

The Sutherlands Journal

Words are Power.

January 612 Edition



One chill evening in November, the Heroes of the Sutherlands girded for war, boarded their vessels, and set out for Orbonne. The voyage was long, cold, and hard, but the men and women aboard the vessels had steel in their hearts and one thing in mind; iron determination to take back Etienne from the Orcs that had occupied it and reclaim it in the name of its rightful rulers – His Majesty King Devron Nolaric and Her Majesty Queen Zephania Nolaric of the Sutherlands and Orbonne. The Sutherlands' troops put on a fine showing that day. The heroes of Isles d'Honig, Ros-sanoë, Sahde, and Sudbyr were out in force, though Darkholme showed smaller numbers than expected. Of course, given their nautical talents and the number of Darkholme ships involved in the assault, their minimal showing on the tactical ground invasion is understandable. In addition, smaller groups such as the Armorsmith's Guild and the Druid's Grove were there in force, and there were even a few Gypsies catcalling throughout the battle. The siege was prefaced by a war council. Kingdom officials and Baronial nobles met with a Black Orc infiltrator that was somehow fielded within the city. After a two-week-long mission, the Orc had enough information to give the assembled nobility critical intelligence that was vital to the war effort. Hours were spent poring over a map as the Orc pointed out critical locations and unit information, and finally a decision was reached, a battle plan was laid out, and swords were loosened in their sheaths.

The siege to reclaim the city began with the assault of the beach outside the city's walls. The assaulting force, notably led by a strong showing of heroes in green and black, approached the beach in small, six-man boats and weathered a vicious defensive rain of ballista and catapult fire. Flaming stones and eldritch energies battered the landing parties, but the heroes quickly formed a beachhead, and began to methodically dismantle the catapults

and the beach's defenders. With the defensive artillery neutralized, the way was opened for the Sutherlands' vessels to approach. Within the hour, the landing party had cleared the way entirely from the beach to the gates of the Etienne, and the catapults and ballistae from the looming vessels had battered them down. The way was open and the Heroes poured into the breach, righteous fury empowering their every step.

A protracted battle ensued in the central area of the town, as vital locations were captured and recaptured by the opposing forces, until finally the Heroes had cleared the town proper. Information becomes cloudy at this point, as anyone who has experienced the fog of war will understand. Some say that a force of Red Orcs swarmed out to defend the city from the Sutherlands troops. Others have said that one lone Hero challenged a leader of the Orcish army to a duel, and narrowly defeated him, similar to the duel between Baron Baal and the Orcish usurper in the Arena last year. What most agree on is that the Sutherlands heroes bitterly gained and held their ground, until the town center was clear and contained. .

After this, a precisely orchestrated series of simultaneous events occurred. This was the most critical part of the entire siege, and a single misstep would mean the loss of the entire campaign and thousands of lives. The cost of failure was slaughter on an unfathomable scale.

Sources have claimed that one team went to the main gates on the inland-facing side of the city to clear the area of defending troops. Another, small squad rode with an Orcish turncoat on a wyvern, to where the controls were for the main gates, to ensure that they would be opened and not disabled.

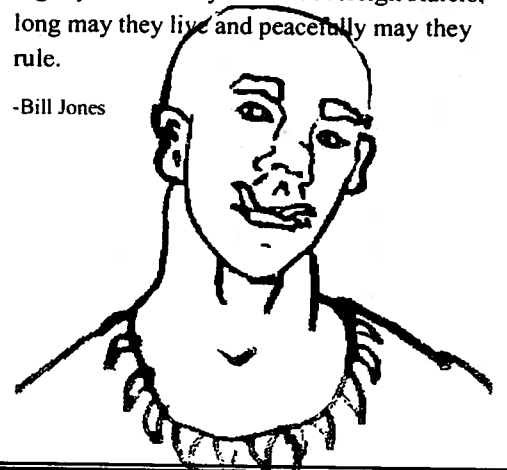
(However, this squad had no way to return, as their wyvern left them at the gate controls. Fortunately, a third team apparently followed an underground tunnel with the help of a rescued citizen of Etienne, where they emerged to escort the stranded squad that had opened the gate and bring them back into the fray. With the gates opened, the rest of the Sutherlands armies that had been forming up beyond them streamed into the town and engaged the

mustered Orcs that the team of Heroes had managed to bypass. With the Sutherlands' troops securing the city, the Heroes were free to assault and engage the castle where Storlogga, king of the Orcs, had solidified his defenses, as it was the most heavily-fortified location in the city. His personal guard of Red Orcs and constructs were firmly entrenched, and though they fought bitterly and were worthy adversaries, the Heroes of the Sutherlands and the righteousness of their cause won the day.

Though the details have been kept among those privy to the knowledge of them, the general consensus is that Storlogga, upon recognizing his defeat, somehow managed to negotiate his own amnesty, and received a guarantee of safe return back to his home in the Badlands.

The nobles of the Sutherlands attempted to convey Storlogga back to a private audience with His Majesty, King Devron Nolaric, but reportedly ESCAPED, leaving the remaining orcs dumbfounded and without a leader. Let it never be said that the Sutherlands is without a sense of justice, nor that their swords are ever less than sharp, their shields less than steady, their hearts less than fierce, in the defense of that which they hold dear. Woe be to the foes of the Sutherlands, and woe indeed to those who would seek to impugn the dignity and nobility of our Sovereign Rulers, long may they live and peacefully may they rule.

-Bill Jones



DRACOLICH DEAD!

Word has been more than whispered throughout the kingdom that the terrible reign of the powerful undead dracolich is finally over. Rumor has it that a great collaboration of our Leaders and heroes alike preceded the epic battle—Days and possibly even months of advance strategy is said to have gone into the plan to slay the Dragon known as the Quiet One.

It is not widely known what magical tools were carried into the graveyard that fateful night, but wild speculations claim that items from magical scrolls, alchemical lights, and even pieces of the beast itself were used in the slaying.

Reports say that, though the battle was to be one of great casualty, fewer lives were lost than expected in the Graveyard. However, it is said that the beast wrecked havoc on some cities of the Sutherlands after its initial flight from the graveyard.

It is also said that a particular bell tower appeared inside the graveyard, remarkably similar to the one previously destroyed in the city of Tiksyllan.

The post All-hallows atmosphere among the commoners is like that of a great kingdom-wide exhalation. The terrible cold and fear that was All Hallows seems to be replaced with a new cold—the cold of winter.

The Heroes Graveyard

After the defeat of the terrible Dracolich, the heroes made a second journey beyond the gates of the Four Winds Graveyard the very next evening. As they crossed the forbidden threshold, they were greeted with the sight of an over flowing river of souls, the same river that the Dracolich was feeding upon during her fight against the combined might of the Sutherlands forces.

The river of life force seemed to be flowing through some sort of rift or portal from a separate section of the graveyard that is reserved for the great heroes and villains of the ages. The river literally flowed from the portal in a straight line across the edge of the Graveyard and off the edge of existence, creating an impassible barrier cutting the Graveyard in half. There is rumored to have been the preserved body of a powerful immortal present during the battle, and only after it was sacrificed to the rived, did the rapids lessen. As the rapids of the river of souls became passable, the heroes of the Sutherlands crossed the river and did battle with the legendary warriors of the ages. As is common practice for the Sutherland forced, they reformed their task and defeated their enemies, in some cases for the second (or third, or fourth, etc) time. Once all of the enemy forces were vanquished, the efforts of the Sutherlands sealed the rift or gateway between the two legendary graveyards, and another victory was credited to Clanthian heroes.

Dwarf Drama

Prince Dolgan's pre-announced visit to the Sutherlands was indeed one of note. Friday of the five-day long gathering of heroes, the dwarven Prince of Stonefast arrived in the middle of town-by himself. As he approached the porch of Her Majesty's Healer's Guild, he was met with vocal and heated words from both Baron Morgrim of Darkholme and Senechal Sessith of Rossanoe.

Onlookers stood agape as the subject matter of the very vocal discussion involved accusations ranging from necromancy to dishonor. Witness report that the Dwarf left in an angry huff.

Readers remember that Prince Dolgan withdrew his troops from the Sutherland's aid back in August. He had originally sent them to help protect our homes while our own troops were busy fighting the war in Orbonne.

It is also reported that, as the dwarven prince was leaving Clanthia, he was kidnapped by orcs with powerful magic. It is said that he was later seen as a greater undead, along with other important political figures such as Lord Riff, Baron Locklan, Lady Know and the Dame LooLoo.

Gypsy Feast

By Paige Turner

It's that time of year again, when we celebrate our nation and our people with feasting! Think back: Were you at last feast? When was your first attendance to a feast?

Each year we celebrate our victories and achievements; this year in the company of the gypsy clans Sbaity and Tshilaba. Providing us with savory roast with mushroom gravy, a creamy soup, crisp feta cheese garnished salad, zesty glazed carrots, and a scrumptious dessert. All the people and tables dressed to their best with all the pomp and adornments too frilly for ordinary use. While we feast, think of the heroes of Clanthia for having vanquished the longtime adversary, the dracolich Whisper, defeating the primarch of law, leading a successful campaign of Orbonne, and the birth of King and Queen Nolaric's son, Prince Evander!

At three months old, Prince Evander, must be a handful. We wonder if the King and Queen will make an appearance this year. Over the years the King has hosted feast many times and had the Queen at his side last year. Will Clanthians be lucky enough to see the heir's royal debut at feast?

This year it will be a "true Clanthian" feast. In recent years, we had the Carpathian Senators that marred the feast with their slights and sarcasm; under the Ancient One's reign, feast was polluted by borderline anarchy, people starving in the streets, dogs and cats living together, and general madness. 609's feast was curious with the king being held hostage by the Djinn of Vengeance. Last we had a positive, optimistic and hopeful feast celebration was for the year 603. The King hosted the event and both he and Agravar, his father, were in attendance.

Can we expect the sounds of thumb cymbals and drumming music to accompany our meal? Perhaps more than just the gypsies will dance as the music and drink lift our spirits. So wear your finest and join the Heroes of the Sutherlands in the Feast of 612!

The year was 607, and Magic

had suffered terrible losses. Circles of Power and Protection lasted only a fraction of the time they had only a few days before, Confinists could no longer cast their Stasis spells from memory, and worst of all, Runic magic vanished altogether, leaving many warriors stripped of a versatile and potent weapon. In the last few weeks, Magic has weakened once again; Circles have been further shortened in duration, buildings are no longer able to hold as many defensive Wards, and we Heroes of Clanthia have found ourselves limited in how many magical items we may tap for power, and how many magical creatures can be bound to our will. Some Magi are even unable to call upon the specialized magics that they have casted for years. Many have bemoaned these changes, crying "What will we do without excessive numbers of magic items? How will we defend ourselves, our city, and our Kingdom without a plethora of long-lasting defensive spells?" We will do what we have always done: Adapt.

We won't be able to sit around in Circles in the middle of battlefields, administering first aid to the wounded and waiting for our bodies to recover from the various ailments we suffer at the hands of our enemies.

I recommend that we, collectively, abandon the static 'Battle Line' strategy that we are all used to in favor of more aggressive and dynamic tactics that focus many small, self-sufficient groups that can be spread across a battlefield and can converge on specific targets. Magic Items and cabin guardians will need to be redistributed. I know that some, rather than give Magic Items away to people that need them, would rather make some quick cash off of things they can no longer use. I will not fault anyone for this, but I will ask that everyone bear in mind that the market will be flooded for some time, which will drive down prices.

As to the Magi that are no longer able to cast the same specialized magics that they are used to, you have two options: find new ways to do the same things, or learn to do new things. Like being able to shrug off Confining magic? Invest in a Cloak, or perhaps become a Master Scroll-Maker so that you can scribe Force Shield scrolls. Did you become a Healer because you hated the inconsistency of Curing verbals? Maybe you should consider a career as a Celestialist.

All creatures must adapt or die. That is the Natural Order.

-Emile Durkheim

*Wandering Hearts Putting the Rom in Romance
by Bandolier Lamia Sbaity*

Dear Lamia,

I find myself in a relationship with a very accomodating mortal. This relationship does not interfere with my agenda here on Tyrra and is therefore pleasing to me. The problem lies in one who is a nuisance to the tranquility of my relationship in much the same way a fly seems to be a nuisance to a mortal eating... a prized piece of pie, shall we say. My question for you, Lamia, is this: What is the most efficient means of dispatching this annoying insect? I do not care for its constant buzzing around my piece of pie.

Sincerely,
Shelddon

Shelddon,

There are a few issues concerned here, such as what you mean by "dispatch". I would never suggest that you break the laws of the kingdom, but there are many other methods of dealing with someone who is overstepping their boundaries.

First, your sweetie pie could deliver the message for you that they are simply uninterested. Of course another option, and one that likely is intensely more satisfying, is delivering the message yourself. And, as this is an insect, I recommend a nice horsehair whip. I find it to be both firm and elegant, as I am sure your intended message will be.

Dear Bandolier Lamia,

Every time feast draws near, everyone usually has a date but not me. What can i do to change that for the next feast and not have to be dateless?

Well, Lonely, there are many reasons that people may be dateless, but my instincts are telling me that the most likely cause is that you're not exploring all of your options. I advise everyone, male or female, to go after what they want. I guarantee that this will serve you well. If your primary goal is simply to have a date, then just start asking people in the street until someone says okay, and surely you will have a date by the end of the day. But if you desire some actual arm-candy, and perhaps even some entertaining banter throughout the night, I recommend setting your eyes on the prize and going for it. You might not get the prize chicken, but you'd be surprised how sexy people will find your confidence. I know I do.

Dear Lamia,

I'm having issues with younger women. They all seem to be too focused and driven. I'm worried my old age is getting to me. What should I do to keep up with these younger, spry women?
Renny

Renny,

First you have too many women, and now they're too young for you? Perhaps you should be answering these letters. Clearly your problem is not how to find love, but how to apply moderation.

For this particular issue, my advice to you is this; age is just a number. What matters is maturity, common interests, and communication. If you feel that this is someone that you can trust and communicate with, and who can support you in your endeavors and who you in turn will support, then the rest is easy.

On the other hand, if you don't feel that's the case, then perhaps you two can agree that your time together is just for fun, and who doesn't need a little fun in their lives, yes? Enjoy your time together, and then move on at the right time to a woman more your speed.

**Exclusive Noble Interview with Veldarin Silvertree,
Lord Marshall of Sahde, Healer, and Undead
Hunter.**

Q: "Can you inform our readers about Sadhe? For example, how has your barony faired this past year and how has the War for Orbonne affected the barony?"

Veladrin: "Sahde is known as a predominantly elven barony, though we do have a range of other races as well, including humans, hobblings, and dwarves. We have a strong tie to the druidic arts, and healing. Over the last year, Sahde has grown stronger, and closer as a Barony, particularly through the War for Orbonne, and the trials encountered therein."

Q: "Are there any particular events in specific this year that you'd care to share with our readers that were particularly important to you or Sadhe?"

Veladrin: "The destruction of the Dracolich of the Graveyard was a major feat, not just for Sahde, but the Sutherlands in general. It's an accomplishment that we took great pride in, especially considering our opposition to necromancy."

Q: "Ah, can you describe how you were able defeat the terrible Dracolich?"

Veladrin: "All I can say is that the Sutherlands has the finest fighting force in all of Tyrra. I have faith that there is no adversary too great for the Heroes that serve King Devron and Queen Zephanie."

Q: "Are the troops finally returning from Orbonne? Is the war over?"

Veladrin: "There is still plenty to be done in Orbonne, including rebuilding, so while the war itself may be coming to a close, there is still much to be done. I have faith that the Sutherlands will be able to help our sister kingdom as much as possible."

Q: "What can you say about the current political climate? The encounter between Prince Dolgan and some Sutherlands Representatives was surely one that could affect the Sutherlands?"

Veladrin: "I have no comment about the situation, really. What's done is done."

Q: "What would you like for our readers to know? What advice can you offer for the upcoming year?"

Veladrin: "Stay Strong, Stay Vigilant, and remember that no matter how dark things may look, keep looking for the light. Long live the King, the Queen, and the Prince! Long Live the Sutherlands!"

*A Haiku, by Maris Shellie
Seaborne*

*You seek to possess
That which cannot want you
I will destroy you.*

*Heroes of the
Sutherlands*



*Your great deeds shall forever be
remembered!*

*Worry not of the arrangements for your
Kingdom's Feast - we shall gift you a
great celebration.*

*The Clans
Sbaity and Tshilaba*

RUMORS! COMPLETELY TRUE!*

Baron Morgrim of Darkholme is no longer a baron, Sessith of Rossanoe IS a Baron... who's next for a change of leadership? Isles, La Rochelle, or Sudbyr?

Lady Astrea has been seen making frequent trips to the Celestial Guild; one of it's members may have a noble feast date.

Does the Celestial guild have ANY female members?

Philip of the Armorsmith's guild has declared himself the Master of Poison; what will Cadicus say?

Hargo Toesmasher found safety in Rossanoe's lands last gather. He may be the new Brogan.

Spectral versions of townspeople appeared in the graveyard Saturday with most of their abilities; could Orion now be casting double formal he usually does?

Recently, Sudbyr has embraced a new spectator--cockfighting.

A certain male gypsy is rumored to be the cover art for fictional romance pamphlets across the Sutherlands. Coincidentally, sales of these romance pamphlets has sky-rocketed since the launch of this new marketing strategy.

It is rumored that a handful of Clanthian heroes who were not in attendance have been missing the last few months since the rampage of the former Lich of the Graveyard through

many of the larger towns of Clanthia Proper. The mysterious group known as the Blood Star maybe be Mercenary group for hire...but who is to really say? What is Sheto thinking?

Sir Arath, a Knight of the Sutherlands, drowned tragically on his return from the Battle of Ettienne.

Jaryn is a douche.

The diminished effect of Circle magic is the ultimate revenge of Whisper. Maybe town will think twice about killing undead in the future.

Cadicus has started the new fad of "horse flipping", which is like cow-tipping, but more legendary. The steeds of Rossanoe quake in fear.

Official titles aside, everyone knows Morgrim is the leader of three baronies, Darkholme, Sudbyr, and now Rossanoe.

Mercenary groups are now being given a chance to become official and work for the Kingdom

under their own banners and names. Does this mean the Black Dragons and the Order of the Ivory Stag will now leave Rossanoe in order to pursue their own goals on their own terms.

Sahde is rumored to

have changed their colors from green and blue to wine and honey to signify the "fall" of the Elves, but their "true" descent is yet to come!

Seeing how well it has worked out for Sudbyr in the past, Rossanoe has taken on a new recruiting policy where numbers are the most important factor. If you happen to be the leader of a small mercenary group, and you're looking to join a Barony, talk to Rossanoe. You'll likely even be given a position on the noble court, or at very least a fancy title to make you feel warm and fuzzy.

With the recent shifts in magics, many Islesmen were overhead complaining and griping about how they must now select a small handful of magic items to use out of their vast hordes.

Some say that Akima is working to collect ALL the snow for Soodus, what he plans to do with the snow is anyone's guess.

Storlagga was Darkholme's fault.

To those that speak the name of my Lord. People are taking offence to this. As he assisted you with both your war and the defeat of the one you so foolishly locked up. Just remember that minds can change as the wind blows. He assists you because it suits their whims. Take great respect when speaking about us and do not speak the name aloud.

—S says US

Balesh's Basement Bargains makes a return to the Sutherlands and Orbonne!

Just before the next 3 gathers to be held in Clanthia the gracious Mechant King will be offering the following services:

Not as nimble as you once were? That's a shame, what's not a shame is that Soul Stores are still the best protection gold can buy for your Soul.

Soul Stores, 50 gold pieces. Bring your own bottle. Transfer Master Control 5 gold pieces. Bring yourself, your creature, and your friend that you want to transfer control to.

In light of recent shifts in formal magics, the Merchant King is graciously opening his stores and bringing his personal formal casters to town to provide you with the service of the Transfer Master Control ritual. Due to an incredibly beautiful flawed set of scroll, we're bringing this value to you at rock-bottom, BALESH'S BASEMENT BARGAIN prices!

To have Master Control of ANY creature (no questions asked), simply bring yourself, your creature, and the person you wish to transfer Master Control to and we'll take care of it for you at a low low low rate of 5 gold pieces per Transfer.

Don't let this value get away from you, prices will only go up as demand increases. Get your creature Master Control transferred TODAY! -Balesh

Buying Alchemy Production Enhancements or trading for Poison, Potion, and Scroll production enhancements or production.

Aleena Thurston

HELP WANTED

Low on Gold? Looking for work in the field of Magical Experimentation? Don't have any immediate family? Then we have an opportunity just for you! Doctor Finkelstone, the famous Gnome Wizard and Researcher, is looking for volunteers* to help with a magical experiment. Interested parties should await Dr. Finkelstone at the Nine Winds Tavern on Saturday the 7th at 11:30 am.

***Volunteers should be new to town, with few associates who would be concerned for their safety and well-being.**

Several sets of journals were recovered in the aftermath of the Siege on Etienne. Amongst the collected papers were the works of the military men and women who defended the honor of Orbonne so gallantly. In order to tell the brave tales which led to the fall of the Orc King and the greenskin menace, we have (with permission of the authors) published their personal works in a Special Edition of the Sutherlands Journal.

Part One

The Manor

Lieutenant's Log (Darkholme)
**Lieutenant Dreilind, Knights of
Chaos, Company of the Eight
Pointed Star**

November 16, 611

Today went as expected. At least the sun dried out the mud in the camps so that sweeping the mess tent wasn't so bad this round. Tomorrow is latrines. I'm glad it's not as bad as they used to be - some of the legion was able to get the local bathhouse to work in some extent so we can actually wash with a little more privacy. I guess you could call what they set-up "running water". Maybe we should request they ship in some more gnomes from homeside, if they don't burn it down in the process maybe they could whip me up a hot bath. Probably not worth it now, but I'd put in a formal request if I knew we were goin' to be stuck here much longer.

Training groups continue to fare well, especially inter-baronial practice matches. Competition is fierce. After-hours wrestling matches and betting's been getting people's minds off of what's coming. Hope is to declare a winner before we get out of this hole. Maybe four contenders left, and two are from Darkholme, no doubt we'll take the title. How that sissy elf from Sahde keeps hanging in the league, I can't figure. Bastard keeps going on about his Baron's rigorous "calisthenics" program.

Greenskins just keep watching, doing nothing. Haven't seen any red ones in weeks. Maybe they got bored... but I bet they're still watching. Sahde archers keep picking off the ones who get too close. Sometimes it looks like the ones they send in to try and pry into our quarter are kind of dumber or smaller than the normal ones. Are we doing them some sort of favor?

Walked the trenches today with Sarge, he says the boys are ready if the greenskins are stupid enough to go over the top. A

bloody no-man's land out there between our fortifications and theirs. I hope the generals are working on a stellar plan, with our backs to the walls and our trenches in the L formation that they are between Knight's Avenue and Redannan Road we're literally surrounded on all sides.

November 17, 611

Word has reached the us from Diarmund's Keep that the forward scout ships of the kingdom have docked and say that behind them is massive fleet filled with reinforcements, supplies, and even the nobility of the Sutherlands. Keeping the word from spreading too far has been difficult, but those in the know do their best to not visibly change behavior, for fear of the orcs figuring it out. Some may think that these greenskins are mindless animals, but I know they get the word to Storlaga and his red orc monsters. Maybe it makes it easier for the men to think of them as animals... I know I plan to give them back what they gave us back home, tenfold, when the time comes.

Those who have found out that the siege is nigh have moved the tourneys up to tonight in order to make sure all bets are in and money is dispersed before folks start getting ready for the final big push.

I put my silver on Gums Bransson, who lost all his teeth last month after his eighth bout.

November 18, 611

Morning. Hungover, but that's 30 silver for my pocket, thanks to Gums Bransson! Still haven't seen the fleet yet, the orcs sent a few volleys of arrows over from the wall this morning and we answered back with Rossanoe artillery. Things were quiet by lunch. No losses, just a few holes in shields to repair.

Afternoon. Strange thing happened, I had a couple of the boys digging a new line of latrines in a burned out house on the south end of the park and the struck a root cellar. That wasn't the odd part though, the odd part was the smell. Smelled worse than troll crap or the swamps of Sudbyr. I puked. So did everyone else. We got some light elixirs into the hole and found the entire cellar filled to the top with bodies.

Evening. Had the boys switch from latrine duty to grave digging while the rest wrapped wet cloths around their mouths and began dragging out the bodies. They're mostly small of stature - women and children the healers say. In the digging, we found the cellar doors, still chained from the outside.

November 19, 611

Morning. Was up late with the guys. Sixty-three bodies in total found in that cellar. Heard from the Sahde and Isles camps that they found similar situations near we're stationed. If anything...this certainly makes the boys lose any moral reservations about killing anything thing with green skin that moves.

Finished up grave digging, kinda cloudy but unusually warm for the season. Fine by me, feels like home. After the find, the men seem grim.

Lunch was baked beans, again but this time we got stale bread and cheese. Attack must be coming soon. I wasn't hungry.

Afternoon. Just got back from a meeting with the Captain. Turns out that Marquis Augustus and Duke Timothy are at Diarmund's Keep and have a plan, the attack begins at midnight and to have our men ready.

I pressed the Cap a little further, and he said we're going over the top and pushing west across Redannan Road toward the orc lines. The Rossanoe artillery is going to soften them up first and Sahde's hopefully going to keep them pinned down with arrows until we can reach their trenches.

That's a lot of hope.

Evening. I had the Sarge get into a tower at one of the burned out chateaus to take a look at the harbor and he said that it looks like the entire naval might of the Sutherlands showed up to bombard these greenskins back to the breeding pits they crawled out of.

Sword's sharpened. Armor's strapped on good and tight. Spells memorized for offense. The men look ready to take it to these animals.

The Landing**Captain's Log (Isles d'Honig)
Captain Abaelin of the *Salty Wench*, New Eit**November 8, 611

New Eit. Orders from the Admiral are to swing by Sahde and Rossanoe to pick up reinforcements. We're finally taking the fight to the orcs that took over the Queen's capital. My crew and I are heading to Finis, looks like the fleet coming in from Gille will be stopping by Trestar to pick up Rossanoe's forces.

November 9, 611

Finis. Easily made our way to Finis, short journey with these new charts the Admiral gave us. Loading the elves on now, a couple scoffed at the name of my ship. I wonder if they think I'll be serving vegetables, fruit, and fresh meat on the journey?

November 11, 611

Galeon Ocean, South of Fort Kynhelm. Met with the Darkholme fleet, had to wait few extra hours while the fleet from Gille arrived. I kinda like the sleek look of their sea elven warships. Small draft on the things, but damn are they fast. Not sure how they'll fare in open seas though. Give me an Isles warship any day of the week. The La Rochelle fleet arrived with the fleet from Gille. Combined we're... well, probably shouldn't put exact numbers in here, not that I know them. But let's just say, there's over a thousand sloop-class ships, over a hundred warships, and at least a dozen man-o-wars?

It brings a tear to my eye, I don't think there's ever been so fine or so large a fleet.

November 13, 611

Sea of Arganea, 100 miles south of Sailor's End. Making good time, considering the size of the fleet. A couple of the smaller ships blew over in gale we had last night but the warships were able to attach lines and right them. Don't think we lost anyone.

Admiral says the gale came from a place called Sailor's End between the two continents. Guess its good we passed far south of it. Water is much bluer here than home, have to remember to ask one of the scholars back in New Eit why that is.

November 14, 611

Sea of Arganea, near mouth of Prosper River. Took all day, but we managed to line the fleet up to enter the relatively narrow mouth of the Prosper River. Going to be hard going, mostly oars since we're headed upriver. Maybe I'll put some of these elves to work?

November 15, 611

Prosper River, south of Port Betra. Passed by the ruins of Port Betra last night, a burned out husk with docks half submerged. Saw movement in the ruins as we passed but the Admiral said we have no time to stop. Guess we have to catch the wind while we can.

November 17, 611

Prosper River, south of Willantor. Slow going now. River got narrower and far shallower near the banks, a couple ships ran aground. They'll have to catch up when repairs are made because we're still moving.

Just passed Willantor after lunch. Huge walled city, still flying Orbonne colors. I think I heard something about the Queen sitting on some huge throne there?

November 18, 611

Prosper River, a few miles north of Etienne. Nothing to either side of the river as far as the eye can see other than burned out and overgrown farmland. Received orders to weigh anchor and wait before proceeding to a river fort a few miles south called Diarmund's Keep. Looks like we're going to try to sneak in under the cover of darkness, whatever good that will do - there's so many ships in this river, were I a younger man I could probably jump from deck to deck.

A couple of the men are doing that, in fact. Tonight's a party, gave each of the men an extra ration of rum for the occasion.

November 19, 611

Prosper River, north side of Diarmund's Keep outside of Etienne. This city is massive. Or was. Well, maybe it will be again. Who knows. The keep is small but stout, old stone construction - probably dwarven.

A few of the ships docked at the keep to pick up some reinforcements stationed there but most of us are weighing anchor out of range of the city walls. Admiral says that the forces inside the city will begin the fight at midnight, shortly after I'm to bombard the walls at a certain point so that our reinforcements can get to the inner city.

November 20, 611

Ship was struck by flaming boulder last night so I ended up on shore for the landing. Glad I just wore my leathers, lost some men in the surf because they were wearing chain and plate. Poor souls.

Whatever scholar said that only elves can shoot arrows was an idiot. When a volley comes at you in the dark, the only warning you have are the screams of the dying to your left and right. Pulled a shield off a Rossanoe knight as he dissipated in the surf and pushed forward. Had to take cover for five minutes as the counter-bombardment rained overhead and found a half dozen of

my men. Chaos like I haven't seen before. Saw the nobles pushing forward ahead of us toward the docks. Came in behind them with sailors, marines, and elites from sunken Isles and Darkholme ships.

Glad most of our ships were luckier than my poor *Salty Wench* because within 45 minutes, the wall was breached. The strike force raised a lighted banner from the plaza and the low draft ships began to land with reinforcements.

Rossanoe cavalry rode down the orcs that first pushed out us as I regrouped with the Admiral and gave a report of losses.

In the lull I could see over the walls flaming arrows and artillery fire going to the east and west. And I could hear the screams of the dying. Tyrra's Blood.. I won't ever forget.

The Manor forces. We had to reach them.

The nobles and their entouarges struck ahead of us toward the palace as we began house to house fighting in the old quarter.

Doors were kicked in. Fires were set, by us - and them. And lives were lost. More than I can count. Of my crew, only I and three men remain. My first mate got it in an ambush on River Road. A half dozen war trolls collapsed buildings on either side of the street on him and his men. He didn't have a chance. By dawn I was covered in blood, singed by fire, and moving house to house with a shadow dwarf from Sudbyr, an Sahde lady archer, a Darkholme fanatic, and a sylvan Royal Guard from La Rochelle by the name of Sir Felarien. Felarien took charge on account of his rank and by dawn we'd captured down to the Royal Boulevard. An odd group by any stretch of the imagination.

In time to see the nobles and their entouarges escort a large robed orc down from the palace. The orcs immediately began to lay down their arms as we began to round them up as prisoners... which is good, because I wouldn't exactly claim that we were really "winning". For the moment, things got quiet.

A few minutes later there was some shouting down by the docks and the sound of fighting again. A number of enormous draconic shapes passed quickly overhead toward the sound and within moments, the city erupted into combat again. The orcs we'd just taken prisoner started casting magic at us and grabbing at the arms they'd just set down.

Not sure what happened but it's about noon now. Fighting, at least in this quarter just ceased. We captured a number of prisoners, not sure how many quite yet or what we're going to do with them.

This city is a mess. Need to find some rum. One for me. One for my first mate and each of the crew I've lost. I need to find the bodies and get their effects home.

The Aftermath

Knight Commander's Journal (Rossanoe)

Sir Eduwyr, Knight Commander of Issoria's Elite Cavalry

November 20, 611

Fighting mounted in cluttered city streets is difficult, but we managed. We adapted as necessary, as a commander is wont to do when information and situations change. My men did the Kingdom proud last night.

We disembarked the Darkholme and Isles ships at the Commerce Plaza and immediately engaged the orcs pouring through the breach in the wall the warships behind us made. Our force, combined with the efforts of our nobility, pushed them back deep into the inner city.

The foot soldiers piled through the breach as we scouted ahead, using skirmish tactics. Lost a few horses in the rough terrain - jagged rocks from demolished buildings, and splintered wood from downed houses. It was dark as can be, save for where the fires raged. I overheard a Sudbyr soldier say that it was "chaos" in there. I have to agree, that's the appropriate word.

Once inside, I kept my men primarily on the main boulevards where we could reinforce those needing it, chase down orc runners, and spring traps long before the foot soldiers arrived.

By the time the sun rose, the east side of the city was ablaze. The area that once housed the University of Etienne was only kindling to the hungry flames. We were taking prisoners once word filtered through the ranks that the orc king had surrendered. More pockets of fighting in the late morning, almost till noon but eventually these died down.

November 21, 611

The resurrection circles are still actively resurrecting our soldiers so I cannot get an accurate count of whom we've lost but I did come across the body of a man I trained with in my youth, Sir Treriniel - may he rest in peace. He appears to have been lanced with such force that it broke the back of his horse and left a hole in his chest I could put my fist through. I'll

warrant it has something to do with those wyvern riders we saw early in the morning.

I gathered his effects, will write a condolence letter tonight to his widow. No time for grief now.

November 22, 611

Morning. The resurrection areas are no longer as active, will get an accurate count today of our losses. It's begun to rain, which makes clearing the streets so we can load the bodies on wagons that much more difficult.

Afternoon. We smelled the Place de Savants long before we saw it. That whole area was overwhelmingly and intrusively affected by the odor of death. You couldn't escape it.

Upon entering the plaza, we encountered human forms. I held my sword, limply, as they staggered toward us. Arms wide, half-naked, and dragging their blistered feet in the cold mud.

They moved to the side of the pathway and got down on their knees and put their hands together in thanks and looked up and smiled. The communication between us was nonverbal.

We had heard the orcs still had Orbonnian prisoners, but we hadn't found any. Till then.

What were once temples of knowledge, surrounding a square where men and women once philosophized of the meaning of life were now exploring the meaning of death and the atrocities that mortals are capable of.

No more than two hundred were found to be alive, of those a half dozen died at the sight of their liberators and could not be revived.

A woman, by the name of Liza - probably in her thirties, once quite beautiful... now though... it was unlikely that she weighed more than 70 pounds, her yellowed skin hanging loosely off her frame spoke to me in a thick Orbonnian accent about the "camp".

The orcs had taken the city by surprise and many had been left inside, those lucky ones had been put to the sword immediately - man, woman, and child. Those not so lucky were divided into camps. Savants, Corrine, Malade,

and Or. This one, Savants, was a "work camp" where those with skills useful to the orcs were kept alive as long as they could work and produce clothing, repair buildings, and smith weapons and armor. As soon as you were found to no longer have a use you would be sent to Corrine or Malade.

These, she explained, were slaughterhouses. While one might die of starvation or disease in Savants or Or, one was assured death at Corrine and Malade. You see, orcs will eat anything and when they burnt all the crops around the city the burnt the following year's food supply. What was inside the city was readily gorged upon and depleted within months, the orcs realized this would happen and knew the "tastes" of their comrades.

I could go on, but the evidence I'm sure will speak for itself in the coming days. Life, bless this city and wash away the evils perpetrated on it.

November 23, 611

Morning. The refugee I spoke with yesterday, Liza, died in the night and was unable to be revived. When I spoke of burying her in the Fields of Rest outside of town, one of her friends said that this is not the Orbonnian way and that her body must be cremated and her ashes planted in the earth or spread to the river to be firmly put to rest. Later in the day, I found that this is primarily the Orbonnian way. One of the scholars I spoke to believes it's due to a great plague of necromancy on the lands many centuries before, a proclamation by one of Queen Zephania's ancestors was that all bodies were to be cremated so that they shall never rise again.

Afternoon. The sun's out, had a good lunch, arrived at Malade and promptly lost my lunch. There were already Islesmen and La Rochelle troops here. The fountain was choked with the bones of the dead, bodies stacked like cordwood in basement, and everywhere the stench, dear lord, the stench. I passed the word to their commanders about the Orbonnian practice of burning the corpses and the quartermaster promptly sent for a great deal of oil to make it happen as there was not nearly enough wood in the area to take care of it.

November 25, 611

Morning. Heard today that Baron Kite has been called to Steward the city of Etienne, and the surrounding province of Verdante by the Queen, and Lord Senechal Sessith has been elevated to Baron of Rossanoe. Long may his reign be.

bonnians, in the sewers beneath the city. Looks like the orcs thought it'd be a great idea to lazily dispose of them there. Not looking forward to taking those to the pyres but a soldier doesn't have to like his job.

December 17, 611

Afternoon. Went to report on the camps to Lord Steward Kite, was appalled to see that the massive moat surrounding the palace was still choked with bodies – ours, theirs, and upon closer inspection as I rode by, hundreds of rotting Orbonnian corpses.

The pyres are still burning brightly, the sickly black smoke winding it's way into the sky – easily seen, and smelled, from the city.

My scouts say that some Orbonnians that had been hiding in the countryside have begun reappearing, returning to the city a few at a time – more each day that goes by. Perhaps there were more survivors than I was led to believe?

November 30, 611

Still no accurate count on the Orbonnian bodies we've found – and certainly no way to name all of them. We've encountered mass burials in some parts of the city, thousands of dead – apparently even the orcs couldn't deal with the stink. I have men removing them and a large pyre is being made a few miles outside the city. Most of my cavalry's horses have been turned to pulling carts laden with bodies for the time being.

December 18, 611

Morning. Raining, cold, miserable. Wearing my dress uniform and armor, and riding my horse in the procession to the Fields of Rest.

The final Sutherland soldier lost in the Battle of Etienne will be put to rest today.

The other horses are being used to clear the streets and pull the wagons of the Sutherland's fallen to the Fields of Rest. Some of the craftier men have set about using the rubble from the destroyed houses as gravestones – while the Orbonnians will burn their dead, ours will have a proper Sutherland burial. I'm told that the ground there is consecrated and that there are shrines to both Life and Death protecting it from the clutches of necromancy.

Afternoon. One of the Queen's Battlehealers gave a eulogy in front of a small peaceful lake, for all the soldiers that fell...more than I thought met their final death.

"Today, nearly a month after the Battle of Etienne, we put the final Sutherland soldier to rest here, beside the city they fought so desperately to regain.

December 5, 611

Cold today, and windy. I'm amazed at how the cold bites into me here. I guess it's that way because of the lack of trees to divert the wind.

More of the same over the last week, I've grown numb to the sight of the horrors here and laughter has not been heard in the city since the adrenaline rush of the battle died away.

"The date of November Nineteenth, Six Hundred and Eleven will forever live in the hearts and minds of the Sutherlands and Orbonne as the day that freedom from the Tyrant Storloga was regained in Orbonne. Freedom for both Sutherland and Orbonnian citizens that we will hold dear for eternity. Nearly ten thousand Sutherland men and women met their final end here. Think about that for a moment, I beg of you. Think of them."

Went to the Fields of Rest today, we have a number of the men from each barony using the wood from destroyed ships and roofs to construct coffins. The hammering continues day and night.

I looked around, over the faces of the tens of thousands gathered as that sunk in. In that rain-drenched cemetery, the headstones and grave mounds went on for almost a mile in every direction. The men and women I fought beside and worked tirelessly with for the last month were pale as sheets. These were their friends, their brothers, their children. This was goodbye.

December 6, 611

Burials finally began today. The quartermasters from each of the baronies have logged the names of the fallen and passed them along to their commanders and respective Barons.

"The whole of Tyrra is now graced with the graves of our dead, for these were not the only souls lost in this great crusade against the orcs. I hope, that these silent witnesses before us show future generations the cost of peace and the desolation of war.

December 15, 611

Sudbyr discovered more bodies of Or-

"All these men and women lie now beneath lifeless and bleak mounds of earth, the simplicity of which does not speak to the unspeakable acts that created them. Here they lie – never to hope, never to love, never to laugh, never to cry."

He paused again, his colors sticking to him in the pouring rain as he raised a hand and pointed to the hilltop where we built the cremation pyre for the Orbonnians.

"While we mourn our fallen friends and comrades let us not forget the Queen's beloved people of Etienne – those innocents that fell to evils, perpetrated upon them by Stor'Laga and his orcs.

"Beyond the anguish and pain, we must pledge that we will stay vigilant and steadfast in the years to come that this might never occur again.

"What is lost might be born anew, what is destroyed may be built again. Etienne will rise and will flourish as the heart of this kingdom.

"Let us honor today the memories of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and her foes. Go now, say your respects to your friends – let them know that you have not forgotten them, nor will you.

"We shall guard their graves with sacred vigilance.

And that's how he ended. After his final words, Sahde Archers immediately fired three volleys of flaming arrows into the lake before anyone else spoke.

The rain was hard enough that it washed away any tears shed, but thousands of men and women spent the rest of the day there - visiting their friends and family, pouring a single glass of ale, wine, or rum over their graves. Flowers were laid on some graves, and true to his word – a pair of Blood Guard stood sentry at the Maison de la Mort facing the graves while a pair of Battlehealers did the same at the Maison de la Vie, an oil torch burning away the darkness and cold beside each.

November 22, 611

A cold morning but the sun came out and began to dry the city out. If the Sutherlands lost ten thousand that day, I'd say we'd moved at least five times that many Orbonnian bodies to the funeral pyres in the last month – and we still find more every day. Clean-up is going to take months, if not years. The Lord Steward has begun ordering supplies for repairs and food for the winter. I don't think we're going anywhere soon.