

Book 4, Thegainvald

EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, BOOK 4 OF 65

It befell in the days of [Ysgrammor](#) Arch-Father who holds all the world under the breadth of his shield that at last a peace was made with the Snow Prince. Four months were they harried at bowshot, and were mastered under swift-seeking arrow. The Devils, ice-tongued debaters, made war cunning-craftily of cold and wind and snow. But ill-bred were these to raise shields against the sons of Mora, for they are born the very same. So passed three ships, long-keeled, to the harbor of the Morning's Star and there held port while the larger axes advanced. The enemy made fast the sea, white-stilled, and rose walls thereupon, and made for siege-work. Then [Ylgar](#), who was chief captain and battle-thinker, came to his father and said "Our position is dire, our lines weakened, our axes blunted. We can neither endure counterattack, nor mount attack from land or sea. Yet our enemy knows nothing of this. Let me speak in strength with the devils and make peace to our advantage."

Then said Ysgrammor Arch-Father "Far-seeing be your mind's eye my son, I warrant farther than mine axe-haft. My blood is redder than yours, and I would not bear clever-works against these devils. But your eyes are owl's, and I will hold what counsel is laid at my feet."

To which the Battle-Thinker replied "Your blood is redder by far father; mine is cold and binding as pack-ice. But think you not I have forgotten our red-vow, I desire nothing but odds with this petty prince. Let me pluck again the [Eye](#), torn once from your own socket, and ever after will these devils falter and stumble and trouble us no more."

So Owl-Eyed Ylgar was clad in the raiment of peace, and went he nude and blue-tongued to the fortress of the devils. But they would not meet with him in sum, and brought forth upon the ice a delegation of twenty priests and confederates so that they might consider his terms. And Ylgar spoke, fox-like, and said "So you have come in small counsel, no doubt so that your own might not hear our argument, even-tempered and measured, and that they might not lower arms against your wishes. Now suppose that you few who come here should make an assurance, that we may speak calm as lake-fish and not quarrel over every consistency, and that if you should have quarrel that you say it in due time, and that we may speak plain and not in politic. Is it agreed?"

And the Snow-Prince said "None now find fault with calm presentation of argument. But find we fault in your present stance, and we suppose that you will make war upon us whatever our posture. Therefore fear we that you should make present judgement to your favor, neither entertaining our pleas nor demands."

And Ylgar said “Differ we in wit, as is natural and understandable, for bear we recourse to many fine-honed arguments. But now we make no fine phrases, neither claiming [Kyne](#)-right by sanctity of voice, nor by honor of history, nor of lineage. These are but word-knots, unfit for princely lips. Cast about your cleverness and know this truth: that we are too strong for you, and so do what we wish while you must suffer what we bear.”

And the Snow-Prince said “Then if you will allow no concept of justice, and so reduce us to self-interest, nonetheless we argue that it is against both our interests to fight, for much needless blood shall spill. But if you will allow a measure of law, we will renew that we have done you no wrong which has not been compensated manyfold.”

And Ylgar said “Bring you two-handed arguments, and we will answer them by turn. Firstly that you say we allow no justice; this is false. Let it be at present that justice is ours to define. Our law is jeweled, many-faceted. We have dealt rubies, yet hear now another face. Second, you say our actions overstep your provocations, but though this hold in corpse-cutting, you still maintain war-spoils. You know of which I speak, cruel-theft of mine own father’s brow. Without this return there can be no peace.”

And the Snow-Prince said “Speak you of Magnia-et-BalEn, the Echo Stone, Third before even White-Gold, raised by the song of my ancestors in times forgotten. That you should set eyes upon such heaven is a blasphemy, that you should claim ownership is beyond absolution.”

And Ylgar said “Nonetheless.”

Then the Snow Prince took counsel with his clergy, set between two incalculable losses. The devil-priests spoke words of soothe to the Ice-Prince, that the Eye was imperturbable, that whatsoever the Sons of Mora should attempt would be surely turned against them by the living will of Magnus. And in opposition, that they faced immediate loss this moment and that if they should be overrun then they would lose the Eye regardless. So the Prince relented, for he loved his people dearly and could not abide their slaughter. With his hand he plucked out his right Eye, and when he did he stumbled, and reaching out Ygar caught him by the wrist and held him a moment. And with the left hand he took the Eye and wordlessly returned across the ice.

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