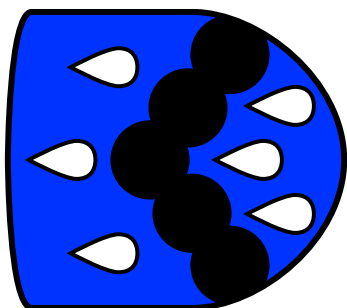


The Argent



From the Monarch

Once again we begin a new reign; as the new Monarch, it's my job to continue the work of Grand Duke Armand, who did a commendable job of rebuilding the Kingdom. But there is still a lot of work to do; I have many grand ideas — some are possible, some are not.

When one takes a look at the state of VSR, one might wonder where our troubles lie. It could be a string of bad Monarchs, but that's not really it. While there may have been one or two that hurt VSR more than they helped, there were several who poured everything they had into the Kingdom.

Any Monarch that attempts to carry the Kingdom on his shoulders is destined to fail. The Monarch needs the help of the people — it's a simple fact. A new Monarch is elected, and everybody expects him to fix the problems. He tries to get his ideas across but meets resistance at every turn. At the end, he's failed to meet his goals and everyone criticizes him. But who is really to blame?

Let's put it in terms of donations. If the membership of VSR is one hundred people, and each member donates \$6 for this reign, then VSR has \$600 to use for feasts and campouts. Currently, the average of dues paid members is 18% — in our example that'd be \$108, which rents one feast hall without food or a camp site for one night; not much to base a successful reign on.

Amtgard is not a business; VSR is a non-profit organization. The majority of our funds comes from donations and site fees. If we don't have the donations, then we can't have events; if we don't have events, we don't have site fees. And VSR becomes a Kingdom where everyone attends other groups' events and wonders "Why can't we have events like this?"

There is nothing I want more than to have this be a reign that we can all look back on with pride. Over the last two reigns we worked hard to build a foundation for VSR. We have a choice; continue to build something that will last, or be apathetic and waste all of that effort.

I can't do this alone, I need help. Will you help me?

Tyric Magnasson
Rex Argentum

Calendar of Events

1998

November

21: Marymoor Park,
Redmond, WA

- HRM Tyric visits
the Barony of
Inland Ocean.

26: **Thanksgiving**

December

20: Wortman Park,
McMinnville

- Arts & Sciences
gathering

- Potluck feast
- Deadline for
declaration of
intent for Prime
Minister and
BOD positions

25: **Christmas**

31: **New Year's Eve**

1999

January

- 10: Wortman Park,
McMinnville
- Winter Midreign
event

- Election for
Prime Minister
- Allthing
- Board of Directors
Elections

February

- 20: Site to be
announced
- Canned Food
Tournament

Rulebook v6.1 and you

The parent organization of Amtgard, the Kingdom of the Burning Lands, is in the process of revising the current edition of the Amtgard Rules of Play. For the Pacific Northwest, there are three representatives: Sir Talon Starchaser for the Empire of the Mystic Seas, Sir Phocion and Squire Garik for Dragonspine (which would cover the Barony of Inland Ocean), and Lord Ian Shadowvale for the Kingdom of VSR. People are encouraged to give their clarifications and suggestions to their kingdom representatives.

You can send in your suggestions and clarifications to me (Ian) in one of three ways:

- Email me at jelmore@gte.net with your suggestion. This is preferred, because that way I'm unlikely to lose it.
- Come and visit me at Camelot Comics & Games in Newberg. I'm there every day except Saturday (when I'm typically at Amtgard, but of late I've been using it to sleep!) The number for the store is (503) 538-0711, but be warned — I am working, and can't necessarily sit on the phone for a half hour as you explain your suggestion.
- Track me down at a practice or event and tell me. (Good luck; as I said, of late I've been sleeping in on Saturdays.)

This is taken from an email sent to the AMTGARD-L mailing list. Grand Duke Aramithris, current Monarch of Burning Lands, was kind enough to give us a taste of what to expect.

1. All classes will have specialized art and haiku poetry.
2. All classes will have historical and literary examples of character archetypes (i.e.- wizards: Merlin, barbarian: Conan, etc.)
3. All magics will be listed alphabetically with descriptions including class and level gained. In addition, magics will be listed by colleges (i.e.- fireball is flame magic, sleep is charm/control magic, etc.).
4. Stoneskins will now only stack to 2; all emotion control effects will last only 30 minutes; 2 entangles or iceballs maximum, with only a 100 count duration; bards will gain more magics from existing magics from other classes; defend will cost two points.
5. Minor classes changes on weapons include: scouts can use staves, monks can use multiple longswords, warriors can use all melee weapons, short and long weapons will be better defined, scouts will lose javelins and gain throwing axes, assassins will lose javelins, red weapons must now be over five feet long.
6. Heavier gauge metal will increase armor value. Worn armor will be differentiated from natural armor, especially as pertains to monsters.
7. Enchantment colors: wizards-yellow, healers-white, druids-green, bards-blue.
8. Barbarian fight after death will be made safer.
9. Bladesharp/improve weapon/magical projectile will be +1 damage per level and have a chart to explain effects. Red and white weapons will also be charted.
10. Classes will be differentiated: fighting, combat, magic, battlefield.
11. Confusing terms will be redefined as per the Beginner's Guide already published on the official Amtgard website.
12. New art will be included, especially as pertains to legal and illegal target areas.
13. Dual classes, already published on AMTGARD-L, will be included as optional classes only.
14. Magics will be standardized: flesh to stone as per petrify, protect as per protection, shatter as per pyrotechnics, etc.
15. Perogatives and responsibilities will be defined as big (national), medium (regional), and small (local).
16. Garb will be streamlined: no monk gray belts, warriors and archers garb will be defined better, etc.
17. Magic components not actually used in magics' applications will be eliminated.
18. Reeve's rules for interkingdom events will be detailed.
19. Blow, shot, hit, damage, deflection, glance, nick and graze will be reworded.
20. Peasant rules will be better defined.
21. All the confusion on subdue and traps will be defined. Examples: firetrap is not a trap, barbarian can be affected by assassin traps (as stated before, magics will be defined by colleges).
22. All weapons will need padding on the upper 1/3, striking edge or not.
23. Single-hand crossbows will only do one point of damage.
24. Shot timing, simos, and powering through parries will be better defined.
25. A table of contents and index will be included.
26. Tying will be removed from the subdual rules.
27. Magic clarifications will instead be listed with the individual magics.
28. Individual kingdom's perogatives will be better defined.
29. If room allows, will include detailed siege weapon and juggling rules.

This is far from a definitive list, but I hope it gives people an idea of what to expect.

(Continued on page 4)

Court Procedures of the Kingdom of VSR

Adopted October 1998

I. Court Called

II. Monarch's Greeting

- A. Proclamations are made at this time
- B. Greeting of visiting dignitaries.

III. Presentation of Awards

- A. Basic Orders
- B. Special Orders
- C. Masterhoods
- D. Titles of Nobility
- E. Knighthoods

IV. Yielding the floor to visiting dignitaries

- A. Visiting Monarchs may give awards at this time

V. Announcements

(assassinations can take place after Kingdom announcements are complete)

- A. Kingdom Announcements
 - B. Holding Announcements
 - C. Fighting Company, Households, and Guild Announcements.
- These announcements must be arranged with the Court Herald to be called before the Monarch.

VI. Open Business

(this is primarily where court assassinations are recommended to take place)

- A. In-Persona Disputes
- B. Criminal Trials
- C. Land Disputes

VII. Court Dismissed

From The Scribe

I'm sorry.

This newsletter is terribly past due. Most of the information that I wanted to capture on paper — elections, another Crown Quails, two Coronations — is now hopelessly out of date. I could go on about how it was unavoidable; my personal life has gone through an upheaval, I'm in a totally different profession than I was the last time an issue came out, and my appearance at Amtgard have dropped to almost none as a result.

But it's all irrelevant. VSR deserves a better caliber of person to handle the important business of the kingdom. Although I truly believe that Amtgard should never come in the way of family or work, VSR needs people who can do the hard work, week in and week out, for months or years on end. If you cannot depend on your life outside of Amtgard to be stable enough for you to be Monarch, Prime Minister, Guildmaster of Scouts or Court Jester for six months, you shouldn't run for office (or ask to be appointed).

And most importantly, the people should not tolerate meager efforts on the part of their officers. The only thing more disappointing for me than my inability to produce was the fact that no one seemed to care. In VSR, we've had officers on all levels of Amtgard disappear for weeks on end, with little or no explanation, and we've grown numb as a result.

Should a Monarch take a week or two to take care of a personal emergency? Absolutely. Should a Prime Minister stay in office if they get a job that forces them to work on weekends? I don't think so. Anyone who claims to want to serve this Kingdom should be capable of giving up as much of their free time as it takes to do the job right.

Although we play this game to escape the pressures of a mundane world, we are still living in that mundane world. If you took a job at a bank and didn't show up for a month, you wouldn't have that job anymore, plain and simple. I don't think it's too much to ask that you give those of us in Amtgard at least as much consideration as you give those at your job.

I'm lucky for two things: one, I have a Monarch who is giving me a chance to make up for my lack of output for the past six months. And, more importantly, he won't let me skip out on my responsibilities. It's the least he deserves as Monarch, and it's the least you deserve as a Kingdom.

And if I can have someone who asks me to toe the line, I don't think it's too much for me to do the same for you. Or too much for you to do to each other, either.

In Service,
Lord Ian Shadowvale
Scribe, Valley of the Silver Rains

Rulebook v6.1 and you (Continued from page 2)

This is another message to the AMTGARD-L list, regarding one of the most-anticipated additions to the Rules of Play — dual-classes.

A lot of people have requests on this dual class stuff, what follows is the working rules we have thus far:

1. People must be 6th level in both classes.
2. Primary class will be played at 5th level, secondary class at 1st level.
3. Person will get 1/2 credit in primary class per week of playing dual class.
4. Dual class rules are optional by kingdom and never allowed at interkingdom events.
5. Garb required is as per primary class, with a favor of secondary class colors striped in purple.
6. All magic points costs still apply to both classes for weapons, unlisted weapons cost 8 points, and magic points costs for armor are: leather- 2 pts., metal- 3 pts. Shields cost 5 if already unlisted.
7. Team limits still apply, so a healer/wizard counts towards both classes on team limits.
8. All abilities on both classes apply, as do limits of both classes, lives are averaged and rounded down.
9. All barbarian magic restrictions still apply.
10. Only knights can play paladin or/and antipaladin dual class.
11. Secondary class may never be raised above first level. Bardic mimic and emotion control may never be used on or by a dual class person.
12. Monsters may never be dual class.
13. Dual classes may not be repeated, i.e.- no assassin-assassins, etc.
14. Berserkers may never use other class abilities.
15. No more than one dual class per 20 people, and all normal bow and magic restrictions per capita apply.
16. Permission to play dual class must come from the Monarch, Prime Minister, and both guildmasters involved.
17. Noncombat classes may never be played as part of dual class.
18. Bonuses to not apply to other classes, i.e.- warrior and assassin additional abilities may not be chosen from say, the monk class.
19. Dual classes must always state what they are playing, if asked.
20. Relic restrictions apply to both primary and secondary class.

From the Reeve's Guild

[NOTE: These are the last clarifications and Allthing rulings that I have on record, from about 6 months ago. — Ian]

These rules clarifications were either made at Allthing, made on the field, or researched in response to a question:

- **"Shots that only strike garb, equipment, or a person's foot do not count as a hit unless said items blocked a blow that would have struck a combatant (i.e. - garb, equipment, sheathed weapons, etc. are not shields and do not count as armor)." (Page 12)**
- **The Homestone can only mend weapons and shields. (Page 25) It does not mend other game items (suchs as wands or spellbooks) or armor.**
- **Monster classes are allowed on the field at the discretion of the Monarch or Guldmaster of Monsters. If neither officer is present the decision, as are all decisions regarding game balance, lies in the hands of the reeves on the field. The important thing to remember is that monster classes are not to played on the battlefield unless you get permission. Page 8 of the rulebook lists all of the current restrictions on monsters.**

(Continued on page 5)

From the Reeve's Guild (Continued from page 4)

This is an email sent to Grand Duke Aramithris, current Monarch of the Kingdom of the Burning Lands and the editor of the current edition of the Amtgard Rules of Play, by Squire Kitirat Otura of the Duchy of Silverwater. Since Aramithris was kind enough to post his replies to the AMTGARD-L mailing list, I'm going to do the same here. Hopefully, this should answer many long-standing questions people have about the rules.

Good day! Here is the list of questions I wrote about in my last message. Again thank you for helping us out. Fairly good questions, so I will post the answers to all, thanks....

1) Does *entangle/iceball/petrify* affect a person if it hits their *enchanted shield*?
No.

2) Does a penetration arrow go through an *enchanted/hardened shield*?
No.

3) What is the range on *banish*?
20 feet.

4) Does vibrating palm count as a weapon for sanctuary?
No.

5) Is a monk who has the enchantment *touch of death* cast on them unable to go into sanctuary?
No.

6) Can you *cancel* your *iceball/entangle/petrify* spells once they have affected a target?
Yes, unfortunately.

7) Does a healer's *protection from death* cast on a wizard protect him if he casts a *mutual destruction*?
Yes.

8) Do *spellballs* discharge on first impact, or first impact with a valid target?
First impact.

9) Do *fireballs* kill everything they touch while still moving?
Yes.

10) Does this happen only if called "remain active"?
Yes.

11) Does a barbarian retain wounds & lost armor they received before dying while fighting after death?
Yes.

12) What happens when a barbarian is under the effects of a *confusion* spell, and the druid *communes* or *passes* without trace?
The barbarian is released.

13) Also may the barbarian attack who he wishes or only the closest target if the druid is dead/out of sight?
Closest target.

14) May a barbarian attack others en route to the druid, or must he ignore them?
Ignore them unless they attack him.

15) Are all shields considered wood for the purposes of *warp wood*? If not, when must they be declared metal, and what are the restrictions on this? (i.e. a 8 foot steel shield would be near impossible to move, etc.)
Consider shields both metal and wood.

16) Can you *resurrect* someone destroyed by *sphere of annihilation*?
Yes. NOTE: The current VSR ruling contradicts this, and should be reversed.

17) Does a shield hit by a flame arrow have to have its face or just an edge tapped to the ground?
Edge.

18) Can an assassin take 2 points of armor twice (getting 4 points of armor) at 6th level?
No.

19) Does *touch of death* discharge on first contact? An assassin slides her hand from someones face, down to their armor, and finally to the skin of their arm. When does it discharge?
He must declare when *touch of death* discharges.

20) Does *touch of death* work through berserker armor?
Yes.

21) May a barbarian move while healing himself, a scout move while bandaging or using *entangle trap*? (i.e., what are combat as compared to non-combat abilities?)
No, no, no. This will be defined better in 6.1.

22) May a *bladesharped* weapon wielded one-handed deal two points of damage and destroy shields?
Yes.

23) What is considered danger for *charm*? (i.e., clapping hands, jumping jacks, dropping weapons, shaking hands with someone who has *touch of death* charged, telling someone to walk over a trap, etc.) Can a *charmed* person put himself in situation such that the *charm* effect puts him in danger to negate the spell? (i.e., if a person is told to clap his hands, and then he walks towards an enemy, since he can no longer protect himself, is he free of the spell?)
Use common sense. Assume danger as per attacks on invulnerability.

24) Can a bard *mimicing* a barbarian's beserking abilities still cast spells? Can he pick and choose the abilities he gains, or must he take all the limitations of the class as well?
No. And be real, you must take all limitations.

25) Is a hand holding a shield affected by hand shots?
No.

26) May a you take a *stunned* or *yielded* person as a prisoner?
Yes.

27) May a spellcaster poke with a staff?
Yes.

28) What is the difference between a spear, staff, and pike? Are there size limits to any of them. (i.e., can a mage take a 10 foot spear, place some padding on the back, declare it a staff and have it cost less points, etc?)
A staff must be slash legal on both ends, a polearm must be slash legal on one end, and a spear does not have to be slash legal.

29) What is the definition of a shield, does it have to be in hand to be in use? Would an exception to that be a buckler (which are normally attached to the forearm)? If so, what is the definition of a buckler? (i.e., when is a plate attached to your forearm armor and when a buckler/shield?)
Shields must be attached to the lower arm and have a hand grip.

30) Can a magic-user cast *extension* multiple times to triple/quadruple range?
No (but I have faked this to annoy people).

31.) Can you cast *pyrotechnics* or *shatter* a spellbook hidden in a pouch?
No, magic is line of sight.

32) What items are destroyed when hit when they are not in use?
All non-combat items are destroyed when hit in combat.

33) What is the minimum/maximum length of a javelin?
Javelins can be between 3 and 5 feet.

A puzzle for the armchair Reeve

Team A consists of:

2nd-level Archer

4th-level Healer

3rd-level Warrior

Team B consists of:

1st-level Assassin

5th-level Barbarian

3rd-level Wizard

The Warrior has had *emotion control: berserk* cast upon him. The Wizard has had *projectile protection* and two *protects* stacked on him. The Healer has cast *bless* upon his tunic. No one else has enchantments. The Warrior has a sword and shield. The Barbarian has a shield and Odin's Hammer. The Wizard has a flail and dagger. The Archer has a short bow.

The Barbarian attacks the Warrior, taking two points of armor off his right arm. The Healer casts *stun* on the Barbarian, who says he is immune and hits the Healer in the chest. The Healer is protected by the *bless* and retreats.

The Archer is shooting arrows at the Assassin, keeping him out of the fight. The Wizard moves to attack the Warrior. The Healer hits the Wizard with an *entangle*, taking one *protect*. The Wizard drops his dagger and casts *wounding* on the Healer, taking his left leg.

The Barbarian has lost his shield to a flame arrow from the Archer. He strikes the Warrior's shield three times, but the Warrior claims an enhanced shield, showing the blue strip.

The Wizard points at the Warrior and begins to cast *heat weapon*. The Warrior hides his weapon and chases after the Wizard, who ducks into a *circle of protection* that he had placed at the beginning of the game.

The Assassin sneaks up on the Warrior, hits him three times in the back, killing him. The Wizard comes out of the *circle of protection*.

The Barbarian charges the Archer, who wounds the Barbarian in the leg with an arrow. The Barbarian drops, but pulls a throwing hammer from his belt and throws it at the Archer, taking an arm. The Archer retreats from the fight. The Barbarian eats some herbs, rattles off the heal spell and stands up.

The Healer, realizing that he is outnumbered, casts *teleport* and retreats.

Find all mistakes and rules violations in this chain of events. Answers will be published in the next newsletter.

submitted by His Royal Majesty
Tyric Magnasson

Submission Guidelines

Submissions can consist of announcements, articles, editorials, photos, artwork, poetry, or prose. Do not submit original copies if possible.

Submissions can be sent to Ian Shadowvale (mka Jay Elmore), P.O. Box 3075, Newberg, OR, 97132.

Submissions can also be sent via email to jelmore@gte.net.

Submissions can be dropped off at Camelot Comics & Games on Highway 99W in Newberg. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your submission returned.

CROMWELL: A TALE

by Sir Derek Roth
Part Two

Cromwell saw the four of them, grouped together like a herd of red cross-bearing sheep. “This is your last chance to give up! Are you going to come out quietly, or do we come after you?” The smile melted away from Cromwell’s features. With no further words, he suddenly picked up a javelin from next to the door. He took aim, and let fly with the projectile. With a satisfying *thwack* it lodged deep into the chest of Christian. Slowly, Cromwell stalked out of the ruin, his guard up.

The remaining three were foolishly clustered together, gathered around their fallen comrade. *Amateurs!* Cromwell thought to himself. Without a sound, he closed the distance between himself and his enemies, and set upon them with unholy fury. They were all completely off-guard, and he easily crushed the limb of Drake. His friends scattered, and Drake desperately swung at Cromwell with his sword. Cromwell easily parried the thrust, and forcefully brought his mace down on Drake’s shoulder. Drake’s collarbone jutted out of his neck, and blood spurted out of the open wound. Cromwell stepped back, avoiding the blood. He turned around just in time to see Theris rushing towards him.

Theris angrily charged Cromwell. All he could think about was ripping Cromwell’s heart out. With lightning speed, he lashed out in a flurry, all blocked by the anti-paladin’s shield. Theris was running out of ideas. Cromwell pushed Theris back with a flurry of his own. Then to Theris’ surprise, Cromwell broke off his attack. He tossed his shield and mace aside, and with one arm behind his back, dared him to come forward.

Theris saw red with anger as he charged at Cromwell. He saw the flail coming at him too late to do anything but brace himself. The smashing blow took his leg out from under him. Theris tumbled over backwards, and he clutched his broken leg in agony. Cromwell was standing over him now, and his flail was poised to strike. Theris defiantly glared up at Cromwell, waiting for the death blow. An instant later, Bobo saved his life, ramming the anti-paladin from the side. “Get out of here!” he yelled, “I’ll keep him busy!” Theris shakily splinted his leg, and waited for the bindings to hold. The next few moments would be the difference between life and death.

Cromwell was caught flatfooted by the barbarian, and he backpedaled to remain upright. Bobo was screaming in his face, and it was starting to get on his nerves. Quietly, he chanted to himself as he backpedaled. He had just finished when he was slammed past the doorway into his ruins. Bobo knelt over him, sword held high. Cromwell tried to snap his flail into his face, but the barbarian simply disarmed him with his sword. Bobo was about to bring the final strike down when Cromwell suddenly grabbed his arm. “Touch of Death!” he hissed. The barbarian’s eyes slid up into his forehead, and he fell backwards on the floor, dead.

Shakily, the anti-paladin stood up, and grabbed the lifeless barbarian by his white tabbard. Cromwell placed his hand on Bobo’s chest. Thistle, still curled up in a ball, looked on in horror as Cromwell’s eyes began to glow bright crimson. An unnatural swirl of wind gathered around Cromwell and his victim. In a powerful, echoing voice, Cromwell declared, “By the power of darkness, I steal thy life!” A blue-white aura began to emanate from Bobo, and slowly started to rise from his fallen corpse. The aura surrounded Cromwell, winding its way around his body. The blue-white color changed to a glowing red, and slowly, began to fade into Cromwell’s now rigid form. He let go of Bobo’s body, and the unholy wind faded away. Cromwell stumbled and turned to face a horrified Thistle. With red glowing eyes still bright in the subdued darkness of the unlit ruins, He bellowed in a loud voice, “What a rush!” Thistle openly screamed, while an oblivious Cromwell strode back to the door.

Cromwell emerged from the ruins alone, and Theris knew what happened. He remained hidden in the dense underbrush nearby, and hoped Cromwell was more concerned with retrieving his weaponry than with finishing him off. Sure enough, the anti-paladin picked up his belongings, and headed back to the ruins. *That poor girl*, thought the sergeant. He would be back, he promised himself that. Quietly, Theris crept out of his hiding place, and limped back for the village. The pain in his leg was an almost solid throb, but he forced himself past the pain. “Just one foot in front of the other,” he told himself. Once he made it back to the village, he promised himself that he’d get some advice.

Cromwell gathered his weapons, looking around for Theris. He had forgotten about the way that scouts could deal with injuries. He also was not looking forward to the prospect of hunting him down. *To hell with it*, he thought to himself, *let him bring more fools to be slaughtered*. He made another cautious sweep of the area, before going to see

CROMWELL: A TALE

about his horse. Sure enough, Cromwell's horse was nervously standing in its makeshift stall, behind the ruins. Cromwell playfully scratched Carnage's muzzle, piling some more hay in front of him. He thoughtfully stroked the fur of his horse for a time, while the steed leaned his head over, nuzzling his master's free hand. Cromwell smirked. "Greedy bastard of a horse anyway!" he chuckled, using both hands to stroke Carnage's neck. "Why settle for one hand petting you when you know I've got two?"

Theris was feeling ill. He knew that he had to make his way to the village soon, or face certain death. He picked the last of his jerky out of his pouch and dryly choked it down, washing it down with the last swig of his waterskin. Theris leaned against a tree, picking up a stray branch as he did so. He decided it would make a good walking stick. With a heavy sigh, and a deep grunt, Theris picked himself up. He hobbled down the path, taking careful note of the position of the sun.

Thistle had screamed until she was hoarse. It did her no good. She was still in the same dank prison, with the same-she wasn't sure what kind of thing she was dealing with. She just knew she wanted out. Cromwell sauntered back into the room, and looked at her. "Comfy?" he asked her. She shot back an ugly look and said nothing. Cromwell stared some more, continuing on, "I had to tend to my horse. He's very picky, you know. Really, Carnage only responds to....kindred spirits." She stared sullenly at the floor. He looked some more. "You must be hungry. I'll fix something." Cromwell turned away to tend to the meal, when she responded. "Those men. You killed them?" Cromwell turned and looked at her as if she just told him the sky was plaid. "Why?" she asked, undeterred. Cromwell frowned. "They were trying to kill me. Go figure." he said with a shrug.

Cromwell lit the fireplace, starting a healthy blaze. He dug around for a few cooking utensils. Thistle pressed on with her questions. "Why did you kill my family?" Cromwell paused for a moment. "Because I felt like it, I suppose." he continued preparing the meal. "Why?" She demanded. Cromwell stopped what he was doing. "Fulfilling the urge." he said quietly, as if for the first time. Thistle stared in confusion. Cromwell continued cooking preparations, a little confused himself.

Theris was feeling faint now, as well as sick. He could chalk cold up with those sensations, too. Now however, he needed to keep going more than ever. He couldn't feel his leg anymore. The thirst he felt was matched only by the ringing in his ears, and he was nearing his destination. He just wished that his vision would stop blurring so.....

"What do you mean urge?" Thistle persisted. Cromwell was pouring the thin soup into a wooden bowl. Placing a spoon into it, he walked over to the girl, placing the bowl just barely inside her reach. As she strained to reach her meal, Cromwell moved his heavy iron throne towards the fire. Pouring himself a bowl of soup for himself, he sat down. and thought about the question. "I've always had the urge," Cromwell answered, "and I assumed everyone else had them, too." Thistle considered this, and probed some more. "So, you've always been a killer?" she shot out between spoonfuls of soup. Cromwell chuckled and replied "No, I was a patriot, too." She looked confused, and waited for Cromwell to continue.

Theris was resting every few minutes now. He felt as though his head were going to explode. The village was just in sight now, but from where he stood, it seemed like it village was pulling further and further away. He felt no sensations at this point, save an all encompassing exhaustion. "Just put one foot in front of the other." he said to himself. "Just one more step." Now , he felt as though he were floating forward.....

"I've always had the urge to exert my instincts." said Cromwell. "It's just that I'm good at it. Maybe too good." Thistle was tipping her bowl to her mouth, drinking the last of the soup. She was horrified about her situation, but she felt she had to know about her captor. Cromwell leaned forward, as if he were reading her thoughts. "You want my life story, lass? Alright, you shall have it." Cromwell adjusted his throne, and sat facing her. Thistle's eyes open wide as she waited with rapt attention.

Theris was just at the outskirts of town now, and he was blind with a bone deep ache he could not fathom. The effort it took to place one foot in front of the other was Herculean. He heard voices inviting him to just let go... Theris decided that they might have a point. With a contented sigh, he felt his legs buckle, and his body fall to the ground. The last vestiges of his life seemed to be fading. The last thing Theris saw was the familiar white tabbard with the red cross upon it, and it was fastened together by a vivid red sash...

To Be Continued