

GAME SESSION 111: TEPEST -6

(This Ravenloft game was played Sept 21th, 2025. Everybody is present except JF - Macrazbunare was played by Sylvain)

Sent to the PCs before the game: *Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious convictions* (attr. to Blaise Pascal)

August 15th, 748, 1h30 pm

In the goblin cavern, Petrak casts healing spells and *lesser restoration* on Exigu (gains 4 points of constitution).

They bring the three chained goblins with them, the first tied by a rope held by Tora.

Fun discussion :

Varadan to Tora – *The Paladin will offer them (the goblins) to the hags to be eaten?*

Tora – *I do not care. They are evil, so in theory this is not against my moral code. This is to save Bryonna, so in the end, the balance is positive.*

DM – *Err... evil is not less evil when people justify it ;D*

The goblins are talking, but none of the heroes understand their language.

Austizel casts *tongues*. He understands the goblins are making a plan to escape. “When I say go, we bite him and then we run.” But they are afraid of Varadan, the “man wolf”.

Then, on the way, the goblins realize they are walking toward the hag’s cottage. They stop walking!

One goblin say in common - *we do not want to pay for the fact that Gurzldak stole the ring*

Tora – *you take your chance and explain yourself with the hags, or we will have to tie you to bring you there.*

Goblin, shouting loudly – *kill us, they are going to eat us!*

The heroes try to gag the goblins, but the prisoners trash and try to kick or bite the heroes. After a short combat, and a few bruise on both side, the goblins are tied by the hands and feet to a pole, and the pole carried away.

At 2 pm, they are near the hag's cottage, Austizel casts *See Invisibility*: nothing.

They get near the cottage. Their previous exposure to the hags does nothing to ease their nerves. The front door of their cottage creaks opens as they draw near, and a horribly twisted voice beckons you forward: "Come in, pretties, come in. Come in, shut the door and wipe your feet!"

Inside the cottage, they see three attractive young women, seated at the table, eating colorful sweets. The dinner table is still bloodied, though all signs of their goblin feast are gone.



Also on the table, a small wooden box, with a red ribbon, as if wrapped as a gift box.

One of the girls speaks with a crooked gravelous hag voice) : *snif sniff I smell the ring, pretties! Give it to us now, and you'll have your precious tincture, you will!*

Varadan hands over the ring to the hags, on the table.

Thank you, pretties, for bringing back to us our sparkling ring says one of the sisters.

We have missed it, we have - especially at dinner! At that, the hags begin to laugh as if some terrible joke had been made, but the heroes hear nothing cheerful in their malevolent cackling...

The first *And which is the prettiest of us?*

Varadan – *I'm dazzled by all three, and I can't decide.*

Take the box, the tincture is in it. There are instructions on the bottle, says the first hag.

The third, licking her lips *But no one leaves before we have our dinner, pretties... Which one will it be, sisters?*

At this, Tora cuts short the question, and he bring the chained goblins inside the cottage. The hags are pleased, and they lick their lips noisily. The goblins whine pitifully and try to escape from their bonds.

One of the hags lift a goblin on the table, and another puts the ring at one of its finger. The heroes realize the ring is a *ring of regenerate*! The evil hags will feast upon his ever-regenerating living body for a long time!

Are you staying with us? Accept our invitation! We invite you for supper!, says the three in unison.

Varadan – *no, sorry, we have to go*, and they walk out the door.

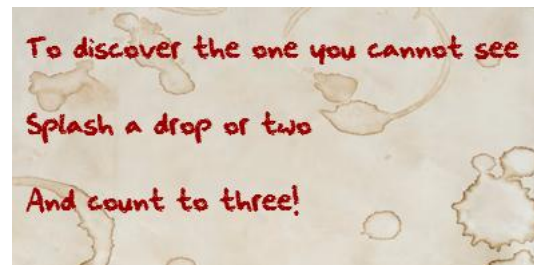
Then leave us, we are very hungry, says the first hag.

When he closes the door, Varadan sees the three hags transforming to their normal crooked bodies.

The heroes hear shouts of pain and horror from the goblin on the table ...

DM note – power checks! I'll call that at the start of next game without the players knowing it's for that use. I'll go for half the 10 % for torturing evil NPCs, or 5 %. I justify the half as they are not doing it themselves. It is still quite high!

When near the clearing, they look inside the box: a small vial, containing may be an ounce of an inkish oily black liquid. An old dirty label is glued on the side of the vial of tincture. It bears an inscription written by a shaky hand.



To discover the one you cannot see
Splash a drop or two
And count to three!

They estimate the vial contains one dose of the fluid. They wonder what should be splashed with the tincture? Themselves, the fey, Wyan? Macrazbunare says it's most probably the invisible fey that should be targeted.

Then they realize that Wyan told them six days ago that Bryonna's execution is "next week", so that is planned for tomorrow! They are about 12-13 hours from Viktal so they have to travel back to Viktal today.

They go back to where they tied the horses. They see the horses took some damage, probably by trashing, as something spooked them and they tried to escape their bonds.

They ride to Kellee and meet Ermintrude inside the inn.

Ermintrude – *how did it go?*

And the heroes tell her the adventures at the cottage and the goblin cave.

They cast *detect magic* on the vial: moderate, divination.

Then back on their horses, and they ride to Viktal, where they arrive around midnight. The humans in the group leave Exigu and Austizel at the fisherman's cabin, and they run toward the town entrance.

The guards stop them at the gate.

Varadam – *we have to see Wyan, it's important!*

One of the guards – *The doors to Viktal are closed. Come back tomorrow, the gate opens at 7.*

Varadan – *it's important!*

The guard – *He is surely sleeping at this time, and you won't be able to talk to him. Come back TOMORROW!*

They go back to the fisherman's cabin and they sleep. It is now near 1 am and they plan for 8 hours of sleep to get back spells.

August 16th, 748, 8h00

They are awakened by the sound of the church bells.

Then the rain begins to slacken. Over the course of a few minutes, the steady cascade that has fallen for the last several days finally comes to an end. Overhead, the gray expanse of clouds begins to break up, exposing azure skies beyond. Here and there, brilliant shafts of sunlight stab downward to grace the long-neglected landscape.

At 9h, the four humans in the group of heroes go back to the gate.

The guard shouts many questions – *Your name?*

The heroes answer.

The guard - *Where do you come from?*

The heroes answer: *Kellee.*

The guard – *But you are not from there! Where do you come from?*

The heroes answer: *Tora is from Briggdarrow and the others are Barovians.*

The guard – *where are the elf and the runt?*

The heroes explain that they stayed at the fisherman's cabin, and they won't enter Viktal.

The guards let them pass.

The bells are still ringing! They see many people walking toward the church.

They hear people talking - *That Bryonna witch will burn today, and it will rid the town of her evil.* Another person adds: *Fire is the only weapon pure enough to break the demonic chains that bind them.*

Hurrying, they pass near two old women praying in the street ... *There is no redemption for those who sell their souls to darkness.... Their cries in the flames are a prayer for redemption... Belenus hears them... Whoever protects them becomes their accomplice... And whoever makes a pact with them shares their fate!*

They arrive at the town center and see a crowd of people already there.

At the center of the village square is a tall wooden pole, around which firewood and kindling have been piled. Oil glistens on the timber, showing clearly that this is an inferno in the making. Lashed tightly to the stake is the sobbing figure of Bryonna (B on the map).

The crowd is of 60 to 70 persons, and many men hold a hammer, a spear or a fork. The mood is angry!

Bryonna's boyfriend, Henrick (H) is there too, but he is retained by two Inquisitors (I).

Greabo (G), the inn owner and his wife (W) are at the front. He shouts "burn!"

About 15 people stand near the pyre. Ten are Inquisitors, dressed in the plain robes of their order.



They see Mira Kaldwyn – one Inquisitor met on the road. When she sees the heroes, she puts her hand on her sword's pomel and takes position 5 feet near Lorelei while keeping an eye on the heroes.

The others near the bonfire are Wyan, who holds a heavy book in his hands, Luther who has a lighted torch in one hand, and Lorelei. Her features are looking oddly cold, and she is clutching a holy symbol of Belenus on a 4 feet wooden staff.



Bryonna

Henrick d'Ogmar



Wyan of Viktal



Luther Vimus



Mira Kaldwyn



Lorelei



Greabo and his wife

Then Wyan slowly raises his hands, the crowd falls silent. In a loud voice, he proclaims:

"This accusation was so serious and so obvious that we could not ignore it. We conducted our investigations methodically, calling witnesses, questioning you, and using other means in accordance with the sanctions of the Inquisition."

The heroes try to interrupt, but Luther silence them: *You're interrupting WYAN OF VIKTAL!* (crowd disapproval toward heroes) *Be quiet and listen, you can speak afterwards!* (he threatens to move his torch closer to the pyre)

Wyan resumes: *"The laws of Belenus have decreed that witches must be burned!"* (loud cry of approval from the crowd)

"Bryonna, we declare you... A WITCH!" (Burn! answers the crowd)

"For consorting with fairies, bewitching the merchant Henrick, and casting spells on... on my own daughter, I condemn you to burn at the stake!"

"And if anyone here doubts the fairness of my decision, let them look up to the sky. The sun shines upon us; Belenus is pleased!" (another shout of approval from the crowd)

(Wyan looking at the heroes) *“Does anyone have anything to say? You, strangers?”*
(hostile crowd mumbling)

During Wyan’s speech, the heroes got very near the front. Wyan asks them to back up, but the heroes do not move back. The Inquisitors don their shield and prepare to bull rush the heroes.

Macrazbunare’s wolf smells smoke near Lorelei, but it is Luther that bears a torch?

Watching the heroes coming close, for several seconds Lorelei is very still. She looks distracted, as if she were listening to a voice only she can hear? Then, as a cruel smile twists her features, she calls out in a voice bitter with indignation:

Let the sentence be carried out!

Let the witch burn!

While saying this, she throws the “holy symbol” at the base of the stake. No sooner does it touch the oil-soaked lumber than a brilliant blaze erupts! The Belenus symbol appears to be an illusion over a burning oil lamp, but few people in the crowd saw this.

Over the crackling of this blaze, the sounds of Bryonna 's screams mingle with Lorelei's diabolical laughter. ***Burn!***

Varadan then rushes toward Lorelei and splashes the tincture of midnight on her! Then he counts to three, as the paper’s instructions (just to be sure!).

The dark fluid splashes into the air, spattering on Lorelei's clothes, skin, and hair. Slowly, another dark shape becomes apparent. On Lorelei's shoulder sits a tiny green woman with bright yellow eyes! This creature is about 2 feet tall.

Oops! proclaims the fey, looking at its suddenly visible arm. *They've found us out, love. The Prince will have to find another girly to do his work, won't he? Bye!* With that, the little spirit leaps into the air and begins to quickly fly away.

Luther shouts “catch it!”

Macrazbunare casts *call lightning* at the fey, while hiding it as a prayer to Belenus. No damage.

Tora and Varadan moves toward the bonfire to save Bryonna. She is already burning from the oil splashed on her and she screams in pain!



As soon as the fey departs, Lorelei begins to run after it, screaming in protest: *No! she yells, Saorsen, come back here! We have to kill Bryonna! You promised to make Henrick love me! You can't leave yet! You still need me!*

Wyan is shocked to hear this, as most of the people are!

Macrazbunare and Petrak run after the fey and eventually capture it (it falls after a *magic missile* from Macrazbunare, -19 hp, under Luther's angry gaze at Macrazbunare). During this time, Varadan and Tora jump on the bonfire to save Bryonna from the flames!

The Inquisitors fetch a cold iron cage, and they put the fey inside. Macrazbunare stabilize the fey.

DM note: IMC, a cold iron cage prevents most feys from using their powers.

One Inquisitor shouts at the crowd, showing the cage "We captured a fey!"

They also see Mira Kaldwyn holding Lorelei's arms. "You, don't move!"

With a voice broken by emotions, Wyan asks the Inquisitor to put the fey and his daughter in a cell under the church, under heavy guard. He then walks toward Bryonna, gets on his knees before her, and says "Bryonna, poor thing, please accept my excuses! I proclaim to all that you are cleared of all charges against you". Then, in the following heavy silence, Wyan walks to his house and enters in it.

Within minutes, the crowd disperses, leaving only the heroes and the Inquisitors keeping an eye on the bonfire.

Tora shouts at Luther – *I hope you do get the lesson. Your certainties are not always the truth! I then ask you to rethink about our sister's death!*

Luther – *Dominica drew the anger of Belenus by trying to talk with feys.*

Tora – *You still keep that tone even after what happened today?*

Luther - *Yes, that is our duty as Inquisitors. Those who criticize our methods forget that, without us, the darkness would have already devoured everything in Tepest. He takes a pause, then adds: But you really want to investigate Dominica's death?*

Tora – *Yes, I think there are many mysteries in this story*

Luther – *then you should read her journal. It was found in a bush near her dead body. This journal is in possession of Wyan. He adds You won't like what you will read in it...*

The heroes go to Wyan's house and knock. Wyan opens the door. His eyes are red, and he wipes tears on his cheeks.

Tora – *I do not want to disturb you for long, I respect what you are currently feeling. But I recently found out that my sister Dominica is dead, and Luther told me that you have the personal journals she wrote?*

Wyan nods. He goes inside his house for a few minutes, then he is back with a leather book, that he gives to Tora.

Wyan – *read it, if you will. Just do not destroy it. Give it back to me when you are finished with it.*

Wyan then closes his door.

DM note: I gave the players a PDF copy of the journal – see this document at the end of this session.

Henrick and Bryonna cannot thank the heroes enough for what they have done. The heroes escort her to her own cabin. There, many friends of Bryonna and Henrick gather to celebrate the happy ending of this story.

The villagers are impressed with the work done by the heroes. A friend of Bryonna, Rowana Thornhill, offers an invitation to take up residence in Viktal, provided that the heroes are willing to protect the village from the evil fey.

Bryonna is still quite weak from the Inquisition and the fire. The heroes cast three *lesser restoration* on her.



Petrak tells Bryonna “and, it’s not all! From what I understand, you are my sister!”

Bryonna is shocked but happy. The next hour sees Bryonna getting better and better, and she asks many questions to Petrak about their family.

The heroes even make a proposition to Henrick (a merchant) and Bryonna – do you want to open a counter of the Boritsi trading Co in Viktal?

DM note – a bit quick from the players, since I guess Ivana or Nostalia surely have something to say in this :)

They leave Henrick and Bryonna at the end of the afternoon, and go back to the fisherman’s cabin.

They take the rest of the day to read Dominica's journal. Some comments during the reading:

Tora (seeing Luther's notes in the book) – Ah, Luther, you crazy maniac!

Tora – should we try to find this Mirewyn? So this has a link with the three hags?

Austizel – she was tricked by a fey, or one of the hag? A hag that changed her appearance? The hags seem to be responsible for many things ...

Tora – why would the hags do this? When we were inside the hag's cottage, there was a servant. Perhaps my sister is inside too?

Austizel, reading the oracle's poem for Tora (session 109):

*Your sister danced beneath the moon,
Where the forest breathes and shadows embrace.
The thread of her destiny, woven then severed by greedy hands,
Is in the hands of ancient spirits, hungry for power.*

*But listen, Tora!
Your sister's song is not extinguished.
It still echoes in their claws,
a flickering flame, captured.*

*The shadow weavers, in their lair, still laugh,
Their web stretches!
Will you save her soul,
Or will you fall into the trap she could not escape?*

Austizel - Funny coincidence, that the oracle asked us to give a message to the hags?

Tora – why did the hags attack my sister? She was finding information on them?

Austizel – should we just tell Wyan of the hag's location, and that they are guilty of many of the evils of Tepest?

Petrak cast *sending* to Ermintrude: *Bryonna is OK, she is not accused anymore. She is with us and recuperating. We now investigate Dominica Vimus's death two years ago"*

Ermintrude's answer: *Hooray for Bryonna! Kiss her for me. I'll be in Viktal soon. I did not know Dominica much."*

August 17th, 748, morning

They meet Luther on the way to Bryonna's cabin.

Luther – *had a good read?*

Tora – *I saw your comments, not uplifting!*

Luther shrugs – *I found some of her thoughts naïve or just silly. Who do you think is this Mirewyn? We did spy on her before Dominica was killed.*

Tora – *you lost sight of her?*

Luther – *Yes. We overheard them talking about meeting real feys. But her journal points toward three sisters. We do not know what these are.*

Tora – *Our sister died strangely.*

Luther – *it's the supernatural!*

Tora, laughing – *surely the fey?*

Luther, serious – *obviously!*

Tora – *how is Wyan?*

Luther – *he do not want to see anybody today.*

Austizel – *The journal mentions the Bloodmoon on October tenth. On the anniversary of this, did you go in the forest to check?*

Luther – *No. But this Mirewyn lied on so many things, you know...*

Tora – *and you were watching our own mother? Don't you think you exaggerate? She feared the Inquisition!*

Luther – *I learned that by reading the journal. We do not watch her since. ... The methods we use are not pleasant, but they are just. We are not acting for ourselves, but for Belenus.*

With this, Luther leaves and walks away.

Bryonna exits her cabin, watching Luther leaving, and asks angrily “What did he want?” She explains that Luther wasn’t one of the Inquisition torturer, but he never said a word to stop it...

Stories collected from the elders of the village of Briggdarrow.

These are incomplete songs. Fragmentary lyrics of lullabies? or warning chants?

Lullaby: "The Hunger Beneath the Moss"

I transcribed it from what a half-blind old woman used to hum to her cats. Mother had also heard this lullaby as a child, sung by an old aunt (now deceased).

Sleep, my heart, sleep without a sound,
Beneath the moss, nothing must watch you now.
The green hands scratch, they dig through the stones,
They wait for the world to lie down and be shown...

When the rain sings to the woods at rest,
Close your eyes, do not open your door.
For the hunger beneath the moss, if it sees you—
—you won't come home anymore.

My thoughts: This lullaby evokes an entity lurking beneath vegetation—perhaps fey?
Green hands? Scratches? Goblins?

The "hunger" seems to be a recurring force in many ancient tepestani tales, an invisible yet insatiable presence.

The moss suggests natural camouflage, perhaps a form of fae mimicry? There but not seen? Or goblins in hiding?

Or something else?

Chant: "The Circle of Whispers"

Half-whispered by children in the village, as a kind of "dangerous game" dare.

Strange: No adults know of this song and its origin? A child invention? Something told to them by ... ?

A circle in the grass, a ring of silence,
Three voices spin, but never dance.
They whisper, but never speak;
They call you by your true name, soft and meek...

? Who or what are
the "three voices" ?

Do not answer, say no word,
Turn around and grip your knife tight.
If you walk between their grey stones,
You'll forget your mother, your house, your shrines.

My thoughts: The "circle of whispers" refers to an ancient ritual site that has since been corrupted? Possibly connected to the stone circle north of Briggdarrow?

Rumors about the stone circle: Very old, site of pagan sacrifices, forgotten gods.

The song seems designed to warn others about a forbidden place. This chant is a possible warning: never answer the call of the fex. It also implies they know people's "true names"?

Fragment of a Lament Song

(It? He? She?) sings when the ~~night~~ world sleeps,
sewn ~~eyelids~~ lips, eyes of the ~~recent~~ dead...
Fire won't hurt them, ~~water~~ sun won't chase them,
They laugh when the bell fades away...

The reference to a bell—
perhaps the church bell?—
suggests they act only when
sacred protections wane?
Interesting!

Fragment has no title or clear structure. I have it in deep rooted in my memory, but from where? I wonder where this song came from—perhaps a dream? My imagination? I'm somehow convinced the "sewn" may refer to bound spirits, or trapped souls. By whom?

Tales of Tepest

The Thorn-Wife (as told by Elder Hannic of Briggdarrow)

The tale concerns a woodsman named Edmund, who vanished from Briggdarrow for nearly a season, returning with a strange woman he claimed to have married in a clearing in the forest, beneath the stars. She wore no shoes. Her hair smelled of damp moss. She never came into the chapel, never spoke, but always followed Edmund, some days with a woven veil over her face.

Villagers noticed wounds on his arms. Thin, straight scratches. When asked, Edmund laughed it off—"brambles," he said. But his laughter was strained.

Over time, the wounds multiplied. Each night, he dreamed of roots twisting through his ribs, of thorns pushing from his skin.

One night, he followed her as she slipped into the woods. Under the full moon, he found her weeping beside an ancient birch, hands buried in the earth.

She turned to him and opened her mouth, and a sigh like wind in dry leaves escaped, but no words.

Edmund ran. When he returned home, she was gone. He disappeared soon after.

Some say she still waits by the tree. If you follow a bare-foot trail in moonlight, it's her you'll find.

My thoughts on this one: Clearly a wood fey! A dryad?

Pattern of speechless forest brides often recurring in Briggdarrow local tales.

Does silence = lack of will? Enchanted state? Or voluntary silent vow?

"Scratches" suggests nightly draining or transformation.

Strong symbolic layering: love vs. predation; beauty as camouflage. Could this be a Dryad-variant, but corrupted?

Might be connected to stories of the "Green Wives" from northern Nova Vaasa.

Need to check cross-reference.

The Clay Bell (as recounted by Brother Fenwick, retired cleric, now apiarist)

"Not all bells were made to summon the gods," Brother Fenwick told me, eyes on his bees. "Some were made to keep things out. Or down."

In the forgotten village of Eld Hollow (no trace found of this "lost" village by the way), long since abandoned, the priest crafted a bell not of metal, but of clay. He claimed iron rang too sharp, too cruel. Clay, he said, would sing low enough for the earth to understand.

Every dusk, he rang it once, and no more. A single, low sound that trembled like thunder through the hills. When asked, he said it was to "keep the hunger in its place."

Years passed. One winter, the bell cracked too many frosts, they said and the villagers failed to mend it. That very season, the children began to vanish. No screams. No signs of struggle. Only little footprints leading into the snowbound woods.

Then they found the priest kneeling beside the bell-stand in spring. Frozen stiff. Eyes open. The bell still hung above him, broken.

Everybody in Eld Hollow moved away soon after.

My thoughts :

Hard to believe a clay bell would sound at all! Made some tests, doesn't ring. Or it rings in the ethereal dimension?

"Hunger" again-same term appears in other regional lullabies and cautionary rhymes. Suggests an enduring archetype or entity, not mere metaphor. It was a recurring notion of G'henna. Link?

Clay bell = fey / folk magic? Earthen bell might resonate with underworld or natural forces. The under folk legends?

The priest's position-kneeling-resembles ritual submission. Did he offer himself?

Never found any record of Eld Hollow. Nothing on old maps? So not possible to cross-check with records of seasonal child disappearances.

Cold Mary's Lantern (collected from a children's rhyme in Viktal)

"Cold Mary walks when the mist is white,
She finds the ones lost in the night.
Her lantern glows, her voice is low—
And when she leaves, they never know..."

Cold Mary was once a midwife. Her name still lingers in nursery rhymes and warnings carved onto old fence posts. She carried a lantern of blue-glass and birchwood, said to glow even in blizzards—but give off no warmth.

"Those who follow the light may return.", she said.

She could find any child, no matter how far, no matter the weather. Mothers praised her. Children feared her. The rescued ones returned—changed. Quiet.

Once, a girl vanished in the southern marsh near Viktal. Mary went in after her. Only the girl returned. Pale, mute, barefoot in the snow. Cold Mary was never seen again.

But sometimes—on fog nights—you'll glimpse her lantern through the trees. Pale blue. Unwavering.

Those who follow the light may return... But not as themselves?

My thoughts

Archetypal "guide figure in the dark"—but subverted? Not malevolent, but not safe either. So is it another caution tale against strangers?

Lantern = soul-lure? Faerie beacon? Similar to "will-o'-the-wisp" folklore in other domains. But the lack of warmth is unique. Emotional coldness = detachment? A form of Death?

But what happened to Mary?

The Weaver's Oath (fragment retrieved from a burnt family ledger near the old weaving house, deserted hamlet south of Briggdarrow)

A young weaver named Serela once declared she would weave the future. Her neighbors laughed—until the cloths she made began to tell things. First a poor man's death. Then a broken marriage. Then the storm that toppled the chapel steeple.

Each time, her fingers bled.

They say she made one final tapestry, during weeks, in secret. When she unveiled it, the tapestry showed fire in the village square, and three hanging shadows beneath the gallows tree.

That winter, the fire came. Culprits were found and three hangings followed.

When they searched Serela's home, she was gone. But her weaving machine still worked. Alone. Weaving threadless fabric-made of shadow.

The elders tried to burn the weaving machine and the tapestry. It screamed as it burned.

My thoughts

Prophetic weaving = dangerous art. Often punished. See similar accounts in Kartakass (Minstrel's Curse).

"Three shadows" ?

Blood-tithe suggests deal made-consciously or not. Was Serela a vessel for something speaking through her?

Investigate history of old weaving house. Was there a Serela living there?

The Ditch-Witch of Larrenton

(as recounted by Pael Turn, cobbler, now lives in Kellee, but originally from Larrenton (Nova Vaasa) - he refuses to return there)

"The ditches always came alive after rain," Pael said, sipping his cider like he was stalling the memory. "Mama said they were the Witch's hair... and if we made too much noise, she'd know where to reach."

In Larrenton, children are told: "don't splash in the rain ditches." Not just for the mud, but because she might hear you. The Ditch-Witch.

She is never seen. Only felt-a coldness, a pulling at your feet when the water runs high. Some say she lives where the underground springs bubble and can reach you through any channel, even a household drain. She waits for the careless.

One tale tells of a boy who set a stolen doll afloat in a muddy ditch to lure her out. The Witch took it.

But the doll was recovered the next season. Its "hair" had grown, and its eyes no longer matched.

It was found to be watching whoever holds it. It's said the boy burned it. But Pael insists it's still in the old schoolhouse, buried beneath the stones. Watching.

My thoughts.

An hydric entity? Not a person but a presence in the water. Consistent with "Mary" and other female-figured forest entities, or the fire witches of Darkon - are there many versions of elemental embodiments?

Doll = vessel. Its transformation suggests link with sympathetic magic or binding.

Question: why did the Witch accept the doll? Did it satisfy her hunger-or was then the boy protected in some way?

I should try to draw the doll in my dreams. Compare to others from other tales. Look for repeating symbols.

Local Tepest history essay

(compiled from various readings here and there in Tepest, and in Nova Vaasa)

Tepestani history begins with a creation myth. They believe that their gods created the world one season at a time, starting with Spring, and populated each season with its own beings.

Some versions of the story say that each season was originally an attempt by individual gods at making separate worlds and that eventually the gods combined their creations into one world. The traditional Tepestani calendar starts in Spring as well. We have since then adopted the Barovian calendar some three decades ago.

During Spring, all was in order and peaceful. Tepestani were then living in tribes scattered around the land.

Bards say that this ancient order was brought low by the seduction of the Fey. Trying to ruin humanity and reassert their dominance over the world, the fey crept back from the deepest, untamed wilds and secretly approached the Cailleach (wise women) of each clan. The fey promised each cailleach that they would teach her how to tap into the raw magical power of the "Weave", manipulating it without the shepherding of the gods.

With this vast power, they would be able to crush their family's foes and end the feuds forever. The wise women were however crushed by the Belenus's church and their influence waned. (comment: patriarchy started then!)

As ever more monsters beset the clans of Tepest, the old feuds indeed faded away as the axelords tribes were forced to band together in order to survive. New three centralized communities grew up along a more easily traversable path through Tepest that would evolve into what is now called the East Timori Road. The old ways faded in the face of a new reality, the tribal power of the axelords waned, and slowly, over the course of generations, modern Tepest came into shape as we see it now.

Year 691. A toothless, borderline senile old woman I spoke to in Kellee remembered an autumn that year when the harvest was ruined as the ripe fruits and vegetables suddenly burst open with worms and flies. A similarly aged but somewhat more coherent herdsman in Viktal told how he remembered a season the same year, when he was a child, when many goats gave red milk or went blind and that the livestock's young were born deformed.

This season of horror seems to coincide chronologically with the recorded "appearance" of Tepest in 691 BC (according to Nova Vaasa maps and other chronicles from afar), so I assume that these bad crops events were a kind of metaphysical birthing of our land?

Before that year, it seems our land didn't exist??? Father and mother were born around this year so they do not know more. For them, the land as it is now had always been there, and their parents being born on it. Mystery!

In 740 BC, the catadysm that struck our world brought several months of terror to the Tepestani. When the initial chaos of the Event passed, the simple folk were horrified to discover that their western and southern neighbors, G'tenna and Markovia, had vanished!!!

Entire lands and all their inhabitants were destroyed, with a gaping chasm full of roiling mists left in their place! The Shadow Rift appeared.

To many Tepestani, this was a sign that the world's Winter (and the end of the world) had finally arrived.

One citizen disagreed. In Viktal, a priest of Belenus named Wyan saw the appearance of the Shadow Rift not as the end of the war, but as the devastating first strike in a resumed campaign by his people's eternal enemies, the fey. The fey, Wyan believes, had succeeded in drawing the world from Summer to Autumn and now were trying to force it into Winter, but they had not yet succeeded. He preached that there was still time to save the rest of the world, if the people of Tepest would join him in resisting the immortal evil of Spring's Children - the feys. Quite unintentionally echoing his axelord ancestors, Wyan declared war on the fey and established the Inquisition of Belenus to drive out the foul spirits of the forest before they could "seduce more souls or take more lives".

Wyan held his first trials in the spring of 741 BC. (my personal comment: since most executions are women, it is clear Wyan hates women and fear them. I'm not sure the executed persons are true witches!)

Heresy! We see things clearly, as they are. LV

The severing of the northern trade route in 740 made Tepest nearly useless to its neighbors in Nova Vaasa, and the sound of rumbling wagons that had grown common in the summer became rare.

When Wyan's Inquisition began to harass foreigners as potential allies of the fey, what little merchant activity remained came to an end.

"Harassment"? It is for the greater good, sister.

What's next to come? A woman-hating theocracy or will the balance come back to something more normal? Thinking of moving to Kellee, where the Ing is quieter there.

Tale idea - Legends about the "Mothers of the Forest": three mysterious female figures who offers poisoned gifts or demands cruel prices in exchange for help. Where did this new idea comes from? Again a dream inspiration! I'm on fire !

Ancient symbols for jewel ideas: runes seen on old Tepestani monuments.

Forgotten fae magic? Find an explanation for the Ingu. if they ask



Observation notes - personal reflections and descriptions of strange phenomena around Briggdarrow:

unusual mists	"whispering trees"	animals avoiding certain paths
sudden sleets!	Endless ingenuity of goblins in making traps	Crooked trees
Fairy stools	Witching gourds - is that true?	Warped or corrupted animals
Mysterious fire in Belenus church in Kellee	Brother T. not coming back	

River changed direction??? prior to 710, it fed Lake Kronov from a spring west of Briggdarrow. Now the river flows from Lake Kronov, spilling into the Shadow Rift as a great majestic waterfall (we should call it the Waterfall of the Feys?!). The water level in Lake Kronov has not appeared to change. Is it related to the later appearance of Castle Island?

I have suspicions about the Inquisition: certain popular tales seem to have been deliberately altered out by the population in fear of displeasing the Inquisition. It will soon be harder and harder to get firsthand untouched tales.

Oh, little sister, you were so misguided! LV

Last pages:

11th Night of September, year 746

I found a small scorch mark today on the ashwood tree in front of our house - small, deliberate, in the shape of a downward-pointing triangle. At first, I thought it lightning damage, but the edges of the triangles are too clean. It was branded there with a red hot poker?

Mother says it's nothing. "Children playing," she says, refusing to talk more about it, though her hands shook when she said it.

I have remembered later where I saw it. I understand why mother is not telling me what she knows. Afraid?!

That triangle - inverted - is one of the watcher's marks. Not fey. Not folklore. Inquisitorial! It means: suspected influence. Last year, I saw a drawing in one of the old Belenus manuals the scribe let me copy in Viktal, in a section on "subtle heresies." It was labeled "signum serpentinae." An inquisitorial sign to : observe, then accuse.

They watch her. They watch mother!

19th Night of September, year 746

Mother hasn't cured anyone publicly in the last week. Sad.

Possible song, inspired by last entry :

The Ash-Daughter

She was the daughter of a green witch, raised beneath rafters where ivy grew.
She slept beside pots of herbs and sang to the fireflies.

The villagers came to her mother for cures, and called her blessed-until the well ran dry, and the goats gave bitter milk.

Then they came with ropes.

They burned the mother on a pyre of her own dried plants. The girl fled to the forest, where she lived by a ruined house. Each spring, she braided nettles into

her hair. Each winter, she left bundles of herbs tied to trees. Some say the village prospered after that. Some say the sickness only changed shape. Others say her shadow still walks where the roots are tangled tightest.

They say a lot, but they do not know.

Thoughts:

No author. No village named. No year. It feels like a story meant to float, to fit wherever needed. Or wherever the guilt lies. Not the guilt, the fear.

Is it too obvious, should I use this tale at the Spider House?

Mother used to braid hidden nettles in her belt "for strength." I liked it but I thought it was superstition. Used this in my tale.

2nd Night of October, year 746

Met a young woman named Mirewynn the other day at the Spider House after a night of songs. After we discussed, she opened up her thoughts to me and she called herself a midwife of Hala!

She has a gentle voice, and sharp eyes. Asked me not to speak of her to others in fear of the Inquisition, of course. Said she lived in Kellee and that she was in town for about two weeks.

She listened to my old stories of Briggdarrow with such hunger. In return, she shared family histories—strange, deep-rooted things that rang older than the earth itself.

An example:

The First Silence (as told by Mirewynn, Spider House — late, over cider and smoke!)

"There was a time," Mirewynn said, "before priests and fire, when silence was not an absence but a gift. When the land itself whispered, and people listened. But someone always wants to own the silence, to cut it, reshape it into prayers."

She smiled. "That's when the first mistake happened."

In her tale, the first people of Tepest did not fear the woods. They lived in small villages, not walled cities.

People respected nature. Every child was taught not to speak until the land had spoken first.

But one girl was born with a loud voice. She sang before she could crawl. She laughed during funerals. They called her Bright Noise, and she was beloved as she was full of joy-until the first death came. Her brother vanished into a pool that reflected the sky but not the stars.

The elders said her voice had cracked the pact between people and land.

So they cut her tongue out, buried it at the center of the forest, and built a circle of stones around it. A silence fell over Tepest, deep and final. No one sang again.

But at the end, Mirewynn leaned in close when she said this: "They say the tongue still pulses beneath the stones. That the land wants her voice back. And that when someone sings the right song, the pact will be broken-and the true names will rise again."

My thoughts:

Wow, I've never heard this story before. Why hasn't it been recorded elsewhere? It feels so old!

"True names" again. Connects directly to "The Circle of Whispers." Mirewynn may be building on local legend, or... revealing its root.

The stone circle is a burial site??

I asked her how she knew this. She only smiled. Said, "My family never forgot what the land used to say." She is so cryptic at times!

I want to believe her. I do believe her.

Another tale she told me: The Mindefisks

This tale begins with Holger and Rudella Mindefisk, peasant farmers who worked a desolate patch of ground in a distant place. Rudella was a superstitious and desperately lonely woman; both her husband and their two sons were gruff and surly and spent most of their time hunting or working the fields. The occasional entertainment came from a traveler would spend a night in their barn, but this offered Rudella little respite. When Rudella expressed her desire for daughters, Holger swore that he would quit their wedding bed before adding such "weaklings" to his family.

One night, as the menfolk slept, Rudella knelt by the embers of the cooking fire and ardently prayed to the fairies for daughters, for she believed that they had many powers. She repeated her plea for three nights, and something heard her. The next morning, Rudella found three infant girls in a wicker basket on her doorstep. The girls were sickly at first, and Rudella dedicated herself to their care, much to Holger's disdain. She named them Leticia, Laveeda and Lorinda.

As the girls flourished under their adoptive mother's care, Rudella's own health waned. She died two years later, somehow drained of her vitality.

After his wife's death, Holger tried repeatedly to rid himself of his unwanted daughters, often leaving them in the woods for the wolves. Once, he even tied them in sacks and threw them in the river.

The girls always returned, however, and Holger eventually resigned himself to the fact that he would never be rid of them. Holger demanded that the sisters clean the house and prepare meals, but otherwise, he and his sons ignored them.

Over time, the girls grew into ravishing young women, each more beautiful than the next. Left to their own devices, they often plotted how they would one day leave their pathetic little farm behind and obtain lives of luxury. What began as daydreams soon twisted into dark desire.

One day, a wealthy traveler spent the night at the Mindefisk farm. The girls saw his purse when he paid their father a gold coin for his hospitality, and they knew their moment had arrived. While Holger and his sons were out performing chores,

the girls worked together to murder the stranger. Rather than bother with burying the corpse, they cooked it into stew and served it to the unsuspecting menfolk. The plan proved so effective that the sisters continued the practice for several years.

Eventually, the girls realized that they would never make enough money this way, so they each came to the independent decision to seduce the next traveler and entice him to take her away to exotic lands. Before long, a roguish dandy came along. He sensed the girls' motives, but he had no intention of taking any of them anywhere. Instead, the rake merely played to their expectations, enjoying their favors while the girls drove each other mad with jealousy. Ultimately, each girl decided that she would rather kill the man than see one of her sisters leave with him. And so they did.

As the Mindefisk sisters murdered the gigolo, mists descended on their farm...

My thoughts:

How strange and cruel fate is for everybody in this tale?

What kind of ending is that? What does it mean?

Mirewynn was strange when telling this tale, as if she did know the Mindefisk's sisters. The next day, she told me she invented this tale and told me to forget it.

6th Night of October, year 746

~~I feel Luther and his crows are watching my every moves, and that my brother doesn't say everything to me. Strange. Why is he watching me, or having people spy on me? I'm not a witch, duh, you creep! Whys those questions on Mirewynn? Ask them to her yourself!~~

According to Mirewynn, there might be indeed three voices in the forest! (I must write it all down soon, while it's still clear in my mind.) She claims to know the truth of Tepest's creation, what happened before year 691?

She is highly educated and knows many old tales ("family stories", she says). She is a fascinating well of stories. I mean to put them in my book but every time she has more.

I have no talent of raconteur compared to her! She has a gift.

10th Night of October, year 746

Mirewynn came to our house this afternoon. She stood at the edge of our garden, just past the yarrow patch, where Mother used to hang her herbs to dry. She didn't call my name. She just waited, with a lantern hidden under her shawl.

When I saw her, I went to her and she said, "tonight is the night". She says the stones will hum, and that I'll hear their old songs with my true ears, and that is nothing compared to the ones I've heard before. She says I've earned the right to see the "blood moon ritual" - something ancient, "seen by no one else." It only happens once a year, she says. Imagine my chance to see such a thing!

She says there are indeed three watchers in the forest. That they've been waiting for me. That they know how I've listened all my life!

That I was watched by something unknown somehow frightens me more than anything.

I told her I didn't want power. Only understanding and knowledge.

She said: "Then you're exactly who they want," but she refused to say more.

There's something in her soothing words that calls to me and now, thinking of it, I do not think it will be dangerous in her company.

We will meet later at 11 pm outside our house.

Verified: there is no Mirewynn in Kellee, as suspected.

Identity of that women is unknown.

Maybe she used a false name, or she is not from Kellee.

QV

Last entry, presumably the night D. died:

*The rune is not a symbol of protection as "she" said.
It is a mark of servitude! A trap. THEY LIE!*

*But they are not fey... they are older things.
If anyone reads this... Do not listen to them.
Do not follow their songs or tales. They lie.*

*"Mirewynn" is now back to the circle, I hear her feet coming
toward me in the fallen leaves.*

It may already be too late for me.

Sister, it seems you made a fatal mistake!

*You know I did warn you... I will pray Belenus for your
soul.*

Who was with you that night?

LV