

THE SHEEP OF LUCK HILLS ARE A RANGE IN THE FAR POINT TO THE WEST OF AMADHALL. THIS IS THE STORY OF HOW THEY GAINED THEIR NAME, AS RECORDED IN THE *SILVERQUILL PARCHMENTS*.

The Sheep of Luck, as told by Tarkal Shielings

There were originally six Sheep of Luck, but Malia took one, Fralar another, and a third got into a head butting contest with Urox over a particularly gorgeous ewe. What sort of luck is that? Bad luck obviously, and that's so much shit between our toes, so lets talk about the other three.



The Good Luck Sheep. They were Heler's, at least when our story begins, and very posh they were too, what with their talking and tugging and fancy fleeces and iron hooves and horns of whatnot—you get the picture. Look, if you want poetry, go down to the dung heap and wake up Aski the skald—better you than his wife. Don't mention what he lost at mumbley peg though—let him get over the hangover first.

Anyways, there were three of them—Blue Shag, Rambones and the Cloudy Dag. I know, I know, but I'm sure it sounds *much* more impressive in the original Stormtongue. Never got the hang of the old thunderspeak myself, so in the rituals I jest kinda mumble in the right spots. In the chief's hall Aski will no doubt strum his fine harp and sing of 'Ancient Azure', 'the War Ram', and 'Shining Silver Fleece', but up here in the shielings we knows a bit more about sheep and their ways, so 'Blue Shag', 'Rambones' and 'Cloudy Dag' will do just fine.

Blue Shag was one randy bugger, and would root anything that moved. Every ewe he tugged would birth fine twin lambs as just sex-crazed as their father. The fields filled up with new-born lambs, and everywhere were the sounds of randy sheep prancing and courtin' and showing off their rivals afore doing their bit for the flock. And o' course, every ewe that had a brain was bleating out to Nevala for rest and mercy.

Rambones was a different kind a beast—he liked nothing better than following his damp master into battle, where he loved to show off his head-butting skills in the champions' duel. Once he scattered an entire Rockwedge army before Old Rainface had even finished lacing up his what'sits. Why even his breath could turn a column of cavalry at four hundred paces! Sheep breath—wheeeeeew!—fermenting grass and who knows what else, and it's not only sheep that's got it—ain't that right *Danwyr*?

And the third, the Dag, well he was just plain lazy, stood around chewin' down the grass an' rubbing his back against anything that was handy. But you could shear him as soon as look at 'im, and his fleece was something special, even to the gods. Pure as a cloud's linin' it was, and straight, just the way the weavers like it. Shear him once, twice, three times a day—no matter—it just grew right back quicker than you could kiss the chief's windy nevermind. Of the three good luck sheep, the Cloudy Dag was the only one you could turn your back on, if you take my meaning.

Beautiful creatures all, and Heler was lucky to have 'em. These were good times for the Rain, and it fell where it wanted and there was never a drought or dry spell to be found.

Now when Barntar came of age and married, Heler gave the young god the three sheep of luck as a wedding gift as a way of building his flocks.



Barntar was grateful for the gift (which is yet to be repaid), even if he was a cattle man at heart. He proudly herded the three rams home to his Big Lodge and his new wife Mahome. By the time he'd reached his stead, news had travelled on the wind that Heler's barns were afire, that three of his lovers had been taken by the Enemy, and that brood had gotten among his prize flocks! Barntar shrugged and was sad, but led his luck sheep onward.

The following times were very good for Ploughson and his bride—the very, very best of times—and 'midst peace and prosperity his sheep rooted and fought and gave fine wool according to their natures. But as the winds blow, the time came when Blue Shag had sired so many lambs that the flocks crowded every hilltop and grazed out every valley, and even spilled into the sweetgrass meadows reserved for the cattle. Rambones became bored (for Barntar was a peaceful soul), and so picked endless fights with the Copper Bulls, knocking down fence and barn and lodge in their loud and angry duelling. Mahome loved the Dag, and spun wondrous cloth from the ram's silver wool, but when he got into chewin' the rare and bountiful grains of Ernalda—the hearth goddess' dowry and greatest treasure—well it was time for a parting. So husband and wife conferred together, and next day, Barntar took the three rams to an isolated meadow. He knew that Desemborth would sometime creep by, and relied on the thieving god to do the rest.

Sure enough, the luck sheep vanished. That very night the Stone People came to Barntar's northern fields, and his old enemy Whipweed planted himself in the southern ones, and at the Big Lodge Mahome faced plagues of Runner Rats and Mangy Curs. Their good luck had ended.

Well the story's a long one, and like the lawspeaker before the moot it goes on and on and on. Desemborth looted the mansions of the star captains with the sheep still stashed in his tucker bag. It was his greatest haul ever, but their bleating threatened to give him away as he hid in Lodril's dung cart to escape.

So Desemborth off-loaded the luck sheep to Issaries for a right old price, and was the very next day caught by the Fire mob and imprisoned in the Emperor's Dungeon Without Doors.

Issaries sold the sheep on quickly enough, to Humakt, and he drove a great bargain, gaining a precious map of the paths of the dead. Goodvoice set off on his way, rejoicing, but around the very next bend was set upon and beaten by the Nine Silences.

Humakt cared little for the sheep, for he was separating the living from the dead. Truesword was never so busy as that first dying season, and he clove as he had never cloved before.

Well the sheep didn't much like the fodder 'round Sword Hall, so they wandered, and the very next day Humakt faced the Un-Empty No-Nothings, and lost his last shadow forever. The world was turning bad.

Roitina found the homeless luck rams, and took them with her as she travelled from stead to stead. Ugly things were abroad, but her songs brought joy and hope to folk everywhere, and she never sang as pure or as strong as when the three rams grazed at her side. Rambones protected her from danger when travelling, and the Dag gave wool for a cloak to keep the growing cold at bay.

Roitina eventually gifted the sheep to another god or goddess. I don't know why... no one knows what Roitina will do, but she always does it. Gentlevoice was beginning a long journey, hoping to find clans lost in the growing darkness. But without her lucky sheep, all she found were Stumble Steps and Words Out Of Place.

There were other gods who stole, found, bought or were given the sheep of luck. Even Odayla tracked and trapped them! All enjoyed good fortune and welcome wyrd until the time came when the sheep left their company, and then misfortune, violence and sorrow came upon them from each of the six directions. For there's a power in the runes that even the gods cannot ignore.

Eventually, the horny trio came into Vinga's keeping. The world was dying, and all its tribes and peoples too. Laughing Daughter used the sheep to help the few survivors in the steads. Blue Shag could produce lambs in any season, and his offspring, though weak and small, were tough, and provided a little food and wool and leather. Rambones fought beside the goddess till even he was exhausted. It was perhaps his finest hour, and he learned to fight shrewdly against enemies without number. The Dag gave and gave of his wool, to wrap the freezing children in a winter without end.

Vinga finally sent the exhausted luck sheep to Elmal, for the Last Light also nurtured a few starving clansfolk. Then Vinga heard the cry of Ernalda carried on a feeble breeze, a cry of anguish as her mother sank sleeping into the cold ground. The Loyal Daughter ran to defend the Earth's body, and fought many enemies there, past pain and exhaustion till she too sank into sleep and death.

Elmal took the sheep into scant shelter from the snow and ice, and they gave to the survivors what they could. The Loyal Light endured a little longer. Elmal cast shreds of the Dag's wool into the sky upon the Last Winds, and their silver reflected the light from the Loyal One's golden shield.

Then Elmal was forced to retreat atop a mountain whose slopes the sheep could not climb, the mountain where even the Loyal Torch despaired, where the Final Fire froze.

In the drifts below, Blue Shag was limp and exhausted, Rambone's horns were cut and broken, and the Cloudy Dag's fleece was sparse and threadbare. All were diminished by their labours. All had given much of what they were. Those three brave sheep huddled together and waited for death.

Some say Eurmál the Trickster found them then, and that he alone was unaffected by their *wyrd*. I don't know. Others say they sheltered a tiny spider, the last living mortal thing, and that she wove a fragile silver web between their horns. I really couldn't say—you'd have to ask Aski. Somehow they survived together a long grey time. Then after an ageless age a soft silver light danced across the sky and a tiny, gentle not-chill breeze brought promise of hope. They survived on that hope another ageless age, for they were three lucky sheep.

Orlanth found them huddled together when he returned with the new cosmos, on that very first day when he returned the Torch Triumphant to Elmal and unleashed the Dawn Winds of Life and Laughter.

Orlanth didn't claim the three rams, for his *wyrd* was all his own. The King of the World set them down in the Sheep Of Luck Hills, and promised them fair winds and sweet rain as long as his tribe endured.

Though they were lessened by their tribulation, the luck sheep were immortal, and with grass and sun and sweet water they soon returned to their old habits, shagging and bunting and chewing for all they were worth.

And they're still out there. The wild sheep that climb the heights of those hills are all Blue Shag's offspring. The uprooted trees and smashed rocks you find are caused by Rambones. The fine silver shreds you find in the woods are from the Cloudy Dag, where he's stopped munching long enough to rub himself against a tree. A hero great enough might catch them for himself, and his *wyrd* will be wondrous as long as he keeps them close.

I just wouldn't want to be in those hills the day they leave. *Would you?*

