

Lo, the Chronicler of TREL has departed beyond the seas to the Blessed Realm, and the echoes of his songs are now fading faintly down the forest pathways. However I, the last Knight still sworn to the Quest, put hand to lute to tell the men of this forgetful age of the Last Days of TREL, and the last glorious adventure of the Knights of TREL –

The Quest For The Holy Grail.

The Vision

In the final days of TREL, Baron Hvgo looked at the land from his high tower in the citadel of TREL. From there, all he could see around was a vast wasteland. The smoke from the burning land confounded the senses, and prevented the wise from seeing far distances; no wound would heal in the poisonous air. Foul pestilence struck the common folk of TREL, and the cries of their lamentations went high into the heavens. Even though the Emperor of Telcordia supped each night on a fattened calf, yet the Knights of TREL were driven by poverty from their castles, and forced to sleep together four-to-a-room, in a most shameful and unmanly manner. Great were the moral and hygienic risks involved in this close partnering. The Knights of TREL fought and squabbled amongst themselves, as the blood of the Knights had been mixed with that of lesser men, and as such they had slipped from the grace that had blessed them when HARBOLD held the throne of old.

Thus Baron Hvgo looked for a cure that might heal a wounded land. First he took boat to Gaul, and throughout the South of that land he went from Inn to Tavern, tarrying ever longer, searching for an answer. Finally he took a fast boat to the Holy Land, in the hope that a pilgrimage may show him the way. And behold! There he saw a vision most glorious of the Holy Grail.

In haste he returned to TREL, and summoned the kingdom before him. Thus he raised his right hand and spoke in judgement.

"I see before me a mighty storm coming. And I shall raise my hand, and a reckoning shall be made. To my right shall be the sheep. And to my left, there shall only be goats. To my right will be the wheat; and to the left, the chaff."

And to Captain Courageous he gave command of the Quest, and ordered him to assemble thirty knights, no more, and no less, to go search for the Grail. Great and wondrous was the amazement of the folk of TREL. And from the great concourse, thirty knights brave and true stepped forward.

Not since the days of HARBOLD have such men been seen. Their blond locks fell from their fair heads, and because their hearts were pure, each possessed the strength of 10 lesser men. Shining sword and glittering harness

was given unto them, and a pure white mare for each to ride on. Verily, when a peasant crept into the cathedral, and saw them all bowing down in prayer, with their heads making obeisance on the ground, he saw a glorious halo around the parts closest to the heavens. Thus amongst the rest of TREL it was known that light like the sun truly shone from their important parts. Each was given their own castle, so they could prepare for the Quest in peace and privacy.

On the fateful day, Captain Courageous assembled the knights, and in a clap of thunder they rode away. Then Baron Hvgo turned to his Lieutenant Pavlvs, and gave him the rod of stewardship for TREL, and spoke unto him;

"Besooth, thou art still important. Goat milk makes nice cheese, and is even better than cows' milk, to which I have an allergy. Keep the Home Fires burning."

And after a long silence, he spoketh some more.

"If you find any of your men worthy of the Quest, they too can join at a later time. And who is tell the difference between sheep and goats, as long as it is dark and the weather cold?"

And then he whispered under his breath:

"But stayeth not up if we do not return home tonight."

Then he took himself and Maid Marion to his tower, to discuss possible uses of Grail-shaped objects.

The Adventure

For three days and three nights the Knights of the Quest rode without rest. Finally they stopped exhausted on a great plane, and pitched their tents in two areas, one for the Knights of the Quest; and one for Captain Courageous and his Lieutenants.

Now great confusion struck the Knights at this point. Some said the Grail was in this direction. Others pointed to the other direction. Some had never seen the Grail, and wanted to know what it looked like. Others started complaining about the size of their tents, and what reward they would get for finding the grail. Even more started getting monkeys to write words on parchment, for surely one day, they will write by accident the true location of the Grail.

Now a commission of Knights approached the tents of Captain Courageous, and asked him where they might look for the Grail. He consulted with his advisers and then said:

*"The Grail is a cup made of silver and gold, inlaid with the finest gems. Therefore it is a **PRODUCT**. Go forth and find me where **PRODUCTS** may be found."*

The Knights returned on the second day with a list of **PRODUCTS**. However Captain Courageous was not pleased.

*"Verily the Grail gives nourishment both physical and spiritual to whomever drinks of the cup. Therefore it is a **SERVICE**. Go forth and find me where **SERVICES** may be found."*

On the third and final day the Knights of the Quest returned with a list of **SERVICES**. However Captain Courageous grew mighty wrathful.

*"The Grail is neither a **PRODUCT** nor a **SERVICE**. It is a **PRODUCT-SERVICE**. If you do not know what the difference is, then thoust does not deserve to be a Knight of the Quest."*

The Knights of the Quest left the tents with bowed heads, for they did not know what a **PRODUCT-SERVICE** was, and were ashamed to ask.

The Beginning of Evil

Now in the latter days of TREL, there lived a foul witch inside the walls of the citadel. She brought great suffering to the men of TREL with her blasphemous curses. With carefree abandon she insulted their manhood and dignity, but due to their oaths of chivalry, they bore her abuse quietly.

At the same time there was also a savage hound-beast, whose name was *Milton The Monster*. Milton was reared as a pup by the Knights of TREL, who lined the bottom of his cage with the shredded documents they received from Telcordia. Milton The Monster reconstructed the documents in painstaking detail, and memorised each rule, regulation and order given to the Knights of TREL. As he grew he developed a ferocious bark, which he would aim at all who transgressed the rules, and he often scared away Knights who innocently went to pat his head.

Now Milton The Monster and the Witch often had furious barking sessions at each other, and such was the roar of their conflict that the peasants of TREL hid under their beds and blocked their ears. Eventually the Witch grew tired of her sport, and left to work her evil inside the Dark Tower of Telcordia. But before she left, she noticed how great the walls of TREL were. Built in the days of **HARBOLD** they were, and as strong as adamant they were, such that no siege engine could take it from force. Only by a weakness within could TREL be conquered.

So before she left, the Witch of TREL cast a **WEB** of sorcerous spells around TREL. Such was the power of the spells, that many now say that she herself

did not cast the dweomer, but was merely the conduit for a far darker power. Indeed, few could credit her with the wit to even think of the spells, and merely uttered the word 'WEB' just as it was beginning to appear.

Nonetheless, the men of TREL became enamoured of this WEB, for those who stared at it long enough claimed they could see patterns in it. Others said they could hear voices, and music; some said they could see images in it, of far-off places, and of far-off times, although these images be but small and of poor quality. A few even claimed that the WEB was better than TREL, for in it Knights could grow more arms and legs than what Nature had given them, and joust safely with the use unheard-of-weapons, although this be all but an illusion. Thus they became experts in rescuing fake maidens in safety, rather than practice the harder art of meeting real ones.

Thus men of TREL started hacking holes in the walls of the citadel – evil portals from which more people could stare at the WEB. Manly deeds and noble thought was forgotten, as men stood still and did nothing but stare at this WEB via dark portals. Such was the power of the WEB that throughout Telcordia it sent out its evil tendrils.

The wise noticed the holes in the walls, and pointed out that the esoteric knowledge men saw in the WEB had been hidden to protect the weak and innocent. The keeper of the Wall, Vavven, walked up and down looking for these holes. So as to avoid detection, the enspelled men of TREL covered the holes with black paper, and by their natural skill hid the gaps; Vavven could not find them all, and by this means the walls were weakened, and a great evil was let loose into the world.

The Failure of The Quest

It has been explained earlier how the Knights of the Quest could not immediately find the Grail. Soon they forgot their oaths, and started spending their time staring at the WEB, and feasting upon the provisions they had for their journey.

"Surely", they spoke amongst themselves, "Someone else will find the Grail, and when we taste its Goodness, we will no longer have need of the food we brought with us".

Thus great feasts and amusements were made without any consideration for the future. Many made merry sport with the plebeians of TREL, thinking in their pride that their armour gave them a higher status in the world. Alliances were made with nearby tribes to find the Grail, but these tribes just stole the food from the Knights of the Quest, leaving even less for them to eat.

Soon all their food ran out, and the Knights faced starvation. Then Stvartvs, a councillor to Captain Courageous gave him this advice:

"See, when we left TREL, we took with us all the knives, forks and spoons. Let us go to yonder Merchant Camp, and sell them all for food. Furthermore, we shall also sell an option to provide more knives, forks and spoons to them; thus increasing the amount of food we can eat."

Now the Knights of the Quest were greatly concerned when they heard this. "Surely, if we were to sell all our cutlery to the Merchants, how shall we eat? With out hands and fingers, like the common carles of TREL?"

And the wise spoke dissent amongst themselves. For it took a score of years for the darkly delving dwarves of TREL to fashion these knives and forks. The slow hammering of years had imbued them with runes of great cunning and might. It was these that gave them value, not the base metals of which they had been constructed.

"It matters not," said Stvartvs, "for in three days, we shall sell them, and in three days we shall promise to deliver more. But on the seventh day we shall be sunning ourselves on the Holy Isle of Avalon, and in the Blessed Realm we shall be safe from any that may follow."

Thus the Quest for the Grail may have ended, had not GOVERNOR CAMBELLVS that night hold a mighty feast. And halfway through the feast he noticed his hands covered with soot, and dripping with pig fat and deer blood. In great anger he ordered a special committee to scour the land to find the reason. Great leeches they were, skilled in the artful removal of blood from their patients. (*Previously they had bled the Knights of TREL for 10% of their blood, claiming that it was better for them to bleed before the battle, so there was less to lose both during and after it.*)

After much deliberation, the committee reported back that all the knives, forks and spoons of Telcordia were about to be sold by Captain Courageous. The Governor's wrath waxed greatly, and he ordered all the Knights to return to TREL; for he reasoned that if they can sell the cutlery, so could he, and without giving them any of the proceeds.

As great was the glory of the beginning of the Quest, so too was the depth of the humiliation of the return of the Knights. For they had travelled the land for a year and a day, without even one sight of the Grail. As they rode back into the Citadel, the taunts and insults of the commoner of TREL were like manure pats rubbed into their souls. So loud were the cries that the lieutenants of TREL came out to hold back the crowd, although they were barely able to control their own joy at the fate of those that had mocked them before.

The Knights' armour was melted down to pay for the food they had consumed. The snow-white mares were lead off the knackers-yard. Their castles were taken away, and the Knights were forced to sleep with common-folk of TREL. Great was their suffering, for the peasants of TREL did

smell mighty awful, and bugs and insects in the shared hay did bite them mercilessly.

The Aftermath

At this time there was a sound of great construction work from the Keep of TREL. Some thought it was the building of a monument to the glory of TREL. Yet when the work was finished, the men of TREL saw only the Crown of Telcordia. Beneath it was a sign.

**Whoever pulls the Jewels from the Crown of Telcordia will
receive an extra ration of bread next year.**

Many knights attempted to pull the Jewels from the Crown, but none could even touch it. They went searching for their own Family Jewels, to practice on them. But many were shocked to find them missing, for the Witch of TREL had cut them off whilst they were staring at the WEB, and wore them around her neck as a trophy. Many more Family Jewels had shrunk and faded, thanks to the dark emanations that came from the portals that led to the WEB.

At this time a wounded messenger collapsed at the Gates of TREL. He bore warning of the Barbarians invading the province of ARS. He demanded to speak to the Emperor.

Now the Emperor was not in Telcordia, instead going on a long journey to the Orient, where he hoped to grow wealthy from the trading of spices and teas with the East. With him he took a great caravan with all the gold of Telcordia, to offer as a gift to appease the Emperor of the East. (Some whispered in dark places that he would never return with the gold, thinking that it would be easier to invade another country than defend Telcordia. That way, at least, even if he could not live like the Emperor of China, then at least he could be as comfortable as one of the Royal Eunuchs.) To keep in touch with his kingdom, and to prevent the falsification of messages, the Emperor ordered that only documents from his royal scribe HARMONICVS would be sent to him.

Now the men of TREL looked at the writings of the scribe HARMONICVS, and were horrified to see that it was little more than the Black Speech of the enemy. Foul and tortured were the lettering he used, and the characters twisted and turned and perverted the meaning of anything written in it. It hurt honest men just to look at the script, and the fair maidens of TREL did faint at the sight of the horror.

In secret, a number of Great Knights, who still remembered the days of HARBOLD, trusted not their captains, and went to seek advise of wise men in the City of CAMBERRVS. "With the help of others" they thought, "we could avert the Great Doom that is coming upon us". None know what happened to them, as they never returned.

Meanwhile the Captains of TREL tried to assure the assembled hosts of TREL.

"The chances of anything coming from ARS, are a million-to-one" they said.

The people were still not happy, so the Captains took a plank of wood. On it they drew an effigy of the Emperor. They presented all complaints to it, and then returned to the Assembly of TREL and spoke truthfully to them.

"All your concerns have been presented to the Board."

The Future

Far away, minds immeasurably smaller than ours viewed TREL with great greed.