

## **Episode Four: The Heart of the World**

### **Overheard at Taco Tuesday**

“Sometimes when you go off on a mission,” said Raggedy Ann, “you are cast in a role. You don’t always get introduced as an outsider. Sometimes you’re dropped in media res into an existing role. Those can be the hardest missions, especially when you have to play a part or be something you’ve never been before!”

Many heads nodded in sympathy.

“Why once I had to play a fleshy creature.” Raggedy Ann shuddered at the memory.

### **The Scenario**

“You find yourself on the Creator's Road in a sun dappled woods.”

Mission: “Support the true heir”.

The players find themselves in The Land. The Land was created in ages unknown by the being known as The Creator. They calmed the waters and raised the land and made the universe as an adornment to the Land. They crossed the Land from East to West. As they passed the rocks rose beneath their feet to provide level footing. As the Creator walked along they brought forth the beasts of the field, the fish of the water, the birds of the sky, the spirits and the people. They left an Egg at the centre of the Land. Having traveled across the Land and having shaped it to their liking the Creator passed from the Land and was seen no more. The Egg at the centre hatched and brought forth the first Empress of the Universe. She ruled until she ruled no more and was succeeded by one of Her Daughters.

Each Empress lives until life holds no charms for them. They then lay or create from three to seven eggs. These eggs are sent throughout the Land to be raised to young adulthood. It is never known exactly how many eggs are distributed. While most are raised by rulers a few end up in the hands of the unknown. These are just as likely to become Empress as those raised by the famous. When the old Empress passes from the Land the guardians of the heirs bring their charges to the Heart of the World where a designated group waits to determine which one is the proper heir. This process known as The Choosing takes some time and while the people wait a Great Tourney is held. This Tourney helps determine the selection process as the heir’s guardians vie for victory.

The players have been cast in the roles of the Lord of Greenwich and his followers. They are travelling from their home at Greenwich on the Shores of the Madding Sea to the Heart of the

World to deliver the Human Child who is one of the Empress of the World's heirs. It is worrying that the heirs are only girls of 10 or so rather than the young adults they normally are.

The players are cast in the roles of the following:

### **Lord Bruce of Greenwich**

Known for two things:

1. Being the richest man in the world.
2. Being the greatest duelist in the world.

His father recently died leaving the City of Greenwich and its surrounding lands to him. Lord Bruce is very young for taking over such a big responsibility but he's sure it can't be that hard. His father was going to provide more training in ruling but kept putting it off until his untimely death at the hands of some Sea Orcs.

His followers are:

### **Biff the Black**

A half-orc warrior, who wishes to become a Paladin. He has been denied because of his birth. He is the product of a vile rape on Lord Bruce's aunt Ermintrude. He was raised beside Lord Bruce as a bodyguard to protect his life. He, like all of Lord Bruce's followers is utterly loyal to him. He is a mighty warrior wearing the Widow's Armour and wielding the Dread Maul, Grief to the Sidhe.

### **Virginia d'Lac**

A half-elf courtesan of great beauty.

### **Baasim ibn Nasif, the Moor**

The ways of this wizard are strange indeed. He washed up on shore after a shipwreck.

### **Harald of the Wildwood**

Lord Bruce's High Sherriff, Harald served Lord Bruce's father and his father before him and enforces the laws of your land with a swift and certain hand.

### **Sweets the Bard**

Little Sweets the Bard is a hobbit of great renown on the lute. He has a sweet, sweet voice.

### **Louis of the Wildwood**

Harald's son, Louis is a tracker and archer extraordinaire. He has won the archery portion of the Great Tourney three years in a row defeating many Sidhe and elven archers.

Each has secrets unknown by the others.

### **What Has Transpired so Far**

The party traveled through the Wild Wood along the Creator's Road. They spotted some of the winged elves from the Cloud Forest passing overhead in the direction of the Heart of the World. As they traveled young Lord Bruce questioned his followers to learn more about them. He was particularly curious about the magical abilities or items any of them might possess. Other than Biff the Black's armour and maul and Bassim ibn Nasif's purported magical abilities no one admitted to any abilities. Lord Bruce wanted Harald and Louis to send out some scouts but unfortunately there weren't and aren't any. Harald and Louis are pretty much Lord Bruce's entire force.

Lord Bruce kept asking Bassim ibn Nasif to cast various spells, summon food, track things, etc. but Bassim demurred saying he did not possess those abilities. He did offer to clean a 10 x 10 area with a summoned spirit or cause something to glow for 4 hours but Lord Bruce seemed uninterested in these magical abilities!

As they rode along they met Lord Elf and a party of 11 elves, half male, half female who stated that they had traveled to the Wild Wood to pay their respects to Lord Bruce and the Human Child. They avoided the half-orc and the half-elf but were very curious about Louis' bow. He refused to allow anyone else to touch it but he did let them look at it. Lord Elf offered to play Lord Bruce at knucklebones for Greenwitch and the Wild Woods (won by the first Lord Bruce many years prior) but Lord Bruce demurred.

They travelled together through the Wild Woods setting up camp on opposite sides of the Creator's Road. The Human Child proved to be an immense brat who claimed that she had already created a list of those who were to be executed when she became Empress! She demanded a song from Sweets who gladly obliged. The elves sat on their side and harmonized beautifully. Sweets was determined to drown out their song and managed to do so.

The next day they reached the edge of the Nameless Plains which Lord Bruce was determined to:

- Name it, and
- Claim it, perhaps making it a fiefdom for his liege man Biff the Black.

He decided that they should set a leisurely pace to keep the horses from getting too tired and so as to not arrive at the Choosing too early. The elves seemed to be in more of a rush and hurried off.

Part way into the day the resident centaurs perhaps sensing the intent to claim their lands appeared in force waving their weapons around. Lord Bruce ordered Bassim to cast a warning spell. He did so casting a lightning bolt which destroyed the only tree for miles and scared off the centaurs. Lord Bruce was impressed, declaring “Why that was the most magical thing I’ve seen all day!”

They were unable to reach the Inn of Heart’s Comfort and had to camp out that night. They could hear the centaur’s drums beating long into the night and the answering roars of the trolls in the distant Troll Hills. As they camped they noticed that the star patterns were swirling and reforming and seemed to be coming nearer. The constellations shrunk down and resolved themselves into the form of a man made of night sky and stars! They were in the presence of the Lord of the Starfields. He introduced himself and greeted Lord Bruce. It turned out that he too had an heir for the Empress, the Starchild. He introduced the Starchild and examined the Human Child for a time. He then told them that he would see them at the Heart of the World and resumed his place in the heavens.

The next day they continued on their way. Suddenly they were attacked by a lone centaur racing out of a hidden arroyo who struck a blow on Biff the Black’s armour, perhaps counting coup? Biff, who was wearing the Widow’s Armour took no damage and gave the centaur a little tap in response that caused a major wound! The centaur was knocked down but he got back up and limped away. After that the centaur kept to themselves.

Finally the party arrived at the Inn of Heart’s Comfort where they were warmly welcomed by the staff. They found the elves there ahead of them. Lord Bruce was shown to the best room in the place with the rest of his followers receiving slightly less nice rooms (Sweets got a cupboard under the stairs and Biff the Black was in the stables). They dined lavishly off of centaur calf enjoying themselves immensely. Sweets was particularly pleased to discover that three hobbit women worked at the Inn. He used his magical music to seduce all three spending an enjoyable night in the cupboard under the stairs.

The next day they departed along with the elves on their way headed over the Troll Hills into the Belt Plains. By pushing hard they could pass over the hills in daylight. They managed to make it over the Hills spotting the totems of the orc clans and the stone forms of the great

Trolls. They gratefully camped for the night on the edge of the plains. They could see the distant shape of Dragonsperch and thought that it would take them two days to reach the Heart of the World. As they travelled their horses grew uneasy as a great winged shape passed over. All kept their seats except Biff the Black who was thrown! The might winged shape descended shrinking in size until it reached human sized and landed. This was The Dragon who with her great weight actually slightly deformed the Creator's Road. She greeted Lord Elf and Lord Bruce and bowed to the Human Child. She introduced her heir, the Winged Child. After a brief examination she and the Winged Child took to the skies and flew off.

After a couple of uneventful days the party arrived at the Heart of the World where they were shown to their pavilion. This is where we called it a night.

### **The Continuation**

We continued where we'd left off. Louis went to the archery butts to doing some practising with his father Harald. Everyone was very interested in his skill and bow but he was just there to do some practising. While he shot a magnificent white elk stag emerged from the nearby woods attended by a crowd of wild animals. On the stag was his mother, the Lady of the Hunt and her ward, the Wild Child. She acknowledged Louis as her son (and Harald as her lover) and placed the child in his care. Louis brought the child to the Chamberlin who made arrangements for her to be boarded with him.

They learned that the five children would be available to interview by each of the voters. Biff the Black, Virginia d'Lac met with the Chamberlin and were impressed with his magic (and ginger snaps). They thought he might be behind everything but decided he wasn't.

The rest of the party split up to investigate various individuals. Louis of the Wildwood went to speak to the Hermit and found him to be a cross between Jimmy Buffet and the Dude. Lord Bruce and his pet sorcerer went to speak with the Sorcerer Supreme and found him to be part Wizard of Oz, part Gandalf.

Besides these two they also spoke with the following individuals:

- King Troll
- Knight with No Name
- Lady Life (she shook Lord Bruce's hand which came to life and started speaking)
- Lord Death
- Master of the Briny Deep
- The Summer Queen

They would have spoken more with others but by this point the last child, Night's Dark Child had arrived and the first child Lord Bruce spoke with was the Starchild. Through some cunning questions he got her to admit to her plan to destroy the world should she be chosen Empress.

She had been corrupted by an agent of FOE called Cassiopeia who tried to attack Lord Bruce. He drew the Day Sword and its brilliance drove her off! The Master of the Starfields was appalled by this and vowed to track her down. The vote occurred and The Human Child was chosen to become Empress. The five entered the tower and the scenario ended.