

Eirbrony Erudition

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Welcome brethren and brave adventurers!

Those of you with curious minds might ask what exactly is erudition. Therefore, I will indulge you. We have coined the usage of this word because it fits well with the name of our most noble Kingdom of Eirbron, and honors his majesty the Ard Righ Calidin. In actuality, erudition means “learning acquired by reading and study.” It is not a far stretch to extend this name to a periodic publication. Thus, the Eirbrony Erudition was born.

You hold in your hands the first edition of this informative publication, a scholarly journal of the high temple of Lilnana in the capital city, Verbronia, the Eye of the North. Within its pages you shall find all forms of discourse on knowledge collected by the gatherer priests of temple of the Lady of the Heavens and compiled by the formulator order of the same. Herein, you will find knowledge which, I hope, will illuminate your minds — knowledge which will also hopefully serve as an abettor to your adventuring careers and keep you far from the gates of Lorminstra.

In this edition of the Erudition and in future issues, you shall find a variety of scholarly works on customs and cultures of the people of the continent of Falgorna and the greater world. There will be stories recorded from the bards of the lands. Literary works, songs, poems and religious texts recorded for your pursuit. Some of our gatherers specialize in the study of biology and nature and from time to time you will find their observations on the unique creatures of the lands. Those of our priests who specialize in magic will discuss the knowledge of wizards who have agreed to divulge their secrets and the histories of magical items. There will be retelling

of miracles, and the appearances of avatars. The Erudition will also endeavor to keep you updated on happenings in the local region and the world as a whole.

I and the clergy of the temple hope that you find this publication of use. Your letters and contributions are welcome. But, for now, I will leave you to study this first edition.

Good moons and good stars,

Corgan Nissbet

Corgan Nissbet,
Formulator priest and editor

Weather Report

Sunny, dry and clear conditions prevailed today in the kingdom’s capital city, Verbronia. Merchant captains setting sail today from our fair city reported propitious winds and commented on the mild temperatures (around 70° F), and at least one was heard to say he’d doubt it was summer if his calendar did not tell him the season had begun five days hence. However, having consulted the most skilled sages in the area of weather prediction, your editor must caution you to watch for heavy rains on Galdor and Romen. And the end of the week will bring hot and humid conditions on Borgalo and Anna.

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Bards' Tales

O'gah'go's tale: A Wild Halfling legend

Transcribed by Lorig Redwing of Lilnana's Temple of Saltmarsh as collected during his visit to the wild halfling tribe of the Teardrop Isle, home of the arch-conjurer Richelieu, in the Thorn Lands under the jurisdiction of Baron Veilvein. Brother Lorig reports this cautionary legend is one of the favorites of the tribe.

O'gah'go set aside the antler he used to sharpen his spearhead and looked up. Squinting, he peered through the illumination of his small campfire into the forest beyond. He cocked his head to listen, but only the quiet crackle of his fire broke the silence. No owls called or raccoons chattered, no whispered scream of the tree cat interrupted the stillness.

Rising to his full three-and-a-half-foot height, the wild halfling warrior used his soul words to whisper an offering to his grandfather and to ask for protection. In one hand he cradled the spear the shaman had blessed before he left the [deshta](#)¹ (tree village, literally, nest-homes) and in the other he gripped his [hueshraan](#)², a heavy club set with a single spike. O'gah'go did not like hunting so far from home, but his people needed meat, a thing which had grown scarce since the shaman saw the omen in the sky.

Stepping heel over heel, his bare feet made no sound as he stepped beyond the blinding radiance of the fire and let his [tesh](#)³ (infravision, literally: moon sight) take over. His night sight revealed no movement, but he remembered the words of the warleader Nog'oath, "That which your eyes do not see may still press for hospitality."

Lifting his nose he sniffed deeply into the slight breeze blowing against him. Something pungent, of death, a dead animal perchance, made the hairs stand on his unclothed back.

The light of the [wolf-moon](#)⁴ filtered through

the forest canopy, reflecting off his earth-tone warpaint and his newly greased and painted hair. A necklace of boar teeth hung round his neck next to his [spirit bag](#)⁵.

O'gah'go had proven himself in battle these past four summers and though he feared, he did not show it.

He recalled again the words of the shaman: "Ignore your enemy when you long to feel a hueshraan in the neck."

O'gah'go knew he could not sleep. He must seek out whatever menace hid beyond his sight, but he would not plunge in like the tall ones who sometimes invaded the lands of the children of the forest. His people called the forest their cloak and their shield, a friend to hide them from their prey. He chose each step into the underbrush with a care which came as second nature to him. Not a twig broke under his feet, not a leaf fell from a branch as he [glided under it](#)⁶.

Soon he came to a place where the trees opened into a clearing. He followed the smell of death and it grew stronger as he neared. The stench pushed the clean air out leaving only bad air to breath. From the forest edge he saw it and he knew why no trees grew here.

Rising from a small hillock and ringed by a twin circle of toadstools stood a [nek-trag](#)⁷ (a type of raised burial rack; literally: soul-trap or soul-cage). The wooden rack designed to keep the body of an outcast from touching the ground, a punishment reserved for only those of great evil, now held no corpse. The sacred ropes of badger gut the shamans had used to bind the traitor had snapped and something had trampled through red rings of toadstools planted to keep the outcast confined. A dead raven lay at the foot of the wooden rack. O'gah'go shuddered when he saw its head had been torn from its body.

An unexpectedly cold breeze gave the only warning that the [roogirnek](#)⁸ (literally: outcast-soul) approached. Then it burst from the underbrush, a high keening wail erupting from its sagging mouth with such force that it caused the

decaying flesh of its lips to flutter. O'gah'go felt the scream deep inside him, penetrating to his soul and as the sight of the creature touched his inner being. He felt some of the light of his youth dim. Like an icy wind it tore through him and he felt his weapons grow heavy in his hands, his joints began to ache, and wrinkles appeared in his young flesh.

He could only stand transfixed, his jaw slack, drool running out the corner of his mouth, eyes wide as the demon creature reached a putrid hand towards him. He saw its feet did not touch the ground. The outcast souls were prevented from rejoining the forest by the shamans' rituals. Ravens had plucked out its eyes leaving only empty cavities which now sheltered sapphire lanterns deep within their depths.

The winter wind howled around him, kicking up earth and debris in a whirlwind. The particles slicing at his flesh, the chill blistering his bare skin and causing the forest to wither. He knew the creature had power over the air through which its damned soul traveled — a putrid power which caused all life to wither.

O'gah'go knew he would not last long if the roogirnek succeeded in touching him. The shamans said, such a creature could drain all the life from the living, and in his current state he could do naught but watch as his essence spilled forth to feed the abomination's lust for lifeforce.

Then he saw the raccoon, his [grandfather](#)⁹, smiling at him from a tree branch just above the evil creature. With a loud, chattering warcry it leaped from the branch onto the festering head of O'gah'go's attacker. The grandfather-raccoon landed hard on the air spirit and winked gleefully as it sunk its claws deep into the moldering flesh. And as grandfather winked O'gah'go felt the fear wash from his body in a warm wave.

Before him the creature thrashed like a whirlwind, trying to shake grandfather-raccoon from his perch. Trees withered and died as the creature brushed against them. The air grew colder still.

But, grandfather-raccoon refused to release his hold.

Knowing his weapons would have no effect on this cursed creature, O'gah'go longed to run, but he would not dishonor grandfather-raccoon by showing his fear. He would stand his ground, even to the point of death — a better fate than cowardice.

Grandfather-raccoon glance at him and smiled. Then O'gah'go remembered. Reaching for his spirit bag, he removed the sacred eagle feather he had found during his first summer as a warrior of the tribe. He had found the smooth brown feather sticking upright from a rotting log. Stroking the tightly clenched plumes one last time, he flung it at the creature with such force that his shoulder burned with the effort.

The feather flew true, like it still lived in the wing of the great guardian bird. Like a blowdart it sliced through the air to land solidly in the roogirnek's gaping mouth. As it struck the forest seemed to erupt in sacred chant. The trees, the birds, the small plants of the forest floor, even the biting insects joined the hymn. As their combined voices reached a final climatic note, sunshine or fire (O'gah'go was not sure) began to vomit from the damned one's mouth. Rolling over his rotting cheeks and lips and pouring through his vacant eyes. It flowed over his shoulders and down the length of his body to his toes. The creature arched its back and cried out — a cry O'gah'go would not soon forget — and then like campfire ashes thrown in the wind, the creature disappeared.

Grandfather-raccoon plopped to the ground, satisfied, now that the creature had gone. Standing on his hind legs, he chattered for a moment before turning for an oak not too far away and disappearing within its sheltering branches.

Footnotes

¹Wild Halflings live in protected villages built high in the treetops. Known as *deshta* in their native tongue, the settlements of the Wild Half-

lings often go unnoticed by unwary observers.

[\(RETURN\)](#)

²Wild Halflings practice cannibalism and have no qualms about eating intelligent humanoids of other races. Anyone or anything that enters their tribal lands is considered game meat. The *hueshwaan*, a heavy club set with a single spike, when wielded by a warrior can be used to strike a fatal blow at the base of the skull where the brain stem meets the spine. It is an effective weapon when used against an opponent who is running away from the halfling. [\(RETURN\)](#)

³*Tesh* is the Wild Halfling word for infravision. Wild Halflings are known to have infravision with a range of 60'. [\(RETURN\)](#)

⁴The Wolf Moon is a reference to the moon Beldar which governs the cycle of the disease lycanthropy. [\(RETURN\)](#)

⁵Spirit bags are given to all Wild Halflings when they reach adulthood. These bags contain seemingly worthless items that are believed by the Wild Halflings to have protective powers. [\(RETURN\)](#)

⁶Much like elves, Wild Halflings can move in virtual silence through natural terrain. [\(RETURN\)](#)

⁷Wild Halfling religious belief holds that a soul cannot move on until the body is reunited with the earth from which is the source of all life. A *nek-trag* elevates the body of a deceased Wild Halfling, preventing it from touching the earth and thus preventing the soul from leaving the body. A nek trag is only used in extreme circumstances to punish a tribe member who has committed some grave wrong such as murder or rape. [\(RETURN\)](#)

⁸Roogirnek are a form of undead that sometimes form when a Wild Halfling is punished by placing his or her body in a nek trag. Though I have never personally seen one of these foul creatures, it appears it shares the aging and fear capabilities of a ghost combined with the life draining characteristics of a wraith. In addition,

the creature can control the element of air and causes all plant life it comes in contact with to wither. [\(RETURN\)](#)

⁹Wild Halflings are strong believers in reincarnation. The raccoon in this tale may have been nothing more than an ordinary raccoon, but O'gah'go believed it to be possessed by the spirit of his grandfather. [\(RETURN\)](#)

News:

The Fete Masquerade, the famous costume festival sponsored by the royal house of Kent, held this Silven 15 in Kentbourne Keep on the occasion of the Summer Solstice, has gone down in the history books as yet another grand event. King Jed appeared this year costumed as rather disgusting night hag. While his wife, Queen Isabel, our sovereign's beloved sister, appeared as a quite stunning golden dragoness.

Here in Vebronia a strange report from a usually reliable source: Captain Erin Dochart reported late last week that his ship pursued a craft of unusual configuration (the descriptions are hardly to be believed, but he said it resembled a giant nautiloid shellfish) which he believes emerged from the sea caverns outside the city. Captain Dochart said the ship was much faster than his top-of-the-line cutter and that he was unable to close to within catapult range, let alone boarding distance. Our dear Captain said the "ship" then lifted from the ocean surface and disappeared into the atmosphere as he and his dismayed crew members observed helplessly. He has used the entire supposed encounter to renew his campaign to have a wizard posted on board all patrolling ships ... more likely this escapade will be used by his enemies to renew their campaign to have him removed from his position of authority (and this time maybe they're right.)

Also making news in our fair city is the attack by unidentified assailants on the beloved Lady Llena Argyle and her longtime companions Mother Talling and Gryf Tanson while spending

a quite evening at the orphanage that has been Lady Llena's favorite recipient of charity these past several years. Lady Llena herself has little to say on the matter and has refused to answer all but the most obvious question — she is unharmed. This fair-minded reporter must ask what brews here when he hears from reliable sources in the ramshackle port district that she was seen that night with a Variquesti wizardess who goes by the name of Vaust and a dwarven priest only known as Gronth and that neither has been seen since the attack.

Later that same evening, Lady Argyle was seen in the Temple District demanding entrance to the Temple of Lorminstra. She was admitted and greeted, it is believed, by the high priestess herself. Strangely, when she left she was accompanied by Mother Talling, whom none had seen enter the temple.

A note on the frontier is in order. A hunting party spotted more barbarians making encampments just a few dozen miles beyond the Dead Tree Hills. Sources at the court and in Baron Veilvein's Keep of Thorns say those who should be concerned are concerned.

In Saltmarsh, we are pleased to report, the Baron Hilary Artemiedes and his beautiful wife Jessica have given birth to an heir. Kelson is a fine blonde-haired, blue-eyed boy, weighing in at just under eight pounds. The noble couple are said to be overcome with joy ... it's been a long wait for the both of them. Congratulations!