

## *Päap's poetic ponderings – A collection of memories from Gimle*

### *The bravery of common folks*

*On my way to Gimle I met two orphaned girls, who as it happens were also heading for that neutral refuge of the persecuted and downtrodden. Seeing as my hired porters and protectors had absconded with most of my gold and a few prized possessions of mine, due to a miscommunication regarding their salary, I had found myself stranded just a few miles away from my destination, with all my worldly belongings thrown into the ditch by the road. Glumly sitting on a stack of carpets, sipping on my last cup of wine, I saw the girls cautiously approach with their hands on the hilts of their swords. 'Just my luck', I thought. 'Getting robbed twice in one day'. But as fortune would have it, they had no such intentions. I offered them some food, which after a few suspicious glances in my direction they graciously accepted. Lo and Nea, as the two sisters were called, seemed positively starved, but beneath their sallow and dirty visages one could see a determined strength, the likes of which can be found in many of the barbaric people in this part of the world. For all their scruffy appearances and lack of refinement in aesthetic matters, they carry within them a valiant heart, with endurance to match.*

*Having lost the company of my so-called bodyguards (greedy ruffians!) I decided that the proper course of action was to strike a deal with these, admittedly young but nevertheless stalwart girls. In exchange for protection on the road, and for helping me carry my equipment to Gimleby I would offer them food, a few coins and lodging for a couple of nights until they could find some more suitable habitation. And so, I finally arrived in Gimle, the dangerous but magical place I had long intended to study and draw inspiration from.*

*At first glance Gimleby seemed like just about any dirty backwards little hamlet. A rudimentary tavern, a trading post, a few soot-and-sawdust covered workers, some noisy children with scraped knees and unkempt hair. But in speaking to mister Grim, the head of the Trader's Guild, I soon came to realise that this simple village held more than met the eye. Here was the very nexus of much intrigue, both political and magical in nature. Deals, alliances, treachery, and violence seemed as commonplace as the sun and the wind to these people. The closer I looked, the more the different threads of an ever-shifting web of power balance came into focus. How the people of Gimleby could go about their daily lives with such cheer and casual calmness is still a mystery to me.*

*That is not to say that they never felt threatened by the various forces surrounding the village. On my second day there, word spread that a group of black-bloods (terrible orcs, if I'm not mistaken) were attempting to appropriate a piece of land presently owned by Gimleby. The South Highlands, they called it. I could not see why that area was of such importance, but the villagers certainly did. With a frenzy I have rarely seen, other than the*

trading docks of The Marble City when ships arrive with rare and exotic goods, just about everyone in sight set to work. Swords were sharpened, old alliance contracts were dusted off, messengers were sent back and forth like a swarm of honeybees. Soon it became clear that the village's 'army' was in weaker form than usual. Many of the experienced fighters of Gimleby had either gone off adventuring, joined one of the other many armies, or simply died. What was left was a ragtag group of traders, craftsmen, old folks and children, very few of which had any real combat training. Grim, a proud protector of his village (and his riches, one presumes) nevertheless managed to muster both fighting spirit and a semblance of organisation. As the hour of the battle drew near, it was with both amusement and trepidation that I watched the children of Gimleby, including the two orphaned sisters I had temporarily taken under my wing, trying their very best to learn which end of a sword is meant for holding, and which is for stabbing. I did my part, of course, writing heroic poems with which to rouse their spirits. For what good is a fighter without the encouraging words of a fine battle hymn?

Just before they gathered to march to the battlefield, and most likely get beaten into a sorry pulp, word arrived that the Vikings of Boradal would honour their treaty with Gimleby and stand side by side against the filthy black-bloods. Everyone, including me, changed their worried looks into ones of tentative optimism. Perhaps all was not lost after all!

Arriving at the chosen spot for the upcoming skirmish I loudly and proudly read my inspirational poems, while at the same time keeping a fair amount of people between me and the enemy. 'Warriors come in dozens of thirteen, but artists are rare', as they say. Then, creeping from the edge of the forest came a group of wretched creatures. Hunched over and viciously grunting, they were the very image of black-blood villainy. To my surprise one of the villagers explained that these were not in fact black-bloods at all, but rather their slaves, forced to battle when daylight prohibited Orcs and such to roam freely.

The fight commenced, and though the Orchen slaves were both frightening and fierce, by the combined forces of mostly untrained villagers and battle-scarred Vikings, the enemy was swiftly defeated. Cheer and hoorays filled the field as the surviving filthy Orch-slaves fled, and the wounded people of Gimleby were tended to.

I learned something important that day. It is not the sparkle of a well-polished armour or the name of your house that makes a great warrior. It is the passion and righteousness of your heart.

(Note: I have more to say about the Vikings and their so-called 'honour' but that will have to wait for another chapter of these musings.)

# *The Battle for South Highland*

*Sit down, relax around the fire,  
As I some history regale  
These words be true, I'm not a liar  
This is a grand and gruesome tale  
From Orchen folks, a challenge went  
For ownership of southern land  
And this is how the battle went  
Each villager with arms in hand  
Each man, each woman, every child  
In Gimleby were called to fight  
To stand against the black-bloods wild  
Though poorly trained, their hearts were bright*

*With Boradal there was a pact  
To come when called, to help and aid  
And now was such a time to act  
They stood with Gimle, sword and blade*

*The sky was clear, the sun burned hot  
The open field for blood had thirst  
But Gimle stood and faltered not  
When from the forest black-bloods burst*

*Stand fast! Be brave! We shall not die!  
Fight together or die alone!  
So went the Gimle battle-cry  
We'll never leave, this is our home!*

*The noise of war was deafening  
As sword and bow was set to work  
And arrows flew, and steel did sing  
To strike at every slave of Orch.*

*The field was stained with black and red  
The rage of war had come and gone  
For every single foe was dead  
And Gimleby had truly won*

*So ends this tale of blood and fear  
Of valiance and bravery  
The lesson is for all to hear  
Don't ever mess with Gimleby!*

## *Ode to an Archer*

O bow, o arrow  
O sharpened tip  
O keenest eye  
O hardened grip  
  
Pull back, take aim  
And hold thy breath  
Release, let fly  
This piercing death  
  
A soaring fang  
A deadly bite  
So swiftly ends  
This gruesome fight  
  
See arrows block  
The scorching sun  
Thy foe will either  
Die, or run

## *Blades of Valor*

Blade to blade, sword to shield  
Instruments of death you wield  
  
Swing your axe, let loose your sword  
Stand fast against this evil horde  
  
Stand with valor, show no fear  
I'll be helping from the rear  
  
Watching closely, crafting rhymes  
To sing your song in brighter times  
  
A hymn to sing when wounds are healed  
Remembrance of a battle-field  
  
Blade to flesh, a broken shield  
Soon your enemies shall yield

*By the pen of Pherryginus Pääp  
Poet, scholar, wine enthusiast, adventurer, and lover*