

## The Adventures of Sir Henry the Seefairer, Episode 2

### *A Great Deal of Talk Concerning Cardinal Numbers and Their Relation to Definite Articles, and the Various Unfortunate Events that Result From the Previously Mentioned Talk.*

“The scrolls also say that the seven tides will be silenced by The One.” An old man spoke sagely, adorned with a thin crystal-white beard that dipped low on his chest. He padded softly, along side a striding, vigorous warrior with a furtive glance and an educated flynthe. They strolled down a shimmering, seaweed-striped beach. It was low tide, and sandpipers scampered in dizzying circles, chased by the throbbing of the waterline. Salt was thick in the air.

“But Coifi, son of Urysc, grandson of the Lirisih the Noble, High Priest of the Seventh Order and Chief of the Council of Wise, did not the prophecies foretell that The One shall rest for seven days “to find himself, after he is found”?” The young warrior respectfully inquired, his sword rattling in his sheath as he walked. On his chest dangled a silvery, square-shaped medallion, with faint, indiscernible, time-worn carvings. Despite its age, it still bore a strange glow.

“Yes, yes. That is true, Wyrd, son of Hroscl, grandson of Gru'nlin'dori'shta'r, great-grandson of Ol, seventh of the Seven Champions, defender of the Elderhalls. Your knowledge of the scrolls surprises me every day.” Coifi smiled, his thin white lips barely visible beneath his feathered beard, and his soft robes draping over his bony frame.

Wyrd inhaled deeply, considering how to phrase his next words. Finally, after a pause broken only by the rattling of his sword, he began: “There was another reason why I needed to speak to you, Coifi, son of Urysc, grandson of the Lirisih the Noble, High Priest of the Seventh Order and Chief of the Council of Wise...” he sighed, “I am not dull: I know that you are not saying something of dire importance. I need to know everything, Coifi. I need to know my *real* parents, my purpose, what this metal piece that swings across my neck is and why it gives me strength; I need to know why the Horizon Walkers hunt me. I need to know why the Elder Golum of Ferishnor seemed to recognize me. I need to know how I knew the way through the Northern Wood, and why I could defeat the Glyme of the Seven Names when stronger and more experienced warriors failed. I need to know why the High Dwarven Guard of Gerush seemed so keen to protect me, and why the Great Red Mage wrote my name in the Night Tome. Mysteries, Coifi, mysteries. Dark, time-broken secrets. I need the answers to these secrets. I need answers... I need to know who I am!” These last words he nearly shouted, his face twisted with angst. Coifi said nothing. “Are you deaf, old man? Please – I must know. You have the answers, Coifi – that's all I ask. Answers...” Wyrd slumped, exhausted with formalities. He collapsed on a large stone, with a tired look that made him look decades more mature. Coifi sat next to him, and said nothing.

There sat a broken old sage and a tormented young warrior, both exhausted, both bitter, and both confused. The rumble of the waves, the squawking of waterfowl, and the snapping of a crab strafing across the jewel-like sand. Silence – the silence of nature. The light would grow mottled from a wandering cloud, but then the sun would expose itself once more, and glint off of Wyrd's chains and metal fastenings that tied together his leather armor. His dark yellow hair would lift up rhythmically, in time with the sea gusts. It was not uncommon that the two would sit like this: contemplating, considering. However, this time, the silence was artificial and tense. It was not thought that stayed their tongues, but fear. Wyrd feared his past. Coifi feared the future. Apprehension and deceit sculpted this lie. But then the silence was... shattered.

“Wyrd. You are... you are... you are...” the old man fumbled for words. Wyrd rose in anticipation. “You are... you are... you are... you are...”

“Yes?”

“You are... the... you are the...”

“Who am I?”

“You... you are... you are the...”

“I am...?”

“You are... you are the... you are... you are... you are... .. the ... .. You Are The One!”

“The One? I –” Before Wyrd could finish, he was pecked in the calf by a Poison-Beak Sandpiper and fell over dead.

“Oh drat,” said Coifi. “This is a most unfortunate turn of events.”

Meanwhile...

“Arg! An' then I say 'im, 'Arg, why dont ye go barry yarself ensted of me treasure!” Alkabeer concluded his story with a roar of piratish laughter, joined by a chorus of “yo ho ho”s from his shipmates. He was standing on the captain's table in the galley, with a keg of birdgrog in each of his monstrous hands, and an equal quantity running down his shirt and soaking his beard.

“Weel ya surrsh turld heem!” Old Man Pete wheezed.

“Antherther – sic – round?” Black Eye Billy belched bovinely.

Sir Henry, unable to let the word misuse be missed, cleared his throat and politely noted: “Ahem. I believe you meant to say 'Antherther – *hic* – round.' 'Sic' is a Latin word meaning 'thus' or 'as it is written here', and indicating that the surrounding context is quoted exactly as it was originally, while “hic” is a onomatopoeia, simulating the sound of a hiccup, burp, or any involuntary contraction of the diaphragm.”

Black Eye Billy scowled, “Allreeter. Antherther – hic – round?”

Sir Henry smiled condescendingly and whispered, “Onomatopoeia used in that context should be italicized.”

Black Eye Billy growled, “Bargrhhrh. Antherther – *hic* – round.” Sir Henry smiled once more and winked.

“Arg. Mare. Where be me fowl gin, ya scurvy scalawags?” Alkabeer thundered, as he transferred both empty barrels to one hand so that he could wield his flintlock with the other. Bart staggered to his feet.

“Arg! Faster, ya landlubbin' ov'nboiler!” Alkabeer shot the ship's ceiling twice. Bart tripped into the birdgrog compartment.

Several tedious minutes later, he let loose a frantic holler, “We don got any!”

Captain Alkabeer exploded with a deafening “Arg!”, leaping down from his table with his saber unsheathed. He sliced up Black Eye Billy, belched, then diced Sir Henry. He shot Old Man Pete with his flintlock, then threw a lit keg of gun powder which he had kept in a secret pocket in his boot into the gin room. Alkabeer had some anger issues. He also had difficulty remembering to bathe. But he was seeking help.

(It would be irresponsible to fail to describe the last time that Alkabeer discovered that he lacked a further supply of gin. Bart, again, had the misfortune of bearing the bad news, but unlike this time, he came out unscathed. He was decapitated, quartered, hanged, and then shot twice in each limb. He then was lit on fire and keelhailed, before being forced to walk the plank and marooned on an island on the main course. He was later burned in effigy thrice, and cloned six times, and the same process was applied to each of his clones – except that the clones were only shot once in each limb. Sir Henry noted that although he admired Alkabeer's thoroughness, he thought the process a bit excessive. Alkabeer later found that his wastefulness of ammunition ended up costing him a prized item of loot. Alkabeer was having a jolly time at Scurvey Island, which was a pirate-themed amusement park. Scurvey Island sported a “treasure” system, which allowed a skilled individual to acquire “treasure tickets” by succeeding in games and redeem those for various prizes, such as plush dolls, oversized inflatables, cannons, and kegs of birdgrog. It had one entertaining game which involved shooting little targets that would pop up mechanically in a small stand. Alkabeer used up all of his corks, and he

lacked more cash. If he only had ammunition left for his flintlock, then he possibly could have gotten enough points to earn him an inflatable koala – a prize that he greatly envied. Instead, he only had enough enough points for a electric talking automatic can-opener, which he didn't particularly need, but he obtained anyway. But I digress...)

Anyway, Alkabeer was pretty angry. He was so angry, in fact, that he passed out — but not before giving Sir Henry this vital command: “Geth me me birdgrog!”

Coifi jumped when he heard someone call out, “Coifi? Coifi? Is Wyrd with you?” Fortunately for Coifi, several large boulders obscured his line-of-sight with the speaker. *Shoot!* he thought to himself, *that's probably Borwynna, daughter of Lluitaroterm, grand-daughter of Ilberi, great-granddaughter of Kif, great-great-granddaughter of P'ri'ne'ry Ir'ot'hi'lyin Pt'ror'tion'ic'olin, the Seventh Priestess of the Seventh Order of the Seven, keeper of the Seal of Junterkar, and wielder of the Club of Unterlanderspimewe, and Clubber of the Seal of Junterkar with the Club of Unterlanderspimewe, and winner in the Competition of Pie Baking of the Yestertome of the Year of Last. I'm Wyrd's Destiny-Guardian. She'll blame me if he's dead. Whew!* he continued thinking, *there sure are a bunch of italicized letters. I shouldn't be thinking this much.*

“Err – yes. He's – um – right here.” Coifi stammered. Thinking quick, he started pulling Wyrd's body up into the underbrush of a clump of trees bordering the beach.

“Is something wrong?”

“Err – no. But don't come! He's – um – taking a pee.” Coifi gulped. A long silence ensued. “Is this Borwynna?”

“I am she.” Curious, Borwynna began treading around the boulder. “Coifi, what's going on?” The sun cast long shadows behind her as she emerged. She wore heavy gray garments and bore a staff in her left hand and a great tome in her right. The old man stumbled frantically from the wood, “Uh no no nothing wrong. Nothing to see here. Wyrd's, um, is—”

“Ah, I see him now.” Borwynna shielded her eyes against the setting sun.

“I can explain! I can explain!”

“You can explain what? That's Wyrd over there, right?” Coifi cupped his hand above his eyes and peered in the direction that Borwynna gestured. A lone shadowy shape poked out of the horizon, casually approaching the two sages.

He quickly muttered, “Err yeah. That's him.”

“Coifi, son of Urysc, grandson of the Lirisih the Noble, High Priest of the Seventh Order and Chief of the Council of Wise, how did Wyrd, son of Hroscl, grandson of Gru'nlin'dori'shta'r, great-grandson of Ol, seventh of the Seven Champions, defender of the Elderhalls, handle the news of his true identity?”

The old man hesitated, but then spoke with a certain glint in his eye, “I suppose he began to doubt everything. He didn't take it very well, really. He began to distrust even his own name!” Just as he was finishing, Borwynna reported that she had a “mission of great urgency”, as it was seven o'clock. Seven o'clock was the time of the Seven Soundings of the Seven Bells, the Seventh of the Seven Rituals of the Seven Temples of Seven, and it was her turn. Coifi was more than a small bit relieved at this interruption.

“Ahoy there!” called Sir Henry. He was striding down a glimmering, wind-softened beach with the setting sun at his back. The Nautiwus had run ashore a mile behind him, and the last words from Captain Alkabeer entrusted him with the gravest of all errands. The entire crew were unconscious, suffering from a malady only fowl gin could cure. In order to save his ship, and effectively the world – he hadn't worked out how the world factored into the equation yet, but he trusted Alkabeer – he had to replenish the ship's alcohol supply. He had spotted an old man that had a desperate, confused, and panicked look about him: the degree of those attributes he logically correlated with the potential this

stranger possessed to assist Sir Henry in his dire quest. Thus, this man would be of great help.

“I am on a quest with the strictest urgency!”

“The strictest, eh? That's a rather bold assumption.” the old man called back. He paused a second to swap his dentures, then continued, “I am Coifi, son of Urysc, grandson of the Lirisih the Noble, High Priest of the Seventh Order and Chief of the Council of Wise. And who might you be?”

“Greetings, Coffee. I'm Sir Henry the Seefairer, Chief Cardiographer of the Piratish Ship Nautiwus.” Sir Henry replied, “I am on an away mission to acquire fowl gin, to save shipmates from a doom far too certain.”

“A doom far too certain? If it's that certain, what is it then?”

“Hmm – I suppose it's having to drink water instead of an alcoholic beverage... probably resulting in an increase in ship-wide efficiency...”

“Well, in that case, that is terrible. I have something to show you, Henry.”

“Are you trying to sell me something?” Sir Henry squinted suspiciously.

“Heheh, no – no. I'm not trying to sell you anything.” Coifi began to lead the Seefairer into the wooded area nearby.

“Drat. I needed a new vacuum cleaner...” Sir Henry's voice trailed off when he spotted Wyrd's corpse. “My word!”

“You know him!” Coifi exclaimed.

“Well actually, sir, I didn't.”

Coifi looked a tad confused, but then shook his head and began, “I have a story to tell. It is only meant for the ear of the mighty, the intelligent, and the indiscriminate.” Sir Henry wasn't entirely sure what that last word meant, but he was thoroughly flattered at the rest. Coifi paused for a second, reading Sir Henry's reaction, and then grinned immensely and continued, “Seven hundred years ago, there were upon this mid-earth seven tribes of men, with seven hundred men each. Many dark and foul creatures pestered them, poking them in the ankles and nibbling at their underarms. Seven thousand fell to the daemons before seven men from each of the seven tribes formed the Council of Seven.”

“Wouldn't it be the Council of Forty-nine?” Sir Henry interjected.

“Well, I suppose that would make more sense. Anyway, as I was saying, they – well – to make a long story short – made a prophecy that set in motion The One Search, or The Seven Searches for the One. It's sort of like American Idol, only it involves a great deal more dragons. Anyway, The One just got pecked by a Poison Beaked Sandpiper, and they'll blame me for his death. I need somebody to be The (other) One.” The old man grinned wide under his feathery beard.

“I'll agree to such a contract under one condition. Nay, two conditions.” Sir Henry spoke deliberately, “The first is that I receive seven kegs of fowl gin.”

“Oh certainly, certainly. We've got plenty of foul gin.” Coifi's cheeks began to twitch from exhaustion from his wide grinning.

“No, *fowl* gin.”

“Err yes that's what I meant to say. Yeah, we've got plenty of fowl gin. What's the other condition?”

“The second condition is that I must keep the second condition secret.”

Coifi's smile faded, and he emitted a strange, whining grunt as pondered the last statement. “In that case, you already broke the contract!” Coifi finally exclaimed.

Sir Henry promptly apologized, then inquired “What do I have to do?”

Coifi's grin returned and then he explained.

Meanwhile...

“All hands on deck!” screamed General Wallace Wilkinson the Seventh, captain of the Royal Navy Ship *The Avenger*.

(It should be noted that, as General Wallace Wilkinson's subtitle (the seventh) indicates, he is a direct decedent of seven other Wallace Wilkinsons. However, just the fact that the number “seven” appears in his subtitle does not mean that he has anything to do with the aforementioned priest, priestess, and (late) Defender of the Elderhalls, whose subtitles and heritage are conspicuously laden with that number. This is often a point of confusion: the fact that this seven appears in the text is purely coincidental, and is intended merely to distinguish General Wallace Wilkinson the Seventh from the other General Wallace Wilkinsons running around, and also to distinguish General Wallace Wilkinson the Seventh from the other General Wallace Wilkinsons casually standing around. I imagine it would do a good job clarifying him from all other generals that bear his name regardless of their activities, even if they are not running or standing around, or running and standing, but asquare. However, unbeknown to General Wallace Wilkinson the Seventh (he greatly enjoyed ham and cheese omelets), these precautions (that is, including his subtitle (the seventh (an ordinal number (an unnecessary clarifier (an unneeded parenthetical expression that is inserted merely to stress the number of nested parenthesis and pain any sensitive grammarians who may have the misfortune of reading this document (ditto) ) ) ) ) ) ), were unneeded, as there were no other Wallace Wilkinsons in existence until well after his death, which was to be very soon. The previous Wallace Wilkinsons had committed suicide out of frustration with their alliterative name. General Wallace Wilkinson the Seventh had considered suicide because of his alliterative name, but then he joined the navy instead. Then he considered suicide because he joined the navy. He was a thoroughly depressed fellow. But I digress...)

Anyway, as I was saying Friendbot model-number LR-27 was a very lonely robot. He knew no other robots. Poor Friendbot! But he was a very friendly robot. He was friendly with palm trees. He was friendly with little acorns that fell out of the palm trees. He was friendly with acorn trees that looked startlingly similar to palm trees. He was also friendly with big, ferocious, Engorstrags. He wasn't sure what an Engorstrag was, but he was very friendly with them. In fact, LR-27 was one of the friendliest robots ever. Unfortunately, he was mauved on a deserted island, and had nobody to be friendly with. He could only be friendly with the little rabbits that hopped about, the little acorns that fell off of acorn trees, and the big, ferocious, Engorstrags that had many peculiar mannerisms, such as juggling inflatable koalas. But then Friendbot devised plan. A very, very friendly plan. He decided to use the magic Rune of Teleportation that he happened to have in his greft pocket to teleport away to a land where he could make friends. (“greft” is the Robotican equivalent of “left”. It originated as a mispronunciation of “Coconut flavored cheese-cake”, but then eventually acquired a meaning adequately paralleled to that of the English “left”).

Meanwhile...

“There! Splendid! You'll make a perfect One.”

“I will? I must say, this armor binds in the hinder-parts quite atrociously... and this sword rattles in its sheath in a most unnerving manner... you are absolutely sure that this The One business won't involve anything the slightest bit dangerous?” Sir Henry then added, “anything *more*, that is – I'm sure this suit has felled all but the strongest.”

“Absolutely,” grinned Coifi, “you have my word.”

Sir Henry had been suited up in Wyrd's armor, which he had then discovered to be the second most uncomfortable thing he ever wore, and the most uncomfortable thing to walk in. Fortunately, it restricted his movements to only hobbling, and it ranked only the eighth most uncomfortable thing he ever hobbled in.

In a short period of time, Sir Henry and Coifi had hobbled and walked (respectively) their way into town (the seventh town, to be precise). It was a typical, nondescript medieval town, sporting several large temples, a monstrous building with a stately air about it, and a magnificent stone-carved fountain in the town square – which, in this case, was not a square but a heptagon. Upon further

examination, Sir Henry found that the fountain consisted of an angel-like figure supporting a wondrously crafted to-scale model of the town, and that the fountain in the model sported another, even smaller model, which had a fountain in the town square that also was spouting water. He leaned in, and saw that this model contained yet another model, and that one yet another. He also noticed a curious discrepancy: each iteration bore an odd shape arched slightly over the fountain, but he could see no correlating sculpture in the full-sized fountain. Beside that shape, a bit away, was another stone column, although this one wasn't bent at all. He also noticed that the bend in each of the tilted columns became more (proportionally) drastic as the containing models got smaller.

“Are you coming?” Coifi prodded him impatiently.

“What is that little column tilted over the fountain in the model?”

Coifi exhaled loudly, in a manner of someone who thinks that exhaling loudly will communicate urgency, “It represents the traveler who has never seen this fountain before and is examining it very closely.”

“Well, then, what's the other one?”

Again, Coifi exhaled loudly, in the manner of someone who thinks that inhaling loudly would not have the same desired effect, “It represents the traveler's companion who is standing, waiting for the traveler to stop idiotically staring at the fountain.”

Sir Henry finally started off again, following Coifi. After a few steps on the cobblestone road, he thought for a second and said, “Wouldn't that make the fountain inaccurate when nobody is standing nearby?”

Coifi exhaled loudly, in a manner of someone who is running dangerously low on exhalations, “Well, it hasn't yet been observed as being wrong.”

Sir Henry took a few more steps on the cobblestone road and one step on a sandal-clad foot, which, as he soon discovered, belonged to a sagely woman, bearing a staff in one hand, a weathered tome in the other, and wearing long, heavy robes and a pair of stylish sunglasses. She removed her sunglasses in one stylish swoop, and removed the stylish swoop with a bottle of stylish swoop remover, which Sir Henry thought was quite noxiously scented.

“Wyrd... you look so different!” Borwynna said.

Sir Henry began, “Wyrd? Oh wait, you see, I'm not—“

Coifi interrupted him, “He's just saying that such sudden and startling knowledge can alter one's complexion.”

Sir Henry panicked, “But no! I'm Sir—“

Coifi continued, “He's saying that he likes your sunglasses.”

Sir Henry sputtered, “Wait, wait, this is a mix up! I'm not—“

Coifi kept on translating, “Now he said that he's agreed to be part of The One Ceremony, and he finds your idea of holding it tonight quite acceptable.” He then added, with a smile and a wink, “He's been awfully inarticulate today...”

Sir Henry stuttered, “Don't listen to him! I'm—“

“He's saying that he has to go prepare and center himself. Good day!”

And with that, Sir Henry exploded in a fiery spectacle of gore: first his abdomen popped open, uncoiling his intestines all over Coifi, then his stomach burst, launching his liver and pancreas onto other bystanders, and finally his left ear fell off and dribbled ear wax onto the cobblestone surface.

“Ugh, how rude!” Borwynna commented simply, as she brushed some excess blood off of her robes onto the street. They proceeded to clean it up, and they were on their way.

“What was that about?” The Seefairer glared at Coifi, “The agreement never mentioned my impersonating anybody! I was just supposed to strut around as The One and then collect my bird-grog.”

Coifi spoke carefully, as if explaining his profound logic to a child, “And how do you know that it never mentioned impersonation?”

“Well, well, you never said anything about it!”

“No I didn't, and if I had, I would have been breaking the very contract we were setting in place.”

Sir Henry screwed up his face, which really didn't have that profound of an effect on it as it was rather screwed-up to begin with.

“You see, Sir Henry, there was another condition in our verbal contract that was very much similar to the second condition that you proposed, only that it had a bit more appended to the end of it. So, in total, the two conditions on my end went something like this: (1) that you agree to be The One for a few days, (2) and that I would not say what the second condition was, that you agree to impersonate Wyrd, and that I could only reveal what the second condition was after the agreement had been settled. So, as you see, you agreed to impersonate Wyrd.”

Sir Henry screwed up his face even more, which required some twisting of his neck to achieve the proper torque. He had been thoroughly outwitted, which, in all honesty, was something that happened quite a bit, yet he still was quite resentful of it when it happened.

Coifi waited a few seconds for Sir Henry to untwist his face.

“Well, if we don't get moving, then we'll miss the The One Ceremony, which would be terrible.”

“I don't think it would be *that* terrible...” Sir Henry said feebly. He knew when nobody cared what he thought, although he presented his thoughts nonetheless.

Coifi continued, “I should mention that impersonating The One is a crime here in Lythein. The punishment is dreadfully severe. It is so disgustingly violent, that just describing it will cast you into indescribable agony before killing you in the most painful manner. In fact, some have postulated that the torture method consists of nothing more than just describing itself.”

“Just my luck.” Sir Henry scowled.

Coifi assumed a grand air, “My good Henry, luck had nothing to do with it. It was the ever busy wizened hand of Fate. For Fate has written the Scroll of Time already, his duty now is merely to read it. Every word has its place, and every place has its word. Every line is a puzzle-piece in the Giant Tapestry of Time. Fate has written the Scroll, and nothing you do can change it, for, from my understanding, Fate dripped some dipping sauce around the paragraph that writes us into Time. There is no action great enough, no army strong enough, and no soap alkaline enough to cleanse that stain upon Time. And yes, even I, cannot erase that stain, but I can try to read around it, and that's what I'm doing now.”

Sir Henry sighed, and then mumbled defeatedly, “Well, if I'm going to make this convincing, I'm going to have to know more about Wyrd and what I'm supposed to do.”

Coifi sat down on a bench beside the road, and motioned for Sir Henry to do the same. He did. Coifi then motioned Sir Henry to get off of Coifi's lap and sit *next to* him on a bench beside the road. He did.

“First, you'll need to answer to the name Wyrd.”

“Ok. That's easy.”

“Second, you must assume The Seven Attributes of The One, which are:

1. Courage
2. Loyalty
- p. Justice
4. Steven J. Braxler
5. Kindness
6. Prowess
7. Krab”

Sir Henry paused for a moment to write them down on a legal pad, then said tensely, “Hm. I have a few questions about those – I'm not sure if I totally understand all of them. For one, why is 'p' used before Justice?”

“Because 'o' would look too much like a zero.”

Sir Henry relaxed somewhat, so that he was now only two-thirds as tense as he was before, then continued, “Ok, I see. Now number four really confused me.”

“Ah yes, that is a tricky one. The 'J' stands for Jonathon.”

Sir Henry relaxed one-third once more, so that now he was two-thirds relaxed and two-thirds tense. He wasn't very good with arithmetic. “Oh ok, that makes much more sense now. Now number seven, why is it spelled with a 'K' instead of a 'C'? Is that just a typo?”

“Very good question, which deserves a very good answer! 'Krab' is 'bark' backwards. Whenever you hear a dog bark, you must say 'krab' to counteract its negative effects. Understand? Let's hear one now, just for practice.”

Sir Henry cleared his throat and then belted, “Krab!”

“Ach. I can't believe it. You failed already. That was terrible. If you can't do it in practice, there's absolutely no way you'll be able to do it in an actual situation where you'll need it.”

The Seefairer frowned, then asked, “Well, what did I do wrong?”

“Did you hear a dog bark? I think not. You are only supposed to say 'krab' if you hear a dog bark. Let's try this again.”

Sir Henry smiled a smile of understatement – he originally wanted to smile a smile of understanding but he ran out of d's after the first one and he didn't want to smile a smile of 'understaning', “Ok, ok. I can do it now. I get it.”

“Ready?”

“Ready!”

Coifi prompted, “Let's hear it!”

Sir Henry cleared his throat and then belted, “..!”

Coifi laughed and slapped Sir Henry on the back – he originally wanted to slap him on the back, but he had an excess of l's and wanted to use one up, “What a quick study! I think you're one-hundred[th of a] percent ready for this ceremony!” Of course, he didn't *actually say* the characters in brackets, but that's what he meant to say, and that's why they were added in brackets for clarification. He then went on to say (with more bracketed words added for clarification), “[You should know that at the end of the ceremony you will have to defeat the Okhlo'hka'ig Beast, the most ferocious of furry woodland creatures.] Are you ready [for such harrowing trials]?”

“I'm ready!”

“Let's go!”

And so they went.

Meanwhile...

On third day of the first week of the seventh month in the third year of the second reign of the third king of the seventh dynasty of the fifth kingdom in the third land on the thirteenth island in the sixth archipelago off the third continent, something wholly unrelated happened, and thus will not be discussed here.

With a ploof of smoke, a smallish robot appeared in a field. This robot stood about five feet high, and had a large metallic cube for a torso. It was balanced on a single swiveling wheel, about five inches in diameter. Its head consisted of a slightly smaller metallic cubeish-shape, supported on a three-inch portion of white tubing. On its head were two large blue lights for eyes, shaped in a square with a distinct grated texture. It had no noticeable mouth. Two long ridged tubes protruded out of its side,

each bearing a scissor-like hand. It had appeared in a shrubby and ferny field. Its name was Friendbot, LR-27. It was a very friendly robot.

A butterfly flitted down, and Friendbot smiled. It didn't really have a mouth, but its head, although seemingly metallic, was wonderfully flexible, and the bottom edge of its head curved upward into a contented smile, and its soft, blue eyes shaped themselves into a pleasant expression, cocked slightly back. The robot issued a quiet, hummish sigh. It put the Rune of Teleportation back into its greft pocket. LR-27 still had no friends. But then the robot spied a cave, thirteen and a half stone-throws away. As the robot could travel at the rate of six stpm (stone-throws per minute), he took his time and entered the cave three minutes later.

The cave was shadowy and dark, plagued with little jumping devils named Ferdinand.

(I should mention that at one time, they were just little devils, and lacked the skill to jump. The unjumping variety were quickly selected against, as they were slathered with cream cheese and devoured by hungry persons. Sometimes they were split open and stuffed with dead fish and then eaten, and in other instances they were split apart and pressed with hot metal coils until their skin was blackened and crunchy, and then they would be spread with various fruit preserves and eaten with coffee. Anyway, the jumping devils survived, and thus it became a custom to name every child born "Ferdinand", which means, in their native tongue, "He who jumps and survives". For that reason, every one of the little devils that LR-27 encountered were not only jumping, but also named Ferdinand. It also should be noted that the devils were round and soft and bready, and sported a hole down the center forming them distinctly into a torus, and had a delectable chewy consistency. They also had a wide variety of genetic traits, as some grew speckled with sesame seeds, and others grew raisins embedded in them. But I digress...)

Friendbot was wheeling through the dank cavern and saw two monstrous eyes gleaming in the stark blackness, about thirty feet from the ground. The putrid-sweet smell of rotten things met Friendbot's olfactory sensors, and his aural receptors picked up a deep, dark, and raspy breathing noise. *Say, thought Friendbot, I wonder if this nice thing would like to be friends with me?*

The One Ceremony was going to be magnificent. A large stage had been erected outside of town, on which there was a tremendous bustle of activity as preparations were being made. Sound systems were being tested, cameras were being checked, lighting was being prepared, and the pyrotechnics were being set up. Off to one side, the band was tuning their instruments, and off to the other the participants were rehearsing their parts. Sir Henry was with this latter group, and thoroughly unhappy. He had tried to back out twice, and now was being lectured by some short geezer with a long beard that he had ridiculously pulled up over his head and sculpted in very extravagant manner, and he was wearing a bright purple robe, embroidered with the words "Great Gglob the Magnificent Mage". Sir Henry assumed that his name was "Gglob", which, although Sir Henry never found out, was really an incorrect assumption, as the old man's real name was "Lenari", and he had, due to his failing eyesight, grabbed the wrong robe by mistake.

Lenari scowled, "All right. Let's hear the oath."

Sir Henry gulped, "Uh – which oath?"

"Jumping Jupiter! The one we've been practicing all this time! The one you've supposed to have memorized since your youth!" Lenari had trouble controlling his temper.

"Ah – uh – yes. That one. Well, let's see, how does it begin..."

Lenari prompted, "I pledge..."

"I pledge..." Sir Henry paused, then continued, "...", and added "...", after a moment's thought, before finishing with "...", to wrap things up.

Lenari rolled his eyes, "... to protect the needy, care for the sick, and punish the evil-doers."

"... to protect the needy, care for the sick, and – uh – prune the cauliflowers." Sir Henry

stumbled over the last item. Fortunately for him, Lenari was not only part blind but also a good bit deaf, and he didn't hear the difference.

Lenari continued, "I vow to honor the righteous, and uphold all fair things, to increase in my wisdom and to utter nothing contemptuous against my neighbor, to be honest in all my doings, to be humble in my personality, and be very, very good."

"...uh... I vow to honor the rhizomes, and upload to warez rings, to, uh be good, and uh smart."

Lenari noticed the difference this time, mostly because of the discrepancy between lengths, "Fool!" After careful consideration, Lenari decided to elucidate his previous statement, so to that end he added, "Idiot fool!". Noticing that the full meaning of his statement had yet to be understood, he decided to conclude his exposition with some profound logical reasoning, "Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!"

And then he stomped off.

A great deal of spectators had already gathered, and even more were expected. A total of two thousand, four hundred and one tickets had been sold, each purchased at a ridiculously inflated price of nineteen Lytheinian Lindts a piece.

(I would be terribly lacking as a story-teller if I failed to mention why nineteen lindts for a ticket was an inflated price. The reason traces back to the Great Economy Failure of 1662, which occurred some time during the mid-sixteenth century (no direct evidence yet discovered points to an exact year, although most historians agree that it occurred during the sixteenth century). The Great Economic Failure of 1662 was quite small in effect, affecting only the island of Lythein, and it was a time of substantial economic prosperity. The etymology of its title is quite complicated, but, to sum it up, it was the result of a rather brilliant propaganda campaign to convince the populace that, economically speaking, everything was going terribly, when, in fact, it was going quite well. Trade was strong. Agriculture was thriving. New advances were being made regularly in the realms of medicine and science. It wasn't until the Great Financial Boom of 1671 that things turned downward. The "Lytheinian Seml" was a metal currency minted mostly of copper and nickel, and was of very small value, such that it was customary to deal in hundreds and thousands of semls. It continued to decline in value, until one day a dairy farmer named Nyru noticed that seml was actually worth slightly less than the metal that it contained. He found that he could get a pretty good income smelting all of his change and selling it as raw metal. The word got out. Overnight, the seml had wholly disappeared, except for three semls left in a drawer in the house of a blacksmith named Ujli Kun, who had been out of town the week that Nyru made his discovery. The value of the seml, naturally, sky-rocketed, as each currency piece was then worth one third of the value of the entire economy. Ujli Kun found himself to be a very rich man. However, nobody had anything valuable enough that it would be worth an entire seml, and so the economy stagnated. Every item for sale ended up being priced at the extremely inflated price of one seml, but since nothing in Lythein was worth one-third of the entire economy, Ujli Kun could never buy anything without being outrageously ripped off. Everybody lived in indescribable poverty, and Ujli was too rich to buy anything. People were getting angry with Ujli Kun blaming him for the current economic state and pressuring him to create a new currency system. He eventually gave in, and proposed what some consider to be one of the most genius decisions in the history of all economics. In the interests of all, he decided to create a new currency, called a Ujlin, which was worth three semls. He promptly exchanged his three semls for the one Ujlin. Later, while drunk, he tipped a waiter the entire economy. The waiter was immediately robbed by the cook, who was knocked unconscious by a ham and cheese omelet thrown by a Mot the Barber. Jorni the Tinker then stole it from Mot, and then Lurni the Librarian charged Jorni it as a late fee (she rounded up). Lurni the Librarian was taxed it by Luci the Tax Collector, and Luci, very unwisely, used it to buy a handsome-looking handbag. And so the economy (quite literally) was moving again. That's why the charging nineteen lindts was so immensely expensive. But I digress...)

Amid the rumble of the crowd, Coifi stepped up onto the stage, bearing a microphone, into which he said with a tiny voice “Hello?” peering up at the sound engineers situated in front of his stage, and then repeated in a booming voice “Hello? Ah much better.” The crowd hushed, and the ambiance was reduced to occasional coughs. “Today, I'd like to announce,” he was interrupted by clapping, “Ahem. Today I—”, again interrupted by clapping, “Today—” (more clapping) “To—” (clapping) “T—” (clapping) “—” (clapping) “—(clapping)!” For in that final instance, the audience interrupted his speech before he even had a chance to insert a closing quotation mark, and for that reason he shouted (in parenthesis) the word “clapping” into the microphone, to a completely quiet audience. This bizarre occurrence has never fully been explained, and the suddenness and alienness of it succeeded in stilling the onlookers long enough for Coifi to begin his speech.

“Today, I would like to announce a very historic event. Today, the One Search has been completed. Today, the One has been found. At last I shall reveal him to the Magi. At last he will have his revenge.” A person in the audience shouted “Yippee!”, and instantly regretted it, as an albino chipmunk that had been hang-gliding above the crowd flew right into her mouth, and he nearly choked to death. Unfortunately, he died of nut poisoning two weeks later. The person (“Lil Steel”) died too, but that's hardly surprising, as most people die. The chipmunk's name was “Curtis Jowlers”, and had a large mustache that would get caught tangled up when he played the kazoo. He enjoyed reading, playing chipmunk rugby, and had a dark scar next to his forth right eye (he had twenty seven eyes). He was sixteen feet tall and could whistle underwater. He also was fond of the word, “wooblers”. To be most precise, Curtis Jowlers never actually heard the word “wooblers” pronounced, but had he heard it, he would have been uniquely pleased with its aesthetics, and it would have quickly become his favorite word. This paragraph, unfortunately, is blatantly inaccurate.

Curtis Jowlers was actually not a chipmunk at all, let alone albino. He was really an elderly gentlemen who was on the Council of Seven, which Coifi was about to introduce by saying, “But first, I would like to introduce you to the Council of Seven.”

Coifi cleared his throat and continued, “But first, I would like to introduce you to the Council of Seven. First we have Curtis Jowlers, son of Elmer Jowlers, Crafter of the Oyster of Illuntir, and Enjoyer of the Aesthetics of the Wooblers.” Curtis Jowlers staggered out of Lil Steel's mouth, all soggy with nasty slobber, and limped up to the judges panel. Everybody, save Lil Steel and Cutis Jowlers, clapped enthusiastically. Lil Steel was busy playing checkers, and Curtis Jowlers was chanting to himself the word “wooblers”, as he heard it for the first time when Coifi enunciated his subtitle, and he loved it.

“We also have Licen Tyrithencarkitarlo, daughter of Boo, the Beast Whisperer of the South, Last Heir of Narthunby, and Keeper of the Elder Box-Kite.” More cheering.

“And now to introduce Ilyn Frinn, son of Ilyn Frinn, grandson of Ilyn Frinn, and great-grandson of Ilyn Frinn, Keeper of the Name of Ilyn Frinn, the Last Remaining Heir of Ilyn Frinn, and President of the Ilyn Frinn Toothpaste Company.”

“Hmm... there's some other people here too, but this is taking too long, so I'll just skip to the good part.” Everybody (very unwisely) held their breaths.

“This is the part you've been waiting for...”

A drum began to roll.

“May I present to you...”

Trumpets began to sound.

“The...”

The class of musical instruments that goes “Balloooo toot toot Wigger CAR!” went “Balloooo toot toot blam Uoofkjj” (those instruments were highly versatile).

“The...”

A kazoo flibbered, and jammed in Curtis Jowlers' mustache.

“The...”

A duck was squeezed, and made a quacking noise. The sound engineer motioned to Coifi that they were running out of respectable instruments to use.

“THE ONE!” The crowd went berserk. People started honking, flying around, slapping each other with giant squeaky hammers, stuffing their mouths with can-openers, screaming, holding their breaths to pass out, juggling flaming koalas, bathing in vats of liquid nitrogen, buying pet rocks, setting themselves on fire and skateboarding into the mouths of hippopotamuses, and flipping out in many other ways. Many individuals managed to do all of those extreme activities at once.

Sir Henry strode onto the stage. The audience went even more berserk in ways that are very difficult to describe, unless one uses the word “woobly” (a conjugate of the base “wooblers”), but as the meaning of that word might not be clear to all readers, I will instead describe it using the phrase “the meaning of the word 'woobly’”. The meaning of the word “woobly”. Coifi put up his hand, and the audience hushed. He then said gravely, “And now, for the One Rite...”

Then the crowd began to recite (for every good Lythein parent teaches their children The One Rite):

“All hail, all respect, and all entrust,  
The One.  
We pledge to honor The One,  
We pledge to support The One,  
As The One shall support us.  
Let it be la.”

Everybody cheered. Sir Henry had the very specific look that could be translated as: *what am I getting into... I should use an expression to communicate this entire thought.*

(I should clarify that he really didn't need to communicate the last clause of the thought in his expression as it would be impossible for him not to be thinking both clauses and still make that expression, but he thought it was thorough and did it nonetheless. However, he failed communicate that he thought it was thorough to communicate both clauses in his expression, which was probably the only ambiguity available to clarify. For that reason, some people today still debate his true motives for communicating the unnecessarily long thought. But I digress...)

But the cheering stopped abruptly. Another figure entered the stage. It was Wyrd – the real Wyrd. In his underpants.

“That's weird...” Sir Henry commented simply.

Wyrd cleared his throat and then announced sardonically, “Ah, my good friends. You thought that I had died, didn't you?”

Sir Henry waved his arms about, “B-But the narrator specifically said that y-you had died?”

“The narrator lied.” The crowd gasped. Some fell over dead on the spot, and one person, named Gglob, looked very confused, as he was trying to find his coat.

Coifi stammered, faltered, sputtered, and did other similar things, before finally spewing out, “Oh well.” and then captured his composure once more and began, “Ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you...”

He motioned to the sound engineer. A cat screeched and twenty ducks were squeezed.

“The...”

A frog chirped while a bandura fell from the sky.

“The...”

A VL-Tone played its demo song.

“THE TWO!”

The crowd went doubly berserk. People started whistling, strumming their fingers, and modestly clapping. They went so berserk that they paradoxically didn't even flip out – or at least in any way that a nonberserker could recognize. But then, the berserkness began to dissipate, and several heads exploded, and people were flying again and wailing on guitars and flipping out in divers ways.

“All hail, all respect, and all entrust,  
The Two.  
We pledge to honor The Two,  
We pledge to support The Two,  
As The Two shall support us.  
Let it be la.”

During the chant, Coifi had been eyeing the edge of the stage, half expecting The Three to pop out at any moment. When no The Three arrived, Coifi wheezed a sigh of relief. Suddenly, The Two died.

“How ridiculous!” noted Lil Steel sagely, “There isn't even a cause for Wyrđ dying this time, however feeble the last malady may have been!”

After many more ceremonious activities that are too varied and bizarre for me to spare time with and for you to believe (respectively), Ilyn Frinn gave a tremendous cough, and began a tremendous speech, as follows:

“Hello.”

After Ilyn Frinn finished, Borwynna continued where Ilyn Frinn left off, with one word overlap for the sake of continuity:

“Hello, Wyrđ.” (she was talking of Sir Henry, for she was still deceived by his devastatingly clever impersonation) “You must now complete The One Trial. You have ten days before you must register.”

Sir Henry blinked.

“You have ten days before you must come back and register with me, after defeating the Okhlo'hka'ig Beast. Goodbye.”

Sir Henry blinked.

Sir Henry spent the first nine of those days tied up, dangling from the chin-hairs of the giant chipmunk named Curtis Jowlers, touring with a blue-grass band. This was the result of a very complicated chain of events that I do not have time to relate here.

On the tenth day, Sir Henry jumped into the Marshmellow Pool of the Elderyears, to cure himself of the platypus bite, and was deposited on The Last Conveyorbelt to the Moon, which took him into Jamestown, where he finally convinced Euler the Talking Can-opener to open The Can of the Meridian Fruit of Deloga (in case you were wondering, he *did not* use Chelsey Kooper's Wiggly Pumpkin at all. In fact, he and Lil Steel cooked it into a marvelous pie, on which he served ice-cream – two scoops, instead of the usual one. Lil Steel, unfortunately, turned out to be lactose intolerant, and Sir Henry was flogged so hard that they ripped his monkey suit). Anyway, he used this fruit to restore the Third Fraction of the Elvis-stone, and The Last Alliance fought well. This paragraph would make perfect sense, had I included the aforementioned “very complicated chain of events”. Additionally, the transition into the remaining portion of the story would have been much less abrupt.

Sir Henry was trapped. Friendbot blocked the exit of the cave behind him (“Come on! You can be friends! Try introducing yourself! Don't give up now!”), and Okhlo'hka'ig, the most ferocious of furry woodland creatures, loomed a few feet away, making savage gargling noises and occasionally hiccuping strange bloody chunks. But then, Sir Henry did something totally unexpected. He whipped out a fine stick of butter.

(A modern audience might be confused as to why whipping out a stick of butter would be considered an unexpected action. You see, at one time the legislative bodies of Thingrend forbid

firearms to be carried onto sea-craft, and the criminal populace had to resort to smuggling weapons aboard, until the crafty politicians declared that illegal too. Many individuals, by cleverly not declaring that they were smuggling guns aboard, managed to pass through security measures. Nearly all of these individuals weren't really meaning to do harm with the weapons they slipped onto the ships, but rather did so just to prove the inefficiencies of government and to acquire some certain bragging rights. At any rate, the government imposed strict punishments for those caught with illegal items and eventually it became more trouble to smuggle illegal items on board than the bragging was worth. One day, however, one aspiring fellow decided to craft a gun look-alike, that was exactly the same size, weight, and material as the firearms of the day without actually being a real gun. That way, people could have all the fun of smuggling illegal items onto ships, without any of the risk, as these items weren't illegal. However, some criminals began to disguise *real* implements of war as these fakes, and to discourage this the legislature banned these fake guns also. Another aspiring fellow took upon himself the charge to design a fake fake gun, something that very closely resembled the fake gun, but without it being quite the same. Again, lawbreakers began to disguise the fake guns as these fake fake guns, and again the parliament declared the fake fake guns as illegal to smuggle onto vessels of the sea. This process was continued, and each fake getting gradually more detached from the original, until the Government of Thingrend implemented a law that prohibited sticks of butter from being smuggled onto boats (fake fake fake fake fake fake fake fake fake fake guns, to be exact). Sir Henry displayed his exceeding cleverocity by managing to smuggle an entire stick of butter onto the Piratish Ship Nautiwus – some less brave persons would smuggle two half-sticks and them splice them together once already on the boat; however, this stick of butter had no seams. But I digress...)

And so Sir Henry slathered his hand with his stick of butter, and used the slippery limb to pick Friendbot's greft pocket, in which he found the Rune of Teleportation.

Sir Henry cleared his throat and enunciated, “Ahem. Err – teleport me to the Nautiwus.”

Nothing happened.

Sir Henry repeated, “Teleport me to the Nautiwus, *please*.”

Nothing happened.

Sir Henry whimpered and tried again, “Nautiwus!”

Something happened – but it is unrelated to this text.

Friendbot piped, “Don't go, Sir Henry! Please don't go! Why don't we have tea?”

The Okhlo'hka'ig roared and vomited out a glow-in-the-dark acid green substance that began burning through the rock floor. It stomped its monstrous feet, and the cave trembled, sending stalactites crashing down like missiles from the ceiling. It crashed its mighty tail, sending loose rocks flying like bombs from the cavern walls.

Sir Henry yelled, “Rune of Teleportation, take me to the Nautiwus! Now! Hurry!”

Nothing (related to this text) happened. Friendbot began to hum Ode To Joy.

But then, Sir Henry realized that the Okhlo'hka'ig was really just a half of an inch tall, so Sir Henry stomped on it.

An hour later, the Seefairer caught a jumping devil named Ferdinand, and spread it with the remainder of his butter stick. It made a very nutritious snack, but he later identified the reason that the jumping variety were less preferable to the non-jumpers as it was rather restless in his stomach.

With this new sustenance, and the Okhlo'hka'ig beast neutralized, Sir Henry returned to town and claimed his seven barrels of birdgrog. After saying farewells to all of the Lytheinians, he teleported back onto the Nautiwus, and the boat sank, and everybody drowned – even the people not on the boat. In fact, everybody in the entire world drowned.

The End!