

The Keep

October 1989



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Greetings unto the populace of the Burning Lands:

Welcome to the second issue of The Keep, the Art and Literature Magazine of the Burning Lands, published in the reign of Queen Tawnee II. I have chosen to retain the name The Keep, first used by Marika, as an appropriate name for this repository of literature.

I have chosen for this issue the factual, composition and poetry entries in Crown Qualifications, April 1989, that placed first through third. I have also included select pieces of poetry from different authors. The last section of the magazine is made up of articles solicited by the editor. I was striving for histories and updates of personas from all Burning Lands Companies. Of the seven company leaders that I spoke to, four submitted articles, which are included herein.

I have made every effort to include as much new art as possible in this issue. There is, however, quite a bit of old art. It boiled down to a balance between the new art and art that was appropriate to each article. This, unfortunately, caused me to pass by some very beautiful work. My apologies to those artists who's submissions I was unable to use. Also, a special message to the artist of the lady on page 22, I sincerely apologize for being unable to track down your Amtgard name. The piece was so beautiful and appropriate that I felt the need to use it anyway. Thank you gentleperson for your patience.

I would like to thank all of the people that I hounded for submissions for their patience. I would especially like to thank M'Deth for his help in the legwork of copying and for his advice.

And, lastly, the required disclaimer, all of the rights to the works included herein are retained by the authors and artists. Also, as this magazine is not sold for profit, it is protected by the laws of the Library of Congress as follows:

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Yours in service,

Ariona



Amtgard: A Medieval and Fantasy Society

"Back to the past" organizations are springing up all over the United States. Groups that study and emulate Scottish Highlanders, the Civil War, and the mountain men of the old west are all popular aspects of this phenomenon. The medieval era is also a favorite, and groups which utilize "heavy" weapons and armor such as the Society for Creative Anachronism and Markland are firmly established. Newer on the scene is the advent of light weapons combat, a system employing no protective body armor and safe, foam padded weapons. The idea is widespread, but few people have organized. One of the more successful groups to "take the ball and run with it" has been Amtgard: Kingdom of the Burning Lands. Foam weapon societies have the advantage of "easy playability". Very little equipment or initial outlay of expense is required. A prospective combatant can provide his or her own garb and equipment for under \$25.00. Most Amtgard members are capable of and do participate on the battlefield. Amtgard's major claim to fame and its biggest departure from other medieval societies is its emphasis on the creative and fantasy aspects derived from both the medieval period and from more modern fictional literature. The persona a member will take within this society is more likely to be a Tolkien style elf or a Viking berserker than a feudal baron or man-at-arms. The use of a class system delineating each participant's options further defines roles on the battlefield, with such choices as archer, barbarian, assassin, and so on. Certain personas and classes are allowed to utilize a set of rules simulating the application of magic, a concept very much in vogue with gamers and high adventure style movies. In summation, Amtgard is a recreational and educational society that seeks to recreate the heroic atmosphere of the quests, courts, feasts and battles of the ancient and medieval eras.

Personas

Amtgard, like most "re-creation" groups, can be characterized as a role-playing club. Members create a "persona", complete with name, history, manner of dress, and idiosyncrasies. Unlike many other recreation groups, Amtgard is not very restrictive in the selection of your persona. All we ask is that, while any period of history or genre of literature may be drawn upon, your persona fit into the club's medieval/fantasy setting, and not be any specific historic or literary figure. As a result of this, we have a wide variety of cultures and genres represented among our populace.

Some players prefer historic personas. Ariona Mixtlatl of the Bear Clan is an Aztec priestess. Aron Nelsson is a

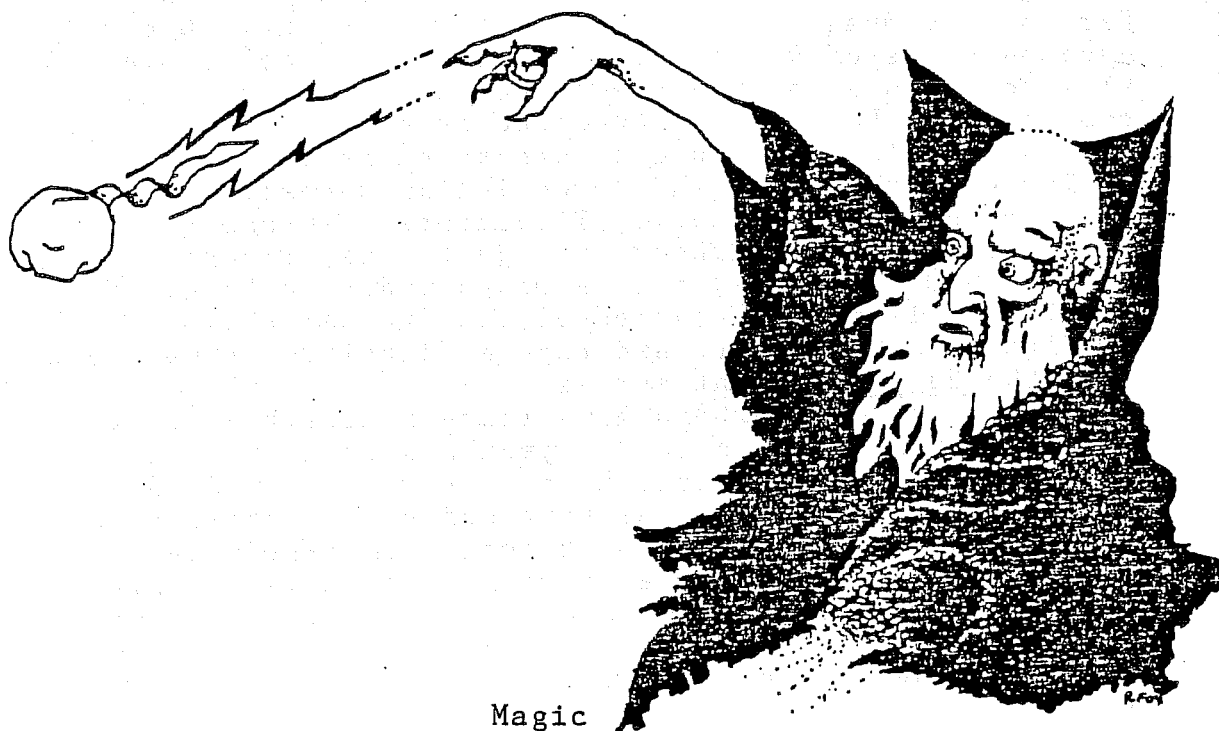
Viking berserker. Kalibria de Grenoille is a French pirate. Karl of Red Dragon Manor is a teutonic knight. Dachs is an escaped slave of Roman/Gothic parentage. Joella Llewellyn Clairmonde is a Welsh noblewoman. Hezekiah Tokeoi is a samurai, and Deth the Direhearted is a Moorish warrior.

Other players choose to create their own setting, such as Tawnee Darkfalcon, an Amazon Indian shaman. Many draw their personas from fantasy literature. Elross Blueraven, Aredhel, and Gilos Dawnhope are just a few of our Tolkenian elves. M'Deth of Benden is a Dragonrider of Pern. Nashomi Lonelywolf is an incarnation of the Eternal Champion. Talon Skyfire is a Wolfrider, and Elycia Windsinger comes to us from the Harpy's Flight series.

A few of our members have taken a more bizarre path to the selection of personas. Ozymandeus is a transdimensional mutant from a post-nuclear holocaust world. Rift Gorhan Tele is an alien starpilot whose ship crashed in the Burning Lands. And Mockvere is a part amphibian part water plant swamp dweller who wields an airplane propeller as his weapon.

These and hundreds of other personas mesh to create a special ambiance at our gatherings. The varied perspectives, costumes, and weapons create a rich visual and social melting pot.





Magic

Once you have determined who you are by selecting your persona, you must decide what you are. On the battlefield you may choose to play any one of a number of classes, covering most fantasy literature archetypes. While you may play only one class at a time, with its restrictions and advantages, you may play a different class every battlegame if you choose.

Amtgard is unique in that several classes utilize a system of magic. Druids are at one with nature, and can call on it for protection or use it to attack their foes. Bards are capable of charming and mesmerizing their opponents, forcing them to fulfill personal quests or to simply sit and listen. Wizards wield powers elemental: lightning, fire, ice and wind, as well as death in many forms. Healers, well, they heal. And resurrect the dead, cure disease, and cleanse poison. They can lash out with that same power to deal injury or destruction.

This "magic" is executed through the use of verbal "spells" or padded foam balls. Each spell of the approximately one hundred between all four classes, has a brief incantation, a range, and usually several classes against whom it will not work. Magic users have a limited number of spell points, with which they select from the list available to their class. Magical defenses for their teammates may be purchased, as well as offensive spells. They must also use spell points to purchase the use of their weapons. Magic-users are the most powerful - and the most vulnerable - players on the battlefield. Tactics and strategy take on whole new dimensions when you are facing off against magic as well as weapons.

Origins

Amtgard was founded in early 1983 in El Paso, Texas. Originally a small group of swords and sorcery enthusiasts, its early roots could be traced to individuals with experience both in role-playing and the medieval combat arts. Amtgard typically draws many members from such organizations as fencing clubs, fantasy literature clubs, and various re-creationist groups. A demographic cross section would yield a high percentage of college and high school students, along with individuals from the military. In 1987, the parent chapter incorporated as Amtgard: Kingdom of the Burning Lands, and soon thereafter received its tax exemption as an educational public foundation. The early Amtgard years had an ambiance akin to quest roleplaying, a genre very similar to the Conan movies. This is still largely true, due to the Amtgard system utilizing battlefield magic and archetypal player classes. However, status as a non-profit organization echoed an ongoing shift toward other additional activities such as staging medieval feasts and weddings; period and genre oriented contests in such areas as medieval garb and cooking, poetry, chess, art and hand crafted work; and research into relevant period topics. 1988 saw rapid growth and expansion into areas from Colorado to Florida, with the most successful new chapters being the Kingdom of the Emerald Hills in Dallas and the Grand Duchy of Barad-Duin in Austin, Texas. Thus far, there has been little centralized control, the parent group in El Paso providing expertise and logistical support to the fledgling chapters.

Amtgard: Kingdom of the Burning Lands is currently exploring the possibility of franchising our non-profit status for the accelerating proliferation of additional Amtgard groups. For further information about Amtgard, write J.W. Donnelly at 1416 Oakdale, El Paso, Texas, 79925. Or write Michele Ellington, 2324 Federal, El Paso, Texas 79930. We will be happy to answer any questions, and, if you are interested, help you start a chapter of Amtgard in your area.

Crossroads

Afforded the dignity, offbeat,
well off the beaten track; tangent trails,
you're alright with him;
even with, and because of your divergence.
Still, you are companions, sharing a destination.
Pitfalls can be many,
but he is only waylaid by his own choice.
Responsibility instructs him to map his route,
and pass it on to others.
Squatters in dirty little villages,
heckle the stranger, passing by them in their impotence.
They rage in their squalor.
Gesturing, snickering at his travel-stained cloak,
they set the dogs to his heels.
He, the object of their contempt, can only shake his head.
Pausing for a while, the horizon his destination.
The journey is resumed.
Furtive eyes note his departure, they turn away,
not daring to dream that they too could share the road.

Forest for the Trees

Pride yourself on prudence -
Survival a key trait,
make it to the next day,
even as a drudge . . .
Codify your view into law,
make it the way of the land.
Tell the young ones to temper their dreams.
Bend the willows and break the oaks.
Kill the trees to save the forest.
Trees need light, space, and air.
You are no friend of the land,
polluter of streams,
cutter of trees,
killer of dreams.



Ravenning

Ravenwing

Syrt fell wearily onto his rude pallet in one corner of the Great Hall. A pall of smoke overhung the city, and the bitter taste of defeat soured the mouths of all within it. One day, perhaps two, and the city walls would be breached. If sorcery did not bring the walls down, then the lack of men to defend them would. There was no help coming. The last hope had died.

He looked to where his sister tended the wounded and dying, and wondered what would become of her. It was the first time he had truly realized they were to die in this war. Her death would be tragic, for those with the gift of healing were rare and much valued. His own shapechanging ability was more common. Sybil and he were enough alike to be twins, although she was five years his senior. Both were short and very slender, with sharp boned, chiseled features, and crow black hair worn at waist length, as was traditional for sorcerii. Both had mismatched eyes, although hers were blue and grey, rather than his green and grey. They shared the same quick grace. None could mistake the shared blood.

She had raised him, for his birth had killed their mother. Their father, a powerful mage, had little time for his second child. Though the words never passed between them, Syrt knew that his father felt the price of his life had been too great. Despite the wall which separated them, Syrt was glad his father had not lived to see the fall of his beloved city. He had died within his magic, as so many great wizards did, summoning power too immense to control.

The young mage hoped to find that fate for himself on the morrow. With a wrench of sorrow, he resolved to give his sister the silver dagger at his belt in the morning. Her magic was not of such a nature that she could find escape in it. But now he must rest, though he was exhausted beyond the ability to sleep. He summoned the discipline he normally used for magic and commanded his body to rest.

But sleep, when it finally came, was fraught with nightmares and all too brief. He woke to the clash of steel. The Usurper's soldiers had broken through and were at the doors of the Hall.

Only half awake, Syrt lashed out at the warriors with what magic he could summon, turning swords and maces to birds, which flew from their hands to flutter against the raftered roof. He tore into their minds, letting his rage and despair strike for him. About the Hall, other wizards loosed lightning and flame against the foe.

But even magic will fall before numbers and determination, and neither the weary loyalists nor their wizards could hold back the tide for long. Soon the rebels were in the Great Hall itself, hacking down resistance, taking captives where they could.

Syrt saw a mailed fist raised to strike down Sybil and in two leaps was upon the soldier in lion form, tearing with

lion teeth and lion hunger at the larger man's throat. Caught in lion joy as the hot blood washed against his muzzle, he did not hear his sister's scream of warning as the sword pommel crashed against his temple.

He awoke in a damp and foul smelling place he did not know. He lay still, gathering his bearings, and sensed someone near him. He turned his head, or tried to, then bit back a cry as pain lanced behind his eyes.

Sybil was there immediately, pressing a damp cloth to his throbbing forehead. In the dim light he saw that her hair was tangled, her face marked with livid bruises, her eyes swollen with much crying.

"Syrt," she said softly, "I had thought your spirit fled to the land of the dead. Three days have you lain unmoving, and I unable to heal you. He--he has stolen my magic." Her voice broke.

He struggled to speak. Everything seemed distant, wailed away by the crushing pain in his head. "W--who?"

"Wortan. He is High Mage of the bastard king's army."

Syrt's ashen lips tightened in a grim line. His father had for many years had nothing good to say of the man who had once been his closest friend, save that he served the King's bastard half-brother.

He began to come back to himself, noticing first the soft clink of chains on Sybil's wrists, then how her dress was torn and dirty. He closed his eyes, ignoring the cold clamp of iron on his own wrists. That could be dealt with in its own time. He put all his effort into willing himself hale and strong, so he might face whatever lay ahead.

He must have slept, for he was awakened by the grate of the cell door. For the first time, he wondered where they were, and realized they must be in the dungeons beneath the castle. So the King had fallen, or perhaps at last fled. The torchlight lance through his eyes and straight to the back of his head. Dizzy and nauseous, he was slow to rise, and received a boot in the ribs for his delay. Sybil helped him, they were of a size. The guard, with the slovenly arrogance typical of rabble that has triumphed over nobility, sneered and shoved them toward the door. Outside the door, another ruffian clad half in rags and half in looted finery stood near a sun darkened giant of a man. Clearly one of the plains barbarians, the man was clad in dyed leather and fur. He looked out of place in the dank dungeon. The two young nobles were escorted in chains across the twilight courtyard to the castle proper. Syrt considered taking hawk form and flying away, but he was too sick and dizzy to risk the change magic, and he could not leave Sybil behind. So he walked quietly with the two rebels and the barbarian, trying to order his chaotic thoughts. The rebels watched them closely. Their pride and bearing proclaimed them as nobles, the length of their sable hair marked them as sorcerii.

After a short wait, they were brought into a small chamber. In the chamber were two men. One he did not know, although he had to look of nobility. He wore a velvet

doublet of deep crimson, with creamy lace at throat and collar. His brown hair was short cropped, and he wore a short, pointed beard and moustache. Next to him sat Wortan. Although Syrt had not seen his godfather since childhood, he recognized him immediately. He was older, careworn, but otherwise much the same, though the long dark hair was now iron grey. Still dressed in dusty war leathers, he struck an odd contrast with his guest. Indeed, he more resembled the barbarian who now occupied a place behind his chair as if he had grown there.

With weary eyes, Wortan looked at the two young nobles standing chained before him. "So these are the heirs of Sortan's power?" he murmured. "You were but babes when I left this land. Now I return to find you grown beautiful."

"Better you did not return." answered Syrt in an acid tone. "You have put the Bastard upon the throne."

The older wizard flushed with anger. "We free the people of a tyrant. Living here, in the city, in a noble house, you could not understand. You know no hunger, no cold, no fear. Othric was strangling Alsyrria while you danced in his halls. He was a monster."

"Was?" Sybil echoed softly. "The King is slain? And the royal family? What of them? What of . . . Eric?"

The pain in her voice cut her brother. After too long unwept, she and the prince were betrothed. While there was not love between them, there was much affection.

Wortan bowed his head. "Dead. All dead. Our men broke through and slew everyone before we could stop them." He raised his eyes to hers in a plea for understanding. "There is much anger in the hearts of the people."

Sybil's cry was drowned in Syrt's feral snarl. He reached inside himself and called upon the magic. The shackles on his wrists rippled, and reformed in the sinuous pattern of a viper. Syrt took the newly made snake in hand and hissed at it in serpent speech. Then he flung it at the startled mage.

The barbarian reached for his bone hilted dagger and moved as if to leap forward, but first flame burst forth from the fingers of the stranger, incinerating the writhing viper in midair. It landed in Wortan's lap as a coil of smoking meat. The wizard flung it away with an expression of distaste.

Syrt disregarded the danger of the change magic, summoning bear form, that he might wreak the most harm before falling. But before the change was even begun, the stranger spoke in an oddly accented voice.

"Enough childish games."

He thrust out a black gloved hand and closed it into a fist. It was as if the fist closed on Syrt's head. Blackness threatened to engulf him as the change power receded from his grasp. As he drove desperately inward after it, his magic diminished rapidly, funnelling through a whirling vortex of emptiness within his mind. He made a last reach for the magic as it disappeared into the void, and for

a split second his mind almost followed it. Then he found himself on the floor retching helplessly.

"Oh, really." muttered the stranger. "His sister was not nearly so melodramatic." He looked at Wortan, who had gone pale. I believe your chains will hold him now. I accept your offer, and thank you for these fine gifts. Tergor will be at your disposal, should any further trouble arise. I leave at dawn. I will send my slavemaster around before then to have them branded."

He rose and sauntered toward the door, where he turned and added, "Have them bathed, would you?"

When the door had closed, for a moment there was no sound other than Syrt's choked gasps, and Sybil's murmured comfort. Wortan sat in silence, shoulders slumped in defeat.

He half turned to the barbarian. "I bounced them on my knee, taught them first to ride, I helped to bury their mother. Now I sell them into foreign chains. What has this war cost us?"

The dark skinned barbarian inclined his head, "If they do not go forth from this land, my lord, this war cannot be done. All those who stood with the tyrant must be slain or sent off, else they will allow us no peace to rebuild your land."

"I know, I know. But to kill Othric's cancer, we must cut the very heart from Alsyria." Wortan rubbed his gritty eyes with the heel of one hand. "See that they are done with as Destrack wishes."

Syrt spent the next few hours in a lightless void. Nothing seemed real; he was empty, desolate. Sybil could not rouse him, he took no note of the servants who bathed him, nor the silver chain they hammered shut on his wrist. He was brought back to himself by the sound of his own scream as a thick bodied foreigner set smoldering iron against his hip to mark him forever a slave.

Sybil was branded as well, although she was stronger. Stoic, she bit deeply into her lips and refused to cry out. They were dressed in white linen, their sable hair brushed and left loose on their shoulders.

They were brought out at dawn for their new master's inspection, who smiled his approval. Then they were put into the back of a gaily covered wagon, kept there by chains run through the bracelets. Neither betrayed any emotion as they watched their shattered homeland disappear behind the wagon. It was no longer the Alsyria they had known, no longer their home.

Their master gave them slave names, calling Syrt Ravenwing and Sybil Crow. At his command, they were beaten whenever they used their true names. Beatings were otherwise infrequent, Destrack did not want them scarred or bruised. Most of their punishments he administered with magic, turning their minds inside out, revealing their innermost secrets, crushing them with their private terrors. They carried out normal slave's duties; cooking, cleaning, sharing the bed of the master and his friends.

It took time for the two young nobles to accustom themselves to such work. They had always been cared for, had servants to perform menial tasks. Now they developed calluses from their new station in life. The calluses were not all on the outside. Before their capture and subsequent enslavement, neither had known a lover. They were proper descendants of a noble house, and such intimacies were reserved for the marriage bed. Now they were little more than objects, whose use was given and accepted casually to any whom their master chose. A part of themselves which was sacred and treasured had been irretrievably soiled.

They, who had rarely left their home city, saw many countries, for Destricks was an emissary of his king, and traveled widely in his name. Ravenwing and Crow could entertain no thoughts of escape, for they were bound and branded as slaves, and Destricks often probed deeply into their minds. Ravenwing felt as if he had died, as if he were but a shadow, chained in spirit as well as in body. He moved through the world as if sleepwalking. Sometimes he understood how selfish it was for him to hide within himself that way, for it left his sister alone. At these times, he struggled to regain himself, but some event would always cause him to slip away again. The days and months passed as in a dream.

He was on his hands and knees washing the white tiles when his magic came back to him. It struck like a blow, knocking him senseless. He awoke a moment later, more fully than he had in along time. His cheek was pressed against the wet tile, his head throbbed dully. Half rising and pushing his dripping hair out of his face, he stared about him in wonder. Tentatively, he reached for his magic. It was there, snugly filling the place which had been so hollow these past two years.

"Crow?" he muttered under his breath.

Then he was on his feet, running through the villa, searching for his sister. The other slaves looked at him curiously, for they had never seen him so animated. But they had seen other changes wrought in him by Destricks, so they finally turned back to their work.

Ravenwing became more quiet as he searched for Crow and did not find her. Finally he crept toward the Master's chambers. He listened at the half open door, but all was silent. At last he heard a murmured breath, a rasp of cloth. He risked looking inside.

On the floor beside the serving table knelt Crow, her beautiful face stark and empty. Sprawled before her was Destricks. His eyes were open and staring, his swollen tongue protruded from his mouth. He was unmistakably dead.

Ravenwing crept forward and took his sister in his arms. His feelings were a hurricane of fear, joy and apprehension. "What happened?"

Crow stared at him, or rather through him, for a long time before answering in a childlike voice. "Last night I told him that I--I--" she looked frantically into her

brother's eyes. "I am with child, Syrt. He--he laughed. He said that he needed no slave bastards--that he'd get me a potion to be rid of it." Fat tears rolled down her face and she gulped as if she were drowning. "He was going to kill my baby, Syrt. I had to do it. I had to."

Ravenwing stared wide-eyed at her, then at the twisted corpse and the goblet it clutched. Half hysterically, he remembered an axiom his father had once used: Never beat the cook.

"Poison," he said softly. A healer supplemented magic with herblore. "Then we are free. We'll slip away, find work at the farms--"

Crow was shaking her head, trying to interrupt his eager joy. "We would be runaway slaves. They would hamstring us and geld you. We are marked for all to see!"

He set his jaw resolutely. "Then we'll go into the forest. I am wolf, falcon, bear. I will hunt."

Still she shook her head. "I am with child, Syrt. You know how I have longed for a child, while father would hear of no marriage before the Prince had survived the Rites of Passage. I will not endanger my baby."

Ravenwing's face darkened. "Destricks' bastard?"

Crow paled, then flushed with anger. "He is not Destricks. He is new life. Feel him." She caught his hand and placed it against her still flat belly. "So small. Barely begun. There is no evil--nor good--in him. His path lies yet unchosen."

Through his sister's power, he sensed the tiny spark of life she sheltered within her own warm glow. He felt her love for it, and for him, and knew she could not risk its life, not even for freedom. Before he could master it, his disappointment washed through the link.

She released his hand and pushed him away. "Go. Fly to the forest. You will be happy with the animals now that your ability to speak with and become and create them has returned."

He gasped as if splashed with icy water. "No. Never without you."

She tried to push him away, but he pulled her against him and crushed her with desperate, bruising strength. "We will be free. I swear it." Holding her out at arm's length, he grinned ferociously. "So, I am to be an uncle."

She laughed despite herself. It had always made her giddy when her brother leapt nimbly from one emotion to another abruptly. "But what about the m--what will we say . . .?"

Ravenwing frowned in thought, then grinned widely. "We shall catch him in his own excess."

He picked up the broken goblet which lay clutched in Destricks' hand and buried it in the soil of a potted tree. Then he stripped the corpse of its clothing, while his sister watched in horrified fascination. With much effort, the slender wizard hauled his dead master onto the bed.

"Take off your clothes," he told her.

"What?"

"Take them off. Tear them." He was busy complying with his own command, accompanied by the sound of tearing cloth. He waited until, with dawning comprehension, she did as he asked. "Now scream."

She smiled nervously at him, knelt on the bed, then emptied her lungs in a nerve shattering scream. He winced, gave her a frightened but reckless grin, and bolted from the room shouting.

"Help! Help! The master is having an attack!"

Several hours later, after close questioning by the surgeon, they were released to their normal duties. That night in the slaves' quarters they talked until dawn of what would become of them. Some were frightened, but others claimed like circumstances in their past. These were anxious, but unafraid. They said that, since Destrick had no family or heirs, his possessions, including them would be auctioned, and the monies returned to his homeland.

True to predictions, a man arrived to put the house in order that very day. Two of the slaves had crept away that night. Ravenwing and Crow never learned if they actually escaped. The man spent several days examining papers and making inventories. Then the slaves were all ordered to load the furniture and tapestries onto wagons. An hour later, another wagon came around for them. Many slaves spent that time beautifying themselves, that they might catch the eyes of a more discriminating buyer. As he watched two slaves who had secretly become lovers embrace sadly, he realized that he and Crow might be separated.

Ravenwing unbound his hair and let it spill across his shoulders to his hips as Crow's did. He instructed her to wipe the ochre from her eyes and the carmine from her lips to emphasize their resemblance. His fear communicated itself to her, and she held his hand tightly in the wagon all the way to the market square. They made certain they were chained together. Their white linen tunics were taken from them, and they were given scant tabards of coarse sackcloth to replace them.

Through the morning hours, the slaves stood chained in the hot sun, displayed for the inspection of prospective buyers. The young noble was hard put to hold his temper as they were poked and prodded for soundness; their teeth, eyes, ears and privates minutely examined for function and disease. The length and color of their hair was much remarked upon. Apparently, tales of their land had not travelled so far. This pleased Ravenwing, for it meant it was unlikely anyone would guess they were sorcerers. Even more pleasing was the fact that all the interested passersby commented on the resemblance of sister and brother.

By the time the hour for the auction had arrived, all the slaves were exhausted. Bruised and humiliated by impersonal and careless handling, it finally came time for their own sale.

To Ravenwing's dismay, Crow was sent onto the wooden

stage alone, while he was left chained. He raised a great commotion, causing the guard at the head of the line to cuff him. The auctioneer, seeing the disturbance, ordered the guard to release Ravenwing onto the stage. Wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth, he mounted the three steps and stood beside Crow.

There was a brief murmur in the crowd as their resemblance was noted. The blond giant who had bidding on Crow held an animated discussion with the athletic woman seated next to him. When the bidding continued, he bought them both.

They were led off the stage to a smith tent, and stood in line to be run-branded. Finally it came to be their turn, and the smooth piece of smoldering iron was laid over Destrick's brand to obliterate it. This process was better done than their first branding, they were given a leather wrapped stick to bite down on while it was done, and an herbal salve was rubbed on the burn to speed healing and ease pain.

Nonetheless, Ravenwing and Crow were sick and trembling when their new masters came to claim them. Standing, they were even taller than they had appeared. The woman was two handspans taller than Ravenwing, the man twice that.

The woman tugged possessively at a lock of his hair and asked in a husky voice, "What are your names?"

The wizard paused a moment, knowing this was an opportunity to regain their lost names. But Syrt and Sybil were the names of noble sorcerii. Crow and Ravenwing were good names for slaves.

He lowered his head in a humble fashion and peered through long lashes in what he hoped was a seductive manner -- he had little experience in such things. "I am called Ravenwing, my lady, and my sister is called Crow." he said softly.

She laughed and patted his head as if he were a dog. "Prettily said." Turning to the man beside her, she added, "My thanks for the gift, my brother. He is quite equal to my gift to you."

The tall man gave her a smile which was not entirely brotherly. "A stallion for each of us, Vestra?"

Her cheeks colored, but she took up the bit of frayed rope tied to Ravenwing's iron manacles and led him away. Over her shoulder she said dryly, "Perhaps so Lond. But if you plan to use yours as I plan to use mine, I fear for your health."

Her brother took up Crow's lead and strode after his sister, trying to come up with a scathing rejoinder. They sauntered casually down the row of merchants, teasing one another mercilessly, till they came to a jeweler's. They had golden torques made for each of their new slaves with the symbol of their house, a fish leaping into a net, graven onto them. The torques were fixed with a bit of melted metal. These would serve to identify them should they escape before they could be re-branded. Their manacles were then struck

off, to be returned to the auctioneer. All this was customary, and performed with expedience.

Business done, Ravenwing's and Crow's right ears were pierced with a sharpened sliver of iron, and a loop of heavy gold fastened through the hole. At a cloth shop, Crow was clothed in a long, simple garment of ruby colored material which draped beneath one arm and clasped over the opposite shoulder with a gold pin. Ravenwing was fitted in an abbreviated sapphire tunic and loin cloth which was belted with a gold chain. Another stall saw them in hempen sandals which laced to the knees. The shoes felt alien after two years in bare feet. Lastly they were bought a pair of ivory combs.

They reached the inn as dusk was falling. Crow and Ravenwing were given a piece of sackcloth and a bar of crude soap and pointed toward the trough for a bath while their masters ate. When they returned, damp hair making dark trails on their new clothing, their owners had done with eating and were discussing the best route over a nearby chasm. Vestra rose languidly and went to where the two stood nervously in the doorway. Giving Crow a pat on the rump, she pushed her into the room with her brother and closed the door. Tangling her hand in Ravenwing's hair, she bent his head back and brought her lips to his mouth. Then she led him to her room.

Ravenwing woke with hunger gnawing at his belly. It had been almost two days since he had eaten. The sun was beginning to peek through the shutters. Vestra's arm and leg were thrown over him possessively. Her breath tickled his throat. He could not move without disturbing her, so he practiced the mental exercises which gave his mind the elasticity to contain and control magic. When he was able, he planned to rebuild the shields which Destrack had ripped from his mind two years ago. But that was a grueling task, requiring days of meditation and purification. He suspected it would be weeks or months before he had so much time to call his own.

Vestra stirred, trailing a finger down his throat, chest, belly, thighs, with sleepy eyes. He shivered at her touch.

"You're awfully shy for a pretty slave." she murmured sleepily.

His cheeks colored and he turned his face away, hoping she would go back to sleep. She caught his jaw and turned his face toward her.

"Strange eyes. Proud eyes. Were you born a slave?"

"No."

"A criminal then? A thief, a murderer . . . rapist?" she teased.

"I lost a war"

"War? Which war?"

"To the West. An internal war." His eyes grew dark with remembered pain.

She teased at his throat with a lock of his hair. "A war to the West. That little place . . . Alys -- Eles --?"

"Alsyria." he answered softly.

"Alsyria." she repeated, and he knew she would not forget. "That was not so long ago. Did you leave a wife in Alsyria?"

"I am too young to be wed."

"A lover, then?"

"In Alsyria, we do not mate before marriage."

"No one does?"

she asked in obvious disbelief, toying with the curve of his throat.

"No one respectable." he replied primly. Realizing he was being insulting, he added, "It is only a custom in my land, an unusual custom."

"What of your former master, the Emissary of Tergor? Did he not find you alluring?"

Ravenwing paled and was silent. He could not damn Destrick before his new owner, nor could he bring himself to praise him. Vestra, watching the changes in his face, saw the truth well enough.

"So, the Tergon was not a worthy teacher." She caught the back of his head and pulled him up to meet her lips. "I am."

They spent almost two weeks at the inn. Crow and Ravenwing found Lond and Vestra easier masters than Destrick had been. Not only were they unequipped to torment their slaves through magic, it was not in their nature. They were not cruel, only demanding. They were quick to deliver a beating when they were not pleased, but they were equally quick to give praise and rewards. While they were somewhat prone to taking out anger and frustration on their slaves, when things went well there were treats and privileges aplenty. Crow found her new life quite easy, she had been an obedient daughter, and did not really mind simple manual labor. Ravenwing frequently found himself in trouble, for he had always been rebellious and independent, and loved slavery no better than he had his father's cold dominion. Both their new masters seemed to have an amused appreciation of his stubborn pride, though, and were not as harsh with him as others would have been. They found he was amazingly good with animals, and gave him responsibility for the care of their horses while they were at the inn. Much of his ruffled pride was salved by the knowledge that they planned on giving him much the same responsibility when they arrived home as well.

Finally, all their purchases made, their contacts signed, their liaisons sworn, it was time to return home to their neighboring city-state. They rode horseback leading two packhorses, heavily loaded with a king's ransom in jewels, rare hides, and worked metals. Ravenwing and Crow rode shaggy mountain ponies, whose wide ribs made their knees ache. Ravenwing held the lead rope of the black stallion Vestra had purchased for her brother before they were bought.

Ravenwing had, for a time, tried to resent the fine horse. He had cost Vestra more than both Ravenwing and Crow had cost Lond, and the mage found this insulting. But the stallion was simply too bright, witty, and full of himself to dislike. They had quickly become friends, and Ravenwing had to be constantly vigilant not to reveal his sorcerous powers of animal speech when he was with the stallion.

It was a six day ride through untamed forest to return to their home. Ravenwing, easily captivated by the myriad voices of the woods, was punished frequently for his sudden laziness. Even this could not dampen his spirits, and he was hard put to keep to human form and human speech with all the possibilities of the wilderness open before him.

On the morning of the fourth day, Ravenwing was struggling with the heavy packs. He had already angered Lond this morning, and faced a sound beating if he had not done loading the horses before they returned from the morning hunting. Crow had gone down to the stream, to refill the water skins. He had shut out the chatter of the small animals, and did not notice the sudden silence.

"Syrt!" came Crow's shout. There was fear in her voice. Then she screamed.

Ravenwing dropped the pack and ran toward the voice. He almost slammed into his sister, who cried out and fell, looking over her shoulder in terror. Like a grey streak, the unkempt, shaggy wolf was upon him. As it struck, he shouted at it in wolf-speech, then he saw the madness in its yellow eyes and the foam on its muzzle. As the snapping jaws clamped down on the forearm he had flung up to protect his throat, he transformed into lion form. Had he been alone, he would have chosen the tougher form of a bear, but a bear would be too slow if the wolf turned on his sister. Allowing the wolf's weight to carry his changing form over backwards, he tried to bring his back legs up to rake at the wolf's unprotected belly, but the wolf leaped back. Even mad as it was, the presence of magic caused it to hesitate. The Ravenwing-lion leaped on the wolf, they tangled in a snapping, snarling, hissing, growling mass. When they flew apart, the wolf was mortally wounded, its belly ripped deeply. The lion nursed a savaged shoulder and hoped the wolf would fall. But the crazed animal did not yet acknowledge its impending death, and crouched to spring. It yelped in midleap and was thrown backward by the arrow protruding from its throat.

Vestra and Lond stood at the edge of the clearing, bows in hand. Lond was reaching for another arrow, Vestra was preparing to loose at the lion.

"No!" screamed Crow, throwing herself in the way.

Vestra raised her eyebrows and eased her pull on the bow. Looking past Crow, her jaw dropped and the hackles rose on her neck as the lion blurred and became a man. She heard her brother's muttered oath beside her and knew she was not imagining it.

Crow gave them a wary look and ran lightly to where her

brother knelt, still on all fours. He breathed raggedly, and blood poured from wounds in his shoulder and arm to pool around his fist in the dirt. She laid her hands on him and began the words to a spell.

"No," he said hoarsely, sitting up and catching her wrist in his good hand.

"Syrt, he had the summer madness. Even if those wounds could go unhealed, and they cannot, I must cleanse you of the poison."

She lay her hands on him again, and her eyes took on the distant look of one communing with magic. Ravenwing felt the burning, itching feeling of wounds healing, and the fire in his blood as she cleansed it. She pushed herself to the limits of her endurance, and when the tingling of power stopped she collapsed in her brother's arms.

He held her close for as long as he dared, then looked up from where he knelt to meet his bewildered owners' eyes.

"Sorcerii," said Vestra wonderingly. Her bow, arrow nocked, pointed unwaveringly at his throat.

"Why didn't you tell us?" demanded Lond, striding toward him. He was careful not to interfere with his sister's target.

Ravenwing laid Crow gently on the ground and rose to his feet. He did not answer, but the defiance on his face and the fear in his eyes was answer enough.

Lond towered over him. "How did the Emissary die, wizard?" He raised his hand to threaten a blow.

Ravenwing bowed his head, unconsciously hunching his shoulders. "Not by magic," he said softly.

Lond's open handed slap knocked him to the ground. The tall warrior flipped the slave onto his back with the toe of one boot. He dropped to one knee on the wizard's narrow chest and drew the knife from his boot. Putting the knife to the slave's throat, he drew a drop of ruby blood.

The wizard peered through a tangle of black hair, resignation in his mismatched eyes. "Crow is a healer," he said urgently. "Her powers can harm no one. Kill me, but don't harm my sister. She is of value to you and no danger."

Lond growled at him through set teeth. "How did the Tergon die?"

Ravenwing expelled the last of his breath. "I poisoned him. I put snakeweed in his wine."

He closed his eyes and swallowed, waiting for the dagger to release his lifeblood. Lond's knee grated on his ribs for a moment, then the pressure was released.

"Well, sister, either he can't harm us, or he won't for whatever reason. I think we can afford to let him live." He reached down and took Ravenwing's hand, pulling him to his feet. "I think this is the best buy we made this trip. We bought two bedwarmers and got a pair of wizards."

He pulled Ravenwing against him for a brief, ribcracking embrace, then let him go. "Don't ever betray my trust in you, boy," he said, a threat behind the smile. "Now fetch your sister back to the fire and get rid of that corpse,

before it attracts the carrion birds."
He and Vestra walked away.

Further chapters will be seen in future competitions . . .



Never knowing why I tried to hide my feelings from you.
Can't stand these hours being away from you.
Nothing is true without the feeling I hold for you.
The pain in my heart is of love never coming true.
Can't wait to see the tears you cried while I was away,
 away from you.
Looking for a way out,
Trying to hide what we both couldn't find, it's all just
 in the mind.
Feel free to fly with me.
Yes, we were meant to sail across the sea.
You and me are lock and key to our destiny.
Living in dreams we are one, we are the rising of the sun.
Looking for reasons why, why we cry in the rain,
 only feeling pain.
I love you.
Do you love me?
Let's hide among the trees.
Let's start a new life so far away.
Let our souls feel free.
Yes, love me.
Listen to me, I love you.
This I can say is true.
In my eyes I see life living forever for you and me.
Be free, make love to me.



A History of Guilds

Societies of artisans or guilds have existed in Europe since the 11th century. They were established when merchants wanted to protect their goods and lives from robbers and the King's toll roads as well as other merchants. The object of the guilds was to hold a monopoly on a trade in each city. Each guild received a charter from the King or local lord allowing them exclusive right to their merchandise. Anyone caught selling goods when he did not belong to that guild was deprived of his goods and run out of town. Only if he received permission and paid a high fee to the guild was he allowed to trade in that town.

The merchant and craft guilds were set up like miniature communities. Each guild elected its officers and levied dues to pay for its expenses. The guilds established their own courts and settled quarrels and disputes among themselves. The courts fixed the prices of their wares and set standards of weights, measures and quality. They could punish workmen for charging more than the "just price" or those who put out poor articles or gave short weight. There were men called searchers who inspected guild members' wares to make sure that it was up to standard. If a dyer's work was unsuitable, he was fined. If the numbers of threads in a weaver's cloth was short, his looms were destroyed.

But the guild not only regulated its wares. If a member fell ill or got in trouble, the guild helped out. If a guildmember died, his widow and children were taken care of. The guild used its influence to promote good behavior among its members as well. A member could be expelled for bad conduct. "If anyone be a common brawler, or given to quarrels, or be a vagabond, or be guilty of any crime whereby the brethren may incur scandal, he shall be admonished once, twice or thrice, and the fourth time he shall be wholly expelled from the brotherhood."

The ways of each trade were kept secret except for those who were guildmasters. There are three levels within a guild: apprentice, journeyman and master. An apprentice began his three to twelve years service when he was around eight years old. The length of his service depended on the skill required for his craft. In addition to being a student, he was a domestic servant and helper. The master's wife could require his help in the house and other workmen could send him on errands. Around the shop he was the one who opened the shop in the morning and closed it at night. He also scrubbed the floor and kept the place clean. When his apprenticeship was over, he was examined by the guild and if found worthy, was raised to the rank of journeyman.

The journeyman (French *journée* for day) hired out his services to master craftsmen for wages. His goal was to save up enough money to set up his own shop. The journeyman went from town to town both in search of work but to also broaden his knowledge. No journeyman could become a master until he

was able to do the kind of work required by his guild. In order to test his knowledge, the wardens of the guild would set him to some task. This was called his masterpiece, and he must carry out the task, be it carving or weaving, without the aid of others. The entire procedure must be carried out while in the presence of judges. If they approved of his work, he then paid a fee and was awarded the title of master craftsman. A person usually achieved the rank of master craftsman while in his 20's.

The guilds had many rules that governed the relations between master, journeyman and apprentice. A boy apprentice to one master could not change to another without the approval of the officers of the guild. If he misbehaved his master had the right to punish him. If a master mistreated his apprentice, the boy could appeal to the guild. If an apprentice ran away, his place was kept open for a certain length of time; and if he did not return within that length of time he was punished. No master could tempt away another master's workmen by offering higher wages. If a master had more work than he could manage then he could ask for temporary assistance from one of the other masters. If any master failed to clothe his apprentices well and instruct them properly in their craft, he was tried and punished by the guild.

Most of the guilds had a distinctive uniform - or livery, as it was called - which all members wore when they met on ceremonial occasions, such as feasts, weddings, and holidays. This livery was bright in color and varied with the fashion of the time and taste of the guildmembers. Usually it was of two colors - scarlet and green, scarlet and black, gold and black, gold and blue, and scarlet and blue. The right side was one color and the left of the other. When complete the costume consisted of a hood and a gown, but sometimes only the hood was worn. The guilds also had banners on which emblems of their guild were displayed.

Every guild had its patron saint, and on that saint's day the members of the guild dressed in their livery and, carrying their banner, processed to the church for the service. Afterward they had a feast in their guildhall.

The guilds began the decline when the cities grew too large to contain the trade. The expanding trade and industry during the sixteenth century took away the power from the guilds. But though they faded away, the guilds of the Middle Ages produced beautiful work, much of which still remains in Europe for people to see.

New Book of Knowledge. Grolier Incorporated. Danbury, Connecticut. Volume 7, 1986.

Medieval Days and Ways. Gertrude Hartman. The Macmillan Company. New York, New York. 1986.

News Flash; New Monster?

Warning!

A new monster class has been sighted between the Burning Lands and Barad-Duin. Descriptions of the beast have been uncovered from the archives of a speeding Prime Minister. Yes, Folks, it's the new Speed Demon! Beware of these rampaging beasts, for they are fearsome. Rumors claim that the savage monster stems from a contagious disease similar to lycanthropy; however, the specimen questioned was so frothing mad that only gibberish emerged (which is usual for him anyway, he's our prime minister). Supposedly, once behind the reins of a horseless chariot, a tiny demon disease crawls into the mind of the driver, welding the driver and the machine into one madly senseless beast. The overview of the monster is under debate, as some reeves feel that the rubber bumper and tire padding is illegal for use on an Amtgard battlefield.

Overview: Speed Demon

Armor: Into the triple digits and usually fashioned in Pittsburgh. Needless to say, it's very heavy.

Attacks: Four tires and two bumpers (both front and back). These weapons are of a class beyond white; enough to hit Andre in full armor and keep going.

Abilities:

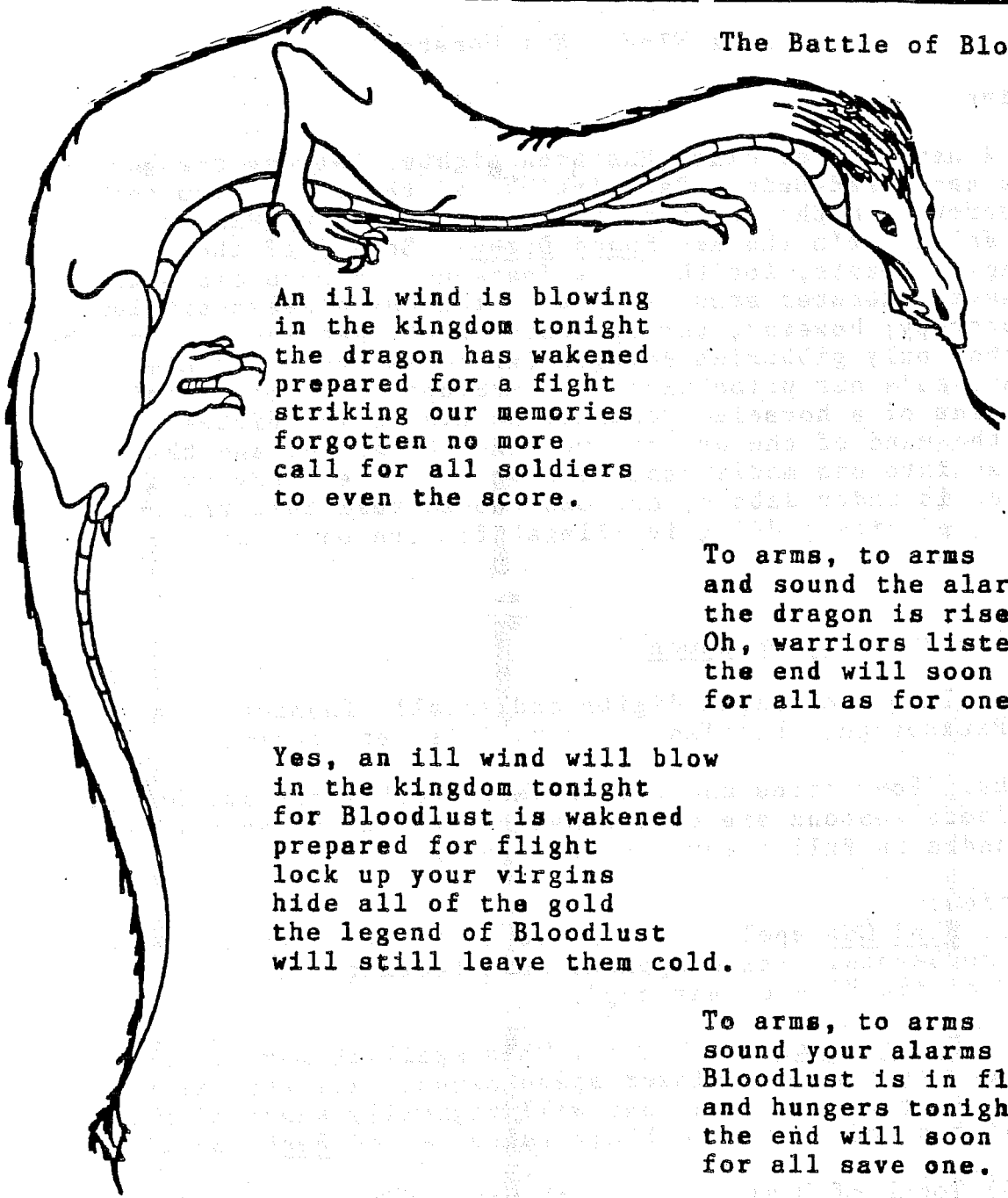
1) Find Cop spell . . . Found in the more intelligent of the beasts. Its component is a beeping box and reciting "I see that cop".

2) Frustration spell . . . This spell is merely cast by getting behind a slower speed demon. All that is needed is to push a button that will magically annoy everyone within radius of the blast (also called Honk spell).

3) Touch of Death . . . Much more effective than a wizard's or assassin's. Find a victim and use the inherent Speed ability. With good aim, the victim will be left with a very good death simulation.

4) Speed ability . . . This amazing ability is the reason for the monster's notoriety. It is easier than teleport, as all that is required is to put your foot down. With this ability, most shots can be called "glancing", unless a sizeable dent occurs.

As said previously, this awesome creature is dangerous and should be used only in very special and very hazardous scenarios.



The Battle of Bloodlust

An ill wind is blowing
in the kingdom tonight
the dragon has wakened
prepared for a fight
striking our memories
forgotten no more
call for all soldiers
to even the score.

To arms, to arms
and sound the alarms
the dragon is risen
Oh, warriors listen
the end will soon come
for all as for one.

Yes, an ill wind will blow
in the kingdom tonight
for Bloodlust is wakened
prepared for flight
lock up your virgins
hide all of the gold
the legend of Bloodlust
will still leave them cold.

To arms, to arms
sound your alarms
Bloodlust is in flight
and hungers tonight
the end will soon come
for all save one.

Get ready your gear men
for the kingdom tonight
your best fighting's needed
to end this new blight
while Bloodlust is flying
men will be dying
we'll defeat the dragon
or at least die trying.

To arms, to arms
and sound the alarms
with our swords in hand
we'll take our best stand the
end will soon come
for all as for one.

With the skies now darkened
o'er the kingdom tonight
a great battle waged
with fires burn'd bright
many have fallen
still Bloodlust survives
call out the mages
while the beast still flies

To arms, to arms
sound the alarms
bring out the mages
the battle yet rages
the end will soon come
for all save one

Protect the grand wizard
of the kingdom tonight
beware of the fires
his fingers ignite
Watch as his magicks
Turn Bloodlust away
rejoice in the glory
we've won for today.

To arms, to arms
and sound the alarms
we've won for today,
our thanks to the fey
we'll mourn for our losses
and remember the cause.

An ill-wind has blown
o'er the kingdom this eve
and Bloodlust was it's name
men, remember me
and fear my name
one day I shall return
seeking my vengeance
your kingdom then will burn.

An Examination of Amtgard Titles of Nobility

History, or even plain experience has shown that humans often crave the marks of achievement more than the achievements themselves. The desire to set oneself apart, thusly elevating one in the eyes of his fellows, appears to be as old as history itself. Living in a culture that tends to stifle creativity while simultaneously encouraging profit at the expense of our neighbors, there seems less and less room for self expression. Phrases like "nice guys finish last" and "what do you want out of life" abound. Retreat into fantasy, popular movies and such organizations as the S.C.A. and Amtgard, are natural occurrences, and often, are healthy hobbies for our diversion, and even for our development. What is not healthy are the insecure and selfish attitudes often brought in from "the real world". How many role-players and recreationists do you know who insist on making the endeavor an unpleasant experience? I'll bet you know several. Americans, in our wealth and relative security, tend to be self involved. A case can be made for criticizing our young and spoiled generation. However, the people of the world out there are no better, no nicer, no more fair or kind in their appraisal of their fellow men.

And what has this to do with Amtgard nobility? People who lack also want, and the illusion of a title is a powerful draw for flagging self esteem. There is some evidence that the medieval orders of knights perished in part due to the cheapening effect caused by the wanton awarding of undeserved orders. The English award their titles of nobility very carefully, and this is because they found the value of a title declined in direct proportion to the number of titles awarded. The world is a more crowded and desperate place, yes, but arrogance, greed, and the scrabbling for undeserved rewards was in full flower by the Middle Ages. I've often wondered, with such marvelous history behind us; the heros and wisdom of Greece, the glory and power of Rome, the wild freedom of the Celts, the adventurous wanderlust of the Norse (and I'm just talking about the Western tradition), why then do we choose the Medieval period for our role model? The Dark Ages were well named. Ignorance, disease, and plague were rife. Most people were serfs, women were chattel, and all offices were routinely awarded for political and hereditary reasons. The word "merit" seldom entered into things. The nobility were firmly entrenched and in control.

As I said, things have not changed much , at least since the Middle Ages. Our flights of fancy emulate a period of barbarism. Despite the pretensions, that is for what modern man yearns - the illusion that he too can be on top. The incessant strife between the various Amtgard groups over "who will make the rules", the constant press of new candidates

desiring knighthood, the creeping advent of people voting themselves more and larger titles, all are symptoms. The conditioning of a thousand years hold firm - "take what you can". We do indeed live in the "Modern Middle Ages". In the same vein, I know we are stuck with the medieval titles we have. I can't change selfish desire, but some light shed on the subject can arm people with knowledge. The honest and fair-minded need not make mistakes through lack of information.

This article has been researched and written with Amtgard in mind. Some interpretations included within are "fast and loose". The key below lists the ten areas of information by which each title is examined. The titles themselves are listed in decreasing order of precedence. To avoid repetition, female equivalents are generally only utilized in the headings. The sad fact is that female titles from the period were usually only weak corollaries to those of husband, father, and King. Not everything read here will agree with conventional medievalist wisdom. Some changes were necessary for the "modern societies". Secondly, Amtgard made some errors in its early years. Finally, Amtgard borrowed heavily from the S.C.A. in the areas of titles, heraldry, and courtly etiquette. Study and research indicate that the S.C.A. either also made early errors, or found cause to deviate from the exact reality in some cases. That last statement might raise some hackles. Then so be it. The literature is available, and a partial bibliography is included. I think that perhaps there is more fantasy in history, and more history in fantasy, than many people would like to admit. Long live the dream.

Key

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| <u>Origins</u> | Semantic origin and definition |
| <u>History</u> | A brief historical overview of the title, its beginning and development. |
| <u>Amtgard</u> | As the title pertains to Amtgard, first titled and application. |
| <u>Addressed</u> | Accepted forms of addressing the titled personage, with heavy emphasis on the English "rules". |
| <u>Crown/Coronet</u> | Crowns are reserved for royalty, while nobles may wear coronets. The chief difference is that a crown covers the top of the head. Note that most coronets were made of silver gilt, and unless specified, pearls (balls) are also of a silver color. |
| <u>Garb</u> | Coronation and/or robes of state. Such robes are of a crimson color and edged with white borders. They are to be worn over court garb. |

Heraldry

and again, are based on English nobility. Ermine is usually plain white fur. The type of helmet that a titled person is eligible to use with his coat of arms. With the nobles, the use of grilles in varying numbers on the helmet is more French than English, in the liberal interpretation utilized herein.

Alternatives

Identical positions in other languages and/or archaic forms.

Equivalents

Similar titles in precedence from other cultures.

Symbol

Occasionally the title will have an identifying symbol.

King/Queen

Origins

From Anglo-Saxon cyng, a contraction of cyning (King)

History

Along with tsar and emperor, has been considered the traditional head of government in the Western World. The actual title of king dates back when its bearer bore it by right of "kinship" as the head of his tribe.

Amtgard

The ruler of a kingdom. The first monarch of Amtgard (in this case, a queen) was Tawnee Darkfalcon of the Burning Lands on 3/27/83. The first elected king was Aramithris of Meadowlake on 10/26/86. Queen Reyna Arafael of the Emerald Hills was the first monarch of a kingdom other than the Burning Lands. She was crowned in early 1988.

Addressed

"Majesty", "Most Gracious Sovereign", "His Majesty the King", "Most Excellent Majesty".

Crown

Often made of gold and edged in purple. No set pattern, though fleur-de-lis with a surmounting orb and cross are common. The most consistent examples are the monarch's crowns of France, which were surmounted with a fleur-de-lis, with 8 arches rising from the 8 fleur-de-lis on the rim. Most European crowns follow this pattern. English crown tend to alternate crosses with the fleur-de-lis.

Garb

Symbols of the kingdom or state are often worn; with the robe, sceptre, crown, and throne being symbols of the king's power.

Heraldry

Gold helmet, with grilles, and affronte (facing the viewer).

Alternatives

Rex (Latin), Roi (French), Padishah (Persian), Sultan (Turkish)

Equivalents

Maharaja (Hindustani), Tarkhan (Tatar), Malik (Arab).

Symbol In Western Europe the lion is often used as the symbol of royal sovereignty. The color red is considered "the field of royal prerogative".

Prince/Princess

Origins From Latin princeps. Literally means one who holds first place. Also from Latin primus capere - to take first.

History In ancient Rome the title of Princeps Senatus was given to the leading senator. Germany had a class of rulers below dukes called prinzen, and today there are still ancient families not connected to any reigning house that bear the title of prince. In England, the title of prince is used by the eldest progeny of the King.

Amtgard First, the consort to the monarch. It is also the more accurate term for the ruler of a principality or duchy (In Barad-Duin, the confusing and contradictory title of "Grand Duke" has been substituted for "Prince"). The first prince consort was Harnsaure in early 1983. Ahrmaand Seregon in early 1988 was the first "ruling prince" to hold an equivalent position.

Addressed "Your Royal Highness", "His Highness the Prince".

Crown Tendency in England is crimson color material over gold metal, with a single arch rising to support an orb. Royal consorts in Britain have worn crowns with 8 arches supporting a globe, with 4 of each crosses and fleur-de-lis in alternating order on the rim. In most European countries a prince in his own right may wear a crown trimmed in ermine with 4 arches rising to a globe and cross.

Heraldry The same as for king

Alternatives Principis (Latin), Principe (Italian), Prinzen (German), Raja (Hindustani), Rana (Pakistani), Rai (Bengali)

Equivalents Ilkhan (Turkish), Mirza (Arabic), Furst (German), Amir (African Arabic), Mian (India), Gaekwar (India).

Grand Duke, Arch Duke

History The title of archduke comes from Austria, and that of grand duke comes from Russia. There were of royal blood, and the princes were a step lower in the hierarchy. Neither had a

Amtgard

tradition of dukes per se. The Austrian title was assumed by rulers in 1156 but not confirmed until 1453. There actually was a brief incidence of archdukes in France.

Addressed
Coronet

Archduke has been awarded to a former monarch who also served another year in the royal court (unless grand duke has been awarded.) A grand duke is a two term monarch. On 4/23/88, by the hand of King M'Deth of Benden, Aramithris of Meadowlake became the first grand duke and Aredhel Kemenva became the first arch duke.

Heraldry

His (Imperial, Royal, or Serene) Highness
No specific formula in either case. The royal family of Austria (including the arch dukes) had gold crowns with a single arch, with 4 large fleur-de-lis alternating with 4 smaller ones on the rim. The Russian royal family (from whence the grand dukes came) had a crown built up on the sides with space in the center, with a single arch supporting an orb. The logical extension from the other titles of nobility is a silver helmet in profile with 9 golden grilles.

Symbol

The symbol for a grand duke is the great horned owl.

Duke/Duchess

Origins

From Latin Dux, a leader, general, or commander.

History

The position came into being when Constantine separated the military (Dux) and civil (comes) commands of the provinces. Initially, the title of duke was inferior to that of count (comes). However, the German tribes adopted the titles, and among these warlike peoples, the military title of duke acquired precedence. Charlemagne was jealous of their power, but the dukes had a revival and almost achieved absolute independence after his death. Isle de France became the first independent dukedom, and soon the title challenged that of King. William, Anne, and George I first granted the title of duke to those of non-royal blood, and today a duke ranks just below a royal prince and an archbishop.

Amtgard

Awarded to former monarchs. The first to receive this title was Tawnee Darkfalcon on 10/22/83 by the hand of King Gilos Dawnhope. "The Most Noble, the Duke of _____", "Your Grace".

Addressed

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Coronet | 8 strawberry leaves of a conventional type on a rim of gold. |
| Garb | 4 rows of spots on the mantle (robe) or 4 guards of ermine with rows of gold lace. |
| Heraldry | Silver helmet in profile with 8 golden grills. |
| Alternatives | Duc (French), Duque (Spanish), Dux (Latin), Duca (Italian), Doge (Venetian), Herzog (Austrian) |
| Equivalents | Pfalzgraf (German), Shogun (Japanese), Bretwalda (Anglo-Saxon), Chiangchun (Chinese) |
| Symbol | Actual kings retired to "Dukedom" have been represented by a crown. |

Count/Countess

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Origins | From Latin comitis, a companion. |
| History | Many provincial governors under Constantine were called comes. In the earlier Republic secondary provincial officers were known as comites or cohorts (companions). Augustus referred to a council of senators as his comites, and in imperial Rome it came to apply to the court of a prince. Charlemagne used the title to denote civil employment, and the Franks made them the King's judges calling them grafen. These judges became so corrupt that the division of counties was abolished in the 12th century. Earl is the English version, and the early English sheriffs corresponded to the grafen. Until 1357 earl was the highest title in England. By 1500, the title of count was a hereditary title on the continent. Today, the political/administrative unit of a county still exists, with some 3,000 in the U.S.A. |
| Amtgard | Awarded to a former royal consort. Shindea of Winddragon was the first to receive the title for this reason on 5/4/85 by the hand of King M'Deth. |
| Addressed | "The Right Honorable", "Illustrious Count", "The Lord". |
| Coronet | The English coronet has 8 pearls raised upon points, with small gold strawberry leaves between, all above the rim. Other countries use 16 pearls without the leaves. |
| Garb | 3 rows of spots on the mantle or 3 guards of ermine with rows of gold lace. |
| Heraldry | Silver helmet in profile with 6 golden grilles. |
| Alternatives | Conde (Portuguese), Comte (French), Conte (Old French), Comes (Latin), Graf (German/Swedish), Graaf (Netherlands), Earl (English), Eorl (Old English), Jarl (Danish). |

Equivalents Orkhan (Tatar), Shireman (Saxon), Dey
(Turkish), Kaliph (Arabic), Khidiw (Persian),
Cuauhtlahtoque (Aztec).

Marquess/Marchioness

Origin From Old High German marcha, a frontier or
march

History The title is relatively new, first developed
by King Richard II in 1385. It soon
thereafter fell into disuse until the reign of
Edward VI in 1551.

Amtgard Unlike "real life" application, the title of
marquess in Amtgard ranks below that of count.
It is awarded to those whom have served as all
of the following: Monarch, Royal Consort,
Prime Minister. Nashomi, the Lonely Wolf
became the first marquess on 9/8/84 when he
was awarded the title by King Asmund Heimdale
Haroldsson.

Addressed "Most Noble and Potent Prince", "The Most
Honorable", "The Lord".

Coronet 4 golden strawberry leaves alternating with
silver pearls.

Garb 3 1/2 rows of spots on the mantle of 4 guards
of ermine with rows of gold lace.

Heraldry Silver helmet in profile with 7 golden
grilles.

Alternatives Marquis (French), Markis (Old French),
Markgraf (German), Margrave (German), Marques
(Spanish), Marchese (Italian), Female titles -
Margravine, Marquee, Marquise.

Viscount/Viscountess

Origins From Latin vice comes, in place of a companion

History Between earl and baron in English precedence,
it was first conferred by letters patent by
Henry VI in 1440. It is frequently attached
to an earldom as a second title. The title
came to England from France, where a vicomte
was first the deputy of a count.

Amtgard Generally awarded to a 2-time Prime Minister,
or for any other two terms of service in the
Royal Court (provided a higher title has not
already been awarded). On 10/20/84 King
Heimdale made Andralaine of Stonehelvan the
first viscountess.

Addressed "The Right Honorable", "The Lord"

Coronet The English utilize 16 pearls on the rim.
Most other European nations have 8 pearls on
points alternating in a high-low pattern.

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Garb | 2 1/2 rows of spots on the mantle or 2 guards of ermine with rows of gold lace. |
| Heraldry | Silver helmet in profile with 5 golden grilles. |
| Alternatives | Viconte (Middle English), Vicomte (French), Visconte (Old French), Vizconde (Spanish), Visconde (Portuguese), Waldgraf (German) |
| Equivalents | Pasha (Turkish) |

Baron/Baroness

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Origins | From Old High German baro, a man |
| History | The word baron signifies man par excellence. The Anglo-Saxon thegns (thanes) were the immediate predecessors of the Norman barons, and received the position for owning land, taking 3 sea voyages, or receiving holy orders. William the Conqueror made barons immediate vassals to the Crown, these nobles reaching their greatest extent of power in 1263 when Simon de Monfort waged the Baron's War against the king. In time the title was relegated below that of the new positions such as earl and Viscount, although it was long a custom that every peer of superior rank also had a barony. From land owners of a feudal system and immediate vassals to the king, the position evolved to the lowest rank of the peerage in Great Britain. The right of wearing a coronet was conferred by Charles II. Until 1873 certain judges in Ireland and England were called barons. Today the title also appertains to bishops and members of the House of Commons. |
| Amtgard | 1) Former Prime Minister of a Kingdom, 2) former ruler of a principality or duchy, 3) the founder and ruler of a barony. Queen Tawnee Darkfalcon made Thanos Darkside the first Amtgard baron on 5/7/83. The first landed baron was Marlin Razclaw of the Barony of the Mystic Valley in early 1988. |
| Addressed | "My Lord", "Your Lordship", "The Lord", "His Excellency", "The Right Honorable". |
| Coronet | 6 pearls on the rim in England, though most countries permit 12 pearls mounted on points. |
| Garb | 2 rows of spots on the mantle or 2 guards of ermine with rows of gold lace. |
| Heraldry | Silver helmet in profile with 4 golden grilles. |
| Alternatives | Barun (Old French), Thane (Saxon), Barao (Portuguese), Barone (Italian). |
| Equivalents | Kahn (Turkish), Emir (Arabic), Daimyo (Japanese), Lord (Scottish). |

Baronet

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Origin | From a French diminutive of baron |
| History | This is the lowest hereditary dignity in Ireland and Great Britain. Originally utilized in Ulster, it was initiated by James I on 22 May, 1611 to raise money for the king. Since the Scottish Union of 1707 and the Irish Union in 1801 no new baronets have been created other than those in England. In English usage it has precedence over all knights except those of the Garter. |
| Amtgard | Awarded to those who served in a pro-tem position on the royal court. On 5/18/85, Kalibria de Grenoille received the first award of the title of baronet from King M'Deth. |
| Addressed | "Sir" |
| Coronet | The continental European coronet consists of 4 pearls on points alternating with 4 leaves. |
| Heraldry | Steel helmet, open and affronte |
| Alternatives | Lesser Thane (Saxon) |
| Equivalents | Freiherr (German), Sheik (Arabic), Seigneur (French), Nawab (Hindustani - Begum is the female title). |
| Symbol | The symbol for a baronet is the "Bloody Hand of Ulster", a raised left hand colored red. |

Lord/Lady

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Origins | From Anglo-Saxon hlaford, a master of a household. |
| History | In feudal times the lord was the grantor or proprietor of the land. In the most definite English sense it is the equivalent to a peer, but does not express any special rank or degree of nobility. In general, the term applies to someone with authority and power. |
| Amtgard | 1) former prince consort of a principality, 2) title awarded to the new ruler who takes the place of a retired baron, 3) awarded by the monarch for exceptional service to the kingdom. On 1/14/84 King Gilos awarded the first lordship to Aron Nelsson. Note that this is the only Amtgard noble title below that of knighthood. A Warlord is the highest military title of achievement. The Overlord is the general of the King's armies. |
| Addressed | "His Lordship" |
| Coronet | Germany and Italy allow 8 pearls raised on points. |
| Garb | None in the English tradition. Arab "lords" are entitled to wear the color green. |
| Heraldry | Steel helmet in profile with the visor closed. |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Alternatives | Hlafweard (Saxon), Loverd/Laferd (Middle English), Pan (Polish), Laird (Scottish), Kyrios (Greek), Dom (Portuguese), Don (Italian) |
| Equivalents | Sherif (Arabic), U (Bermese), Sayid (Hindustani), Agah (Persian), Rabban (Hebrew), Chieftan (Irish) |



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This song tells of a young man travelling the country. One day he chances to stroll through a small rural village and comes across an old woman sitting in the sun watching a small group of young girls. The text of the song is as follows:

Good morrow good grandmother
May I sit with you a while?
I'm just a travelling player
And am much taken by your smile.

You sit and watch yon maidens
At their laughter and their play
And I wonder do you yearn
To return to a younger day.

Chorus
Oh, time you sly deceiver
All you promised is delivered
And the price we pay, we pay
we pay.
And the price we surely pay.

Why, yes, my chance companion
I do dream of days of summer.
I played and sang and gave the lie
To the certainty of winter.

And my step was sure my eye
was bold,
And the boys vied for my favor.
And I sit with thee a moment
My sweet summer days to savor.

Chorus
Oh, time you sly deceiver
All you promised was delivered
And the price we pay, we pay
we pay.
And the price we surely pay.

So I held her hand in sorrow
But she reproved me with a look,
Saying youth is of the heart lad
And mine's a well writ book.

I have the best of all years
For with age I can remember
The hope and joy and loves
That in youth I did engender.

Chorus
Oh, time you sweet believer
All you promised was delivered
And the price I paid, I paid,
I paid.
The price I've gladly paid.

So I sat by her till sunset
Her hand held firm in mine.
When the sun had finally left us
She spoke just one more time.

Live your life in full son,
Never grudge what you will pay.
Then she lay her silver head
back
And softly passed away.

Chorus
Oh, time you kind deceiver
Take this maiden to your breast
And the price she paid, she paid,
she paid
Should make you love her best.

Seven Ages in Chaos: A Fable

Listen wayfarers and citizens all - I speak of a time of greatness, of legends old, when warriors were proud, and magic was more than a dream. Yes, pull up your stools and sip your ale. A story I will spin you until in awe you are bound. Pray, grant an old man a reprieve, and for a drink and a toke I will take you to yore, an era too long forgotten. There dragons warred upon men, though not men as of today; where pirates coursed like crusaders, and Faerie bode dark in the east. Back we will go to the seven great ages of an empire that burned, but did not decay. For the cycle is seven, and it rises again, never defeated, heads never bowed. Hearken to my telling, and listen you well, and perhaps in comprehension, you will never grow old.

The First Age

The god was dark, grim and fey, with locks of golden hair, though fair was not his countenance nor even-handed his sway. The people were scattered, and never told, his weaknesses many, he shunned the sun. The toll of his tax was heavy, and the people groaned. No hope for the many. But from the west came the raiders in grey, tall men with pride, never kneeling in dust. A battle was joined, the black god distracted, and in the manna of conflict a new force was forged. The scattered wanderers united, paired with all manner of beasts. Dragon fang and equine hooves joined for freedom, a new dawn of hope for the land. Through the Stormdoor the dark one fled, and soon enough his sergeants fell. The grey raiders retreated in their chariots awlirl, to await the calling, when the time was right. The land was still busy, civil wars fraught, the fabric still forming. Seen were pink colored eggs, and discolored birds, yet the pattern had hardened, and all took a breath.

The Second Age

A storm was brewing, the times still troubled. The northern tribes struck again and again, only to be beaten back soundly in desperate fray. Barbarians wandered, and strove for King. In this tumultuous mist again were the grey ones seen, their legions many, their manner bold. Beaten were the northerners, though still afraid the noble caste. Incidents were many, though casualties few. Legion strove versus bladesmen militia, chivalry in black, whatever the nobles could bear. At the Bridge of the Lone Survivor was

the challenge met, the combat viscious, no quarter let. Unicorn bowed to rainbow, the men in metal wept, but to no avail their tribulation and trial. The battle at the bridge marked the end of an era, ushered in the new age - the grey men were there to stay. The ring of the hammer, the mettle of smiths, the slavedrivers broken, the fates had been cast. A new order of warrior with spurs at their feet, a new breed of minister in the prime of their get.

The Third Age

Snow filled the passes, and fast in his keep, the King of the Mountain was slain as he slept. The slaving trolls, his assassins in fact, swept down into lowlands for pillage and theft. A new sword was forged, with flame in its steel, the monsters halted. A circle of elders, to halt the profane, a temple of guardians to ward the keep. Creation and building, an age of some peace, though in the maneuvering the mountains, foul creatures were swept. Brasshats saw the plenty, and wanted a piece, but the champions were many and the free were not yoked. Visitors from a windy city, jousting at a festival fair, wanderers lying in the sleeping grasses - prosperity and peace throughout the land. But in the peace of plenty, when more desire is borne, the wanting is greater, and divided the lands. The freemen revolted, the nobles quailed. Have and have not, the distinction paled. The rules had been changed, a new order prevailed.

The Fourth Age

The little folk invaded the land, and the chivalry split as if in night and day. A few warriors summoned to sport out far west, the elite now united under silver fang. The land almost righted, but then came the rain. A chieftain of northerners lifted the crown, claimed all the honors and then he was gone. Chaos was halted, his vacuum was filled, and spoke he from sore exile, "It wasn't my fault." The grey men held order, the legions were raised, and for a time engaged the men in metal at bay. Yet this time too passed, and a wind from the past, the old one's last challenge. Again them defeated, the children of a lesser god vanquished. The black god attempted return, but the Stormdoor slammed in his face, he departed unheeded. Countess met Duke, noble vows of chastity were sealed. It was a time of culture and plenty. Evil was driven from the field, the last northerner challenge to the Crown denied. The seeds of structure and maintenance were sown in the land.

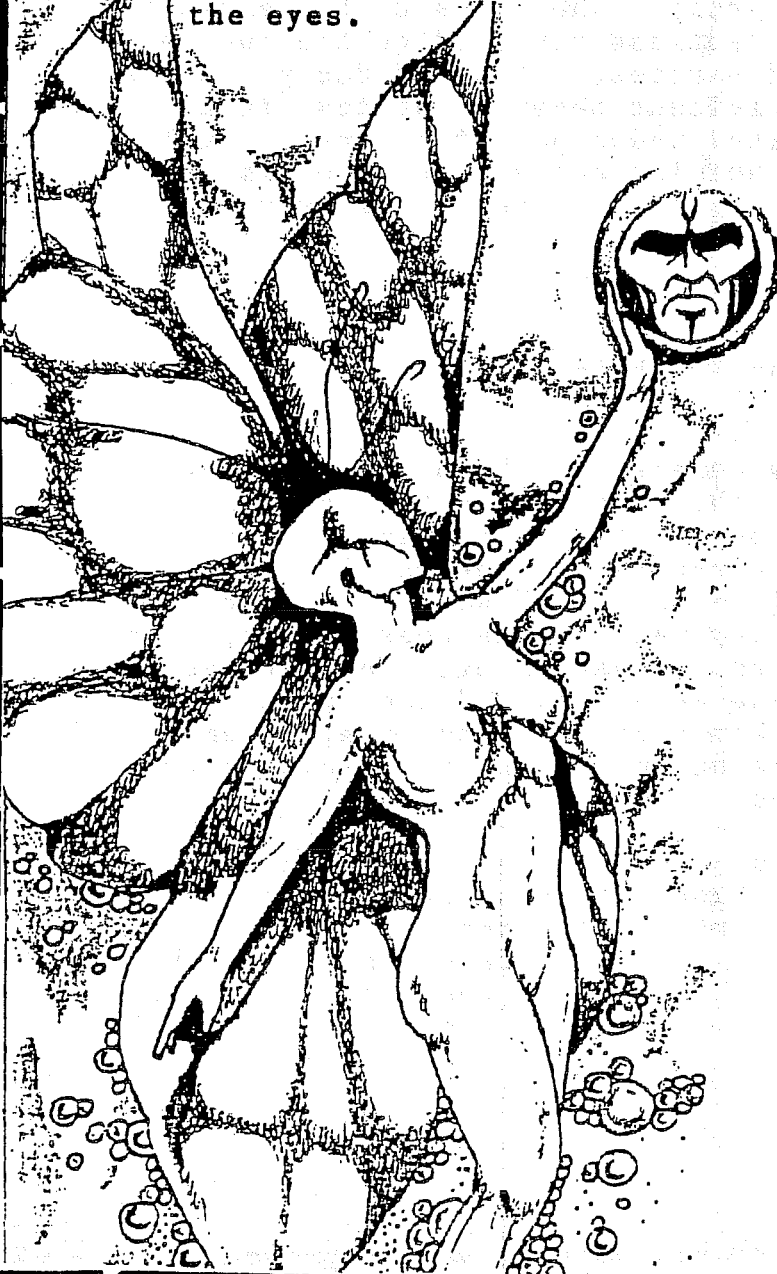
The Fifth Age

The first colonials brought the word to foreign lands, the northerners abated even as the snow falls lay deep and heavy. The legions wore their livery, the guilds worked long on their arts. The law was set into stone, and the way of the land was put into parchment for all to see. Civilization settled, and in the imperial way, sovereign rights were invested in electors. Tourneying became the day, silver adorning the champion's throats. Pirates settled, and honored the Kings, their black and grey tabbards their symbol of defiance and faith. Emissaries voyaged to foreign courts, questors trekked to a crimson hill. Late in the age saw civilized pirates in court, and the first of the royal archives were set for posterity. The ruins of the ancients were visited again as the restless advanced on the edge of expansion; consumption and parties, a time of decay? Lions joined company as the significant beast. Intrigue in the court, the people only united under powerful Kings. Guilds and companies strove for dominion and status under imperial law. Hard pressed were the guards of the royal sway.

The Sixth Age

Feasting and tourneys ushered in the age. Lion met Legion in a challenge of might, and out on the fringes a calling was heard. Colonies had flourished in far away lands, civilized forming on the rim of the wheel. This was an era of courts, in glorious array. Tidings and gifts arrived from afar. The snowy wastes, the mossy tower, clans from far and wide celebrated the gathering. Many tribes were seen together, but the seams were sundered and split. In medieval tradition the children destined to take, attempting to wrest what their parents had made. Arcana produced by chronicler's zeal, kingdoms treated in a show of state. However, insecure were the faces made, and war the result of royal tirade. The land was now three, and the heralds revealed, all was not well despite the pacts that were sealed. The children had turned, scathing their proclamations of mother's sin. The trickle, this wave, was felt through the land, and the start of resentment seen in the stirrings of people and state. The tone was set for the challenge of now.

The old man leaned back, his breath exhaled, and rested a bit before finishing his tale. Now we are here, in the tempestuous present, no one so happy in the niche they have met. Forgotten the grandeur of glory days, denied the dignity of courtly ways. Nary a crack of a smile, or a word in thanks, the factions have settled to plunder their weight. Is the future bleak? I cannot say, but I have seen the power and belonging in the original way. It's not so evident in the currents of change. It is friends who gather, and share a dream. Those contesting for might do all in their power, not to build or create, but to shatter a bower. Perhaps you think me old, drunk, and unsightly to weep, but I've seen the glory, and in my heart it will keep. And if you can't live the dream, then remember my song, and perhaps one day again there will be dragon-filled skies, love in the heart, hope in the eyes.



Shifting Sands

Where has the valor gone?
When once a Roman, in his bronzed armor,
swung his sword for the valor of Rome,
now, man sits behind a desk,
waving the pen that is "mightier" than the sword.

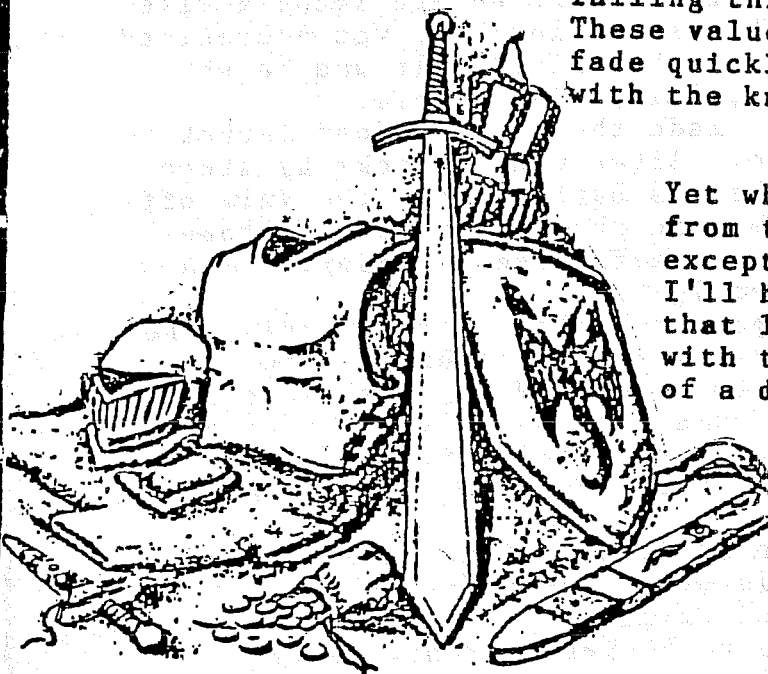
Where has the honor gone?
When once men fought wars for honor,
with spear and shield, unrelenting,
now, wars are fought for fools
pointing fingers at the "enemy."

Where has the chivalry gone?
When once a knight in shining armor would die
for the gracious favor of a lady,
now, "men" ignore the call for help
from ladies who can "help themselves."

Where has the freedom gone?
When once barbarian horsemen, proud and fierce,
hefted battle axe for the freedom of his people
now, a "free" country is slave
to threats of nuclear war.

The valor, honor, chivalry, and freedom,
are dying concepts,
slipping away
like grains of sand
falling through open fingers.
These values, nearly dead,
fade quickly
with the knights of old.

Yet when all is gone,
from this "civilized" world,
except that tiny bit within myself,
I'll hold onto
that last grain of sand
with the undying clutch
of a deathgrip.



A History of House Andalsa

The history of House Andalsa began with the journey of the Irish warrior Cuchulain to the land called Alba. While in this mystical otherworld Cuchulain fought with a warrior-queen name Aifa. For some strange reason the two warriors fell in love. They had many wonderful adventures together. Just as Cuchulain prepared to return to the Emerald Isle he discovered that Aifa carried his child. He made her swear to him that she would send that child to Ireland when it reached an appropriate age. Aifa kept her word, but she tricked her son into attacking Cuchulain, for she had grown bitter at his leaving her. But her plan backfired and it was her son that died. Cuchulain was in agony for eternity when he found out what he had done.

But there was something that Cuchulain did not know, Aifa gave birth to twins. The younger of the two had remained in Alba while his brother went off to die. This remaining son, named Korlain, hated his mother for what she had done. He vowed to leave Alba and search for a new home, isolated from the world. However, no place he found suited him well enough. In great despair he acquired a boat and drifted on the seas, hoping to die there. After many days on the angry sea his small craft drifted onto a beach. He searched long, but found that he was isolated from the cruel world at last.

He built a small home and lived in it quite happily. But a time came when he grew lonely. He sailed to a civilized land and persuaded people with the same values as he had to join him in his land. They were industrious people. They built several cities, as well as some castles.

Korlain died young, but not before he had found a wife who had borne him a son. This son, Kierchan, was accredited with finding the land in which they lived. It was he who gave the large vale its name, Silverbreeze Vale.

Devon, son of Kierchan, made the city of Caer Tarnak the capitol of Silverbreeze Vale. After many attacks by stone giants the Wall of Lost Souls was built to cut the Vale off from Stone Giant Pass. It was in the Pass that the Stone Giants lived. But to be on the safe side the capitol was moved to a new city, Ferro et Ignis.

A time of peace came upon the Vale. Lord Almeric, the son of Devon, took the opportunity to further protect the Vale. The Wall of the Sun, Defender's Wall, Almeric's Wall, and the Wall of Forgotten Dreams were built at this time. Castle Stiria was also built then. Trade with Minotaurs became common place. Through this trade the Silverbreeze Vale grew rich.

The High-King of Alaron decided that he should rule the Vale as a colony. The people of Silverbreeze Vale saw this as a threat to their peaceful existence. Lord Ryshel, son of Almeric, proclaimed the Vale to be independent. A war

ensued. With help from the Minotaurs the citizens of the Vale emerged victorious. A civil war was brewing in the Minotaur's own country so they withdrew their forces. This left the Vale without sufficient defenses.

The evil monster horde of Zovian invaded Silverbreeze Vale by command of Morbus, god of disease. The forces of the Vale were forced into Castle Stiria and were utterly destroyed. Lord Ryshel and his wife, Fahlar, died horrible deaths. Fahlar became the ghost called the Umbra, which still haunts Castle Stiria.

Ryshel's son had been sent to the allied kingdom of Quanisha and therefore survived. He grew up in the palace of a Quanishan overlord. When he attained the age of twenty-three he persuaded the overlord to attack Zovian. For five years the war raged on. Finally, Zovian's forces were forced into Ferro et Ignis. They made a last stand in a naval battle on the waters of Ash Lake. The monster horde was destroyed, but Zovian was nowhere to be found.

Amarr, the victor in the war against Zovian, ascended to the throne, bringing a new period of peace to the Vale. This time has been termed the Mithril Age.

Dymish reigned after the death of Amarr, and was followed by Korlain II and then Duncan. The son of Lord Duncan, Astrean, is the present ruler of the Vale.

The very peace of the Mithril Age was split asunder as a new period of violence emerged. The end of the peace was heralded by the Lost Souls War, so named because the invading nation of Jiminuk never breached the Vale's first line of defense, the Wall of Lost Souls.

At present, all members of House Andalsa are mourning the loss of our kin, Ske and Tallah, both of whom fell to the wicked blades of Jiminuk's master assassin. When the required Time of Mourning has passed our forces will be thrown into a retaliatory strike against foul Jiminuk.

We must not grieve too long, however, for our brother and sister gave their lives for the glory of the Vale, long may it last.

After Jiminuk's stunning defeat Lord Astrean elevated his brothers to the title of either Lord-Mayor or Warlord, depending on how well that individual supported the Vale during the war. He then took the title of High-lord for himself.

Soon afterwards, the upstart Palanis threw the House into disgrace and was exiled accordingly. He had control of the city of Sarth and the Fortress of Sorrow, as well as the Navy. A tournament was held to determine who would take temporary possession of Palanis' holdings. All members of the House were urged to enter the lists at Kythia, and the victor was to be named the Sarthian Warder until the appointment of a new Lord-Mayor could be made.

Astrean oversees the welfare of the Vale from his palace in Ferro et Ignis. His brother, Nanoc, is Lord-Mayor of Caer Tarnak and is presently building up the Army, which is under his command. Calaban, Lord-Mayor of Porta Potens, is

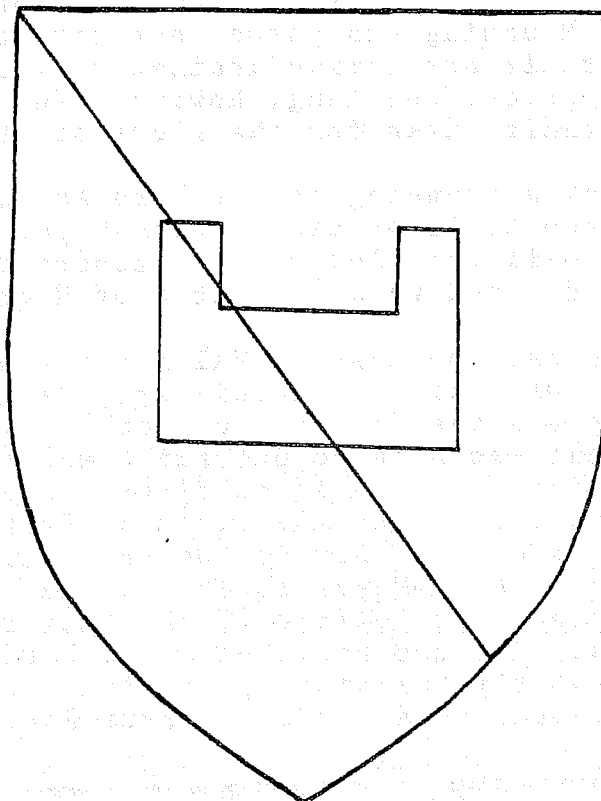
likewise strengthening the Air Cavalry, which is composed of dragons, griffons, and the like. The police force of the Vale, the Contralatro, is currently being overseen by Shendo, Lord-Mayor of Audax. Warlord Mogar is presently in the midst of building a new castle to further protect our precious Silverbreeze Vale.

The evil Zovian, who was thought to have been vanquished, seems to have returned to the Vale. Several clans of leprechauns have run amuck, burning fields and looting towns as they go. Also, the Red Dragons have been seen flying overhead in record numbers, defying the strength and authority of our own Silver Dragons. The snake worshipping cult called the Anguis has risen from its lairs beneath the cities of the Vale, stalking sacrificial victims in broad daylight. Every bit of evil which makes its home in the Vale has grown bolder, as they last did when Zovian's monster horde invaded.

None have lost faith, however, for the Vale is stronger than it has ever been. There is no doubt that we can defeat all but the strongest of armies in defense of the Vale. We must be cautious, nevertheless, for we must not be drawn out in the open, beyond the protection of the mountains which surround our home.

zi im saniss bu'jalak - may the Vale overcome

Written by the Royal Historians of Silverbreeze Vale,
overseen in our efforts by Astrean Andalsa



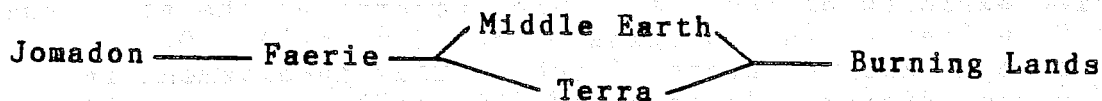
Amtgard Origins: The Claw Legion

Much has been written on the historical origins and storied exploits of the Claw Legion cohorts of the past (see "The Claw Legion" and "Origins of the Company"). Other pieces cover ancient events (such as Claw involvement in Jomadonese affairs - "A Dark Tide Rising"), and specialized information on certain company members ("A Legacy of Two Worlds"). However, little has been said of the arrival of the Company into the military and political context of the Kingdom of the Burning Lands. Again, a myriad of written pieces covering all manner of exploits from the year A.F. 2 (Amtgard Calendar: After Founding) abound, but little before this period referred to by Sultan Gilos of the Southern Wastes as the "Classic Claw Period". A gap exists, one this scholar will endeavor to fill.

What do Kings and rulers have in common? Recent surveys show Claw membership to be both heterogeneous and eclectic, a far cry from its ancient Esperai Jomadon origins. The first legion exodus into Terran environs was via Stonegate, an ancient artifact capable of one-way trans-dimensional transportation. Primitives called it magic. We "sophisticates" of modern intellectual derivation know better. The relic and others like it are obviously alien in manufacture and reflect a high order of technology, leading to a strong science-fantasy feel (that being our phrase substituted for "magic" when we don't understand things either). The important fact is that Stonegate and other such portals are scattered about the multiverse, some here on our adopted world, and traffic continues in a sporadic manner between the dimensions.

Time flow seems to vary between the gates, confusing the issue as which legionnaires departed for the Burning Lands first. The adventures of Orange in the early 4th millennium seem to indicate Esperin contact with gate technology before the exodus. Her experiences also reveal a linear effect to gate travel. The so-called elves reside dimensionally between Jomadon and Terra, much the same way as Terra occupies the niche between the elves and the Burning Lands. Can the linear method of travel be circumvented? - unknown, though evidence indicates more than one gate and destination both on Terra and in the Burning Lands. Point in fact, the elves in both Middle Earth and Terra departed over the Western Sea (to the legendary realm of Faerie? - the elven home dimension), yet both citizens of Gondolin and Numenor have sailed straight from their homelands to the Burning Lands. No evidence of a gate manifested in these journeys - though the common point of sailing over water is interesting. Repeated Terran human contacts with elven-kind also suggest

that gates may enhance (or focus) dimensional travel, though may not be required for such.

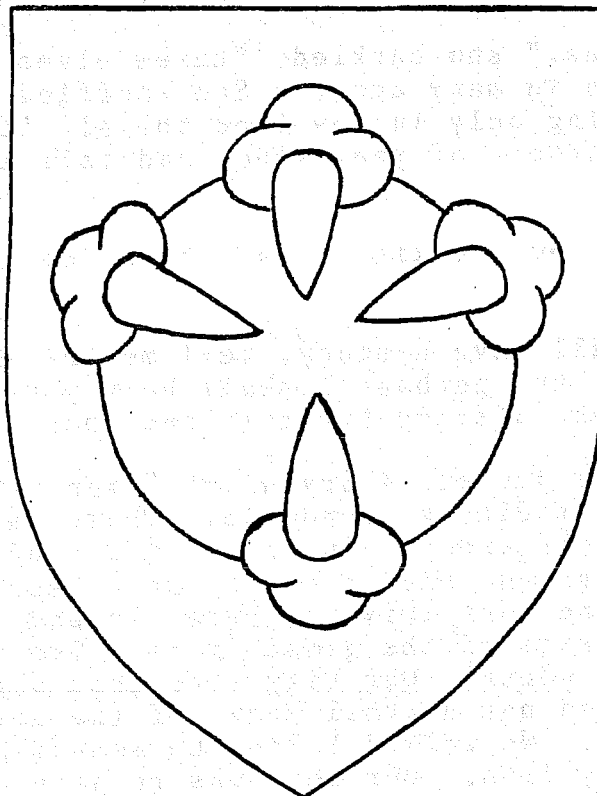


Many Burning Landers did not pass through a terran gate (assuming they did not arrive at all, but instead originated in the Burning Lands. However, archaeological evidence indicates that the Burning Lands was colonized by interdimensional travellers, it then in turn expanding to form other Amtgard groupings). However, all original Claw members either passed from Jomadon to Terra and hence to the Burning Lands, or joined the exodus from their original Terran habitats. The net result is that the Claw Legion had an impact on Terran history. This period of interaction roughly corresponded to that arbitrary cycle of events that Terran scholars consider to have divided their ancient and medieval historical eras. From the Charlemagne period through about 1400, there are references in Legion archives to involvement in Terran affairs. Indeed, whole clans of Esperin may have stayed to be assimilated in the Celtic societies of the British Isles. Stonehenge is thought to be an analogue to Stonegate, and similar artifacts appear throughout these islands. Certainly only a few legionnaires arrived in the Burning Lands, strong evidence that many settled on Terra.

The origins of several prominent Claw members lend credence to the theories already mentioned. Aramithris of Meadowlake and Covenant of Marcustar passed through Stonegate (the latter's origins portrayed in "The Summer Song") and resided for a time in Ireland. Witnesses have heard Aramithris castigate an Amtgarder of Norse extraction about the final victory of his people over the Vikings (a probable reference to King Brian Borus' victory over the Norse invaders at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014). Alrick of the Emerald Isle has a name that implies some Irish extraction. Joella Llewelyn Claromonde is a Welsh noblewoman from the same period who obviously emigrated with the Legion to the Burning Lands. Sterling # of Joatmon seems to be an English (Old) name. Though its origins have been recounted, the English translation of the Company name to "Claw Legion," both in the use of a dragon's claw and the military term of "legion" bear an uncanny resemblance to terminology referring to English society of the Pendragon period. Circumstantial evidence abounds concerning Claw Legion presence in Medieval Britain.

The existence of other characters in the Burning Lands is not so easily explained. While from a similar timeframe, Ariona Mixtlatl of the Bear Clan is of Aztec extraction. Perhaps Viking penetration of the Americas was more thorough than commonly accepted (a theory put forth by Aredhel Kemenval in "Vikings in America"), and Ariona became one of the first Americans to visit Europe; or there could have been gates in the "New World." Aredhel himself is obviously a Middle Earth Elf. In fact, a large minority of Burning Landers can boast of at least some elven blood. M'Deth of Benden heads a small Dragon-Rider contingent. It is assumed that they became lost while teleporting "inbetween" and accidentally arrived here in the Burning Lands. Some origins are not easily traceable, such as Gwynne of Tarnlea, and Naes Weissdrake. In both cases there is again a faint resemblance to Arthurian era terminology, although it is not an absolute correlation.

In summation nothing definite has been proved, yet indications are that there is a logical gridwork of dimensional pathways, that these pathways are frequently travelled, and that several waves of colonists, including the Claw Legion, utilized these pathways to arrive at and colonize the Burning Lands. It would seem that the Kingdom owes its existence to an older race of "super engineers." Perhaps one day we shall learn to utilize their legacy, and boldly stepping forth, venture to meet them on an equal basis, face to face, between the worlds.



A Stop on the Journey

The camp could be seen from the trail, but the three tired figures did not look back. They walked, stirring dust into the hot air. The sun was setting and the sky was lit in orange. The walkers crested the ridge and stood at the mouth of a large cave. One of the figures threw back the hood of her cloak and shook her head. "I don't like this at all," she said, scorn in her voice, "we've seen this one's like before and they are never anything but trouble."

"Laurethil, we've had this discussion before, and if we are to see home again, we must keep trying," replied one of her companions. He stepped into the cave and paused, eyes adjusting to the lack of light. Carefully, he walked down the tunnel towards a dim red glow. The glow emanated from a small fire which lit the tiny cavern at the end of the tunnel. Insane shadows were cast from the scattered contents of the room. A hunched figure could be seen as they entered, a vague mumbling rising from it.

"Witch, we have come," stated the leader, "I am Gilos and my companions are Laurethil and Elross. We seek your aid." The figure mumbled a moment longer, then turned to face it's visitors. The witch was short, hunched as if carrying a heavy burden. Her matted hair hung down nearly covering her eyes, eyes which glowed with an insane glee. She looked at each one in their turn. Laurethil's hand rested on her sword, the others shifted nervously.

"Three elves," she cackled, "three elves in these lands, a sight not seen in many ages." She shuffled quickly across the room, stopping only inches from the elf leader. "Not alone are you, others of your kind, and tall men of the west come with you."

"Witch, we come seeking a path home, can you guide us," asked Gilos.

"They say all have a story, tell me the story of you and your companions, and perhaps I shall help you." She shuffled about as she spoke peering first at one then another.

"I will tell you our story witch," ventured Elross. "We come from the lost City of Gondolin. There we lived despite the darkness of the enemy. Our peace was brutally ended when Morgoth discovered our hidden city. He unleashed his fury upon our home, and that fury was great indeed. The sky was filled with the fire of the great Wyrms. The Balrogs came and they brought death. Our city died that night. We would have joined it had not Angthil known of the secret tunnels beneath the city. We walked below the mountains of our homeland for many days. Our hope was to join our brethren to

the South. We emerged in a land we did not know. Thus has it been for years, we wander from land to land. We have seen many men and women of your ilk; Brand the mumblor of Amber, that fool wizard of Tintagel, and scores of others. None know anything of us, or our land. We seek to escape these sun blasted lands, and return to our fellows and our homelands. So witch, that is our story subtracting only endless nights and many wandering days. What say you?"

"Who sent you to me?" questioned the witch. She had stopped her incessant mumbling and stood still before the companions.

Gilos looked to his friends and replied, "A man we met upon the road, his name was Gull. He also said that you would ask, and that you knew him."

"I have not seen this man Gull in two hundred years. We were lovers once. When I walked the green hills of the Emerald Isle," cooed the old witch. Her eyes took on a mellower aspect. "He joined me and my companions as we travelled, perhaps he sent you to remind me of these things."

Cursing, Laurethil stepped forward and drew her sword. "Damn you, witch! We did not come to hear the prattlings of an old fool."

The witch locked eyes with the golden haired elf. "Look to your sword and see menaces aplenty to deal with," said the witch quietly. The three stared at the drawn sword as it pulsed with blue light.

"Orcs," shouted Gilos. He whirled drawing his sword which shone a warning of the approaching goblinfolk. Grunts and coarse cries issued from the hall, and the sounds of battle echoed in the night. Four large orcs appeared in the tunnel as the three elves ran to meet them. Elross struck one full in the face with the light mace he had concealed beneath his cloak. It made a gurgling noise and collapsed back into it's fellows. Gilos drove his sword into the second orc, plunging the metal through it's midsection. The creature fell, ripping the elven leader's sword from his grasp. One orc drove forward over his fallen brothers only to have it's misshapen head removed from it's shoulders by Laurethil's sword. The final orc glance about in panic, and ran for the cave mouth.

"Don't let him escape," shouted Gilos, as he tried vainly to free his lost sword. His two companions ran into the darkness in pursuit. Moments later his sword freed, Gilos turned to join the pursuit only to be stopped short by the stooped figure of the old witch. She stood in the cave's entrance staring out into the night.

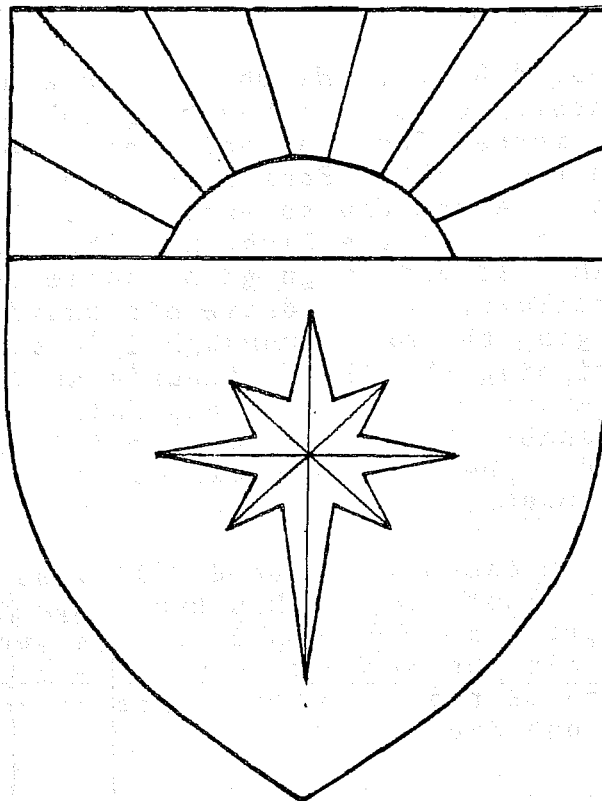
"Do not fear, your friends have slain the last creature," she said, "but now a choice must be made." Gilos took a step back, eyeing her warily, sword still in hand. She ignored him and spake, "I will tell you of your lands and what happened after your departure." She told him then of the defeat of the Naldor, the raising of the Great Host, and the Fall of Morgoth and Thangorodrim. She spoke of the Second and Third ages, the defeat of Sauron, and the fading of all things elvish. When she had finished, Gilos stood badly shaken.

"All that we have known has passed away," he said, "we have no home." He sheathed his sword and stood staring at the stars. "Witch," he asked, "you mentioned a choice?" She looked at him, and smiled.

"There is a land to the South," she began.

Hours later, Forn stood watching out across the hills. He saw Gilos approaching. Forn yelled to him, "So are we going back?"

"No," he said not pausing, "We go forward."



The Warriors of the Starquesting Dragon

In the peaceful center of a fertile peninsula with a thousand year old pact of peace with her two neighbors, Eldan was a land of content. Sheltered from the ravaging barbarians to the North and the pirates who harried the Southern coasts by Certes and Aldar, respectively, Eldan supported her sisterlands in those distant battles with foods and metals. The nobility and peoples of those three nations had so intermingled that they were as one land, with only the river Easy separating Aldar from Eldan, and the Stormtooth mountains dividing Eldan from Certes.

So had it been since the dawn of recorded history, so all thought it would always be. But there was a new power in the North, a magic older and darker than any seen before. Some said it was a god, waked from long slumber by the barbarians. Some said it was arcane knowledge dredged from the shattered cities where those now sunk to barbarism once ruled in splendor. Some claimed it was a mystery from beyond the sea, or beneath it, or past the night sky. Upon one thing they all agreed; where this power walked, the land itself trembled, and all that was left in its path was death and devastation.

Another power stalked the land before it, and its name was fear. The stream of Certesian refugees poured over the mountains, bringing terror with them like a plague. Certes had fallen, the barbarians were mad, drunk with rape, pillage and fire. The Eldaraans gave them food and drink and sent them on to Aldar. Many went with them, driving livestock and hauling families and all they could carry on wooden carts. But many stayed. Eldan had forgotten how to make war after a thousand years of peace. Those who had hungered for battle had journeyed to find it in other lands. But there is a fire to be kindled in the hearts of even peaceful peoples when their hearths and families are threatened. So the Eldaraans who stayed prepared to fight, with rake and shovel if need be.

Lothar, King of Eldan this past forty years, sent a desperate message to his cousin Sherit, regent of Aldar. The return messenger arrived only two days ahead of the first soldiers. Hearing of trouble in the North, the pirates had redoubled their assaults against Aldar's shores, so the regular army had to remain at home. But Sherit emptied his Kingdom's coffers to hire mercenaries to rush to Eldan's aid. If that peaceful country were to fall to the invaders, Aldar would also be quick to fall.

One such band of mercenaries was the Warriors of the Starquesting Dragon. Originally, they had crewed a pirate vessel named for her dragon shape and stellar navigation. A storm had left her shattered on the rocks at the foot of an Aldaran village they had meant to sack. Instead they were taken in, albeit warily, fed, and the injured cared for. By the time the soldiers came for them, they and the village had

won one another's' loyalty, and the soldiers were turned away at the gate. Led by their Captain, Krell Ironfist, they took hire as mercenaries and spent much of their time defending villages from pirates.

Krell led his mixed band of fighters North to kill barbarians only slightly less civilized than themselves. With them he took his captive bride, the amazon shamaness, Tawnee Darkfalcon. They battled savages every day for two turns of the moon, as the weather turned bitter and snow began falling at the Stormtooth's feet. Although the fighting was fierce, there were no magics brought against them. When Krell asked after the power rumored to have laid waste to Certes, the locals muttered superstitious nonsense. It was said that the Stormtooth mountains were the last home of Faery. That the elves who had retreated to their forbidding slopes had no love of human magic, and would not allow it to pass through their realm. Krell snorted derisively at this nonsense, and surmised that either the magic had run out, or that there had never been any at all.

Winter settled over the land, and the mountains became all but impassable. Only a fool, or the hardiest of adventurers, would dare to brave the snow-clad peaks in the winter. The barbarians settled into their captured lands to the North and waited for Spring to give them access to their enemy once more. The mercenaries took shelter with their hosts, living among them in the villages and towns. The Dragons, having fought very well indeed, were invited to winter at Lothar's castle. Krell thought it a doubtful honor. His rough crew would be happier settled in a village like their adoptive one in Aldar. But they could hardly refuse the King. Krell led his band to Lothar's winter keep. The Dragons were every bit as uncivilized as Krell had feared, drinking and carousing into the wee hours every night, and he counted himself among them. But Lothar was a wise man, and he had guessed well, warning his staff and family what to expect. The Dragons were assigned quarters well away from the royal family, and their own feasting hall and wine cellar. Only Krell and his wife slept near the King and Queen. The amazon woman was an interesting creature, friendly enough in her blunt, abrupt way, alternating love and hatred toward her captor husband. She had no interest in women's pastimes such as embroidery or stitching, although she politely watched the Queen's frail, blue-veined hands show her how to do the work. She demanded her own turn at the walls, marching guard duty with her spear in the bitter cold. She had won a grudging respect from the pirates turned mercenaries, and Krell's love for her was open in his eyes.

Each morning they rose and tended armor and weapons, in the afternoon they took a shift of guard duty. In the evening they supped with the royal family, then joined the Dragons for wine and song. Near dawn, they returned to their apartment next to the King's and fell into drunken slumber. One morning like all the rest, Tawnee woke with her head heavy from the night's drinking. Turning to shake Krell

awake, she found him dead, cold, throat cut, blood pooled on their bed. With a roar she burst from the room into the hallway, to find the castle in turmoil. The King and Queen were slain, along with the Princess and the two young Princes. Vaguely she realized that Krell bore some small resemblance to the royal family, that the assassins must have thought him a Prince of the Blood. The Dragons rampaged through the castle, searching for the assassins. They found two dead guards where the killers had come over the walls, a nearly impossible feat. No trace of the assassins was found, not in the castle nor in the village outside its walls. It was as if they had never been, but their handiwork was all too evident. The advisors began turning suspicious eyes toward the Dragons, more from a need to find someone to blame than any real conviction. On the second day, Tawnee returned to the room she had shared with her husband. She had stoked the flames of her anger to keep sorrow at bay, and was not yet willing to surrender to despair. So much had been left unsaid between them, and now it would never be said. Hate carried her forward. Closing the door and barring it with a simple Ward, she began a complex ritual of magic unused since her capture in her native lands. Through this magic she Sensed traces of the assassins passing. She tasted their aura, and found it alien, although human. These were no simple barbarians, but come from far, very far, to do this deed. Their trail, a faint amber glow in the air, led out through the door of their room. At the end of that amber glow were the men she would kill in Krell's name. Then she could mourn.

Several of the Dragons came across her while she packed travel rations. Joella Starwatcher, once navigator of the Starquesting Dragons, who now guided their travels on land, Ghislane, the axe-wielding barbarian who had fought beside them for years. The soft spoken desert nomad whose name no one knew. Ward Truestory, the Company's bard, who had written many a song and story of the Dragon's exploits. Pan Faarstar, ever torn between wielding a sword or a pen. And Dachs, escaped slave turned pirate. The most loyal of the band, they argued the right to travel alongside the amazon. They too hungered for vengeance for their lost friend and Captain. They left in the brilliance of a winter morning, against the protests of the advisors, who were not yet quite ready to make outright accusations. They followed the amber trail through miles of forestland to the foot of the Stormtooth mountains. Some of the band demurred assaulting the wintry slopes, but Tawnee argued that the assassins had managed it, without magic to guide or shelter them. Finally she started up, and even the reluctant ones trailed up after her.

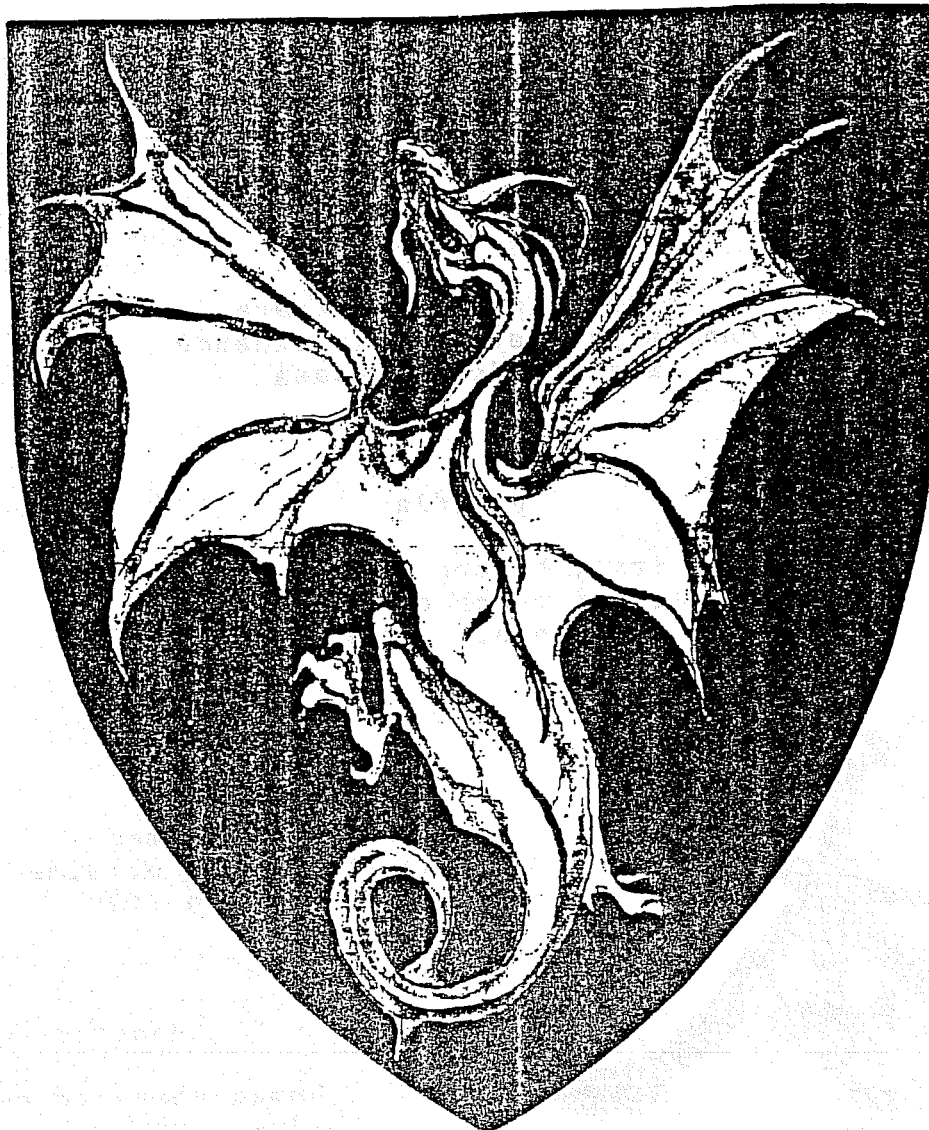
The climb was perilous, and more than once Tawnee was forced to use her shaman powers to save lives, including her own. At almost the midway point, they followed the amber trail around the curve of the pass and abruptly found themselves in the midst of a green valley. Tawnee wanted to

stop, to circle the valley, but the rest of the crew seemed ensorcelled by the place, and pushed past her toward the wooded copse at its center. Slowly, her sense of foreboding slipped away, and Tawnee felt the peace of this place settle in her bones. Only the hard knot of anger which armored her grief remained chill. A flare of panic sparked when they entered the copse and she saw that the trees formed a perfect circle. In the center, no grass grew. The whisper of softly chanting voices drifted to her ears as she fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

She woke with a sense of terrible wrongness. The air was dry and hot, and a searing wind blew against her. She was walking through a desert wasteland, yet she did not remember how she got here. The rest of the Company staggered beside her, in a daze like her own. A strange, low city was on the horizon. As they drew near, they could see the dwellings were built of sand made solid, with graceful curves and round windows. The streets were empty, but there was the sound of revelry ahead. They pushed forward, and came into a park, where brown grass struggled to survive in the sun and sandy soil. The crowd, which had been noisy before, had fallen to utter silence at their approach, and now stood staring in eery silence. From out of the crowd stepped the strangest man Tawnee had ever seen. He looked somewhat like the jester at Lothar's court, with his long curled blond wig and striped breeches. He came forward with a huge artificial smile and kissed Tawnee's hand as the courtiers had done. Looking up at her with eyes too bright for a human, he introduced himself. He was to be called Sir Peter Le Grue, although that was not his name. He had created this place, and the people in it. When asked how, he turned with a glint of madness in those bright eyes and said, from his imagination of course, They were led to a dwelling which they all swore had not been there when they first passed, and given food and drink. Their hunger overcame their caution, and they ate it all. When they had slept and rested for several days, they were summoned again to the park. The villagers were gathered all around, watching silently. A strange lot; Tawnee had the absurd impression they existed only when one was looking directly at them. Le Grue smiled, and she saw that his teeth were fanged. Remembering the Eldan farmers' campfire tales of men who could become wolves, Tawnee watched him suspiciously. He had the faint reek of black magic. He explained in grandiose style that it was time for the village to become a Kingdom. None among the populace were of noble blood, so it was left to the strangers to contest for the crown. Tawnee and the Dragons refused to fight one another. But Le Grue explained in his mad fashion that death and injury were but inconveniences here. Midway into his explanation, he suddenly plunged a dagger into the nomad's heart. With a shout, Ghislane beheaded the jester. The head lost its blond wig and rolled away, giggling hysterically. They all watched in horror as the body strode over and lifted the head back to its shoulders, recovering

the wig with a fey grin. He pointed to the fallen nomad. The corpse stirred, and the nomad raise a hand to his head in confusion. Then he rose and bared his breast, where not even a mark remained. They experimented with cutting themselves, the pain dull and short lived. They duelled, killing one another, only to rise after a few minutes, ready to fight again. It was then that Tawnee realized they were in Hell.

Numb with the conviction that Krell's death would never be avenged, she joined the tourney. She was happy that Krell's soul had not been consigned to this bleak land, nor that of Shanna, her tribal mate, dead these past six years. She was gripped as by a fever, and slew her friends one by one till only she was left standing. Le Grue took her by the arm and proclaimed her Queen. Queen of the Lands that Burn. Queen of Hell.



scout

silent as sunlight
sifting through the em'rald trees
child of forest song

archer

bow's wood and sinew
man's flesh and blood, eye and heart
combined, one weapon

barbarian

cold lands lead to warm
fear, pain, sorrow, even death -- lost
in Berserkergang

assassin

clad in night's embrace
chosen prey stalked in silence
face of death unseen

paladin

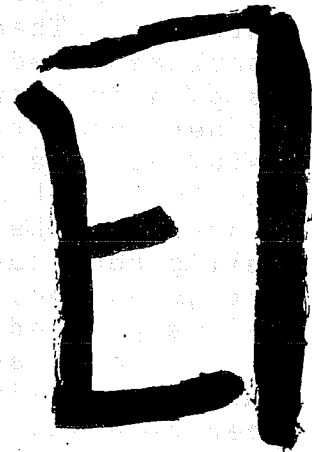
iron. haloed in light
blesser of touched and touching
flame born, life giver

bard

peacemaker, dreamer
weaving the fabric of time
lest the past be lost

monster

human shape concealed
hidden hunger let escape
beast within revealed





wizard

heartswept, wings of fire
yearning skyward, no respite
Wisdom is Power

wench

flower midst combat
gladly cheering the victor
whatever his name

warrior

staunchest of the bold
no magic save a fierce heart
and a will to win

healer

above the charnel
dispenser of life and death
like some primal god

druid

trees are but doorways
to the heart of the Forest
her children have keys

anti-paladin

iron. shrouded in dusk
thief of life's breath from dead foes
ash spawned, death's touch

monk

war as an art form
combat a swift dance of death
peace wrought of chaos

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