
Brath Teagair

Intelligence Report

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Bran the Fated

"They were the Clan that was not.
Their name has been forgotten:
Their hero tales shall never be told again.
Only one of them shall be remembered.
Only one was worthy. "

Bran

It was a time of need, and want, and pain. The arms of Anu, which had embraced them and protected them since time began, now seemed distracted. Instead of pouring her love into the land to bring them fertile crops and fertile women, it seemed instead that she was draining power from the land, and from the people. The land was parched and barren; the people themselves seemed drawn and weakened.

At first they trusted in Anu: she who had always cared for them in the past would not forsake them. But the seasons passed and still the crops failed.

It must be a test, the Druids proclaimed, to prove our love and worth to Anu. We must stand firm. But the seasons passed, and the babes still died.

Driven to despair in their hunger, the clan started to lose faith in Anu. So the Druids, in desperation, went to the Great Shrine, and performed a powerful rite to contact their ancestor. Such a rite had never been needed before, as Anu had always walked amongst them before, and brought her wisdom to them directly. And they trembled, for they feared that Anu would be angry to be so called upon, and would smite them. But instead, for all the power and faith and love they threw into the rite, Anu simply did not respond. They received no answer to their pleas, their power just seemed to be absorbed by the shrine, going they knew not where.

The Druids returned to the clan, despairing as their people had, and told them to give up hope: Anu had abandoned them.

And in their despair, chaos ensued. Instead of sharing what little there was as they had done, the clansmen fought over the scraps, killing indiscriminately the young and the old and the weak to get what they wanted, indulging all of their excesses as if the world itself were about to end. The despair seemed to make the land worse the few plants and animals that had been left just withered and died before their eyes.

But one boy of the clan, named Bran, barely past his warriors tests, looked on in horror at the actions of his clan, still holding on to his faith and refusing to believe Anu had abandoned them. It seemed instead to him that they had abandoned Anu.

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So he travelled into the mountains, through the great dangers of the land filled with chaos, to a small shrine he had found as a child, close to where he had been left on the mountainside as a babe. This shrine was a dark and cool cave, hidden under the curtain of a waterfall that poured into a peaceful pool below. As he approached, he noticed that even though the other streams and rivers had dried up in the famine, this one still flowed full; creating a beautiful rainbow over the pool it was still filling below. And he saw that around the pool, the plants still lived, flowers still bloomed, and lush fruit hung from the trees. As he hungrily rushed forward to grasp some berries and fill his empty belly, he saw that many animals, rabbits and deer and birds sheltered under the trees around the pool, unafraid of him, contented as though they had found refuge from the ravages of the world outside. And Bran knew that this place was holy and felt hope in his heart.

He climbed the wet rocks under the waterfall and up into the cave beyond. Entering, he felt the coolness and a sense of peace. He approached the altar, hewn from the rock and covered in damp moss, and knelt in reverence. As he knelt, about to call on Anu, he felt at peace in his faith and clarity in his mind, ungnawed by the pangs of hunger for the first time in years. Though his thought had been to call on Anu to plead with her to send a message, suddenly he thought: What if Anu cannot appear? What if there is a reason she cannot show herself to us? So instead, he started to pray, and to call on Anu's children instead: to Dagda, to Ciara, to Gwynn, to Manannon, and Mider. But no answer came.

But he refused to give up hope, and sat in contemplation for some time. Then, in the corner of his eye, he noticed a symbol on the altar, hidden under the moss. The symbol of Pain. How could such a symbol be associated with such a place? How could this be her holy place? Swallowing with fear, he called on her: Obum, mistress of the realm of pain. He heard a noise and from his prayer, he slowly looked up: a long pair of legs, swathed in leather, were before him, topped by a dark haired woman who glowed with the aura of power. He quickly abased himself before her.

"We don't have time for this." She proclaimed irritably, "Stand up"

Bran looked up, and saw a harried look on Obum's face. He stood, trembling, before the mistress of pain. She seemed to flicker and fade as though not really there as though her attention was really elsewhere.

"You must return to your clan" she ordered, "tell them Anu has not abandoned them. She is instead fighting for their very existence: a great demon lord has been trying to wrest control of the land and the people from her protection. It has taken everything she has to hold him off: she has drawn power from the land and the people to fight this evil. This is why she no longer comes among you: she and her first children are fighting to save you

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from horrors beyond imagining.

The power you poured into the Great Shrine helped her greatly she was on the verge of defeating the evil. But when your clansmen despaired, the loss of their love took her power from her, and now she barely clings on to survival.

You must tell your clansmen to stop their anarchy. Anu loves them still. They must gather all the clans and return to the Great Shrine. There the armies of the Demon Lord are now gathered, as for the first time, he has been able to appear physically in our land. This time you will need to fight your way through them to reach the shrine, and then pour all the power and love of all the clans into the shrine to strengthen Anu so that she may finally defeat the demon lord and free us of his tyranny. Now go!"

But as she turned as if to disappear, Bran cried to her to wait. What was this wondrous place, and how could it possibly be hers?

She smiled wryly and replied: "This place is my own tribute of love to Anu, for I serve her, and bring pain to those who fail her. But still I am capable of love and compassion for those who are worthy, and for the glory of Anu." And then she was gone.

Bran returned to the clan, and told the Druids what he had found and saw, and of Obum's message. They looked on him doubtfully, and though not truly believing, saw that his message was the only hope of ending the chaos and anarchy the clan had fallen into. They called the clan together to prepare for war, and sent messages to the other clans to muster their warriors near to the Great Shrine.

The clans came to the great shrine. Before them they saw the demonic war host, an immense swathe of demonic creatures, howling for blood, twisting and writhing like a great ocean between them and the shrine, determined to stop the clans from reaching it and feeding their power and love to Anu. The men of Bran's clan felt despair once again. But Bran gathered the other clan chiefs to him, and together they rallied the warriors to stand firm and prepare to charge. All they needed to do was punch through to the circle, not defeat the whole sea of demons. If they could but complete the rite, Anu would be able to defeat the rest for them.

Bran laid out their plan: they would perform a classic hammer manoeuvre, but with more warriors than had ever been used before, with the Druids protected in its core to be carried through to the shrine. Bran's clan would provide the front line that the hammer would punch through from behind.

Battle commenced, bloody and full of ugly deaths. Bran's clan, who had been known as the

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bravest and strongest warriors in times gone past, took the brunt of the violence, many of them falling and being trampled into the bloody mud. But then their lines parted, and the clans rushed through, and the hammer struck. They swept through the shocked demons and on through to the shrine. The clans, Bran with them, formed a defensive wall around the circle, as the Druids began their worship.

Meanwhile, the warriors of Bran's clan remained on the outer edge of the battle, their role completed but having to fight on, with their lines rapidly becoming depleted now the rest of the clans were at the circle.

The Demon Lord, now manifest on the battlefield, saw this and waded through the ranks to cut huge swathes through the clan. The clan began to panic and despair they had been abandoned by the clans and by Anu to die alone and see their clan wiped out. Seeing this in their eyes, the Demon Lord abruptly stopped, and instead showed them illusions: visions of all the food they could ever want, of fertile fields and fertile women, of power and victory in battle victory fighting for him.

And all the long years of pain and hunger and despair overwhelmed the clansmen at these sights, and as one, they fell to the bloody mud and abased themselves before him, swearing allegiance to the demon lord and no other.

The Demon Lord laughed, and ordered his new army of clansmen forward, through the ranks of demons, towards the shrine. And as they passed through, they still put on a show of fighting the demons, for the Demon Lord had no qualms about throwing away his creatures. As they broke through the front lines at the circle, the other clans saw them and cheered, and Bran's face lit up, to see his clan still lived and had been able to join their stand. They opened their arms to welcome the clan into their lines. In Reply the clansmen of Bran raised their swords as if in salute, but at the last moment brought down their swords, and thrust them into the clansmen defending the circle.

Bran froze in horror, and the Druids in the circle faltered, hearing the death cries of their clansmen. Bran heard the laughter of the Demon Lord, and realised his kin had betrayed Anu. And he felt pain, anguish, and the first stab of despair. But he would not give up his trust in Anu, and as the warriors around him fell under his kinsmen's swords, he called on Anu and Obum to lend him strength to hold off his kin. And with that he charged. He fought, through blood and pain, and slew his own clansmen, tears ravaging his face, and it seemed as though he shone with the glow of divinity. Blow upon blow struck him, but he did not falter.

The Druids continued their rite as he held off the betrayers, and they fell into rapture, and re-found their belief and love in Anu, and poured all of this into the shrine that she

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may be strengthened and renewed. And as the rite reached its climax, a great blue holy fire blasted across the battlefield, and the demons screeched in agony, and were destroyed.

But the fire would not touch Anu's children, so even as victory was won, Bran continued slaying his kin, until their bodies lay around him in a mound, and his clan was no more, destroyed forever.

When the last one fell, the glow about him flickered and died, and he collapsed from his many wounds. The Druids carried him into the circle and tried to heal him, but he was too far gone.

So the Druids formed a circle around Bran and called on Anu to save him, as surely he was more worthy of saving than any other who fell that day. Then a great glow surrounded Bran for a few moments. Bran opened his eyes and slowly rose to his feet. The Druids hailed praise to Anu for saving Bran, and the clan chiefs called on Bran to be named King of all the clans.

But Bran bid them to silence "I am sorry, I can not accept. Anu has other plans for me. My time left on this world is growing very short and you must aid me in my journey to the other world to watch over our people who have failed Anu"

So the druid known among the clansman as the Guardian brought forward the Gateway to the otherworld and placed it on the Great Shrine's mighty altar, and in the true name of the Lord and Guardian of the gateway to the other world, he invoked its powers to open the gates to eternity.

Bran thanked all those around him and bid them to stay true to Anu. He then stepped through the gateway and disappeared never to be seen again.

The Druids proclaimed Bran a great warrior and true hero of the land. But they condemned his clan for their betrayal. They proclaimed that the clan would be forgotten, as if they had never existed: their name would be no more: their heroic tales would never be told again, they would be forgotten for eternity.

Only Bran's name would be remembered and exalted: only his feats would be told again and again, and he would be revered forever as Bran the Lord of the Fated."

End of Report

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