

BALOK'S BOOKS OF BANTER

Book 2: BATTLE CRIES

DOG
SOUL

BALOK'S BOOK OF BANTER: BATTLE CRIES

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'Balok's Book of Banter : Battle Cries'
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INTRO

You are exhausted, and the only inn in the small village where you have now arrived seems to be in the midst of some sort of raucous party. Hoping for a stiff drink, a long bath, and some peace and quiet, you open the door to see a host of dancers entertaining a rowdy crowd, who show no sign of tiring of their hooting and hollering. This has not been your day.

You have always been a survivor. Where others have failed, you have persevered, continuing on battle after battle. You've seen a great many conflicts, survived a great many conflicts, and on a night like tonight, after yet another difficult trial by arms, all you really want is a little peace of mind. One of the dancers swirls around you as you enter, trying to draw you in, and your eyes connect with a figure near the back of the room, at the only table that hasn't succumbed to rhythmic pounding of beer mugs by patrons working their way into a drunken stupor. You avoid the performers and make your way to the empty seat where the figure sits.

From beneath his hood, the small man gestures to the seat at his small table, then scribbles into a thick, leather-bound journal. He seems satisfied that you will be a quiet table-mate and makes no effort to draw you into conversation. After short moments, the waitress makes her way over, dodging between a pair of halflings who have left their drinks to join in the dancing with abandon.

"Welcome!" she shouts over the music, grinning at the volume of the establishment. "Would you like to hear our specials?"

Before you can answer, the hooded man looks up. "Unless your specials include a quiet room, I am afraid they are of no interest to us," he says. He seems to look up at her from under his hood, but his face is hidden in shadow. "But two full meals will do, and I believe my friend could use a stiff drink. Should it run dry, you are to bring another, but you are not to ask how we are and if everything is all right. The world would have to change extraordinarily for that to be a truth. Do we understand one another?" His voice takes on a dangerously low tone as his gloved hand flicks the girl a jewel of greater value than a week's worth of dinners at least.

She vanishes quickly, eager to be away from your eerie companion, who accepts your thanks with a wave of his gloved hand. As you offer to repay his generosity, he laughs, and the sound of his voice in laughter is more disturbing than his shadowed face. "My friend," he says cheerfully, "if you wish to repay me, merely tell me of the battles you have seen! One with as many scars as you sport must have seen battle upon battle." Before you can protest, he says, "Your adventures are not important to me, but I crave to hear the words of men charging into battle, of heroes reclaiming lost loves. Tell me of the cries of victory and defeat."

You feel your mouth open to deny his request when memories begin spilling from your lips. As your dinner is placed before you, you recall all of the screams you have heard as you've headed into battle...

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GOAL

For God, Country, and My Sister's Honor!
For God, Country, and His Sister's Honor!
For God, Country, and My Mother's Pancakes.
Bacon!
Death before dishonor!
I'll not share the same sun as the dogs of Wu!
Give us back our chickens!
For the Treasure!
For Honor, glory, and immortality!
Screw glory. For the money!

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE ANIMALS

Cry Havoc and let slip the war dogs!
Let loose the hogs of war!
Let loose the puppies of war!
Release the dragon!
Go go fiendish bunny!
Celestial Badger, I choose you!

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE NUMBERS

Never quote me the odds!
It's 1 to 10 odds? You want to surrender?

Last man to kill an orc is a rotten egg!
Last orc to kill a human will die screaming
I regret that you have but one life to give for my country!
Five hundred of them vs. the three of us? That's hardly fair... for them.
Only thirty to go!
Legion One, advance. Legion Two, advance. Legion three, advance. Legions 4-50, secure the flanks...
I'll take the thousand on the left, you take the thousand on the right.

BARDIC BATTLE CRIES

I'm sorry. I had no idea the woman in question was your wife, Never the less, you have impugned my honor. Draw your weapon.
I have killed three score men with this blade. Each of them was a master of his fighting style.
It's almost a disgrace to sully my sword with your common blood.
I am reminded of the saga of Felix the Bold. Fools beset him as well. Thus I quote him: 'Look to your gods. Make good your time.'

Not in the face!
Just keep your blood off my new suit of armor
Let's get this party started right!

Destroy the infidels!

Destroy the fidsels!

Destroy the fiddles!



CRIES OF CRIMINALS AND VILLAINS

Rape the canoes and ride the women home!

The world is mine!

By my dark powers, I shall turn you all into little fluffy bunnies!

Kill them. Leave none standing.

Kill them all... except for the one in the red shirt carrying the axe. That's my wife's nephew. I'll never hear the end of it.

CRIES OF COWARDS AND FAILURES

RUN AWAY!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

Here we go again...

This is all your fault...

If at first you don't succeed, get the heck out of [insert name of town].

Bring me my brown pants.

GNOMES

Hook them! Hammer them! Take out their kneecaps!

We're fighting ogres lads, get your climbing gear ready!

They might be twice our size, but they've only half our brains!

HALFLINGS

I don't care how tall you are. Step away from the children or I will rend you limb from limb!

Five to one odds eh? I like my chances!

There's just one troll left! We outnumber him two to one!

My knife will cut through you faster than I could carve a pumpkin.

I don't care if you are the Dread Lord of the Abyss. Threaten my family again and my blade will be the last thing you see.

HALF-ELVES

Half-breed though I be, I am still man enough to deal with you.

My elven blood may be thin, but it will never yield to orcish scum.

They say that elves are ten times the fighters humans are. I'd say that still makes me five times better than you.

MISCELLANEOUS BATTLE CRIES

You can have as many arrows as you want... in your belly!

Taste cold steel, pig dog.

You have been weighed, measured, and found wanting.

First the stone goes in my sling, then the stone goes in your head.

I love the smell of bat guano and sulfur in the morning. Smells like.... FIREBALL.

'Scuse me while I whip this out.

Hallo. You killed my father. Prepare to die.

Your presence here is a blight upon the land.
You will be cleansed.

My two blades sing for your death.

Do you prefer to die quickly, or painlessly?

Do you prefer to die quickly, or painfully?

Look! A flock of dead turtles flying backwards!

Yes! Right in the kidneys!

Look at me when I'm stabbing you!

Let the very heart of elemental fire consume
you!

My sister could fight this army with her little
pink dolly.

My grandmother could fight this ogre with her
broom.

My mother could fight this lich with her cook-
ing. Actually, I think she already did...

I want to die of old age in bed. You don't get
that option.

Two arrows in the heart. One in the head. Only
way to be sure.

Did you want to have grandchildren?

My first strike will graze your right shoulder. My
second strike will graze your left leg. My third
strike will impale you in the center. Now that
you're aware of the itinerary, let's begin.

Did you know I like to keep a battalion of gi-
ants in reserve?

Reserve? Who needs a stinking reserve?

You can come willingly or you can be dragged
kicking and screaming. Your choice.

I do hope you plan on resisting arrest

Your soul may belong to your god, but your ass
is mine.

If you run, you'll only die tired.

If you scream, you'll only die hoarse.

If you crap yourself, you'll only die smelly.

We're adventurers. They have green skin. Of
course we're going to kill them.



OUTRO

You blink, closing your half-open mouth with the feeling that you were in the middle of saying something, but you can't remember what it is. Your meal has long been finished, and the dancers have gone, leaving the room strangely quiet and empty. But instead of a feeling of relief at the lack of noise, you are slightly unsettled. You wonder vaguely just what was in the drink your benefactor ordered for you.

The morning sun pushes its way through the shades, and a waitress, different from the one last night, brings a heaping plate of breakfast for you. Clearly she has been informed of your companion's instructions, for she doesn't speak, merely curtsies as she wanders off. You look at the hooded man and try to remember what you were saying just a moment ago.

The stranger doesn't seem concerned, however. His hand dances across the journal, accompanied by a long feathered quill. He seems engrossed in his writing, and only looks up at you after he notices that you are watching him. He blows on the pages, then closes the book, tucking both the journal and his long quill inside his cloak before corking his vial of ink.

"You certainly have seen quite a few battles, haven't you?" he says, though he obviously doesn't expect you to answer. You see the flash of a grin from the shadows below his hood. "I do apologize for keeping you occupied, when it was obvious you sought rest. You'll find the staff has drawn a bath for you and a room is reserved for your use. I no longer have need of it."

He stands suddenly, faster than it seems he should have, and again you wonder where the time went. The stranger nods once, slips his vial of ink into the

voluminous folds of his cloak, and begins to walk away from the table. You call out to him, asking him who he is, and you sense that he is again smiling.

"Well, that is an interesting question," he replies. "I will give you an interesting answer." He withdraws a scrap of paper from his cloak, flicking it to you with perfect precision from his gloved hand. "That will tell you all you need to know should you wish to contact me for my services... or simply to supply further tales. But do not do so lightly. My master is stern, and only allows for a few free meals." He nods again, then backs away into a shadow behind the bar and turns, fading into the darkness as if he had stepped through a door.

You look at the scrap of paper, unable to recognize the words splayed across it. Such things are perhaps better not to be trifled with... but you place the scrap in your pouch, on top of more coin than you remembered having. It often pays to have an advantage no one else is aware of, though you wonder what the cost might be. Deciding to clear your mind, you walk over to the waitress to get directions to the bath that awaits you.

