

Raven's Herald

Vol. 10 Number 3

Valor and Victory!

September, 598

Sessuar Army Defeated in Cumberland; Greystone Vows Victory By Year's End

Although weary and battered to the bone, Ravenholt's finest have continued their unflinching press back against the last vestiges of the Sessuar Emperium, battling almost non stop since two ill-planned attacks on our fair capitol city. While this time last year saw our lands in desperate straights, the attacks on the city in September and October of last year seemed to energize our flagging hopes. Led by the valorous Baron Maximillian Greystone, all able hands have joined what is believed to be the turning point in this hideous and deadly war.

March saw tides turning in our favor as several brave scouts

from Duke Alaric's personal guard managed to intercept and re-route information from the Southern Sessuar Army to the Northern Army, allowing Warlord Zomar's troops to cut off the Red Hand's attempts to join forces. While Baron Greystone and his men continued to push the last vestiges of the Southern Army back towards the port city of Sercia, Warlord Zomar's continued efforts forced the armies of the Red Hand to move north and eastward towards the coast, in an obvious state of full retreat.

Leaving a force to manage the coastline of Capulus, Baron Greystone moved northward

up the coast from below, forcing a running battle from Greywatch towards Gadren Castle, preparing a devastating pincer of power where the Northern Army's ships had first docked in the early stages of this war. As Zomar's troops put forth even greater effort, the ever dwindling numbers of the Northern Army, under the flagging guidance of the Red Hand, having lost many of its famed Black Robed Mages to raids and battles, rushed straight into the well laid trap.

The final battle was two tiered, with an initial surprise attack coming from Greystone's men in the south, as the Sessai moved towards port. Baron Greystone called out the Red Hand for a valorous man-to-man final combat. Enemy stood motionless alongside enemy as those closest watch in awe as these two great warriors came to blows.

Greystone was grievously wounded and at one point seemed to be all but unconscious on the ground, only to seem to find some burst of energy and strength from within as he forced a final, great killing blow to the chest of the malignant Red Hand.

As the cheers went up from Greystone's troops, a battle cry of terrifying proportions rang out from the far side of the city as what was described by one exhausted participant as "A huge HERD of those terrifying horned minotaurs joined the fray...I'm just glad they was on our side!"

The Minotaur Army, led by Warlord Zomar and his brother, Tariq, pounded through from the northwestern side, coming down the river from Greytree, bolstering the now unstoppable Ravenholt

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Emmisary of Death Audits Guild Several Townsfolk Sign Contracts

Late in the night of June 12th 598 a strange being calling himself, "the Auditor" appeared in town. He appeared as a human, but clearly associated in some way with the plane of Death, and possessed significant knowledge and power. He claimed to have come to balance the scales of Life and Death, both in the Healer's Guild whose circle is now strongly tied to powers of Life, and in those who had an imbalance in deaths due to strange circumstances, or the intervention of powerful forces.

A fair number of townsfolk also signed contracts of some kind with the Auditor. These contracts seem to have involved going on quests, or giving up part of the signer's spirit in return for services rendered by the Auditor. Those who signed contracts are generally keeping very quiet on the nature of them so the Raven's Herald was unable to discover much about the contracts or the quests that they entailed.

Those who interacted with the Auditor generally describe him as a neutral being, polite and impartial. After a few days in town, he departed, apparently satisfied that he balance of Life and Death had been restored.

Vengeful Spirit Laid to Rest

The reason behind recent mysterious attacks on the few Stone Elves remaining in the Eastwyck area was discovered this past month in Ravenholt. The vengeful spirit of a murdered farm woman whose quest for revenge against her attackers became a quest against all life, had a particular hatred of Stone Elves, and enjoyed using her dark powers to cause their deaths. This June she was returned to her rest by brave and noble people of Ravenholt. The tale of her death, after-life, and final rest are related below.

Two hundred years ago in what is now southern Capulus, the
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Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Tourney in Honor of Prince Kevynn Announced

A festival in honor of the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Kevynn Blackfox is to be held in the city of Ravenholt on the fifth and sixth days of October in the year 598.

All are invited to attend. Many festivities are planned for this most joyous occasion, including a Nobles Tournament, a Commoners Tournament, Highland Games, a Royal Feast, and a Masked Ball.

The festivities shall begin promptly at eleven o'clock in the morning of September 5th, with the presentation of the Ravenholt nobles to the Prince in the Form of a Colors presentation/competition on the center tourney field. Nobles are required to be at the presentation to introduce their courts, but are not required to compete this year. It is understood by His Royal Highness that the Nobles have been very busy with the war and rebuilding of the Duchy.

For any commoners wishing to enter the Commoners Tourney or Highland Games, applications will be available Friday the 4th of September. The following guidelines apply:

The competitions shall be as follows:

Nobles:	Commoners:
Colors	Combat
Combat	Darts
Decryption	Scavenger Hunt
Hunting	Riddles
Darts	Entertainment

Highland Games:

Insults

Log Throw

Foot race

Dagger fighting

Practical Joke

A Royal Feast will be held Saturday evening beginning promptly at 5:30pm. The Grand Masked Ball will follow after the feast. All are invited to attend.

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forces. In what was described by some as a "rampaging massacre," the minotaurs and the people of Ravenholt laid waste to the now leaderless Sessai who, as always, fought suicidally well. The death toll was high on both sides, but highest among our enemy. Those of

Ravenholt who died here died knowing their cause was just and truly fought. Baron Grey-stone was heard to remark that he vowed to clean out the few remaining pockets of these vile and hated scum, and that there would be a full and final victory for Ravenholt by year's end.

Wizard's Ritual Goes Awry

On the night of Friday, June 12, a young wizard's apprentice named Jadrin entered Ravenholt seeking help in dealing with creatures that had overrun her mentor's tower and trapped a friend inside. She also sought a group to sneak into the tower through a hidden tunnel to retrieve papers with information on a ritual of her mentor's that had gone wrong. Ryker and Corwyn of the Mage's Guild led the frontal assault while the court of Capulus ventured the secret passage. Jadrin's friend, a scout named Mirai, was rescued, and both groups wound up in the wizard's study where they found numerous notes and papers and a circle of power. While they searched the study for further clues, the woman they had thought was Mirai, disintegrated Jadrin and escaped through another secret passage blocked by the circle, in which she seemed to be invested. The real Mirai showed up later, and it was evident that the woman that the warriors of Ravenholt had "rescued" was a shape-changed or magically disguised impostor.

The papers recovered from the tower were reviewed by area residents. Some of them seemed to be the notes of a creature ritually created by the wizard; others were notes of the wizard himself. It seemed that the wizard had found a power source and performed a ritual, giving his life to power it, to create a being that would exist to end violence. The ritual had flawed, and created an op-

posite to this being as well, one whose only purpose was to create violence and strife. This creature could be stopped using the items that had powered the ritual: four orbs associated with the four seasons. The scout Mirai knew the locations where the orbs had been hidden, and volunteered to take groups to retrieve them.

Meanwhile, a strange and powerful being appeared in town calling himself "Heartsblood." He approached the townsfolk asking them questions about why they bore weapons, sometimes attacking those whose answers displeased him.

The Baronial court of Westmarch first encountered Heartsblood while he was attacking a commoner. They immediately intervened, rescuing a commoner and forcing Heartsblood to retreat. While they were not able to speak to him at that time, later that night someone approached him and was able to talk to him peacefully. It soon became apparent that he was the creature created by the wizard's ritual to try to end violence in Ravenholt.

There was no sign for some time of Heartsblood's opposite, a creature calling herself Anath. It is believed that she may have been behind virulent ogre attacks, increased banditry, and other problems faced by Ravenholt that gathering.

On the following day, groups were organized to retrieve the four orbs that could be used to reduce Anath's power, and force her to reform in the circle

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family of a young woman named Kaethe was mercilessly slaughtered by brigands. With her dying breathe, Kaethe begged for the power to avenge her family's murders, and her wish was granted by an unknown power.

Kaethe took into herself the dying pain and emotions of her family. She tracked the brigands who had killed them and destroyed them. For several months afterwards, Kaethe hunted more marauding bandits, but her dark powers apparently began to consume her, and soon she did not care who her victims were as long as they fed her hungers. An appeal was sent to the Stonewood Forest for assistance from the Stone Elves, who were able to strike Kaethe down after a brutal battle and destroy her.

In truth, however as was discovered this June, Kaethe had only been banished to the nightmare realm for two centuries, until she discovered a young empathic healer in Eastwyck. Andelyn, who arrived in the city of Ravenholt this June, possessed the power to take pain and misery from others into herself without the use of the Earth magicks commonly used to heal wounds.

Stone elves and others with

similar mind powers within the capital city and its environs could sense Kaethe as she drifted through Ravenholt. Being sensed apparently angered Kaethe, for if anyone pointed out that they felt her presence she would fill the minds of those around her with hatred and rage to attack the one who had sensed her.

Early afternoon on Saturday of the 13th, Kaethe used her powers of rage and hatred to provoke a large fight outside Eastwyck Hall. This location was chosen most likely because Andelyn was traveling with the baronial court during her stay in Ravenholt. The young healer rushed from body to body, healing wounds with just the touch of her hand. At the end of the battle she cried out and collapsed. Baron Johann ordered Andelyn's body to be taken to the Mage's Guild to be identified, but before they could reach the circle, Andelyn awoke. She looked upon herself in amazement and exclaimed, "It worked!"

When Baron Johann and his companions sought an explanation for Andelyn's odd behavior, she threw what appeared to be spells of chaos upon those who tried to restrain her, then turned gaseous and escaped.

Black Rose

On a dark night this September, the powerful undead group known as the Black Rose once again visited Ravenholt. Rumors indicated that they intended to attack Eastwyck and possibly Prince Kevynn as well. The Black Rose stayed in the woods, however, where many brave townfolk ventured after them to attempt to destroy them, slaying many minions. In the end, Westmarch, Eastwyck, and some members of the Funeral Parlor stayed on the hunt for longest, succeeding in killing the ghoul known as Renfield. The Death Knight that led the Black Rose group, however, escaped towards dawn.

A scholar, previously from the Stonewood forest, arrived shortly after, investigating attacks on Stone elves in the area. He brought information connecting the history of Kaethe and current events. His theories were confirmed when Andelyn's spirit manifested and spoke of Kaethe's possession of her body and her own entrapment on the plane of nightmares. She also spoke of the spirits of Kaethe's family who had been in torment all these years, powering Kaethe with their pain and misery. Andelyn claimed that Kaethe's power could be broken and her spirit laid to rest if the spirits of her family were released.

Four groups ventured to the Plane of Nightmares to save Kaethe's family. A group from the Healer's Guild helped Kaethe's son Jathan. They recovered a wooden dragon that restored the boy's courage for a time. He begged his saviors to take the dragon and bring it to his mother to force her to remember him, for only when Kaethe had been laid to rest would her family rest as well. Baron Johann and others recovered a rag doll belonging to Cavia, Kaethe's younger daughter, and saved her from despair. Another group sought to release her eldest daughter, Nadelle from her hatred by restoring her engagement ring. Both daughters also begged their rescuers to take the tokens they had found to their mother or else their torment would continue after the brief deliverance.

The court of Eastwyck took up the challenge of freeing Kaethe's husband Lorian from

his rage. After a vicious fight, they disarmed him of his sword, and his anger temporarily left him. His request was the same as his children's before him: put his wife to rest

Late that evening Andelyn's spirit appeared again to lead those who would follow to Kaethe's lair. A sizable force of Ravenholt citizens did battle with the nightmare creatures that Kaethe had summoned to protect her. In the midst of the battle, a small group of those bearing the tokens managed to fight their way through to confront her. Townsfolk boldly presented the possessions of her family and spoke of their ongoing torment on the plane of Nightmare. Kaethe dismissed their words as lies at first and began to summon her power to destroy them. Their heartfelt pleas to release her children and husband from their suffering soon began to have some effect. Kaethe began to wail in denial that, "This was not how it was supposed to be!" She collapsed, and Kaethe's spirit rose from her stolen body. She begged for forgiveness and thanked her saviors for her release from darkness and her family's release from their torment, then she vanished.

Andelyn's spirit returned to her body when Kaethe's departed. It is unknown at this time whether she has retained her healing gifts, and the court of Eastwyck has taken her into their protection.



Spirit Haunts ARC

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of her creation. Lucas of the Funeral Parlor gathered a group to retrieve the Spring orb which included several town-folk very new to town, mostly Dark elves associated with the Funeral Parlor.

Squire Ailon of Arkham organized the group that retrieved the Summer orb. The Fall and Winter orbs were gathered by other town-folk.

The Orbs, if activated around Anath would decrease her power and make her vulnerable to permanent destruction. However the only way she could be forever destroyed was by coming onto contact with Heartsblood, her opposite, which would destroy them both. Heartsblood was convinced to confront her, and took the field again that night, and convinced him to make this sacrifice.

The day after all four orbs were retrieved, a ceremony was held following instructions laid out in the deceased wizard's notes to attune appropriate bearers to each of the four orbs, attuning them to their bearers.

Later that morning Heartsblood told the orb bearers how to find Anath, who was in the guise of one of the merchants of House Avaro at the Auction that occurred that morning. The four orb bearers were able to get into position and activate their orbs without the creature noticing them; it then transformed to its true shape and tried to flee, but was cut down on the field.

Two groups were then organized to go to the wizard's tower and fight Anath one final time. The court of Westmarch spearheaded the frontal assault on Anath and her minions. The orb bearers meanwhile took their orbs to be destroyed by dropping them in a lava pit, and then sneaked Heartsblood in through a secret passage. Anath was cut down. When she reformed in the circle of power in the wizard's study, Heartsblood made the fatal contact and both were destroyed.



Contributions Needed

Give to the War Effort

Donations of components, weapons, and other material goods will be greatly appreciated by those on the front lines.

For the last few months the Alchemical Research Center has been visited by a poltergeist. At first the members of the ARC heard singing and strange things continuously happened; objects would be moved candles would spontaneously light themselves, and so on.

As time went on, people began to think that the cabin might be haunted. Singing had always been a constant when the strange things happened. Harold MacDonald at one time sang back to the spirit, at which time it sang again. Shortly after that the spirit left.

A few weeks later, the spirit revisited the ARC. The singing was heard, and the people within the cabin tried to communicate with it. Several questions were asked, but no solid answers were given. Eventually, Kainon Andrews sang back the verse that the spirit sang. The spirit accompanied him, and sang another verse. The people present copied down the words and sang them back again. After each verse sung, a new verse would be presented, until the song was complete. The people present-Kainon, Tyrus, Kendrick, and Cole- followed the song's lead. After completing the "instructions" they entered what seemed to be a vision spell. In the vision, they saw the spirit, and her story unfolded for them. After the vision, the spirit left.

At the gathering in early September, the spirit returned. The verses of the song were sung to it, but nothing happened. Kainon retrieved an item which had aided them before, and again, the people present entered a vision. A riddle was given for the adventurers to solve. After the vision had ended, they worked diligently to solve the puzzle, but to no end. There are high hopes that the resolution can be found soon so as to end the torture of the spirit.



Ravenholt Healers' Guild Auction

The Annual Healer's Guild auction will be held Saturday September 5th at 2:00 p.m. Wondrous pastries, cakes, and cookies will be sold off as well as interesting items donated by the master of a caravan. The items will include jewelry, furniture, and other things of a useful nature. Scrolls, potions, foci, ritual and alchemical components and perhaps a mystery donation will be auctioned off as well. A list of the items to be sold can be seen at the Tavern and the Healer's Guild. Please come early and bid often. We are also seeking all manner of donations for the war effort and this auction, if you have anything that you would like to contribute please contact Sister Prudence or Gwyneth.

To All of Ravenholt,

A number of weeks ago we were visited by a being known as the Auditor. He visited many people around town and frequented the Healer's Guild several times. He told us that he was there for a number of reasons. His first job was to investigate reports of people who may have been in some way cheating death. Those who seemingly should have died a final death but were still among the living.

His questions for the Healer's Guild were of a different nature. He saw the mark of Life and the Rod of Healing as a taint on our circle. Being that he was an emissary of Death, this was understandable. He was concerned that we might become too devoted to Life, due to the constant influence of the rod and the circle. He spoke with all of us in the guild, and in the end set forth two tasks for us to do. These were tasks that would see just how far we would go in the service of Life.

The first required releasing a spirit that was trapped. The spirit was binding a large, dangerous creature. If the spirit was released, the creature would be freed. The spirit pleaded to be allowed to go to its final rest, and the guild members there released it. The creature later arrived in Ravenholt. It was dispatched by several townsfolk.

The second task was to confront a man who had extended his life beyond normal by becoming a liche. I accompanied my healers on this task. We found the "liche" was in fact alive again. He had attempted to gain a book capable of extending life. The book, instead of extending his undead-ness brought him back as a normal, living human, and kept him alive for many years. There was however, some type of proscribe on the room that would not allow anything living to pass through. The book could not be moved due to some magical influence in the room. We finally were forced to kill the man at his request. He did not expect to survive a resurrection, but would rather be dead forever than alive, and trapped as he was. After we dispatched him, the Auditor appeared. He said that he was satisfied for now, but that he would return.

One extra note of thanks to the fighter who accompanied us.

I am very sorry that I cannot remember your name, only your face. You know who you are, and I am personally grateful for the help and the patience that you gave to us. If you ever have need of service, ask me-I am in your debt.

The Healers' Guild

LETTERS TO THE PEOPLE OF RAVENHOLT

The code of Chivalry states that: "Thou shalt respect the weak, and constitute thyself the defender of them."

While the great battle against the Red Hand raged, I "spoke" to a young woman named "Piper" who was distressed that when she blew her whistle for help when attacked by creatures, she was berated loudly for doing so. Piper bears no weapons, and cannot spellcast, for she is mute. There is all possibility that these facts were not known, so I have taken up her cause.

Piper was in the thick of the elemental battle to aid our recovery of Capulus, dodging blasts of fire and ice to apply herbal healing to fallen combatants. Bravery of this caliber cannot and should not go unnoticed. May we all learn from her example, and count ourselves fortunate to come to her aid.

Baron Alan Moonwind
Cumberland

A Memorial

What is it like to read the obituary of someone you never knew? I have done just that in these pages many times, reading lists of accomplishments, companions, relatives, ranks attained, -seldom feeling even a fraction of what those same companions and relatives must be feeling. What can I say to make you the reader feel my loss? How can I convey the agony of being the only person who can approach her estranged family to tell them that the daughter they once loved and nurtured, but turned their backs on, will now never come back to them. There will never be a reconciliation. There is no avenging a mother's tears at hearing the news of the death of her child. If you did not know her, you will never know her. If you did know her, you understand. I will not be the one to itemize her, or put a level on her life and how she spent it. That is for someone else to do. Fox, my friend since childhood, is dead. Her death has been avenged. Lift a mug in her honor whenever you think about it. Slan agus banacht -Harold MacDonald

Unto the Honorable Peoples of Ravenholt:

Forgive my presumption, but I feel it necessary to clarify a point of etiquette. It is both right and proper to address any person, be they noble or goodman, by the term "My Lord" or "My Lady". This is Not addressing someone by noble title, nor is it considered pretending to noble title to accept such address. This is very different from addressing someone as "Lord So-and-so," and should not be confused. If a person addresses another as "My Lord" or "My Lady" it is generally out of respect or politeness and should be accepted with all good grace.

-Lady Alyssa Antecris, Steward to His Grace, Duke Alaric

Public Notices

Wanted: True Elemental essence of Shadows or Darkness.
Contact Darius Brisbane

Come to the House of Al-Quadim! A shop of wonders and practicalities from across Tyrra. Items to make adventuring easier, or to delight your friends and loved ones! Armor, weapons, alchemicals, potions, scrolls, locks, traps, spellbooks, and objects of beauty and uniqueness bought and sold. Appraisals of fine objects also readily available. Traps made to order. Training available upon request. Special Orders always Welcome! Safe Journey to You!

Seeking Red Wolf or Spirit Dancer: It has been a long time since you have made it to town. Many people seek your wisdom and knowledge. If you can not make it to town, please send word to the barbarians of Ravenholt so that they may meet with you somewhere. Thank You.

Order of the Codex, We wish to thank you for generating the idea to donate proceeds from our auctions. Let it be known that they, the Orphanage have thanked us numerous times so I wish to convey their thanks to those who implemented the idea.

-Rafters of the Darkwind Funeral Parlor.

People of Ravenholt, The children and staff of the Darkwind Orphanage wish to thank you for your support in moneys and curatives that were donated in your name by the Funeral Parlour from a portion of the proceeds of the last three auctions they held. If only you could see their joy in the children's eyes when they look to the new beds, and play area that is being built. Again, Thank you all!

Norman Flynn/Chancellor

Wanted, multiple low circle celestial scrolls. I need to purchase multiple scrolls to fulfill an order. Please contact Amra Asland Al-Quadim. Safe Journey to You!

Congratulations to Harold and Fallon for their new marriage. May it be long and joyous. May your mugs always be full, and your alchemy always fly true. May the elements offer you their strength and the totem spirits guide your path. From all those that love you both forever and always.

Wanted: Multiple Potions. I need to purchase multiple potions to fulfill an order. Please contact Amra Asland Al-Quadim. Safe Journey to You!

To All the Citizens of Ravenholt:

By request and sanction of His Grace Duke Alaric Malinruin, a heraldic registry is being compiled. All Colors and Coats of Arms are to be recorded in the Registry. At your earliest convenience please provide written or verbal description of your Court, Group, or Personal colors and Arms to the Mages' Guild. Thank You.

Wanted: I am interested in recruiting new adventurers to the lands of Ravenholt as bodyguards for my shop. Please contact Amra Asland Al-Quadim at the House of Al-Quadim, located in forty of the Healer's Circle. Safe Journey to You!

Wanted: All manner of ritual components. Will pay premium prices. Contact Darius Brisbane.

Wanted: A Destroy Undead Focus: Please contact Amra Asland Al-Quadim at the House of Al-Quadim, located in front of the Healer's Guild circle. Safe Journey to You!

Black Rose,

It is quite a pity that one impure thorn can sour the image of a perfect rose. The beauty of the delicate petals shall not be corrupted by your twisted forms. I await your defeat with gleeful anticipation. I regret that I was not there to witness your retreat, but for you the end is near. May you forever wither in the Darkness of permanent night. -The True Daughter of the Rose.

Seeking: Historians and researchers to share information and correspondence. Please contact Severa Winternight in Tyrangel, Southwatch.

Seeking aid from Alchemists of Evendarr. Due to the magical flux, standard alchemy in the Hinterlands does not seem to work as once it did. We are finding specific components needed for each different substance. We wish to trade knowledge of recipes, old and new. We wish to correlate any recipes and known effects of this experimentation with the hopes that we lose no more people to the experiments..

-The Alchemy Guild of The Hinterlands

The Noble Court of Capulus has a number of positions available. We will consider any class, and will provide training to those less experienced who become members. Are you a warrior? By temperament or by training? Positions available in the infantry, archers, and cavalry. Healers also needed. Defend your home and your people. Speak to a recruiter in the Capital City for additional details.