

# Sylverfern Star

Volume 4, Edition 2.

Forrestwake A.F. 318

## WERDILL SUCCEEDS FROM MIDDLEHAVEN

### IN THIS EDITION:

WERDILL SUCCEEDS

BLOODY BRAWL  
ON NIGHT OF THE  
TRAVELLER

SILVER SHORTAGE?

FOOLS DAY  
CELEBRATION

NEW CAPTAIN  
OF THE GUARD

...AND MUCH, MUCH  
MORE



Night of the Traveller, a much more eventful holiday for the town of Sylverfern than anyone would wish between Argus Myzan tainting people's drinks with a poison called "demon blood," the murder of a Werdillan visitor and the assault of a noble youth ended with a politically explosive moment when a messenger arrived at Lockhart manor and announced the news that had come fresh from Werdill- that Werdill had officially seceded from the Middlehaven kingdom and declared itself its own sovereign kingdom!

Everybody was left stunned by the sudden announcement and in the past month Fallstav, Perin and Mergrim have been reeling from the abrupt change. The young people that were the original Separatists before the movement became popularized by the nobility and other influential adults have shown everything from ecstasy to astonishment at how much of a difference even a few youths can make. Other youth seem inspired by the success of their peers.

Dukes Bertrum Fallstav, Harold Aquinas Perin and Jorus Mergrim are deeply disturbed by this sudden decision of Duchess Jullanna Werdill, who had originally intended to wait until the end of 318 in order to make her decision on breaking Werdill's union with the rest of Middlehaven. The erstwhile duchess, now a newly coronated Queen, told the rest of the stunned Council of High Lords that she still fully intends to maintain trade and positive relationships with Fallstav, Mergrim and Perin.

When the three Dukes demanded explanations from Lady Werdill, she expressed concerns in regards to the tensions between Fallstav

and Perin, citing the expenses of war between Fallstav and Perin that have been steadily draining the Middlehaven economy. She also expressed heavy criticism of Middlehaven's fair trade laws. "These so-called "fair trade laws" unfairly cripple Werdill merchants. Has the King lived, he would have certainly revised trade laws by now- but the Council of High Lords have refused to make any adjustments whatsoever!" One can infer that Lady Werdill is referring to how her duchy has been compelled to bolster all three other duchies. Stung by the damage the fair-trade laws caused for her duchy, the now-former Duchess Werdill has called votes to revise these laws on several occasions only for the other three Dukes to either refuse a vote at all or else unanimously vote against any modification to these laws. Werdill has thus been paying for the trade deficit of the entire kingdom of Middlehaven for nearly two decades.

The lesser Werdillan nobility have overtly cited "being punished for their success" by paying a "grossly inflated portion of kingdom debts" as a reason for supporting the Separatists as well as, in the eyes of one Werdillan Separatist "by extension paying for all three of Fallstav and Perin's wars... or is it four? We're starting to lose count." They adamantly believe Werdill will become only wealthier by separating from Middlehaven. Due to the widespread support for secession by the nobles and her own. "Finally, it's become clear that independence is the only way," Lady Werdill said. Anticipating protests and allusions to the J'Teth, she added "Werdill WILL fight with you

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## CONSTABLE'S CORNER

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### SEPARATISTS AND LOYALISTS CLASH ON NIGHT OF THE TRAVELLER WERDILLAN MERCHANT SLAIN, SEPARATIST/BARON'S DAUGHTER STABBED

On the Night of the Traveller, the participants in the Separatist movement, particularly the youth, were in very high spirits due to the rumors that have been circulating for several moons about now-former Duchess Jullanna Werdill's intentions to secede from the kingdom of Middlehaven at the end of 318 shifting to imply that Lady Werdill might make her move sooner.

On that same day, Werdillans that heavily disagreed with their Duchess came into Fallstav hoping to find allies in persuading the duchess to change her mind. They found themselves extremely unpopular with Werdill's nobles and even facing some violence. They decided they needed outside help. Many of the Werdillan nobility stand by what is now Queen Werdill (see the article regarding Werdill's secession). The Werdillan merchants that trade more with outside lands than internally in Middlehaven also see Werdill's decision to become its own sovereign kingdom as beneficial, for it streamlines the process in trading abroad and they see more profits than harm from tariffs. However, in general the wealthy merchants there that traded mostly with other Middlehaven duchies have found their businesses damaged.

Three brothers, Zegan, Kodan and Elwil Inko came into Sylverfern on the Night of the Traveller, drained from travelling at a great pace and requesting aid and a place to stay from the Sylverfern Council. Shelter was granted to the trio. Not much later, a group came in from Vrengar's boarding schools; Kane Murata, assistant to history professor Avery Barghava, was

accompanying three students (all 16 or 17 years old) on a trip to gather tales of local history and research what various parts of Fallstav are like now compared to the past. These students were excited because of the rumors and holiday.

When the loyalists and Separatists ran into each other, tensions ran high the Werdillan loyalists' exhaustion and anger about Werdill's political situation clashed with the Fallstavian Separatists' youthful impulsiveness and own fears because of their critics. Luckily both groups in the early afternoon were more interested in food and drink than fighting.

The betrayal of a Sylverfern Argus Myzan in what was apparently slipping poison into a large bottle of wine and possibly food that stirred up aggression and rendered the healing miracles of priests harmful made hostilities flare among the inhabitants and visitors of Lockhart manor. For some reason that remains not fully known, a mass brawl erupted between everyone within the manorhouse. The Inkos were out in the main room during the mob scene and at some point Elwil Inko was stricken down and brutally murdered. This left the two remaining Inkos, particularly the eldest brother Zegan Inko, grief-stricken and enraged.

One of the Separatists, Sabrina Ellimore, 17 came down into the main room early. The teacher's assistant Kane Murata, who knew her to be a baron's daughter, immediately followed as soon as he'd realized she'd gone off on her own, wanting to ensure she didn't come to harm. It was explained later that Ellimore's friends,

17-year-old Lord Fabian Talbot and 16-year-old Kendra Cecil, were still getting ready with help from one of Lord Lockhart's staff. Talbot is a heavily gifted duelist, ranking second overall in ability within the schools, so Murata had felt Sabrina to be most at risk. Unfortunately, it was already too late, the brash girl had already gotten herself into an argument with Zegan Inko and other loyalists, and before Murata could calm things down, one of the loyalists struck Ellimore with the steel of a halberd in the heat of anger.

Several people testified that a lot of confusion erupted afterwards. The young girl was healed of her wound. She began shouting at the loyalists in rage, and apparently a couple of Sylverfern villagers, one of them Enix Krynvalis, began cries of "traitor" at the youth. Before things could get any worse, a messenger came in to announce Werdill had seceded, leaving everyone stunned.

Zegan Inko later told us "I just want vengeance on that Argus fellow for starting the whole thing." As for the Separatists, "They're traitors to Werdill and Middlehaven itself. They'll have their little rebellion and they'll be put to the sword when it all ends." When asked if he meant that for all Separatists, including the large percentage that are youth, he clarified "Obviously not, they've been brainwashed by the traitors about things they can't possibly understand yet."

It looks as though internal hostilities between loyalists and Separatists are only worsening.

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### SILVER SHORTAGE

Alista Plathor

Everyone's heard about Werdill declaring their independence by now, I'm sure. There has been discord on all sides of this new separatist movement and two major groups have emerged: those in favor of the separating the duchies into their own kingdoms, and those calling themselves loyalist. This

article is about neither group and to warn ye of another issue rising as a result of this movement.

The major issue is that Werdill has been funding many of Fallstav and the other duchies tithes owed and what not. With this new independence Fallstav risks going broke. Silver, including the silver helm, is becoming scarce as a result of Werdill,

since a large amount of Middlehaven's Silver comes from there. There is talk in the capitol from the duke that there may be a change in the coin rates, because of this some locals have become scared and taken to forming their own bandit rings, hijacking innocents on the road. They will take anything of value of course but silver is their primary focus.

Hopefully, our Lord Lockhart and the Duke of Fallstav will work quickly to aid against these groups and help solve our potential growing financial crisis. For now, stay safe and never travel alone. Such are the way things are in Sylverfern these days, after all, we all know bandits seem to not be our only concern with stories that would shock other nations.

# FOOL'S DAY FESTIVAL TO BE HELD IN SILVERFERN

Ashley Vakarian

On this upcoming Fool's Day, the barony of Silverfern will be holding a festival, as is customary in a number of places in Middlehaven. Merchants are encouraged to attend, as the main focus of the revelry will be a market of goods from as far across Middlehaven as can be found.

This festival is traditional for Fool's Day, as a remembrance of the "birthday" of the Immortal Knave. According to legend, the first "Fool's Day" prank was when the Knave tricked the Gods, and stole "immortality" from them- becoming a God himself in the process. Since then, priests of the Wayward One journey across the realms promoting merriment and celebration on this day.

Lord Lockhart himself ordered servants to begin preparations for this festival. He said Middlehaven is beginning to come back from its troubles, and is on a road to prosperity. Because of this, he is hoping merchants in particular will attend the festival to show their wares. He, of course, is aware of the typical pranks played during such a festival, and would like to remind the people of Sylverfern that lawbreaking and other dangerous mischief will not be tolerated. Rye Felhn, a member of both the Council and the Sylverfern guard had this to say: "I hope the festival is not darkened by more dangerous actions disguising itself as mischief. We of the guard will be on the lookout for dangerous people, though we do not expect any attacks. We are more concerned about pranks taken too far, without proper thought to the consequences."

There are typically many games played at the Fool's Day festivals. Brightly dyed "Goose Feathers" are used as a sort of "Currency" during Fool's Day Festivals. Performances, Contests and games of chance can be played in order to win them. At the end of the evening, the person with the most feathers will win "The Cap of Fools", which is a artifact empowered by ancient rituals and traditions known only to the sage and wise priests of the Immortal Knave (and it occasionally smells of

cat urine).

Entertainment will be present during the festival, and entertainers of any type are encouraged to come and perform. Some of Sylverfern's local bards will be in attendance. There will be a performance contest, the winner of which will be announced in the next Star and who will be granted feathers as a prize.

Other games played for the feathers are: a game of (harmless) pranks, where any time a prank is successfully done against someone they must give up a feather; a game of riddles, where one poses riddles and each guess from the crowd costs the guesser a feather, but a successful answer gives two feathers; and the game of drinks, a drinking contest where entry costs one feather and the winner takes them all. More traditional gambling takes place on this day, of course, with both coin and feathers used as currency, and one could bet on anything they wish to. There are also challenges for storytelling and slander-slinging, where the best one (as determined by a judge or the crowd) gains feathers as their reward.

Open worship of the Knave remains a contentious issue in Middlehaven as a whole. There are those calling for the rulings making such worship illegal to be struck from the laws, and those who say that allowing open worship of the Knave and other gods such as Mondrigror would bring chaos. These discussions are, apparently, ongoing. Rye Felhn, said of these discussions: "It is true some have come to us asking we make this worship legal in these lands, at least. I cannot comment on the Council's discussions on this issue at this time."

What are the rewards from the Knave for Fools Day? Does it appease the Immortal Knave, somehow? The Knave's priests say it does, that participating in the festival sates the Knave's appetite for mischief so our crops may grow untroubled, and other pranks are not played on our animals, people, or wildlife throughout the year.

## Where In The World Are The Cadre?

Last moon several Children of the Covenant followers entered Lord Lockheart's dilapidated mansion to deliver a message to a band of rogues called The Cadre, more specifically Lupin Shadowson, who have been charged with an unprovoked attack on several Children of the Covenant diplomats. After a brief discussion after the incident, Lupin swore that he would stand trial for the actions of him and his "Cadre," but when the Children came calling, he was nowhere to be found. No news yet on what the Children of the Covenant plans to do about the missing men, but all are advised to not take the law into your own hands as they are considered armed and deranged enough to be dangerous. The Children of the Covenant showed great leniency trusting them to answer for their actions at a later date, but clearly The Cadre's honor is not worth much when they take off when the consequences come calling. Leaving many wondering where in the world are the Cadre?



## AN INTERVIEW WITH SEPRATISTS

On the Night of the Traveller, a travel party including three students was present in Sylverfern from Vrengar's two partnered boarding schools for youth from aristocratic and/or wealthy families, Vrengar Finishing Academy for Girls and the Brightwater Preparatory Academy of

Vrengar for Boys. This group was chaperoned by Mr. Kane Murata, the assistant of celebrated history professor Avery Barghava. The students present in the group happen to be active in the Separatist Movement. We were able to meet with two of the students, 17-year-old Sabrina Ellimore

and 16-year-old Kendra Cecil.

17-year-old Lord Fabian Talbot, who is finishing out his seventh year, could not be reached for comment as he spent the remainder of his spring holiday with his mentor and fellow Valkor worshipper Tricia Cadwallader after the

conclusion of the field trip with Kane Murata. 18-year-old seventh year Carlo Hanover and 16-year-old sixth year Rodney Bancroft are also prominent in the Separatist movement but they were not in Sylverfern with Ellimore, Talbot, Cecil and Murata.

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express displeasure on my own part and on behalf of my wife in regards to an incident that transpired the tenth day of Earththaw at Lord Lockhart's manorhouse. My daughter Sabrina was in the village of Sylverfern with her history professor Avery Barghava's assistant and several other girl from Vrengar Finishing Academy (and a boy from the Brightwater Academy of Vrengar) on a school trip to further her history studies. Since it was Night of the Traveller they sought hospitality at the manor of Lord Lockhart, who was renowned for his victories against the J'Teth and most recently the Battle of Sylverfern against Perin. My daughter hoped to find revelry within the constraint of her school's rules.

Instead? Sabrina and her friends, being open Separatists, found themselves confronted by unexpected loyalists from Werdill. My Sabrina then took a halberd strike to her chest. Fortunately, she was healed so I did not lose my child, though unfortunately the bastard (if my use of a vulgar word can be forgiven, it certainly fits the man) that did this got away. As though this wasn't bad enough, a man named Enix started shouting very loud, public accusations of my daughter committing treason just because she is a Separatist! As though the poor girl wasn't shaken up enough! Were it not for Professor Avery Barghava's assistant Mr. Kane Murata's quick thinking and getting his student out of there, things could have gone bad very quickly. To condone an attack on a barely 17-year-old girl by blaming her for her own being made the victim of a crime is a despicable act.

Let me make one thing clear- treason is selling barony, duchy or kingdom secrets to a foreign kingdom. Or assisting foreign entities with the murder or kidnapping of Fallstavian nobility. And however much I might agree or disagree with my daughter- that is immaterial here- she is most certainly not selling information to a foreign entity or assisting with any attacks on nobility. She is a STUDENT and a CHILD and thus does not have the knowledge one would even need to commit treason. And while my daughter did admit to saying "not-nice" things out of understandable anger and fright at being attacked, though she couldn't remember the specifics because of the heat of the moment, the CORRECT way to handle that sort of improper behavior is to express concerns to her parents- or in this situation the chaperone, the man who as the group supervisor and an employee at the boarding school to whom I entrust the care and education of my children was acting in the place of a parent. Accusing a noble's child of treason is an insult against not just the child but the entire house caring for that child! And there is no justifiable excuse for stabbing a child, let alone a noble's child, let alone a noble's child who has no drawn weapon.

I am making it known that I have no intention of raising an issue with Lord Lockhart or his commoner Council; I understand firsthand from running a barony myself and am perfectly

aware that- and from other things I was told by my daughter and her friends, apparently a bunch of people were brought in bleeding and there was a child poisoning earlier in the day- there was a tale regarding sec the guards were likely extremely busy that evening and so didn't notice some kids in high spirits or hostile Werdillans until it was too late. However, I wish them to know that I DO intend to invoke my family's Right of Pro Telo by longstanding royal law on my daughter's behalf in answer to this Enix's baseless accusations, condoning violence against my child and overt disrespect to nobility.

I shall be sending my family's champion during the first week's end of Forrestwake in order to reply to this Enix's challenges and in answer to the slight he dared inflict upon an innocent student who had JUST regained consciousness after an unprovoked attack against her person WHILE SHE WAS PRACTICALLY UNARMED as though my daughter was not exposed to strain enough.

May the gods have mercy on his soul. As for the Werdillan sack of troll dung that dared attack my daughter, if I ever get hold of him, he will be brought up on charges for the attempted murder of a noble. I would hope that if Sylverfern locates him, they either turn him over to me or deliver justice unto him themselves as is their job.

Lord Rodrigo Ellimore

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Editor's Note: Because this particular law is less common in Sylverfern, we here at the Star felt it necessary to make sure all of our readers understood term.

Explanation of Pro Telo

Right of "Pro telo" - Anyone of noble birth has the right to challenge an accuser of lesser birth to honorable combat (until one side yields or can no longer fight). The one challenged may name a champion, but in that case the noble born may name a champion him/herself. This is only done when a Noble is accused of a crime by one of lesser birth. Being accused by someone of equal or greater birth results in a trial.

2. The law only applies when answering challenges. A noble does not have the right to order another noble's "Landsmen" to do anything- but the common born on his own family's holdings must obey.

3. A "Honorable Combat" cannot occur if one side is unarmed, asleep, too sick to fight, etc. The Nobility in the region is honor bound to host the battle and make accommodations for a just combat. It is believed that the Gods themselves will side with the side that is righteous.

\*This is an ancient law accepted by almost all feudal societies. It is the main reason why nobles carry arms, they have the right to physically answer accusations against their honor with force of steel.

## OPINION PIECE: VISHAR AND SURVIVOR'S GUILT

Vishar. It means that death's grasp on you may not be as firm as you think. Having never had the occurrence myself, I don't know if I actually am Vishar. I recently spoke with some merchants from Werdill by the names of Zeegan, Elywin, and Kodan, who apparently left soon after myself, though for very different reasons. The experience is tinged with bittersweetness, as Elywin is no longer among the living, but he approached my table shortly before evening meal and we spoke briefly about it. About how there are so many Vishar in Sylverfern, and about how rare they are elsewhere. About how Vishar, and Sylverfern residents in general, are more likely to take such things for granted. How fortunate, how gifted, how ungrateful some can be about it.

After pulling him away from an argument later that evening, I found myself telling him that only having one life is what makes that life important. It shocked me to learn how truthful the words tasted in my mouth - how they didn't seem to be just something to try and calm a man who had anger in his eyes.

Once I'd learned of his death, I sought out his brother Zeegan - I thought it only fair to offer, as a kind of condolence, my knowledge of what had happened to Elywin. Of the conversation we had. I'm incapable, it seems, of permanently chasing the words from my mind, and it's only now that I realize that might not be a bad thing. Maybe I'm supposed to carry this particular experience with me. Maybe I'm supposed to bring to light the fact that just because someone may have met their death and returned to walk amongst the living, that does not mean we should expect it.

Coming back is a blessing, and a gift, but it is not promised. If we forget what a gift every breath is, we forget what it is to be alive.

I still don't know if I'm Vishar. But even if I am, when the time comes to see my fate sealed, I hope Elywin is there to nod, and ask if I remember him, and to tell me that I've done well with my given life.

In his honor, I intend to help Zeegan and Kodan find their closure. This story is minutia incarnate, but being small in size does not make something small in importance.

Remember to live the life you want to lead. Remember to be grateful for even the slightest things. However long-lived you are, you are finite. You have a responsibility to make your life worthwhile. Be humble. Be grateful. Live.

[G.P.]

## FROM COUNCILOR FELHN: AN UPDATE ON COUNCIL MATTERS, NEW ADVENTURER'S TAX RULES

As promised in my last writing to the Star, here is an update on the issues of the manor house, the bridge, and the Council's absenteeism. Work has begun on both the manor house and the collapsed bridge. Funds and workers have been secured for both these projects, and they will be underway by the time this is published (barring, of course, unplanned accidents or complications, though that seems very unlikely).

As for our absenteeism: the council has put into place a hard limit on what constitutes a quorum. Should a decision need to be reached immediately, or if the issue is otherwise very time-sensitive, a quorum of three council members

agreeing on a course of action suffices for making a decision. If an issue is not time-sensitive, or has long-reaching implications (such as proposed law changes), a quorum of five is needed

The rules for taxes for the adventurers, once known as the Coventry Irregulars and now bolstered by others coming to the land, are also changing slightly. Instead of one florin being asked for every moon the adventurers

gather, we will now be asking for six florin per adventurer per cycle. This is not an increase in the amount of coin normally paid by an adventurer to the town. This can be paid at any time, and can be paid as one florin per moon if they wish, or in a lump sum at the beginning, end, or anywhere in the middle of a cycle. This rule will be going into effect immediately, though of course we would not expect everyone to be able to pay immediately. We will be keeping our own records of who pays, as well as giving paperwork to each adventurer so they may know how much they have paid for a given cycle. Members of the guard are, as regulars in Sylverfern, exempt from this tax as they have always been.



As a show of good faith, though I am a member of the guard and the Council, I will be contributing six florin of my own to the treasury. As some have stated, I was not born here in Sylverfern, though I do now call this barony and land my home. Were I not in the positions I am in, I would be paying this "Adventurer's Tax", and so I consider it fair I do my part as much as anyone else, as I have the ability to do so.

## Bloodshed on Night of the Traveller

The Night of the Traveller, a Dabith holiday in which all travellers must be granted hospitality and the bonds between a host and guest are more sacred than the rest of the year, is a day of peace. This day typically allows enemies to meet diplomatically as anyone that deliberately raises a blade to another is cursed by Dabith. Four cycles ago, the stages for a Fallstav and Perin armistice after the 311-313 war was set on this very holiday.

This cycle's Night of the Traveller, however, had a level of violence that can be easily compared to how the one in 314 ended (with a failed attempt by Lorenzo Lockhart on his brother our Lord Lockhart's life). The worst of it was the mass brawl that erupted in the manorhouse shortly after supper that left a wealthy Werdillan merchant and loyalist dead and many other people grievously wounded, surviving only because of the quick actions of the Rakasha Cyrrah, local doctors and other priests.

The catalyst of this bloodshed? Betrayal. From whom? A man once greatly celebrated as a hero due to the role he played in rescuing Lord Lockhart- Argus Myzan. During the evening of the Night of the Traveller, Myzan distributed what he told everyone was expensive wine he'd gotten for cheap. This wine turned out to be poisoned and many people drank it. The poison, called demon blood and one rumored by the superstitious to come from actual demons, induces fits of rage and violence and even alters the body's design so the healing hands of priests turn damaging to oneself.

An eyewitness named Giddy explained "I don't know about a ritual. But the wine was tainted. I saw the reaction that someone had after drinking it: went from happy to snippy, to downright pissed within half an hour. After the whole mess, someone performed a cleansing to try and alleviate it from those who drank it. He just kept saying it was a bottle of wine worth 400 florin that he was sharing. If there was wine in it, I suppose he wasn't technically lying. But it's a hell of a thing to omit. Truth of it is, if he hadn't been playing a prank with ale earlier that day, I might've taken him up on it and had a sip."

When asked about the nature of these pranks, she clarified "From what I saw, he put a sleeping draught in it - tried to pass it off as a drink on him, and give it to someone. Much more tame, just for a laugh. Someone tricked him into drinking it himself - I missed the how of it, but personally I was amused that he'd gotten back the sharp end of his own spear, so to speak. I didn't trust him after that, figured he was trying to pull another prank with the wine. I had no idea the magnitude until it was too late. Cold day in a dwarf's forge before I ever drink anything but my own, after that mess. We didn't get much farther than that before all hell broke loose. I voiced my concern of what it was, someone told someone else, soon there was yelling and everyone went looking for their generous wine donator. They found him, people were pulling people off of him, and while I was trying to talk a man down from what I assumed was going to be fisticuffs, someone else showed up."

This eyewitness also shed light on the situation of the young man that ended up dead as a result of the fracas, later revealed to be named Elwil Inko. "A merchant from Werdill. He and his brothers got caught up in the duchy mess there, and they'd come here to Sylverfern very recently." Her whole face darkened with sadness. "If you can believe it, it was an accident, from what I was told. Someone tried to heal him, but his body couldn't take it."

Lord Lockhart's head steward, Stewart, was enraged by the temerity of Argus Myzan. He ended up intervening during the chaos, as even several Council members and at least one noble present had been tricked into imbibing the poison. "Argus actions are not only

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## Poem: Gwen the Wyrm

Come all ye buldrefolk and men,  
Come halflings, gnomes, and ogrekin!  
Come all now sitting here within-  
To hear of felling Gwen!

Ten thousand towns were lain to waste  
To build the treasure wide  
And still within, two score years hence  
The scaly dragon hyde.

T'was bright the moon and dim the stars  
Along the winding path  
Up to the dragon's hoarde of gold  
Compiled of death and wrath.

One night, seek vengeance did our man,  
Mere human to the skin  
But 'neath his armor did there beat  
A hero's heart within.

He climbed far up the mountainside  
A cave close to the peak,  
The hero found a maw of stone  
Stretch'd wide as though to speak.

On sure-foot strides he stepped within  
His sword still in it's sheath  
He did not seek to shed wyrm blood  
But steal the thing beneath.

For long he'd known that in that hole  
The wyrm had lain a mare,  
And beside her on that bed of jewels  
There rest a hatchling bare.

A small trick here was all it took  
To capture wyrmling Dink,  
And with a blade held to his throat  
Great Gwen in defeat did shrink.

She gave in trade a chest of gold  
And gave her word to fast,  
And mare and hatchling did retreat  
Gone from our land at last.

And so, not just a sword we need  
To rid ourselves of death,  
For playing on a mother's love  
Will stay a dragon's breath!

--Anonymous



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against any invasion- including the J'Teth, should that come to pass. We are, historically, allies and in spite of things I still consider you as such. You have my word, should the J'Teth Empire directly attack Fallstav, Perin or Mergrim, you have our swords. However, we will have our independence. My nobility all shout for it. I must listen to my people."

In answer to queries about if she was okay defending the new borders that had once been protected from foreign lands by the presence of another duchy, the new queen expressed confidence that the extra revenue her land would gain would be more than sufficient to defend against foreign lands. There is little doubt that the small kingdom would be capable of that, as even before the secession Werdillan revenue greatly outstripped that of the rest of Middlehaven.

Fallstav, Perin and Mergrim were dismayed by this turn of events. "This issue has come at the worst possible time, since there is a vast J'Teth army to our North in Rokar," our Duke Fallstav said. "It is entirely possible that this whole Separatist movement was originated as a J'Teth plot to weaken our defences!"

"That is ridiculous," scoffed Lady Werdill, pointing out that the original Separatists were youth. "And youth they were and still are, but events the past twenty years have marred their entire lives! Can we blame them for questioning things as they are? They've never known stability and peace. And they are wise and well-spoken far beyond their scant years; it is no surprise that their elders, once they got past their age-."

Duke Perin stepped in, cutting off Lady Werdill's argument about the origins of the Separatist movement. "Despite years of ill will, Perin stands with Fallstav on this issue. "The J'Teth are the true threat now. All our efforts must be bent towards them."

Lady Werdill started to say "I've already told you we'd fight the J'Teth, but-" and Duke Fallstav added "This is what the

J'Teth do- they weaken their foes from within by corruption and deceit."

And thus the final meeting of the Council of High Lords that included Jullanna Werdill, now the first Queen of her line in the Kingdom of Werdill, came to an end.

It should be noted that Duke Mergrim was mostly silent but clearly affronted by Jullanna Werdill's words. He has since provided official support to the Werdillan loyalists, going against the Werdill nobility and queen. It should be noted that much like Fallstav and Perin, the ducal family of Mergrim has been unfriendly rivals to outright enemies of the Werdillan family for multiple generations, though they have not had outright clashes since the late 290s and early 300s before Dame Allius Jorak of the Order of the Rose got the heads of duchies to unify under a treaty and guided them into forming the Council of High Lords.

It's been more recently noticed that while the nobles of Werdill almost universally support their new queen's move, the population is split down the middle. Merchants that traded primarily abroad to begin with support the move, as not having to go through three other Dukes facilitated the process, but the ones that traded solely within Middlehaven feel the secession to be damaging. The peasantry has proven impossible to reach, so their views remain unclear.

In the wake of the situation, Mayor Harris Saberhorn, figurehead of the Fenlund Resistance, has even emerged from hiding to speak with one of our reporters about his views on the situation. He had much to say. "I can understand that the Duchess wants what's best for her people but it comes at the cost of Middlehaven as a whole. It shows that we a divided people to our enemies. Yes, I said Enemies: the Children of the Covenant ever growing to believe that free thought is wrong; the brazen occupation of Fallstav, by an ever growing Orc population who thirst for battle; and most serious, is the the J'teth."

On the J'Teth, Saberhorn said "The J'teth have been working in the shadows for a long time. I'm only beginning to understand now how deep they have worked themselves into our lands. Take Rokar as an example, they openly had J'teth advisors giving advice and manipulated the clans to fight each other. In the end, the promised powers were lies, and they gave little resistance to the J'teth friends now turned MASTERS. I fear that the Duchess is listening to advisors who are only interested in promised power. For now, the price of goods may become cheaper and merchants will line their pockets with silver. What will happen now, is that Fallstav can't afford their goods anymore. Their support has helped us maintain ourselves and be able to buy their products. The more we struggle the less these same merchants make in the end. This is being groat wise and florin foolish."

In response to questions in regard to conflict people, Saberhorn said "We are a divided people. Where were the duchies when Fallstav was invaded? Those in charge feared that they would be next. When fighting breaks out, and believe me there will be WAR in our future, these same people will advise her to stay clear. It's was safer to let Perin and Fallstav wear each other out. If we acted as one, Perin would have never invaded. Unless we all can put down our arms and look into our own courts and flush out the J'teth puppet masters and then stand as one we will lose the war on the horizon."

He was disdainful of Werdillan criticism of trade laws. "Werdill complained about being taxed to help support the poorer duchies. What if instead they helped Fallstav find or produce products or resources so they can stand on their own feet?"

He ended the conversation with a powerful statement, alluding to the general populations being duchy-centric. "We think ourselves from Fallstav, Perin, Mergrim, or Werdill. It's time we think of ourselves as from MIDDLEHAVEN."

How did you feel when you came into Sylverfern and saw the presence of the Werdillan visitors that wish for the kingdom to stay unified?

LADY SABRINA ELLIMORE: Not sure what they think their new foreigners can do. 'tis the change of tide.

KENDRA CECIL: I was nervous, it was too much of a coincidence. We've been getting a lot of people that agree but also a lot of hostility and one of my teachers hinted at death threats, they said we could still do the trip but didn't want us out of sight in case anyone tried anything...

What did you observe around you when you were in Sylverfern?

SE: For a peaceful holiday there sure were people bleeding all over the place, especially this red man.

KC: It also sorta has a lot of bad stuff happening there, like, the guard there looks as busy as the city guard even though it's like this out-in-the-sticks armpit of Fallstav place. They also get a lot of nonhumans. An uncanny amount. Only in Sylverfern do I ever see that many nonhumans in one place.

Have your feelings about affairs in Middlehaven, whether the duchies should be unified or become kingdoms in their own affair and the Werdill situation changed in any way since this incident? How so?

SE: I think it shows even more how each duchy has more of their own concerns to focus on.

KC: The latent hostility that's always been there was made much more obvious. Mr. Murata was really worried when he heard they were coming and told us to be on guard because not everybody agreed with us, a lot of people fear change and some people would do anything to make sure things didn't change. And sure enough but I'm not going to back down just because I'm scared even though yes, I AM scared.

What are your personal feelings on how Fallstav should handle things in the wake of the Werdill secession?

SE: They should follow suit. I had hoped with our presence early on we would have been the trail blazers.

KC: I think he should evolve and go with the tide. These are different times. It's not the 200s anymore. There hasn't been a king or queen on the throne since before I was born.

Now I must apologize for touching on what I know will be a difficult topic for you lot, but it is one that people are talking about without your side of the story to set the record straight. The attack on Lady Sabrina. You do have the option to refuse if you wish, but if you want to give the world your say on the matter, here is your chance. Can I ask in your words what happened? And if you were not present, what are your feelings on things? How have they affected you?

SE: He just attacked me! Is that how they settle their issues? Good riddance to our ties with that duchy.

KC: I wasn't there for that, but it was horrifying to hear about. She didn't even have her dagger out and apparently that Werdillan just went and tried to run her through with his halberd!

What are your thoughts on the poisoning and subsequent death of one of the Werdillan visitors?

SE: They came here obviously looking for trouble, we've always only been peaceful in our search for new beginnings and they chose a bloody path.

KC: I don't think that had anything to do with us. I looked up records about that town after and they're a really really violent town, lots of violent crime. So yeah. It is a really regrettable thing that happened, though, and I hope that man's brothers find peace.

How has this affected your actions in the Separatist movement?

SE: I believe in it even more.

KC: I'm just more careful now. Some of my classmates have always had to be because of their families having enemies that might try to hurt them. But now I know people might try to retaliate against me because of the beliefs I gained after quite a lot of study about Middlehaven history. The movement's helped me a lot too, I used to be really shy. Still FEEL shy but I can stand up in the face of that and DO something and BE somebody.

How has your school been in handling matters?

SE: They must support it? They give us much leeway for our field trips to learn and promote our cause.

KC: A lot of the teachers think "it's just a phase." Not all of them though. Professor Barghava especially has been very supportive of us. Always has been, he cares about us as people. He's always been one of my favorites, but he IS my favorite now because he knows not everything can be learned out of books and he takes those of us that are smart in the books on trips to get hands-on experience. He also doesn't treat me differently for being a sponsored kid. His assistant Kane Murata's great too. I'm also getting a lot of compliments about how I talk now. I used to be real shy.

Have you found yourself facing a lot of hostility due to your being active in the political world as mere students?

SE: Not until this last one. Apparently they fear us in numbers, but will scream in one girls face, forgetting his station is below hers.

KC: There have been many thinly-veiled threats, yes. And my teacher's given us a lot of talks about not going off on our own in case anyone tries to silence us.

How do you feel knowing you've achieved a major goal of yours at such a young age?

SE: I'm proud. I hope people look back on this and remember with pride the way we changed history.

KC: I'm in awe of it. I never expected it to get this far. We've hit on some stumbling blocks- a lot of people disagree it, and there's one thing of major concern but we just have to be careful who we trust is all.

What is it you hope to achieve next?

SE: I'm still of a noble family, I'd like to be able to convince my family to let me marry one of my classmates from the males school instead of an arranged marriage.

KC: Graduating with top honors next cycle. I haven't been getting as many perfect papers because I've been busy so I need to hit the books harder. I'm on scholarship so I can't let my grades crash. I don't get the option of the three-year remedial seventh year and graduating at 20 or 21 like kids with bad grades whose parents can afford to pay for it, I just lose my scholarship. People keep telling me it's not a worry because my total average is 92, but it used to be a 96, 97! Soooo I want to get to get it back to 97. Or 98.

Do you have anything you'd like to add that we haven't covered?

SE: I'm so very proud of my friends especially Kendra and Fabian for sticking through everything.

KC: True friends definitely stick together through good times and bad. Sabrina especially deserves respect because she isn't cowering in fear even after she was attacked. And I can thank the Separatist movement for giving me self-confidence. I feel like my life can MEAN something.





Continued from pg. 6 an insult to his Lord Lockhart, I would call it treasonous. He took Lord Lockhart's hospitality and abused it. On top of everything us he violated the Tradition of the Night of the Traveler! He shed blood in the Lord's Manor. Now nearly a dozen of the Manor's guests have been infected with this "taint". This is very nasty business now. They are still guests but at the first sign of them becoming a danger to the Manor or Lord himself or family I'll have them escorted by force if necessary. I take my position very seriously as steward of the Manor."

Other members of his Lordship's staff are feeling the effects as well, such as one of the cooking staff, a dwarf called Adogold. "Some people say poison some say demons, I'm just a cook not my place to play judge but this villain out there better turn himself in. The people here are good people Lot of sad faces and looks of distrust. People sniffing the ale and drinks from my kitchen is really hurtful"

There is a tremendous amount of anger from people that were harmed as a result of this demon blood, particularly the ones that ending up attacking others they'd never have attacked if they hadn't been poisoned. One victim said, "firstly, this is damn humiliating considering that I most unfortunately considered him a potential friend. And I'm usually quite good at discerning when my food and drink have been tampered with. Apparently what he used isn't as easily detectable as regular drugs and poisons. I CHECKED, I thought his source sounded suspicious, but I didn't pick up on anything being wrong until all of a sudden my holy symbol felt heavier and it was suddenly difficult to do healing prayers. I'm grateful for the ritual Cyrrah and some others did to remove at least some taint- mine's gone, thank sard, but I'm furious it was needed."

A second victim of his, guardsman Asher, stated "I was tainted. Argus or perhaps a demon parading with Argus' face shared some of his wine 'in celebration of winning the tournament.' He said many people tested it for poisons and I trusted him on it." As a former friend of Argus Myzan, he expressed a desperate hope of an alternative to the fact that he'd been betrayed by someone he deeply trusted. "I want to desperately believe that he's on the Ashen Plane, being held captive by a Demon Lord. He, is or was my friend. I know he wouldn't want to hurt people like this. That's why I want to believe that he's been taken. If he's been tainted, he can be purified, like I was! I was there, when Lord Lockhart was saved. I know that an entity called the Dream Thief was able to open a Portal. I've been to the Ashen Plane and returned. But a bargain with the Dream Thief doesn't sound like

something I'd like to make."

In response to the skepticism he would likely encounter if he tried to spread the story further, Asher added, I've seen three Fey that I know of, in less than half a year, since I've been here. I've touched one. The city folk don't see, because they don't look. I'm just going to try and be the best guard I can be. Even if that means fighting demons or some other kind of monster."

One disappointed former friend of Myzan said "I don't know what the hell ol Argus was thinking, but having known him before he went nuts, it was probably out of some bigger picture warped sense of justice he did this. He still gotta answer for what he did, though..."

A visiting Mergrimit noble had some very intriguing light to shed on the situation. He offered a verbose explanation of what he beheld. The events witnessed by Lord Wolrick Higgins are as follows:

"I, I well, I invited the man Argus outside because my cousin, a greater noble than I, wanted to speak to him. Well, the conversation seemed normal. Until my cousin made an offer to Argus about power. We, well it appeared as though my, cousin, was not my cousin. Instead, he was a demon lord. Gunthrax. Well, it was odd. He asked Argus why he saved one of his demons... did anyone know Argus did such a thing?"

The noble then went into the interest that this "demon lord" had in Argus Myzan and the answer Argus gave. "He... Argus said that everyone deserves a chance at life. He saved a demon because he thought its life could have meaning. The demon lord, he looked confused. He didn't understand and in fact, he said, "well that's not what I would have guessed, but a noble gesture of which I will reward, as I reward those who do something for me!"

"He touched Argus, and he yelled in pain. (the demon lord) told him the change would begin. He would feel minor pain but in an hour it would complete itself. They both ignored my presence as if I didn't exist. But I couldn't move. I fear what the demon lord would have done if I did! Well, it was told that after the hour he would transform into a demon and command power. This was his thank you. Well, one of them..."

"His other thank you was to return a bottle to him. The demon lord said it was normal wine. He touched it, then commanded Argus to go inside and offer it to people, and to not get caught. "Yes, I... I saw it when Argus went back inside. He commanded me to also go and watch, but say nothing. And he too went inside with us. Everyone was in the presence of a demon lord who was watching Argus the whole time."

"He went around the room offering

it to people. I saw his face. He kept almost signaling people as if he didn't want them to drink. Saying things about a 400 florin bottle changing it to imported wine. A bottle he just found. He was being rather obvious, I think."

"I don't know. I feel like the man was trying to help people. But then, he lost the bottle. I heard, some did, at least check for poison, but nothing came up. "Whatever the demon lord did, it must have been magic, because he never opened the bottle. He just touched it and handed it over to Argus. But, I saw an elf with a black cloak hiding the bottle underneath the cloak (and) offering it to others. I know not this elf, nor if they knew what they were doing, but, they made it worse, much worse. Argus, he was rejected by many. They didn't trust him, either because of his subtle mannerisms, or otherwise. However the elf? Many more accepted from him"

"Some even asked if the elf had the same bottle. The elf told them it wasn't. I cannot fathom why. He was taller (with) blue eyes, but the rest of him was obscured by the cloak. Again, I do not know if they did so knowingly, but, they made it much worse. Argus seems to be well, I do not know him well personally, but, the words he spoke, even to that demon, are words of a kindhearted man. I would ask those to try to save him, if such a thing is possible. Someone who is willing to save even a demon deserves to be saved themselves."

"And that fight... were any of you in the middle of it all? I heard the voice of the demon lord. He commanded all with the taint to attack everyone else. Did those people... could those people resist? He commanded Argus, and Argus did perhaps his expressions were the means of his resistance. You are all free to believe what you will, just take it from a man who had to watch it all in silence who comes back now to break that silence, to try and be courageous, even if speaking would damn me to be visited by the demon."

Some of the others present during that explanation did not all wholly impressed, citing things that can be very roughly summarized as "easy for you to say, you weren't one of his victims."

Argus Myzan has since fled town, and there are heavy implications that the Sylverfern Council intends to issue a Wanted poster on the man that poisoned so many people, nobles and commoners alike, spitting in the face of the sanctity of the Night of the Traveller. They have not yet, likely because they either have not yet been able to finalize details with Lord Lockhart or they lack the funds to put forth a bounty. The way this will be addressed remains to be seen.

## CHANGES TO THE SYLVERFERN GUARD: TOWN GUARDS SOUND OFF

The Sylverfern guard has spent a very long time without leadership ever since the death of Captain Thistle and her successor Mairi Cobbletoss being called away by personal business. A group of town guards that included Argus (brother of the corporal Fergus that had spent months imprisoned by Perin) decided to take action against these undesirable circumstances on the Night of the Traveller by approaching the Council and Lord Lockhart, demanding a new Captain and Lieutenant to replace the ones that had been absent for most or all of the past year.

The guard ending up holding an election for the position of Captain of the Guard and Arglac Dunhelm was the man selected for the job. Dunhelm chose as his second a transplant from Werdill, an 18-year-old lordling named Lord Qech Serraviv, a relation of the prominent Vordis Poisonbloom clan.

Most of the guard seems to have positive views and feelings of relief about the new Captain. Among other things, they felt deprived of training and people to ask questions when tricky situations arose. "Well, I know Arglac personally, and I know he's a hard ass and a great tactician," guardsman Bob Dabith told the newspaper. "So I feel he can whip the guards, me included, into shape." The Council has proven extremely hands-off with the guard, so they were not a source of assistance. The guard also lacked someone to remind the Council about paying them.

Lieutenant Serraviv, too, has elicited generally positive reactions. "Oh but yes, I've known

him for a bit. He seems to be a great addition," Bob Dabith told a Sylverfern Star reporter. "Being he used to worship Hekita and whatnot, he's not going to let the weak simply join. Honestly.. if it wasn't for me being grandfathered in and a combat medic, I'm sure he wouldn't allow me to be a guard."

The guard has gained other new additions aside from the two leaders. Corporal Sharparo stated "The only new guard I knows of is Asher and I love him, I think he's a great addition to the guard especially since he's learned magic and found his own fighting style." On Dunhelm and Serraviv he said "I have the highest respect for both in leadership and fighting skill. I'm looking forward to seeing how they handle the various abilities and skills of the guards in their ranks."

The Asher of whom Corporal Sharparo spoke was Asher Raamchu, who was one of the guards that participated in the call for new leadership. "I was appointed last Fall, things have been going well around town, I suppose. Well, when Argus came to town and what he said about having a captain made sense. I hear there was a captain previously, but she hasn't been seen in quite some time. Personally, I voted for Arglac." Even as a new guardsman, Raamchu picked up on some issues. "I hear that previously, the reputation of the guard wasn't so great. I'd like the people to see us and feel safe." Although, The council, seems dead set on maintaining their appointment to the position. I spoke with Sigmund, a powerful sorcerer, one of the members of

the council. I happened to mention that there was a new captain, and he says that the council appointed a Captain. I told him that a Captain that was actually present and one that seemed to have a plan was better than an appointment. I'm not trying to say that the previous captain was bad, I just don't know them. Who knows, the previous captain could be better than Arglac. I just trying to do my job."

Despite the Council's misgivings, this is a popular change. The feelings of commoners around the village about the guard seem to have improved as well. One anonymous villager had much to say in praise of the recent changes. "I'm pretty happy about that. My fiancée's cousin is lieutenant! And my close friend is captain. And I know for a fact they'll get things done, such as training and whatnot- I've worked with them in the past several times. Probably still will. Finally the guard has some leadership that is actually HERE." The biggest hope of this villager in regards to the town guard leadership is "that they still go drinking with me once in a while, and that ol Serraviv helps babysit when the kids come around."

On a side note, the Council, too, is undergoing changes. Lord Samson Bordeaux is no longer a member, according to a member of the Lockhart household, and Dame Gemma Silverwolf is now an official member, joining Gaberiel Halewood, Sigmund Kijam, Rye Felhn, Antonia Bianchi and Tatha. There are rumors that Wren Immerrill is to be a new member but these are unconfirmed.

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# Overheard at the Manor

"WERDILL SECEDED."

"The fighting tournament for the pretty hammer."

"All the fay with all the angst."

"Got betrayed by someone I thought of as a friend. So that was lovely... not."

"The mass poisoning at Lord Lockhart's. Bet that bloke'll have a massive bounty on his head."

"Hey we didn't get any lords executed this holiday?"

"I didn't so much as learn anything new than get something reinforced... people are inherently selfish, deceitful sards."

"How relieved I am that there wasn't a bigger brawl between those Separatist kids and the Werdillan loyalists"

"Werdill's left Middlehaven. We're in big trouble now!"

"Werdill seceding. I hope Perin goes next or else we do. This kingdom ain't big enough for the two of us."

"The massive brawl up at the manorhouse where everybody was trying to kill each other."

"Betrayal."

"People raving about walking toys, think they celebrated a little too hard"

"My dog got killed by trolls"

"I gained a sweetheart"

"Too many Mo'Raak."

"Sugar-high children"

"My hangover the next morning"

"Taking bets on whether the manorhouse would make it through the holiday or if it'd fall down like Castle Blutmund"

"CURF!"

"The adventurer types almost all murdered each other"

"Guardsmen Sharparo couldn't cast magic"

"Cat people. So many cat people"

"Tachanka is marrying a cat"

"Court Doctor Fern found a new sweetheart to replace the whip boy"

"New guard captain Arglac an... Hey anyone else notice the elf seems to be really boned as of late?"

I mean she always has a big bone on her back now

Not to mention the white shaft she totes around with itd Lieutenant Whip Boy. Let's see if they WHIP the guard into shape so we Qech up to other towns"

"Was Captain Arglac a pirate at one point? I mean, Aaaaaargus... Aaaaaarglac..."

"Rye is doing better as a treasurer, maybe we can all afford some Rye too now"

"Half the time Tatha doesn't talk, is that the elf or the human part that does that?"

"I feel like you wrote about Sigmund before, huh dejav. Huh dejavu."

"Who's Gabe? OH you mean the talking Tower shield in the council? That thing has a name?"

"Why isn't Lady Antonia a bard? She's certainly addled and delusional enough to be... owait, never mind, she can't Bianchi"

"What IS Lady Gemma? We can play a game with that one Elf? Forest clearer? Wine disposal? Or flower garden? Your guess as good as mine."

"The Council has a lot of races on it. Looks like the potential new one is going to be a bird-person named Wren."

"Maybe if we slip Gemma some curf and make her a... High elf... She'll remove the hot sword from her bum"

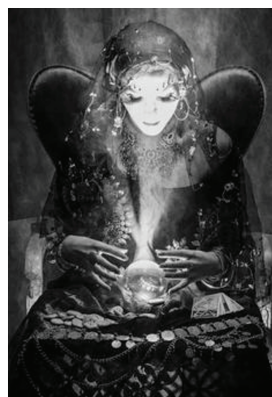
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