

THE TOENAIL OF CHAOS

DRAGONPLANCE®: FIFTH AGE® CONTEST WINNERS FROM WAY BACK IN ISSUE 123

Despite the chaos during TSR's Time of Troubles (or perhaps by its own design), we managed to save these contest winners, as judged by the DL:5A creative team. More than a year later, we present the winner, Adam Bennington, and runner-up, Henry R. Gannon.

by Adam Bennington

The world of Krynn changed greatly after the Battle of the Rift. But some things always stay the same. Such are the kender. The great upheavals that rocked Krynn spurred many kender, charged with wanderlust, to new and wonderful adventures.

One such kender was Wyn Lockstumbler. Wyn had traveled all over Ansalon, twice according to his tales. He came home to live in his village of Hommol in Kenderhome but after trying his hand at farming, Wyn became bored, a terrible fate for a kender (and anyone else near one). Wyn would often visit the local tavern telling tales of his adventures in hopes of a free ale. "Oh yes, I was in Palanthas once. Beautiful city... They have this wonderful tower. At any rate, I had a misunderstanding with a giant... Well, he was really just a Knight of Solamnia, but he could have been a giant. Anyway, he dropped his purse so I picked it up and I was going to eventually return it to him and then..."

Word reached Kenderhome about the strange happenings concerning Chaos and the gods and Wyn Lockstumbler decided to set out exploring again. So many new adventures awaited! Eventually, Wyn joined a group of explorers charting the changes to Solamnia after the Battle of the Rift. One day, when the group was passing through a dark forest in the mountains of Solamnia, they discovered a rare and wondrous object, or at least Wyn thought so. The group came to a clearing in the pines and saw a small crater in the mountainside near them. They decided to investigate but as they moved closer, Wyn observed his friends becoming more and more nervous. Eventually, Wyn noticed that his companions had wandered off. "Oh well," he said to himself, "I'll catch up with them later." (The members of the exploration party were found a week later, still wandering aimlessly unable to even remember their names.)

Very carefully, Wyn approached the charred crater and peered over its edge.

In the center of the crater, half covered with soot and ash, was a large crescent shaped stone made of a shiny, cream colored substance. As Wyn stood there and looked at it for a while, his kender mind thought it looked like a toenail of a giant. He therefore reasoned that this must be the toenail of the overgod Chaos! (It could be from another god, but Wyn thought Chaos was the most likely.) Maybe in the Battle of the Rift, someone had cut off Chaos's toenail, and it had somehow ended up here. Many asked him how this "toenail" could travel so far. "I don't know," he responded. "That's not important... It's the toenail of a god. It can do what it wants."

Wyn couldn't resist showing off his new prize and decided to return to his village of Hommol. When he got home, he went to the local tavern and told new stories. "You see, my friends and I were traveling through this forest and... Oh, I wonder whatever happened to them..."

The "toenail" became the treasure of the town. But strange things began to happen in the village of Hommol. Objects at one spot in a room would mysteriously move to another spot. People would go to sleep in their beds and wake up in the street. A painting would be turned upside down. Everything seemed harmless so the kender came to see it as a game. But the incidents went on and became more serious and more deadly. Certain people would have good luck while others would be brought to their knees with misfortune. One poor kender was struck by lightning in the middle of a blizzard. Another had her new barn collapse on top of her for no reason.

Wyn was finally asked to get rid of his "toenail" and with much reluctance and many tears, he did. He went far away from the Hommol and buried it, but upon his return home, he found the toe-



HAPPY KENDER—BEFORE THE CHAOS TOENAIL!

nail in its old resting place on his mantle. The kenders of Hommol tried everything: breaking it, burning it, dropping it in a nearby lake, hanging it from a tree, and painting it blue (no one really knows why this was tried). They even gave it away to travelers. It always came back!

Wyn himself changed. He grew possessive of the “toenail.” He shined it and even began speaking with it. He ceased going out much and when he did, the “toenail” always went with him. When people came to visit, Wyn seemed fine until they moved for his treasure. Then his eyes grew frenzied and he clutched his prize whispering, “Must protect toenail....”

No one knows what Wyn Lockstumbler brought home. Many of the humans that have come near the “Toenail of Chaos” have lost their memory. One mage of the Red Robes who studied it has never been seen since. But there are a one or two who claim they have unlocked great magic after encountering the “toenail.” And all sorts of strange happening have gone on around Wyn’s house—strange lights, weird sounds, peculiar beasts, voices, etc.

The kender of Hommol want nothing greater than to be rid of the object. Is it the Toenail of Chaos? Who knows... But in the heart of Kenderhome, there is a village of kender that would give anything to be free of its greatest treasure.

THE CHAOS CLOUD

by Henry R. Gannon

The Chaos Cloud is an amorphous bank of vapor. Also called the Firemist due to its reddish-orange sheen, the exact size of the Cloud varies and has been described as a large upright column, an airborne cloudmass, and a grounded bank of fog. The Cloud’s normal pace seems to be equal to that of a stout dwarf marching, though it has been seen moving as fast as a galloping horse without being deterred by wind speed or direction, water, or other obstacles. Though it has appeared during daylight hours, nighttime sightings are more common.

The first documented report of the Cloud was in 2 s.c. (Second Cataclysm), and as few as one to as many as seventeen different sightings have been recorded in each year since. The Cloud was even seen thrice in a single night at widely distant locations on Ansalon, before vanishing for close to a year. The Cloud’s only constant is that it has never been sighted within a city or other enclosed area of people.

The Chaos Cloud has gathered a dread reputation about it, but not from any overt acts of malice. The Cloud’s presence heralds change, usually—but

not always—for the worse. The withering of crops, an outbreak of disease ravaging livestock, a sudden storm, freak accidents and the like have all beset areas in the Cloud’s wake. All the myriad events and happenings cataloged thus far are those that can and have happened naturally or through ill luck, though few believe it coincidence that they strike within days of the Cloud’s passing. Occasionally, the Cloud is a harbinger of good; a terminal fever suddenly breaks, rains come unexpectedly to ease a drought and similar incidents are credited to it, but these are uncommon. No other evidence of the Cloud’s passing has been noted, and no other properties have been witnessed or ascribed to the Firemist.

It is said that the Chaos Cloud is the last breath that the Chaos God exhaled through the rift before it closed. Other rumors state that it is an as yet unspecified creature of Chaos, like daemon warriors and shadow wights, but it has not shown sentience or anything else that would categorize it as truly alive. The exact origins of the Chaos Cloud and its purpose are, as yet, very much unknown. □

