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The Golden Age of Witchers

It's been a few hundred years and people have forgotten what it used to be like. They've forgotten where their nursery rhymes come from, and why they bar their doors at night. We witchers exist for a reason: to slog through the muck and grime and slay the monstrosities other people are incapable of facing.

—Erland of Larvik



Heh, so here's the deal. Few months ago, I was makin' my way back from the Tir Tochair—on business, of course—and I happened to come into possession of chest of odds and ends. Nothing all that interestin' if ya ask me, heh. 'Til I found an musty old book at the bottom of a stack of outdated magic theories and whatnot. Didn't have a title. Nothing fancy about the thing. Hell, think if I hadn't had the sense to treat it careful it may 'ave come apart in my hands! But yers truly's a man of culture and knowledge! I know a rare find when I see it!

A few minutes of careful handlin' and I was off to market! Got the book open and ya'd never guess what I found: notes from a witcher named Erland of Larvik!

Now ya may notta heard of ol' Erland and I wouldn't blame ya! When the keeps went down a lot of kings scrubbed every mention of witchers they could find.

Nobody knows much about Erland of Larvik. There're some mentions of him 'round the world but it turns out he was a pretty big deal among his guild. One of the foundin' members of the Witcher's Gryphon School and their first Grandmaster! This son of bitch, rid the halls of Kaer y Seren of specters with his own silver, traveled the whole Continent slayin' monsters! Heh, the book I picked up was some sorta compiled list of all the notes he took over centuries of witchin'.

Bein' the level-headed, pragmatist I am, I saw an opportunity! Witcher's are all but gone these days and the monsters are comin' back. We need witcher smarts more than ever now! So here I am with the "Master of The Northern Intelligentsia" himself, Brandon of Oxenfurt, transcribin' a witcher's journal on huntin' monsters! Without further ado, the introduction's a real piece of work so we'll copy that right in. Enjoy!

—Rodolf Kazmer

The Ending Of An Era

Kaer y Seren has fallen—buried beneath a mountain of snow and ice. I can't say how many of my brethren escaped the avalanche but I saw the culprits.

I shouldn't be surprised that the sorcerer's envy would turn to rage someday. No doubt, the kings of the north and the mages of the council will arrive soon to pick through the snow and rubble in hopes of finally unearthing the "Secrets of the Gryphon." This will be the last time I underestimate the blinding greed of humanity.

I believe it's time for the Gryphon to leave this god forsaken place. People have forgotten what us witcher were created for in the first place. They've forgotten the monsters that lurk in the night and the terrors that we witchers shield them from. Now they lash out at their protectors. No doubt, the other schools will come under siege soon—if they haven't already fallen.

The realms of humanity will twist these atrocities to their liking in their histories. I have no doubt witchers of all school will soon be known as nothing more than monsters and devils. But our purpose is beyond the whims of frightened kings and arrogant mages.

I leave this journal and the others bound with it, to set the ledger straight and make sure that the knowledge of the witchers will be preserved. When the last witcher has fallen, and the monsters begin to creep from the crypts and caves of the world, humanity will begin to remember. And on that day, I hope these journals can be used to protect the realms even past my death.

Life Before Witchers

I might as well have grown up on a ship. When I think back on my childhood, I think I spent more time on the waves than on solid ground.

My mother, Vanja, was a spear maiden from Hindarsfjall and to this day, I've no idea who my father was. An unlucky fisherman from the Redanian coast, I imagine. My mother and I shared little love and she spoke rarely. I don't doubt my mother only kept me to keep Freya from punishing her.

Hindarsfjall was a different place before the witcher order. These days Skelligers are often unwilling to hire witchers but they've benefited from us as much as the rest of the Continent. Back in the day you didn't go near the shore if you weren't at a dock and you didn't venture into the forest unless you weren't keen on seeing the next morning. Every now and again, the older lads would dare each other to travel into the mountains and maybe a quarter of them would come back. If they weren't captured and eaten by a cyclops, they probably wound up in the dirty, carrion-filled nest of a roc. Nearly a quarter of the drakkar that left port were torn apart by screeching sirens and the truly unlucky ones were dragged down to the depth by a kraken or some other beast of the deep. If a village fell under a curse or a night wraith manifested in a graveyard, that village was abandoned until a druid could set the place right. If they even could.

I was a deckhand by the time I could walk and I was swinging an axe as soon as I could lift it. My mother's fellow crewmen gave me what little "raising" I got. They kept me busy, tying ropes, fetching things, and sharpening swords and axes. On raids I was the ship's night guard. I slept on the top deck, always keeping a weather eye on the sky or the railing of the ship. If I saw a siren or the tentacle of a kraken I was to run to the ship's bell and ring it with all my might. If I didn't make to the bell in time I could at least scream loud enough to wake the crew. One deckhand was a small price to pay in those days. I imagine no one would mourn long if they came to the top deck the next morning and found nothing but a bloody smear leading to the railing.

The First Witchers

I was ten years old when I made port in Novigrad under the banners of the Heymaey for the last time. I'd become a wild young man, and my mother was keen on getting rid of me. Just a month prior I had drawn steel on one of the new deckhands for calling me a bastard and he was still recovering.

When a wealthy-looking mage approached her asking to buy her deckhand for reasonable price she lept at the chance. Of course, she probably would have settled for a half-pint of warm ale and a rusty dagger at that point. The deal was struck

and my destiny was written. I left with the Sorcerer Alzur that very evening.

I never knew much of Alzur. I traveled with him for several weeks as he collected a horde of children, including myself, but he rarely uttered a word to us except to ask us questions about our health. When we asked what he had planned for us, all he said was that we would be the next step in a "revolutionary experiment." When we asked why he needed children all he said was that adults had "proved unsatisfactory."

At the mountain castle of Rissberg, the 37 other children and I trained day and night to prepare ourselves for the experiments Alzur and his associates had planned. Climbing cliff-sides, running obstacle courses peppered with traps, dodging heavy pendulums while blindfolded, and many other trials I've forgotten over the years.

We were pushed to our limits and the slightest slip up could mean death. Four of my fellow students died before the mages had even begun their experimentation. The rest of us managed to build a kinship. We were suffering but we were suffering together and somehow that made it somewhat more bearable. I got into a number of fights in those early days but in the end we all had to report to the mages the next morning so none of us could afford to hold a grudge long.

I was around 11 then and I had started to find my eyes wandering to a young Aedirnian girl by the name of Jagoda. I don't really know whether it was genuine affection or a bond forged by trauma, but it was real to me at the time. After all these years it's hard to remember details but I do remember she used to sit on the castle walls with me before bed. We kept ourselves sane by complaining about the mages, and the trials, and the terrible food. It made us feel human again. Even if no one cared about us, we cared for each other.

When the time came for the true experiments, our resolve began to fade. We started a regiment of bubbling mushroom stews and soapy alchemical teas and at first, all seemed well. We became stronger and faster and our bodies grew more powerful. But as the experimentation continued the concoctions the mages prepared for us became harsher and most of the girls quickly took ill. Jagoda was among them. I tried to take care of her but most nights I just wound up talking with her and bringing her cool water.

When the sorcerers started their experimentations it grew clear that the majority of us wouldn't survive and the girls would fair the worst. But they pressed on. For more than a month, our numbers dwindled. One of us would be lead into the laboratory and all we would hear of them was the screaming and the begging.

Jagoda was gone within the first week—cold and buried with the other failed prospects. I did my best to bury her mangled body in the makeshift graveyard the other prospects and I

had built. I didn't speak for days after that but I ran faster and I struck harder. Every inch of me was on fire and I had nowhere to go but forward.

Nearly a month in, Alzur and his compatriots saw their first success. One of the younger boys survived the mutations with his mind and body intact. After countless deaths, the first witcher was born.

I was mutated less than a week later and I think it was only my hatred for the sorcerers that kept me alive. More than two centuries later I still have never felt pain like I did on that operating table.

When they had finished mutating all of us only a handful of boys remained. We were inspected thoroughly and tested constantly. The mages had gathered professionals from all over the Continent to train us in different skills: hunters from Kaedwen, alchemists from Vicovaro, and swordsmen from every corner of the map came to teach us. In theory, the mages themselves would train us in magic.

Long sessions with huntsmen gave us an unparalleled knowledge of tracking and hunting. Late nights with alchemists ensured that we would be able to craft the mutagenic concoctions they had tailored for us. Grueling, painful practices with the swordsmen hardened us into lethal weapons. We were everything the mages and their unseen masters wanted. Almost.

The mutations had opened our bodies to the flow of chaos but even so we proved too weak to channel magic like a born magician and this was the turning point for the mages. I never knew what terse arguments and pathetic groveling had transpired but after we showed our limited magical talent we were banished from Castle Rissberg and the few mages who supported us went with. Their project had proven less than profitable and the Brotherhood of Sorcerers would no longer support them. Alzur, his mentor Cosimo, and some of the others joined us. They took us to an abandoned castle in the Kestrel mountains called Castle Morgraig and continued their testing—no doubt seeking to validate the cost of their investment.

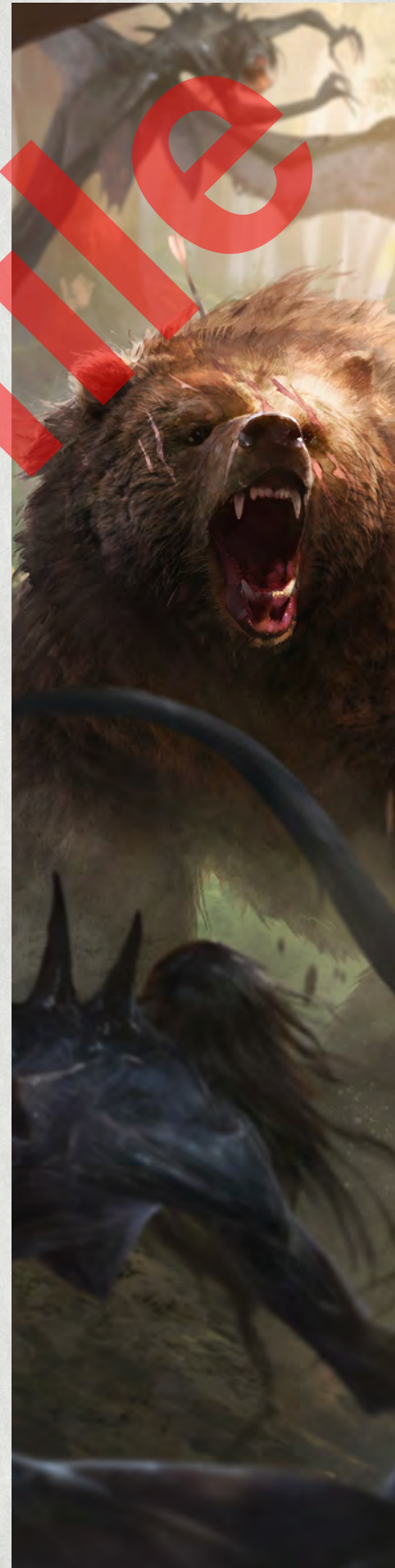
Cosimo developed the signs for us, simple magic that we could manage even with our limited capabilities. To a mage they were crude and unsophisticated, but to a young man who had never even considered the possibility of magic they were more than impressive enough. I practiced long into the night, perfecting my hand gestures and willing my control over the chaos to strengthen. The magic was the only thing I still managed to find joy in save for the rare conversations with my fellow witchers.

Sir Lywelyn

By the time I was 15 or 16, the first class of witchers had come into their own and I was among them. There were only 5 of us but Alzur and Cosimo already had gathered more children to be our underclassmen. Soon we would be sent out into the world to hunt monsters. I can't say I know how the other four felt about this. None of wanted to talk about our fears or misgivings after what we had been through.

For my part I was prepared. Months before our "maiden voyage" our sword trainer had found reason to quarrel with Alzur and his vacant, charred room was given to a wandering knight one of the other mages had met on their travels. Taliesin Bleddyn Yorath aep Lywelyn was his name but we called him "Gryphon" for the black Gryphon on his shield. Gryphon was different from the hard-eyed sellswords that had trained us prior. From the first day we trained with him I could tell he believed in something—he had a purpose greater than surviving to the next sunrise. The knight errant taught us southern sword styles and techniques to ignore pain and fight through grievous wounds but he also spoke of our "Duty." He believed that we had been created for a reason. We weren't the result a failed experiment and we had great works to do in this world.

I doubt any of the others took his soliloquizing seriously but it resonated with me. I had begun this journey as an angry young man and ever since Jagoda had passed on years earlier I had nothing but anger and





grief in my heart. Thinking our suffering had a meaning gave me peace of mind. I took Gryphon's words to heart and when I first set out on The Path it was with a single purpose: To protect the people of the Continent from the threats they couldn't face.

On the Path

The First Age of Witchers that began with my four brothers and myself was a strange time for all involved. Settlements all around the Continent were under assault from monsters but they hadn't called for aid from the mages at Morgraig. When we witchers first made contact with humanity neither of us knew what to expect. The only people we had ever interacted with were our teachers and the mages who made us, and the peasants had never even heard of a witcher before.

I barely remember my first hunt—I believe it was a horde of rotfiends in southern Kaedwen. I remember the look of confusion and concern on the alderman's face when I approached him. I could tell he didn't know what to make of me. I stated my price—a modest sum to pay for repairing my armor and weapons and buying materials for my potions—and he agreed cautiously. I was a stranger and my eyes betrayed my alien nature but he had lost too much to the rotfiend horde to turn down any aid I could offer.

The hunt was far from easy. At that time we didn't have half the knowledge we have now. The first rotfiend I slew was impaled on the end of my blade when its body erupted and I barely managed to turn my face away in time to avoid the caustic bile. But I learned and I planned. With traps, and magic, and superior skill I must have killed 10 or 20 rotfiends single handedly. I returned to the alderman with word of the hunt and got my pay. The alderman was still cautious of me but the townsfolk were grateful. They even offered me a round at the tavern.

That was how it was everywhere I went. The dukes and aldermen were wary of

my new order, and the mages were insulted by my abrupt replacement of their "heroic" positions, but the peasants were cautiously thankful to the man who saved them from the ravaging beasts at their doorstep. I spoke with them, drank with them from time to time, and even made a few friends. I would travel from town to village to city, clearing trade routes, breaking curses, and saving innocents. I took money for repairing my gear and preparing my potions but I never left a village suffering for lack of coin.

I thought good word would spread and perhaps the world would become less wary of witchers. But I couldn't have been more wrong. Before the end of the year, the churches of the north had begun spreading venomous tales about my mutated brethren and I. I did my best to calm the people who now began to see me as a monster but after a while that became nearly impossible. Their priests and "wise men" had told them of the "ungodly witchmen from the mountains".

As the colder weather started to set in, I headed back to Morgraig. There I met with my surviving brothers, mourned the fallen, and told stories of my year on the Path. I must admit, even when peasants met me warmly I still couldn't connect with them like I could with my brothers. We shared an experience and a life that no other person could fully understand. Every year I set off on the Path and I always looked forward to wintering at Morgraig and sharing the tales I had collected with whoever was lucky enough to make it home.

For a few decades, that was how it was. A spring, summer, and fall full of deadly hunts and vicious curses and then a winter of warm fires, training in the mountains, and celebrating another year alive with my brothers and the boys who would follow in our footsteps.

The Fracturing

Unfortunately, things couldn't last. By the time I was in my late 40s the Order of the Witchers had begun to fracture. Alzur, Cosimo had moved on, leaving only a hand-

ful of mages to perform our mutations and our order no longer had a leader. The cracks rapidly began to show in our unified facade.

Witchers were traveling the entirety of the known Continent and often they crossed paths. For the most part this wasn't a problem. Whoever found the contract first claimed it, and the other witcher would respect that claim. After all, there were plenty of contracts and plenty of settlements in need. But as we spread we began to quarrel amongst ourselves. Witchers would return from the path telling tales of brothers who tricked them out of contracts or drew steel on them, threatening to kill them if they didn't move on. There were a number of confrontations in the halls of Morgraig, each one more tense than the last.

I can't recall when the first blood was shed. It wasn't long after the first squabbles. I returned to Morgraig one winter to find one of our own, Rhys, cut from shoulder to waist and covered in his own blood. The Swallow potion had kept him alive and he told us a bone chilling tale. Deep in the forests of Kaedwen he had taken on a contract for the head of a chort that had been terrorizing a highland village. As he had finished negotiating the fee, another of our brothers had entered the village seeking to make a deal for the very same creature. His name was Arnaghad and I knew him well. Arnaghad was a titan of a man from the depth of Gemmera. He must have been near 9-hands wide at the shoulder and always draped himself in a battered bearskin cloak. Though he commanded the respect of many of our brothers, Arnaghad didn't feel the same kinship I so valued. When he learned that such a lucrative contract had slipped his grasp his blood must have boiled. Arnaghad found Rhys in the wilds outside the village and met him, blade in hand. Rhys had only managed to escape with his life by calling the attention of the chort and slipping away into the wilderness when it charged Arnaghad and him.

We had allowed the arguments and threats to go on too long and now a witcher's blood had been spilt. We prepared for Arnaghad's return, intent on meting out his punishment and ending the infighting that had begun.

When Arnaghad returned it was with a posse of other brothers. No doubt he expected a fight but his pride wouldn't allow him to flee. I don't know what speech he had given to others; likely some long-winded diatribe against the Order and our "stagnating traditions." When we met them in the great hall, Arnaghad's cloak was already thrown back, his steel sword gripped in his gloved fist. I think many of us hoped he would see reason and go quietly. Of course I doubt that would have ever occurred to Arnaghad.

I had never fought to the death with another witcher before. A thousand times I had drawn steel against some unlucky foe and now I was on the receiving end of a whirlwind of steel and magic. My body moved on instinct, watching for a spark of light or the glint of steel hurtling towards me. After laying low one of Arnaghad's band I paused for just a moment to survey my surroundings. Enough time to leave me open to the charging kinslayer who had started this whole mess. Arnaghad's slash nearly ended my life on the spot, smashing through my Quen shield and splitting my face open like a burst seam. I kept fighting through streaming blood and hazy vision, dodging Arnaghad's offensive and managing to knock him to his back with a well placed Aard. The battle continued but I remember very little of it.

By the end of the night Arnaghad and his kinslayers had fled into the dark of the mountains, licking their wounds. The Order of Witchers had survived but its numbers had rapidly dwindled and its morale was deeply wounded.

In the aftermath of the first fracture, the Witcher Order was wounded and unstable. We began to argue amongst ourselves.

"Why do we fight for people who hate us?"

"Why do we accept such low payment?"

"Why don't we kill humans or elves or whoever else we're paid to kill?"

Many of my brothers had become disillusioned by the tenets of our order and there was little I could do to change their minds. Times had changed and the glory and status we had once enjoyed was long gone. Many of our newest brothers had no memory of the First Age of Witchers and they had grown restless. Years crept by and the tensions grew, spreading through our ranks. Witchers who traveled south began encountering new witchers, wearing a medallion of a bear's head or of a curling viper. They relayed tales of a new witcher school called School of the Bear, built by Arnaghad in the Amell Mountains. They told of the new witchers of the south who sold their skills to anyone for any contract and of a cruel betrayal that nearly led to the death of Arnaghad and gave birth to a secretive order of witchers who embraced the poison of the viper.

As these tales spread the rifts in our order widened. Before long, another group of young witchers split from the Order. Unlike the kinslaying bears, these witchers split off from us with an intent to form a new school. These witchers, who fashioned cat's-head medallions for themselves, were fed up with the poor treatment they received at the hands of the commonfolk and believed they could form a better order that would surpass the Order of Witchers and command the respect of the Continent. Fifteen or 20 of them stole away in the night, taking

a great deal of our mutagenic compounds and alchemical tools with them. At the time we had no idea how wrong they were when they boasted about the improvements they would make with future witchers. Search parties were sent to find them and retrieve the mutagens but by then they cats had used their knowledge to obscure their tracks beyond recognition.

The End of the Order of Witchers

For a time we soldiered on. In the spring we would go out on the Path, but now we met with not only the derision of the people but the threat of other witchers who might try to kill us for our contracts. Eventually, we began dividing up the Continent by schools to keep from driving ourselves to extinction. The attitude at Morgraig became more utilitarian and my brothers began to lose any spark they once possessed. We were becoming the grim servants of death the world viewed us as.

I remember the winter I left Morgraig. Another year on the Path had passed and I made my way back up into the mountains to meet with my brothers at Morgraig. When I arrived at the keep, the halls were dark, lit only by a few torches and the great hall's hearth. A number of my brothers sat at the great table, trading stories and drinking from battered tankards. Others lingered near windows, watching the mountains. Though the fires remained lit the warmth had left Morgraig. The keep was more a sanctuary than a home. A place hidden far away from the world, where the last witchers of the once proud Order could hide.

I was determined not to deal another blow to the Order that had been my family for so many decades. I wouldn't cause a massacre and I would cause as little bad blood as possible. With my 13 closest friends I said my piece and we left Morgraig that night. The meaning of the Order of Witchers had been all but forgotten and I couldn't let it fade away. No one stopped us and no one came after us.

I had lost my home but much of my family remained. We moved northwest, heading for the Dragon Mountains and the coasts of Poviss. Morgraig was not the only keep the mages had used to house their experiments. In my travels I had heard of one other, Kaer y Seren, an old fortress on a cliffside by the water. Its halls had been empty since the torture and death Alzur and Cosimo wrought had woven a death curse over the foundation of the keep. When we arrived we found the castle exactly as expected. Specters of failed witchers roamed the corpse-strewn hall and but the castle hummed with power. Within the castle's courtyard, a standing stone stood, erected by elves centuries ago at a confluence of air magic. No doubt its presence was the reason the mages had the castle built. We set about dispatching the suffering souls of our predecessors and reclaiming the keep in the name of the witchers. From our seat at the top of the world, we would uphold the honorable goals

we had been built for. In honor of my long-dead mentor, I took up the mantle of the Gryphon, forging a school that would serve as a reminder to the people of what witchers were meant to be.

In the wake of the fracturing, the remaining order migrated from the Castle Morgraig, seeking solitude somewhere in the west. Eventually we would meet again, noting the wolf-head medallions of our former brothers.

The "Golden Age"

Among witchers sometimes you'll hear the term "The Golden Age." More often than not they are referring to the time after the fracturing of the Order of Witchers. I believe some scholars refer to it as a Second Era of Witchers.

Surprisingly enough the fracturing of the witcher order had lead to a more effective organization for us witchers. Spread across the Continent and each making more witchers independently, it was no longer the task of 60 or 70 witchers to patrol the entire Continent from Nilfgaard to Kovir. Each school patrolled their own path and when a Gryphon met with a Bear each knew they had their territory and any infighting wouldn't be worth the bloodshed. We managed to broker peace and live as somewhat estranged brothers rather than bitter enemies.

In the mountains of Poviss my brothers and I had begun training new witchers who would wear the Gryphon medallion. Adjusting was difficult at first but soon the fires were roaring in the great hall and life returned to the way it had been. But this time, we were all of the same mind and our practices reflected our principles. My brothers and I stood as examples to the younger witchers we trained and we taught them to have honor in their practice and conviction in their hearts. Kaer y Seren was not a dingy fortress filled with resentful hunters and tormented children. Together with our head sorcerer we crafted a new discipline: one whose focus was on magic, preparedness, and flexibility. The training was still strenuous and still many children did not survive the mutations. But the older brothers and I guided the son of the Gryphon through their training and when one fell we honored their passing and buried them properly. The fate of a witcher—no matter the school—can be harrowing but among the Gryphons you knew your suffering had purpose and your brothers would support you.

Even as the Grandmaster of the newly founded Gryphon School I set out every spring on the Path, traversing the lands from Poviss to Cintra and from the Arcsea to the Kestrel Mountains. I fought hordes of necrophages in nobles' crypts, hunted draconids in the peaks of the Kestrel mountains, and faced off against some of the most dangerous monsters on the Continent. I can't count the scars I received but most of them have faded by now. Every winter I returned with stories aplenty and once again, just as when I was a young lad, I sat with my brothers

and the sons of the Gryphon and told tales of the Path around a roaring fire. Tapestries were hung in the halls of Kaer y Seren, depicting our triumphs and our tribulations. We made something of ourselves, harkening back to the knightly path we were meant to follow.

Of course, when we came down from the keep the kings and queens of the world were still wary of us. At the time I didn't blame them. Five independent schools of hunters, armed with powers far beyond that of any soldier are cause for concern. No doubt the churches and mages of the North still whispered poison in their ears as well. But for the Gryphon, this was only a minor obstacle. We acted with honor and never raised our blades against a human who hadn't earned their death. There were villages in the north where the deeds of the Gryphon school were celebrated and I was called to the courts of kings more than once for my advice and my skills. On my travels I made close friends and powerful alliances. Granted, many of those allies are long dead by now but I treasure their memories.

As time crept forward in its never ending march, the neutrality we had fought to maintain was tested numerous times. The race wars between Human and Non-Human flared constantly and in the periods of peace between races, human kingdoms would take up arms against each other over borders and other squabbles. The Vipers and the Cats found their contracts among the massacres and soon our doorstep was flooded with kings, rebels, and revolutionaries. Each one looking to add witchers to the ranks of their army. But a witcher's purpose is not to fight on a battlefield and it is not to slit the throat of an unpopular monarch. Even when the Appanage of Kovir called to us to defend them from the Redanians we did not answer the call. Once a witcher has broken their neutrality, they cannot go back.

During the race war sparked by the death of Cregennan of Lod and Lara Dorren we protected innocents from the spec-

ters and cursed ones that their rulers and warriors brought into the world. When Falka's Rebellion spread blood across the north, we hunted the necrophages and vampires that preyed on the survivors. We continued to stand as a barrier between the realms of humanity and the devils and monsters that came from beyond.

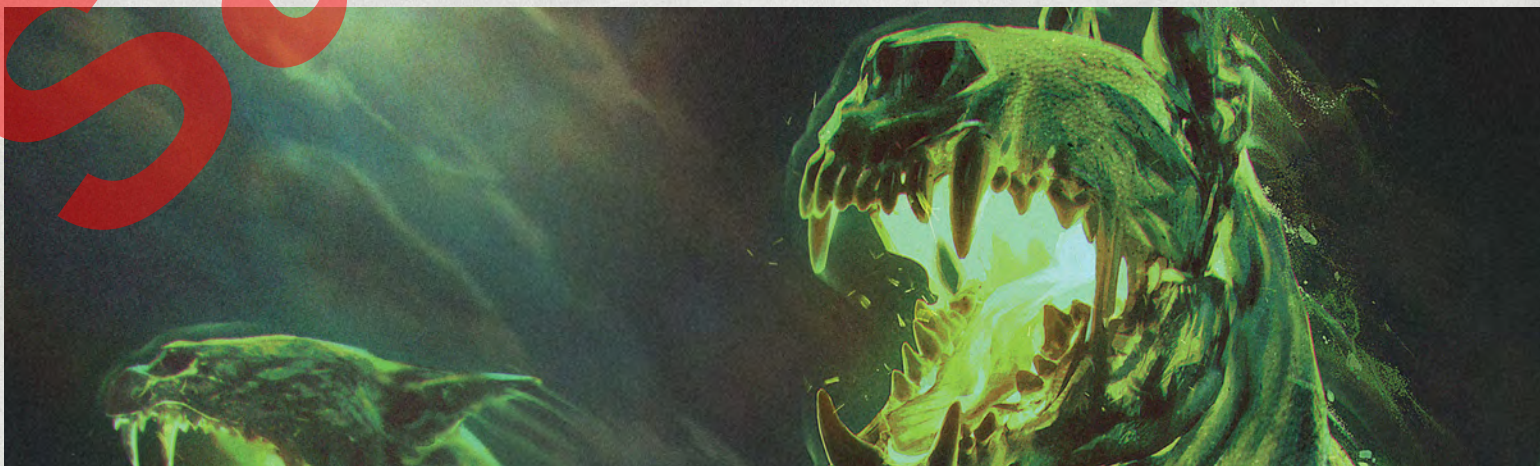
It would be a lie to say I never raised my blade in opposition to a person. Even a Witcher hears the call of steel when faced with evil in the form of a man and I've drawn blood many a time in defense of my friends. But never for coin.

The End of the Golden Age

The middle of the 1160s saw the end of the "Golden Age of Witchers." Despite the difficulties we had with the people of the Continent we had been too successful. By the end of the 1160s monsters had been all but eradicated. In the entirety of a year on the Path, I might find one contract for the extermination of a nekker nest or a cave troll. No doubt many monsters had learned from the deaths of their kin and had hidden away in the mountains or underground. With hardly any monsters left to hunt, the prospect of powerful mutants unbidden to a king became more threatening than that of a world without monster hunters. In the absence of monsters, we became the monsters in the eyes of the people.

As our usefulness began to fade, the churches of the Continent chose their time to strike. Anti-witcher propaganda was everywhere. The church of Kreve blamed the witchers for the outbreaks of the plague that were ravaging Temeria. It wasn't long before the once respected witcher was known to the world as the "mangy, greedy, Witchman".

And I suppose that leads all the way up to the Grandmaster of the Gryphon School, sitting in a damp freezing cave writing his memoirs in hopes that someone will read them and see the light before the world slaughters its last guard and wonders why there are armies amassing on its border.



Reading a Monster

Monsters & Weapons

Unlike their Feral counterparts, most Sapient monsters are capable of anything a human is capable of. A Sapient monster that has hands is capable of wielding weapons. In most cases, monsters don't do this because their natural weapons are just as potent (if not more so). However, if you want, you can give a Sapient monster a weapon and a weapon skill.

Claw Reliability

Every weapon a monster has possesses a Reliability, since a monster may choose to block with its claw, tail, and whatnot. Just like other weapons, once a monster's weapon has been reduced to 0 Reliability, it is rendered useless. This effect is permanent; but monsters with Regeneration heal Reliability at a rate of 1 point per day.

Crushing Force

Some creatures strike with such incredible force that their attacks cannot be parried and they do double ablation damage to weapons, shields, or armor.

In *A Witcher's Journal*, the monsters are present in a more easily read reference format than in the Core Rule Book. That being said, there are some important bits of clarification.

Category

This image shows you what category the monster falls under. *A Witcher's Journal* is organized by monster category, so all monsters of a certain category are grouped together.

Difficulty

Here you can find the monster's general difficulty. Difficulty is split up between the actual power rating of the monster (Easy, Medium, Hard) and their complexity (Simple, Complex, Difficult). The higher either of those values is, the more difficult the monster is to deal with.

Intelligence

Here you can find the monster's intelligence level. Feral monsters are non-sapient beasts,

which are incapable of making complicated plans or interacting with others intellectually. In combat, Feral creatures always attack the closest target or the target that recently attacked them. While they aren't intelligent, Feral creatures gain instinct bonuses to the Awareness and Wilderness Survival skills that have already been factored in. Sapient creatures, on the other hand, are capable of thinking, making plans, and often interacting or speaking with other creatures. These creatures have an intelligence score above 1, can formulate plans, and in many cases can be reasoned with.

Special Senses

Here you can find the monster's special senses. These include: Night Vision (which negates penalties for dim-light conditions), Superior Night Vision (which negates penalties for complete darkness), & Scent Tracking (which allows the creature to perceive things by smell alone and grants a bonus to Awareness).

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Skill Base	
Athletics	10
Acrobatics	10
Endurance	14
Strength	15
Intelligence	20
Intimidation	14
Perception	20
Survival	14
Wizardry	14
Deceit	5
Wilderness Survival	7

Armor	
Regeneration	4

Resistances	
Poison, Bleeding	4

Immunities	
Poison, Bleeding	4

Susceptibilities	
Necrophage Oil, Mouldrot, Boudrot	4

Dodge Base	
Reposition Base	10
Block Base	14

Bounty	
500 Crowns	

Loot	
Bullvorn Scale (x1)	
Bullvorn Blood (x200)	
Bullvorn Eyes (x100)	
Larvae (x100)	
Twisted (x200)	



Bullvorn

Commoner Superstition (Education DC:16)

Don't really hear 'bout those some of fithers much. But, guess they spend most of their time underground with the redheads. Intimidate 'em! (Some folk say once in a blue moon a man gets 't got struck by lightning' and all the corpse's touch together into this bullvorn mound of flesh and bones and whatnot. And once it gets started killin' there's no stoppin' it! Folks, long as you stay outside the cave and deep within and only you'll be free though. If you do have to fight one, you best keep your wits about you. Folks where you're first-hand say the beast can spit acid from all the guts melted up in 'em.

—Rudolf Kestner

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Lore & Behavior (Monster Lore DC:14)

A species of necrophage that appeared on the Continent after the Conjunction, the bullvorn is a terrible foe, hulking and bearing massive horns. While never encountered with others of their kind, they are often seen in the company of rotflies or nekkers, which they are known to salvage and feed. When encountered in such groups, they are quite dangerous.

When accompanied by other small monsters in combat, the bullvorn sometimes stands behind them, vomiting an array of caustic acid over their heads, which is also quite poisonous. Don't block this, or you'll be buying a new shield. Additionally, when accompanied by rotflies, it is known to purposefully detonate its allies using this vomit, sometimes just to watch them explode.

It is capable of a terrible charge which can devastate slower foes. When it decides to charge, it does not care if any of its allies might be in the way. Keep on your toes and be ready to dodge. Whenever possible, fight with your back to a solid obstacle. Baiting the monster into charging into stone creates an opening for you to deal a fatal strike. Speaking of striking the monster, be warned that its wounds regenerate much like a troll, and that its hide will put only for the strongest of blades. An application of Necrophage Oil would be prudent.

Attacks						
Name	ATK Base	Type	DMG	Rel.	RNG	Effect
Claw Slash	14	S	3d6+3	15	—	—
Horn Gore	14	P	5d6	15	—	Blood (50%)

Ability: Caustic Vomit	
By taking an action, a bullvorn can roll with a base 13 against a target within 30m its vomit acidic bile on them. If this target fails to defend, they take 1d6 damage to a random location, are poisoned , and any armor on that location takes 1d10 ablation damage. If the target successfully blocks this attack, the item they used to block it still takes 1d10 ablation damage. This attack cannot be parried, even if the defending target is a Witcher with the Parry Arrows ability.	

Ability: Charge	
If its target is more than 5m away, the bullvorn can take an full round to charge up to them and make a single Horn Gore attack with a base of 12. If the target fails to defend, they take 7d6 damage to the torso and are knocked back 1m. If the target strikes anything while flying back, they take a number of dice of damage to the torso equal to the half the number of meters they flew. If the target successfully blocks this attack, they must make a Reflex check (DC:25) to avoid being knocked back as per the ability. If the bullvorn misses its target, it continues to charge the rest of the distance in a straight line. If it hits a wall or an equally solid object, the bullvorn becomes stunned until it can make a Status Save.	

"Bullvorns are among the most repellent necrophages I've encountered in all my years on the Path. Their engorged, tumescent bodies are enough to turn the stomachs of the common people but their twisted minds are far more revolting to me. Bullvorns are arrogant creatures that take pleasure in the suffering of others. Often times, they'll murder their own retinue in elaborate ways just for the spectacle."

—Erland of Larvik