

A Tale From the Deep Woods

Bal-Sagoth

The ravens are on the wing! My scramasax is red
(stained with the blood of many Mercian warriors),
The ravens are on the wing,
By Offa's decree I am an outlaw,
Branded wolf's head by my own king.
(The orm-garth awaits me, darkly astir with ophidian malice...) The ravens are on the wing! Ash for our spear-
hafts,
Yew for our bow-staves,
Oak for our deck planks,
Oak and elder our shields. Hail, o' great liege of the ancient woods, ruler of the deepest forest...
you, who were reigning o'er your time-veiled kingdom centuries before
the arrogant men who proclaim themselves kings of this island
ever supped of life's bitter-sweet draught... I give you my hail,
I give you my blood,
I give you my life,
O' sylvan liege. My life bleeds forth unto the earth
(from many deep and dire wounds),
To slake your roots, great old king...
(as I rest my battle-ravaged body against thee.) The ravens are on the wing! Ten leagues ride on lathered steed,
Gold in hand to a sword-for-hire,
A blood-eagle carved by Saxon steel,
And two score slain earns royal ire. Gwynned lies two days westwards,
Still further south, the werewold calls.
Mayhap with All-Father Woden's favour,
My deeds may yet inspire the skalds. Litha's moon gleams high o'er the tallest oak,
Ancient king in this sylvan court of elm, ash and yew,
The wood-spirits watch from gnarled bough and bole,
As I pull two Mercian shafts from my bloodied thews. The ravens are on the wing! I give you my hail,
I give you my blood,
I give you my life,
O' sylvan liege. Beneath the oak, I rest, bone weary,
Thirsting for a horn of ale or jug of mead,
And yet how could a heathen man wish for any more,
Than the healing balms of English trees? The ravens are on the wing!

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