

The Scarsinvale Saga

Conemur iterum

June - 2, 2024 A.T.
Year of the Dancing Mouse

New Undead Creatures Join Massed Ranks v. Scarsinvale

Further undead swell at the borders of Scarsinvale, threatening the nascent nation's existence, and the further survival of the Broken Reach settlements.

As if the Reach were not already troubled enough by undead coming from Hammerfrost, new reports suggest that elementally imbued undead, currently taking the form of zombies with additional acidic properties, may be joining the fight, potentially in large numbers.

It's not clear whether these undead are explicitly magical, or if this is a combination of arcane and alchemical meddling. Acid enchantments have classically been extremely few and far between, with only the powerful spell *Acid Ward* manifesting acid by way of magic.

Although the creatures themselves are distressing, if this is a combination of necromancy and alchemy, it may mean good news for the area. Complex alchemies require delicate and

expensive laboratories, which means that if the source of these undead could be determined, it may be possible to shut them down for good.

This new zombie variant comes on the heels of countless grimwalkers and revenants, in addition to the more standard array of zombies, skeletons, wraiths, ghouls, and so forth.

Anyone with knowledge about these 'acidborn' should contact local authorities.

Mysterious Letters Threaten Blackmail or Exposure

Residents of the town of Scarsinvale have recently received letters threatening the exposure of secrets. These letters, by accounts, threaten a vague 'or else' if the letters go unaddressed and unanswered.

It is no secret that some people who have moved to the Broken Reach may have colourful or harsh pasts that they might well have thought behind them. For this reason, this type of blackmail may appear to be effective to an outsider.

In truth however, simple exposure should carry little sting for the majority of townsfolk.

While it may be embarrassing to have one's dirty laundry aired in public, Scarsinvale is a town of second chances.

Anyone being threatened with exposure should recall that the town can only work through mutual support. The effort to do the right thing now far surpasses a history however shady.

Blackmail and extortion require secrecy to succeed.

The Saga encourages anyone who has received a threatening letter to speak openly with their community about it.

Local Farm Feuds with Balaxan Priest

A dispute with a local priest of Balaxa has led to tense negotiations within the area. It is not uncommon for powerful priests or servants of powerful beings to exhibit a certain zealotry when standing up for their god's domain.

However, it is also worth noting that many of the ideals that a priest may espouse may not be sustainable or indeed, survivable. It is from such a dispute that this feud initially arose, and it was only through the careful and patient negotiation, leading to a compromise that truly pleased no one involved, that peace was achieved.

This just serves to remind us that the ideals of a god taken in balance with the ideals of all other gods and liberally peppered with the interests of mortals is necessary to make a community work. It may be in Balaxa's best interests that winters be long, harsh, and deadly, but the same can hardly be said for our farms and people.

If you find that you are having difficulty negotiating the calls upon your faith with the needs of your community, the best thing that you can do is to speak openly and candidly with others.

Creature Feature: Ghouls

The Saga seeks to highlight a few of the strange creatures that adventurers may find in their travels, so that people can better learn about them before they get jumped. In this edition, we will talk about the undead known as ghouls.

Ghouls are a form of complex undead that, while not always able to communicate in meaningful ways, technically count as 'intelligent' undead. They are also distinct from other corporeal undead in another way; while zombies and skeletons are merely the risen corpses of the dead, a ghoul is formed from a spirit.

Powerful necromancy can be used upon a spirit to deliberately create a ghoul, but they can also arise naturally, or be created by even more powerful undead. Created ghouls are under the control of their creator, but the death of their creator will not undo the magic. Ghouls left without any source for legitimate orders will attempt to complete the last orders that they received.

Wild ghouls, or ghouls that have no further orders and no living source of legitimate orders, will seek to kill and devour living creatures, with a preference for larger prey.

Ghouls are resistant to damage that is not magical or made by a silvered weapon. They will often carry disease, and their blows do dark damage. Perhaps more worrisome, ghouls have a paralyzing touch that acts much like the spell *paralyze*.

Upon destruction, a ghoul will revert back to the spirit from which it was made. The spirit can then be resurrected as per normal.

Ghouls often act as vanguards or low-level leadership in large groups or armies featuring undead forces.

Horoscopes

The future is an unknown country. However, ideas and visions of the future may stem from information of the present; your decisions help to make the world you live in tomorrow. To that end, we have published a generalized horoscope for each of the Calendar Birth Signs, and hope that it will serve to amuse and enlighten. Horoscopes provided by Seer Oren Freedman.

The Shroud (Dec 31st – Jan 28th)

Open conflict is in your near future. Something from your past is likely to rear its head, and you may be confronted with a friend or rival from a prior time. Be wary of the past – and mindful of the future – but do not spare your attention from the present at any cost.

The Harp (Jan 29th – Feb 27th)

There is a figure in dark colours or black who will have something of considerable import to say to you. Please note that while important, this may not be a truthful statement – merely that what is said will impact the direction that your life will soon take.

The Fount (Feb 28th – Mar 30th)

Be generous, most of all with your time. There will be challenges in the near future that will require goodwill to help to resolve, and those around you will note your giving and generous nature when considering how much they have to spare. Your luck will come in threes and fives.

The Dice (Mar 31st – Apr 28th)

Every person has two faces; the one that they show to others, and the one that they keep to themselves. Consider what

each such choice says about you, and what image you would like to be presenting. Others are watching and forming their opinions, especially when they appear not to be.

The Arrow (Apr 29th – May 27th)

Fly straight and true in a world of twists and turns. You will encounter additional resistance, but go further and to greater effect than you may have thought possible. More importantly, you will still recognize yourself in the mirror when the matters that currently seem so important are resolved.

The Stone (May 28th – Jun 25th)

Your courage will pay dividends in the near future. You may find yourself presented with new opportunities because you took a chance now – and the dividends may not stop with you. Be aware of peril, but have courage in your convictions.

The Coin (June 26th – July 28th)

A friend will soon ask you for help. To help them will invite risk, but to fail to help them may cost some of the strength of that friendship. Be mindful of the coin that you spend, because on some decisions there are no refunds, and no easy way to take back a harsh statement or sorrowful choice.

The Spade (July 29th – Aug 30th)

There is labour to come. You will have a chance to better yourself, but it will take time and effort that you might have rather to earmark for some other cause. There may come other opportunities if you pass this one up, but eventually an opportunity will be the last one.

The Blade (Aug 31st – Sept 27th)

Be in motion, but not compelled to move. The compulsion to move when stillness is required may give away your position in a way that you would prefer it had not; being still when you need move might freeze you at a crucial moment.

The Mask (Sept 28th – October 31st)

The undead will manifest in a manner or place unexpected to you in the near future. Be on your guard; even those that may whisper sweet pleasantries may prove more dangerous than their first impression might imply. You will have good fortune associated with yellow and silver.

The Shield (Nov 1st – Nov 29th)

The barriers that you put up between yourself and others may be challenged this month. Decide what is worth keeping – and what is worth discarding – because some people will get past them, and you will want some say in who gets in and who stays out. You will experience conflict with a creature that is neither living nor dead, and will have to find some way to resolve this paradox for them.

The Hearth (Nov 30th – Dec 30th)

You will be presented with an opportunity by which you may benefit this month. It will require you to do something that is outside of your realm of comfort. You don't need to do this if you don't want to, but it is a route to power if it suits your hand. Be warned; there will be hurdles in your path, and comfort zones are there for a reason.

Editorial: Justice, You Shall Pursue

There is a delicate but necessary balance that hangs between the needs of a community and the freedoms of an individual.

That tension can be even more fraught when the question is one of violence. It is obviously necessary, in a dangerous location, that all persons who feel confident in carrying a weapon be allowed to do so. But when tensions run high, this runs the risk of immediately escalating a

dispute into a fight with perhaps lethal consequences.

Further, the question of 'who is in and who is out' may arise when it comes to defending territory. Someone entering a town with weapons bared may be seen as a threat – or as a bonafide traveller simply using the necessary tools to keep themselves safe in a dangerous land.

There is no simple answer. And when issues do come to a head,

it may mean that one or more persons is now deceased.

The threats to Scarsinvale and to the Broken Reach more generally are in no short supply. Adding in the question of how to safely run a society where everyone is armed and no one is, perforce, made polite, can cause friction.

If trouble does rear its head, look to your friends. Your neighbours. Seek to lead, and guide, a path to peace.

- Oren D'vann, Editor.

Matters of Faith

Holy Days Just Past

May 27th: Twilight Festival (Sasha)

The Twilight Festival is celebrated as a recognition of the mysteries and wonder of magic. Beginning at sunset, in places that have strong representation either in the church or of wizards of all kinds, a dusk-to-dawn meal is openly prepared, more lavish in areas where the working of magic has borne wonders in the past year. Rainbows are often seen come the dawn.

June 12th: Mother's Blessing (Atha)

The Feast-day of Atha recognizes the gift of the Earth mother as the last of the spring crops begin to come ripe. It is common for gifts of food and coin to be donated to temples, and farmers and miners will often seek the blessings of Atha upon their labour. The Feast of Mother's Blessing is also a common time for new priests of Atha to formally take up their vows.

\Forthcoming Holy Days

July 10th: Hand's Day (Astrid)

Hand's Day is a recognition of the story of Astrid and their ascension to divinity. Shrouded in secrecy, this day is most often observed by Astrid's faithful, who counsel thieves in their skills, duties to their divine patron, and the balance between a thief and their community. For the rest of us, watch your valuables and perhaps purchase stronger locks – Hand's Day is notoriously rife for burglary.

July 16th: Summer's Fair (Marius)

The feast-day of Marius is often marked by trade caravans and bazaars, and is considered to be a lucky day for new trade contracts to be signed or negotiated. It is considered bad luck to cheat or swindle someone on Summer's Fair, with Marius said to be watching over every transaction. In Marius' role as the god of travel, new voyages are often begun on this day.

A Message of Faith

I would speak on the power of faith as it essential to community. This is not merely a faith in the divine; indeed, there may be times when strongly held faith contradicts and contrasts, and this prevents mutual support and cooperation: just as the gods may work at cross purposes, so may their followers.

There is another kind of faith though; by building interpersonal trust within one another, we can rely on one another to assist and support where needed, and to make good lacks that we may perceive in ourselves or our community. In essence, the faith that we hold in one another helps us to build our community and is no less an expression of trust than faith in the divine.

By building this kind of trust, we can lay a firm footing for all the other things we seek to do. We can take chances more safely, and build places of worship – grounded in faith.

Rumours and Clues

Strange rumours have circulated to the Saga publishing house. These have been passed along, unverified, for your erudition, but we cannot guarantee their complete accuracy.

Large dwarven caravans have been seen travelling through or around the Broken Reach. With whispers of a massing force seeking to retake the dwarven lands of Hammerfrost, it is possible that the forces so massing are here to contribute to or to support this endeavour in the near future.

*
Corsages have become an increasing fashion within the reach, with fresh flowers marking the wrists or upon the breasts of many.

*
Charred corpses have been found occasionally throughout the winter. Most have been burned to the point that they have been unrecognizable but some have been found to be at least humanoid in frame.

*
Strangers, seeming confused and uncertain as to how they came to be where they are have been encountered in areas in the Reach near Scarsinvale. Those with knowledge upon the subject suggest that these might be ghosts, although this has not been positively confirmed.

Ghosts or otherwise, it is recommended that one be courteous but cautious around these confused strangers. They may have been affected by strange magics.

Suspicious Dave's Stews Presents:

Making Ends Meet

“Cheap sausage for parsimonious times. It's meat, we swear.”

Community Board

This section is reserved for information about the community, and may include unverified information as well as community events.

*
The *Saga* is calling for donations to be raised in support of the Hammerfrost refugees. Offering up aid and succor to these refugees will help to show Scarsinvale's

character on the international stage, and also prove a chance to do real good.

*
A chill winter wind was said to blow from a cave a couple of miles from town. In the current heat, this was much appreciated.

*
Rumours of a black dog seen

around graveyards and resting places have dogged the area of late.

*
An ancient oak was scarred by lightning, and split, revealing a cache of silver.

*
Portents: Thunder on a cloudless day. A coin landing on its edge and spinning.

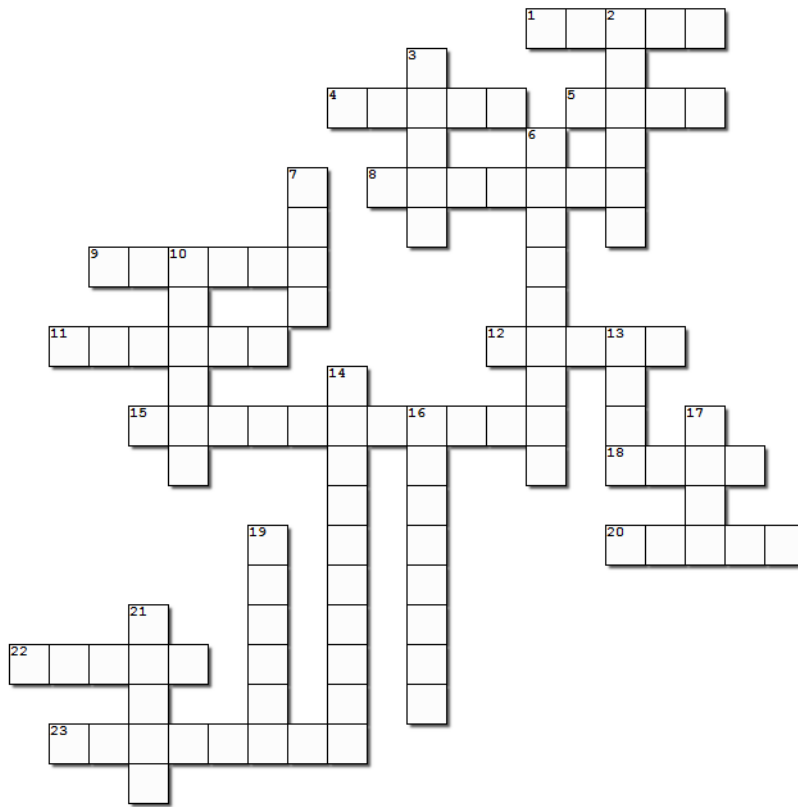
The Saga is brought to you by our Generous Advertisers.

For the duration of the Hammerfrost Refugee Crisis, all proceeds from advertisements will go to the relief fund.

You know advertising works – because you saw it here!

If you have **news**, an **announcement**, a clever **contribution** or a piece of **art** you would like displayed, don't keep it to yourself! The *Saga* is happy to help you reach a broader audience!

Crossword



Across

1. Hyena-like aggressors
4. One salt sea through veins
5. A well-crafted cudgel
8. Anti-magic metal
9. Someone at an art's pinnacle
11. Holy Day: "Summer's Fair"
12. A staff with a pointed blade
15. Apply to your hide to resist injury.
18. A fluid that dissolves
20. Sea-creature's hard home.

22. Belief and fidelity
23. Harodom celebrates June 30th.

13. The Earth Mother
14. The act of creating undead.
16. A fleshless creation of 14d.
17. A flickering flame.
19. A formal title for a mage.
21. A portable rock.

Down

2. A seer foresees events to come.
3. Our town.
6. Yorik's famous tavern.
7. The king the nation is named for.
10. Don't fight one in a cave.

Riddles

Riddle 1:

I fly without feathers,
And I see without light;
Though my voice is quite
shrill,
As I flap through the night.

Answer 1: *tab A*

Riddle 2:

I am the cold grip on your
heart,
The whisper in your ear;
I am the shiver down your
spine,
So name me, if I'm clear.

Answer 2: *raeF*

Riddle 3:

I am a distance you've
journeyed,
The seasons marked,
Changed by, but changing
you.

Answer 3: *egA*

Riddle 4:

Great web,
Fortune's path,
Stars marked,
Gods' wrath.

Answer 4: *etaF*

Riddle 5:

I'm key to real-life liberty,
But freedom I restrict;
Let all beneath my canopy
Eschew what I interdict.

Answer 5: *'ecitsuJ'*

Riddle 6:

I'm made to keep a secret,
Or to some advantage gain,
But what you say may cause
affray,
Some say your soul I'll stain.

Answer 6: *eil A*

Recipe of the Month: Rhubarb Ginger Pudding Cake

With fresh rhubarb now being available, it seemed an appropriate time to include this recipe – rhubarb being a mild laxative after the binding diets of winter and early spring.

- O Freedman

Ingredients

Base

2 Tbsp butter (melted)
1/2 cup brown sugar
3 Cups chopped rhubarb
2 Tbsp grated or finely chopped crystallized ginger

Cake

1 1/2 Cups all purpose flour
2 Tsp baking powder
1 Tsp ground ginger
1/4 Tsp salt
some freshly grated nutmeg

3/4 cups white sugar
1/2 cup butter (room temperature)
2 Large eggs
1 Tsp vanilla extract
1 cup plain yogurt (or sour cream)

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degree F.

Put the butter in the bottom of an 8 inch square glass or ceramic baking dish. Microwave until the butter is melted (about 20 seconds). Swirl to cover the bottom.

Sprinkle with brown sugar. Spread rhubarb evenly in dish and sprinkle on the grated crystallized ginger.

In a bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, ground ginger, salt and

nutmeg; set aside. In a large bowl, cream the sugar and butter until light and fluffy.

Beat in the eggs, one at a time, and then beat in the vanilla.

Add the flour mixture alternately with the yogurt, making two additions of each.

Spread the cake over the base.

Bake for about 45 minutes or until the top is golden and a cake tester inserted in the centre comes out clean. Serve with whipped cream or ice cream.

A sweet treat best enjoyed in good company. For those with access to an ice house, pre-cut rhubarb keeps well frozen.

Hammerfrost Needs You!

Food, equipment and your **good will** are required to take the fight to the undead body snatchers!

Contact Kellskagg of the Scarsinvale Dwarven Enclave for more details!

A Verse

By Oren D'vann

Every dancer must know,
When first they line up to dance,
That their every step has a
countering step,
And these steps match retreat
with advance.

Every fighter accepts,
When first they are trained with a
sword,
They might need take a blow to
deliver a blow,
And with this they might earn
their reward.

Every minstrel is taught,
When first they set fingers to
string,
That the dissonant notes and
harmonious notes
All needs must all be played as
they sing.

Every butcher endures,
When first they are trained in
their trade,
That the fortunate strokes and
unfortunate strokes,
All lie in the art of the blade.

So from these lessons we take,
When we set forth to work some
great deed,
That the heroes' remit means they
must take a hit,
And to sally forth means they must
bleed.

Every hero recall,
When the world's saved or damned
as we choose,
That the losses we're shown might
well include our own,
And that sometimes to win we
might lose.

Comic Strip



Omens and Portents: Fortune Telling and Divination

With the visible aurora borealis, a number of rumours have circulated about what such an event might mean. The Northern Lights are thought to serve as Clovis' shield against infernal attacks, but they're not alone in marking unusual tidings. In this section, we will try to discuss **fortune telling** and **divination** – their overlaps and their contrasts.

Perhaps the most popular form of **fortune telling** on Ariel is the art of **astrology**. As a diviner, one is trained in astrology, but may also be trained in other, related forms of lay-divination. Such practices can genuinely return real results – but it is likely that they will be obfuscated, and are next to impossible to target.

The study of these forms of fortune telling are therefore

also the purview of charlatans and con artists. It is not a strain upon the mind of a genius to **cold read** a subject, targeting guessing and narrowing down on relevant subjects through the careful reading of responses and reactions.

This is itself not a million miles from a legitimate form of divination (albeit not one that most people would choose to pay to be subject to). The art of divination and fortune telling is a combination of tricks from the field of hypnosis and extrapolation, taking broader signs from small changes in the environment. Fortune telling in all of its forms follows the first rule of divination – **as above so below**, and the natural corollary, **as below, so above**.

(Small signs indicate big things. Big signs have a specific case.)

Divination in the technical use of the term manipulates the flow of magic innate to the world in order to produce mystical effects. Unlike arcana or clerical miracles, the diviner does not draw upon a pool of internalized magic, but rather moves the magic around them through the use of ritual.

To the outsider, there appears to be little difference.

Powerful diviners can even use a complex form of cartomancy (the reading of cards) to view the weave of Fate itself. This is an *extremely* targeted form of fortune telling, since it does not seek the general, but the specific. Consequently, it is perilous to do so too many times in short order.

This distinction can help both to get the answers you want – and to not be taken in.