

And so the search continued...

Though Ir'tran had known Khal since his seventeenth year, this new display of cowardice baffled him.

Why did not Khal come forth and admit his crime? What deeper purpose was he concealing?

But now was not the time for such ponderings. Ir'tran shook his head and went back to pretending he was listening to the man across the table.

"So I tells him, I tells him, you're sick in the head, you lowlife!" The man talked rapidly and perpetually, unaware that his two listeners weren't.

"Ain't been no Darkborn in Yorgos since Rog, everyone know that! But he go on and on about the Darkborns he sees at night in his dreams, and sos I tells him to shut up, that he's sourin' my ale, but no, he just goes on and on and on buggin' everybody and sweatin' arrows. Crazy, that's what old Garzad is, he's crazy, I tells ya!"

Ir'tran grunted as though he was paying attention and took a swill of his drink. To his left, Azhol began snoring, caught himself, and blinked his eyes. The man started again. "Yeah, sos I tells him he's sick, he's crazy, but he just make this wacko moan at me, like he was in one o' dem dreams he talk about. Sos I--"

"Wonderful story, friend," spoke Azhol, "but we feel a need for our beds at the moment."

A new creature entered the conversation. "But, how is it that we seem to need our beds, yet they do not exist, nor will they, for the next three billion years?!" asked the newcomer.

"Who are you?", they asked. "I am...Slartibartfast." Gasps echoed through the Bar. The Great Slartibartfast had disappeared during The Horrible Really Miserable Crop Exchange of Midsummer, twelve seasons ago.

"Impossible!", claimed Azhol, "The Great Slartibartfast disappeared during The Horrible Really Miserable Crop Exchange of Midsummer, twelve seasons ago."

"But now I have returned, and I return with terrible news. The one we all know as Khal is...well, it cannot be discussed here. Meet me at the Secret

Place where we hatched the plan to remove all dairy farmers from the face of the earth so long ago."

"Great Yeegersnarfs!" exclaimed Azhol, "Only the One True Great Slartibartfast would know of the Secret Place!! But...I thought it was destroyed many moons ago."

"It was merely a ploy to keep people away from that sacred place until such time as it was needed again." And with that, Slartibartfast disappeared in a puff of multi colored smoke.

There was several minutes of uncomfortable silence, then the silence was broken by the entrance of a feeble old man, born seventy winters ago during the War of the Yilnarg.

He spoke. "Citizens of Puzzywug, I think it is time we rise up against Eegwa and his evil minions, the Darkborns. We should listen to Slartibartfast, let us return to the Secret Place."

Azhol spoke up. "Why should we even listen to someone who claims to be the Great Slartibartfast?"

A frail man in the corner replied, "Slartibartfast has not been seen since the Horrible Really Miserable Crop Exchange of Midsummer, twelve seasons ago. But I remember 'im. And this is 'im. And we should listen to 'im."

"And who are you to decide who should do what around here?", demanded Azhol.

"I am 'enry. 'enry the 'ermit."

"Well, Enree..."

The man went berserk. "No! Not Enree, my name is 'enry! Get my name right!!!" He began swinging his staff around in mighty swoops. Everyone in the tavern, even old Gizzlesnarf, ran out, most of them heading for the Secret Place.

Azhol sniffed. "This is the place, where is the Great Slartibartfast?!" The Secret Place turned out to be a small area where garbage was dumped. This gave everyone in the small town of Puzzywug the illusion that the Secret Place had been destroyed, since during The Great Revolt Against Dairy

Farmers, the Secret Place was the most beautiful location in the Known World. This was, in fact, due to some minor illusionary magic on Slartibartfast's part. The magic had, in fact, raised the beauty quotient of the rest of the Known World, making the Secret Place appear less beautiful, and thus hiding it from those who remembered it as the most beautiful spot in the Known World, even though the beauty quotient of the Secret Place had never changed. And so did the Secret Place become the ugliest place in the Known Lands, and so did this paragraph end.

Ir'tran spoke to his fellow partner Azhol: "Slartibartfast shall appear when Slartibartfast decrees it so. Be not so impatient, my friend."

And even as Ir'tran finished speaking, a great puff of multi-colored smoke appeared over the garbage dump. It was not noticed at first by most people, as the citizens of Puzzywug were used to seeing clouds of multi-colored smoke over their garbage dump, but this one did not smell like garbage. It smelled like a round yellow sign.

And thus did the Great Slartibartfast appear in the Secret Place to the Enlightened Ones of the Grand City of Puzzywug, holding a round yellow sign.

Everyone present except Azhol and Slartibartfast knelt on one knee. Gizzlesnarf, owner of the knee being knelt on, was not particularly pleased. In the meantime, Azhol strode to the Place the Great Slartibartfast had chosen to grace with his feet. "Old man! Why should we listen to the mad teachings of an insane old foof like you?" And with that, Azhol slapped the One True Great Slartibartfast across the bowels.

"Unhand my bowels, you unworthy Bugblatter Beast!" shouted the Great Slartibartfast. Moving his fingers in strange and mystical patterns, he Magically caused Azhol to CEASE TO EXIST.

Ir'tran raised his head, eyes brimming with tears. "O One True Great Slartibartfast, please pardon my longtime friend! He does not mean to slander you. It is just his way."

Slartibartfast spoke thusly: "I understand, and out of compassion for your plight, I shall Undo what has been Done. Ugmar Yeehl Vhon Zowie..." Azhol was Magically returned to existence.

Azhol was rather unhappy, and pulled a dagger on Slartibartfast. This rather upset Slartibartfast, who immediately fired a magical arrow,

knocking the dagger free of Azhol's hand. With another arcane gesture, he put a magical field around Azhol, causing several small petunias to become burned, and also causing several major wars in other galaxies. But, of course, he didn't k