

The Appendix
of
The K'fr Road: to Ve'kahn and Back Again

The Third Book

in the

Dragon Bound

a.k.a Dra@g©n B©und a.k.a

a.k.a **The D-B©und Adventuring Series** a.k.a

starring

Ruby FireHaven

and so on and so forth

as conceived, written, and enchanted by

Celli

the

Happy Go Lucky Celaphopod

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and in the Earthen Vortex

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Happy Birthday to the LeeZards

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Editing, Translated to the English, and in general Debugged & Deburred

by

Brett Paufler

Brett@Paufler.net

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The Appendix
Matt Needs Killing

The movie is over. The credits have rolled. If you have paid attention, then you know who the lead technical wizard is, the names of his forty two assistants, and the dozens of supporting guilds. You also might know the name of the best boy, key grip, lead game designer, and/or the book editor.

Me, I don't pay attention to those things. What I pay attention to are those nagging little holes in the script that keep on bugging me even after I thought I'd laid the project to rest. They don't have to be big things. I suppose the project might have some great big glaring holes that you could drive the proverbial truck through, but holes that big are just part of the story. No, it's the little ones that bug me. Like the name of the Goblin Horde. I admit I just picked the name Doom Crag out of the air... I thought it might be fun to have some back reference to the first book, The Dragon Bound Quartet, but if you look at it too closely, there are potential discrepancies. Like, it's hard to believe Raging Bertha and good ole Broken Toe grew up on the same reservation. It's a minor piddling point of absolutely no importance, but it seems to edge into my consciousness whenever I think about this project, so I need to lay it to rest. You know, either rewrite the original scene and change the name of Broken Toe's horde... which is way too much work and besides as I remember it, there are a few jokes that only make sense if it's the Doom Crag horde, or explain away any discrepancies away by adding additional random information... you know, pretty much what I do whenever I wrote myself into a corner in the rest of the story and the whole series when you get down to it. So the choice is rework a few lines or write a whole

new chapter. I hope I don't have to tell you I opted for the additional chapter... because, believe it or not, it seemed easier... So, there you are and, to make it all the more pathetic and on the off chance whatever explanation I come up with isn't airtight, I'm going to leave it to you to make the final decision. So, here are your choices as to why it makes sense that Raging Bertha and Broken Toe both come from the Doom Crag horde:

- We tortured good ole Broken Toe until he agreed he was from whatever horde we said he was from.
- The Rigor Pass horde and Broken Toe's horde are just two of many offshoots of the same large mega-horde which has numerous sub-clans scattered across the vortexes.
- All names have been changed to protect the innocent... blah, blah, blah...
- When you get right down to it, some things simply don't matter... like the name of a stupid Goblin's horde.

Ehh, I don't know if that lays it to rest any better, but it's over. Right now, I've got bigger fish to fry.

If you have EVIL WARLORD EXP, then you may have been suiting up while you were listening to the forgoing rant. Like was mentioned previously, EVIL WARLORD EXP provides a completely customizable immersive experience... any character from the book is available for play as a lead character, an ally, an enemy... or anything else... just let your mind explore the possibilities for a moment before you rush out to by a copy.

OK. Maybe let you mind wander in a bit. Right now I've got a book to finish. So eyes back on the page. Yeah, yeah, this is free content, well past the 100,000 words, so just consider the attitude one of those little extras.

OK. Forget the attitude. Right now take a moment to enjoy the Fey'an hard body we've loaded into the game for you. It's a

well oiled fighting machine. Turn the emotional slider way up. Can you feel the hate pounding in your head, the overpowering desire to kill. This is Ess'mer'lence.

Me, if I had this much hate cursing through me, I don't even know if I could tie my shoes, but Esse has grown into the hate. Take a moment to savor the malice.

Here we are in the prototypical start up. Green matrix lines flow off to infinity. As Esse, we wear black leather pants, a soft brown leather jerkin, a shirt of chain, leather running boots, and of course the swords. Esse's is much more practical, it is a small blade, sharp and strong with just enough magical enchantment to get the job done. The EVIL Warlord's blade is a bigger, badder, and if truth be told, a bit of overkill. If you take a moment to swing the two blades around, trying each of them out and tossing them from hand to hand, you'll get an idea why. The Warlord's blade, is almost as tall as Esse, it simply is too unwieldy... but it is not my intent to get into a discussion on the merits of understated weaponry. Instead let's try out those running boots.

As we run, notice one does not tire in Shadow. We could run for hours, in this or an ordinary body, but we will not stay here long. The green lines quickly disappear and we are in the gray swirling mists of almost anywhere when the suburban housing development Matt used to call his home slowly materializes out of the gloom.

It is easy to spot Matt's house. The yard is unkempt. Weeds grow wild. The car parked in the driveway has a broken windshield and has not been washed for months. Looking through Esse's eyes, gifted with magic sight, one would expect to see a manna geyser shooting out of the roof of the house, but it is gone, as are the K'fr vines. This is the suburbs, not the heart of the jungle, having used Matt (and perhaps us as well) the K'fr vine has moved on. Behind the thick growth of native plants that fill the yard, the occasional broken window can be seen.

The front door is open, but we will finish the job and kick it off its hinges... because we can and because we are pissed. Don't

ever forget the hate or let it out of your mind, even as you take a moment to appreciate the strength in those Fey'an legs... and perhaps let your mind wander... If you empathize with Esse, then realize that this objectification by others is a further reason for hate. Smash a window out with your fist it makes you feel better. Maybe pick up the coffee table and throw it through a window. It won't make any different.

The inside of the house is already trashed. Sticks and leaves are everywhere, as are empty bottles of booze and beer. Unless you are following along in EVIL WARLORD EXP, I will leave it to your imagination to fill out the scene further. It is clear the local kids, a relative term, have been using the house to party in and the debris from this activity litter the floor... spray painted logos decorate the walls. Moving on, we walk down the hall and notice that a vandal of below average intelligence chose to point out that ORKS REWEL in broken backwards letters over the family pictures that hang there. It is not so much a portent, as an indication that the story is not totally over yet... it never is...

One the bed lies the first of the loose ends; a Mr. Cardinal. He is old and weak. He is on his death bed. We will push him over the edge.

Perhaps this is only a game. Perhaps it has no substance... a mere movie, book... dare I say daydream, an idea which perhaps takes us back to the beginning? We will go with it. Yes. This is a mere fantasy. What we do here has no substance. How could it?

Back to Mr. Cardinal. He has seen better days. Tubes lead to his nose from an oxygen tank on the floor. His days are at an end. If he were conscious, he might stare at the birds that have gathered outside his bedroom doors, or he might gaze at the reflection the birdbath that his niece placed there casts on the ceiling, but he is not conscious.

The action we take would be too subtle for Esse, but then we are not really Esse. We jump on the bed. Mr. Cardinal does not notice. We hold the EVIL Warlord's sword over his heart and the

tip glows. It is but theatrics. Purple snakes of raw power swirl around the edge of the sword and reach into Mr. Cardinal's chest. They grab his heart and squeeze. He wakes in a fright from the pain and bolts upright. His own motion causes the sword to plunge deep into his heart. It is almost as if he has killed himself, but the detail matters not.

Instead, spend a moment feel the dead callousness of Esse's cold heart. In this moment it is hard to believe she is really Fey'an. Words of power leave her lips. The snakes take what is Mr. Cardinal away from the body on the bed as they crawl up the sword's blade and deliver this essence to Ess'mer'lence. Feel the joy, the delight.

Return to Mr. Cardinal. Feel his pain, his suffering. Without one there is hardly ever the other. Finally dead, Mr. Cardinal falls back to the bed, his face twisted into a monstrous caricature of pain. Neither Esse, Dee, nor the author has ever bothered to learn his first name. I can assure you, it does not matter.

We, you, I, Esse knocks a prayer candle someone left by the side of the bed over with the warlord's sword and then we jump into the portal overhead. I can assure you that the house will burn to the ground. The fire department will have mechanical difficulties. By the time they arrive, even the foundation will have cracked and reduced to rubble by the heat of the blaze. There will be no K'fr. There will be no open portal. And, there will be no Mr. Cardinal.

We will... perhaps by we, I mean I in this instance... but no, we will change the records... or maybe they always were as such. This will be but a house Mr. Cardinal always owned. I'm sure he rented it out on occasion... perhaps ill advisedly to a Haole bartender. We need not elaborate the details. Though this vortex has been in transition for some time, our actions will not push it over the edge. That has never been our goal. Rest assured in a few short years after the house has been rebuilt, even the neighbors won't be able to separate the truth from the rumors... an aging recluse... wild renters... maybe relations... dealing... parties...

unkempt yard... possible suicide... lingering cancer... I think he was a smoker... maybe a candle... or a final cigarette... and then... purple smoke rising to the heavens as the house is consumed. One thing is clear and will live on; a plume of purple smoke rising to the heavens.

But we will not stay to watch this. In Esse's body, we walk down the K'fr road. Notice the flatness of the walk. The path is as smooth as a Walk of Honor crafted by the finest Dwarven artisans as they might hewn and polish for their most beloved ancestors. The K'fr vine is tame for Esse. Perhaps it honors the blade she carries. Or, perhaps she does its bidding. Notice when we take practice swings with Matt's blade the walls of the tunnel recede to avoid the blade.

It is but a game... I keep on saying that... It is but a game, so it is easy to program an encounter... We should stop here in the passage for a moment.

Look ahead and to the right. Do you see it? A full grown Mantid hiding by the side of the path; with Esse's eye he is not difficult to see, but even without the sight, the pile of Orcin skulls only half hidden by the vines should have been a clue. I don't know if this was previously made clear. There is a reason the Mantids were let loose. The Mantid will wait patiently until we are abreast of it in the passage and then attack with lightning speed. We would not be able to take it in a fair fight, whatever that means, but there is an easy way. Swing Matt's blade through the vines, and the vines give way. They disappear before the blade, but the Mantid is not so lucky. He falls in two separate pieces to the tunnel floor.

It is in the arrogance of a game... or of a soul who no longer cares, that we gather up deadfall and start a small fire in the middle of The K'fr Road to roast the Mantid claws on. Savor the taste of victory, the taste of death.

While we enjoy our repast, look at the ceiling of vines, which crowd down on us. Wonder at the difficulty a 7' tall Minataur with

a full rack of horns must have had in getting through here. Realize he must have had some serious help. You are Fey'an. Push your hand through the walls of the vine. It yields to your request. Push your head through and gaze on the swirling mystery, the incomprehensible divide between the worlds. Stare for as long as you like... and then we must move on.

It is a last scene, a final scene. I cannot explain these things, more than to say Matt must die. He should have died earlier in the book. I confess. I interfered to assure his survival. It was a mistake. I feared the backlash should any fans identify with him, or Mr. Cardinal, but that is not the way to tell a compelling story... fear of the reaction... or even dedication to art.

I cannot begin to tell you how sick I am of reading even the most mundane of articles in magazines; book review, weather reports, histories of whatever... everything, everywhere is supposed to end with some witty sentence that ties it all together, makes it all make sense, brings it all back to the beginning, and makes it go full circle. Maybe it was original in times past, but I tire of it. It is forced, and it shows.

We are at the end. Sneak a final peak out of the tunnel if you wish at the swirling mystery. Even film cannot capture the scene, so I will not waste the words. Take a last bite of the Mantid claw... remember to pack butter... and then we are off.

We could walk down The K'fr Road for hours more. It is without end, but if you know where you are going, and you have the word count, it should never take more than a few words... er, steps.

And so it is without delay that we find ourselves in the predawn light on the steppes of Ve'kahn. The gang is all here, Bull, Jack, Garg, the Ke'Hyrin... and even Gary, Gary Ganesh star of stage and screen...

De'sca'lence is here as well. As is Ess'mer'lence and Matt. Join me as we merge bodies. The game ghost body we inhabit joins with the material body of Ess'mer'lence. Without delay, flourish, or comment Ess'mer'lence thrusts the EVIL Warlord's sword into Matt. It is a good, clean, satisfying stroke. The blade enters under Matt's ribcage, pierces his vital organs, and protrudes from the back of his neck.

Feel if you will the total emptiness inside of Esse.

Feel the comical disbelief inside of Matt. He is unable to comprehend his own demise.

Feel the sword suck the life out of Matt, reducing his soul to its constituent elements, as Matt has done so many times before to his fallen foes.

Feel the sword grant this power to Esse as the raw energy flows up the blade.

This is the grand end. Matt jerks and quivers in his death throes. Esse glares unfeeling into his eyes the entire time. She does not notice the power or its potential flowing into her body. She feels the cold, icy satisfaction of revenge and nothing more.

And as we fade away from the scene, as we pull back and watch the rising sun behind our heroes? As the brand new dawn shines forth, as Ve'kahn is returned to the fold... as all this transpires, notice the lack of a soundtrack, notice the lack of overriding special effects, and if you will notice your enjoyment of Matt's demise... or your revulsion...

More importantly, notice as we pull away and the author sets up one of those annoying final commentaries which somehow is supposed to lay it all to rest... in all this:

Notice Gary Ganesh does not do a damn thing as Matt crumples to the ground dead, and lifeless in his presence.

And it is here that I leave it to you to write that witty last line in that final space before...

THE END

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The bright theatre lights are turned on.

The house music, which is eerily quiet after the blasting movie soundtrack, is turned back on.

A few last stragglers; a Gnome who dreams of a career in the entertainment industry, bleary eyed Goblin who has nowhere else to go, a Celaphopod slumming it with the masses, if you are lucky your date or family, and you yourself stand, stretch, and slowly make your way to the exit.

A Cobalt clean up crew holds the door for you as you make your way back into your life. From there you must write the rest yourself...

Although if you choose, you may notice among the dirt and refuse in the Cobalt's dustbin there are two, damn, annoying, just won't stay the hell out of the story fortunes:

You can never go home again!

With great risks come great rewards!

And a final one to boot:

It ain't over, till it's over.

And now, it's over.

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No really it's over. That's it.

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Look. You can't just keep on turning the pages and expecting there to be more. At some point it just has to end.

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Of course, if you really don't want it to end, you can join me again at the beginning. I'll be reading this sucker 20+ more times before I'm through...

What do you mean you've got to go?

I'll let you edit. Come on, you can spell check for me.

Where'd everyone go?

Spell checking is fun...