



The Brandel Bugle

Editor: Ksaberjazz of Groff

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Vampire - Brandel heroes save the union

The Bugle has learnt that the Yamashu have recently attempted to forge a way through the great forest in order to allow their armies to sweep through to the other bastions quickly and efficiently. They were however held back by the wood elves and were initially pushed back easily by them, supported by the ancient forest and the power of Nuada.

So the 'Shu had to find a way to destroy the brave defenders - and summoned a powerful force of evil to lay a blight on the land. It was a vampire, capable of shape-changing, only recognisable by the long, dirty fingernails that it possessed in all forms and with which it fed by poking through the eyes of its chosen victims.

This and Yamashu undead (soon joined by those elves fallen in the initial confrontation and now risen as creatures of the night themselves) layed seige to the principal village; light was converted to dark; Gaia was worshipped as Pairthraine; the creature itself existing partly on the Plane of mists kept sending plagues to torment those already in their darkest hours.

Tarquin, known to the elves, was sent to obtain help and this he did with the call of a white dove. The dove found the chosen ones in conference with Lord Ferlad and Lord Wrath, and so they were quickly dispatched to reconnoitre the area - a force was to be sent after them. The first complication to face these brave adventurers was a duel, founless as they so often are: a result of suspicion and mutual distrust. Tarquin and Raphael were the combatants. The duel however soon resolved itself as the

antagonists discovered that they were both there to help the elves, and with this they joined our noble few and set off in search of the village.

A huge force of 'Shu ambushed this worthy band soon after. As speed was of the essence the party were forced to go on as Tarquin and Raphael held back the army in a melee that left many corpses feeding the worms. The party without their guides were soon entrapped in a swamp, their wounds infected and the noble Kathiros injected with the parasitic egg of a muck imp. Atric was sucked under the swamp (but unfortunately came up again). Eventually the exhausted adventurers arrived at the village to hunt down the Vampire. Several villagers were struck down with the evil before a wave of walking dead was sent against them.

After a long struggle the party found their goal, the Vampire. Atric was instrumental in his demise as he cast spell after spell to first entrap the creature and then send its life force screaming back to the hell from which it came. With the death of the Vampire the village began slowly to restore itself, but not quickly enough for our poor colleagues. Their wounds infected, they were forced to limp back through the forest in a vain effort to reach Brandel before the diseases killed them all. One last obstacle faced them. A horde of 'Shu blocked their path. Fortunately the force sent by Lords Brandel and Wrath finally arrived, and with the help of Raphael and Tarquin, the 'Shu were destroyed and the adventurers carried back to Kar Brandel for healing and rest. Lord Brandel himself thanked the party for their efforts.

Arson attempt in Wheelwright's Street

Despite the harmony promised by the recent Unification Banquet, the Brandeler in the street is understandably unnerved by the prevalence of acts suggesting sedition, treachery and a desire to undermine the new peace. It seems that barely a day passes now without another murder or abduction being placed on the 'unsolved' list at the Brandel city guardhouse. How much longer can we endure such treatment and the lack of response from those in power?

The latest in a long list of assassination attempts is a hostile action made against the premises of Jacko L Mattman (37). This gentleman was enjoying a bean-pudding when he was alerted to danger by the sound of his own front door opening. He stood, and had time to glimpse a small figure in the doorway before it hurled a missile at his head which knocked him backwards. His injury might have been more severe if the pudding had not broken his fall. The missile proved to be a bundle of papers marked with 'funny drawings and circles and things', glass shards and dead leaves, all of which began to smoke alarmingly. Fortunately Mr Mattman had the presence of mind to hurl the package through his now open front door and into the street, where it swiftly combusted. Mr Mattman described his assailant as of diminutive stature, and as possessing small green horns. This last aspect of the description, say the city watch, has been ruled out and is currently being attributed to the shock Mr Mattman undoubtedly suffered. The watch are however at a complete loss and have appealed to the public to come forward with any help they can. The Bugle has helped fund a 10gp reward for information leading to an arrest. Details from the guardhouse.

KLABERJAZZ TURNIPSON



As many of you know, Anarchica, a noble priestess of Rincewind/Rhiathale, was abducted from the banqueting chamber of our city at the height of the not-too-distant Masqued Ball. What may surprise the majority of our readers however, is the complete lack of effort to get her returned. I know that every now and then some people make a token effort, usually in public, just to remind us all that they are truly caring, but how many diplomatic or covert missions have actually gone to the Pact capital at Kar Dernath and negotiated for / demanded her return? Well, like goddesses of Spring throughout legend, it seems that Anarchica has tasted the forbidden fruits that only darkness can offer.

I have many agents who manage to walk the realms gathering information for me and some who dare enter the evil city itself to face horrors undreamt of by most mortal, sane man. It was one of these agents who first informed me that strange rumours currently abound in the vice dens and brothels of fallen Dernath. My curiosity piqued, I examined further, sending more and more agents into the city, until my worst fears were confirmed - the Black Lich, a vessel of evil and mockery of life, harbours lustful passions within its withered, degenerate hulk. Lustful I say, but who can tell what strange perversions such a creature contemplates? The object of this lust - the pure, bright soul of our noble priestess!

Why did we not act sooner? A good question and one that can only be answered by Lord Brandel or Lord Wrath, both of whom seem reluctant in the extreme to answer these questions. Why do we still not act? Because it is more convenient to forget and do nothing; because no adventurers can be found with enough courage and skill to fight the Black Lich; because our Lords still fear the might of the Pact and because, simply, those in power do not care.

Well, the Bugle will not let you forget and neither will the people of Brandel. Do something now!

Well it's that time of year again - bright sun, warm days, lazy afternoons with cold ale... or sudden storms, rabbit invasions and rook strikes, corn weevil and rust. Yes, this is the time of year that is, some argue, the most worrying for the farmer. Now as the grain begins to ripen is the time when pests flourish and are most hungry. But what is to be done? Well, never fear the Bugle has found the answer, or at least, found an alchemist, Mr Org Pherous, who claims to have found an answer. When we interviewed the man the only details he would give were that the new liquid was sprayed over the plants and was a result of years of painstaking research. The alchemist went on to say that the substance which should revolutionise modern farming was still expensive to produce, particularly as its formation required the reaction of a strange reddish substance that burned in air together with coal and other similar natural substances.

The substance, which Mr Pherous has named "a no fuss" element, still has its drawbacks however. It seems to have unpleasant effects on human tissue and as Mr Pherous has found to his cost, long term exposure can lead to a complete degeneration of the nervous system. But despite this the Bugle predicts that Mr Org "a no fuss" Pherous's element will be in wide use very soon.

Also on the farming front this week, Bastion merchants announced their final buying price for brewing barley. The merchants, who have had a monopoly on the trade for years, are beginning to get out of control. The price they have offered to local farmers will barely cover the production costs, yet the price of beer seems to be on an ever increasing upward spiral. Part of the reason may be the new leadership. When the current Lord's father was in power, at the height of the war with the Pact, grain was confiscated by the crown, and distributed fairly and at a price set down by the Lord. Now with the onset of free trade the merchants in the grain hauling business are making their monopoly felt. Unless something is done

In the past month I have been accused of being sexist, racist and biased, but to each of my critics I say this. Take a good look at yourselves first, and then examine my motives. I am not sexist because I criticise Val, Cepulcia, Cal and others; I am not racist because I condemn the Vorleshi; I am not biased because I print seemingly one-sided stories. I do all these things because in each case the object of my criticism has deserved it beyond all doubt in any reasonable society. If Cepulcia and Val had been men, nobody would have cared what I had written as long as it was true. Since that was always the case, who is the sexist, me or my critics? I treat each person the same regardless of sex, yet others expect me not to. If Brandel scouts sack another guild we condemn them, yet if the Vorleshi sack a city we are expected to say "that's all right, they are foreigners." I think not. And if I publish all stories and letters that are sent to the Bugle and advertise this policy as widely as possible am I biased if all the reports sent in protest the same side. No. If my critics want to change the world they should get off their arses and do something and not just complain when things don't go their own way!

Finally this week, it has come to my attention that the promise of the young generation of Brandelers has already died. Although the vast majority still hold true to the principles of loyalty and integrity, one of my reporters, after killing a Pact agent who ambushed him in the wild, has handed me a letter from a Kar Brandel adventurer to Talen Coldblood himself. The letter contains what, on the surface at least, appears to be state secrets, in particular details of the Union troop movements, all essential to any general planning an invasion. Other details include the state of Kar Brandel defences and the itineraries of the bastion lords. The handwriting is instantly recognisable and the Bugle will be showing the document to Lord Ferlaid as soon as possible. As for the guilty man - Kathros, how could you? Such treachery can only be rewarded by the hangman's rope after public torture.

Your letters

Dear Klaberjazz,

I have noted your attempts to produce a socio-historical chronicle of Kar Brandel's more immediate events with some interest. The residents of Kar Brandel, possibly including yourself, are blissfully unaware of how unusual Kar Brandel's situation is. The city has passed through crisis after crisis, seriously warping its development. After visiting incognito, I feel my observations, as an objective outsider, should be made known.

The city's true power now rests in a number of armed camps, or 'guilds' as they are known. The authority of the rulers of Kar Brandel has been somewhat undermined after not one but two of their number have been deposed by armed bands made up of representatives from the guilds. The guards, the only military force that is responsible for the city itself, is being ruined by corrupt and inefficient administration. Incidences of sexual discrimination, bribery and favouritism are frequent and blatant. The Authorities can do nothing about it, for the guards are the only force left who are fully loyal to them. Any duties requiring true talent are usually given to the Fighter's Guild. The scouts have virtual monopoly over military intelligence. The entire power structure is threatened by petty disputes amongst the priests - few can successfully wield authority without divine sanction. As for you Mages, you yourself have amply demonstrated how they are taking over the municipality of the city itself. It is easy to claim that the guilds have no interest in politics but the truth is that nothing can occur without their consent. I will be interested to see how the new order, particularly Lord Wrath, react when they realise the true situation.

This news is not in itself worrying - many cities are run by powerful oligarchies. The problem is that the guilds' power is essentially that of the sword. In other areas their talent is woefully lacking. As my particular speciality is theoretical magic, it is upon this most vital of disciplines that I feel drawn to comment. Excelling as Brandel does in the more practical aspects of the arcane arts, for which the

Brandel practitioners are justly famed, it behoves me to point out that Brandel mages are, on the whole, staggeringly ignorant of the forces that they are using. They hide this behind a cloak of mystery and pretension, whilst desperately trying to work out what is going on. More mages should follow the examples of Bezique and yourself, and use their talents and learning for the good of the people.

Darcover himself is an excellent illustration of everything that has gone wrong in Kar Brandel. He has acquired an artifact of immense power, referred to crudely as the chaos gem, by overawing a group of guild members and encouraging them to blatantly flout the authority of the then Lord Brandel. He has now given this to an apprentice of child-like mentality, as a toy to play with. I should add that his indulgence in his pet chaos mage is highly dangerous. Exposure to such low yield, high potency magical energy is likely to be dangerous, if not fatal, in the hands of an irresponsible operator, particularly as the scalar is likely to increase at an exponential rate. I despair in the knowledge my words will not be heeded, partly because I am not a guild member, but mostly because Darcover will not have the slightest idea what I mean.

Yours in scholarship,
Whitewind, Archimage.

Dear Whitewind,

Thank you for your most thought provoking letter. It contains many interesting points most of which, on the surface at least, seem to be true, however I feel that I should respond and defend many of the accusations that you level.

Firstly you refer to the guilds as 'armed camps', a description that many of us would disagree with. The guilds exist to disseminate information and to form a rigid structure in order to comply with the wishes of the Lord. Which leads me straight on to my second point. All Brandelers, no matter what their station or social group, are loyal to the Lord Brandel, without question. We may wish for promotion, we may act selfishly against others, we may seem gung-ho, but no man, woman or child would not obey a command from our

noble Lord. This fact, which some outsiders seem hard to grasp often leads to rapid changes in position. Let us take the example of my former mentor, Bezique. Bezique was fiercely loyal to the Lord at the time of his adventuring career. He would have given his life at the fatal Masqued Ball if it could have saved that of his Lord. But when he died, Bezique immediately showed his loyalty to Terrance, as eldest son, travelling with Darcover by spell, on the night of his father's death to inform him of the unhappy events. Later when Terrance was killed by bandits Bezique again shifted his loyalty to Lord Pearce, where he learned many things, some of which were obviously very much against what Bezique thought of as acceptable moral behaviour, but despite this his loyalty was unquestioned. I feel that this example is typical of a Brandeler, and strange to others, but it works and I for one would not propose that it changed.

Thirdly, although I agree that mages should do more to help the community, I think you underestimate the knowledge we have of magic. Many of us research specifically into the Gold and Grey disciplines, and Darcover is, despite appearances, a Grand Master of both! I resent the suggestion that we are taking over the municipality of the city. The Bugle is an independant journal that reports all stories given to it, and itself tries to seek out truth and other newsworthy items. I am sure Darcover too will resent the criticisms you level at him. I do not often see eye to eye with him or Cepulia, but I guarantee that she is nobody's pet. Cepulia has a unique mind and it does Darcover credit that he is trying to educate her and, in particular, introduce discipline into her life. I know Cepulia is dangerous, and I advocate as little contact with her as possible, but I do not do this from malice, but merely a wish that everyone lives safely, and that Cepulia is not placed in a position where her frustration can get the better of her.

Perhaps, Whitewind, you should join the Kar Brandel Mages' Guild, for then you would see the freedom we possess, yet the belonging we feel. Kar Brandel is the greatest of the bastions now and forever.

Klaberjazz.

Letters cont.

The Bugle does not often get asked to pass on letters, but this month we have been able to help a little girl in need. Now with her permission we are able to publish her cry for help, and the response from the one she has cried out to:

Cud you giv this to alarik?

dear alarik,

i hav a problem and plese cud you help. my mum and dad they are fytng. mum says that rinswind is not rythal and dad says he is and ther is lots of showting. you are a big prest (ed. surely pest!) and cud you plese plese plese ask him (rinswind, not my dad) if he relly cars. i get called silly names but i tink if i were making peple showt a lot and get me sent outside and stuff then i wud not car so much abot names. i wud jus want to stop all the showting

love emily

Dear Emily,

I was most distressed to hear of your difficulty and I sincerely hope I can help you. It seems that your parents are slightly confused about their god, but there is an explanation. Rhiathale is an

ancient god, but his name was forgotten by humans until recently when Kellessar rediscovered Rhiathale. Sadly Kellessar misheard Rhiathale's name to be Rincewind. To Rhiathale's deep sorrow this error has continued until today, mainly because by worshipping Rincewind a person can obtain some limited contact with Rhiathale and thus gain some meagre powers. By worshipping Rhiathale in his true form, we open a direct conduit to our god and his glory fills our world once more. Rest assured Emily, he cares deeply about you and your parents; it grieves him mightily that there are those who insist on praising his shadow instead of basking in his light.

Simply there is no Rincewind, just the god Rhiathale. I hope this helps you, but if not, and you would like to contact me again, I would be honoured to explain the truth to both you and your parents.

Alrik, High priest of Rhiathale.

(ed. Just so long as it is not the same way you explained 'the truth' to Kellessar Alrik. Perhaps the people would be better off if they came to worship Bezique, god of reconciliation and agriculture, at the shrine at his birthplace in downtown Brandel - commune services weekdays 10.00am and 6.00pm. This week's guest preacher - me.)

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Depressed? Lonely? The whole world out to get you?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes then you have a problem and should seek help. Also you will completely ineligible to apply for a job in the Brandel guard.

The Brandel guard - join today. You can count on being among well-adjusted individuals. See new places. Push those snotty adventurers around. Life in the guard is just one fun moment after another!

Scrap metal wanted for war effort. If you have any old metal pots that you no longer use or could do without, or perhaps you don't quite need that second shield then please give them up for the Union army. The Army is always grateful for any donations made, and remember your donation could one day save your life.

Dear Klaberjazz,
My husband doesn't spend any time with me anymore but spends all his waking hours making up blosy stupid letters for his stupid newspaper. Can you help?

Anonymous

P.S. The dog ate your dinner

Dear Anon,
No, I can't.

Klaberjazz

Dear Klaberjazz,
I note with some concern that I still have not received a reply to my request to join your editorial team. I feel that the biased, unimaginative rubbish you print week after week can only get better should you take me on. I can understand your fear at taking on a real journalist, after all your own shortcomings are far too numerous to list, but you need me.

Canasta de Belzar

Dear Canasta,
Push off you self centered, arrogant layabout and get a real job.

Klaberjazz

And finally...

Rumours abound about the party of Union adventurers who recently returned from Kar Bhelthor with the first news of the Yamashu.

My corespondent in the area has managed to send a short report in which is a slightly garbled account concerning the death of Chancellor Ekwesh. If the report is to be believed then it seems the party was instrumental in the daylight murder of the chancellor, cutting him down in front of a stunned crowd of Bhelthorian guards. Maskeline the Mad immediately took advantage of the situation and marched on the capital to take control.

Just how much control he has is not yet clear, but with a horde of 'Shu in his town and another even larger army supposedly on his border it cannot be very much.