

Ekaterina Andreyevna Zhigulenko

Supreme Shepherd of Rad

AC 1014

By Michael Berry

“_Лучше один раз увидеть, чем сто раз услышать”

I. Appearance

Ekaterina is a striking woman standing 6'2" with piercing black eyes and curly shoulder length black hair streaked with grey. While in her 60's she has the look of a woman twenty years younger via magic potions of Longevity. She is never seen, in public or in private, not dressed in her Shepherd robes of pure white which are tailored to fit tightly and show off her figure. She wears no jewelry other than the symbol and Talisman of the office and rank of the Supreme Shepherd of Rad, consisting of an expertly smithed and richly detailed Opera gold necklace with a large hanging Chrysocolla Crystal pendant so beautiful and attention grabbing that men have had trouble deciding with is more awe inspiring, that pendent or her ample bosom that the pendent showcases, or is it vice versa? A topic of many arguments after her morning services at the Grand Temple for years.

II. Personality & Quirks

Ekaterina is driven, and has been since she was a child, by the quest for knowledge. What put her on the course that her life took was the idea that that quest was not merely a personal one for her but one that all should undertake. The Supreme Shepherd has never attended, nor would ever attend mere foppish social engagements but has been known to make unannounced surprise appearances at lectures at the Great School of Magic merely to hear discussions about subjects she was interested in and felt she could learn from. She is also known to put in appearances at the Scholar's Fraternity Headquarters and one a year personally leads the communal classes on reading and counting hosted by the Scholars' Fraternity at Raknaar Garden. She is also known to occasionally visit to the Sages' League Headquarters. While an expert in many subjects herself she always reminds herself that the quest for knowledge is one that has no end, only new beginnings.

Ekaterina like most all members of the Temple of Rad abstains from a good many things that are thought to cloud the mind and intellect and distract one from the path of knowledge and wisdom such as sex and strong drink. She also abstains from eating meat telling all that vegetables are best for a healthy mind as well as a healthy body but in reality, she just loves animals and can't stomach the notion of eating them. She keeps a magical familiar in the form of a cat but also keeps a litter of 5 kittens she adopted after finding alone and in desperately poor physical shape after a stroll through the dark alleys of the West End Quarter one day. She nursed them back to health and are her constant companions through the halls of her residence and also through the gardens of the Grand Temple.

III. History & Background

Ekaterina was born in the small village of Bykhov in the Eastern Czaikow Hills Free Province in 948 the only child of farmers Andrei and Yulia Zhigulenko. From an early age Ekaterina exhibited a sharp curiosity and high degree of intelligence and spoke her first words at eight months and was forming sentences at 12 months. At age five she was orphaned when her parents both came down with a Pox and passed away. She was taken in for a time by extended relatives until finally being placed in an orphanage in Rymskigrad. Even in such a brutal and heartless place her obvious intelligence was noticed and when she turned seven, she was tested by a Shepherd of Rad for magical ability and found to not just to have the ability to learn magic but incredibly tested in the 90th percentile in addition to her overall intelligence.

Word soon reached Prince Morphail from his Principalities Director of Education of this incredible find in an orphanage in Rymskigrad. Morphail himself paid a nighttime visit to the orphanage to check on this young child for himself and came away impressed with not just her test results, or even her obvious intelligence, but mostly for her cool and calm demeanor at meeting (with no advance warning or preparation for his visit) such an intimidating, famous, and feared presence as himself. She was soon after sent to the Great School of Magic thanks to a program the Prince of Boldavia had implemented in which the most promising of low-class citizens could be given a chance to learn the arcane arts at the expense of the Prince of Boldavia.

Ekaterina was assigned to the Rooster Dormitory and while it took her some time to adjust to the pressure of her course work and gain confidence in herself to hold her own intellectually with her peers, she eventually started to carve a social niche and over the course of her first year gained a tight circle of close friends. As Ekaterina progressed into the meat of her studies, she developed a real passion for history and languages, and she found that magic came quite easily to her and proved to be a quick learner in both her academic and magical studies. Ekaterina came to love all aspects of her time at the Great School, her classes, her friends, late night talks with her Rooster dorm mates after lights out and even her daily sessions at the school's Temple of Rad. Her zeal in repeating her daily mantras and her obvious enjoyment at those morning services, in comparison to the barely concealed boredom of her classmates, attracted the notice of one of the Shepherds of Rad at the Great School who became a mentor and friend to young Ekaterina.

The years at the Great School of Magic passed quickly for her and before she knew it she attained the 9th level of spellcasting was approved to attempt the Graduation Test. She passed the test with flying colors scoring a 22,000 on her test earning hearty congratulations from her master, Master of Divination Joachim Rattlner, and even managed to score a miniature laboratory which she kept and used for many years, and thus she graduated with her wizard certificate from the Great School of Magic at age 16. However, she now faced a crossroads in her life. While Morphail's scholarship had provided for her during her school years, she now was a Wizard with a valuable piece of Vellum but little else. She had little interest in seeking adventure, much less fame and fortune. She wanted only to continue learning but had no resources to draw upon to further her education, much less to continue live in such an expensive cosmopolitan city like Glantri City. While mulling her options one day a chance tease by friend finally set her on her course. She was known throughout her school years to be one of the more, passionate participants of the daily sessions at the Temple of Rad, and when a friend joked that she should join the Temple and then she could recite a hundred mantras a day instead of the thirty a day she often did, when all just did the minimum ten recitations. It was then the proverbial light went on in her head. That was where she decided she needed to be and where her life would be. The next day she

went the Temple of Rad at the Great School and signed her life away to the cause of seeking and promoting knowledge and attainment of true wisdom.

Ekaterina spent the next two years being very willingly indoctrinated, as an Initiate of The Temple of Rad, to the tenets of the Philosophy of Rad at the High Temple in Yvonne. Upon being found to be worthy to being accepted into the Temple of Rad she was promoted to a temporary rank of Acolyte, even though she was a wizard and sent to her first assignment which was back to Glantri City and back to the Temple at the Great School of Magic. She passed her final tests and was promoted to Shepherd after three months and then was assigned to the High Temple in Taterhill where began in earnest her life as a Shepherd of Rad. As the years passed, she was assigned to Temples throughout Glantri and continued her arcane studies in addition to her academic studies. Her most satisfying years, she will often muse, were these years, often spent far from civilization in spartan conditions serving the needs of small villages in the borderlands of Glantri. She would often spend her time as a teacher educating young children in subjects like mathematics, history, geography and even her favorite subject language instruction. She was rewarded for her efforts and made the Lead Shepherd of her first Local Temple of Rad in Kapel (Principality of Aalban) in 975.

Eventually her passion for her work and growing skill as a wizard started to pay dividends as she moved up the hierarchy of the Temple. She became Chief Shepherd of her first Regional Temple of Rad in Estioniarsk in 978 and was promoted to Senior Shepherd to lead her first High Temple of Rad in Eriadna 11 years later. In 997 she was selected by the Supreme Shepherd of Rad to fill a vacancy and become one of the three High Shepherds of Rad and was assigned to the Grand Temple of Rad in Glantri City. Her rise through the upper hierarchy of Rad was a rapid, if tragic, one as one of the two higher ranking High Shepherds died of old age in 1001 and the other was killed in a laboratory explosion two years later leaving Ekaterina the senior of the three High Shepherds of Rad. When the Supreme Shepherd passed away in Sviftmont 1008 Ekaterina was raised to become the new and 12th overall Supreme Shepherd of Rad.

The new Supreme Shepherd found herself in charge of a vast network whose tendrils extended into every part of Glantri. While she wanted to dive into her idealistic notions of spreading education, knowledge, and the light of Rad to her fellow Glantrians the exigencies of the war Glantri was deeply into conflicted with her idealistic notions. Upon being raised to Supreme Shepherd she had a miserable yet frank discussion in a vision with her nation's patron Rad who told her, against the backdrop of two armies fighting and great slaughter, of how badly the war was going for Glantri and its main ally Thyatis. She was told by Rad that within two years tops he fully expected Alphatian troops to be inside Glantri and fighting a war of extermination to get at the very essence of what makes Glantri so great and so magically powerful, the Light of Rad. He continued by telling her that while he fully expected a bloody stalemate to ensure initially from a clash of armies in an invasion of Glantri by Alphatia, he did not think Glantri could afford such a war of attrition, not after the severe losses of the humanoid invasion, no matter how weakened Alphatia might be wearing down Thyatis and would likely eventually lose to Alphatia and cease to exist as a nation. Crying by this point Ekaterina asked Rad was there nothing that could be done, was there no hope? After several moments of silence Rad spoke vaguely of one chance that he was working on personally but would offer no other hope and even less in details as the vision ended.

The next year passed like a blur as the specter of Alphatian invasion grew large once, as Rad envisioned, the Alphatian juggernaut worn down what was left of the Thyatian armies in Thyatis itself in savage bloody fighting with horrid losses on both sides yet losses that the Alphatians could replace but

Thyatians could not. The Supreme Shepherd spend most of 1009 overseeing her Shepherds work in trying to gird the people of Glantri for the upcoming battles for the survival of Glantri itself. Once Thyatis was indeed knocked out the war and no nation stood between Glantri and Alphatia it looked as if the bloody invasion Rad had predicted was only weeks or months away. However, as Ekaterina came to believe later, Rad himself intervened, and the Wrath of Rad soon descended upon Alphatia itself destroying its Capital city and killing its Empress and when Alphatia tried to retaliate by sending its Council of Wizards to lay waste to Glantri City in retaliation, not only did its wizards (Ekaterina among them) rise to successfully defend their city but Rad himself, as Ekaterina believes, took Glantri's final vengeance on Alphatia for instigating this horrible war and sunk the entire continent under the waves. Ekaterina was certain this was not the work of the Immortals punishing Alphatia as many in Thyatis and elsewhere did and was not some sort of an incredible display of Glantrian wizardry like some master wizards outside Glantri suspected. She knew with all of her heart, her soul and most importantly her mind that it was Rad himself and was the result of that one chance he mentioned to her in the vision last year.

Repeated requests for guidance and counsel went unheeded in the months after the end of the war and eventually Ekaterina gave up trying to contact Rad and assumed that Rad must have expended such energy in the process of saving Glantri that he needed to rest and recuperate. In Rad's absence the Supreme Shepherd mobilized her Shepherds to provide care and comfort to the weary and gravely wounded psyche of the people of Glantri. Though victorious in the end Glantri lost almost 16% of its population between the Alphatian attacks, humanoid invasion, and the devastating plague. She led the Temple of Rad as best she could and issued orders in 'Rads' name and did so considering her commands to be as Rad would have wanted. In the years that followed Rad's disappearance she has continued to lead the Temples of Rad as if Rad never left and with none, not even her High Shepherds suspecting that Rad had now been silent for years. Once the immediate needs of the Glantrian people were met immediately after the war and a sense of normally and rebuilding took hold she turned to her passions and where she felt Rad would have wanted her to take their flock. She exhorted her High Shepherds to continue their work stressing education knowledge and the unchallenged power of the Magocracy as she has invested significant time and Temple gold to rebuilding looted and burned Temples that were in the path of Thar's invasion and recruit new Shepherds to replace the many lost during the last years of the war.

It was not until last year that after three years away that Rad returned to Ekaterina in a vision. The vision left the Supreme Shepherd a bit confused as 'Rad' asked her questions she would have never thought he would deign to ask such as questions about numbers of Temples and overall numbers of wizards. She was left even more confused when 'Rad' later came to her in another vision of a completely different style that he had before and asked about the value of the holdings of the Great Temple in its catacombs. Ekaterina was not sure as to be more worried or relieved when the visions ended abruptly again. She had assumed he had been really affected by the experience of saving Glantri and was still recovering. In 'Rad's' absence the Supreme Shepherd continued to oversee the Temples of Rad and kept a firm hand on keeping the Shepherds on the path to knowledge and serving the people of Glantri.

Ekaterina was greatly relieved this year when Rad, after nine months of silence, started sending visions again. Unlike before when she seemed to be probed for information that he should have known Rad seemed to her to have fully recovered and offered her kind words and encouragement for her work while Rad had been away and offered her guidance on improving quality of education the Temple provided to the people of Glantri. Ekaterina fully took Rad's suggestions and has started to implement them and was relieved that Rad had not only returned but seemed to be back to normal. Only 66 years

old, Ekaterina hopes to be able to remain sharp enough in mind, spirit, and body to lead her beloved Temples of Rad for the next three or four decades and hopes that Glantri has seen the last in her lifetime war with all of its death and destruction.

IV. Web of Intrigue

Ekaterina has no interest in Glantrian politics at any point in her life and that has continued into her reign as the 12th Supreme Shepherd of Rad. She remains apolitical and directs the Shepherds to keep to their paths of knowledge, not paths to power. She faces no internal threats as history has taught all today from the earliest days of instruction the folly of High Shepherds assassinating or overthrowing Supreme Shepherds. Those that succeeded did not live but a few days and those who failed ... lived even less.

V. Statistics & Style of Magic

Statistics: 34th-level Wizard, Supreme Shepherd of Rad

Str 9, Int 18, Wis 17, Dex 16, Con 11, Cha 16; AL - Lawful

Languages: Traladaran, Flaemish, Thyatian (common), Alphatian, Elf, Dragon

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff (basic), dagger (basic),

Skills: Alternative Magics (18), Magical Engineering (18), Alchemy (18), Planar Navigation (18), Metallurgy (18), Ancient Alphatian History (18), Traladaran History (18), Flaemish History (18), Blackmoorian History (18), Elf History (18), Sindhian History (18)

While Ekaterina has nearly reached to top of mastery of spellcasting, she is extremely limited in combat abilities due to the focus of the Temple of Rad on knowledge not violence. She knows all the defensive spells and nearly all non-lethal offensive spells but the highest-level lethal spell she knows is from her days as a student at the Great School of Magic when she learned Fireball. While she knows the spell, she has never once cast it in combat and in fact the only combat she has ever seen was defending the Grand Temple and those around it with her very formidable defensive spells during the Alphatian attack. Ekaterina's magic is geared towards general use spells and especially spells useful for learning or for teaching.

"What an interesting woman, almost enough to find that drivel she spouts interesting"

(Lord Pieter Vandehaar)