

THE OTARI GAZETTE

A DAY IN THE LIFE · THE DRAGON, THE HIDE & THE HAMMER

OTARI · TWO COPPERS

A DRAGON COMES TO OTARI

Four travel-stained delvers haul a horned dragon through the gate before the bells strike ten — and the whole town spills into the street to see it.

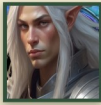


The young horned dragon, slain beneath the Gauntlight, now keeps watch over the counter at Blades for Glades.

THE CHAMPIONS



REGIT LACHER
Elf Rogue · the silver tongue



IXOR GIEST
Fetchling Guardian · the wall



ILIAN
Fruit Leshy Monk · the open hand



SGT. FLINT "FLAK" IRONHAND
Dwarf Gunslinger · the gun

Four went under the Gauntlight. A dragon came back with them.

It was not yet ten o'clock when four travel-worn delvers came through the gate, dragging a dead dragon behind them. A juvenile, the dock-hands were quick to note — green-scaled and horned, no longer than a fishing skiff — but a dragon all the same, and one hauled up out of the black beneath the Gauntlight, where grander names have gone down and never come back. Otari has not seen a night like it in years.

The crowd came fast and stayed late. Children were lifted to see the horns; a line formed of folk willing to part with a copper for the luck of touching a dragon's tooth, and by the small hours the heroes were sixteen coppers richer for it. Beneath the wonder ran a colder current of talk: if one young dragon laired below the town, what laid it there — and what else is still breathing down in the dark?

The carcass went to the mortician, where the cold would keep it whole for cutting, curing, and study. Not every offer was honest. A Grand Bazaar merchant out of Absalom, one Gothab Mo, kept raising his purse for the dragon's tongue-root until Ilian named the only uses such a thing has — all of them ugly. The party refused outright; Sgt. Ironhand burned the man's card, and the tongue-root was destroyed rather than sold. The scholars Morlibint and Vial took their measurements and notes in trade for healing draughts, and the rest of the beast was set aside for the one craftsman in town with the nerve to work it.

HEARD IN THE STREET

“ *I've lived under that lighthouse my whole life telling myself the stories were stories. Then four of them drag a dragon past my stoop. I don't sleep so easy now.* ”
A DOCK LANE NEIGHBOR

“ *A copper to touch its tooth? Cheapest luck I ever bought. Cheaper than what those four paid to fetch it, I'll wager.* ”
A PATRON OF THE ROWDY ROCKFISH

Continued — how the dragon fell, told by the four who felled it.

HOW THE DRAGON FELL

Your correspondent sat down with all four champions. What they describe is less a clean triumph than a near-disaster that turned, at the last breath, the heroes' way.

The four did not slay their dragon in open air or under any banner. By their own account they killed it far below the streets, in a kobold warren in the pitch dark — and for a long, ugly stretch of it, the dragon was winning.

Nor was it some wild thing stumbled upon. A whole tribe of kobolds had hatched and reared the beast, eggshell trophies strung at their throats, guarding the young horned dragon as the crowning prize of their warlord — the one they called Kobold Boss Zolgran. The champions broke in from the wrong side of the warren, and the fight was upon them before they could choose it.

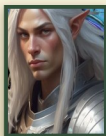
It went badly first. Regit Lacher was beaten to death's door at the dragon's very feet; Ixor Giest stood bleeding to hold the line; poison breath and a lashing tail caught them both. And then the dragon, lunging to finish Regit where he lay, swung wild and wide — and Regit, half-dead in the muck, drove his slender silver cane up and home. The beast dropped.

The kobolds did not break at once. Sgt. Ironhand's powder cleared the warlord's guard, and Ilian put a brutal end to Zolgran himself. The lair and its hoard fell to them — including the boss's own smoking sword, now resheathed at Ixor's hip — and then began the long, muddy haul to carry a dragon up into the light.



"I was flat on my back in kobold filth, bleeding, watching it pick which of us to eat. It chose to lunge. It chose wrong."

REGIT LACHER · Elf Rogue



"My work is simple. I stand where the worst of it lands, so the others can do the clever things. I have new scars; they are breathing. A fair trade."

IXOR GIEST · Fetchling Guardian



"The dragon died younger than it should have. But the kobolds were growing it into something Otari could not have survived. I took no joy in it. I would do it again."

ILIAN · Fruit Leshy Monk



"Powder and patience put the warlord's guard down. The dragon was the loud part. It's the kobolds still breathing that keep me up at night."

SGT. FLINT "FLAK" IRONHAND · Dwarf Gunslinger

WHAT THEY FACED

- ❖ **A juvenile horned dragon** — green-scaled, poison-breathed, deaf to venom and sleep.
- ❖ **Kobold Boss Zolgran** and a warren of warriors and scouts.
- ❖ **A reared beast** — eggshell trophies marked it the kobolds' own hatchling.
- ❖ **A long road home**, hauling a dragon up through the dark and the Fogfen mire.

Continued — what a dragon leaves behind, long after it is dead.

WHAT A DRAGON LEAVES BEHIND

A week on, Otari cannot stop talking about its dragon. Some of that talk is pride. Some of it is fear. Your correspondent listened to both.

The dragon is a week dead, and the town has not gone quiet. In the market squares the children have invented a new game: one of them plays the dragon, the rest are champions with broomstick swords and bucket-lid shields, and the dragon must always, in the end, fall to a wooden cane. They make the smallest one with the stick win every time.

At the Rowdy Rockfish a knot of admirers has formed around the four — standing their drinks, begging the tale told once more, a few trailing them from door to door. Fame, it seems, is its own kind of weather, and not every day of it is fair.

For not all the talk is bright. Two colder currents run beneath the cheering. The first comes from older voices who mutter that you cannot go hammering about in the deep places under a town without waking something content to sleep; they glance toward the Gauntlight and lower their voices.

The second sits nearer the ground. The dragon was a kobold tribe’s reared treasure, and the champions killed both the beast and the warlord who kept it. The survivors fled into the dark, and a grudge like that is not known to cool. More than one farmer on the town’s edge has begun barring the door at dusk.

So Otari carries both at once — pride and dread, sharing the same streets, the same taverns, the same long look toward the light over the water.

THE GLAD AND THE PROUD

- ❖ A town that felled a dragon feels, for once, as though it can defend itself.
- ❖ The four are local names now — pointed out in the street, never short of a drink.
- ❖ A good story travels; the tale is already drawing the curious toward Otari’s gate.

THE WARY AND THE WORRIED

- ❖ Some swear the delving stirred something below that should have been left sleeping.
- ❖ The dead dragon was a kobold tribe’s nursling; its kin may come seeking a reckoning.
- ❖ The Gauntlight still looms, and the deep, by every account, is far from empty.

AROUND TOWN

“ My boy’s been the dragon three days running, and he insists on losing to the cane every time. I’ve never seen a child so glad to be slain.

A PARENT OFF MARKET LANE

“ You do not strike a stone that deep and expect the echo to stay down there. Something below heard them. I have stopped reading the stars at that hour.

WRIN SIVINXI — astrologer, Wrin’s Wonders

“ I’ve heard them tell it six times and I’ll stay for a seventh. We get fish in Otari. We do not get dragons.

A REGULAR AT THE ROWDY ROCKFISH

“ They killed the little dragon and the thing that raised it. A nest like that does not forgive. I’ve started bringing the goats in before dark.

A FARMER ON THE OTARI ROAD

Continued — the hide goes to the hammer, and Carman Rajani finds more in it than leather.

THE HIDE AND THE HAMMER

Carman Rajani took a slayer's trophy and a hard man's pride to his bench — and gave back four keepsakes that surprised even him.



Carman Rajani, last of his line and smith of Blades for Glades.

THE COMMISSIONS

- ❖ **A gentleman's grip** for Regit's silver sword-cane.
- ❖ **A grip and sheath** for Ixor's smoking sword.
- ❖ **A set of handwraps** for Ilian's fists.
- ❖ **A shell bandolier** for Flint's powder and shot.

They brought the green hide to the one bench in Otari that would not flinch at it. Carman Rajani — last of the Rajani line, better known for a sharp tongue than a soft word — took one look at the cured strips and went quiet in a way the apprentices had not seen before. He skinned, salted, and oiled; he worked the scale-pattern up from under the polish until the dark green caught the lamplight like something still half-alive.

He will tell you, if pressed, that it is the finest material to cross his bench in years: dragon, taken in his own town, by hands that asked him — him — to make it into something they would carry. A man with that much pride and that much chip on his shoulder does not waste the chance. He bound grips, stitched bands, set bronze fittings and small medallions, and refused to rush a single seam.

And somewhere in the work, something he had not asked for arrived. As each piece took its final shape, a faint will settled into it — the dragon's own nature, lingering in the cured hide, answering to the slayers it would serve. Carman did not etch a rune or speak a word of power. He is no mage and never claimed to be. Yet he stood over a finished bandolier and felt it want to throw smoke, and he knew the others would be no different.

He has not stopped talking about it since. The bitter craftsman who fixes shield-bosses for five silver has, by his own startled account, put a living boon into four ordinary-looking things — and cannot fully say how.

AT THE BENCH

"I have shod horses and mended blades thirty years. I did not know I had this in my hands. Neither did the dragon, I'd wager."

— CARMAN RAJANI · smith, *Blades for Glades*

Overleaf — the four keepsakes, and the gift bound into each.

FOUR KEEPSAKES, FOUR BOONS

A cane, a sword, a set of wraps, and a bandolier — all cut from the same green hide, each holding a different gift.



THE GENTLEMAN'S CANE



borne by Regit Lacher · Elf Rogue

A slender silver blade hidden in a polished cane, its cap rewrapped in dark green dragonhide — a weapon that passes for a fop's affectation.

BOON · GENTLEMAN'S MONSTER-HIDE

Once a day, when the cane can serve as prop, status, or misdirection, Regit gains +1 to a Deception or Society check. It cannot help where it plays no part.

+1 STRIKING SILVER SWORD CANE · LEVEL 5 · UNIQUE



THE COMMAND GRIP



borne by Ixor Giest · Fetchling Guardian

A smoking longsword regripped and resheathed in green scale over leather and bronze. The hide remembers the dragon's coiling strength.

BOON · DRAGONHIDE COMMAND GRIP

Once a day, +1 to an Athletics check to Trip, Shove, Reposition, or Disarm. The blade still smokes — and still bites with fire on command.

+1 STRIKING SMOKING SWORD · LEVEL 5 · UNIQUE



SCALE-SLIP WRAPS



borne by Ilian · Fruit Leshy Monk

Embroidered wraps crossed with green-black scale and a thin gold-green filament like a living vein. Over a leshy's vine-fingers they flex like scales themselves.

BOON · SCALE-SLIP FOOTWORK

Once a day, +1 to an Acrobatics check to Tumble Through, Balance, Escape, or cross treacherous ground. They don't strike harder — they keep him on his feet.

+1 STRIKING HANDWRAPS OF MIGHTY BLOWS · LEVEL 5 · UNIQUE



THE SMOKE-SCALE BANDOLIER



borne by Sgt. Flint "Flak" Ironhand · Dwarf Gunslinger

A broad shell bandolier of cured green hide, a bronze dragon medallion at the clasp, built to hold his shells and firearm tools.

BOON · SMOKE-SCALE FLASH

Once a day, as a reaction to an attacker he can see, smoke and sparks burst from the hide and Flint is concealed until his next turn. The smoke clings to him alone.

SHELL BANDOLIER · LEVEL 5 · UNIQUE

All four reworked in Otari by Carman Rajani — from the hide of the dragon their bearers carried home.

HEROES, AND THE DARK BELOW

This reporter's accolades for four dragon-slayers — and the questions Otari cannot yet answer.

Let the record show plainly what this town watched happen: four adventurers walked a dragon's carcass through our gate. A juvenile, yes — and the old hunters down at the docks will gladly remind you that a grown horned dragon would have made cinders of the lot. But it was a dragon, and they killed it, and they did so in the black beneath the Gauntlight, where braver-sounding names have gone down and simply never surfaced.

What this Gazette admires is not only the kill. It is the conduct around it. Offered a fat Absalom purse for the beast's tongue-root, they weighed what the thing was good for, found the answer foul, and destroyed it rather than take the coin. Slayers who can also say no are rarer than dragons in these parts.

And then there is the craft of it — Carman Rajani's bench turning a trophy into tools that carry a piece of the beast still. The whole affair, from gate to forge, has the shape of a town remembering how to be proud of itself.

But pride is not the same as safety, and your reporter will not pretend otherwise. One young dragon is dead. No one in Otari can yet tell you what laired it under our streets, or whether it was the only one. The Gauntlight's terror is not ended; it is merely interrupted. The deep is not cleared. The light still leans over the water, and the dark beneath it still waits.

So Otari raises a glass to four champions tonight — and, by the Mayor's own word, offers them not an order but a promise: whatever they choose to do next, the town will stand behind them.

— Verna Quill, *The Otari Gazette*



The trophy at Blades for Glades — proof, and warning both.

THE MAYOR'S CHARGE

“These four walked into the dark and carried a dragon home. I will not order heroes anywhere — but should they choose to see this through, Otari will stand behind them to the last, and welcome them home with everything we have.”

— OSEPH MENHEMES · Mayor of Otari

STILL BENEATH US

- ❖ **More dragons?** One juvenile is slain; what laired it below Otari, none can yet say.
- ❖ **The Gauntlight** still leans over the water — its terror interrupted, not ended.
- ❖ **The deep is not cleared.** Whatever the champions found below, it is not finished.
- ❖ **A grudge below.** The slain dragon was a kobold tribe's nursling; its kin may yet seek a reckoning.
- ❖ **Will they return?** The town waits to learn whether its heroes go back down.

Otari raises a glass to four champions tonight — and hopes, quietly, that they are not yet done.