

RenQuest 2014: Resurrection
by Julie McMillin and Derrick Gaetke

Morning broke like a whisper on the Band of the Twisted Claw. While the members of the Pub Crawl slept off their previous day's escapades, Thomas the scribe sat alone, diligently working on his latest epic. His clothing, though faded, bore the styling of a country manor servant, a stark contrast to the gypsies of the camp. He was so engrossed in his work that he failed to hear the skipping steps drawing near.

"Thomas!" a girl's voice all but shouted.

He started, spilling his inkpot across the parchment. A growing black stain soon mirrored his rising frustration. He took a deep breath and said, "Yes, Alice?"

"Hast thou seen Vashta today?" asked the apprentice healer and soothsayer.

"Nay."

"Truly you haven't?" Alice pressed. "She left last night to check on the Coopers."

"A great number of people passed me this morning," he said through gritted teeth, "But Vashta was not among them."

She ceased her bouncing. "What's wrong?"

He raised an incredulous eyebrow. "You mean besides my writing...?"

"Oh!" Alice cried. "Oh, Thomas, I am so, so sorry!" She fell to her knees and attempted to blot the ink with the edge of her tattered skirt.

With a wary eye on the slumbering Pub Crawlers he whispered, "Hush, Alice. 'Tis well."

"You're not angry with me?"

"Nay," he reassured her. "Never for very long."

She giggled. "Well, it could be worse!"

"Please don't say it..."

"You could have seen a Draco!"

Thomas threw up his hands. "Alice, you're horrible! That is foreshadowing of the worst kind!"

The girl bit her lip and hung her head like a reprimanded puppy dog. Thomas sighed and said, "Look, Alice, I meant not that –"

"You two weren't waiting up for me, were you?" came a stern voice from behind, causing them both to jump. Thomas knocked his inkpot over yet again, and soon what little parchment had been left untouched was as black as the deepest night.

"Vashta!" Alice greeted cheerfully. "We were, forsooth! How fare the Coopers?"

"Not well," Vashta replied. Her voice's weary strain spoke volumes more. "Nothing I have seems to break their fever. They show the same imbalance as the Bakers, the Chandlers, the Fletchers... But now, I fear we have greater concerns than their collective malady. This morning I found *this* staked to their doors."

She handed Thomas a scrap of parchment. One side was covered in cramped writing. The other bore a single symbol... one they knew all too well.

"The Draco Disciples?" gasped Alice. "They're behind this illness?"

Thomas gaped in horror. "My thoughts of foreshadowing were only in jest, but this..."

Vashta placed a hand on his shoulder. "Aye, lad. We'll be needing help to unravel this mystery."