The Sultan's Eye

(*David M. Donachie*)

This story is told of Sultan Matul the Magnificent, who was the great-grandfather of our blessed Sultan, may the Illuminate watch over him.

It is said that in his younger days, Matul was a great warrior, who often took to the field against the enemies of Opalar, which were many, and which beset the kingdom from every side. He was seldom in his palace, or out of his armour, and it was said that only by the strength of his sword-arm was the Sultanate kept safe.

One day, Matul took to the field against the horse-barbarians. In the midst of battle, an infidel arrow pierced the very eye-slot of his helmet. By the Illuminate's providence, the arrow did not take his life, but the point of it struck out the Sultan's eye, blinding him.

The Sultan gave thanks to God for sparing him, but privately he was dismayed by the loss of his eye. Without it, he could not aim a lance, shoot a bow, or wield a sword as he had been used to do; and he feared what it would mean for Opalar if he could not lead its defence in battle.

In those days, it was the case that the Sultan commanded the service of a sorcerer, who was given the position of Wazir. After he had given thanks for his deliverance in the temple, the Sultan went to his Wazir and told him that, although he was, of course, grateful to God for his salvation, nevertheless he was unmanned by the loss of his eye.

“Find for me a way to see again,” he instructed the Wazir, “and it will be God's will.”

The Wazir was discomfited by the Sultan's words, but nevertheless, he bent his wisdom to fulfilling his commands. After a night spent in contemplation, he called for his horse and his servants and set out into the deep desert, seeking a certain monument buried in the sands. He rode for three days and three nights, and when he reached the place he had sought, he had his servants place costly offerings of incense and myrrh at the gate of this monument and then retire, to allow him to conduct his rituals.

By arcane means, the Wazir called up a djinn. A whirlwind of crimson smoke rose from the sands, dwarfing the sorcerer, and causing his servants to hide their faces in fear. This djinn was the one known as Al-Alyquaza, the djinn with nine eyes, and the Wazir would have seen these eyes dancing like balls of fire if he had raised his own gaze from the sands.

“Why have you summoned me?” roared the djinn.

The Wazir replied, “Because the Sultan, may the Illuminate watch over him, has been wounded in battle and has lost his eye.”

At this, the djinn said, “It is given to me by God's grace to restore the sight of the blind, but only if it is the will of God. Can you be sure that this is what the creator has intended?”

The Wazir was filled with doubt, but nevertheless, he said, “I am sure.”

“So be it!”

The djinn clapped his hands, and vanished, leaving behind a gleaming eye made from the most exquisite polished ruby, which blinked and turned like a real eye, despite being made of stone.

The Wazir took this magic eye back to the Sultan, who placed it in his own socket. At once, his vision was restored, and indeed enhanced, for the eye allowed him to see the hawk in flight or the beat of a bee's wing.

“God be blessed!” the Sultan exclaimed, “for this eye is better than the one I lost!”

The Sultan returned at once to the battlefield, but instead of victory, he met only with defeat. Though his vision was keener than ever, and the blows of his lance and bow were gifted with unerring accuracy, nevertheless his armies met with loss after loss. His men were exhausted by constant battle, and the nation, bled dry of men, was on the brink of famine. Nine times he took to the field, and at each battle found himself on the losing side.

When he returned to his palace, the Sultan called for his Wazir a second time and spoke to him with anger.

“Since I placed this eye in my head, my every undertaking has met with disaster! You have cursed me, Wazir, and I demand that you explain this and release me from your curse or I will have you cast from the topmost tower of the palace!”

The Wazir shook in fear, but he answered the Sultan honestly: “My Lord, it is not I who have cursed you, but God himself, for he had ordained that you should be saved but blinded, and you took it upon yourself to undo what he had wrought. You may slay me if you wish, but this will not change a thing.”

At this, the Sultan said, “If it is God's will that I be blind in one eye, let him pluck it out a second time, for otherwise I shall not believe a word you say.”

The Sultan had the Wazir thrown into his dungeon, intending to oversee his execution the following day, but that very night a thief snuck into the Sultan's tower, where he was slumbering in his bed, and plucked the magical eye from his head! The Sultan cried out for his guards, but the thief escaped them.

The next day, the Sultan, a shaken man, had the Wazir released, and swore an oath in the temple that he would heed God's will and retire from battle. As is well known, Sultan Matul proved to be an even finer administrator than he had been a warrior, and under his care, Opalar recovered from its woes and became the strong nation that we know now.

This is why it is said that even the wishes of Sultans are as nothing before the will of God.

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The fate of the Sultan's Eye after its legendary theft is a matter for speculation. Tall tales have it appear in many places, but always end with the eye being stolen once more.

The eye is a polished sphere of ruby crystal with an iris and pupil engraved on one side, rather like a translucent glass eye. At times the engraved eye blinks or seems to move from one side of the sphere to another, though never when being watched.

The eye is a powerful talisman. A Mystic who carries it may subtract 1 from any Psychic Fatigue checks they make. However, its true power is only realised if a character replaces their own eye with it. In this case, they receive the following benefits: +1 ATTACK, or +2 ATTACK when using ranged weapons, and all spell expiry rolls are made on 2d10 (expiring on a 20) instead of the normal dice.

Of course, replacing your own eye is easy if you are already missing one. If you are not, putting your own eye and replacing it with the Sultan's eye inflicts a permanent loss of 1 Health Point and 1 Looks, and GMs may require you to pass a fright check if doing it yourself. As a side benefit, you may claim a +2 Looks bonus when attempting to intimidate people.

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