

## **\* The Sage \***

### **by Aegrothius Goth**

Crackle, snap, hiss ... Flicker, bright, dim ... The fire in the hearth provides light and heat. Neither seem to affect the old man. His reclining figure stares into the flames and flames reflect back from his deep dark eyes. Indigo blue robes reflect and yet absorb the firelight and highlights of golden threads twinkle as the flames flicker. His beard and hair are long and snowy white; in the firelight they almost appear to be ethereal like that of a godling. At his side is a tall pointed hat which is the same color as his robe and also twinkles with highlights of gold. The face is lined with age, yet almost appears youthful; wisdom and intellect exude from his personage. This is the Sage who is known in all of Tamriel as the champion and counselor to all users of magic. His thoughts wander, and he remembers ...

Gyron Vardengroet was born to a poor and humble Breton family in the village of Moonguard. The only child of Frieda and Horstle Vardengroet entered life during a rare eclipse of Tamriel's moons. It was soon apparent that he was unusually gifted in the magical arts. He was found levitating the family dog when he was only a year old. Most Bretons have a great talent for magic, but as he grew Gyron displayed a talent far greater than that of his peers. The village wizard began to take an interest in young Gyron and soon took him under his wing. In spite of the young man's proclivities for being rowdy, the old Wizard Grungdinger liked him and worked hard to teach him the magical arts to the extent of his own skills.

Finally the day came when Grungdinger could teach Gyron no more. The young mage had surpassed his master, and he was somewhat unsettled with the apprentice mage's questions about life, death and immortality. Grungdinger called Gyron to him and gave him a letter addressed to Morkledder, the Guildmagister of the Mages Guild in Shornhelm. The young mage told his parents of his fortune, packed his meager belongings, and set out for the journey to Shornhelm. After many months of travel through the foothills of the Kurallian Mountains, Gyron arrived at the gates to the great City-State of Shornhelm high in the mountainous terrain of High Rock.

After the life of a quiet Breton village, Shornhelm was a wonder to Gyron. He explored the city from one end to the other, and eventually found the Mages Guild. Presenting Grungdinger's letter to Morkledder, Gyron was received warmly. Morkledder explained to Gyron that he would need to be tested before any commitment to further training could be made. After a night of rest and meditation, Gyron was shown into the main hall of the Mages Guild which was now filled with magic users of all kinds. It was very quiet. The young mage felt as if his heart was in his throat as he approached the Council of Three, the leaders of the mages in this City-State. Morkledder rose and explained to Gyron the various tests he would be subjected to to prove his worth as a mage. The youth then turned and left the Council Chamber, the eyes of the many mages on him, and went forth to complete the tasks that had been defined for him.

Returning to Shornhelm several years later, Gyron was admitted to the Mages Guild and shown to the Council Chamber where he was met by Morkledder. The ancient mage reviewed the journal entries, the artifacts gathered, and most especially the spellbook entries presented to him by Gyron. An expression of amazement spread across the old wizard's face; there had never been a novice to accomplish what Gyron had during the testing. Morkledder then called a full session of the Guild presenting Gyron as a full Wizard.

Gyron remained with Morkledder for several years and studied hard. In private session several years after the testing, Morkledder admitted to Gyron that the Guild at Shornhelm could teach him no more and that he should seek further enlightenment at the Crystal Tower on Sumurset Isle.

After packing his possessions once again, Gyron set off on another long journey. He arrived at the Crystal Tower several years later after having traversed the province of Hammerfell where he had many adventures, met many other mages and shared his experiences and knowledge with them. He heard stories of wonderful plants that when combined with other elements could restore life to those dead, prolong life to those yet living, and in the proper combination bestow immortality on the user. Gyron was always quick to advise and guide mages who were less experienced than himself. He loved being able to help. He made many friends and stories began to spread across the land about this exceptional user of magic.

When he entered the Crystal Tower, he was greeted by several mages all clamoring for his attention. His reputation had preceded him. However, the crowd hushed and parted at the arrival of a very imposing figure dressed all in indigo blue robes trimmed in gold, wearing a high pointed hat and carrying the most beautifully

carved staff Gyron had ever seen. The Elder of the Council of Wizards, Esthlander, looked closely at the young wizard, nodded and turned to walk back into the tower. Without delay, Gyron followed him. The audience that followed stunned the young mage.

Esthlander explained to him that Gyron's coming had been foretold for many years, and he had been expected. The mages had been told by the Gods that one of their own would come along to provide guidance, knowledge and aid. Gyron was that promised champion and leader. Gyron was confused and uncertain. How could he be such an extraordinary person? What must he do to fulfill his destiny? Many questions spilled from him to which Esthlander could not provide the answers. The Elder suggested that Gyron stay with them in the Crystal Tower for a while and study. This he did.

The day finally came when The Elder admitted to Gyron that the Crystal Tower could no longer provide anything new and that he needed to travel the lands of Tamriel and seek the wisdom and knowledge. The Elder sighed and told Gyron how sad he was that the Crystal Tower was losing him, but that his destiny must be fulfilled. With this, the Elder presented Gyron with a package wrapped in the same beautiful indigo blue as the Elder's Robes. Gyron was told to take the package with him but open it only when he was at least a day's travel from the Crystal Tower.

After a long day's walk, Gyron set up camp in a beautiful glade next to a brook of crystal clear water. Finally, he thought, I can open the Elder's package. As he untied the golden cord that had bound the package, he found that the wrapping was not wrapping at all but an exquisitely tailored robe identical to the one worn by the Elder. As he opened the robe, a high pointed wizard's hat popped out of the package, and with a "whoosh" and "pop," the same intricately carved staff that the Elder had carried appeared. A note from the Elder advised that the garments were indestructible and that the staff had many magical properties for Gyron to discover. It went on further to explain that from this day forward Gyron would be known as The Sage.

Tired from his walking and with an inner glow of accomplishment, The Sage settled down for the first night of his long pilgrimage across the lands.

After many months of further travels and adventures, The Sage returned to Moonguard and was warmly welcomed by the villagers and most especially by his parents, Frieda and Horstle. News of his coming had preceded him and the whole village had worked hard to build and furnish a cottage for the mage in the pleasant forest just outside the town. After a festive banquet that evening, Gyron retired to his new home.

The Sage settled into his life outside Moonguard. He received many visitors who have traveled from near and far to seek his guidance, help, and training. The years passed. It was not long before first Horstle and then Frieda died. The Sage was devastated by his loss. In his grief he swore to dedicate the rest of his life to defeating death so that grief like his could be avoided by others.

He returned to the Great Library at the Crystal Tower and researched the many flowers, herbs and plants that he had heard about and seen during his travels. In his cottage, he labored tirelessly over the spellbooks, vials and collection of flora from all over the lands. He tested the potions on himself. The years went by, but The Sage seemed not to age anymore. At some point he had found the right combination in his experiments, but could not determine which combination it had been as the change had been most subtle. He had secured a life without end. And the years continued to pass.

Mages came to him for help which he freely gave. The Sage settled into his life of advising and guiding and the years continued to pass. Unfortunately, his fame became so great that the call for his help was unmanageable. He reluctantly packed his possessions for the last time, and moved far into the Kurallian Mountains and built a magical fortress. Only the most worthy magic user could gain access and help from The Sage.

However, following his heart, even today The Sage often leaves his mountain abode and travels the land helping young mages gain experience and to grow.

Snap, crackle ... The firelight flickers... The old mage stirs as the memories fade and flicker like the firelight. Bang, bang, bang... echoes from the pounding knocker on the great oaken doors of the fortress... The Sage rises and heads for the doors knowing that yet another mage in need has found him and is worthy of help.