

The PAWS Soulforge

And

The Quest for Ladon

By: Archmage Guildmaster

Many years have passed since the Unknown Mage left Sosaria and life was fairly normal for the citizens of this realm. The Necronomicon was entrusted with the Mages' Guild for safekeeping and reading from this book was outlawed throughout the land. As the Archmage Guildmaster, the task to honor the Unknown Mage, who saved the realm from the army of darkness, fell to me. I decided to put the Pair of Completely Normal Sandals on display in the city of Moonglow as a tribute to his exploits.

It was during this time that the Codex of wisdom was uncovered and all of Sosaria was thrust back into turmoil. Many believed the Codex of Wisdom was none other than the Book of Wisdom referenced in the Necronomicon. There became a split within the Mage's Guild and old feuds between chaos and order returned. Mariah the champion of the virtue of honesty broke with the Mages' Guild to support Lord British at the start of the faction wars. When she left Mariah took several manuscripts and these sandals on display in Moonglow with her. The sandals were the least of anyone's concern at this time, but it's worth mentioning for how this story will end up being told.

A young mage in the Mages' Guild discovered something around this time of significant importance as well. Influenced by the Unknown Mage he dedicated his life to vanquishing evil and one day was able to assassinate the champion of the Abyss during that time of the Third Dawn. What he recovered from the body was a book with no name and no text glowing with a red hue that looked strangely like the Necronomicon. Being somewhat neutral to the current faction war, he entrusted this book to Mariah, the champion of the virtue of honesty, who was friends with his wife, a prominent business woman of the realm.

Soon the mystery of this book was revealed. Researchers found that when fire was applied to this book, words began to appear. The tome in question was discovered as being the Book of the Dragons written by the Old Ones, also referenced within the Necronomicon. What was learned from Mariah's research was not only the name of the unknown mage (Ladon), but the name of his avatar in this realm (ImaNewbie). More importantly though, what was learned was the significance of the Pair of Completely Normal Sandals. It was correctly assumed once this discovery was made that if Ladon did not have these sandals with him, he could not be re-summoned to this world and the books entrusted to him, to show us the way, may be lost forever, or worse-may have already fallen into the wrong hands. The sandals being left behind also meant that Ladon was not able to cross over into the Second Plane of Existence

and thus his whereabouts remain unclear. The Book of Dragons also outlined the beginning of our realm and that there are a total of 12 realms of mankind, something-that took some time to process.

The Mages Guild, the Council of Mages and the Counselors of our realm put their differences aside and briefly reunited under a common goal to come up with a plan to combat this potential threat. Lord British, himself, who was a friend of ImaNewbie left our world in search of these other realms, in hopes to find what had happened to his friend. This was the untold story of how the faction war of the Third Dawn ended or at least-how they came to be paused, for a while. This is and was-of course still debatable, depending on who you ask, and who is telling the story.

It was decided, by our now united group of scholars, that we would break the law of the land, re-open the Necronomicon and attempt to summon an ancient dragon to our world. What transpired was nothing short of amazing.

The ritual to summon the ancient dragon would then be enacted with haste, as time was of the essence, especially since there was no word back-yet, from the King. Our group of scholars assembled in the throne room of the castle to begin this ritual in secret. Once complete, standing before us-was a violet dragon of small stature with ruby eyes and electricity of storms flowing around and through her body. The Dragon did not seem to be a hero or even a court jester, but something else. This must be Lemuria the Forge Master, as described in the Book of Dragons.

Lemuria looked up, briefly in surprise and said: "I should not be her-this is not good-and where is Ladon? She asked. We all started to look at each other, to see who would be the one to speak, something we likely should have figured out before summoning an ancient dragon, I suppose. Lemuria looked at me and said, "human, I am going to need your help-and you are going to need mine". She continued by saying, "more than you could ever know-is in grave peril if I am here talking with you right now, so you need to tell me everything you know".

After Lemuria was brought up to the current events of our realm, she explained to us this grave peril. She could not stay in this world, for the Dragon Soulforge requires an operator and unattended many souls may become trapped and possibly lost forever. Instead, she was going to need to return to her home as quickly as possible and she would ask her brother, Kumara, for help to find Ladon instead. She smiled and said, "his help is of the highest quality".

"First thing's first though, I need to build a Dragon Soulforge here and use the Book of Dragons to send myself home", she went on. The concern was clearly seen over the faces of my colleagues and I, for having that kind of device to worry about in this realm did not seem palatable. Furthermore, if Lemuria

could not leave the Dragon Soulforge unattended in her plane of existence, then why could she leave a similar device unattended in this one.

Noticing the concern, she replied, “do not worry humans, for my brother and his house will attend to the Dragon Soulforge here and trust-that you will be in good hands”.

Lemuria instructed our alliance of scholars in how to construct a focus crystal to the Eternal Void, then she explained that a Valkyrie must be summoned to construct the forge itself, for they are in possession of both the metal required to create this device and the knowledge to create it. “There is also a chance that an agent of my brother Sirius will be summoned from the Necronomicon-and he has dominion over all demons and nightmares, so be prepared.”

A call to arms went out across the realm to gather in force and be ready for whatever Lemuria summoned. Knights, noblemen and peasants all came together north of the Wind mountains to prepare once again to defend our world. Once assembled and ready at a chosen location, far away from our cities, Lemuria took the Necronomicon and with a sigh began to read from the book. A portal soon opened, but nothing stepped through at first glance. Then at once we saw the creature. A massive hulk of a beast and it let loose a battle cry that could be heard all through the valley, sending horror and fright to the very marrow in our bones of anything living. Lemuria said in a soft-spoken voice, “no”. The demon looked towards Lemuria then turned and walked back through the portal. So as quickly as the thing appeared it was gone. Everyone was in shock, not fully understanding what just happened, then Lemuria said, “let’s try this again”.

“What was that!?” I cried out. in which Lemuria said, “that was a Dread Balron General”. “Those are fairly rare and don’t usually come through the portal”, she continued. The hundreds of onlookers said nothing in shock, but before anyone could say anything further, Lemuria started to speak the words again and this time, she changed her tone slightly to be more determined with a lowered posture to mimic her determination.

The portal re-appeared and we heard a deep bellow from a ghostly horn, followed by a flood of water rushing through the portal. This tidal wave of water washed everything away including all of us. Fog then started to pour through and as the waters began to subside, through the clouds we could make out a pair of massive red eyes. The fog began to lift and through the mist was a gigantic gray octopus, ten stories tall moving slowly towards us. Lemuria said in her soft-spoken voice again, “no” as everyone started to panic and run-in terror. The Demon God thing groaned and then crawled back through the portal in which it came.

“What-Seriously?!” cried an onlooker, then Lemuria turned to me and said, “my powers are too great to summon the Valkyrie, you must do it”, as she handed me the book. “Make sure you say the phrase exactly, for any misspoken words could have horrible consequences” she said.

Clearly shaken, I nodded and then took the Necronomicon and with my trembling hands opened the book, turned the pages to the words of power and then cleared my throat. “Oh no dear”, proclaimed Lemuria, “next page please”. “Right, right-you are”, I said...” that was close”, I thought.

After Collecting myself, I turned the page and a few moments later the words were spoken and the portal opened once more. I was unable to move, too afraid I didn’t say the words correctly. I looked up and over to Lemuria for approval nervously. Noticing this, Lemuria smiled at me, and looked back towards the portal, while we sat there in some kind of small overly dramatic pause before our impending doom ensued. With the suddenness of an instant a blinding golden light emerged from the portal and “a being” on horseback slowly walked through. The reigns pulled up on the horse and the portal disappeared quickly behind this being. As everyone’s eyes started to adjust it was clear the unknown figure was a woman with flawless pure white skin, white hair, wearing bright blue gemstone encrusted armor, holding a spear and shield made from the same material. The horse was as white as snow with a rainbow mane, wings protruding from the side of the animal and a horn coming out of its head. This must be the Valkyrie.

The Valkyrie fixated her gaze at me, I assumed, because I summoned her and then she seemed to lose interest. She noticed the familiar violet color off to the side in the crowd of people. “Lemuria!” as she got off her steed and then dropped to one knee in reverence. Lemuria responded with urgency, “I need your help my friend”. Lemuria hurried over to stand up the Valkyrie and as she was pulling the Valkyrie up to her feet said, “I need your weapon to create an improved rock hammer in order to craft a Dragon Soulforge and I need your shield to make my signet so that I may return home”. The Valkyrie nodded and together they gathered themselves, preparing to leave. Lemuria stopped, looked over to the rest of us and asked us where they could build such a thing. “There is an abandoned house just over that mountain range to the south, along the coast. It is the home of one of our fallen mages, the same mage who happened to find the Book of the Dragons “. Look for the orrery and telescope on the roof”, I told her. Lemuria smiled and said, “let’s have a look, shall we?”. The ancient dragon and the Valkyrie flew off into the distance while the people started to break apart and leave for their homes.

Many days later under the watchful eye of the Mages’ Guild, the Counsel of Mages and the Counselors, the ancient dragon and the Valkyrie were able to create the tools they required to construct the Dragon Soulforge and then the Dragon Soulforge itself. To make room for this massive thing, a wall was removed and in the center of the first floor, our group of scholars created the portal to the Eternal Void. Following Lemuria’s instructions, we also crafted a lever mechanism so that the device could be controlled, either turned on or off. Before the tools could be crafted with the fire from the ancient dragon the moons of Trammel and Felucca had to have been aligned.

When the device was working and at full speed Lemuria spoke into the portal and was instantly struck with an intense beam of light. Her scales on her body began to buckle and then she took a deep breath and let loose a violent roar followed by a consistent blast of intense white dragon's breath, crackling with electricity. The Valkyrie quickly threw her weapon and shield onto the floor where liquified dragon scales began to form a puddle and we all waited. This continued for several minutes until there was a great pool of liquid under the intense display. The spear and shield turned a bright gold color and once it did the Valkyrie walked over to the lever mechanism and turned off the device.

"You're hurt!", decried one of our mages. "No, I will be fine-I am immortal, you see", said Lemuria, "once I return home this damage will be undone". "The house is still standing!", yelled another mage, "how is this possible, there is no damage at all!". He continued. "The house was completely destroyed and burned to the ground", Lemuria explained to the mage present, "but just not this house".

The reason we had to wait until both the moons of Trammel and Felucca were perfectly aligned was that Lemuria was able to project a mirror image of the house that was in Trammel to the exact location in Felucca and trick the properties of the physical world to react with the properties of the physical world there in Felucca instead. This was done to prevent damage to the device we created to access the Eternal Void.

From The Journal of The Archmage Guildmaster:

"Lemuria the Forge Master returned back to her home and escaped our realm. All that was left to remind us of her being here was a burnt down house in Felucca, the Dragon Soulforge and a Valkyrie with an improved golden rock hammer. I remember thinking it would take Valkyries six hundred days to turn that pile of melted scales and forged metal into a usable tool, a Dragon Soulforge and Lemuria's signet. Valkyries did it in less than twenty."

"Valkyries as we have come to call her instead of a Valkyrie instructed us that she would be staying here to operate the Eternal Void portal and guard the Dragon Soulforge. She said that if she didn't then the people that died in this world would be trapped here forever, unable to move on, since our realm now has this device that it was never intended to have. I knew somewhere on the other end of that portal was Lemuria operating her Dragon Soulforge and it gave me great comfort in knowing this."

"As months went by there was no sign of Kumara at all. Valkyries assured us that everything was just fine. She said there is no time in the Second Plane of Existence so years here in this realm may only be a few days or a week or a minute or no time at all there."

“Time has slowly degraded our memories. We have all nearly forgotten about the Third Dawn, Lord British, who did return briefly but was gone again before we knew it. Our friends and family have gone or have moved on. New threats arose and we dealt with them together, but still no sign of Kumara. A few times the Dragon Soulforge came under threat but we learned how effective Valkyries could be in combat. We actually feel much safer having her around.”

“I am an old man now and many years have been removed from the time of Lemuria. I have long since retired as Archmage Guildmaster and I often think about Valkyries and that house with the Dragon Soulforge, which now has fallen into shambles and disrepair. The young mage who once lived there, so long ago, and his wife are long gone and that time feels like a distant dream.”

“Something strange happened today. I was on my way to visit my grandchildren in Vesper and rode past Valkyries’ house and noticed it looked much different, much improved but much different. I decided I would stop by there on my way back to pay my friend a visit.”

Kumara and The PAWS Soulforge

On my way home from Vesper I stopped to see what was going on at Valkyries house and to my amazement the house looked brand new. I knocked on the door and Valkyries opened it and when I looked inside to my astonishment were people, I have not seen for over 20 years. She quickly stopped me and said, “these are not your friends you remember. They are like them but they are not them. The Dragon Soulforge is pulling memories from this house and recreating them. These memories have taken it upon themselves to repair the damages to this building and to make improvements to this house, not I”. What does this mean? I asked her. She said she thinks “it means Kumara is close”. She then said, “I think Kumara’s father Typhon has restored order specifically at this location for the return of his son. You should tell who you need to tell to get here and await his arrival.”

Just then the thunderclouds blotted out the sun and it got really dark. I looked up and realized there were no thunderclouds, then looked toward the sun and saw something massive descending down to our location. “Kumara!” Valkyries said with excitement.

I started walking backwards slowly, not fully understanding what I was seeing with my own eyes. Before my brain could register anything, a massive green dragon the size of a castle was directly over me, accompanied by a legion of Valkyries just like my friend Valkyries. There were also several large beings with flaming swords that seemed to be specifically guarding this dragon. I started walking backwards slowly, not fully understanding what I was seeing with my own eyes. Before my brain could register

anything, a massive green dragon the size of a castle was directly over me, accompanied by a legion of Valkyries just like my friend Valkyries. There were also several large beings with flaming swords that seemed to be specifically guarding this dragon.

“Yes”, said the dragon, “I am Kumara”, as he looked at me.

“Bring me the memories”, Kumara said to Valkyries and Valkyries went into the house and retrieved 9 spirits of long past champions of the realm. As Valkyries led the spirits from the house, 9 other Valkyries landed and got off their flying horses and walked towards the spirits. One by one they touched them with their spears and I could not believe my eyes. These Valkyries had merged themselves with these spirits and created living embodiments of them. What kind of strange magic was this? I asked, but received no reply. Kumara said to Valkyries, “there is another”. “Of course, sire, how could I forget”, Valkyries said in return and quickly went into the house.”

Kumara looked at me and said, “these Valkyrie would infuse themselves with the memories of this place and they will work to restore the memories of your realm as well. We will need those memories to find Ladon, my sibling. Your memories better serve you as knowing him as ImaNewbie, so that is where we begin this quest.”

Just then Valkyries produced a pile of bones and laid them on the ground and said, “this is the champion my lord, the one who found the Book of the Dragons”. One of the beings with the flaming sword floated down to the ground and touched the pile of bones with his sword and the pile of bones came alive. Kumara began to land on the ground in front of all of us. Just then all 9 of the champions of our realm, fully alive now, and Valkyries kneeled with their heads bowed in reverence. Kumara then started to breathe a low intensity heat, out of his mouth, onto the pile of bones standing in front of him. The dust created a vibrant emerald green color and I could no longer see what was going on.

The dust clouds finally settled and all that remained was a man standing there with a tabard of justice on. I recognize this fellow, for he was the young mage from long ago, reborn, or infused with this dragon-I don’t know which.

The young mage looked at me and said, “what wonderful memories!” He turned around and looked at the house and asked out loud, “This is the PAWS Soulforge?” then declared: “This is the PAWS Soulforge! This house and this name of PAWS are keepers of memories of another time. for these things are good and should not be forgotten”, Kumara continued. PAWS-that was a name I have not heard in years. That was the name of a small player-run city just south of the Britain Stables, well before the second age, which no longer exists today, I thought to myself.

Kumara or the young mage, whoever it was, turned to me and said the following:

"I see now, and it is time for others to see too."

"PAWS began with a dream, to give the people a stream."

"So, they could navigate the currents together, and forge something that lasts forever."

"To remember is to find your way, and for this reason I have this to say."

"It could be big or small or anything at all, a smile is worth more than gold, and for this-the story must be told!"

"Archmage", Kumara continued, "we all have a part to play, write what you have witnessed here today and what transpired to bring us to this point. Everyone in your realm has a part to play in the story too, as it is the story of your realm. Ladon or as you know him to be: ImaNewbie, published many years ago: [ImaNewbie Does Britannia]. To remember is to find your way Archmage, so help your people remember."

"For my Sibling Ladon is missing, the Books written by the Old Ones have been lost or worse -yet have fallen into the wrong hands and your world as well as the other realms are not safe. We need to re-connect the dots of where Ladon hid the tomes and figure out what became of their fate. We also need to get to the bottom of how it was that Ladon left this world without his signet, [A Pair of Completely Normal Sandals], bestowed to him by the Old Ones and of course: We need to find my brother."

"Are you ready to get to work?"

I nodded to Kumara and I understood that we must rebuild our past in order to find our way forward. That to find Ladon means we have to start with what is most familiar to us first, and then I realized: There is much work to be done.

- Archmage Guildmaster