

HAYLEM HERALD

Hic sumus, omnibus ad insaniam convertunt

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Visitors From Afar

The adventurers from Thrush Peake have dealt with some of the worst villains, monsters and evil-doers that the kingdom has ever seen. They've fought back beasts and abominations the likes of which would terrify the common folk of Haylem . . . but this past gathering they found themselves doing something very different: helping stranded strangers from another land.

On Friday night of the past gather, representatives of the Dividian Trader's Association arrived in Thrush Peake seeking help with a little problem on the northwest coast of the kingdom, near the lighthouse. When they arrived at the location, they discovered three foreigners who had washed up on the beach. They introduced themselves as Prince Dion, Kata and Yida (a satyr). They told the adventurers that they were from a far-off nation they called 'Sola Vecchio' and they had no easy way to go home. However, they had heard that there was a portal somewhere nearby from ancient times when they used to trade with the Kingdom. They apparently had secured a book about it from an old library and desperately wanted to use it to go home. They told the adventurers that they have found the cave that holds the portal, but some nasty monsters live inside it and they need some help clearing it out.

Inside the cave, the adventurers faced giant spiders that spun webs strong enough to stand upon. Spiders are always a tricky foe, mostly due to their tendency to ensnare their prey in sticky webs, but such things are no match for the powerful adventurers of Thrush Peake! Deeper into the cave, they fought a band of troglodytes who seemed to be guarding some kind of plinth.

As they fought through the creatures and neared the plinth, they noticed that it had a large crack in it. Once all the troglodytes were slain the adventurers found a map near the plinth that was clearly magical, as there was one spot on the map just outside of Tiefanu that was glowing.

Not sure where to go from here, the adventurers (at the urging of the foreigners) decided to check out the location. Upon arriving there, they were greeted by a watchman who after much debate, showed the adventurers to a big stone wall, in which were two very strange looking stones that didn't match the others that made up the wall. When the adventurers put the map near the strange rocks, they started to glow. The watchman agreed to let them take the rocks, but only if they could find another similar rock to replace them with. Therefore, they headed out to a nearby quarry in search of some mundane rocks to give the watchman in exchange.

In the quarry, the adventurers encountered a large band of goblins who accosted them as they tried to find appropriately shaped rocks. But goblins are no match for the might of the adventurers of Thrush Peake, and they were dispatched with ease. Among the many, many rocks in the quarry, they were able to find two that were around the right size and shape, and they were able to successfully trade them to the watchman for the two glowing ones in the wall. When the glowing rocks were held near the map, the spot on the map that they were at disappeared and another spot started to glow, this one on the docks of Nagelstadt. It being so late, the adventurers and their visiting friends decided to check out the new location the next day.

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The following morning, the adventurers headed to Nagelstadt's docks, where the glowing map lead them to a bar. At the door to the bar, the adventurers ran into an old friend: Vandrad, the half-orc! He warned the adventurers that they didn't want to go into the bar just then . . . apparently they orcs inside the bar were having a bit of a fight regarding some kind of strange glowing rock that the barkeep owned. The adventurers immediately knew that the rock the half-orcs were fighting over was the one that the needed to help their friends. They tried to bargain with the owner to trade for the rock, but he wouldn't trade it for anything less than a small fortune . . . a sum that even the adventurers could not afford. Vandrad suggested that the only way they were going to get the rock if they truly wanted it was to fight the orcs and half-orcs for it; according to him, it was the only 'negotiating' they would truly understand.

Therefore, the adventurers jumped head-long into the already engaged bar brawl. By the end of the fight, the adventurers emerged victorious and made sure that all of their opponents were stable and in no danger of dying (they were races of man who had committed no crime, after all). The much subdued barkeep agreed to give the adventurers the rock, but to show him that they meant him no ill-will, the foreigners agreed to bring back several cases of their wine (which, according to them, was much better than anything we had available here) that the barkeep could sell exclusively at his bar. Happy to have the promise of an exclusive trade deal with the people from Sola Vecchio, the barkeep handed over the glowing rock. Just as before, when they put the rock up against the map, the glowing spot moved. This time it highlighted a farm in County Somershire.

That afternoon, the adventurers and their new friends headed to the new spot and found the home of a dryad whose home doubled as a matchmaking service that he runs. When asked about whether or not he might be in possession of a strange glowing rock, he immediately became defensive and told the adventurers that

he didn't want to give it up. He had buried it in the backyard, and he became aggressive when the adventurers tried to bargain with him for it. He had a bunch of bandits working for him, including what appeared to be a large shambling bush, and they attacked the adventurers, throwing love and charm effects. Eventually, the adventurers were able to defeat the creatures and dig up the rock. Digging around in the shop, the adventurers found numerous (illegal) Love and Love-9 elixirs . . . they determined that the dryad had been using them to facilitate his matchmaking services. Given the illegal nature of those elixirs, the countess determined that he should suffer a death for his crimes and the adventurers left him to die, after destroying all the illegal alchemy that he had.

This time when the adventurers held the glowing rock (and the other similar rocks) up to the map, it turned into a scroll. According to the instructions on the scroll, when the rocks are placed into the plinth in the cave and the words on the scroll are spoken it will open a portal to Sola Vecchio and allow the foreigners to return home.

The three, anxious to return home, urged the adventurers to return to the cave and cast the ritual. They arrived at the site and after trying several configurations of the rocks eventually figured out the correct order to place them into the plinth. Once the rocks were in place, Sage Violet of the Celestial Guild started the ritual, but instantly realized that even the extensive magics that she possessed would not be enough to open the portal. However, she noticed that there were many strands of lose magic floating around the cavern, and called for the adventurers to funnel it into her Circle. Once the ritual began, the cavern started to fill with strange, ghostly creatures, many of which seemed nigh impervious to damage (both physical and magical) who sought to disrupt the casting. However, they proved no match for the might of the adventurers, who managed to fend off the creatures and allow Sage Violet to complete the ritual, causing a burst of magical energy to fill

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the cavern and a glowing portal appeared. Anxious to return home the foreigners, along with several adventurers, jumped into the portal . . . and emerged on a beautiful beach! Palm trees and cabanas dotted the sand and in the distance fruit orchards stretched for miles. Kata, Dion and Yida led those adventurers who had accompanied them to a small keep that they claimed was their home. But upon arriving there, they found the building Warded against them. They were told that they would have to come back and have a meeting with the Vizier, Magos, the following day. Dismayed, but undeterred the three strangers were able to still show the adventurers around and share some of their fabled wine. According to sources, the wine was ‘the best thing you’ve ever had in your mouth. It was like 1000 high elves kissing your cheeks and whispering “delicious”.’

The next day, Prince Dion and Yida the satyr returned to their home with the entire force of the adventurers of Thrush Peake. Unfortunately, Kata was missing but Dion was determined to return and confront Magos about what had happened during his time away from the keep. When the group arrived back in Sola Vecchio at the keep, they were surprised to find Kata within the Warded building. When they began questioning her, she suddenly became violent, dropping the Ward and throwing Death spells at the adventurers, who fought back, pressing into the keep and confronting the guards and the Vizier himself, who turned out to be a very potent Dragon Mage. It was a hard fought battle (as it always is against a being who can throw powerful Formal magic as battle magic), but unsurprisingly the adventurers emerged victorious. They kept Magos alive so that Prince Dion could question him, and sources say that the vizier admitted to overthrowing the prince because he had ‘disappeared’ months ago. There was some concern on Dion’s part that Magos might have had a hand in his ‘disappearance’, but before he could ask more questions, the vizier disappeared, using formal magic to recall away.

Saddened by the traitorous actions of his once friend Magos, but excited at the prospect of new trade and relations with our kingdom, Prince Dion, Kata and Yida bid a fond farewell to the adventurers, seeing them off through the portal back to County Kyrinen.

While helping these strangers may not have been as glamorous or (seemingly) dangerous as most of what the adventurers face on a day-to-day basis, their willingness to help anyone in need proves how much this county needs them. They are always there to help, regardless of how big (or small) the problem might be, and in case they don’t hear it enough, THANK-YOU ADVENTURERS OF THRUSH PEAKE!!

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## **Halloween Advisory**

On behalf of Her Excellency, the Countess of Kyrinen, the County wishes to remind all residents to take proper precautions this All Hallow’s Eve. While Halloween can be an enjoyable evening full of treats, costumes, and festive cheer, it is important to remember that most of these traditions stem from the very dangerous truth that the veil between all the worlds grows thin at All Hallow’s. The realms of spirits, of the Fae, and the restless dead are much closer than at any other time of year.

Please bear this in mind, and keep your celebrations well-lit, inform the Watch of your plans, and keep a close eye on your children.

Things to Watch Out For include, but are not limited to:

- Evil Circuses
- Spirits of Dead family members, enemies, lost loves or other things that haunt you
- Jack O’Lanterns that transport you to a spirit realm
- Your childhood fears
- Arcane Goblins
- Undead Circuses
- Flickering Green Fire

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- Doors to other realms in trees
- Crossroads
- Folktales come to life
- Cursed Circuses
- Animated Scarecrows
- Megalomaniacal pumpkin people
- Banshee Queens
- Suspiciously melancholy Elven spirits
- Circus Clowns of *any kind*

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Death Count Rises to 24: Nights of Terror Continue for Thrush Peake Residents

Watch reports indicate that baker Lyema Callaan, 41, was found dead in her home yesterday, and bore the same grisly cause of death that has been the calling card of the 'phantom killer'.

Every victim so far has been killed in similar ways--violently. Mrs. Callaan was no exception. Details released from the watch report describe a collapsed chest cavity, ranging the entirety of waist to neck and, like the others, a message in blood written on the wall above her body reading "ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER, UNTIL I HAVE HIM."

The 'Phantom', according to reports, is an undead on a mission of vengeance, who has terrorized the local populace. The local guild chapters are recommending staying behind a ward during the night when at all possible, but most cannot afford such luxuries--instead, they continue to live in constant fear.

The phantom is known to be hunting an adventurer named Tusk. The Earth Guild has given no formal statement regarding how they are handling this threat, but it was made clear that they have making every effort to ensure the safety of the populace, and are working hard, so that no one in Thrush Peake should need to live in fear of the undead.

Mrs. Callaan leaves behind two daughters, ages 21 and 18.

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## **Tale of Ashen Whisper, the Chieftess of Banshees**

**Submitted by: Anonymous**

Ashen Whisper did not start off as the evil creature so many have come to fear. Long ago there were 8 Wild Elf sisters. Their parents came to them and explained they were born to greatness. That their sacrifice would empower a grove for ages to come and be a sacred place for their people.

The 8 sisters nodded...but one held fear in her heart. She tried to explain to her sisters, and then her parents, that she did not want this. This was not the path for her. The parents and sisters not understanding, explained it would be alright. She would forever be at peace and the sisters together for all time. Ashen Whisper's fear grew and finally she ran. The Wild Elves, seeing this as a betrayal, cursed Ashen Whisper for abandoning the duties she was born to.

The cursed Ashen Whisper walked the land and eventually through sadness and desperation fell into company with a Dracolich. The curse upon her only helped to escalate his Chaotic powers until she became the Banshee the legends tell of today.

There came a time when her evil was so well known throughout the land that a town of adventurers joined forces and decided enough was enough. Many of those adventurers do not know to this day what they truly did that night.

7 representatives were selected by the spirits for each of the 7 sisters in the grove. The lessons were taught on how to lay Ashen Whisper low and retrieve her bones to bring them back to the grove she had run so far from.

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3 wards had to be destroyed. 4 challenges to bring down the first. 3 challenges to bring down the second and finally to battle Ashen Whisper herself to take down the third. Many died that night again not knowing what they were truly doing.

After countless battles on All-Hallows the final ward was dropped and her bones taken to the grove. The seven representatives began the ritual to put Ashen Whisper to rest in the grove... A group was selected to distract the banshee while the ritual began. At its completion, Ashen Whisper's spirit laid down in the grove and fell to sleep on top of her freshly buried bones and the Chaos brought forth by Ashen Whisper was quieted.

Now those hearing the tale ponder this: If this poor Wild Elf girl would do all this evil just to avoid being sacrificed in this grove... would she truly be at rest? Or did the adventurers just do what her parents and sisters could not and force her into this grove? Does that make these adventures into heroes... or villains? Only time will tell, but one thing is for sure. If Ashen Whisper is not truly at peace and rest... Then when she gets out she will be very, very angry.

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Come one, Come all!

This All Hallow's Eve, after dinner this gather please come join me at the fire pit. There will be s'mores and chestnuts to go around! As well, I'm holding a spooky story contest. So bring your favorite ghost stories and I'll see who has the best! - Valeria



A Poem

By: Anonymous

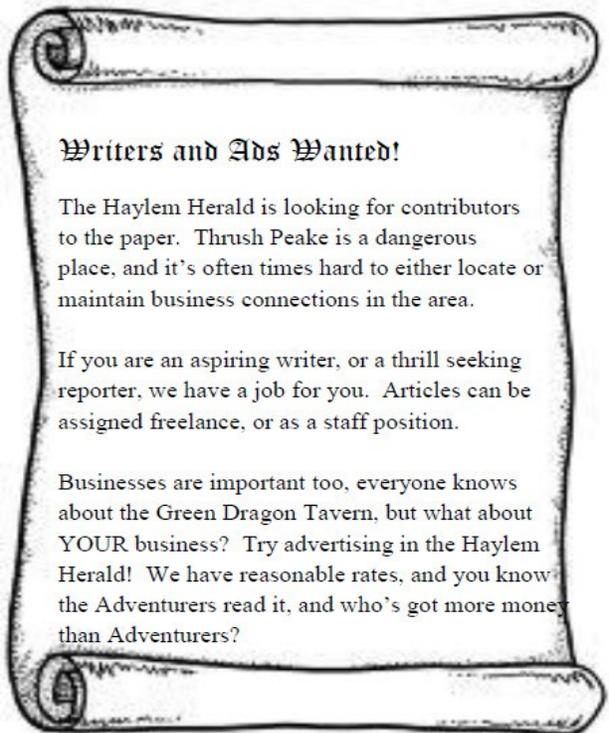
Into the dream world it goes
To rule our minds, and our darkest thoughts.
Into the realm of lies or truth.
It is what we make it.
It awakens in us all.

Watch the fire burn in shadows
Light piercing the shade
Watch it move and dance; feel it.
Reborn are the foes of our past.
Come to remind us of the mistakes of our past.

While we wake, we feed the dreams
While we sleep, we are the dreams
While we die, we become the dreams

Wait for the shadow
Wait for the lines in the sand
It will come
It will be seen.
It is in us all to dream.

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#### **Writers and Ads Wanted!**

The Haylem Herald is looking for contributors to the paper. Thrush Peake is a dangerous place, and it's often times hard to either locate or maintain business connections in the area.

If you are an aspiring writer, or a thrill seeking reporter, we have a job for you. Articles can be assigned freelance, or as a staff position.

Businesses are important too, everyone knows about the Green Dragon Tavern, but what about YOUR business? Try advertising in the Haylem Herald! We have reasonable rates, and you know the Adventurers read it, and who's got more money than Adventurers?

## Rumours

Once again dear readers I bring you the best and strangest of the rumours which circulate the county at this time. Some seem to have died down, due to a lack of interest, or perhaps the truth of them was discovered. Maybe even the parties responsible were found and brought to justice.

Anyways, some still linger on the tongues of Tavern patrons, and some new rumours have sprouted entirely. Read, enjoy and for all those brave spirited individuals, pursue these tales with caution, for who know what lies in the darkness.

*“Satyrs are FREAKING annoying!”*

*Young sounding voice 1: “My mom won't let me go Trick-or-Treating this year . . . she says it's too **dangerous**.”*

*Young sounding voice 2: “I know . . . it's not fair! Everything in this county SUCKS!! Why does all the evil stuff end up here to wreck our fun?”*

*Young sounding voice 1: “I think it's those stoope adventurers . . . bad stuff is always around them.”*

*“One o' me pumpkins is missin' from me patch. It was tha biggest one too! I was gunna enter it in the competition next week!”*

*A strange barge has been spotted floating down the river by Eldamar at night of late. It has eerie green lights at the bow and stern, and doesn't seem to be manned by anyone.*

*Voice 1: “I swear I saw a horse as black as night, with flaming hooves and blood red eyes!! It ran through my back field. The scorch-marked hoof prints are still here!”*

*Voice 2: “Sure you did Caden! Are you certain it just wasn't the neighbour's goat?”*

*Voice 1: “What kind of goat leaves giant burnt hoof prints, you dufus!”*

\*Note\* Should there be anything within this report which the Towers or the Nobility wishes I do not report on, please make it known to me and I will omit such rumours from the printed version of the Herald. As an aside however, if it appears in this column, the people are already talking about it, and suppressing my report will do little to the spread of such rumours. Also, any items above listed in quotations, were overheard by me, and are being included as direct quotes.

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- Do you need production? We've got it!
- Want items, but can't find the time to learn to make them? We'll do it!
- Slow week adventuring? We buy your unwanted items! Come on down to the Haylem Association of Crafters and let's make a deal. Just tell us what you want, and we'll make it happen, for a reasonable price.

At the Haylem Association of Crafters, we mean business.