

Aventurian Herald

Aventurian Herald 177

The Bass and the Manticore—the Northmarches and the Fight against the Traitor Haffax Mendena. We wish to firmly denounce all malicious claims that the Northmarcher stayed home from the war as they so often do. The most honorable nobles of the Northmarches rode with the Northmarchan Guard Regiments under the dukedom's banner of the River King in answer to the Empress' call to arms against the dark Shadow Marshal.

Mage Academy in Wagonhold Finally Opens! Wagonhold. On the 20th of Phex, the Storrerbrandt College opened its second branch, this time in Wagonhold. The event was preceded by a legal and bureaucratic tug of war, as not everyone was happy that the trade house planned to open a mage academy so close to the imperial city. The issue's many points of contention include whether the College's charter even permits the establishment of a branch academy.

Are Further Disasters Heading Our Way? Since the Starfall last autumn and the disaster in Arivor, worries and fears have dominated conversations in salons and on the streets. The starry sky above us has changed quite a bit and continues to change! Arivor is lost! And our Horas has not been seen in public for over a year!



Aventurian Herald, Travia, 1059 F8



Royal Wedding Secures Nostria's Future

Queen Yolande II Kasmyrin Ties the Knot of Travia with Forest Count Eilert Rheideryan

NOSTRIA. After her three-year engagement to the war-like Forest Count Eilert Rheideryan of Mirdin, Queen Yolande II Kasmyrin of Nostria invited dignitaries from allied countries (as well as courtiers from her own country) to their wedding in the capital. Our reporter was happy to be present at the festivities in his capacity as writer for the *Aventurian Herald*.

Kind reader, take note: unlike many of her citizens, the young queen values Hesindan knowledge and the world. The date chosen for the marriage, the Day of Fidelity, which is the 12th of Travia, shows her devotion to the community of the lands of the Twelvegods. The marriage is a sign for foreign visitors and the people of Nostria that the difficult years are past, and a new age is beginning.

To visitors, the city of Nostria presents itself as a worthy capital. The boulevards are lavish, the house facades ornate. Trade and innovation enliven the city in ways that haven't been seen for a long time.

To Queen Yolande, Nostria's fortunes began to improve the day they announced their engagement. Marshal Rondriane of Sapstem was never close to the Queen in the days before the marriage, and although the marshal was in attendance, Yolande chose instead to spend her time conversing with various scholars from all over Aventuria. The famous historian Lyssandra della Pallyo was present, but it was the famous mercenary, Jaco Doria, who stood out. Despite his warlike profession, Jaco received his education in Methumis and proved it by gracing the writer of this article with a long lecture on the subject of trolls. Count Eilert seems to be on cordial terms with Master Doria, most likely as a result of his many quests.

Despite many opportunities for interesting conversation, the Forest Count settled quickly into his role as husband of the Queen and presented a serious, almost gruff mien to the assembled guests.

The celebrations began with an early-morning tournament, which began with many knights competing in the joust on the meadows before the gates of Nostria. Their shields showed that they came from all across the realm and even from neighboring kingdoms. The autumn weather made the tilt yard muddy, which demanded great riding skill from the knights. After many broken lances, the winner was a mysterious White Knight who was fighting for the honor of her queen. Second place went to Adran Bittersteel, a knight from Weiden.

Count Eilert watched the tournament by Yolande's side, and didn't take part himself. A wise decision, as who would dare tilt against the bridegroom of the Queen on the wedding day?

After a short break and an excellent midday meal, it was time for the bridal couple to take

their vows. They rode on horseback through cheering crowds of burghers, followed by the royal household and the guests in a long parade, to the historical Stone of Nostria. Blessed Ones of Travia guided the couple to their place in front of the columns in Freedom Square. Their joined hands were wound with a precious ribbon as a sign of their covenant with Travia. The priests gave their blessings and Yolande and Eilert took their vows before their subjects and the gods. After the ceremony, everyone withdrew to the festive banquet in the castle.

A weight seemed to lift from Eilert's shoulders and his pace quickened as the bridal couple approached their seats at the table. After they were seated, a long line of guests paid their respects. No courtier dared miss the wedding, and though it seems that certain members of the nobility of Nostria are displeased by this union (Marshal Rondriane of Sapstem and Count Albio III of Salza among them, according to malicious gossip), no ill will was felt during the celebration.

Foreign guests then honored the couple after the courtiers and subjects had presented their gifts. The list of visiting dignitaries included representatives of the Horasian HPNC, an envoy of Finnian ui Bennain, and even Kajian of Sinoda (known as "The Swallow"), a Swordmaster from far Maraskano who presented the happy couple with a philosophical treatise and praised the deep friendship between free Maraskano and the Kasmyrin family. The guests, too, demonstrated by their actions and words that they were united by scholarship as well as mutual defense in warfare, in the spirit of the day.

The most unusual guests arrived uninvited. After the foreign visitors had given their blessings and presented their gifts, and everyone had settled down to the first course of the meal, the doors to the room swung open by magic. Ravens and owls flew in and landed on the rafters, heralding the entrance a group of mysterious visitors who were no doubt witches.

Their leader approached the queen with the self-confidence of a high-born noble. She introduced herself as Karlitta of Lyckweiden. The name sent whispers through the hall, as she is considered the most influential among the witches of Nostria. This daughter of Satuarina presented the queen with an unusual gift—a stone surrounded by a strange glow. She said it was a fallen star, given to remind the Queen that she rules in fateful times.

Friedhelm Roachbrook
(Philipp Neitzel)



Aventurian Herald, Travia, 1040 FB

On Our Own Behalf

THE *Aventurian Herald* wishes to head off any rumors that government authorities took issue with the *Herald* after the publication of the previous edition.

Dear readers, we ask that you please refrain from spreading these falsehoods. Of course, the *Aventurian Herald* is prepared to place its archives at the disposal of the authorities at any time. There is no need to talk about a search of the editorial office just because some members of the authority occasionally visit our offices unannounced. Also, we can confirm that Itsadora Alrikshuber hasn't been imprisoned, even though certain local papers claim otherwise.

It is correct to say that Miss Alrikshuber no longer writes for our periodical, but this is due to the simple fact that our managing editor dismissed Miss Alrikshuber. Regrettably, of late, the quality of her research has not been meeting the high standards the *Herald* demands of its writers. We would also ask you to refrain from submitting further questions about Miss Alrikshuber and her recent article. Despite everything, we wish our former writer good luck, as—and we want to make

this clear—she wrote and worked in the interest of her readers. Even though her wording might have been callous at times, she always followed the Hesindan obligation to increase our knowledge.

Upon reflection, this should be obvious to anybody who wishes to speculate whether Miss Alrikshuber intended to spread negative propaganda about the Griffon Throne in her recent article.

The *Aventurian Herald* rejects these accusations categorically, as neither in the past nor today have any members of our editorial staff allowed themselves to be used for such second-rate politics. Miss Alrikshuber may have chosen her words poorly, but we assure you that she had no dishonest ambitions.

Our editors wish only to spread knowledge and have nothing to hide. Our readers can rest assured that, in the future, our coverage will remain as free and unbiased as it has always been.

*With sincere regards,
Baltram of Liepenberg
(Carolina Möbis)*

Aventurian Herald, Praios, 1040 FB

Letter to the Editor

THE sorry effort entitled "Successful Adventure," printed recently in the hate-filled *Nostrian Wartrumpet*, cannot be called an article. The term "purposeful slander" fits these horrible scribbles better. The undoubtedly biased writer used outrageous phrases to emphasize his prejudiced opinion about a dubious incident on the border between Andergast and the chaotic realm of Nostria! "Sinister Andergastan bandits" attacked some brave heroes?

If there really are footpads leaping from the bushes, why do you assume automatically that they are Andergastans? You would like that to be true, writer of the *Aventurian Herald*, wouldn't you? What proof do you have for the claims in your report? Let me summarize: None! But when an old coffin is found in the wild heart of the forest, Nostria claims to have solved this mystery at once.

You must retract this article, unless you wish to lose your Andergastan readers! Oh, I can hear it already, that Nostrian spite. They would probably be surprised to learn that

people in Andergast know how to read at all. Similar insults will no doubt be shouted from across the Nostrian border if you are brave enough to print my letter. I assure you, we know how to read. And we also know how to read the dishonesty between the lines. Beware, *Aventurian Herald*, don't become the mouthpiece of Nostria.

This wasn't a case of Andergastans attacking harmless adventurers. I know from a well-informed source that a group of Nostrian grave robbers crossed the border to Andergast recently, to plunder and desecrate the tomb of an ancestor of our honored baron. A brave group of lumberjacks drove them from our land, chasing the miserable tadpoles all the way back into the fish ponds they crawled from!

And a personal word to you, Friedhelm Roachbrook! If you are a man and not a coward, you will find me in Joborn on the 1st of Boron, in front of the woodchopper's. Bring your fists and your courage, if you even know what that is!

*Eberhardt Fireroot, burgher from Andergast
(Carolina Möbis)*

Aventurian Herald, Praios, 1040 FB

The Lioness' Watchful Eye

From the Protest Note of the Master of the Southern Domain, to Sultan Goriens, Praios, 1039 FB

"We demand justice from the lord of Anchopal. We won't hesitate to lecture the son of Hasrabal of Goriens about the path of the world as chosen by the immortals. No one besides us, our matriarch, the Sword of Swords, or the goddess Rondra can confine a Blessed One of the Lady of the Storms to her temple or forbid her to use her naming sword. This is especially true for the magically-gifted scion of a spellcaster who has not been blessed by the Twelve.

We, Bibernell Rishal of Hengisford, Master of the Southern Domain by Rondra's will, forbid an unbelieving spellcaster to



pronounce judgment over our priests. Our daughter Shuray will be returned to us, as will her naming sword. We will send a priest of our choice who knows how to deal with the rulers of Anchopal, Rondra testis [Bosparano for "as Rondra is my witness" -Editor]! And if Vizier Maruban ben Hasrabal forces us, we will know how to enforce this lesson, in obedience to the commandments of the goddess of Thunder."

*Bibernell Rishal of Hengisford
(Daniel Richter)*

**Before you marry,
keep both eyes open,
but afterwards, turn
one blind eye.**
*The Dukedom of Angasal
offers its congratulations on the
happy day of Queen Yolande
JJ Kasmyrin and Count Eilert
JJ Rheideryan, in neighborly
joviality and fellowship.
Count Gard J*

**Builders Take
Note!**
*The Alliance of the Sword is
looking for builders to expand
the new main temple of the
Storm Queen in Drileuen.*

Aventurian Herald, Peraine, 1039 FB

The Dean's Invitation

PUNIN. The *Scientific Symposium on Current Research in Magical Phenomena* is a great opportunity for magical-scientific experts to visit the capital of Almada. It gives members of the Gray Guild a chance to exchange views about magical phenomena and, when possible, study Almadan wine.

The symposium is usually restricted to a familiar circle of researchers at the Academy of High Magic in Punin. But this year, Dean Sirdon Kosmaar has invited anybody of distinction in the Gray Guild. The Symposium is now open to all members of the Guild, a fact that the leader of the Punin Academy wants to stress. But rumors have it that the Dean issued personal invitations to particularly important members of the Guild, such as department heads and celebrities.

Rumors also fly about the reasons behind this change in policy. Some say that Sirdon Kosmaar will try anything to gather votes for the upcoming Guild Master election, and that he might have plans to found a second branch of the Punin Academy. Others claim that the Dean wants to reduce the size of all offices and either become an eremite or teach at the Institute of Arcane Analysis in Kuslik. There is also talk about

the development of new spells or new staff rituals, or even an attempt at mediation between the three Guilds, echoing the Unified Guild of the past.

So far, the Ivory Tower, as the Puniners refer to the Academy, has not commented on these rumors. They would speak only of the necessity to improve ones' magical knowledge, and that all members of the Guild are invited to do so.

Many mages have announced their intentions to participate. Most have made little effort to excel in their magical-scientific studies, but many have proven themselves with their practical skills, good teaching, or personal acumen in debate, like Jeldan of Perricum, a vocal critic of Kosmaar.

As the formerly sedate Symposium expectantly awaits many more participants this year, taunters propose the hypothesis that Kosmaar's true intention is to increase the Symposium's fame and use it to strengthen his position in the Guild. It remains to be seen whether he is really interested in the scheduled presentations.

The *Aventurian Herald* will report other possible motives behind the Dean's invitations as we learn of them.

*Terya di Casibelli
(Marie Mönkemeyer)*

**Now available at all branches
of Stoerrebrandt Trade House:**
Wagonhold Blue
*Apply just one coat, and
your shutters will shine
like those of the richest
man in the world!*

Limetree Javern
*Garetian cuisine
Oaksteader wheat beer
Clean places to sleep
On the Market
Square in Wagonhold*

Aventurian Herald

Special Edition
Aventurian Herald 177

Aventurian Herald, Praios 1040 FB

1. An Astrologer from Gyldenland

RETHIS. Our colleague Tychea Patronikis held and transcribed the following conversation on her journey to the island of Rethis. The statements of the well-traveled Zorianon (“astrologer”—Editor) have been reworked with his permission, to make them comprehensible for our honored

readers. Our writer received translation assistance from Magister Braziacos a Nithartus from the Rehtian Warrior Academy, himself from Gyldenland. Unfortunately, our messenger suffered a mishap on his way to the printer, and the manuscript has been damaged in some places.

Tychea. We have the rare pleasure of speaking to *Sargolam of the family Sargonim from Kerrish-Thalam*. The Zorianon is from Gyldenland. Recent events in the sky have caused some chaos in his home country as well, and he has traveled for many weeks to find the reason for these changes. We are fortunate

to have the support of Magister *Braziacos a Nithartus*, who himself came from Gyldenland many years ago. He now teaches at our own Mother Rondra Academy and is willing to assist us with translation difficulties. Zorianon Sargolam, please tell us about the reasons for your monumental journey.

2. A Falling Star

SARGOLAM: Certainly. A burning star fell from the sky during Kashu (the winter month) six years ago (around Boron, 1033 FB —Editor) near Yil’ Dabuu in the east of the Archipelago of Talaminas. I knew that great changes were coming. All signs pointed in that direction. The stars give us riddles and also clues, but no constellation told us the reason for this event.

Tychea. I know our readers certainly want to know the location of the archipelago you come from. Can you give us some hints?

Sargolam. Certainly. With strong winds, my home is about four days of travel south of the large jungle region. It takes about two weeks to travel from there to Balan Cantara.

Braziacos. I learned from conversations with sailors on their way to Gyldenland from Teremon that they were headed for Balan Cantara, believing that it is about as far south as Brabak. The lands of the Kerrishi are very far south indeed.

Tychea. And your long journey began with a star falling out of the sky?

Sargolam. Not at all. I have been dealing with the things the stars reveal about our fates for over 30 years. We began to see changes via our observatory earlier in the year. Actually, we have been searching the skies for changes since the Star Fall ten years ago (1029 FB/4777 IC/5503 YoA. —Editor). We saw further confirmations in the years 4780, 4782, and 4782 IC. I heard that a burning star landed in the southern reaches of the Towers of Morning in the year 4780 of the Imperial Calendar (or the 5506th Year of Arrival, as the culture of the Kerrishi would call it), and my Order asked me to study this ominous phenomenon. We gathered the necessary information through our many branches and connections in the Empire, and I myself traveled to northern Corabenius, to see where the star had landed.



3. Disease from the Stars?

SARGOLAM: The Imperials had begun, in their ignorance, to dig up the star. Many died from a disease that spread edema across their bodies and caused their hair to fall out. Three days after my arrival, cyclopes attacked the Temple of Brajan, where the heart was being stored, and carried it off. My research to that point had revealed a high concentration of natural purplesteel in the star, which is very interesting. Soon after the attack, our traders began to report an increase in activity among the cyclopes in the region. Two years later, another burning star broke up in the sky over the sea lands the Imperials call Ochobenius, in the north of Myranor. It was said that forest fires raged for days, and the trees had been tossed around in some places as if they had been struck down by the fist of Bel-Shuga. The third event took place in the west of Myranor, in an area called Koromanthia. The exact location of the fallen star is still unknown, as it most likely came down in the desert. In that same year,

a star fell in the northeast of Myranor and destroyed a fleet of Hjaldinger ships.

These were just the greatest of the signs the stars presented. Many smaller signs brought the image into sharp focus. The Observatory of Kerrish-Thalam has an astrological tradition going back over 5,000 years, and some of their written records go back just as far. With these resources to guide them, each soon-to-be Zorianon learns the names and behaviors of the stars, and their meanings. As Balburri shows us again and again, our heavenly guides are ruled by order, and every change has a reason and must be considered a sign.

Tychea. Bel-Shuga, Balburri—these names will not be familiar to our readers. Magister, could you help us?

Braziacos. In the Horasian Empire, the red star Bel-Shuga is called *Kor*, yes, like the demigod of war. Horasians honor bright, white Balburri with the name of *Horas*.

Sargolam. Horas, well, ... [Editor's note: Here the record of the conversation was damaged on its way to the printer]

4. The Star Shaker

BRAZIACOS: You have mentioned that a cult tried to interfere with your research at various locations. Could you tell us more about these disciples of the stars?

Sargolam. Certainly. It is a community that seems to accept members from any background. We saw humans from Shindrabar during the attack on the Observatory of Semparang. We also saw feline species, and even some shingwa. This is particularly interesting, as the humans who live there feel a strong antipathy towards all furred and lizard creatures. These cultists tried everything in their power to get to the fallen stars. We learned from prisoners that they hope to earn eternal life and curry the favor of a god they call the *Star Shaker*. We have found cults united under their symbol in various cities, each having managed to gather the wretched with their alluring messages.

Tychea. Were you involved in the attack

Continued on next page -->

yourself? That must have been a frightening experience.

Sargolam. Not scared, no. Zorianoni are well-versed in the astrological sciences, yes, but they also receive extended training in the use of arcane powers, which are given to us by Bal' Ashindi, the Lady of the Stars. Traveling Zorianoni possess various mundane skills as well, and usually have more than enough fighters by their side. Having not one but *three* Zorianoni present in the observatory at the moment of the attack was a great advantage. This turned the brashness of the cult into disaster.

Tychea. This Observatory of Sembarang, where is it located?

Sargolam. *Semparang*, not *Sembarang*! The Observatory of *Semparang* is on the island of *Yil' Djanar* in the Archipelago of *Shindrabar*. This is about halfway between the Archipelago of *Talaminas* and *Balan Cantara*.

Tychea. Then your people have settled two archipelagos?

Sargolam. Not quite. Not yet. The League of *Talaminas* absorbed some of the larger islands in the south of the Archipelago of *Shindrabar* into the *Kerrishi* culture.

Tychea. Interesting. Why were you visiting that observatory?

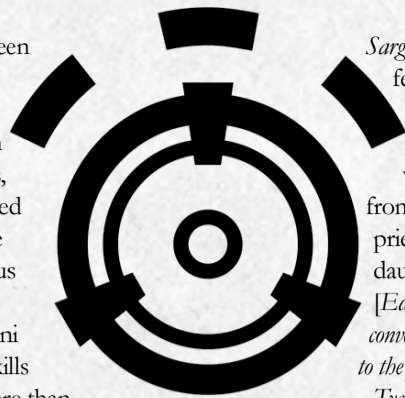
Sargolam. A rain of burning stars fell on the southern islands of the archipelago early that year. Given our experience with burning stars, I traveled from *Kerrish-Thalam* with two priestesses of *Bal' Ingra* and his daughter. *Bal' Ingra* is the ...

[Editor's note: Here the record of the conversation was damaged on its way to the printer]

Tychea. Would you kindly explain to us why, exactly, you asked the Blessed Ones to join you?

Sargolam. Certainly. The *Kerrishi* of *Kerrish-Thalam* have a model society that is segregated into various castes. The priestesses and astrologers are at the top, as they have the gift of *Bal' Ashindi*. That is, they understand and pronounce *Bal' Ashindi's* will. We had traveled to *Kerrish-Djanar* as a trinary to look for fallen stars. Some of these stars can appear to be gifts from the Lord of Fire, and the priesthood considers them holy. Other stars are cursed and bring disease and pestilence. We have a responsibility to gather them and minimize the danger... [Editor's note: Here the record of the conversation was damaged on its way to the printer]

Tychea Patronikis, with thanks to Sargolam of the family Sargonim from Kerrish-Thalam, and Magister Braziacos (Peter Horstmann)



3. A New Life

BR better said: we came to the *Gyldraland*. This is only a part of the great land in the west and belongs to the Empire, as they call their realm. And it is a land of wonder. The houses are built from bright stone and the temple of their gods is made of gold, precious metals, and jewels. Its glory and wonder make *Havena* and *Grangor* look like orc villages. There we were. Looking for our relatives. And we felt proud when people called us *Hjaldingers* in this land. I could tell you many stories, but you have asked about the old home, and so I will talk about our adventures in *Myranhall* and our cheerful evenings with the *Golden Falcon* later. As we were told by *Isir* in *Olport*, *Hjaldingers* are free and accept no king, and should be an example to all of us. They serve the Empire! Yes! I have seen it, with my own eyes! I lived there for fifteen years! Yes, half of my life. Yeab, those were great years, full of wonder and adventure.

We defeated panther men. Creatures like shadows that mated with a predator. *Thorge* led us to *Haldingaport* after a few weeks. What a town. People as numerous as stars in the sky. Something happening all the time. We offered our strong hands and a ship, and they offered much work, a place to rest, and thousands of stories about their land, and *Hjaldingers*, and elves, and so much more than anybody here could imagine. We have enough stories to last us years in *Thornval*. *Thorge* was a skillful trader and competent leader, and he helped us earn a good standing. As we all had set out to live in the land of our ancestors, we made ourselves comfortable and consolidated our strength. Over the years, we met other *Thornvalers* from our expedition in *Haldingaport*. Many had not fared well. Most had lost their ships, had washed up on the coast without anything, or had even been sold as slaves. They found a new home with us.

4. The High Queen

IT was here that I met *Kirla*. Ten years of happiness... We had been trading with the *Vestland*, the coast of *Haldingard*, for everything they had to offer—amber and furs, horn and jewels. In *Haldingaport* we met other traders from all across *Myranor*. There were *Cantarese*, tanned from the hot sun, *Iolonans* as fair-skinned as we, as their ancestors also had come from the north. There were also *Kerrishi*. By *Swafnir*, nobody is as stubborn and merciless in trade as the *Kerrishi*, but their wines are among the best you can get. We sold those in *Kingscastle*, or *Haldingshall*, as they call it. This black fortress with its stout walls and many towers is the bulwark of *High Queen Theodosvintha Sunhelm*—and what a queen she is. She is younger than me, but she has slain a dragon with her own hands! A real dragon! And *Kirla* helped.

From her I learned how the monster had ravaged the countryside and killed any man who stood in its way. But then along came *Theodosvintha*. She was a rune master who had gathered some companions to face the creature, rune blade in her left hand, golden shield emblazoned with the red horse head in her right hand, purple cloak and long, reddish-

blond hair blowing in the wind—a true heroine. By her side were *Kirla* and her other companions, with long spears and throwing hatchets, driving the beast towards their master and preventing its escape. Every child in *Haldingard* knows the story. The monster had already killed the old *High King*. After *Theodosvintha* killed the dragon, the *High Hjalding* named her the *High King's* successor.

This was the beginning of great times for our *Ottajaska*. Our connection with the *High Queen* gave us the ability to expand our small trade house and establish contacts in *Balan Cantara*, *Sidor Ochobik*, and *Sidor Corabis*. Big cities in *Myranor*, each with many thousands of inhabitants. *Thorge* was a wealthy man when he died four years ago, and his funeral was so glorious that people spoke about it for months. *Thorge's* death was but a sign of evil days to come. In 4784 IC, a star crashed down in the *Othbavik*, the large arm of the ocean between *Vestland* and the *Hardun Peninsula*. The resulting flood brought misery and death to many villages on the coast. Our luck never returned.

Aventurian Herald, Rondra 1040 EB

1. The Journey Home

HAVENA. Another report about the *Gyldenland* reached our editorial office from the capital of *Albernia*. A group of four *Thorwalers* whom we met in the *Anchorheart Tavern* claimed to have once made a successful journey to this legendary land. One of our writers managed to record part of their incredible tale.



We started on our way, our chests bursting with pride. I was a young man back then, just old enough to be allowed to go. We wanted to see adventure, I say! And we did. By *Swafnir*, we did! With a strong wind, we sailed west on the sea, towards all the miracles of our old home. And it is full of wonders. But more about that later. First, we have to get there, don't we? So to the sea we went. To the terrors of *Hranngar*.

2. Terror from the Deep

WE saw the fight of the divine whale against the spawn, the primal serpent and mother of all dark creatures of the sea. We weren't yet two weeks into our journey. First came the fog. Then came the noises. Muffled and unreal. Some of the older men clutched their talisman necklaces and stared out into the fog. That went on for about an hour. Calls, muffled and mourning as the voices of the dead. Screams, high and clicking like a dolphin's. And in between, a droning sound, so deep that you felt it in your stomach more than heard it with your ears. The sails were unfurled, the oars were unshipped, and we slowly approached the sounds. The other longboats had disappeared in the mist. Only the long notes of horns told us that we weren't alone. We repeated the signal to show that we still were alive. But suddenly it got quiet. No horns, no calls, no screams—just silence. We shipped the oars and waited. *Shaya*, our *Blessed One*, murmured silent prayers to *Swafnir*, and many sailors did the same.

A shadow rose from the mist. A slender neck. Upon it, a monster's head. Eyes of pure fire. We grabbed for our weapons. Perhaps you can understand our relief when we saw that it was only the dragon prow of *Branngar Laefson*, with the torch he had lashed on for better seeing. *Branngar* himself stood at the front, another torch in hand, trying to find a way through the fog.

Then it happened. I remember only fragments. Something jumped out of the water between the ships, growing bigger. Dark green and dirty brown, covered in thousands of scales. By *Swafnir*, I swear it was the primal serpent itself rising from the water. Waves as high as houses tossed our ships, making them dance on the foam like sparks above a campfire. *Branngar's* ship split asunder before our eyes, the men and women fell into the water, and tentacles and other horrors of *Hranngar's* spawn fell upon them. Helpless, we clung to our own boat, unable to reach our companions. Then our proud

ship was thrown into the air and shattered by a single tremendous blow. I still remember falling toward the water. I am not ashamed to admit that I screamed in terror. Everybody did. Then everything went dark.

Days later, I awoke in darkness. What I saw in my nightmares during that time is between me and *Swafnir*. But I guess I will tell *Bridgera Karvsolmfara*. [Since the narrator had only just returned from a journey, he probably didn't know that the *Blessed One* was missing. —Editor] Where did I awake? Well, not on my ship. That didn't exist anymore. Our *Sea Bride* had been beautiful and glorious. Now she rested in *Swafnir's* depths, along with my father and my companions. As it turned out, I awoke on the *Goal Rider*. The boys and girls of the *Tilarid Ottajaska* had fished me out of the water. *Hetman Thorge* told me that I was the only one they recovered. After a few weeks, the *Goal Rider* carried us to *Gyldenland*.

5. Heralds of Doom

KIRLA was on her way to *Kaupfjord*, at the behest of her mistress when the star hit. Her ship went down with all hands. If not for the reports of local fishermen, I would never have learned what happened to my wife. And the misery did not end there. Many died after eating fish caught in that part of the ocean. Prophecies of doom were everywhere, and people proclaimed strange mysteries. The *High Queen* acted to silence these cults, but they were like the *hydras* from legend. Cut one head off, two new ones grew back. More and more often I thought of my childhood, and I longed to return to my roots. *Iskir* had promised us a *Hjaldingard* that didn't exist, or at least hadn't existed for a long time. My mind drifted back to *Thornval* and the time I met the *Sea King* [Editor's note: probably the explorer *Phileasson*], when all my dreams were followed up by deeds. With three companions, I boarded a ship sailing east to *Trivina*, and after a few months I found a *Gyldenland* ship from *Havena*. They were glad to take us on board as translators and companions. It is our goal now to return to *Thornval*. There we will tell what we learned about *Hjaldingard* and wait for the *Sea King's* return.

Swafnilda Pettersdottir (Peter Horstmann)

Aventurian Herald, Rundra, 1040 FB

Alarich of Gareth and the Battle of Gaulsford

A Chancellor of the Realm Fights in the Forefront of Battle, Faces Haffax, and is Brave Enough to Sound the Retreat—Alarich Ruhmrath of Gareth-Sighelsmark and the Battle of the Gaulsford Prove that Empress Rohaja Brings a New Age of Heroes.

WATERCASTLE/PERRICUM. The citizens of Perricum and Gareth had only four days to prepare to face the army of the arch-traitor Haffax, which, in a surprise move, came up the Darpat from Perricum. And the circumstances! The ground was soft and flooded, exhausting and demoralizing the knights and soldiers as they forcemarched from northern Perricum and the County of Gorge. Admittedly, the units from Gareth, Darpatia, Nebachot, and Arania were a wild bunch of honest but quarrelsome men. And who else would have accepted the responsibility of command and dare to face the brilliant commander Haffax? No less than Alarich of Gareth, Chancellor of the Realm and cousin to the Empress.

Alarich is honest, charismatic, intelligent, and eloquent, and is considered a true supporter of the crown. He was born into the imperial family in 995 FB as heir to the

burgrave of Sighelsmark. After his time as a squire and his service in the Northmarchan Duke's court, he completed his education in the Law School of the Griffon in Beilunk. Alarich later earned glory as a field commander at the Battle of the Gaulsford, which by all accounts was not a battle to be won. Haffax' army was superior in every way, supported as it was by karakilm and artillery mounted on the demon arks. When a brave troop of Nebachotian riders got stuck in the mud and their foray ended in disaster, Alarich realized that he had no choice but to employ that most difficult of military maneuvers—an ordered retreat.

The defeat at the Gaulsford cost the Realm many hundreds of lives, but at the same time, many more hundreds of lives were saved on the battlefield by the quick mind of a man who was brave enough to accept defeat. And who knows what

else might have been gained as a result?

The brave fighters of the Gaulsford have certainly bought the Realm precious time to order their troops and prepare for Haffax.

One final word about this field commander. When Empress Rohaja needed to appoint a new leader for the Imperial bureaucracy, she had many excellent candidates from which to choose. Alarich of Gareth was a respected political personality who possessed several advantages. First, Alarich is related to the Empress. Second, he is experienced in politics. Third, he is well-versed in diplomacy. Fourth, he is unbribable, and fifth, he is respected even by his enemies for his unimpeachable character. Only the Nebachotans refuse to forgive him for, as they put it, the "Shame of the Gaulsford."

*Jagodar of Galothini
(Björn Berghausen)*

Northmarchan News, Praios, 1040 FB

The Bass and the Manticore—the Morthmarches and the Fight against the Traitor Haffax

MENDENA. We wish to firmly denounce all malicious claims that the Morthmarchers stayed home from the war as they so often do. The most honorable nobles of the Morthmarches rode with the Morthmarchan Guard Regiments under the dukedom's banner of the River King in answer to the Empress' call to arms against the dark Shadow Marshal.

Like a lion, the Duke of the Morthmarches charged his enemy and showed no mercy. Rundra and the Alveranians were by his side, and thus he snatched the soil of the Realm from the claws of darkness, even though his followers paid for this victory with their blood.

His Highness Hagrobald Gruntwin of the Great River barely lost a hair on his

head, as Fate truly favored him in battle that day, but nevertheless the Raven carried many souls from the ranks of the River Guard across the Neversea. Accompanying him at the Battle of Mendena was the Baron of Swordlend, a colonel who led the Morthmarchan troops in the victorious attack on the city gate. Sadly, the colonel died in the struggle along with the barons of Firnwood and Fishwatchvalley, as well as the Lady of Vairningen. All were brave heroes who had held their fiefdoms since the time of His Majesty's grandfather, Count Jast Gorsam. The Realm feels these losses keenly. The laughter of many warriors, river guards, and knights will never be heard again on the Great River.

"The cost of this victory shows in the

eyes of the survivors, and though countless as the stars in Phex's night sky, their wounds will always remind us of the Campaign of a Thousand Tears." Thus spoke His Magnificence, Hane of Ibenburg-Luring, Praios' Field Chaplain of the Morthmarches, during the funeral service he led after the battle.

His Highness Hagrobald and his fighters returned victorious to their homeland by the Great River. He pledged to grant tuition and accolades to the children of fighters who had died in the war.

Blessed you are, Land of the Great River, that such a strong and determined hand watches over you.

*Hesindiago Wagonserve
(Tina Hagner)*

Aventurian Herald, Phex, 1059

Mage Academy in Wagonhold Finally Opens!

WAGONHOLD. On the 20th of Phex, the Stoorrebrandt College opened its second branch, this time in Wagonhold. The event was preceded by a legal and bureaucratic tug of war, as not everyone was happy that the trade house planned to open a mage academy so close to the imperial city. The issue's many points of contention included whether the College's charter permitted the establishment of a branch academy.

However, as of Phex of this year, all quarrels were resolved and construction on the former farmstead at the edge of town was allowed to begin. All of Wagonhold was present, as were many outsiders (the Limetree

Tavern had no rooms, or even places to sit, the night before). Many dignitaries, not all of them magical, were in town to attend a tour of the academy building led by Emmeran Stoorrebrandt himself. Others were here to learn about the curriculum from the teachers.

Things did not get off to a smooth start. The Trade Lord's opening speech was rudely interrupted by a blustery old mage who accused Stoorrebrandt of being an old crook with no respect for tradition. He went on to say that this high-handed academy was shameful to Guilds and mages everywhere.

With a friendly smile, the Trade Lord asked alumni from the Stoorrebrandt College in Riva who were present to welcome the new disciples

and treat their angry colleague to a drink of his choice in the Limetree. Then the Trade Lord went on with his speech.

The *Aventurian Herald* learned that this disruptive fellow was none other than Hesindiello Contumaci, a 53-year-old expert of magical theory who taught at the Institute of Arcane Analysis in Kuslik and who has voiced his opposition to the Stoorrebrandt College branch in Wagonhold since those plans were first announced. Readers of the *Herald* will remember him from his urgent letter, which we published in Edition #171.

For the rest of the speech, the magister held his comments in check, Hesinde be thanked, so that the celebrations could continue

Aventurian Herald, Praios, 1059 FB

From Belhanka to the World

BELHANKA. The annual Festival of Joy occurred only a few short weeks ago, but there are always many reasons to be happy in cheerful Belhanka. This might seem strange to non-locals, but even the most straight-laced bore would be hard pressed to complain about the recent festivities, which were a true inspiration for any patriot.

On the 12th of Praios, only a few days after an appearance by the Horas, six ships of the Horasian-Imperial Navy set out from the harbor of this most beautiful of cities. Cheered on by the crowds, the ships left the harbor and set course for the south, to the accompaniment of the clear sound of trumpets.

Unlike certain earlier expeditions, this flotilla's mission is no secret. It does not sail for Uthuria, even though many opportunities await brave explorers and settlers in Nova Methumisa. This time, it sails for the open waters of the Southern Sea, where the crews will hunt the pirates that have been increasingly troublesome. To quote Capitan Dragio ya Frecelli, "We will rest only when the last pirate is dangling from the noose." It might be a brutal policy, but it is also a welcome one, for the pirates have been ambushing our merchant ships and endangering trade with the colonies.

The first stop for the fleet is Nagra, to deliver a contingent of soldiers to their new posting before continuing south. These troops will protect our burghers living in the Brabakian harbor town.

This mission proves once again that the ships from Belhanka are among the best in the world. Four of six ships still sat unfinished in the local shipyards a few months ago, but today they were ready to sail. And even this is not enough, as more ships will follow! There is still much work to be done in the shipyards. The ship owner's son, Rivazio ya Montazzi, implied that the Horasian-Imperial Navy has placed more orders for ships from his honorable family's shipyards. He wouldn't speak of numbers, but a new dock is under construction in the Shipyard ya Montazzi, so we can guess that it will be *many*.

*Quido Berylli
(Marie Mönkemeyer, with
thanks to Christian Nehling)*



undisturbed.

We have since learned that Magister Ragenthal will visit Punin next month to report on the branch in Wagonhold at the *Scientific Symposium on Current Research in Magical Phenomena*, so as not to "leave the coverage of the event to experts that are beholden to Sirdon Kosmaar and his lapdogs," as the mage put it.

*Hesindiago Wagonserve
(Marie Mönkemeyer)*

Garethan Messenger, Praios, 1040 FB

What Do the Stars Tell Us?

FOR Praiosborn, the beginning of the month is the perfect time to start something new in your love life. On its way to Rahja, the Dog passes the constellation of the Griffon, indicating success in love when combined with Ucuri's position. What better moment to fall in love or re-ignite old feelings?

Rondrabort have character traits of the divine lioness, but not everybody is as stalwart as them, as shown by the changes to the constellation of the Sword. Someone close wants to betray you. Be especially careful with business at the beginning of the month.

Few know how to trust their emotions like **Efferdborn** do. This can be a great boon for your love life, as the Dog approaches Rahja from the direction of Efferd. If you remain determined and do not yield to small changes in the tides, your journey will lead you to your harbor by mid-month.

Traviaborn cannot rest as long as somebody needs their attention and care. This trait makes you popular and strengthens your business successes from the middle of the month on, but thanks to Mada, the health of those who need your care should improve by the end of the month.

Boronborn have no reason to mourn during the coming month. Their seriousness and stubbornness, and the positive influence of a conjuncture of Phex and Ucuri, grant them successes all through the month, especially (but not only) in business.

Since the Star Serpent coiled itself up, **Hesindeborn** must live with changes that will grow increasingly wild towards the end of the month, as Kor approaches the Serpent. In heated disputes and arguments, question any new opinions as much as old habits and positions.

For **Firunborn**, the coming month is the time to focus on developing their abilities.

It doesn't matter if you train in mental or physical skills, as Nandus' influence truly is powerful. At the end of the month, Kor's proximity to the Serpent grants you strength to carry out your plans.

The Cup almost builds a trigon with Levthan and the Lizard, advising **Tsaborn** to refrain from starting anything important, especially concerning love. From mid-month on, Mada's position lessens the power of the constellation, making it a good time to begin health-related endeavors. Maybe it is time to reconsider your diet?

The conjunction of Phex and Ucuri naturally offers **Phexborn** the chance for success in business, but the constellation formed by Mada's sign and the Horns might mean difficult negotiations ahead. You should rethink your position, especially towards the end of the month.

For all **Peraineborn**, this is the month to sow a new seed. Aves approaches the Barque, and the two will meet next month. Until then, you should delay new plans in order to reap greater successes later. This shouldn't be a problem, as careful preparations are suited to the nature of Peraineborn anyway.

Ingerimborn should rein in their fiery temper this month, as the Ogre Cross moves threateningly close to the Hammer, foretelling a nasty end to any conflict. Help comes from the Horas, a faithful companion for the whole month who reinforces your inner peace.

Due to Uthar's position, **Rahjaborn** should hold refrain from starting new romances, especially mid-month. As we all know, patience, faithfulness, and hard work can still lead to mistakes, but the Dog approaches the Mare, meaning that long-sought assistance is near at hand, possibly from a surprising source.

(Marie Mönkemeyer)

Kuslikan Courier, Praios, 1040 FB

Are Further Disasters Headed Our Way?

SINCE the Starfall last autumn and the disaster in Arivor, worries and fears have dominated conversations in salons and on the streets. The starry sky above us has changed quite a bit and continues to change! Arivor is lost! And our Horas has not been seen in public for over a year!

Since the beginning of the year, First Paladin Prince Folnor of Firdayon-Bethana has stood in for the Horas at celebrations, to deliver our leader's benevolent words to his subjects. Prince Folnor is often accompanied by his sister Udora, the Horas' fiancée, whose friendly manner has won her a place in many Horasians' hearts. We may no longer be able to rely upon the constancy of the night sky, but a ruler should tend to his people!

Are further disasters heading our way? That is the question on everybody's mind.

Instead of panicking or running after one of the many crazed doomsday prophets, the writers of the *Kuslikan Courier* tried to find answers, as is pleasing unto Hesinde. We found them with the Fellowship of True Faith, as embodied by His Grace Quendan Eolan Mercator, a Blessed One of Phex who is an expert in astrology and prophecy. When

we sat down for the interview, His Grace applauded us for our curiosity.

He couldn't tell us when or even if there would be further disasters, but he did say that we can expect change. "Everybody must realize that events are in motion. Many things that cannot be seen by mortals must be examined in the spirit of Hesinde. The pendulum can swing in many directions. And always remember that not all change is evil. A serpent molts, changes, and then is the same as before." He went on to say that he saw no reason for exaggerated fear. "On the contrary," he said, "this is a time to be brave. Look at the night sky. The Hero is shining brighter than ever before. He admonishes us to show courage, be a hero, and do great things, just like Geron the One-Handed. I have seen it clearly in the stars. They do not lie, but how things turn out depends on us, our courage, and our heroes."

As cryptic as these words might sound, His Grace spoke them calmly and with great purpose. He insisted that we print them, to "illuminate the right people at the proper moment, as is pleasing unto Hesinde."

Rational Rabrunati
(Marie Mönkemeyer)

Wanted: Itsadora Alrikshuber

50 silverthalers to anyone who knows the current whereabouts of the writer Itsadora Alrikshuber. The Tobrian Court will accept any information.

Editor's note: We have been assured that Miss Alrikshuber is being sought only for questioning, as she didn't appear for a formal inquiry at the Imperial administration. Miss Alrikshuber, if you read this, you know what to do.

Credits

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I.G.I.A.
APPROVED

Classifieds

Poem of the Month

Emperor, Margrave, Nobleman, all hold the Herald in their hand.

But if there's satire on their pages, they fly into horrible rages.

As when mockery comes to your door, no one asks for an encore.

Xeledon the Taunter
(Florian Schörg)