

THE ASHBURY TIMES



MONTH OF GRYPHON 614



SYNVIA SWEEP AWAY

BY NYARIEN SILVERTREE

On the morning of the First of Gryphon, a mysterious, enormous storm descended over the island of Synvia off the coast of the Ash Forest, eclipsing it from all view. Described as being “unlike anything ever seen” and having “come out of nowhere” by the locals of South Point, the coastal port has seen a massive influx of turbulent seas and shipwreck victims since the onset of the storm. Attempts to make contact with the island nation of Scavengers have proved futile. Scout ships find themselves battered to pieces by the treacherous waves while all Whispering Wind rituals sent to the Karobwa Council have immediately failed and backlashed upon their casters. Even the Geolithes, for the first time in record, have failed to activate transportation to the island.

Recent visitors to the island report that as far back as the

Month of Dragon, citizens on the island have been experiencing an epidemic progressively worsening nightmares. “It didn’t seem like much more than a nuisance while I was there,” says a South Point fisherman. “But fewer and fewer folk have come off the island in the past few months.” Sources cannot confirm if this is related to the paranormal storm or not, but speculation abounds that it cannot be a coincidence.

Less than a week following the storm’s appearance, Ash Forest military personnel stationed on the coast report a significant fleet of Thessi ships sailing across the Bay of Vacarra lead by a warship confirmed to be Icenian ex-patriot Nigel Campbell’s own brig, *King’s Ransom*. In pursuit of the fleet were a number of Imladari warships, including the flagship *Daralassia* captained by Prince Valdorian Thantellin. Scouts say that the ships were

“heading straight for the heart of the storm,” but lost sight of them in the churning waters and rains shortly thereafter. Wreckage and bodies of both Thessi and Imladari soldiers have since washed to shore near South Point, but there has been no confirmation on whether any of them were of the *Daralassia* or *King’s Ransom*.

When reached for comment regarding the bizarre meteorological phenomenon and the disappearance of the *Daralassia*, His Grace, Sir Nevin Kendrick, Duke of Ashbury, declared the paramount importance of protecting the borders of the Duchy, its people, and its allies. He requests the immediate assembly of any able-bodied adventurers to assemble in South Point as quickly as possible to stage a rescue mission to the lost island of Synvia.

WITHIN:

- *Blythedale Under Attack*
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- *Disturbing Discovery in the Bay of Vacarra*

BY THE ORDER OF COUNT ULTHOC CROWNSMITH OF NORDENN

The Estate of Thrommel is hereby under direct military control.

All Biata residing within the Estate of Thrommel are to evacuate immediately, reporting to the Estates of Hopewell and

Bloodstone for assistance. The Nordenn Army is available to assist in transportation as needed.

The Homestone of Thrommel is to be entrusted to the Councils of Hopewell and Bloodstone. The Council of Thrommel is

ordered to report directly to me immediately.

Any deviation from or sedition to this Order shall be considered a violation of a Noble Order.



BLYTHEDALE UNDER ATTACK!

Attention citizens of Blythedale and surrounding lands. The Thessi have begun open hostilities against the Barony of Blythedale. Painguard Assassins have rifted in and made assassination attempts against the court of Blythedale including 4 separate escalating attempts against the Baron. Civilian leadership, military officers, and key members of all court member administrators have been incapacitated or permanently killed. The attacks are wide sweeping and specifically targeted seemingly to weaken communication and chains of command around the entire Barony. The only explanation is that this is softening blow and prelude to an all-out assault.

His excellency Baron Garathon Von Storm again asks that all able bodied men and women who can service report to your local military stronghold for training in combat or logistical support and

to serve your homeland. The Blythedale Navy, such that it is, is currently patrolling the southern coast. Their two largest warships Ivan's Justice and Repentance have seen evidence of naval scout ships from the Thessi and report an invasion may be imminent.

This attack comes as no surprise to the Baron as the last Painguard to assault him while in Thrommel specifically said that Baron Garathon was known to the Painguard and he was next.

All non-military personnel are asked to stay in their homes after nightfall as Guardsmen Patrols under the careful hand of Squire Readella will detain and question any who are found traveling after dark. Remember, Painguard can rift in at will almost everywhere. Large military contingents under Lord Captain Khorwyn are being stationed at all Geolythes and Newman Stones in

BY MONDA GEWITTER

case the Thessi can use these for transport.

When Baron Garathon was approached for an interview, he had little to say other than the following:

"Citizens of Blythedale. For many years we have sat at the epicenter of wars and conflicts, but have remained thankfully unscathed. Steel yourselves because a terrible foe has focused its ire on us. However, they do not know me nor do they know the heart of every person in this barony. They don't realize that they have awakened a storm worse than they have ever known. Beware creatures of evil for you have angered the Baron of Lighting and his people. We will not go quietly into the night. Arise and fight for War has finally come to Blythedale and we will answer it in kind!"

*"WAR HAS
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THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

BY CAPTAIN SIMON NEVILLE

Something I heard upon the battle field our last time together with adventurers, visitors and soldiers alike, as a certain confusion as to which set of orders to follow. In battle there are often contradicting orders going out across the field, but I wanted to try and engage the populace here to try and begin the process of clearing up the confusion.

The short answer of "whose orders do I follow" is "whomever is in command of your section." The reason for

this is that when we fight as a town with 30 or more people, it is not practical for one person to try and shout down the din of battle and maneuver every person on the field. This is why for example Baron Garathon would place Lord Captain Brey in charge of one flank and myself on the other. The Baron would then issue orders out loud, but these are to be interpreted and acted on by the two Captains, so if you find yourself on the flank commanded by a given Captain you follow his orders.

The idea of enforcing discipline is complicated, and the whole army is still training its officers and soldiers on the proper protocols, so I beg that those that travel and fight with us bear with the Nobility and the Officer corps as we figure out how to make this work. In the interim, if you have any questions please find myself or one of the other officers and ask whatever questions you might have.



HEROES ROUT THESSI INFLUENCE IN THROMMEL BY RICHARD GILESBIE



The brave heroes of Ashbury, led by Count Ulthoc, took action against the Estate of Thrommel, finally proving a connection between Thrommel and Thessi, and routing the town of the evil Biata and Gryphons that had corrupted the estate into a den of slavery and Necromancy.

While the Thessi influence in Thrommel had long been suspected, no real evidence had been found to implicate them—until now.

It was recently discovered that Thessi had been capturing refugees from the war and bringing them to Thessi to become slaves, figuring they wouldn't be noticed or missed and would be assumed as victims of war. Using a hidden port in a cove in Thrommel, the slaves were being shipped out after having been stored in an old asylum.

It was later learned that the group known as Brendan's Army had been digging under Thrommel in order to bore a way into the asylum. A Dwarven miner had removed a stone which broke a spell, releasing a swarm of Undead. Because this happened outside of Thrommel's walls, the town was shut, allowing no one in or out.

The Undead, which locals called "morfs," had the ability to turn others into similarly highly intelligent Undead, but the adventurers fought wisely and very few were turned. However, some of the Thrommel soldiers had been turned into morfs and were very difficult to defeat, including Thrommel Council member Gravelus Borack.

A group of adventurers followed the miner's instructions and went into the cave, where they were able to recover the stone upon which evidently the word "Lysander" was written in Biata language.

Neala Merik, a Biata woman sent by the Thrommel Council to assist the adventurers, suggested that the adventurers seek out the local Soothsayer who could help. The Soothsayer, an eccentric Dryad named Froopstin, told the adventurers what had happened:

Many years ago, before there was an Ashbury, the Thessi had discovered a Biata homestone buried in the area now known as Thrommel. In order to activate a Homestone to make it useable for the Biata, a Gryphon was required to perform a ritual. The Thessi performed the ritual, but it backlashed and turned the Gryphon, Lysander, and everyone nearby into Undead. The Thessi fought the Undead and were eventually able to trap them underground using a similar ritual to what the Ashbans later used against them behind the Arch, trapping them there in time. Removing the keystone had apparently released the Undead from their time prison.

Guildmistress Zatarina knew that the only way to defeat the Undead would be to purify the stone through another ritual requiring a golden Gryphon (a Gryphon of pure love and goodness). Fortunately, some of the Ashban adventurers had already secured one that could help. The adventurers then learned that they would need to get to the center of

Thrommel and find the Healers' Guild near a large field under which they would find the Homestone to be cleansed.

Once Count Ulthoc had obtained all of the necessary evidence to prove the connection between Thessi and Thrommel, the adventurers gathered to plan their attack. Word had come down that many Thrommel citizens were on their side, and a number of Thrommel town guard disappeared from their posts and otherwise made it clear they would help. Count Ulthoc led the attack, assisted by Baron Garathon, Baroness Ezri, and Sir Amaranthus of Brittington.

A large ballista was carried by Vox in golem form in order to beat down the gates to the town. The adventurers were greeted by volleys of arrows and spells thrown from the top of the wall, but soon the gates fell and the battle commenced. For more than an hour, the adventurers and nobles of Ashbury fought through the narrow streets of Thrommel, battling the town guard and other Thessi supporters. From upper windows, citizens loyal to Ashbury threw pots, pans, and spells at the heads of the Thessi below.

Finally, the adventurers reached the center of town, only to discover that opening the gates had allowed the Undead to follow and meet them there. The Undead Gryphon Lysander soon flew in with an Undead rider.

While the adventurers fought Lysander and his Undead, a smaller group led by Zatarina ran to the

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PUBLIC NOTICE

I call to the stout hearts and brave souls of the Ash Forest and all who seek to serve in her employ as a soldier at arms in the Army reformed. The Black Candles is a new

company, recruiting now to all necessary disciplines. I seek archers, mobile infantry, and skilled horsemen, as well as a platoon of adventurers for a special missions and tactics

By CAPTAIN SIMON NEVILLE

squad. All interested parties should find their local Sergeant of mark, or myself as I travel on the business of the Barony.

A LETTER FROM ZATARINA

I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart those who have sacrificed much to defeat Thessi's hold on Thrommel. My heart breaks to see people rooted from their homes and to try and solve the problem. Please bring racial concerns to Bloodstone and Hopewell so we make as much help as much as we can ease this pain on many who are innocent.

Apologies, thank yous, and offers to help are just words and can feel hollow. So, I will do my best to explain from a Biata stand point so many will understand what heroes they truly are.

Many years ago, many Biata fled Thessi's persecution and evil and came to many areas of the Ashbury lands. Elves welcomed us and helped us adjust. With help from a few Dwarves, they helped us move our towns to below ground to be hidden.

With our being hidden, the Thessi Biata started moving into the land above. They had and have no regard to any one but themselves. To stop their slaughter of many races, the golden Elves made the ulti-

mate sacrifice as a race.

The Thessi fought with the local Vansir and headed north, allowing us to live in the land above again. Intense treaties, family line blood oaths, as well as racial oaths were made with the elves. We would not be here if it were not for their kindness.

When we suddenly found ourselves on Fortannis, this alliance grew strong with the extreme honorability of the new nobility of the land. Duke Aramis was so willing to listen to all sides that peace was inevitable, even as the Biata argued among themselves.

When Duke Frost was last seen, he was with high ranking Biata of Thrommel. Then he vanished. Immediately Nikole, Kita, and myself (as well as others who wish to remain nameless) worked nonstop to gain evidence to find the Duke. Due to past experiences and how all the information led, we were sure he was imprisoned in Thrommel. This is how we uncovered the secret slave trade within Thrommel.

Once we had enough evi-

dence, and at great risk to the Fairdale council, we brought all our leaders together to try and parlay a unity to stop a Thessi hold on Thrommel. Please note we seriously feared mind tampering on Frost the longer this took. Upon a heated but finally unified agreement, we approached the current nobility.

On a related note, we have felt awkward around the current nobility, who we feel do not understand our race (as seen by the inclusion of all Biata in the banishment from Thrommel, as if we are all the same and all evil). So getting them involved has been difficult. It has been a long time since the Guilds were included in noble discussions for instance. We were left with little but to pass notes and hope they would help the Biata. We understand the logic in needing overwhelming proof before action. I do again say it breaks my heart this took so long to those missing loved ones.

I will soon say thank you in blood next month to those heroes who helped cure the Thrommel stone from the

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"I WILL SOON SAY THANK YOU IN BLOOD TO THOSE HEROES WHO HELPED CURE THE THROMMEL STONE."



A LETTER FROM ZATARINA (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 4)

evils done to it. At great risk to their lives, over and over again over the last few months, they have risked their lives to accomplish this in ways that do not gain them the fame that normally accompanies such actions. With the exposure of Thrommel, the Thessi foothold in Ashbury is damaged or removed. A new era is upon the land.

Due to the discovery of a Homestone, all Biata leaders are working together with the Stone Elves to help many who have been unjustly harmed by the Thessi.

Again I thank all of the heroes for making this possible; there are no words to express how in awe we are that this is even possible. Should this be successful, there should a complete union of the Gryphons society, the Hunter society, the Hopewell Council, the Bloodstone Council, and the Fairdale Council as well as (hopefully) a new Thrommel council that will be loyal to Ashbury. We may finally be able to form a unified Biata council to serve Ashbury. This would bring about a golden age of unity so that Thessi can never again threaten anyone in these lands. This should send any remaining running home with fear from all of their battlefronts.

If this is successful, then the Barony of Nordenn now aligning with the Kingdom of Brittington in their Thessi fight

should crush them. When this meeting takes place, I officially invoke the old treaty bonds and ask that those who worked so long and hard to secure the stone are to be guests at the meeting.

The Ash Forest has once again graciously offered their land to house this grand meeting. With their vast knowledge and experience in doing such parlays our success grows greatly. Baroness Ezri, once again we are indebted to you for your kindness.

Lastly on a sad note it has been declared all Biata must leave Thrommel, which includes many who fought bravely against the Thessi for years in their own ways. If anyone is willing to spend time comforting or helping out the innocent, please do so. It would be horrible to create a new enemy when they could so easily unify under our king. Bloodstone as well as Hopewell have welcomed these poor innocent Biata. Those of the Fairdale council are few and our accommodations are small but help is also given.

There has also been a declaration that the stone must be removed in 60 days or it will be destroyed. I beg all biata to not react violently to this announcement, and instead to discuss with the nobility what this means. Much of our culture is alien to many of the nobility. Please -- the councils are working on educating those in charge as well work-

ing on the situation.

For those unaware, the stone is neutral and in no way connected to Thessi. It has never been activated and in fact when the Thessi tried, it back-fired on them.

Try and imagine a sick life tree from the Ash Forest being fixed, and then someone in charge demands the tree be removed or else it will be burned down. Form an outside stand point, it is just a tree and therefore not a problem, but those embracing the earth, this is a horror. Just as one can not just up root a fully grown life tree, a home load stone is the same. This is beyond the fact that the stones go miles deep and wide. What we see is but the brushed off surface connected the land it resides in. In the same way to destroy an innocent life tree would destroy a lot more socially and culturally then "just a tree".

I know our culture seem too odd to many to embrace. But please, I beg all help this meeting of the full scope of all kinds of Biata elders to be a success. To fail will once again leave a crack for Thessi to slide in and will cause rifts in the relationship between Biata and Ashbury that have just been repaired. We need to work together to fight the Thessi, and treating Ashbury Biata as if they are the enemy will only benefit the true enemy across the sea.



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DISTURBING DISCOVERY IN THE BAY OF VACARRA

Citizens of Ashbury, and notably of the area near the Ash Forest, this article is being produced to ensure the truth is spread across the land. The Thessi appear to be the creators of the dark storm that plagues the Bay of Vacarra and the surrounding area. Now I understand this statement, however feasible, must be substantiated by confirmed facts. I have irrefutable evidence to prove this to be fact.

The facts lay as thus. I was on board a ship called the *Sercehatal* that set sail from Port Frederick. We had been sent to investigate the disturbances occurring in the Bay of Vacarra. A sudden and torrential storm burst from

nothingness on the First of Gryphon. The crew found themselves suddenly in the middle of several galleys, spearheaded by a massive warship, flying the colors of Thessi. Our destruction was assured until the *Daralassia* herself suddenly appeared off our aft and inflicted massive damage on the enemy flagship. The Thessi naval forces attempted to flee the scene, and my ship was commanded to pursue the Thessi fleeing into the darkest part of the storm, a roiling haze of black and purple. I awoke to my ship destroyed, and was able to swim to the nearby shores of Ash Forest's South Point.

I have no doubts that the missing Amani rangers

and missing court members that Baroness Silverthorn has reported as unaccounted for are a result of the Thessi's wanton actions in the area.

I hereby, in the name of Imladar, denounce the Thessi for their destructive actions against the Ash Forest, and request any allied forces of Imladar at sea move to secure the area from further attacks by the encroaching Thessi naval forces.

Honorably,

Ohtar Altohtaro Armand
Special Forces Division
Imladar Northern Regional
Command
Imladari Ambassador Pro
Tempore to the Duchy of
Ashbury

*"THE THESSI
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Heroes Rout Thessi (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 3)

Guild. This group included Nikole, Kida, and about half a dozen others. Cautiously, they made their way below where they discovered the Biata Homestone and the golden Gryphon successfully cleansed it.

Upon returning to their camp, the adventurers discovered a Circle of Power in which stood Thrommel Council members Kib Thorak and Aleonar Thardik (who, years earlier, had taunted Ashbans with his own team during the annual Ducal

Tournament), surrounded by Thessi Painguards. After a brief exchange, Aleonar ordered his guards to attack and Spirit Recalled away, leaving Kib to be captured by Count Ulthoc.

The adventurers were cheered by the citizens of Thrommel for freeing them from Thessi control. Count Ulthoc then turned to Sir Amaranthus and pledged Ashbury's support of the war against Thessi.

However, all is not cheery — Count Ulthoc has since demanded that all Biata leave Thrommel,

By RICHARD GILESBIE

which has cast a damper over the enthusiasm and support the other Biata Councils had after the victory.

"We hope His Grace will overturn this decision," stated Bloodstone Council leader Xapano Corak. "After all, Thrommel is a Ducal estate, and ultimately the Duke makes that decision. To hold all Biata responsible for the actions of a few is misguided. Many loyal Biata worked with the nobles of Ashbury to help rid Thrommel of this evil. To question our loyalty now is, frankly, an insult."



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I found among my belongings a Greater Wand ritual scroll subsequent my last visit to Icenia. I am making said scroll available via private auction with a starting bid of 25 gold. Please contact me with bids or inquiries. My preference is toward coin but I will entertain exchanges of enchanted items capable of use in any land. -V

"Valim, please meet me in South Point immediately. If I am not there when you arrive, find a way to Synvia with all due haste. - Altohtaro Armand of Imladar"

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TALK OF THE TAVERN

In our monthly installment of "Talk of the Tavern," we'll be sharing some of the most notable rumors and stories going around Ashbury's local taverns — to keep you, our readers, apprised of what the common folk are saying.

First, we've heard rumors from increased grumbling from the estate of Thrommel, as all the biata evacuate as per Count Ulthoc's orders.

Speaking of Thrommel, a Dryad soothsayer appeared to make many uncomfortable, making many adventurers outright avoid the Child of Autumn. Maybe the sudden swarm of bees reported mid-gather were just the Dryad's attempts at finding some company?

Speaking of finding company, Jorma was seen flirting with the Ducal Seneschal. Could there be something brewing between the Vakkar and Camulan?

Crossing the Duchy, there's been quite a stir regarding the storm in the Bay of Vacarra. Locals in South Point made note of a very wet and very angry Imladari soldier dragging himself ashore, loudly cursing the Thessi while digging through debris.

Many have been con-



cerned about the Thessi— some go so far as to wonder whether they have finally succeeded in taking down the Imladari flagship, the *Daralassia*.

Speaking of ships and explosions, rumor has it that the Dwarf Valim has been seen setting off traps in Port Fredsrick, at times nearly taking parts of the harbor with him.

A rather alarming rumor has come in, though we hope it is simply idle chatter— the security may be lacking in Ashbury City. Apparently, getting into the Prism was a cakewalk.

Speaking of cake, the Stone Elf Kar sure does like to provide snacks at gathers. Should adventurers be worried that like a certain other Stone Elf, she shares a proclivity for poisons?

On an unrelated note, it would seem that the Vanguard has Squire Ket handling their money. Better ask for handouts now, while the coin is still in the hands of one who must give freely to others.

That's all for this month's Talk of the Tavern! If you have a rumor you'd like to share, send your missive to our headquarters in Ashbury City.