

The Ballad

of

TANISLAV

ENQ



A History Lesson

Once, nearly a lifetime ago, there came a great man from the frozen steppes of Kislev. He vanquished evil where no other hero bothered to tread and upheld the dignity of people who were considered beneath the notice of other great men. His first and greatest feat was the uprising at Svetsk and his struggle against *The Great Lord Kekyin*, a tale oft sung in ale houses and festivals to wow children and woo women. A true Kislevite hero.

Stanislav Benq is an idol to every man, woman and child throughout rural Kislev. Many who have heard his tale believe him to be a myth or legend, some tell his tales while calling him by a different name but there are few who truly deny him. Nevertheless, throughout the frozen countryside of the eastern reaches of the Old World tales are told and songs are sung of a hero who fought for the sick and needy, who helped the weak and decrepit and who stood against evil wherever he found it. The most important of these is the favoured fireside folk song known simply as ***The Ballad of Stanislav Benq***.

It is a simple tale of a brave farmer who led a revolution against a slaver. At the end they fight in a frozen field and the slaver is vanquished to the sound of the simple folk cheering. Shortly after, *Stanislav* left to pursue some of the slavers former men who had stolen a rare treasure from the poorfolk: the reliquary of a local saint. Many of the tales attributed to him are placed after this time while he is on his quest to bring back the treasure

for it is said that a curse befell his people when it was removed.

Svetsk

Svetsk is a *county* in Kislev, notable as one of the smallest of the whole nation, but completely unnoteworthy in very nearly every respect. Both a very poor and religious area, the people who live there care a great deal about provincial pride and self worth; historians have long presumed this to be the case simply because the people therein had nothing else. It is a loose collection of miserable, poor, villages, the details of which are completely irrelevant to this adventure beyond knowing that even the greatest hero of their people decided he should leave...

The Great Lord Kekyin

One of the major reasons for the pauperism of Svetsk are the handful of unreasonably greedy and spiteful counts and minor nobles scattered around the midlands of Kislev. Every few hundred miles or so you come across a great stone fort/tower/citadel/stronghold or some other imposing structure that looks as though it cost twice as much as all the preceding countryside. One of the more fearsome of these counts was ***The Great Lord Kekyin***.

Few detailed accounts of *Karloff Kekyin* survive (you may be glad to hear, given the amount of reading it will save you) but it is well known that he was quite the collector of

rare and treasured artefacts. In fact he spent the better part of his life sacking and pillaging small townships in the pursuit of said artefacts and ended his life with one of the most comprehensively eclectic (to put it kindly) collections to be found.

Now, before your players start salivating at this prospect, these items were all of special *religious* and *historic* relevance, sadly not of derring-do/hack-and-slash/save-the-maiden-wench relevance.

So great was his thirst for these items, many thought his to have some sort of malady or affliction of the senses. His obsession led to horrific deeds being done in the name of his collection and it was mainly these deeds that let him to be mostly remembered as ***The Tyrant of Svetsk.***

More recently...

Ok, delightful, yes - very nice overview there...excuse me but have you, perchance, seen an adventure around here anywhere?

Well, this is what leads up to the adventure right here: *Karloff Kekyin* had a son; a man of both his fathers virtue and vice but sadly very little else. *Giorgi Kekyin* has taken it upon himself to finish off his father's collection of fanciful historic wonders and top of his list is a very specific item long denied his family from Svetsk. He has taken the somewhat impersonal approach of hiring a small band of "*Specialists*" from the empire to find and retrieve it.

This item is the, above mentioned, reliquary of a local saint. To give it

it's full title, it is known as "***The Sacred Shrine of the Shard of Shinbone of Saint Sergei of Svetsk***".

It shall be henceforth referred to, simply, as "the Shrine" or "the Reliquary" some such other contraction. *Kekyin* has desired this object for many years, since it vanished from a dig his father initiated at a site formerly occupied by a rather major temple to *Sergei*.

During the slave uprising against his father, led by *Stanislav Benq*, the object was supposedly stolen by underhanded employees of *Karloff Kekyin* who felt that they could better earn their keep looting and selling this item, having believed, in error, that as *Karloff* wanted it so much, it must be worth something.

Giorgi Kekyin's "Specialists" are a band of mercenaries, led by a skilled Agitator named *Jarlath Holzmann*. This rattish man has latched onto the extreme fanaticism surrounding the legend of *Stanislav Benq*, and the following of *Saint Sergei*, in order to root out what the poorfolk know of the relic. He has managed to convince several local men and women that the "curse" (for letting the shrine be stolen, see above) hitherto only mentioned in hedge-folklore and old widow's-tales is real and afflicting many of their own to this very day.

Some of these people have banded together and formed a caravan to journey west to follow the trail *Stanislav* is said to have left on a quest to retrieve the reliquary. In lukewarm pursuit are *Holzmann* and his murderous fellows, simply letting the commoners do their work for them - after all when you are being paid by the day, what better method is there than to let someone else do

the work...*slowly*. These wandering paupers have followed the signs given to them by stories of *Stanislav* and travelled to the town of **Dorfchen**, about thirty miles south of Talabheim, where they have lost the trail and all hope of lifting their curse.

Dorfchen

(you can spell it with an umlaut if you like, it makes no odds to me)

As with most towns in the Old World Dorfchen is populated by people who are generally good and gods-fearing; they pay taxes and go about their business honestly hoping nothing too exciting ever happens to them as exciting things seem to be inversely proportional to lifespans in these parts. With a population of just over a thousand, it is a fairly large town; a dozen inns are scattered about the centre, most in the northerly market and trade districts.

To the South of the town are the more esoteric areas occasionally found in places partly populated by people of provincial parentage. *Little Kislev, the Breton-borough, Estalia Alley and Tilea Town* (a place best avoided after hours...if indeed not during or even *before* hours) all lie in this small area, originally situated outside the walls as a sort of shanty slum. They erected their own walls and systematically broke down the *Dorfchener* ones on the inside.

There was a lot of fighting initially but that's a few generations past at this stage. Suffice it to say the integration has been completed and the people who live there are generally regarded to be "*as Dorfchenish as the Dorfcheners themselves*".

There are a thousand and one reasons that adventurers could be passing through this town, or any town that could conveniently become this one if needed. The location is not relevant to the story and so could easily be transplanted to anywhere you, as the GM, desire. the important thing is what happens when they get there.

In summary, for your eyes only:

- ◆ They meet the band of Old Kislevites questing after the Reliquary of Saint Sergei.
- ◆ They follow some leads.
- ◆ They get attacked by Jarlath and his Specialists
- ◆ The vanquish all evil
- ◆ They save the day

Well, that's the *rough* outline, anyway.

Friends and Gentlemen

Enter the PC's

So, most likely they are staying at an inn somewhere, either on their way to/from Talabheim, as this is where most of *Dorfchen's* traffic comes from. Even if they are just passing through, however, you can still drop this on them.

Meeting the Oldies

There are three ways that the players can meet up with the traveling Kislevites, each has its various advantages and disadvantages, each would be more suitable for a different group of PC's.

◆ **We're Heroes:** After a hefty night of drinking and merrymaking, or something they apparently do for fun, on their way back to their inn: the PC's hear the sounds of a scuffle coming from a nearby alley (*Knofflauchsallee* in *Little Kislev*, ideally). Investigation reveals a thuggish, hairy, band of footpads laying into some elderly paupers. They, naturally, rush to their aid and a mêlée ensues wherein the brave PC's are victorious and righteous and so on.

◆ **We're Targets:** Especially good for a non-combat heavy

party (if such a thing exists). While on their way back to their inn after a vigorous night of gaming and carousing, the PC's are attacked by a ragtag band of poor traveling Kislevites for their money. The attempted mugging ends when one of the Kislevites is badly injured. Note that, although desperate for money, they are not really intent on hurting anyone, as they are generally honest folk.

◆ We're cowards and we're not helping anyone but ourselves: Again with the night of debauched revelry, on their way back to lodgings, the players encounter a mugging, this time of only one poor old man. They decide discretion is the better part of survival and turn tail, pretending they saw nothing. Of course, the footpads feel such cowards will probably be easy marks and head after them. The players are then mugged by these footpads and rescued by the rest of the Kislevites who had returned to their fallen comrade.

- In all of these scenarios, it is important point is that the players end with the belief that *the Oldies* (as I will refer to them) are good guys.
- It is also quite important that one of the Oldies be injured in the scuffle - Let's assume it's Harald.

Plot Burlesque

The next bit can go down in whatever order you like. *The Oldies* need help and are not above asking such charitable people (or people who owe them, in one case, above) for it. They firmly believe that *St. Sergei* has led the players to them and that they are meant to help them. They have a slum set up in a back corner of *Knofflauchsallee* with a small fire and filthy blankets spread on the ground. They will urge the players to come back to it with them and it is here that they explain the nature of their need and the predicament the PC's are in.

If the PC's refuse, then you can just explain there and then, or imply the horrible end the curse brings and continue on.

They need help to find this Reliquary, but their path has ended due to no money, food, old age and countless other maladies. They have travelled this far on the simple basis of belief that *Stanislav* is said to have told the villagers he would travel the road until he found the thieves and apprehended them. This is where that road led. Such is the infallible logic of the poor Kislevite folk that they simply set out upon the road *Stanislav* is said to have set out on and stuck to it until it got somewhere. This brought them here, to *Dorfchen*, and to the PC's. They will blindly swear this to be the work of St. Sergei in thick slavic accents as much as is necessary.

As an added incentive to the players, *the Oldies* point out that they are cursed and, when *Harald* was injured, anyone who was splattered with his blood (or, if he died, anyone

who killed him) has contracted the curse. The only way to break it and release themselves from its bindings is to find the Relic and return it to Svetsk. So the player's *must* help them.

During this little exposé, the PC's are being watched from afar by *Vaclav Schmeck*, one of *Kekyin's* "Specialists". They will have a hard time (**-30%**) spotting him as they are distracted and it's dark and even if they do manage to, he'll just run off - but he is there nonetheless.

The Song of Sam Beck

The Oldies explain the tale and the history of their situation to the players. Only a rough outline is necessary, which is handy as a rough outline is all I have given you so far. Make things up if you like, it happened about fifty years ago and the only real reference is the testimony of six old, illiterate, Kislevite farmers. Just give the PC's enough to believe they are in a situation appropriate to being cursed.

The information they give is more than enough for the players to recognise the story of *Stanislav Benq*, however. This is where we can divide groups into two:

◆ **Groups that have a minstrel**, a former entertainer or someone with musicianship of a decent level. These people will not only have heard of the ballad but will probably have earned a meal or two through the telling of it.

◆ **Groups that have fighters.**

Lots of fighters. They will be at a bit of a disadvantage here, it has to be said, and the wisdom of you running this adventure somewhat in doubt. Never fear though as, if you really want, the players can make an **Int** roll to see if they are familiar with the story. You're probably going to be playing catch up for a bit of this adventure though with a party like this.

The title of this section is a reference to the fact that ***The Ballad*** is known by several different names throughout the Empire, depending on the region. The original ***Ballad***, however - and a stupidly high score in Musicianship would be needed to know this (-35%), was scored for the Elector of Talabecland nearly thirty-five years ago. A mildly famous balladeer named *Johannes Sangerman* documented folk stories from the Kislevite borders and cobbled them together, creating ***The Ballad***.

This was all to please his patron, the Elector, and won him much favour at court. ***The Ballad*** spread throughout the minstrels of the Old World, the story changing and growing as it went and for the past ten years it has been a staple favourite in rural towns, especially ones that identify with the desire for a saviour in their lives.

PC's with any musical inclination will likely know the first verse, the more accomplished will know the second but, most likely, only a scholar would realistically know the full details of the third.

The Entire Ballad is included at the end of the scenario, along with the

common interpretation that most musicians and pub-singers would know. Also included is the detail of what the Ballad actually means and where it came from. This information should be available to extremely resourceful PC's but is not, by any means, necessary.

We no sing good:

If the players do not have a musically gifted character, they can always try to find an entertainer in *Dorfchen* who will happily sing the song for them, as much as necessary, though at the cost of 1-/per recitation. The meaning of the song and *Sangerman*'s wit will need explanation though as players cannot really decipher it on their own.

If they pay well, the notations from the Appendix are theirs for the asking, depending on the skill of the entertainer they get. So it's up to you as to how much money you want to take from them and how much information you want to give them.

The Pious Man

The second verse of ***the Ballad***, at the end, makes reference to a "Pious man". In fact, it blatantly states (in so far as songs do) that he met a priest, you can be quite blunt in telling your players this.

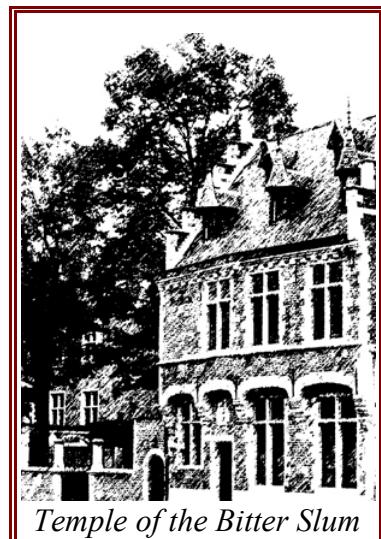
Being, as it is, the only step or lead that they have - it is now for them to find out where this priest may be located. Even if they don't think that or simply decide the idea of assuming tracing *Stanislav's* steps this way is too inaccurate or blunt, you can remind them that they are also curse and that it might not be a bad idea to see a priest anyway.

There are three major temples in *Dorfchen*:

- ◆ ***Temple of the Cult of Sigmar***
- ◆ ***Temple of the Cult of Taal***
- ◆ ***Temple of provincial Worship (better known as the Temple of the Bitter Slum)***

Temple of the Cult of Taal

Less a temple and more a small park, there are much fewer paupers begging at this temple, most likely due to the considerably less well off nature of its visitors. Very much a place for the commonfolk to frequent on their occasional devotions. Less than thirty yards by thirty yards and surrounded in trees, it is located at the south westernmost edge of the town. A small dais with wooden statues of both Taal and Rhya have been secured in placed near the center.



Temple of the Cult of Sigmar

Centrally located, this is the biggest temple in the town ad worship is held daily. Though run down, there is a constant stream of worshippers and beggars going through the generous front door. Old, stalwart, stones support the stout, domed, building and its interior is mostly a voluminous hall with a small area behind the prominently placed statues towards the end of the hall

Temple of Provincial Worship

This temple, in the heart of the sectarian southern slums represents the majority of all other religions in the town. It is a converted tavern, with rooms for various gods. Nothing nefarious or evil goes on here, it must be firstly clarified, but it was a simple practical solution to the lack of sufficient representation of the more minor gods.

Myrmidia and Shallya both have places of worship here and the entire basement is a "temple" of Ranald, frequently getting high attendances at *services* every payday.

The most prominent religious placing, however, goes to *Ursun* - the Kislevite god. Primarily this came about because the Kislevites were the most numerous of immigrants in the area, they had the highest representation. Along with this, as Ursun and Taal are quite closely regarded by the less-that-picky common people of *Dorfchen*, on especially rainy days the temple of *Ursun* swells; as it is deemed the Temple of Taal:

"be simply too muddy"

and his Clerics tend to render it off-limits: lest they trample too much of His Holy Grass.

A three story wooden building, formerly known as ***The Runner's Rest***, it is also known locally, among the more well off people, as the ***Temple of the Bitter Slum***. This is an uncharacteristically witty commentary, first conceived of by the Jester *Mickil Ungamaar* - and is a play on the name "***The Temple of the Better Sun***", a small moving temple of the *Ungol*. Most people are completely unaware of this, of course, and simply take the slight at face value.

Incidentally, Mickil Ungamaar met a small group of Ungol a few years after this and was caught boasting of it, the spot is quite easily discoverable by the Halfway house known as "The Four Horse and Limb"

At the temple of *Ursun*, there is an elderly priest, long past his best and his name is *Josef Volkvar*. He runs the whole establishment and maintains the peace between the various small cults.

Anyone who the PC's meet at the Temple will direct them to him as he is something of a local community leader and the best man to talk to. He is wistful and quite hard of hearing but by no means senile or stupid. He will answer any and all of the players questions, should they have any.

Indeed, when he was a young man, he remembers someone from Kislev who may well have been *Stanislav* coming through *Dorfchen*. He describes him as

"a brash youth with an air of authority about him, a rugged handsomeness and a sense of greatness about him"

Curiously, though, he will sidestep more questions on the subject or, if really cornered, will play the hard of hearing card or shuffle off muttering about how it is time for his medicine. This can be played as a mildly interesting, a completely ignorable one or a blinding alarm bell - depending on how much time you have, and the type of players you have.

The Patience of Jarlath

At this point in the adventure, *Jarlath Holzmann* and his cronies are exceptionally bored. It has taken over six weeks for the Kislevites to get this far and they have found

nothing. At the sight of the PC's interaction with them, the *Specialists* start to get quite excited.

So much so, in fact, that they decide everything the PC's do is worth following up themselves. Anywhere the PC's go, they will be followed by one or more of them and trouble will trace their steps. If they don't find out what they want to, then they will get quite violent.

This comes to a head when they approach *Josef Volkvar* and break into the *Bitter Slum*. Upon attacking him he tells them that he had the Reliquary but gave it to the PC's.

This is untrue, of course, but it will send the *Specialists* after the players. Cue a second late night scuffle.

This fight is essentially to the death, or until someone runs away, which the *Specialists* will do if taking heavy losses. They are all cowards when threatened and will spill all they know to the players on a successful **Intimidate** (or **Torture**) check.

If he survives, *Jarlath* will flee the town, heading back to his master, *Giorgi Kekyin* in Svetsk. This sets them up nicely for a little vendetta with a foreign mogul, should such a thing be to your tastes, but it's not relevant to the immediate story.

The fight with the *Specialists* has the usual implications when it comes to the Watch, as you would expect, but nine times out of ten they have a habit of overlooking any rough-housing in the Southern district. Gives you nice leeway to have them interfere if you want or not if they are sick of getting into trouble with the Watch...again.

Some Priest

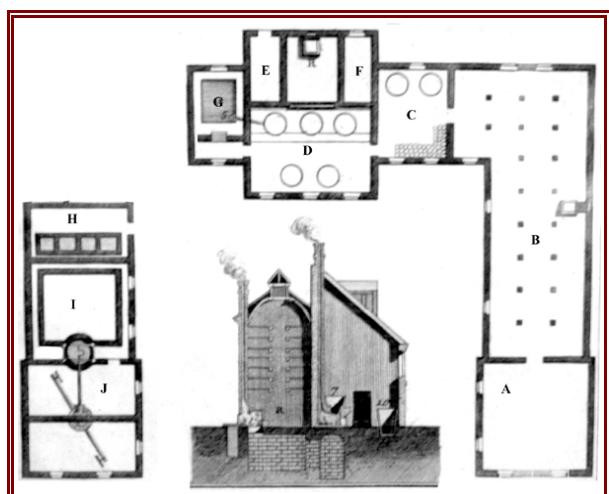
The information that this priest set a band of nasty, cut-throat, mercenaries on them should get them asking questions.

The answer to that can only be found at his Temple but he is nowhere to be found. His room on the third floor is deserted, his worship chambers locked. The only sign of life seems to be the candle burning in the Shrine of Shallya.

You know there was a candle there because that is what sets the building on fire, shortly after the players enter it.

Volkvar has been waiting for them it seems and doused the halls in some foul, musty, scent. Difficult to notice as the whole temple is permeated with odd incense and terribly ale.

Any PC's with **Academic Knowledge: (Engineering), (Science)**, or any other applicable skill, has an opportunity to recognise the smell on the way up through the Temple.



A: Entrance; **B:** Shallya's Temple; **C:** Antechamber; **D:** Storehouse **E:** Stairs up; **F:** Stairs Down; **G:** Volkvar's Worship Chambers **H:** Gaming tables **I:** Ranald's Palace; **J:** Card tables

Ursun's Beard!

Josef Volkvar's chambers are not those you would associate with a typical priest...or maybe you would.

For a simple man who lives by the law of a god of bears, he seems to have strangely refined taste. Silks and generous donations are strewn about his chambers, should the PC's ever find their way in there.

It is a struggle to get out of the burning building - standard **Toughness** tests are required every few rounds with an escalating difficulty. There is a very real chance that the PC's could be severely injured or worse in this fire.

Rules for Suffocation and Fire Damage can be found on page 136 of the WFRP core rulebook.

As the fire was set on the PC's arrival at the Temple, it should be obvious that their trapper could not have gone far. In fact, he has not and is still within the city walls. Making his way to the stables at the east end of the town with the madcap scheme of stealing a cart.

He is easily caught up, especially as he is toting a small chest o his back, wheezing as he desperately tried to run. If you're playing this in a light-hearted fashion, feel free to make an odd, chase scene out of this. There are plenty of winding alleys and doorways in the southern shanties where he can hold them off for a while. All in all though, his day is done.

The chest he carries is securely locked, barely two foot in length and looks rotten at the edges.

The Chest

The chest he carries is, in fact, the sought after reliquary.



The Sacred Shrine of Sard of Shin of Saint Sergei of Svetsk

Josef was trying to get away with it as he has had in his possession and regards it as his, with a bizarre attachment to it.

In fact, if the PC's have ever wanted to see an elderly bear-priest cry, this is their opportunity. Taking the Reliquary will break the old man and leave him very difficult to talk to.

Opening the chest is not difficult, *Josef* has a key on his person, even despite that though, the box would not be difficult to break.

Explanation

I'm sure, to some, it will be obvious, but *Josef Volkvar* is Stanislav Benq. After the fiasco of the uprising against Kekyin, he ran away from home, hoping to sell the Reliquary and make his way in the world – away from the miserable prospects of the Kislevite tundras.

Upon arriving at *Dorfchen*, he found

he had no money and no one was interested in a tatty old box with a dead man's bones.

He lived on the streets of Little Kislev for a while, during much of the unsettled times with the locals and was cared for by the former priest and founder of the Temple of *Ursun*.

Stanislav changed his name and became an apprentice to the priest, ending up a vaguely decent bloke. His vices showed through, however, in that his taste for finery was fed off skimmed alms, he got a cut off all of the *services* of Ranald held in the Shrines basement and even managed to wrangle a competent stipend from the *Dorfchen* Council to keep the undesirables in the Slums.

Fifteen years after his running away, Stanislav was approached by a young minstrel who had tracked him to the town. He had made drawings of Stanislav from descriptions he took from his kinfolk. At this time Stanislav was still young enough to be identified from them. This man was looking to write an epic ballad about him, explaining for the first time, that he was a hero to his people, because they thought he had travelled to get the Reliquary back after killing Kekyin.

Unfortunately, he could now no longer go back, as he would have to bring tales of his exploits, that he couldn't back up, and give back the Reliquary. He had grown very sentimental about the old box, as though he had made it his own. He didn't believe in any curse, so saw no harm in keeping it.

Now, upon being attacked by the *Specialists* and being questioned by the PC's, he felt that his time had

surely come and that the people of Svetsk would have him hung, drawn and quartered when they found out the truth.

In a panic he grabbed the bx, doused the Temple and tried to kill the PC's.

Simple really.

Appendix

The Curse

After the theft of any major religious item, or even the loss of any significant thing with folklore attached – there are rumours of a curse.

In Svetsk, the rumours started slow, growing to murmurs of paranoia before finally fading out to the mists of old wives tales.

This curse was never defined, never concrete and never really believed, until *Jarlath Holzmann* came and changed all that. An accomplished **Agitator**, *Jarlath* resurrected the idea in the minds of the people and convinced several of them that, not only was the curse real, but that they were affected by it.

Helped in his ruse by the very fact that life in the back end of Kislev is nearly a curse unto itself and the general stupidity of your average, uneducated, Gospodar: he made men believe that the course of their whole lives had been ruined by this curse.

Failed harvests, dead livestock, sickly children and all manner of accidents and minor maladies were blamed on it. He whipped them up into a frenzy and that was when they decided to send a troupe of their wisest and most desperate.

So, there is no curse.

However, the Kislevites believe in it, they believe so strongly that their belief is practically tangible. Indeed, after meeting with them,

any character (the more you can convince the better) could believe he is cursed.

It starts with itching, apparently, and there are boils and rashes; lesions and madness follow. The end result is always the same however, leaving you bitter, alone, miserable and wishing for death.

Of course all of these things are commonplace in the Old World. The itching is how it starts though, which is actually caused by lice, but PC's who fail a **Toughness** test (**-10%**) will simply feel the first prickle of the curse.

It is your job as GM to point out new marks, rashes and other afflictions they have not paid attention to before. Everything should seem like a new symptom.

Even if they go to an Apothecary, he sill tell them it is much worse than it truly is – though from his point of view, it is just so he can sell them the *Armfang Root* over the *Peddlar's Paste*...it is four times as expensive after all.

The psychosomatic symptoms will start to fade once they have the reliquary, as the paranoia wears off too. Until that time though...give 'em hell.

Saint Sergei

Saint Sergei of Svetsk was a pious man of tremendous good nature. He became a cleric of Sigmar and did many good works throughout Kislev in his name. His home County, a

small area called Svetsk, keeps his memory alive as they laud their most beloved child.

Sergei was never raised to Sainthood by the Cult of Sigmar, though the readily acknowledge his good works. To them he is known as Sergei the Venerable and his home is listed as being a large town of the east of Svetsk called Mavistaristok.

Sergei's popularity among the poorfolk of Kislev, however, has meant that, in the 150 years since his passing, numerous temples dedicated to this "Saint" have appeared. Along with these temples, countless "relics" have found their way throughout Kislev.

The most famous Temple and Relic belonged to the people of Svetsk, who kept Sergei's dessicated shinbone for over fifty years, that pilgrims might pay hommage.

During a minor incursion a band of chaos beastmen marauded through the temple, destroying everything and collapsing it to ruins.

Kekyin was searching for the Shrine of the Shin of Saint Sergei of Svetsk and no death toll would deter him.

A further two weeks of careful excavating and sifting through rubble passed before the apse of the temple was uncovered. By that time over two thirds of the people who had begun the dig were dead. The remaining people were half starved and on the verge of collapse.

Stanislav Benq was a young pauper who had been enlisted to take part In Kekyin's dig. Like the others, he had suffered from violent beatings, starvation and abuse. Unlike the others he had never lost hope of escape. He plotted the downfall of Kekyin with a tenacity which failed the others.

Stanislav spent his nights panning through the dig on his own, in search of anything useful. One night, days after the discovering of the temple's apse, he discovered a decayed pouch with some *gold* in it. He spent it on the only thing he could think of – revenge.

The gold was outdated, much of it poorly minted, but it was enough for his plan. He bribed the guards to desert their posts and the gaolers to undo the prisoner's bonds.

That night there was an uprising. The tents of the excavation were set alight and the remaining guards clashed with the prisoners in bloody combat.

As mayhem spread through the camp, Stanislav could not resist making his way back to the excavated temple. The rear chamber of the temple had been guarded in his previous excursions and he could not get close. This time he slipped

Stanislav Benq

Fifty years ago an excavation of the temple at Svetsk took place. A Tyrant named Karloff Kekyin was behind it and used his power and money to hire men who forced the locals to provide labour.

Thus enslaved, the poorfolk of Svetsk carefully dug a five mile site in search of the original temple. It was six weeks into the dig before anything was found and by that time over a hundred people had been killed, either by overwork or brutal punishments.

inside.

He found Karloff Kekyin, alone, standing before a dais with his back turned. Stanislav picked up a nearby Trowel and approached him silently. He attacked swiftly and buried the trowel to the hilt in the back of Kekyin's head; he slumped over, instantly dead and collapsed on the floor.

What had held his attention away from Stanislav's intrusion turned out to be none other than the Sacred Shrine of the Shin of Saint Sergei of Svetsk.

There are three interpretations of the Ballad of Stanislav Benq here;

The Ballad

- ◆ The original, translated as best as possible.

All versions stem from the original, as written by *Johannes Sangerman*.

I

*In Ohren Spree, the lanyards wept,
As pawnyard men through slav'ry crept,
 Bound in iron for Kekyin's ends,
To pay his debt and make his mends.*

*In billard binds and haggard straights,
 Gems do prize from unkept mines,
And from the gates of Kekyin's plans,
 Rose one noble Kislev man.*

*Stanislav, though a meagre wetch,
 Rose to lord 'mong empty men,
He prow'd boldly the worker's hetch,
 And drove a nail of justice ken,
Through the heart o' th' dev'lsh man.*

*In battle his glory brightly stood,
 Rapt tight in righteous ties,
And in the end of darkened times,
 Naked brazen faith didst shine,
Through long and weary nights they fought,
And only then was Kekyin's doom so wraught.*

*And in the climbing nights of Spree,
 Rags to wretches grow,
And a man can be chirked of a wretch,
 But few men can be made as he,
Of bladeworth mettle and fired heart,
 A man of north idyl,
A man of power hew and henk,
 The man of no mans schill.*

*The morn o' th' vict'ry child,
Was marred to all mens minds,
For Benq had braved the wilds,
 And left his men behind,
Some say he rode to better times,
Some say he fought no more,
 But all men say,
 To bitt'red ales,
'Twas he who won their war.*

II

*In Morn o' pale of loss,
The road a' westerly weave's
Th' man o't'hour ha' shed his shock
Ha' bid farewell t'hearthfire eaves*

*On road o' pitch and pik'
 He yok'd his bur'n
for step by step 'twixt step'n' pace
forward fierly, frst fr fa't's for'n*

*On path o' dreg'ged hear'n'
A plankened mare o' cracklin' weaving
Bore a stench o' wasting feyre
 And a wench o' sate desyre
 A heart asong 'o selfish verse
T' leave his bear'n' of people curs'd
He sho'ed the k'shka from his ways
 And so becurs'd t'his endful days
 The witches dogs tore his skeyne
So he stroke 'em 'side fr mem'ry o' 's kin
He dash'd th' coven and left thee hearth
 Near ripp'd out his very heart*

*Still a'shed of righteous feet
Still a'search of Kekyin's beast
Still a'road in seek o' more
Sill awash in scornful chore*

*A bear d'bound o' th' trees
Sensed in him a powerfl need
And soke to tear wi' fang from him
 That the witch had kindly done
"Away" he roar'd from fuel o' fire
 Scorn'd it off in p'tys pyre*

*All journeys reap
All burd'ns borne
Salvation 'waits thru' th' d'ment'd horns
At last the aid o' a Pious man
 Sets him free to begin again*

III

*In the time o Benq, great trees did grow
people flock'd around them
such mighty kin for Ursun borne
in strength alike with equal scorn*

*A boy o' th' Spree
enfills his rawd enkindly
trials before him oft did fall
 but were seen to ,on and all
in valour and heart and guts and steel
Stanislav Benq was no man's heel*

*embathed in praise and allish thanks
he shirk'd his chance for manly fault
in saught of time in legends ranks
ne'er was stopped and ne'er was caught
till he drank at myth'en banks*

*for many o the tides in 'dina's dreams
and countless seasons of Gospodar's reams
Once and more and through and quick
Stanislav revailed with sword and stick
his visited lands are countless
his sefless deeds sturdy and boundless
the songs of his heartbeat, true of his eastwiyt
His quest eternal for Kekyin's beast*

*Astride th' st'ry Benq abodes
his bravery a lesson to us all
his tales of countless moral and mirth
a man who lives on within us best
his pious quest in search of rest
living beneath Kekyin's test.*

*but in the day of childen borne
seems nay braver man did morne
to fight forfast t'kinsmens best
that he might lastly take his rest*

◆ The lay interpretations

I

In a place Called Ohren Spree, the workmen
and their families were dimayed
Because men and women had been enslaved
A nasty man named Kekyin had enslaved them
for his own use
to help him in his nefarious schemes.

Even in a terrible state and securely locked up
Occasionally someone great will shine through
And from the ranks of those slaves
Someone rose up to oppose Kekyin.

Stanislav, who was generally quite lowly
Proved himself to be more worthy than
appearance would imply.
He fought very hard on the worker's behalf
And struck a righteous blow
Right where it hurt Kekyin most

He was impressive in battle
Because his cause and inspiration were just
And, towards the end of the uprising
He proved himself to be a man of great mettle
He fought for a long time with Kekyin
And finally got he better of him

And in the time after that, when the nights
were joyous and not msierable
Men begin to relearn what it means to be free
again
Any man can be restored from a low period
but not many will rise to the challenge like
Stanislav did
A great warrior and valorous champion
A grat example of Kislevite breeding and how
we're better than everyone else
A man bestowed of all manly virtues one
could ever desire
A man who would never live enslaved.

The morning of the victory and death of
Kekyin
Was somewhat less an occasion than it could
have been
Stanislav had left
on his own
No one was quite sure where he had gone

Some people believed he had given up the
sword in favour of a peaceful life
All of them agrred, however
As they drank themselves silly
That without him they would still enslaved

II

The next morning, which was somewhat
lacking due to the hero of the hour being
missing

There is a road that heads west
Stanislav had gone down that road and
abandoned the small town life
Never to return

On a hard road, covered in stones
Stanislav bore a grave resonsibility as he
walked
And he walked a lot
Heading towards his destiny

On a somewhat depressing stretch of road
He came across a caravan, stopped, with a fire
It was so warm and inviting, he wanted to stop
and give up his quest
there was also a girl there, comely, and
seeming quite taken with him...which didn't
help

He really wanted to forget his responsibilities
and only think of himself and be with this girl
and forget all about all the people depending
on him

So he pushed the girl away, both from him
physically and from the way of his
responsibility and destiny

So he had made his decision and now there
was no going back – ever.

Which was just as well as she turned out to be
a witch and set a pack of wild dogs on him.
Thinking of his people to give him strength, he
battled and killed the dogs.

He destroyed the source of her power
(presumed the caravan) and left that place.
But was still very saddened that he had to give
up that kind of life to be the kind of man he
was.

Still venturing onwards as his righteous nature
demanded.

Still in search of the thing that turned the
slaver Kekyin so ruthless and evil.

Onward he journeyed.

He was in a repentant mood as he blamed himself for some bad thing that seemingly was happening back in Spree.

A bear jumped out of the woods at him
And could sense that the blame he felt and the quest he had undertaken were getting him down.

The bear tried to save him from his malaise by tearing his heart from him.

In contrast to the witch who had tried to charm him (first indication that the witch was trying to steal his heart – i.e. valour).

He commanded the beast to leave.
Ashamed of its rash and violent actions it left and Stanislav continued on.

There is an end and reward at the end of every journey/

There comes a time when you can put down your burdens.

After trial and hellish encounters comes the chance for something better

Finally he meets a good man, a priest, who helps him

The priest helps him understand that it is his place to quest and be great, so he does.

III

Trees that were seeded when Stanislav was around are now fully grown – i.e. It was a long time ago

And towns have arisen in the area
Kislevites are truly great people, as they are blessed by Ursun

They are strong and willful and generally all 'round stellar people.

From Humble beginnings – i.e. His birth as a pauper by the river Spree

And a typical country upbringing

He faced many trials throughout his life
And overcame them quite nicely, if I do say so myself

In all manner of heroic virtues
Stanislav was pretty great

When he was lavished with praise and thanks.
He eschewed the opportunity to just live off

his fame

and went in search of more adventure
He never gave up on his quests and adventures
Until his story became the legend it is today.

A long time later, "Dina" is assumed to be some homely love-interest who was waiting for him and dreaming of him.

Emphasises how long a time later.

Again and again
Stanislav conquered challenges and won battles

He visited numerous strange places.
And proved himself a great hero in all of them
His valour is a trait common to all "eastwyrt"
or eastern men(: Kislevites)
But throughout all his adventures the shadow of what caused Kekyin to enslave his people hangs over him

Stanislav lives on throughout history
and his bravery is an example we can all learn from

lots of times he proved himself heroic, noble,
moral and so on

if he can do it then so can you
the same spirit that emboldened him is within
every one of us
to nobly strive forward because it's the right
thing to do and not for personal gain
Living under the shadow of that which drove
Kekyin mad and eventually got him killed.

At the end of the day
He was a great fellow
Maybe someday someone will come along
Who will be as great as he was.

◆ The bitter scholar's interpretation (or, rather, what it actually means)

I

Some bad stuff was happening in Ohren, by
the spree River
Wretched men were enslaved
Because a guy named Kekyin wanted to use
them
For some evil, nefarious purpose.

In bad times
Great things can happen
and from this situation
One man stood out.

Stanislav, though a weakling and young.
Gained his peers respect
by working hard
and striking a righteous blow
through Kekyin's heart

They had a great battle
Good versus Evil
At the end of it
the good guys won.

Even though it was a long fight
It went well because Kekin was killed in it

In the following evenings
the men got their spirit back.
Men can recover from hardship
But Stanislav was exceptional beyond that
A good fighter ad a good man
A prefect example of the typical Kislevite.
Strong, noble and courageous
A man who will not be enslaved.

The morning of the victory.
Was somewhat lacking
Stanislav had run off
and left everyone wondering where he was.
The made guesses, hoping he fared well
Some people said he was really a coward to
begin with
All of the agreed though
as they drang that **disgusting** stuff the call beer
in Kislev

That Stanislav was the man of the hour.

II

The next morning, which was somewhat lacking due to the hero of the hour being missing

There is a road that heads west
Stanislav had gone down that road and abandoned his life of mundane drudgery with no prospects
And he wasn't coming back.

On a road.
He carried the Reliquary he had stolen
He walked a lot
And then walked some more.

On a somewhat depressing stretch of road
A caravan, stopped, with a fire
Made him want to stop and join the caravan
There was also a girl there he fancied
But then he though of all the money he could make selling the Reliquary
And forget all about his accursed homeland
he pushed the girl away...when she tried to steal the reliquary
and kinda regretted it
He was then attacked by her dog
And hit it with a stick
This is a misprint. He broke her oven, and ran away
And nearly had a heart attack being chased down the road.

Still walking, barefoot.
Still trying to find somewhere h could sell the Reliquary.

Still on the road and looking
Feeling really sore and bitter that he still has to carry this damned box around just to escape his miserable life.

He was attacked by a bear.
It smelled at his provisions
And tried to eat them
after he had stolen them from the girl at the caravan
He shouted lots and threw a rock at it.
It loped off and he continued on.

He comes to the end of the road, got to
Dorfchen
Ready to get rid of the Reliquary
After carrying it around for ages through nasty
weather and bear attacks
He was then helped by a priest
Who helped him start a whole new life for
himself.

III

Inference of a seed to a tree - a man becomes
a hero
A hero becomes an icon
Man / icon becomes a legend
But, like most things made up – there is very
little truth to it.

A boy from the Spree
Through adverse conditions
In spite of various difficulties
that really he just ran away from
In all those virtues that make a hero
Stanislav was not a man to base those on.

After he was a hero
He forewent te life of a hero to pursue money
He tried his best to get filthy rich
Never gave up on that
And yet, somehow became a folk hero.

'dina being a metaphor for both his family and
his country – of obscure regional origin:
passage means “after a long time”
After a couple of generations of his people it
says countless, but it's probably about two or
three – Sangerman liked using “Countless” to
mean zero but imply lots.

Again and again
Stanislav was beaten with sticks and swords
Again, countless here meaning pretty much:
none
boundless here meaning: non existant
His heart beat like a true Kislevite – he's
implying Kislevites are scum
He never stopped trying to offload that
damned Reliquary.

Benq pretty much only exists in this story – oft
interpreted as Benq lives on through history
Implies he's really brave when in fact...

Once again – countless here meaning one or
none
Humble birth here meaning the birth of the
story, not of Benq – in fact, he made a lot of it
up himself
Because, let's face it, he's not much in real life
He turned to the priesthood so he could hide
Always trying to offload that damned relic.

From what I can see
He seems like a typical guy
Who only fought to help his people
Because there was something in it for him

Stats

The Kislevites

They are all old and mostly ineffectual, their lives broken by hardship, labour, poverty and being cursed. The same profile can be used for all. Non of them have useful skills barring laborious trades.

They are still hardy though and still capable of putting up a decent fight.

They are:

Bogdan of Svetsk

Fat and barely able to walk from the labourers lurgy – he is dour and homourless. The leader of the group, purely by virtue of assumption.

Harald Narclovic

Slow and ugly, Harald is clumsy, rude and foul mouthed. Yet alarmingly endearing.

Fedot Andramaniskuy

Formerly a herder, Fedot is used to a life alone, so he stays quiet most of the time. An exceptionally hairy man, even by Kislev Standards. He still smells of the heard.

Lyov Inket

The youngest of the group, at 57, and the only one still capable of doing a whole days work. He came to be the groups gopher and messenger-boy,

Abram Narclovic

The classic red-nosed drunkard. His eyes permanently crossed and saliva always bubbling at the corner of his mouth. Asking him a question is asking for a shower.

Mefodiy Keshkeshkin

The only woman in the group. She may have been comely in her youth, but that was before your own mother was born so it doesn't bear thinking about.

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Wp	Fel
33	29	42	41	30	34	30	20

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mg	IP	FP
1	11	3	4	3	0	0	0

Possessions:

They all wear thick furs that stink from having been slept in for who-knows-how-long.

Knife; Hatchet, Shortsword or Staff; Small utensils for trades; 3-4ss & 3-7bp each.

The Specialists

Mostly just hired thugs, Jarlath Holzmann is the main man among these rented dogs.

Jarlath Holzmann:

Demagogue, Ex-Agitator, Ex-Scribe

A pedant, an argumentative obsessive, and a casual poet of atrocious verse. Jarlath loves to mince words, especially if they earn him money. With a nasal voice and penchant to giggle at his own terrible puns, he is a man not only to be reviled, but despised and ideally killed...painfully.

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Wp	Fel
29	42	30	31	35	30	28	25

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mg	IP	FP
2	13	3	3	4	0	0	0

Possessions:

Sword, Buckler, dagger, Leather Leggings, sleeveless mail shirt, small writing box, 34ss, 8bp

Skills:

Perception, Read/Write, Gossip, Speak Language (Reikspiel, Kislevian, Breton, Classical), Charm, Blather Command Intimidate

Talents: Streetwise, Street Fighting

His cronies:

Iosef Anserban
Damien Thorne
Damien Helc
Hassbracht Messenheimer
Anders Gulchman

All bought for brawn and a general lack of moral decency. They go where Jarlath tells them, they do what he says and they jeer his opponents from the crowd.

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Wp	Fel
33	26	43	31	32	25	36	30

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mg	IP	FP
1	12	4	3	4	0	0	0

Trappings:

Hand weapon – Shortsword or Axe; Crossbow; Small Shield; playing cards; manacles; Leather Armour.

Stanislav Beng

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Wp	Fel
28	25	28	31	32	43	30	39

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mg	IP	FP
1	9	2	3	4	0	0	0

Possessions: Robes, Religious Symbol, small dagger, small chest.

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Engineering, Theology,) Charm Common Knowledge(Kislev, The Empire), Gossip, Heal, Perception, Ride, Speak Language (Reikspiel, Estalia, Kislevian)

Talents: Strike to Stun, Super Numerate, Public Speaking