

The Esterra Times

*News from the Land of the Starry Night
Summer, 3rd Year of the Empire (1642)*

Empire Up in Arms!

(Tor Amal) Although they said it would never happen again, the ancient seat of the Dragons arose from the sea destroying rich Ramal and resurrecting the EMPIRE OF THE DRAGON THRONE. For more than three years the good people of Capel have waited for the true nature of this Empire to show itself. Wyrms flying over the city were the first signs. Then our priests fled and dragon-worshippers took their place.

Now come another terror of ancient days: Imperial Legions!

Emperor Dracar has sent out the call to form great legions. He says they are in defense of the lands and peoples of the Empire, but only the most utter fool would not see the truth behind his veil of lies.

Once again, the steel boots of oppression will be laid on the necks of the good and righteous Esterrans.

Resist before it is too late. Boycott the call to muster. Do not sell your goods to this "new" army of domination.

**- Prince Hodon
hereditary heir to the
throne of Capel.**

This commentary does not represent the views of the Esterra Times nor its publishers, the loyal Hobbits of Inkwell.

THE SON ALSO RISES

(Garum Tsen, Nore) With great joy and celebration, the peoples of Nore welcome the first heir to the Norst throne, Willem Ilexander Burgeddon Segandsep Tsen, son of King Ando Tsen. The most holy priests of Chorra anointed the child on Harper's Eve, christening him in the eyes of the Seven Elders. Much joy to the Royals of Nore!

SCHISM ROCKS THE ARCANUM

(Tor Amal) Punctuated by balls of fire and lightning bolts, part of the Great Arcanum of Ramal has left that order. Where they have gone is a complete mystery to the common folk of Ramal, though 'far away' was the popular suggestion.

Long known for their dark and mysterious ways,

the Arcanum had been a blessing and boon to Ramal in the days before the Dragon. Grand Chancellor Raskellan often sat at court to lend advice and wisdom to our great Princes.

In the Riven War, the members of the Arcanum sacrificed greatly. The pyres of their dead burned for twenty-one days on the dawn side of the city. Raskellan himself was gravely wounded and has undertaken a long recovery.

The departing faction has been dubbed the Red Wizards by sources close to the Arcanum.

MIRACLES OF CHOTH

(Ulven, Ligura, Empire) Long thought to be a hateful god and an enemy of the Esterrans, Choth and his priests have emerged as the

staunchest enemies of the Dragon Empire. Many, seeking revenge against the new power have joined in praying to Choth.

In the village of Greensbee, a vicious snake was killed by a small child, daughter of a priestess of Choth. High Priests of Choth and the other Esterran Gods have confirmed the miracle as the work of Choth. "It is a great symbol of resistance against the serpents now in power," said Her Eminence Bergetta, Priestess of Chorra.

Choth priests are also rumored to be responsible for the death of a dragon fifty leagues west of Tor Amal.

EMPEROR DRACAR SEEKS BALANCE

(Palace, Tor Amal) Speaking to the Grand Court, Emperor Dracar again exhorted his

subjects to treat each other as equals and repeated his claims that the Dragon Throne was reborn to lead all peoples to a new age of peace and prosperity.

When questioned about the new legions mustering under the command of Sarinus Taltos, the Emperor invited anyone who doubts their intent to go out to the fields and see for themselves. The only dragons serving in the legions are foot soldiers. Officers are Idani and Esterran.

FACTIONS STRUGGLE FOR POWER AND PRESTIGE

(Palace, Tor Amal) The ruling class is well established in the halls of the Dragon Palace. The race of dragon men who name themselves Ronin occupy all but a few of the most prominent offices and dominate the Imperial bureaucracy. Idani loyalists are also strongly represented, outnumbering Esterran-born officials three to one.

Emperor Dracar continues to broaden support for his government by elevating Esterran individuals, but he is receiving great resistance from his own people. Many Ronin believe that they are more capable of ruling Esterrans, due to their longevity and access to millenia of recorded wisdom. Their individual strength is also a source of great pride and held as further proof of natural dominance of Ronin over humans.

De facto leader of the Ronin imperialists is Sevlin Sectarius, head of a house of Ronin and currently the Chancellor for Tor Amal.

under his guidance, many of the most valuable homes and estates unearthed during the emergence of the Dragon Throne were given to Ronin, ostensibly their ancestral homes.

ABEDO'S TOWER FESTIVAL

(The City, Tor Amal) Everyone knows the legend of Abedo Majurkin: apprentice of Isker, brother of the Prince of Ramal, risked life and liberty to battle the Riven armies countless times, succeeded Isker as Master of the Tower after the rise of the Dragon Throne, benefactor of the masses.

Now, in the third year of his good works, the people of Tor Amal are holding a festival in Abedo's honor. Said to include music, dancing, feasting, games, and competitions, the festival will be held in the Tower piazza and several surrounding streets. Abedo is said to be planning an impressive display of magic to entertain the young and old alike. Food and drink has been donated by those who have benefited from Abedo's aid and the hungry peoples of the city are warmly invited to the Festival.

SCANDAL HOUNDS DON FERNANDO

(The Bottoms, Tor Amal) After forfeiting his elaborate palace in Tor Amal to creditors, Lord Don Fernando had been leaning on the benevolence of the Royal Court. His close friendship with the Auric princes appeared to have calmed the open hostilities between himself and the Emperor.

But after one too many dalliances with the ladies of

the court, naturally angering the lords of the court, Fernando has fled the city. His spokesman, Colinn of Jemsee, said that his master was simply taking one of his Grand Tours of the countryside, on his way to Liga for the annual Sharma-Wuck festivals. "His departure signals no displeasure from the Royal Court, but is his traditional travel schedule."

When asked for comment, the Royal Senechal would only say "Lord Fernando is not a friend of the Court and if the Lord contemplates a return any time soon, it would be too soon."

TEMPLE OF OZYMAR

(HolyGate, Tor Amal) With the expressed blessing of the Dragon Emperor, a grand temple has been founded in Tor Amal by Ozymarian missionaries.

Speaking to recently arrived Ozymarian priests, they believe that the risen city, Tor Amal, is a sacred city to their people, the "City of the Ancestors".

Sigismondo, a hero of the Riven War, was instrumental in obtaining Imperial permission for creation of the temple as well as funding and directing its construction.

In addition to the Temple, more people of far off Ozymar have made their way to the Risen City. By far the most noticeable is the rich and charismatic Shedao Shai, an Ozymarian noble and semi-official envoy to the Dragon Throne. Shai funds and runs a series of inns and work programs for immigrant Ozymars arrived to worship at the Temple.

DARK CLOUDS FORM

(Across Capel) After the Battle of Erven's Cross, it was thought that the Skoryn encroachment had been halted. But new reports suggest that more subtle maneuvers are taking place. Soon, the remaining free states of Capel may be neatly divided between the Skoryn and Dragon alliances.

Reports from inside Skoryn indicate that after a night where blood ran in the streets, Mengus Grifone has taken control of over half the Skoryn lands, now ruling Polita, Tchoban, and Byankuba.

Grifone's strongest surviving rival is the aging warlord Chogan Munt of Fitzdun. Rumors are flying that Munt has forged an alliance with the Durin of the Strathrhyl Mountains.

NORE IS A HAVEN

(Across Nore) Since the rise of the Dragon Throne and the triumph of dragon worshippers in Tor Amal, the priests and faithful Esterrans have fled to the countryside.

Many patriarchs fled to the ancient sacred city of Ryll in the west. Now Skoryn's dark influence threatens that often subjugated place. To safeguard holy relics and lead their people to a place of sanctuary, many of the greatest servants of our Esterran Gods have now made their way to the nation of Nore in the north. High King Tsen of Nore, a devout believer has given them comfort and protection. He has even donated great monies to have new temples built in the capital to accomodate the influx of believers.

The new arrivals in Nore are bringing with them the wealth and wisdom of Ramal, secured in their flight from that city. Nore lands, long lain fallow, are being settled and tilled by the displaced Capellans.

WILD MAGICS IN THE LAND

(Across Capel, Venar, Nore, and Thran) Not only do dragons fly above regal Tor Amal, strange beasts both fair and foul are now seen in great numbers across all lands. A Chimer Demon was slain last month outside the city of Ryll. The Forest of Tummel has become impassable due to tribes of gnolls and worse who have taken it over. Pegasi have been seen flying over the Strathrhyls.

In many lands, Kings and Lords do battle with these spawn, protecting their people and the safety of their domains. In the Dragon Empire, new condottas and adventuring companies are forming. Bounties posted by the Empire drive them to defeat these monsters.

LAWS CONFUSE PLEADERS

(Imperial Courts, Tor Amal) Pleadors in the city have become accustomed to the new laws of the land, as decreed by Emperor Dracar. In many ways, those laws did not radically stray from the Codex Antillae, the basis of all law in the lands of Capel for centuries.

But now the pleaders are crying foul. Jenne Portus, Ronin judge, continues to clarify small questions of law, often to the detriment of masses of Esterrans.

"I was invested with this task by the great Dracar himself. I speak for the Empire. There will always be victors and vanquished in the Court of Law. Those who bridle under the strict justice of the Empire need to become accustomed to judgments not swayed by petty bribery and blackmail."

VODEN REMAIN SILENT

(Voda, Mellach) Envoys from the Guilds of Tor Amal were turned away again at the borders of Mellach, land of the Voden. Merchants complained that they did not even glimpse the famous giant men, but were repelled by condottieres.

"A stupid swordswinger had the gall to order us back and refuse our rightful entreat of the Voden people! We have as much right as the Emperor to see the wonders of Asayr and barter for them," raged Guildsman Corfei of the Metalliers. "I hope his falchion cracks on the grain!"

While the Voden envoy, Zacharias, lives in the Dragon Palace, no other Voden have been seen by the subjects of the Empire. Voden works were uncovered during the Change and many now study their language, history, and art.

When pressed, the Emperor explained that the Voden people need to adjust in their own time to their rebirth.

"Much as the elves of Skyreach had much to learn about world events during their Imprisonment, so too the Voden must come to grips with their losses and their new opportunities."

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

A Call to Arms: The Empire is mustering Legions in defense of its lands and people. Cadres of foot and horse will be recruited, outfitted, trained and deployed. Enlistment requires a commitment of three years service, but rewards with pay in gold coin and military honors for the brave and best.

General Sarinus Taltos will lead the legions now being mustered.

Fighters of all races and creeds are welcome. Esterran, Skoryn, Auric, Iluwin, and Durin of good heart and character can enlist. Rank will be awarded by merit.

Monsters within and enemies without, our Empire needs swords to defend it and deliver it to glory.

Red Birds Return: Not all are gone. Gather with the COPPERSMITHS and we shall fly again.

Estate For Sale: The infamous Fernando estate will be auctioned off this Saturday to repay creditors. Among the opulent furnishings is a complete set of the Illustrated Kama Sutra de Fernando, a bed of water, numerous devices of decadence, and a wide array of the FINEST FASHIONS.

Auction opens at Tens Bell, bids for coin must be settled at once.

Tanners Guild Meeting: Election of the new Guildmaster will be held on the next Holy Day. All members of the tanners Guild

are strongly encouraged to attend. After the investiture of the new Guildmaster, the Guild's Book of Measures and Values will be reviewed and amended.

Far Merchant's Guild Calls for Caravaneers: After decades of peaceful commerce, hauling trade goods has become a dangerous proposition in Capel. First the Riven and then the Skoryn have pillaged and decimated free traders all over the heart of Capel.

GOOD PAY is being offered to veteran fighters to sign on as caravaneers. Those who step forward will now be admitted as full members of the Far Merchant's Guild at the end of their third successful trip.

Calling All Smiths: Put your hammer in use for defense of the Empire. The Imperial Legions now forming to the north need the finest weapons and armor. Apply at the Metalliers Guildhall for Legion work. Pay is DOUBLE GUILD FEES.

TRAVEL

Visiting the Heart of the Empire: If you've been to Ramal in the past, forget what you know. With the emergence of the Dragon Throne, **Tor Amal** is a whole new city to explore and enjoy.

A must for any visitor is a visit to the Dragon Palace itself. The waters of the Edvant and Ipslay flow through the palace, through channels and across intricately mosaiced pools.

Outside of the Palace are the Three Watchers, gigantic

statues of dragons, one in gold, one in silver, and one in bronze. They sit in the corners of the Assembly Plaza at the foot of the Dragon Palace.

A stone's throw from the Watchers are the Scarlet Gardens, a large series of courts and buildings housing the most amazing collection of plants ever seen.

The Palace, Plaza, and Gardens highlight the Ancient Quarter, also known as the heart of Tor Amal. Around the Ancient Quarter lie numerous boroughs, including (west to east) the Sunset Markets, Tintown, the Silent Quarter and MorningGate.

Just east of MorningGate sits the Arcanum, Guild and Sanctuary of Wizards and Sorcerers across Esterra. While the stone gargoyles won't let you in for a look around, you won't have to wait long before you'll see fire and strange lights erupt from within as the arcane spellcasters explore the limits of their knowledge and powers.

Seaward and below the ramparts of the Dragon Palace lie the Imperial Docks, flanked by those of the Guild of Far Merchants, and the Trading Domain of Aurum.

When its time for shopping, you have come to the greatest market in all the Esterran lands. Just east of the Ancient Quarter and north of the Auric docks lies the Grand Bazaar. A large complex of shops, markets, narrow streets and auction plazas, the Grand Bazaar is an incomperable market of goods and services from as far as men have walked or ships have sailed. *Don't tarry*

at night for after dusk the Bazaar becomes quite a different place!

The glory and might of the Dragon Empire has attracted great interest from sightseers and merchants, nobles and pilgrims. Artists and philosophers have flocked to the city, freed from the oft-times oppressive regimes of the Esterran church.

Even the Frendi from far-off Solaria have made the

sea voyage and established a Guildhall in the city. Merchants with silks from far east Ozymar mix with warriors from Dark Gorn.

For visitors looking for the ways of old Ramal, we're pleased to confirm that some parts of the old city survived the Change. Courtesans still ply their trade and buoy up a local aristocracy. Skiffs can still be seen on the rivers as they wind through the city, though they number far fewer

than the hundreds in old Ramal.

The wealthy still appear at the Casina on the western heights, ready to gamble their gold on traditional and new games of chance, and partake in grand parties. For Esterrans, the Casina has taken the role the Prince's Palace had before the Change, epicenter of social significance, far from the Dragon Throne while still being in the city itself.