

# A Spinster's Tale

An account by Adzquille, Spinster of Aspirant's Way, of the LostLorn Gazetteer Consortium

I felt distinctly that all eyes were on me as I walked into the Hull. It was a massive tavern, a beached ship said to be the oldest permanent structure in Broken Gallows, and now the most popular watering hole in the pirate city. As my eyes adjusted to the gloom, I felt a sense of disappointment. Once proud trophies of raids on other worlds hung prominently displayed from the beams of the beached vessel, but today the glories of past victories were covered in dust, threadbare and tarnished. Sullen conversations drifted from shadowed alcoves. Once famed for revelry, the Hull was now a haunt for nostalgia. Like the rest of the island, Broken Gallows was a shadow of its past.

A wiry individual with a vicious scar approached me, a feral grin on his face. "Yaræl Musmahhu?" I asked, stumbling over his foreign name.

A bark of laughter. "Ahoy, bucko! Call me SunChaser! Welcome to the Broken Gallows, lad! Let's get ye seated with some grog in ya before one of me mates decides to hornswaggle you!"

I looked at him with what I am sure was a look of utter horror. "Dear gods! Erasmus told me you were from Val-Ragna and we would not have a language barrier."

SunChaser looked askance throughout the bar. "Not so loud,

Spinster. You don' have your sea legs yet, and there's always at least one matey lookin' for the sweet trade. And you, with your swabbie milk tongue and your fresh face, are ye askin' t'be keelhauled?"

"What in the king's name did you just say, SunChaser?" Was this an effect of the Blight?

"I said," he answered, taking me by the elbow and steering me toward one of the many shadowed booths, "that you should keep your head down and stop sticking out like a sore thumb. Erasmus didn't teach you how to survive in the real world, did he?"

"If talking like that is a means of survival, no he did not."

SunChaser grinned. "Yeah, well, it was rough on me too when I first got here. But it do grow on ya. The Blarney speech, the Thousand Perils... hell, even the damn blighted food. There's a purity about these people, lad, make no mistake."

"Is that why you assimilated and never returned to Master Erasmus?"

SunChaser shrugged, slipping back into his heavy accent. "I know yer life, lad. Libraries, quill pens, parchment, and if yer lucky, pictures in a book. I'm a Spinster too, r'member? But ol' Erasmus sent me here to find out some details on the local politics, and I did

that jus' fine. Sent him some great reports in the early days. But after livin' here for a while, livin' the story instead of readin' it..."

"You couldn't go back." I understood. Of course I did. There was something about the danger of BloodStone Isle that made life worth living.

"Damn right, lad. Yer savvy enough to get what I'm spinning."

"So you settled down here, in Broken Gallows? When you could have settled in FreeBoot Landing?"

SunChaser laughed again. "Hah! Ye ain't been here long enough. The IronKnights keep things peaceful over there; sometimes too peaceful. Look, Briar Canyon is a nice village, full o' nice people. But there's no story there. Surely y'know what I mean?"

I shrugged. "Perhaps I do. I will confess, this establishment has a modicum of charm, outdated though it clearly is."

"Hell's teeth, but you talk like Erasmus. Did I ever bleat like that?"

"SunChaser," I leaned forward and lowered my voice, "I am leaving for BleakStone City after this, and I do not know what I should be expecting. I am told that the BloodRose Clan and Broken Gallows are linked to the past. I need to know. What is the true history of BloodStone Isle?"

SunChaser nodded. "Y'want the true history of BloodStone Isle? Well... I'll tell ya. It starts with a guy, two girls, and more rum than any one man has a right to drink. Don't all good tales start that way?"



"Nothing here is separate or unique or entirely of listing the forest."

thing on this island is one. Everything in the forest is the city. Everything in the fens is the fens. Everything in the city is the city. Everything of blood is blood."—Adaquille

# BESTIARY: BODGER

## Of the Myriad Monsters of BloodStone Isle

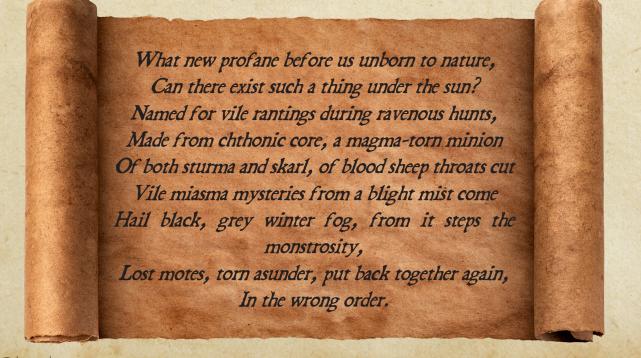
BloodStone Isle is a dangerous land where only the strongest and fiercest survive. From titan turtles and "The Hunger" to castle crabs and rock toads, BloodStone Isle is a home to many dangerous creatures, and any who dwell herein must learn to be survivors or perish. Here is one that is worth particular mention.

### THE VILE BODGER

Bodgers are benighted creatures of the Storm, twisted by the Blight and left monstrous in personality as well as in appearance. They are ravenous and cunning, but no longer truly sentient. Releasing them from their miserable existence is seen as a mercy by all rational creatures. Bodgers are made of whatever parts remain of the beasts, animals, and mortals caught up in the black mists of the Tempest. They are among the most feared creatures to spill out of the mists when they touch ground, and are the legendary boogeymen of the long night. Nothing makes children go to bed quicker than stories of bodgers. No two of them look alike; they have hideous mixed up bodies incorporating features of various humanoid, beast, monster and animal parts. Their "parentage" can include cats, deer, goats, antelope, cattle, sheep, bears, humans, and worse. Bodgers are the most feared creatures on BloodStone Isle.

the Tempest and from the miasma itself, and the further they are from it the duller they get. The most difficult aspect in dealing with is to not use cutting weapons, but to use blunt force, fire, traps, cagbodgers is their refusal to quit fighting, even if cut into bits. Each es and such so that one does not make their problem worse.

They have an animal cunning which they seem to gain from individual piece of a bodger does not die when separated from the whole but can continue to do harm. Thus the desire in fighting them



## The Gods of BloodStone Isle

## KRA THE TITAN WAVE

The weather on BloodStone Isle is a challenge in its own right. Due to the proximity of the Tempest and the chaos it brings, lightning storms are far more frequent on BloodStone Isle than elsewhere, raining down upon the island and striking many high places, although never the great Mother Pine on the summit of Mount Kra.

The miasma that sweeps across the island is a thick mist that rolls in from the Tempest, covering the land and making it nearly impossible to find one's way. Bodgers and other creatures that feel kin to the Tempest seem to navigate the fog easier than most people on the island, who know to not risk the concealed dangers of the DuskFog. Worse, the DuskFog can conceal the Great Miasma, tendrils of the Tempest that bring with them its chaotic taint, warping flesh and mind through the power of the Storm.

## THE NIGHTQUEEN 18-

be absolved. Some, like the FangKnights of Slivingmaw, fight against their darker natures to protect the world of LostLorn from the vile forces of the Abysma. Others give in to their darker natures and serve the profane powers below. Jhæra the NightQueen is one such. How she came to BloodStone Isle is not known, though her timing seems to coincide with the fall of the Three Captains. She has gathered herself a following of cultists that meet upon Mount Kra, who surround the HellHole that leads into the Abysma itself, and many of the desperate and hopeless have flocked to worship her, hoping for a place in her plans for vengeance on all who oppose her.

The island has long been home to vampires, those called Ac-

cursed, who stand outside of the cycle of life and death unless their crime

THE CRONECROW \ CONTROL CONTRO

THE HURLY BURLY IS DONE!

"The crow wished that everything was as black as night, the owl wished for a day with no shadows."

All fear Vraw the CroneCrow, the malevolent evil that lurks over BloodStone from the tall pine, and brings in the night by flying around the island, her black shadow sending fear into the hearts of all. Those who worship her, including the Cult of the Crow, are the most dangerous of people who must be uprooted, exposed, and tried by the Badlanders (or those presumed to be Badlanders).

Of course, when they question them, these cultists do seem like strange people indeed, more than simply odd, and with extreme ideas, but perhaps not as evil as they have been branded.

It is well known that the Crone brings onto the island miasma from the Tempest, and smothers the islands (or sometimes just certain regions) with the toxic mists that force everyone to stay tightly locked inside with a strong fire going, seek shelter underground, or find someplace high above the most toxic parts of the mist.

For this she is well and truly hated, for many have died from the miasma, and many more are corrupted by it and made sick and deformed by the disease it brings. Of course her followers, the Cult of the Crone, insist that she is ridding the island of the blight by summoning the miasma, but most do not believe such lies.

## BloodStones

Oh, thou art a sharp carbuncle, spinel garnet of inner fire, inner light. Lighting flash, fire from below, sunset star stone, guide of motes, feeder of the ravenous.



All the wealth of BloodStone Isle arose from the fabulous BloodStones, sometimes called BloodRose Rubies, which were mined on this island and which are now all gone, the mine exhausted. They were known to emit their own light and to "shine like a torch". It was said that a BloodStone placed in cold water could bring it instantly to a boil, and if concealed by a wrapping, the gem would shine through and reveal its presence. In addition to certain protective powers, they were touted as helping to control dark thoughts, dispel anger, and focus concentration.

But most of all the gems were known to be a powerful form of ortho of the profana variety, useful in the study of the Arcane by the Amaranth Alchemists, who prized it over all else.

Seven sisters shine upon those of our island. When the first sister is full of joy and the last sister is covered in blackness and grief, the sisters' tears will be seen far to the north. This will lead our people to the birth of the jewel.

> "This time I will with poetic art rehearse, by means of words and wit, a poem about a kind of kraken, the great sea-monster which is often unwillingly met, terrible and cruel-hearted to seafarers, yea, to every man; this swimmer of the ocean-streams is known as Kra.

Her appearance is like that of a rough boulder, as if she were tossed against the shore for eternity bank begirt with sand-dunes, and so large that seafarers imagine they are gazing upon a small island, and moor their high-prowed ships with cables to false land, make fast the ocean-coursers at the sea's end, and, bold of heart, climb up.

Such is the way of demons, the wont of devils: they spend their lives outwitting men by their secret power, inciting them to the corruption of good deeds, misguiding."

Long lost favor granted and lost And with epic treasures bold, I can make both secrets crossed, Grant her hint of riches new and old. Begin it where cold waters halt And take it in the bone town, Not far under, but too short to walk. Hidden blow the grave of the crown. From there it's no place for the meek, The end is ever drawing nigh; There'll be no whisky to seek, Just heavy loads and water high. If you've been wise and found the blaze, Look quickly down, your quest to cease, But tarry scant with terrible gaze, Just take the chest and go in peace. So why is it that I must go And leave my trove for all to seek? The answers I already know, I've done it tired, and now I'm weak. So hear me all and listen good,

Your effort will be worth the cold.

If you are brave and in the wood

I give you title to the gold.

To the FreeBoot Badlander Trespassers

Right Trusty, & c.

Giving unto knowledge of thy presence that we have this day received has given us no end of wearisome bother. We must admonish thee for not presenting thyself to us upon thine immediate arrival upon our lands. For this thou must be shamed and make appropriate pleadings for thy neglect. Through the countenance of the Tide Turner, we have perceived the exploits of thy band of companions, and the winning of friends and besting of enemies. News has come to us of thy well-achieved enterprise resulting in loss, confusion, rebuke, and the shame of our common enemies (nameless and bodger), and all to thy profit, surety, honour, and good renome. But thou must know that this is our land, our Marcher Barony, our island, and we shall not or ever suffer strangers upon it without our grace... And

—If thou dost not present thyselves to us forthwith, death shall come down upon thee, and our ferocious agents will grant thee no quarter or respite. Pay now and pay thou must, for we are no trifling monarch. Once we have reached accords, in person or by our agent (know them by their mammoth mount), thou art free to thine own labour, pain, travel and faithful devoir.

Thou shalt show respect, proper and whole, or thou shalt become nameless.

So sayeth I. S. Lavande of the Death Mask Crown The Five-in-Fens You must bring the BloodStones you have found in Dyar to the Basaju villages in the swamps and have a feast, and you need to nake sure that you end your journey with gactly two BloodStones for the Cultists in the rock. The elders of each village insist that you pay them half of the BloodStones

that you are carrying, but by ancient tradition in the morning they will give you back a single BloodRose Ruby.

How many Rubies do you have to take with you to make sure that you arrive at the rock cultists with exactly two BloodStones?"

## Dwimmer

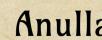
Dwimmer is the fundamental energy that radiates throughout the entire island of BloodStone. In all places, there is a single dominant twine of dwimmer, a single strand of the tapestry that rules the area. There are seven different dwimmer: sacra, natura, faera, sturma, profana, withera and the weird, defilling annulla. To power certain devices, sustain entities or use certain uncanny abilities, you must be in or of the correct dwimmer.

Sometimes a plant absorbs the dwimmer of its environment or a creature is intrinsically attached to a specific form of dwimmer. Sometimes deposits of dwimmer-infused rock grow in the Abysma. These sources of physical, raw dwimmer are called ortho. Ortho is used as a power source for strange abilities, philtrums or devices, or render a being more susceptible to a certain twain of dwimmer. However ortho manifests, it is precious and highly sought after.











Profana





Sturma

corruption that threatens to choke LostLorn, there lies a distinct possibility of not just spiritual but of physical transformation. High levels of blight indicate that a mote is being seized by corruption. Badlanders have only one more life to live, so the decay of their mote can lead them to madness or monstrosity. If a person accumulates too much blight, they begin

In the state of spiritual degradation and surrender to the to change, facing the possibility of madness, mutation and worse. Exposure to certain dwimmer, surrendering to the vile side of one's nature and ingesting certain poisons can cause one to accumulate blight. Those with blight must endeavor to purge or heal it as soon as possible before it taints their mote.



# Of the Blightfens

In retrospect I probably should have heeded the warning of the priestess when she said that the Belted Eotin would not appreciate an uninvited guest for dinner. In troth, it turns out that this might not be entirely true, but some of that may depend upon whether or not I am that dinner. It would be an ignominious end to what had been an otherwise successful leg of my journey.

It is said that the Basaju first came to BloodStone Isle so long ago that their presence herein predates the existence of most of the Birthrights on LostLorn. Here they built grand living cities like Dyar, but with the coming of the Æthenra and later the BloodRose Dynasty, the Basaju retreated to the wilds of the island. When the Tempest came, those that lived in the BlightFens were protected from the worst of the storm. Once proud rulers of the island, the Basaju were left to build their villages in trees high off the forest floor.

There are five Basaju villages in the Fens, but I had foregone the chance to visit these, intending to pass through one on my way to Broken Gallows.

Now, I suspect, that journey may go unfinished. Instead, I journeyed to the mythic Yehling Tree in the heart of the Fens. The Yehling Tree appears to be a forest of near identical trees with roots that emerge from the ground, but is said to be a single tree with multiple trunks all connected in a single root structure that stretches in all directions. Each trunk is like a column extending from a massive tangle of roots that seems to crouch in the Fen like a colony of giant spiders waiting to devour all intruders. Within the roots of the Yehling tree lives Zaneah, high priestess of the Basaju. Or perhaps she is their shaman. I must confess that their dialect is far removed from any of the languages of LostLorn that I have studied.

As an outsider, I expected a wary welcome at best, but was delighted to find her amenable to my presence and forthcoming with her answers. The Basaju of the BightFens are a content people, having learned to live in harmony with their surroundings. Theirs is a contentment born from accepting their place in the world rather than fighting to subdue it.

I suppose it was this warm welcome that lulled me into a false sense of security.

I decided to visit the Belted Eotin on the Spurs, a strange tribe of giants that have but one leg, one arm, and one eye, but who attach themselves to each other in an arrangement closer than marriage, bound together by a huge leather belt, that together they might have two arms and two legs. These bizarre giants have been on Blood-Stone Isle for eons, it is said, and I had heard that they lived in peace with the Basaju. I have come to understand, admittedly in an incorrect manner, that this is because the Basaju do not visit the Belted Eotin in their own territory, and especially not for dinner.

They have made me prisoner in their caves, but I have just learned that due to the customs of this island they shall wait for ransom to be paid, at which point I should be redeemed in due course. Clearly the Belted Eotin have some culture, and where there is culture there is love of the narrative. I am confident that I may win their approval with the myriad tales that I have collected through the years, and indeed, that I have prepared for such a time as this. By this time tomorrow I hope I will be on my way again, but with the goodwill of the Belted Eotin, for who does not value a well-told story? I fear the alternative is a long wait for one who would pay my ransom.



Political factions of BloodStone

As far as I can tell, this blighted island has divided itself into five major factions, each one demographically separated by a unique culture, history, and values. Those who explore the island will, like I have, come into contact with each of these factions of natives, whose strange traditions will serve to bemuse, horrify, or entertain their 'guests'. Trust one who knows, you need to accustom yourself to them and not expect them to accustom themselves to you.

## THE SHADOWVAIN: Cultists of the Undead NightQueen

The ShadowVain are the most feared faction on the island, showing a remarkable predilection to ignore consequences, pain, loss, and defeat; they simply strike out at anyone who dares refuse them what they want. Their many decades of command over the island from atop Mount Kra have given them a remarkable ability to extract whatever tithe they choose when they send their "High Priests" around the island on a giant crab to collect their monthly "tithe."

The NightWalkers are Æthenra who live beneath BlightStone City and who have allied with the ShadowVain as a way to fight back against their arch-rivals, the Day-Walkers, who rule the city while the sun shines. They run the massive spy network which the ShadowVain use to threaten and strike fear in all the other groups in the Isle.

Other than these two sub-factions, very little is known about the ShadowVain beyond their worship of Jhæra the NightQueen, the ancient vampire who lives in the lava pits below the HellHole that is the maw of the once dormant volcano.

### STORMTOSSED: Heathen of the CroneCrow

The original inhabitants of BloodStone Isle were the Basaju, a simple people who lived in harmony with nature. As they spread throughout the island, they tamed the wild landscape and built extensive garden cities that merged their civilization seamlessly with their surroundings. The greatest of these cities was Dyar of the Many Pillars, dominated by its grand Temple of the Twilit Trees. The Basaju ruled Dyar peacefully for centuries, while their beautiful island traveled from LostLorn to various worlds, and the bizarre Belted Eotin found their way onto the island during this time. While their rival communities did not always get along, something of a peace developed between the two cultures. But this peace would not last forever.

A terrible Cataclysm weakened the island, and it was then that the Three Captains, Baron Jack, Screaming Mary, and Bonny Anne brought war to the island, destroying the peace of Dyar. Today the Basaju are a remnant of what they once were, mostly hunter-gatherers and slash and burn farmers who hide in the fens and forests, practicing animistic traditions and worshipping the huge beasts and exotic monsters which are their clan gods. They long for a return to their garden temple at Dyar, buried under the BoneDust Dunes, and petitioning the CroneCrow to sweep the invaders from the island.

### BLIGHT-TORN: Scurvy of the BloodRose

Pirates, smugglers, scavengers, and explorers, the Blight-Torn have thrived on the edge of BloodStone Isle since the arrival of the Three Captains. Though twisted by Blight and haunted by the repercussions of their past, the BlightTorn strive to recreate the glory they held under their pirate heroes, most notably Baron Iack Bloodrose.

It is said Baron Jack was not the first pirate to find the Ruby Isle, nor the last, but unquestioningly he was the most enterprising, seeing in the wandering island a chance to plunder the wealth of many worlds. With his lover Bonny Anne he gathered around himself a rogue's crew, a pirate armada to plunder the waves and retreat into the Tempest, while with his lover Mary he established the BloodRose dynasty in the corpse of BrightStone City. He died as he lived, head unbowed and with a curse on his lips.

The pirates of Broken Gallows continue to honor the legacy of Baron Jack. Although their fortunes have come and gone, the pirates of BloodStone continue to ply the waves of the storm. As BloodStone Isle continues to make its way through the realms, more adventurers find their way across the Tidal Causeway to this wonderful land, and many more victims of shipwrecks find themselves washed up on the shores of the mysterious island and welcomed by the crews of the BlightTorn.

### FREEBOOTS: Strangers from the Seas

FreeBooters are nearly all newcomers and colonists from many different worlds. The most diverse and least tightly organized faction, they have by grim necessity learned to stick together. FreeBoots display the greatest variety of motives, cultures, and morality of any denizens of BloodStone Isle; indeed, the term FreeBoot is something of a catchall for those who do not fit neatly into the other factions. They are civilized folk who have established a beachhead on what is known as the "bottom" of the island. There are several different groups of Freeboots: the IronKnights, HillFolk, DuneFolk, and BriarFolk.

The IronKnights are champions of the Sacra Prisma Church of LostLorn. Desiring to convert all to their religion, the IronKnights have the ability to judge a person's corruption and can determine if someone is BlightTainted. They buy "thralls" from whoever will sell them, and work them hard in the fields and in building their still incomplete Defiant Stormhold. But

they also give their thralls a chance to rise in the ranks and become full-fledged knights.

The HillFolk live in scattered shepherd huts and fortified farmholds, exploiting the island's resources and exploring its secrets. They are fiercely loyal to the Herbalist, and live in close harmony with the BriarFolk.

The BriarFolk have built the only permanent town on the south side of the island. Briar Canyon Village is built around Furthest, the Badlander Station. It is an oasis of peace in a chaotic and unforgiving land and is surrounded by a thick wall of briars for its protection. It is the only real trading port on the south shores, and for this reason is raided by pirates all too often.

And in the untamed sands of the BoneDust Dunes, the reclusive DuneFolk have managed to build their homes, small towers, on the backs of the giant turtles, collecting water in cisterns, leaving them largely immune from the brutal politics of the island.

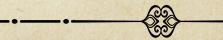
## BLEAKSTONE: Spectres of Time Past

Remnants of the once-mighty BrightStone barony now scramble for relevance in the ruins and shadows of their once glorious past. Once Æthenra ruled the Ruby Island from BrightStone City, mastering the highest arts of technology and the arcane, but they were destroyed by the coming of Baron Jack and his pirate armada.

Today the citizens of the former barony are a defeated people, struggling to reclaim their former glory. They hold to their history with a bleak resentment, directing their greatest hatred towards the pirates who stole their land from them, and to the Bloodrose Clan for despoiling their home, and to the cultists who have destroyed their legacy. They live in a ghost city built for many more inhabitants than they currently have and possess a fraction of the wealth and luxuries that their ancestors did, and they know it all too well.

In the ancient mines beneath Bleak-Stone City, many of the Æthenra found refuge from the Tempest, and some dwell there still. In the dark caverns, they continue to eke out a sinister existence, playing games of bygone politics. Those Æthenra who live on the surface and seek the return of the BrightStone barony are called DayWalkers. They see themselves as the natural rulers of the island to whom all others must swear fealty, and try to both work with and exert influence over the other factions. They are opposed by their ShadowVain rivals, the NightWalkers.







A Lord of creation, such luxury, and ease. My fastness displays the wealth and pomp of crowns. Mellifluous beyond words, yet haunted, I am alive but not truly alive. I am ancient of age, a monarch of the seas, yet newborn. Hungry, indeed insatiable, yet I cannot eat. Lord of the island, yet tremulous of my master, and forebearer, the ninety and ten. I am rich beyond imagination yet I cannot afford to buy the one thing I truly desire, that I used to bathe in and Upon these ramparts, we stand, hope-forsaken. We must fight on alone. Our clan divided. Our scurvy crews all dead. Our city under siege. Deserted by our liege and allies. None hear our cries. Our words echo hollow and unheeded. Yet, we shall never yield. This is our island, our blood stones, our legacy.

# Prophecy of the BlightTongue

Thy persuasion rooted In evil it was deemed Thy protests heard By way of thy screams

When we put thou inside
The old cast iron pot
It was with all the will of Skarl
Itself, a great battle was fought

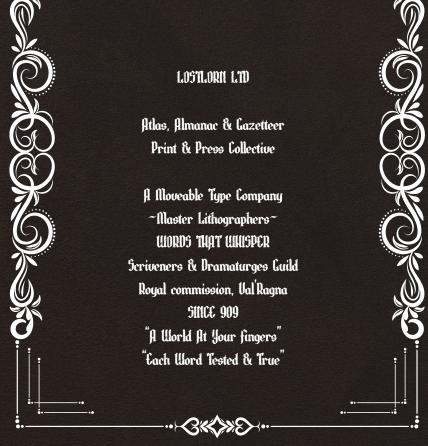
It is said thy fate can be redeemed
If thy body drops below the surface
Made pure again in the eyes of Kra
And by those who stand witness

Yet full submerged
Thy struggle for air
Sinking, slowly, the victim
With fire in hair

With swords in hand BlightTorn gathered around Together they shouted While watching thy drown

Redemption at last granted All thy sins washed away clean By those who condemned thee As bones to be gleamed





"These gallows harvest brave wits and even braver half-wits."