

THE SIF CHRONICLES: MYTHS, PROPHECIES AND LEGENDS, PART I

A tale must begin somewhere, dearest reader. In this book, you'll find a selection of curiosities that I have gathered, just for you, from throughout my travels on the continent of Elos. The truth behind them, however, is up to you to decide. I hope you enjoy, and, as always, venture far. Yours, Sif Selaine.

THE LAW OF BINDING

When one saves the life of another, the other owes them a debt, for Fate has been changed. Fate does not enjoy their plans to be unravelled, they have told me as such, though there are laws even they must follow. The saviour may, as payment, invoke the ancient rite called The Law of Binding. As part of this request, they may propose one of two things. The first, they may ask for "The first thing that greets you when you return home" It could be a dog, a guard standing at the gate, or a spouse. Quite amusing, is it not reader? You have your life spared but might have to hand the life of another dear to you over. Very tragic, really.

The second, they may ask for "What you find at home yet did not expect.". This could be a lover in their partner's bed, a sum of money from the shipment sent last week, or even a child of which they found their wife to be pregnant. To my knowledge, the law is rarely invoked, due to the unreliable nature of the thing to be received, however once it has been invoked, it must be upheld. Should it not be upheld, Fate has been known to intervene, with it ending poorly for all involved. I highly recommend, reader, against invoking this law should you save the life of someone. That is, unless you like to roll the dice of chance. If you do, then, may Uverthal give you his guidance.

THE PROPHECY OF THE BLIGHTMOON

Several decades ago, the two moons of Ithilion, Adrios and Aethana, eclipsed one another in a rare event. I was there to see it, reader, it was truly spectacular. Sadly, this happens once every several thousand years, though might I say for the best. The emanating magic from this caused several creatures to awaken, turning into Elven form and walking out unclothed from the forests, with only their tell-tale eyes to mark them for what they truly were. Due to the untrustworthiness of Fey magic, which this was believed to be, many of the Elf-creature hybrids were slain. Quite sad, really.

Senseless murder of these fine specimens of nature. A prophecy was told by Archvald Melorn Viskyei of Jester that those born under what had become known as The Blightmoon were to bring about lycanthropy and other curses upon the people. Having met this man myself, reader, I would less likely trust him with opening the door for me, let alone believing any word he had to say on this event. Though it would seem his word had sway within Aldarin. As such, it was believed that these Elves were the coming of this prophecy. Those that were not killed were imprisoned in forts across the continent, making sure that the prophecy were not to become true. Despite this, some were known to have escaped, or eluded capture in the first place. These Elves are known to speak little common and seem to act feral in nature. Some, myself included, protest the prophecy, stating that were they taken in and cared for, they would be far more accepted to live amongst the other humanoid races. A much more sensible option, wouldn't you agree, reader?

THE TOWER OF SORROW

Said to appear only when both Adrios and Aethana are both full in the sky, which happens once or twice a decade, the tower is known to bring great depression across the area it inhabits. Never appearing in the same place twice, the tower seems to leap across countries and oceans, only ever present for the single night. Unfortunately for us both, reader, I have been unable to see this phenomena with my own two eyes. However, I have collected accounts from locals who have seen the structure. They all reported wretched nightmares, horrible wails and suicidal thoughts permeating their minds for the duration of the towers presence. These thoughts appear to fade at dawn, the tower along with them, usually driving many to death in the time it is there.

A mysterious tower that causes depression and death to those around it. What could be any more interesting, reader? Those who dared to enter the tower have been said to never return. I have been told it appears as a gaunt, bleak pillar of darkened stone with jagged, black tiles forming a coiled roof. No windows can be seen, with only one plain wooden door standing at the front. Very ominous, though almost inviting, wouldn't you say?

THE ATFERO RUNES

These mysterious runestones have been found mainly across the north west of the continent, often standing 10-15ft tall and covered in runic writing. Researchers have concluded that the language stems to before the Vilorian times, with little to none of it being relatable to any modern language. I have inspected them myself and must say the language does seem quite peculiar indeed. Should I happen across one again, I very much wish to get some copies the writing. I might even publish them in my next book for you, reader. I'm sure you'd enjoy that. Attempts have been made to move the runes, however, even with the help of 40 black bears commanded by Pilvo Miststep, they have not budged an inch.

In my opinion, the Elves of Fyndar did not recruit enough bears from the forest to do the job, but I am no expert of the ways of nature. Further research seems to indicate a relationship to conjuration magic, with the runes reacting to such spells by glowing a dim, orange light. Any other magic seems to fall silent upon them. The mystery of these runes is widely debated by researchers across Elos, many presuming them to be warding stones or magical waypoints developed by a long lost civilisation. In my opinion, reader, if you would listen to it, is that they are summoning runes. But what they are to summon, reader, I do not know.

NIHAF

On the same night as the Blightmoon, away from the stupidity of the populus going on in Aldarin and Rymin, a bow was crafted from the branches of a white oak by the Master Craftsman Hirthrondal Velkilmarris in Fyndar, and infused with the energy of the lunar eclipse. A much more positive creation than the slaughter of thousands, would you not say, reader? This weapon became known as Nihaf and is said to be blessed by Mornfel herself. Not long after the construction of this bow, Hirthrondal died under peculiar circumstances and the bow went missing.

Those I had spoken to reported flashes of purple and green light from the house before his parting and investigation by The Walkers led to believe that Fey magic was involved. Commander Iskival Mendith of Fyndar's Elite Guard has been leading an investigation into the disappearance of the bow and murder of it's maker ever since, especially as she was the one to be receiving the bow from Hirthrondal the next day. She did not seem to appreciate my prying into the matter, reader. I was escorted out of Liorne by her guard. They seemed to think I was trying to obtain the bow for myself, which was not an untruth, I just merely wished to inspect it before handing it to it's rightful owner. Any bow blessed by a goddess would peak your interest too, would it not, reader?

All traces of the bow have been lost, with the guard seemingly presuming it to have been taken into the Feywild, though none understand how any could have permeated through the planar barrier. I feel there is a conspiracy of some sort, but for sake of a Walker being sent for my head, I shall keep my theories to myself, reader.

I'm sure we are all familiar with Mistveil, are we not, dear reader? The lovely, ash-filled, smoky land of the ever-hospitable Ashensworn. It is truly a delight to visit, for where most see drab, blackened landscape, I see tale upon tale to be discovered. In the capital city, Magnos, there exists a volcano called Vul'gyph that sits atop the city. It is quite magnificent, really. If you ever get the chance to visit, reader, I do recommend travelling to the summit. You will not regret it. A constant flow of magma slowly trickles from Vul'gyph, down to the sea below, forming new land for the city to expand onto. I hear those plots of land get more expensive by the year, or so I was told while in Magnos. Around 300 years ago, when the city was under half the size of it's present state, Elder Kulo of The Illustrious Pactwardens was said to have had a vision. This vision foretold the destruction of the city brought about by the children of the Pactwardens birthed this year. Should they not be sacrificed to Javar by being thrown into Vul'gyph, the city would surely see its demise. As we know, readers, Magnos still exists to this day. Well, read on and you shall find out why.

Some of the Pactwardens heeded this prophecy, sacrificing their own to appease the god, however some saw it as nonsense and refused. Eventually, mobs grew, and some were sacrificed by force - though a few escaped under the dead of night. A year from when the prophecy was foretold, the volcano erupted in a fiery, gaseous explosion, completely destroying the upper district of the town where the Pactwardens lived, and flowing down into the ocean. You see, reader, I presume that Javar had seen mercy on those that had done his favour and spared the rest of the city. You are welcome to disagree, reader. I encourage you to have your own mind. The surviving Pactwardens relocated to a new district formed atop the cooling magma of the volcanic eruption, however all was not forgotten. The children that had not been sacrificed were seen as cursed and labelled as dangerous to the future existence of the city. This ensuing hatred towards the children caused them to grow up twisted and malevolent, spiteful towards their friends and unnaturally cruel in nature.

It was to be expected, as with any alleged curse, the disdain of those around the person causes the curse to become such, not the other way around. This behaviour was attributed to the curse, as it would, and eventually all were branded and ostracised from the city. Many died in the harsh wilds of The Shadow Fields, though some were said to survive - harbouring a hatred for their own kind and still walking Elos to this day. You cannot blame them, can you reader? It really was a dark time for Mistveil. These that live are known as The Children of Vul'gyph and any Ashensworn to run into one is instructed to kill them on sight, alleged to be highly dangerous and volatile. I'll say just this, reader. Do not try. I have met one in my time and can speak of experience.

THE VUL'GYPH PROPHECY

THE ASH FENS

The farming community of The Shadow Fields usually live in small communities to help each other survive and to work the harsh landscape of Mistveil. There is a small area to the south-west of this territory commonly referred to by the locals as The Ash Fens. This small area has been the source of many supernatural occurrences to date, with multiple disappearances being reported nearby. I've seen this place with my own eyes, reader. The local farmer, Krix, took me as close as he dared go. I ventured a little further than he, it'll be said. The land itself is much boggy and swamp-like compared to the usually dry and cracked terrain of the rest of Mistveil.

The fens are rarely talked about by locals and often ignored. It took much convincing to hear anything of them. Only those with a death wish travel into The Ash Fens, reader. That is what I was told. Strange creatures have been sighted prowling around the fens by those who have been near, though many have written these off as movements in the trees, claiming the swamp just to be a dangerous terrain to traverse.

I was told a tale while in the local watering hole, reader. A tale of a Pactwarden. One of the Kex family from Magnos. He allegedly bought the land several decades ago with hopes to renovate it into a manor house and grounds, however after entering with his construction teams, none were seen nor heard from again. It is curious to me of what lies within that swampland, though I know better than to stick my nose in where it does not belong. I do enough of that as it is, it'll be said.

THE ISLE OF ORTHAIN

This small island is situated to the south of Menderin and Mistveil. It has been the attraction of many researchers and archeologists, myself amongst them. The isle namely went uninhabited, aside from those drawn to it for research and a number of penguins who reside on the south beach. They are quite adorable, honestly. I'll tell you, reader, that my partner and I at the time used to go and feed them fish from the cliffs between archeological digs. Watching them run after the small scraps used to fill me with such joy. But onto the isle itself. It was discovered around 50 years ago to contain several ruins beneath the surface that had become lost to time. These ruins, after further research by my fellow teams, have been attributed to a race of Elves that existed about 30,000 years ago, with little else being gleamed from them, sadly.

However, a few years after the opening of the first ruin to miners, a series of tombs were discovered. I was there, reader, when they unearthed these tombs and they were most spectacular. I've never seen so much gold in all my life, and I have visited Deveros! It was debated amongst the teams whether to open the tombs or not. This went on for several years, long after I had departed the isle, with them eventually deciding upon the opening of a single tomb. There, they were said to have discovered the mummified corpse of what seemed to be a Queen or some other royalty figure. Curiosity took the better of them, as it would with any mind geared towards learning, leading to the opening of the remaining tombs, discovering more mummified royalty and nobles. Very good for research, definitely, however not long after, storms picked up and ravaged the island. Many of the supply ships were destroyed, their crews washed beneath the waves. Most fled the isle at the nearest opportunity, never returning, believing they had been cursed. Over the years, the research teams slowly left the isle, with many who were present at the opening of the tombs dying of bizarre and tragic deaths within a few years of leaving.

Now, reader, I am not always the biggest fan of curses. Most I see to be folktales and nonsense created to keep the children from straying too far from the village, however, this. This seems like a true, fully fledged curse, reader. How incredible. After these events had transpired, the isle lay abandoned again until recently, where a team of Emondas researchers took up re-excavating the ruins and continuing on with the research there. I might call them mad. I might, though I joined them there, reader, so I do not. We all wished to know of these Elves that once lived here and we could not be kept away. As of yet, nothing had happened to them, nor me, though more tombs have been unearthed but not yet opened. The occupants of the previous tombs were left there, the tombs themselves being locked down and entry forbidden. Mostly likely for the best, in this case, don't you think?

REAVER'S GRASP

Allegedly once wielded by the prior God of War from The Elemental Chaos, Reaver, this glaive is a powerful artefact said to exist somewhere in Elos, or so I have been told. It is said to have fallen to the material plane after Reaver was slain by Felkir and Othorita on their wedding day. From what I have read, the god was said to have interrupted the ceremony with a number of demigods at his side, protesting the partnership. Naturally, the betrothed couple were not too pleased with the interruption to their special day and promptly murdered him. Nothing unusual in the week of a deity, I'm sure.

His glaive fell down to the material plane and was lost to time. From those I have spoken to around Lyros, it is said to exist somewhere within the dense jungles within Lyros Del Melidar. An elderly researcher by the name of Niorn, who had done extensive research into the gods, mentioned to me that those who wield this glaive are said to be fueled with immense strength fired from the stars of The Elemental Chaos, harnessing this power to destroy entire cities with one fell blow. How brutal a weapon, but how truly fascinating at the same time, would you not agree?

I've learnt of many who have set out into the writhing expanse of this forsaken jungle to find the glaive, though none to my knowledge have succeeded. With so many of the Gnomish tribes that live within, attacking and cannibalising any who dare venture into their territories, I doubt any of those groups will ever be found. Such a shame, for I would so wish to study this object in person should it ever be found. We can all dream, reader. It doesn't mean they'll always come true.

THE FIFTH FLEET OF DEVEROS

Ghost ships are a common legend upon the seas around Elos and these tales usually disinterest me. Ships are capable of being blown with the tides for many a year after being abandoned. The tales often speak of older ships falling to the tides and allegedly coming back to haunt the seas they once patrolled. Standard ghost story nonsense, wouldn't you agree, reader? Though, I shall admit, none quite compare to the legend of The Fifth Fleet of Deveros.

Eighty years ago, when the war with Jykstrav was at its peak, Aldarin set out on an ambitious venture to storm Jykstrav by sea. This may not have been that ambitious a plan at first, no no, until we note that it was being led through The Valhuk, or Ashen Abyss to the uneducated. For those that do not know of this, it is a raging perpetual storm that reigns down on the seas to the north of Jykstrav and Far Crest, commonly cutting off most sea travel north of this point. As such, Halthos and Fyndar and almost entirely excluded from the ocean due to the nature of this marvelous natural phenomena. This fleet was to be led by Vice-Admiral Helena Danston around the north-most peninsular of Jykstrav, around Far Crest and to invade from the border point with Halthos. Quite a valiant plan, I would say. Stupid, possibly, but should it work, Aldarin would take the helm of this war. The Jydren would never expect it. Not even the most bold and daring of Jyrden sailors think to venture into the Valhuk.

With new ships crafted of Skyrvn wood, the Aldarins were confident in their plan. Nothing much changes in history, dearest reader. The Aldarins of this day are just as hard-headed as those of times past. Tragedy struck not long into the embarkment, with The Valhuk decimating the fleet. Only three ships out of the hundred returned to Deveros. Many years later, sailors around the north of Jordveil Isle reported sightings of an Aldarin fleet sailing out of The Valhuk. As soon as the reports came in, the ships had vanished. These were the first sightings of many over the years, leading most to believe that the ships of The Fifth Fleet still sail the seas north of Jykstrav, led by the ghost of Vice-Admiral Danston, fueled by the anger of the suicide mission they were sent on.

I think we'll both agree here, reader, this ghost ship story is far more interesting than most.

THE CITY OF BENLAK

Just over a thousand years ago, The Dusk Shroud receded from the material plane and the many humanoid races began to live once again on the surface. I think we can both agree, reader, that was a questionable thing to happen. True, there was war underground but now there is more war on the surface. Anyway, during the time of the Dusk Shroud, these races had been confined down into The Underdark, barely surviving and constantly warring with the other races that inhabited those lands. Fortresses and towns were built, though more out of practicality and necessity for survival.

One such settlement was known as Benlak, a small city numbering around 8,000 of Human and Elven residents, and is believed to be roughly located under Eastern Jykstrav. My sources have told me that some of the architecture of modern day Jyrden buildings stem from the styles of these cities. Quite splendid it must have looked. The settlement started small, from a trade company I believe, and slowly grew into the cavern it had taken to reside in, expanding downwards to the lake that the cavern housed. Frequent trade came through the city, as was to be expected, with many finding it as a location of fresh water and peace from the warring of the rest of the Underdark.

One day, a caravan from the Aldarin settlement of Vain arrived to deliver supplies and to trade. When they entered the cavern, they did not understand what had happened. The city was gone. The sources I have for this are translated rather hastily, dear reader, but you will listen to me when I say there is no mistake in the wording: The city has vanished into thin air. No trace of it ever having existed was left behind. Don't you find that fascinating, reader? I certainly do. To this day, none know what happened to Benlak, nor its inhabitants. Some say the cavern was cursed, or that they were transported to another plane, though none have been able to determine the true cause of the disappearance of an entire city.

THE TOME OF TOBIAS STEED

From what I have heard, dearest reader, Tobias Steed was a wizard once pertaining to the land of Menderin. He was a human of Rymin descent, the old one, not the new, and had made quite a name for himself amongst the tribes of Menderin. So some of the tribespeople were willing to tell me, in broken common, that Tobias could bring back the dead. Now to you and I, reader, this does not sound that peculiar. "Clerics do that, Sif. Don't be ridiculous." I hear you say. You are not wrong, reader. Not in the slightest. But Tobias was different. He brought back hundreds of people, all in one day.

I am told he was blessed by Zephyr, at least that is what these people believe. I disagree, no god would hand out that power so readily. It seems that Tobias passed on many years ago, now. Rather ironic that he had such power for life but was unable to prevent his own inevitable demise, wouldn't you say, reader? Either way, his knowledge was said to be packed into this grand tome of his that he carried everywhere. None know of his resting place, nor where this tome might be. It may not even be buried with him, though that doesn't stop the pursuit of man seeking it. They assume they can unlock the doors of life and death themselves as he once did. All I know is that it is somewhere in Menderin, though I shall not waste my time searching for I have more to document and more to find.

Until next time, reader.