

THE IRON CITY POST-INTELLIGENCER

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FREE

A CHARTERED SUBSIDIARY OF THE LIRIA POST INTELLIGENCER., LTD.

A WORD FROM OUR EDITOR

You may notice some changes in the formatting of our fine paper, This is due to some exciting news, Miss Eleanor C. Vance, Acting Chief Editor has agreed to step in full time and become the new Chief Editor for this region. She is looking forward to bringing you the news from across Talus with the flair and dignity expected of a Lirian publication.

LIRIAN IRONCLAD CAPTURED

The forces in the Monarch Sea revealed last week that the HMS Mount Hooker was captured by Jhandihari allied naval forces. The Mt. Hooker was one of roughly three dozen currently deployed Lirian Ironclads defending Liria's Northern coasts. The Ironclad disappeared mysteriously after breaking off from a blockade to restock on food supplies at a small island between the coast of the Balihu main islands and the northernmost point on the Yoban peninsula. A late return prompted several smaller boats to investigate the disappearance and Admiral Sawell, head of the Northern coast defense forces, reports that his people discovered much of the crew stranded, living amongst the Balihu. The report provided indicates that a force disguised as Balihu snuck aboard the Mt. Hooker while it was docked and hijacked the ship from port, leaving those ashore stranded and casting much of its crew overboard to swim for safety. Admiral Sawell reports that he suspect Na'ren pirates may have been responsible and may have acted on their own and subsequently sold off the ship to the Jhandihari, but some sources have suggested that the disguised soldiers may have been Dolvanni mercenaries specifically hired by the Jhandihari to perform this task. Admiral Sawell has stated that "It is our intention to recapture the Mt. Hooker before it can be integrated into the Jhandihari fleet, such as it is. If that should fail the destruction of the Mt. Hooker should be a relatively simple feat given our superior numbers and firepower, knowledge of its limitations and our familiarity with the behavior of Ironclads in combat.

Her majesty's boatyards have been at work producing additional Ironclads for use in the defense of the Lirian coasts since before the war began, and both Admiral Sawell and Her Majesty's military advisors have said that the defensive naval campaign is going

extremely well and the loss of this ship is only a minor, albeit costly, inconvenience, posing no real threat.



LINE HOLDS NORTH OF IRON CITY

The highly decorated Brigadier General Cornwall's most recent public report on the war with Jhandihar has been overwhelmingly positive. According to Cornwall's envoy "The general has secured a line along most of the Northern border of the Ogwe territories and is receiving reinforcements on a daily basis from Liria and its allies. Skirmishes have been a daily occurrence as the Jhandihari forces test the entrenched Lirians, making no real progress. Only three major battles have yet been reported, and in all cases the Jhandihari attempts at breaking through the defenders have been soundly thwarted with very few Lirian casualties. The General reported a particularly great amount of fighting directly North of Iron City, though General Cornwall expressed in his reports that he is "quite confident in the ability of Brigadier General Wells and his forces in Iron City to prevent further Southern progress by guerillas and other Jhandihari irregulars."

The generals public report made no mentions of an offensive strategy against the Jhandihari, as is expected, but the ramp up in forces has led to widespread speculation that Cornwall does have some intention of pushing into the Jhandihari territory in the hopes of forcing a swift surrender and cessation of the conflict.

WORKING CLASS AND WAR

Paranoia has spread in the Kriegan lands upon hearing of the increased use of gaseous attacks employed by Jhandihar soldiers. All over the lands men can be seen with large garish filtration masks and goggles while they tend their fields and work in factories. It was reported that

one particularly worried man has seen fit to affix these masks to several of his more prized units of livestock. "You can't be too careful

gas up my whole farm, and then where would I be?"

No reports have been made of attacks that far inland, but as one factory foreman stated: "You never know when they might get the Emir's airship and fly it right over and snuff us out."

Perhaps the most disturbing sight seen, was an entire school, each student equipped with the masks, proudly waving their school flags with their teachers standing placidly by as the students created mock cannons and played "shoot the airship out of the sky." They happily posed for a tintype. Kriegens, known for their unwavering superstitions have always been wary of Jhandihar methods of war, so this does not come as a surprise to many in Liria City.

STAGECOACHES ATTACKED

Lieutenant Colonel Howard Phillips and his band of renegades have struck again, bringing their attacks on Knickerbocker stagecoaches in recent months to half a dozen. Why these outlaws are specifically targeting Knickerbocker is unknown, but the distance traveled to intercept them indicate that these are not robberies of opportunity.

A representative from Knickerbocker Coffee and Teas has said that no interruption in mail delivery is expected.

ESTATE BURNING TAKES A LIFE

Reports are coming forward that an estate burning in Liria City this past month may have claimed an

unexpected life. The planned demolition of the condemned aristocratic mansion went according to plan, save for the discovery a few weeks later of a child that authorities believe may have died from the fire. A half mile away from the mansion the body of a child identified simply as "Marcus", a local orphan boy, was found -- who physicians have determined died from smoke inhalation at a time fitting with the demolition. Authorities have declared interest in the case because appearances would dictate that the boy actually suffocated in the house, but seemed to have been dragged the half mile and hidden in a ditch. The boy also seemed to have been robbed, in that he lacked a coat despite the season, and was missing his

"everpresent goggles" as pointed out by those who knew him -- leading them to suspect foul play. An investigation is underway.

BUYING GEARS! ALL TYPES!

IRON IMPORTS WILL BE BUYING GEARS FROM ANY WISHING TO SELL FOR THE FOLLOWING PRICES:
COPPER GEARS: 3 Q. OZ.
SILVER GEARS: 15 Q. OZ.
GOLD GEARS: 30 Q. OZ.

PLEASE SEE MR. ABE YOUNG FOR INQUIRIES.

CULT OF ASHES ACTIVITY GROWS

Over the past winter, reports have grown exponentially in occurrence and severity of attacks on guildhouses and workshops. While these incidents initially seemed independent of each other, investigations have pointed acuation at increased activity from the Cult of Ashes. A few of the more recent attacks have resulted in the gruesome branding of the Cult of Ashes symbol onto the foreheads of several prominent engineers. Numerous accusations of arson, murder, branding, and sabotage have since been levied upon the group, and citizens of Iron City are urged to remain wary of any members of this cult.

BOBINSKI'S CIRCUS OF WONDERS DENIED

The famed Bobinski's Circus of Wonders was recently denied entrance to Iron City due to the blockades making travel to and from the city difficult. This has delayed the circus on it's regular travel route, forcing them to make a longer journey around the city and it's environs through potentially dangerous roads known to be frequented by bandits.

CONTRIBUTORS NEEDED! THE ICPI NEEDS MORE REPORTERS, WITH GENEROUS COMPENSATION, WHAT SCHOLARLY TYPE WOULD EVER PASS UP AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THE NEWS OF THE WORLD WITH HER PEERS? 3 QUEENS PER 200 WORDS OF NEWS ARTICLES, RATES MAY DIFFER FOR EDITORIALS AND WORKS OF FICTION.

A SPORTING GOOD TIME IN THE PROTECTORATES

Baliyu Cricket has undergone a revival in recent months, due in part to locally based philanthropists The Bosswink family. They have taken an interest in the game, and have generously sponsored the formation of many teams in the area to test the mettle of their imported players.

The season has opened with their new personal team: The Bosswink Badgers seizing victory from the jaws of defeat in extended play last Tuesday against the Lead Barrow Strikers in the longest Baliyu rules cricket match since the Carvel Cudgels beat the Kohlburg Thumpers in an exhibition game that lasted 37 days in 2734.

Early in the first day, a stray pitch incapacitated lead clubber Desmond Reading, which sent a chill down the Badgers' batting line. For the first two days, the Strikers managed to build an extensive lead of 47 - nil, in what looked to be a shutout victory going into the afternoon of the third day. Facing the possibility of the mercy rule being put into effect, a visibly inebriated Charles Porkwell took his turn at bat, and managed to score an impressive 18 runs before being beaten to submission by the Strikers' defensemen. This appeared to be the rallying point that turned the tide for the Badgers, as they managed to make good the gap over the course of the next three days. It was at this point where the Strikers instituted a designated hitter, who prevented further scoring by the Badgers. The Badgers' defense was equally formidable, and neither side scored a run for eleven more days. It was not until the rainstorm of Tuesday last that either side was able to break the stalemate. The tie was finally broken on day twelve of this pre-tournament match by Leroy "Mudwallop" Johnston. At which point the imported Baliyu players were able to enact a "time limit" rule and make a play for victory.

The Bosswink Badgers face off against the Copper Brook Team Sunday next. With no word as to whether Iron City will be forming its own team.

ON NEW WORLDS BY MASTER PING GHU

Lies. You are all fools. Imbeciles, really. I, the venerable Master Ping Ghu, have been to the so called "New World". Yes, I have been to this New World and can confirm

that it is, indeed, a hoax. There is no foreign mystical barbaric land, there is simply more water. You've all been duped. Simpletons. Now, I openly insult the intelligence of you, dear reader, simply because I know none of you barbarians can actually read. It does not matter what I write you'll all simply glance at these strange symbols for a moment until you notice the poorly drawn pictures always included in this terrible publication. I could simply go off on a tangent that has nothing at all to do with the original focus of this article which was something I have forgotten. I could ramble on and on about how terrible the room service on barbarian "Air" ships is. I traveled on one of these "Air" Ships on my trip to the "New World" and can say with finality that it only appeared to lift off the ground. The whole experience was a surprisingly convincing illusion. It must have been. Flight is impossible. I know this because if it were not the Xingsol people would have been zipping about the skies a thousand years ago. You silly barbarians are fooled so easily.

Notice how I am starting a new paragraph here. I do this to ensure that my illiterate editor assumes that I am following the grammatical conventions of this primitive language. I don't understand why anyone even bothered to make any other written languages. Not only are they bound to be less elegant and efficient, it's not as if anyone not of Xingsol blood has the mental capacity to utilize a written language. A barbarian attempting to write would probably end in a disjointed, pointless, unintelligible block of text. It's not your fault, Savage, you were simply born inferior.

OBITUARIES:

Major the Honorable Winston Weatherby XIV was received to the bosom of Orpha on October 11th, year of our Lady 2791. He is survived by his wife, mother and sister. Major The Honorable Winston Wellington Weatherby XIV attended Merrimac Academy, Fullmore Gate Academy and graduated with high honors from the School of the Soldier. Major Weatherby achieved the rank of major in slightly less than two years of service to Her Majesty Armed Forces as well as being an accomplished pianist and composing pieces for piano and harpsichord.

Sabien O' Faegan has passed on, saving Iron City and his people from a Luen Horde. Though many will only remember Sabien for his political rabble-rousing, he was first and foremost a loyal Ogwehoweh who only wanted fair treatment of his people and their land. Not only was he a fine engineer, he was also a skilled surgeon and doctor who aided the injured indiscriminately. It did not matter whether you were Ogwe or Lirian when you were in need; Sabien would jump in to help. In the end, Sabien died protecting an ideal he held dear - He died trying to preserve the Ogwe citizens he worked so hard to unite. His dying words will be his enduring epitaph: "For a free and independent Ogwe!"



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Prince Augustus Abernathy of Lasai has formally announced his engagement to Lady Elizabeth Merriweather of Iron City by way of Liria. The two are said to be very much in love. And were seen dancing merrily at the festival of Tamborus this winter, where the proposal occurred.

IRON CITY CHARITY REVIEW: SATURDAY AT 10:00 P.M.

We welcome one and all to the Iron City Charity Revue, presented by the Cog and Sprocket Tavern and the Lirian Benevolent Association. Come hear the songs and stories of Talus, and donate to a worthy cause. Musicians, storytellers, tumblers, illusionists, ventriloquists, and all those with wholesome talents of performance are solicited to participate, be you professional or amateur.

The Revue shall begin promptly at 10:00 p.m. Saturday night. Performers of all nations are welcome, and cultural exhibitions are strongly encouraged. Lewd or obscene acts, and acts involving animals or children are strictly prohibited. Acts involving open flames, chemicals, and live steel

are discouraged and require prior approval of Cog and Sprocket management. Performers will not be remunerated, but token prizes shall be awarded to popular and exceptional acts.

Admission to the Revue is free to all, but we implore those blessed with sufficient coin to offer a donation. Those of more substantial means are encouraged to inquire as to subscription rates and further support of the Lirian Benevolent Association.

It is the hope of the Lirian Benevolent Association that through sharing the best of our cultures, we may find a way to affirm our common humanity in these dark and warring times.

-Edmund Brandworth
Addington, Esquire.

DO YOU HAVE OLD, BROKEN, OR UNWANTED ITEMS? ARE YOU BOGGED DOWN WITH UNWANTED ITEMS? IS YOUR LIVING SPACE CLUTTER WITH BROKEN OR USED ITEMS? UNSURE OF WHAT TO DO WITH YOU REFUSE? LAB EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG AND YOU NEED THE RESULTS DEALT WITH? NEED SOMEONE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR TRASH? WELL, FRET NOT! I WILL TAKE CARE OF AND REMOVE ANY SUCH ITEMS:

FOR FREE!! YES FREE.

NO MATTER HOW BIG OR SMALL, I WILL COLLECT:

- DUDS- ANY CALIBER!
- SPENT CASINGS- ANY CALIBER!
- USED TEA BAGS
- USED KITS
- OLD TOOLS
- BROKEN/ WORN ARMOR
- BROKEN WEAPONS- MELEE, RANGE, SIEGE!
- SCRAP
- OR ANYTHING ELSE!

JUST ASK ME, DESERT FOX, AND I WILL BE GLAD TO HELP YOU.

(MAY BE SURCHARGE FOR ELABORATE OR HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, OR JOBS REQUIRING OUTSIDE HELP. NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR DAMAGE TO PROPERTY DURING COLLECTION.)

THE FINANCIAL POST-INTELLIGENCER

A SPECIAL SECTION IN HONOR OF THE QUEENS BIRTHDAY

BUY WAR BONDS

The Lirian Academy of Diplomacy, Finance, and Trade is pleased to announce an investment opportunity in War Bonds to finance the current war with Jhandihar. Support the defense of Liria and your own pocketbook by taking advantage of these competitive rates. For more details, contact your local representative from the Lirian Academy of Diplomacy, Finance, and Trade.

SHOCKING TURNAROUND FOR UNITED LIRIAN TEXTILES

In an amazing turn of events, the Lirian military has reversed its previous decision regarding United Lirian Textiles, and has awarded the uniform contract to the beleaguered firm. "I want to thank each and every military officer, soldier, and veteran who came to our defense in the past few months," said Phillip Porter, CEO of United Lirian Textiles. "I always knew that

EXCHANGE RATES

ALL PRICES IN QUEENS OZ.

ALDER (LA) 0.26
 EMIR (JE) 1.002
 EMPEROR (XE) 0.013
 KAISER (DK) 0.071

NORTHERN RAILWAY & LOCOMOTIVE STEAMS AHEAD

Track lines for the Northern Railway & Locomotive operations, previously stalled due to protesting Ogwe, were finally laid down today, after a breakthrough in negotiations. The railway, expected to connect the lucrative mining operations overseen by the Lirian government within the Ogwehoweh Confederacy to the rest of the Liria, has been expected for years, and could rapidly improve commerce, transit of medical supplies to plague-stricken areas, and facilitate the movement of troops to assist in the war effort. In a grand ceremony, the first track across the border was laid down to cheers. Stock prices rose in late trading.

system, has achieved rapid success within the last few years, and looks primed to be a stock to watch in the coming months. Interested investors should contact their local representatives from the Lirian Academy of Diplomacy, Finance, and

Heavy legal restrictions being placed on addictive herbal creations such as "Honey", "Amber", and "Rose", have increased bandit activity in the region as some try to raise funds through illegal means to meet the growing underground prices. Side effects of this include several non-addictive plants being

STOCK LISTINGS

LATEST QUOTES PROVIDED COURTESY OF DAWKINS & EMBERWELL BROKERAGE.

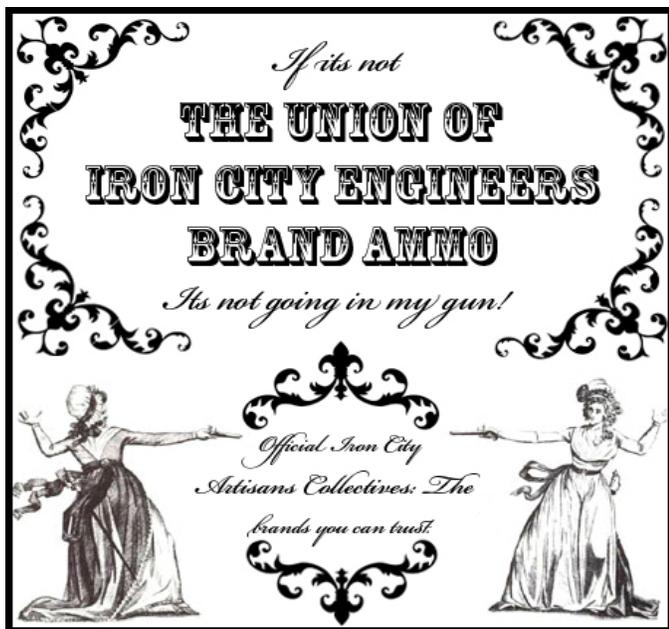
ALL PRICES LISTED IN QOZ.

Equity Market

	Price
D&E Composite Index.....	16.8
Dornham Royal Teas (DRT).....	13.7
Lirian Steamship & Foundry (LSF)	37.6
Amalgamated Coal & Galvacite (ACG)	22.1
Yoban Agricultural (YA)	18.7
Farthingham Tool & Leather (FTL)	8.7
National Bank of Liria (NBL)	26.6
Royal Tonics & Distilling (RTS)	14.2
Northern Railway & Locomotive (NRL)	24.1
United Lirian Textile (ULT)	6.2
First Galvanic & Semaphore (FGS)	20.9
Bosswink and Bosswink Assay & Mining (BBM).....	14.6
Fourth Age Shipyards (FAS)	13.7

Bond Market

	Price
30 Day Royal Exchequer Bond (100 Qoz)	99
60 Day Royal Exchequer Bond (100 Qoz)	97
90 Day Royal Exchequer Bond (100 Qoz)	95
One Year Royal Exchequer Bond (100 Qoz)	89
Variable-Length Jhandihari War Bond (100 Qoz)	80
90 Day Academy Expansion Bond (100 Qoz)	94



loyalty, hard work, and dedication would pay off in the support of our customers." Stocks rose quickly in early trading on the news, and United Lirian Textiles looks poised to be the big winner in this spring's market.

INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERING

An initial public offering for the Hoffmaster Corporation will be made available to the public within the weeks following this year's Jubilee celebrations. The Hoffmaster Corporation, well known for their cutting edge catalog ordering

Trade.

EXPLOSION AT THE ACADEMY OF CARTOGRAPHY, NAVIGATION, AND BUOYANT CRAFT

A fireball that erupted over the Academy of Cartography, Navigation, and Buoyant Craft is being blamed on faulty parts from 4th Age Shipyards. Officials within the Academy have been uncharacteristically tight-lipped about the affair, but it is said that at least one, possibly two, of the new model airships were destroyed. Shares in 4th Age Shipyards fell on the news.

HERBAL RESTRICTIONS INCREASE THEFT

harvested from local woodlands by inexperienced herbalists hoping to make a quick queen on the black market, and several attacks upon local herbalists as a result of this competition.

BROKER RECOMMENDATIONS

- DRT - Hold
- LSF - Buy
- ACG - Hold
- YA - Hold
- FTL - Buy
- NBL - Hold
- RTS - Buy
- NRL - Hold
- ULT - Hold
- FGS - Sell
- BBM - Sell

THE IRON CITY POST INTELLIGENCER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY FINANCIAL ISSUES THAT MAY ARISE IF ONE CHOOSES TO "PLAY" THE STOCK MARKET HEREBY ADVERTISED.

EDITORIALS AND LITERATURE

The opinions of the authors presented herein do not represent the attitudes and opinions of the Iron City Post-Intelligencer or its staff.

WHY MEN SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO VOTE

-anonymous contribution-

Man's place is in the army.

No really manly man wants to settle any questions otherwise than by fighting about it.

Men will lose their charm if they step out of their natural sphere and interest themselves in other matters than feats of arms, uniforms and drums.

Men are too emotional to vote.

Their conduct at cricket games and political conventions shows this, while their innate tendency to appeal to force renders them unfit for government.

GIANTS OF THE RIVER BY STONE HORSE

The Great River Ama, running the length of the expansive Aniyonema Nation and fed by innumerable tributaries, may well be the largest river on Talus. Certainly, none have ever mapped Her every stream, brook and spring. Like roots through the earth, the tendrils of the Ama bind the people who dwell upon Her banks: my people, the Equoni. All that we are, we owe to the river's generosity, and Her bounty also sustains many other magnificent creatures unique to the river and the lands around Her.

The yearly flooding of the river creates lands of unequaled fertility. Those unfamiliar with the Land of the Unending Waters are often struck by the sheer proliferation of life here. It seems as if everything in sight is alive and flourishing in numbers thought impossible elsewhere. Flocks of geese darken the sky, and near the Great Cataracts in spring, the salmon are so thick that a man may walk across the river upon their backs. There are villages along the Ama where no fisherman has thrown a net or spear for decades, as the fish are so numerous they may simply be scooped from the water with a reed basket.

Such incredible abundance may explain, at least in part, the unusual characteristics and physical dimensions of some animals native to the lands of the Ama. While a bear in the forests of Acria may weigh 600 pounds and match the tallest man in height, the awe-inspiring Canyon Bear in Equoni lands can weigh over 1100 pounds and towers over a draft horse. This imposing creature dwells in the limestone caves of the Ama's canyons, and despite its terrifying appearance is generally non-aggressive except during mating season. It is simply too large and potentially deadly to have natural predators, and attains its tremendous size by gorging on fish trapped in shallow pools. The younger bears often amuse themselves in playful mock combat that is truly humbling to witness, for a man who believes himself physically strong. To refer to someone as a "Canyon Bear" among the Equoni is to say that person is sweet-tempered until

crossed.

The Great Elk moves in herds among the older forests along the northern portion of Aniyonema lands. These enormous plant-eaters are less wary than their smaller cousins, so it is possible to move close to them undetected. Woe betide the hunter who reveals himself, however: the Great Elk male is a ferocious warrior in the defense of his harem. Built like a furred siege engine, a Great Elk's antler rack may stretch as much as 12 feet across, tipped with hand-length spikes.

Of course, some of the most notable wildlife of the region are found within the waters. My own village was widely renowned for hunting an unusual river delicacy: the Giant Sturgeon. We routinely saw and caught sturgeon over twenty feet long, but the elders spoke of days when some were much, much larger. Indeed, I have seen old dried scales the size of a Dolvanni's shield to attest to this.

By nature a peaceful bottom-feeder, the Giant Sturgeon is generally sluggish and lacks the jaws or teeth to threaten a man with its bite. When our teams of canoes surrounded one and the first harpoon struck home, however, the fish would become possessed of the ferocity of Vengeance Himself. The normally docile fish would thrash and twist with tremendous force. A solid blow from the tail of a 25-footer would turn a canoe to tinder, or shatter a man like a clay pot in a bag. My father, Long Rifle, was taken by the river when a wounded sturgeon capsized his craft. It requires intense cooperation, preparation, and skill to safely land one of these fish, but the reward is well worth the risk. The scales and bones are valued for a thousand household items, the flesh is succulent and rich, and the sturgeon's eggs are prized by gourmands and Hedonauts alike.

LIFE ACROSS THE CONTINENT BY KHALID IMAD ABDUL-ALIM SHARIF

"Life Across the Continent" is a twelve-part series in which the author describes his practical experience with the various cultures of Talus. Part travelogue, part digest, we hope these articles provide you with a taste of life across the known world

Part IV: The Balihu

Anyone who claims to know the Balihu is being false. With over two thousand islands in their Territory, it would be impossible to know the hundreds of tribes that form the Balihu. Consider yourself fortunate to befriend even one tribe of these amazing people.

Many years ago, a friend of my tribe knew of a Balihu merchant who would row from the islands to the shores of Jhandihar every few months in search of trade. With the nearest island over twenty by ten thousand cubits away from the

shore, I took my friend for a jokester.

Then I met Kamaka. He appeared on the horizon in his two-keel rowboat, laden with fish and silks, paddling with a peculiar two-sided paddle. He easily stood over seven cubits tall, his bare chest and arms covered in tattoos that mimicked the waves of the sea. His darkened face framed a set of pearl-white teeth, stretched in the biggest smile I'd ever seen. Once business was concluded, he agreed to take me back to "his island" to meet his people.

The return trip took a full day of non-stop rowing, leaving me exhausted and Kamaka barely breaking a sweat. We easily found his village thanks to the large bonfires lit on the shore, a signal for their fishermen to find their way home. Upon their return, the fishermen would be greeted by these fires with food, drink and music, a celebration in honor of the spirits who saw to the safe return of the village's fishermen. Not wanting to offend his people, the Mataatua, I asked Kamaka for his advice, to which he said: "They will return all the love you give, your hatred double."

That night, we danced and celebrated life for its own sake. We thanked the spirits for being a part of the world. We feverishly danced the haka, our tongues stuck out in gruesome grimaces to ward off evil spirits (It's much harder than it sounds!) Tattoos were etched on those who achieved manhood and priestesses invoked the spirits of ancestors while war dancers lend their strength through dance. There was no special occasion or holiday to mark the day. They were simply happy to exist as beings of the world. I miss these people very much. People often call each other "brother", yet Kamaka was one of the few people I felt sincerely meant it. Should you ever encounter the Balihu, remember his jubilant smile, his fearsome strength and, most importantly, his simple, yet sage, advice.

Khalid Imad Abdul-Alim Sharif is a Jhandihari Seeker who has studied many of the cultures of Talus during his travels. A fan of various clothing styles, he has worn skirts, tassels, sashes, loin cloths, headdresses and feathered pauldrons, yet never could quite handle the Lirian tuxedo.

AVAST YE KRAKEN A WORK OF FICTION BY CAPTIAN JAMES GESSAR

I had been searching for the existence of the giant squid – sometimes called a kraken for the majority of my life. In point of fact this was the third time I, Captain James N. Gesser, had taken a boat out to try to find the wretched thing. The first time was fruitless. Day upon day. Week upon week until supplies ran out and we had to turn back. The seas were silent, seemingly devoid of life and the weather – mildly inclement. Eleven seamen in it for the money and one Captain with an obsession, a quest to

prove the kraken exists. I was the only one who really gave a damn about the creature, the only one who knew that its survival was only going to be guaranteed by proving to the world it existed. And the only way to prove it existed was to kill the bugger. The second time we took to the seas was stormy. The weather turned on us almost immediately, hammering down and forcing us under the decks into hiding until something surfaced. Not something. The squid. The whole crew took to the deck to see the kraken but the rain tore into them, blinding as it did so. The screaming, the running, everyone hanging on as the waves hit the boat. Hit us and hit us and hit us as the kraken reared out of the deep, tentacles flailing in the gale. One of the men loosed off a harpoon and it connected, somehow it met its target and for a split second the foam on the crest of the wave was tinged with crimson. Somehow we dragged in the rope on the harpoon but even before it reached the boat we knew there was nothing on the line. Third time – this time it was different. We could all feel it – like sailing on the moon the waters were so calm. We followed the trails into the horizon for two weeks, the directions from stories we had heard from fisherman combined with the places we knew it would be most likely to feed. And so we arrive at last night. The moon diving in and out from behind sporadic clouds, the wind cold against my face and there was a movement to starboard. The water stirred, I tied the wheel and lurched into a run to investigate, catching just in time the last vestige of tentacle slipping back into the salt water. I panicked, ran to the harpoon, my finger jumping to the trigger and readying itself. A tentacle broke the quiet water, tip first and began gracefully to rise. The barbed suckers that peppered its surface were a myriad of tiny eyes all staring, mid-wink at me as the thickness of the appendage increased exponentially. Then something else broke the surface – a sign. A real one. Flaking red paint on faded driftwood.

PLEASE

It rose slowly with the tentacle. I paused, my brow furrowing as my eyes followed.

DON'T

Up it went. I could no longer move, transfixed by the badly daubed letters, focusing on the soaked grain of the wood.

I'M THE ONLY ONE

I realised I wasn't breathing and started panting to compensate. It was as if this thing was reading my mind.

TURN BACK CAPTAIN!

It was the final message at the thickest point of the tentacle, I gawped as what must have been the monster's mouth came into view then the whole thing began to sink, the sea thick with foam as it moved away from me.

I walked calmly back to the helm and without giving it another thought turned the boat around. Though I was sailing away, I was most profoundly certain that this was not my only and final witness of the sea beast, and three years later fates brought us together once more.

But that is a story for another day.

THIS ISSUE SPONSORED IN PART BY:

THE BOSSWINK FOUNDATION FOR THE FORMATION OF AN IRON CITY CRICKET TEAM
PRINCE AUGUSTUS ABERNATHY OF THE LASAI, AS A GIFT TO HIS FIANCÉ WHO LOVES TO READ