cast a Ward. As Cap opened the door, he and Trivector were caught in the explosion. Trivector successfully resurrected to tell the tale, but Cap died his final death. He will be sorely missed.

Investigation revealed that the source of the explosion was a trap of some kind attached to the door. No damage was done to the valuables inside and the damage to the building was quickly repaired in time for Cap's normal business hours the next day.

An investigation of the attack is pending. Amra Asland Al-Qadim and the Merchants' Guild are offering a reward of five gold pieces for information leading to the arrest of the person or persons responsible and another five gold for the actual capture of those persons.

Orcs Invade Ravenholt

This April, what was formerly only a continual annoying menace to Ravenholt -orcs- became a serious threat. Several local orc tribes received a strange scroll from a secretive and wise group of goblins which allowed them to create something called a Bloodstone. This bloodstone fed off the anger and hatred of the orcs over having their homeland taken away by the people of Ravenholt, and it imbued them with greater than usual powers. The orcs of the tribes involved became both stronger and tougher, making them a much more dangerous enemy. Their new advantage also gave them the courage to attack the town in force.

Help came from an unlikely source: one of the goblins of the very group that gave the orcs the bloodstone scroll. A one eyed goblin with strange powers called "Moonfire", very civilized and intelligent came to Ravenholt offering information on how the orcs had created the Bloodstone, and how it could be unmade using the same scroll. Because the spirit of the orcs was powering the bloodstone, only by the Orc clans own will could the bloodstone be destroyed. Each clan had an important token and banner which represented the spirit of their tribe. If the defenders of Ravenholt could obtain these tokens and banners, then they would be able to represent the orc clans and unmake the bloodstone as if they were the orcs themselves.

Several groups went on quests to win the tokens from the orc clans. some tokens were physical objects; the Iron Chain's token was a pair of manacles, and the Red Venom's token was an Alchemy book. Other groups had to win honorary membership in a clan. The orcs' banners had to be won on the field. The orc clans carried them into a few large attacks on Ravenholt, defending them ferociously from the warriors who strove to take them. All the warriors of Ravenholt acquitted themselves valiantly, and finally all of the banners were won.

With all the tokens and banners assembled, the forces of Ravenholt followed Moonfire to the bloodstone to perform the ritual to unmake it. The massed warriors defended the ritual from constant orc attacks while the token bearers -some of them living tokens themselves- spoke the words to draw the power from the stone into the banners and tokens that they bore.

As the ritual progressed the stone itself began to bleed, and the orcs attacked with more and more desperation. Finally the ritual was finished successfully and the power transferred from the Bloodstone to the Orcish tokens and banners, returning the orcs to their normal, lesser strength. The warriors of Ravenholt fought their way through angry orcs back to town, victorious.

More than They Bargained For

The festival of the recent Three Ravens Merchant Caravan this March proved more eventful than expected. The festival started out with fairground games and a playful atmosphere, but it was soon disrupted by many bandit attacks. A number of citizens were attacked by harmless seeming people and robbed of their money and belongings.

It was discovered that at least some of these bandits, who sometimes attacked by subterfuge, and sometimes in numbers, were Sessuar bonded. Towards the end of the gathering, what seemed like a vast horde of them attacked; the defenders of Ravenholt had a long and difficult battle against the large force which included spell casters and fighters of considerable skill. At last the bandits were defeated. It is hoped that these represented the last remnants of Sessuar in the that region.



mists could do considerable harm to themselves and others as they attempt to handle it.”

Special squads of technicians have been sent to infiltrate Sessuar camps in the hopes of finding unusual ingredients not available on our shores, but thus far, those who have returned alive have reported little success.

Guildmistress Zara, renowned Astrologer and Celestial Mage, has cast numerous portents on His Grace's behalf, but finds only darkness and uncertainty in his future. She has requested that word be sent to King Mykel's astrologers that further aid is needed.

Public Notices

Come to the House of Al-Quadim! A shop of wonders and practicalities from across Tyrra. -items to make adventuring easier, or to delight your friends and loved ones! Armor, Weapons, alchemicals, potions, scrolls, locks, traps, spell books, and objects of beauty and uniqueness bought and sold. Appraisals of fine objects also available. Traps made to order. Training available on request. Special orders always welcome! Safe Journey to you!

To All Citizens of Ravenholt:

By the request and sanction of our Lord Duke Alaric Malinruin, a Heraldic Registry is being compiled. All colors and coats of arms are to be recorded in the registry. At your earliest convenience, please provide either written or verbal description of your court, group and personal colors and arms to Durchasi Ruinvorn. Thank You.

Wanted: I am interested in recruiting new adventurers to the lands of Ravenholt as bodyguards for my shop. Please contact Amra Asland Al-Quadim at the House of Al-Quadim, located in front of the Healer's Circle...Safe Journey to You!

Friend,

Arrived. Last time hindered by unanticipated company. Expected no others. Eluded discovery. Not safe. Another time.

Wanted: Everything! I am looking to buy/sell/trade for many items. Potions, scrolls, components, armor, weapons, crystals. Pleases contact Amra Asland Al-Quadim at the House of Al-Quadim located in front of the Healer's Circle. Safe Journey to You!

Wanted: True elemental essence of Darkness or Shadow, and any information regarding the shadows which plagued this last gathering.

—Darius Brisbane.

Attention Spellingers:

Be it known that I have acquired foci for the spells Vision, and Rest. Anyone needing to make use of them should contact me. I will be attending most council gatherings in Ravenholt city.—Anastasia

In Memoriam: HeartsBlood

A knowing spirit and true who gave up his own existence for the good of all. There is no finer gift. I will eternally regret the lack of a chance to know him better, and shall always strive for a peaceful answer in his memory. Perhaps so should we all.

As he did live for us, so did he die for us.

Spirits Laid to Rest

This February in the caverns and tunnels beneath Ravenholt the adventurers who fell below discovered several restless spirits wandering the subterranean halls. They seemed drawn to plaques on the wall, bearing inscriptions in strange runes. When they were spoken to, it became clear that these spirits were without memory of who they had been.

The plaques were translated by several people of Ravenholt, including Anastasia, Keyla, and Harry O'Leary. The inscriptions turned out to be the epitaphs of the spirits. When their epitaphs were read to them their memories returned.

To put the spirits to rest, final small spirit-quests had to be performed for them. Most of these were very simple. -A harmonicist needed to be sung to, a sculptor watched someone sculpt, and so forth. When these spirit-quests were performed by a number of helpful towns folk, the spirits were finally freed and able to go to their rest.

