

# Graff's Journey to The Wastes

## Excerpts from Graff's Diary

### The ride to Walthain

It has been many days since we set off from the safety of my temple in *Verboconc*. I have often travelled through this part of the world, joining traders and merchants as they travel between the various trading hubs west of the *Nyr Dyv*. We first travelled north on the main road to *Libernen* where we spent a day resting in the comfort of the local tavern, before travelling west towards the port town of *Walthain*. Our travels have been uneventful so far, although there was still far to go on our journey up to the northern coast near *The Wastes*.

We stopped last night on a hill overlooking the *Nyr Dyv*, the water shimmering with the last few rays of sunshine as the sun slowly set in the west. I have travelled a fair bit around the Flanaess, but few sights on this Oerth can match the beauty of that glistening lake at dusk. In a few small days we would make it to *Walthain* where our journey would continue on water.

Sir Leonti and I offered to take the first watch that night as the others made themselves comfortable for the night ahead. While most had small sleeping bags, or tents to sleep in, I could not help but laugh at Orisha, as she slept coiled up like a snake. Despite her daunting ophidian exterior, I know there is a nice person (hidden) inside her.

I took the opportunity to ask Leonti about his family that he so often talks about; He has a wife named Christine, and three children, Luca, Calista, and Caileon, that live with him in *Dyvers*. He explained the bizarre set of circumstances that lead to the party meeting Karat (the adorable golden dragon, who often masquerades as a huge fluffy cat) and how they eventually defeated Diraq Malcinex and took ownership of the tower they now all live in.

Leonti told me of the exciting adventures, and the hardships that the party faced as they worked to rid the world of the evil God Vecna. The knight described how the evil God hid in plain sight as a travelling merchant, sending his minions after the adventures as they worked to stop his plans from coming to fruition. My eyes were slowly drooping; the long day of travelling had caught up with me, and before I knew it I had fallen asleep next to the big knight.

The next day I woke up in my sleeping bag: the nice Knight must have picked me up and slipped me into my sleeping bag after I fell asleep...

### The the boat to Critwall

When we made it to the port town of *Walthain*, Lady Thernya offered to organise our onward journey over the *Nyr Dyv*. She had been brought up in *Hardby*, a port town south of *Dyvers* in the *Woolly Bay*, and was clearly used to dealing with these merchant types that

transported goods by water. As luck would have it, a fancy merchant who made his living by selling cloth, textiles, and yarn was leaving *Walthain* the next day, and was heading to *Critwall* with a short stop in *Willip*. The boat itself was not large, but finely equipped, somewhat suiting a merchant of his stature.

Not soon after we left port, it became clear that the captain had taken an interest in Thernya for it was not often that such a fine lady would gain passage on his vessel. He offered her one of the finer rooms which she happily accepted, but firmly pushed back on his more 'friendly' advances while onboard.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the break from travelling on land; Sir Leonti happily patrolled the ship, Urzyl was practicing his knife throwing (the others stayed well away for some reason), though none enjoyed the water more so than Thernya. This was puzzling as I seemed to remember Sir Leonti describing her as a fire mage, but it was clear just looking at her that she had a strong connection to the water.

Late one evening, I found Thernya and her little dragon on the bow of the ship looking off into the distance, the lights from the lakeside town of *Critwall* off in the distance. I asked her about her transformation from a fire mage to a water mage, to which she happily recounted how she followed the path of Geshtai to enlightenment. Argo, her friendly little familiar, spoke about how he transformed alongside her mistress, shedding his Faerie Dragon wings to become a Geyser Dragon.

The story was inspiring, and a true reminder that the Gods are powerful but just; They will help lead those who have fallen astray back onto the right path.

### **The journey to Hallorn**

We disembarked the cargo ship at *Critwall*, a city formerly occupied by the forces of Luz, but recently freed by the soldier of the Shield Lands. The city is still in disrepair, and there are many soldiers still garrisoned there. We would not stay in the city for long, only enough time to seek out a local map keeper to help us plot our onwards journey; we would travel north to *Law's Forge* (carefully avoiding the *Horned Lands*), and then west via *Stahzer* to *Hallorn*.

Now that we were back on dry land, there was no excuse to continue eating trail mix and magically created 'food', and so Urzyl and I offered to go out and hunt some wild animals. Hunting has always been one of my favourite pastimes (and a useful one for a halfling that spends so much time out on the road!), and I was impressed by how the half-elf was able to keep up as we stalked through the local woods not far from our campsite. He was very nimble on his feet, and seemed to enjoy the acrobatics of it all. We were quickly able to find some pheasants and made quick work of them, but Urzyl clearly wasn't satisfied with such small prey. After another half hour of stalking through the undergrowth, we spotted a deer in the distance, and planned how we would kill it; I would creep round the side and create a distraction so that it would run into Urzyl who was hidden in the trees where he would strike -- the perfect plan.

In some respects the plan was executed according to plan; What I didn't expect was that Urzyl would use his huge clockwork spinsword when going for the kill. There wasn't much left of the deer, small chunks of meat littered the surrounding woods, and small specks of blood were rolling down the trees. Urzyl was a complete mess...

We stopped by a small river on the way back to clean ourselves off after the 'incident', agreeing that we would tell no one. While cleaning ourselves off in the river, I asked Urzyl about his past and how he eventually became the renowned Unbelievable Urzyl. He told me how he was a slave before being freed by his patron Joachim, and now he travels the Oerth spreading joy and happiness. It's wonderful that he has found someone that means so much to him and works doing what he loves. I have found a kindred spirit in Urzyl...

### **The thieves of Hallorn**

During the times of Luz, the city of *Hallorn* was controlled by a tyrant warlord who ruled with an iron fist. Now that the The Old One had been defeated, various bandit factions were fighting for control of the city, making it a dangerous place for those caught unaware. The city was downtrodden and dirty, with all sorts of characters skulking on the streets: a shady looking merchant selling his wares from the shadows, a drunk half-orc stumbling through the streets with a an empty bottle of ale, a few dirty looking children begging for food, and what looked to be a few member of the town watch searching the street for some thieves.

We did not plan to stay long in the city, preferring to quickly restock our supplies before joining a caravan heading north through the *Bandit Kingdoms* and onto a small village outside the *Fellreev Forest*. Our last stop before departing was an apothecary near the city gates that Orisha had been talking about all day. As we waited outside the shoppe (for what seemed an age), the town watchmen we had spotted earlier stopped by us and asked if we had seen the thieves they were after; two half-elves, a male and a female, who were accused of stealing food from the city food stores. "They should be easy enough to recognise, the male was injured when he tried to escape; he should have a recent cut across his face. He won't be able to hide for long..." he laughed.

It was well past noon before Orisha had finally finished all her purchases and we were able to set off towards the *Fellreev Forest*. We gathered our possessions and made our way to the stables outside the city where the caravan was preparing to depart. Thernya was making herself comfortable on one of the carts, while Sir Leonti was making sure that the strappings on the lead caravan were tight and secure. I was helping Eloahim in the stables to prepare one of the horses when he suddenly fell silent, slowly peering behind one of the wooden fences, before loudly proclaiming "My friends!".

Two scrawny looking half-elves cautiously emerged from behind the fence, rapidly looking from Eloahim to myself for any signs of aggression. One had a nasty looking cut across his face that the other was tending to him. Eloahim offered his hand as a sign of friendship, "You need not worry friends, while the guards of *Hallorn* may after you, I will not hurt you. No one

should be persecuted simply for feeding themselves” he said before casting a healing spell to clean up the wound.

As Eloahim continued to speak to the half-elves, they became more comfortable and started to talk about their lives in the *Bandit Kingdoms* and how they had been forced into stealing to stay alive. Somehow Eloahim always seems to be able to connect with the common folk, no matter how different their culture, language, or traditions were from his own. Eloahim offered to hide the half-elves in the back of the caravan so they could escape *Hallorn* undetected and try and continue their lives in one of the local villages we would pass through, which they gratefully accepted.

A day or so later we made it through a small village where the half-elves quietly left without anyone noticing. I was very impressed by Eloahim’s actions and kindness; He was not preachy like Orisha, nor was he as outwardly valiant as Sir Leonti, but he showed his devotion to his God through his actions.

“I fight for those who society has trodden on, and help them back on their feet.”

### **The battle in The Bandit Kingdoms**

Our quiet journey through the *The Bandit Kingdoms* came to an abrupt end about a week after we had left the city of *Hallorn*. It happened late at night when most of the party were fast asleep around the caravan site; I was awoken by the sound of rustling, and as I opened my eyes and peered into the moonless night I could see small hideous figures surrounding me holding all manner of cruel looking weapons: goblins.

The goblins rushed towards me as I yelled for help and grabbed my shortsword. I was reasonably well trained with the blade, but I was far outnumbered by the goblin hoard. It looked like I was not the only one in trouble, the goblins had seemingly managed to sneak up on the caravan site and were attacking from all sides.

I was able to defend myself from the first few, but was subdued by the sheer number of assailants. I was afraid that this could very well be my last memory, being torn limb from limb in *The Bandit Kingdoms*. Out of the corner of my eye I could see something big rushing towards me; Had the goblins brought reinforcements? Perhaps some orcs? or an orge?

Lady Luck must have been smiling on me that day, as the big figure was to be my saviour, Valkinos our friendly half-orc! “Don’t worry little one, you won’t die today” he cried as he smashed groups of the small Goblins with his morning star. My attackers let go of me to focus on the bigger threat, though it quickly became apparent that even someone as brave and powerful as Valkinos was outnumbered by the swarm.

I managed to catch my breath, and remembered something that Valkinos had once told me about his weapon, the Morning Star of Pain. I quickly grabbed my satchel of magical components, rummaging through for a dice and a thickened cube of milky sugar, before casting a numerological spell on Valkinos. Moments later, there came an almighty crack as

the morning star came down hard on one of the Goblins, the hooked barbs burying themselves deep in the monster's side, its face visibly contorting as it cried out in agony. The cry was so blood curdling that it stopped the other attackers in their stride, as they quickly looked at each other and started to rapidly withdraw.

"And stay out..." shouted the Half-Orc at the retreating Goblins.

### **The berries in The Fellreev Forest**

Having already visit *The Fellreev Forest* some time ago, Orisha proclaimed that she would be able to lead us through the forest unharmed. The foliage was dense, and with so little light seeping through the forest canopy, it was very easy to become disoriented. My years of adventuring have made me proficient in navigation, but with every other tree seemingly looking the same, and with no clear view of the stars in the night sky, even I felt lost.

My companions were grateful for my array of travelling spells that would make the journey more comfortable. My aura of comfort kept us comfortable during the day, and my magically created campsite and circle of privacy helped keep us safe at night. Orisha did not approve of these "creature comforts" and encouraged us to enjoy the forest and be at one with the nature surrounding us.

While I was unwilling to give up my warm and cosy campsite, I was happy to forgo eating more of those unappetising food rations. Our epic journey has really taken its toll on my diet, and I was only too happy to accompany Orisha as she foraged for berries, mushrooms, and other edible vegetation that she promised would make for a filling and nutritious meal.

She effortlessly slithered through the undergrowth pointing out things that I should collect in my basket to bring back to camp. The berries and fruit looked very appetising, though the "delicious earth-green moss" that Orisha made me gather was less appealing. Orisha seemed to have carelessly moved past a small bush full of glistening black berries ripe for the taking; perhaps she had missed them since they were at eye level, and she towered above me? They looked so enticing...

"What do you think you're doing?!" she yelled as I was about to devour a handful of berries. "A single one of these berries would easily kill someone twice my size, let alone a small halfling such as yourself. Don't you know any better? Ugh!" She had saved my life and was clearly keeping an eye on me, but there was no way she was going to admit it...