



HORHAY TRIUMPHS

The most incredible story of all time

Robert Lee Noogles*

***Steve Allsup**

HORHAY TRIUMPHS

An Adventure Into Insanity

By
Steve Allsup¹

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By Steve Allsup, writing as Robert Lee Noogles
Illustrated by the author

¹ Writing as Robert Lee Noogles

This Impressive Volume also Includes more adventures in the Hydralik Age:

VENTURER OF THE ETERNAL RIVER

The Tale of Phosphor

by Phil Peacock.

and

THE ADVENTURES OF THE HYDRALIK AGE'S MOST
FABULOUS WIZARD WITHOUT EQUAL HITHER, THERE, OR
BEYOND: A STUDIOUSLY ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE
OF AMAKRAPOLOS OF KRAP, THE MOST STUPENDOUS MAGE
OF ALL TIME

by Tangor

THE COMPLEAT *HORHAY TRIUMPHS*

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

Robert Lee Noogles (1947-1974) was a child prodigy and the founder of the “Swords-and-Dinosaurs” sub-genre of fantasy fiction. In 1974, Noogles cut short a promising future as a major new literary talent, when he crashed his dune-buggy head-on into the four-wheel drive pick-up truck of an off-duty state trooper while playing “chicken” out highway 13.

Before he died, Noogles made cult history by serializing the novel *HORHAY TRIUMPHS* in underground fanzines. He is believed to have had access to a rare copy of Thomas Bulfrench’s obscure “fourth” volume of mythology, *The Age of Schnarvy*, which has long been out of print, and virtually unknown since it was published in a very limited edition during the American Civil War paper shortage. Somehow Noogles either found or inherited a copy of this extremely rare volume, or else had read about it in M. P. Dugger’s definitive biography of Bulfrench. Otherwise, no actual copies of it are known to exist.

In 1975, Noogles’ father sent me a box of manuscripts to see if I believed they had any literary merit. After reading through the stack, I realized that Noogles not only possessed a natural, inexorable storytelling ability, but that he had, in fact, invented whole-cloth an entirely new genre of fantasy that Lemley Gilbert dubbed, in the foreword to his 1979 novel, *Blotek and the Princess of Pankey*, as “Sword-and-Dinosaur” fiction. Noogles’ inspiration for this new genre was the “Sword-and-Raygun” series of novels by Edmund Wright Bunfurgular. Of course, Noogles was not the first author in history to tell of the adventures of swordsmen fighting dinosaurs, for men had muttered such tales over campfires since they had first learned how to sing Kumbaya in the Upper Triassic period a million years ago, but his tales were the first to establish a recognizable formula for this genre.

In 1982, Hollywood discovered the greatest of Noogles' creations, the bulking, masscular Barvarian known as Horhay, King of Fools. Horhay blundered, blustered, and bombasted his way through the legendary Hydralik Age, a period long before the sinking of Atlantis and concurrent with the explusion of the moon from the floor of the Pacific Ocean, mentioned by Thomas Bulfrench as having occurred some two billion years ago. As was customary in the 19th century, Bulfrench used the Latin word Schnarvy in place of the original Greek word Hydralik to denote the distant age in which King Horhay flourished.

The book you hold in your hands is the novelization of the screenplay based on the Farquhar-Gilbert novel, which was, in turn, adapted from the first half of a rough draft and a complete one-page synopsis written by Noogles. It is our hope that this can in some way repay the debt that the fantasy world owes to the memory of the name of Robert Lee Noogles.

---P. Schindler Farquhar

EDITOR'S NOTE TO THE INTRODUCTION

After the death of P. Schindler Farquhar, a science fiction writer who added 17 volumes of novels to the Horhay saga, I came into possession of Noogles' original manuscripts, and this internet publication of the authentic Noogles Horhay represents the first time it has seen print in a textually pure, unedited and compleat form.

Steve Allsup
Tangiers, Feb. 2008

Meanwhile...

The Tale of Horhay Begins:

Chapter 1: The Coming of Horhay

"Between the invention of sacking groceries and the subsequent sacking of Rome, in a far, strange land still waiting to be defined by scientific analysis, there came Horhay the Barvarian, king of all fools, a cheat, a cretin, a slobberer, to adventure across the Hydralik continent with an eye to gobbling it down like an oyster."—Toadsuck Chronicles

The alley was dark, smelly and damp. Late evening noise of reveling and carousing filled the air with a raucous music. The lights from local evening establishments made a cheerful aurora along the rooftops, permeating the atmosphere with a twilight aura mixed with starlight. Puddles of muck were scattered here and there across the undulating cobblestones, as well as a few empty flasks and torn rags.

Suddenly a rumble could be detected emitting from the alley's black mouth. First there was an awful skittering and scampering like dozens of cats running, then a monolithic pounding like the tread of a stone colossus. Bursting from the shadows into a patch of moonlight, an horrific horde of Joktan's infamous monsterats could be seen fleeing in fear across the cobbles like an icy white water river. These mammalian beasts were insanely carnivorous and often as large as beagles.

Few things could create in such a horde the act of flight. That which was following them had instilled in their hearts a consuming terror bordering on derangement. Their high, thin squealing disturbed the sleep of dogs for miles around, starting up a low howling throughout the city.

And then into the bar of moonbeams, a sandal kicked savagely, exploding several dozen of the monsterats high into

the air. A second later, the entire body came into view. It was a man; but such a man as the sane world has never beheld. The massive giant towered fully eight feet in his thin-soled, worn out sandals, and weighed an astonishing 7000 peckers², most of it lead-dense muscle or muscle encased flab. About his loins was somehow affixed a tight, furry breechclout, while from his neck hung suspended a scintillant medallion of some mysterious, nameless alloy. His face was unmistakably stamped with the irrational, and his strange yellow eyes stared into the twilight like two glowing golden coins. His mass of uncropped hair was greasy, matted and black as night. From his breechclout belt dangled a massive, sheathed broadsword, a trifling toy next to his huge bulk.



The horde of monster-ats had scrambled to the safety of nearby nooks and crannies, and now the masscular Barvarian stood alone in the alley. He was still a youth, though fully grown, and to determine the fool's age from his crag-like face of lunacy was impossible.

In his homeland of Bavaria he had worked among his father's team of garbage-men, and as a youth had forged quite a name for himself within their ranks. Eventually, however, growing bored with such a frivolous existence, the burly Barvarian abandoned his village and struck southward towards the civilized city-states with vague schemes forming in his beclouded brain. For months he had traveled, across trackless deserts and wastelands, forsaking all for nothing.

² *A unit of weight measurement in Toadsuck*

Chapter 2: A last Mug of Weir

Horhay glanced up at the strange, gigantic moon of Hydralia. It rose colossal on the western horizon, its curving outline sweeping across half the sky like a silver cloud formation. The Barbarian had heard that it projected from the ocean like a child's beach ball, for ships had sailed from the coast of Toadsuck and approached it far out in the sea. In fact, a drunken boor of a city guardsman had claimed that pilgrims from Toadsuck and the neighboring nation of Krap had actually climbed up its sides and founded colonies upon its surface, though how that could be Horhay could not comprehend, since he knew nothing of the laws of centripetal gravity. He strongly suspected the guardsman was lying, when he went so far as to claim that the colonists of the moon were able to leap about and spring through the air like frogs. Someday the bulky Bavarian would travel there and see for himself concerning this great mystery.

Since his arrival in the capitol of Toadsuck a month earlier, Horhay had discovered that the height of civilization could be almost as annoying as the wilderness. He frowned in displeasure to recall that he had relinquished his final futt³, earlier in the evening, in a cheap Joktan dive to guzzle one last mug of weir.

Joktan, it should be mentioned in passing, was the lowest geographical point in Toadsuck, laying in a sunken valley well below sea level. The city itself was built around this valley in a circular pattern resembling, from the hills around, a cyclopean amphitheater. Thus, the central square of Joktan was the lowest point in the city. Precisely upon this landmark was built a world famous weir shop.

There, in that weir shop, was brewed the most cherished and exquisite weir in the entire Hydralik world. For every

³ *a denomination of coin in Toadsuck worth about a dollar.*

gutter and sewer in the city terminated at that bar, just as all roads led to Rome in the ancient world of our own epoch. The sewage was channeled through the center of the one story hall in a long trough. A public room allowed patrons, jovially jesting and toasting, to sit beside this trough, as at a bar, and dip mugs inexpensively, thus enjoying in its virgin, unfermented freshness the slop, or weir. The trough was then directed into the brewing chamber where it is prepared, fermented, and bottled into the most delicate and famous vintage of weir in Toadsuck. Weir was brewed from many ingredients, some differing slightly, and in many parts of the world. However, most connoisseurs held emphatically that weir brewed in Joktan, stink-hole of Toadsuck, from its sewage and gutter trough, was the greatest of them all and marvelous beyond compare.

When fermented, weir delivers a powerful kick and may quickly and easily transform an arrogant, clever dandy into a staggering, slobbering imbecile. Of this beverage Horhay had quaffed a sturdy quantity, earlier in the evening, and now as he paused to reflect, he noted the pleasing sensation it evoked coursing through his being. Sated, but not quenched, his lust for adventure burned bright. The bulky Barvarian strode down the lane beneath the stars, drinking great droughts of the plethora of sensual perceptions assaulting his youthful sensibilities.

Of his next move he was unresolved. He had no money: it seemed time to acquire more. All that he now possessed was the great sword at his side and the medallion at his breast. To part with the sword was unthinkable; in the madness of the Hydralik world, a stranger would not survive long enough to spend the money from his bartered blade. Besides, the immense moron felt naked without his tool of trade.

As for the medallion, Horhay would sell it only in the direst extremity. Doubtless it was of some value; thus it served him as a kind of savings. The metal from which it was forged was unknown. At an ancient date, it had been the royal medallion of King Horhay I, Ubum of Barvaria, before plotting had enstated a new dynasty. Then, passed down for millennia from father to son, it had come into Horhay's possession. In

the superstitious mind of the Bavarian, it also served as a splendid auspicious amulet.

These musings of the slow-witted swordsman were rudely interrupted when a figure burst from the shadows and collided into the massive torso of the Bavarian....

Chapter 3: Gnard, Prince of Thieves

Horhay stared down to see what manner of fool had thus accosted him. Gazing upwards in dull-minded drunkenness was a tunic-clad man of abbreviated height, with his head shaved in pin-head fashion. He was lithe but also gnarly.

"Who be ye, knavery, who offends the very Prince of Thieves himself?" the lesser man uttered indignantly. Horhay stood motionless.

"Know ye who I am, thou King of Fools?" cried the man, his middle finger pressing into Horhay's massive, protruding breast muscles. He had accidentally averted instant destruction by using the one insult that the bulky Barvarian considered an honor and a compliment.

"Nay, who be ye, piggay?" queried Horhay gruffly.

"Why, I be the very Gnard, Prince of Thieves, that ye have heard spoken of in a hundred legends!" he replied, polishing his fingernails on his tan leather jerkin. When Gnard glanced up at the Barvarian's face to see his reaction, he looked away disturbed at the incomprehensible complexities evidently passing through the towering warrior's convoluted mind, expressed in a yellow stare.

"Partake of the substance?" inquired Gnard, drawing forth a rolled-up pouch from his breechclout. The substance to which he referred was



parg, the intoxicating tobacco of Toadsuck. Unrolling the pouch, Gnard expertly withdrew a precise pinch of the purple plant and placed it within a tiny folded paper. He then rolled this into a fat, tight tube in one swift motion of his thumb and forefinger. Lighting it with a piece of flint from the pouch, Gnard sucked the gasper until its tip glowed a bright yellow beneath the moon. He handed the reefer of parg to the immense imbecile. Horhay lifted it to his broad, frog-like mouth, his thin lips drawing a huge drag. When the Barvarian returned the parg to Gnard, a tiny, lifeless roach was all that remained after Horhay's titan toke.

"By Gogog," exclaimed the Prince of Thieves, "must you consume it all up, oh Duke of Dogs?"

"Dost insult Horhay, maggot?" said the Barvarian menacingly, expelling a massive, acrid cloud of parg smoke through his flared nostrils. A loud snap startled the man of Joktan. It was the crossing of the gigantic swordsman's eyes, an involuntary reflex that Horhay manifested whenever he waxed wrath.

"Methinks 'twas what I said, if not mistaken, oh Lord of Lice," retorted Gnard, but even before this statement was completed, Horhay's mallet-like fist was descending like lightning from the dense shadow in which parts of the Barvarian's upper body was obscured. Gnard glanced upward as he spoke in time to catch a fleeting glimpse of his impending oblivion. Then the fist smote with an awesome cracking the top of the diminutive thief's cone-like pate, driving a-skelter his neck and spine, and bloodily fracturing his skull. Gnard sank to the ground in a senseless, perhaps lifeless, heap.

Like some Hydralik Robin Hood, Horhay appropriated the Prince's coin-purse. The Barvarian's wide, frog-like mouth stretched into a smile at this piece of luck. Mere moments before, he had been pondering ways and means for his next mug of weir. Now fate had dropped a goose of golden eggs right into the Barvarian's beckoning arms. Perhaps great Kak still watched over corpulent country hicks. Horhay turned and started back toward his favorite weir shop. There, with his handful of newfound coins, he could quaff to his heart's

content, while poking huge beefsteaks down his gullet of bulging muscles and swollen veins.

When he finally reached the place, he noted that the fenced fore-yard was cluttered with the prone bodies of unconscious clientele unable to travel homeward for the night. A loud snoring and moaning arose like the breeze off a hilly meadow of parg, while from inside the establishment could still be heard the raucous singing and boorish jesting of numerous Toadsuckers. Horhay strode willfully across the yard, treading carelessly upon the inebriated idiots therein, and then disappeared within the portals.

Chapter 4: A Spectral Vision

*"I finally found a real man
A bear, not a poodle!
My Horhay is gonna crack
the Priestess-King's noodle!"
--Song of the Faerie Queene*

Horhay's weird golden eyes snapped open. Some noise or presence had disturbed the bizarre dreams of his blissful nocturnal slumber. The masscular Barvarian peered intently into the moonlight and shadows of the filthy alley where he had plopped in a drunken stupor hours before.

The muddy, sewage-strewn cobblestones of obscure byways had served as a temporarily suitable bedding for the giant fool, ever since his arrival a month before into the capital city-state of the Empire of Toadsuck, Joktan. In the past weeks he had managed to barely eke out a living as a thief in a city where the most innocent and overprotected of little girls was born with more knowledge of stealing than Horhay anticipated ever needing to learn.

He intended to sell his mighty sword-arm to some fat, balding nobleman or bony, emaciated sorcerer, until his secret, sub-conscious plan, to enforce on a vast scale his reign as King of Fools, had been realized. Aggressive and ambitious, Horhay's terrific violence was an irresistible force.

Now his round, coin-like eyes glared out from where he squatted in the gutter, glowing brightly an eerie yellow phosphorescence, his every sense alert to find the source of his disturbance.

His facial muscles twitching in the Bavarian's instinctive fear of the supernatural, Horhay watched as a weird manifestation materialized in the benighted lane a few feet from his astonished stare. A pinkish ectoplasmic wisp coalesced into a vivid, life-like miniature image of a singularly beautiful maiden. She wore a long pink gown of satin, and her hair was long, thick, and flaxen.

The massive fool burned in indignation, thinking the apparition to be the tormented spirit of some murdered harlot of decades past. The maiden merely smiled into his transfixed gaze.

"Help me Obi-Wan Kenobi. You're my only hope!" Suddenly the maiden giggled. "Just jesting!"

"Tahel, Horhay," the maiden murmured musically. Tahel was the common, universal greeting of the Hydralik world. After regaining her composure, she remarked, "I have been expecting your imminent arrival in Joktan. At last I have located you. Pray, if you seek your starry predestination, come to my palace of dreams in three days."

"Who are you?" The Barvarian's deep-chested growl rumbled.

"I, Barvarian? Why, the Faerie Queene, fool!" she answered. Then, fading swiftly, the image disappeared.

"By Kak!" The giant fool ejaculated. Then a titanic weir headache sent Horhay rolling in the gutter, desperate for a swift return into unconsciousness.

Chapter Five: The Manure Merchant's Mistake

The morning light found the Bavarian still locked in slumber. Presently he regained consciousness when a wooden cart wheel rolled onto his right shoulder and down the length of his endomorphic eight-foot-long body.

"Kak! What fool dareth?" Horhay roared, springing to his sandal-beshod feet in a huge bound, his broadsword whipping from its sheath. Instantly the bulky Barvarian leaped into the fertilizer cart, as the driver looked back in horror at the titan he had arrogantly and foolishly trepassed upon.

Hysterical in his anxiety, the manure merchant applied the lash to his horses with a reckless frenzy. Horhay was flung to his back in the mound of manure, and because of his great weight, sank deeply beneath its surface. The driver took a spear he had in the cart and plunged it powerfully into the pile. In terror, he felt it pulled from his grasp, and then Horhay rose up like a corpse from the grave, bloated and overbearing, the sword in his hands dripping blackly. The tip of the spear was imbedded fully an inch into the thick leather of the Barvarian's belt, from which Horhay indignantly jerked it, and then slamming the spear through the peasant's breast, provoked a dying howl of hopelessness from the depths of his bosom.

The cart was now hurtling uncontrollably down the narrow alleyway. Rather than risk the outcome of a lawsuit against the manure merchant's heirs, Horhay decided to immediately appropriate those of the peasant's belongings that he most desired and felt he deserved. Thus, ripping the merchant's coin-bag off his belt, the enormous imbecile pounced upon the left-hand horse and severed the binding ropes and connecting reins.

Then he suddenly turned the steed left up a steep road leading north, seconds before the cart careened into a bustling intersection, toppling several other carts. One of the carts was loaded with melons. Another was a plague cart. One pitiful beggar, armless, sitting beside the road, received two crushed legs for his inattentive sloth.

The manure burst into the air and flew across the busy lane in every direction, covering any fool within range. Fat, greasy women with babes in arms stood splattered with manure, weeping and wailing. The corpse of the manure merchant was forcefully launched high into the pink sky of Toadsuck, and with uncanny precision shot straight down the well of the market.

Horhay, his round head rotated like a owl's, glimpsed these happenings. Then, giving the gratuitous nag a savage kick in the ribs, the imposing imbecile laughed, smiling, his long matted black hair lifting in the wind.

Horhay found himself in a celebratory disposition. The night before, he had been a penniless thief with only thin-worn sandals, tight furry loincloth, and the strange, scintillant medallion to call his own. Now he possessed the memory of a special revelatory manifestation, as well as two tokens of social caste: a feisty if decrepit stallion, and a leather pouch of golden coins. The massive, moronic madman had estimated with a swift glance that the tan bag contained a fortunate fifty futts, a Hydralik denomination similar to the dollar of modern Earth.

The gold standard was still maintained, of course, in the Hydralik world. This was possible because, since time immemorial, the cost of a number of common items had been inert both in tradition and by royal decree. This was a list called the Fool's Price, and was preserved in its exact, original form by the court scribes of Joktan. Because of the Fool's Price, golden coins were quite common in the marketplace of Toadsuck.

Chapter Six

The massive Bavarian had reached the suburbs of Joktan and the houses were growing farther and farther between, with small, occasional farm fields becoming gradually more frequent. He was still riding steeply uphill, for, as previously mentioned, Joktan is the sink-hole of Toadsuck, being constructed inside a gigantic meteor crater almost in the form of a cyclopean colosseum. In order to travel downhill, one must either ride back towards the city or else ride some fifty beekton⁴ away, at which point the land finally levels off, and

⁴*Beekton is an Hydralik unit of distance*

thereafter, occasionally, tilts downhill. This topographical feature gave Horhay a vague sense of claustrophobia while within the confines of the city limits.

Thus, he now decided to take a long ride up into the country. The immense moron had not had a chance to leave the city since his arrival from the forzen north, so he relished the idea of an escape to nature to relieve his constrained frustrations. Too, he was uncertain of the legal technicalities involved in the manure merchant affair, and, being in doubt, his animalistic instincts opted to entirely avoid ensuing civilized procedures. Because he was new to Toadsuck, he felt it best to pursue anonymity like a rich man's coin purse.

The civilized men, he had found, possessed somewhat different ideas of justice and honor than Horhay had learned as a Bavarian youth. In many ways, these city folk seemed more savage and barbaric than the rustic hillfolk.

Many learned philosophers of the Age of Schnarvy⁵ felt that this was the result of a dog-less home life. Since the more sparsely settled rurals owned and had superior accommodations for more curs than the urban dwellers, who had all but exterminated their hounds from various plagues and famines, the thinkers had deduced that the presence of canines must therefore be conducive to civility. Dogs, they reasoned, were man's best friend, so in addition to gold, cold steel, weir, the bodies of beautiful women, and song, whether on the lyre or on the lute, a citizen must require the companionship of a dog in order to restrict insanity to a reasonable level.

Of course, all Toadsuckers, regardless of health regimens, were born and would remain fools. Perhaps that was why Horhay felt a natural affinity with this most prominent of all Hydralik nations. Already in his youthful mind lurked the conviction that he was the veritable *Ubum* of all fools. Wheth-

⁵*Age of Schnarvy is the title of a rare, obscure fourth volume of mythology by Thomas Bulfrench*

er this was merely a mental illness in itself, or a deeper, mystic racial memory, he did not know, nor does the ancient chronicle tell.

Chapter Seven

As the city gave way to the countryside, the huge hero reined his equine into the dirt foreyard of a quaint weirshop. He entered the portal, and momentarily emerged carrying a package of food in his left hand and a keg of weir over his right shoulder.

It was in his mind that quite possibly he would spend this night beside a rushing stream or perched upon a cliff, deep in the ocean of trees west of Joktan. To have a horse between his legs again pleased the bulky Barvarian to the degree of exuberance. It was time to take a holiday from his outrageous and evil city lifestyle. Horhay was not a born thief; he was a warrior without a war.

Since the number of burglars in Joktan compared fittingly to the amount of miners in a mining camp, the savage swordsman felt little compunction against joining this craft. There was even an organized Thieve's Guild, formed, among other reasons, to prevent unreasonable punishments by the guards of the Priestess-King of Toadsuck, mightiest Ubum of that age. The Guild had managed, over several centuries, to greatly reduce sentences to an almost negligible degree.

As Horhay firmly nudged the nag's ribs he relished the Bacchanalian retreat he was beginning. Soon he came to a primitive forest road branching off the highway, and, turning onto it, he quickly disappeared amidst the spring foliage. The idiot adventurer grinned, for he knew no passersby had watched him, and, now that he had entered the Black Wood, his trail was lost to any pursuit.

The Black Wood was an excellent recreational area, for most of the locals were too fearful and superstitious to approach its precincts, and the hunting was free, since it was not a royal park. As far as the grisly legends concerning monsters and spirits which surrounded the forest, the battling Barvarian possessed the warrior's careless courage against the

phantasmal unperceived. Too, Horhay was infected as well by the incurable curiosity of youth.

The fearsome fool marveled at the bravery of the road builders, who had cut a maze of tracks throughout the forest by entering only by day and then retiring to the local inn before sunset. This practice had ceased, however, when it was learned that the sinister inhabitants of the wood were able to manifest their malevolence even in daytime. Because he could then no longer coerce lumberjacks to harvest the timber, the Priestess-King had neglected paying the taxes to himself for the land and had been forced to forfeit ownership as a result--creating a no-man's land. This label was appropriate, for there were no men of Toadsuck, still retaining any vestiges of comportment, who would claim any part of its fifty-odd square beekton.

Horhay breathed a deep sigh of contentment as he realized the likelihood of confronting other humans was nil. Still, an eery feeling lurked in his elementary mind as he noted the tufts of weeds erupting from the eroded road.

Chapter 8

As the witless warrior made his way deeper and deeper into the Black Forest, he gazed uneasily at two eaglodons circling lazily above the trees. Though these giant reptilian bird-like creatures were big enough to carry a warrior on their back when domesticated, wild eaglodons could pose a danger to humans and cattle, especially smaller children and even fat-bottomed teen-age girls. In his youth, Horhay had slain many of these massive carnivores, but he knew a healthy respect for their ruthless speed and power.

At noon he dismounted beside a stream crossing the road, and sat beneath a large tree of dark, profuse foliage. Ravenously the mountainous moron drew forth a loaf of ambrub and began to devour it.

Ambrub was a loaf of the blue, wheatlike grain of Toadsuck, baked and stuffed with a variety of vegetables as filling. This food was the standard staple of the Hydralik diet, along with a slab of meat, just as 20th century Americans eat

hamburgers, and Italians eat spaghetti and meatballs. Ambrub could be compared equally easily to the Chop Suey of the Chinese, the chili con carne of Mexico, sadza in Africa, hot dogs at a baseball game, or fish and chips in an old English seacoast village. By chance, this popular dish of Toadsuck happened to be a well balanced diet, which, considering the average Toadsuck I.Q. of seventy-eight, was a fortunate quirk of fate regarding the nutrition of the nation-state. If not for the traditional custom of eating ambrub, many toadsuckers would be quite foolish enough to eat grass, wood, raw meat, or even manure. Many actually did so, to supplement the otherwise spartan diet.

To Horhay, ambrub was simply a necessity, for his primary joy of consumption lay in the chugging of weir. The idiot adventurer felt his day incomplete without intoxication to enhance his senses. This attitude was not uncommon among Barvarian warriors, especially those of a restless, wandering disposition.

Though Horhay preferred weir to solid foods, he was still a man, however insane, and men require food. The Barvarian enjoyed meat a great deal more than ambrub, and longed for a bow with which to stalk game. Unfortunately, there were no travellers in the Black Forest, or Horhay could simply appropriate a bow and quiver of arrows. In any event, the gold pieces he had acquired would enable him to purchase supplies for a great while.

Pausing from his food long enough to quaff a great draught of the weir he had brought, Horhay was startled suddenly when when his nag, who had cautiously moved around behind him, leaned down and procured the ambrub lying in his lap, then quickly carried it some beeks⁶ away. In two great swallows the loaf was gone. Then the horse just stood there, a blank look on its face, the snack entirely forgotten. Horhay was loathe to punish a beast who had so

⁶ *a unit of measurement similar to a "yard"*

thoroughly omitted the crime from its memory, particularly since the horse had simply obeyed its instincts, albeit in a somewhat sly way.

"by Kak, nag, must ye nag me for food so? I shall tittle ye Nagger."

The deity by which Horhay most often swore his great oaths, great Kak, was the common god of the Age of Schnarvy. From rude log arbors in Barvaria to domed, marble temples in Joktan, Kak dominated the pantheons of that misty world. However, the Hydralik peoples were, nevertheless, quite far from monotheistic, and the benign but lunatic father figure of Kak was accompanied by a vast host of lower gods too innumerable to inscribe, particularly if one included the countless additional deities and variant versions of the lesser kingdoms. One old Toadsuck saying claimed that there was a god for every grain of sand by the sea, and even one for every fool in Toadsuck.

If one then added the hosts of spirits, fairies, elves, sprites and ghosts, along with their darker counterparts of demons, devils, trolls, dwarves, spectres, gremlins and the like, beings of supernatural nature far outnumbered humans.

Chapter Nine: KING OF NOPLACE

*"Oafey Ken Nokey! Uh, uh!
Oafey Ken Nokey! Uh, uh!
Eeno peeno massam dee-ass,
Kala, hyenie, tayenny sayess!
Oafey Ken Nokey! Uh, uh!
Oafey Ken Nokey! Ahhhhh....."
——War Chant of the Nokey*

Upon his horse sat Horhay, looking out over the forest below. The horse clacked its hooves nervously against the bald rock of the hill's summit.

The massive Bavarian noted with alarm that the outcropping of rock strongly suggested the shape of a skull. It should be mentioned in passing, however, that the shape of

a man's head was the result of the Priest-Queen having employed sculptors to carve a monument of him out of the living mountain. It had been abandoned, unfinished, along with the other projects within the Black Wood. When workers had begun to disappear, the legends of the haunted woods were remembered and respected. In its incomplete state, the head possessed a cross-eyed appearance.

From Horhay's vantage atop the domed forehead, looking down, it seemed to be a grinning skull gazing up at him cross-eyed. Horhay's half-hearted belch of defiance echoed mockingly.

From the opposite end of the valley a curl of smoke arose. Soon, great puffs arose as if according to some obscure design. Then, across the valley, more puffs arose as if in answer. Unfortunately, Horhay imagined eleven other explanations in addition to the possibility that they were smoke signals communicating with each other, and so he rode down the mountain slope to investigate, virtually mystified.

As he rode along through the woods, Horhay determined to attempt his Kakisms, a rite of prayer he had not performed since the suicide of his teenage sweetheart, Schlobbunza, when he had openly confessed his romantic devotion to her.

To say the Kakisms, Horhay began with the solemn statement, "Kak is Kak!" He then repeated this but reversing the order of the words: "Kak is Kak." Next he repeated it reversing the letters of the first word; then he repeated it, reversing the letters of both words. This went on until every sacred combination was achieved.

To a modernist, this might seem like more of a mathematical exercise than a prayer, but it must be remembered that in Toadsuck all men are fools. Few, if any, possessed arithmetical skills, so fortunately the ritual of Kakisms gave them regular, moderate mental exercise. Perhaps this was the enigmatic design of Kak and his priests.

Chapter Ten: The Coming of Orfner

As the mighty mooncalf drew near the edge of the thicket, he spied a curious scene in the clearing beyond. He

gently reined up Nagger, grew stock still and watched in wonderment.

A slender, narrowly-built warrior in a mesh-mail tunic and Norman-style helmet had erupted into the clearing at a full trot. At first the bulky Bavarian guessed that some hidden animal had merely alarmed the hiking warrior as he passed through the dense underbrush.

When the knight had reached the center of the little meadow, several bestial figures emerged from the forest hot in pursuit. Horhay had never beheld such creatures-- hairy and black like gorillas, they wore feather headdresses and carried heavy tomahawks.

Briefly, the knight paused and turned in the middle of the pasture to raise a long, thin crossbow. For several seconds he cranked the cock, and all the while the brutal looking beasts shambled towards him on stumpy bow-legs. Just as they neared him, he fired, and the foremost among them dropped with a bolt through his breast.

The knight turned and loped off at full gallop. The brutes delayed briefly at the body of their fallen comrade, tussling and wrestling over his few accouterments. Soon, they each had obtained some item, and, cramming these into their broad belts, set off again in pursuit.

Now the warrior had reached the opposite side of the clearing, and stopped again to crank his crossbow. Once more the previous situation was repeated, then the knight plunged into the thick brush of the wood. It seemed to the magnificent moron, who watched all this from concealment, that the fellow stood a good chance of killing them all, assuming his nerve and endurance held out.

Horhay's face turned bright scarlet with the blood-lust of the Barvarian. He decided to assist the knight rather than the brutes, "because," thought he, "even though the civilized warrior seems to have the odds in his favor, and though I am seriously outnumbered, yet I feel a greater kinship to the knight than to the bestial, pre-human savages."

Thus he gave Nagger a vicious spur and launched into pursuit of the "ape-origines" who were now fast disappearing into the trees.

The knight had stumbled onto a winding, well-worn game trail. Down this path came the ape-origines, roaring and howling, and behind them came Horhay and Nagger, the Barvarian's broadsword unsheathed. The savage creatures were creating such a bedlam that they failed to hear the sound of hooves behind them. The last of them in line thought he might have heard a deer following behind him. In the excitement of his howling blood-lust, it did not occur to the creature that a wild four-footed mammal would probably have elected *not* to get involved in such a lively situation.

However that may be, presently he felt his head being separated from his shoulders. One after another, Horhay rode up behind each of the brutes, decapitating each in turn, until he reached the final foremost ape-origine just in time to observe the slender knight launch his bolt into the beast-man's breast.

The mailed warrior and the King of Fools gazed at one another appraisingly for a moment, and then the knight began his cranking of the bow for fear that Horhay was the mindless berserker that he appeared to be.

"No need for thanks," remarked the masscular moron.....

Chapter 11

"No need for thanks," Horhay remarked, annoyed that the knave knew not the rightful born king of fools.

"Tahel, warrior! Do you hail from Joktan?" queried the other, pausing briefly from his loading.

"Barvaria, by way of Joktan, aye, but no Toadsucker. And ye?" rejoined Horhay.

"My name is Orfner."

"Orfner of where?"

"Orfner.... a king."

"Are you the gossiped Priest-Queen of Toadsuck?" inquired Horhay, amazed at the coincidence of two kings meeting by chance in a wilderness.

"Nay, thank Goobar! For the Priestess-King is a malfortunate Siamese androgyny."

"Then where?"

"A far distant land."

"Aye?"

"Perhaps in Barvaria ye have not heard of me," suggested Orfner.

"And so what?" Horhay countered defensively, self-conscious of his rustic rural background.

"It is of no particular concern," rejoined Orfner, as if he were hiding a secret.

"But if you are a king, then what are you a king of? Know ye that I am king of all fools! I descend from Horhay the Great."

"Indeed?" replied Orfner, "so I see from the rare, all but forgotten medallion at your throat."

For a few moments Horhay sat motionless upon the horse, gazing at Orfner through the heavy, pollen-laden air of the forest.

"So tell me, Orfner, from what fabled land ye hail?"

"Noplace."

"Noplace?"

"Aye, Noplace. I am Orfner, King of Noplace."

Horhay said nothing, skeptical of the existence of such a country. "Where is your crown?" Horhay asked him.

"Where is yours, Bavarian?" asked Orfner.

"As yet I have not obtained it, but I shall, I vow. Is that also why you do not?"

"Nay. Back at my castle I have that, with throne and all. I left it home, since I do not wish to be recognized. I am involved at this time in spying upon the Toadsuck Empire."

"Do ye seek some secret in Joktan?"

"Nay, but many Toadsuckers would seek my secret. I'm trying to find out what's going on in the big city, so I'll thank thee to respect our confidence," enjoined Orfner earnestly.

"Never fear. I, too, am new to Toadsuck, and owe her no more allegiance than a man owes a colony of ants crossing his dinner table," cried the Barvarian, laughing gustily.

"Indeed," said Orfner. "And what of the beast-men who attacked me? Are all Toadsuckers so ugly?"

"Nay! I have not seen the beast-men before, nor heard of them. Toadsuckers are a lowly breed... nothings... all fools," replied the massive one.

"I was traveling through the Black Wood," Orfner continued, "and suddenly the ape-origines attacked me from concealment. If I had not had my crossbow...." Orfner shuddered.

"Then had ye perished in a nameless way on a nameless day," offered the Bavrian.

"Nay, then I would have been compelled to flee in earnest," Orfner assured him.

Chapter 12

Horhay's owl-like head rotated, scanning the dense foliage which surrounded the pair of adventurers. His pig-like nostrils expanded, sucking in the odors of the woodland.

"I wonder if the beastman village is nearby?" Horhay asked.

"That would not be an unlikely conclusion. Yet how comes such a tribe to exist within a half-day's ride of the capitol?" Orfner pondered.

"In days of yore this was a royal park. It is haunted, and now none dare draw near unto its shadowed precincts," explained the bulky Bavarian.

"Apparently the beastmen are less affected by such superstitions," Orfner added.

A frog-like grin split the other's skull as some new idea dawned upon his dense intellect.

"Let us then ride by night unto their village, and shoot thy bolts into their stockade until all perish. Afterwards, we may inspect their lair for lost treasures unknown to man. Then, with the scalps of these fiends, bounty may be obtained from the Priest-Queen," Horhay announced excitedly. "What say ye, piggay?"

"Maybe you're right. Whatever these creatures are, they are doubtless better extinct," Orfner agreed.

So set off the two monarchs to find adventure and booty. First, as the retraced their steps, Orfner removed his bolts

from each body as they passed them. He found that he had killed ten of them, seven before Horhay had come upon them. Horhay had killed the six remaining. The masscular madman scalped the creatures, which, to all physical appearances, were identical to gorillas.⁷ Horhay stowed the scalps into Nagger's saddlebags, so that he could find out if they were of any value when next he returned to the rural weirshop two hours to the north.

Horhay shared with Orfner his sighting of the smoke signals he had seen from the summit of the skull. They determined to travel towards the position of the nearest of the fires to investigate. Soon they came to another game trail going in the same general direction they were moving. Now the pair became quiet and wary. The sun was setting in a pool of its own blood like a suicide in a bathtub.

A digression presents itself at this point to elaborate on the unique trees of Toadsuck. The species of tree which dominated the forest was a type prevalent to the Hydralik world called *poke*. The poke trees were bright blue of leaf, while the bark was a grayish purple. The unusual thing about the poke trees was the simple fact, noticeable only on closer inspection, that they were not separate trees at all, but, rather, one gigantic combined tree. That is to say, each trunk was bound to the others by its branches, and, though sunk in the ground, each also shared connected roots.

Thus, if one were to plant a poke seed in one's courtyard, soon would appear what would seem to be an ordinary tree. Then, however, the limbs would continue to grow out and down until they met and connected with trunks erupting from the ground on all sides from the extended roots of the original. This meant that usually, in Toadsuck, where they were woods there were solid woods, and where there were meadows, these were open fields. Lone standing trees did not normally occur in nature.

Chapter 13. Blood Below the Branches

⁷ *No footnote, just haven't had one for a few pages-T.*

As Horhay and Orfner traveled along the rocky, muddy game trail, the latter's crossbow slapped rhythmically against his leg from its belt-thong. Orfner carried a crossbow because they had just newly been invented and he always made sure to wield the latest state-of-the-art equipment. These powerful bows were very expensive because few knights had decided as yet to commit themselves to the transition from bow to crossbow. Orfner realized that, as the ultimate in the evolution of weapons, the crossbow was the world's most perfect armament.

Though bows and swords were common in lands round about the Empire of Toadsuck, the armies of fools indigenous to the latter had tamed the civilized world with the most ridiculous weapon of all, the infamous *chippie*, wielded by the Pink Legions of the Priest-Queen.

The chippie was a wooden saucer which had a circular, razor-edged blade in a groove about its circumference. The blade entirely encircled the disc except for a span about six inches wide, which served as a handle with which to fling the device at an opponent. Its range depended, like the spear, upon the strength of the warrior, but had a far greater range than the spear because of its unique, patented aerodynamic abilities.

As the armies of Toadsuck enterprised outwards to hew an empire with this weapon, the neighboring countries had two choices: either to adopt their own hastily devised versions of the chippie themselves, or else wield an unfair advantage over the Pink Legions of Toadsuck. For, once the weapon is hurled, it is lost, unless the enemy hurls it back.

Thus, neighboring nations adopted this bloody tool for their own militia, and soon the battlefields ran red with the blood spilled by this insane weapon. For only those warriors with the greatest skill in eye-hand coordination could *catch* the infernal disc by its handle. Countless troops lost fingers in the attempt.

Suddenly, Orfner, in the lead, stopped and motioned to Horhay. The massive Barvarian dismounted and slung the reins around a branch. The pair crept forward cautiously

around a bend in the trail. Ahead of them, smoke signals were rising over the trees, not twenty yards distant!

As the two warriors approached the clearing, they emerged to discover, to their surprise, that it lay empty. A fire still smouldered in the center of the deserted camp. Mere moments before, the ape-origines had been there!

"They heard us coming and fled in fright," said Horhay, whipping out his broadsword. "Come, Orfner, let us give a merry chase," he cried, a broad smile lighting his ugly, frog-like head.

No sooner had the duo plunged into the forest on the far side of the clearing than dozens of the beast-men dropped upon them out of the branches hanging over both sides of the trail.

One alighted astraddle the Barvarian's shoulders, his tomahawk drumming a fierce rhythm atop Horhay's crown. The masscular maniac swung his sword up and back, cleaving the creature from head to navel. Fortunately the arc of the Bavarian's swing stopped a mere sixteenth of an inch from the hair-parting of his own head.

Then the giant fool began his inexorable "human lawn mower" rhythm. In this he resembled a man defending himself from giant Venus fly-traps with a machete. Severed arms and legs flew in every direction like grass clippings.

Soon the ape-origines retreated back into the undergrowth on all sides, and for a full five minutes Horhay swung at tree limbs and empty air before he dared to open his eyes again.

When he finally did so, it was to expell an ejaculation of surprise.

"By the googies of Goobar!"

For Orfner, king of Noplace, had been taken. He was gone.

Chapter 14

Orfner's head seemed to float like a paramecium in a stagnant pond for what seemed like an eon, but was, in actual fact, only the better part of five hours.

When he first opened his eyes, he saw the strange pink sky of Toadsuck. It was the primeval gases of ancient Peshe that lent the atmosphere its vivid hue.

He struggled to arise and found that he could not. He was bound hand and foot on the top of a blood-stained rock altar. Around him the tribe of ape-origines was gathered. Some of them danced around the altar to the beat of tom-toms. Others chugged ale and wooed females. Still others, the tribal elders, held council together.

Orfner recalled reading of the human sacrifices of savage tribes. He got butterflies in his stomach thinking about the tortures. He felt a sick dread assail him and stick to his ribs for the duration of the afternoon. Orfner lay his head back and tried to rest. Terrible internal fits of anguish swept over him in his fear and hatred.

At length, he determined to force himself to open his eyes and study his surroundings, although he knew he'd never figure out a way to escape, and so be doomed to bitter frustration. Besides, he was already gritting his teeth and shivering in fright to such a degree that, although thinking about escape might give his mind a diversion, he hardly had the extra energy left from being so worried. He had reached that state of mortal terror called by the modern psychologists *coopa-defarpo*, though he had no such ready appellation in his own language.

Orfner was aware that there are those who say one should never waste energy worrying, but at this point, for the life of him, he could ascertain no way of ceasing. It seemed to him in those terrible hours about as easy to stop worrying as to put himself into a self-induced trance, cause his heart to stop beating, and leave on an astral vacation.

He noticed with dismay that the gorilla-like warriors had posted guards on the stockade that surrounded their wigwams, presumably to prevent Horhay from rescuing him. Orfner assumed it probable that Horhay had not been captured. These guards were armed with bows and arrows, so they might be able to kill the masscular Bavarian, clothed in naught but a loincloth.

Orfner tugged at his bonds to no avail. He was utterly at a loss as to how to save his own life! Claustrophobia swept over him, for though no hope remained, the utter ridiculousness of the situation seemed to preclude resignation.

Presently, the beast-man who appeared to be the medicine man approached the one who was obviously the chief.

"It almost sundown. Me sacrifice white-eyes now, okey, Chief?" asked the witchdoctor.

"Wait! We get good and drunk first-- wait to about midnight, okey?"

"But Chief," protested the medicine man, "how we sacrifice to sun-god at midnight?"

"So? Why not we just sacrifice him to moon-god instead? When last time we sacrifice to moon-god, huh?"

"Not in many, many moons," agreed the witchman. "Okey, me go study over moon-god sacrifice, come back at midnight and we do it!"

"Sound good," said the chief, turning to refill a tiny palm leaf, rooled into a cone, out of a keg barrel.

Orfner heard all this and felt greatly relieved. In darkness, Horhay had a much better chance to somehow free him. Assuming, of course, that the Bavarian had any intention of trying to rescue him. Oh, how truly miserable Orfner was!

Around half an hour short of midnight, he noted that most of the ape-origines were collapsed on the ground because of the introduction an hour before, into the frenzied occasion, of a cask of stolen weir. The medicine man emerged from his wigwam and approached the chief.

"Well, we about ready now to start sacrifice?" he asked.

"Huh?" returned the chief, looking dazed. "Oh... sacrifice! No... everybody conked out now. We sacrifice him tomorrow night," then the chief staggered away towards his wigwam.

Soon the medicine man had drunk what was left of the weir and now he, too, retired involuntarily upon the sandy soil.

Orfner was amazed and glad beyond measure at his reprieve, but, by Kak, did he have to go to the bathroom!

Chapter 15

It was around the third hour of the night that Orfner's thoughts had reached the realization that he was going to go to his grave without having found his great true Love, and therefore die a virgin, when he noticed a pale, moon-like gleam from a tree at the edge of the stockade.

He raised his head in the dark stillness and stared at it for many moments, unable to define the vision. Finally, after his eyes had adjusted somewhat to the blackness, it seemed to Orfner to be a face, a round, grinning face, floating there in the shadows. Perhaps it was a leopard, curious and hungry, smiling at him there from the limb of the great poke tree.

Suddenly, with a loud, echoing thump, the form dropped to the ground just inside the barricade.

Orfner could scarce restrain the cry of joy that mounted to his lips, for the grinning face was that of the giant Barvarian. Unsheathing his sword, and casting wary glances at the prone beast-men lying around the area, Horhay approached the altar where the King of Noplace was bound.

"Tahel, Barvarian," he whispered.

Horhay slashed the rawhide strips and helped the stiff and sore Orfner to his feet.

"I knew they'd drink the keg of weir I left by a well outside the stockade," commented the giant hillman. "The fools will be out for hours."

"I had hoped against hope you had not forgotten me, King of Fools," Orfner replied. "And now let us make haste to escape."

"Escape? What about our original plan?"

"Our plan?" Orfner paused. "You mean... the... the... the scalps?"

Teeth glinted in the moonlight as Horhay's smile split his face from ear to ear.

"By Goobar," ejaculated Orfner, "you've gone mad, Barvarian!"

"You civilized fools never understand," remarked the Barvarian, his receding brow creased by a serious frown. "Insanity is the natural state of mankind. Sanity is unnatural. It

is a mere fluke of fate. And insanity must always ultimately triumph."

Even until dawn broke through the hills, Orfner sat upon the altar listening to the relentless chopping of Horhay's ax resound through the dense poke forest.

And from deep within the darkness of a low mud hut, an unearthly chuckle could be clearly heard in the early morning that startled the mailed warrior out of his gloomy trance.

Chapter 16: Krak, Son of Tard

As the sun arose above the treetops surrounding the village of the ape-origines, a low spine-tingling laugh could be heard coming from within one of the grass huts. Orfner and Horhay exchanged puzzled glances and then the Barvarian drew his massive blade. They moved toward the sound cautiously.

The pair thrust their heads within the interior shadows of what looked to be the chief's hut. After a few moments their eyes adjusted and they saw, sitting against the far wall, a handsome youth with his hands tied behind his back. On his face was a grin of pure insanity.

"A captive," quoth the Bavarian.

"Aye. Doubtless driven stark mad from his hellish captivity," replied Orfner. "Let us free the fool."

Horhay obligingly lurched towards the youth, and this seemed to act as a trigger that energized the motionless captive. Suddenly he began wrestling fiercely with his bonds, and in moments had his hands free.

"You think Krak needs two fools to save his life?" queried the youth. "Krak can leave here at any time he pleases."

"What are you doing here, knavery?" Quoth the Barvarian.

"Baiting the Nokeys. It is the game that Krak play," he replied.

"The Nokeys? Is that what you call these... ape-origines?"

"Aye. They are the Nokey tribe of man-apes. Krak was to be their full moon sacrifice, but they captured you instead and decided to save me for next month." The fair haired youth

stood up, his tall head brushing the grasses of the roof of the low building. "As soon as they would have put me on the altar, Krak was going to give the fierce jungle cry and summon my eaglodon to my aid. That stunt never fails to impress the ignorant and superstitious Nokey. No matter how many times Krak pull it on them, they never get used to it."

"But why do you let them capture ye?" The mighty moron asked.

"Sometimes food is scarce in the forest, and as a captive, the Nokey fatten me up for days. Krak not have to lift a finger," the youth explained.

"Then tell us thy name, Krak, so that we may utter it in legend," queried the Barvarian.

"I am Krak. Krak, son of Tard, Ubum of the jungle," said the youth.

"Why do they call you such a name as Krak?" inquired the King of Noplace.

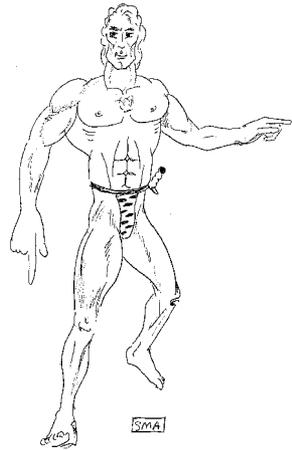
Without bothering to answer, Krak pushed his way between the pair into the sunlight of street. Orfner watched the youth's round buttocks bouncing together from the narrow confines of a single slender rawhide thong.

Krak strode down the street into the square where the altar lay. The rising sun had just detached itself from the horizon and hung smeared against the pink sky like an old harlot's shanker pustule exploded onto her silvered mirror. "What do you think you are *doing*, fools?" He asked in shock, gazing about at the scalped bodies of the Nokey tribe. He turned to Horhay with madness written on his features.

"I am going to find out if the scalps are worth anything," replied the massive imbecile.

"They will be worth some hard time in the Priest-Queen's infamous dungeons, knaves. The Nokey are on the Royal Endangered Species List. You have wiped out the entire tribe!"

"They were trying to slay us both," protested the Barvarian. "We had no choice."



"That's right, Oh Son of Tard. If Horhay had not slain them as they lay in a drunken stupor last night, they would doubtlessly have pursued our trail all this day and tomorrow as well," insisted Orfner.

"Hunfh! What are you two doing in the Black Wood anyway? You asked for trouble the second you entered the forest," scowled Krak.

"Hey little Piggies! We be seeking lost treasures and good fortune," bellowed the Bavarian.

"Treasure, eh? So that's it!" the son of Tard's eyes widened in comprehension, his face wreathed with golden curls.

"Aye, verily. No man hath entered this realm for many decades, and searched out its hidden corridors and dark corners," agreed the King of Noplace.

Krak studied them for a moment, thoughtfully, and finally the insane grin returned to his face. "Krak know of such a treasure, not far off... and it has lain unguarded, awaiting the day that two notable adventurers would come to carry it back to the dens of depravity."

Horhay took the wooden keg in his massive hands and tore the lid off. "Look, knavery, there is still some of the weir left," he grinned hospitably. "Drink of it, and tell of us this fabled store of wealth."

"Nay, piggies... Krak does not drink of the 'loco-liquids.' Then the nigh naked youth turned his face to the sky and voiced a weird piecing scream. "Hey little piggies! Hey little piggies! Hey little PIGGAYS!"

From far away an answering scream echoed from the beak of an eaglodon. Soon it appeared, circling them warily high above the village. Presently it dropped down and lit beside the Son of Tard. Krak caressed its leathery neck. "There, there, Schniffies," he murmured softly. "Schniffies is wary of strangers."

Horhay eyed the massive winged reptile skeptically. Many philosophers in Toadsuck held that it was impossible to tame an eaglodon. Many fools had attempted the feat and had their heads bitten off neatly at the shoulders for their pains. Never had anyone in Toadsuck been heard of to have tamed an eaglodon. Yet here, undeniably, stood one of the

giant flying monsters, as comfortable and relaxed in the arms of the Son of Tard as if he were its own mother.

"The Nokey plunder the eaglodon nests for eggs, and the young they find already hatched they smash with their clubs," explained Krak. "Krak rescue this one from two of the bad tempered brutes by coming up behind them and knocking their heads together. Schniffies was just a sniffing babe when Krak took him and raised him as his own, training him in the ways of war."

The youth nestled his face against the hawk-like beak of the reptile, and the towering creature reciprocated with appropriate sibilant hisses and a rhythmic slapping of its long tail against the ground. "Oh, Schniffies," cooed the boy. "You'll always be my little Schniffies."

"What does he eat?" inquired Orfner nervously.

"Dogs, usually," was the casual reply. Dogs were another species on the Royal Endangered Species List, because of the prevalence of famines and droughts in Toadsuck, when they became the only meat available.

Suddenly Krak mounted the eaglodon in one swift motion. "Follow me, and Krak will take you to treasures such as ye have rarely dreamed upon," he remarked, and then, making a familiar clicking noise with his teeth and lips, caused the eaglodon to rise and soar.

Chapter 17: The Jog for the Jewels

The hot sun burned down onto the glade as two men ran across it. The first was a massive giant, whose tree-stump legs thumped vigorously through the brush. Well behind him was a lesser man, slim and of average height, and breathing with some difficulty. They were Horhay, king of fools, and Orfner, king of Noplace, following the spoor of Krak, son of Tard.

Periodically Horhay's owl-like round head would rotate upward so that he could determine the direction of Krak's flight on the eaglodon Schniffies. Krak was flying at such a speed that he would not lose sight of the pair entirely, and yet would give them reason to be glad when the journey had ended.

In the rear, Orfner was having a problem attempting to continue the pace. Already they had been running at top speed for twenty minutes without a break. The thought of the treasure grew rapidly less significant in Orfner's mind than the sweet thought of stopping for rest. He called to the Barvarian to hold up.

"Ho, mighty Horhay!" he cried, "I must needs have a word with thee."

After he had said this several times, finally the massive fool slowed to a halt and awaited the lesser man's approach.

"What need ye, knavery?" queried Horhay.

"Barvarian, I must ask a question that has puzzled me greatly. Perhaps you can answer," replied Orfner, between heaving gasps for air. The pair stood still, facing each other in the midst of the glade.

"Speak!" cried the king of fools.

"I have heard this, but I must know the truth. Is it so, that in all of creation, there is but one queer creature known by men to exist?"

"Aye," whispered Horhay, "I have heard the same. It is called the Gaygoonda, and is a gross being to behold." Then he turned abruptly and set off again after the distant sight of Krak.

The stop had provided Orfner with only a few precious moments of rest to catch his breath. Now he yelled after the Barvarian as they started off again. They continued running for a time, and soon Orfner had begun to grow weary. He called out to the Barvarian a second time.

"Great Horhay! I must needs inquire of thee upon a certain subject!"

After he had repeated this loudly five times, Horhay again slowed to a stop and turned to await the Noplacian.

"What is thy wish, piggay?" growled the Bavarian in annoyance.

"A thought which hath troubled me greatly upon our journey," wheezed Orfner. "It is simply this: are there not such a creature as the terrible fierce schleopard, who may inhabit this dark forest?"

"Aye, so I have heard it spoken in the taverns," affirmed the giant moron. "But we need not fear them, for they sleep almost all the time. Thus are they called schleopards."

"And yet, Barvarian, think upon this.... will not the loud slamming of thy legs into the ground with each pace, bring them up from the world of dreams?"

"If they come up, I shall slay them, fool!" Horhay turned and started off on the long run. Orfner moaned and followed him, ever more slowly it might seem to an onlooker.

Many more minutes passed, as the sweat dripped off of Orfner like raindrops cascading from the roof of a mud hut. His mesh-mail was not conducive to cardio-vascular endurance. He considered casting his armor aside, but then thought better and called out to Horhay a third time.

"Oh great Lord of Fools! Can ye not hold a mere moment to answer a query of vast importance?"

Yet once more, Horhay came to a halt and turned to the man behind him. When Orfner saw he has ceased, he came up, huffing and puffing, and stood before the Barvarian for some moments catching his breath.

"Well?" boomed Horhay. "Say thy saying and be done!"

"Yes, yes, of course, I must ask ye.... Have ye heard of the strange Skrawneenkies of the south? The wise men of Noplace have pondered a great question- whether they be animal or vegetable."

"Aye, they are the bean men," quoth the massive moron.

"But I must know-- are they men, or are they beans?" Orfner gazed into Horhay's golden eyes with intense earnest.

"Fool! They are neither! They be human beans!" With that, Horhay cried out, "No more!" as he began his tireless pace that ate up the ground.

For a time yet, Orfner continued the pursuit. Soon his fatigue overcame him again, and this time he dared not attempt to halt the Barvarian, who was entirely intent upon the treasure to which Krak was leading them. Soon then, his loud gasps for air became agonized sobs, and great tears rolled down his face, trickling through the greasy sweat. Suddenly, without warning, his legs gave way and he tumbled to the grasses all of a heap. For many minutes he lay there,

moaning and weeping, for he had failed the test of the true warrior, who cannot and must not tire until victory is achieved.

"I have accomplished nothing," he cried in despair. "The Barvarian is mightier than any man." He covered his face with his hands and wept, openly and without shame at his shame. All might see that he was shameless in his shamefulness. It was the time of true testing in the life of every Noplacian, and the king himself was not exempt. Until he had failed in the test of manhood, a Noplacian could not command respect around the tribal council fires. In accomplishing nothing, Orfner had won the most important goal of his young life. "The Barvarian has shamed me forever," he groaned. "Some-day I shall be avenged!"

"Who be ye, piggay?" It was a most musical and enchanting voice, the voice of a young woman. Orfner gazed up through his tears.

"Wherefore lay ye there and weep like a woman, cadavery?" she inquired again, scowling into the bright sun. Orfner saw that it was a vision from some ethereal fantasy. A young white girl, with long flowing tresses that covered her ripe young bosom, and supple muscles that lent her figure a golden statuesqueness, was speaking to him. He answered.

"Tahel, dear lass! I am lost in this fierce and strange woodland, and know not the path," he told her, "If ye could help me I would reward thee with wondrous things, for I am the veritable Ubum of Noplace!"

"Truly thou lookest the part, and I cannot but believe thy words!" She grinned at him with lovely rose petal lips.

"May I have the pleasure of hearing thee speak thy name, girl?" pleaded the man.

"I am Thongleena, daughter of Tard!" She giggled merrily. "Fool, thou canst not follow where I shall lead!" And taunting him, she turned and raced toward the forest at the edge of the glade. He watched, spellbound, her round, golden buttocks, confined by nothing more than a leather g-strip, bouncing as she ran.

Orfner, his quest for treasure with the Barvarian entirely forgotten, felt his manhood rise within him as he leapt to his feet and gave chase.

Chapter 18: Monastery of the Mentallects

Horhay was still running after more than an hour of pursuit, and his sandals were ground into tiny particles in a trail left behind him. Now the massive moron was entirely barefoot, and totally insensitive to the briars and stickers beneath his titanic tread. His entire focus was completely aimed at the youth on the giant eaglodon far ahead. As he trotted along his thick, matted hair lifted and bounced with each step.

Finally the eaglodon settled onto a cliff outcropping. Soon Horhay approached and Krak turned to him with a smile.

"Well ran, Barvarian! Your wildest dreams are not far ahead of you now."

The words caused a final burst of speed from the king of fools as he considered his status as a rich man. He did not stop until standing next to the naked youth. Horhay heaved great gasps for air which blew Krak's light fair hair up like some wintry wind. Before the mighty mountain of manure had caught his breath, Krak was almost blown from the cliff-top from the force of it.

"See there?" Krak pointed to a castle lying in the valley below. "There lies the treasure undreamed of!"

Horhay gazed below. He saw a small temple-like building made of great blocks of stone. There was no moat or any guards in sight on the walls.

"Why has no one stolen this treasure before?" he grumbled. "Anyone might enter that structure and take it with ease."

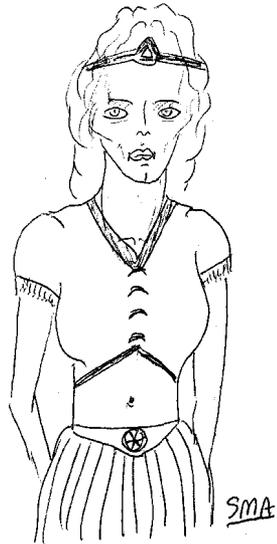
"Simple, Barvarian- I never told anyone before that there was a treasure there," Krak replied. "It has been a deep secret until now. You are the first to know of it."

"My thanks," Horhay grunted, and, having rested sufficiently, began a swift descent toward the building. When he

came to the great wooden doors, he found they were not locked. He cautiously pushed them open with his sword, and then sauntered within. As he strode down the entrance hall, he was suddenly surprised by a chorus of voices singing in an alcove off the hall to his left. His owl-like head rotated to the left and gazed into the alcove. Three female devotees welcomed him with a song.

*"If you seek Goobar's treasure,
Go below decks!
And don't think we have
An Electra complex!
We know that no sex
Is the only safe sex!
Here in the Monastery
Of the Mentallects!"*

Horhay's weird golden eyes glimmered at the beautiful virgins, clad in their white silk finery. These girls were not like the Black Chocolate Girls of Toadsuck. Perhaps, he thought, after he acquired the treasure he might capture them as his wives and take them back to Joktan. Suddenly he recalled the strange vision he had of the Fairie Queene and her summons. Soon he would answer her call. But for now the treasure awaited.



Horhay continued down the corridor until he came into a vast chamber, with innumerable steps leading down to a sunken level. "Go below decks," the maidens had sung. He looked to the far end of the great hall below. There was a massive idol of darkest onyx, carved into the form of a Skull-fish with the ruby horn of a **eunuchorn** protruding from its head. The eunuchorn was the rarest of all legendary beasts because it could not reproduce, and from

the center of its horse-like head grew a great ruby horn of priceless value.

A skull-fish, it should be mentioned in passing, is an oceanic coelenterate which has a body that strangely resembles a human skull. It has two great bulging eyes that gaze out in a singularly blank expression, but the effect is one of creating a freezing sensation of horror in its prey. Below the skull-like body a long tangle of poisonous tentacle strands flows down. Thus appeared this black idol, and a tingling chill crept up Horhay's thick spine.

Casting off his superstitions, he focused on the prize—the ruby horn of the eunuchorn, easily as long as the Barvarian's forearm bone. There looked to be no kind of obstacle to simply climbing the tentacles and then prying the horn off with his sword. In front of the idol was a wide area of flooring that looked like some glassy or sandy surface. Horhay descended the steps and started across the chamber toward the idol. As he stepped onto the glassy surface he suddenly felt himself sinking into some thick, clinging substance. The further he moved the deeper he sank.

"Ha ha!" a loud laugh cut through the somber silence. It was Krak, who had flown into a wide arching window on Schniffies. "Fool! You will pay the price for your intrusion into our hidden land! Did you think the treasure had no trap to ensnare the greedy!"

Horhay's owl-like head rotated to stare at the youth, sitting on his eaglodon in the window. He did not return the laugh. He was sinking rapidly now, and only his head remained above the surface. In seconds his hair would be pulled beneath.

"It is quicksand, Barvarian!" cried the youth in triumph. "In minutes you will be no more and the hidden valley will be safe. The pleasure was all mine, and I bid you farewell!" He kicked the eaglodon gently in the sides and they took off into the outer sky, disappearing from view almost instantly.

Horhay slowly sank beneath the smooth surface of the glassy sand. Presently he felt his feet touch the bottom of the pit. He remained calm. In slow motion he began taking steps forward. His giant frame pushed against the thick liquid. He

would walk the twenty paces to the idol. As a youth in Barvaria, Horhay had won many lake walking contests, and could hold his breath longer than a dolphin or seal. His lungs were so massive proportionate to the size of his brain that very little demand was placed upon him for oxygen. His feet kicked the bones of submerged skeletons from his path.

After some minutes, he felt his feet strike submerged steps leading up to the idol. Slowly he climbed the stairs, until at last his bushy mass of hair appeared on the surface of the sand. As he blew his breath out at last, the force of it parted the liquid like a hurricane before him, and he stepped onto the dry pedestal of the idol. The glassy sand dripped off his titanic frame in great, globular gobbets. He gazed up and beheld the ruby horn of the eunuchorn above.

Swiftly he shimmied up the slippery tentacles to the skull-like bulb. With both hands he grasped the horn, and then let his full weight dangle from it. With a rending crack the horn was pulled from the socket, and he slid back down to the floor.

Horhay moved around the base of the idol and discovered a passageway behind. A long tunnel led to a hidden escape passage that emerged far out into the meadow surrounding the castle, behind a clump of boulders. His mighty form stood tall on the summit of the boulders in triumph. He held aloft the red ruby horn to the sky.

"Hey little Piggies! Hey little Piggies! Hey little PIGGAYS!" Horhay gave vent to the weird victory song of Toadsuck, his adopted land. The land of Toadsuck had rewarded the Barvarian's long and senseless quest for total insanity. At this moment Horhay felt crazier than he had ever felt before. The sheer inhuman volume of the victory cry burst the eardrums of small forest creatures nearby.

Soon he must return to Joktan, and he would return in triumph!

Chapter 19: The Diabolical Doctor Kneel

"There is another branch of ancient superstitions which ought not to be entirely overlooked, especially as it prefigures the culture from which we, with our genetic inheritance, derive our intelligence. It is that of the Hydralik nations, who inhabited the countries known as Toadsuck, Barvaria, Assguard and Krap. These mythological records are contained in a collection called The Toadsucking Chronicles, which is written in prose poetry and dates back to the two millionth millenium."

— BULFRENCH, *The Age of Schnarvy*

Horhay thrust the ruby horn into his belt and walked back to the Nokey village, where he found Nagger still tied and quite hungry as usual. The mighty moron then gathered up the ape-origine scalps and stuffed them into his saddlebags. Without further delay he mounted Nagger and set off through the hills of the Black Wood, determined to reach the weir shop before nightfall and barter his "pelts."

As he rode once more through the forbidden forest, the behemoth of Barvaria knew not what next to expect. He took a different route than before, in order to avoid intercourse with more Nokey beastmen of other tribes. Presently Horhay rounded a hill and espied a weird sight. Below him in a glade he beheld an odd windowless brick building with a triangularly shaped, fenced rear yard behind it. The building seemed new and strange compared with the usual grass roofed shanties of Toadsuck. But here stood this lone building, the forest looming behind it. Horhay urged Nagger down the hill to investigate.

All at once he was accosted by a giant ogre, three times his own towering height, that lunged from behind a stand of Poke trees. Even as the Barvarian started in amazement, the ogre, who was making a meal of a deer, noticed the homely visage of the king of fools. The terrible brute, roaring with delight, plowed through the trees, and the poor Barvarian had but time to withdraw his sword, so rapid was the advance of

the giant. The ogre grasped Horhay about the loins and lifted him off the back of the terrified Nagger. The giant shook him, and squeezed him, and at length prepared to bite off his head, as Horhay's mighty sword recoiled from the elephantine hide of the demon, with no effect.

Suddenly, Horhay's bulging eyes perceived a small oriental lad rise up from behind a bush and throw a small volume, bound in black leather. He hurled it with all his force at the heart cavity of the ogre, and to the Barvarian's amazement, it entered into the ribs of the monster, causing him to howl abominably. Thereafter, the ogre dissolved into nothingness, and Horhay fell to the ground with a sickening thud. At this, the child rushed forward to assist him.

Soon the child began gesturing frantically as strange creatures began to bustle out from small door flaps in the wall of the building. Horhay saw that they were in the shape of Nokey ape-origines, except that they were made of metal instead of skin and fur. "**Aaaiiiieeee! Dokka Kneel's crockwork 'rangatangs!'**" cried the boy. Each of these creatures was dressed in a quaint looking outfit: white pants and suspenders, black boots with a derby hat on their heads. Each carried a short stick in its hand that was wielded as a club.

As these shambled closer Horhay rose up and ran to meet them, his sword dashing their mechanical mechanisms into a hundred pieces. The strange machines circled him as they walked, squalked and balked. The Barvarian found it no great effort to send them flying in every direction, until at last they lay in the grasses torn asunder, their appendages quivering helplessly.

Now in the portal of the building appeared a tall, imposing oriental man in a long white coat. In his hands he held a small magic box, which he was busily engaged in shaking and fingering frantically. Beside him were five youths, apparently his sons, who were similar to the taller man in general appearance. The small boy beside Horhay began pleading with him to attack them. Hysterically he pointed to the six, and then gazed earnestly into Horhay's eyes while drawing his finger across his throat meaningfully. "He made the ogre with that little box! Smash it or he bring more!"

Horhay then roused himself up, and, convinced that the tall oriental man called Kneel was responsible for the ogre attack, bounded toward them with all the fury of an obese berserker. Though the five youths surrounded the Barvarian at a safe distance, jumping and running, hurling taunts and yelling insults, Horhay made straight for the adult with the box clutched in his hands.

"What is wrong with this infernal Pseudo-psionic Hologrameter?" cried Dr. Kneel. As the massive moron neared him, the unsuccessful wizard began to stumble backwards, while raising the box menacingly and continuing to fumble with the controls. At this, Horhay's sword flashed down and found its mark. The magic box, along with the oriental's right hand, lay smashed on the soil.

Kneel turned and ran behind the building, his right arm pumping out blood. Then the five youths chased after him, and Horhay glimpsed them climbing into a weird boat of some sort and then, shimmering in the clear forest air, fade away into nothing it seemed. Then Horhay and the small boy were alone in the Black Wood.

"By Kak!" swore the Barvarian. "Who were those fools?"

"Dr. Kneel and his five sons: Neel, Neal, Neil, Kneal, and Kneil," replied the child. "A thousand thanks, great one, for your excellent deeds! You have freed poor Toe Foo."

"From what strange land do ye hail, then, Toe Foo?" inquired the puzzled Horhay.

"Dr. Kneel, he come from future, great one! He right-wing fanatic, try to impose total strict order upon all life," Toe Foo explained. "He work for the commanusts, and take me a slave a do his abidding. His sons very mean to me." Horhay noticed the bruises covering the poor lad's face and limbs, and his massive hand tousled the boy's hair gently. "The commanusts come and try take him in jail, because he too right-wing, but we get away in time-boat, and come back here, million years before our day."

Toe Foo had to glance away when he saw the expression of pure bewilderment in the Barvarian's golden eyes. Politics were never Horhay's strong suit. For him, life was simple: a crown held by a bloody blade. Subtleties and diplomacy were

beyond his range of vision. Thus would he one day rule all fools!

"When they return, I shall not let them have this place. I shall take this strange castle as my hideaway."

"They shall not return here, I don't think," said Toe Foo. "They leave in time-boat-- it take them to 'nother world far away." With such a magic boat, a wizard could voyage into sorcerous worlds beyond worlds, to golden realms un-guessed, and the wondering Barvarian could only ponder the awesome energies of a boat that could suddenly disappear when there was no water. He could not begin to imagine their unknown destination.

"My thanks, too, tiny one, for hurling the book into the heart of the ogre," said Horhay, "for unless ye had done that very deed, today might be the day of memorial for this land-less rogue." This day they had saved each other in turn, from fates worse than death, and each knew in his heart he would not soon forget.

"What mighty book of olden lore was its name?"

"It was Noo Tessament," cried the boy gleefully.

"Come," said the massive moron. Horhay and the boy found Nagger hiding behind a tree. Horhay sat Toe Foo in front of him in the saddle and they started down the road. The barvarian had no idea what he would do with his small companion. Perhaps he could take him back into Joktan and find a wench willing to take him in. They rode for many miles.

"By the kindness of Kak!" Such a soft oath seldom found its way from the lips of the massive moron, as he sat upon the emaciated gray horse. The warrior's bristling eyebrows came together in a long deep crease as he surveyed the startling scene. Before him, at the other side of the time-lost clearing somewhere in the Black Wood, a scene unfolded that might send a madman chattering even further into the depths of perdition.

Horhay, the Barvarian, against whose extreme foolishness none might long contend, blinked hard against the blazing noonday sun to ascertain that he was not, in fact, experiencing delusions in his mind resulting from the exces-

sive use of certain "medicinal" recreations he had previously obtained from depraved acquaintances in Joktan. For there before him lolled upon the carpet of grasses the youth Krak, naked but for a leopard jockey strap, intent upon wrestling with a score of playful Nokey gorilla-children.

"Krak!" exclaimed Toe Foo, slipping from the saddle and running across the glade. " See, de mighty warrior has fled me from Dokka Kneel and his evil sons!"

He ran to the son of Tard and threw his arms around his legs. Krak sent a deep hard look of pure hatred at the Barvarian but then smiled as he gently tousled Toe Foo's black hair. Horhay saw that the two were good friends, and that they felt a strong bond between them. There could be no peace between Horhay and Krak. The son of Tard had betrayed the Barvarian into a trap, leaving him for dead. In truth, Horhay desired nothing more than to beat Krak to a pulp, into the ground. Now Krak had taken the place of affection in the boy's heart that Horhay had held supreme only moments before. Horhay could see he was not needed. Krak would take care of the boy. The massive moron would take his vengeance against the naked youth someday, but for now he would go away, alone again to face his destiny.

When Toe Foo finally turned from Krak to gaze back at the Barvarian, Horhay and Nagger were gone. Krak acted as if he had seen no one. Toe Foo thought in his mind that Horhay must have been a veritable genie of Goobar, who had now disappeared to return to the "land beyond the valleys below." He shrugged, and began to play with the Nokey apes. With Krak he would be safe.

Chapter 20: The Coming of Phosphor

Horhay was lost. The obese berserker had ridden Nagger around in circles for the entire afternoon, and it would not be long before sunset. The confusing maze of abandoned roads that criss-crossed the Black Wood were impossible to comprehend. At length he emerged from the edge of the Wood.

Before him lay an endless prairie to the south. It presented a spectacular panorama. Horhay thought that at some

point to the south was the Eternal River Stynx, which bisected the continent of Peshe from east to west. To his left a few miles, he could see the River of Toadsuck that flowed southward from Joktan, through the Black Wood, and finally flowed into the Stynx. Beyond the Stynx was the blasted desert of Nothing. To the west was a massive range of mountains, looming in the distance.

He was on the opposite side of the Black Wood from where he wished to go, for Joktan was on the northern boundary of that forbidden forest. His stomach ached with a wound that he had received at the hands of Dr. Kneel's giant ogre. As the ogre had squeezed the Barvarian in his giant hands, Horhay's sword had slid out from its sheath a foot, and sliced open his belly as the monster had kneaded him in its grasp. The constant riding had jostled it open so that it was bleeding yet again. He dismounted, somewhat discouraged, and glanced about him. Just within the shadow of the forest, off to his right, he could perceive some ragged ruins jutting up among the poke leaves. He led the horse over to the ruins to investigate. There he found what was left of some ancient tower, and he lay down in the shadow of the porch, the precious saddlebags with the ruby horn of the eunuchorn by his side.

The bleeding from the wound lessened from his quiet position, and he began to half doze, meditating casually upon his big toe, far at the extremity of his giant bulk. Beyond the toe stretched the limitless plain, which shimmered in the late afternoon sun. At some point he became aware of a movement far away, just to the right of his toenail, that suddenly seemed to appeared out of nowhere. Slowly the moving figure grew larger, until he could see it was a warrior riding upon a giant desert rat.

It should be noted in passing that rats were of much greater importance during the Hydralik Age than today. Besides the monsterats and carnivorats that infested cities, as big as dogs, some species of desert rats were easily as large as donkeys and ponies. It was common for the dwellers of the desert in that day to ride upon the tough, resilient rats much like Arabs ride upon camels in our own age.

As the stranger drew nigh unto the ruins at the edge of the wood, a look of astonishment lit his facial features when he saw the massive moron resting in the shade.

“By all the Graxian idols of Nocity,” ejaculated the figure on the desert rat, “be ye Horhay, King of all Fools??”

“Verily, kanave,” retorted the Barvarian in surprise, “King of all Fools from Hyperbolla to Schloob. Word travels fast indeed!”

Greatly impressed with this news, the warrior dismounted his rat in reverence. He had heard tales in his distant land to the south of a strange wandering adventurer with a mighty destiny. Upon sight he had readily recognized who he must be.

Horhay did not arise. As the other man approached, he merely heaved up upon one elbow, which started the blood trickling from his stomach wound yet again. Horhay gazed at the other man in great concentration, attempting to recall if he had seen his visage in some past adventure. Finally he spoke.

“Who doth dare to arouse the King of Fools from his idle reverie?” he bellowed. “Speak, cadavery, for I sense I know thee not!”

“I be Phosphor, the Conqueror of Nothing!” the man proclaimed, without embarrassment. He gazed stupidly at the prone Barvarian, and presently detected the blood seeping from his wound. “By the Bodicean lice, why bleedeth thou, Fool of Fools?”

At hearing the identity of Phosphor, Horhay immediately became suspicious that here was another spy, like Orfner, some dangerous idiot from the south come up to plunder the poverty of Toadsuck. It did not occur to the massive moron that he was himself just such a landless foreigner come for that same purpose. He laid a thick arm across each of his two bags, which contained his invaluable prizes.

“Hey little Piggays!” cried Horhay. “I have but two satchels: one holds a roasted sewer rat, upon which I have not yet supped. The other doth contain my sword of mighty trashmetal.” Horhay’s sword was actually beneath his gargantuan body as he lay upon it, and unseen by the Nothing.

Trashmetal was considered the most advanced means of tempering a blade in those days. Horhay's father had fashioned his son's blade from the trashmetal in his own junkyard.

"So then thou has not partaken of the carnivorat, and thus thy stomach doth bleed from lack of sustenance?" spewed Phosphor.

"Nay, by a thousand Schiller slaves," replied Horhay grimly, shaking his round head, "It doth bleed from that I did eat my sword!"

Phosphor stared in awe, entirely misunderstanding Horhay's allusion. Dimly he recalled the sword-eaters of No-place, that were able to slide the length of a blade down into their innards. He felt pity that Horhay, so manly that, when starving, could eat a trashmetal sword, and yet suffer the pains of indigestion from its sharpness.

Suddenly from the ruined tower behind the Barvarian came a weird unearthly cry. "Oo-loo-oo-loo boops!" It seemed to say. "Ee-lee-ee-lee stooks!"

The heads of both warriors whipped around to the sounds. They focused all their attention toward the dark doorway that gaped in the darkness now that the sun had set in the west.

"Boopa-boopa NOOT!"

"By the googies of Goobar, who doth hide within?" hollered Horhay.

A strange, scintillant spectre peered from the gloom. Its head was all covered with eyes on all sides. "Legion, doggies! We be Legion!" It said with a myriad of voices in chorus. "For we are many!"

"Tis some dread demon from darkest doom," hissed Phosphor.

Horhay stealthily drew his sword, and with unerring precision, flung it at the head of the spectre. The trashmetal blade flew through the entity without resistance and disappeared into the darkness of the tower. The two warriors heard it clatter against the far wall of stone. The engorged gargantuan hurled the full weight of his body at the spectre, and tripped on the portal as he did so. He went sprawling

upon his face inside the tower. He crawled upon his knees in the blackness, feeling for his sword.

“May the curses of Kak confound thee, demon! May the gigglings of Goobar greet thee in the rockbound caverns of the nether regions,” Phosphor cried, pointing his slender finger at the entity.

“Nee-hee-nee-hee- SNIK!” cried the demon.

“May the very might of Gogog on the last day of doom hurl thee into the abyss!” cried Phosphor.

Bob-bob-bob-bob- BOOP!” shrieked the entity, and then disappeared in a bursting rainbow.

“It is gone, Barvarian!” said Phosphor. “My mighty oaths have driven the demon back to the pits of the inferno that spawned it.”

Horhay, scrabbling in the gloom, grunted as his fat fist found the blade of his sword. He took it up and started for the door, but framed in the starlight of the portal, beheld the Nothing bending over his two saddlebags.

“Then the sword was not in thy bag, after all, oh King of Fools,” Phosphor gurgled as his hands worked at the fastener. “Will ye then share your extra carnivorat with he who hast aided thee against the spectre?”

Horhay growled and then crashed his bulk against the Nothing. Phosphor was flung from his feet to land in the bushes nearby.

“None may partake of my sustenance,” Horhay insisted.

“Do ye take offense that I, thy savior from the demon, dost also hunger without food?” Phosphor was lifting himself out of the stickers and brambles in disappointment.

“I have but one carnivorat, knavery! The other is for my horse,” concluded Horhay.

Phosphor burned in his indignation. “Truly thou are King of all Fools! For the land of Toadsuck doth contain a great horde of garbage, and yet none within the boundaries of this land will share with a poor stranger.” Phosphor’s eyes flashed in the moonlight.

“Begone, little Doggies!” exploded the Barvarian. He could not allow such talk about a land that he had adopted as his own.

“So be it,” cried the Nothing. “When next I see thee, I will bring up a vast army to conquer all the country of the Priestess-King!” With that, Phosphor clambered onto the back of his nervous desert rat. Horhay could not guess the consequences of his actions at that time, and merely watched as the Nothing rode away on his endless journey. In the glowing starlight he could dimly perceive the dancing sand fairies as they sprinkled their twinkle dust upon the desert. Horhay inspected his bags, and resumed his resting place, and immediately fell into a coma-like stupor that would not release him from its hold until a new day.

Chapter 21: The Fairie Queene

Dawn broke on an astonishing sight. Beneath a great poke tree at the edge of the plain, an immense imbecile was engaged in an unusual activity. It was Horhay, performing head-stand pushups, the great secret of his strength, passed down through generations of Horhays from the first Horhay the Great.

Each first-born heir had been carefully tutored from his infancy in this mighty custom. By the age of one Horhay had done his first head-stand, and at the age of 10 could perform a hundred presses with ease. At thirteen, as part of his test of idiocy, he had walked a mile on his hands. Now that he was a full grown man, he was able to do a thousand in a matter of minutes. No Horhay had ever betrayed his sacred trust by explaining this to any man, nor could the men of that age have comprehended the purpose of the act had they witnessed it with their own eyes. To them it would have appeared an absurd feat resulting from insanity, nothing more. But for Horhay it meant that his power far exceeded that of any fool in Toadsuck many-fold. Yet it was but one of a multitude of ways in which Horhay’s stupidity surpassed them all.

It might be mentioned in passing that Horhay was unable to count far beyond his fingers and toes. The manner by which he was able to keep count up to a thousand was by singing, softly to himself, the ancient saga of Hair-Cleaze, his

favorite boyhood hero of legend. The saga was set in 100 stanzas of 10 lines each, and he sang one line for each pushup that he performed. It should be noted that as a youth Horhay had considerably more difficulty memorizing the saga than he had in performing the 1000 exercises.

One thought burned in Horhay's guts. Today was the third day. This day he must return to the Palace of the Fairie Queene. There he would learn the mysteries of his starry predestination. Since three whole days had passed, no one in Joktan would remember him. He had no close companions. He could enter the city like a stranger again. Hopefully however, the Fairie Queene would recall their trist, even as he did. How could he forget that glorious vision of ethereal radiance?

All day the massive moron followed the curve of the edge of the Black Forest, eventually arriving at Joktan on the north side around sunset. Nagger slowed to a halt as Horhay gazed in wonder upon the largest city in the world. It seemed like an endless age since he had fled from her, having murdered the manure merchant and taken his horse.

"I was but the son of a garbageman, and grew restless with my life in Barvaria," mused the masscular maniac, "so I drifted south into the crazy kingdoms, that lay sprawled across the world like harlots in a harem. Hail, mighty Toadsuck, ye who are the most insane of all kingdoms!" Horhay lifted his callused hand in solemn salute. "Hail, Joktan, stinkhole of Toadsuck, where the most innocent babe has more knowledge of thievery than such simpletons as I may ever learn!"

The Barvarian dismounted and drew up his eight feet of muscle and flab tall and straight. "Since my boyhood one dream has haunted me both night and day- the very crown over all fools! Here in Toadsuck lies my destiny, for here, all are born fools." His gaze swept over the vast bowl-like city before him. "Mayhap the key to that dream lies in the arms of the Toadsuck Fairie, who perchance shall enlist my aid to overcome her glibbering rival for supreme power, the detestable Priestess-King of Toadsuck, that sniveling pervert

who wrecks the morale of a nation, and oppresses the insanity of the common folk.”

So Horhay descended into the city, leading his horse behind him, and as the ornate primeval sun set in the West, dipping down the pink sky to disappear behind the vast bulk of the moon, red shot through the clouds like blood in a harlot’s eyes at dawn.

The Fairie-Queene’s Palace of Dreams was readily recognizable because of the twin pink domes that jutted from it into the evening sky. At the gate hung a golden cord, which tinkled with the sound of a hundred tiny bells when Horhay pulled it. Soon the delicately carved gate opened, and a figure emerged, clad in a hooded robe.

“Come, Barbarian! We must not be seen here,” the figure stated in a woman’s hushed voice, as she took his wrist and led him into the shadows of a nearby alley. Nagger, still carrying the ruby horn in his bags, ambled into the garden in search of ripe vegetables.

Once safely alone, the hooded figure turned to him and let her cloak fall back and away. Horhay grunted in amazement. It was the same regal damosel that had sent the strange occult message to him in the alley, three nights before. This time she was real flesh and blood.

Horhay gazed deeply into the eyes of the Toadsuck Fairie, his strange golden eyes mesmerizing her, like rare coins gleaming in the fountain of Garfandy. She drew back, momentarily stunned by the incomprehensible complexities communicated in his stare, his round yellow eyes glistening like Little Orphan Annie’s, there in the moonlit alleyway.

It should be mentioned in passing, that the moonlight of the Hydralik Age was much brighter than in our own day and age, because of the close proximity to the moon, still jutting, attached, from the depths of the Western Ocean. Because of its position still dangling from the earth, in those ancient days before it had been launched into its orbit, a full moon was unknown. Nevertheless, the blue moonlight now flooded the alley almost as bright as day.

The Fairie Queene lowered her gaze, intuitively desecrated by the very presence of the obese berserker, and noted

then the tight, furry loincloth and the shimmering medallion that he wore, the ages-old heirloom passed down from the semi-legendary King Horhay I. For Horhay came of ancient fool's blood, the oldest inbred line in all of Barvaria.

"Here is the man," she thought to herself, in full knowledge of the ridiculous position she was in, standing there in an alleyway like any common fool. But the thrill of it inflamed her elven hormones and she felt the prickle of a rash breaking out upon her ivory flesh. Her hand ventured to his chest, where her fingers explored the black patch of curly hair that adorned his sternum. Her fingers coiled around the medallion.

"Ye come of royal blood," she murmured. "What do you seek in Toadsuck?"

"I search for a dream," he ventured, his deep voice resonating like a wave of sewage slopping through the pits below them.

"In Toadsuck, a fool may find his dream," she whispered aerily. "Are you a fool, Barvarian?"

"Aye, the veritable King of all Fools!" Horhay guffawed heartily, his wide grin splitting his frog-like face.

"Somehow, I believe you, Horhay," replied the slender creature, almost scrawny in her fragile emasciation.

"Then come," grunted the giant adventurer, "what few coins left in my pouch should pay for some goblets of weir! Even as a youth in Barvaria, I heard the tale of the weir of Joktan, stout enough to make a full-grown bull tremble and stagger like a new-born calf! Where is your favorite establishment?"

"A Fairie Queene cannot be seen in such a place as you describe," pleaded the skinny maiden. "Get me two mugs to go, Barvarian..."

Horhay shook his head like a man who has been hit by a catapult ball on his helmet. "Who can understand the ways of women?" he muttered, as his long strides down the alley crunched upon the shells of the giant black arthropods of Joktan that infested the muddy lanes. Reaching down, his massive hand scooped up a half dozen of the virulent vermin and he wolfed them down, famished.

Chapter 22: "By This Club I Rule!"

The sounds of fists striking against the ornate bronze doors smote upon the eardrums of the immense imbecile. Horhay lay sprawled in the giant feather bed of the Fairie Queene, his right arm wound around her soft white shoulders, and in his outstretched left hand a spilled weir goblet. The Fairie Queen was like a smooth, soft sack of skin in his hands.

"Kak, Goobar and Gogog!" He growled. "Who dares?"

Abruptly the bolt burst and the door flew open, and the sudden release from their ramming sent the ten guards tumbling across the floor in somersaults, to lie at the foot of the bed in a heap. Then, hunkered out of view below the bed, the guards hesitantly raised their heads above the edge, one by one, to see if there was, in truth, a masscular Barvarian in the bed of the Fairie Queene. As each did so, Horhay wrathfully kicked each head in turn, until all ten were lying unconscious. Then he sprang to his feet in indignation.

"Aye, Barvarian, just me and thee now," said the sole remaining officer, advancing menacingly from the shadows of the portal into the chamber with his sword drawn.

"Tell me thy name, cadavery, so that I can sing thee a sweet song with my harp," and with that, Horhay swept up his sword from the night table.

"Domnail, Captain of the Priest-Queen's Guard, at your service, sir," replied the soldier, "and here to offer ye a one-way invitation to the palace dungeons."

Horhay circled warily as the Fairie Queene fled into her parlors, enwrapped in a mass of silks. Domnail did not attempt to stop her. Here was the man he was after. The Priestess-King had been warned of a gigantic Barvarian adventurer by a wizard newly arrived in his court. Inquiries had betrayed the fact that the Fairie Queene had been playing host to such a homeless fool for the past few weeks. Now the Barvarian's amazing luck had played out. Domnail lunged with his blade.

Never one for finesse, Horhay did not even attempt to parry the stroke, but merely clove straight down with all his

force, slicing off the captain's sword at the hilt. With all the momentum of his vast bulk, the Barvarian then dashed his left hand against Domnail's helmet, causing it to leap across the chamber and clash into the far corner. The captain was staggered to his knees. Horhay grabbed the fool's long pony-tail and twirled him around, then began ruthlessly flogging him against the bed. At length, he dropped the all-but-senseless officer to the floor. Domnail tried to curse but was too dazed.

"Gibben google," was all he could manage, rocking unsteadily on his all fours. Horhay's bare foot caught him in the chest and sent him hurdling against a large mirror on the wall, smashing it to a thousand fragments.

The other ten had slowly arisen and stood staring at the Barvarian. They offered no resistance. Instead, they tendered him a royal salute.

"Hail to our new Captain Horhay!" They cried. Horhay grunted in surprise. According to the timeless Toadsuck code of honor, any man who could defeat the captain of the guards in a fair fight was made the new captain. Thus came Horhay into the ranks of Toadsuckers. The ten gathered around him, warmly congratulating him and slapping his broad back. One of them got the captain's helmet from the floor and brought it to the Barvarian.

"Enjoy it while it lasts, fools!" growled Domnail, picking glass from a bleeding lip. "Even now the Council of Chaos is marching to defeat the Priestess-King! Toadsuck is doomed!"

Horhay lunged for the captain but he slipped out the door and ran from the palace at top speed. No man of Joktan could run from battle as swiftly as Domnail. The man's words puzzled the massive moron. Horhay pondered them again and again in his mind. However, soon he was loudly jesting and celebrating his new rank with the ten guards.

"Come, knaveries, let us hasten to the weir shop this fine morning to satisfy our thirst," Horhay bellowed, and the small troop followed him out into the sunny courtyard of the palace. "Then we shall go report unto this Priest-Queen."

Once inside Horhay's customary establishment of refreshment, the eleven men pulled up rickety wooden stools to

a round table. They drank in merriment, and the Barvarian regarded his men. Horhay fell as naturally into a position of leadership among warriors as a water nymph diving into a perfumed fountain. No men in all of Joktan were as big of fools as these ten men. The weir warmed his bosom.

In his cup, the saying of Domnail returned unto the Barvarian, and as he meditated upon the dire warning of doom, softly he began to warble the Deathsong of Toadsuck. First one, then another took up the mournful tune, until all ten guards were lamenting the Deathsong loudly. Soon the entire establishment joined in, and passersby on the streets were drawn into the chorus. None could resist the sweet, sad refrain. Before three stanzas were sung, the entire city was singing the song of the Doom of Toadsuck. In five stanzas the song was being sung all the way to the very borders of the land, and in the treacherous camp of the Council of Chaos, the tune reached their ears and they, too, joined into the universal lament.

And in his dread tower, the Priestess-King on the throne of Toadsuck cried "Stop!"

"It is time," spoke Horhay, and they rose from their table.

As they sauntered proudly through the midst of the city, presently the Barvarian espied the famous monument of Hair-Cleaze in the square. It consisted of a vast chunk of rock into which a massive club had been driven, and was called the "Pillow of Hair-Cleaze," after the name of the strait that opened into the Middle Sea, from which it had been removed in distant antiquity and placed here as an everlasting memorial. Legend had it that the Middle Sea was once, long ago, a lake, until Hair-Cleaze had blasted a channel to the Fagarall Sea with his mighty club. His blow had split the rock so deeply that it could not be removed, thus the entire boulder

had been lugged to Joktan on a manure cart. It was called the Pillow of Hair-Cleaze because of the fact that Hair-Cleaze had customarily slept with his club beneath his pillow. Now the club had been subjected to the elements for so long that it had petrified into stone itself. Horhay drew near to gaze upon it.



“Aye, the great club of Hair-Cleaze,” noted one of the guards.

Horhay reached up and fit his hand around the handle end. He had heard the old legend—that the man who could pull the club from the stone was the true king of Toadsuck. It appeared to be impossible to withdraw it—the club was driven halfway into the boulder, with which it

had long fused into solid stone. The guards observed him with interest as he grasped the protruding club with both hands. It was common custom in Joktan for men to attempt the feat, but never before had they seen it tried by such a massive imbecile as now. Horhay’s gigantic stature seemed to match the scale of the weapon itself, as if he were Hair-Cleaze reborn. For a moment beads of sweat stood out on the Barbarian’s chest hairs as he tested the stone.

Suddenly, with a blinding flash of light, and a loud crack of thunder, Horhay swung the club up and held it high in his hands! He had pulled the mighty bludgeon free! A crowd began to gather in wonder. Horhay turned to them with the club raised over his head.

“PIGGAYS!” he roared.

The dumbfounded mob began to chant in a dull, monotonous response. The Barbarian turned and led his guards down the hill toward the citadel of the Priestess-King. The throngs of Toadsuckers followed them. It was time to face the Priest-Queen. Only in this way could Horhay hope to save Toadsuck from the coming invasion.

Blocks away, at the bottom of the hill, the palatial temple of the Priestess-King arose, stark and conservatively decorated, more of a fortress than a temple or palace. High on its tower wall was a balcony. There stood a trembling figure in royal robes, watching in terrible fascination at the mob descending the hill. This diminutive and distorted figure began issuing shrill orders to the gardeners below. At that command they took their pitchforks and spades and ran up the hill to meet the oncoming masses.

The Priest-Queen had imported all the gardener-slaves from distant Mongoloid and they answered to no one else. Only the Priestess-Queen, in all the kingdom of Toadsuck, had mastered their obscure, complex tongue. Knowing but ten of their 25 words, still that was an astounding feat, since only an elite handful of Mongoloids in the entire world knew them all. In Mongoloid, a different letter-symbol stood for every different word, all 25 of them. In comparison, Toadsuck had only three letters that stood for every word, in various combinations. According to legend, these three letters had been invented by the god Kak-- the three letters of his name.

Now Horhay began running, and led a terrible charge down upon them. The Mongoloids put up a courageous front but were swept into the dust by the trample of myriad feet. Those that rushed into the path of the Barbarian were crushed to atoms, one by one, by the titanic club of stone. He ran through the gates of the mighty citadel, and only his guards followed now. In superstitious reverence, the mob would go no further. They flowed around on all sides of the temple, called ***Krudur-Mud*** by the scribes of antiquity. The throng continued their mindless chant, watching to see what would occur next.

Horhay and the ten guards swept across the moat bridge and into the citadel. There they were joined by the other ten guards who had been left to protect the ruler. These were readily apprised of their new captain. Horhay clambered up the marble stairs and finally came to the top floor. He came to double golden doors, arching up to the lofty ceiling. With a great swing of the iron-like club, he smashed the bolt. Di-

rectly ahead of him, across the vast chamber, he saw the throne of Toadsuck.

On that throne sat a strange and terrible figure.

“KNEEL!” cried a voice from the side. Horhay’s gaze swept across the room and landed upon a tall, elegant oriental man in a silken coat. It was Dr, Kneel!

“Who be ye, Piggay, that ye dare cross me yet again?” queried the Barvarian.

“Kneel, fool!” commanded the eastern wizard, gesturing imperiously with his remaining left hand.

“Aye, ye be the Kneel-fool indeed,” Horhay growled, whipping out his sword with his free hand and hurling it with deadly force directly at the breast of the oriental. Startled, Dr. Kneel suddenly blinked out of sight, fleeing into some sorcerous dimension and leaving the Priestess-King to his own devices. The sword flew into a wall hanging and stuck with a clanging vibration.

“Thou didst send for me?” Horhay inquired of the figure upon the throne.

“Barvarian, ye are mad,” retorted the Priest-Queen. “Even now a host marches upon this land in conquest. Ye dare not dethrone me. The masses will not follow you, a nameless wanderer.”

“Nameless wanderer? Nay, I be Horhay, descended from King Horhay the Great, sung of old times. See this club, warped one?” The Barvarian brandished it proudly. The Priestess-King’s eyes widened in recognition.

“The...the club of Hair-Cleaze!” he gasped in dismay.

“Aye!” rumbled the obese imbecile. “Now we shall see for whom the crowds clamor!”

With those words, Horhay rushed upon the dais and lifted the pathetic tyrant from the throne, never to set there again. With the writhing, struggling creature in his arms, he strode to the balcony. At their appearance the hosts began a mighty tumultuous roaring. Horhay raised the Priest-Queen high over his head. He gazed down through black brows at the mob. Viciously they cried out the name of the Priestess-King, calling for him and howling.

Horhay heaved the grotesque creature across the moat and into their midst. The Priest-Queen screamed one loud shrill shriek before being engulfed by the thrashing bodies. They tore and struck at the tyrant that had been delivered to them at last. With a rending rip, the former ruler of Toadsuck was split in half. A siamese androgyny from birth, now the two separated twins ran in shame in opposite directions, naked like bloody newborns, the sister into the royal park to the north and the brother into the alleys to the south. The crowd let them go, to see what Horhay would do from his place high above.

“By this club I rule!” He thundered.

A great roar arose from the masses. Horhay was a king they could all understand. A Ubum like they had never seen before. Truly, the king of all fools! Were not all of them fools?

Horhay gazed out upon his children. The crowds were still flooding down from the heights of the city to join the events. Men, women, and babes in diapers swarmed down the congested avenues for a chance to glimpse the King of all Fools. Toadsuck had been delivered at last. Suddenly the Barvarian felt a strange dizziness, as the roaring mob below seemed to recede and he wavered on his tree-trunk legs.

“Who art thou, piggay? Who art thou to rule a land so repugnant, a race so obtuse and fatuous? I, Joktan, was the eternal cesspit a dozen centuries before thou wert a twinkle in thy sire’s gold-flaked eye, Barvarian!”

“Horhay!” he rumbled from deep in his breast. “I am Horhay! Horhay the King!”

And then, as he gazed at the cheering crowds up the avenue, he saw a curious figure. Descending the hill in great leaps came a hopping thing. As it came the mob melted away from its path to clear the way. An awed hush fell on the throng as it came. At first Horhay was utterly mystified by the strange being, but at last the sight of it plucked upon the chords of memory in his befogged brain.

It was the Crowning Beast. In its tiny fore-paws it snatched the crown of Toadsuck from the mud. It always appeared whenever there was a new Ubum in Joktan. None ever knew from whence it came or to where it returned. Now

it bounded across the moat-bridge, and, with a single titanic leap, sprang onto the balcony where Horhay stood motionless. Effortlessly the creature deposited the crown onto the Barvarian's head, before springing entirely over the top of the tower and disappearing beyond.

For a long moment the vast throng was quiet with the wonderment of seeing the Crowning Beast appear among them. And in that moment of quiet, Horhay's keen ears heard a strange sound from afar. It was the noise of the paws of thousands of giant desert rats marching in formation upon the city from the plains to the south.

Chapter 23: The Coming of the Council

*“One Fool over all,
one Fool to use them,
One Fool to bring them all,
and with his club abuse them
In the Land of Joktan
where the Chippies fly!”
--Toadsucking Chronicles*

Five strange figures moved stealthily through the subterranean maze, their torches splashing light along the narrow confining corridors. For hours they had plunged through the stygian crypts, seeking for something lost to the ken of mankind. Four of them wore coarse sackcloth cloaks, their heads shaved but for a narrow strip of hair clipped to spell the letters of their god Kak. The fifth was a masscular Barvarian, who wore the crown of Toadsuck upon his sloping, pongid brow.

The corridor narrowed and finally ended in a wall, and the Barvarian swore softly, his fat, bulging shoulders squeezing against both sides of the passage. Who would have guessed that beneath the black tower of the Priestess-king lay

a veritable labyrinth of tunnels, built in ages past by rulers in Joktan with a multitude of sins and treasures to hide away forever from the sight of mortals. The four priests of Kak murmured and muttered at the sight of a curious pagan symbol upon the wall that barred their path. It was the unthinkable abominable sign of Gogog- pressed into the clay by the royal stamp of the Priest-Queen, some years before. Horhay grunted that it was the same as the symbol on his medallion, and the four priests gazed in eager amazement from one to the other. They gathered round the Barvarian, pulling upon his neckchain and holding it up next to the symbol on the wall.

“Surely this is a sign,” remarked one of them.

“Indeed it is! It is an auspicious portent,” the second noted.

“If the signs match, that must have great significance,” intoned the third.

“Oh, if the signs match, that is something beyond reckoning,” offered the fourth.

“A sign of what, fools? What is it that we seek?” inquired the Barvarian, frowning in puzzlement.

“That which was lost by the Priestess-King, Your Highness, when the map of the labyrinth was inadvertently used as bath tissue. What we seek is behind this wall.”

“Stand ye back, fools.” Horhay hefted his mighty club within the tight confines of the passage, and with all the power in his wrists, slammed it through the clay wall that held the symbol of Gogog. It crashed into shards and the light from their torches fell into a cavity beyond. It was a hidden chamber. Horhay kicked in the loose partition and pressed his vast bulk through the portal.

Orfner, King of Noplace, gazed in wonder upon the walls of Joktan. He jousled upon a giant desert rat, provided for him, as one of the Nine, by Lace-Face the Accursed. He saw mighty Phosphor the Conqueror, who rode at the head of the Nothinian Ninth Fleet, his naval infantry who had followed him across barren deserts, forsaking their beloved River Stynx to chase a dream. Here had all the great armies of the world converged to lay siege to the capital of the greatest empire of them all. From the Northeast and from the Southeast the armies had come, the men of Nothing, Noplace, Snood and Shush in the south, and the men of Cinema, Hyperbolla, and Pommeria in the north.

All had been summoned by the call of the mysterious sorceror known as Lace-Face. Orfner could see him standing beside his eaglodon on a hillock behind him. Lace-Face did not have a face like a normal man. Instead of a face, a mass of feelers twisted and writhed, each with one small eye on its tip. Though his general outline seemed to be the frame of a human, none could truly say what kind of body was hidden by the scarlet cloak of Lace-Face. His skin was green, and he



wore a conical wizard's cap with stars and moons sewn into his clothing. Orfner could see that he was busy making incantations and drawing invisible symbols in the air with his hands. From the terrible temple of Goobar came this weird being to smash an empire and win for himself renown.

Orfner recalled how this scheme against Toadsuck had begun weeks before. He had received a mystic summons as he sat in the treehouse of Krak and Thongleena, sucking upon luscious gobba fruit. Both he and Krak had a score to settle with Horhay, so they had answered the summons, riding to

the Pommerian Steppies upon Schniffies. Young Krak, himself

a prince of the jungle in his leather thong, served as Orfner's squire. In the terrible temple of Goobar, deep in the Pommerian Steppies, they had met the detestable Lace-Face, their host, and, sitting in council around the ten-sided table, had decided the fate of empires. Eight other famous heroes of that day and age filled the table and completed the rostrum of the Council. The scheme of Lace-Face was stupidly simple—the complete conquest of the mightiest of empires, for only Lace-Face knew that through the misfortunate loss of a peculiarly potent object, the mystic power of the Priest-Queen was currently quite weak.

Orfner recalled the small orchestra that Lace-Face had positioned outside the castle that day of days, there upon the lawn of the temple. From their meeting at the ten-sided table within, the Council had emerged onto that lawn, which was engraven by gardeners with the sign of Goobar, the unspeakably ancient symbol of chaos. In the vague and distant mythology of that dim day, Kak was the embodiment of Everything, and Goobar the incarnation of absolutely Nothing. The war between Kak and Goobar was unrelenting down through eons of time, as Everything struggled for dominance against Nothing. The Nine, each with his squire, had taken their positions around the great Sign of Chaos that day, while Lace-Face stood in the center with his arm uplifted in salute. And there, as the strange orchestra to the side had played a weird melody, the Nine did the accursed dance of Chaos, singing their dull, stupid song as Lace-Face piped upon the cracked flute clutched in his left paw. Orfner bethought him that the survival of his very soul must depend upon the outcome of this battle, in consideration of the evil vows that had been made to bind the Nine to their goals.

Further reflection was senseless. Orfner turned his attention back to the present. Now, weeks later, all the armies of the earth had assembled at the walls of Joktan. Orfner gazed about him. Far to the north was encamped the army of Cinema, led by Carnab of the Council. Carnab and Spagnar of Pommeria were encamped together, who, having been mortal enemies, were now inseparable companions. Their armies had both been wiped out to the last man in a vicious

battle, leaving only Carnab and Spagnar to toast a cheer to the dead. Though the army of Cinema no longer existed, Carnab had enlisted the aid of Chimeran tribesmen from the hills of Cinema to replete their ranks. Next to them was the infantry of Spagnar, men he had handpicked during the forced march from the Pommerian Steppies, swamp-men with reptile in their blood.

Then came the Seventh Nothinian Fleet of Phosphor, and beside his troops, Orfner beheld the crazed beserkers of Fa-Fred of Hyperbolla. To ensure the survival of his men, Fa-Fred had strictly forbidden the use of lethal weapons until the emergence of the Pink Pig-Legions of Toadsuck upon the field. In the meantime they were resigned to mud-wrestling among themselves. It was said that a Hyperbollan never stopped fighting until the day he dropped. Orfner could see the truth in the old adage, as the men of Fa-Fred ceaselessly tumbled about in an unending struggle.

Then, situated in the center facing the great gates of Joktan, was Orfner and his amassed Noplacians. This would be the first time Orfner had led his men into battle as the King of Noplace, and indeed, the first time Orfner had ever been in a battle at all. Orfner's father had been a noted proponent of peace. Ordinarily Orfner, too, was an advocate of accord, but today he felt an overpowering sense of destiny leading him into his own destruction. His crossbow hung by a thong from his belt, and he had already wound it for the first onslaught.

Just to his left, Orfner glanced at the Toadsuck Traitors, led by Domnail and his squire Gnard, the Prince of Thieves. It was Gnard who had convinced Domnail of the folly of remaining true to his land of birth. Weeks before, Domnail had been on the point of arresting Gnard in a filthy alleyway of Joktan, when Gnard had suddenly served the unsuspecting captain with the summons from Lace-Face. Domnail had answered that awesome and terrible call, and now rode proudly at the head of the Toadsuck Traitors, as one of the Nine on the Council of Chaos.

Beyond him was the rag-tag army of Bebop of Snood. It was the custom in Snood for a commander to drive his men with the whip, and all across their forced march from Pom-

meria, Bebop could be seen flogging his men unmercifully to drive them onward. Becamped uneasily beside the Snoodisians were the sleek black warriors of Knee-Grow, Prince of the lost city of Shush in the impenetrable jungles of Punt. The men of Shush were dreaded because of the lethal, poison darts which they could launch five at a time from their fingerbows. Allied with the men of Shush were a legion of Pactish headhunter savages from the wilderness of Nicca.

Finally, Orfner could see Kotar to the south, Kotar the Swordsman, performing a savage sword-dance to inspire his men to frenzy. Around him circled his vicious "Sadeestos" of the Sea of Thespit. No band of men in that vile age were as dreaded for their cruelty and brutality. Hated by all the others, only the power of Lace-Face had prevented the assembled armies from falling upon the Sadeestos in revenge for their crimes against humanity. How it was that a hero like Kotar became their captain was a beclouded enigma to the King of Noplace. He could not know that the one thing in all creation that the Sadeestos admired and honored was a master swordsman.

Orfner watched the massive butt-ox hammering their horns against the granite gates of Joktan. All morning, Lace-Face had been directing the monstrous brutes in their onslaught, like a conductor of some great orchestra. Butt-oxen were gigantic beasts bred for one purpose-- the dashing apart of city gates in a siege. The gates of Joktan had been constructed, however, with the impact of butt-ox in mind. So far, for hours now, the famed "Granite Gates" had withstood the unthinkable pounding of Lace-Face's butt-ox .

Orfner was becoming impatient. Soon the battle must begin or else the hordes would begin to wander off into the desert without reason or purpose. To pass the time, Orfner mused upon his favorite maxim of old-- "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." Or was it "Tomorrow?" "Tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life?" Orfner was puzzled. Did it matter? Surely today would mean something else besides tomorrow. They could not be the same. It seemed to be a philosophical quagmire. And yet-

Now horns were now blowing annoyingly from the along the top of the walls of Joktan. The King of Noplace would have to consider the problem another time. Something was happening. Indeed, now he could see the massive gates of the city begin to open, as tubs of hot burning oil were poured upon the butt-ox to scatter them. The butt-ox went wild and turning away from the wall, plowed into the amassed armies, creating havok and savagely going their own men, crushing them to atoms.

Now a mighty warrior rode onto the field at the head of the Pink Pig-Legions of Toadsuck, but even from that distance Orfner could see that it was not the Priestess-King. Nay, it was the blasted Barvarian, Horhay! Orfner pondered, stupified, how had he come to lead the armies of Toadsuck. Then, the incoherent rumors of their spies must be true- a masscular Barvarian had just made himself Ubum of Toadsuck. Horhay's bulk was so big that his horse was dwarfed by the weight on its back. On his head, Horhay wore a helmet that the Fairie Queene had fashioned for him with the aid of her fay smithies- a bronze cap with a single, straight nine-inch ruby horn projecting aggressively from the forehead. To the king of Noplace, Horhay seemed a veritable *unitaur* embodied.

The Pink Pig-Legions marched in formation onto the field. Though Toadsuck had no standing army in that distant day, in times of war, men from every bar in Joktan were drafted into service. The craftsmen and merchants of the city hoped in this way to preserve their lives by forcing the addicts and deviates into battle. The gayly clad warriors were lured into the Legion with the irresistible appeal of a pink velvet uniform. This striking costume became a badge of honor for them. Their uniform was completed by a metal helmet shaped like a wild razorback boar. The nine members of the Council of Chaos began to quake in terror to see the full force of the Pink Pig-Legions arranged into formation on the field of battle.

“For Schlobbunza!” cried Horhay.

“For Schlobbunza!” roared the Pink Legions.

“For the Fairie Queene!” Horhay bellowed.

“For the Fairie Queene!” Answered the host.

“CHIPPIES!” commanded the Barbarian.

Suddenly the sky darkened as hundreds of chippies launched into flight, and arched over and fell into the crowded hordes of chaos. Men screamed as the discs slashed into their naked shoulders and backs with long ripping tears of flesh. Recently the Legions had upgraded their chippies by adding to the razor edge of the disc a serration, like a jagged rip-saw blade. For a moment all that could be heard was the agonized screams of the wounded, but presently the armies of Lace-Face took up the chippies and then hurled them back in a thick cloud of whizzing detriment.

“Bucklers!” cried the King.

Quickly, every warrior in the Pink Legion had raised his buckler before him. The returning chippies clattered harmlessly against the bucklers and fell to the ground, to be instantly retrieved by their owners. Again they were launched at the enemy, who, for the most part, did not have adequate coverage. Among Orfner’s own men, only a handful were wealthy enough to wear the mail-shirt that he himself wore. Most had to content themselves with cardboard armour that their women had fashioned for them so that they appeared to be wearing armor.

For a long time the chippie exchange continued, with the Pink Legions getting the better of it, until at last Lace-Face ordered the hordes to charge down upon them. Perhaps by sheer numbers the Legions could be overwhelmed. The hordes of Chaos rushed down the hillside on their desert rats to crash into the Legions like a tidal wave. The Legionnaires along the front of the line were forced to their knees by the sheer impact, but they did not fall. Soon the field of battle was a chaos of killing and noise. The howls of men mingled with the squealing of alarmed and apprehensive rats.

The King was pounding helmets to the right and the left with his inexorable club of stone. Lace-Face had not reckoned with the strange Barbarian. He had intended to meet an army led by a craven pushover, at a moment of his greatest weakness. Not this. He had never imagined this.

Horhay was wielding his club in his terrible figure-eight rhythm, dashing out brains and hurling limp forms right and

left. With a loud pop the immense moron's eyes had crossed in his berserker rage, and now he had closed his eyes entirely, reaching out with his other senses to connect with the enemy all around. His own Pink Legions found it prudent to avoid the King as much as possible, leaving the way clear for his total annihilation of the invaders.

"Hey-ho, chi-chi dogs!" Horhay was roaring as he smote fiercely this way and that. However, because of the inability of the Pink Legions to fully employ their chippies as intended at close quarters, the hordes of Chaos were taking a terrible toll, using swords and axes, which the Toadsuckers did not carry. Though the Legionaires could bat at the fools with their ragged chippies, the long swords gave the foe a longer reach. Horhay began to sense that the Council had the advantage should the battle continue all day. Something must be done soon to recover his cause. Horhay opened his eyes and beheld from afar the evil Lace-Face riding upon his eaglodon high above, casting spells and hurling commands.

The Barvarian swept out the sword from his sheath and held it aloft. It was not the sword he had carried into Joktan as a wandering adventurer.

"The Black Blade! The One Sword!" the chant of the crowd went up to Lace-Face upon his mount, and seeing, he began to howl in despair. The One Blade that the Priest-Queen had lost was recovered. Lace-Face could not know that the priests of Kak had led Horhay deep into the labyrinth to find the Blade.

As Horhay held the Black Blade aloft, it began to scream. A piercing sound was emitted from the sword that deafened the hosts on the field. A dazzling light shone out. Soon Lace-Face saw eaglodon riders approaching from the North. The Bladerats were coming, the Nine who answered to the One Black Blade. Lace-Face cried out in terror, and turned his mount to flee the battle. Somehow from the tangled tentacles that were his face, he shrieked. Horhay took the great Black Blade in his hands like a throwing knife, and hurled it with all his force. It spun through the sky and struck the wizard in the midst of his tentacles, passing entirely through his head before arching back to the earth to stick into the bloody soil.

Lace-Face's green body burst in a magical cascade of colors, and his empty robe floated slowly down to the earth.

Now onto the field swooped the Nine Bladerats, with the swords of insanity. According to legend, the nine Blades of Insanity had been bestowed upon the nine sane inhabitants of Toadsuck, in days of old long gone. Yet, over time, the holding of the Blades had driven these men to a far deeper level of insanity than any living Toadsucker. Thus they were horrible to behold as they descended upon the hordes of Chaos, their swords sizzling with strange powers. Horhay saw Krak, Son of Tard trying to flee on his eaglodon, and the massive moron caught up a heavy boulder and hurled it with catapult force. It caught Krak on the left side, cracking his ribs and knocking him off his mount, to fall onto the crazed contestants in the field below.

The tide had turned. The Pink Legions were greatly heartened by these new developments, and began to viciously pummel their foes with the serrated chippies. Rapidly the hordes of Chaos began to fall back. The mighty swords of the Bladerats hurled thunderbolts of energy into the horde, disintegrating men on contact.

Finally, as the hordes of the Council dispersed into the desert in panic, the Nine Bladerats sought out the Nine of the Council. Orfner began to run, but felt the claws of an eaglodon grasp his shoulders and carry him up into the air. All those who swore the oaths of the Council of Chaos were captured by the Bladerats and carried back to the King. There, they were dropped rudely onto the ground- Phosphor, Bebop, Kotar, Knee-grow, Domnail, Carnab, Spagnar, Fa-fred and Orfner. The unfortunate Council tumbled together into a heap.

Horhay the King did not hesitate. "PIGGAYS!" he cried, as he plowed into the mound of men like a bulldozer, rolling their piled mass over like bodies into a pauper's grave, the club of Hair-Cleaze in one hand and the One Black Blade in the other. Phosphor valiantly held aloft his Blade that was Reforged and Rebroken, but even it could not stand against the One Black Blade. When Horhay's sword crashed down against the blade of the Nothinian, the Rebroken blade was

shivered, humming like a tuning fork, into a hundred slivered shards. The pieces exploded out in every direction, lancing bare flesh and skewering armor. The Nine of the Council all scrambled up and ran rapidly about him in a circle, trying to make the Barbarian too dizzy to destroy them. But the Barbarian's reach was long, and one by one the conspirators met a terrible fate, as his sword lopped off members and his club cracked helmets and smashed skulls. Soon the Nine were tossed into a heap, dazed and unable to continue. With a grim smile, Horhay hollered:

***“Today have ye done a terrible thing—
Attacking Toadsuck like the dumbest of mules!
But of all the dumbest, I am the KING,
And so all of ye, too, are but Fools!”***

With that, the King swung up both Blade and Club, and smashed the ground with the force of an earthquake. Fissures opened wide around the Council of Chaos, and into the deep pits of Hell they suddenly fell, like screaming sailors into the raging seas. Horhay gazed down into the abyss, and saw far below the molten fires of the earth's core. He had won a mighty victory this day. Now he could turn at last from battle and return to his throne and his queene. For a season the land could rest, and there would be celebrations for many days by the victors. A new Ubum reigned in Toadsuck, and the word would spread to all the earth, to beware of the power of the King of Fools.

THE END

**Letter from The Mysterious Submitter Who Continues
To Waste the busy Editor's Time:**

Here is the first of the Phil Peacock Toadsuck series, as promised, written when we were teenagers. Hope you like these as much as I do! Phil created Phosphor and Mark Tapson created Orfner.

Editor's Aside (It's not like he doesn't have better things to do!) NO animals were killed the production of this publication. Real names have been used. We hope they bear resemblance to real living persons or maybe even a few dead ones, too. Read at your own risk. We are not liable for any issues of any kind, mental, personal, heroic, off-the-wall, etc. Oh, or even if you have those issues.

Tammy, call the lawyer, we've got to get a better disclaimer!

Phosphor
Lives!



PHOSPHOR: A Tale of the Hydralik Age

by

PHIL PEACOCK⁸

Chicago Centurian-
*"A novel worthy of the fires of
hell, or the depths of the nearest
trash can."*

Houston Hourly-
*"Philip Peacock has really
outdone himself in writing for
his own kind: this is truly for
the birds."*

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BOOK ONE: VENTURER OF THE ETERNAL RIVER

*This book is dedicated to Steve Allsup, who stood behind me
with great confidence and said, "I'll get you for plagiarism!"*

Foreword

While rummaging through some fairly ancient volumes we found in a second hand junk-book and comic book shop, a friend and I stumbled on a collection of oddly bound books which apparently were filled with gibberish from beginning to end. But on closer examination, they appeared to be some sort of legers written to keep up with ancient history. As there were only three volumes, the division was obvious: one book apiece, with mutual control over the third.

After several days of futile attempts, my friend, S. M. Allsup, succeeded in translating a phrase from his volume. "King

⁸ *Real Name. Wanna make somethin' of it????*

of Fools" was that phrase, and from that we have derived these strange, obscure, often stupid tales.

His volume, known as the book of "CLAVEN", centered around the tales of Horhay the Barvarian, called the King of Fools, and his reign over the mighty nation-state of Toadsuck.

My volume is called the "BOOK OF KUKUR THE PROPHET", and it deals, among other things, on the reign and journeys of Phosphor the Conqueror throughout the region called by Kukur the continent of "Peshe." Also dealt with is the service and religion to Kak

The third volume, strangely authorless, is known as the "TOADSUCKING CHRONICLES," which is apparently a large-scale plagiarism with verse directly from CLAVEN and KUKUR THE PROPHET (along with some here-to-fore undiscovered books.) However, it is indeed helpful, for those volumes which are unknown to me, and for settling disputes, as accounts of almost every incident differ, some minutely, some drastically, between CLAVEN and KUKUR THE PROPHET.

Approximately V. A. 27 since the rebuilding of Nothing by the Nothing calendar, the Council of Chaos was formed under Lace-Face, an evil sorcerer, for the eventual uniting of all major foes of Toadsuck. Accounts in all three volumes vary here, so it may be your pleasure to read it three times.

Notes of explanation may be included either in the middle of the story or with a footnote. Anyone finding any other volumes of this quality and content: please contact us.

--Philip Peacock

Note: Footnotes have been included for those who are stupid enough to need them. The Eternal River runs completely around (and through) the world of the Vylgerian Age⁹. It is divided into two parts: 1 flowing north and one flowing south. There is a void between them (much to the discomfort

⁹ Kukur's alternate name for the Hydralik Age, used by Claven and the Toadsucking Chronicles.

of the water walkers of Wonurd.) At two places the River Stynx¹⁰ disappears from sight. It makes its way to hell and returns at the other end.

from the beginning of Nothing,
to the end of everything
journeys

PHOSPHOR THE CONQUEROR: VENTURER OF THE ETERNAL RIVER

(hard words deleted for morons)

From the depths of Nothing, and the heights of everything exploded the xarmon rule of Phosphor the Conqueror. For three miligramts did his mighty rule hold the land of Nothing. Pursued by the inconduscent Graxnob, Phosphor seeks adventure with his crew the Nothinians, along the Eternal River. Let us return once again to the noxious origin of Phosphor the Conqueror!

A young Nothing was being pursued by the Graxnob, a humonstrous blob of muscular fat. Phosphor, seeing the lad's plight, rushed upon the Graxnob, sending ripples down his bloated stomache. After a short fight, Phosphor made a foul jab, which caused the Graxnob to flee. The grateful Nothing gathered a group of Nothinians (1 Nothing = 2 Nothinians) to help him in his arbirian struggle with the Graxnob. So they sail to adventure in the mightiest and swiftest craft of all: a Nothing garbage barge. But the Graxnob is hot on his trail up the Eternal River. And a spell by a ludinious Winzin forces him to roam the Eternal River for an infinitesimal eternity fleeing from the furious Graxnob.

Chapter Two. Phosphor and the Mucows (abridged for the stupid reader)

¹⁰ *The actual name for the river, transliterated in some places as "Eternal."*

Once again Journies Phorphor along the bafflous circle made by the Eternal River. His crew, the Nothinians, forever striving upstream, were restless for battle. Phosphor knew the time was ripe (and approaching rotten) to start his conquest of the globe. What more appropriate place to start than Muco? To Muco sails that famangulous blight; that farce of heroes; Phosphor the Conqueror!

The Mucows, startled by the approach of a Nothinian ship on Tuesday, set out their trash expecting it to be picked up as usual. Phosphor, with conquest in his toe, leapt out of the Nothing garbage barge and drove his mighty cub scout sword to its hilt in the stomach of a Mucow. The battle was raging fiercely. Glancing quickly behind a tree, he stabs at the flesh which is visible. With a cry of anguish, he finds he has pierced the latter part of his leg. The Nothinians, seeing their master is wounded, flee from the Mucows and rescue their master. Phosphor once again starts his perpetual journey upstream swearing vengeance upon his return.

Chapter Three. Phosphor Battles For Nothing

(condensed version for pollacks)

Once again baffled by his twisted life, Phosphor plodded on against the currents of time, and, as always, against the currents of the Eternal River. He had heard rumors of an uprising in the land of Nothing. When he returned to Nowhere, the capitol of Nothing, he found riots and protesting in the streets. He returned to his throne, and prepared his forces for a major battle against the revolutionaries.

The morning later saw the forces of Phosphor and the opposing forces locked in battle. Many mercenaries came to aid Phosphor. No one fought for Phosphor more fiercely than Chinko the Check. The Checks are people of bright complexion of black and white alternating squares (not unlike a checker board.) The battle raged on fiercely till the night, with neither side gaining an advantage. At the end of the day Phosphor the Conqueror and the opposing forces signed a cease-fire. The terms of this honorable armistice were that the opposing forces would rule at Nowhere, and Phosphor would

be the leader of the seventh fleet, which consisted of one Nothing garbage barge. He was not, according to the terms of the cease-fire, to return to Nothing. So as he left Nothing, Chinko and the Checks pledged their loyalty to him, as did his previous crew. With Chinko as his first mate he continues to seek adventure.

Chapter 4. "The Only Good Chinko is a Dead Chinko"

Phosphor, wandering always against the black white-wash of the Eternal River, was once again feeling the pains of a warmonger. He knew it was a fitting time for him to become the new Ubum of the globe. So, sailing with his crew, he coordinated toward Smogg. He ordered his crew to plow on through the manure-filled bay right into the port of Soggie, the main port for the exporting of turniptine.

This irking beverage was green in color, having the intoxicating power of four turnipts in every draught.

With Chinko, his checkerboard complexion aflame, Phosphor went to the center of town to decree his rule. He found the poisonous smogg had killed off ninety per cent of his prospective subjects, and the remainder were so enriched with turniptine that they were incapable of surrendering.

In disgust Phosphor and Chinko retraced their steps on a new path toward the ship. Inadvertently Chinko fell into a vat of turniptine. Unable to rescue hiim, Phosphor watched his friend turn a sickly green in death. Later the crew recovered Chinko's body.

Phosphor commanded the Nothinians once more upstream for all time. as a memorial to Chinko, Phosphor had him skinned and made into a chess table.

Chapter Five. Phosphor and Scabbo Battle the Naustazians

Again confronted by the complex confusing contours of the Eternal River, Phosphor and his crew pinpoint a new coordinate of the land of Naustazia. Upon the death of Chinko the Check, Phosphor appointed Scabbo the Nothing to the

post of first mate. So on they plunked, ever slowly through the pitch white everythingness of the jungle swamps of Naustazia. As they approached a civilized area (well, sort of civilized) they were net by an unwelcoming committee which showered them with gifts of spears and knives. As the battle raged, Phosphor, his dull senses awakened to their greatest ability, slipped quietly onto the giant mudhole which was the home of the king of all the Naustazians. The king, horrified by the hideous two-eyed dunce which faced him, drew his sword and plunged it into the inner depths of Phosphor's toe-nail. The loss of blood, and the injury of one of his vital organs, put Phosphor into a deep coma. Fearing for the life of his master, Scabbo rushed him to the mudic unit aboard the ship. The mud, thinking this was the dead peasant to be put under glass, sent him on to the kitchen. Scabbo, finding the mistake, rushed to the kitchen. He was in time to save his master, but the cook already had his left thumb and forefinger to make that delicacy, left thumb-and-forefinger stew. Phosphor, recovering because of the pain, pronounced that the journey was cursed by one of the jungle doodoo doctors. With all haste, the crew began again their unending quest up that omnipresent essence of slime which is the body of the Eternal River.

Chapter Six. The Turn and Return of the Graxnob

Plunging on through the murky depths of the Eternal River, Phosphor was once again met by his arc-foe, the Graxnob. The Graxnob, since their last meeting, was traveling downstream on the continuous flow of the Eternal River. This ensured that they would meet again. A Check who had been on guard duty was the first to see it, as it looked like a humungolous wad of fat with two bloated blood-shot eyes

The Check's cry was heard by none other than Phosphor. He rushed out on the poop deck just in time to see the remainder of his crewman engulfed by the enormous blob. As the Graxnob approached, Phosphor clicked on his tern-guard and proceeded to pound on the Graxnob with said object. As he was forced over the side of the garbage barge the Graxnob

slid a tentacle around the leg of Phosphor and pulled him into that giant spittoon which is the Eternal River. Scabbo, loving Phosphor more than death itself, leapt in and with all his weight drove into the gooey hide of the Graxnob. The Graxnob, taken by surprise, released his hold on Phosphor and fell into the area which divides the North-flowing Eternal River and the South-flowing portion. Cursing in Graxian, the bloated mammoth absorbed Scabbo the Nothing. Phosphor, with tears in his nose, was plied from the syrupy crust which lay beneath him. As they continued up the snarled entangled path of their journey, Phosphor saluted the great Nothing who had died for him. As they left, they saw the Graxnob continually spinning between the two currents.

Chapter Seven. The Destruction of Nothing

It had been destroyed. Phosphor felt sorrow in its destruction even though it was controlled by a foreign power. Now he was a stranger. Strangely enough the Nothing word for stranger was the same word for fool. Phosphor marveled at the power of the Priestess-King of Toadsuck to annihilate a whole nation-state, including the cities of Nowhere and Nocity. Phosphor was no longer pursued by the now hapless Graxnob. Nobody on the ship spoke; tea, nobody spoke of Nothing.

Phosphor considered seeking out the Priest-Queen in the mighty Toadsuck city and facing him. However, without the consent of Horhay the Barverian, king of all fools, it would be impossible to penetrate the vast Toadsucking lands. He stopped off at Hairybodice to pick up supplies of turniptine and Kauldrin, a drink of surprising strength. As he stepped from the garbage barge he was met by a hairybodicean.

"Tahel, stranger," spoke the approacher.

"Tahel," replied Phosphor.

"Of what city be you, fool?"

"I be of no city," returned Phosphor.

"Of Nocity?"

"Nay, of nowhere," corrected Phosphor.

"Nowhere of Nothing?"

"Nay, Nothing is now non-existent, now I be of no place, dog," retorted the wrathful conqueror.

"Noplacians be our mortal enemies. Return, or face the wrath of King Bodice."

Needing the provisions badly, and unable to reason with the enraged Bodiceans, Phosphor and his crew charged forth to do battle. They battled fiercely and with great courage, but the Bodiceans, outnumbering them three trillion to one, eventually drove them back to their ship. As Phosphor got into the ship he was seized by the beast whom Hairybodice is named for: the Hairybodice!

The thirteen fat tentacles wrapped around his body. Freeing his gun hand, Phosphor drew his sword and hacked at the now hardening monster. In pain the monster released him. Watching to avoid the Schiller monster, he continues his ridiculous raging rendezvous 'round this Counter-Counter Earth.

*The End of *Venturer of the Eternal River**

PHOSPHOR LIVES!

Book Two in the Complete Phosphor Saga

Dedication; Ta' Sardine Toadsuck
(To the Priest-Queen of Toadsuck)
for foretelling the coming of the Council.

INTRODUCTION

I've never believed it or cared to inform anyone before, but Phosphor is, in reality, I. Never have I been willing to face that before. But all my dreams, and frustrations, and sarcasms are put in these pages. My retreat into this fantasy world is an outcry against a cruel society. But the main reason I write this is because I'm weird.

The continent of Peshe in the Hydralik period of Earth's History contains many fantastic and exciting adventures of unbelievable heroes. The purpose of this is to invent a totally bizarre and unusually alien to any previous society. Satire is presented about the Gorean Cycle, Conan the Barbarian, and other assorted trivia.

Phosphor is the Ubum (king) of Nothing, a southern nation on the Peshe continent. He adventures all through the Hydralik nations. In the first Book (Venturer of the Eternal River) Phosphor, with his crew of Nothinians, tried to obtain world domination. He had many great adventures on the Eternal River, that called the River Stynx. In this second Book (Phosphor Lives!) he meets and has adventures with great heroes of this time, such as Horhay, Fa-Fred, and Gnard.

In Book III (Chaos Unleashed!) Phosphor will join the Council of Chaos for gain and for the overcoming of the greatest fool; the King of Fools; Horhay the Barverian.

PHOSPHOR LIVES!

So decreed the dreaded Priestess-King of Toadsuck; Phosphor lives! He is the conqueror of dreary Nothing; the destroyer of smoggy Smogg; and is the would-be conqueror of great Toadsuck itself. he is quickly gathering forces to his aid! He must turn or face the death of the mighty torture: the Goring Spike!

—HYDRALIK AGE Year One (H. A. 1)

Dedication; TO PHOSPHOR without whom these tales would be impossible.

PROLOGUE

*"Where 'aye flowing of the river
Traces back for ever more:*

*The restless tides, receding never,
'Tis there you'll find the door."
—Kuker the prophet*

Night in the swamps: as a lone Nothing ran. Behind him, in a fit of often surpassed fury, pursued the Graxnob, a humonstrous blob of (for all practicle appearances) slightly congealed grease. It is apparent that this youth has been trained by the followers of Kak, as he flew swiftly across the water on foot, Kak being the source of all such blessings. No matter though, the Graxnob (surprisingly) slowly gained on his "din-din," until the swamps led to the entrance to the Eternal River, where the boy tripped over a floating coconut (also blessed with the knowledge of Kak.) The Graxnob fell toward him, with visible internal drooling, and was about to attack, when, coughing from the waters, stood a tall stranger, apparently having forgotten how to breathe. Finding himself between the furious Graxnob and his prey, he quickly analyzed the situation. (Well... to be more exact, the Graxnob wasn't THAT mad... and so, with a little trial and error here and there... you know...)

He quickly shouted, "Tarka Yibbo!" While the Graxnob searched through his "Thesaurus of Foolish Phrases," the accidental rescuer drew a "trashmetal" sword from his side and plunged it toward the Graxnob. Being hit with the pommel of the sword, though, only stunned the Graxnob, who fled quickly back into the swamps.

And thus begins the tales of Phosphor the Conqueror!¹¹

With his skill and recklessness, Phosphor quickly became captain of the Nothinian Seventh Fleet (i.e. one garbage barge), which he later acquired. This acquisition eventually led to his conquest of Nothing, in particular.

¹¹ *Adapted from suggestions in the Book of Kukur the Prophet and the Toadsucking Chronicles.*

CHAPTER ONE: THE FOOL IN THE SHADOWS

*"So decreed the Priest-Queen of Toadsuck,
Phosphor Lives! He threatens vast lands,
and merchant ports, and even mighty
Toadsuck itself!"*

—Toadsucking Chronicles

Horhay the Barvarian sat contemplating his toenail in idle fantasy. Before him lay the vast deserts of Nothing. Sitting in his cooling stupor, he was half aware of an approacher. Riding a giant desert-rat Phosphor approaches from Nowhere. The mighty conqueror gasped, as he discovered the identity of what he thought was a simple fool.

"By all the Graxian idols of Nocity!" he exclaimed, "Be you Horhay, the King of Fools?"

"Aye, subject, that I be," returned Horhay, "King of all fools from Toadsuck to Pommeria." Phosphor was awed by his power. With great concentration, Horhay spoke once more.

"Who speaks so lightly to the King of Fools?" exploded Horhay. "Speak, Ka-nave!"

Phosphor's dull-sighted glance saw that the mighty fool's stomach bled fiercely. "Ah, by all the Bodicean lice! Why bleed you, fool of fools?" emitted Phosphor.

"Hey little doggies!" shouted Horhay, "I had two satchels; one contained a roast sewer-rat, on which I supped," burbled he, "and the other held my 'trashmetal' sword," continued the Bavarian.

"Ah, so when you had supped you threw away also the satchel containing your sword," spewed forth Phosphor.

"Nay! By a thousand Schiller slaves!" roared the idling fool, "I did also eat my sword!"

As Phosphor rode away on his journey, the queer little sand fairies sprinkled dust on the muddy desert. And as Horhay falls once more into his continuing coma, the sun sets on the day, and on our journey.

CHAPTER II: THE TEMPLE OF THE DUNG-GOD

*"So sang the fairy minstrels of Barvaria:
Mighty Phosphor seeks adventure
in the Temple of the Dung-god Jab-Jub-Ret.
He entered, but who shall say whether he shall return."
---Toadsucking Chronicles*

Among the temple-rats walked Phosphor. Quickly hyperventilating Phosphor fell into a dismal hallway and found himself in a ghastly chamber in the pit-um-most bottom of the caverns of the temple of Jab-Jub-Ret, the dung-god. Stumbling cautiously through a nearby vat of turniptine, he stepped on a seemingly lifeless blob of flesh. Scrutinizing closely, he found it was a blubbering blasphemy of Cinema. Slithering slowly to his feet the Cineman idiot faced him.

"Speak, piggie!" cried the Cineman, "Who are you, and why be you in this temple, knave!"

Phosphor raised his voice in a dull droll and replied, "I be Phosphor, a Nothing, and who be you, ka-nave?"

For many hours the Cineman pondered this question. "I be Carnab, a Cineman," spoke he.

"Indeed?" replied Phosphor.

"Correct," returned Carnab.

For an hour Phosphor pondered a reply. "Truly?" questioned the Nothing.

"Affirmative," answered he.

Watching Phosphor ponder in idle idiocy, Carnab quite unobtrusively munched on a temple-rat. Unable to reply, Phosphor stumbled and tripped quickly toward the stairway.

It is well to point out at this time that the dung-god is greatly feared in the Cinema and Pommeria regions, but little is known about him in Toadsuck, Nothing and Noplace.

Phosphor retraced his steps through a new passageway and found himself in the room of the idol of Jab-Jub-Ret. Phosphor was overcome by the sight (as well as the smell) of a king's ransom of manure which laid as an offering to Jab-Jub-Ret.

In the hand of the idol was a sword which made even Phosphor's own trashmetal look small in comparison. As

Phosphor neared the image, hundreds of idol-rats scurried away. Careful not to put his foot in the offering, Phosphor easily pulled the sword from its crumbling hand. As Phosphor began to leave, he heard a sound of moving rock. As Phosphor turned, he saw the image of Jab-Jub-Ret moving slowly toward him. And while Phosphor watched in blatant, unmistakable horror, the idol began to consume the dung-gift of the Cinemans. Phosphor froze in terror.

In the Hydralik nations, it is important to note, the sewer systems all flowed directly to Cinema. Carnab, being the guardian of the dung temple, was used to place the offering before Jab-Jub-Ret.

As Phosphor was before the dung-god, Carnab was having a struggle within his very soul, and was losing. He decided to aid Phosphor and leave the temple, for he disliked the dung-god. So drawing forth his sword, Exhandler (translated "Cut-paper") he rushed into the idol room.

Within a minute he lay unconscious before the babbling blasphemy. Phosphor, his toes petrified in fright, raised the exceptionally jeweled sword and hurled it straight at the heart of the idol. Missing slightly, the idol was gored through the stomach. A thick, brown, ichor oozed from the open wound. Gasping for breath the creature fell into the remnants of the offering; never to rise again. Wiping the spattered dung from his eyes, Phosphor dragged Carnab from the temple. Reaching the open air, Carnab once again awakened.

Even as they were leaving the temple Phosphor had found an answer to the battle of wits which they had been pursuing. As Carnab once again gained consciousness, Phosphor spoke to him.

"I want to say, Ka-nave," Phosphor began, "that I thank you, and my people thank you, and even my country thanks you for your aid in the destruction of Jab-Jub-Ret. Yes, my country thanks you. Truly, thanks for Nothing."

As Phosphor mounts once more his loyal desert-rat, our saga closes with Carnab the Cineman still pondering that imbecilic reply.

CHAPTER THREE: BEHIND THE WALLS

*"From heights anew to grounds untold:
For wine and women, land and gold,
To Cinema's mighty temple there,
To Pommeria's walls, let fools beware!"
--The Toadsucking Chronicles*

Struggling vainly across the vast wastelands of Pommeria, a lone stranger suddenly found himself in the very heart of an amorphous city. Unable to do anything but crawl, he continued on into the streets. He was quickly trampled by a herd of stampeding land-rats.

In a dismal tavern in the midst of a Pommerian nation-state, Phosphor bent low over a keg of turniptine. Across from him, and under the table lay Carnab the Cineman, pondering the floor at close range. Phosphor rose and, burbling in undistinguishable syllables, called for the tavern keeper. The obese tavern-keeper emerged to find two seemingly dead bodies.

Upon awaking, Phosphor found himself in a putrid pit. In the yellowish mud lay his trashmetal sword. Slobbering quickly to his feet he slurped up his trashmetal by the blade. Quickly wiping the blood from his mangled fingers, he ejaculated his fury in vile blasts of vulgar language.

The sides of the enclosure were made of a smooth glowing blue metal.

Notice if you will at this time that said metal like this was probably used in the destruction of Nothing. The Priestess-King's accidental destruction of the vast nation to the south caused a great blue flame to be visible even from the Eternal River.

This blue metal was very strong indeed. For even as Phosphor's mighty trashmetal crashed into it, it still remained firm.

In Nothing the blue metal had been built into buildings, unknowing that it would eventually cause their destruction.

After Phosphor escaped from the pit, he galumphed off cautiously down the halls of a great catacombs winding spindulously through the infinity before him.

Stumbling and falling down a vast staircase, he encountered a force of five and twenty Pommerian princes, each flailing a sword. Quickly slaying them all, he continued on in a South by Southwestern direction. Let me point out at this time that the Northwestern Pole of the Hydralik Age lies precisely in the Pommerian region Phosphor was in. So actually any direction in which he strode would be some degree of Southwest.

The catacombs grew narrower and narrower. All at once Phosphor realized he was trapped in the complicated sewer-maze of Pommeria! Blithing in his unbearable rage, Phosphor called to unnamed blasphemies of Nothing.

It was mythed by outrageous vulgarities of the Hydralik Nations that this blight to the occupant led to the dreaded tomb of the god of the dirt.

Primedal, the evil dirt god, was locked, ages past, by the powers of goodness, in a vault. For blaspheming ages his burbling anathema echoed through the grounds, shaking mountains, valleys, hell and heaven alike.

Phosphor continued on through the startling, twisting turns of the curious prison. Before him through a masterfully worked arch of dirt lay an ivory chest of minimal size. Laying his trashmetal atop the chest, Phosphor removed the molding, ivory-plated top with several hard strikes. In a flash of dust, Primedal is once again released to haunt the earth.

Phosphor was faced by this wrathful wraith of the pit, but the demon was too anxious to journey toward other realms of dirt to notice the nothing of this Nothing before him. With a fantastic shout of disgusting volume, the hell-spoon fled to realms we shall later explore.

As our journey ends, Phosphor's hyper-sensitive toenail was leading him to the end of the maze.

But what of Carnab? Only the Priest-Queen may know...

CHAPTER FOUR: NOTHING REGAINED

*"Beyond the walls of dusk and dawn
O'er land where caverns gape and yawn;
Through darkest shadows of the night*

*Into the dreaded morning light—
Death to everyone!"
—Toadsucking Chronicles*

Krudus the Hunter sat overlooking Nowhere. His loyal sewer-rat grew impatient, being motionless for so long. Below, the confused and baffled inhabitants of Nothing returned, each bearing a grain of sand with which to rebuild the walls. Six trillion numbered the Nothinians who returned.

Others were scattered abroad over all the Hydralik Nations. A dead Nothing was being given a hero's departing. His robed, dressed body was that of a fool's. Into the grinder went his body. The compressed remains were taken by the Scribblers to be filed in the annals of Nothing. Krudus, being little interested in the affairs of Nothinians, turned toward Toadsuck.

Let me speak at this time of something, known only as a Game, which is respected by all the various regions of the Hydralik Nations. It consists of 77 squares of black and white (in no particular order) and 12 pieces of each color; the Fool, the Foola (or Fool's Mate), the Fool's Scribbler, the Foola's Scrubbler, the Fool's Barvarian, the Foola's Barvarian, and six Wipe Slaves.

As Krudus rode through the vast deserted desert of Toadsuck, he came upon a blind loser stumbling along. A loser, it is well to note, is one of no particular Claste who is caught up in the intricacies of losing at a Game. The loser walked along feeble yelling, "a Game," "a Game." Seemingly from Nowhere came a broad fool to challenge the loser. After he had set the pieces up the way he wanted them, the loser concentrated on his first move.

Impatiently, Krudus left after two hours of this concentration. Riding over the vastness of Toadsuck, he pondered

the fate of Horhay, the King of Fools, since their last (and first) meeting.¹²

Suddenly Krudus came upon a dismal form lying nigh of Pommeria. Covered with Carnivorats lay the mangled body of Carnab the Cineman.

Moaning in an insignificant variation of the language of Cinema, Carnab cursed the sun, the moon, his mother, and Pommeria.

Looking up through the remains of his eyes, Carnab half studied the form of Krudus.

"Tahel, oh mighty Nothing," said the pile of disorderly flesh.

"Tahel, Ka-nave," returned Phosphor.

For days Phosphor pondered the fantastic positions of his fingers. After much time he noticed that Carnab had departed once more toward unexplored regions of civilized Toadsuck.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PAST AND PRESENT KING

*"Through fire and hell of age gone by
Where Mighty men did fight and die,
By waters still and raging storm
In coldest lands and nations warm,
Horhay Triumphs!"
--The Toadsucking Chronicles*

Mighty Phosphor, ruler of rebuilt Nothing, sat upon his massive throne contemplating the hordes of throne-rats surrounding his head. With a gruff ape-growl he startled them into oblivious flight. Rising from the symbol of his stupidity,

¹² Phosphor has no knowledge of these writings, for if he did the author might face serious problems from the raging fool. The meeting with Horhay suggested has been presented to you as "The Fool in the Shadows."

Phosphor approached his loyal sewer-rat, who was appropriately tethered in the throne room. Quickly he arrived on the outer limits of great Noplace. Inside that dismal country-state the Eternal River intersects the Lake of No Rerun on the border of said place and Nothing. A distant flash-back appeared in his upper-cerebral chamber. A memory of his strange origin came to him as he stood on the banks of the great Eternal River. He saw once more the two-eyed fool who was his father. And his childhood came into his mind. And, too, he remembered his early life in the rem¹³ of the queen, and of his joyous escape from that anathemous prison of amoral frivoltries of Fairy Princesses and weird Princes of the realm.

Sputtering in foolish rage, Phosphor found he had been unoriginally pushed from his perch above the Eternal River into said body and was quickly receding from Nothing and from Noplace. With determination he swam down the circular path made by this body of water, and once more he reached Noplace. Grabbing onto an extended flagpole, which happened to be sticking out across the Eternal River, Phosphor pulled himself into the everythingness of Noplace. As he trudged through its desert-swamps he saw the city for which he searched. Walking toward the sunrise he entered the capitol of that blasted nation. He entered that city; the Middle of Noplace.

CHAPTER SIX. The Origin of Phosphor

Brought from the pits of the Goo Mountains; Stolen from the secret hordes of the Fairie-Queene of Toadsuck; Comes the 1st (and original) ORIGIN OF PHOSPHOR!

"Through all the toils and dangers gone,

¹³ male form of harem (refer to "In the Palace" in HORHAY TRIUMPHS)

*With nothing, only it alone,
With temptation more than it can stand,
Dies the searching soul of Man."
-Toadsucking Chronicles*

In a darkened corner of a Toadsucking palace a small child held a sword, barely able to lift it. Behind him lay the bodies of five and twenty palace attendants. Five years later, as a youth, this unnamed hell-spoon was brought before the Fairie-Queene of Toadsuck. In her awesome presence, he was first decreed named. And she pronounced the name which was to shake the Hydralian Nations: Phosphor! Rapidly he grew, doing his grotesque duties in the rem of the Queene. Fulfilling the pleasures of the Queene's court, he worked hard, lest Orgo, helmsman of the Toadsucking Ferry, would take him into the realm of chaos and lifelessness.

Five years passed, and once more there was once more a change in the character. He saw visions of the coming of a mighty fool, who would be fool of all fools: a Barvarian destined to end the heinous reign of the dreaded Priestess-King. And a flash-forward predicts that Phosphor will sit himself on an equally blasphemous throne to the south. With fantastic caution, emitted from an empathetic earlobe, he jumped into the bottomless stream below the Toadsucking Ferry. Swimming as for eternity, he held his breath and swam downward for that day.

Unable to swim farther, he surfaced to find himself, for the first time, in that infinitely flowing body, the Eternal River. When he arrived at land, wading knee-deep through the Eternal River, he arrived to find an unclaimed city. Walking and stumbling into the heart of that territorial nation-state, he found nothing which he could claim. Then, by inspiration, he claimed the nothingness; and thus was this country-state named: Nothing!

Upon seeing this unfamous fool from Toadsuck, the inhabitants quickly gathered a war force.

Subduing the entire populace with his mighty trash-metal, he set up his reign of this blasphemous asunderation of people. He was crowned at once: Phosphor the Conqueror!

Epilogue¹⁴

At this same time a Barvarian stumbles into the dismal taverns of Toadsuck. His destiny is before him. Shall he triumph? Shall he gain control? Will he ever sober??

CHAPTER 7: THE COMING OF FA-FRED

*"Shackled to the dying earth,
Killed before its straining birth,
Now restored to heavenly space
'Death to all the human race!'
Death to everyone!"
--Toadsucking Chronicles*

From the depths and widths of Hyperbolla comes Fa-Fred; chiefest of robber princes; inferior only to Gnard, prince of thieves, companion of Horhay. Beside him, to his left knee strode the Exterminator; also called the Purple Ratter. He was invaluable to his lord Spagnar in ridding Pommeria of its sewer-rats which infested the prisonous sewer-mazes.

Meeting this menacing duo on the "plain of stupidity" of Nothing, Phosphor slobbered in disbelief, his tongue affectionately rubbing his lower lip. From deep within his troubled existence, a rumble grew into a slight tremor of surprise, visible only in the silent quivering of his big toe.

Before him the duo stood; baffled by the unexplained presence of fear within their upper-arms. Together, they drew swords to face the mighty trashmetal of Phosphor. Not deigning to cross swords with them, Phosphor stumbled and fell on his face in front of them. With delicate precision Fa-Fred thrust his sword at the Phosphor-like form laying on the muddy plain. As if by accident a lone plain-rat ran rapidly

¹⁴ *At the same time Phosphor was crowned Ubum of Nothing, Horhay was stumbling into Toadsuck for the first time. Later he does come to power.*

onto Phosphor's chest. The Purple Ratter in ecstasy dove at the loathsome creature to end its existence, thus intercepting the rusty blade of Fa-Fred. In disgust, Phosphor, sucking the delicate solution from a nearby mudhole, headed once more towards the merry regions of Toadsuck.

CHAPTER 8: THE COUNCIL OF CHAOS

*"Flee the land, desert the sea,
Run in terror from the streets.
Betray your love, deny your friends,
The Dreaded Council meets!"
--Toadsucking Chronicles*

Orfner, dread king of the Middle of Noplace, rode swiftly from Noplace's border towards the castle of Lace-Face and Others, and the 10 sided table of the Council. Before him scurried creatures unheard of as he journeyed through the waste deserts of Toadsuck.

He was the First.

Unknown to Horhay, Domnail, Captain of the Guard of Toadsuck, removed himself from the presence of Toadsuck's palace in Joktan (Toadsuck City), striding through the distant jungle-swamps he also came to the table of the Council.

He was the Second.

From a great battle (of which only they survived) rode Carnab the Cineman and Spagnar of Pommeria. Both of their armies had been destroyed by the other, leaving only them to battle. In this situation they came; they were Third and Fourth.

Phosphor, cornered by a band of three thousand Pact savages, heard the call to fall in and form. Lace-Face's message was not unanswered. Three minutes later the dead savages lay at his feet. Upon his loyal sewer-rat he plunked toward the Castle of Lace-Face and Others.

He was the Fifth.

Fa-Fred of Hyperbolla slung the stolen idol onto his back. Seeming not to notice this three hundred ton weight, he walked merrily on toward the castle.

He was the Sixth.

Bebop of Snood came once more from the lower pits of the Pommerian sewer-mazes where he had been for the greater part of his life. Cursing in Snoodesian he answers the summons of Boot-Face, 1st son of Lace-Face, and with him rode toward the Council.

He was the Seventh.

Knay-Grow, Prince of Shush, dark-skinned lord of the vast desert forests of Shush, picked up his fingerbow and his 1 inch arrow-quiver. Armed with the fierce arrows of discord, he walked swiftly from the dark halls of the black palace.

He was the Eighth.

Kotar the Swordsman practiced to improve his perfect swordsmanship. For Horhay used (both) a club and (not) a sword.¹⁵ The call came just as he had cut down the last tree in Nothing with one blow. He put his sword in its sheath and headed for the Pommerian Steppies.

He was the Ninth.

Thus it was, and thus it shall be;

THE COUNCIL MEETS!

CHAPTER 9: WITHIN THE CASTLE

(Adapted from a story by Steve Allsup)

"Within the castle dark and drear +

The fathoms and obers stare.

The council sits and raises fear,

May the King of Fools beware!"

-Toadsucking Chronicles

¹⁵ *meaning of translation unclear*

Round the Table sat the Council, each member retreating into his own special fantasy. Lace-Face called the role. In alphabetical order (of the Toadsucking language) he began.

"Kotar," spewed Lace-Face.

"Aye," returned Kotar.

"Knee-Grow," spit Lace-Face.

"Aye," grunted Knee-Grow.

"Bebop," shouted Lace-Face.

"Aye," bellowed Bebop.

"Fa-Fred," questioned Lace-Face.

"Aye," repeated Fa-Fred.

"Phosphor," wondered Lace-Face.

"Phosphor abstains," quoth Phosphor. Phosphor saw no reason to let anyone know he was present; especially when he wasn't sure himself. The Council went on to verify that Spagnar, Carnab, Domnail, and Orfner were present.

Unbeknownst or unbecared by the Council, Lace-Face had not simply offered the Council Table to them for naught. Yea, he would use them for his own ends.

With the role called, Orfner suggested they begin their business. It was fine until they discovered no one knew what they were there for. In majestic stupidity Phosphor rose eyeing them all in a cold, harsh grin.

"Schnippies!" shouted Phosphor.

All looked at him in awe. This was the first time this was spoken in all of Toadsuck.

All about the table began to sing a vulgar song of the fall of Toadsuck. Even Domnail, though he was of Toadsuck, began, with tears in his eyes, to sing of the idiocy of Toadsuck. The song was picked up and soon the whole nation-state of Toadsuck, yea, even to the borders of Pommeria, Cinema, and Nothing, began to join. So overpowering was the melody that Horhay, in the palace of the Priestess-King, let his lips, in dull simianess, begin to sing. All the world began to sing.

"Stop!" shouted the Priest-Queen, but the song continued.

THE END of PHOSPHOR LIVES!

Fragments from *PHOSPHOR Book III: CHAOS UNLEASHED*

The Other Editor's Preface

In editing these fragments of Peacock's last great work of Phosphor the Conqueror, I have touched them up as lightly as possible, leaving them in the original form, just as I did the first two books. Occasionally I made some slight punctuation or spelling correction, but rarely. One thing that I did do was to regularize the past and present tenses, which Peacock, in translating his stories literally from the *Book of Kukur*, would switch, with no apparent logic, with jarring frequency. For in the original language of Toadsuck, past and present tense have much more interchangeable value than in our own language.

I have resisted the temptation to complete the fragments, not only because *Horhay Triumphs*, translated from the *Book of Klaven*, tells the same tales of the Council's rebellion, but because I do not have access to the Book of Kukur. Peacock locked that volume away in a safe at the time when his family discovered his project and had him institutionalized in a madhouse. His wife turned over the work that he had already completed to me at that time, but he refused to remember the combination to the safe containing the *Book of Kukur*. It is to be hoped that at some time in the future his sanity may return sufficiently for him to complete his groundbreaking work in this astonishing, newly discovered mythology.

-S.M.A.

THE COUNCIL AND THE KING

BOOK III of PHOSPHOR

"Onward now to battle Rides the Council 'neath the sky

Ready now for struggle

Ready now to fight and die!"

--Toadsucking Chronicles

The Council was moving toward Toadsuck. Though Domnail was of the Council, he accidentally told Horhay all that he knew of the Council. So Horhay knew. If he would take Toadsuck he had to do it now. Taking his club he strode toward the palace of the Priestess-King.

Toadsuckers surrounded the palace. Their mongoloid features and swords shone everywhere. Slowly and stupidly they strode toward Horhay. Horhay saw them coming miles away. Forcing all his mental ability to the brain, Horhay raised his club just as they came upon him. Coming dumbly toward him they came. He crushed them one at a time. The last one he pounded into the ground right beneath his massive feet. On he strode through the moat of the castle.

The Council came from the North with the combined armies of Nothing, Snood, Hyperbolla, Noplace, Cinema, Pommeria, and Shush. Under his sheath of trashmetal, Phosphor carried the Blade that was Reforged and Rebroken. The sword symbolized the heir of Nothing, true blood. The fellowship of the Council came for gain, and to stop the growing power of the Priestess-King. His power was still great, even though he had lost the Great Blade of Fools. This black blade controlled the great Nine Blades that were distributed to Toadsuck. They had been given to the nine intelligent occupants of Toadsuck. They were nine who had come from the far North, even farther north than Barvaria itself. Now they were totally under the control of the Priest-Queen. They were called Bladerats.

The great Three Blades of Rui, held by the free Ruins of the Gray Castle, were controlled only by the great One Blade. They were the healing and knighting blades of the world at this time. The seven Hewing and Building Blades of Cinema were accounted for. Two had been destroyed by carelessness, dropped into the mudholes of Cinema. One other had been lost when the Graxnob of the Eternal River had been destroyed.

The One Blade was lost. The Priest-Queen was searching desperately for it. In his hire were the Prophets of Kak, the blighted souls of that religion.

Obers he had created, imitating the Vylgerian spiderats. All these he had concentrated into Krudur-Mud, the Black Tower.

Horhay continued on toward Toadsuck City. Now before him stood the masses of Toadsuck. Their empty, idiotic features were ready to attack anything that moved. With a shout, Horhay jumped into their midst.

"Horhay must live!"

His club jumped immediately to life, finding the skulls of many Toadsuckers. "Piggies!" he cried.

The Toadsuckers froze. This simple task of speech had fascinated their simian minds. Horhay strode on toward the castle. Each fell in behind him raising their sticks in the only acclamation they were capable of, a killing motion from the

air to the ground. This they mechanically did as long as they followed Horhay.

**THE THRONE OF THE KING:
DEATH TO EVERYONE!**

*"Onward now does Horhay ride
O'er the field where many moan.
Onward now does Horhay fly,
Onward now to take his throne!"
-Toadsucking Chronicles*

He had waited long enough. Horhay strode to the gates of the temple of the Priest-Queen; Krudur-Mud. This mighty temple had withstood all foes of the powerful Priestess-King. For ages no one had gained entry.

Horhay had read of the legends of the vast mazes of an underground entrance to the temple, and decided now was the time to make Toadsuck his own.

With fantastic....

The END of fragments of Book Three: Chaos Unleashed

THE ADVENTURES OF THE
HYDRALIK AGE'S MOST FABU-
LOUS WIZARD WITHOUT EQUAL
HITHER, THERE, OR BEYOND: A
STUDIOUSLY ACCURATE AC-
COUNT OF THE LIFE OF
AMAKRAPHOS OF KRAP, THE
MOST STUPENDOUS MAGE OF
ALL TIME

by

TANGOR

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Chapter (whatever)

The Sage Sage Sallies Forth Without Silliness

In the far off land of Krap, wherein lies a Park, a mysterious and reputedly evil wizard named Amakrapolos poured over the yellowed and musty pages of an arcane text. Above his balding pate circled a cloud black and viperous from the trio of tall candles which light fought against the darkness of the lofty tower's chill chamber. So intent upon his reading was Amakrapolos that he did not notice the entrance of his faithful idiot Fenn Unwise--or the unsavory dish of cold meatloaf and unboiled potatoes that worthy carried in an arthritic hand.

"Ma-ma-master!" Fenn Unwise stuttered, ducking just in case the wizard chose a fist rather than a scowl as answer. "Di-di-ner is served."

"More hogswill from the kitchen? Remind me, Fenn Unwise, to transform that harpy of a cook into a bug."

"Why would you do that? I—I—love her!"

Amakrapolos sighed, shaking his head, the long white hairs fringing his over-large skull gently whipped about his badly shaved chin. "I worry about you, Fenn Unwise! Come, my faithful idiot, see what I have found in the forbidden texts of Omigosh!"

Assured his misshapen skull was safe from a beating, Fenn Unwise put down the trencher and the meatloaf and stepped close. His watery and rheumy gaze looked at the long finger (hideously distorted by advanced arthritis) repeatedly underlining a set of symbols that seemed to burn with a bone-chilling blue light on the moldy page. The hunchbacked servant scratched his head (as will you once the Words are Revealed).

"*Insert Tab A into Slot B?* Wha-what does tha-that mean, Ma-ma-master?"

"Damfino! That's what it means, Fenn Unwise! Damfino is our destination to unravel this mystery, for I feel that once this knowledge is known I shall be able to rule the world! Prepare my steed. We depart immediately!"

Fenn Unwise backed away. Lowering his head, knowing how unstable was his master, the faithful idiot said: "No steed. We-we ate him last wi-winter."

Amakrapolos frowned, tapping his yellowed teeth with a too-long fingernail. "Ah, yes. I remember. That particular month of meatloaf was even worse than usual. Oh well. New shoes all around. Pack my bag, Fenn Unwise. We must go to Nicca and converse with Tean. I'll be down shortly."

Fenn Unwise plodded down the narrow curving stairs, keeping his mutters to himself.

* * * * *

Amakrapolos frowned (his usual expression) more intensely than usual. Upon waking from their overnight camp three days beyond the border of Krap, and while waiting as Fenn Unwise prepared asparagus crepes and scrambled quail eggs, a vile insect of unknown species had taken a bite from the tip of his too-thin, too-long nose. The wizard's swift

reflexes had mashed the bug beyond recognition—and in the process had produced a rather striking black shiner that contrasted most disconcertingly with the wizard's bloodshot eyes.

Carrying a disproportionately huge backpack at least six feet taller than Fenn Unwise's four foot height, the faithful idiot trudged dutifully in his master's steps, huffing and puffing. "Are we-we th-th-there yet, Ma-ma-master?"

The magnificent wizard of Krap scowled even more mightily. "Not yet, oh drudge insignificant, but soon."

"Soon" was some hours later as the intrepid pair entered the Secret City of Tean in Nicca and make their way to the entrance of the Oracle of Nicca's tiny shrine. A Malodorous Voice issued forth (coughing) "State your business or cause, else deposit three dinero in the offering box."

The conversation which followed will follow, eventually. Breath holding is not suggested.

NEXT: The Fallen Idol: Or How El-vis Entered the Hy-dralik Age

Editor's note: Well, actually, there is no "next" this is—

THE END