

A WEARY TRAVELER'S JOURNAL

My companions, warriors and members of *Evil's Bane*, are sleeping close by as I write. It is our first night on blessedly dry land after a long sea journey. Only a sputtering candle lights this darkened common room of the first inn by the docks in Firiona Vie, as a fresh quill scratches my words on the parchment. We've all sailed a long way from Antonica, following the trail of stories and rumors about an unusual winged beast that swooped down during a battle and carried off Lysel — our sworn companion and the *Bane*'s best swordswoman — in its hooked talons.

Weeks ago, we were about to give up the search when Rallos Zek intervened and sent us a spark of hope in the form of a tall, cloaked visitor. He told us that he had heard of others being captured by flying creatures, and he told us we needed to forget about our friend — that she had been taken as a slave to the Ring of Scale on "Kunark," and that no slave has ever escaped.

None of us had ever been to this place, Kunark, but we were encouraged by the fact that Lysel might still be alive. We all agreed. If there was a chance that she lived, there was a chance we could rescue her. Our mysterious friend only shook his head. Then, he slipped back the hood of his cloak so that we might see his reptilian face. He introduced himself as Vanusk and told us he was boarding the *Seahawk* that evening to sail to Kunark. In return for our companionship on the long voyage, and payment of his passage, Vanusk offered to tell us about his homeland. His tales included much that we already knew. However, so that I would miss nothing, I recorded everything he said.

I n the Beginning ...

There always has been and always will be an entity known as The Nameless. The universe and its countless suns and worlds sprang from the will of the Nameless, as well as many powerful creatures whom one might call gods. Whereas The Nameless created the stage, these gods gave birth to us, the many actors upon that stage.

Veeshan

*Vanusk only
mentioned
Veeshan here.
Much more
comes later.*

Dragons First – The Age of Scale

Veeshan, Crystalline Dragon and ruler of the Plane of Sky, was the first god to notice the world of Norrath. She found it pleasing and deposited her brood onto the frozen continent of Velious. Dragons walked the land and flew the skies — powerful beings of great intellect, wisdom, and strength.

Early Gods and Their Interventions – The Elder Age

In time, another god noticed Veeshan's work. Brell Serilis, the Duke of Underfoot, secretly created a magic portal to a cavern deep in the belly of Norrath. Through this portal, he seeded the depths of Norrath with all manner of creatures and sealed them within a labyrinthine chamber of mystical Living Stone.

With his own supplicants in place, Brell Serilis then discussed the fate of Norrath with the other gods: Tunare the Great Mother, Prexus the Oceanlord, and Rallos Zek the Warlord. With words befitting the King of Thieves, Brell proposed that they accept an alliance of sorts, to divide the planet amongst them for the purpose of keeping the Dragon Wurmqueen in check. All agreed to the division; however, Rallos Zek pledged his allegiance to none.

Thus, the gods each created a race of beings to keep a vigilant eye on Norrath and the schemes of Dragonkind. Brell Serilis had forged the Dwarves, stout and strong, deep beneath the mountains. Prexus the Oceanlord produced his children, the Kedge, hearty aquatic beings of great mental power and stamina. Aboveground, Tunare the Great Mother gave birth to the Elves, creatures of limitless grace and beauty. And Rallos Zek created the Giants, a race of fierce and formidable surface-dwellers, ever intent upon the defense of their lands.

Unwanted Attention – The Age of Monuments

Innoruuk, The Prince of Hate, cursed his fellow gods for not including him in their pact and vowed they would regret such disrespect. He took the first Elven King and Queen and slowly tore them apart, physically and mentally, over the course of three hundred years. He then rebuilt them into his own dark sadistic image. These Dark Elven creatures came to be known as the Teir'Dal.

**The History
of Norrath**



Brell Serilis



Tunare



Innoruuk

Fizzlethorpe Bristlebane and Cazic-Thule came next to Norrath. Brell Serilis entered into a second pact with these gods, along with Rallos Zek.

From this pact, Brell added the Gnomes — cousins to Dwarves, yet more wiry, gnarled and consumed by tinkering with devices. Rallos Zek made the Ogres — massive, implacable beings of questionable intelligence — and the Orcs, bred for battle and singled-minded in their desire for conquest.

On the surface, away from Elves and Giants, Fizzlethorpe Bristlebane fashioned the Halflings, a short and stubby folk, who were nonetheless agile and had a distinct propensity to meddle (or even pilfer) at times.

Cazic-Thule, Lord of Fear, was drawn to the swamps and jungles of Norrath and there created the green-skinned Trolls and the reptilian Iksar of Kunark.

Fall of Rallos Zek and His Children

Only the Ogres of Rallos Zek dared invade the Plane of Earth itself. Through a combined offensive effort, the other gods finally defeated and imprisoned Rallos Zek in his own domain, the Planes of Power. Thousands of Ogres were slain and their empire collapsed around them. The Giants were forced to flee their homes as the gods brought snow and ice to their previously lush lands. Rallos Zek's third race, the Goblins, were also cursed, although no writings remain of their trials.

Rallos Zek

Nothing lasts forever.

End of Elven Prosperity

The Elddar Forest, the Elven realm of old, spread across the entire southeastern quarter of Tunaria. Tree communities as well as cities of marble and gleaming snow-white spires rose out of the forest, higher than the tallest trees. This prosperity drew the jealousy of Solusek Ro, Lord of Flame. The rivers ran dry, and less rain fell. The great Elven druids fought long and hard with their powerful magic, attempting to turn back the change, but they could only delay the inevitable. Slowly the forest gave way to desert, until at last even the fair Elven city Takish-Hiz crumbled, and the elves were forced to flee Tunaria, leaving much of their greatness behind.

Solusek



Erollisi

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Mithaniel

Birth of Humankind – The Age of Blood

As the dust settled, the last of the gods came to Norrath. These were twin deities Mithaniel Marr, God of Valor, and his sister Erollisi, Goddess of Love. Their creatures, the Barbarians, proved a hardy race and settled the cold and rugged northlands near the ruins of the Giants' empire. As the Barbarians spread out across the lands — in dispute with each other and any other race encountered — a tiny movement toward enlightened thinking was sparked by the Twins Marr and began slowly to grow. And so, even amidst desolation and war, there was hope.

This enlightened order of Barbarians became the fathers and mothers of the Human race. Their Combine Empire spread throughout the known world, but then died even more quickly than it grew, and for reasons still unknown. While they are the ancestors of every Human on Norrath, and their relics and ruins still litter lands from Odus to Faydwer, little history of their great empire remains.

Early Human Settlements – The Age of Enlightenment

To the west, a strong and noble band of Humans, lead by Antonius Bayle the First, founded Qeynos under the lofty principles of law. To the east, Freeport grew into an active and dangerous port of call for all who dared venture into the Ocean of Tears. The great continent of Tunaria became known as Antonica.

Meanwhile, Human explorers and adventurers returned from afar with tales of Elves, Dwarves, and other strange creatures, as well as descriptions of ancient, abandoned cities. A few even came back with limited knowledge of sorcery and the mystic arts. When a discontented minority of leaders heard these tales, they became both jealous of the arts and races described therein and determined to see these lands for themselves.

Magic

Leaving a small network of spies behind them, Erud and the above mentioned discontents sailed west and landed upon the barren coast of Odus Island. They soon established Erudin, a city almost entirely within a towering castle inhabited by scribes and scholars called High Men. Within the castle walls they gathered and analyzed reports, captured books or scrolls, and other artifacts brought to them by

This was the first night that we noticed a certain disdain to Vanusk's speech. We did not mention it to him, though.

their spies. Soon many "Erudites" — wizards, sorcerers, and enchanters — occupied the great halls of Erudin, growing immensely in both power and knowledge.

Prexus

When confronted with our disdain for children's stories, Vanusk only flicked his scaled hand and said, "It is important to remember."

Although Vanusk has been honorable on this voyage, we all looked askance at this statement.

Magic in War – The Age of Turmoil

Some years later, a small group of Erudites discovered the lost art of necromancy and were branded heretics. For the first time in hundreds of years, the Erudites knew and engaged in civil war.

But war among the Erudites held one significant difference. In place of swords and bows, they used magic. Lives by the hundreds were lost, great buildings and structures destroyed, and eventually the heretics were forced to flee Erudin and regroup in the southern regions of Odus. The great arcane energies released in the final battle of the war opened an immense hole in the earth, leading to depths unknown. Along the sides of this chasm, the heretics built Paineel, their city of refuge.

And, in Kunark

Tonight, Vanusk sat in silence until I asked him to continue. He wanted to know what we had learned. When we started to recite the tales back to him, he silenced us and asked again what we had learned. The Bane's leader ventured a guess and told him that the only constants seem to be struggle, death, war and deceit. He pulled back the edges of his mouth in what must have been an Iksar smile and said, "As goes Norrath, so goes Kunark. Now, you are ready to learn of my land."

He sat back, leaning his strong tail against the railing of our ship and looked south. "Since the beginning," he said, "Kunark has suffered under the shadow of the worm." His fantastic tale continued over the last days of our sea journey.

Shissir Kingdom

While the dragons took centuries to grow and organize, a race of intelligent snake men — the Shissir — assumed the forefront. The Shissir were a brutal race who enslaved the Iksar, using Vanusk's ancestors for workers and food. From their capital of Chelsith in what is now The Overthere, they explored dark rites and forgotten evils which would lay the foundation for much of Iksar knowledge and philosophy.

As learned from the rest of Norrath, nothing is permanent. Eventually, the Shissir angered even their own gods. A horrible plague destroyed every Shissir; however, the Iksar survived unscathed.

Iksar Nation

Over the next several centuries, the Iksar grew to greatness on the buried ashes of their former masters. They migrated outward across the continent of Kunark and formed five principal tribe-states: Kylong, Nathsar, Obulus, Jarsath and Kunzar. This last tribe-state was led by Venril Sathir, a young and powerful warrior-mage, who raised an unyielding army of undead with the assistance of dark magic.

Sathir and his Kunzar armies conquered and annexed the remaining tribe-states under his rule as the first King of Sebilis, the renamed Iksar nation. In order to build his Sebilisan Empire, Sathir brutally captured and enslaved the Hill Giants, Forest Giants and Froglok of Kunark. Throughout Sathir's life, the Sebilisan Empire quickly grew in might, power and grandeur.

The Rule of Rile

King Sathir aged, but, of course, he did not want to die. To cheat death, he made an unholy pact with Innoruuk to rise, undead and immortal. Rile, Sathir's heir, had other plans and thwarted the ritual. Sathir's soul was trapped inside an amulet that was hidden away as Rile cremated his father's body.

Rile assumed the throne; however, little changed in the kingdom. The son of Sathir seized more valuable land and his ruthless reputation increased under the terrors of his warlords: Kurn Machta and Karatukus and the vampire, Chosooth. By the time these warlords finished, most of the continent definitely belonged to Sebilis ... all but a few pockets of Giants and Dragons.

The Ring of Scale

The Iksar had left the Dragon lands alone, but their threat was easy to see. The Dragon lords convened the Ring of Scale and argued about how to proceed. Trakanon, the large blue, advocated swift intervention on behalf of all races against the Iksar. However, Trakanon was voted down and the Ring of Scale decided to intervene only indirectly.



Cazic-Thule

*We sat
mesmerized at
the tales of
this land.
Vanusk
seemed to
enjoy the
telling as
well.*

Trakanon and a number of the younger dragons decided more direct action was required. They conjured a squall at sea that destroyed Rile's warship while the King was on board. This action triggered a spectacular war among the Dragons that lasted for almost a half century. Since this Ring of Scale was, in all likelihood, responsible for the capture of our companion, we were understandably curious to learn as much as we could. Vanusk answered only one question with, "There are lesser dragons that fly across Norrath and pluck candidates for slavery to the Ring of Scale."



Sketch of Vanusk

As we neared our destination, Vanusk condensed the final years of Iksar history.

A trebe's Iksar Empire

Atrebe, Rile's first-hatched son, then became King. This young Iksar was different from his father. He was reclusive and enamored of the dark arts. All feared his use of the evil magic of the Shissir and his grandfather, Sathir. His foul experiments joined a dragon with an Iksar, creating the Sarnak, a race of intelligent Dragon-men. He also joined a Dragon with a Froglok, creating flying mounts for his armies, the Sokokar. On these flying beasts, the Iksar were deadly. Soon, only the hardiest Dragonkind stood unconquered by the Sebilisan Empire.

Iksar vs. the Ring of Scale

Over the next half century, Dragonkind struggled against the Iksar' airborne army. Atrebe was succeeded by his son, Ganak, a most capable warrior. The war ended inconclusively over the Field of Bone with aerial duel between Ganak on his Sokokar mount and Jaled-Dar, then leader of the Ring of Scale. Both were incinerated by magic and fire.

The Dragons retreated, but not before destroying the imperial palace and all Ganak's hatchlings in a daring final blaze of revenge.

The Emerald Circle

Instead of a new king, the Iksar nobles created the Emerald Circle, a body of five nobles who wisely worked to enhance the Iksar cities and trade, rebuild the navy, and return prosperity to the empire.

Unfortunately, whenever the ambitions of rulers are involved, strife soon follows and the empire was ultimately divided into the original five tribal-states. Even that treaty was soon forgotten, as the tribes began to wrestle for supremacy over each other. Unbeknownst to the Iksar, the Ring of Scale had also rebuilt and was meddling in every alliance and affair, pitting the tribal-states one against another.

The End of the Sebilisan Empire

The slaves revolted in Sebilis. Goblin lords from Faydwer invaded Kunark. The Giants mustered an army and destroyed the warlord outposts before they attacked the cities. The final destructive attack on the Iksar came when Trakanon and his Dragon allies descended on what was left of the Iksar cities and reduced them to ashes and ruins. The grand Sebilisan Empire was no more. Free from Iksar restraints and rule, all the other races established themselves and began warring amongst themselves in their lust for domination.

Two last warnings came from Vanusk as we bedded down for the evening. Our new friend told us that the undead King Venril Sathir had indeed been brought back into existence and ruled in Karnor, in The Dreadlands, a place he recommended we avoid. The second warning was to avoid the Frontier Mountains. That foul bastard race, the Sarnak, had set up outposts there to breed Goblin and Froglok slaves.

And now, the hour grows late. My notes are complete and I have prepared a new parchment to record upcoming events in our journey. I pray that Rallos Zek guide our will and that Vanusk will agree to guide our way to these mountains of Veeshan's children.

We are in his world of Kunark now..

The History
of Norrath

It was obvious to me, from Vanusk's tone, that he felt the other (lesser?) races had been better off in the security of Iksar dependence.



VELIOUS OPPORTUNITIES - YOUR EYES ONLY

NERIAK MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

My lord,

In keeping with your request to find out more about Velious and the recent journeys being made there, I dispatched our spies to gather what information they could. We have had some success, and enclosed are transcripts of letters sent by a recent group of travelers to Velious.

While fragmentary and possibly filled with exaggerations, they do shed more light upon this mysterious land. Our spies are to be commended on the excellent performance of their tasks as that getting copies of these letters was by no means easy.

Letter transcript recovered from Freepost:

Mentor,

I hope this reaches you before too much time has passed. In my last letter, I told you about securing passage on the gnomish vessel IceBreaker, which had recently begun making voyages from the Northern Desert of Ro to the frozen continent of Velious. Little did I know what was in store for me.

The IceBreaker is not your typical vessel. Built like all things gnomish, it is more about function than form or comfort. I will not bore you with the details of my wretched journey across the Iceclad Ocean. I will also refrain from commenting on the nature of the gnomes who crewed the vessel. Gnomish pirates, indeed!

Having already made several voyages from Antonica, the gnomes established a beach camp and constructed a rudimentary dock. Beyond that, they lacked for almost any real creature comfort. They made a few short forays inland, but mostly, they stuck close to the landing area, trading with a relatively peaceful tribe of gnolls that inhabited the area.

Since my companions and I embarked on this journey for the sake of discovery and adventure, we immediately set forth to explore this frozen land. Venturing west from the landing, we came across a tremendous bridge spanning a huge chasm in the ice. Nothing built by the fabled Combine Empire can compare to this massive construction, seemingly fashioned from the bones of a great dragon!

Across this bridge, and away from the ocean proper, we ran into our first trouble. Giants! And not the giants you may be familiar with. These giants were different. We all know the story about how the giants and other creations of Rallos Zek were cursed by The Rathe for making war upon the gods themselves. That curse does not seem to apply to these creatures, though how they managed to escape divine wrath is still a mystery to me. In any event, they are much more intelligent and organized than their lesser brethren, while every bit as fierce.

We lost two of our party to a small band of these creatures when first we set foot upon the eastern wastes of Velious, and those of us who survived were scattered. Finding myself alone, I was determined to continue my journey westward. Moving most carefully, and using all that I learned in my many years of adventuring, I managed to avoid several more bands of giants as well as

war bands of orcs. Eventually, I came in sight of a large keep, obviously built for giants. Not wanting to venture into what I felt would be a very dangerous place; I struck off in the opposite direction.

After several days of travel, I left the realm of the giants and orcs. Though, to my puzzlement, there seemed to be signs of some other inhabitants. Old campfires at first, then cleverly disguised structures built into hillsides, showing signs of recent habitation. Imagine my surprise when while investigating one of these structures, I was confronted by a group of odd pale dwarves! While wary around me, they were not hostile, and were able to converse with me in a colorful dialect of Common. They called themselves the Coldain and agreed to take me to their fortress city of Thurgadin.

Words can not describe this city built under an icy mountain, so I shall not attempt it. Suffice to say that these dwarves are every bit as industrious and hardy as their cousins in Kaladim. I was brought before their king, Dain Frostreaver IV. This mighty warrior welcomed me to his realm, and proceeded to query me for information about the world beyond Velious. In the process, I learned much about Velious itself. The Coldain take a very serious view of their heritage and from very early childhood learn a great deal about their history. It is their firm belief that they were chosen by Brell to inhabit Velious.

During the ancient days when the first city of the dwarves was under construction, dwarves were sent across the lands and sea to find precious reserves of stone, crystal, and ore for the project. Ships sailed in and out by the dozens bringing supplies for the great city. One fleet of such ships sailed across the South of Antonica to reach the island we know as Odus, where a quartz mine was to be set up in the name of the dwarves.

Led by the miner and explorer Colin Dain, the fleet carrying several hundred dwarves ran into one of the worst storms Prexus had ever unleashed. The storm raged on for days as most of the dwarves huddled together in the ships' holds waiting for the seas to calm. When at last the storm passed, they found themselves utterly lost. Even the best of the captains and navigators had no clue as to where they were. The stars in the sky could not be relied upon for navigation, as none of them were recognizable to the dwarves.

Using typical dwarven logic, Colin Dain picked a direction to

sail and decided that their only hope was to keep sailing in that direction until they spotted land. As the days and then weeks went by the only noticeable change was that the weather began to get cold. Some nights were so cold that dwarves froze to death on the deck, turned into a statue of ice by the cruel weather.

Only the determination of Colin Dain kept the dwarves' hopes alive as he moved from ship to ship, assuring the dwarves that they would, "Hit land soon, if not tomorrow then the day after." Eventually Colin's words rang true as the dwarves did indeed spot a gigantic white landmass in the distance.

The landing proved to be as deadly as the voyage when icebergs both small and large tore the small fleet apart. Not a single ship made it to shore. Most were torn apart far from the land, and many dwarves met Death at the hands of the ocean. Less than a hundred made it onto an icy beach.

With no serviceable ships, Colin Dain wasted little time leading his people from the shoreline. He knew they would have to find shelter to keep from dying in the cold. He also knew they would need to find wood and other supplies so they could repair their ships and set off for fairer lands. So the quartz miners from the north settled in caves a few miles inland from where they landed. These caves were set into a giant mountain of ice and snow in the northern section of the Eastern Wastes.

There is an old saying that goes, "Dwarves are like time itself, neither can remain idle." This certainly proved true for the new settlement. The miners quickly discovered that the hard packed ice lying beneath the snow of Velious was as durable and malleable as stone, and ideally suited for construction in this frozen land. They would later discover that the ice, known as Velium, had magical properties as well.

Through time the cave settlement became a town, and then a strong dwarven keep began to take shape within the mountain. Named Froststone for the ice out of which it was built, the dwarves knew that with the completion of this keep their stay on this strange new land was permanent. Unfortunately the peace of the dwarves was shattered when they encountered another race upon Velious, the frost giants.

It was with great surprise that the dwarves woke up one day to find their home under siege by an army of giants. The frost giants inhabited the Eastern Wastes and considered those lands their home. They did not take kindly to the puny children of Brell

building a fortress along their border. After much battle, the dwarves realized they could not possibly hold out against their large foes.

In desperation, Colin Dain led them from their new home in the Great Divide to the only place they could go—deeper into the mountains. The frost giants pursued, so a small group of dwarves volunteered to stay behind to allow the others to escape. Colin Dain himself led the suicide ambush, buying his people enough time to escape the giants. From this time onward the dwarves would refer to themselves as the Coldain in honor of their beloved leader. Furthermore, the leader of their people would carry the title "Dain."

While hiding out in the frigid caverns a Coldain miner by the name of Glight Snowchipper received a vision from Brell. The vision was of a labyrinth of ice where the dwarves could hide from the frost giants. In the narrow passageways, it was hoped that the giants would become lost and fall into the many traps the dwarves would construct. Glight presented his idea to Dain Frostreaver, the son of Colin Dain, who began construction of the labyrinth. The Crystal Caverns were completed in a little under half a century. The speed of the project alone was proof to the Coldain that Glight had indeed been inspired by Brell. These caverns of Crystal would be the salvation of the Coldain race.

The true test of the caverns worth came nearly thirty years later, when by following a party of Coldain, the frost giants discovered the location of the Crystal Caverns. Slagd Frozentoe of the frost giants led the invasion force of warriors to the cavern, hoping to wipe the hated Coldain from Velious once and for all. Glight Snowchipper, in the fashion of Colin Dain, led the defense, drawing the frost giants deep into the confusing caverns. His magical pickaxe, aptly named Snowchipper, felled many a giant's as the dwarves struck repeatedly from hidden passages and around shadowy corridors.

Despite losing most of his force, Slagd and the remaining giants almost made it to the Coldain city in the center of the caverns when Glight pulled off his greatest and final trick. Thousands of tons of ice and stone crashed into Slagd and his remaining giants after Glight and a few of his brave miners led them down a false passage. Unfortunately it was an act of self-sacrifice as Glight and his fellows were also buried in the avalanche. The miners of Thurgadin still call themselves

Snowchippers, in honor of Glight.

Over the next few centuries strange creatures began migrating into the Crystal Caverns. It was these foes and more which eventually caused the dwarves to abandon the caverns and set out to build a new fortress more akin to Frostkeep. I was cautioned to avoid the old caverns, as they still hold many dangers.

The Coldain retreated even deeper into the Great Divide. Led by Dain Frostreaver II, they founded the city of Thurgadin, or New Froststone.

Constructed on the northern edge of the Great Divide, Thurgadin lies within a glacial mountain rich with untouched supplies of velium and other ores. The outer region of the city is carved into the ancient glacial ice, while the inner region pierces the mountain rock where the precious ores are mined.

The Coldain are determined not to lose this home. Thurgadin is built in a very defensive manner, with passage through long tunnels lined with murder holes being necessary to get to the inner city. At the heart of the city lies Icewell Keep, where the Dain and his council of advisors reside and where he granted audience to me.

Surrounding the castle are the forges and shops that make up the mainstay of Coldain commerce. Mines burrow deeper into the mountains, some ending in cleverly hidden and easily collapsible escape hatches for easy access into the Great Divide. I have used my meager cartography skills to fashion a map of Thurgadin, which I am sending you with this letter.

I have decided to reside in Thurgadin for a time, to better get to know my hosts, and to assist them in rejoining the community of beings of Antonica and Faydwer. I feel very secure here in this mountain stronghold, and I think there is much to accomplish.

As always,
Solist Kinslan

Letter Transcript recovered from Halas:

McTarnigal,

Took the gnome ship, the trip was bad. Ship was too cramped, not built for a Halasman. What is, outside of Halas? Made it to Velious with a strong group of Southrons. Weather was fine, looks like a nice place, plenty to eat, and plenty to fight. Not enough to drink, stupid gnomes lost all the rum.

Went inland, saw a strange tower, steered clear of it, it reeked of sick magic. Found a large bridge. Would not want to defend it, too big. Crossed the bridge, good country there. Looks like an excellent place to live. Found Kromrif here too. Thought frost giants were all dead. They are not.

Party was ambushed by Kromrif war band, some died, and others ran. I fought. Clubbed till I went black. Woke up being carried into giant fortress. Saw banners of Lord Rallos, gave homage. Kromrif saw this, nodded.

Taken to true leaders of city. Kromzek. Storm giants are still alive, and still strong. Someone should hit Margyn McCann over the head, her lore is wrong.

The King of Kromzek, Tormax, asked me many questions. Found out Kromzek and Kromrif escaped the curse. Kromrif are warring with ice dwarves to the north. Kromzek are trying to expand west, fighting a savage forest claimed by Tunare.

They also fight Dragons. Very bad blood between the Velious dragons and Kromzek. Tormax sits on the bones of a dragon queen his sire killed.

Tomorrow I go out with a war band of Kromzek and Kromrif, heading west through forest to a dragon shrine, to do battle there. May Zek give me strength.

I am giving this letter to a Kromrif who is going east, to hand to the gnomes. Tell the warriors of Halas that Rallos Zek is strong here. Many chances for battle and conquest. Bring your own beer.

Breen Everblood.

Letter transcript recovered from Qeynos:

Hanns,

When I get back to Qeynos, I'm going to knock a few of your teeth out. I'm still not sure how you convinced me to make this trip, though I'm thinking Crow's Special Brew had something to do with it.

Leaving the new dock in North Ro, I took a launch that carried me out to the Iceclad Ocean. There I boarded IceBreaker, a so-called ship constructed by the gnomes. Several other people had booked passage for this voyage and were awaiting my arrival, including my comrades Tolan, Breen, and Solist.

It wasn't a fun trip. The ship's hammers were constantly clanking and banging, those blasted gnomes were making silly pirate noises, and it was cold. It nearly drove me crazy.

We finally made landing at a beachhead the gnomes constructed, but found little in the way of luxuries. The gnomes even managed to misplace the horrible rum that kept us warm during the voyage. And before you ask, I had nothing to do with that misplacement.

After looking around the landing, the group of us decided to head west, beyond the area the gnomes had explored. We passed quite a few interesting sights, and a tower I really wanted to inspect, but Solist and Breen both said to avoid it, so we continued on. After crossing a bridge that was so high it made even me dizzy, our luck ran out.

A group of well-organized giants took us by surprise. Deciding discretion was called for, I managed to duck out of the battle when it was obvious we were losing. Several people, including Solist, managed to escape, while Breen went down fighting, buried under a pile of giants. After the dust settled, I saw the giants carrying Breen off to the southwest and decided to follow them.

After a few hours of sneaking along, I was startled by a voice behind me. Tolan! The clever ranger had escaped the giant ambush the same way I had, and was tracking the giants and me across the wastes. We continued to follow the giants, and eventually came to a great fortress city.

With luck and skill, the two of us managed to sneak inside the city. We tried to find Breen, but there was no way to know for sure where he had been taken. The chance of getting caught

was high, since the place was crawling with giants. We eventually passed through the city itself, and found ourselves on the edge of a huge forest.

The giants were working hard to push the forest back, but according to Tolan, they weren't doing well. He said he felt great power in the woods, stronger even than the heart of Faydark. I didn't question his statement; I could feel the life here myself.

At Tolan's urging we left the giant city behind and traveled on through the forest. Tolan grew more and more excited, saying he felt we were nearing something amazing.

Tolan's woods lore gave us no warning when a group of strange flying creatures suddenly appeared. Finding ourselves quickly captured, we were trussed, blindfolded, and gagged. We were carried to the heart of the forest where a gathering of beings awaited us. They would not speak to me. But they jabbered with Tolan for a long while in a strange language.

Again I was blindfolded and carried through the forest. After some time I was put down and my bonds cut. I was at the edge of a clearing, facing the giant city. Tolan was there, unbound and smiling. He told me I should make my way back to the Iceclad Ocean. I wasn't welcome in this land, and to go any further west would be a bad idea. Dragons would kill me if I entered the shrine they had built on the other side of the forest. That is if I made it that far, since there was always the chance that the forest creatures would decide to have me for lunch.

When I asked Tolan what he was going to do, he said he would be staying there for a time as a guest. He was a grown man; I assume he knew his own business. Not wanting to overstay my welcome, I took Tolan's advice and said goodbye. I went back through the giant city (still no sign of Breen), across the wastes, and eventually, back to the shores of the Iceclad Ocean, where I sit now.

I'm going to head back out again soon to look for Breen, Solist, and the others. I wouldn't feel right abandoning them at this point, and besides, it could turn out to be profitable.

Regards,
Mrylokar

As you can tell by reading the transcripts, there is much more to Velious than we first imagined. The war among the dwarves, giants and dragons, suggests great opportunity for us, if we choose our allies carefully.

If you have any further questions, you need only ask, and I shall endeavor to find answers for you.

Your humble vassal,
Ryoz K'Tarn
Master Coercer

The History
of Norrath