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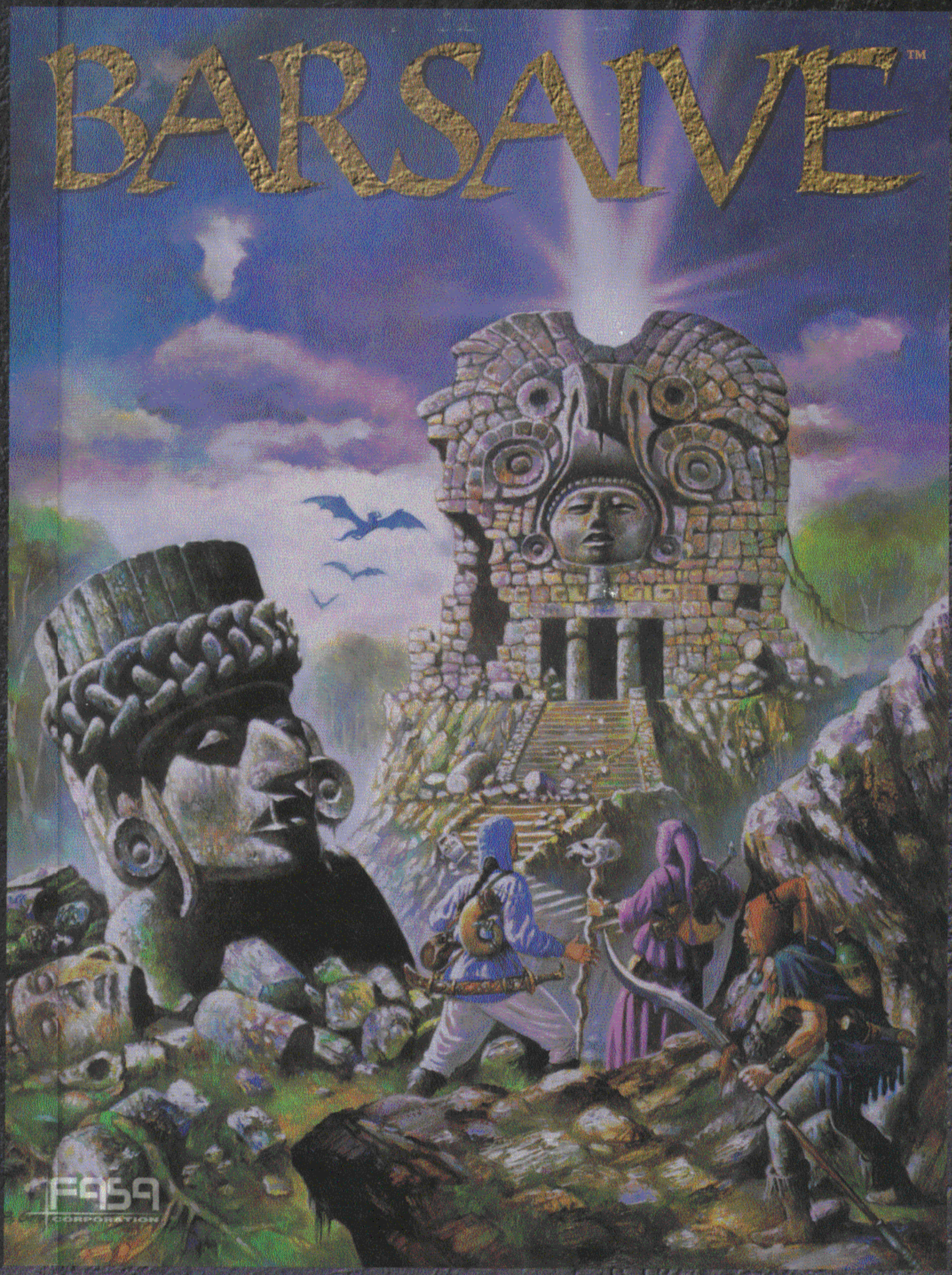
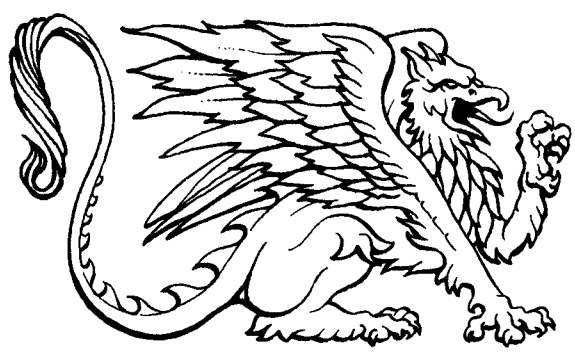
EARTHDAWN

BARSAIVE™



An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive



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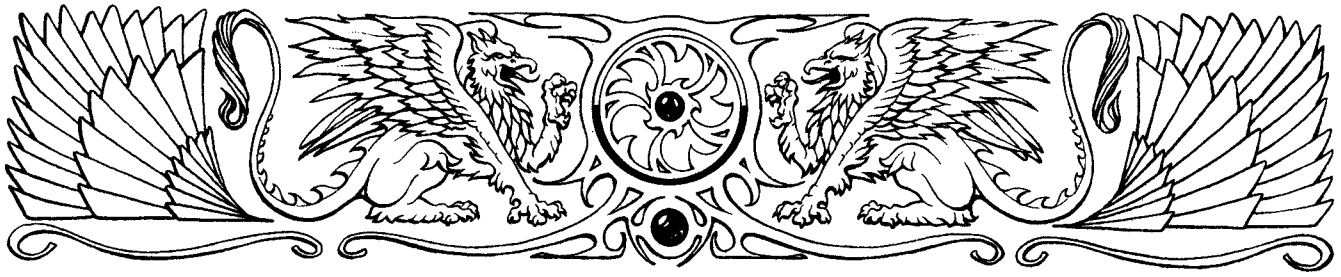

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KEY TO ARCHIVIST SYMBOLS

Ardinn Tero
Scholar of the Library of Throal

Daron Fenn
Scholar of the Library of Throal

Derrat
Wizard of the City of Yistaine

Jaron of Bethabel
Scholar of the Library of Throal

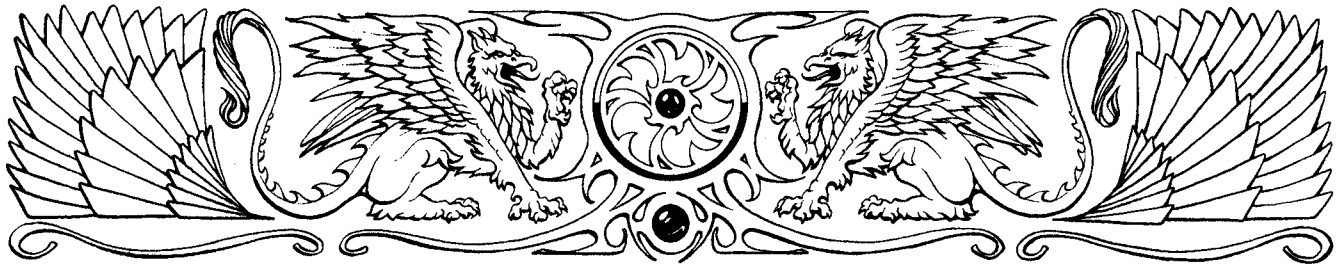
Jerriv Forrim
Scribe and Scholar of the Library of Throal

Karon Foll
Elven Scholar

Kern Redhand
Historian of Throal

Merrox
Master of the Hall of Records

Thom Edrull
Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records



ON THE NATURE OF THE EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BARSAIVE

We live in an age of magical thought. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the earth we stand upon, and the fire before which we warm ourselves are ours to manipulate as we desire. I know people who can give life to the bones of the dead with a wave of the hand. I have traveled with troll raiders in their magical airships, flying just below the belly of the clouds. I have seen a man ripped apart from the inside out because his enemy learned too much about him. Magic controls all things, all change, all destinies.

I do not know if our world has always been as rich in magic as it is in our own age—certainly the research of the Therans dictates otherwise. For myself, I am convinced of the inevitability and power of change in all things. I have watched the world transform from a bleak landscape of dry brown earth to a living bower of lush, green forests. I have seen the terror of the Scourge give way to cautious, new hope. Where once people lived in isolated hamlets ruled by fear of the outside world, the dwarfs of Throal have brought Barsaive's towns, cities, and villages together through trade and political pacts. I have also seen Throal's efforts thwarted by the airships and legions of the Theran Empire, bent on recapturing a province they once owned. The world abounds in complications, and the ebb and flow of its transformations form a pattern that no one still living in the world can discern.

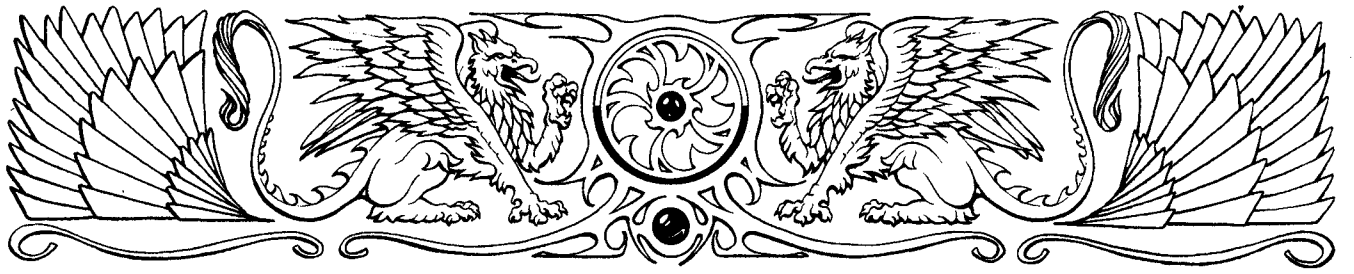
Magic gives us all the chance to influence the fate of our world, because magic allows us to know and even alter all things. Magic leads brave adventurers to glittering treasures buried in the Dragon Mountains, and magic powers the fire cannons of riverboats that clash in fierce battles along the Serpent River. One can use magic to assassinate political rivals, sway the emotions of enemies and allies, or steal jewels from the hand of a sleeping prince. Magic allows the Horrors to enter the minds of unwitting victims and determines victory or defeat for the bands of ork cavalry that sweep across the plains to plunder lonely caravans. Swordmasters, thieves, troubadours, magicians, and others practice their arts through the magical thought that is the living force of our world.

How long this age of magical thought will last, I cannot say, nor can I know what the following age may bring. I believe, however, that this magical age will one day end. So that those who come after us may remember the time in which we lived, I have commanded Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, to see to the writing of this book.

Our story is a part of the world's legend, and our children must and should know of it. In our age, farmers defend their families against creatures more dreadful than nightmares from the darkest depths of the soul, and the free Kingdom of Throal battles tirelessly to throw off the last remnants of Theran oppression. Wonder and splendor exist side by side with brutality and strife.

The Barsaive I know is a world of despots and corrupted kingdoms, of magical treasures and fantastical creatures. In Barsaive, wonder and fear twine together; hope and despair are the twin sides of the same coin. You who read this, think well on our lives. Whether or not we have left you a world to your liking, we are your past, and our stories carry lessons for your future.

—Varulus III, King of Throal
12 Gahmil, 1506 TH



ON THE COMPILING OF THE EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BARSAIVE

The writing of this great book began on a day no different from any other day. Though the summons that came for me was from King Varulus III, such an occurrence was not unusual. As Master of the Hall of Records of the Library of Throal, I have on other occasions been called by the king to gather certain information or to perform odd bits of research. On this day, however, his request far exceeded the mundane tasks he had previously set for me.

I found the king in his study, chin in hand as if contemplating his next move in the game of *pratee* he was playing with his eldest son. He looked up as I entered, greeting me with a warm smile.

"Merrox, I wish you to undertake an important task for me," he began as he almost always did. "I wish you to compile a document that describes Barsaive to those who know nothing of it. Many of Barsaive's own people remain ignorant of the wonders and perils that lie within the boundaries of their own province, but that is not as it should be. I wish for them to learn more of this place in which they live. Our library needs a book to serve as a guide to our land."

I clutched the back of a chair to steady myself, feeling the raised patterns of the carvings in its cold stone back bite into the tips of my fingers. My day had taken a turn into the realm of the fantastic.

"You may have whatever you need to complete the book—within reason," the king continued. "Spare no efforts, Merrox. This document is of paramount importance to me."

Dazed but undaunted by my king's unusual request, I returned to my office and called together my chief assistants. We sat wakeful long into the night, determining how best to accomlish our mission. It was many days before I returned to King Varulus with my list of requirements, all of which he granted save one. Permission to visit the Eternal Library of Thera he refused me, reminding me that the enmity between Throal and Thera made it impossible for any known citizen of Throal to patronize a Theran institution. Though I would have liked to inspect their archives, I acceded to my king's wisdom and began work on this book with the resources on hand.

At last, many years after King Varulus called me into his chambers that day, my assistants and I have completed the task set us. All of the information in this document was gathered first-hand by explorers and adventurers who have traveled across Barsaive in search of knowledge. Each group visited a different region of Barsaive, reporting on the various cities, mountains, rivers, forests, and other sites of interest along the way. My fellow archivists and I have distilled the information they brought into a readable and fascinating manuscript, available for the asking to any resident of Barsaive who visits the Library of Throal.

Each section of this book describes in detail a facet of life in Barsaive. Comments from the librarian in charge of each area of research preface every section. In addition, my fellow scholars and I have added our own observations regarding certain places and events in the margins of the text and copied in entries from the explorers' journals in hopes of conveying the realities of Barsaive through firsthand accounts of its marvels and terrors.

For all those who read this, remember that every individual sees the world through his own eyes. Though we have tried to pass on only verifiable facts, some of the information in this document may be inaccurate, if only because it reflects the particular bias or peculiar turn of mind of the explorer who provided the source material.

The following archivists contributed to this work, in the areas listed:

Project Master Merrox, On the Origins of the Land of Barsaive; Daron Fenn, On the Scourge; Ardinn Tero, On Life in Barsaive; Derrat, On the Nature of Magic; Thom Edrull, On Travel in the Land of Barsaive; Jerriv Forrim, On Denizens of Barsaive; Kern Redhand, On Towns and Cities; Thom Edrull, Regarding the Land and Its Places; Jaron of Bethabel, On the Kingdom of Throal; Karon Foal, On Blood Wood; Merrox, Of the Theran Empire.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records
Great Library of Throal
14 Rua, 1505 TH

ON THE ORIGINS OF THE LAND OF BARSAIVE

Given the importance of the task, I thought myself the best candidate to write a condensed history of Barsaive. My work, culled from a vast array of material collected for this book, is as complete as I could manage, given the time and space constraints under which I labored. I can, however, personally vouch for the accuracy of the information given. To convey the fullest sense of Barsaive's wonders and rich past, I could find no better words than those of the following journal excerpt.

—Most humbly offered by Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records,
and by the Passions' Grace, a Loyal Servant of His Majesty the King of Throal

—From the journal of Torgak, 1665 TH (transcribed by Lorin of Throal)

After countless days of travel, many of my companions became convinced that we had had become hopelessly lost. Though we had followed to the letter the directions given us in Throal, the Forgotten City was still nowhere in sight.

I was determined to find the place and so resolved to continue on alone if need be. Fortunately my resolve was never tested, for only three days later we found it.

We were walking through a partially wooded area, the trees covering the top of a large hill. As we reached the hilltop, we saw the spires of ruined Parlainth spread out below us like a shattered mosaic. The descriptions we had read in the journals of J'role the thief and in the Library of Throal told of the shattered splendor of the Forgotten City, but I had foolishly considered this description exaggerated. The sight of the ruins taught me that words alone could not convey the awe and sadness one feels when face to face with the ruins of Parlainth.

The city lay smothered in tangled vines and overgrown plants. Once-tall spires and pyramids had crumbled into piles of broken stone, mute testimony to the destructive power and corruption of the Horrors.

Parlainth was like no city I had ever seen. I had been an explorer of sorts for years before that journey, and had discovered more than a dozen lost cities and kaers, but none so magnificent and sad as this. The ruins had a majesty to them, as if to say that neither the Horrors nor time itself could mar their beauty. But for all its grandeur, the place held a cold and uninviting presence. . .

OF THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

FOR MY PART, I AGREE. BUT I MUST ADD THAT MANY YEARS AGO I VISITED BLOOD WOOD, AND DESPITE THE HORRIBLE THINGS THE ELVES DID TO THEMSELVES DURING THE SCOURGE, THEY ARE STILL A BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE. A TERRIBLE BEAUTY, PERHAPS, BUT UNDENIABLE.
—KARON FOAL

The Therans named the province of Barsaive six hundred years ago, before the Scourge began. Even today the Therans consider Barsaive a province of their empire, though most Barsaivians give their allegiance to the dwarf kingdom of Throal. This stark contradiction between the perceptions of Barsaive's people and its would-be overlords creates much of the conflict between Thera and Barsaive.

A vast land, Barsaive takes weeks to cross even on the back of a war horse. The journey from the northern boundary to the southern takes 40 days on foot, 25 on horseback; the journey from east to west requires 60 days on foot, 38 days on horseback.

Barsaive's southern boundary is Death's Sea, a huge body of molten stone so hot that only elementals, Horrors, and those with magical protection may travel over it. The heat from the sea has transformed the surrounding land into a vast expanse of barren sand and rock. Legend says that enough blood spilled into the earth will quench the fire, and the sea will turn to water.

At Barsaive's northern boundary lies Blood Wood, a lush forest many days' ride across wherein the elven Queen and her corrupt court reside. Many elves outside Blood Wood no longer give their allegiance to the elven Queen, considering her as monstrous as the Horrors. The elves of Blood Wood have never lost their ability to perform intricate magic, however. The Queen's castle, supported by six great trees, is a magical wonder to behold.

In the west of Barsaive lie the Wastes, where little magic has yet touched the land to renew it after the Scourge. Most scholars believe that the Horrors entered more shelters built in the Wastes than elsewhere, and so fewer people survived to re-emerge. Nowadays, little exists in the region other than monsters, Horrors, and a few small plants and animals. If the scholars are correct, then the Wastes must be dotted with more unopened, undiscovered kaers and citadels than exist in the rest of Barsaive. Because of the Wastes' reputation as a storehouse of undiscovered wonders, bands of adventurers often journey there in search of ancient treasure and magical artifacts. Unfortunately, few ever return.

The Aras Sea marks the eastern border of Barsaive. This large, saltwater ocean connects Barsaive to lands beyond the province and to the expanse of the Theran Empire. From the city of Urupa and other coastal towns, scores of seagoing ships sail from port to port, trading Barsaivian goods for those from other lands.

Other major trading ports lie along the Serpent River, a majestic waterway that cuts Barsaive into two uneven parts as it winds its way from north of the Wastes down to the Death's Sea. For most of its length the Serpent is so wide that a riverboat takes an hour to traverse it. Save by magical means or on a well-designed ship, it is impossible to cross. The river creates the most fertile land in Barsaive, and the wide, long valley sloping up from its banks contains countless villages and towns. The reptilian t'skrang, who live in half-submerged towns alongside and in the river and sail their riverboats from port to port, conduct most trade along the Serpent. Many t'skrang maintain trade agreements with the Kingdom of Throal and work to promote unity among the people along the Serpent. Other t'skrang captains use their ships for piracy and raiding.

The Serpent winds its way around the Throal Mountains, a large range whose peaks reach into the clouds. So huge that they are almost a province unto themselves, the mountains are home to nomadic tribes who hunt the wild beasts that roam the slopes. Within the mountains lies the kingdom of Throal, where the dwarfs retreated during the Scourge and from which they have at least temporarily united Barsaive against Theran encroachment. Though many Barsaivians are suspicious of the power the dwarfs wield, they fear the terrible magic of the Therans more and so give grudging allegiance to Throal. The dwarf hold on this wary loyalty remains tenuous. Should the Therans ever be defeated beyond recovery, the dwarfs of Throal may find themselves dealing with a new set of troubles.

Countless people, citadels, villages, forests, and other marvels fill in the spaces between Barsaive's borders. The Theran outpost of Sky Point rests within Barsaive's southern border, near the Theran-controlled city of Vivane. Nomadic tribes of ork scorchers roam the untamed lands on their massive riding beasts. Some of these tribes are as primitive as the hunters wandering the Throal Mountains; others, known as ork cavalry, have organized themselves into effective mercenary bands. These ork cavalry sell their talents and strength to anyone who can pay the price. In the skies above Barsaive, troll raiders fly their magically crafted vessels, searching for villages to raid and Theran airships to plunder. These and other wonders are fully described in later sections of this work.

OF THERA AND THE SCOURGE

Rather than offering a detailed history of our world, or even a complete description of the ancient civilizations that thrived in Barsaive before the province was Named, this work intends only to provide the history necessary to understand the Barsaive of our time. It is the workings of the present world I wish to preserve, and this history makes those workings clear. I have added to the account of the coming of the Scourge an excerpt from A Concordia of History, a generational text constantly updated by the librarians of Throal. Readers interested in a detailed history of Barsaive and the ancient lands that became our province should peruse that volume. A similarly detailed history of Barsaive may also be found in the transcripts of the speakings of Storymaster Jallo Redbeard, an account preserved in the Library of Throal.

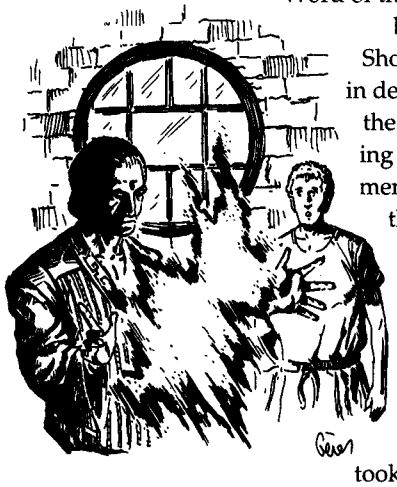
—Most humbly offered by Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

According to the tales the Therans tell, many hundreds of years ago, an elven scholar named Elianar Messias discovered ancient texts predicting an invasion of the world by creatures from a certain plane of astral space. These documents claimed that the creatures would ravage the Earth for nearly five hundred years and then return, sated, to their own plane of existence. The truth of this discovery drove Elianar to madness and a bloody death. Years later, Messias' colleague Kearos Navarim founded a school dedicated to the study of this prophecy on an island in the Selestrean Sea. A hundred years

passed, during which the school attracted talented magicians and Adepts from all fields. The school taught all kinds of magical theory and practice, but turned its best minds toward finding a way to stop the invasion of our world by its astral enemies.

At that time, the area now known as Barsaive comprised a jumble of different peoples: the dwarfs in the mountains, the t'skrang along the Serpent River, the orks and trolls on the plains, the elves in the woods, humans in stone towns and a few cities, and so on. Different communities had little commerce with one another, and the dialects of each region varied enough to make communication between different groups almost impossible. Little, if any, trading went on between regions, or even between towns. Despite this staggering degree of isolation, travelers and adventurers from faraway places gradually carried tales of the extraordinary school for magic to the people of other lands, and many magicians and Adepts traveled south to seek the school.

After a century of existence, the school had grown so large that its eldest members founded a city to house it, which they named Thera. With magicians and adepts as half of its citizens, the island that would become theTheran Empire claimed its place as the most powerful city in the world.



Word of the coming attack of the astral creatures, now referred to by all races as the Horrors, had begun to spread through the lands around Thera. When the distant elven kingdom of Shosara heard of the impending disaster, they sent messengers to Thera asking for guidance in defending against the approaching invaders. In their studies of ways to defeat or forestall the Horrors, the Therans had devised several methods of protection. Rather than simply giving this information to the elves of Shosara, however, they demanded favorable trade agreements in exchange for the knowledge. The elves accepted these terms, and soon other realms throughout the world followed suit, giving their riches to the Therans in return for the precious knowledge that the magical scholars held.

The Shosaran treaties marked the beginning of the Theran Empire. Soon after their success with the Shosaran elves, the Therans sent envoys to all the nearby lands, warning all of impending doom and selling the secrets of safety from the Horrors to all who could afford them. With every new bargain they made, their island city grew in power, until the Therans' reach stretched around the globe.

As trading increased, the various factions of the region that would become Barsaive took on common traits. The area's diverse people now shared much that they had not before: a fear of the Horrors, a need to build strongholds against them, and a distaste for Theran influence. This dislike bonded the races and factions together more tightly than any other. The Therans tried to impose their calendar, their style of dress, and their architecture on the region; they also brought with them the barbarism of slavery. Though not everyone suffered under the lash of the slaver's whip, everyone knew and feared that they might. Some groups worked together to stop the practice of slavery; others aided the Therans in a desperate attempt to buy continued freedom.

When the Therans arrived as Barsaive's conquerors, the dwarf kingdom of Throal was the largest realm in the region, and so the Therans delegated to them much of the day-to-day government. The dwarf language became the official language of trade, superseding the Theran tongue. Through their administrative responsibilities, the dwarfs exerted considerable influence over the area.

For one hundred years, Theran power grew. Using their magical arts to unite their new possession under a common name, the Therans officially created the province of Barsaive. They searched the world for Barsaive's pattern items, knowing that the study of these items gave them an advantage in all places not already Named by those living in the province. What they did to Barsaive, they repeated throughout their empire, creating new names and dividing the world they ruled into different provinces.

At the northeastern corner of Barsaive, the Therans built the sprawling city of Parlainth, intended as both the provincial capital of Barsaive and the gateway to the "uncivilized" world that lay beyond. Once the Horrors left the plane of the world, the Therans hoped to return to Barsaive and resume imperial rule. As the Therans worked their great magics to protect their island heart from the Scourge, people throughout the Theran Empire constructed shelters against the Horrors as the Theran magicians had taught them. Some of these shelters, built underground, were called kaers. Large shelters built above ground were called citadels. Many of the human-inhabited cities became citadels.

As the time of the invasion approached, strange monsters began to stalk the countryside. Far worse than the griffins, giant serpents, and firedogs common to Barsaive, these misshapen monstrosities struck terror into the hearts of all who saw them, attacking with a perverse delight in their victims' pain. Some of these early-arriving Horrors looked like moving mass graves, single beings composed of a dozen corpses stitched together. Others wielded finely crafted instruments of torture imbedded in their own skin. Some were misshapen lizards 20 feet long. Some attacked the body with teeth and claws; others attacked the victim's very thoughts.

—From the diary of King Cardok of Scytha

. . .The Passions no longer heed me; what have I done? I am a good king. . .this I know, for my subjects love me. Never, they say, never has Scytha had such a gracious and loving sovereign as King Cardok the Peacemaker.

Or so they said once. Now they raise their eyes to the heavens and cry out against the injustice of the world, begging the Passions to tell them wherein they have erred. And I, even I, the king, can do no more than raise my voice with theirs. I cannot stop the evil that has befallen Scytha. I cannot keep their children from dying.

I cannot keep my son from dying.

Every day he slips a little further away from me, my only son who almost cost his mother her life at his birthing. His illness began scarcely a week after his first breath, with a low fever and a dryness of the skin. Then a cough, harsh and hard as though the dust of a desert clogged his infant throat. He cries from the pain, but sheds no tears; he has not enough water left in his body to make his eyes wet. They stare upward at the ceiling and inward at nothing, crusted with the last tears that dried against his lashes like the salt ring on a barrel of fish. His voice comes out as a thin whine, often broken by coughs. Blood from his lungs dries on his parched lips, and his breath rattles in his throat. Ancient bones might make such a sound, raised to a horrid mockery of life by a nethermancer. In this last week, his skin has begun to wrinkle; my grandsire's leather saddle, ridden on to countless wars and cracked with age, feels more smooth and supple than the flesh of my son. I stroked his hair last night to calm him as he wailed, and pieces of it broke off and crumbled to nothing in my hands.

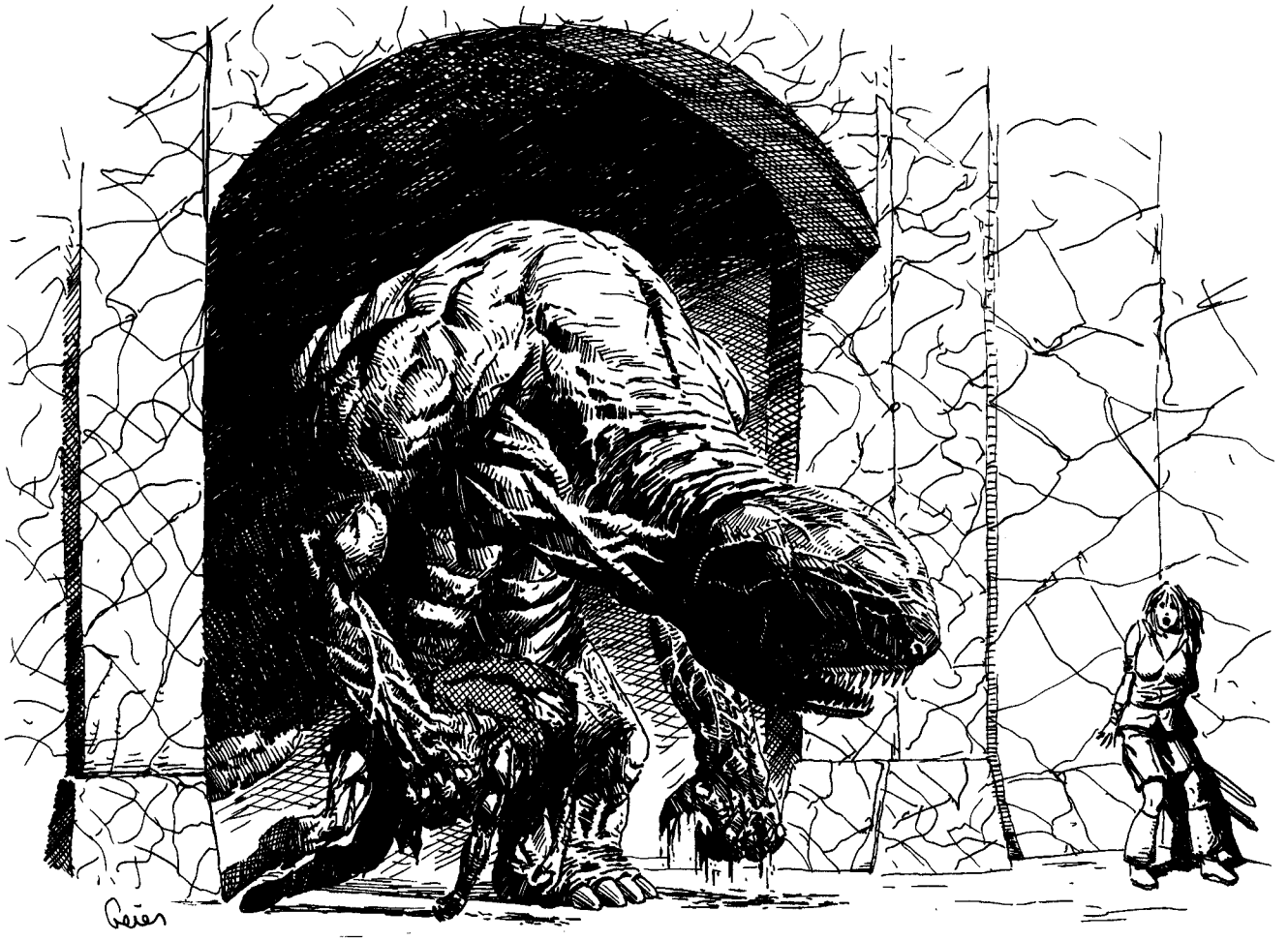
My son has lived for less than three weeks. He looks like a shriveled root, a dying old man.

Of all the children born in Scytha since the last year's harvest, none has yet lived a month. Something has sucked the life from them, some monstrous evil borne by the very air. With each tortured breath my child takes, I can hear the evil's footfall. With each passing day, I feel its nearness. We are dying, and we know not why. . .

Within a short time, the Horrors' attacks became bolder and more frequent. Creatures stormed villages; smaller Horrors swarmed forests and grasslands, consuming everything in their path. Flocks of birds vanished within hours. Herds of cattle disappeared, relentlessly pursued by Horrors. Barsaive's people tried to fight back, but the creatures' ferocity and overwhelming numbers finally drove the terrified people to seek protection within their kaers and citadels. They sealed themselves behind doors inscribed with wards and glyphs to ward the Horrors away, taking up residence in tomblike places that would be their homes for hundreds of years.

Within the kaers, magical lights lit the underground darkness and magical crops and springs fed the hiding populations. For four centuries, generations were born, lived, and died within the shelters, waiting for the day when they could return to the world their ancestors left behind. At the end of four hundred years, a full century earlier than the Theran magicians had predicted, the magical devices created by the Therans to herald the end of the Scourge revealed that the awaited time had come. Under the earth and in their walled towers, Barsaive's people waited, afraid to leave the safety of their shelters too soon. Finally, driven near to madness by the longing to leave their self-imposed imprisonment, the people began to unseal the doors of their kaers and citadels. Outside, they discovered a corrupted and barren world.

Some shelters did not survive the Scourge. Horrors entered some of the kaers and citadels, crashing physically through the walls or invading the minds of those hiding within, possessing them and making them do the Horrors' bidding. Whenever the creatures could breach a kaer's defenses, they fed well in the shelters; the victims within had nowhere to run and nothing to do but die.



As people emerged from hiding, they moved back onto the land, using magical arts to turn the world green again. Though the Horrors ended their assault on the world one hundred years earlier than the Therans had predicted, some especially powerful Horrors remained. To this day, they take every opportunity to shatter the fragile peace.

For the first fifty years after the opening of the kaers, the dwarfs of Throal worked to reunite Barsaive's scattered villages and towns through trade and treaties. In all that time, no word came from the Therans. Many believed, even hoped, that the island heart of the Theran Empire had perished during the Scourge. Alas, such hopes proved fruitless. Forty years ago the Therans returned in force, determined to lay claim to the province of Barsaive once more. The return of the empire sparked the Theran War, which ended in a massive siege of Throal. For once, the Therans' armed might failed to bring them victory, however. The people of Barsaive united against the Therans and drove them back to the southwest corner of Barsaive, where they still hold sway.

Barsaive in the present day is a land still recovering from the devastation of astral invasion, its people only beginning to reclaim their world. The Kingdom of Throal and the Theran Empire remain poised in conflict. Through widespread raiding, the Therans have brought back slavery to a land taking its first free breaths under the idealistic laws of the dwarf kingdom. The land is rife with unopened shelters, some reportedly still filled with people who refuse to believe the Scourge over, and monsters roam the hills in search of victims.

Upon this stage, with these players and props, the struggle for Barsaive and perhaps the future of our world will be acted out. If the Therans prevail, the world will turn one way; if the Kingdom of Throal prevails, the world will turn down a different path. Between these two great powers lie constant smaller struggles, each leaving its own mark, large or small, upon the shape of our world's destiny.

To those now reading this book, we hope that you, our descendants, find our actions worthy.

ON THE SCOURGE

It fell to me to complete the arduous task of gathering information regarding the Scourge, how we weathered it, and how it changed the land of Barsaive. For two reasons I have found this a difficult assignment. First, the topic itself is less concrete than many others in this work. By this I mean that it is one thing to report on various settlements, or on the landmarks of Barsaive, but another to distill fact from opinions about the great change that shook our world. Every person we queried gave us a different answer to our questions about the changes that the Scourge wrought in Barsaive.

The second difficulty in completing this task has been facing the sometimes unpleasant fact that the Scourge changed us as a people as much as it changed our land. When our ancestors chose to hide in their kaers and citadels for the duration of the Scourge, they saw no other choice, and did not consider the ways in which such long-lasting, self-imposed imprisonment might affect their descendants. Unfortunately, the effects were significant.

We cannot ignore the fact that the Barsaive we knew before the Scourge is gone. Other than geographical features immune even to time and the Scourge, little that is familiar remains. The larger purpose of this document is to serve as a permanent record of present-day Barsaive so that we may make our past and present part of our future.

—Composed on this the First Day of Strassa, in the Year 1505, by Archivist Daron Fenn of Throal

ON THE SCOURGE AND WHAT IT WROUGHT

We cannot hope to completely understand the Barsaive of our own day without understanding how the Scourge affected the land and its people. Both the threat of the Scourge and its arrival changed Barsaive in ways unimaginable to our ancestors. From a vibrant land of many tribes and kingdoms, Barsaive became a subject province of the oppressive Theran Empire, which owed its existence to the world's need for powerful magic to survive the coming disaster. The Scourge itself drove the people underground and laid waste to the land, and Barsaive has yet to fully recover.

This chapter speaks of the Scourge. To fully understand it, we must recall how our people lived during that terrible time.

THE BOOKS OF HARROW

Ever since the long-ago days when the elven scholar Kearos Navarim determined that creatures from another astral plane would one day roam the world, leaving destruction and corruption in their wake, this invasion has been called the Scourge.

The first glimmer of knowledge that such creatures as the Horrors existed came when Elianar Messias, now known as the Martyr Scholar, unearthed the Books of Harrow in the catacombs beneath an ancient monastery in the Delaris Mountains. After extensive study of these six volumes, Messias learned the nature of the Horrors, a discovery that drove him mad. Whether his madness or some other force killed him, no one knows. Before he died, he scrawled a note that read:

These are the Books of Harrow.
They are our doom and our salvation.
Learn from them, or we will all perish.

Cryptic and unsettling, this note provided the first clue to the coming of the Scourge. After the death of Elianar Messias, an elven scholar and colleague named Kearos Navarim took the Books of Harrow and traveled with several fellow scholars to an island in the Selestrean Sea. Sequestering themselves for many years on the island that would one day become Thera, Navarim and his fellows studied to unlock the secrets the volumes held.

The final translation of the first Book of Harrow, completed a century and a half after they first came to light, revealed that the magic level of the world would increase until it reached a peak, at which time rapacious creatures from astral space would enter our world and ravage it. Navarim and his fellows, all scholars at the newly christened School of Shadows, also learned when this fearsome event would take place and calculated precisely how much time they had to discover a way to protect the world and its people from the Horrors. After translating several more of the Books of Harrow and studying them closely, Navarim wrote the Rites of Protection and Passage. With this collection of plans for shelters to hide people from the Horrors and theories for creating magical protection against them, the Therans could counsel the rest of the world on how to prepare for and survive the Scourge.

ON THE BUILDING OF THE SHELTERS

The Theran Rites of Protection and Passage instructed the people of Barsaive on how to construct two types of shelters: kaers and citadels. Though both share many features, each has unique aspects.

CITADELS

The term citadel carries two common meanings. The earlier meaning, which we survivors of the Scourge have begun to use again, refers to a large, walled city that also serves as a fortress. Barsaive has many such citadels, most built before the Scourge. Some of these suffered the ravages of time, war, and the Horrors; many others provide glowing testimonials to the builders' art and craft. Today, members of many of the Name-giving races inhabit these large cities, having resettled them after the Scourge.

The second meaning originated with the Scourge and refers to a city built or strengthened to withstand the Horrors. Massive domes of rune-inscribed stone usually surrounded such citadels, though some builders created domes of elemental air and fire. To protect against Horrors that might break through the first line of defense, magicians set traps and magical defenses at the edges of these fortified cities.

Because it is easier to build shelters from stone and dirt than from elemental fire, wood, water, and air, the Theran magicians focused on building with elemental earth. In the same way that magicians weave elemental air into the design when building an airship, elemental earth could be easily woven into the walls of the shelters. Equally important, the commonplace nature of small stone and dirt shelters made it easy to develop plans for larger shelters intended to house entire villages.

Castles and other shelters woven from elemental air, fire, water, and wood still exist, but the methods used to build those structures died with their architects. Few such citadels survived the Scourge intact, and few in Barsaive have ever seen one. Many believe that the Horrors enjoyed destroying these shelters more than any others, that the creatures took particular pleasure in crushing those who flaunted their control over magic by building such impressive citadels.

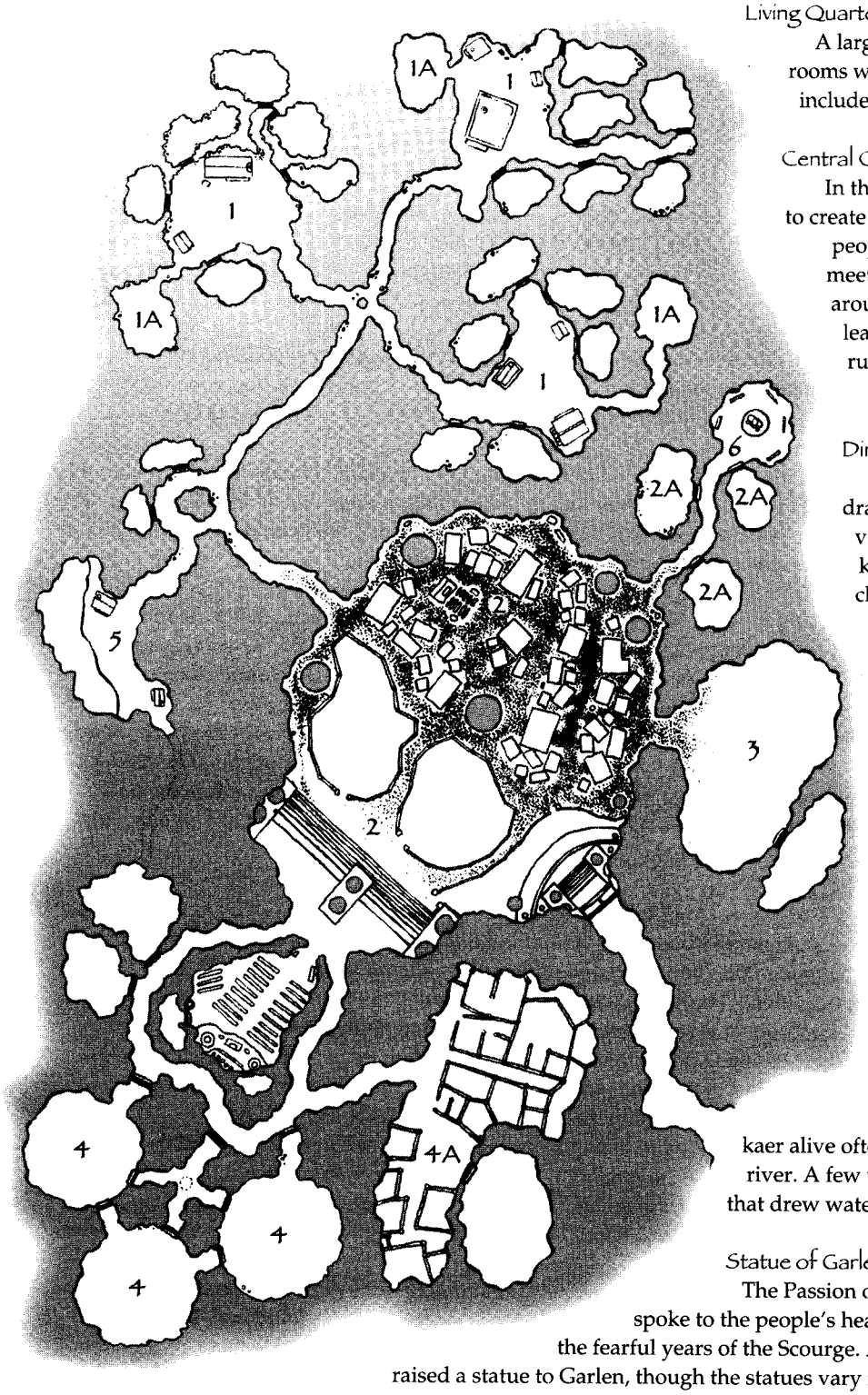
The people who lived in the citadels that survived the Scourge remained in them after it ended, and their cities became a part of the new Barsaive. The citadels that succumbed to the Horrors are little more than massive graveyards filled with the bones and treasures of their luckless inhabitants. Horrors who remained on this plane, creatures seeking isolated lairs, and roaming bands of nomads and ruffians often live in these ruined citadels, hidden from view in thick, leafy jungles that shield the remains even from passing airships.

KAERS

The kaers consisted of living quarters and common areas dug into mountains or under the ground. Unlike the people who sheltered in the citadels, most who took to the kaers abandoned them as soon as they believed it safe to do so. Kaer designs across Barsaive varied widely, depending on the resources at hand and how much time their builders had to construct them. All, however, were designed to accommodate generations of inhabitants. Some kaers, with their countless rooms and chambers, lay deep inside mountains or far underground. Some had many levels; others consisted of one level that stretched a long distance under the earth and rock. Some were dug out roughly, like the warrens of rats, long and narrow with winding passages; others boasted the clean lines and colossal design common to Throalic cities.

Most kaers were divided into common and private areas. In many larger kaers, each family was assigned its own quarters; smaller kaers built communal sleeping quarters. Residents used the large chamber at the center of the kaer for meetings and celebrations. Other vast rooms filled with tables and chairs served as communal eating facilities, adjoined by kitchens built to feed hundreds and set up to work day and night. Communal cooking and eating rooms also allowed the kaer's leaders to keep a watchful eye on food supplies.

As with the citadels, most kaer builders created traps and magical wards to keep the Horrors out. Though many kaers survived, many still remain sealed because of their inhabitants' fear. Other still-sealed kaers protect only the corpses of inhabitants long dead, their treasures still guarded by the traps and wards designed to repel the Horrors.



Living Quarters (1)

A large area containing many smaller rooms wherein each family slept. Most also included a communal bathing chamber. (1A)

Central Chamber (2)

In this vast chamber, lit by magical moss to create the illusion of day and night, the people gathered for ceremonies and meetings. Merchants set up shops all around the perimeter, and the village's leading citizens attended to the smooth running of the kaer from offices also built in this place (2A).

Dining Areas (3)

Here the kaer's residents ate and drank together, at times chosen by the village leaders. Every member of the kaer shared in cooking the meal and cleaning.

Food Growth/ Preparation Chambers (4)

Here the villagers grew food for the kaer when the stored supplies ran out. Larger kaers set aside additional space to raise livestock (4A), but most kaers grew only vegetables and fruits. Generations of gardeners and farmers worked to feed the kaer, experimenting with water and light cycles and hybrids to produce heartier plants.

Water Source (5)

The water that kept the kaer alive often came from an underground river. A few villages built springs in their kaers that drew water from the elemental water plane.

Statue of Garlen (6)

The Passion of Hearth and Healing, Garlen spoke to the people's hearts more strongly than ever during the fearful years of the Scourge. Almost every kaer built in Barsaive raised a statue to Garlen, though the statues vary in likeness.

OF THE RITES OF PROTECTION

The Theran Rites of Protection and Passage offered the people of Barsaive several ways to protect themselves from the Horrors. All Horrors possess both astral and physical forms, though they manifest in different ways. Some only manifest in astral form, while others manifest only in physical form. Because of the Horrors' dual nature, the Theran protections needed to work against both astral and physical attacks.

MOST INDIVIDUALS HOLD A UNIQUE VISION OF EACH PASSION'S APPEARANCE.
—MERROX

Astral Protection

The Theran Rites offered astral protection from the Horrors in two ways. The natural materials used to create the kaers and citadels offered one kind of protection; in addition to that natural barrier, the Therans created wards built of runes designed to drive the Horrors away. The protections worked in the following manner.

All living things, including animals, plants, and the earth itself, have a "solid" presence in astral space. Astral manifestations cannot pass through astral creatures or the astral aspects of other living things. Because of this property, kaer walls made of natural materials such as stone, wood, and earth created a virtually impenetrable barrier to the astral forms of the Horrors.

Not content with a single layer of protection against such fearsome beings, the Therans also researched the runes most effective against Horrors, intending to use them to create magical barriers called wards that would block astral incursions. The people of Barsaive inscribed these runes on the outer walls of kaers and the domes of citadels. In many kaers, the builders also inscribed the inner walls with runes, creating still more magical wards as an additional layer of protection. This forethought saved many kaers, because too many Horrors found ways to penetrate the kaers' outer walls.

Potentially the weakest part of a shelter's defense, and therefore the most heavily protected, was the door. Because the entrance and exit of a kaer could not be made of elemental earth, the builders took extra care to protect these openings with additional magics, inscribing the doors with intricate runes and often lining them with orichalcum.

Physical Protection

In addition to the sheer mass and thickness of rock and earth, magical reinforcement of these materials offered physical protection from the Horrors. The creators of the citadels and kaers reinforced their domes and walls with elemental earth to strengthen them against the physical might of the Horrors, but this was a costly practice. The builders of kaers that lacked sufficient resources simply took advantage of areas offering naturally strong, thick walls. The people built many kaers in abandoned mines and other places deep beneath the earth, thus providing the strongest physical protection short of reinforcement with elemental earth. Builders also used elemental earth to reinforce the doors and entranceways of both kaers and citadels.

In addition to reinforcing walls and building magical wards, many kaers and citadels also set physical traps throughout their shelters as a layered defense against any Horrors that managed to penetrate the outer protections.

Constructing even the smallest shelters presented a monumental task; some kaers and citadels required more than two hundred years to complete. Despite the protections devised by the Therans, the Horrors managed to penetrate far too many kaers and citadels. In some cases, the Horror simply proved stronger than the protections set to repel it, and easily penetrated the shelter's defenses. Other Horrors, blocked on the astral plane, were patient enough to dig through the walls of a kaer until they broke through. Still other Horrors used their magical powers to render inert the astral defenses of a kaer and then attacked the shelter's residents.

OF LIFE DURING THE SCOURGE

As might be expected, the people of Barsaive found life in the underground kaers and sealed citadels drastically different from their former existence and often difficult. Moving an entire civilization underground required people to greatly change the way they lived their lives, and many found these changes daunting to face.

TO CREATE A TRULY ACCURATE PORTRAYAL OF THIS COMPLEX SUBJECT, I HAVE RELIED ON THE WORDS OF ONE LONG DEAD WHO LIVED THROUGH THE FIRST YEARS OF HIDING. HE LEFT BEHIND A JOURNAL FROM WHICH I TOOK THE FOLLOWING ENTRY. AS A SCHOLAR, I AM GRATEFUL FOR THIS AND OTHER SUCH PRECIOUS RECORDS OF OUR HISTORY.
—DARON FENN

—From the journal of Drahcid, swordmaster of Genve

...Almost three weeks have passed since the good people of Ar Dham granted me admittance to their kaer, but I still feel as lonely as I did during the bleakest days of my wanderings. Suspicious glances and halfhearted words of greeting are the only replies my overtures elicit, and mothers whisk their children out of my path as I walk through the narrow avenues and hallways of this subterranean world. Still, I am more than grateful that these good folk have granted me sanctuary, and I cannot begrudge them their fear of Horror-touched strangers. And when I think of the stories I have heard of other kaers, where the fear and suspicion turn lifelong neighbors against one another and spawn the frenzied stonings of innocents, I consider the people of Ar Dham quite compassionate and myself Passion-blessed.

Despite my loneliness, my life has developed a strangely comforting rhythm here. Each day, we all receive a portion of vegetables from the kaer's carefully tended gardens. And on special occasions, the elders slaughter one of the precious goats, and everyone shares in the feast. I stroll through the avenues under the steady light of the glowing moss that lines the kaer walls and always seem to pass by the kaer's large sygnal at the same time every day. There I pause and join the others who watch the bowl of elemental water and the small sphere of elemental earth that floats in the air above it. We gaze at it in silence, all dreaming of that far-off day when the earth and water again shall meet and the Scourge will become no more than a painful memory.

Evenings are my favorite time, however. After supper a crowd always gathers for the storytelling around the fire in the center of the kaer. Mothers cradle sleeping babes in their arms, children sit in rapt attention, young lovers hold each other in easy embraces and listen to the storytellers weave eloquent tapestries of cool mountain brooks and warm summer breezes, emerald meadows and quiet orchards, fiery sunrises and bird song and soft autumn evenings when the moonlight spills across the golden fields. . .

ON LIFE OUTSIDE THE SHELTERS

Though life went on inside the kaers and citadels, the Horrors were ravaging the world without. Swarms of Horrors tore across the landscape, devouring everything in their paths. Where once lush forests had stood, the Horrors left little but gnawed, burnt roots and twigs. The Horrors fed so voraciously that at times the sound of the devastation penetrated even the walls of the shelters. This unbearable noise alternated with silence so profound that a few daring or desperate souls persuaded themselves that the Horrors had gone.

Those who dared left the kaers many years before the Scourge ended, hoping to find fresh meat or longing to once more see the sun. Of these hardy (and foolhardy) souls, only a handful returned to the safety of the shelters. Most ended their days as food for the Horrors; others the Horrors touched and sent back to their kaers, thereby gaining access to fresh supplies of victims. Many records found in deserted kaers imply that opening their doors was the last action the residents took. The following journal excerpt describes the fate of one kaer that opened its doors too soon.

—From the journal of Mallem, 1401 TH, found in the ruins of Kaer Frohn near the Tylon Mountains

...Not until long after Jaro's death did we learn of his corruption. When the wizards proclaimed that the Scourge had ended, he, I, and three others broke open the seals on the doors and walked outside. We had hoped to find a new world, but the one we found came close to breaking our hearts.

Before us stretched a barren land, devoid of almost all life. In what our storytellers had always described as a lush valley, we found a bleak and wasted landscape where only a few insects and small plants still struggled to survive.

As we looked about us, the voice came. We all heard it—in our heads, not in our ears. As quick as thought, the sky grew dark with

creatures, their attack nearly overwhelming us. We fought our way back into the kaer, just barely preventing the creatures from entering. Of the five of us that left, three died outside the kaer's doors.

We thought ourselves safe, but we had not kept all the Horrors out. We soon learned that a Horror had entered the mind of Jaro and in that way penetrated the safety our our kaer...

OF THE ENDING OF THE SCOURGE

Though Theran scholars had predicted that the Scourge would last for five centuries, it ended one hundred years early, marked by an inexplicable occurrence. Contrary to the predictions of Theran magical theory, the fall of magical energy simply stopped long before it should have, a phenomenon recorded in the kaers and citadels by magic-level indicators of Theran devising. Scholars and magicians still cannot explain this discrepancy, except as a misinterpretation of the Books of Harrow.

THIS DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THERAN PREDICTION AND REALITY HAS CAUSED MANY SCHOLARS IN THROAL TO DISPUTE OTHER SO-CALLED "REVELATIONS" BY THERA'S MAGICIANS.
—DERROX, MASTER OF THE HALL OF RECORDS

Based on their studies of the Books of Harrow, the original scholars at Thera's Eternal Library had concluded that the magical energy of the world determined the arrival and departure of the Horrors. As the level of ambient magic rose, the Horrors could breach the astral barriers between their plane of existence and ours. When the magic level subsided, the Horrors could no longer maintain the link between the two worlds and retreated to their native astral plane.

The magicians inside the shelters kept close watch as the world's magical energy slowly declined. At some point, they accepted the fact that the magic levels had seemingly ceased to drop, stopping short of the projected safe level. Though they suspected that the magic had receded enough to force most of the Horrors back to their own plane, they also guessed that an unwelcome number of especially powerful Horrors would remain.

Following the counsel of their magicians and village leaders, ever-increasing numbers of kaers and citadels pronounced the end of the Scourge and emerged to reclaim and re-tame their world. At long last, we seem to be winning that difficult struggle. However, many kaers and citadels still do not believe that the Scourge has ended. These people remain hidden, waiting patiently for a sign that they may re-enter the world their ancestors left behind.

LEAVING THE SHELTERS

Though the Scourge had ended, for many the battle for freedom had just begun. Most people had known only life in the kaer or citadel, and they feared to leave the safety of their shelters and face unknown danger.

ONLY TWO YEARS AGO I DISCOVERED A SEALED KAER WHOSE PEOPLE DID NOT KNOW THAT THE SCOURGE HAD ENDED. I AM SURE THAT THIS SHELTER IS NOT THE ONLY SUCH ONE.
—J'ROLE, THE HONORABLE THIEF

Barsaivians left their shelters in a trickle, the shelters opening up one by one as the people spread cautiously across the land. By the time the dwarfs in Throal had organized a fleet of messengers to spread the news of the Scourge's end across Barsaive, the people of most kaers had rejoined the outside world. What greeted them little resembled the world described in legend. The Scourge may have ended, but four centuries of devastation had changed the world almost beyond recognition.

From the journal of Me'gana of Kaer Lowilla, 1495 TH

...I was among the first to leave my kaer. All my life, I had longed to breathe fresh air, see the mountains, leave the kaer's cramped confines. My first glance at the world outside dashed my hopes for a new, wondrous life. At first, I thought the tales told by the kaer's storytellers had grown into myth during four centuries underground. As I looked about, I began to see the truth. It was not the stories that had lied. Instead, the world had changed.

Towering oaks had become twisted husks, monstrous mockeries of trees. The mountains, once breathtaking, forested slopes, were now barren rock. I breathed in deeply, hoping to find at least the outside air uncorrupted. It tasted harsh and bitter and burned my throat. I fell to the ground gasping, hoping that I smelled the odor from the rotting trees nearby. I was wrong...

ON HOW THE SCOURGE CHANGED US

The Scourge left its mark on every aspect of life in Barsaive. The physical devastation was the most obvious change; once-lush forests withered and rotting, towns and cities obliterated, villages forever enslaved by Horrors. The Scourge had also changed people's hearts. The Barsaivians of our time have become a fearful lot, often preferring to hide from the future rather than face it. Though this may be understandable after our four hundred years in hiding, such a closing of the heart and mind bodes ill for the healing of our land.

The Scourge may never truly be ended for it utterly changed Barsaive and its people in every possible way: physically, mentally, spiritually, and magically.

ON THE CHANGES IN THE LAND

The physical effects of the Scourge remain the most noticeable, for the very face of Barsaive is changed. The ravages of the Horrors left whole cities and towns in ruins. Some succumbed during the Scourge; others fell victim to the depredations of Horrors that remained in our world after the kaers opened. Entire villages were swept away, leaving no evidence that anyone had ever lived in those regions. The Horrors devastated much of the landscape as well, leaving it stripped of life except for plants and animals too small to capture the Horrors' deadly interest. In most cases, the little life that remained was forever corrupted; in the patches of forest left standing, the trees had become twisted and gnarled in a perverse reflection of their former glory. In some areas, even the air was tainted, choking the survivors who breathed it.

> We must be careful with our generalizations. Rumor has it that Mountainshadow lairs within the Badlands.
> —Merrox.

The worst devastation occurred in those areas now known as the Badlands and the Wastes. The Scourge altered the land irrevocably in these areas, transforming fertile farmland into barren ground, devoid of all life save the Horrors and the creatures that served them.

A land once full of towns and villages became a bare and windswept plain shadowed by thick, ash-like clouds.

The effects of the Scourge in these areas teaches us a lesson regarding the power we wield as Name-givers. By Naming these areas the Badlands and the Wastes, we have created true patterns for these areas that define them in terms of what they are now, not what they once were or what they might become. As heroes continue to explore these areas and learn more about them, their true patterns grow stronger. Thus, as scholars and magicians debate the best method by which to heal these regions, their very study of them as the Badlands and the Wastes strengthens these true patterns. Even as we seek knowledge with which to heal, we make the healing process more difficult.

—*Derrat*

ON THE CHANGES IN LIVING AND THOUGHT

The effects of the Scourge on the minds and hearts of its survivors are much less obvious than the changes in the land, but in many ways far more significant. These changes fall into two broad categories: cultural changes and changes in behavior.

On the Changes in Culture

Strangely enough, the Scourge wrought some good in Barsaivian culture. Before the Scourge, the Name-giver races maintained separate cultures. The end of the Scourge, however, brought representatives of all the Name-giver races together in the same communities. When the people of Barsaive returned to the surface of the world to rebuild it, they reasoned that larger settlements might bring safety because a greater population provided a larger number of people to be trained as warriors. As groups of Barsaivians traveled across the province to establish new settlements, they realized that maintaining distinctions between races was far less important than building a strong community able to defend itself and thus chose to live as neighbors rather than enemies.

In contrast to this new acceptance between the races, though no less beneficial in its way, the isolation created by four centuries of hiding gave rise to a multitude of different customs. Before the Scourge, communities that traded with each

other and intermarried developed similar cultures, possessing the same customs, modes of dress, folklore and legends, and spiritual beliefs. During four hundred years of isolation, however, each community developed a unique culture. The resulting variety of customs, styles, and legends has given Barsaive society a color and richness badly needed to heal the darkness left by the Scourge. Barsaive now boasts so many different cultures that travelers no longer know what to expect when they arrive in a new settlement.

Though these changes have made Barsaive a far more dynamic place, this cultural explosion also creates the risk of us encountering beliefs and customs different from our own.
—Daron Fenn

On the Changes in People

Though the wider cultural changes wrought by the Scourge seem to have brought us great good, changes in our individual thought and action often appear to counteract them. The people of Barsaive can accept differences in race and culture far more readily than did our ancestors because fear demands that we band together; yet this same fear has made Barsaivians mistrustful of everyone they meet.

The years of self-imprisonment fostered a strong streak of suspicion in most Barsaivians. Countless tales describing the dangers of the Horrors helped keep the residents of the shelters safe through constant vigilance, but many people took this caution to extremes. Family members often became as suspect as strangers, and anyone who showed even the slightest difference from "normal" behavior risked being stoned to death at the hands of frightened fellow kaersmen.

When they left the shelters, people carried their fears with them, and intense suspicion became a fact of everyday life in Barsaive. Small towns and villages rarely welcome strangers. The occasional stranger who stops for a night or several days finds himself the object of universal scrutiny and suspicion. This is true even for visitors to larger cities, whose residents are determined not to be duped by those possessed by a Horror. Travelers often feel as if everyone in the city or town is watching them.

In an ironic corollary to this paranoia rampant in our society, travelers who feel watched in other cities almost always watch strangers in the same way when at home.
—Merrox

In some ways, fear of the Horrors and the desire to avoid their influence has done more harm to Barsaive than have the Horrors themselves. The Horrors did not inflict the Ritual of the Thorns on the elves of the Blood Wood, for one. The Elven Court chose to walk that path rather than face destruction by the Horrors and did themselves greater, irretrievable harm than could the Horrors. In the same way, blood magic has often saved someone from the Horrors, but the price we pay for purchasing our safety through such gruesome means is often too high to justify the ends.

ON THE CHANGES IN THE PASSIONS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

The Passions, powerless to prevent the Scourge (though many scholars and questors doubt they would have, even given the chance), stood by and watched the Horrors devastate their world and people. Of the twelve Passions, nine survived the Scourge intact. The remaining three—Dis, Raggok, and Vestrial—were driven mad by the corruption. Now known as the Mad Passions, these three have had a profound spiritual effect on their followers. Where once the Passions lived peacefully side by side, the three Mad Passions now work to destroy the other Passions, sowing discord and forcing the remaining Passions to fight off these attacks.

This discord among the Passions led their questors to create the first organizations devoted to the ideals of the individual Passions. The desire of the Mad Passions to conquer and destroy the other Passions prompted their questors to create hierarchies within the ranks of devotees, the better to serve their crazed gods' purposes.

ON THE CHANGES IN MAGIC

Though less visible than the changes in the land and less disruptive than the Scourge's spiritual effects, the changes the Scourage has wrought on magic are potentially the most profound.

Before the Scourge, magicians could draw magical energy directly from astral space to power their spells with little risk. Though careless spellcasters using magic in such a way often suffered damage, most experienced magicians could cast raw magic with no ill effects. But the Horrors warped and corrupted astral space when traveling through it during the Scourge,

just as they did the rest of the world. To avoid the dangers of making direct contact with this polluted magical energy, magicians developed safer methods of powering their spells. Those few magicians still willing to cast raw magic risk being noticed and marked by a Horror.

The pollution of astral space gravely concerns many magical theorists. Though most of the world's corruption has begun to heal itself, the damage to astral space shows no signs of healing. Many observers fear that the corruption of astral space is permanent. Given the pervasive nature of magic in Barsaive, this taint irrevocably alters the way we live our lives.

Some magicians attribute the current steady level of magic to the effects of the Scourge. This theory has few supporters, though none of its detractors can conclusively prove the idea wrong.
—Derrat

ON THE LEGACY OF THE SCOURGE

The Scourge left an indelible mark on our world. Though as a people we are determined to reclaim and rebuild our land, memories of the Scourge and its lasting effects make this task tremendously difficult.

Many troubadours and historians insist that the Therans' original prediction of a five-hundred-year Scourge was correct. Though Barsaive's people emerged from the kaers and citadels after only four hundred years, this last century might easily be considered the final stage of the Scourge. Only now, after a century of healing, do we seem to have moved away from its dark shadow. Only now can we truly begin to rebuild our world in the hope of restoring it to its former beauty and glory.

ON LIFE IN BARSAIVE

Such luck. I drew the one topic I hoped not to receive: to describe the various, unique aspects of life in Barsaive. This topic could be anything, I thought. After struggling for weeks to find a scheme for organization that worked, I finally accepted that I needed to first gather my information and then concern myself with organizing it. Unfortunately, the longer I worked at my task, the harder it became to find a satisfactory way to organize such diverse material into a logical format.

Even worse, as work proceeded on other sections of the text, I was told that more and more information needed to appear in my section. By now greatly frustrated, I resolved to organize this section as simply as possible. I hope I have provided a useful chapter, one which is far easier to read than it was to write.

—Written by the Hand of Ardinn Tero, Scholar of the Library of Throal

A DISCOURSE ON DAILY LIFE

In some ways, this chapter serves as a primer on Barsaive, providing enough information to prepare the reader for travel across the province, but not so much that it becomes overwhelming. Descriptions of Barsaive's languages, customs, economy, spiritual beliefs, and so on give the reader with some notion of what to expect in different towns and cities, and also offers insights into Barsaive's many cultures.

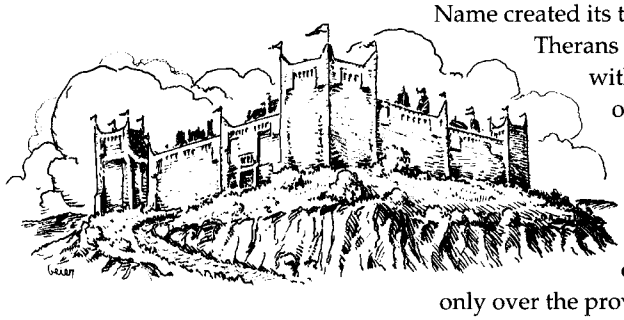
This chapter begins with an overview of present-day life in Barsaive, followed by essays covering more specific topics.

despite his trepidations, i think that ardinn has done an admirable job of organizing the diverse and somewhat unwieldy material that needed to be included in this section.
—merrox

BARSAIVE AS WE KNOW IT

The vast land mass of Barsaive is bounded on the south by the Death's Sea, on the east by the Aras Sea, on the north by the Blood Wood, and on the west by the Wastes. The Second Theran Empire, whose lands adjoin Barsaive at its southwestern edge, claims Barsaive as part of its empire, though the people of Barsaive steadfastly resist this Theran incursion. In order to expand their empire farther north, the Therans must first overcome our resistance.

Almost six hundred years ago, Barsaive received its Name from the First Theran Empire, and this Name created its true pattern. Once they had Named it and made it theirs, the Therans were content to let the internal politics of the province continue without interference, as long as those politics did not affect their own plans. As token ruler and watchdog over the province, the Therans created the position of Overgovernor, making the holder of that office responsible for shaping policy in the province to meet Thera's needs.



By Theran reckoning, Overgovernor Kypros is currently in charge of the province of Barsaive. In truth, his influence extends only over the province's southeastern corner, the area around the Sky Point outpost and the Theran-controlled city of Vivane. Sky Point is Kypros' fortress and the center of the Theran presence in Barsaive.

As Overgovernor, Kypros is actively involved in sending Theran troops and airships deep into Barsaive to harass the people and capture slaves. Though the rulers of Barsaive's various cities and regions do not recognized Kypros' authority, he has been able to establish trade and slaving agreements with certain non-official parties in some of the large cities of Barsaive's southwest quarter.

The politics of the rest of Barsaive can be best summed up in a common saying:

> The trolls raid the dwarfs,
> the dwarfs dislike the elves,
> the elves have no patience with the humans,
> and the humans war with each other.
> But everyone hates the Therans.

In fact, though every community harbors racist factions, most of Barsaive's cities, towns, and villages gladly accept neighbors of many races. The dwarf Kingdom of Throal, which encourages members of all races to settle within its borders and builds homes for immigrants, is the greatest power in the province, followed by the elves of Blood Wood and the t'skrang of the Serpent River (though the latter suffer from the continual problem of infighting). The next strongest power lies in various cities scattered across the land, followed by independent military groups such as the crystal raiders and the ork scorchers.

The people of Barsaive are not united in their allegiances. Some pledge loyalty to the Kingdom of Throal, upholding its egalitarian laws and ideal of freedom for everyone. Others, believing that the dwarfs will not give up power and authority easily, fear that in time Throal may become as oppressive as the Theran Empire. The elves of Blood Wood seek far more power than they currently wield, and rumors abound that they will soon stop brooding in their giant forest and begin laying claim to the surrounding area. Many cities also wish to establish themselves as rivals to Throal, and the trollmoots have been trying for decades to make of their diverse tribes a cohesive political force.

The years ahead clearly hold many possibilities for political intrigue and diplomacy, as each faction forms advantageous alliances just long enough to gain the upper hand.

ON THE VARYING CUSTOMS OF BARSAIVE

Despite Barsaive's bewildering variety of cultures, certain customs and conventions such as the name-day, belief in the Passions, and the use of Throalic and Theran calendars are common to many communities. The institution of slavery, a Theran barbarity imposed on Barsaive rather than a native practice, has unfortunately become enough a part of Barsaive society to rate inclusion in this section.

ON THE PASSING OF DAYS AND MONTHS

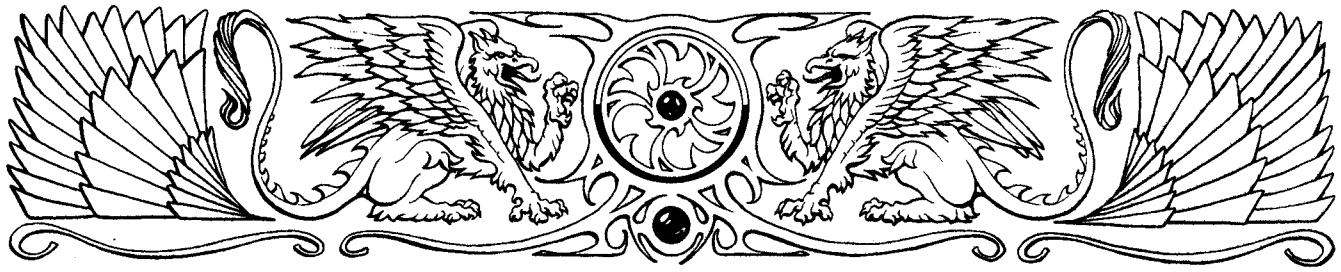
The people of Barsaive mark time according to one of two calendars: Theran or Throalic. The Throalic calendar was used before the Scourge, and most of Barsaive continues to use it. People living in areas under Theran rule use the Theran calendar, often under threat of punishment. In the city of Vivane, with the largest population in Barsaive under the yoke of Thera, authorities have outlawed Throalic calendars; anyone found using them must pay a heavy fine.

The Calendar of Throal

The Throalic calendar divides the year into twelve months of thirty days each, each month beginning near or on a new lunar cycle. The months are named Strassa, Veltom, Charassa, Rua, Mawag, Gahmil, Raquas, Sollus, Riag, Teayu, Borrum, and Doddul.

Between the months of Gahmil and Raquas, the Throalic calendar sets aside five days to celebrate the Earth. This five-day holiday reflects the calendar's dwarf origin. Though the dwarfs use the moon cycle to count the passage of days, they also wish to pay respect to their true home underground. With their preference for subterranean life, the dwarfs seldom see the moon. Indeed, their use of its cycles is more for convenience than because of any spiritual attachment to it.

Across Barsaive, people use these five days for many purposes. Throal sponsors holidays featuring contests of crafts involving stonework, primarily gem-cutting and sculpting. The contest winners earn seats of honor at local feasts. In many cities, residents indulge in revelry during these days, and the wealthy often sponsor enormous parties for the less fortunate.



Farming towns and villages also use the five days to celebrate the Earth, but focus their ceremonies on the fertility of the soil. Pageants and rituals celebrate birth, growth, decay, and death—the cycle of all life.

The Throalic calendar takes the date of Throal's founding as its beginning. According to this calendar, the current year is 1506 TH.

NO THERAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY OR CITY, INCLUDING IOPOS AND VIVANE, RECOGNIZES THE FIVE CELEBRATION DAYS.
—KERN REDHAND

The Calendar of Thera

Each Theran day begins and ends according to the cycle of the sun, and the Therans arrange their calendar in 73 five-day weeks rather than according to the lunar cycle. The Therans do not, however, worship the sun; they adopted a solar-based calendar simply for ease of use. Each week is numbered rather than named, and each day is designated by its week number and position in the week: for example, "fifth week, second day." When written, this date appears as 5/2, sometimes followed by the year. The Therans begin their calendar with the founding of the city of Thera; by their reckoning, the current year is 1063.

MOST BARSAIVIANS ASSUME THAT THE THERAN GOVERNMENT ADOPTED THEIR CALENDAR IN ORDER TO MORE FREQUENTLY TAX THEIR CITIZENS. THE THERANS COLLECT TAXES EVERY FOURTH WEEK, OR TWENTY DAYS.
—ARDINN TERO

ON THE FEAST OF THE NAME-DAY

Because our ability to Name things separates Name-givers from the other creations of the universe, the Naming of our own offspring becomes a significant event. Every culture and every race in Barsaive and in the whole world performs a Naming ritual for its children; even the Therans practice a Naming ritual, and slaves brought to Thera and Barsaive from other lands describe similar ceremonies common to their homelands.

Naming makes a person significant in our world. Though every person, place, and thing possesses a pattern that lets it interact with magic, Naming creates a true pattern and focuses the magic of the world into that pattern. By the act of Naming, Name-givers separate themselves from the formless void of the universe.

Most Name-day ceremonies take place within the first week of a child's life, though some people celebrate the Name-day during the child's adolescence. All children receive at least a simple nickname soon after birth. Children who perform the Name-day ritual during adolescence receive a second name to signify their Naming according to the proper ritual.

Most communities create a true pattern for their place of Naming by setting aside one location for the Naming ceremony. The family of the child to be Named prepares this place for the Naming according to local custom. In the morning of the third day of the child's life, the parents bring him or her to the Naming place, usually a windowless room. They carry the child into the room and close the door, plunging the room into darkness. The scent of burning incense soon fills the room, calming those present and helping to make the coming ceremony the focus of their thoughts.

By magic or other means, a magician lights a candle. This single point of light illuminates the faces of all present—the baby, the parents, a magician (usually the person who produced the flame), and friends of the family. Their illuminated faces and bodies seem to float in the surrounding darkness, and in that moment all present turn their hearts and minds toward the child.

One of the parents says to the child, "On this your Name-day, I Name you so you may be known. This Name is not who you are, but who you will be. It is not a limit, but a vessel you shall fill."

The other parent then says, "When people think of you, they will think not of your Name, but of the Passions that Name represents. You are not bound to this Name, for you are a Name-giver. We give you this Name. From now on, you will Name."

The parent not holding the child then picks up a candle and lights it from the flame the magician created. As the wick catches fire, both parents speak the first syllable of the Name in unison, then place the candle on a small table in the center of the room. The parents continue to light candles as they speak each syllable of the Name until they have spoken each separate syllable. When the couple has lit candles for each syllable of the child's Name, the magician opens the door of the room just as the gathered group speaks the whole Name in unison. The light from outside the room rushes in, joining the light produced by the candles and driving out the void.

ON COMMON SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

Barsaivians believe that the Passions of the world are the living embodiments of the life force of the universe. Much as an adept draws on the magic of the universe to perform great deeds, the Passions grant similar strength, power, and abilities to their questors, who in turn live out the ideals of the Passions in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Questors devote their lives to living as their chosen Passion would have them do and to teaching others about that Passion. Most questors wield power equivalent to that of magicians and adepts, but receive their power as a gift from their chosen Passion, rather than drawing it directly from the universe. Living his or her life according to a given Passion's ideals focuses a questor's power much as a Discipline focuses an adept's. The questor's life becomes a metaphor of the ideals that the Passions embody.

As their name implies, questors spend their lives pursuing a mission, the nature of which depends on the Passion the questor serves. As with magicians and adepts, the actions of most questors add color and vibrancy to the world.

ON THE THERAN ABOMINATION OF SLAVERY

The evil of slavery came to Barsaive with the Therans, who began to deal in slaves as a valuable commodity during the First Theran Empire. In those long-ago times a slave was educated, held a certain status in society, and could eventually earn the means to purchase his freedom. Though no one could ever view slavery as a good condition of life, a slave's lot in the First Theran Empire would be enviable compared to the plight of a slave in our day.

Theran slavery weighed heavy on the citizens of Barsaive, especially the dwarfs of Throal. During the Scourge, the dwarfs decided to outlaw the practice of slavery in any form. They also vowed to enforce this sanction in Throal or in any other place where the shameful practice existed once the Scourge had ended. Though this resolution implies that Throal intends someday to invade Thera and abolish slavery there, at present King Varulus has his hands full rooting out slavery in Barsaive.

In stark contrast to the Therans' view of slavery during the First Empire, the Therans of our time no longer believe that the Passions deign to inspire slaves and deny the unique nature each slave possesses as a Name-giver. They see slaves as less valuable than tools. While the Therans take special care of their tools, slaves they treat no better than coals and dry wood tossed into a fire and consumed. Once used, these materials turn to ash and burn away as waste.

Theran law sets forth certain conditions that make it legal to sell an individual into slavery, the foremost of which is criminal activity. Theft, murder, assault, or destruction of property can be punished by slavery. In cases involving Therans, Theran judges determine a criminal's fate. For cases involving Barsaivians, local judges pass sentence. Theran criminals receive a sentence of slavery only when they commit one of the aforementioned crimes against another Theran. By contrast, non-Theran criminals may be sentenced to slavery for almost any crime, regardless of the motive or victim.

In short, Theran law inverts Throalic justice, which states that the wealthier and more powerful the criminal, the greater the punishment. Theran law also ignores the fact that few Barsaivian communities other than Throal possess a legal system as complex as their own. The legal accountability that Therans take for granted simply does not exist throughout most of Barsaive. When a band of slavers arrives at Iopos or Sky Point herding two dozen prisoners they claim are murderers, the Therans do not bother to ascertain whether or not the prisoners received a fair trial and deserve their fate. They simply assume it is so, pay the slavers for their property, and set the slaves to work.

This attitude encourages slavers to roam the land in search of the powerless and isolated for capture and sale. Attracted by the prospect of making profits at little risk, some Barsaivians have also begun to kidnap and sell their fellow citizens to the Therans. Scorcher tribes, neighboring villages, and others level spurious claims of criminal activity against each other in a desperate attempt to earn money or to avoid becoming slaves.

Theran slaves perform the work of household and personal servants, soldiers, farmers, miners, airship rowers, builders of ships and buildings, and innumerable other difficult or menial tasks. Because they receive little food, water, or rest, most slaves die within a few years of capture.

In an effort to prevent slaves from rebelling against their captivity, the Therans usually put them to work far from where they were captured. Though much of the slave trade is made up of unfortunates from communities too small to know Throalic or even be aware of the Theran Empire, the Therans make sure their slave gangs are composed only of indivduals from various far-flung places, people who do not share a common language, culture, or knowledge of the nearby land.

Theran slave-owners also control their slaves by offering them a chance at freedom in return for information about planned revolts and escapes. We do not know, however, if the Therans reward such behavior by keeping their promises.

Regardless of the debatable morality of slavery, its continued existance in Barsaive seems a certainty for several years to come.

YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS ENSLAVED, I ROWED A THERAN MINING SHIP ALONGSIDE PEOPLE WHO SPOKE WORDS I HAD NEVER HEARD BEFORE. I NEVER KNEW HOW MANY OF MY FELLOW SUFFERERS WERE FROM BARSAIVE AND HOW MANY HAD BEEN DRAGGED COUNTLESS MILES TO SUFFER IN MY HOMELAND.
—J'ROLE THE HONORABLE THIEF

ON OUR DIVERSE LANGUAGES

Barsaive's diverse population speaks several languages, some of them more widely used than others. The following discussion touches on each of the major languages.

ON THE LANGUAGE OF THROAL

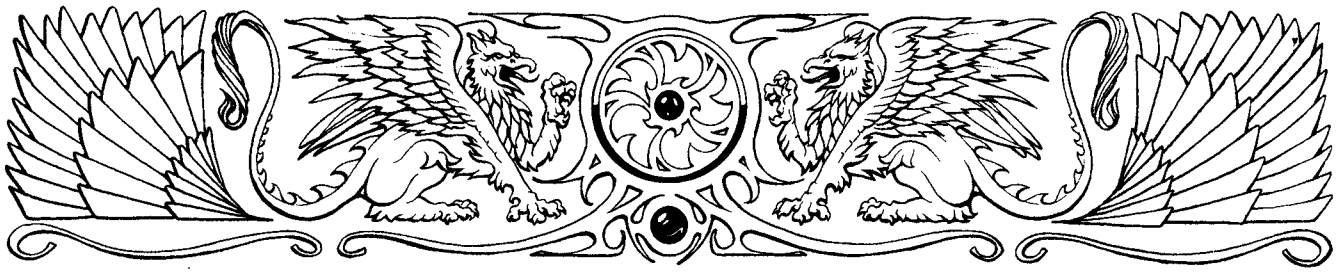
Throalic, the most common language in Barsaive, is a corrupted version of the ancient tongue used by the dwarfs of the Throal Mountains centuries ago. When the First Theran Empire conquered Barsaive, its leaders encouraged the dwarfs of Throal to establish trade routes throughout the province. Of all the native groups in Barsaive, the dwarfs alone could match the Therans in prosperity. Realizing that the dwarfs were helping to create trading ties throughout the land, which would only make the Theran Empire stronger, the Therans gave the dwarf merchants free rein.

For hundreds of years dwarf traders traveled throughout Barsaive, eventually establishing their language as the language of trade. Throalic words described the standard for measurements, weights, money, and the accepted terms of negotiation. The spread of language worked both ways, however. As the dwarfs went about their business in towns and villages across Barsaive, they incorporated many words from those communities into the Throalic tongue.

On Throalic as the Common Tongue

Because Throalic is a relatively easy language to master, and because, over time, it incorporated so many pan-Barsaivian words, increasing numbers of people found it expedient to use the language for purposes other than trade. Because rule by the First Theran Empire made trade and travel safer and easier, people from all walks of life and areas of the province were encountering each other on the road, in cities, and everywhere else people could meet. The only language they had in common was bits and pieces of Throalic. In this way, Throalic eventually became the most widespread provincial tongue. Later the dwarfs began to record and standardize their language, thus ensuring its continued prominence as the common tongue of Barsaive and furthering the spread of dwarf culture.

THE THROALIC DWARFS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ADEPT AT WEAVING OTHER PEOPLE'S CUSTOMS, WORDS, AND IDEAS INTO THEIR OWN WAYS, INSTINCTIVELY CHOOSING WHATEVER WILL MAKE THEIR OWN KINGDOM AND PEOPLE MORE APPEALING TO OTHERS. OF COURSE, MANY CLAIM THAT THE DWARFS JUST AS INSTINCTIVELY TAKE CREDIT FOR THESE CUSTOMS, WORDS, AND IDEAS, CONVENIENTLY FORGETTING THAT THEY ORIGINALLY BORROWED THEM. I CANNOT DISPUTE THIS CLAIM.
—MERROX



How the Book of Tomorrow Came to Be

As part of this effort, a group of linguists headed by the legendary dwarf scribe Mabbon Destroggus created a book listing all the Throalic words in common use in Barsaive at that time, adding the rules of grammar according to dwarf custom. As the time of the Scourge drew near, the purpose of this book changed to eventually include the history of Barsaive and Thera, the province's tales and legends, and the knowledge that Throal possessed concerning the coming Scourge. What began as a book of language became the Book of Tomorrow, offering Barsaivians counsel on surviving the coming Scourge and how they might one day resume their normal life after the Horrors departed our world.

King Varulus II commissioned countless scribes to copy out this tome so that the book could be sent to communities all over Barsaive—cities, trading towns, t'skrang crew covenants, farming towns and villages, ork tribes, and so on—until nearly every settlement, big or small, had received a copy.

Most communities received their copy just as the Scourge was about to strike, and so the people carried the Book of Tomorrow with them into their kaers and citadels. During the four hundred years of hiding, the Book of Tomorrow became a symbol of hope for the people of Barsaive, a link to their past and the promise of a brighter future.

Those of us now living in Barsaive must understand that the people who sealed themselves away in the shelters—even those who knew no other way of life—never accepted that state of affairs as natural. People hid because of the Horrors; the Horrors were terrible, and therefore living in shelters was terrible. Each generation told its children stories of life before the Scourge, of living in a world with a warm yellow sun, vast green jungles, blue skies, trails of white clouds, and grassy expanses that stretched as far as the distant horizon.

> As a boy, I learned much about the world that I could not verify as true. The warmth of the sun, the majesty of the airships, and the beauty of the elves all seemed too fabulous to be believed. And neither had anyone I knew ever seen such things, for the last people to see the sun had died centuries before.
>
> —J'role the honorable thief

The Book of Tomorrow reminded people of what they had lost and what they would someday regain. The word for "sun" was clearly defined in the book, so that every day people could open the book and know that the sun existed! Every day people could read and speak words that referred to things they had never experienced, things that they had lost generations before when the Horrors tore the world apart. Sky. Mountains. Farms. Airships. Flowers. Riverboats. Races not represented in certain kaers were remembered as well: elves, dwarfs, orks, windlings, and so on. Though the people in their kaers and citadels had little firsthand knowledge of the wonders described, the Book of Tomorrow ensured that little was forgotten. As generations passed, the words for things in the world they had lost took on the mystique of magical talismans. And gradually, the peoples of Barsaive developed a deep reverence for the land they could only dream of.

Generation after generation learned the language of the dwarfs. As the Book of Tomorrow gained mythic proportions, entire communities began to adopt the tongue that spoke of the promised land we would find once the Horrors retreated to their own astral plane. In this way, Throalic became the standard language for all of Barsaive. Pronunciation varied wildly, of course, as each community spoke according to its own way. But when the people began to emerge from hiding again, a common language with which to communicate made it easier for Barsaive to begin its long road to recovery from the Scourge.

A Few Remaining Curiosities

Because written Throalic is a complicated language, formed by pictures adorned with elaborate symbols, only a few, well-educated people in any community could read and write it. These more literate folk took on the task of teaching the spoken language to the rest of their communities. The inability of most ordinary citizens to read Throalic added to the mystique of the Book of Tomorrow and of the words within it.

Almost universal access to the Book of Tomorrow had another unexpected effect. Because the book described many dwarf customs, attributes, and ideals, most Barsaivians emerged from the kaers and citadels already feeling a comfortable familiarity with the dwarfs and their ways. Though generations had passed without contact, the Book of Tomorrow established the dwarfs in the hopes and dreams of their countrymen. It was that which allowed the small subterranean people of the Throal Mountains to play such an important role in unifying the land and attracting other races to their cities after the Scourge.

ON THE THERAN TONGUE

Prior to the Scourge, the Therans attempted to teach their language to the wealthy and educated citizens of Barsaive, and records show that the Theran language enjoyed widespread use hundreds of years ago. However, it was the Book of Tomorrow that sustained the people of Barsaive during the terrible time of the Scourge; the Theran language quickly fell into disuse. Only a few stories tell of communities that spoke Theran when they emerged from their shelters.

Except for the many Theran words adopted by the dwarfs during the First Theran Empire, Theran is rarely heard in Barsaive. As part of the Therans' attempt to reconquer Barsaive, they are once again attempting to teach us their tongue, but find their task even harder now. When the First Empire dominated Barsaive centuries ago, no common language unified the people. Now the Therans must grapple with a cultural identity that they helped forge, only to have it work against them.

In general only Theran bureaucrats learn Throalic, and then simply to communicate more easily with the local population. The Theran government has not given up its goal of establishing Theran as the official language of Barsaive and the rest of its empire, however.

ON RACIAL AND LOCAL LANGUAGES

Barsaive's unification has made racial and local languages rare, but a few such tongues are still spoken. Countless farming villages and towns, some cut off completely from the political turmoil that has gripped Barsaive in recent years, still speak their ancient languages. Lacking copies of the Book of Tomorrow, these communities did not learn of the Throalic language and therefore continued to speak the tongue of their ancestors while in hiding. Even the best-prepared heroes re-exploring our land may find themselves unable to communicate verbally with such people. Some communities use more than one language. The crystal raiders and ork scorcher tribes speak their own ancient tongues as their primary languages and in some cases also speak fluent Throalic.

The t'skrang of the Serpent River, members of the Elven Court, and other single-race communities also preserve their racial languages, but tend to use them as formal, almost ritual tongues, reserving them for official functions. Only the elite of such communities learn these ancient tongues, and many fear that these venerable languages will one day be lost to time.

Of course, racial languages only remain pure in racially pure communities. The t'skrang crew covenants and the Elven Court of Blood Wood are two examples of this increasingly rare phenomenon, notable exceptions to the interracial communities that make up the bulk of Barsaive. In this modern day, most Name-givers define themselves by where they live rather than by race.

ON TRADE AND THE FLOW OF GOODS

Though many self-sufficient villages remain scattered throughout Barsaive's remote regions, trade has once again begun to generate wealth in most of the province. Since the emergence from the shelters, burgeoning trade has created both rich and poor and given rise to various standards of living ranging from squalid to wealthy.

—From the journal of Torkel, a caravan trader of northern Barsaive
The Mercantile Exploits of Torkel of Barsaive
as recorded by
Thelonius, scribe of Bartertown,
on the First Day of Raquas, 1506 TH

('Tis truly a sad day, Thelonius, when a learned scribe such as yourself is reduced to recording the daily life of a common trader. But you have only yourself to blame, after all. And Bonecrusher cannot remain angry forever. In a few weeks the swordmaster will calm down and surely understand when you explain you had no idea the young lady was his niece. In the meantime, where were we? Ah yes, Torkel.)

The beneficent merchant Torkel set out from the gates of Bartertown at dawn, leading a caravan of three camels, two oxen, swords and shields—a virtual cornucopia of fine merchandise...

(Yes, quite a "cornucopia"—one long sword; two shields; three dwarf-weave rugs; assorted spearheads; a week's worth of dwarf rations; a mold-covered old keg, the contents of which I cared not to learn; 27 copper pieces; and a weathered old troll war helm fashioned from the skull of a thundra beast. The trader seemed especially proud of this last item.)

By midday our caravan reached Larken, a small village in the foothills of the Throal Mountains. Several young children ran out to greet us as we arrived, and Torkel puffed out his chest like a victorious warrior returning from battle. A small crowd had gathered in the town square, bringing sheep, wool and cotton, pelts of exotic creatures, and other sundries to exchange. Torkel's spearheads and rugs attracted immediate attention, and after much haggling he had exchanged six of the dwarf points and one rug for a small espagra hide, two bolts of cotton, and a basket of fresh apples and walnuts from the orchards and hills outside of town. The villagers insisted we stay for lunch to celebrate our transaction.

(Torkel accepted immediately, apparently not the type to turn down a free meal, no matter how crude the cuisine.)

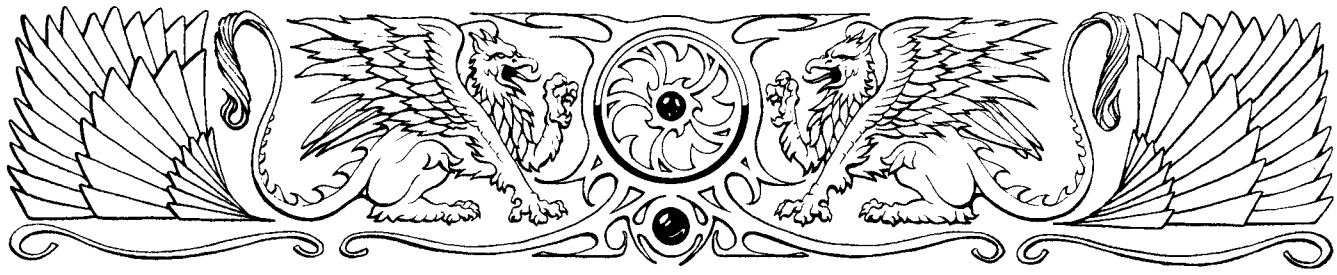
Afterward, the magnanimous merchant treated our hosts to a round of the "finest dwarf stout" in a display of his unending generosity...

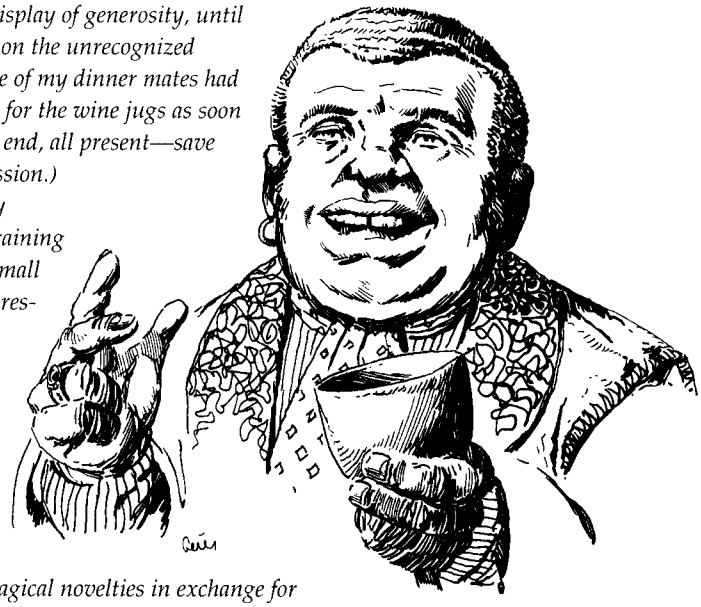
(He had one of the crew pour the toast from the mysterious mold-covered keg. The villagers apparently didn't know the difference or were ashamed to admit they had never tasted the rare dwarf brew, for they quaffed the vile liquid as though it were fine t'skrang vinlo.)

...The remainder of the day passed uneventfully. We stopped at two other villages, where Torkel traded several more spearheads for incense, more fruit and nuts, and some primitive but not unpleasing jewelry.

By noon of the second day, we had reached one of the lush green valleys that surround the Serpent's upper tributaries. We followed the road, winding our way through the vineyards that lined the hillsides until we reached a settlement of dwarfs and trolls nestled along the river's edge. Torkel spent the rest of the day trading, and by evening he had exchanged the two oxen, the two remaining rugs, the bolts of cotton and the rest of his spearheads for six large kegs of the valley's strong red wine.

Then, in yet another display of his uncommon generosity, Torkel treated your scribe, the caravan crew, and several of his dwarf and troll clients to a feast of roast pig at the local inn...





(Well, one could easily have mistaken the lavish repast for a display of generosity, until Torkel subjected his captive guests to an interminable discourse on the unrecognized importance of the merchant class in the life of the province. Some of my dinner mates had apparently heard it before, for they seemed to instinctively reach for the wine jugs as soon as he raised his cup and launched into his address. By evening's end, all present—save the magnanimous merchant—wore the same droopy-eyed expression.)

...On the third day we followed the river south as it gradually widened. We continued along the well-worn path, the camels straining under the weight of the heavy wine casks, until we reached the small river port called New Parlainth. The town did not look very impressive at first, but then we came on the docks along the river's edge, where t'skrang rivermen had tied their paddle-wheelers and set out their wares. The exquisite aromas of trikella, ustander, pestain and other rare t'skrang spices filled the air, piles of spiced fish towered taller than a troll, finely detailed silks rippled in the breeze. Several of the boisterous lizard-men shouted greetings to Torkel, making offers of silver and gold coins, exotic clothing and jewelry, finely carved flutes, crying statues and chameleon rings and other t'skrang magical novelties in exchange for his wine casks.

Torkel, cunning merchant that he is, only smiled and nodded. After he sent the crew off to secure the camels and their cargo for the night, he explained that he would let the demand for his wine casks grow until the next day, when they would fetch twice the price. Then we made our way to a riverside tavern, where he treated me to a feast that surpassed even the previous evening's abundance.

(I excused myself, citing fatigue from the morning's travel, when Torkel began asking one of the t'skrang dancers if she had ever contemplated the vital contribution to cultural exchange made by Barsaive's merchants.)

...At midmorning of the fourth day, Torkel departed the port of New Parlainth in triumph. In an amazing stroke of good fortune, he said, he had made the chance acquaintance of a t'skrang dancer the previous evening—a dancer whose uncle just happened to possess the last remaining stock of genuine t'skrang kalydospheres in New Parlainth! Unwilling to risk the chance that another buyer might snatch up the precious wares the next morn, he had cleverly concluded an agreement with the dancer that same evening and gained possession of the magical treasures for a mere six casks of wine, two shields, a sword, and assorted merchandise.

Thus our caravan departed the t'skrang river port, our camels laden with 600 elemental-water balls that change color when shaken...

A DISCOURSE ON SECRET SOCIETIES

Within every society there exist small groups of people who share minority beliefs and values. In Barsaive, these groups take many forms and pursue many goals. Some are guilds, formed by craftsmen who share a common trade. Some are spiritual groups, drawn together by devotion to a particular Passion. Others consist of men and women attracted by the opportunity for profit or dissatisfied with the way of the world. Partly because they expect opposition, partly because exclusivity appeals to most people, and sometimes because their goals may harm the larger society, many such small organizations keep their existence secret. The information provided below regarding the following five secret societies came from many sources, some more reliable than others.

THE HAND OF CORRUPTION

Though the name might suggest it, the Hand of Corruption has no ties to the Horrors. This group believes that the Horrors have forever tainted and corrupted the world, and that to heal the world all life must begin anew. To make this happen, members of this group pledge to cleanse the world of all the Name-giver races, so that life may be reborn.

Our sources hint that the Hand of Corruption is organized into many layers, its members scattered through cities across Barsaive. Unfortunately, the travelers with whom we spoke could offer us little information beyond whispers and rumors.

THE KEYS OF DEATH

A group of assassins, the Keys of Death intend to spill enough blood to free Death. According to legend, the Passions imprisoned Death beneath Death's Sea, where it will remain until enough blood has been spilled in Barsaive to allow Death to sunder its shackles and escape. The Keys of Death offer their expert services across Barsaive, performing their speciality for anyone able to pay their price.

LIVING LEGEND CULTS

This type of group originated with small societies that promoted hero worship. Living legend cults grew from those groups who believed that the answers to meeting the new challenges of our world could be found in the legends of Barsaive's past. Each living legend cult takes as its focal point the legend of a hero or magic item from the past. For example, one living legend cult seeks Purifier, the sword that legend says is destined to slay the remaining Horrors in the world. Another group, the elven Seekers of the Heart, vow to undo the corruption of Blood Wood and return the Court of the Elven Queen to its past glories.

Though the members of most living legend cults seem harmlessly obsessed with certain legends, a few present a real danger. These extremists consider anyone not equally devoted to their chosen legend as an enemy of their work of trying to save the world. In a world as wondrously diverse as ours, their suspicions may even be accurate.

LIGHTBEARERS

The Lightbearers are dedicated to ridding the world of the Horrors and their dreadful legacy. They intend to bring light back to the world through the Passions, and so drive away the darkness of the Horrors. As with the Hand of Corruption, the Lightbearers cover their tracks so well that few people know anything of them save rumor; some even believe that they do not exist.

WHERE THE PEOPLES OF BARSAIVE DWELL

Though each of the Name-giver races contributes to Barsaivian culture, the influence of each race on a given area differs according to its numbers in that area. The province of Barsaive can be divided into three broad regions: the Kingdom of Throal, including its recently constructed cities; the lowlands, which include most of the province's jungles, the Serpent River, and so on; and the highlands, which include all the mountains and plateaus of the province. All Barsaivian cities outside of Throal lie in the lowlands; many smaller villages and towns lie in the highlands.

Each of the three regions contains the following percentage of Barsaive's people: Throal, 33 percent; lowlands, 50 percent; highlands, 17 percent. Note that *one-third* of the province's population lives in the mountain kingdom of Throal. Half the population lives in the lowlands, with half of this number residing in the cities. This means that the great lowland jungles of Barsaive support slightly more than a fourth of the province's population. Though the Scourge ended more than 80 years ago and we can now travel the land freely, most people, from habit or wisdom, prefer to cluster together.

ON THE NATURE OF MAGIC

We live in an age of magical thought. Because this age may end or the magic transmute into some other form, we have included an overview of our understanding of its workings in this guide to Barsaive. A reader desirous of specific discourses on the nature of magic may find them in numerous tomes covering that subject. I recommend the Thoughts Concordia by Vercian and The Art of Sword Magic by King Varulus I of Throal. Both of these books contributed to the following description of magic, as did theorists willing to explain to us their understanding of it.
—Inscribed by the Hand of Derrat, wizard of the City of Yistane

ON THE WIELDING OF MAGIC

There are many planes of existence beyond the one we see. Some, particularly the etheric plane, mirror our own world. These other planes are the source of magic in the universe, and the medium through which magical energy travels.

We use magic in two different ways: as magicians and as adepts. Though magicians learn to use magic as an adept Discipline, an essential distinction between adepts and magicians does exist. Understanding this distinction clarifies the two uses of magic.

ON THE PRACTICES OF MAGICIANS

Magicians wield magic by tapping magical forces and controlling them through spells. Such practitioners seek to understand their magic, and so whatever magical theory exists comes almost exclusively from their ranks.

Magicians can be identified by the colorful, ornately embroidered robes they wear. In the early days of the Scourge, people found it necessary to prove that they were free of the Horrors' taint. Magicians chose to do this by practicing the artisan skill of embroidery, constantly stitching and redesigning elaborate patterns on their robes. These patterns draw on all aspects of Barsaivian life in ways meaningful to the magician. What a magician stitches into his or her robes often reveals much about him. Sometimes the magician creates geometric patterns, such as linked golden triangles set against blue squares. Other magicians may choose more domestic designs: farmers toiling to raise their crops, a river flowing through fertile valleys, and so on. The intricate detail of these illustrations make the pictures seem to move slightly, as if with a life of their own.

Because magicians draw magic from the astral plane to weave their spells, they are particularly susceptible to the Horrors, which often exist on both the physical and etheric planes. These abominations constantly search for magicians tapping the astral plane's mystical forces, hoping to mark and so control an unwary victim.

As soon as magicians realized that the astral corruption that followed the Horrors had made it dangerous to draw magical energy directly into the world, they began using their robes and other objects to store their spells. This proved an unfortunate practice, however, because magicians lost spells when they lost the relevant object. Further research provided another solution to this problem: spell matrices.

On the Casting of Spells

When a magician wishes to cast a spell, he must create a pattern in astral space to represent that spell, which he can then draw into the physical world. Magicians learn to form such configurations of magical energy in the early stages of their Discipline training. The safest, most common way of drawing magic into the physical world is through the use of a spell matrix.

A spell matrix is an astral construct linked to the magician and designed to hold spell patterns. Once a magician forms a spell pattern and places it into a spell matrix (known as attuning), the magician can then draw the spell pattern from astral space, creating the spell's effects in the physical world.

For example, a magician casting a spell to produce a bolt of lightning must form a spell pattern to represent a lightning bolt. He draws the spell pattern into the physical world through the spell matrix and then directs the spell at his target. When the magical energy hits the target, it strikes the victim with the strength and violence of a bolt of lightning.

A magician can cast a spell without a spell matrix, but to do so requires that he draw the spell's energy though his own body. Because of the polluted nature of astral space, this puts the magician at risk of physical harm and also might show him to the Horrors as a beacon of energy on the astral plane.

The high magic levels in our world allow us to physically see the transfer of magical energy. A lightning bolt spell might, for example, look like the shadow of a lightning bolt as it travels through the air. Such shadows are often translucent and tinged with unusual colors.

ON THE PRACTICES OF ADEPTS

Any person who uses magic without casting spells is an adept of a Discipline. The nature of adept magic is obscure. Magicians consider adepts as lesser magic-users; adepts can spend their whole lives in ignorance of astral space and still perfect fantastic abilities that earn them the name of hero.

Even the most learned magicians, such as Ystan of Chorlath, can only suggest a comprehensive theory of the workings of adept magic. His theory has drawn the fewest objections, though some destractors suggest that Chorlath's explanation stands only because one cannot argue with a theory as amorphous as air. The following explanation appears in the introduction to his definitive work, *The Universe and the Arts Magical.*

"The universe is alive with magic. Our lives, the lives of the Name-givers, feed the magic; we give the universe form and meaning. Without the Name-givers, the universe is but an amalgamation of light, a planet, trees, animals. Life follows its course under such conditions, but there is no mystery, for there is no one to wonder at the universe. There are splendid sights, but no one to marvel at them. The universe may teem with life, but it has no meaning. Without the Name-givers, life has no passion, no love, no loss, no joy, no confusion. The universe itself longs to be filled with wonder, marvels, passion, love, loss, joy, and confusion, for these qualities make the universe feel appreciated.

"To maintain us Name-givers, the world's most rewarding form of life, the universe feeds us magic. A symbiotic relationship exists between the universe and the Name-givers, proving us at once part of and separate from it. As squirrels and trees are inside the universe, so are we. But we also stand outside the universe, aware of our place in it as squirrels and trees are not. As Name-givers, we are separate from one another and separate from the universe.

"The universe feeds with magic those most passionate about their lives, their emotions, their art. The universe feeds with magic those who challenge themselves with adventures, who challenge their own beliefs, who strive to become more than they were the day before. But the sustenance of magic carries a price. To truly thrive on the magic, one must give oneself completely to a Discipline. Many exist: archery, swordsmanship, thieving, sailing. Each Discipline serves as a metaphor for living. Focusing on one Discipline allows one to see one's relationship to the universe clearly, come to a better understanding of one's self, and reach the true potential of one's talents and abilities.

"A person who dedicates himself to practicing a Discipline and views his role in the universe through that Discipline has, in essence, Named himself. Such a one we call an adept. Many archers live in Barsaive, but not all archers are adepts. The ordinary archer knows how to bend a bow, may even have extraordinary shooting skill, but he does not see his occupation as a metaphor for his life. He does not understand his life through this metaphor. When the archer adept aims an arrow, he understands that he aims at every element of his life in the same way. Through careful aim, he can always strike his target. The thief adept does more than move silently or hide well in the shadows of night, as other thieves can. He knows that his silence and ability to wrap himself in shadows provide a metaphor for how he lives; silent and separate from his fellow beings, he remains unknown and unknowable. He cannot allow himself to trust others fully, nor by his very nature will people trust him fully, whether or not they know he is a thief.

"This is the way of the adept. Living fully within his Discipline forces the adept to see the universe in a starker light. Some consider this unrelieved, true vision limiting. But this narrowing of choices makes life's direction clearer. Without a Discipline, a person simply drifts according to the whims and goals of others. By contrast, the adept is bound to no force other than the universe."

ON THE NATURE OF MAGICAL THOUGHT

According to Ystan of Chorlath, the universe feeds the Name-givers magic so that we may experience its wonders. He goes on to say that all Name-givers use the magic of the universe, not only magicians and adepts. Though magicians and adepts have the most skill in using magic, the universe feeds magic to all the Name-givers, who in turn help shape the world.

Many scholars refer to this synergistic relationship as magical thought. The theory of magical thought states that the world is alive with magic. The Name-givers are part of the world, and its magic affects their actions, thoughts, and lives. The magic of the world influences the Name-givers, and under that influence the Name-givers begin to see the world differently. This altered view in turn affects the magic of the world and so creates a new magical world in which the Name-givers live and act.

ON THE WORKINGS OF MAGIC

The interaction between the magic of the universe and the Name-givers relies on a complex relationship between Names, Name-givers, pattern items, and knowledge. Those interested in a scholarly study of magical theory should read the *Writings of Jaron* in the Library of Throal. For the layman, we explain these ideas below.

The Nature of Names and Name-givers

The Name-givers referred to by Ystan of Chorlath are the people of Barsaive, all the intelligent and sentient beings who Name themselves and the world around them. Any living being, place, or object can be Named. And once Named, it is tied to the universe magically. For example, a horse is not tied magically to the universe, but a horse Named Sharrer the Swift is. A stone is not, but the Varness Stone is. A prison is not, but the Pit in Blood Wood is.

People who find, identify, and study threads connected to people, places, and objects learn important, powerful knowledge about those people, places, and objects; they learn the true pattern of the thing they study. When the person who researched the being, place, or object uses magic with or against the being, place, or object, the knowledge of the true pattern enhances the magic, and the adept or magician performs it more effectively.

The most difficult aspect of Naming for a young adept or magician to understand is the distinction between two related objects, places, or people. For example, if an adept studies threads connected to the Kingdom of Throal, this information does not make magic cast within the Hall of Records in Throal more effective, for the following reason.

Each Named place can be viewed as nesting within another Named place and containing still other Named places, much like a series of boxes within boxes. For example, Throal rests within Barsaive, and the Hall of Records lies within Throal. The information an adept possesses about a place enhances his magic until he leaves his current box and moves to either a broader or more specific box.

If a magician has studied the magical knowledge connected to the Name of the Kingdom of Throal, that knowledge helps him interact magically with certain aspects of the kingdom while walking through its unNamed corridors. To gain that same advantage in the Hall of Records, however, the magician must study the threads of that place, because he has entered a new Named place within Throal. If he leaves Throal, travels to an unNamed place and uses magic there, knowledge about Barsaive makes his actions more effective, because the Name of Barsaive encompasses the pattern of the unNamed area.

Object patterns nest together in much the same way. For example, the Bell of Vanthairn in the Tower of Challi has a pattern separate from the tower, which has a pattern separate from the village in which it stands, and so on.

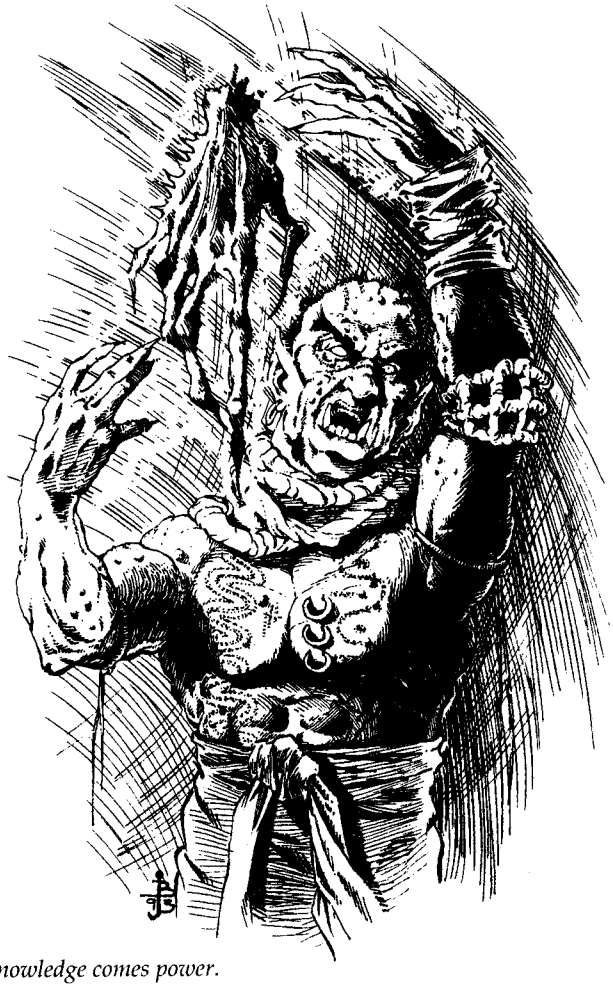
The Name-givers themselves provide an exception to this general rule. Name-givers can rarely be Named as groups; the life force of each individual is too strong to be dominated by an arbitrary Naming. Though 15 orks may ride together as comrades under the banner of Yoarkall's Mercenaries, the name itself does not enhance a magician's or adept's power to work magic for or against those orks. Instead, each individual ork is magically connected. However, certain rituals allow groups to Name themselves en masse. And despite the risk inherent in creating a Name and the pattern that come with it, many adventuring groups Name themselves to heighten their magic and thus their abilities.

Knowledge and Pattern Items

Each piece of knowledge about a being, place, or object is tied to an object, called a pattern item. For example, the infamous ork thief Garlthik One-Eye was so named because he lost one eye to an evil magician, who used the eye as a source of knowledge about Garlthik. As a part of him, the eye was one of Garlthik's pattern items; because the magician had successfully studied it, his magic became more effective against Garlthik.

A stone from a castle wall serves as a pattern item, allowing a magician to better understand that castle. Knowledge of the bones of the first animal to enter Blood Wood would allow a magic-user to cast more effective magic in the wood. The diary of a wizard serves as one of that wizard's pattern items and so on.

Pattern items are rarely so obvious as the above examples, however. Those who wish to use pattern items to enhance their magic against a specific enemy or to gain an advantage when casting a spell in a specific place must invest a great deal of time. First, the magic user must discover the objects that form the needed pattern items. Depending on the magical significance of the being, place, or object, each pattern item will contain a different amount of knowledge, providing different numbers of threads. Except in unusual circumstances, even the most diligent research rarely reveals more than one item related to a person or place, and few people ever know all of the pattern items connected to a person or place.



—From the journal of Ketsh Ara Shet, wizard apprentice

My master says it is simple: the Pattern reflects the whole. It shapes it, defines it and maintains it. The physical structure defines something here in the natural world. But its pattern, which bridges astral space, lies behind it and within it, defining its physical structure and its mystical properties as well. Patterns are shaped by their interaction with the magical forces of the world. A pattern that has been exposed to few magical forces will be simple and lack power. One that has ridden waves of magical force will be bright and powerful. He says this as though it were as obvious as the city wall. I have thought for years now on what he says, but it is only within the past few days that I am finally beginning to understand.

Imagine if you can, that patterns could talk. (Oh that they could! My efforts would be so much simpler!) What would they tell you? Like a person, they would tell you of the people they've known, the places they've seen, the things they've done. Patterns that have no tales to tell are dull and lifeless. They have been nowhere, seen nothing, and therefore have nothing special about them. But the patterns of heroes and magicians, the patterns of the items they carry and the places they affect—these have wondrous tales to tell! The greater the tale the more powerful the pattern. Like tales, though, patterns grow with the telling. A sword that participates in a wondrous deed today might not manifest powers based on that event for some time.

The tales of all things are hidden away within their patterns. We cannot ask a pattern to tell us where it has been, what has it done, or who aided in its creation. We can, however, weave threads that reveal the tales within. That weaving brings revelation, understanding, and knowledge. And with knowledge comes power.

Once he has found the pattern item, the user must weave a magical thread to it. Because the magic-user must physically possess the item in order to weave a thread, this step often requires him to either hire adventurers to find and retrieve the item or to search for it personally. Because a pattern item is almost always a personal possession, this step may be difficult to accomplish. For example, the wizard Tylaser discovered that his heart was one of his pattern items. Aware of how vul-

nerable this made him, he devoted years to creating a spell that would allow him to remove his heart from his body and hide it away in an orichalcum jar. I also know that the Elven Queen has obtained two pattern items of Blood Wood and keeps them under guard in her castle.

Each time a person learns more about a pattern item, he or she can weave a stronger thread, which makes the magic more effective against the being or object or within the boundary of the place. For example, if a troubadour adept studies a pattern item for Blood Wood and weaves a thread to the item, the next time he sings a song using magic while in Blood Wood, the magic in the song will be more powerful.

Learning your own pattern items is as time-consuming as learning others. I know two of mine, but only because two separate people found my pattern items and tried to use them against me. During my struggle to avoid their hostile magics, I acquired the objects and hid them away. There was no point in destroying them; we are all tied to the universe by a certain number of threads. If a pattern item is destroyed, the loose thread simply attaches itself to another object. By keeping my known pattern items, I have won a little safety. Sending the threads back out into the wide world would deprive me of this security.

—*Derrat*

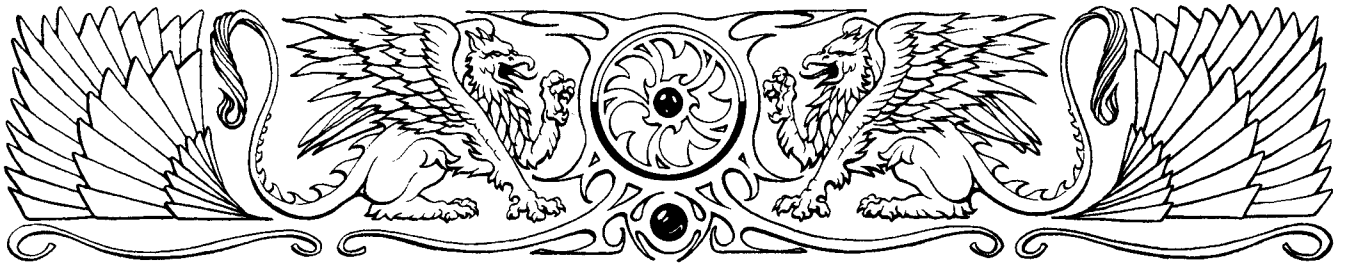
ON THE NATURE OF MAGICAL ELEMENTS

The world's magic flows through the Name-giver races, through the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we walk upon. Though magic lives and breathes in every particle of the world, people can manipulate magic more easily if they have access to its basic elements of air, earth, fire, water, and wood. These magical elements can be mined from places where the physical world meets the astral plane and distilled into base magical substances.

A DISCOURSE ON ELEMENTAL PLANES

Astral space includes many different planes of existence. The five elemental planes—air, earth, fire, water, and wood—are each a separate universe within astral space. Unlike our plane of existence, which balances these elements, each elemental plane belongs to one element alone. For example, the elemental plane of fire roars with constant flames. Little solid ground exists in it, for this plane cannot tolerate earth. Water sometimes appears, but immediately evaporates. The elemental plane of earth is a nearly solid mass of rock interrupted by occasional small pockets of air or water or fire. Only the strange creatures who live there and are suited for traveling through stone can pass through this plane.

The elemental planes support life forms, but because these need their own special environment to survive, these life forms rarely appear in our world and protect their own most fiercely.



Where Planes Meet

According to recent research, the planes of astral space apparently move "closer" together at certain times in history. This description is a metaphor, however, for the astral planes do not take up physical space. Yet, in some sense the elemental planes and our world meet, allowing creatures from the elemental plane to enter our world and allowing us to reach into the elemental planes. For example, the Death's Sea offers many doorways to the elemental plane of fire. Because this fiery ocean so closely resembles the elemental planes of fire, the strange creatures that inhabit that plane can survive on ours in that one place. The same is true for water elementals in the Serpent River, earth elementals in the deep caverns of Barsaive's mountains, and air elementals in the sky over the province. Because the natives of our world are not suited to the environments of these other planes, there is little reason to travel to them bodily, for death surely awaits. However, we often create doorways between planes by artificial means in order to mine the magical elements of the elemental planes.

ON THE GATHERING OF MAGICAL ELEMENTS

If care is taken, it is possible to mine each of the five magical elements—air, earth, fire, water, and wood—from the environments corresponding to each element. Elemental air is mined, or gathered, from the sky; elemental fire, from Death's Sea; and so on.

The magical elements do not actually exist on our plane, but share our world with the elemental plane of their nature. Thus, the elemental fire in the Death's Sea exists at once in the molten rock of our world, but also in the elemental plane of fire.

Gathering each element requires tearing holes in the fabric separating the elemental planes and our world. This process works differently for each element. For example, Death's Sea is connected to the plane of elemental fire through the law of similarity. When a charge of elemental water is dropped into the sea, the force of the magical explosion rips a hole in the elemental plane of fire, freeing shards of that element. Miners then capture the floating magical element in nets lined with orichalcum. I have never seen any other element mined and have found these individuals quite unwilling to speak of their methods. I can hazard a guess, however, that the relationships between the elements determine the ways in which we may gather them. So complex are these relationships that theorists are still determining them.

Orichalcum is a unique magical material produced when all five elements interact in a certain, precise way. Depending on how the orichalcum is made, it can conduct magic or contain it. For example, magical elements are usually stored in sealed orichalcum jars for safety. A pliable material, orichalcum can be pounded thin or spread out over large areas. A small amount of orichalcum can, for example, be shaped into thin threads, which are then woven into the hemp nets used to gather magical elements.

Many ruined kaers and citadels contain stores of orichalcum and other magical elements used as protection against the Horrors. Because magical elements bring a high price to those who sell them, adventurers willingly enter ruined citadels and kaers to retrieve and sell these stores.

ON THE LAWS OF MAGIC

The Law of Contagion and the Law of Similarity govern the use of the magic flowing through the fabric of our universe. These laws lie at the core of magical thinking. Magicians must use them when casting a spell, but they influence many other aspects of our life as well.

The Law of Contagion states that once a connection has been forged between two things, they remain connected forevermore. A dragon's scale is always part of that dragon, even if he sheds it. The place of his birth is a part of a Name-giver's legend until the end of his days, even if he journeys far away from it.

The Law of Similarity states that those things that look alike are alike; things that behave the same way are the same. This law allows airships to float on air using magic, for they look and act like ships that float on water.

Though the magical elements and orichalcum forged from all five of them can be used to circumvent the Laws of Contagion and Similarity, it often takes years to find the proper proportions of elemental magic needed to achieve various effects. Many people have, for example, tried to create ships able to sail through land as boats sail through water and air, but no one has yet succeeded. The combination of elemental earth and other magics needed to accomplish such a feat have yet to be discovered.

ON TRAVEL IN THE LAND OF BARSAIVE

I somehow earned the distinct privilege of compiling the information on travel in Barsaive. I have always enjoyed traveling, even under the most difficult conditions, and working on this part of our book gave me the opportunity to travel (free of charge, I must add!) by land, water, and air. Researching by doing rather than by taking someone else's word for the experience may sound like a sensible method of discovering the truth of any given matter, but not all of my fellow scholars enjoyed this luxury. For example, Merrox himself did not have the opportunity to visit Thera to research that chapter of this guide.

Describing travel in Barsaive brought me many delights, especially the opportunity to study at length the original maps of our province drawn by Shantaya Nightstar. Using these maps, exquisite in every detail, made my task much simpler and more satisfying. I now understand why travelers over all of Barsaive praise the work of this great explorer. Legends say that Shantaya ventured beyond the borders of Barsaive and mapped those regions with equal care and thoroughness. If this legend is true, these maps have a home in some other place than the Royal Library of Throal. According to the same legend, Shantaya is a descendant of the ancient elven kingdom of Shosara, proclaimed forever sundered from the Elven Court centuries ago by Queen Alachia's predecessor, Queen Failla. If Shosara still exists, perhaps Shantaya's legendary maps reside there.

It is my devout hope that Merrox will send me in search of these additional maps as my next task.

—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, archivist and scribe of the Hall of Records

ON THE DANGERS AND DELIGHTS OF JOURNEYING

Travel is an unending concern for all merchants, traders, explorers, and adventurers who live and ply their trades in Barsaive. Even with our command of magic, travel in Barsaive remains a perilous task at best. Villages, town, and cities lie far apart, and traveling from one place to another requires long journeys. The weather, landscape, plant and animal life force travelers to be cautious, as does the hazard of encountering a Horror.

Those who must travel across Barsaive can choose one of three methods: by land, by air, or by river.

ON TRAVELING OVER LAND

Most Barsaivians travel over land either on foot or mounted. In the interests of safety and to avoid losing their way, land travelers usually follow roads and established trade routes.

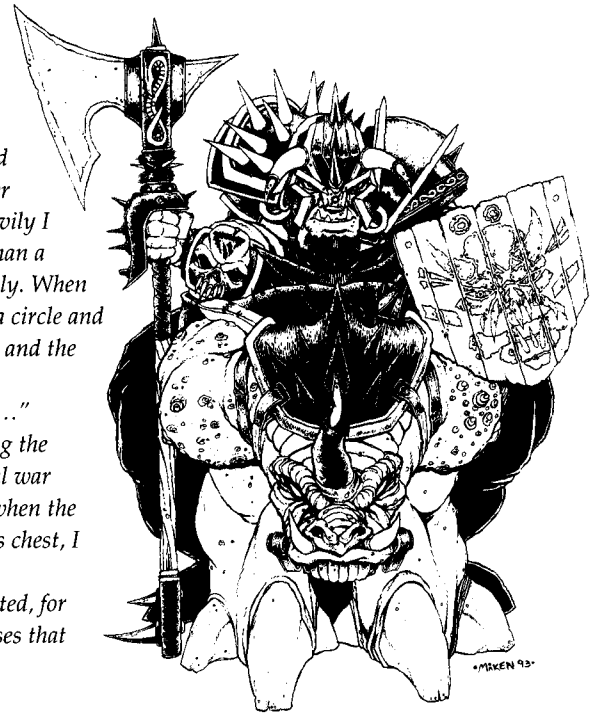
Those who journey by land normally travel for eight to ten hours each day, including stops for rest and meals. Travel during daylight is much preferred. Travel by night increases the chance of becoming lost or of succumbing to attacks by fearsome creatures and Horrors.

ON DETERMINING SAFE ROUTES AND PLACES

Because most of Barsaive remains unexplored, travelers with legitimate itineraries consider only the areas immediately surrounding most cities and a few established trading routes to be safe. Accidentally wandering away from these safe areas or deliberately traveling off the main paths can prove hazardous.

Small villages and farming towns surround most major cities, most no further away than a three hours' ride. These towns supply the city with foodstuffs in exchange for protection, usually regular patrols and quick defense by available armed forces, and favorable trade agreements. As the towns lie close to the city, brief trips between the city and the farming communities are common. Heavily settled and well-protected relative to the rest of Barsaive, the land between major cities and outlying villages offers travelers safe passage, but even these areas contain desolate and dangerous spots.

Other safe areas follow Barsaive's well-traveled trade routes, which connect great cities with trading ports along the Serpent River. The landmarks for these routes change occasionally, based on the most recent travelers' tales of their encounters. However, every trade route crosses unexplored regions; travelers who stray as little as a thousand yards off the trade route may stumble into unmapped regions and areas unexplored even before the Scourge.



—From the diary of Aurance, swordmaster of Baku

...We were three days out of Travar when the storm hit us. Gray clouds had been drifting across the sky all morning, and by mid-afternoon they had formed a black mass that blotted out the sun. The torrent began with a crack of thunder that reverberated across the plains, and within minutes rain was falling so heavily I could barely make out the man in front of me. Soon the trail became no more than a pool of mud, but the merchant insisted we keep moving, so we pushed on blindly. When the wagons could no longer negotiate the knee-deep muck, we drew them into a circle and stopped to wait out the tempest. Hours passed before the rains finally subsided and the horizon revealed itself again.

"Aurance! Aurance, we've lost the trail, damn the Passions! We've lost the..."

The scorchers ripped through us like the claws of a mighty dragon, scattering the wagons and sending sprays of crimson and severed limbs into the air. Guttural war cries and the pitiful screams of dying men blended into a horrible music, and when the man beside me fell to the ground, clutching the spear shaft protruding from his chest, I grabbed his sword and began swinging wildly at any movement within range.

I cannot tell you how long I carried on so or how long that terrible night lasted, for the next thing I recall was waking to the sound of vultures tearing at the corpses that lay all around me...

On the Recognition of Distance Markers

As trade routes proliferated across Barsaive, King Varulus III saw the wisdom of marking those routes used most often by merchants traveling to and from Throal. These markers would also help travelers find the dwarf kingdom.

The route markers look like small stone monoliths standing some six to seven feet high. Triangular and pointed at the top, each side of the post shows the distance in days' travel on foot and by horse to Throal and other significant cities in Barsaive, such as Iopos, Travar, Haven, and Urupa. The markers also bear the symbol of the kingdom of Throal. Travelers can use these markers in conjunction with maps to plot distance and direction, much as one might use the maps created by the legendary traveler Shantaya. I describe the method for using Shantaya's maps further on in this section.

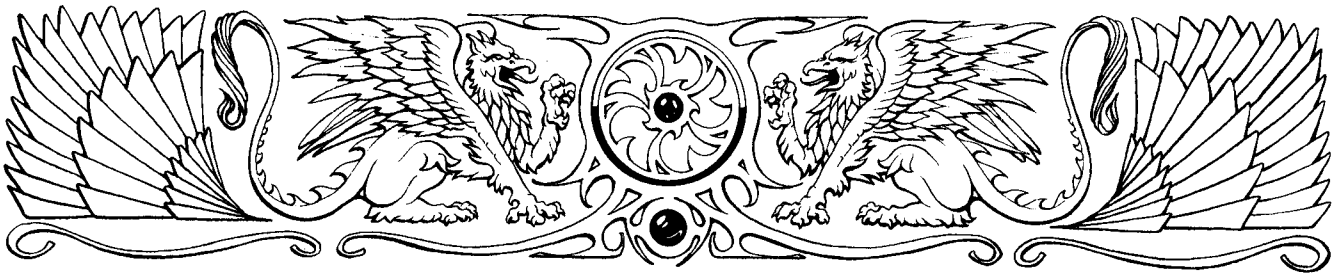
ON THE PERILS OF LAND TRAVEL

In addition to the expected hazards of traveling outside areas considered safe, land travel in Barsaive holds other dangers. Trouble can also befall the traveler who loses his way, encounters Theran slavers, or runs across hostile villages.

Regarding the Hazards of Getting Lost

Any number of circumstances can cause travelers to lose their way. A fierce storm might force them to travel in the wrong direction, or a small caravan might lose its bearings while making a detour to avoid a band of ork scorchers. Because so much of Barsaive's landscape changed beyond recognition during the Scourge, even the newly installed route markers may not prevent travelers from getting lost, especially if they wander through areas inadequately mapped before the Scourge.

Losing one's way poses enormous risks for the unlucky traveler. Adventurers may roam certain areas of Barsaive for years without encountering civilized settlements, and many small towns and villages are so isolated that they know nothing of the nearest village, let alone landmarks or trade routes.



On the Dangers of Trespass Among Strangers

Though the people of many kaers and citadels chose to come out of hiding long ago, and have reestablished their villages and towns under the bright light of day, travelers can still find sealed kaers and citadels. The residents of some are dead, while others still live in fear, trapped by Horrors or unaware that the Scourge is over.

Many small towns and villages rebuilt near their kaers, using their former home as a shelter in emergencies or for extra storage. Most communities have simply let their kaers fall into disrepair, however, hoping that memories of the Scourge will disintegrate along with the kaer's walls. Most citadels have removed the domes that shielded them from the Horrors, and these proud castles and strongholds stand as they did before the Scourge. Despite the people of Barsaive's bold steps into the new world, however, the fear brought by the Scourge still lives in their hearts.

Between their terror of being Horror-touched and their isolation, the people of small villages and towns regard strangers with suspicion. If travelers wish to remain safe, they must understand the reasons for the hostility shown them and be prepared to answer probing questions with politeness and patience.

On the Depredations of Theran Slavers

Travelers in southeastern Barsaive face a danger unique to that region. The Therans who control the area hire mercenary bands to roam the countryside, capturing unwary travelers and hapless townspeople from the surrounding villages to serve as slaves in Thera. Though slaving has declined in the years since the Theran War, slavery dragnets still imperil travelers in the region near those imperial outposts. On rare occasions, Theran slavers range as far north as the Delaris Mountains and as far east as the Twilight Peaks.

A DISCOURSE ON MAPS

—Letter from the merchant Dollwan to his son.

My son,

As your mother informed you, I am not pleased with your decision to form your own caravan and establish a trade route to the t'skrang of Lake Vors in partnership with this guide you call Welis. I can already hear you mutter that you led three caravans from Kratas to Bartertown and are well versed in the ways and means of commerce, and doubtless you will tell me that your friend Welis has great knowledge of the pathways through the mountains of Tylon and the plains beyond. Well, my son, your fine words matter nothing, and I shall tell you why.

The route to Kratas that you have so bravely traversed has been well established for more than 20 years. Posting houses and towns dot the route. An injured man can quickly be delivered into the hands of a questor of Garlen, not left to die in a desolate spot along the road. Break a wagon's axle and a wheelwright arrives in half a day. Lame beasts can easily be exchanged for fit and hale animals, and the lances of Throal hold scorchers at bay.

Nothing of this ilk exists in the wilds that you wish to travel. You will need to live on what you carry and protect yourself from man, beast, and Horror. I question you on the thoroughness of your preparations. Have you food for a hundred days, a questor of Garlen, huttawas, horses, herders, drivers, guards led by warriors of at least the Second Circle? And will the profit you make exceed the cost?

I also question your guide, Welis. Does he have a Sextant of Shantaya? Does his rutter contain knowledge of the land as it is, or only as it was in the past? Can he find Vestrial at his darkest height even with the sun overhead, or must he sight the star at night? Does he know which scorcher tribes will grant safe passage for a flask of white water crystals, and which tribes desire blood for their dark magics?

You are well beyond the age of consent, so I cannot demand that you give up this foolishness. But listen to my questions and answer them truthfully.

May Chorrolis guide you in your paths.

To reach their destinations and avoid dangerous areas, travelers over land need a map. The province of Barsaive covers great distances, but all maps of the province show many areas left unexplored. In addition, the Scourge changed the land drastically by obliterating many towns and cities, forcing some to rebuild elsewhere and destroying many landmarks such

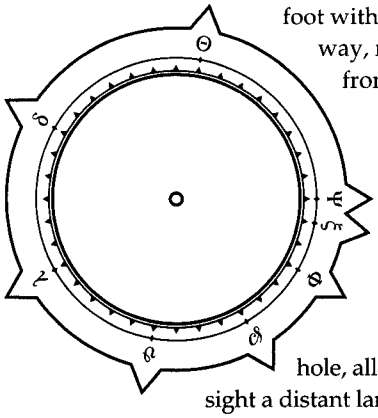
as rivers, lakes, forests, and so on. Even the famous voyage of the *Earthdawn* made no provision for mapping Barsaive, and so no reliable maps have existed since the Scourge. Most maps only show the best-known landmarks still in existence, such as the larger mountain ranges, the ruins of Parlainth, the Theran outposts at Vivane and Sky Point, the Serpent River, Death's Sea, the great cities of Iopos, Travar, Jerris, and Kratas, and the kingdom of Throal. Some more costly maps also show the main trade routes across the province, but most of these maps are commissioned by traders and few can be found for sale.

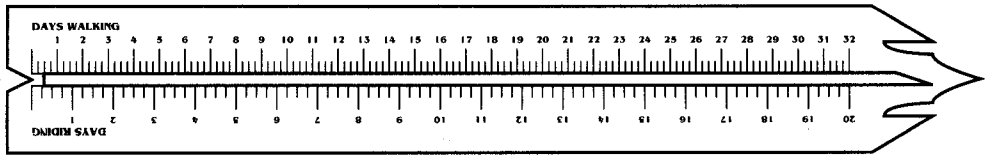
Most mapmakers in Barsaive draw their maps for use with a device called Shantaya's sextant. Shantaya Nightstar was an elven troubadour who traveled the province and mapped it in the years before the Scourge. To make her work easy for others to use and copy, she developed a device to chart distance and bearings using the maps she drew. By aligning the sextant with certain landmarks and using the constellations on the margins of the map, a traveler can determine the bearing and distance in days walking or riding to almost any place in Barsaive. Also, by sighting the stars at night with the sextant, a traveler can determine his location. The most prominent landmarks on Shantaya's maps include Throal, Sky Point, Blood Wood (named Wyrm Wood on her map), the Death's Sea, and the Dragon Mountains.

ON THE USE OF SHANTAYA'S SEXTANT AND MAPS

When used together, Shantaya Nightstar's maps and sextant can guide travelers even through trackless wilderness. Travelers most often use Shantaya's Sextant with maps that do not show all of Barsaive's important cities and landmarks. Those lucky enough to find and rich enough to afford detailed maps can make their way from place to place simply by following the star groups in the proper phases. For example, on a map that shows both Throal and Kratas, one can easily see that to travel from Throal to Kratas, a traveler need only follow Floranuus at sundown for 15 days walking or 9 days riding.

For reaching places not marked on maps, Shantaya's sextant becomes invaluable. From verbal or written directions provided by travelers, mapmakers can create instructions for arriving at the same location using the Sextant and Shantaya's maps. For example, if a traveler began his journey in Jerris and traveled for a certain number of days on foot with the star group of the Passion Raggok in sight, then stumbled over a tiny kaer along the way, mapmakers could provide directions for using Shantaya's sextant to reach that same kaer from anywhere else in Barsaive.





Shantaya's sextant consists of two parts: the astrolobe and the rod.

The astrolobe is a metal disk with a hole in its center. A sighting arm pivots around this hole, allowing the traveler to sight the stars in the same manner that a surveyor's transit is used to sight a distant landmark. By aligning two or more sightings to the map, a traveler can find his exact location.

At irregular intervals around the perimeter of the disk are marked eight directions, which represent the eight sane Passions. The constellation devoted to Garlen is not used, because she is always used to align a traveler's map. Prior to the Scourge, the astrobles included directions that utilized the Mad Passions as well, but such astrobles are never used in our own day.

Each interval between the directions is larger than the previous one. The user aligns these directions with landmarks to determine the direction of travel to his intended destination.

The rod is a long, rectangular piece of thin metal marked along both edges. These marks indicate, according to the scale of Shantaya's maps, the distance to various destinations in days walking and riding. The center of the rectangle is cut out to serve as a frame for the destination.

Shantaya drew her maps specifically to work with the sextant. They begin as standard maps drawn to a specific scale, but are then embellished with a series of concentric circles that represent distances from Throal in increments of 11 days' walking each. These circles help travelers judge distances with a quick glance at the map.

The second set of marks that distinguishes Shantaya's maps from others are twelve straight lines originating at Throal that divide the map into twelve wedges. A representation of one of the Passions and a star group associated with that Passion appears in each wedge. At some point in the past, perhaps originating with Shantaya, a specific group of stars was ascribed to each Passion and considered to symbolize some aspect of that Passion. One of these star groups appears over the horizon in each of the twelve directions and serves as a navigation point for travelers who know their directions but do not have a map. Travelers can judge their course more precisely by journeying toward a Passion star group at one of three phases of the day: sundown, midnight, and sunrise.

By performing a minor ritual, skilled guides can use the astrolobe to determine their exact location without actually taking a sighting on a star. Taking the map, the master guide places the center of the astrolobe on the marginal representation of a Passion. He then turns the sighting arm until it stops and inscribes a line along the arm onto the map. He then places the astrolobe on another Passion, turns the sighting arm, and inscribes a second line. The point at which the two lines meet is the place where the guide is standing.

Using the maps and sextant, a traveler can reach any destination from a known location by following a simple set of instructions. A traveler in Urupa wishing to go to a kaer near Parlainth can find his way by aligning Upandal with Parlainth and traveling along Mynbruje's setting for five days. To find the direction of Mynbruje's setting, the traveler places the astrolobe on the map at Urupa and aligns the sighting arm with Upandal. He then aligns Upandal with Parlainth, and draws a line along the direction of Mynbruje's setting position. Using the rod along this direction, he can find the kaer's exact location on the map.

ON THE JOYS AND DANGERS OF RIVER TRAVEL

Those who must travel great distances often arrange for transport down the Serpent River that crosses the length of Barsaive. Because few ordinary citizens own boats, most travelers must buy passage on a t'skrang riverboat.

At this writing, passage on a t'skrang riverboat costs an average of five silver pieces per person per day. Most ship captains demand full payment before beginning the voyage, though some accept partial payment in advance with the remainder due upon reaching the traveler's destination. Though the captain of my ship did not do so with me, I saw her charge certain passengers more than the average price, then encourage the passenger to bargain for the sheer joy of the exchange. Mounted travelers can arrange to transport their mounts on the same craft, but must pay an additional five silver pieces per day for the animal.

Travelers determined to reach their destination but short on ready coin may pay for their passage by working as a crew member during the voyage. I traveled this way, wishing to help my t'skrang hosts with the work of the ship. Each day that a passenger works for the crew earns him an average of three silver pieces, though pay rates are negotiable based on the person's skills. Instead of paying coin, some captains simply exchange passage for the traveler's time and labor. As I did, a passenger can usually work off most or all of the cost of his trip in this manner.

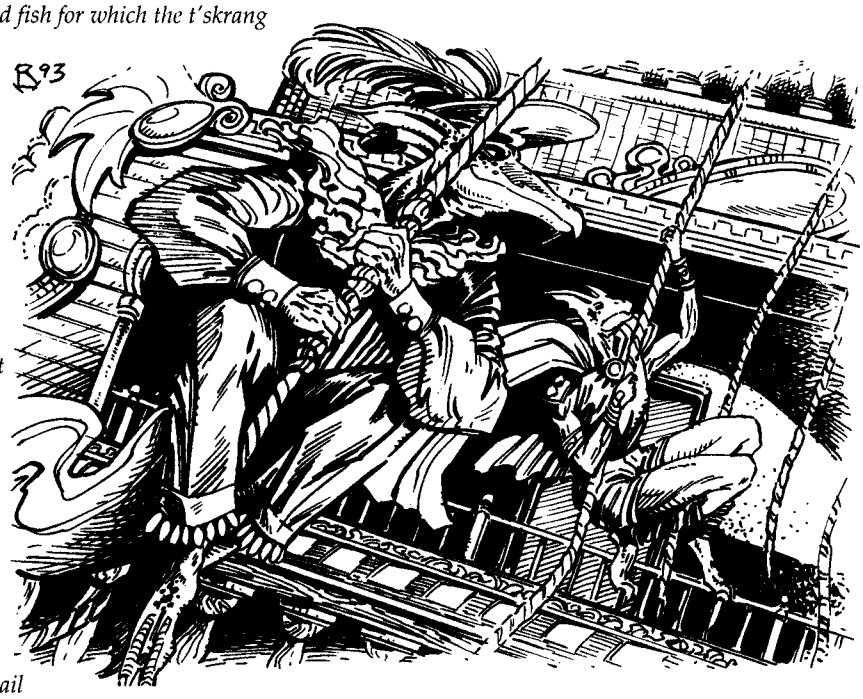
Swift and riverworthy, t'skrang riverboats cover vast distances in the 16 hours per day that they travel, stopping all along the river to deliver and take on goods and passengers. Most riverboats sail through the night without stopping, laying over at ports until morning only if night sailing would take the boat past its destination.

CONCERNING ACTS OF PIRACY

Pirates also travel the Serpent River, attacking riverboats that carry passengers or any kind of cargo. Passengers who help fight off these marauders often receive a partial refund of their passage payment from a grateful captain.

—From the journal of Val, troubadour of Klestra

. . .Gyllina and I set out this morning aboard the Pride of Upandal. Our captain, Yrogerg, sniggered when I offered to lend the crew a hand, and so after a quick breakfast of the spiced fish for which the t'skrang are so rightly famous, I climbed to the top deck of the Pride to better enjoy the beautiful morning. From my perch, the dark blue waters of the Serpent seemed to dance with a life of their own, and I began to understand the almost mystical awe the river inspires among the river folk.



Suddenly, the roar of fire-cannon drowned out the gentle splashing of the Pride's paddle-wheel. Startled, I peered over the edge of the deck and saw the t'skrang crew swinging about on the Pride's pole lines, their swords flashing as they grappled with the crew of a broken-down riverboat that had pulled alongside our craft.

My heart nearly stopped when I saw Gyllina in the clutches of a pirate.

"Val! Val!" she cried out as the lizard-man leapt to the pirate vessel.

I grabbed the nearest pole line and was halfway to the paddlewheeler when a t'skrang tail caught me in the side of the head and I fell into the wine-dark waters of the Serpent. . .

A DISCOURSE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF RIVERBOATS

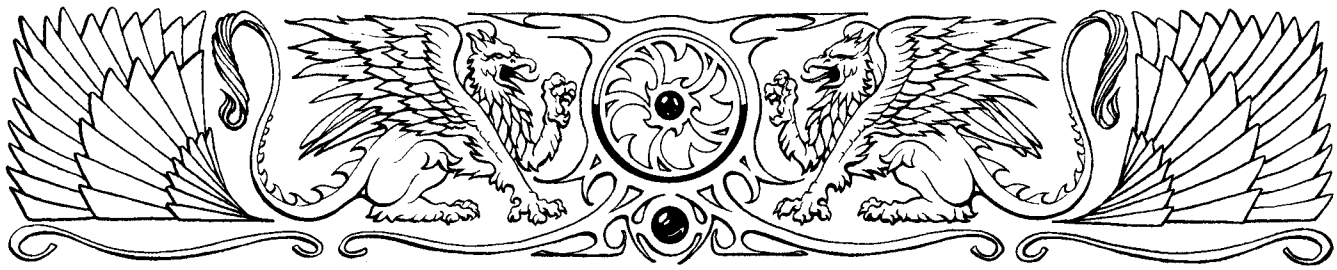
A t'skrang riverboat has five decks; one lower deck, three upper decks, and an aft castle from which the captain commands the ship.

The lower deck fills the flat, wide bottom of the riverboat; on it are stored the ship's supplies. The three upper decks, covering half the riverboat's length, hold the crew quarters, the ship's cargo, and the fire cannons. The cargo holds have large doors cut into the side of the riverboat, from which wide gangplanks are lowered during loading and unloading. Because the plank lies at a steeper angle against the uppermost deck, the crew stores lighter cargo items on the highest deck and the heaviest items on the lower deck.

The mid-decks are terraced in such a way that the exterior walls are set back a few yards from the ship's edge. The entire surface of the ship bristles with sturdy poles attached to hinged braces; from each pole hangs a length of rope. To move around the ship, t'skrang sailors grab the end of a rope and swing out over the water, then arc back toward the ship. If this swing leaves the sailor short of his destination, he grabs another rope and swings further. Though the interior of the ship provides corridors and stairs leading to every part of the vessel, the t'skrang prefer to swing around the ship—even if the trip takes longer.

Fire cannons stand along the decks and on the roof of the topside. First used hundreds of years ago when the first Theran Empire dominated Barsaive, the fire cannons' roaring explosions captured the imaginations of the excitable, spectacle-loving t'skrang. The cannons are fixed in position, forcing the crew to turn the entire ship in order to aim them. As one might expect, t'skrang crews quickly become expert at maneuvering in a fight.

The aft castle is a large room elevated on stilts a few yards above the top deck. Windows line the bridge and provide a clear view of the river in all directions. The controls for the elemental fire engine and the ship's rudders are in the bridge, allowing the captain to determine where the ship goes and how fast it travels.



Methods of Propulsion

Unlike any other vessel in Barsaive, t'skrang riverboats do not use sails or oars to move through the river. To my knowledge, not even the Therans possess anything as extraordinary as the t'skrang fire engines and giant paddle wheels.

The fire engine is generally housed in a large room at the stern of the lower deck, and consists of a large metal chamber with one wheel on either side. A large wooden arm attaches to each wheel and extends past the rear of the ship.

> The Therans always dismiss the achievements of native Barsaivians. They desire to make us all seem utterly insignificant.
> —Vellunium, captain of the Breeton II

The large, cylinder-shaped paddle wheel sits above the water on an axle, the large slats of wood fastened to the edge of the cylinder and angled as if radiating from the center of the cylinder resting in the water.

The arms protruding from the fire engine are attached to either end of the cylinder shape. As the wheels of the fire engine turn, they pull and push on these arms, and the arms pull and push on the paddle wheel. This motion spins the paddle wheel around its axle. As the wheel turns, the planks consecutively sink into the water and push against it. This pushing forces the riverboat forward or backward, depending on the direction in which the wheel is turning.

Different traditions describe the origins of the t'skrang knowledge of fire engines. Theran scholars suggest that the original fire engine was an ancient artifact from a time before our recorded history. They claim the t'skrang imitated the combination of engineering and magic by accident, and contend that the t'skrang have never applied the knowledge to anything else because they do not understand it.

The t'skrang themselves disagree about the source of their fire engines. Some believe that a questor of Upandal created the device centuries ago. According to the story, the power of the Passion Upandal so filled the questor's being that he was touched by madness. It is said that no Name-giver can begin to comprehend the complex and wonderful ideas that Upandal possesses. Driven by his madness, the questor constructed the fire engine, a device that combined mechanical ingenuity and a great deal of magic. This first engine powered the first riverboat and set the t'skrang on the path to become Barsaive's most skilled sailors and traders.

Other t'skrang believe that several t'skrang villages together created the device, working under the guidance of Upandal. The Passion was pleased by their ingenuity and willingness to cooperate in this creative process and ensured that this engine would succeed. When the marvelous device was completed, Upandal showed them how to attach it to their riverboats, and they grew rich from the trade the miraculous engine brought them.

> Historians reading this must realize that the t'skrang created the fire engine and paddle wheel long before the city of Thera was founded, and many centuries before our province was called Barsaive.
> —Merrox

With their newfound speed and mobility, the t'skrang prospered. Their battles also grew more destructive, for they could maneuver more quickly. According to a popular t'skrang tale, some of the Passions became jealous of the devotion to Upandal inspired by the fire engines and told Upandal that he must destroy his work. Upandal refused, and Chorrolis, Passion of trade, sided with him. This tale provides the only hint that the Passions could fight among themselves before madness took three of them during the Scourge.

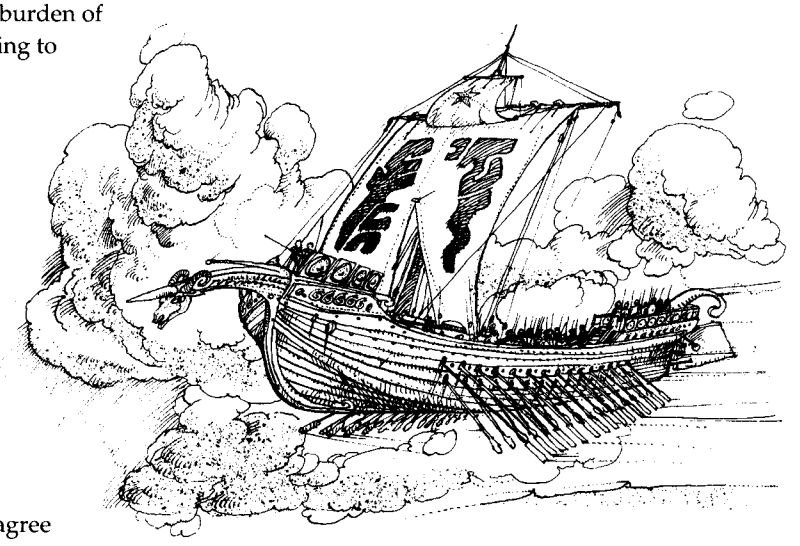
The jealous Passions swore to destroy the t'skrang if Upandal did not destroy the fire engines. Now Upandal loved both the engines and the t'skrang who had worked so hard to build them, for it is Upandal's nature to love the objects made as much as those who fashion them. He agreed that the fire engines could be dangerous and proposed a compromise. The t'skrang would live and keep the engines attached to their riverboats, but no one would ever be able to build another engine of that kind for any other use. As a reward for their faith in him, Upandal made the t'skrang the only Name-givers capable of building the engines, but only for use on their ships. This compromise placated the jealous Passions and restored harmony among them.

This last tale in some ways seems the least likely, for we have found no other records of conflict between the Passions before the Scourge. On the other hand, Upandal has never again helped anyone who tried to duplicate the t'skrang fire engines. Though many have tried to build them, including the Therans, none have succeeded. Upandal himself never speaks of the matter, nor do any of the other Passions. I believe that there may be truth to the story; it may even be the entire truth, for all that I can tell.

ON THE WONDERS OF AIRSHIP TRAVEL

Because of the difficulty and expense of arranging airship passage, people only travel acros Barsaive in this manner when they must reach their destination swiftly. Travel aboard airships can be unpleasant; most lack space for passengers, and airship captains and crews are rarely disposed kindly toward strangers aboard their vessels.

Most airships in Barsaive belong to the troll crystal raiders. Small and swift, these ships are made for combat and raiding, giving the captains even less reason to want the burden of passengers. Travelers who find troll raiders willing to give them passage should negotiate the terms of travel with extreme caution. Ideally, travelers seeking airship passage should track down the owner of a galley, most of which belong to trading companies. A galley captain will welcome passengers with less distaste than his fellow captains and flies his ship into fewer perilous situations.



Speed is air travel's greatest advantage. In the course of 16 hours, an airship can travel a distance of 60 days' ride on a mount. Most airships do not fly through the night, except in battles or raids. Airships carrying passengers rarely go raiding unless the passengers agree to fight for the ship as part of the terms of passage.

ON THE PERILS OF AIR TRAVEL

The greatest danger of traveling by airship is the risk of encountering crystal raiders and Theran slave ships. The crystal raiders fly small, maneuverable, and well-armed ships that they call drakkars. Though the trolls most often raid near their homes in the Twilight Peaks, they sometimes range as far as 100 days' ride away. The huge stone slave ships of the Theran Empire prey most often over the southeast reaches of Barsaive, capturing slaves and then ferrying them back to the Theran stronghold at Sky Point or to the nearby Theran-controlled city of Vivane. Theran slave ships often attack other airships as well as people on the ground in their quest to capture slaves for the Empire.

—From the journal of J'role the Honorable Thief

...I did not see my first airship until I was 30 years old. It was a Theran fortress—a castle made of shimmering white stone that could fly just beneath the clouds, then land on the ground and serve as a fortress. A true magical wonder, it was. Like everyone in Barsaive, I had heard of the troll airships, but they were said to have the shape of seagoing vessels. This Theran marvel was a gleaming pile of stone upon stone, built into chambers and corridors and stairways without number. And still, for all its vastness and heaviness, it floated on the wind as lightly as a feather.

The wonder held me even though I first saw the ship as a helpless captive—but the wonder lasted only until Overgovernor Povelis put me aboard a mining ship. Shackled to a hard stone rowers' bench in the dimly lit belly of the mining vessel, I no longer found the magic so splendid. The magic that propelled the vessel drew on the life of the slaves to keep the ship aloft as we searched the sky for pockets of elemental air. To this day, I hear the sound of the rowing drum in my nightmares. Intended to help us keep time, by some dreadful magic it kept us rowing far beyond our strength. Even those who had died on their benches kept rowing, rowing, rowing.

Thankfully, a troll raid cut short my time aboard the slave ship. The crystal raiders also use life force to power their vessels, but they know well the air currents above Barsaive. Their light raiding ships darted quickly and easily through the sky, surrounding the Theran mining vessel like gnats around a dying crakbill.

ON THE BUILDING OF AIRSHIPS

The multitude of tales that describe encounters with airships misrepresent the facts: airships are quite rare, being difficult to build and difficult to fly. A great many magicians must first enchant the materials used to build the ships, then the builder must find a way to power the ship so that it will travel through the air. Larger ships use sails for propulsion; smaller ships use oars. According to rumor, substantiated by the journals of J'role the Honorable Thief, some Theran ships move by draining the life force from the ship's rowing slaves.

Barsaivian airships are generally made of wood, while the magic-rich Therans float stone vessels the size of castles. Many cities controlled by Thera have shipyards able to produce one to three airships a year.

Construction and Destruction

The builders of wooden airships fashion the hulls in shapes similar to waterborne vessels. Theran ships, by contrast, are great blocks of stone that often resemble fantastic, flying cities. During construction of all airships, elemental magicians weave elemental air into the wood or stone to make the ships fly.

In accordance with the Law of Similarity, a wooden airship floats in the air as other ships float in water. Just as a water ship will sink if its hull is breached, so an air ship will sink if its hull takes too much damage. Whether damaged by fire cannon, magical spell, or a flock of giant eagles, a breached ship will sink slowly toward the earth. If the damage has been extreme, it will quickly plummet to the ground below. Theran ships make no use of this law, relying on other, crueler magics.

REGARDING THE DIVERSITY OF AIRSHIPS

Airships are made of either stone or of wood. Within these two broad categories are three types of ship. Below I have provided general descriptions of the different ships; in practice, airships can take on any configuration.

The Therans, rich in magic and ever willing to flaunt their wealth, build stone airships almost without exception. The crystal raiders and shipwrights in Barsaivian cities build wooden airships.

Stone Airships

Unlike wooden airships, which use the magical Law of Similarity to navigate, stone ships have not the look of waterborne vessels. At best, they resemble flat-bottomed barges. Most lack sails, and few have the rudders or keels common to wooden ships. Many stone airships are powered by the physical strength and life force of oarsmen, usually slaves. Rather than relying on physical methods of navigation and steering, the Therans chart and stay their course through magic.

Most stone ships are built like fortresses—thick-walled, heavy, and nearly impossible to keep aloft. The magical resources required to construct such a ship and keep it airborne speaks well of Theran wealth and ill of their wasteful habits.

Three types of stone airships cruise the skies above the Theran Empire: behemoths, kilas, and vedettes. Though all stone airships are classed as one of these three, the classes themselves are determined by size. Thus, the vedette, the smallest class of the stone airships, includes small warships as well stone mining ships.

> According to the Therans with whom I have spoken, behemoths carry more than two hundred slaves. A great many die during long journeys, and so the ship must land often to replenish its slave population.
> —Merrox

Behemoths are the size of a town. The bottom of the ship is a hollow foundation, usually circular or square. In this sunless area, the ship's slaves live out their miserable existences.

The foundation supports two dozen or more buildings housing Theran officials, soldiers, libraries, and the ship's crew, making the behemoth a portable community of conquest. In these vessels, the Therans travel throughout the Theran Empire, carrying enough officials, soldiers, magicians, adepts, and questors to invade and occupy any place they wish to lay hands on.

The airship known as the kila is the size of a vast, fortified castle. Instead of the dozens of buildings found on a behemoth, a kila supports only one building with several towers and one wall. The kila serves as a movable fortress for the Theran military; they can land this airship on any patch of ground and immediately establish a fortress. These huge ships are much larger than our wooden galleons, and the greatest of them can eclipse the sun by floating past it. Like the behemoth, the kila has a flat foundation where the ship's slaves are housed.

Vedettes, the smallest of the Theran stone vessels, are the most comparable to seagoing ships.

Built long and wide, the vedette features several lower decks and a few upper decks, and serves many different purposes. The Therans often use vedettes against the crystal raiders and other native airships that prey on Theran vessels. Vedettes also swiftly move strike forces where they are needed and work as escorts for mining ships and behemoths.

Vedettes also make useful barges for gathering magical elements. The sturdy stone hulls protect slaves and crews mining the Death's Sea for elemental fire, and the ships can rise high enough into the sky to gather elemental air.

Wooden Airships

In sharp contrast to stone airships, wooden airships are easier to build, easier to fly, and less expensive in terms of both elemental magic and money. At this writing, the crystal raiders are the best shipbuilders in the province. Several Barsaivian cities also build wooden airships, notably Urupa, Travar, Jerris, and Iopos. The art of shipbuilding has returned slowly to Barsaive since the Theran War, as the people struggle to recover from the Scourge and the Theran invasion. The shipbuilders might hope for greater profit if one or more shipyards pooled their resources, but, unfortunately, no two shipyards have been able to agree to work together.

The galleon, the galley, and the drakkar represent the three classes of wooden airships. Galleons, the largest of the wooden airships known to fly in Barsaive, have not flown in our skies since the Scourge. Like the seagoing ships from which they take their name, these ships carry three or four masts. Most galleons are 30 feet wide and 130 feet long, with three lower decks running the length of the ship and two decks each on the fore and aft castles. These ships boast huge spaces for cargo and are commonly used to transport trade goods, soldiers, and fire cannons. If the leaders of Throal could find a way to build a galleon, such a ship would surely strengthen our defenses against the Theran airship fleet.

RECORDS SHOW THAT BARSAIVE'S ANCIENT TRADING FLEET INCLUDED FOUR GALLEONS; THESE SHIPS MUST HAVE GONE SOMEWHERE. MY BEST INFORMANTS TELL ME THAT RUMORS PLACE THE REMAINS OF THESE SHIPS IN THE WASTES OR ATOP THE CRAGGY PEAKS OF THE THROAL MOUNTAINS. WHETHER THE RUMORS SPEAK TRUE IS ONE MATTER. WHETHER THE SHIPS CAN BE FOUND IS A SECOND. AND WHETHER THEY CAN BE SALVAGED IS A THIRD. BUT IF THEY COULD...
—KING VARULUS III OF THROAL

Barsaivian ships seldom use slaves for propulsion. When an airship must fly swiftly, the crew members give their life energy voluntarily. Unlike the Therans, who kill slaves by draining their life force for this effort, Barsaivian crews give up smaller amounts of life energy and almost always survive this process.

The galley is the class of ship most often built in Barsaive. Usually 100 feet long by 20 feet wide, each galley is fitted with two or three sails, supplemented by up to 100 oarsmen. It has two lower decks and two upper decks on each of the fore and aft castles. When fitted for war, as most ships are these days, the castles serve as firing platforms for fire cannons.

The crystal raiders use a class of ship known as the drakkar. Air-faring trollmoots have built such ships for untold centuries, and their skill continues to grow. Drakkars average 100 feet in length and sometimes support a single mast. This sail supplements the ship's power, most of which comes from rowing crews of approximately 70 trolls. The ships can carry cargo, but usually use that space to transport an additional 100 crystal raiders.

Swiftness and maneuverability are the drakkar's greatest advantages, but its light weight means the ship can flip over easily in a high wind. It is a tribute to the skill of the crews that these ships so rarely plunge to the ground and shatter. In the course of my research I flew on a drakkar, an experience I found exhilarating beyond compare! In contrast to the large galleys, which feel much more substantial, little seems to hold the vessel up; it rushes through the air at dizzying speed, and the cold, sharp wind strikes your face like a surging wave.

Drakkars cannot carry fire cannons, but the crystal raiders have no great love of such weapons. When raiding, they prefer to rush slower vessels, evading the fireballs shot at them in defense. As soon as they are close enough, the raiders throw grappling hooks toward the other ship and use them to pull their own ship closer. Rather than waiting for the ships to touch, some raiders throw themselves across the space between the vessels—an extraordinary feat of courage when one considers that they are leaping over a sickening drop of many hundreds of feet.

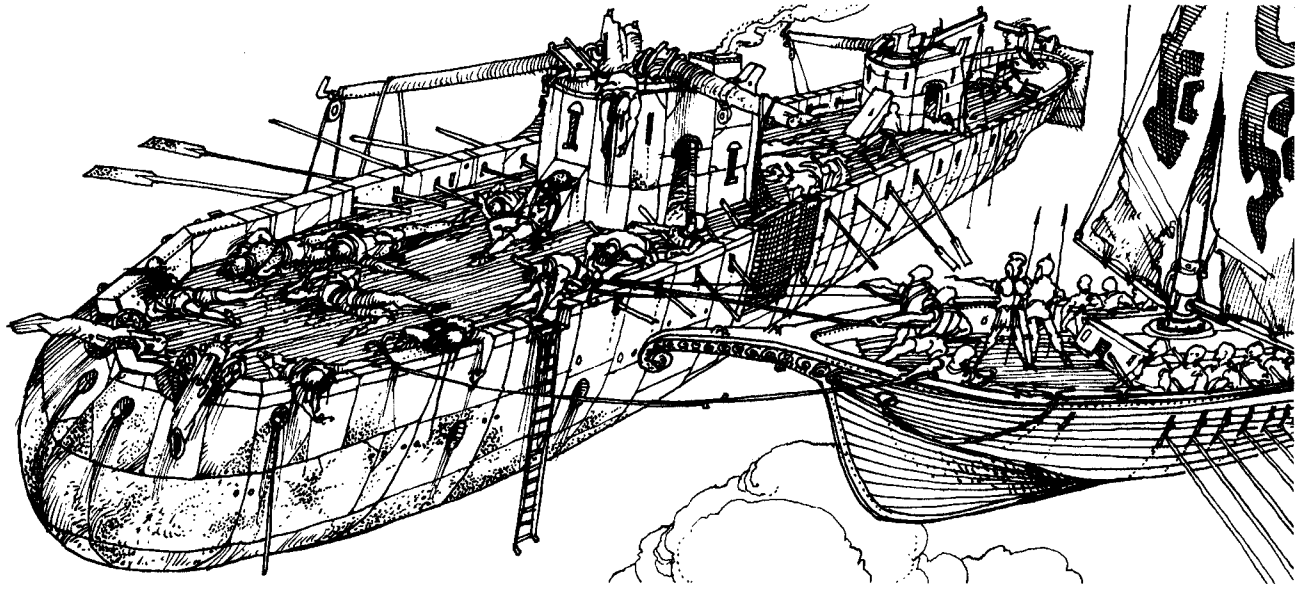
At this point, the true crystal raider battle begins, for the raiders excel at hand-to-hand combat. Once boarded, few ships can defend against the crystal raiders' fierce, joyous attacks.

GHOST SHIPS

During my travels, I heard tales of airships that fly without crews. Called ghost ships, most such vessels ply the skies only briefly. Without life force from a crew or regular replacement of the ship's elemental air, a ghost ship will eventually crash to the ground like any other airship. A fellow traveler who had seen one told me that many ghost ships are created when a Horror invades an airship and kills the crew. The Horror then abandons the ship for greener pastures or else waits for salvagers to board the vessel and serve as its next victims. On rare occasions, crystal raiders attack a ship, kill its crew, take its riches, and leave the ship floating dead in the sky.

On occasion, more extraordinary events produce ghost ships that roam the skies for many years. These ships stay afloat as long as the spirits of the dead crew haunt the vessel. The *Golden Cloud* , a Theran mining ship, is one famous long-lived ghost ship. Once part of a fleet that used elemental fire charges to rip into the plane of elemental air and gather the shards of that magical element, the *Golden Cloud* fell victim to its success. The continuous mining ravaged a portion of the elemental plane beyond repair; angered by the destruction, elemental air creatures entered our world and slaughtered the airship's crew. They invested the ship with enough elemental air magic to keep the airship high in the sky over Barsaive. To this day, so stories tell, the ship cuts a wide swath through the sky, reminding those who live below that air miners harm the elemental planes at their own risk. Several heroes and Theran salvagers have attempted to board the ship and capture its cargo, but none have ever returned.

Perhaps the most famous of all ghost ships is the *Earthdawn*, the ship flown by Vaare Longfang on her exploration of Barsaive in the days immediately following the Scourge. The *Earthdawn* returned once, then set out again. It never returned from its second journey. Many legends tell of the *Earthdawn* appearing in the sky, and then vanishing in an eyeblink.



—From the journal of Vorg of the Stoneclaws

...From the decks of our drakkar, we watched the derelict Theran barge loom closer. In the prow of our ship, several of the Stoneclaws' best warriors pulled on the grappling ropes that made a slender bridge between our ship of wood and the stone barge. Though most Theran craftsmanship shows grace and beauty, the ugly lines and angles of the mining barge reflected the Therans callous indifference to their workers. Ash from mana bursts used for the mining caked and dirtied the vessel.

As the barge approached, everyone fell silent. On the deck of the barge lay the remains of the slaves, their bodies torn apart, their blood seeping into the deck. Across a rowers' bench lay an elf's corpse, his long, lean body sliced open with delicate precision. Though the barge moved, nothing on it lived. We knew then it was that the Horrors had done this. . .

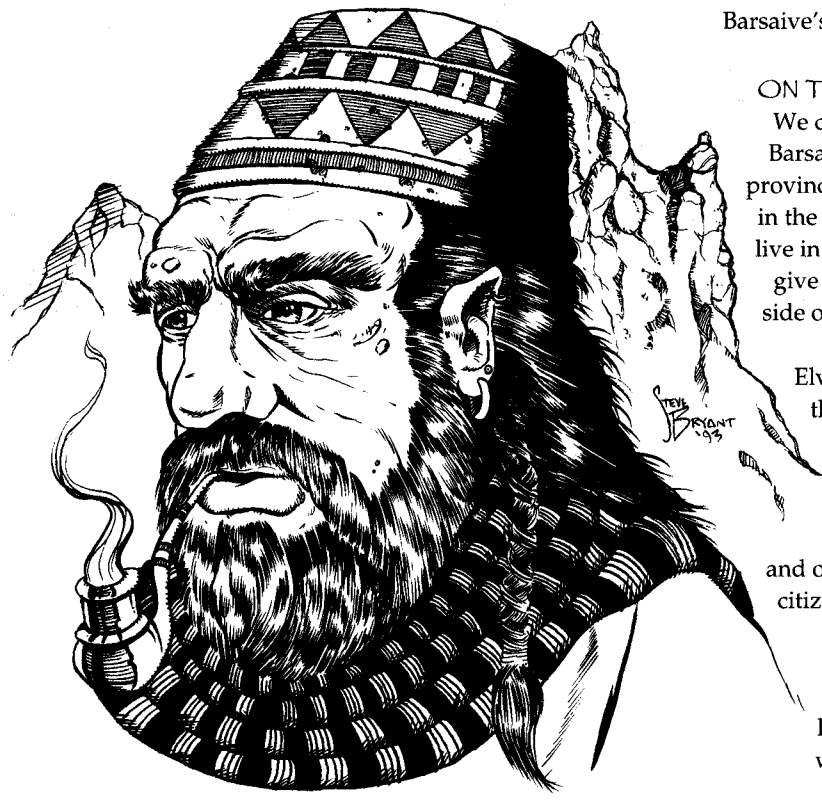
ON THE DENIZENS OF BARSAIVE

My task of compiling notes describing all the known denizens of Barsaive began easily enough, then quickly became more difficult than I had expected. The known denizens of our province include not only the Name-giver races, but also dragons, mundane creatures, and the Horrors. Documenting these three latter groups took a heavy toll on my already precarious health. Members of each Name-giving race gladly provided information regarding their own people. However, I found listening to their stories and recording everything in the proper order extremely taxing. In fact, I accumulated so much information that I intend to begin writing one or more volumes fully describing the character and unique qualities of each Name-giver race once I complete this current task. If, that is, I am granted a life long enough to complete such a monumental undertaking. Even my colleague Merrox cannot fully understand the danger to which I exposed my fragile self to acquire accurate information regarding dragons, creatures, and Horrors. The foul miasma infusing the journals of adventuring groups who so kindly donated their tales to the Library of Throal, and from which I excerpted most of the text in this section, was enough to drive me to my pallet. I hope that by repeating their adventures, rather than retelling them, I have given readers a truer picture of the races and other denizens of Barsaive.

—Humbly offered to the Reader by Jerriv Forrim, scribe and scholar of the Library of Throal

REGARDING THE NAME-GIVER RACES

Eight Name-giver races live in Barsaive: dwarf, elf, human, obsidiman, ork, troll, t'skrang, and windling. In view of the mountains of information I gathered for this book, I have dispensed with physical descriptions of the races. Instead, I offer each race's own words about its ways, customs, and place in Barsaive's society.



ON THE WAYS OF DWARFS

We dwarfs are the most numerous people of Barsaive, numbering nearly a third of the province's inhabitants. Though half our people live in the Kingdom of Throal, the rest (such as myself) live in villages and cities throughout the land. To give you an idea of how many dwarfs live outside of Throal, our numbers nearly equal those of the trolls, orks, and humans in Barsaive. Elves, obsidimen, and windlings are far fewer than we.

Our brethren in Throal have given Barsaive freedom from Theran rule and are leading the land back to greatness. All dwarfs, in Throal and outside it, know our place as Barsaive's chief citizens and feel kinship with all of its peoples and places. We are our fellow races' elder brothers and have a duty to live ourselves as we would have them live. Unlike the Therans, who oppressed us, we dwarfs lead by example.

All of Barsaive is home to a dwarf. We go where we will, and all welcome us. The Caucavik Mountains, the Serpent River, it matters not. Wherever we go, we remain dwarfs and are proud to be so.

Our nature as builders makes us dwarfs. We build everything: weapons, jewelry, roads, farms, houses, ships, carts, and, everything else needful. In Throal, we have even built a new society! Of course, our pride in building carries its price, as does any gift. A dwarf measures himself by what he makes, by its beauty and its quantity, and by what he can endure in the making. I have seen fellow dwarfs exhaust themselves in labor to earn the respect of neighbors.

You ask me if the Kingdom of Throal holds the same place in a dwarf's heart as Blood Wood holds for an elf, and I tell you it does not. Though built by dwarfs, Throal is not a dwarf land. Most dwarfs in Barsaive take pride in the kingdom and its growing power, but we know well that many races other than dwarfs live inside its boundaries. And so it should be, for what is Barsaive itself but the common home of many peoples? Those of us who live outside Throal wish it well, but it is not our home. Like any other Name-giver, a dwarf's home is his city, town, or village.

In the interests of honesty, I must confess to you that some dwarf villages view Throal with suspicion. Not many, mind; those of us who know how to think know that Throal has done well by Barsaive. But some dwarfs with suspicious minds fear that Throal's military and political power will lead it to oppress the people of Barsaive once we have driven the hated Therans from our land.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Lúnas Ironhand, dwarf weaponsmith

Ironhand quaffed dwarf stout ale throughout this interview. He insisted that I drink some, which I did, against my better judgement. It was delicious, but later made me quite sick at my stomach.
—Jerriv Forrim

ON THE WAYS OF ELVES

Of course you wish to know of Blood Wood. Why would anyone who speaks to an elf wish to know of anything else? No matter that throughout Barsaive live many elves who refused to take shelter in the Elven Queen's Court during the Scourge and so were saved from corruption. No matter that we are set apart from those now known as the Blood Elves. No matter that, like all the Name-giver races throughout Barsaive, we uncorrupted elves live in harmony and peace with non-elven neighbors. No matter that we do not look to the Elven Queen's Court to guide our existence. No matter that we live our lives like any of our neighbors, whether we live in a great city such as Travar or a small farming village buried deep in a jungle. People see us and think of the Blood Wood and must know what we think of it.

To my sorrow, I cannot claim that Blood Wood has no hold on me. Though it causes me great pain, I must speak truthfully of this matter. (There you have what it is to be an elf, chronicler. We follow the path of honor though we may die for it. See that you write that, when you tell our tale.) We cannot help but remember in every waking moment that in the northern reaches of Barsaive live a community of elves that most of Barsaive regards as monsters. And yet, these monsters are of one flesh with us—or were, ages ago. Our loyalty is torn. We recognize that the elves of Blood Wood did an abominable thing to themselves during the Scourge, yet cannot wholly renounce them. How can we renounce them, remembering that the Elven Queen's Court was once the heart of all elves? When it was Wyrm Wood, it was our glory; in it we gave voice to higher ideals and shape to finer beauty than any other Name-giver race has ever created. When Wyrm Wood became Blood Wood, it perverted these ideals and this beauty. And yet, it remains an exquisite place.

This change has worked its ill upon us. Where once elves strode across the land with heads held high, our bearing now at times reveals shame. Some elves let their shame weaken their pride in their heritage, walking with their eyes downcast and doing all they can to forget that they are elves. Other elves hide their shame by sneering at the ways of other races, belittling them and striving to show that elven ways are best. They do not truly believe this, of course; if they felt pride in being elves, they would feel no need to sneer and bully.

We uncorrupted elves firmly believe that we can and must someday return Blood Wood to its former purity and glory. Many of us devote our lives to working toward this day, some alone and some as members of the Seekers of the Heart. We reveal this hope in a short poem recited at the evening meal, spoken aloud among our own and silently in the presence of non-elves. An elven troubadour wrote it 50 years ago. Your ears, chronicler, are the first non-elven ones ever to hear it.

My woodland heart is by its children killed,
In mocking life its voice forever stilled.
The sweet rose has become a cankered bud;
Its thorns have drowned the blossom deep in blood.
In memory, I see your beauties clear,
Each tree inclining gladly toward the sun
That in its turn rained down each golden tear
Till green and gold met, joined, became as one.
It lives within you still, each tree, each flower;
Each joyous elf, to reclaim with love's power.
Until that day, this world I'll not depart;
And to its coming, I do pledge my heart.

Besides the duty to purify Blood Wood, all elves have an obligation to protect nature. Even those of us who live in the cities must do what we can to heal the ravages of the Scourge. I know that many other races view elves as a reserved people, and so we are when alone. But in large gatherings, elves can become quite raucous. We sing, dance, drink wine, and carouse through all hours of the night. Despite the pain of Blood Wood's corruption, we can still be joyous. And we are still beautiful. We elves take great pride in our elegant bodies, and love to adorn ourselves with beautiful jewels.

—Transcribed from the Speaking of R'iallan ni Mar, elven merchant of Travar

R'iallan ni Mar's perfume gave me a splitting headache. I apologize if my inability to concentrate because of the pain caused me to transcribe anything inaccurately.
—Jerriv Forrim

ON THE WAYS OF HUMANS

Let me tell you about my fellow humans, friend. We would like to swagger through the world with as much bravado as orks and trolls, but humans haven't enough bulk to back up rude behavior. Instead, we humans accomplish our ends through manipulation, controlling magic, politics, and money. True, everyone else in Barsaive also uses magic, politics, and money to get what they want, but humans excel at it. We gather information, influence, and wealth and hold it close. Others may share if they can persuade us to trust them, but may not own what we have.

Humans, especially men, foolishly insist on believing that life is a conflict. He who refuses to see enemies everywhere will lose all to them, and so must strike others before they strike him. You must have listened to many a human conversation; you know the truth of what I say. Every discussion that does not turn on how best to do ill to someone else will invariably fall into gossip. Women gossip about personal matters—people in the village, who is wearing what these days. Men gossip about more general matters—people in power, who is dictating to whom these days. We humans rarely get to the heart of whatever business is at hand. Determining and establishing status, in any form, lies at the root of all our dealings.

Of course, many humans will back down from a fight—and then arrange for ruffians to set upon the ork or troll later that night, or have the local authorities fine the bully until he has no coin or possessions to his name.
—Jerriv Forrim

Humans play these games of prestige and power in many ways. Some humans make sure the world knows that they have power. They seek positions of rank, flaunt their wealth, and lord it over everyone they meet. Others traffick in secrets, worming information from confidants, gathering influence and resources secretly, and revealing them only when they must.

I find it amusing when other Name-givers lump humans together with orks and trolls, as if we had much in common with those great louts. I find it even more amusing when my fellow humans take the comparison seriously. More than once, I have seen other humans display ridiculous physical bravado to prove that they are as tough as trolls and orks. Often, trolls and orks pick fights with hot-headed humans, knowing that the human will enter the fray to preserve his pride. As might be expected, the human always loses. But in the strange world view held by my race, such a human wins. The simple fact that he accepted the challenge allows him to go back to his friends and boast that he stood up to the aggressor, gaining him much honor among his peers.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Tel Kour, human thief of Kratas

ON THE WAYS OF OBSIDIMEN

We obsidimen have a slow and steady nature, tied to balance. We believe that all things should remain stable at all times, like the tranquil life of a mountain. Time and rain and wind may alter a mountain, but the mountain does not make the changes. It changes slowly, simply by being.

Unlike our fellow races, we obsidimen are not easily moved by the Passions. Our strength is that of the rock and we can easily defend against any attack, but we do not understand conflict. Fighting and war, these things do not belong to us. Those who fight become imbalanced, a thing we abhor. An obsidiman forced to fight strides up to his opponent and strikes a decisive blow, ending the fight and its imbalance in the same moment. Obsidimen rarely feel excitement, but when they do, those around them should seek cover. As the proverb says, when the ground shakes, everyone falls.

Most often, we find our contentment in standing motionless, among each other and in the elements. We gather in groups to stand silent and draw comfort from each other's presence. When we stand so, we see and hear and feel only each other, only the earth and rock and air and rain. These things become our whole world, unless some foolish one threatens us.

Some obsidimen like myself become adventurers, seeking out other races simply to see how the imbalanced, frenzied, energy-wasters live. For myself, I have even come to love the life of quick energy that others of our race consider useless. Over the years, I came to spend less time with my own people and more with those who adventure by trade, until I chose to live in this great city among my hasty, strange, but beloved companions.

I have worked for many merchants as a caravan guard; they think well of obsidimen because we are well-behaved, responsible, and as tough as the rock we resemble. I have also worked for mercenary bands, though they had some difficulty in teaching me to attack swiftly. For those of my race, the world is less urgent, and so we sometimes fail to see the need for action until long after others join the fray. I must confess, I prefer working for merchants; among them, I face less conflict and imbalance.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Omeyras, troubadour of Urupa

OBSIDIMEN ARE RARE IN BARSAIVE, THOUGH SOME STUDENTS OF THE RACE CONJECTURE THAT THEY MAY LIVE IN GREATER NUMBERS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I HAD A DIFFICULT TIME FINDING ONE TO SPEAK TO. THE EFFORT OF TRAVELING TO URUPA TO SPEAK WITH THE TROUBADOUR OMEYRAS SENT ME TO MY PALLET FOR A WEEK.
—JERRIV FORRIM

—From the journal of Rinnthal of Travar, 1506 TH

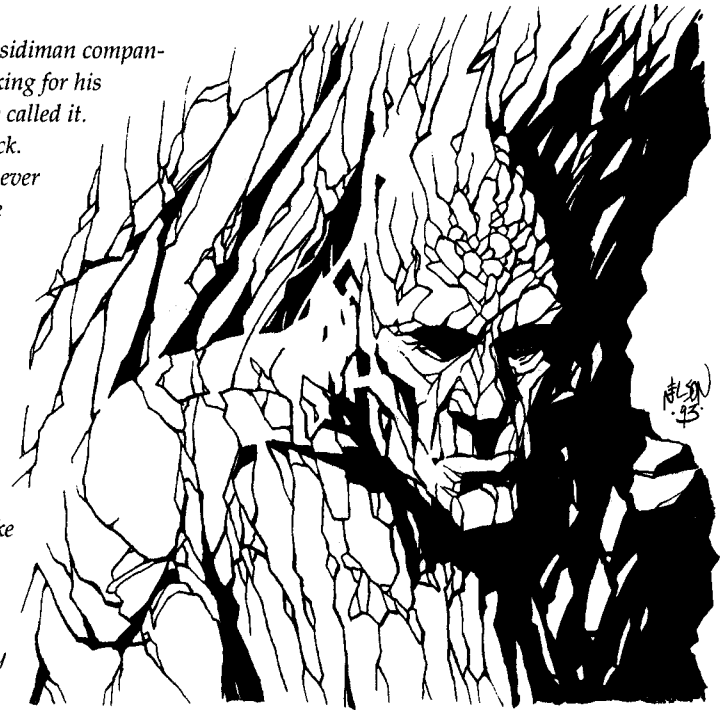
...We walked toward a rocky outcropping, led by Grinache, my obsidiman companion. I was sure we were in the wrong place. He had said we were looking for his Liferock, where he and his family enter their "time of thought," as he called it. Surely, I thought, this outsized rock formation couldn't be his Liferock. What's a tumbled lot of boulders got to do with life? I mean, rock's never been alive, has it? I asked him why he was stopping. "Because we are here," he said.

I'd nothing to say to that. Just blinked at him and kept my mouth shut. I couldn't believe that a heap of ordinary, reddish brown rock could be anything special to anyone.

But then, as I watched him move toward it, I saw the shape of an obsidiman begin to form in the stone. As I looked even closer, I realized that the shape had been there all along; I just hadn't seen it. To the left of the first shape I saw another obsidiman, curled up tight next to a third who was sitting.

As I stood mesmerized by the shapes in the Liferock, Grinache spoke to me. His deep voice, as always, reminded me just a little of muffled thunder. "Thank you for coming home with me, Rinn. I'll be staying for a time."

I stayed and watched. He leaned against the outcropping, not truly rock but his obsidiman brothers, and over the next several hours became one with the Liferock. . .



ON THE WAYS OF ORKS

We orks have ambition, we do. We work hard at a task and never quit until it is done. Show me the puny human who works half as hard or does half as much! One in five of all Barsaivians is ork. Outside of Throal, more of us live in Barsaive than any other single race. We live everywhere, we do: in villages, towns, and the greatest cities. We farm, we sell, we soldier, we lead the people, and we protect innocent folk. Plenty trust us these days; some still spit on the ground we walk on, but that only shows how stupid they are. As for us, we care nothing for what they think. Why should we? They are not ork.

IRONICALLY, THIS HARDENED INDIVIDUALISM IS EXACTLY WHAT KEEPS ORKS FROM GAINING POWER AND RESPECT AS A GROUP.
—JERRIV FORRIM

Know what sticks in my throat, friend? We work so hard and do so much for Barsaive, yet other races still belittle us. They refuse us their respect. It isn't right. Every ork child grows up and goes off on his own, working hard to succeed as a farmer or merchant or even to strike it rich in a deserted kaer. Yet even if they get respect for what they have done, they get it in spite of being orks. Their so-called betters overlook their race, as if being ork were like being diseased.

No matter what, an ork strives to succeed. Any ork worth the name will do almost anything to reach his goal. Most of us call this good, but sometimes it turns us bad. Honest orks work hard enough to make a dwarf jealous. In a dishonest ork, this striving to succeed at any cost can produce a thief, a murderer, or worse. Lucky for Barsaive, most of us are good people. Even the scorcher bands only want respect and a good living. . .well, most do. After all, why shouldn't orks charge tolls for the roads? Didn't we build most of them?

We built those roads, we did, with a stamina that no one else can claim. Orks can endure any pain if we must. Failure is not an end to an ork, only a wayside stop on the road to success.

Our children learn ambition through the stories we tell each generation. Ork lore tells us that in ancient times almost every race in the world used orks as slaves. We were Name-givers, yet they treated us as mindless animals. We didn't stand for it, we didn't. We won our freedom with our blood; we fought hard for it. We made them see us as Name-givers, just like themselves. They hated us for it. The looking-down-the-nose started back then. Strange to tell, it was the Therans who made things better for us. They enslaved all races in Barsaive, and only then did our fellow Name-givers began to understand, just a little, what they had done to us.

THE FOOD SERVED AT THE INN IN THE TYLON FOOTHILLS MADE ME BREAK OUT IN SPOTS. I CANNOT SPEAK WELL OF HIS COOK.
—JERRIV FORRIM

When it came time to build the kaers and citadels, we orks built more and faster than anyone; that earned us heartfelt thanks, if nothing else. But not respect, oh no. Not for the lowly ork. I tell you, friend, sometimes it's enough to drive an ork to plunder and murder. If I have a treasure and you have nothing, you must respect me, right?

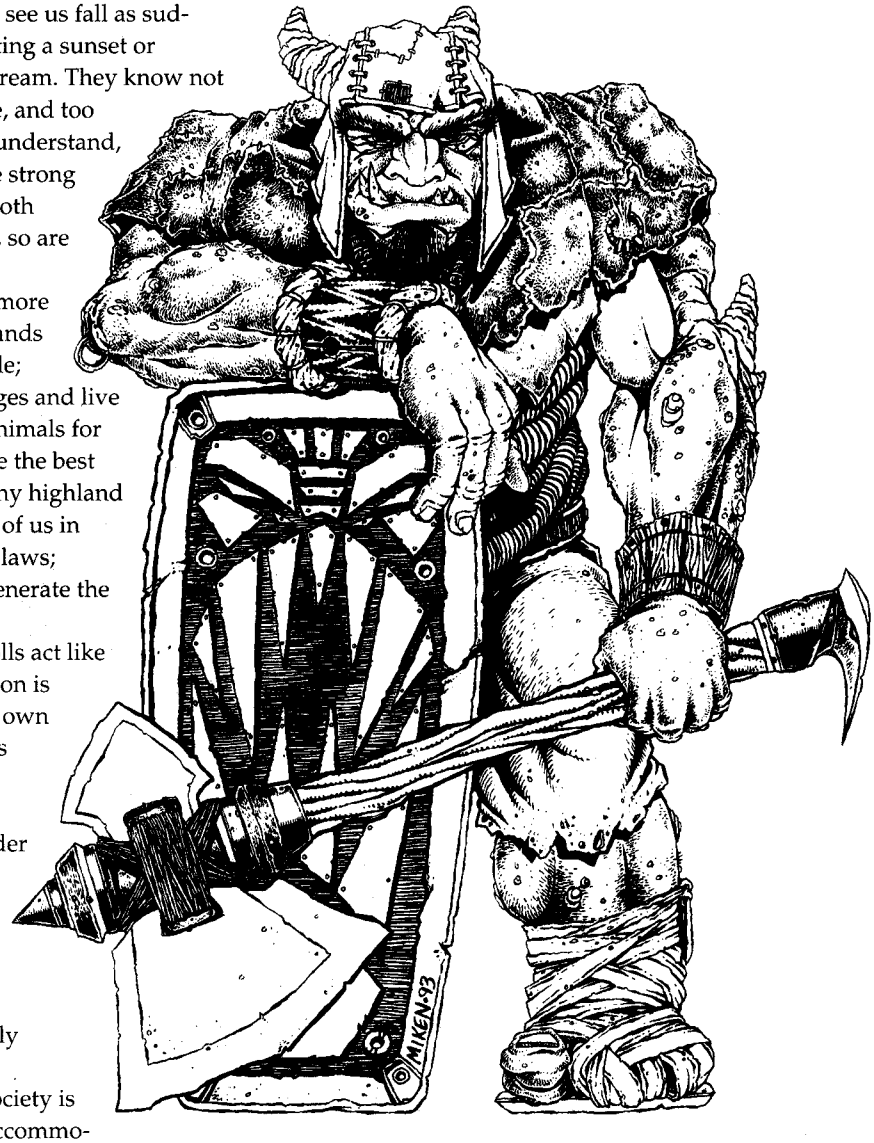
—Transcribed from the Speaking of V'Gogh Bonecracker, innkeeper

ON THE WAYS OF TROLLS

On behalf of my village, I welcome you, Jerriv Forrim. I say this so that you will know we are civilized.

First, let me say that we are not cousins to the obsidimen. True, we are large; true, many of us dig homes deep into the sides of mountains. We value the obsidimen, as we do all Name-giver races, but the rumor that we are kin is false.

It is sad that we trolls so confuse our fellow Name-givers. They see us impassioned, impatient, intemperate, and driven to extraordinary physical exertion; then they see us fall as suddenly still as an obsidiman when contemplating a sunset or the sparkle of sunlight against a mountain stream. They know not what to make of a race both fierce and gentle, and too often this confusion makes them fearful. To understand, they need only remember that we trolls have strong ties to the earth and nature. Nature itself is both fierce and still, noisy and silent. As is nature, so are we.



Many also fail to understand that there is more than one kind of troll. The trolls of the highlands have become a crude stereotype of our people; they live in hard-to-reach mountaintop villages and live off the land, often herding goats and other animals for sustenance and barter. The crystal raiders are the best known of the highland dwellers, though many highland trolls do not fly airships. Compared to those of us in the lowlands, highland trolls have primitive laws; among them, might makes right, and they venerate the warlike Passion Thystonius above all others.

Sadly, most Barsaivians believe that all trolls act like highland trolls. Like all stereotypes, this notion is unfair and untrue. A troll family such as my own that has lived for generations in the lowlands has only its race in common with the highland trolls. To assume that we too are brash, violent, and driven by a need to plunder represents the worst sort of ignorance. We are a people like any other; we live peacefully in villages, towns, and cities, and some of us even achieve positions of power. Because many of our neighbors fail to fully accept us, however, most of us appear socially awkward in their eyes.

The greatest trouble we face in Barsaive society is our size—or rather, the failure of others to accommodate our size. As we lowland trolls are few in number, architects and other craftsmen rarely build corridors, doorways, chairs, tables, and tools large enough for troll bodies. In any city, a troll rarely finds a room to rent that he can fit in comfortably. Rarer still does a troll find a chair at a tavern that he will not crush by attempting to sit in it or a mug large enough to hold with any semblance of grace. Because we are large and the world is built small, everywhere we go we trolls appear ungainly, clumsy, and destructive. This is not our nature, but simply the fate of those living in a world not made for our comfort. Despite, or perhaps because of, these difficulties, we lowland trolls take pride in working to prove our worth to the towns and villages we live in.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Haschem, leader of Kahlor

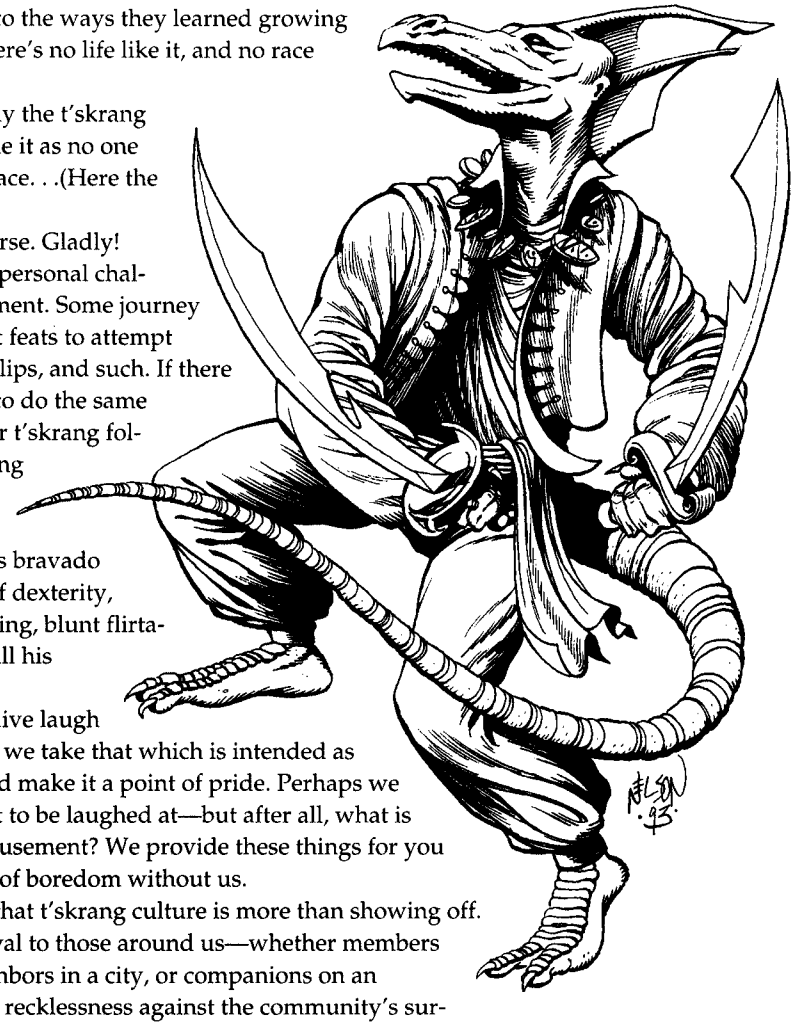
ON THE WAYS OF T'SKRANG

The Serpent River is the mother of the t'skrang. We sail her waters in our riverboats and profit from trade, with which we enrich our crew covenants. To us, a crew covenant means a family: those we eat with, play with, squabble with, care for, and fight for. Though many t'skrang leave the river and wander the width and breadth of Barsaive, they return in their hearts to the ways they learned growing up along the Serpent. And well they should; there's no life like it, and no race like the t'skrang.

We value bravado above all other things. Only the t'skrang truly understand bravado; we live it and breathe it as no one else does. Oh, a few individuals may, but as a race. . .(Here the t'skrang shrugged.)

I will give you what explanation I can, of course. Gladly! Every t'skrang tries to fill his life with as many personal challenges as possible—day to day, moment to moment. Some journey on fantastic quests. Others choose new, difficult feats to attempt each day—swinging from ropes, turning back-flips, and such. If there is a simple way to do a thing and a flashy way to do the same thing, a t'skrang chooses flash every time. Other t'skrang follow those who show the most bravado, regarding the bravest and flashiest as the best teacher from whom to learn bravado.

Many people believe that the t'skrang express bravado only through fighting, but this is not so. Feats of dexterity, endurance, public oration, impromptu storytelling, blunt flirtation, and even convincing a man to give away all his goods count as impressive acts of bravado.



CAPTAIN DARIINAEUS PRESSED ME TO ACCEPT SOME OF THE FAMOUS T'SKRANG SPICED FISH. SURPRISINGLY, IT AGREED WITH ME. I RECOMMEND IT.
—JERRIV FORRIM

The other races of Barsaive laugh at us, but like true t'skrang we take that which is intended as good-natured contempt and make it a point of pride. Perhaps we are reckless, absurd, and fit to be laughed at—but after all, what is life without daring and amusement? We provide these things for you duller creatures; you'd die of boredom without us.

Understand, however, that t'skrang culture is more than showing off. We t'skrang are fiercely loyal to those around us—whether members of our crew covenant, neighbors in a city, or companions on an adventure. We balance our recklessness against the community's survival and safety, and each t'skrang must choose his or her own way to do this in the heat of the moment.

Let me explain this by way of a story. We have a great, epic poem—the tale of Yustraa Piaan, most beloved among ancient t'skrang heroes. The climax pits Yustraa against just that conflict: should he return home alone, armed only with a bow and a quiver of arrows, to rescue his wife from the importunate attentions of suitors who have taken over his home? Or should he hire mercenaries to drive the suitors out? In the tale, he goes back alone and kills all the suitors, but both Yustraa Piaan and his wife also die. Many might consider this a tragic legend; we see it as a testament to the hero's bravado that he attempted such a battle single-handed. That he failed after coming so near to success gives the story a tragic undercurrent, but we regard his choice as courageous rather than foolish.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Dariinaeus, captain of the *Swiftwater*

—From the journal of Paalo of Travar

...On the fourth day, our riverboat pulled into the port town of T'uurl to take on supplies, and Nadalya and I took the opportunity to sample some t'skrang river life. We began with a fine t'skrang feast and were enjoying some music in a local tavern when we were unexpectedly treated to a taste of the infamous t'skrang bravado.

It all started innocently enough when an extravagantly dressed t'skrang riverman struck up a conversation with us. We both found his outrageous boasting amusing and soon were exchanging toasts of vinlo, an exquisitely spiced t'skrang wine with a kick like an ork war horse. Eventually the t'skrang's near-constant patter turned to Nadalya's physical charms, which didn't really bother me at first. But when I spied the lizard-man's tail begin snaking its way under the hem of my Nadalya's skirt, I decided enough was enough.

"All right, fish-face, that's it. Either keep your tail where it belongs or I'll do it for you."

"What's wrong, little man?" he replied. "I'm only trying to show this beautiful lady some t'skrang hospitality. After all, such a fine young flower obviously cannot be satisfied by a tail-less freak such as yourself."

I must admit I lost my head at that point. I began to close with the t'skrang, and when he began to reach for the bejeweled handle of his sword, I sprang inside his reach, pinning his arm against his side and stepping down on his slimy green tail with all my weight. He immediately dropped to the ground, wailing like a wounded crakbill and cradling his scaly appendage.

I grabbed Nadalya by the hand and we flew like frightened windlings from the tavern, not stopping until we had reached the safety of our riverboat. When she finally caught her breaths, Nadalya let loose with a string of obscenities the likes of which I'd never heard before. Apparently she thought I had overreacted!

Three full days passed before she would speak to me again...

ON THE WAYS OF WINDLINGS

Change, change, change—that is the nature of windlings. Change is what we love, and change is what we will have. One generation may borrow the martial trappings of the highland trolls, the next dedicate themselves to peace. We watch everything and everyone; nothing escapes a windling's eye. We borrow what we will from the ways of others, shifting from one to the next as quickly and easily as the wealthy change their wardrobe to keep up with fashion.
As we windlings often say, "Why live one way if there are hundreds of ways waiting for you?"

Children we love most of all. Few of us bear them, and so we cherish them and raise them with great care. A child is change made flesh. As the child windling sees the world through fascinated eyes, so do grown windlings try to recapture and sharpen our own feelings of wonder and enjoyment of the world.

We raise our children in clans of 30 windlings or so, four adults for each child. All grown windlings share care for all the children as if each were his or her own. Some doubtless think us too frivolous for parenting, but we take that task more seriously than any other. Any creature or person who threatens a windling can expect no quarter, and our small size belies our fierceness.

We windlings love to travel across Barsaive, meeting different races and telling stories back home of what we have seen and done. If we like what another race does, we do it; their ways become windling ways, at least until we tire of them and make up new ones. They say that windling life changes dramatically every ten years. I say it's more like six or seven, but that changes too.

A windling will try anything new at least once, laughing all the way through every new experience. Some call this windling daring bravado, comparing us to the t'skrang. Unlike the river people, windlings rarely care if we succeed or fail at something new. A t'skrang might feel shame at failure; not so a windling, except in matters of life and death. Windlings possess a fierce desire to live and will take fewer risks than a t'skrang. What matters most to us is not succeeding, but simply doing.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Tyrwhill, windling archer of Clan Whaele

ON THE MULTITUDE OF OTHER DENIZENS

Though dragons properly belong among the Name-giver races, I have placed them in this section to differentiate them from the Name-givers who form the population of Barsaive. Their distinct, aloof nature calls for a unique treatment of their physical types, relations with each other and other races, and other pertinent details.

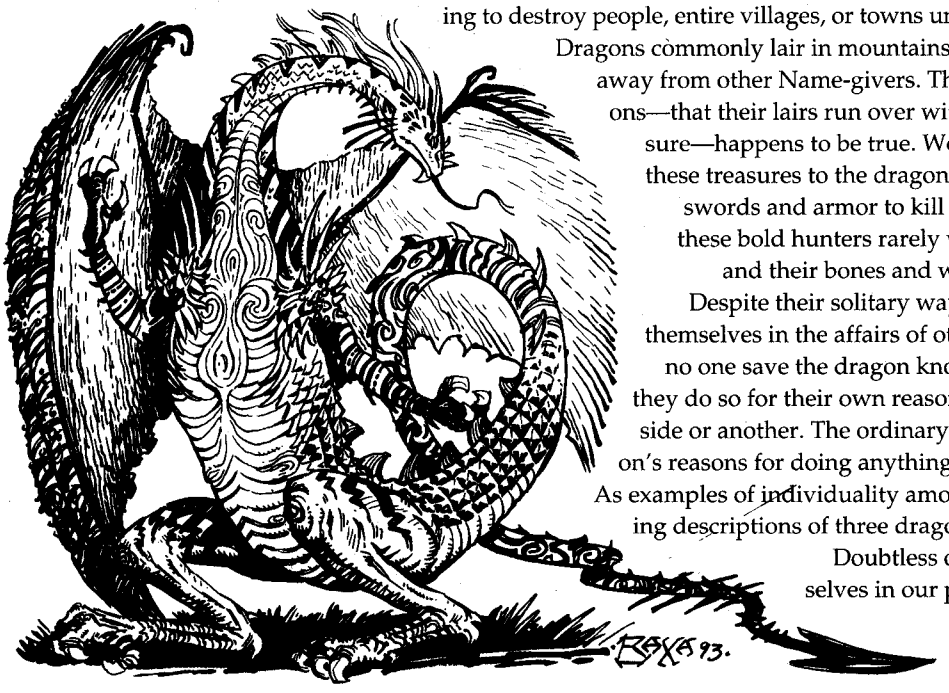
—Jerriv Forrim

ON THE NATURE OF DRAGONS

The fiercest and most powerful of all the Name-giver races, dragons are creatures of immense size and longevity. At full size the average dragon measures up to 90 feet long, with a 60-foot or longer tail, a shoulder height of up to 18 feet, and a wingspan of 130 feet. The thick scales that run the length of a dragon's body vary greatly in color, ranging from deep greens to fiery reds, though each dragon is usually a single color. Most dragons have long, narrow necks and horned heads. Though they walk on all fours, their front feet have thumbs that allow them to handle objects.

The dangers that dragons pose come from more than their great size, large claws, and thick hides. Some can breath fire, control animals, spit venom, and control the minds of people with whom they speak.

Few dragons are known to exist, and those whose existence we know of tend to live alone. In general, dragons consider themselves superior to the other Name-giver races and seem to show little interest in the Passions. They usually accomplish their mysterious ends by manipulating members of other Name-giver races, often threatening to destroy people, entire villages, or towns unless the dragon's will is carried out.



Dragons commonly lair in mountains, fens, bogs, and dense jungles, away from other Name-givers. The most popular tale about dragons—that their lairs run over with precious metals and other treasure—happens to be true. Would-be dragon slayers often bring these treasures to the dragon's lair, hoping to use magical swords and armor to kill the dragon. As one might expect, these bold hunters rarely win the battle against the dragon, and their bones and wealth add to the dragon's hoard.

Despite their solitary ways, dragons sometimes involve themselves in the affairs of other Name-givers. Why they do so, no one save the dragon knows. If they take sides in a conflict, they do so for their own reasons, not because they agree with one side or another. The ordinary citizens can only guess at a dragon's reasons for doing anything.

As examples of individuality among this race, I provide the following descriptions of three dragons known to lair in Barsaive. Doubtless other dragons have hidden themselves in our province and remain undiscovered.

Aban

The dragon Aban lairs in the steamy shadows of the Mist Swamps. She tolerates no intruders, and surviving travelers to the area describe the terrifying experience of being chased out of the swamps by the dragon. Some people believe that no one has found the pre-Scourge city rumored to be lost in the Mist Swamps because it lies beneath Aban's lair.

Aban has dark red scales and black eyes and moves noiselessly through the swamps. Those who have survived an encounter claim that they had no idea she was near until her huge silhouette rose up through the steam before them.

Mountainshadow

Mountainshadow lives in the Dragon Mountains, which were so Named after explorers discovered the dragon laired in their peaks. A huge dragon, Mountainshadow differs from others of his race in his fascination with the other Name-giver races. The dragon studies us not for some obscure political end, but apparently to understand our hearts and minds. Alas, no one can guess what use he plans to make of whatever he is able to learn.

Mountainshadow's lair lies in a deep cave high on a mountainside, the cave protected by winds too fierce to navigate in airships and sheer cliffs on all sides of the mountain. It is possible to see Mountainshadow only when the dragon wishes to be seen, usually when he flies down the mountain to retrieve one of his rare guests.

According to one tale, Mountainshadow's lair is home to enough orphaned humans and orks to make up a village, all raised from infancy by the dragon. Supposedly, the community lives on the chill and barren peak by wielding many of the same magics that kept kaers and citadels functioning during the Scourge. Other tales say that Mountainshadow has a second lair deep within the Badlands.

"It is one year after we opened our kaer, the kaer designed by our protector, the dragon Mountainshadow. We owe all to Mountainshadow. He aided us and showed us how to protect ourselves from the Scourge that ravaged all of Barsaive.

"He asked but one payment. . .that we write down all that transpired during our time in the kaer and give him a copy of it. Today, our end of the bargain is fulfilled.

"Today is the Festival of the Sun. On this day, we send our history to Mountainshadow as we promised."

—From a speech by village elder Mila Neb of Jud-alam

"Do you know who you have disturbed, boy?" The voice boomed in my head until I thought my skull would explode.

"I seek Mountainshadow, the dragon," I squeaked. " I have the history of the village of Jud-alam. It is a payment."

"Humankind," the voice boomed even louder. "Ever the prompt creatures." And the voice laughed until it seemed that the mountains themselves would collapse.

—From the testimony of the messenger Telemir of Jud-alam

Mountainshadow is silver and blue with black eyes. Those who have seen him claim that he frequently breaks into musical laughter, which unnerves people because they fail to understand what he finds amusing.

Usun

Usun makes his home in the Liaj Jungle; because of the dragon's lair, few other communities settle in or near the Liaj. Observers report that animals living in the Liaj seem to fear him less than do the Name-givers; the jungle fairly teems with creatures of all types. Usun's scales are green and his eyes are blue. When he sits motionless, it is nearly impossible to distinguish him from the jungle trees and plants.

A BRIEF DISCOURSE ON BARSAIVIAN FAUNA

Even the patchiest listing of the creatures that inhabit Barsaive falls far beyond the scope of this book. Rather than list and describe each one, I have chosen to briefly mention the types of creatures Barsaive contains and comment on the most unusual characteristics of those creatures.

Mundane creatures range from small forest dwellers to the large predators common to the Servos Jungle of central Barsaive. Other creatures possess innate magical powers that allow them to fly, defend themselves through magic, or attack those who threaten them in unexpected fashion. Many creatures both fantastic and mundane are constructs of the Horrors, who create minions and slaves to serve them in their search for victims to sate their terrible hungers.

In the days since the Scourge, most creatures living in Barsaive seem more eager to attack any creature they perceive as an aggressor or threat, often striking without provocation. Scholars blame this behavior on the Scourge, claiming that most animals and other creatures react as if they must still battle nature itself for survival. This abnormal aggression has not abated since the Scourge ended, and many scholars believe it may be a permanent change.

—From notes for The Legend of the Four Warriors, by the elven troubadour Mert Looha

...Day 2: I saw the same three heroes today as yesterday—Neggil Pax, swordmaster; Teavil, weaponsmith; and Tasha Wilk, wizard. Pilla Doog, thief, still has not appeared.

Neggil: Now this scar here, the one that starts at my shoulder and ends at my hip, I got that one from a gargoyle. Dropped on me from above. Never saw it. Those monsters have stone claws, razor sharp. Happened near the Tylon Mountains.

Tasha: No, no. We fought the crakbills near the Tylon Mountains. I was still weak from fighting the cave troll the day before. The troll hit me with a stone axe; I still walk with a limp. With my bad leg, I couldn't save Teavil from the crakbill's paralyzing breath.

Teavil: I remember that. That bird thing bit me on the leg, and I could only stand there and curse. Didn't hurt so much. . .more annoying than anything else. Scared me, though, not being able to move.

Neggil: Irritatin' little critters, them crakbills. Not much to fright one. Like those ghouls we saw. . .hideous to look at, frightening at first, but really nothing but pests.

Tasha: Deadly pests! Remember the time we finished off a gaggle of them without breaking a sweat, only to face cadaver men and then a spectral dancer?

Teavil: I'll never forget it. Thank goodness Pilla attacked just after Tasha started to dance, or we might have lost our wizard.

Tasha: Speaking of our thief, here he is at last.

We looked toward the doorway, and I beheld a man with no left arm. A stump grew where his right leg had once been. Using a crutch, he hobbled to the table. My gasp must have been audible, for the other three looked at me and said in unison, "blood monkeys."

ON THE DREADFUL NATURE OF HORRORS

Unlike the dangerous creatures and monsters native to our plane, such as griffins and hydras, the Horrors invaded our world from another plane of existence. Alien to our world, these fearsome beings possess unique abilities, twisted logic, and a love of pain that is absent from all but the most disturbed beings of our own world.

According to the magical scholars of Thera, the Horrors invade our world every several thousand years, when the magic level of the world becomes so high that these creatures can force a passage between our plane and theirs. We know not if the Horrors invade other worlds, but their invasions of our plane, the times we know as the Scourge, last hundreds of years. The most recent Scourge ended roughly ninety years ago and lasted more than four hundred years.

During the Scourge the Horrors swarmed over the world, destroying, torturing, and devouring everything in their paths. Lack of artifacts or other evidence of the existence of previous civilizations leads us to believe that the Horrors must have completely wiped out earlier inhabitants of the Earth in past ages. The fact that so much of our own culture survived the Scourge intact can be credited to the efforts of the Therans, who warned us of the Horrors and taught us how to build shelters against them.

As for the rest of the world, we have had little contact with civilizations beyond Barsaive since the Scourge, but that is not to say those civilizations did not survive. Through trade with cities on the other side of the Aras Sea, we know that some lived through the Scourge. Perhaps others also survived, but like us must rebuild their own lands before reaching out to others. Also like us, they may still be battling a few lingering Horrors.

As far as we know, as many types of Horrors exist as do types of creatures on our own plane. Some Horrors are mindless omnivores, consuming grass and trees and insects. Others show more cunning by solving simple puzzles and eluding simple traps. Undoubtedly, many citadels and kaers fell to Horrors of this kind.

The most powerful Horrors think much as we do. Like us, they have a language and seem to feel some level of emotion. Their considerable cunning makes them very dangerous. This type of Horror especially savors pain and fear. Rather than simply killing their prey as other Horrors do, they stalk, manipulate, and toy with their victims, sometimes for years. We may never know for certain why they behave so, but most believe that the Horrors draw a kind of psychic sustenance from the painful emotions they inspire in their prey. Many of the most intelligent Horrors deftly breached the defenses of kaers and citadels, then kept their presence within them a secret. For years they stalked the residents of these shelters, often killing more victims by driving the inhabitants into frenzies than by shedding blood themselves.

Some Horrors possess people; others can slip in and out of shadows. Some animate corpses or inhabit weapons. We have discovered so many types of Horrors that no one knows the full extent of their abilities.

I have seen ruined kaers where hundreds of skeletons lay strewn about the corridors, a sword or dagger in each bony hand. I could only conclude that the people killed each other. I doubt not that the horrors helped bring them to this end.
—Win Thraul

—From the journal of Gliock Bluch, obsidiman warrior, and companions upon finding Kaer Phil-tolo

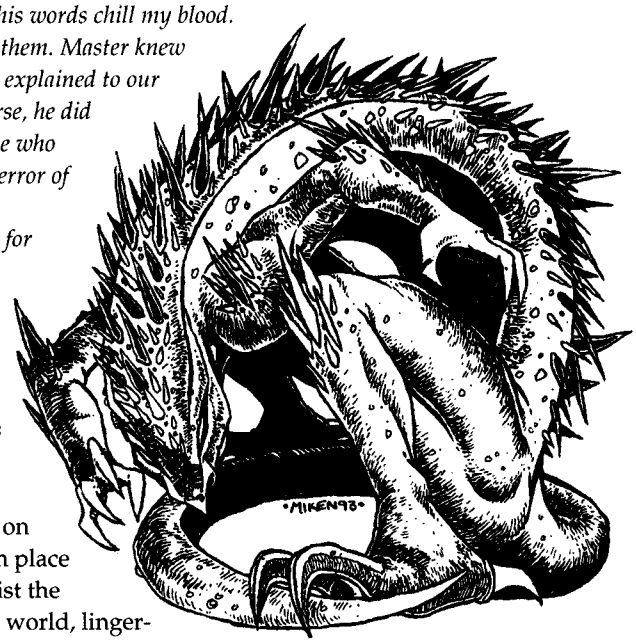
. . .We spoke with the kaer's last inhabitant, one Bylon by name. To this day, his words chill my blood.

"You are wrong," he said. "My master is not a Horror. He protected us from them. Master knew that some of the people would object to being his servants, so he asked my help. I explained to our people that it could only benefit our town to have Master watch over us. Of course, he did ask a price. At first he wanted only the elders and the sick. No one minded. Those who did, the criminals and troublemakers, I took to my Master. He showed them the error of their ways.

"Soon, other kaer residents began to give themselves. People killed themselves for my Master. All the members of a family would come in together to give themselves to him, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons."

Bylon ceased speaking and gazed skyward, a look of pain crossing his gaunt face as his body stiffened.

"Master? I have told too much. I am sorry." Standing up, he grabbed a knife from the floor. "Excuse me. My master needs another sacrifice." He smiled at us over the rusting blade, then turned and vanished into the kaer's dark depths.



As the world's magic level ebbed, the Horrors could no longer remain on our plane. The decrease in magical energy forced them back to the hellish place that had spawned them. Many of the creatures had power enough to resist the drain of magic and remain here, however. Others became trapped in our world, lingering too long to escape the way they had come. Though the Horrors no longer threaten the entire world, they still present a real danger to both heroes and common folk.

TRIBES AND CLANS WITHIN THE RACES

Some of the Name-giver races form clans or tribes that live outside the normal existence of the people of Barsaive. Though these groups make up part of Barsaive, they keep to themselves and regard their affairs as private. These clans and tribes represent the greatest threat to the peace the Kingdom of Throal is determined to bring to Barsaive. Though most inhabitants of Barsaive gladly joined the society built by Throal, these groups stand outside of that society and therefore weaken it. The largest of these groups include the troll crystal raiders, the ork scorchers, and the t'skrang river villages.

THE T'SKRANG WEAKEN BARSAIVIAN SOCIETY? I THINK NOT. BARSAIVE BELONGS TO US AS MUCH AS TO ANY LOT OF DWARFS—WE DIFFER FROM THROAL, BUT WE DO NOT WEAKEN OUR OWN LAND.
—DARIINAEUS, CAPTAIN OF THE SWIFTWATER

CRYSTAL RAIDERS

For centuries, countless troll clans have claimed the Twilight Peaks as home. The tall mountain range put welcome distance between the trolls and the other Name-giving races and offered them deep caves and caverns in which to live. Before the Scourge, the Twilight Peaks abounded in life. Rich flora covered the mountains, even above the tree line in other areas of similar elevation. Careless of their prosperity, the troll clans gave little thought to farming and agriculture, neglecting the Passion Jaspree in favor of Thystonius, Passion of conflict.

They fashioned weapons of war from stone and crystal, for the Twilight Peaks were rich in elemental earth and the caverns rich with the crystals they loved to craft into shimmering swords and armor. Few other species possessed the brute strength required to wield and wear such heavy, ornate items, and the trolls took pride in their unique weapons. They also built drakkars—long, wooden airships in which they sailed around the mountain peaks, fighting great battles against their own kind in the sweeping mountain slopes. These trolls were not the raiders we know today, who fight others as well as their own.

Like every other place in Barsaive, the Scourge changed the Twilight Peaks almost beyond recognition. Most of the trolls survived the Scourge buried deep in their mountain kaers, but their land fared far worse. Where once trees and grass, and fruits and vegetables grew wild, the Horrors left only barren ground and gray stone. The surviving trolls, inexperienced at working the land, have so far proved unable (some say unwilling) to re-plant the vegetation that flourished in earlier days. Instead of learning to use elemental earth and mundane tools for farming, they began to raid surrounding towns and villages in their drakkars, taking the food and supplies they needed.

Over the past 90 or so years, the trolls of the Twilight Peaks developed a new culture based on raiding and created customs and rituals to support their changed way of life. Their trollmoots have grown larger, some two hundred to a thousand strong. Though such numbers give the trolls an advantage in their constant warring, they have grown too numerous for the Twilight Peaks; the mountains cannot sustain the number of trolls attempting to live off the barren landscape. This crowding only worsens the lack of food and supplies and drives the trolls out on ever-increasing raids.

Crystal raider trollmoots vary greatly in temperament and fighting styles. They still fight among themselves in the mountains, but are as likely to attack Theran airships, farming communities, and caravans. Some, such as the Bloodlores, are the most ruthless of beings. The Stoneclaws, by contrast, are rumored to have offered shelter to those less fortunate than themselves during the Theran War.

On the Customs of Crystal Raiders

Crystal raider society is organized around the trollmoot, two or more troll clans that have banded together to share their lands, labor, and the rewards of raids. When two or more clan chiefs agree to join forces, the clans perform the Ritual of the Trollmoot, a rite of blood magic that requires the clan leaders to swear a blood promise to one another, forever proclaiming the loyalty of their two clans.

The many different trollmoots share a few common traditions. A chieftain leads each crystal raider trollmoot, usually the troll most feared by the other trolls. Anyone who believes he or she can best the chieftain may challenge him or her to one-on-one combat. The chieftain sets the terms of victory; most often, the battle continues until one troll falls down, bleeds, falls unconscious, or dies. The challenger chooses the method of combat, barehanded or armed. If the fight is set to continue

only until one of the trolls is knocked down, the combatants usually forswear weapons. However, many challengers choose to fight with weapons regardless of the victory conditions in the hope that they can slay the reigning chieftain and take his or her place.

Work and danger fill the lives of crystal raider trollmoots. When they desire entertainment, they mount celebrations that rival any others in Barsaive for energy and frenzy. The mountain trolls love to move, whether in combat or while dancing around the great bonfires they build. In their wild dancing they call on Floranuus, Passion of revelry, victory, and motion.

Crystal Raider Ships

Trollmoot activities center on airships and raiding. Crystal raiders use drakkars, the smallest type of wooden airships in Barsaive. These ships boast ornately decorated hulls, finely carved with runes by clan raiders. Narrow caves near the trollmoot's village serve as concealed mooring places; within them, the trolls care for and repair their swift vessels.

The chieftain of the trollmoot appoints a captain for each drakkar the trollmoot owns. The captain of the ship commands the crew of the vessel and makes decisions whenever the chieftain cannot bespeak the ship. For his own ship, the chieftain chooses a vig (second-in-command), ensuring a swift and smooth transfer of command should the chieftain die in battle. A few of the prouder warlords refuse to do this, annoyed by the suggestion that they might not survive a fight. Everyone else on the airship serves as crew, works the oars, or joins the warriors who will strike first. These fortunates sit in the center of the boat, swords in hand, ready to engage in combat at a single word.

The trolls left behind are either too young or too old for combat; sometimes they stay behind because the clan does not have enough airships to hold them. These members of the trollmoot build weapons, make repairs, and care for the young.

On the Place of Newots in Society

Over the past 80 to 90 years, the crystal raiders began abducting people from the towns, villages, and ships they raided. These prisoners, called newots, prepare food and perform other menial tasks for the trollmoot. Escape is difficult. Even trolls find it difficult to scale the Twilight Peaks, and a newot who escapes one trollmoot faces likely capture by another trollmoot during the climb down to the foot of the mountains.

The crystal raiders make a sharp distinction between their taking of newots and the Therans' taking of slaves, though only they understand the difference. They base their claim on the fact that the Therans trade and sell slaves, while the trolls capture newots only for their own use. They consider the newots members of their community, albeit members with no power, authority, or respect within the trollmoot.

A newot who survives the rigorous life of the trollmoot long enough may be formally invited by its chieftain to join the trollmoot as a full member. If the newot accepts the invitation, he or she undergoes the initiation rites of an adolescent troll. If the initiate survives the rituals, he or she receives all the rights of a member of the trollmoot.

> In truth, the distinction between newots and slaves eludes most scholars. Of course, few scholars would dare say so for fear of angering a crystal raider.
> —Jerriv Forrim

On Weapons and Armor

Besides being master craftsmen of their drakkar airships, the crystal raiders produce some of the most extraordinary weapons and armor in all of Barsaive, perhaps in all the world. It is from these trappings of war that they take their name, which suits them better than any other. Though the raiders also use conventional arms made of metal and leather, a great many wield swords and spears made of blue-tinted crystal or wear armor thickly encrusted with with jagged crystal shards.

The trolls cannot use natural crystal alone to produce such weapons and armor, because they would shatter during combat. Instead, they carve these beautiful but deadly weapons from crystals native to the Twilight Peaks, and then lace them with elemental earth to make them as strong as metal.

The Twilight Peaks offer two resources that make such craftsmanship possible. In deep caverns at the heart of the mountains lie a great supply of crystals called ice stones, so named because they are cold to the touch, and a rich supply of elemental earth. The caverns remain largely unexplored and unsettled, for they are rife with strange and dangerous creatures

from the elemental plane of earth. The raiders, fierce and eager for combat at almost all other times, make expeditions into the caverns with uncharacteristic timidity. Though they greatly desire the treasures contained therein, they also believe that they are trespassing by intruding into these caves. For more information on the nature of the caverns, turn to the section called On the Mountains of Barsaive, in which the Twilight Peaks are further described.

—From the journal of Zurc of the Stoneclaws

. . .The entire moot came out to see us off, the little ones gathering in the shadows of the mighty airships as I had done only a few years before. The moot elders, grizzled men and women proudly bearing the scars of long-ago raids, bade farewell to their battle-girded sons and daughters with the traditional admonition to "Return victorious—or draped across your shield."

At the deep, rich sound of a b'ruar, fashioned from the horn of a thundra beast, we 500 warriors formed a column. A second bellowing call sent us marching toward the drakkars. We moved as a great, terrible beast, bristling with the gleaming points of crystal-tipped spears and swords. Others wielded finely wrought battle-axes fitted with ice-stone heads the size of thundra skulls. Still others carried flails and maces, laced with elemental earth for strength. Some even wore elaborate helms and armor of jagged crystal, and all bore large ice-stone shields that flashed in the harsh mountain sun like dragon scales.

As the last warriors boarded the drakkars, the crowd fell silent. Then the slow, steady beat of spears against shields announced the beginning of the h'kradt, the ancient raider ritual. Slowly, the beat grew louder and faster until it grew into a thunder that filled the sky.

The crowd answered with war cries and cheers. Then, as the last echoes of the h'kradt reverberated through the mountain passes, the drakkars of the Stoneclaws rose toward the clouds. . .

Crystal weapons and armor offer the same protection in battle as metal weapons or armor and seldom have magical properties. Few other than trolls use them, as it takes troll-like strength to wield such heavy armaments. However, a troll weaponsmith occasionally creates a truly extraordinary weapon, by accident or design. Such items that we know to exist include an enchanted crystal sword that inflicts more harm than any other sword of comparable weight and size, crystal spiked maces that emit a blazing blue light to blind the wielder's opponent, and suits of crystal armor that weigh as little as leather armor. Many warriors throughout Barsaive covet such wondrous items; the raiders often become the raided when bands of adventurers attempt to slip into a trollmoot and steal such armor and weapons. Other heroes make desperate attempts to stop the trolls in mid-attack in the hope of seizing enchanted items from their fallen foes.

I consider myself a good friend of the moot's chieftain, Kerththale. His father was instrumental in bringing air power to the Throalic cause during the Theran War. Of all the crystal raider trollmoots, the Stoneclaws seem the most open to shedding their harshest customs. Every year I visit Kerththale it seems his people have adopted more lowland ways.
—Thom Edrull

AN EXAMINATION OF THREE TROLLMOOTS

During my research, I spoke with members of three crystal raider trollmoots, and offer the following summations of their words to demonstrate how differently each lives out the ways and customs now common to the crystal raiders.

The Ways of the Stoneclaws

The Stoneclaws trollmoot, though retaining their fierce crystal raider temperament, have lately taken on the trappings of what we call civilization and refined their raiding techniques.

The Stoneclaws, a clan some 1,000 strong, own ten drakkars and make their home in the northeastern part of the Twilight Peaks. Like all crystal raiders, the Stoneclaws still raid to survive. But instead of wearing thick furs as do their fellows, the Stoneclaws prefer cloth and have adopted the square, boxy fashions popular in Throal. Unfortunately, such clothing—designed for the squat bodies of dwarfs—looks even more ridiculous on trolls than on humans. Disdaining the opinion of others, the Stoneclaws take immense pride in their new-found cultural tie to the lowlands, and their proud bearing almost makes the ill-conceived design work. Though the trolls have not taken to the dwarf fashion of wearing their beards in a flat row of cylinders, they do trim them more often than do members of other trollmoots. The pains they take with their appearance and the Throalic accent with which they speak lends the Stoneclaws an unexpected air of sophistication.

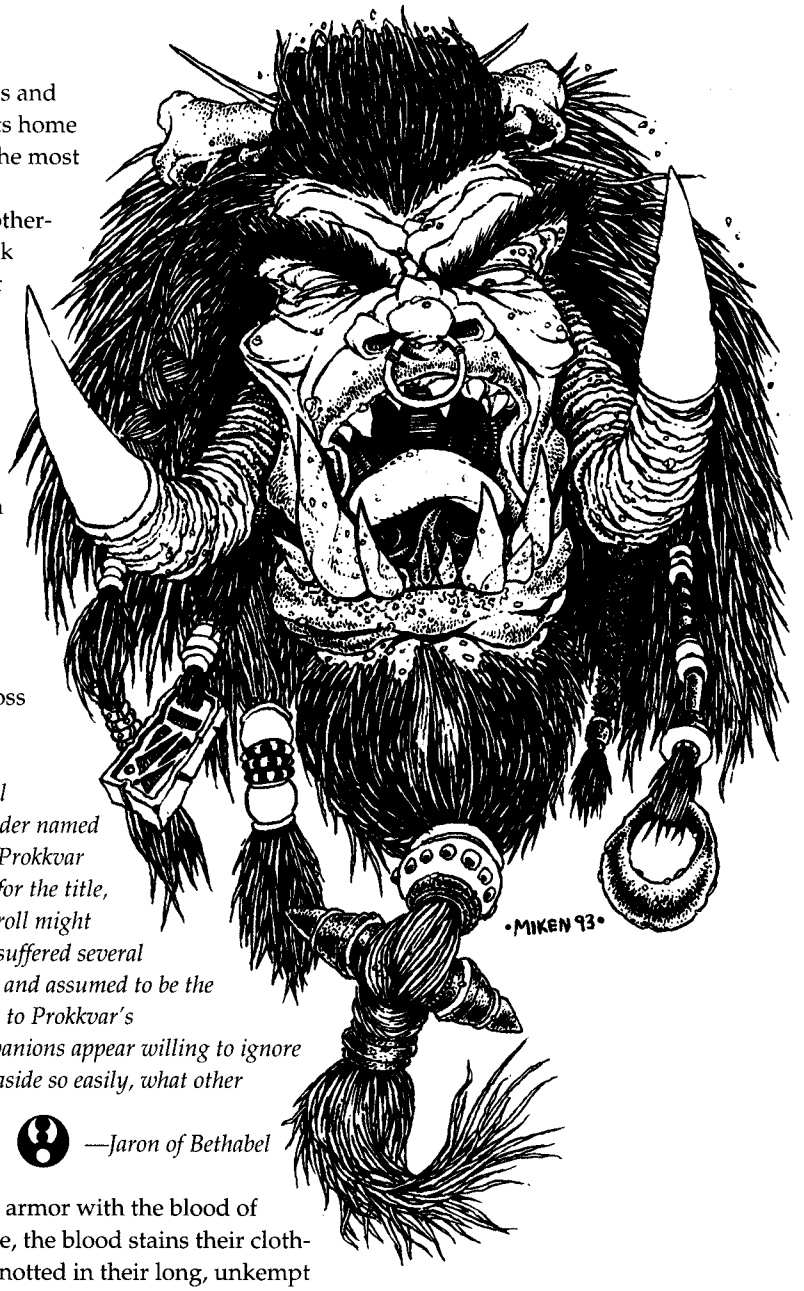
Their attempts to imitate lowland dress and speech make their continuing raids an unpleasant shock to their victims. Regardless of their outward appearance, the Stoneclaws still board drakkars and sail away from Twilight Peaks in search of villages to raid. Outward trappings have had little effect on the trolls' inward nature; violence and raiding remain as natural to them as breathing.

The real difference between the Stoneclaws and other crystal raider trollmoots is that the Stoneclaws no longer raid indiscriminately. Instead, they most often raid Therans and those who support them. When pickings are slim, however, they will still gladly raid any likely target.

The Ways of the Bloodlores

The Bloodlores trollmoot numbers nearly 800 trolls and owns eight drakkars. This bloodthirsty clan makes its home in the northwestern portion of the Twilight Peaks. The most violent of the known crystal raider trollmoots, the Bloodlores kill for sport and often attack without bothering to loot their victim's bodies. They regularly attack other trollmoots to test their martial prowess against those they consider their only truly worthy foes.

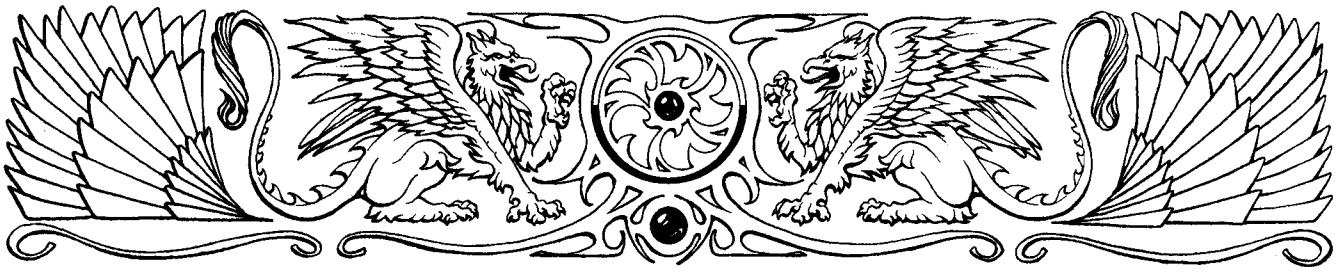
Chorak Bonecracker, the Bloodlores' chieftain, particularly hates the Stoneclaws. He and his entire trollmoot loudly proclaim that the Stoneclaws have become too soft to deserve the name crystal raiders. In an effort to destroy his most hated enemies, Bonecracker has waged two bloody wars upon the Stoneclaws, drawing several other trollmoots into the conflict as allies. Kerththale of the Stoneclaws, having inherited some of his famous sire's diplomatic skills, successfully created his own alliance of trollmoots to repulse the Bloodlores' attacks. Despite the terrible shedding of blood and loss of lives, both wars ended without victory.



Rumors in Throal have it that Chorak has his hands full with a pack of young trolls led by an ambitious crystal raider named Prokkvar Tornflesh, who has his eye on the chieftainship. Prokkvar so far refuses to challenge Chorak in a traditional contest for the title, for he knows he cannot win. But given time, that young troll might well do Chorak in, by fair means or foul. Chorak recently suffered several accidents that nearly took his life, all suspicious in nature and assumed to be the work of the Stoneclaws tribe. Certain circumstances point to Prokkvar's involvement, however, and if true, Prokkvar and his companions appear willing to ignore the traditions of trollmoot accession. If they can toss that aside so easily, what other traditions might they choose to ignore?

—Jaron of Bethabel

The Bloodlores usually paint their furs and crystal armor with the blood of slaughtered animals before battle or a raid. Over time, the blood stains their clothing a dark crimson. Many of them also wear bones knotted in their long, unkempt hair, creating the appearance of crazed savages—exactly the effect they seek.



The Ways of the Ironmongers

As savage as the Bloodlores, the Ironmongers feel a special affinity for metal that distinguishes them from other troll-moots. Like other crystal raiders, they work with stone and crystal, but make a special effort to collect for themselves goods forged in metal: brooches, swords, maces, helmets, rings, kettles, and other such items. From comments made by some of their craftsman adepts, I surmise that they seek some new Discipline of magic that will allow them to combine metal with stone in some new and powerful way.

Yorvak Bronzeclaw, the trollmoot's leader, spends much time researching the trading practices of various villages to determine the likely contents of certain caravans. In this way, he chooses his victims, raiding those most likely to be carrying precious raw metals and finely worked metal goods. He has also stolen from magicians known to work on magic swords and the like.

The Ironmongers' specific interest in metal makes most villages and towns safe from their attacks. Heroes laden with magical weapons, beautiful rings, and a reputation for collecting treasure, however, must guard against Ironmonger drakkars while on the road.

The Ironmongers tend to wear clothes in the colors of metal, and often paint their crystal armor and weapons to resemble metal ones. The trollmoot numbers 1,200 members, owns twelve drakkars, and lives in the central region of the Twilight Peaks.

A DISCOURSE ON ORK SCORCHERS

Ork scorchers are bands of nomads that travel the lands to the south and west of the Throal Mountains. Divided between cavalry and raiders, all ork scorchers travel mounted on all manner of beasts, including horses, thundra beasts, and large, horned animals called stajian. Most ork scorcher warriors are also skilled adepts, capable of performing complex acrobatic feats and specialized attacks while riding. Both types of scorchers regard each other with deep animosity. The cavalry scorchers find the undisciplined, randomly violent lifestyle of the raiders embarrassing, partly because many Barsaivians make no distinction between the raiders and scorcher cavalries. As for the raiders, they detest what they consider the affectations of discipline and directed violence the cavalry scorchers have adopted.

Scorcher cavalry and raiders both spring from orks who escaped slavery in the centuries before the Scourge. These escaped slaves banded together into small tribes, living as nomads in order to avoid recapture. Many orks found themselves surprisingly skilled at taming wild beasts and used this gift to create herds of animals trained to carry the tribes on their travels. The ork tribes raided isolated villages and farms for enough supplies to keep them going from day to day, sneaking in to take what they needed when discovery seemed least likely. As the tribes grew larger, these raids grew bolder and more devastating to the victims, because the orks' need for supplies became greater.

As the orks grew stronger, they began to believe that they could resist any attempts to return them to slavery. Their supply raids changed from desperate acts of survival to punishment inflicted on all other Name-giver races for the injustice the orks had suffered. As the centuries passed, even this justification gave way to the sheer pleasure of destruction and the desire to deprive the privileged of their prized possessions. The ork culture became a constant round of violence and wild celebration of successful, devastating raids. Their lightning attacks cut a wide swath of death and destruction, and their victims called them scorchers for the barren lives they left behind.

During the Scourge, each scorcher tribe established a separate kaer. No longer able to perform glorious feats in battle, the scorchers kept their traditions alive through legends of their great heroes. The first scorchers to leave the kaers found little worth raiding, but immediately took up the lives of their ancestors and waited for Barsaive to rebuild.

ON SCORCHER CAVALRY

Shortly after the united people of Barsaive defeated the Theran Empire and ended the Theran War, the leader of the Thunderers scorcher tribe decided that his people should earn their way in the world by offering their finely honed fighting skills to other groups. Though the tribe resisted, their leader had seen the coming importance of trade to Barsaive, and eventually prevailed. Other tribes followed in his footsteps; they abandoned raiding and instead formed cavalries, selling their skills to the highest bidder. From their earliest days, some ork cavalries lived by strict rules that pledged each rider's loyalty to one side of a conflict, while others changed sides from one week to the next. This dichotomy remains in our own day.

Ork cavalries range in size from ten scorchers to 100, built around groupings of nine riders and one sergeant. Overall command of larger forces falls to a captain.

Individual cavalries identify themselves with symbols such as bloody teeth, torn pennants, or bloody horns affixed to their shields, breastplates, or helms. This particular custom is one they share with the scorcher raiders, though in general the cavalries wear well-kept armor and maintain their weapons in good repair. As they travel, they often adopt the clothing styles of the towns and cities they encounter, adding robes, fine leather boots, and other luxuries to their wardrobes.

Only a rare few scorchers read and write, though many units contain adepts whose Disciplines includes this talent. Because an ork leader may not have this ability, contracts are sealed verbally after negotiations. The cavalries offer a unique service, and so most prospective allies agree to even the most outrageous demands.

Because they love combat above all other things, scorcher cavalries usually attach themselves to front-line troops and wait for the first volleys of enemy arrows and spells to cross the field. Then, armed with thick lances and riding their powerful mounts, the orks race across the battlefield to engage the enemy, running down anything in their paths. The mere sight of charging ork cavalry is often enough to break the opposing army.

Families travel with the cavalries, taking care of such day-to-day concerns as repairing weapons, cooking food, and tending the wounded. Once a cavalry has fulfilled its contract, the riders and their families camp outside the walls of major cities, using this excellent vantage point to sniff out political conflicts that might provide more work. Whenever they learn of battle brewing, the cavalries break camp and ride to the battlefield. Because all cavalries find work in the same way, the cavalry that arrives first has the best chance of winning the assignment. When work is particularly scarce, cavalries fight each other for contracts.

Cavalry units obey their own code of law. Warriors by profession, they treat other warriors as they themselves wish to be treated. Prisoners taken are held until the end of the conflict, when they are ransomed or simply returned to their army. Anything of value captured during battle goes to the winner. Once hired, most orks throw themselves completely behind the side that is paying them. Though some can be bribed to change sides, most scorcher cavalries units only abandon their employers when ordered to engage in suicidal attacks, or if the conflict escalates beyond the terms of the original contract. Should this happen, employers who refuse to renegotiate will swiftly lose their fine ork soldiers.

ON THREE FAMED CAVALRIES

I describe the three most famous (or infamous) scorcher cavalry units in Barsaive below. Note that the first number given represents both the cavalry and their families; the approximate number of warriors within that total appears in parentheses.

Terath's Chargers

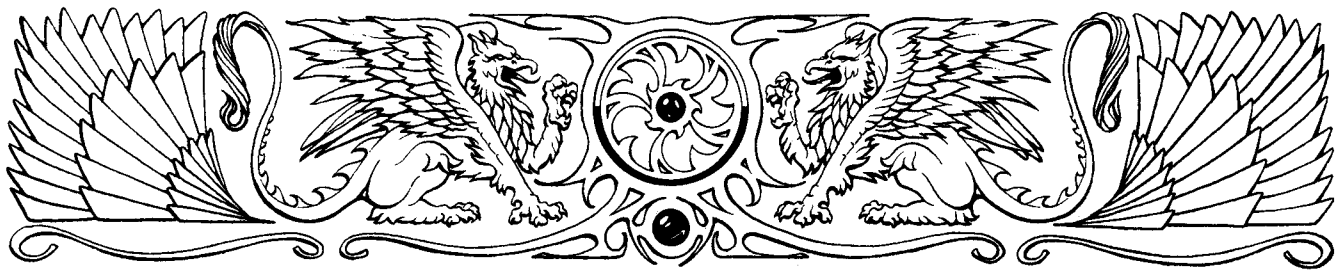
One of the largest ork scorcher tribes in Barsaive, Terath's Chargers is second in size only to the Thunderers. Led by Terath the Contemplative, the tribe comprises 1,600 (400) orks, though the cavalry is usually split into two groups of 200 each to allow Terath's Chargers to fight twice as many battles. The entire cavalry regroups only for particularly challenging contracts, when they believe their full strength is needed.

For the past four years, half of Terath's Chargers have defended King Varulus III's lands against attack from the Skull Wharg raiders. The presence of orks defending dwarf interests against other orks has roused the anger of Karak Bloodeyes, the Skull Wharg chieftain, and he has sworn to kill Terath at the first opportunity.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THERE ARE FEW LEADERS IN BARSAIVE THAT KARAK HAS NOT SWORN TO KILL.
—ARDINN TERO

Terath's two children, his son Earal Bloodstroke and his daughter Zarass Icethought, lead the two halves of his army when he is not present. Earal commands the cavalry employed by Throal, and Zarass leads the half that roams Barsaive seeking employment. Terath rides between the two groups, keeping his authority firmly established. Because Terath spends only half his time with the cavalry attached to Throal, he has so far dismissed reports that Earal's people are becoming fast friends with the people they have sworn to protect.

Terath's Chargers wear uniforms of deep blue, relieved only by silver buttons. Terath frowns on cavalry members who ornament their uniforms, but allows the occasional bone-pattern held in place with heavy thread.



—From the journal of Gernol of Throal, 1505 TH

...Not long ago, I visited the camps of Earal Bloodstroke. Large, dome-shaped tents made of tanned animal hides were set up in six-tent circles, with a bright fire burning at the center of each circle. As I believe is their custom, the scorchers were gathered around the fires telling stories of the battles they had fought and recounting ancient legends of the times before the Scourge.

I was particularly struck by the number of dwarfs, elves, humans, and other races from the farmlands gathered around the fires as well. Judging by the stories being told, such behavior was unique to this scorcher camp. I can only guess that because this cavalry has lived and fought in the same place for more than a year, they have become (in a sense) part of Throal. I spoke with many of the ork families under Earal's command, and they obviously believe that Throal has agreed to a contract for an indefinite time. When I told them that the contract is renewed and renegotiated each year, that news surprised them. If a time comes when Terath chooses to move his Chargers out of Throal, he may find his forces permanently split.

—From the journal of Jonam Swordarm, 1505 TH

. . .Our meeting with Zarass Icethought clearly showed dissent among Terath's Chargers. Zarass has repeatedly demanded that her father Terath rotate the two halves of the cavalry in and out of Throal each year. She claims that her brother, Earal, feels affection for the people he protects, an attitude foreign to the very fabric of an ork scorcher's being. . .

Though Terath seems to know of the rivalry between his children, he has yet to act. Some say that Earal counts his sister's arguments by pointing out that his cavalry is experienced at defending Throal and so should remain there. Though this argument may have truth to it, by allowing his units to fraternize with the people of Throal he jeopardizes the scorcher way of life. Terath appears willing to wait on events, allowing Earal and his cavalry to draw ever closer to the citizens of Throal they defend; in this way he avoids forcing his people to choose between him and Throal.

Herok's Lancers

Herok's Lancers, more commonly called the Lancers, are regarded by other cavalries as little better than a scorcher raider tribe. Though they work for contracts and keep their word as scrupulously as any other cavalry group, they cause as much injury to their opponents as possible, and looting is one of the Lancers' favorite pastimes. On occasion they attack communities without being paid to do so, then later invent a creative reason for the strike. However, their fighting prowess convinces most prospective employers to overlook these infrequent lapses into lawlessness.

The tribe usually numbers about 8,000 (2,000); their loose organization allows families to join and leave the Lancers easily and with little notice.

Herok Shatterbone, a sturdy, capable ork who interprets a contract in his own way, leads the Lancers. Unexpectedly literate, Herok often makes changes to contracts even after signing. Though these changes are always small and rarely come to light, Herok always offers to clear up any misunderstanding through a fight.

Employers who hire the Lancers buy fierce soldiers on the battlefield, but may receive a surprise or two in the negotiating room. Because the Lancers seem to sell themselves cheaply, many cities and political factions in need of an army will gladly hire them. Once he has won the battle, however, Herok often demands a higher fee than the one negotiated or a reward of another kind. Those who hire the Lancers are rarely in a position to dispute with an army of orks and pay whatever the scorchers ask.

Through years of experience, Herok has learned just how far to go with his extra demands. In most cases, he asks for only 20 percent over the original fee. If he desires an extra reward in something other than coin, he tends to request obscure and seemingly valueless objects that apparently hold some meaning for Herok and his people. In the past he has collected minor magic items, swords, and ancient texts. Some believe that Herok or someone else in the Lancers is working toward the same goal as the living legend cults, but no one can prove this contention.

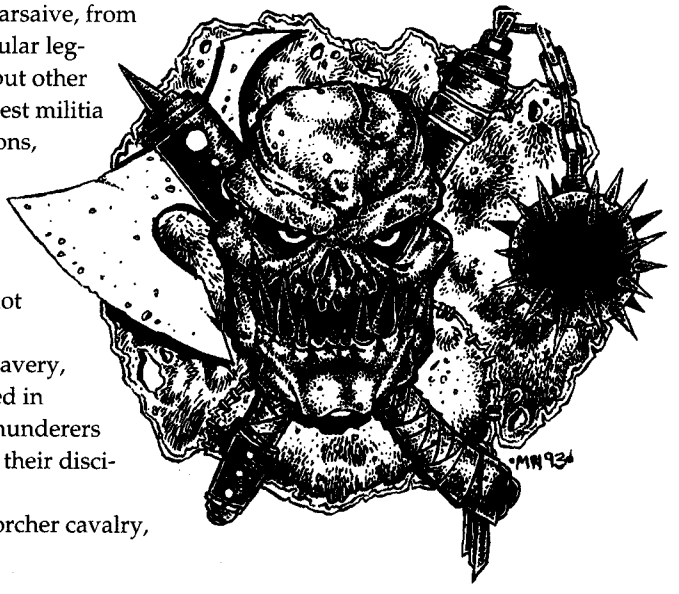
The Lancers dress in a ragtag collection of bits and pieces taken from the uniforms of defeated opponents. Every Lancer wears black or red, along with many other colors. The true mark of Herok's Lancers are the unique spears and lances these orks carry. They paint the weapons black, with red stripes. The tips of the weapons are bright red, and the Lancers festoon the last third of the handles with small bones, fixed in place with adhesive paste.

Thunderers

The oldest ork scorcher cavalry, the Thunderers began selling their services more than 30 years ago, shortly after the Theran War. The Thunderers' leader, Zrack Lone-Roar, one day gathered together his raider tribe and declared that beginning at sunset, they would no longer raid at whim, but would commit acts of violence for pay from any who wished to employ them. At first his people balked at what they saw as servitude, accusing Zrack of betraying the foundations of their society. Zrack, however, showed wisdom in recognizing the growing influence of trade in the world. By hiring out, his people took advantage of that influence to prosper.

During the first few, hard years many people refused to believe that lawless raiders would abide by a contract. By performing their duty well and honorably time and again, the tribe belied the skeptics and built a reputation. Accepted as honorable orks, Zrack's tribe could eventually choose between bidders, and their success inspired other scorcher tribes to follow suit.

Titanstroke Greybeard, Zrack's son, now leads the Thunderers. They number some 2,000 (500) orks, and enjoy a reputation as the most professional of the scorcher cavalries, rivaling the Therans in discipline and prestige. Even General Crotias of Sky Point has acknowledged the Thunderers' expertise by inviting Titanstroke several times to become a permanent part of the Theran force in Barsaive, from there traveling the world as an arm of the Theran Empire. Popular legend reports that Titanstroke spit at the general's feet in reply, but other rumors say that the offer tempted him sorely. Joining the greatest militia in the world would make a fine capstone to his father's ambitions, and the opportunity to lead his cavalry into new lands must also have held appeal.



Whatever his private thoughts, Titanstroke repeatedly declines the offer, a testament to the strength of his hatred of slavery. Though he respects the Theran sense of order, he cannot abide their enslavement of others. He has declared that the Thunderers will never accept work that furthers the cause of slavery, and his cavalry lowers its fee when fighting opponents involved in the slave trade. For this reason, King Varulus often hires the Thunderers to fight campaigns in southern Barsaive, where they can apply their discipline effectively against the formidable Theran army.

The Thunderers wear the most distinctive uniforms of all scorcher cavalry, midnight blue decorated with gold braid.

—From the journal of Freestone's Fighters, 1505 TH

...As we traveled across the lands near the ancient kingdom of Landis, we came upon a massive ork tribe camped for the night. Spotted by their sentries, we were escorted to the leader's quarters, where we met Titanstroke Greybeard. He cordially invited us to rest with the Thunderers scorcher tribe. That night we heard many legends of ork battles against Theran armies in which Theran slavers fared worst at the hands of the Thunderers.

Their terrible fierceness against slavers has its origins in our distant past, when orks were the only Name-giver race enslaved...

SCORCHER RAIDERS

Ork raiders live in much the same primitive way that their ancestors did before the Scourge drove them into the kaers. They take pride in their shabby, dirty clothes, their inability to read and write, and the constant squabbling that goes on within and between tribes. They choose victims (whether persons, caravans, or communities) to raid based on known or rumored wealth and treat their victims according to how well they are dressed. Those who look wealthier are more likely to be killed or tortured. Balancing this savagery, the raiders often help the poorer people in society, sometimes aiding rebellions against cruel, wealthy merchants or slave owners.

The raiders travel the land in tribes numbering from 50 to 300 orks. Like the cavalry scorchers, their prominent warriors are riders. Their nomadic life with its constant travel allows them to take what they want from anyone they meet. They rarely stop for more than seven days, pitching their conical tents and feasting and dancing around huge fires until dawn.

Fierce warriors, the scorcher raiders take pride in their physical prowess and skill in combat. Even their games often involve hitting, biting, clawing, and other physical attacks. One popular pastime, tossball, requires players to move a ball (made from an animal's skull wrapped in cloth) up and down a playing field. The players use heavy poles measuring some six feet in length to manipulate the ball, but can also use the poles to hit anything else on the field, including other players. Tossball is bloody and sometimes fatal, but the raiders laugh throughout the game. In a well-played game, every player suffers serious bruises, and serious wounds are seen as a badge of honor.

Most raiders wear furs and unfinished leathers, decorating their clothes and hair with bones and feathers. They wield crude weapons and often their first goal in a battle or raid is to acquire better ones.

ON THE MOST INFAMOUS TRIBES

In the following pages, I describe everything we know about three of the largest ork raider tribes in Barsaive.

Broken Fang Tribe

The Broken Fang tribe roams the lands between Twilight Peaks and the Liaj Jungle. Some 5,000 orks strong, the tribe is divided into smaller clans of 500 to 600 raiders. All the villages and hamlets between the jungle and the mountains hold dark memories of Broken Fang attacks. Most villages and towns raise as many of their children to be warriors as farmers; a number of these warriors leave their villages to travel the world in search of magic and artifacts that might help protect their people against further scorcher raids.

Rumor claims that the Therans once approached the Broken Fang tribe to form an alliance, but the orks slew the ambassadors. Given their fierce independence, I should think an alliance between the Broken Fang and anyone at all is impossible.
—Merrox

Members of the Broken Fang tribe tattoo their flesh and paint broken, bloody fangs on their shields. They wear red armor trimmed in black feathers. Loyalty among the Broken Fang tribe is so strong that all attempts to destroy individual clans have failed, thwarted by the arrival of the rest of the tribe. Because the clan rarely stops for more than three days at a time, few have successfully tracked them. When cornered, Broken Fang raiders fight with the ferocity of rabid animals, angered by a shared belief that no one dares attack them. Punishment for challenging this belief is swift and terrible.

The Broken Fangs' leader, Charok Redhand, has reached an age where he might well die before too many more years pass. His son, Tarjak Stormcloud, has been urging his father to choose a side in the Theran-Throalic conflict. Apparently Tarjak cares not which side Redhand chooses. The truth is that he simply wishes his people to have a friend, should full-blown war with the Therans break out.

Most of the tribe disagrees with Tarjak, preferring instead to watch the factions of power in Barsaive battle themselves to a standstill. If he is allowed to assume his father's place, Tarjak faces an uphill battle to keep it. Though the eldest son normally assumes the father's place of power in the Broken Fang tribe, in some cases a council of clan leaders chooses the new tribal chieftain, but usually only when the son and heir has died.

Metal Fist Tribe

The Metal Fist tribe numbers some 8,000 scorchers, though they rarely gather in one place. Scattered throughout Barsaive, they make their homes in the foothills of the mountains. Remarkably, this tribe can ride their beasts up and down mountainsides at will, sometimes taking advantage of this skill to raid crystal raider trollmoots. Only breeding, training, and extraordinary empathy between rider and mount makes this feat possible.

Witnesses also say that he has met several times with Tresgg Heatsky, daughter of the chieftain of the Metal Fist scorcher tribe, to discuss an alliance of some sort.
—Jerriv Forrim

The tribe is divided into a dozen clans, two or more of which often raid together. The scorchers wear a spiked or studded black metal glove on one hand at all times and occasionally on both, usually when riding into battle.

The tribe has sworn to destroy the Therans, for the orks have lost many members to slave raids. In order to better defend against these attacks, the Metal Fist tribe has begun to adopt scorcher cavalry

organization. They wear red- and purple-dyed furs to mark their tribal allegiance, often adding colorful feathers.

Even their personal war with the Therans cannot force the Metal Fist tribe into an alliance with Thera's other enemies. As with other raider tribes, their sense of independence prevents them from working with others to reach a common goal; they know only how to be enemies, not friends.

The tribe's chieftain, a master tactician known as Bronze Eyes, uses his tribe's vast numbers to significant advantage. He rarely wastes his strength attacking small villages, instead looting larger towns and heavily guarded caravans. He seems to believe that anything not well-protected is not worth the taking. A few foolish merchants have tried to protect themselves from the Metal Fists by hiring a light guard and thus disguising the value of their goods, only to fall prey to common thieves.

At the moment, the tribe is closely watching Tresgg Heatsky, daughter of Bronze Eyes. Members of the tribe have seen her with Tarjak Stormcloud, son of the Broken Fang tribe's chieftain, and all concerned feel alarm at what this contact between them might mean. Bronze Eyes has forbidden his daughter, who by hereditary right is the next Metal Fist chieftain, to meet with the Stormcloud whelp again, and she appears to be honoring his wishes. Her father's most faithful warriors believe her compliance genuine, but in a world so rich with magic, even the most trained observers can be easily decieved.

Skull Wharg Tribe

The Skull Whargs raid the lands around the Throal Mountains, creating constant trouble for King Varulus III and his citizens. Led by Karak Bloodeyes, the tribe numbers 4,000 members, divided into eight clans. These clans regularly raid dwarf caravans, farming communities near the Throal Mountains, crystal raider trollmoots, and the docks along the Serpent River.

The Skull Whargs wear hides sewn together in a patchwork pattern; the more colors and textures crammed into a jerkin, the better they like it. They paint their shields with ludicrous white skulls—I can find no better way to describe this supposed artistic effort. Some of the skulls clearly belong to orks, humans, or beings such as dragons. Others represent heads that only a mad person would recognize.

The Skull Wharg tribe hates Throal, everything it stands for, and all who ally themselves with it. Their own peculiar mythology states that orks were the first Name-giver race and thus are Barsaive's true inheritors; the increasing power of the dwarfs threatens this belief. These scorchers often raid traders or settlements with ties to Throal, less to loot than to destroy. When they strike, they leave behind nothing but the charred remains of bodies, homes, carts, and trade goods.

The Skull Whargs continually campaign to enlist Barsaive's other scorcher tribes in their private war, but so far have met with limited success. Two clans from the small Blood Spear tribe defected to the Skull Whargs two years ago, increasing the latter tribe's membership to 4,000. Other scorcher tribes, however, apparently consider the Skull Whargs' goal of toppling dwarf power too ambitious.

Karak Bloodeyes has sworn repeatedly and publicly that he will someday personally lead a vast army of orks into the mountain kingdom of Throal, kill the king with his own hands, and raise his head on a spear. Many rumors claim that his ranting drew the attention of the Keys of Death cult, and that the two groups have begun planing a joint campaign against the Kingdom of Throal. I believe that Thera would gladly join such an effort, did it exist, but have heard no hint of Theran involvement in these plans.

> Thearasi, an elven scholar of physiology, suggests that the skulls are representations of horrors, their descriptions passed down through generations. I rather think they are wild fancies of misapplied paint that the raiders are too lazy to correct.
> —Thom Edrull

On T'skrang River Villages

Many t'skrang villages line the banks of the Serpent River. In these villages live the t'skrang crew covenants, that race's form of extended family. The crew covenant serves many functions for the t'skrang who live in these riverside villages.

Unlike the troll crystal raiders and ork scorchers, members of which attempt to join the rest of Barsaivian society, all t'skrang consider themselves members of their crew covenant first and citizens of Barsaive second. Also unlike the first two

groups, the t'skrang rely on trade rather than raiding for their livelihood. T'skrang pirates do exist, but the honest traders far outnumber them.

On the Villages as Permanent Homes

Though t'skrang sailors love to travel up and down the river, they also enjoy long stays in their villages. The t'skrang love of children and their strong family ties make them value a safe haven in their riverside communities. T'skrang villages are made up of four to twenty extended families, called foundations because they are the base on which t'skrang society is built. Each foundation is ruled by its oldest female elder, called the lahala.

These villages lie partly buried under the muddy bottom of the Serpent and rise slightly above it. Constructed of stone and shaped like domes, t'skrang homes are connected by underground tunnels. The domes vary in size, with at least one dome in every village large enough to hold the entire population for meetings and celebrations. Each foundation also builds a dome where its members communally eat and sleep. For every foundation formed, another dome must be built.

The t'skrang love to climb and swing on ropes. Where space permits, foundation members string ropes along walls and ceilings, forming some into ladders and dangling others from high ceilings. The play of t'skrang children consists almost entirely of chasing each other around on these ropes.

On the Building and Function of Towers

In every t'skrang village, large, thick spires extend upward from the river floor, usually four to twenty per village. Each of these towers belongs to one of the village's foundations. Rising above the surface of the Serpent, the towers resemble round rocks with flat tops from the shore. The towers are sturdily made to withstand the powerful, fast current of the Serpent and the constant pounding of the waves against the upriver face of the towers. A steady spray of water boils off the face of the tower and crashes back into the river, making for an interesting hazard when sailing.

These towers serve several purposes. They allow easy access between the village and the surface of the river, serve as docks for t'skrang riverboats, and protect the village from pirate attacks.

To defend against attack, the t'skrang mount on the towers the same fire cannons used on the riverboats. They also erect magical barricades called refs that radiate from the towers. Lying invisible just below the surface of the water, refs consist of elemental water shaped into thick spikes that can tear open the hull of any riverboat passing above. Tower sentries raise and lower the refs to allow friendly riverboats to pass safely and covenant boats to leave or approach the tower. Because all towers are surrounded by refs, all riverboats steer clear of tower tops unless invited in by the towers' crew covenant.

To raise and lower the refs takes five minutes or so, leaving the village exposed to hostile riverboats for that length of time. Before lowering the refs, guards scan the Serpent carefully for unknown ships. Because the Serpent meanders in gentle curves, the tower guards can see farther than a ship can travel in five minutes, making it unlikely that an enemy ship can reach the village before the refs go down. Extraordinary as it may seem, however, more than one t'skrang captain has managed to bypass the refs of another village. Captain Patrochian of the *Breeton* accomplished this feat by arranging for a powerful spell of invisibility to be placed over her ship and waiting only yards away from a tower while the refs were lowered. Another captain, so the story goes, fueled his engines with so much elemental fire that he was able to charge down the

Serpent from his hiding place around a bend in a scant three minutes. His engines exploded as he reached the village, but his story is remembered because he successfully passed his riverboat over the refs.

The t'skrang place especial importance on protecting the towers furthest upstream from the village, because ships that control those towers control access to the village. Once docked at a tower, the crew of a hostile ship can storm it and from there make their way to the helpless village. Because the village's best fighters and sailors go with the riverboats, the village is at its lowest strength when the village boats are out on the river. A raided village can only surrender, hope for rescue, or die fighting.

Allowing enemies to control even one tower gives them access to the rest of the village, and the t'skrang have few choices in such dire straits. Though they are uniformly good swimmers, the river is swift and strong; few t'skrang can leave their village from the riverbed, swim to the surface, and end up where they wish to be. Of course, enemy t'skrang who try to reach a village by swimming rather than through the towers face the same obstacle. If hostile ships control all of a village's towers, its citizens may starve to death. Most supplies come from the village's riverboats, either through trade or piracy. Those supplies move from boats and the shore to the village through the towers.

A Description of a T'skrang Community

Society within each village is matriarchal. When two t'skrang marry, the man enters the woman's foundation. Decisions within each foundation as to the sharing of food, clothes, novelties, and so on are made by a council comprising the women of the foundation, led by its lahala. Men do not attend these meetings, but their wives and sisters usually solicit their opinions before the council meeting.

All members over the age of 15 have a voice in making decisions affecting the entire crew covenant (that is, the entire village). Monthly meetings take place in the large dome at the center of the village, though the council may call an unscheduled meeting if an emergency warrants it. The meetings reflect the nature of the t'skrang themselves: loud, boisterous, energetic, and full of motion. Impassioned t'skrang often climb the ropeworks of the dome during a meeting, scrambling over each other to reach the highest points in the room and shout each other down.

On Village Prosperity

The t'skrang livelihood depends on trade. The ships that ply the river over the villages conduct trade (and sometimes piracy), while the village produces the many goods that the ships trade for others.

The backbone of the t'skrang livelihood is a specially prepared fish that only they produce. Though the subtleties of taste and texture vary from village to village, this delicacy is always in demand. The t'skrang catch fish from the Serpent using elaborate mazes of nets strung across the riverbed between a village's domes. The nets trap any fish that swims into them, because all directions within the net maze lead to dead ends.

Every few hours t'skrang fishermen and women work their way along the nets and harvest the trapped fish, gathering them in large rope sacks. The t'skrang designed the nets to capture fish of a certain size; those small enough to escape simply grow big enough to be caught later.

Every member of the village helps to prepare the fish. The secret t'skrang recipes use unique spices collected from the river bottom, and both spices and recipes differ from village to village. Preparations combine spices with magic, creating a mouth-watering delicacy that retains its taste and freshness anywhere from two weeks to two months.

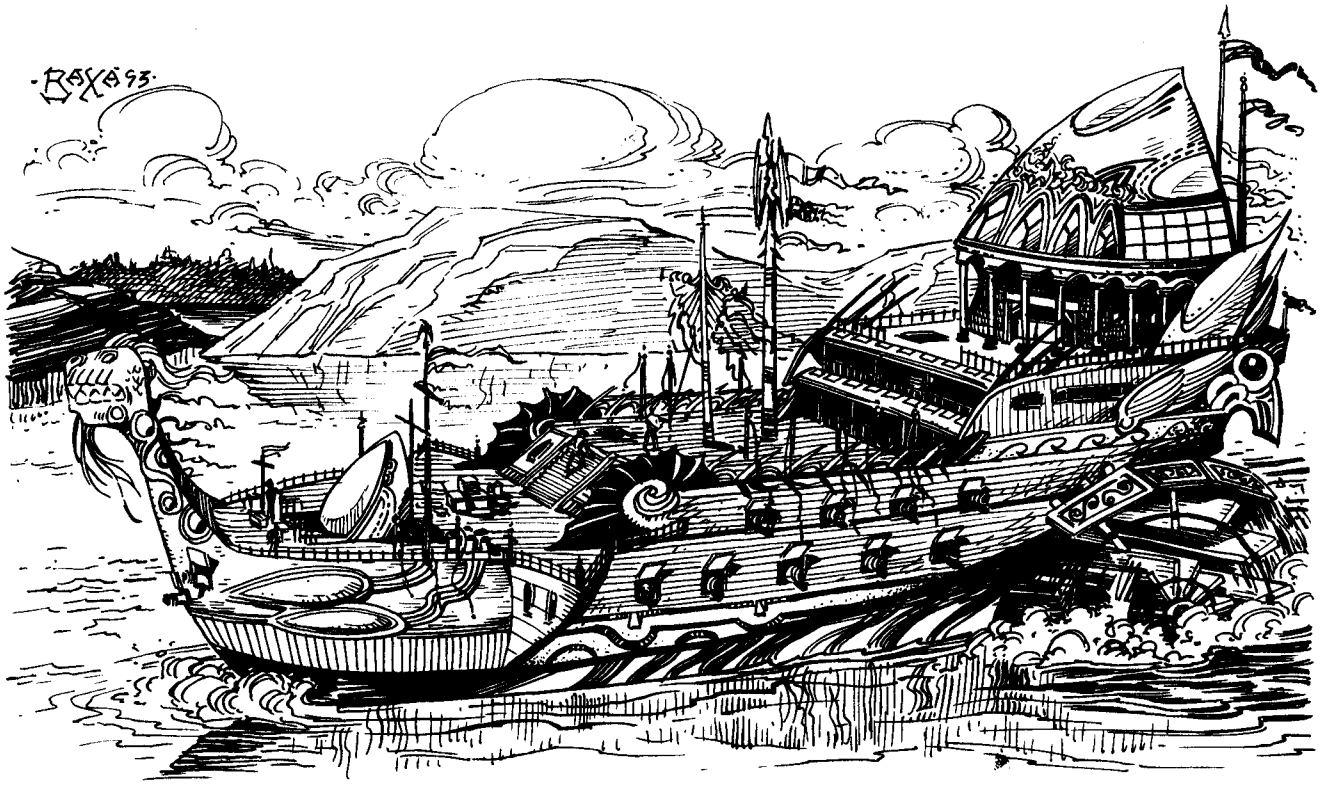
Though t'skrang crew covenants often fight among themselves and steal from one another, no circumstance could ever prompt a t'skrang to reveal the secrets of preparing fish. Such an offense is punishable by death according to t'skrang law, but this threat is a mere formality. The t'skrang possess too much racial pride and loyalty, and need the support of their fellows too much, to ever betray their own people in this way.

The t'skrang willingly sell the spices harvested from the plants that grow on the river bottom; these spices are among their most profitable trade goods. The plants yield leaves and seeds that the t'skrang prepare in several forms, using some

> ON MANY OCCASIONS, USUALLY AS A GUEST AT THE COURT OF KING VARULUS, I HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE OF EATING FISH PREPARED BY THE T'SKRANG, AND I BELIEVE IT IS THE MOST WONDERFUL FOOD I HAVE EVER BEEN PRIVILEGED TO TASTE. ORK SCORCHERS AND OTHER BANDITS OFTEN ATTACK CARAVANS RUMORED TO CARRY T'SKRANG FISH, SIMPLY TO SAVOR THAT DELICACY. VICIOUS RUMORS ALLEGE THAT THE T'SKRANG SPICES AND MAGIC ACTUALLY MAKE THE FISH ADDICTIVE; THE T'SKRANG VEHEMENTLY DENY THIS, AND I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IT.
> —MERROX

to produce their prepared fish and selling the rest. Though the spices alone do not produce the same extraordinary taste one finds in the t'skrang fish, cooks throughout Barsaive consider t'skrang spices the finest available. Reliable sources claim that Overgovernor Kypros sends agents north from Sky Point to purchase the spices from the t'skrang for use by his personal kitchen staff.

Talented craftsmen, the t'skrang produce extraordinary works of art using elemental water and earth. Statuettes of water, earthenware necklaces that change shape, and bracelets that flow up and down the wearer's arms are among the marvels that the t'skrang create. Like their fish, their jewelry and art is justifiably famed and sought throughout Barsaive.



On the T'skrang Love of Riverboats

The discussion of the villages above might imply that the t'skrang are a sedentary people, content to fish, create art, and cook. Nothing could be further from the truth. Though their underwater villages provide them shelter from all sorts of attacks, including Horror assaults during the Scourge, most t'skrang feel trapped if they stay too long inside the stone domes. Creatures of sweeping motion and intense passion, the t'skrang long for the chance to serve as crew members on the village's riverboat and travel the wide expanse of the Serpent. Larger villages support several riverboats, allowing even more of the village's citizens to travel the rivers.

T'skrang villages and communities exist to sail the Serpent; the crew covenant reflects the importance of the riverboat in their lives. To have a ship and sail upon it is all a t'skrang truly desires from life. Even the t'skrang cannot explain this overwhelming desire, but if one considers their love of motion, their amphibian nature, and the complete safety offered by their underwater villages, it seems clear that the riverboat has given them a way to balance their desires against the need to raise children in safety.

Though the foundation is matriarchal, crewing assignments for a ship are shared equally among the entire crew covenant. The actual assignments vary, depending on the size of the village and how many ships are available. The captain is chosen by the entire crew covenant, based on ability, experience, and more than a little politicking. The vote is seldom

unanimous, but if two-thirds of a crew covenant agrees on a candidate, the choice is made. Chosen for a single season, the best captains often serve in that capacity for life. Incompetent captains lose their position at the end of a season, or may be voted out mid-season.

The Occurrence of Mutiny

The captain of a ship provides stability among the crew covenants, but can also become the target of jealousy among those rejected for the position. Though most crew covenants are too tightly knit for such feelings to surface, occasionally an overly ambitious t'skrang leads a mutiny against a captain, usually taking the position of captain himself. Particularly calculating t'skrang sometimes prop up a crew member they can influence as the captain so that if the mutiny goes badly, the true mutineer will suffer less heavy a punishment than his dupe. Usurpation of a captain's authority is punishable by death, and co-conspirators often die as well.

If their mutiny succeeds, the crew can either sail back to their village and attempt to force their will on the rest of the crew covenant, or find another village willing to accept the ship in its fleet. Though many villages might welcome another ship, most t'skrang consider it risky to invite mutinous sailors into the crew covenant. If a crew has mutinied once, it may well do so again. In most cases, a village that accepts a mutinous crew most likely struck a prior bargain with that crew. In such cases, the village interested in acquiring the ship may aid the mutineers by attacking the ship when the mutiny begins.

On the Business of Trade

The t'skrang use their riverboats mainly for trade. The ships carry goods produced by t'skrang villages up and down the river, selling them to villages and towns on the fertile banks of the Serpent or to merchants, who buy them at docks along the river and carry them throughout Barsaive to sell at a profit.

The t'skrang owners of the goods sometimes travel with their merchandise, selling it themselves when the riverboat docks at a likely market. Sometimes merchants hire t'skrang to carry their goods to the other side of the river, a nearly impossible feat without a riverboat. Occasionally, the t'skrang crew purchases goods along their journey and sells those goods elsewhere, effectively acting as merchants.

Some crews without the patience for trade and careful bargaining turn to stealing from other riverboats. Piracy is not common along the entire Serpent, but certain stretches are regularly plagued by pirates.

—From the journal of J'role the Honorable Thief

. . .The first time I laid eyes upon the Serpent River, I watched one t'skrang riverboat attack another. The immense size of the Serpent had stunned me, and the strange vessels floating on its surface surprised me even more. A blue and green riverboat, smoke billowing from its two chimneys, moved upriver, its massive paddle wheel pushing it forward. Another ship, covered with gold and red, sailed downstream toward it. Suddenly the gold and red riverboat turned to starboard and unleashed a volley of fireballs from its fire cannons. The red balls of fire, trailing plumes of flame behind them, arced over the intervening water toward the blue and green ship. Some of the fireballs crashed into the water, sending pillars of steam dozens of yards into the air. Others smashed into the upper decks of the riverboat, sending t'skrang sailors scrambling for buckets of water to quench the quickly growing fires. Their garments, sometimes a dozen colors of clothing scraps thrown on haphazardly, caught the sunlight and shimmered like iridescent flowers—green vests, red bandannas, wide-legged scarlet pants, and such. In the fiery light of their burning ship, their scales glowed bright emerald.

The blue and green ship turned to face the gold and red ship, smoke billowing thickly from its chimneys. As it charged forward, the red and gold ship continued to fire. However, because the blue and green ship faced the red and gold ship head-on, it offered a narrower target, and the fireballs fell to either side of it. When the second volley had passed, the blue and green ship turned hard to port. The red and gold ship could not fire, because the crew was still working hard to reload the fire cannons from the last volley. The green and blue ship, now almost on top of the red and gold ship, its starboard side lined up against the port side of the other ship, let loose its own barrage of shots. The fireballs slammed into the red and gold ship, sending flames racing along the upper decks.

Badly damaged from the fight, the red and gold ship wheeled away. On both ships, dozens of t'skrang armed with swords shook their fists at each other and swore oaths of vengeance. I know now that if the ships had passed just a few feet closer, sailors from both ships would have grabbed ropes and tried to swing over to the enemy ship to engage those crew members. But the red and gold ship turned around and headed toward the shore. The captain of the blue and green ship, not willing to risk additional damage to her craft, continued upriver.

ON TOWNS AND CITIES

The task of describing the places in which the people of Barsaive live fell to me. In some respects, I found my task an easy one; many people have visited our land's great cities, and most were eager to describe them for anyone willing to listen. In fact, we received so much information about Throal alone (and, of course, knew it intimately ourselves) that we have written of the dwarf kingdom in a separate chapter. However, this still left me with a plethora of information on Barsaive's other sites. Because this information could have filled an entire volume by itself, I have chosen only the most important or best-known of each city's or town's features.

The reader should also note that the descriptions provided here can serve only as an introduction to the cities and towns of Barsaive. More exhaustive information is available in the Throal Encyclopedia, 1505 TH.

—Written on the Eighth Day of Raquas by Kern Redhand, Historian of Throal

ON VILLAGES AND TOWNS

Hundreds of villages and towns dot the landscape of Barsaive; this volume will describe them only in general terms. The only difference between villages and towns is the number of people living in them. Though no hard and fast rule exists to determine when a village becomes a town, as a rule of thumb, a settlement whose population numbers tens or hundreds is considered a village, while one numbering in the high hundreds to the thousands is considered a town. Some feel that the distinction has less to do with numbers than with the way in which each settlement sees itself.

The discourse in these pages refers mainly to Barsaive's villages, towns, and a few nomadic groups that have ties of trade and politics with other settlements. As part of the devastating legacy of the Scourge, most towns and villages scattered throughout the jungles and hills of the province show little interest in their neighbors—except when attacked, of course. Those settlements that fall victim to attack do their best to rebuild and return to the life they lived before catastrophe befell them.

In fact, most people in Barsaive live their entire lives in the communities in which they were born, never having the need or desire for trade or travel. They learn a trade, which is usually farming, grow to adulthood, marry, and raise children. They teach their children the knowledge they accumulated in a lifetime, grow old, and die.

For villages and towns engaged in commerce, even if only that of hosting travelers in settlements that lie near roads, a select few townspeople usually deal with the outside world. Their fellow citizens consider travelers quite brave, though somewhat suspect, for to leave home one must abandon for a time one's family, village, and magical protections. Those with an aptitude for dealing with strangers often establish inns, creating a gathering place for the community and providing a few rooms for travelers to rent for a small fee. An inn allows those few individuals who are curious about the outside world, hungry for tales of strange places and peculiar adventures, to satisfy their curiosity in a relatively safe manner. Most villagers shun travelers, however. The Horrors still live in the world, and if even a trusted friend can become an enemy without warning, how can an unknown visitor be trusted?

I AND OTHERS I NOW BELIEVE THAT GATHERING WITH OTHER PEOPLE REPRESENTS THE BEST MEANS TO SECURE SAFETY, BUT COMMON SENSE COMES IN MANY FORMS. TO EACH HIS OWN.
—MERROX

Towns and villages that engage in commerce can be distinguished by their accessibility to and interest in the larger, outside world. Settlements that lie along major trade routes, or are connected to major roads by trails usually conduct at least a little trade with travelers and other communities. Occasionally, people from neighboring villages or towns marry, but only if relations between the communities are very good.

Most towns and villages lie far from established roads, many isolated ever since the time of the Scourge. When the Scourge ended, the people who left their shelters sought above all a place in the world safe from danger. Beyond that, they wished for nothing else. Even today, nearly a century later, some still believe that cutting off all ties with the rest of the world is the best means to guarantee their safety.

Though no town or village can depend entirely on trade for its survival, those communities accessible to regular trade routes often possess a greater variety of trinkets and clothes, and have more interest in strangers than do many more isolated farming communities. They also have a greater appetite for new ideas and trade goods, and show interest in novelties from far away (or not so far away, depending on the inhabitants' definition of distance).

In contrast, farming communities usually keep to themselves. The people farm the hilly land, producing rice, fruit, and vegetables, and raise livestock, including sheep, cows, and goats. Because wide expanses of flat ground are rare in Barsaive except in the lowlands, many farmers plant crops in a series of irrigated ledges that follow the contours of the hills. The ledges resemble large, wet steps.

Most villages and towns build their houses on the ground, using stone, mud, and wood. Others are more exotic. Some villages in Barsaive build their homes on stilts that raise the buildings several feet above deep ponds and lakes. In these settlements, the villagers use canoes or boats to travel around the village. Other towns and villages build their homes in the trees. Many such tree-houses become quite elaborate, their massive structures connected by rope bridges spanning hundreds of feet between trees.

A word of warning for the cautious traveler: as the following journal entry shows, many isolated communities prefer to remain so. Keeping this in mind, the traveler should remember that many people in Barsaive still regard strangers with extreme hostility, despite the visitor's good intentions. An explorer will improve his chances of surviving the adventures that fall his way by making his first contact with isolated villages very cautiously.

—From the journal of Melias Mahoaryl of the village of Danadal

. . .I'll not go adventuring again. Mad for it, we were—my brother M'kael, our cousins D'nal and Rekera, and me, Melias. Runt of the litter, they called me. Funny, isn't it? In a tippy boat that D'nal had built from the memory of a t'skrang riverboat he'd seen once, we set out down the river our folk call Twistwater. Above our village it goes through bends and even rapids, and so we headed downriver toward calm waters. Safer there, we thought.

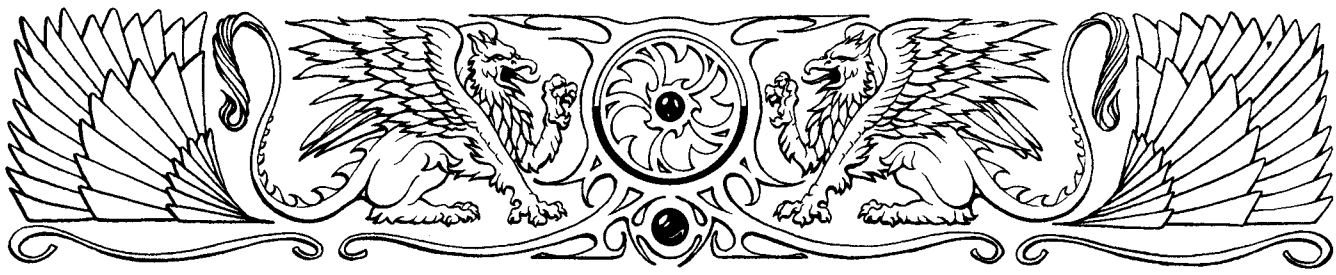
All we wanted was a little adventure, something to tell grandchildren by the bonfire on the village green. . .

But the story turned out much differently.

A storm blew up one night, sending us down a river channel none of us knew. Morning saw us drifting among tall, thick reed beds, where the water smelled of hot sunlight and rotting weeds. We paddled around a bend and saw a little village, 20 round houses on stilts with a little canoe tied up by each one. A sudden wind brought us the scent of fish roasting, and we paddled closer hoping to obtain a bite to eat.

A canoe drifted close, in which sat a ragged, skinny boy cutting reeds with a large knife. D'nal shouted hello. The boy turned, and screamed at the sight of us—the kind of scream you give when your house is burning down or a nightmare chokes your throat so hard that you must wake or go mad. Then whip-quick, he hurled his knife at D'nal. The point struck D'nal in the chest, taking him down in a shower of blood. The rest of us grabbed oars and tried to paddle away, M'kael cursing as the prow caught in the reeds. Too slow, we were. Too slow. A dozen canoes came after us, the villagers shooting arrows and slinging stones. An arrow took Rekera in the throat before M'kael and I went under as the weight of the stones capsized our boat. Poor M'kael never had learned to swim.

Seems they don't like strangers down the Twistwater.



ON THE GREAT CITIES

The cities of Barsaive house many more people than do villages and towns, usually many thousands. As in all of Barsaive, each city features unique customs and culture. A common practice in Urupa, for example, may be a punishable offense in Iopos.

In the following pages, I describe the most famed cities in Barsaive. I have organized the information given for each in such a manner as to best express the individual character of each city. In addition, I have also provided a general description of each city and its location, including directions for reaching it from Throal by using Shantaya's sextant and maps, and a brief description of each city's current ruler.

TO LEARN HOW TO USE SHANTAYA'S SEXTANT AND MAPS, CONSULT THE TRAVEL SECTION. —MERROX

BARTERTOWN

A vast, bewildering maze of a city that 50,000 people call home, Bartertown lies just outside the gates to the Kingdom of Throal. Sprawling in front of the three giant arches leading into the mountain kingdom, Bartertown grew out of a bazaar the dwarfs established years ago at the entrance to Throal. Merchants, traders, and visitors gathered there over the years, and the town became a favorite destination for those who wished to take advantage of the dwarf kingdom's trade policies without feeling obligated to pledge loyalty to Throal. Huts and other permanent structures eventually replaced the open market bazaars and tents and were in turn replaced by larger, more comfortable buildings. As of this writing, it seems nothing can stop Bartertown's growth. During a busy trading season, the city's already large population can double in size.

The closer one approaches to Bartertown, the clearer its ramshackle nature and origins become. Traveling up the Royal Road to Throal, a visitor can see the massive Throal Mountains, at the base of which the three towering arches leading into the kingdom catch the sun's light and glimmer bright gold. These arches seem to stand guard over Bartertown, which tumbles away from the mountains like sharp, angular foothills.

On the Ruler of Bartertown

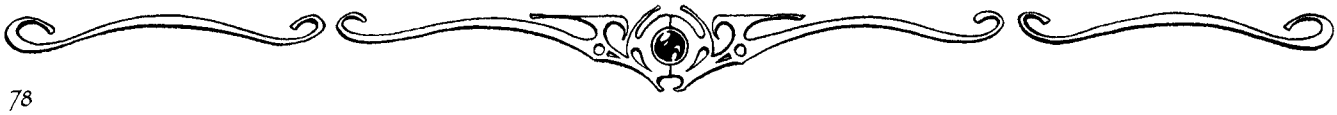
A magistrate chosen each year by the Council of Merchants rules Bartertown. The right to choose this magistrate became a thorny issue several years ago when King Varulus III of Throal and Bartertown's leading merchants wrangled over the power of appointment. Suddenly realizing how large and prosperous Bartertown had become, the king wished to appoint his own magistrate, presumably to extend his sovereignty over the city. Unwilling to relinquish their power, the merchants waved their original charter in the king's face until he was forced to relent.

To their misfortune, the merchants' stubbornness prompted King Varulus to stop supplying money and military might to support the city. In the last 15 years the city has been forced to impose taxes to build better buildings and provide city guards, but many of the citizens simply ignore or cheat on their taxes, which has made the king's withdrawal of support a matter of serious concern. Bartertown's fate has yet to be determined, but already some citizens want the Council of Merchants to relinquish authority to King Varulus III. Many more citizens believe that pride demands that Bartertown succeed on its own. These good people consider the city their home and want it to become as independent and wealthy as any other city of Barsaive.

Unique Features of Bartertown

Reflecting its origins as an open-air market, Bartertown is unlike the other great cities of Barsaive. Most other cities, built generations ago with the aid of the Theran Empire, boast massive stone buildings, towers and spires plated with gold, wide domes that glow the blue of a beautiful dusk, and intricate patterns carved into stone walls laced with gold and silver. Even though the Scourge, the Theran War, and time have reduced many of these cities to ruins, and though the cities still inhabited reflect only a shadow of their former glory, their beauty eclipses the ramshackle streets and lively chaos of Bartertown.

Bartertown boasts no buildings higher than three stories; most stand only two stories tall. Lying as it does next to Throal and the mountains, the city's lack of stonework is immediately noticeable. The buildings of Bartertown are constructed of wood, covered with white plaster, and lack the sense of security that stone shelters provide. Despite the city's size,



Bartertown gives more the impression of a small wilderness town that just happens to lie along trade routes. Bartertown owns no airships and maintains a minimal city guard.

The wide, smooth Royal Road bisects Bartertown, providing all visitors with a clear view of the arches carved out of the mountain ahead. Three-story buildings line both sides of the road, all adorned with colorful paint and bright signs proclaiming the sale of various wares, goods, and services. The Royal Road is clean and well kept, creating a sense of order that makes the city seem pleasant, if provincial. As visitors pass beneath the arches, they enter the Throal Bazaar—the dwarf kingdom's official trading area, housed in a huge cavern filled with countless stalls and merchants. Tunnels lead out of the bazaar into the kingdom itself.

Visitors who turn aside from the Royal Road and onto one of Bartertown's roads quickly see the true nature of this city. Its architecture resembles a child's version of a city, hundreds of buildings placed next to or on top of one another. A closer look shows that some shelters consist of nothing more than heavy cloth draped between two buildings.

Visitors who venture further into Bartertown encounter a sea of jostling crowds in the streets and a cacophony of voices. Workers move their wares from craft shops in the inner recesses of the city to shops set up on or near the Royal Road, where traders from all over Barsaive scour the streets looking for bargains. Visiting airships dock at spires, their shadows falling across the crowded streets as their crews unload goods carried from as far away as towns and villages near Death's Sea or the Twilight Peaks. Pickpockets and thieves work the crowds as well, finding easy pickings among those who become careless in Bartertown's bustle and din.

The city is full of merchant houses busily making fabrics, dyes, magical potions, and every other imaginable good. Even if a product is not made in Bartertown, it can still be found within the city's shops and stalls. Customers seeking specific items must be prepared to spend considerable time sorting through the city's chaotic layout and willing to wait for information if finding the item requires that merchants contact other merchants. Items not immediately available can often be found and brought to Bartertown for a customer, though sometimes the seeker of a rare herb or exotic perfume is simply told in what remote corner of Barsaive he can find the thing he desires.

On the Origins of Bartertown

How did such a unplanned and sometimes ugly city come to lie at the gates of the magnificent Kingdom of Throal, itself a testament to planning and order? This question plagues the dwarfs, for it suggests that chaos can triumph despite their best efforts and that all their grandest plans may yet come to nothing.

The nature of the dwarfs themselves, so well-suited to planning and organizing, gave Bartertown its beginnings. Many traders and visitors simply wanted a place where they could trade and otherwise deal with the dwarfs without being subject to the laws of Throal. To fulfill this desire, King Varulus III granted a charter of land to a few merchants in order to create a community of merchants and traders outside of Throal. He wanted to encourage the presence of traders, but recognized that Throal's might could well frighten away the timid or those suspicious of any great power.

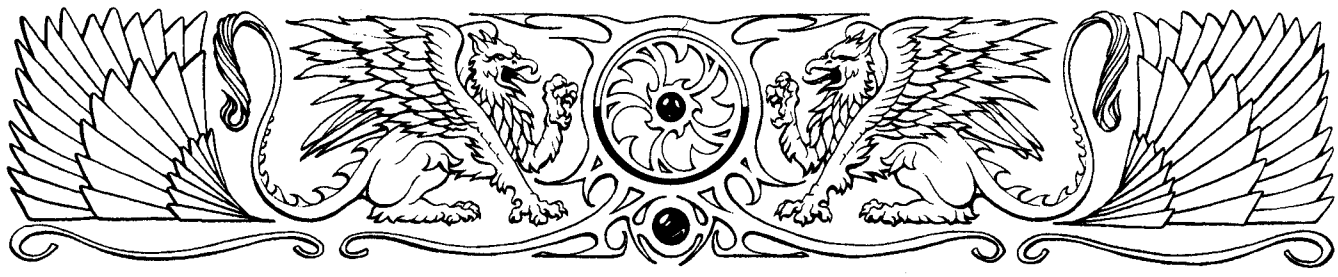
The other force behind Bartertown's swift growth came out of the physical nature of the dwarf kingdom. Many visitors to Throal, especially those of younger generations, simply disliked the idea of sleeping under a mountain. Though hundreds of thousands of people came—and still come—to populate the cities the dwarfs built within Throal, many others wished to be near the kingdom, but not of it. For these people, Bartertown provides the perfect home.

King Varulus gave the city only its charter, nothing more; he pledged it no support or defense. Nonetheless, it continued to grow unchecked. Even the merchants who received the original charter intended to establish only a few trading houses, never envisioning the development of such a vast city. Because half of Bartertown's population at any given time is transient, the city still lacks a true sense of community, and permanent residents are in the awkward position of serving as an adjunct to Throal. Bartertown is neither a truly separate power, nor fully a part of the dwarf kingdom.

HAVEN

Haven lies some 21 days walking and 13 days riding from Throal. To find the proper direction of travel, center Shantaya's sextant on Throal and align Point Θ on the sextant with the Elven Queen's Palace in Blood Wood. Point Ψ on the Sextant indicates the direction of travel; by following Astendar at sunrise in this direction, the traveler will reach Haven.

A small, rough town, Haven lies in the southeastern corner of the ruins of the Forgotten City of Parlainth. Ork and troll



adventurers led by the famed troll Torgak founded the town of Haven 15 years ago, after spending three years carefully exploring a small corner of Parlainth's ruins. After ridding that area of monsters and Horrors, the adventurers set up a permanent settlement from which to conduct further explorations. Other adventurers traveling to the Forgotten City began stopping in the safe area, by this time known as the Haven, to ask what portions of the city had yet to be explored and to hear the most current rumors of monsters and Horrors living in the ruins.

Eventually abandoning their own treasure-hunting efforts in favor of providing services to other adventurers, Torgak and his fellows rebuilt certain ruins into an inn they named the Restless Troll, and later a trading post called Torgak's Supplies and Goods. Because the ruins themselves are so impressive, the Restless Troll and Torgak's are spectacular establishments, featuring high ceilings, wide corridors, and marble steps down to the street; in many ways, they rival some of the buildings in the Kingdom of Throal. Their opulence provides an incongruous contrast to the rough-and-tumble spirit of Haven.

At this writing, Haven boasts a permanent population of just over one thousand, including several dozen families. As many races live in Haven as in Throal, peacefully and amicably. Most trouble in Haven comes from outsiders. Of course, outsiders constantly travel to Haven, and so opportunities to stir up friction abound.

A few years after the town achieved a stable population, other people interested in the opportunities to make a profit in Haven built onto the town, expanding away from the ruins. The first neighborhood constructed during this time is now known as the Old Neighborhood, though several sections of the town predate it.

On the Ruler of Haven

Haven is ruled by Torgak, founder of the trading post. A benevolent dictator, Torgak can use the strength of well-armed orks and trolls to enforce his will when necessary, but he has rarely needed to resort to this measure. His chief concerns are to increase trade and traffic through Haven and to keep the peace. Now that Torgak is getting on in years, he longer craves adventure or the possibility of encountering violent situations. Outsiders who come to Haven intent on brewing trouble are often hauled before Torgak for a lecture; sometimes, he gives them a beating as well.

Despite Torgak's personal desire for peace, Haven still reflects the nature of the ork and troll adventurers who founded it. The town is noisy, rowdy, and rough, and both visitors and citizens alike can indulge in much brawling or other violence before anyone interferes to stop them.

The Defense of Haven

Given the quarrelsome nature of many of its inhabitants, only a town full of warriors ready for a fight could enforce the law in Haven. And despite its peaceful name, the community sits on the edge of a ruined city whose shadows hide countless dangers. Beneath the ancient cracked and bleached-white structures lie dark cellars and long, empty corridors in which monsters prowl and Horrors nest. Indeed, masses of monstrous creatures have attacked the city several times each year since its founding. The circumstances behind such coordinated attacks remain a mystery, but most Haveners suspect that one or more Horrors are behind them.

The Horrors living in the ruins are those powerful enough to remain on our plane after the drop in magic that forced most of their kind from our world. Many are intelligent enough to make mental attacks so subtle that they can cause untold damage before being detected. Horrors can compel people to kill friends and family in their sleep, possess individual members of adventuring bands so that the pawn will lead his companions into a trap deep within the ruins of Parlainth, and perpetrate other unspeakably dreadful acts.

On Haven and Other Communities

Citizens of Haven have begun to develop working relationships with representatives of both Throal and the Blood Wood, currently the two largest political powers near Parlainth. Both King Varulus and the Blood Warders of Blood Wood hunger for artifacts, information, and magic from the ruins, and will pay well any adventurers who can secure such items. Both the elves of Blood Wood and the King of Throal will often hire adventurers to enter and search any ruins rumored to contain an ancient treasure. Would-be heroes venturing into Parlainth from Haven must often contend not only with the monsters,

Horrors, and ancient magical traps scattered throughout the ruins, but also other adventurers racing to claim their prize.

IOPOS

Iopos lies some 38 days' walk and 23 days' ride from Throal. To reach Iopos, center the sextant on Throal and align Point λ on the astrolobe with Parlainth. Point Φ on the astrolobe now points toward Iopos; the traveler must journey in that direction, following Lochost at sundown.

Crouched on the northern edge of the province, Iopos presents the greatest internal threat to the power of Throal (the Theran Empire is, of course, the greatest external threat). The city is ruled by a family of magicians Named the Denairastas, an ancient bloodline whose members governed the city through the Scourge. Their success in keeping the city safe bound the loyalty of the city's people to their magically gifted overlords. To this day, the Denairastas can do whatever they please with nary a word of complaint from the populace.

Those few who dare protest are quickly crushed by the Holders of Trust, retainers loyal to the Denairastas who serve as both guards and informers. The guards of the Holders of Trust wear silver armor and carry large swords, presenting a visible and constant reminder of the family's power and authority. These guards will punish any accused dissenters brought to them by their spies. Charged with seeking out dissent, these spies are not formally identified as Holders of Trust, but walk as ordinary citizens among the people, ever alert for signs of complaint or dissatisifaction with the rule of the Denairastas. At a word from the informants, the guards move swiftly to arrest or kill all known or suspected dissidents.

RUMOR SAYS THAT HAVEN ALSO HOUSES THERAN SPIES AND INFORMANTS WHO LOOK FOR ANCIENT THERAN TREASURE THAT REMAINS IN PARLAINTH AND REPORT ANY UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE FORGOTTEN CITY TO THE OVERGOVERNOR AT SKY POINT. THIS RUMOR SEEMS LIKELY TO BE TRUE. PARLAINTH WAS ONCE A THERAN CITY, AND PROBABLY HOLDS MANY SECRETS OF THERA'S PAST.
—MERROX

—From the last missive of Slock, thief and spy of the city of Kratas

To see this city is to see what our world would look like if the Scourge had never befallen us. The buildings seem to sparkle in the sunlight; the streets are clean, the people happy. No one speaks ill of anything, and all extol the grandeur and beauty of Iopos over any other place in Barsaive. From its outward appearance, Iopos seems a city in which the Passions dwell.

As pleasant as this city seems, a darkness lies beneath its shining surface. As you know, I am nothing if not cautious. I have more than once felt as if someone were shadowing me, which is most strange, for I have done nothing but act the role of the rich merchant. By neither word nor deed have I behaved in such a manner as to arouse suspicion.

The Holders of the trust—the city militia, army, and secret police—are everywhere. All on the same day I saw two visiting merchants arrested, tried, and beheaded in the city center for not observing the law that one must give one percent of all profits to city leader Uhl Denairastas with the pledge, "Uhl is our leader, our beacon, our all." They gave the money gladly, but refused to make the pledge. And it was one of their own workers who turned them in. These merchants came from Jerris and have never been to Iopos before! I tell you, I have not seen such brutality in the guise of order since the dark days of Theran rule!

MORE THAN ONE ADVENTURER WHO VOLUNTEERED TO RESEARCH IOPOS WAS ARRESTED, TRIED, AND SENTENCED TO DEATH ALL WITHIN TWO SHORT HOURS FOR NO GREATER OFFENSE THAN SEEKING A FIRMER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE DENAIRASTAS COMMAND SUCH LOYALTY.
—KERN REDHAND

The Holders of Trust have few occasions to punish offenders, however. Most citizens of Iopos feel loyalty to the point of fanaticism for their rulers; people commonly compare members of the Denairastas family to the Passions. When outsiders question this exaggeration, the citizens simply smile, as if they alone know the answer to a deep and important secret.

I advise visitors to the city to keep any questions or criticisms of Denairastas family politics to themselves.

The Denairastas willfully abuse the worship of their subjects. Whereas cruel Theran masters whip their slaves to death, the people of Iopos work themselves to death of their own free will. Whatever the Denairastas family asks, the people will give, and the Denairastas demand a great deal. Scores of men and women die while mining magical elements, and the city's army is nearly suicidal in its valor. Parents compete to offer their own children for the blood magic rites the Denairastas sometimes practice.

I saw dozens of workers collapse from exhaustion while building a new palace for Uhl Denairastas. I learned later that two of them had actually died in service to their ruler.
—J'role the honorable thief

The Denairastas have sworn to defeat both Throal and Thera, to take their power for themselves. Because Iopos lies so far from Theran influence, the city has turned its attention to disrupting the trade and state negotiations that King Varulus' agents are conducting in his effort to unite Barsaive. The Holders of Trust form Iopos' front line in this effort, going into communities across Barsaive and sowing discontent through murder and destruction. They are skilled at disguising their work to look like the random violence of ork scorchers or crystal raiders, and choose their victims carefully.

The Denairastas' special interest in magic leads some Throalic scholars to speculate that certain living legend cults may be fronts for the family's goals, by which the Denairastas draw unwary people into their scheme of acquiring lost artifacts and knowledge. Iopos possesses a rich reserve of magical elements, collected by airships sent across Barsaive to mine elemental fire from Death's Sea and elemental air from the skies. The city's supply of elemental earth and wood hints at secret expeditions into Blood Wood, though I dared not seek proof for fear of arrest for asking the wrong questions.

More than 100,000 people live in Iopos. The city's fleet of airships consists of three galleys and six drakkars. Three shipping companies also do business within the city, giving Denairastas another additional six drakkars should he require their services.

JERRIS

The city of Jerris lies some 38 days' walk or 23 days' ride from Throal. To reach Jerris using Shantaya's sextant and maps, center the sextant on Throal and align Point λ on the sextant with Urupa. Point Θ on the sextant will point toward Jerris; simply travel in that direction by following Floranuus at sundown.

Jerris occupies a peculiar place In the physical and spiritual geography of Barsaive. Located at the western edge of the province, the city huddles between the edge of the vast Wastes that cut us off from the rest of the world on one side and a huge, unexplored jungle on the other. Because the city borders on so much unexplored land, many people wonder if Jerris marks the border of Horror-filled lands, or perhaps actually lies within them.

The dark smoke that blows from the Wastes swirls perpetually through the streets of Jerris, rarely allowing the sun to shine brightly upon its citizens. The smoke looks and feels ashy, though no one has yet discovered its true nature. Visitors to Jerris who walk through the shadowed streets quickly discover an odd taste on their tongue, as if they had eaten cinders.

To me, the taste suggests something indefinable—perhaps the taste of nightmares. (This observation lacks any real relevance to the discussion of ashes, I know, but there it is.)
—Merrox

The people of Jerris are a brooding, temperamental lot. As in any other city, the streets of Jerris are usually filled with people, but unlike the throngs in other cities, the people of Jerris walk silently with their gaze turned toward the ground. This habit seems to infect everyone who stays too long within the city's walls. An air of listlessness seems to hang over the city, but make no mistake: however tired the people of Jerris may appear, they are easily moved to extremes of passion. Tears flow freely, whether of sorrow or joy. Blades are drawn easily and blood swiftly spilled, whether for money or love. Oddly, these passionate actions rarely inspire the slightest interest from people witnessing such outbursts.

Many scholars, and certain less-educated groups, have suggested that the city is cursed in some way. According to one rumor, the Hand of Corruption believes that the city rests on a wound in the earth and is a physical manifestation of a spiritual illness in our world. The Seekers of Pure Flesh, a gruesome living legend cult, agree with this theory. They suggest that the city can be saved by gathering bits of flesh from those who died for love. The Seekers have brought bucketfuls of flayed skin to Jerris, where it is stored in a pit under the town hall. So far, however, the magistrate of Jerris has refused to allow them to perform their homespun ritual.

Those of a more pragmatic bent believe that the ash filtering over the city from the Wastes has blighted the people's hearts. None of these theories, however, can tell us what the ash is or from where it blows among the Wastes.

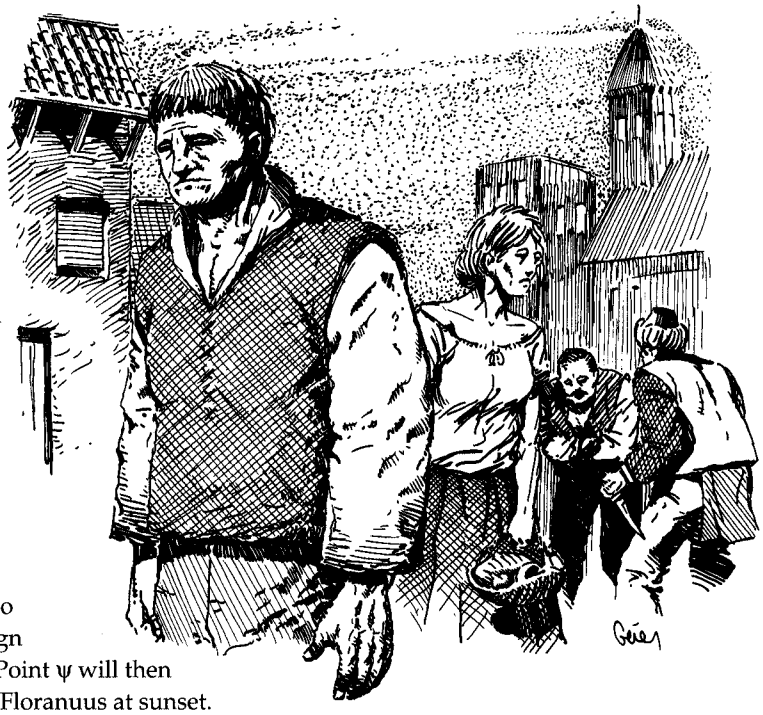
—*Kern Redhand*

Common wisdom in Barsaive says that strange creatures—perhaps Horrors—roam the city's streets at night, unnoticed by the people of Jerris, who cannot see these creatures through some strange effect peculiar to the city. Strange incidents

support these stories. For example, certain tales say that every week ten people simply vanish in the night. Though such a claim is undoubtedly an exaggeration—the city would soon be empty if it were true—it is an exaggeration of truth. People do vanish in Jerris. Yet another mystery shrouds those rare occasions when someone is found murdered in their sleep, torn apart with what appear to be sharp daggers—or claws.

Why do people live in Jerris if they must suffer such miseries? In a word, money. Despite its grim aspect and filthy appearance, the city is home to wealthy merchants and airship builders. Though far from Barsaive's main trade routes, the city transports many goods from place to place throughout the province. Because strong air currents pass over Jerris, a merchant's ships can reach stops on the main trade routes quickly. This advantage allows the merchants of Jerris to serve both the t'skrang and the Kingdom of Throal as hired shipping agents. The airship builders also sell drakkars to towns and private merchants throughout the province. The city also makes considerable profit mining elemental air.

Not everyone is content with business in Jerris, however. The trading houses seek to stop the airship builders from selling drakkars outside of the city, fearing (with reason) that if airships become commonly available elsewhere in Barsaive, no longer will their services as shippers be in demand. The city's elemental air mining operations face constant threats from crystal raiders and the Therans, though the Therans are the greater threat of the two. Rather than simply raiding for cargo, the Therans try to sink new airships as soon as they float, most likely in an attempt to control Barsaive's ability to defend against or attack the Theran armada. The Therans recently launched several air attacks against Jerris, to which the city responded by imposing a new tax on its citizens to finance construction of an airship fleet designed to protect the city.



At this writing, the city's fleet consists of one galley and four drakkars. The merchant fleets total another 15 drakkars, which the magistrate can command to defend Jerris. The total population of the city numbers 80,000.

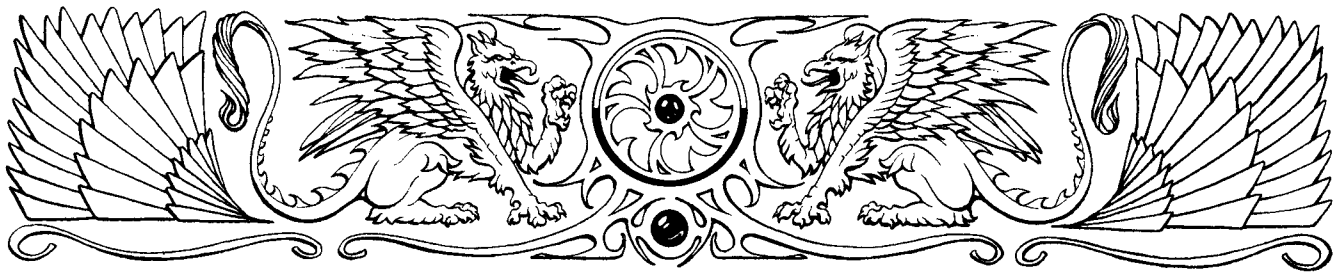
KRATAS

Kratas lies 15 days' walk or 9 days' ride from Throal. To reach Kratas, center Shantaya's sextant on Throal and align Point Θ on the astrolobe toward the Dragon Mountains. Point ψ will then face Kratas; simply travel along that direction, following Floranuus at sunset.

Located in the center of Barsaive, the city of Kratas serves as a crossroads of information and stolen goods. Despite its location near almost all major trade routes, few honest merchants pass through the city, for Kratas is ruled and run by thieves. Its people are the clever and desperate, the illegally wealthy and the horribly destitute of our province.

The site of an ancient citadel that fell to the Horrors during the Scourge, Kratas was crammed with treasures both magical and mundane when adventurers rediscovered it, empty of survivors, soon after the end of the Scourge. Rumors of its treasures led countless expeditions of heroes and treasure-seekers to scour the ruins bare of wealth and monsters. Within a few years, the dark buildings became home to bandits seeking a home base between their raiding activities. Over time the bandits and thieves began to feel themselves a community, though a true government did not form in Kratas until the outbreak of the Theran War.

In the early days of the occupation, the Theran army demanded obedience from the thousands of thieves and cutthroats that called the ruins home. When Throal organized the resistance that routed the Therans, the famous ork thief adept Garlthik One-Eye called together an army of his fellow thieves and chased the Therans out of Kratas. In their place, he appointed himself the city's ruler and has served the city well despite his unconventional rise to power.



The self-interested nature of the criminals that populate the city prevents Kratas from taking advantage of its accessibility to trade, and thus keeps it from developing into a true political power. Though the citadel of Kratas could easily hold some 100,000 people, Kratas' population remains at roughly half that number. Bands of thieves conceal their activities by constantly moving between empty neighborhoods, and only about a fifth of the population lives in fixed residences.

Kratas' streets are dirty, shadowed by cracked and leaning stone and wood buildings. Though the city is inhabited by tens of thousands of people, the secretive nature of Kratas' citizens often make the streets look deserted. Travelers can walk or ride hundreds of yards in the middle of the day and see nary a soul, yet experience the eerie feeling that the shuttered windows and dark doorways have hundreds of eyes.

A strange loyalty binds the outlaws of Kratas together and directs their mistrust and deceit against the rest of Barsaive. Odd as it may seem to honest citizens, most inhabitants of Kratas live there because it is the only place in Barsaive where they feel safe.

Besides the city's many thieves and mercenaries, numerous craftsmen, merchants, and artisans also live in Kratas. These more law-abiding citizens live in fear of attacks that rarely come, but remain there despite the dangers because their services are more amply rewarded in Kratas than in other cities. The thieves of Kratas recognize that their city needs these people to sustain itself, and so they leave these honest citizens alone in their fierce competitions for control over the city's neighborhoods. Merchants and craftsmen must remain carefully neutral in their dealings, however. More than one unfortunate ally of a bandit leader or witness to a terrible deed has ended his days lying in a dark back alley with his throat slit.

Some evidence hints that the leaders of the Keys of Death make their home in Kratas. No one can confirm this rumor, but anyone seeking the services of an expert assassin begins in Kratas. The city also supports a thriving black market for secrets and for stolen goods, especially elemental magic items. Spies who report to the leaders of Kratas are everywhere. Indeed, it is often said that "every secret in Barsaive is gossip in Kratas." The only trade not permitted in Kratas is slavery.

—From the journal of Shiellen Woodsong, eldest son of the Second Magistrate of Travar, found dead in the Drunken Dragon Inn

. . .Today we entered Kratas, a miserable den of ruffians. I can scarce believe that I have come to this place, where tumbledown shacks lean over the litter-ridden streets like crippled old men and the very air smells of deceit. Did I not have a debt of honor to settle, I would ride straight home to father. But then again it is likely my hired "companions" would follow me and kill me for my purse unless I pay them.

We rode through an iron gate set in crumbling walls of lichen-eaten stone, paying ten silver pieces each for the privilege. That princely sum, of course, came from my pocket. The dirty streets smelled of rotting food. I saw a band of urchins splashing in the filthy sluice that ran down one side street; another band ran after us, shouting for coin. One grabbed my horse's saddlebag and tried to swing herself up behind me, but lost her grip and tumbled to the dirt. When she sat up, I saw she was laughing. The scrofulous little beast shouted something after me, though I know not what. I swear they picked my pocket; I am missing a purse full of copper. I have scarce enough money left to pay the innkeeper, a surly sort who looks like he would as soon murder me as breathe.

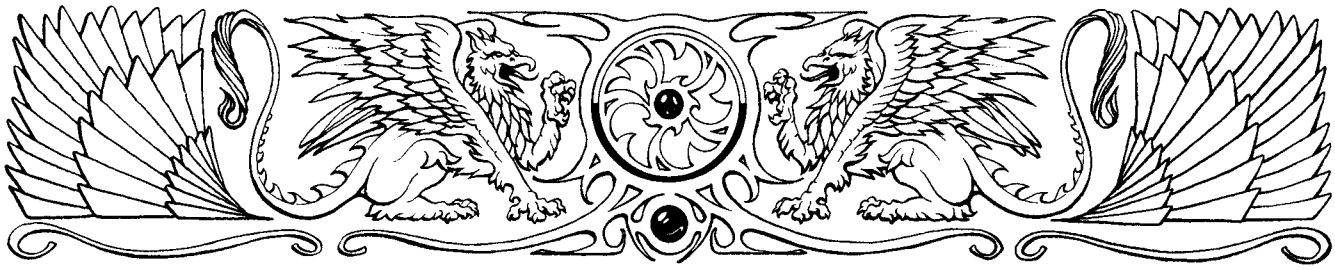
Someone is at the door. Catulla the windling? Surely not—he cannot know that I have come to pay my debt. Who would dare disturb a gentleman at this dead hour of the night?

A pragmatic thief, Garlthik One-Eye rules his city in a pragmatic fashion. When it suits the city's purposes to help Throal, Garlthik supplies whatever is needed. If it better suits their purposes to rob a dwarf caravan, Garlthik's subjects gladly loot and pillage.

Many gangs of thieves live in the city, some using it as a safe headquarters from which to raid the surrounding lands. Others steal only from those living within the city walls. Because it is their nature to covet what their neighbor has, gangs of thieves draw boundaries for territory that they claim as their own, denying others the opportunity to steal or operate within those boundaries. Outsiders may wonder at territorial wars fought within a half-deserted city, but violent disputes break out regularly. The two most powerful gangs of thieves in Kratas are the Force of the Eye and Brocher's Brood.

Force of the Eye

The most influential gang in Kratas, the Force of the Eye owes its existence and allegiance to the venerable ork thief, Garlthik One-Eye. Garlthik uses his gang to maintain the upper hand in Kratas; his anti-slavery, anti-Theran policies only



carry weight because he has the strength to back them. Though none openly oppose Garlthik's decrees, many traders in Kratas would undoubtedly welcome the chance to reap the awesome profits of the slave trade.

The Forcë of the Eye has nearly 1,000 members, made up mostly of orks and elves, though it also includes members from all the Name-giver races. Garlthik regularly assigns a quarter or so of his gang to work for him elsewhere in Barsaive, but retains several hundred informants throughout Kratas. These spies hold no official position in the Force of the Eye, but their ability to slip in and out of the city's many criminal factions makes them useful.

Garlthik's chief counsel is Terricia, a windling thief adept rumored to be responsible for the recent deaths of several of Garlthik's most strident opponents.

Brocher's Brood

A particularly bloody gang of thieves, Brocher's Brood is Garlthik's chief rival for control of Kratas. Led by Vistrosh, a corrupted elf and former Blood Warder to the Elven Queen Alachia, this gang heads the illegal slave market in Kratas. The Brood numbers some 600 members, each of whom must swear an oath of personal loyalty to Vistrosh. The gang is rife with assassins, and few who dare to cross the Brood will escape its relentless pursuit.

TRAVAR

The city of Travar lies 22 days' walk or 13 days' ride from Throal. To reach it, center Shantaya's sextant on Throal and align Point λ on the astrolobe with Urupa. Point δ on the astrolobe will now face Travar; simply travel in that direction, following Raggok at sunset.

Travar is a beautiful city, full of gleaming white buildings, towers, and spires. Of all the cities in Barsaive that survived the Scourge, Travar alone still possesses its original splendor and grace. Its golden roofs catch the sun's light, reflecting its brilliance in all directions. Its location on the Byrose River gives Travar access to the t'skrang traders of the Serpent River and to the Kingdom of Throal. Its proximity to Death's Sea and the Servos Jungle allows easy access to both mundane goods and magical supplies. Travar builds most airships sold in Barsaive, and its own fleet now boasts four galleys and six drakkars. As the wealthiest city outside of Throal, Travar and its citizens enjoy the prosperous lives that accompany brisk trade and wise leadership.

On the Rulers of Travar

A council of three magistrates rules Travar, each magistrate serving for three years. Every year one magistrate steps down from his position, and those interested in serving as magistrate must hire a champion to compete in a tournament called the Founding. If a magistrate wishes to hold his post for three consecutive years, his champion must win the Founding. Magistrates often lose their position by losing the tournament, but regain the office in a later year.

On the Unique Features of the City

The Founding is one of the most peculiar political institutions in Barsaive. Each year a group of magicians known as the Body of Five devises a spectacular tournament involving magic, wild beasts, puzzles, and traps. This huge affair lasts more than two weeks, when the citizens of Travar crowd into a great arena at the center of the city. Seating is limited, and the city's best efforts to control ticket distribution are always swept aside by theft, bribery, and skyrocketing prices. Games of finance are the principal sport of Travar, and lie at the heart of the Founding. Why should tickets for the Founding be exempt?

Persons who want to become magistrates must hire a champion to represent them in the Founding. Every year, candidates secure their champion(s) of choice months before the tournament and spend the intervening time on rigorous training and instruction. Champions come from the ranks of adepts, for the Body of Five creates difficult and subtle tests. No one can predict from year to year what skills and abilities will be needed in order to succeed. Because of this uncertainty, most who seek the magistrate's office hire more than one champion, often choosing several who possess a variety of talents.

The champions compete against one another and against the puzzles created by the Body of Five for two weeks without rest. The crowd watches every event with unbridled glee, always waiting for the contests to reach greater heights of humiliation. Invariably, they do.

having resided in Travar during the Founding, I have witnessed some truly bizarre contests. With my own eyes I have seen combat fought with unusual weapons of magical origin; contests fought from the backs of huge, greased pigs; competitions played out on long logs strung over pits of molten lava drawn from the Death's Sea; races through elaborate mazes formed from whirling walls of flame; games of strategy where the champions are living "pieces" on a large playing board; riddle contests; tests requiring the champion to create an impromptu song on spontaneously chosen themes; and many more.
—Merrox

Though the outcomes of these contests never depend on bloodshed, little can be done to stop overzealous competitors from harming or killing their opponent once the contest has begun. The Founding allows competitors a sanctioned opportunity to give in to their fiercest instincts, should they choose to.

Every year, 50 or more men and women vie for the office of magistrate. Because training and paying champions is expensive, only the wealthy citizens of Travar can afford to run for the office. This expense, however, deters few; a magistrate exerts great influence over the city's trade and tax laws, and a crafty magistrate can double or quadruple his profits within a year's time.

Approximately 150 adepts register as champions each year. By a clever provision in the law governing the selection of magistrates, all officially registered champions must make themselves available to serve the city at all times. This creates a veritable army of heroes drawn from a broad range of talents standing ready to defend the city's interests. Because individuals support each champion, the citizens are spared the expense of supporting an army, and even ork scorchers or crystal raiders are unwilling to attack a city so well defended.

The city's population hovers somewhere near 95,000 citizens, ranging in wealth from those rich enough to wear robes made of gold even to bed to those who sleep in the city's back alleys with only a few utensils and a dirty mat as possessions. Nowhere else in Barsaive do so many craftsmen and merchants gather as in Travar, and even among the poor are many skilled artisans and merchants who have not been fortunate enough to crack the city's market.

Like wealthy people everywhere, the citizens of Travar desire peace. Unfortunately, only the wealthiest members wield the clout to demand peace, and they often choose the terms and definition of that peace. Often, it seems to come at the expense of justice for the less fortunate. Despite the city's close ties with Throal, the magistrates continue to keep Travar's government separate from that of the dwarf kingdom, perhaps because some citizens are unwilling or unable to accept the equal justice that King Varulus III promises to bring to the world.

The people of Travar are merchants by nature; they will sell anything, procure anything, buy anything as long as they believe that by doing so they are getting the better end of the bargain. The city's energy is infectious. Visitors who walk its streets suddenly quicken their stride, gain a sense of purpose, and begin to act like someone not to be trifled with, even when they have no purpose and are more than willing to be trifled with! This is the marvelous illusion of Travar: everyone in the city believes himself destined for greatness, even when the truth shows only enough room at the top for a few of the city's people.

URUPA

The city of Urupa lies 23 days' walk or 15 days' ride from Throal. To reach Urupa, center Shantaya's sextant on Throal and align Point ϑ on the astrolobe toward Sky Point. Point ψ on the astrolobe will face Urupa; simply travel in that direction, following Chorrolis at midnight.

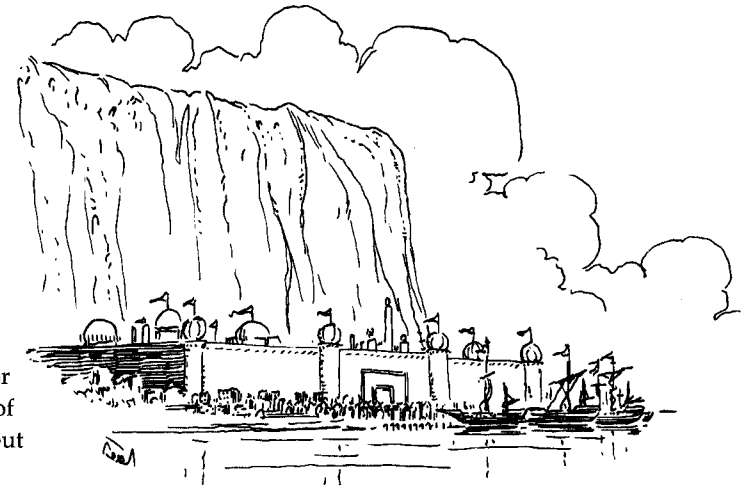
Situated on the shore of the Aras Sea near the end of a tributary of the Serpent River, Urupa stands alone among the cities of Barsaive. A relatively new city, Urupa was founded almost 90 years ago, shortly after the end of the Scourge.

The residents of seven small kaers and citadels located along the shore of the Aras Sea established Urupa, believing that safety lay in numbers. Each community had reached this conclusion independently during the Scourge, and so readily pooled their resources and moved north after the Scourge toward the current site of the city. Intending to create the most advantageous trading arrangement possible, they positioned their new city on the coast of the Aras Sea and near a tributary of the Serpent River, planning that has brought them much good.

The city lies at the base of a high, sheer cliff, on a peninsula between the shores of the Serpent River and the Aras Sea. The 1,500-foot cliff discourages attacks on the city from above, and a twenty-foot high wall broken by five watchtowers helps

defend against all other attacks. Part of the city's militia of 2,000 troops serves as crew for an airfleet of three galleys and five drakkars. Though these ships double as trading vessels, five are always docked along the southern wall of the city, near the city's shipyards.

Urupa also boasts a fleet of five sea vessels that serve as both trading and military ships. The city maintains a regularly scheduled trade route to several ports along the shore of the Aras Sea, both in the known regions of Barsaive and along unexplored stretches of the sea's distant shores.



On the Rulers of Urupa

A seven-member Leadership Council, created by the city's founders, governs Urupa. The first council consisted of the leaders of the seven towns and villages that banded together to found the city. Every two years the council elects a leader, called the chief councilor, who oversees the council's activities. At the end of a term, the council may reelect the current chief councilor to another term. It is a tribute to the Council's wisdom that the chief councilor rarely loses his office. A serious political or financial blunder or unwarranted action against another councilor has on occasion forced a chief councilor to lose the support of the remaining councilors and so be enjoined to step down, but most chief councilors have served in that office for life.

The present chief councilor, a woman named Fellidra Jer, has been head of the Leadership Council for the past eight years and still enjoys the popular support of the city's residents.

—From the journal of Loran Redstone, 1506 TH

...and as the river wound around the rocks, we came in view of Urupa, nestled between the shores of the Serpent River and the Aras Sea. Our riverboat pulled up along the docks on the Serpent side of the city, where the t'skrang boatmen docked the ship to unload cargo. As we looked across the city, we could see the tall masts of the water ships moored at the sea docks.

We walked through the heart of the city until we came to the docks, as busy as any on the Serpent. Many water ships of all sorts and sizes were moored there, bearing flags of Urupa as well as places unknown to us.

We spied a caravan moving toward us from the dock, heading for the residential section of the city. At the head of the caravan walked a huge obsidiman, wearing ornate attire and attended by nearly a dozen servants. I and my traveling companions watched in fascination as he led his entourage through the city. Here, we realized, was a citizen of power and wealth.

The alliance between the kaers that founded Urupa marks the city as unique in Barsaive. Whereas most Barsaivians emerging from their kaers and citadels could barely set aside their suspicions long enough to help themselves and other communities rebuild, the people of Urupa emerged determined to find like-minded souls and create a new, safe haven. With the exception of the final resistance effort by which the people of Barsaive defeated the Therans and ended the Theran War, the races of this province have never before shown such mutual trust.

Because of its location, Urupa enjoys the distinction of being one of the only cities to regularly welcome people from outside of Barsaive. Trading ships travel to Urupa across the Aras Sea twice annually, with every journey introducing unique goods and treasure to Barsaive.

The Kingdom of Throal has recently decided to send envoys across the Aras Sea in hopes of contacting those who live outside of Barsaive, and so lie beyond the reach of the Theran Empire. King Varulus hopes that these people will look favorably on establishing political ties with Throal. He also hopes to learn how they protected themselves from the Horrors during the Scourge. The king's magicians are especially curious to learn how the Scourge affected other areas of the world, and perhaps to learn non-Theran forms of magical protection.

—Kern Redhand

VIVANE

The city of Vivane lies 49 days' walk or 29 days' ride from Throal. To reach Vivane, center Shantaya's sextant on Throal and align Point Φ on the astrolobe with the Dragon Mountains. Point ϑ will then face Vivane; simply travel in that direction, following Dis at sunrise.

Isolated in the southwest corner of Barsaive, Vivane represents Thera's greatest conquest.

Decades ago, Vivane was the most beautiful city in the province. When the Therans returned to Barsaive following the Scourge, Vivane surrendered to the invaders, hoping to save the freedom and wealth its people enjoyed. Pleased by the picture of wealth and beauty that Vivane's bright blue spires and golden domes created, the Therans made the city their new provincial capital, bringing their slave laws with them. Vivane's bazaars soon filled with prisoners from throughout Barsaive, all torn from their homes by no law but greed.

During the Theran War, Vivane was a primary target. As the heart of Theran slave trade, it was also home to numerous Theran officials. Many airships and fire cannons fought the battle for Vivane, and much of the city's beauty was destroyed as its proud towers and spires crumbled to the streets. An underground resistance supported the air war, and the Therans were routed from the city.

Though Vivane enjoyed a brief period of freedom from Thera almost 60 years ago, the Therans refused to accept defeat and have since reclaimed the city. However, they do not take their control of the city for granted. Overgovernor Kypros keeps a tight rein on the puppet government, and a well-trained and fanatical militia drawn from the city's population patrols the streets to stamp out even the slightest whisper of rebellion. Overgovernor Kypros often docks the massive airship *Ascendancy* in Vivane, and other Theran officials view the city as their personal possession.

Only a small corner of the city has been rebuilt since the Theran War. Named the Theran Quarter because Theran money rebuilt it, it will accept as residents only Therans and those Barsaivians most loyal to them. A new wall separates the Theran Quarter from the rest of the city, its single entrance well guarded by the city's militia. Only the Quarter's citizens and those with guest passes can gain entrance. Anyone caught in the Quarter without a pass is immediately arrested and may be thrown in prison or summarily executed.

The rest of the city alternates between solid, well-crafted buildings and the ruins of towers, spires, and homes. Though the rubble was cleared long ago, the remnants of shattered towers and walls still stand, their broken walls reaching toward the sky in a mockery of their former grace.

Vivane has a population of 95,000, of which 20,000 are slaves. The city has no airships, for the Therans dare not risk giving the citizens access to power. Entry into the city is carefully restricted, and the militia stays alert for known agitators. According to rumor, the underground resistance born during the Theran War still exists, its leaders and operatives hidden too deep for the Therans to ferret out.

—From the journal of Thysel, thief adept

...To pick the Fearful Feather's pocket and live to tell the tale! Such a glorious endeavor! Not that Fearful's much to worry on. . .it's his Theran guard you've got to watch for. Sharp spears, they've got, and a few have sharp eyes and minds to match. Lucky for me, most are thick as posts. Ah, it's grand being a thief.

I spent the morn lurking near the wall between the Theran Quarter and the rest of Vivane, hoping to spot a mark. Not many Therans carry money outside the Quarter any more. Seems even a Theran can learn sense, if you give him long enough. Folk carry money in, where they can spend it among clean streets, white marble walls, and pretty gold and blue towers and spires. No mess or rubble for the Therans, thank you. They leave that for us, their lessers. I hoped a visiting merchant might go to see His Honorableness (hah!), the Theran puppet governor. Lucky me—after an hour or two Fearful himself came out, ringed by spear-toting Therans and carrying a heavy leather bag. None too tight a grip, neither—guards must make you careless. I couldn't resist it. Using my thief magic, I picked my way silent and unseen over the cracked cobbles and followed Fearful's entourage to one of the few shops outside the wall in good repair. Wine shop, as it happened. A guard stumbled on a broken stone, and I saw my chance. Snatched the bag then vanished before Fearful even felt it leave his fingers. By the time they raised a shout, I was spending my ill-gotten gains in my favorite tavern, the Dirty Dwarf.

Who says you can't make a living in Vivane?

On the Ruler of Vivane

In keeping with Barsaive traditions, Vivane is ruled by a magistrate, the Honorable Quarique Oathstone. The discontented of the city call him the Fearful Feather, for a feather's weight is the extent of his political power. Appointed ten years ago by Overgovernor Kypros, Oathstone spends his days pretending to be a true ruler, but in reality the only thing he does without consulting one Theran offical or another is to choose the menus for his meals of the day.

REGARDING THE LAND AND ITS PLACES

Though my original assignment was only to describe traveling in Barsaive, Master Merrox decided I should also describe the land as well. Though I initially had doubts about the wisdom of this decision, the two topics have indeed overlapped in ways that made both sections easier to complete. Perhaps Merrox is Master of the Hall of Records for good reason after all.

Barsaive is full of astonishing sights, some wonderful, some frightening. In the following overview of the most significant of these sights. I chose to include those landmarks and features most often singled out as notable by those who travel our land in search of adventure. Though such a life is not for me, I met many of these interesting individuals on my own journey undertaken to complete my research for this book. In addition to my own travels, I drew heavily from on records of journeys written by many explorers and adventurers in the land of Barsaive.

—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, archivist and scribe of the Hall of Records

Most of the large, untamed land that we call Barsaive has remained unexplored since the days before the Scourge. This record incorporates information on Barsaive's weather, landscape, fauna and flora, and landmarks from many different sources—some contemporary, some hundreds of years old. We have used the older sources for those areas of Barsaive that have not been visited or described by contemporary explorers. Unfortunately, we cannot know whether these regions have changed beyond recognition until the explorers of our time provide us with first-hand accounts that either verify or correct these earlier sources.

ON THE LANDSCAPE AND WEATHER

Hilly uplands, plateaus, and low mountains cover most of Barsaive, giving the province often beautiful and always dramatic scenery. A few exceptionally large mountain ranges interrupt this rolling landscape, most notably the Throal Mountains and the Twilight Peaks, which rise to heights of more than 15,000 feet above the sea. The hill lands rise to some 2,600 feet above the sea, with plateaus and lower mountain ranges averaging 3,000 to 4,000 feet above the sea's level. The need for constant climbing and forcing one's way through lush jungles and forests makes travel difficult. Barsaive's few finished roads wind up and down hills and around plateaus and mountains, making even journeys along established routes arduous.

Nothing grew in Barsaive in the years immediately following the Scourge, which had the effect of causing dramatic and frequent shifts in temperature and rainfall. Once the people began to emerge from their kaers, however, they used magic to regenerate the world's greenery at a phenomenal rate. Within a decade of the end of the Scourge, Barsaive enjoyed a year-round, temperate climate with moderate rainfall.

Rainfall in most of southern Barsaive is heavier than the 40 to 60 inches common in the rest of the province, but the area surrounding Death's Sea suffers continual drought. Most of the year's rainfall occurs during the first six months.

THE NOTICEABLE ABSENCE OF A COOL OR WINTER SEASON IS ONE OF THE MORE UNUSUAL CHANGES FORCED ON OUR LAND BY THE SCOURGE. THOUGH ANCIENT RECORDS DESCRIBE WINTERS IN BARSAIVE, CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARS HAVE YET TO DETERMINE WHY OUR WEATHER LACKS THAT SEASON TODAY.
—MERROX

ON THE FLORA AND FAUNA

Savannas, jungles, and forests cover much of Barsaive. Few people live in or near the woodlands, most of the population having carved out farmlands and surrounding villages on the plains or in the hilly uplands.

ON SAVANNAS

Coarse, tall grass covers Barsaive's broad, lowland plains, which become drowned in flood waters during heavy rains. Above the grasses, scattered trees rise like long-necked beasts. Traveling across the savanna on clear days is a delightful experience. The sharp blue of the sky and the touch of the cool wind brushing the tops of the long grass is soothing to the spirit, not to mention that passage through the grasses is much easier than through the tangled brush of the jungle. From all directions comes the constant buzz of insects, and occasionally travelers might catch sight of something larger through the grass—snakes, rodents, and sometimes large animals such as tigers and lions.

During the dry months tribes of herders all across Barsaive stake out ranges for their animals. At this time of year, one often sees plumes of smoke rising out of the grass in the distance, signs of the camps of herders settled in for the season. These men and women must constantly be on the watch for thieves who would steal their cattle or predators ready to rip the herds apart to feed their young.

During the rains, travel across the grasslands becomes unpleasant. With every step, a man's feet or a beast's hooves sink an inch or two into the water-soaked land. Sometimes, travelers find themselves ankle-deep in mud and water. On such occasions it becomes necessary to lead one's animals on foot because the added burden of a rider would totally mire the average horse or mule. The grass stalks droop from the weight of the water, drenching one's skin and clothing with their heavy moisture. While plodding along in cold, wet misery, a traveler could too easily forget to be on the alert for the constant danger of stalking creatures or raving ork scorcher bands possibly lurking beyond the next hill.

ON JUNGLES AND FORESTS

Records show that before the Scourge, tall trees with broad leaves shut out the sunlight from the floor of Barsaive's jungles and forests and so kept them clear of underbrush. In our time, through some combination of magic, intent, circumstance, and natural growth, jungles and forests grow thick with low vegetation that weaves between the tall trees, thriving with or without sunlight. Perhaps in reaction to the barrenness of the Scourge, Barsaive's jungles and forests now teem with animal and plant life. Magicians, questors, and others endlessly debate explanations for this rampant fertility, but have yet to reach a consensus.

Both jungle and forest flora range from ground-covering bushes to the tallest trees, which soar to heights of 300 feet and are scattered throughout the woodlands. Trees that stand 100 to 200 feet tall form the canopy of leafy branches that blocks much of the sunlight and conceals the ground from the view of airships and flying creatures.

The next tallest trees rise 50 to 80 feet high. Their trunks, branches, twigs, and foliage grow together into an apparently impenetrable mass that sometimes extends down to the ground. Though whole groups of travelers may be able to walk freely through some areas of the forests and jungles, at other times the draping vines can conceal someone a mere step away.

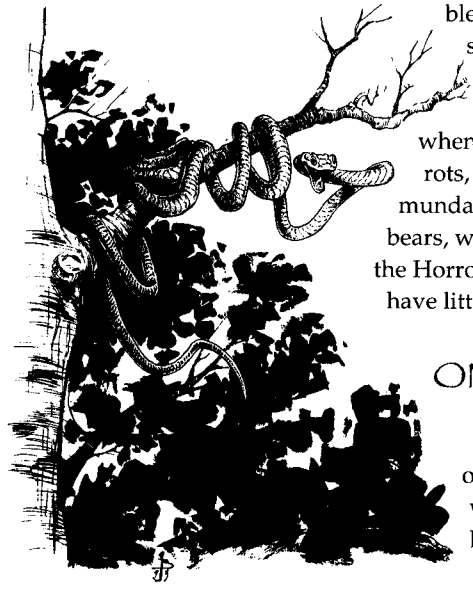
The wetter, southern part of Barsaive boasts jungles filled with dense stands of bright, green broad-leaved trees and woody, stemmed vines whose brilliant flowers blossom year round. The abundant vines festoon the trees and snake across the jungle floor, often winding their way through trees for a distance of several days' ride. The dampness also fosters the growth of mosses that hang from the trees and spring from dead plants. The variety of plant life in these jungles is astounding; questors of Jaspree estimate that thousands of varieties of plants and trees grow within a single day's ride in any direction. In some areas, foliage is so thick that one must hack a path through the vines and small trees growing on the jungle floor. The overgrowth allows only a murky, green-gray light to filter through the thick canopy of leaves, turning the traveler's path into an eerie, twilight journey at any time of day.

Other sections of Barsaive's wooded lands provide easier and brighter passage, but no truly clear paths. As soon as a traveler cuts a passage and leaves it behind, the trees and growth begin crowding in again. Splashes of sunlight, beams of light so startlingly bright that they look like fire burning its way through the dimness, sometimes illuminate remnants of other explorers' trails.

The dense plant life makes the jungle a dangerous place for Name-givers and all manner of mundane creatures. Large predators often await their prey in branches high above the jungle paths or in the shadow of underbrush. Often, more vulnerable creatures use the abundant flora to hide. The air echoes with bird song, the hum of insects, and the occasional roar of larger animals challenging trespassers or warning off scavengers hoping to share their kill. The temperature is the only comfortable part of traveling through Barsaive's forests and jungles; it is rarely hot, and may even be cold during the rainy season. Among the great trees, travelers can always find a dry spot to wait out the weather.

Farmers and herders all across Barsaive have begun to settle along the edges of the forests and jungles, felling trees and chopping away vines to make room for homes, crops, and grazing land. In clearing the land, they always create a border between the settlement and the thick tangle of the surrounding trees in hopes of avoiding surprise attacks by the predators and monstrous creatures hiding in the leafy green shadows.

ON THE ANIMALS OF BARSAIVE



Barsaive's abundant fauna includes small animals such as mice and frogs that are visible everywhere in the province. More dangerous animals usually stay hidden, sometimes allowing travelers to pass unmolested, other times pouncing at the last moment to take their victim by surprise.

Most creatures in Barsaive pose little danger to travelers or attack only when threatened. These creatures—monkeys, sloths, aardvarks, boars, snakes, parrots, hawks, peacocks, tortoises, and so on—have no magic. Other creatures, both mundane and magically endowed, pose a greater danger: tigers, rhinoceros, lions, bears, wild dogs, griffins, giant snakes, leopards, and so on. Greatest of all threats are the Horrors still roaming the world, of course. As everyone knows, we Name-givers have little natural defense against them.

ON SEAS AND WATERWAYS

Though it may seem odd to refer to seas when discussing a land mass the size of Barsaive, both the Aras and Selestrean Seas are large enough to affect the weather and influence trade in the province. The four main bodies of water in Barsaive include the Aras Sea, the Selestrean Sea, the Serpent Lakes, and the Serpent River.

OF THE ARAS SEA

The Aras Sea, located on the eastern edge of Barsaive, is a large saltwater ocean that reaches beyond the borders of Barsaive to unexplored lands. The Silverspring, the largest tributary of the Serpent River, flows into the Aras Sea near the city of Urupa, the only city of any size located on the shoreline. The coast stretching south from Urupa also harbors many smaller cities and towns. Traders from Barsaive and from across the sea frequent Urupa and her neighboring ports.

The Aras can become violent without warning. Storms, some magical in nature, occasionally spring up on the Aras Sea and eventually travel to shore, where their destructive power causes great damage.

The sea is also home to abundant animal life, including magical creatures and a few water-dwelling Horrors. Reports of these dreadful creatures are few and far between, but those who journey on the Aras Sea should know that even crossing the waters requires caution.

—From the journal of Loran Redstone, 1506 TH

. . .After only five days in Urupa, my companions and I were hired by a trading company. It was, oddly enough, the Overland Trading Company, owned by the obsidiman we had encountered on our first day in the city.

In the service of our new employers, we were to travel on a water ship over the Aras Sea to a smaller city along its western shore. We were to aid the ship's crew during the journey and work as guards during the trade negotiations. On the second night of our five-day voyage, a drunken sailor stumbled across the deck and fell overboard. Hearing his shouts, the entire crew raced up on deck; a few of them tossed the floundering crewman a rope with which to pull him back aboard. A team of ten men worked to hoist the crewman out of the sea, but just as the man's waist cleared the water line, a huge tentacle surged up and grabbed him. He screamed horribly, his body pulled in two directions by the creature and the rope. The tentacle briefly loosened its grip, and we thought it might let the crewman go. Then it tightened around him again and gave a mighty yank that pulled the first five members of the rope crew over the rail. Their screams echoed across the water as the creature fed on them, one by one. . .

OF THE SELESTREAN SEA

The Selestrean Sea lies far to the southwest of Barsaive, beyond Vivane and Sky Point. Within its waters lies the island of Thera, heart of the oppressive Theran Empire. Fearing Thera's might, Barsaivians have built few cities along the shore where the sea meets the province. The Therans control all the towns and villages along the shore, using these occupied communities as outposts and supply depots for the Theran army and navy at Sky Point.

Within the Selestrean Sea also lies the Chain of Tears, a group of small islands strung between the Barsaive shoreline and the Theran coast. Legend has it that Horrors live on these islands, and grant wishes to those who travel there to do their bidding.

The Selestrean Sea rarely becomes as violent as the Aras Sea, but legends and rumor both contend that the Therans control the sea through elemental magic. However, not even the Therans can control the many creatures that live in the Selestrean Sea, which doubtless include Horrors.

HAVING HAD MY SHARE OF DEALINGS WITH HORRORS, I CANNOT IMAGINE WHAT DESIRE WOULD PROMPT A SANE PERSON TO TRAVEL TO THE CHAIN OF TEARS TO FIND THE TRUTH OF THESE TALES.
—J'ROLE THE HONORABLE THIEF

—From the journal of Gerna Bloodletter, 1470 TH

...during the third month, we faced a huge cyclone of water, seemingly controlled by some unknown force. The strength of the water and wind smashed our ship to splinters, washing us up on the shore of a small island.

At daybreak, we began to scour the island for food; during our search, we found the island's only resident. An old man sat fishing at the edge of a small pond; he turned to speak to us as we approached.

"Welcome to my island. I brought you here, and only I can return you to your homeland. If you do me a service, I will set you free. Refuse, and you will die."

Leanam, ever the skeptic, laughed aloud at the old man's words.

The old man turned to Leanam and snapped his fingers. An unseen hand plucked up the troll and flung him into the pond, then held him under. He struggled to break surface, but to no avail. Rooted to the spot, we watched him drown, not a one of us able to lift a finger to help him.

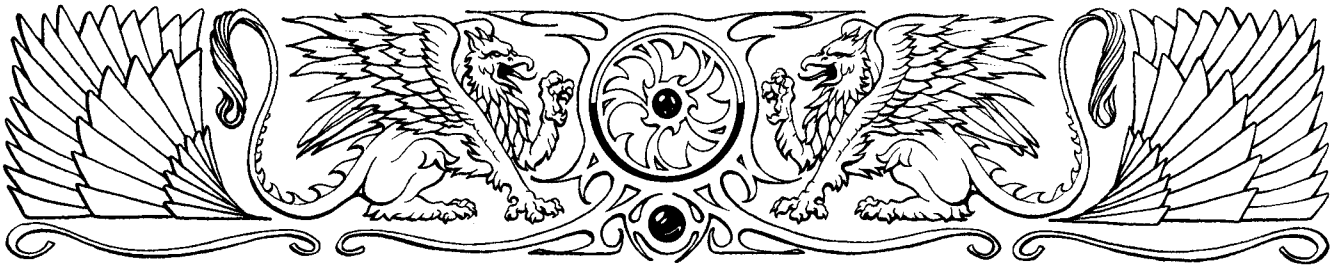
As Leanam breathed his last, the old man turned back to us.

"You have seen your companion's answer to my offer. How will you choose?"

OF THE SERPENT LAKES

At three points down its length, the frantic rush of the Serpent River slows and winds into the calm, clear Serpent Lakes: Lake Ban, Lake Pyros, and Lake Vors. The shores of each lake host settlements of many sizes; the lakes regularly overflow their banks, leaving behind fertile soil for farming, and plentiful fish swim within their waters. Often, the lakeside villages build their huts and other buildings on stilts to raise them above the muddy ground.

Though conflict sometimes erupts between the villages over the rights to farmland and fishing waters, more often the villages band together against the t'skrang pirates that raid them. Relations between villages that abide by Throalic law are polite, but never warm, for the people in each settlement prefer to keep their riches and their disputes to themselves.



Dwarfs, elves, humans, and t'skrang dwell in the lakeside villages. Despite their proximity to t'skrang villages of the Serpent River and to the Kingdom of Throal, these t'skrang and dwarfs swear primary loyalty to their villages.

OF THE SERPENT RIVER

The long, winding Serpent River runs through the heart of Barsaive, dividing it in two. Home of the t'skrang and their villages, the river supports hundreds of tributaries and delivers fresh water to most of the people of Barsaive.

The river received its Name from the dwarfs of the ancient kingdom of Scytha. It begins in the northern mountains well beyond the borders of Barsaive, entering the province near the city of Iopos and winding through the land, passing just south of the Scol Mountains that feed spring water into the river. From the Scol foothills, the Serpent passes through Lake Vors and winds around the massive Throal Mountains, which also add to its strength with fresh water. The river then flows through Lake Ban before passing through Lake Pyros in the Servos Jungle. It then enters the Mist Swamps, where it meets the molten stone of the Death's Sea.

The Serpent is wide, nearly an hour's crossing by riverboat at most points, and flows with a deceptively strong current. One cannot cross the river and arrive at a specific place without either magical aid or a boat. Swimming across the Serpent is considered an amazing feat of strength; most t'skrang villages hold a yearly swimming contest for those brave (or foolish) enough to attempt such a crossing. According to t'skrang tales, only one or two persons have ever accomplished this deed.

—From the journal of Yevad, troubadour of Tirtarga

. . .As our airship cleared the last foothills of the Caucavic Mountains, the cool blue waters of the Serpent River appeared below us, the bright summer sun bouncing off her whitecaps and making them look like jewels. Fields of deep emerald and gold lined the river's gently sloping banks, pressing against her lifegiving waters as if in a lover's embrace. As we drifted along, following the river's meandering path, two t'skrang paddlewheelers appeared, like gems set in her shimmering blue waters. As we watched, the boats began to close. They spewed tiny plumes of white into the air, the telltale signs of fire cannons. Farther down the river, the fields gave way to small trading ports, where brightly colored barges formed everchanging mosaics along the riverbanks.

For days we followed the Great Serpent, as her blue waters flowed through Lake Ban, then under the dark canopy of the Servos Jungle, until they finally disappeared into the foul darkness of the Mist Swamps.

The t'skrang villages that trade up and down the length of the Serpent River control the activities of all ships plying the river. Sections of the Serpent lie under the jurisdiction of the great t'skrang trading houses, or Aropagoi, formed by coalitions of several villages along each particular stretch of the river. The villages work together to manage trade and discourage piracy, joining their resources to create fleets of riverboats that can prevent pirate attacks along their portions of the river.

The strength of the Aropagoi deters pirates from excessive raiding along most of the Serpent. But along sparsely populated stretches, such as through the Servos Jungle, piracy poses a great danger to travelers still.

ON THE MOUNTAINS OF BARSAIVE

Barsaive holds far too many mountain ranges to describe them all in this document. Therefore, I describe only the major ranges here. I write a little from my own, limited knowledge, and in many cases also use accounts written by adventurers who traveled in, on, or near each mountain range.

OF THE CAUCAVIC MOUNTAINS

The Caucavic Mountains in the northeast corner of Barsaive lie roughly five days walk from Haven and Parlainth. The mountains' Name, derived from the troll word for feral or ferocious, is particularly apt, for the Caucavik Mountains are the most treacherous in all Barsaive. Steep cliffs, deep valleys, and plunging gullies are said to hide all manner of creatures and even Horrors that somehow managed to survive among the barren rocks. The tree line ends only 1,500 feet above the base of the mountains; beyond that point, the terrain is unstable and prone to rockslides and quakes.

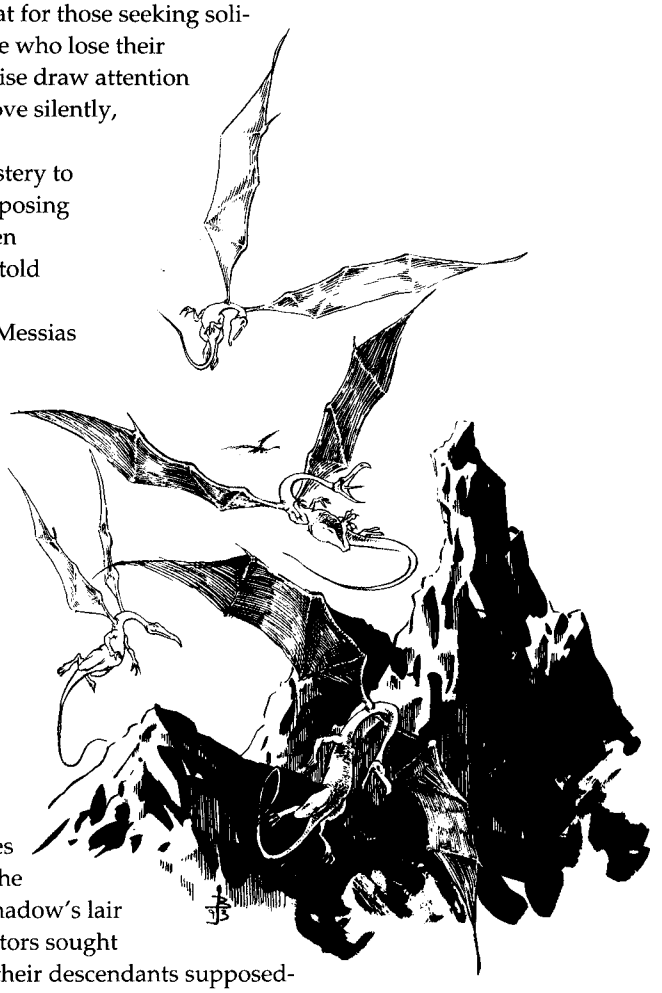
According to rumor, the Caucavics are the home of savage tribes that attack all intruders. These tribes, which are said to be survivors of the Scourge, live in caverns near the base of the mountain range. Though all the Name-givers races can be found among the tribes, most of their number are humans, orks, and dwarfs.

OF THE DELARIS MOUNTAINS

The Delaris Mountains lie near the western border of Barsaive, roughly 10 days' walk south of Jerris and 12 days' walk north of Vivane and Sky Point. The Name of these mountains comes from the elven word for quiet or serene.

Breathtaking in their beauty and tranquility, the Delaris Mountains possess an odd, almost eerie quality. The drowsy peace of the mountains seems to envelop all those within a day's walk of their foothills, muffling all sound. Though animals of all kinds live in, on, and near the mountains, the creature sounds one might expect to hear simply do not exist.

Though a place without sound might seem a wonderful retreat for those seeking solitude, it presents certain hazards for the ordinary traveler. People who lose their way or find themselves in danger cannot call for help or otherwise draw attention to their plight. The muffling of noise also allows creatures to move silently, enabling them to attack their prey without warning.



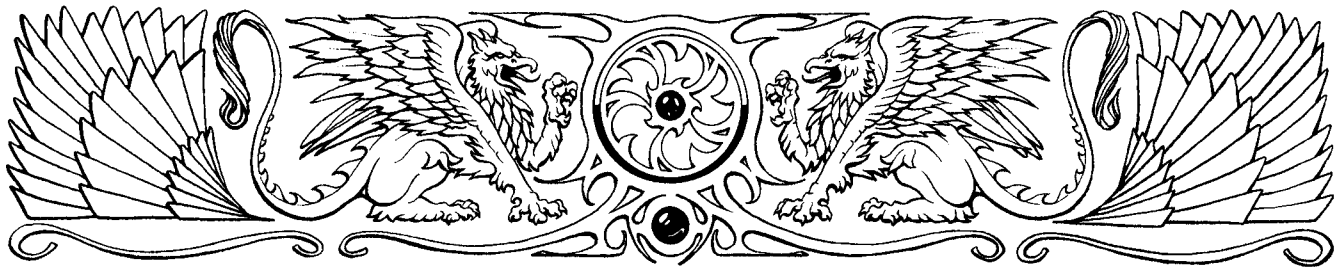
According to legend, the Delaris Mountains shelter the monastery to which Elianar Messias, the Martyr Scholar, was banished for opposing the Elven Queen Failla's Declaration of Separation from the elven nation Shosara. Messias found the Books of Harrow, which foretold the coming of the Horrors, in a nearby cavern in the Delaris foothills. The legends say that the mountains conspired to give Messias the silence he needed to study the books and so save the world. Regardless of the truth of this tale, the quiet is real.

Though many have tried, no adventurers have yet found the monastery spoken of as the abode of the Martyr Scholar. Many believe it was destroyed during the Scourge; others claim it never existed, and consider the story of the Martyr Scholar nothing more than an excellent fiction.

OF THE DRAGON MOUNTAINS

The Dragon Mountains stand in the far southeast corner of Barsaive between the Aras and Death's seas, roughly 10 days' ride from the city of Travar. The southern tip of the region known as the Badlands ends where the foothills of the Dragon Mountains begin.

The Dragon Mountains earned their Name because the great dragon Mountainshadow chose to lair in their peaks. The lair lies in a deep cave adjacent to a large plateau on the tallest peak of the mountain range. In addition to housing the dragon, Mountainshadow's lair is said to also shelter a community of Name-givers whose ancestors sought refuge with Mountainshadow during the Scourge. To this day, their descendants supposedly continue to live under the wing of the dragon. Persistent rumors also insist that a race of shape-changing creatures called drakes live in this mountain range. According to legend, these small, dragonlike creatures can change into the shape of any Name-giver race. The great dragons supposedly created the drakes to serve them, but no record of their shape-changing powers exists in the Library of Throal. Records do, however, offer reports of six- to eight-foot dragonlike creatures lairing in the foothills and gullies of the Dragon Mountains.



—From the Journal of Fomhair Evensong, elven troubadour

The Dragon Mountains are cold as death. I alone am left; the others have all died. Food ran out weeks ago, and these barren slopes hold nothing an elf can eat. I will die soon. 'Tis strange, but of all the things I might wish for as I lie here on the frozen stone, I want most to see a dragon before my last breath.

The intense desire to see one of these creatures with my own eyes is why I set out on this journey in the first place. I thought they lived in the Dragon Mountains, but I have seen nothing living save my companions and a few hardy lichens. These I tried to eat , but their bitter taste galled my tongue and turned my stomach. Nothing exists in these crags but chill mists, bitter plants, and cold stone.

...I scarce have strength to write, but I have seen a dragon! Floating over the highest peak, the one that stabs the sky like an accusing finger, I saw a dragon...

ON THE ORIGINS OF THROAL ...IT WAS FROM THE SCYTHAN KINGDOM THAT THE FOUNDERS OF THROAL CAME. AFTER CENTURIES OF LIFE UNDER SCYTHAN RULE, SOME DWARFS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FAIRER IF THE VARIOUS PEOPLES OF THE LAND HAD A SAY IN WHO WOULD RULE OVER THEM. WHEN THE SCYTHAN KING REJECTED THEIR PETITION, THESE SAME DWARFS LEFT SCYTHA TO FORM A NEW KINGDOM THAT WOULD WORK TO UNITE BARSAIVE'S NAME-GIVER RACES UNDER ONE RULE. THESE DISSIDENTS TRAVELED SOUTH FROM SCYTHA TO THE THROAL MOUNTAINS, WHERE THEY BEGAN TO BUILD A NEW HOME, WHICH WOULD ONE DAY BECOME THE KINGDOM OF THROAL. —FROM THE THROALIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, 1505 TH

OF THE SCOL MOUNTAINS

The Scol Mountains lie in northwest Barsaive between the Serpent River and Blood Wood, 10 days' walk from Iopos and 15 days from Jerris. The mountains' Name means ancient, and comes from the troll tongue.

According to troll folklore and legend, the Scol Mountains are the birthplace of the trolls who built and ruled the ancient kingdom of Ustrect. Unfortunately, no one has yet mounted a successful expedition to verify the truth of these legends. The best evidence to support the trolls' claim are the many isolated troll clans currently living in the Scol Mountains who speak a strange dialect of the troll language unknown anywhere else in Barsaive. Though they have little save race in common with the crystal raiders, these troll clans also survive by raiding; they travel on large mounts similar to thundra beasts, but more savage.

The Stoneclaw trollmoot has often attempted to contact these tribes of trolls, possibly to negotiate an alliance, but to no avail. Scouting parties sent into the Scol Mountains always limp out again, with many wounded and dead. From this, it seems that these tribes intend to remain apart from Barsaivian society.

OF THE SCYTHA MOUNTAINS

The Scytha Mountains occupy the northern region of Barsaive, lying just north of the Kingdom of Throal and southeast of the Elven Queen's Palace in Blood Wood. The Name Scytha comes from the dwarf language, and like the troll word Scol, means old or ancient. Within the Scytha Mountains long ago, the dwarfs built their first kingdom in the land that would one day become Barsaive. The dwarf kingdom of Scytha pre-dates the founding of Throal by many years, having been in existence long before Elianar Messias was banished to the Delaris Mountains.

The Kingdom of Scytha survived the Orichalcum Wars, though its prosperity began to decline with the arrival of the Therans and the establishment of the Theran Empire. Scytha quickly fell to the superior Theran military, and was forced to swear allegiance to the Empire. Though both poverty and Theran oppression weakened the Scythan kingdom, neither was the cause of its downfall.

Perhaps a hundred years before the coming of the Scourge, creatures now thought to be the first of the Horrors began to infest the caverns and passageways of Scytha. In time, these creatures drove the dwarfs from their home. The Scythan dwarfs traveled south to Throal, requesting haven in that kingdom. King Varulus I welcomed them graciously, and none have ever returned to their former homeland.

Long abandoned by the Name-giver races, the Scytha Mountains are now thought to be haunted by the vengeful spirits of the founders of Scytha. Despite these rumors, persistent tales of the vast wealth left behind by the dwarfs in their haste to depart the Horror-infested kingdom continue to draw adventurers to the mountains.

Recent expeditions to the Scytha Mountains have brought back reports of strange, dangerous creatures still prowling the caverns of the ancient dwarf kingdom. Every adventurer who returns relates a different description of these creatures; some insist that they are another manifestation of the Horrors, while others say the creatures appear in a guise never before seen.

—From the journal of Thom Hammerblade, 1505 TH

...at last we arrived at Scytha, the home of the ancient dwarf kingdom. We searched for the evening's shelter and settled upon a small cave.

Shortly after arriving, we discovered that we were not alone in our refuge. A pack of strange creatures attacked us in the night. They stood seven to eight feet tall and had spiny limbs that bristled with sharp hair. After fighting off the grotesque, insectlike things, we explored our shelter and discovered that it led to vast underground caverns beneath the Scytha Mountains. We later learned from harsh experience that the caverns were infested with these foul abominations...

OF THE THROAL MOUNTAINS

The Throal Mountains, rising up through the clouds and extending across the heart of Barsaive, seem impossibly large. Indeed, as one approaches the Throal Mountains, their image fills the sight. Maps of Barsaive fail to do justice to the sheer size of the peaks, for maps can show only the width of the mountains. In fact, if the surface area of the range could be laid out flat, it would cover one quarter of Barsaive.

The tremendous wasteland across the surface of the mountains provides a stark contrast to the orderly Kingdom of Throal, buried deep within the rocky slopes. The dwarfs devote no time or forces to policing the upper reaches of their mountains, and so the surface remains untamed, much as it was following the Scourge.

Travelers who walk across the mountainous wastes are struck by the cold blue tint of the soil. Myriad small stones cover the ground underfoot, making the trek awkward and threatening one with a turned ankle or twisted knee at every step. Two-thirds of the way up the slopes, the air is so cold that exhaled breath turns to mist, and only thick furs will enable a visitor to survive the night. All manner of strange creatures roam the mountains. Many of the them are solitary, like the feather serpents, which seek out food to bring back to their broods. Others, like the ice wolves, travel in packs. The numerous large boulders and tall outcroppings can hide any kind of ambusher. With food so scarce in the mountains, the few living predators and people must constantly struggle to kill for food or die of starvation.

An ever greater danger for travelers are the savages that roam the slopes. Several primitive tribes of humans, orks, trolls, and even dwarfs live on the surface of the mountains, survivors of the Scourge. No one knows how these people lived through the Horrors' reign without the Rites of Protection and Passage. The most oft-told tales say that these tribes made deals with the Horrors, worshipping them as we worship the Passions. If true, some attacks on unwary travelers may be the work of questors of a Horror, but we cannot verify that these people consider themselves to be such.

OF THE THUNDER MOUNTAINS

The Thunder Mountains cover the southeastern area of Barsaive, just north of the Dragon Mountains and a days' walk from Travar. Just south of Travar, the western edge of the Thunder Mountains meets the eastern edge of the Badlands.

The Name of the Thunder Mountains comes from the dwarf word for the thunderous sounds that roll out of the peaks and valleys during the months of Strassa, Veltom, and Charassa. No widely accepted explanation exists for these booming rumbles. Some legends say that a great dragon was trapped beneath the mountains before the Scourge, and the thunder is his roar. Others suggest that Verjigorm, the Horror also called Hunter of Great Dragons, is trapped beneath the mountains. Still others, among them many questors, insist that the sounds are those of Death, still imprisoned beneath Death's Sea, calling out to remind the world of his presence. The last (and most likely) explanation is that the Thunder Mountains lie over a crack between the land masses that make up Barsaive, and the roars are the grinding of earth and rock as the land masses shift.

Other than the distinctive roar that comes from these mountains, the Thunder Mountains have few noteworthy characteristics. Like most mountain ranges in Barsaive, they are home to all manner of wildlife and most likely a few Horrors.

—From the journal of Caron Lev, dwarf illusionist

...The Thunder Mountains looked like any others. Rock. More rock than the mind could comprehend. We were five days out of Travar, heading to the Aras Sea. We had heard the rumblings on our first day, but they seemed far away then, like thunder over the horizon. Today, without warning, the rumbling started again. At first it sounded like falling rocks in the distance, then grew to the sound of a million hammers forging a million blades. Under our feet the ground danced.

Anonlic, our overly superstitious swordmaster, shouted, "Death has returned and we are to be its first meal!" Not to be outdone, our archer Mejox screeched, "The Dragon Lord is released!" Those of us closer to the earth realize that neither case was true, yet fear of these tales paralyzed my companions. They shook more than the rock they were standing on. I pulled them aside to keep them from getting crushed by falling rock or swallowed up by the widening crack in the ground. Breaths held, we waited for the quaking to cease. The roar drowned out my companions' mad cries of doom as we watched the earth open.

As quickly as it had begun, it ended. The dust was choking us. Fearing to move too soon, I made my companions wait. When the dust settled, the Thunder Mountains still stood, though the path we had followed no longer existed. Death did not return, nor did the Dragon Lord. Mercifully, my hearing has not yet returned either. At least for today, I need not listen to my companions whining about the certain death that just barely passed us by...

OF THE TYLON MOUNTAINS

The Tylon Mountains lie almost in the very heart of Barsaive, only one days' walk from Kratas and ten days by horseback from Throal. The Tylons are Named for their improbably tall spires (tylons, in the ork tongue), which rise from each of the twelve peaks in the mountain range. These spires rival the Throal Mountains in height, and pierce the clouds beyond the sight of travelers standing at their foot.

Some slopes and glens of the Tylons are only barren rock, while others are covered with thick forest and brush. Unlike the Caucavik Mountains, which have a very low tree line, the Tylons tree line ends quite high up. Above that point, the terrain becomes craggy and difficult to traverse.

The spires, or tylons, serve as the source of many fascinating legends and myths.

WHY THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES SCHOLARS THINK THEY CAN UNDERSTAND OTHERS FROM SIMPLE LEGENDS AND FOLK TALES, I WILL NEVER KNOW. THOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT WE ORKS COME AT LIFE WITH BOTH HANDS OPEN, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ALL THAT TRANSPIRES IS PREORDAINED. SUCH AN IDEA IS FOOLISH.
—FRATH SHARPTONGUE, ORK TROUBADOUR

Spires of the Passions

According to ork legend, the twelve spires of the Tylon Mountains are the twelve Passions, frozen in time as they reach toward the universe, the source of all that is in the world.

This legend says that when the Passions learned of the coming Scourge, they sought protection for their world. Unable to accept that the Horrors, like all things, were a part of the universe, they pled with the universe to stop the Horrors. Sadly, the universe cannot stop what has begun—all things must occur in their own time, whether good or ill.

Because the Passions refused to accept the way of the world, they were frozen in time and space as they reached in supplication toward the sky, forced to watch as the Scourge ravaged their world and helpless to aid those who called for their assistance.

This legend suggests that the Passions are no longer active in Barsaive. Ork storytellers, anxious to explain this legend to modern scholars in a way that does not imply denial of the living Passions, say that the story illustrates the pitfalls of relying on others for aid, and teaches us to rely on ourselves. Skeptics believe that the legend originated with an inventive storyteller, who saw the twelve spires and likened them to the Passions to make a good tale.

The legend of the Spires of the Passions clearly reveals the orks' view of the world. The legend's message says that the events of the world will unfold as they will, and even the universe itself cannot change the outcome of those events. This view explains the ork philosophy of living life to the fullest. Because they feel powerless to alter the fate of the world, they are determined to grasp every emotion and opportunity life has to offer while they have the chance.

—Thom Edrull

OF THE TWILIGHT PEAKS

The Twilight Peaks lie in southern Barsaive along the edge of the Death's Sea and received their Name for the spectacular view they provide onlookers every twilight. Crystal deposits growing on the far side of the mountains reflect and heighten the glow from the Death's Sea, creating a warm-colored aura that can be seen for miles around the mountains every eve at twilight.

The Twilight Peaks were Named by dwarf merchants traveling from Throal to Sky Point during the years immediately after the Orichalcum Wars. The dwarfs, from their vantage point along the trade route, could see the glowing mountains from miles away, but as they neared the mountains, the glow disappeared. Further investigation revealed the Death's Sea as the cause of the glow.

Barsaive's crystal raider trollmoots live on the northern slopes of the Twilight Peaks, away from the heat of the nearby Death's Sea. As the trolls discovered long ago, the peaks are Barsaive's largest source of living crystal, which they use in forging their crystal armor, shields, and weapons. The living crystal from the Twilight Peaks is vastly superior to that found in other mountain ranges. Though no one has been able to explain why this is so, many weaponsmiths claim that the intense heat of the Death's Sea tempers the crystal, making it stronger and more durable. Others insist that the Twilight Peaks are also rich in elemental earth, which gives the crystal its special qualities.

Though most of the crystal mined from Twilight Peaks is taken from caverns far underground, the numerous surface deposits on the far side of the mountains near the Death's Sea can also be gathered by particularly enterprising adventurers. Taking crystal from the mountainsides is hazardous, however. The heat of the sea of molten lava can burn or sicken those who come too near it, and many strange and dangerous creatures lair in the crystal caves.

ON NOTEWORTHY WILD LANDS

Though forests and jungles cover much of Barsaive, some of the most unusual ones deserve special mention in this work.

OF BLOOD WOOD

At the northern border of Barsaive lies Blood Wood. Once called Wyrm Wood, the forest suffered horrible changes during the Scourge, among them the self-corruption of the Elven Court. The wood now takes its Name from the blood of its elves. Blood constantly drips from the thorns that tear through the elves' skins, and soaks into the ground.

Within Blood Wood is the Court of the Elven Queen, once the heart of elven culture. The Court lost this status when Queen Alachia refused aid from the Therans and chose to face the Horrors without the Rites of Protection and Passage. The elves built natural kaers, strengthened by elemental earth and wood, but the failure of these kaers forced the Court to take desperate measures to protect themselves from the Horrors. Driven by dire need, they created the Ritual of the Thorns, which caused thorns to grow from the bodies of all elves in the Elven Court. The constant pain of the thorns kept the Horrors at bay, but at a terrible price. Most of the world has now stigmatized the elves of Blood Wood as a visible, lasting sign of the corruption that the Horrors wrought on this world.

Blood Wood itself abounds in lush growth, overpowering the unwary with its rampant plant and animal life. Though others in Barsaive also used magic to revive their forests and fields, the blood elves' corrupted magic seems to have brought an almost menacing fecundity to their forest home.

Additional information on Blood Wood and its inhabitants appears in the section of this book titled A Discourse on Blood Wood.

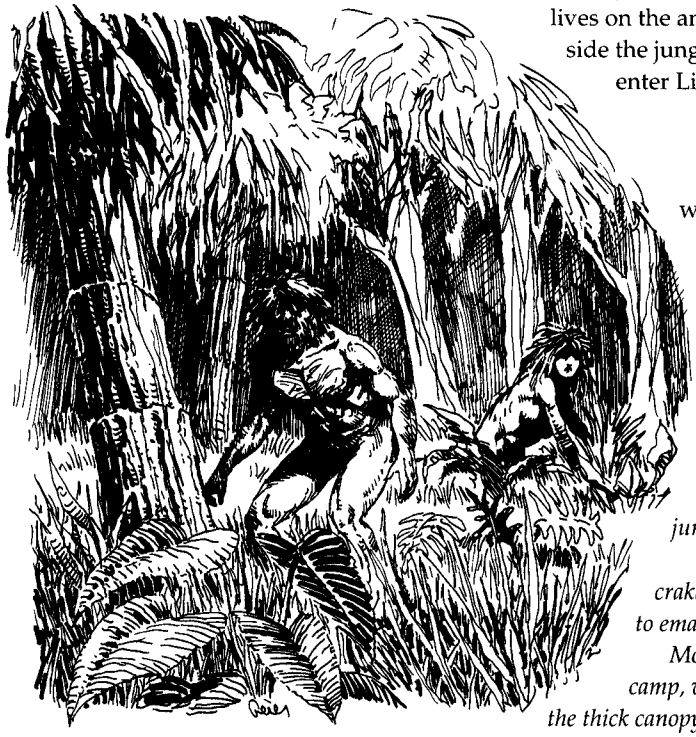
OF THE LIAJ JUNGLE

The Liaj Jungle, dense and sparsely populated with Name-giver settlements, presents three distinct dangers to those who enter it. The first is Usun, one of the three known great dragons. No one knows the precise location of Usun's lair, but most people avoid the area entirely becuase the dragon is rumored to prowl the entire jungle looking for prey.

The second danger is the jungle's large, predatory animals. Within the thick stands of trees and layers of green, leafy vines live tigers, lions, bears, and giant snakes. Though the great dragon Usun strikes more fear into the heart, these more mundane animals pose the greater immediate danger.

The third danger is a tribe of humans and elves, some 200 strong, that have broken with civilization and instead roam the jungle. They call themselves Tamers, a Name that refers somewhat to their ability to bond with the jungle animals, but more strongly proclaims their own victory in refusing to weaken themselves with civilized living.

The Tamers have no permanent home and live by foraging for edible plants and small animals. Usun has not given them permission to live in his jungle, and they must constantly watch for the dragon's presence. The tribe boasts many beastmaster adepts, as well as several questors of Jaspree.



The Tamers reject clothing, tools, and trade goods, instead modeling their lives on the animals with which they live. They trust no one from outside the jungle, and deliberately lead in circles anyone who tries to enter Liaj, eventually leaving them on the edge of the jungle.

Those who wish to speak to the Tamers must first prove themselves worthy of respect in the tribe's eyes.

Earning Tamer respect requires that one adopt Tamer ways, forgoing all luxuries of everyday life. This respect is not easily earned, but once given it is not easily lost.

—From the journal of Aicila of Iopos

. . .We set out at dawn, heading east from Jerris. At the end of the first day we had reached the edge of the Liaj Jungle, where we pitched camp for the night. After all, only the very brave—or foolhardy—would dare enter the dark recesses of the Liaj after nightfall.

Soon after the last rays of the sun had disappeared, the jungle came to life. Far in the distance, the lone roar of a brithan pierced the air, followed by the sudden high-pitched cries of a crakbill flock. Just below these sounds was a low hum that seemed to emanate from the jungle itself, the song of her countless insects.

Most disturbing were the rustlings we heard just outside our camp, which called to mind the nocturnal predators prowling under the thick canopy of the Liaj—storm wolves, lightning lizards, giant serpents the size of airships, as well as more mundane but equally deadly beasts such as tigers and bears. Even worse, somewhere in the blackness lurked the dragon called Usun, a fearsome beast with a taste for the flesh of men.

Suddenly our campfire seemed very small indeed.

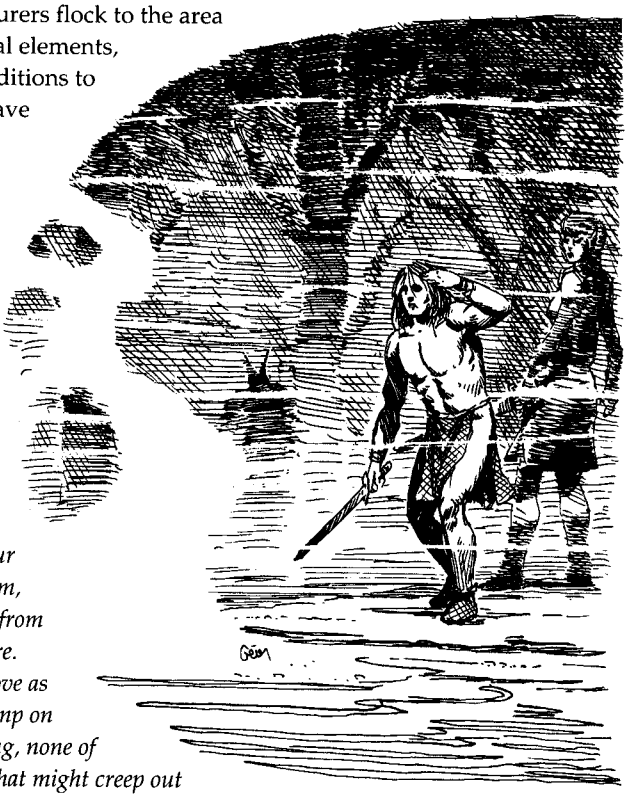
OF THE MIST SWAMPS

The Mist Swamps form where the Serpent River pours into the Death's Sea. Though not as deadly as the Death's Sea, the swamps still pose considerable danger for travelers.

The steam rising off the swamps can be seen for miles. As one approaches, the air grows thick with water, the moisture combining with the rising temperature to suck the energy and curiosity from the foolhardy adventurer. Those who continue on into the swamps suffer worse conditions. The mist becomes so thick one can barely see ten feet ahead. The knee-deep water maintains a scalding-hot temperature, actually boiling in some spots, with only a few islands of solid ground provid-

ing relief. Adventurers planning to travel through the Mist Swamps must wear clothing that can resist heat, or at least allow their skin to breathe. Only the suicidally foolish would wear metal armor in this terrain.

Rumors and vague directions on old maps hint that an ancient city once stood on the site covered by the Mist Swamps. If it exists, this city would predate all others that we know of, including Thera. As often happens when legends surface of fabled treasures hidden in lost cities, adventurers flock to the area hoping to find and claim for themselves the gold, silver, magical elements, and finely crafted weapons said to await discovery. Some expeditions to the Mist Swamps have returned; others have not. Those who have returned brought back nothing to prove that they had actually entered the swamps save strange and fearsome stories.



—From the journal of Negik Silverhand, dwarf swordmaster of Throal

...You smell the Mist Swamps before you see them. Smell them and feel them, the heat soaking into your bones and making the very marrow feel heavy and wet. Ever smelled bad vegetables, cooked and eaten because you'd nothing more wholesome? That's what the swamps smell like. They say there's treasure buried deep in the muck, and I half-believed it till I smelled the place. I just wonder what that rotting-vegetable water does to gold or gems. If the treasures smell like that, let the swamps keep them.

We reached the edge of the swamps today and spent a bewitched hour watching the steam rise off the water. Through the mist, I could see dim, hulking shapes: trees, I think. I hope. Splashes and strange cries came from all around, echoing so much that I couldn't tell how far away they were. The vines and hanging mosses that drape the gnarled trees seem to move as you watch them. Gave me the creeping terrors, they did. We set up camp on the other side of the trees, out of sight of the swamps. With night falling, none of us cares to camp too near the cursed place. Only the Passions know what might creep out of the bog, after all.

POISON FOREST

The Poison Forest is a vast jungle that lies between the city of Jerris and the Wastes. Many Barsaivians believe that the mysterious black soot that blows from the Wastes across Barsaive's western edge adversely affects the bodies and minds of the citizens of Jerris. They also believe that the soot has created the bizarre condition of the Poison Forest.

At first glance, the jungle appears dead. Traveling through it is an unpleasant experience; only rotting trunks, withered vines, and dry, decayed leaves meet the eye. The black and gray of the scene is unrelieved by a single blade of grass or leaf shining with the green of life. The sky is clearly visible above, the bright blue of a clear day contrasting sharply with the stark, blackened branches. The lack of a jungle canopy is disconcerting. One expects to journey through murky green, but instead travels exposed to the sky and elements.

The silence of the jungle seems to beat on one's ears, for no truly living creature roams there. No birds flutter by; no predators roar out warnings to keep rivals away from their territory. Though the jungle is filled with vaguely familiar shapes, nothing bears any true resemblance to the living world outside the forest.

Yet the forest lives, in its own perverse fashion. The trees, vines, and leaves may seem dead, but they are not. The pools of dank, standing water smell fetid and incapable of sustaining life, yet they seem to sustain the forest in a perpetual state of decay. Though no birds sing, animals crawl over the ground and sluggishly climb the rotting trees.

The paradox is this: the forest is not dead, but dying. As far as anyone can tell, it will continue to die till the end of time. Each animal, each tree, each vine moves infinitesimally closer to death each day, but never truly dies. Because the trees

never die, they do not fall and rot, making way for new life to take their place. For whatever reason, the Poison Forest cannot complete the natural cycle of death, decay, and rebirth.

—From the journal of Yllom of Oshane

...Today we finally reached the end of this accursed place, thanks be to the Passions. Now I truly know why it is called the Poison Forest, for even now its all-pervasive stench of a thousand dying animals clings to our clothing as if the forest itself held us in a death grip.

I cannot forget the sight of the unholy creatures that roam the forest's lifeless gray floor—half-dead beasts draped in decaying flesh, hideous abominations that should never see the light of day. On our second day wandering through the blackened trees we encountered one such beast, a massive tiger whose putrid flesh crawled with thousands of tiny white maggots.

I can scarcely wait to be shut of this place. For it is not life that animates the Poison Forest, but some blasphemous mockery of life that is not of this world.

This unnatural state holds the animals of the forest in its thrall as well. They wander the jungle, alive, but dying, their natural instincts to mate, hunt, and sleep ruined. They make little noise, but exist in a twilight between life and death, so confused that they no longer know how to live.

Though half-decayed and caught between living and dying, the animals apparently still possess the instinct to attack. Stories abound of those who somehow wander into the Poison Forest barely surviving savage attacks by rotting tigers or assaults by flocks of featherless, putrefying raptors. Some suggest that the animals' hatred is all that remains alive or that perhaps something grants them the passion of jealousy, but no evidence can be found to support this conjecture.

These dangers are minor compared to the darker claims that the ever-dying jungle can exert its unnatural power over those who tarry within its miasma. A wanderer who stays too long in the forest may begin to decay, losing his or her sense of life, passion, and intelligence. Over time he, too, will enter the twilight between life and death, unable to fully live but also unable to die. As the victim's body and soul withers, he becomes a creature jealous of the living, striking out against those who enter the forest. Other stories tell of travelers who pass safely through the forest only to begin wasting away as they continue their travels.

Of course, we do not know enough to prove the stories' truth, but the only cure ever mentioned in legend for those afflicted is to perform a bold act inspired by each of the Passions.

OF THE SERVOS JUNGLE

The Servos Jungle spreads its shade near the center of Barsaive, just south of the Throal Mountains. To walk from one side of the Servos to the other takes more than ten days. The jungle's apt Name comes from the human word meaning isolated, or separated from. Though the Servos exists within the borders of Barsaive, those who enter the jungle's boundaries leave Barsaive behind, in more than just name.

The jungle is dark and eerie, and many prefer to travel around rather than through it. Stories abound of the dangers in the Servos, and its fearsome reputation has spread across Barsaive. As with other jungles, untold creatures within it stalk unwary prey and the tribes of humans who apparently survived the Scourge under the Servos' canopy. Knowing what we do of the corrupted blood elves, most Barsaivians suspect that any group that lacked Theran protection against the Horrors must be Horror-touched.

The Serpent River is the largest of many rivers that crisscross the Servos Jungle. Even here, the rivers are home to many tribes of t'skrang and other Name-givers, though these tribes are more savage than those in Barsaive proper. Indeed, some are even cannibals. Lake Pyros and the stretch of the Serpent River that crosses the Servos Jungle are plagued by piracy, and no heroes have yet dared to break the pirates' hold on the few villages in the jungle.

ON PLACES OF LEGEND AND PERIL

Scattered across Barsaive are many areas that attract adventurers from all across the province. These places, some of the most perilous and dangerous sites in all of Barsaive, have inspired legends in the past and will likely help create the legends of the future.

OF THE BADLANDS

The Badlands are a large patch of blighted earth in south-central Barsaive. Before the Scourge, this ruined area boasted some of the richest farmlands in the province, as well as some of the finest and most prosperous towns. Indeed, the region's well-tended farms, rich forest, and abundant wildlife, led ancient accounts to describe the area as surpassingly beautiful. Apparently, the Horrors found such beauty a delicacy and cut a terrible swath through it.

In the present day, the Badlands can boast only rock-filled gullies cutting through barren hills. Building a road is not possible over such a rough landscape, and so each person who enters the Badlands strikes out on his own, with no knowledge as to how previous travelers made their ways safely through the area. No villages exist in the Badlands, and few Name-givers live in the area.

Travel through the Badlands is always painful. No shade exists, save in the occasional cave tucked into the hillsides, and the rocks covering the ground constantly slide underfoot, causing discomfort even through heavy boots. One cannot move carts through the Badlands, for the stones quickly splinter wooden wheels and dent metal-shod wheels. Riding a beast is almost as difficult. With the exception of the thick-skinned stajian used by nomadic ork tribes, few animals can bear the pain of rock-torn feet and cracked hooves.

Despite its forbidding aspect, life does exist in the Badlands. As one might expect, the deep, solitary gullies are home to monsters and Horrors. The few Name-givers who make homes in the blighted region include magicians seeking private places to study, and questors of Jaspree determined to restore the land to its former splendor. Escaped slaves, often with their masters in swift pursuit, frequently enter the Badlands in a desperate attempt to lose their pursuers, though few will ever emerge from the region alive. Weak from their time in captivity and usually unarmed, the escaped slaves are no match for the wildlife roaming these inhospitable lands. The Badlands may also hide one of the lairs of the dragon Mountainshadow. Though this story originated with King Varulus III, it has never been confirmed since its first mention 30 years ago.

The Badlands are pocked with dozens of kaers built into the hills, all of them showing signs of breaching by the Horrors during the Scourge. These destroyed refuges remain deathly still, some with their treasures still intact. Adventurers who

enter the Badlands for the sole purpose of finding such kaers and collecting the valuables left lying with the corpses often find trouble waiting. Many of the kaers serve as homes for monsters and Horrors, and some of their magical and mechanical defenses are still in working order. The Horrors attacked the Badlands with such swiftness and brutality, and the area has remained so desolate, that in many cases it seems as if the monsters and Horrors simply replaced the inhabitants of the kaers.

—From the journal of Tallis Treyar, human questor of Jaspree

...This night is too silent; I cannot sleep. I wish I had never come to the Badlands. I try to believe that Jaspree guides my steps to a safe haven here, but each day sorely tests my faith.

Jagged rocks lie loose on the ground, giving way at every step. This morning, a rockslide threw me down. Had I not caught a withered tree as I rolled past it, I would now lie dead at the bottom of a ravine. My boots are torn, and I cannot mend them. I passed a kaer a few hours' walk away and thought to beg supplies from its folk, but could not make myself walk toward it. Its very stones seemed shrouded in darkness, and the wind blowing from its direction seemed to carry the stench of a charnel house. I am afraid; the roaring of wild beasts and the growing sense of evil paralyze me. The Passions save me, but I cannot go on. I cannot go back, either. There is no road, and I do not know the way.

Jaspree, Passion of growth and the land, if ever you have heeded your questors, hear me now. Guard me from the evils that may befall me, and guide me out of this benighted land...

Questors of Jaspree state repeatedly that this land was corrupted by the Horrors, just as the creatures might corrupt a soul or mind. They believe that the land can be healed, but do not know how to accomplish this task. They are considering the question with some urgency, however, for it seems that the Badlands are growing. If it is possible to heal the Badlands, it will mean we can restore prosperity and health to all places in our province. If we cannot, the blight on those lands may yet destroy our world.

WHEN I WAS A BOY, I SUCCESSFULLY EXPELLED A HORROR FROM MY THOUGHTS, SO I KNOW SUCH A THING IS POSSIBLE.
—J'ROLE THE HONORABLE THIEF

OF THE DEATH'S SEA

Forming the southern border of Barsaive, the Death's Sea is a vast body of molten rock resting in a huge basin ringed by high hills of dry black stone. Contrary to popular belief, the Death's Sea is not a sea of fire. The surface of the sea is actually covered with loose, irregularly shaped fragments of stone called clenkas. In the cracks between the clenkas, bright red liquid stone glows. Occasionally a hot bubble bursts underneath the clenkas, spraying molten rock over the surface of the sea. The red glow of the sea is visible at night, even from miles away. Clouds floating over the sea shine with an eerie red glow; this same glow provides the spectacular twilights seen over the Twilight Peaks.

Clenkas are formed when the liquid stone touches the air and cools. Though the clenkas are solid, they retain the searing heat of the molten stone below and can burn with a touch. They are not sturdy; the slightest weight applied to clenkas may sink the stone and whatever is on it into the sea. The molten rock beneath the surface is hot enough to melt metal, and will kill any living being upon contact.

One can only travel across the surface of Death's Sea by airship. Unless an airship flies exceptionally low over the surface, it will not be affected. Ships that travel within 50 feet of the sea's surface, however, often find themselves unable to maintain a position of steadiness. The most likely explanation for this diminished performance is that the intensity of the elemental fire in the Death's Sea affects the elemental air in the ships.

—From the log of Qui Kyak, captain of the airship Angry Troll

...Sixth Day out of Iphan

The Death's Sea is happy today. Its bright red glow mocks us, mocks our unsuccessful attempts to find its elemental fire and mocks the five crewmen who died today.

Two new sailors were killed when four viraas attacked them. The presence of viraas told us we were near a huge pocket of elemental fire. Of course, the attack panicked the new recruits. They tangled the rescue ropes, and I had to risk the life of four others to rescue them. We nearly had them out, when one slipped from the grip of a rescuer and was instantly devoured. A fire wraith took the second in

a blaze of flame that engulfed him instantly. We chose to leave that pocket of elemental fire, and instead check out a fool's island that had remained solid longer than most.

On the fool's island, we lost Nob, Skatz, and my good friend Llink. It is always a gamble to land men on a fool's island; I know it better than most, for I lost a foot to one years ago. It seems that the Death's Sea knows when someone has trespassed on it. The fool's island stayed together nearly all day until Nob and Skatz landed on it, and only then did it begin to pull apart. Llink died trying to save them; an explosion blasted up from the sea, charring all three instantly. I have never done anything so difficult as cutting the rope that held my companion of these last six years, then watching his body fall into that red death.

A Description of Elemental Fire Mining

Despite the dangers of Death's Sea, hundreds of brave men and women venture out across its infernal surface each year to mine the elemental fire that animates its depths. The precious flame is used in the fire cannon of airships and riverboats, for casting magical spells, and in trade along the sea, bringing great wealth to the citadels of Byrdown, Mathok, and Iphan, which regularly send out mining expeditions. But the Death's Sea can also exact a terrible toll from those who would harvest her treasures.

Toward the end of the first week of my tour of southern Barsaive, I witnessed the intrepid miners at work. Our airship had just passed over the ancient kingdom of Landis and was drifting out over the great sea, when we spotted mining airships hovering a mere 50 feet above the sea's deadly surface. As we drew closer, we could see the tiny forms of miners lowering themselves from ropes attached to the ships, buffeted by the turbulent air as if they were moths fluttering around a candle flame. Clad only in loincloths, thick-soled boots, and thick gloves against the lethal heat, they carefully descended to a "fool's island"—a fragile, semi-solid mass of clenkas drifting along on top of the molten rock. They had barely just dropped their orichalcum-laced nets into the boiling sea when some of them began to shout frantically at the airship hovering above them. As the clenkas beneath their feet began to split apart, the miners scrambled up the ropes and the airship began to ascend.

Most of the crew had the luck to escape injury, but one lost her grip just as the clenka on which she stood tilted violently. With a muffled cry, she slipped into the flesh-searing, molten rock as the rest of the crew—some hanging no more than a dwarf's-length away—helplessly looked on.

Though the miner's death seemed a horrible tragedy at the time, it foreshadowed an even greater calamity that we witnessed later that same, ill-fated morning. We had come upon a larger expedition, this one using charges of elemental water to harvest the priceless fire. Working in pairs, the mining ships first spread large, orichalcum-laced nets between them. Then the mining crews cast elemental water charges into the sea beneath the nets. The changes triggered violent explosions when they struck the molten rock, hurling shards of elemental fire and air hundreds of feet into the sky. As the sharp missiles reached the nets, the well-drilled crews quickly gathered in the huge seines between the ships, trapping the precious flame.

What happened next may have resulted from the work's heavy toll on the miners, or perhaps the Death's Sea herself was striking back at those who had plundered her depths. One of my companions later speculated that a careless crewman had likely packed too much elemental water into a charge, but everything happened so fast that no one can be certain what happened. All I remember is hearing an explosion—louder than the rest—and turning to see one of the hanging nets bulging upward. As the net rose, it pulled the two airships together. The hulls of the ill-fated ships splintered with a sickening crack, then both plunged toward the boiling stone below. The ships burst into flames and within seconds disappeared into the glowing cauldron of the Death's Sea, carrying more than 50 valiant miners to their deaths.

On the Strange Creatures that Inhabit the Death's Sea

The Death's Sea is home to many creatures, both monsters from our world and Horrors who remain on our plane for reasons we cannot guess. All these creatures appear immune from the horrible heat of the Death's Sea, thriving in the inimical environment. Though they feed mostly on each other, they eagerly attack any and all travelers across the sea.

Viraas and broccha both inhabit the fool's islands, lying just beneath the cool surface and rising up to strike anything that comes to rest on the clenkas. Large, winged fire eagles also fly in small flocks across the sea, searching for prey to bring back to their young waiting in molten nests. The legendary fire wraiths also wait patiently for any Name-giver with guilt in his heart to approach, that they may devour him whole.

On the Legend of the Death's Sea

Its intolerable heat and barrenness make the Death's Sea an inhospitable place not worth visiting. However, the lure of elemental fire continues to draw miners to the sea, as well as adventurers to guard them. As friction between the different

peoples and powers of Barsaive increases and open conflict with the Theran Empire looms closer, there is little doubt that the market for elemental fire will increase, with more and more expeditions launched over the terrible molten ocean.

The Death's Sea has existed for as long as we have kept records, and it has changed little over time. However, one interesting legend of its history found in the Great Library of Throal claims that the Death's Sea was once filled with water. It turned to molten stone in ages past when the Passions conspired to kill another of the universe's powerful entities—Death. They did this of their own accord, thinking to please the universe, which cherished life above all else. Combining their strength, they buried Death beneath the waters of the sea, then transformed the sea into molten stone to trap Death there. Death has been imprisoned for as long as the sea has burned, or so the story says.

Several questions spring immediately to mind. First, if Death was imprisoned, why do people still die? Was resurrection once not possible? The scholar Borsander of Throal suggests that this strange thought might be true. Her research indicates that the potential for personal resurrection is comparatively new. Perhaps before Death was imprisoned, those who died were forever trapped in Death.

If the story is true, another question leaps forward with terrible urgency. According to the story, Death will be freed when enough blood soaks into the earth. We do not know how much blood is required, nor where the blood must fall. But our province lies next to Death's Sea, and a terrible, bloody war with Thera looms on the horizon. Could war with the Therans create enough blood to free Death? And when Death is freed, how will he greet the world? Will he set out claiming lives in a haphazard frenzy of revenge? Will pestilence, famine, and plague spread across the world as a result of Death's liberation?

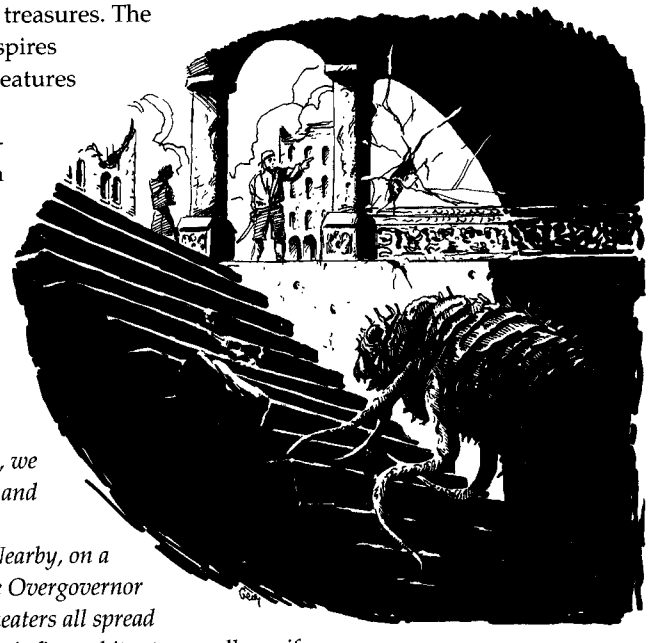
Though these speculations may be no more than idle tales told generations ago around campfires, perhaps they provide a warning we would do well to heed. If through intrigue or careful tactics we can keep a bloody conflict with the Therans at bay, we might well protect not just ourselves, but countless others around the world.

ON THE FORGOTTEN CITY OF PARLAINTH

Built with Theran labor and money long ago, the great city of Parlainth marks the far northeast corner of Barsaive. In the time before the Scourge, it served as the First Theran Empire's provincial capital and the home of the Overgovernor. In the days of its triumph, Parlainth had opulence and splendor unmatched even by present-day Travar.

What we know of Parlainth's past in our time comes mostly from exploration of its ruins, and from legends and stories that occasionally resurface in the remotest areas of Barsaive. We know that before the Scourge, the city was the Theran provincial capital of Barsaive. To protect their fair city from the Scourge, the Therans did not transform it into a citadel, as did many other cities, but chose a different method of protection. They shifted the entire city into one of the netherworlds of astral space, wiping knowledge of its existence from every citizen's mind, believing that this was the only way to keep Parlainth safe from the Horrors. Despite this great feat of magic, the Horrors still managed somehow to detect and invade the city during the Scourge, destroying the legendary Parlainth just as they had destroyed so many other cities.

Through the efforts of J'role the Honorable Thief and the elementalist Releana, the Forgotten City of Parlainth was restored to earthly existence in Barsaive after the Scourge. It is true that its ruins harbor frightful creatures and Horrors, but they also contain countless treasures. The city itself is a wilderness to be explored and tamed, for the tall spires and dozens of substructures deep underground hide myriad creatures and traps for the unwary.



A small town named Haven occupies the ruined city's southeast corner. The founders of the town cleared this small portion of Parlainth of both monsters and treasure, and Haven now serves as a trading post and way station for adventurers journeying deep into the fabulous ruins in search of Parlainth's marvelous treasures.

—From the journal of Sargon of Urupa

...After about a day's ride northeast of the Caucavics, we reached Haven, where we purchased a moth-eaten adventuring log from a dwarf merchant. Using the directions supplied in its yellowing pages, we made our way to the outskirts of Parlainth, the fabled Forgotten City and the ancient Theran capital of Barsaive.

We saw the great citadel where mighty airships had once docked. Nearby, on a high hill overlooking the city, stood the monumental palace where the Overgovernor had once lived. Temples and great houses, market places and amphitheaters all spread out from the citadel. Deep green vines and mosses covered much of their fine, white stone walls, as if the jungle itself had conspired with Parlainth's original inhabitants to hide the great city. Though the wind and rain of many years had left the white stone pockmarked and pitted, close inspection revealed intricately carved designs and glyphs, a silent testament to the skill of Parlainth's artisans.

We carefully made our way toward the city center, on constant watch for the numerous Horrors still inhabiting the dead city. Suddenly, we froze in our tracks. Before us lay a rectangular courtyard the size of ten Theran kilas, a courtyard whose white stone walls still bore the brown stains of blood spilled long ago. We had found the ancient Theran slave market.

It seems certain that the Therans have spies within Haven, keeping watch over Parlainth and any explorers who plunder its ruins. Speculations about their aims range from Theran plans to reclaim Parlainth and retrieve its treasures for their empire to tracking or even waylaying treasure seekers brave enough to explore its depths.
—Kern Redhand

Haven may provide refuge against the dangers of Parlainth, but its inhabitants—adventurers, thieves, swindlers, mad wizards, and even Horrors disguised as any of the above—often prove as formidable a challenge as the traps and monsters of the Forgotten City.

Of the Scarlet Sea

The Scarlet Sea, linked to the Death's Sea by the Pryon Strait, is the home of the *Firespawn*, a salvaged Theran vedette operated by a group of air sailors and merchants. The ship's crew, composed of humans, orks, and trolls, gather elemental air at their leisure, then travel down the Serpent River to sell their harvest to the t'skrang.

The *Firespawn*'s crew claim the Scarlet Sea as their exclusive property, and so maintain the right to pirate anyone else attempting to mine the sea. In fact, they only attack ships that they believe they can easily defeat. Often, they extend their mining rights into the Death's Sea as well, but only if they spot a ship they believe they can successfully overcome.

Of the Wastes

The Wastes form the western border of Barsaive. No Name-givers live in this area, now home only to creatures, Horrors, and stunted plants and animals. Before the Scourge, this rich and fertile area boasted more kaers and citadels than any other region of Barsaive. The end of the Scourge has brought no reports of survivors from this region, and few who have entered the Wastes to search for signs of life have ever returned. If Throalic records are accurate, Barsaive lost hundreds of shelters to the destruction of the Horrors in this area alone.

The Wastes feature a unique and puzzling phenomenon apparently created by the Scourge. Billowing clouds of ashlike smoke cover the entire region, the same ashy substance that floats through the Poison Forest and the city of Jerris. Though many believe this strange ash to be the cause of the Poison Forest's long dying and of the lassitude of the people of Jerris, studies of samples have yet to reveal any facts to support or disprove this belief. Another claim gaining popular support states that the ash is a Horror that controls the area and seeks to expand its influence.

—From the journal of Derleth, nethermancer of Ar Kham

...Today our galley passed over Jerris and then westward over the Wastes, a forsaken place that truly resembles the end of the world. Mercifully, a maelstrom of swirling, gray dust obscured the abominable land from the eyes of our crew; they surely would have mutinied had they seen the evil landscape below us. For the Wastes are still ruled by Horrors, those unholy entities from the Great Void of the netherworlds, terrible abominations that existed long before the Books of Harrow were even a dream in the tortured mind of the Martyr Scholar.

No creatures of the light would dare set foot in the Wastes. Its rancid air supports only the Horrors and their spawn: wormskulls, despairthoughts, bloatforms and jehuthras, swarms of krilworms, and other nameless creatures that feed on the souls of Name-givers.

ON THE KINGDOM OF THROAL

You might imagine that the task of gathering information about the Kingdom of Throal would prove an easy one. And in many ways, it was: I found numerous sources readily available, well-organized and complete historical records, and an orderly kingdom to survey. The challenge lay in choosing what to include, and what to leave for further works. As I may take up only a few pages of this work for my subject, I provide the most basic information and encourage interested readers to study further.
—Inscribed by Jaron of Bethabel, scholar of the Library of Throal

ON THE FIRST SIGHT OF THROAL

The entrance to the Kingdom of Throal stands on the south face of the Throal Mountain range. To reach Throal, one must pass through Bartertown, a sprawling city of merchants and traders that has grown around the entrance to the kingdom ever since the time of the Scourge's end. My colleague Kern Redhand more fully describes Bartertown in the section titled On Towns and Cities, so I shall leave the detail for readers of that chapter of this volume.

IF ONLY THEY COULD DO THE SAME WITH THE REST OF BARTERTOWN.
—KERN REDHAND

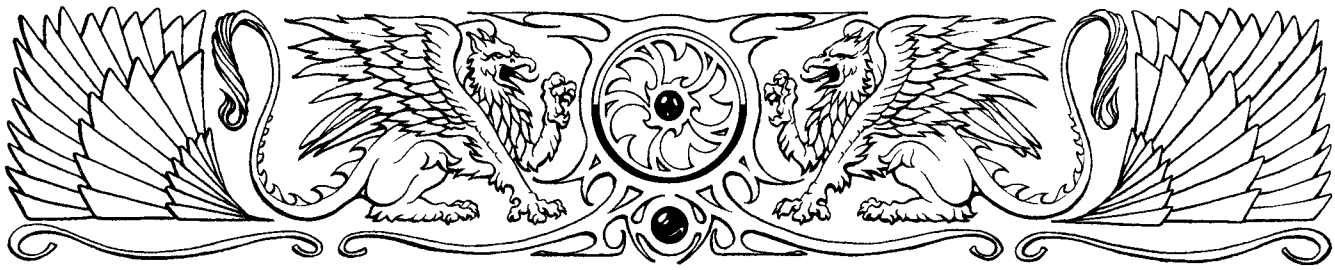
The wide, smooth Royal Road cuts through Bartertown, leading visitors straight to the gates of Throal. King Varulus III has ordered that this road be kept in continually pristine condition.

The journey through Bartertown permits one a fascinating glimpse of the countless Barsaivian cultures and races that come to trade with Throal. Merchants, beggars, and charlatans fill the streets, wares of every sort are displayed for trade, and criers call out for mercenaries to guard shipments across the province. Truly, Bartertown is an awesome, overwhelming sight; yet even its colorful chaos takes second place to the majestic Throal Mountains. One can look up from any place in Bartertown and see the blue-misted mountains soaring high into the clouds, the peaks so enormous that they fill one's vision. The colossal mountains seem to lean down over Bartertown, giving one almost the sensation that the towering slopes might momentarily topple down upon the ramshackle city.

As one approaches the mountains, the gates of the Kingdom of Throal are a welcome sight, perhaps because they relieve some of the breathtaking grandeur of the setting. These proofs of Name-giver habitation are reminders that the huge mountains can be tamed after all. The entrance to Throal lies through three massive arches carved into the mountains, their edges plated with gold. Because the mountains are so enormous, it is only from directly under the arches that one can truly appreciate the vastness of the gates. They tower overhead; people who look directly up at their golden curves often suffer the momentary sensation of falling over backward.

The three arches open into a chamber hundreds of feet high, which serves as the official entrance to the kingdom. Here is the place known as the Bazaar, where merchants who obtain licenses from the Kingdom of Throal can set up their booths. Throalic guards patrol the Bazaar, watching for questionable business practices and keeping a sharp eye out for thieves.

From this great, vaulted chamber, nine huge hallways lead into the heart of the mountains. All along their length, these hallways branch off into smaller corridors, leading into a maze that winds its way through the mountain range. The kingdom fills the Throal Mountains: long corridors and colossal stairways connect caverns massive enough to contain small cities.



A DISCOURSE ON RECENT HISTORY

SOME OFFICIALS GRUMBLE THAT KING VARULUS II WOULD NEVER HAVE GONE SO FAR WITH CERTAIN REFORMS, BUT WHO CAN SAY IF THIS IS TRUE? —JARON OF BETHABEL

No political institution in all of Barsaive can match the dwarf Kingdom of Throal for size, power, and ambition. Though the dwarfs who founded it once served as administrators for the First Theran Empire, ever since the end of the Scourge they have sought power for themselves in order to promote dwarf ideals of equality and justice. They wish to bring their reforms to the rest of the province, but prefer to do so by persuasion rather than conquest. Their chief goal is to reform Barsaive's legal system, originally imposed by the benighted Therans and then handed down through the generations.

Like his father before him, King Varulus III has formulated unique and sometimes startling ideas on the nature of individual rights. These rights influence how criminals are judged in Throal, how society treats each individual, what each person owes to society, and what citizens may expect from their rulers as well as what rulers can expect from citizens.

During the Scourge, King Varulus II and Varulus III created an extensive legal code. King Varulus II died before completing his work, but the present king believes that his father would have approved of his additions to Throalic law.

NEARLY ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THE DEATH REBELLION CONTINUES ITS WORK AS A SECRET ORGANIZATION, ATTEMPTING TO DISCREDIT THE KING AND SECRETLY COOPERATING WITH THERAN AGENTS. THEIR SEVERAL ATTEMPTS TO KILL THE KING, HIS WIFE DOLLAS, AND HIS SON, NEDEN, HAVE FAILED, BUT THE DEATH REBELLION'S POWER INCREASES ALONG WITH THERAN INFLUENCE IN BARSAIVE. —MERROX,

Shortly before the Scourge ended, King Varulus III presented his laws to the people. Though he knew they could not prevent him from implementing them, the idea of merely forcing his views on unwilling subjects was anathema to him. Therefore, the king took the time to explain his (and his father's) purpose in creating the new laws, as well as proclaiming his vision of the kingdom's future. The people repaid him with steadfast loyalty; among the common folk, the king's reforms met with little resistance. Alas, this was not so among certain, powerful dwarf nobles.

King Varulus attempted his changes in a troubled time. No one could yet predict when the Scourge would end, and several Horrors had recently breached the kingdom's defenses. It seemed ill-considered to be planning the kingdom's place in the outside world when no one knew if the world outside still existed. But King Varulus, a visionary questor of Upandal the Builder and perhaps a bit of a mystic, insisted that his people must plan for the future precisely because so many unknowns lay ahead. He declared that the dwarfs must have a firm idea of the kind of world they wanted to build when the Scourge ended and a plan to accomplish their goals.

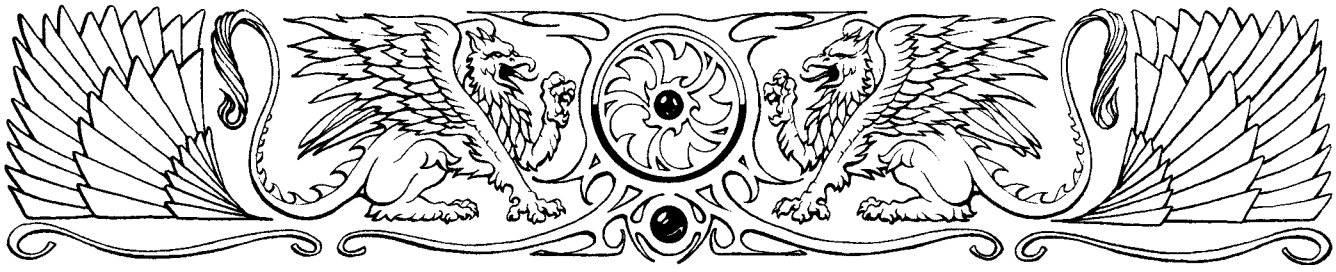
Several conservative factions were deeply offended by what they viewed as Varulus III's rejection of tradition. Banding together, they attempted to kill Varulus and seize power. This conflict, which became known as the Death Rebellion, set families against one another, and might even have shredded the fabric of Throalic society had Varulus not immediately captured the initiative by arresting the rebellion's leaders and dispersing their followers. No such organized resistance has openly challenged his rule since.

ON THE WORKINGS OF THROALIC LAW

The complete text of the king's laws requires several hundred pages; herein, I repeat only a few examples in order to illustrate the unique nature of these laws. Taken as a whole, the Throalic legal code is the most startling change to the practice of law the world has ever seen. The laws with the greatest importance to the greatest number of citizens are as follows:

- *All Name-givers are masters of their own souls, and none may be enslaved to the will of another.* Though only a few Barsaivian cultures practice slavery, Throal is the first realm to openly declare slavery wrong, and to refuse to tolerate the despicable practice anywhere in any form. Though this law seems to imply that Throal must someday wage war on Thera to end the tyranny of slavery, King Varulus and those closest to him will say only that they hope their example will lead the Therans to abandon that barbarous institution.

PERHAPS THEY WILL. BUT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY. —JARON



•*A poor citizen who steals is judged less harshly than a rich citizen who steals.* To the Throalic way of thinking, both a rich citizen and a poor citizen may know the law, but the rich man has no need to steal; a poor citizen, however, may be driven to do wrong by his desperate circumstances. By acknowledging this truth in law, Throal makes a deliberate effort to contradict the usual way of the world in which the law favors the rich. In many places, such as Thera, such bias is open, and those with greater wealth and power are less subject to the law; in other realms it occurs indirectly, where the wealthy influence the legal system with favors and money.

•*The Kingdom of Throal takes responsibility for the property of its citizens.* That is, if something is stolen from a citizen of Throal within the kingdom's boundaries, the kingdom must recover or replace it. Though this law unfortunately keeps a good deal of the kingdom's resources tied up in guards and patrols, most citizens appreciate the security the law provides.

The idea of property and its protection is crucial to the Throalic legal code. King Varulus III, seeing how the Therans built their empire upon the exchange of information and goods, plans to use the same methods to gain power for his kingdom.

WITHIN THE DWARF KINGDOM

Plunging far below the slopes of the Throal Mountains, the Kingdom of Throal is a vast place. Its myriad corridors and passageways extend a distance of many days' walk, branching off to other, seemingly endless corridors. Massive chambers and caverns filled with Throal's huge inner cities lie along these passages, as do all of the kingdom's important areas.

ON THE HALLS OF THROAL

The winding halls of Throal and the living and working spaces which they connect represent unique dwarf construction styles. The countless wide tunnels reach some twelve feet high and wind through the mountains for a distance of many days' travel. These passages make up the old sections of the kingdom. Most citizens of Throal live here, preferring to dwell in the underground chambers where they feel most comfortable. Light quartz crystals line the walls of these corridors, illuminating their shadowy depths.

The old part of Throal, which served as the kingdom's kaer during the Scourge, is divided between residences and chambers used for trade, work, and research. Countless homes line the residential corridors, many-roomed dwellings that lie behind thick, wooden doors. In the trade and work spaces, the people of Throal conduct business, the making of goods, and scholarly research. These areas serve as workshops for craftspeople, provide meeting places for those who deal in importing and exporting goods, and contain the great Throalic libraries.

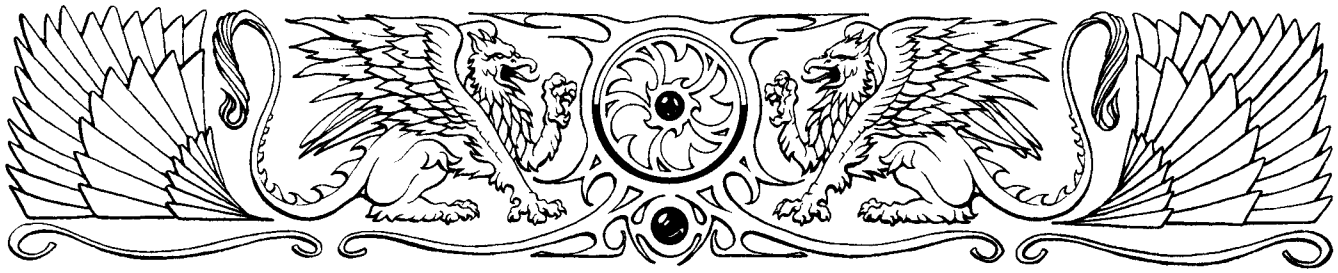
Long stairways carved from the mountain lead from certain tunnels, providing access between the different levels of Throal. The landings of some of the longer stairways feature small parks where people can rest, for the walk between levels can sometimes take an hour or more. In some of the parks are fountains of magical water specially enchanted to refresh those who partake of it. Unfortunately, the water loses its healing property when carried out of the city.

ON THE GREAT LIBRARY

Within the kingdom lies the Great Library of Throal, the most complete and inclusive library in the province. Its stone walls house the collective literary, artistic, and scholarly works of the people of Barsaive. Given the great numbers who dwell in Throal and the dwarf kingdom's extensive history, this priceless collection has grown over the centuries to a size almost beyond comprehension. In addition to gathering scholarly and literary works, the librarians are constantly adding to the record of Barsaive's history, from the province's beginnings to the present day.

Among the many ways the librarians accomplish this goal is by hiring adventurers to seek the truth behind certain legends and rumors and to verify events reported from every region of Barsaive. Rather than relying on memory alone, the librarians require these adventurers to keep journals of their travels, recording each day the perils and wonders they have faced. In addition, the library purchases the journals of adventurers who have explored all areas of the province.

The library makes a formal acquisition of journals once a year, during the months of Sollus and Riag. Thousands of adventurers descend on Throal at this time, all hoping to sell their stories and become a part of Barsaive's history. Some adventurers earn enough from the library to continue their journey or to return home; however, no adventurer or group



can expect to earn a fortune in this way.

The Master of the Hall of Records, currently my colleague Merrox, administers the library. At any time, roughly two dozen librarians and scholars assist the Master, each taking charge of a general area of study: topography, city lore, history (this subject requires five librarians), and so on. The library also catalogues maps of the entire province as well as of smaller regions within it.

All of the manuscripts and papers stored in the library are exhaustively indexed and coded so that visiting scholars and travelers can easily find what they are looking for. Visitors may use the library for a fee of twenty silver pieces a day, which includes assistance from the librarians, scribes, and research scholars.

Though the scourge ended Thera's reign over Barsaive and therefore our land's status as a province, its citizens still refer to it as the province when not using its name.
—Merrox

I think we pay too much for these journals. We would better spend our coin on additional staff or enlarging the library.
—Jaron of Bethabel

Most librarians believe that the king knows a number of secret passages that lead to various areas of the kingdom, allowing him to move through his domain without using the public corridors. Merrox refuses to confirm or deny these rumors, though I suspect he knows more than he is telling.
—Jaron of Bethabel

The Chambers of the Inner Kingdom

Certain tunnels lead to the chambers wherein the King and his court conduct the day-to-day business of Throal and Barsaive. These rooms include the king's audience chamber and banquet hall, where formal functions and ceremonies take place; the private chambers of the king, his family, and his court; and the Vaults of the Kingdom, which contain Throal's treasure and valuable, magical artifacts.

Because it houses what we of Throal hold most dear, this Inner Kingdom remains under heavy guard at all times. Without exception, those venturing into this area without an authorized escort are detained.

I consider it my duty to illustrate the consequences of visiting the Inner Kingdom without the proper guard. It pains me to admit this, but I myself once entered the Inner Kingdom without first informing the authorities of my intent. I trespassed for a moment, no more; I meant only to look for Merrox, so that he might answer a vexing question regarding the cross-indexing of grain-trading records. I knew that he had gone to speak with the king. I suppose I should have waited, but the king frequently holds discourses on research and the law with Merrox for hours at a time. As one of the principal scholars of the Great Library, my research is particularly pressing, so I chose to risk entry rather than lose hours of my valuable time. I believed that my status might serve as a safe-conduct of sorts.

Much to my chagrin, I had taken scarcely twenty paces down the great hall leading to the king's private study when four guards in chain mail accosted me. Their leader, a black-bearded dwarf with a patch over one eye, gave me a grim look and questioned me coldly as to my business. All the while his fellows leaned ominously on their pole-arms, with their hands resting on the hilts of their dwarf swords. In vain did I explain who I was. They refused to let me pass. I bade them fetch Merrox, that he might vouch for me, but that suggestion only made them look on me with greater suspicion! At length I tired of the dispute and made as if to step past them, a deed which was my undoing. Four swords whipped out of their sheaths, surrounding me in a ring of sharp, shining metal. As I stood motionless in shock, the chief guard sheathed his sword, gripped me by the arms from behind in a most unpleasant manner and marched me down the winding corridors to prison. I, Derrat of Wishon, chief scholar of the Great Library of Throal, actually went to prison! Merrox came several hours later and persuaded them to release me, but I shall never forget the indignity of the experience.

—*Derrat*

The Mines

The endless tunnels of Throal also provide access to Throal's most important natural resources: the magical and mundane minerals drawn from the mining tunnels and shafts that wind through the deepest heart of the Throal Mountains. Though many of Throal's dwarfs immerse themselves in the theory and practice of governing a kingdom, the vast majorty prefer to delve into the earth and uncover its treasures.

Such work carries risks; cave-ins may occur at any time, as may attack by creatures that roam the tunnels. Some of these are mundane animals that have crept into the tunnels from the surface of the

Throal Mountains. Other, more dangerous creatures emerge from the elemental plane of earth and attack the miners to prevent them from gathering elemental earth.

Several different mining companies work within Throal, constantly searching for new, rich sources of raw material and more efficient means to mine it. The level of competition for the market and the companies' unsurpassed ability to work the mines effectively puts the prices of minerals and elemental earth in constant flux.

ON THE CAVERNS AND CITIES

More recent additions to Throal include the massive cities built in huge caverns throughout the Throal Mountains. City architecture differs considerably from the building style of the old kaer, reflecting the present-day variety among Throal's citizens. When King Varulus III invited people of all races from across Barsaive to take up residence in the Kingdom of Throal, the officials in charge of housing the anticipated influx of people decided that the newcomers would adjust to their homes more quickly if their new residences resembled the homes they had left. Accordingly, Throalic engineers set about building roads, towers, and storied residences on the wide floors of five vast caverns. As was common in the kaers, these areas are illuminated by a magical, glowing moss that lines the roof of the caverns, supplemented by light-quartz crystals around the outer walls of each city.

The cities the dwarfs built inside the caverns, though generally smaller than cities in the rest of Barsaive, are no less splendid in design. Each houses approximately 25,000 people of many different races. Each city is ruled by a baron or baroness, also of a variety of races, who has sworn loyalty to King Varulus III. The city's noble families hold their titles for the life of the current baron or baroness. Upon the death of a city's ruler, the king may allow an heir to assume the place of his or her father or mother, or he may place a new ruler in charge of the city. In general, King Varulus considers the current ruling family's popularity among the citizens when making this decision. If the people find their current rulers satisfactory, that family continues to rule. If the people feel otherwise, the king gives the stewardship of the city to a new noble family.

At this writing, the dwarfs have completed five subterranean cities: Bethabal, Wishon, Tirtarga, Oshane, and Yistane. These cities are filled with a mix of races who chose to become citizens of Throal. Bethabal is famed for the garden that seems to float near the roof of that city's giant cave, planted on an observation platform built during the city's construction. Six stone walkways now lead to the garden from various parts of the cavern, each affording a spectacular view of Bethabal.

Two more cities, Hustane and Valvria, are in the final stages of construction. No residents have yet settled there, and only a few dwarfs still work in the quiet cities. Walking through their streets is an eerie experience, almost like exploring an empty kaer or citadel.

ON BLOOD WOOD

If you have ever experienced mixed feelings, such as pain and pleasure, joy and sadness, or pride and shame, then you know what I felt at being given the task of compiling information about Blood Wood and the Elven Court. As a historian and scholar, I anticipated that my work might reveal the lesson taught us by the corruption of the elves of Blood Wood. But as an elf who remembers vividly the experience of living underground in hiding from the Horrors, I found it terrifying to face one of the most profound and disturbing outcomes of the Scourge. I believe that the fact of my racial origin and the knowledge that it was my kinsmen who willingly inflicted such agony on themselves were what made the study of this subject particularly painful for me.

Of course, many non-elves in Barsaive also feel as I do, and I know that my racial background should have no bearing on my work as a scholar, but I could not help but wonder what would have been my fate had I been born in Wyrm Wood instead of in a kaer. Might I have ended up as a blood elf? I cannot say, and do not wish to know.

—Set down on this the Third Day of Rua, 1505 TH, by Karon Foal, elven scholar

ON THE TERRIBLE BEAUTY OF BLOOD WOOD

Blood Wood, a place both miraculous and unsettling, marks the northern boundary of Barsaive. Though life has returned to much of the world since the end of the Scourge, no place is so rich with life as the legendary Blood Wood. Revived and magically rejuvenated by the corrupted elves of the north, the forest has grown to enormous proportions and now stands as a testament to the beauty that elves, corrupted or not, can create.

—From the journal of J'role the Honorable Thief

...I remember my first sight of Blood Wood, decades ago. A shimmering island of green amid a barren, brown plain, its beauty both attracted and terrified me. Never in my life had I seen so many trees, which covered the land like a monstrous army of alien growing things. The sheer abundance of life all around me made my heart stop beating and tore the breath from my throat. As I approached it, knowing I must enter whether I would or not, the emerald beauty of the leaves became dark and menacing, and the thick maze of branches and trunks became a single, powerful creature that might easily devour me. Until that day, I had seen only the stark, gray interior of my kaer and the mountainous brown horizon that surrounded my meager farming village. When I entered Blood Wood, I came upon a different land; even in my dreams I had never imagined such a place, and the difference of it paralyzed me with fear and longing.

Blood Wood grows thick with green- and red-leafed undergrowth that brushes against a visitor's legs. Tall, thick-trunked birch trees overgrown with layers of furry moss lean down overhead, their leaves blocking most of the sun's light and turning the forest into an endless cavern of undergrowth. Thick vines hang in long loops from the canopy overhead down to the ground.

Animal life is equally abundant in the forest. Though a traveler sometimes crosses an eerily silent section of the woodland—more terrifying than any constant sound—the animals of the Blood Wood chatter and call and whistle. Many of the smaller animals prey on each other, posing no threat to travelers. Other animals are very dangerous; the small but deadly blood monkey, the fierce witherfang, the sly giant python, and others all wait to hunt down the careless traveler.

But these mundane plants and animals are not the greatest danger within Blood Wood, nor are they its most interesting inhabitants. This magnificent forest is home to the largest elven population in Barsaive, the corrupted elves who still worship the Elven Queen Alachia as their High Queen and the guardian of elven culture.

HOW BLOOD WOOD CAME TO BE

In the days before the Scourge, the Elven Queen ruled all the elves of Barsaive and other lands. All elves pledged their loyalty to her court, though many lived their entire lives without ever paying their respects to her in person. Over time, the Elven Queen lost the power to rule any but the elves. Her kingdom, however, remained the most important and linked the realms of faerie with the mundane world. No matter where they lived, all elves owed and still owe their greatest loyalty to the Court of the Elven Queen, a tradition that continues undiminished to this day.

In return for their loyalty, the Elven Queen kept safe all elves in the world. With few exceptions, every Elven Queen has fulfilled this duty to her utmost. Keeping abreast of events in the world outside her northern forest kingdom by requiring reports on the outside world from all visitors to her kingdom, each Elven Queen learned where to focus her attention to guarantee the continued welfare of her subjects.

HOW THE SCHISM OCCURRED

Even such ingrained traditions, however, could not withstand the challenge of the Horrors. Seven hundred years ago, as the world discovered the impending onslaught of the Horrors and the rulers of Thera created the Rites of Protection and Passage, Thera demanded that all citizens swear loyalty to its empire in exchange for protection from the Scourge. All elves knew that their first loyalty lay with the Elven Queen, and most expected Queen Alachia to agree to these terms. But the Queen rejected the Theran demands, and with them the Rites of Protection and Passage. Many of the elves in Barsaive, fearing they could not survive the coming Scourge without the Theran Rites, forswore Queen Alachia and joined communities that had learned the Rites of Protection and Passage.

The elves called this time of turning away the Schism. Even as thousands of elves threw in their lot with Barsaive's other races and went into hiding in the kaers and citadels, the elven folk still loyal to the Elven Queen gathered around her in the giant Wyrm Wood for the hundred years preceding the Scourge. There a bitterness settled upon them, and their hearts became closed and dark. They felt betrayed not only by their own kind, but by the world itself, which demanded that people make such unforgivable choices.

THE CORRUPTION OF THE ELVES

Unlike most communities, whose people built their kaers and citadels from the stone and earth they knew so well, the elves of Wyrm Wood drew on elemental magic to build shelters of trees and plants. The Elven Queen and her court sealed Wyrm Wood under a thick canopy of vines and leaves, placing magical wards within the trees of their forest just as other people placed wards on the stones of their kaers and citadels.

But their wards did not hold. Slowly, the Horrors ate away at the outer defenses of Wyrm Wood. Even as the beleaguered elves tried to shore up their magical defenses, the Horrors slipped in, possessing elves, attacking those who lived within the failed kaer, and arousing untold terror. In desperation, the elves began to dig deep tunnels to escape the Horrors, but the creatures had entrenched themselves in Wyrm Wood. Before long, the elves began to lose the battle in earnest.

In this darkest hour of elven history, the magicians of Wyrm Wood stumbled across a possible means of salvation. Rather than fighting the Horrors, they would simply make themselves unappealing to the creatures. Because the Horrors feed on the pain they inflict on their victims, the Court chose to drive them away by inflicting agony on themselves. By twisting elemental magic, they created the Ritual of the Thorns, which made sharp thorns grow out of their bodies and cut through their flesh. With their bodies and minds awash in constant, agonizing pain on which the Horrors could not feed, the elves forced the Horrors to leave the woodland alone.

Because the Horrors also consider despair, fear, and other anguish of the heart a delicacy, the elves of the Court disciplined themselves to feel little. They feel enough to still be considered Name-givers, but are capable of only so much emo-

tion. The blood elves, as they came to be called, can feel love and concern for others, but only to a limited degree. Like the rest of us, they have hopes, dreams, and fears—but these, too, have limits.

The terrible plan worked; the hastily dug underground shelters combined with the self-inflicted mental and physical torture kept the elves from succumbing to the Horrors. For their survival, however, they paid a dreadful price. Some say that though the elves saved their own lives, what they did to themselves rendered their lives as empty as if they had died. Even the elves themselves cannot deny that they twisted their nature into something horrible. Still breathtakingly beautiful in their own way, the blood elves of the Queen's Court also evoke overwhelming pain and sorrow.

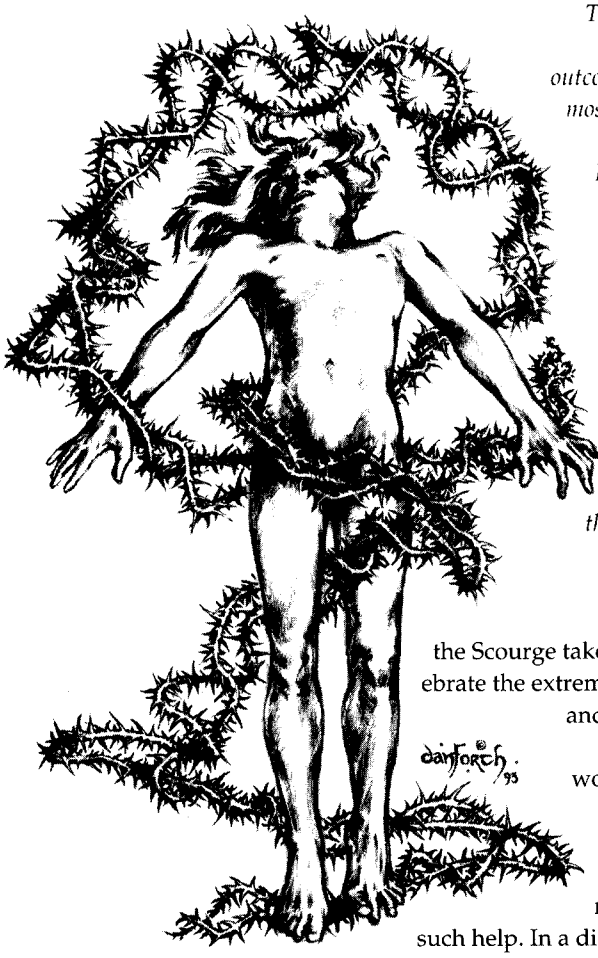
—From a letter from Queen Alachia to King Varulus III of Throal, 1462 TH

To His Majesty King Varulus III of the Throal,

Since my return from your kingdom, I have been disturbed by the outcome of our meeting. You and yours have grown to such distrust and animosity toward us, but for what reason? Surely what we have done to ourselves is no worse than the protective measures taken by other peoples of Barsaive.

The tales of blood magic rituals in which communities sacrificed their own are known to us. You may feel that our solution is a barbaric one, but we never called for any type of sacrifice. And what of those whose shelters failed, and who were taken by the Horrors? This did not happen to we of the Elven Court, but again, you feel our solution intolerable.

We did what we had to do. We survived the Scourge, and in many ways, we survived more intact than others. The Ritual of Thorns has cleansed us as a people and helped us purge the seeds of corruption from ourselves. All those from outside Blood Wood know not the enlightenment that awaits anyone who chooses our way...



Though they rarely speak of it, the members of the Elven Court feel torn by their current state. The elves who survived the Scourge take great pride in their victory over the Horrors. Some continue to celebrate the extreme choice they made, scoffing at those who are repelled by their cold and masochistic existence. However, each member of the Elven Court also recognizes that he or she has become alien to the rest of the world. Though their longing is unspoken, they remember with regret the days when they lived without the constant pain and stifled emotions they now suffer.

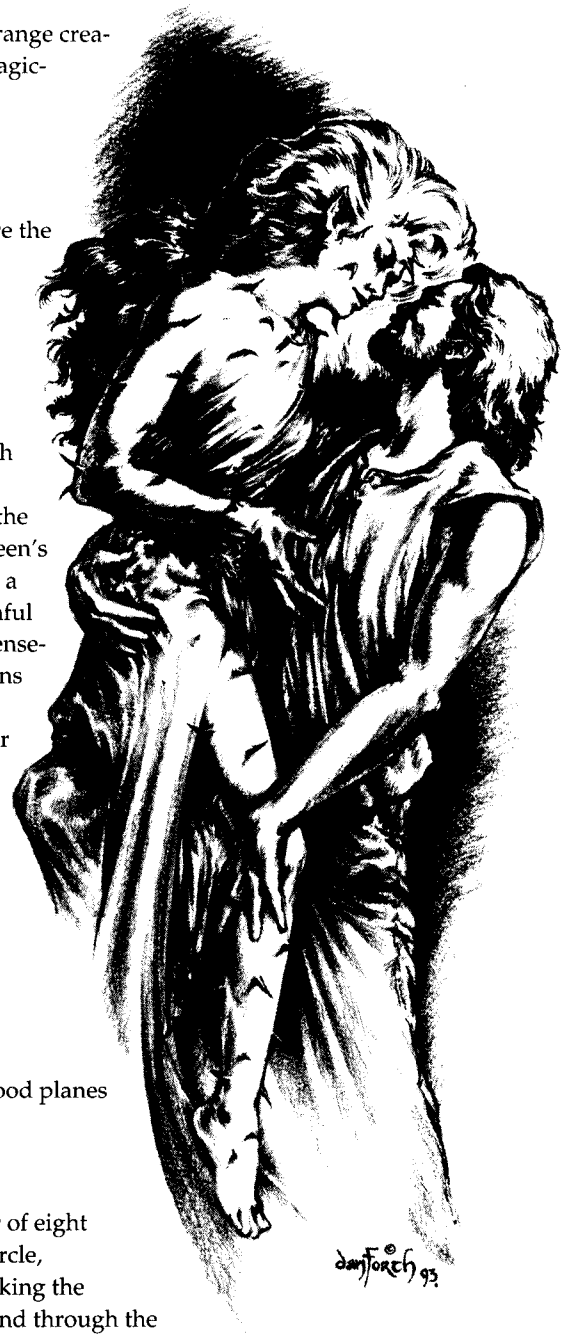
With time and help, the Court may discover a way to reverse the Ritual of the Thorns. Of course, they will never ask for such help. In a display of elven arrogance sadly common to my race, their perverse pride in their condition prevents them from acting to achieve the changes that some small remnant of their hearts so desperately craves. They remain as they became during the Scourge; safe from the Horrors, but cut off from the world.

ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF WYRM WOOD

As the elves hid underground, their flesh torn by thorns and spilling blood into the thirsty ground as if in offering, the Horrors ravaged Wyrm Wood above. After the Scourge ended, the elves emerged to discover their beloved forest corrupted, forever altered by the Horrors. What had once been a verdant wood had become a desolate wasteland.

Unable to imagine life without their forest, the elves began to use the twisted magics they had developed during the Scourge to revive their home. Combining elemental magic with nethermancy, they created a hybrid magical process to help the forest re-grow. Blood from their own bodies fed the seeds they planted. Working without rest and giving ceaselessly of themselves, many elves died to renew the forest. The survivors carefully drained the corpses of blood and used it to speed the forest's growth, then planted the dead husks to feed the largest trees. Some say that the souls of these dead still live within the trees and can be called forth by offering blood to the forest.

During this time, the elves also created the first thorn men and other strange creatures. The nature of their magical arts remains a well-kept secret; other magic-users have yet to duplicate their perverse experiments.



ON THE LURE OF BLOOD WOOD

Why would anyone enter Blood Wood, filled as it is with dangerous monsters and equally dangerous elves? Many come because the woods are the richest source of elemental earth and elemental wood in all of Barsaive. Just as the Therans sail the skies with their mining ships in search of elemental air, or desperate and greedy miners work Death's Sea for elemental fire, so intrepid expeditions enter Blood Wood in search of elemental earth and wood. The elves guard their woods jealously, however, dealing harshly with intruders. Mining expeditions work quickly and quietly, hoping to gather enough elemental riches to outweigh the risks.

Other people wander into the wood enticed by rumors of its beauty or the beauty of the elves. Inevitably captured and brought before the Elven Queen's Court, these hapless adventurers often find themselves drawn into taking a blood elf as a lover. Though such joining yields heretofore unknown, painful bliss, it lasts a very short time. Because the blood elves feel nothing as intensely as the other Name-giver races, they tire quickly of non-elven companions and abandon them without a thought for other, newer amusements.

The abandoned adventurer continues to hope for the return of his or her elven lover, caring for nothing else, and eventually wastes away and dies. According to some tales, Blood Wood is littered with the bones of rejected lovers. Those who are discovered soon enough may recover, given time away from the wood and plenty of other company, but many die of longing despite all help from others.

The forest is also scattered about with lone questors of Jaspree who have committed themselves to protecting Blood Wood despites the elves' efforts to eject them. Heedless of the threat of capture, the questors work to keep others from entering the forest to mine for the precious elemental earth and wood. Though the elves disavow their efforts, such questors often develop friendships with elementals from the earth and wood planes of astral space and so make formidable opponents.

OF THE ELVEN QUEEN'S COURT

The life of the Court revolves around the Elven Queen's Palace, a tower of eight giant trees in a clearing in the heart of Blood Wood. The trees grow in a circle, their trunks as thick as taverns. The branches wind around each other, linking the trees in intricate patterns, as if they had been grown to create this order, and through the order, to become beautiful.

—From the journal of T'rayn, elven troubadour of Urupa

...We stood before the palace of the Elven Queen.

Flowering vines grew between the trees, forming elaborate patterns. So thick did the vines grow that they created walls—walls covered with large green leaves and white and violet flowers at least two hand-widths across. The walls of vines had many openings, like windows, draped in intricate spider webs. Catching the sunlight, the webs turned it into a rainbow of colors.

White bones of many shapes and sizes fitted together to create a staircase that led to the palace doors. The doors were made of rose bushes grown so thick they blocked all light from passing through them.

The palace stands eight floors high. The lower floor contains a ballroom and other public chambers. On the next two floors are quarters for the Elven Queen's guards and personal advisors. Above that is a floor devoted to the Court's bizarre magicians and the laboratories. The fifth and sixth floors contain guest chambers, though they most often stand empty. The top two floors belong to the Elven Queen: the uppermost floor contains a hall filled with gifts brought to Queen Alachia by visitors to Blood Wood, as well as her private chamber. An open wall of the bed chamber looks out over Blood Wood. From this vantage point, the forest spreads out like the still surface of a bright green lake.

ON THE HIERARCHY OF THE COURT

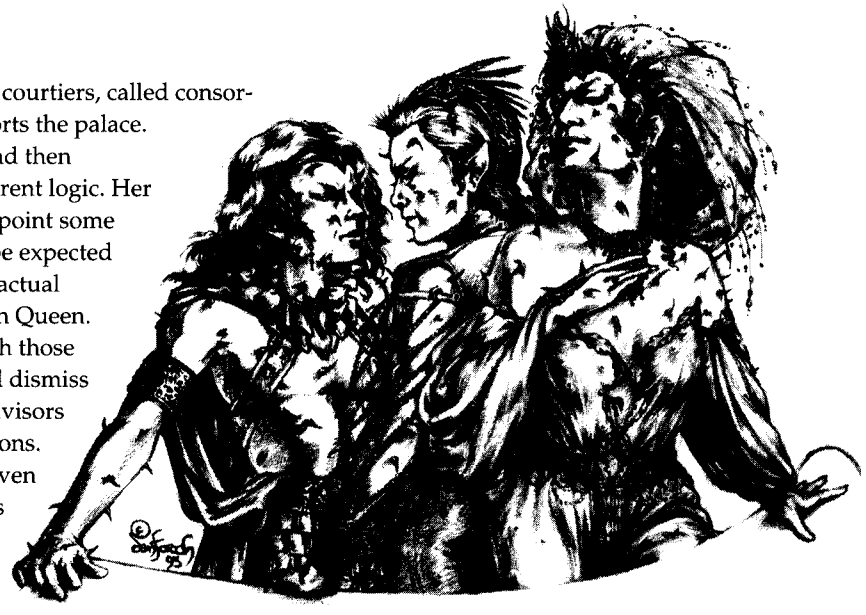
ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM THOSE WHO HAVE PENETRATED BLOOD WOOD FOR ANY REASON, ALACHIA HAS DECREED THAT THE ELVEN COURT SHOULD HAVE LIMITED DEALINGS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
—MERROX

At the head of the Court is the Elven Queen. She holds ultimate power within the Court, and exerts considerable influence over elven folk outside Blood Wood who still owe her loyalty. The Elven Queen's first duty is to protect the Court, Blood Wood, and other forests across the world. Because its power and influence have eroded over the past several hundred years, the Court now finds it impossible to maintain its distance from the complicated politics of the world. If they are to survive, they must gain power by playing the same political games as every other realm.

The current Elven Queen, Alachia, has involved the Court in intrigues throughout Barsaive. Thus far, her attempts are marred by the Court's lack of experience in the affairs of other races. In centuries past, the Elven Queen and the elves of Blood Wood could command instant respect and awe; but few in Barsaive feel the same reverence since the elves carried out their self-inflicted corruption. King Varulus III of Throal has made his antipathy toward the corrupted Court of Blood Wood quite apparent. Those who know anything about Blood Wood and its inhabitants speculate that many years will pass before the Queen successfully replaces her imperious directness with the silent, unseen maneuvering necessary in our time.

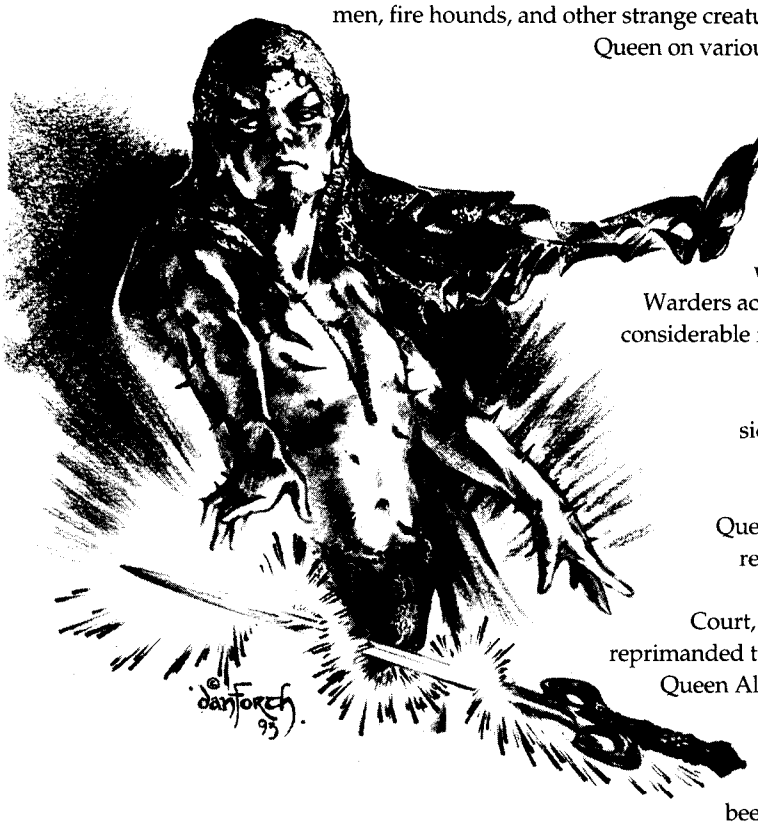
On the Position of Consortis

Queen Alachia appoints eight advisors and courtiers, called consortis, one for each of the massive trees that supports the palace. The Elven Queen often dismisses a consortis and then appoints a new one with little warning or apparent logic. Her whims have prompted her to dismiss and reappoint some members of the court several times. As might be expected from this description, the consortis wield little actual power, but on occasion may influence the Elven Queen. Though she usually surrounds herself only with those who support her own plans and ideas, and will dismiss a consortis for daring to speak his mind, her advisors have occasionally led her in unexpected directions. In addition to advising (and supporting) the Elven Queen, consortis often have their own concerns that may not be in accord with the greater concerns of the Court.



On the Position of Blood Warders

In the hierarchy of the Elven Court, the Court magicians are next in power to the Elven Queen and the consortis. Known as Blood Warders, the Court magicians continue to practice the twisted magics created during the Scourge. They create the thorn men, fire hounds, and other strange creatures that patrol Blood Wood. They advise the Elven Queen on various matters, and she listens carefully to their counsel. Though the Blood Warders often act independently of the Elven Queen's knowledge in the political sphere, the rest of the Court rarely protests their actions. The elves seem to have given the Blood Warders sole responsibility for keeping their perverse traditions alive, without practicing the traditions themselves. The Blood Warders accept this responsibility, knowing that it brings them considerable freedom to act.



For example, the Blood Warders recently procured the bones of dozens of skeletons from a graveyard outside an inhabited citadel in order to perform a certain experiment. Without asking the Queen's permission, the Blood Warders secured funds from the Queen's treasury and hired a band of adventurers to remove the bones from under the watchful eye of the graveyard's guards. Even for members of the Elven Court, grave-robbing is considered reprehensible, but no one reprimanded the Blood Warders for their dreadful deed. Despite Queen Alachia's apparent willingness to grant the Warders' a certain freedom, many observers believe that she is beginning to feel uneasy at her magicians' growing power. Few know precisely what the Warders have been up to and no one except Alachia would dare to ask.

On the Position of Exolashers

The exolashers are the Elven Queen's personal guard, adepts in martial magics. Fiercely loyal to the Queen, they will gladly die upon her command.

ON RELATIONS WITH OTHER ELVES AND RACES

At this writing, the Elven Court's relations with elves outside Blood Wood remain strained. The blood elves' self-inflicted corruption gives other elves pause, and the Court's strange pride in its tainted condition only increases the suspicion felt by elves not of Blood Wood. The Court frequently sends emissaries from Blood Wood to meet with other elves, whom the Elven Queen considers "lost" members of her Court, in hopes of persuading these elven communities to renew their old loyalty to the Elven Queen. On rare occasions an elf from outside returns to Blood Wood and submits him or herself to the Ritual of the Thorns. The magic of the Blood Warders corrupts these elves in the same way that all inhabitants of Blood Wood have been corrupted.

As for relations with other races and powers, the Queen has publicly decreed that the Court will undertake dealings with non-elves only when absolutely necessary. Of course, in a place such as the Elven Court, full of elves who breathe intrigue as other races breathe air, the word "necessary" has many definitions. According to one particularly interesting report, certain factions among the Blood Warders seek alliance with other realms, but must work covertly for fear of the Queen's wrath. She has, on occasion, been known to slay those who dare oppose her too openly. One rumor speaks of a nameless Blood Warder who even engaged in secret correspondence with the Theran Empire.

OF THE THERAN EMPIRE

Because the enmity between the Kingdom of Throal and the Theran Empire is so much a part of the history of our land, I decided that the same librarian should compile both sections. Therefore, I have set down all that we know of the Theran Empire. I have never visited Thera, though I have heard of its wonders from Therans who have been here to Barsaive and from the records kept safely in Throal and other kaers during the Scourge.
—Written on the Eighth Day of Gahmil, 1505 TH, by Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

—From the second Theran Proclamation

The Long Night has ended. The Theran Empire has survived. Her people and subject lands are united once again. As of this day, Theran rule and guidance is restored to her province of Barsaive. Governors and administrators will arrive within the week to re-establish Theran laws and customs throughout the province of Barsaive.

The passing of the Scourge has strained the glorious empire to its breaking point. It is therefore declared that all villages, towns, and cities within Barsaive prepare to make all their public and private records available to the representatives of the empire within a fortnight. After reviewing these records, the representatives will cipher the tithe of services, chattel, and people that each community owes to Thera for the period starting from the sealing of Thera to the present day.

The Long Night is past. The sun that is Thera has risen.

OF PRIDEFUL THERA AND BARSAIVE

The heart of the Theran Empire is the city of Thera, which sits on an island in the center of the Selestrean Sea to the south and west of Barsaive. Before the Scourge, Thera was the capital of a great empire that ruled all the known world. The First Theran Empire was a place of magic, power, and knowledge beyond that of other realms; it was also a place of arrogance and evil. Since the end of the Scourge, Thera has served as the capital of a second empire with all the same traits as the first.

According to our records, a group of magicians founded Thera centuries ago, when they foresaw the coming of the Horrors and wished to discover a way to stop them. When they realized it would be impossible to forestall the Scourge, they sought a way to protect the world from the Horrors. Their magical studies produced the Rites of Protection and Passage, the means to build shelters against the Horrors. Knowing the value of this information, the arrogant Therans demanded favorable trade agreements, oaths of allegiance, and sometimes slaves in exchange.

At one time, Theran influence extended across Barsaive and beyond. Indeed, many records indicate that the empire once covered a vast area radiating out from the island of Thera, uniting many lands through magical studies and trade. Despite their abominable practice of slavery, I would not be a responsible scholar if I did not grant that the Therans contributed some good to the world by creating a sense of world community. That little good, however, cannot outweigh the great evils they have wrought in our land.

I discuss the war in more detail in the section of this work titled How Barsaive came to be.
—Merrox

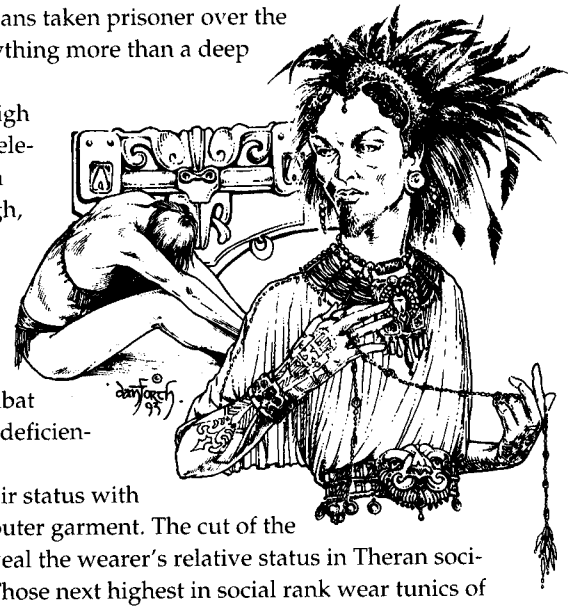
During the Scourge, Barsaive was completely cut off from Thera. For the first thirty years after the end of the Scourge, the dwarfs of Throal took advantage of the Therans' unexpected absence and worked to re-unite Barsaive under the freedom and justice of Throalic law. Throal outlawed slavery, and greatly reformed the legal system to offer justice to all throughout the province.

Almost fifty years ago the Therans returned to Barsaive, intending to become our overlords once more and demanding that we hand our lands and lives over to them. They had changed little, and none for the better. If anything, the time spent behind the magically protected walls of Thera seems to have made them even more vile and arrogant. As with the elves of Blood Wood, something seems to have twisted their souls during the Scourge.

As every Barsaivian knows, the prideful Therans did not get the cringing allegiance they expected from Barsaive. Our time in the kaers had affected us as well; no longer were we willing to bow to the Therans like slaves before a stern master. Led by Throal, Barsaive rejected Thera's demands, and this conflict of wills brought on the Theran War.

OF THE THERAN PEOPLE

Though our records clearly indicate that adepts and magicians of many races founded the city of Thera, most Therans of our day are of human or elven stock with strangely similar features. Though this might not seem unusual in a small kaer populated by a single race, one would expect the population of a city made up of students from across the Theran Empire to show greater diversity. How any population's features could take on such consistency remains a mystery, despite Throalic scholars' best efforts to explain it. Therans taken prisoner over the years refuse to speak of it. Neither do magical probings elicit anything more than a deep sense of guilt and shame.



Features common to many Therans include tall, thin bodies, high foreheads, and prominent cheekbones. Their bodies have a lean elegance, especially in the fingers and limbs. Skin color ranges from bronze to dark brown, a result of the southern sun. Oddly enough, many Therans appear physically weak, perhaps because their home city is so rich in magic that they need do little with their own muscle and bone. One exception to this phenomenon of course, is the Theran soldier. These individuals have the strength of any human or elf of Barsaive, and fight fiercely in battle. The Theran study of magic does not lack for either combat spells or adepts who can use magic to make up for any physical deficiencies while also wielding a sword.

Social rank holds great importance for Therans, who mark their status with their clothing. Everyday garb consists of a tunic, a sort of loose outer garment. The cut of the garment, the material from which it is made, and its color all reveal the wearer's relative status in Theran society. The most prominent members of their culture wear white. Those next highest in social rank wear tunics of metallic colors such as gold and silver, sometimes with real gold and silver woven into the fabric. Ordinary citizens wear colored tunics, most often blues, greens and reds. Slaves wear black tunics, the opposite of the exalted white.

A DISCOURSE ON THERAN GOVERNANCE

The Empire of Thera traces its history back to the founding of the city of Nehr'esham, the "center of the mind." The history of the city remains rooted in the history of the School of Shadows, founded to study magic and interpret the Books of Harrow that prophesied the coming of the Horrors. The empire displays its roots in the form of its government and social ranks, but it has grown larger and more powerful than its founders ever imagined. The city of Thera, and indeed the entire Theran Empire, has become a sprawling bureaucracy almost beyond its rulers' control.

Officials within the Theran military and government may sponsor new recruits to the Theran civil service to fill vacant positions. This sponsorship system discourages officials from practicing ill-considered favoritism in office; the sponsoring official must answer for the conduct of his or her appointees throughout that appointee's career. When an incompetent member of the bureaucracy falls from grace, he is likely to take his sponsor with him, no matter how long or illustrious the sponsor's service.

All appointees must undergo well-regulated examinations. The exams test the subject's knowledge of magical theory, specific magical skills (for magicians or adepts, respectively), political theory, practical applications of government policies, history of the Empire, and knowledge of Theran arts and literary classics. These examinations continue throughout the bureaucrat's career, determining how swiftly he advances and for how long he retains each position.

According to Theran records, the system works well, generally ensuring deserved promotions and carefully chosen appointments. The system does, nevertheless, occasionally force unlucky officials to take desperate measures in last-ditch attempts to save face. For example, the late Theran Overgovernor Povelis committed his forces to a suicidal and wasteful siege of the Kingdom of Throal in an attempt to bolster his flagging prestige during the Theran War. His assistant Tularch, who briefly succeeded Povelis as Overgovernor after that worthy's suicide, was demoted to provincial admiral. Only Tularch's close friendship with the new Overgovernor, Kypros, saved her from utter disgrace, and every action she takes is directed toward redeeming her standing within Theran society.

Those administrators and officials of the empire who successfully achieve high status through the examination system tend toward insufferable arrogance. Because they have passed the most stringent tests their society can devise, and because they believe their society superior to all others, they naturally believe that they are better than anyone else they might meet. Even when captured by enemies, they speak and act with a self-confidence more befitting a master of slaves than a prisoner. In fact, this arrogance has led them to enslave other races. Certainly, their prosperity depends on slave labor, but they also sincerely believe that other societies produce nothing better than slave stock fit to be driven to death so that Therans might live well.

THE THERANS DO NOT SUPPORT SLAVERY SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE "EVIL" OR HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO. THE PRACTICE COMES FROM THEIR LONG-HELD BELIEFS IN THEIR OWN SUPERIORITY.
—MERROX

OF THE THERAN PRESENCE IN BARSAIVE

Theran forces in Barsaive are controlled by Overgovernor Kypros. Kypros holds court from his personal kila, the *Ascendancy*, which is usually docked at Sky Point or the city of Vivane. Kypros regularly flies over the southwest section of the province to keep his Barsaivian allies in line and strike fear into the hearts of those who dare resist him.

From observation and the reports of escaped slaves, we know a little about the *Ascendancy*. The vessel is shaped like a square, two hundred feet to a side. At each corner stands a circular, fifty-foot-tall tower. The towers widen at the base, and this splayed plinth makes battering down the walls a difficult task. The ship carries 170 sailors and 300 Theran soldiers. One out of every ten soldiers is an adept in a Discipline of martial combat. The *Ascendancy* carries approximately 200 close combat warriors and 100 archers and crossbowmen.

The walls of the kila enclose the *Ascendancy*'s Great Tower, which stands almost 70 feet tall and nearly 50 feet across. The walls are eight feet thick, and support a spiral staircase built into the side facing the kila's courtyard. The first floor of the Great Tower is the great hall, which contains a cooking hearth and serves as Kypros' council chamber and feast hall. Kypros' quarters—a hall furnished with tables and chairs, a master bedroom, and a library—occupy the second floor. The stairway continues to a third floor, and from there to the roof. We do not yet know what the third floor contains, though rumors claim it is an elaborate shrine to the Mad Passion Dis. Slaves taken to the third floor never return, leading us to suspect that the Therans practice live sacrifice even though the Passions forbade such barbaric offerings generations ago.

THE THERAN AIRSHIP FLEET

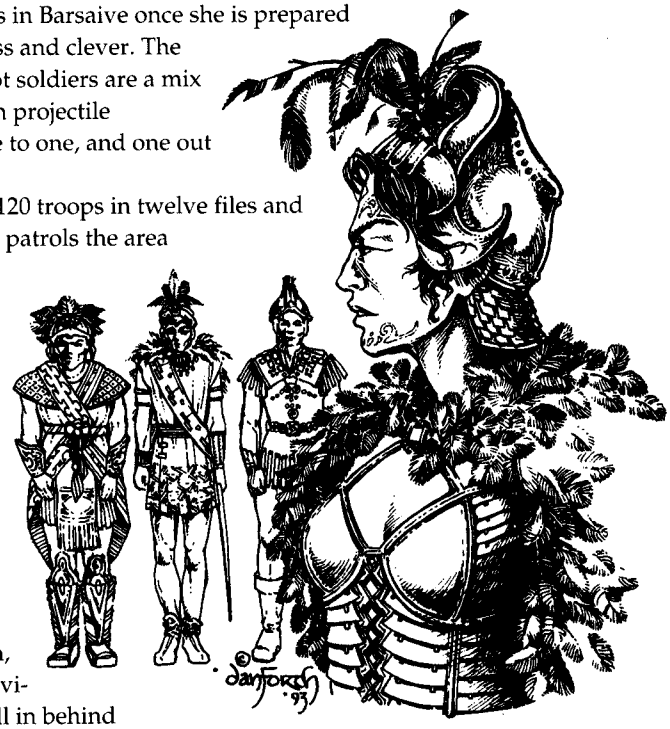
Two additional kila patrol within the borders of Barsaive, The *Prestige* and the *Regal*, both commanded by Provincial Admiral Tularch, the former Overgovernor of Barsaive. the *Prestige* is a circular kila, 120 feet across with five towers built into the ship's wall. One of the towers serves as the great hall and Tularch's personal chambers. The *Regal* is a triangular kila, smaller than the *Prestige*, with a tower at each corner.

Tularch also commands a dozen vedettes outfitted for combat and another dozen outfitted for mining. The admiral enjoys complete freedom to use the fleet as she wishes, but must report all maneuvers to Kypros. The Overgovernor has yet to reject any of Tularch's plans, but escaped slaves have reported that Kypros is simply waiting for Tularch to make some dreadful blunder. When she does, Kypros will send Tularch back to Thera and establish his favorite political apprentice, Hychraius, as the new

provincial admiral. If the reports are true, it would seem that the friendship between Tularch and Kypros has not worn well.

OF THERAN MILITARY FORCES

The Theran Empire maintains a substantial military presence in Barsaive, though one insufficient to launch an effective strike against Throal. Theran soldiers in Barsaive consist of the Eighth Theran Legion, under the command of General Crotias. A veteran of several campaigns in the south of the Theran Empire, Crotias arrived in Barsaive recently, in the year 1504 TH. As of this writing, the general is still reorganizing the legion and installing her trusted officers in key positions. We cannot know for certain how her presence will affect matters in Barsaive once she is prepared to give it her full attention, but she is rumored to be both ruthless and clever. The Eighth Legion consists of 4,200 soldiers and 700 cavalry. The foot soldiers are a mix of heavy infantry for close combat and light infantry armed with projectile weapons. The heavy infantry outnumber the light infantry three to one, and one out of every ten soldiers is an adept in martial combat.



Within the legion are units called divisions, each made up of 120 troops in twelve files and ten ranks. A single division usually handles garrison duties and patrols the area around Sky Point.

The legion is also divided into larger units called cohorts. Four divisions form a cohort, numbering 480 soldiers. When a great battle is planned, all the divisions combine into cohorts, and the cohorts combine into a legion of 4,200 troops. Outside of such large-scale battles, cohorts often receive orders to engage in smaller skirmishes on their own. The commander of a division is called a strategos, the commander of a cohort a pole march, and the commander of the legion is General Crotias.

When combined into its full force, the Eighth Legion is arranged as follows:

Twenty divisions draw up into two lines of ten divisions each, composed of heavy infantry. A space of 60 feet, equal to each division's width, separates the units. The units of the second line fall in behind the spaces of the first line, allowing the second line to easily advance to the first or the first to fall back to the second. This arrangement gives the troops extra mobility when marching in two lines and solidarity when they combine to fight. The combined 20 divisions have a depth of ten ranks and a front line of 1,200 feet. Certainly a formidable foe to meet on the battlefield!

Completing the Legion is a third line of ten units of light foot soldiers, alternated with ten units of reserve troops. Each light foot unit numbers 120, and each reserve unit numbers sixty.

On paper, General Crotias also commands the soldiers posted to Admiral Tularch's ships in addition to the soldiers of the legion. However, an unspoken rule gives ship's officers the power of command in combat, meaning that the Admiral commands her own soldiers in practice. So far the general seems content to let this interpretation stand.

OF BARSAIVIAN LANDS UNDER THERAN CONTROL

Though the Theran Empire once ruled all of Barsaive, in our time Thera controls little Barsaivian land. The region currently under the control of Thera lies in the southwest of Barsaive, extending north to the Delaris Mountains, east to Death's Sea, and touches the edge of the Twilight Peaks.

Every town and city in this area of Barsaive has Theran representatives and administrators living within its boundaries. These official representatives of the Theran Empire often receive a small contingent of soldiers to be stationed in the town, usually numbering from five to fifty troops.

The largest city in the Theran-controlled area of Barsaive is Vivane, which lies completely under the empire's thumb. Though this city has a Barsaivian native loyal to Thera as its nominal leader, it is commonly understood that this Barsaivian magistrate is nothing more than a puppet controlled by Overgovernor Kypros. Clearly visible from the military base at Sky Point, Vivane is the Theran playground, and many Therans regard it as their new provincial capital. For more information concerning Vivane, see the section of this book titled On Towns and Cities.

—From a letter by Adrak Erraom, liquid jewel merchant of Vivane, TE 1008

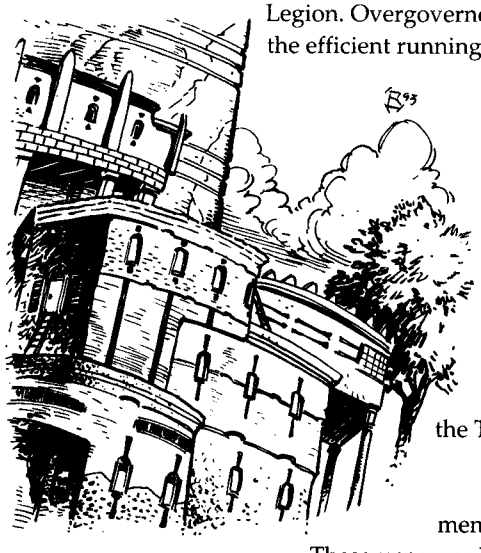
You ask me what it is to live under Theran rule? By your words its sounds as if you expect me to horrify you with tales of terrible perversions, of public slaughter, of arrogance, treachery and oppression. It is not so.

Yes, the Therans can be harsh masters. As I write this to you, I sit in the shadow of the Overgovernor's airship Ascendancy, which is once again docked at the Basalt Spire. It is here as a warning that the riots in the Broken Quarter must stop. Tonight, Theran guardsmen will bring that warning down into the streets, dealing with lawbreakers most harshly. But if a man breaks the law, should he not be punished?

Vivane is quiet, my friend. More quiet now than before the Therans returned. Yes, days and nights of fire and blood nearly consumed the city before the people recognized the truth before them. But I, for one, am pleased they are here. I feel safe. For as long as they remain, no Horror would dare come here, nor would any ork scorcher or raider. I feel safe, too, from the thieves that once peered in my windows at night, lusting after my wares and my children. The Therans have made Vivane safe for myself and my daughters. What more can I ask?

Sky Point

Sky Point, the Theran military stronghold within Barsaive's borders, is a huge platform elevated hundreds of feet above the ground by thick stone pillars; it serves as the base for the Theran airship fleet as well as the home of the Eighth Theran Legion. Overgovernor Kypros rules Sky Point through a group of Theran functionaries who see to the efficient running of the base.



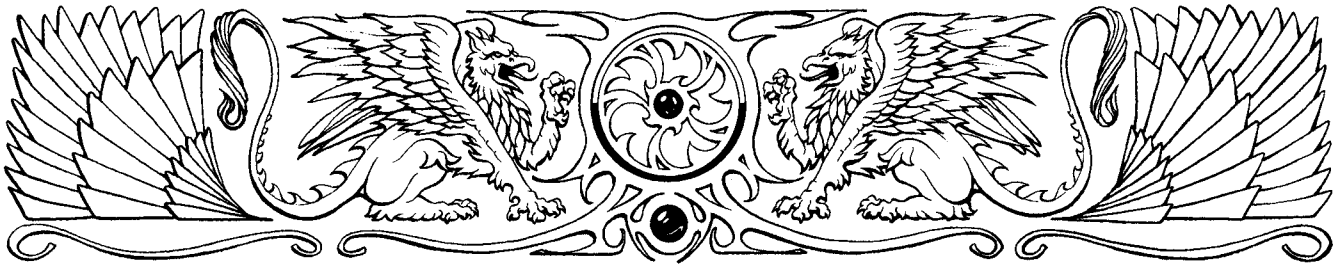
One can only reach the platform by airship or through spells or magical items designed to levitate people or objects through the air. No stairs or other mechanical means provide access to Sky Point, which makes the platform safe from most attackers. Each of the pillars is 300 feet thick and built to sustain a great deal of damage without breaking.

At all hours of the day and night Theran mining ships, crewed by slaves, float off the platform to search for elemental air. The Therans use bursts of elemental fire to breach the barriers between planes and reveal pockets of the precious material. These mining bursts can sometimes be seen as far north as Throal, and serve as a constant reminder of the Theran presence. The mining ships are a common target for the crystal raiders, and the Therans exert serious efforts to keeping their mining operations safe from raiders and saboteurs.

Under the shadow of the Sky Point platform lies Vrontok, a settlement comprised mostly of humans who have thrown in their lot with the Therans. These unscrupulous people range all over Barsaive, capturing other sentient beings to sell to the Therans as slaves in exchange for Theran protection and certain magical items.

The settlement numbers some 20,000 inhabitants. Its dwellings huddle around two of the platform's pillars; many of them are built against the pillars themselves, rising on top of each other like moss climbing up a tree. Of course, these dwellings do not reach high enough to allow access to the platform.

Sky Point and Vrontok are surrounded by a series of trenches and pickets to foil attack from the ground. Several drawbridges allow access to the land beneath the platform, each heavily guarded. Units of the Eighth Theran Legion live in camps beneath the platform, where the troops conduct maneuvers designed to repulse any invasion by land.



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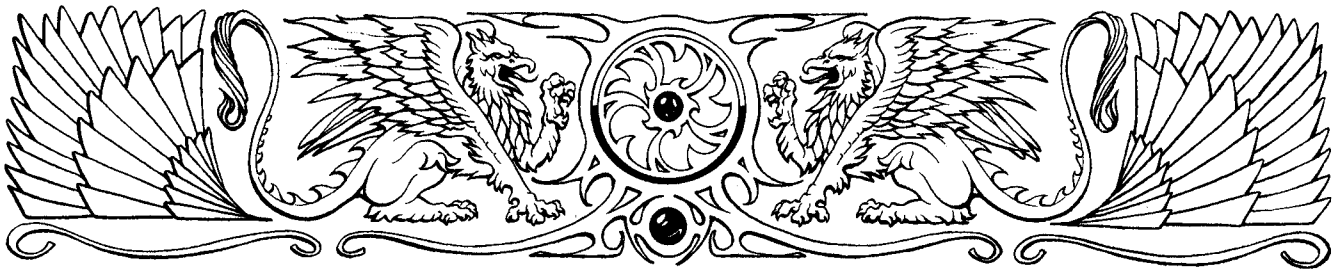

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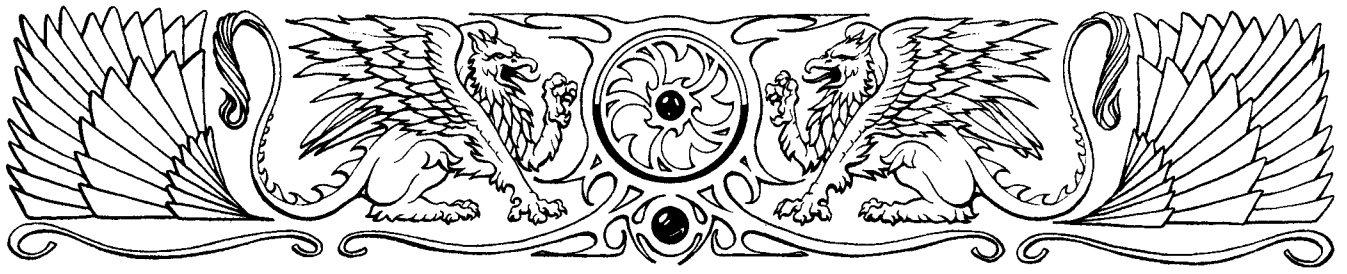

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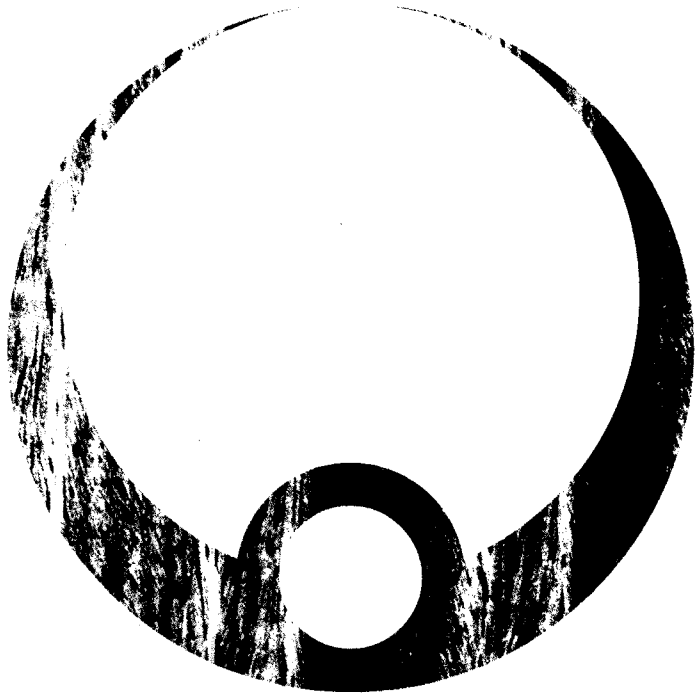
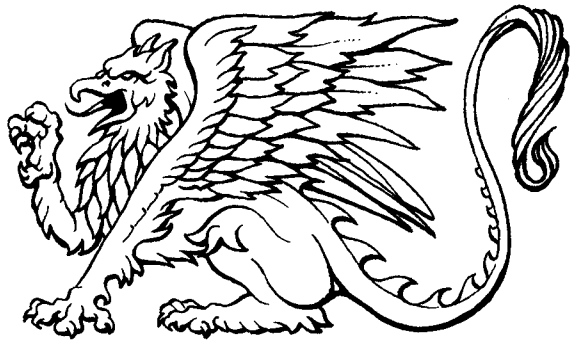


MERROX

MASTER OF THE HALL OF RECORDS

The Barsaive Gamemaster Book



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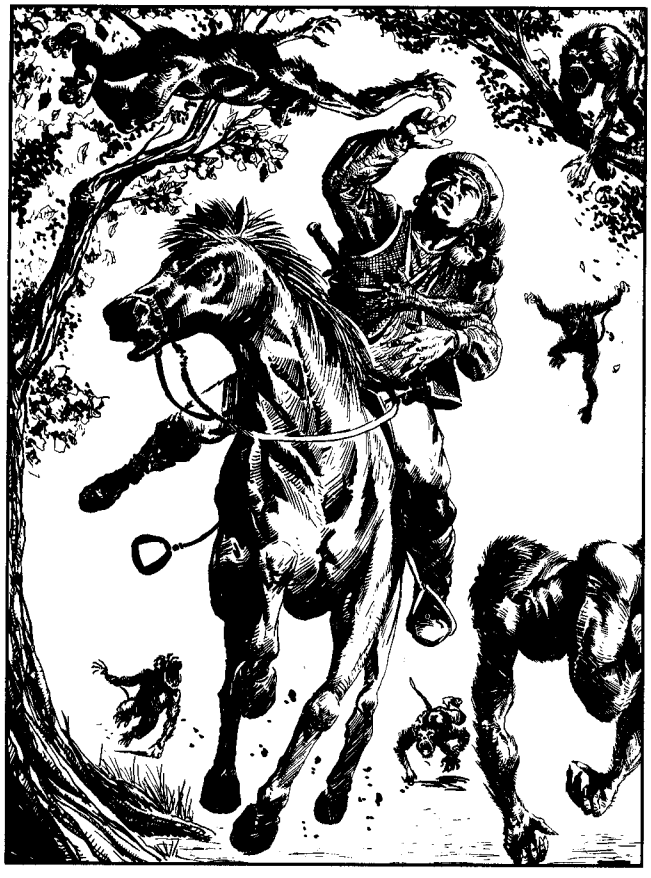

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INTRODUCTION

Barsaive is rich in legend, folklore, and tall tales. But to discover which is truth and which is fiction—that is the challenge.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, advising the librarians of Throal of the dangers inherent in creating the Explorer's Guide to Barsaive

The **Barsaive Campaign Set** provides the backdrop for the stories and tales of adventure told in the **Earthdawn** roleplaying game and its supplemental products. To use this campaign set, gamemasters and players will need a copy of the **Earthdawn** rules. They will also find the **Gamemastering Earthdawn** book included in the **Earthdawn Gamemaster Pack** useful, but not required, to use this product.

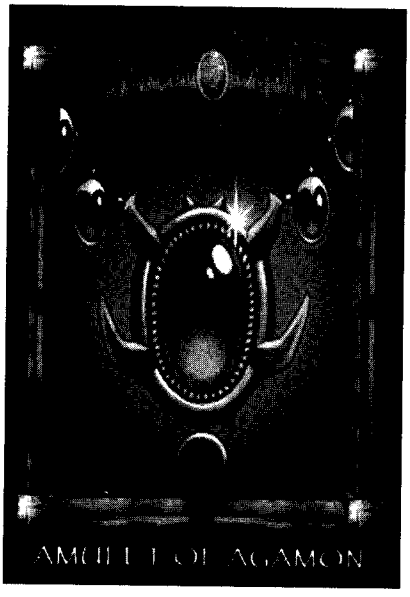
COMPONENTS

The **Barsaive Campaign Set** includes the following components. Players should check the contents of the package against the following list to be sure all components are present.

An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive (sourcebook)
Gamemaster's Book
36 full-color Treasure/Creature Cards
Map of Barsaive
Shantaya's Sextant

AN EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BARSAIVE

This book serves as a guide to the province of Barsaive. Compiled by the librarians of the Kingdom of Throal, it provides an overall view of Barsaive for both players and gamemasters, including information about Barsaive's cities and towns, the creatures and Name-givers that inhabit the province, the Scourge and its effects on Barsaive, Blood Wood, the Theran Empire, landmarks and geography, and so on.



GAMEMASTER'S BOOK

This introduction is part of the **Gamemaster's Book**, which provides information for the gamemaster's eyes only. Included in it are detailed descriptions of certain important people in Barsaive, seven new magical treasures, eight additional creatures, and in-depth information on secret societies operating in Barsaive. The book also features a number of Barsaive legends, each followed by adventure ideas and suggestions for incorporating these stories into campaigns.

TREASURE/CREATURE CARDS

The 36 treasure/creature cards included in this set feature full-color illustrations of some of the treasures and creatures to be found in Barsaive. The 18 treasure cards that originally appeared in the **Earthdawn** rulebook have been reprinted on sturdier cards. The remaining cards feature the seven new treasures presented in this book and 11 commonly encountered creatures, including some appearing for the first time in this product. For information on using the treasure cards, see **Earthdawn,** p. 273. On the reverse side of each creature card is a handy reference to the information and statistics needed to play the creature in the game.

MAP OF BARSAIVE

The map of Barsaive included with this campaign set is a larger, expanded version of the travelers and explorers' map published in the **Earthdawn** rulebook. The map indicates all the most important cities and landmarks, but also leaves extensive regions totally unexplored. The map has been marked for use with **Shantaya's Sextant** (see below).

SHANTAYA'S SEXTANT

Shantaya's sextant consists of two die-cut cardboard pieces, a direction finder and a distance finder. These are the primary navigational tools of travelers in Barsaive. Instructions for how to use the sextant appear in the **Gamemaster Notes** section of this book. The gamemaster can use the map and Shantaya's sextant to create travel directions from various points in Barsaive to abandoned kaers and other sites of adventure.

HOW TO USE THIS PRODUCT

The **Barsaive Campaign Set** provides a wealth of information about Barsaive and its people. This product was designed to supply enough facts and legends about the land of Barsaive, both past and present, and its inhabitants to give the gamemaster a firm grasp of the world of **Earthdawn**, yet leave enough unanswered questions that the gamemaster has plenty of opportunity to improvise. To best use this product, the gamemaster will want to familiarize himself with **An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive**, then read the **Gamemaster's Book** closely to obtain the details on various treasures, creatures, people, and legends mentioned in the **Explorer's Guide**.

The information in this product was developed to aid gamemasters in creating adventures and campaigns of their own. Gamemasters may find it useful to review the the sections on gamemastering and on creating and running adventures and campaigns in the **Earthdawn** rulebook and in **Gamemastering Earthdawn**.

We expect the **Earthdawn** universe to be dynamic, changing with every adventure your player characters survive and every new interpretation you find for a rumor or legend. FASA also expects the **Earthdawn** universe to continually evolve as we explore its potential. Together, our efforts will create a world of great heroes, wondrous tales, and fantastic adventures.

GAMEMASTER NOTES

All of life is but a game, and we are merely players.
Of course, some of us never quite get the rules straight.
—Trebor of Asaf

This section provides game information for various topics discussed in **An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive,** including directions for using Shantaya's sextant, population figures, a price guide for Barsaive's several standards of living, and specifics on t'skrang trade goods. Each topic refers to the **Explorer's Guide** section in which the general information on that subject appears.

POPULATION

This section provides estimates for both the general and area-specific racial composition of Barsaive. These numbers do not describe the total population, which remains uncounted since the Scourge. This section shows Barsaive's total population distribution, the distribution of each racial population in the province's three major geographic areas, and the breakdown of population in each geographic area. For a general description of Barsaive's population, see **On Denizens of Barsaive,** p. 50 in **An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive.**

The following tables show racial distribution across Barsaive by geographic region, as well as the racial breakdown of the population in each area. For example, the Racial Distribution Table shows that 50 percent of all dwarfs in Barsaive live in Throal; the Racial Composition Table shows that dwarfs make up only 43 percent of Throal's total population.

SHANTAYA'S SEXTANT

Mapmakers in Barsaive use a tried and true method to create and give directions to various places and points of interest in the province. This method is based on a device known as Shantaya's sextant, a two-part mechanical apparatus to be used with appropriately marked maps, both invented by an adventurer named Shantaya Nightstar. The sextant consists of the astrolobe (direction finder) and the rod (distance finder).

Eight directions are marked at irregular intervals around the perimeter of the astrolobe. Each interval between the directions is larger than the previous one. The user centers the astrolobe on his location, then aligns one or more of the eight directions with landmarks to determine the direction of travel to his intended destination.

The rod is a long, rectangular piece of thin metal marked along both edges. These marks indicate, according to the scale of Shantaya's maps, the distance to various destinations in days walking and riding. The center of the rectangle is cut out to serve as a frame for the destination.

Shantaya's maps are drawn to a specific scale, then refined by the addition of a series of concentric circles, centered on the Kingdom of Throal, that represents distances from Throal in increments of 10-11 days' walking. These circles help travelers judge distances with a quick glance at the map. The second set of marks that distinguishes Shantaya's maps from others is twelve straight lines originating at Throal that divide the map into twelve wedges. A representation of one of the Passions and a star group associated with that Passion appears in each wedge and serves as a navigation point for travelers who know their directions but do not have a map. Travelers can judge their course more precisely by journeying toward a Passion star-group at one of three phases of the day; sundown, midnight, and sunrise.

As becomes obvious in the following examples, adventurers who possess maps do not need the sextant to travel between known places. The sextant is really designed to find places that do not appear on maps and to help Throalic archivists and mapmakers to reconstruct a group's journey and pinpoint their discoveries. For more information on how player characters use the sextant, see **A Discourse on Maps,** p. 40 in the **Travel** section in the **Explorer's Guide.**

ESTIMATED RACIAL COMPOSITION

Race	Percent of Total Population
Dwarf	32
Ork	19
Human	16
Troll	13
Elf	10
T'skrang	8
Obsidiman	1
Windling	1

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION TABLE

	Percent of Total Population (by Region)		
Race	**Throal**	**Lowlands**	**Highlands**
Dwarf	50	35	15
Ork	40	55	5
Human	20	65	15
Troll	10	40	50
Elf	22	75	Less than 1
T'skrang	20	80	Less than 1
Obsidiman	Less than 1	50	50
Windling	25	60	15

RACIAL COMPOSITION TABLE

Race	Throal	Percent of Regional Population Lowlands	Highlands
Dwarf	43	20	26
Ork	22	22	8
Human	10	18	10
Troll	11	9	36
Elf	8	16	5
T'skrang	5	11	5
Obsidiman	Less than 1	2	5
Windling	1	2	5

When used by adventurers in Barsaive, Shantaya's sextant takes on magical qualities that allow travelers to find their way through the province with the help of the Passions and, if one is available, a map. The sextant is slightly more mundane when used by gamemasters to place a village, citadel, or kaer on the map or to provide directions for the player characters. The following information describes how travel information will appear for the gamemaster in future products. The gamemaster may translate those directions for the heroes in his game in any way he or she wishes. The directions for using the sextant appear in a standardized format, as shown below.

Center Sextant On: XX
Align: XX **with:** XX
Sight Along Point: XX
Follow: XX (Passion) **at:** (Sundown, Midnight, or Sunrise)
Days Travel: XX walking, XX riding

Each element of these directions is explained below. Gamemasters creating travel instructions for use with Shantaya's sextant should use the following five steps.

1. Center the sextant.
2. Align the sextant to a landmark.
3. Determine the direction of travel.
4. Determine the appropriate phase of the Passions.
5. Note distance to destination per travel style.

1. Center the Sextant

To center the sextant, find your current location on the map and place the hole in the sextant over your position. In the directions above, this step is noted as **Center Sextant On:** XX.

2. Align the Sextant to a Landmark

Once the sextant is centered, align one of the symbols on its edge with one of the main landmarks on the map. The landmarks most often used are Throal, Sky Point, Death's Sea, the Dragon Mountains, Urupa, Parlainth, the Elf Queen's Palace, Iopos, and Jerris. In the directions above, this step is noted as **Align:** XX **with:** XX.

3. Determine the Direction of Travel

After aligning the sextant to a landmark, find the direction of travel by locating the point on the sextant's rim given in **Sight Along Point:** XX. This step indicates which Passion star-group the traveler will follow.

4. Determine the Appropriate Phase of the Passion

After determining the desired direction of travel, determine the phase of the Passion that lies on the most direct route to the destination. The star group that represents the Passion moves across the sky during the night from left to right. Its path can be divided into three phases, sundown, midnight, and sunrise. The sundown phase is farthest left, midnight is in the center, and sunrise is farthest right.

The phase in the directions indicates when during the night to look to the horizon for the Passion star-group being followed.

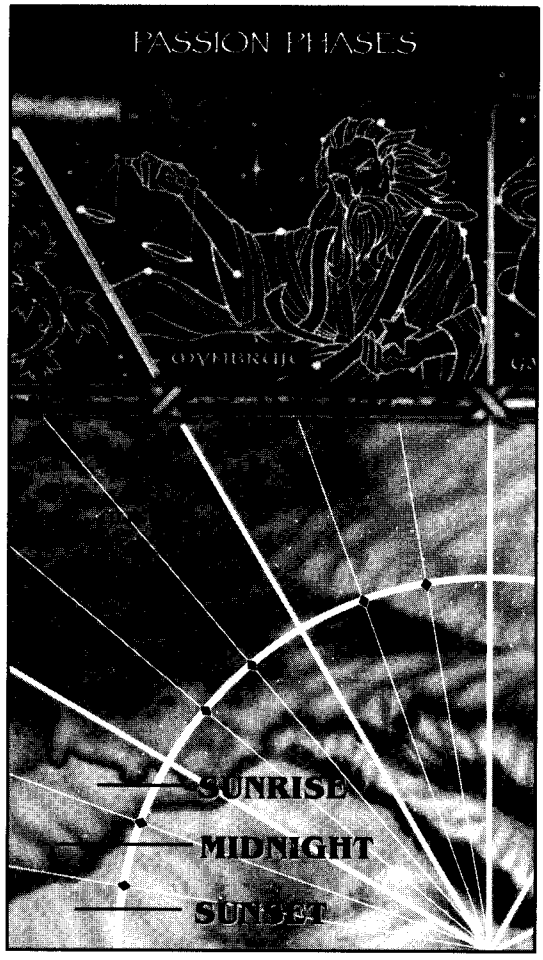
For example, a traveler journeying toward Jaspree in the sunrise phase would look to the horizon just before sunrise to verify his or her direction.

Most travelers check their bearings each night to make sure that they stay on course. The directions above note this step as **Follow:** XX (Passion) **at:** (Sundown, Midnight, or Sunrise).

5. Note Distance to Destination Per Travel Style

Use the rod to determine how long the journey to the destination will take. Place the notched end of the rod on your current position and align it in the direction determined by the previous steps. The closest mark to the destination provides the approximate number of days walking or days riding required to reach the destination. This is noted in the directions as **Days Travel:** XX.

Use the following examples to become familiar with the technique of using Shantaya's sextant and maps, then use the steps above to create directions to new destinations.



To travel from Kratas to Iopos:
Center Sextant On: Kratas
Align: ξ **with:** Urupa
Sight Along Point: δ
Follow: Lochost **at** Sunrise
Days Travel: 30 walking, 18 riding

To find the Forgotten City of Parlainth from Travar:
Center Sextant On: Travar
Align: ψ **with:** Jerris
Sight Along Point: ϑ
Follow: Astendar **at** Sunrise
Days Travel: 38 days walking, 23 riding

STANDARDS OF LIVING

Barsaivian standards of living fall into four distinct categories: squalid, poor, comfortable, and wealthy.

Those who live in squalid conditions make their homes in barns, stables, or mud huts erected outside the walls of towns. Desperate, fearful, and angry at the shocking deprivation of their lives, they often resort to acts of violence simply to survive. People living in squalor lack the means to protect themselves, have no standing in law, and are considered outside the bounds of society. Slavers target these people more often than any other group. Though a few people live in conditions of squalor near villages and towns, most of these poorest of the poor live outside large cities where community ties are weaker and no one knows or cares for their fate.

A poor standard of living raises people above squalor, if only a little. Though the poor live hand-to-mouth, most can scrape together enough coin to rent living space in a sturdier, wooden hut or a room in a run-down boarding house. Surrounded by the violence of those less fortunate even than themselves, poor thieves often rob other people in a desperate attempt to better their condition. In general, law enforcement and lack of opportunity keep the poor downtrodden and constantly afraid of slipping into squalor.

For the most part, the law protects those who enjoy a comfortable standard of living. Though their possessions and money may make them targets of thieves, they have legal recourse to recover their property or receive compensation, and they rarely trouble themselves about the source of their next meal or where they will lay their heads. For these people, life moves along without incident unless adventure finds them.

Wealthy people live well, residing in large and splendid houses, wearing costly garments, and wielding considerable power and influence in their communities. Because they have the most to lose, the wealthy run all governments, from the village elders to the city councils. Though some genuinely care for the welfare of all, most spend their time protecting their power and wealth from other wealthy citizens who desire more riches and influence.

The general per-month expenditures of each standard of living are given in the table on page 11. Note that adepts who reach comfortable or wealthy standards of living tend to spend more money as they increase in the Circles of their Discipline. As adepts become more powerful, they generally accumulate more wealth and spend more money to maintain the lifestyle to which they become accustomed.

The currency listed in the table represents the approximate value of whatever a person at each standard of living spends, trades, or barters. For example, a poor farmer may never actually use coins in his daily life, but may trade 20 silver pieces worth of grain each month.

T'SKRANG TRADE GOODS

Though many races offer unique goods for trade, the t'skrang trade several items that remain in constant high demand: fish, certain spices, and novelties.

FISH

The t'skrang perserve and sell three grades of fish. The special ingredients and secret magical method they use to prepare this delicacy gives the fish a unique, delicious taste that only they can produce, thus creating a constant demand for their product.

The tastiest, most expensive, and longest-lasting fish, Grade A, takes two months to prepare. Also high quality but slightly less hardy, Grade B takes one month to prepare. Grade C fish spoils quickest and takes two weeks to prepare. The t'skrang also sell fresh fish to inhabitants along the Serpent River for one-half the Grade C price. Each grade of fish remains edible for as long as it took to prepare; for example, Grade A fish lasts two months before it spoils. Fresh fish must be eaten almost immediately.

The longer it takes for a t'skrang village to prepare each grade of fish, the higher the chance becomes that the process will fail. If the magic fails to take hold as they preserve the fish, the decay of the preceding weeks immediately sets in and the food becomes inedible. Because it takes the longest to prepare, Grade A fish has the highest rate of failure. Grade B is slightly easier to produce; Grade C is commonly available.

The t'skrang normally sell their fish for the prices per barrel listed below.

COST OF LIVING TABLE

Standard of Living	Expenditures per Month (in silver pieces)
Squalid	5
Poor	25
Comfortable	150/Circle
Wealthy	350/Circle

T'SKRANG FISH

Grade of Fish	Price per Barrel (in silver pieces)
A	500
B	200
C	100

SPICES

The t'skrang gather many unusual spices from locations passed down from generation to generation, processing their secret caches using secret methods. Three exotic spices, trikella, ustandar, and pestain, are in particular demand throughout Barsaive. The price per ounce listed below reflects the value of the spice.

NOVELTIES

T'skrang novelties come in many shapes and sizes, all skillfully and lovingly created by craftsmen who combine elemental water and earth with mundane wood, stone, and metals with delightful results. The well-known t'skrang affinity for pranks and theatrics puts their novelties in great demand, which they satisfy by producing a variety of goods too numerous to list. A fairly representative example includes small spheres made of water that swirl with different colors when shaken, small figurines that cry when held gently in the hand of a child, and stone rings that change color during the course of the day. The novelties range greatly in quality and price, usually running anywhere from 1 to 1,000 silver pieces each.

T'SKRANG SPICES

Spice	Price per Ounce (in silver pieces)
Trikella (a light green powder, often with silver sparkles)	20
Ustandar (red and coarse, like sand)	10
Pestain (small green leaves, finely chopped)	5

LEGENDS

There is truth in the adage that all legend springs from fact.
And finding the truth behind the legend is the true juice of life.
—Monus Byre, leader of the Seekers of the Heart

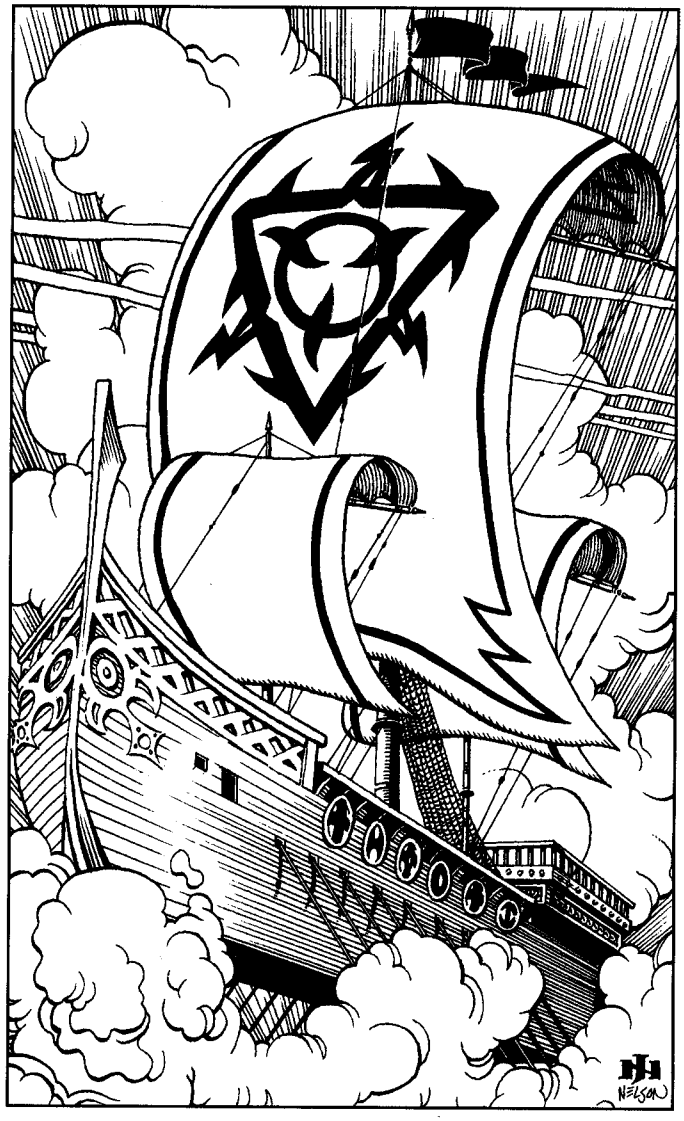
Legends unite the people of Barsaive with their past and point the way toward their future. Inspired by legends, the heroes of Barsaive fight to reclaim their world from the devastation of the Scourge and to free it from the remaining Horrors. These heroes, in turn, spawn the legends that will inspire Barsaive's future generations.

As the people of Barsaive strive to rebuild their lives outside the kaers, the lessons of the past teach the people of the present how to guard against and even overcome the hardships and dangers of their task. Many Barsaivian legends speak of dangers that still threaten the living; by uncovering the facts behind those legends, adventurers can learn not only what happened as the Horrors grew to engulf the world, but also how to root out these abominations and rid Barsaive of their dreadful legacy.

USING LEGENDS

The following text presents just a few of Barsaive's many legends, which the gamemaster may incorporate in adventures and campaigns. Each legend entry includes a section titled **Adventure Ideas**, which suggests specific ways the gamemaster may use the legend or elements of it. The gamemaster can present the legend to the players characters in various ways. For example, they may hear the legend from a troubadour during a stay in a small town or find it in the journal of another adventuring group as they investigate an abandoned kaer or citadel. Use whatever means fits your style of play. Some of the legends work better as background than as a central element in a campaign and are so noted.

The gamemaster decides the "truth" of each legend. Though the adventure ideas provided in the following pages assume that the legends are literally true, the gamemaster may decide otherwise. But even if he determines that some are complete fabrications or contain certain elements that are false, he can still use these legends to lead characters toward other adventures.



THE EARTHDAWN

In the first days after the end of the dark times known as the Scourge, King Varulus of Throal decreed that the bravest and boldest among his people should go forth and explore the land of Barsaive. After centuries of living in underground kaers and sealed citadels, the people hungered for the sight of the sun and the scent of the wind and many answered his call. Of the hundreds who ventured out into the Horror-ravaged countryside, however, not a single soul returned, until the day the troll sky raider Vaare Longfang came back to tell His Majesty that the Horrors were retreating to the hellish place that had spawned them. Longfang's courage and strength so impressed Varulus that he immediately ordered an airship made ready for her and commanded the raider to explore the length and breadth of Barsaive, documenting the world the Horrors had left and spreading the joyful news of the Scourge's passing to those still in hiding. Throal's finest mages gave the ship strong magic for defense against the Horrors that remained, and Varulus provided a crew of heroes fit for a grand adventure. To represent his hopes for the expedition, the king christened the ship the *Earthdawn*.

For a year and a day the *Earthdawn* sailed across Barsaive's skies, surveying the ravaged land and battling many perils. Though some Horrors lingered in places still thick with magic, Longfang and her crew found most of Barsaive free of the abominations. But these glad tidings fell on deaf ears, for though the *Earthdawn* landed at every kaer and citadel it encountered, all but two rejected their words. Fearful and unbelieving, the people refused to come out of their shelters.

When Longfang returned to Throal and told Varulus of the people's fears, he commanded her to set off once more, this time for the larger kingdoms of Barsaive. Varulus hoped that if Longfang could persuade the great kingdoms to open their doors, the example of the mighty would banish fear among all of Barsaive's people. And so the *Earthdawn* set sail once more, this time toward the human kingdom of Landis. The airship was never seen again. Though many believe Longfang and her valiant crew fell prey to the Horrors, the true fate of the *Earthdawn* remains a mystery to this day.

Occasionally, travelers in remote areas report seeing the airship slowly sailing through the Barsaivian sky. According to another tale, the "ghost ship" still carries invaluable maps of Barsaive drawn by Longfang's own hand.

Adventure Ideas

The abandoned *Earthdawn* may indeed still drift through the skies of Barsaive, appearing every so often near the Throal Mountains or the area once known as the kingdom of Landis. Her original crew, however, is likely long dead or perhaps trapped in another plane of existence.

Some unknown force—Horrors, questors of a Mad Passion, or even Theran spies may be guiding the *Earthdawn* now. And if Longfang's maps truly exist, such artifacts would be invaluable. Of course, any attempt to recover such artifacts would undoubtedly attract the attentions of any number of gamemaster characters—Therans, Horrors, elves, and the like.

THE ENDLESS STAIRWAY

During the time just before the Scourge, when Horrors walked the land but were not yet its masters, a great evil came to pass in the lands between the Serpent River and the Kingdom of Throal.

The dwarf weaponsmith Ginn Darrow, who lived in a small mountain village, fell under the power of a nameless Horror and went mad. In the grip of his madness he worshipped the abomination and built a temple to it as though it were a Passion. He preached that salvation from the approaching Scourge would only come to those who sacrificed their lives to the Horror by dying a bloody death or dedicating themselves forever to its dreadful service.

Those who believed Darrow's mad words traveled to the blasphemous temple in the Throal Mountains, then spread out to ravage nearby towns and villages. Those who did not flee were killed outright or brought back to be sacrificed on the Horror's unholy altar. In this way, Darrow and his followers helped speed the coming of the Horrors to Barsaive, confident their dread masters would spare their lives in gratitude.

The armies of Throal and Thera struck at these evildoers scant years before the Scourge began, killing many and driving the rest ever deeper into the Throal Mountains. Angered by their defeat and thirsting for revenge, the Horror-worshippers began to build the Endless Stairway, a set of steps to link the accursed temple in the mountain peaks to another hidden deep underground. From these two temples they intended to wreak vengeance on the Throalic and Theran armies by summoning the physical form of their patron Horror and so speeding the arrival of the Scourge.

Darrow and his disciples vanished during the Scourge. Some say the Horror took them into itself, while others claim the creature simply destroyed them. Still others say the account is no more than a tall story, but even today travelers who pass through the Throal Mountains tell tales of tribes who roam its isolated valleys, tribes that still worship the abomination and practice the forbidden rites. Some visitors even claim to have seen the Endless Stairway, ascending into the dark mists that surround the mountain peaks and winding its way deep into the black bowels of the earth. So far, no one has dared climb the length of the stairway, and the temples to the unknown Horror remain a mystery.

Adventure Ideas

The so-called Endless Stairway extends roughly ten miles from top to bottom, with countless blind twists and turns that make it extremely hazardous to traverse. To reach the stairway, characters first must scale some of the most forbidding peaks in all of Barsaive. Much of the stairway itself lies in dark mountain passes infested with griffins, espagra, jehuthras, and other foul creatures spawned by the unholy unions of Horrors and the local fauna.

Characters who survive these dangers and reach the end of the stairway may find a temple built on a large plateau just below the highest peaks of the Throal Mountains. Populate the temple with any foul folk you wish—descendants of the original cultists, a tribe of savage trolls, a sect devoted to one of the mad Passions. Any of these would be plausible.

The lower reaches of the staircase may contain even greater hazards. Extending far underground, the stairway leads through numerous subterranean dens occupied by various nasty creatures. Some tales even claim a dragon's lair lies beneath the Throal Mountains. The gamemaster may choose to have the stairs lead into this lair, or to someplace worse. According to legend, the bottom end of the stairway leads to the temple of the patron Horror. Though the abomination has no Name in any of the tales, scholars have linked it to an ancient cult known as Those of the Great Hunter. That cult's adherents served the Horror called Verjigorm, the Hunter of Great Dragons. And if Darrow's disciples had any connection to the worshippers of Verjigorm, only the mightiest heroes should consider a trip down the Endless Stairway.

THE EVERLIVING FLOWER

Hundreds of years before the Scourge, the finest artisans of the elven kingdom of Shosara crafted a beautiful treasure for Queen Failla of Wyrm Wood. From the rose gardens that once blossomed near the Queen's Palace in the wondrous Elven Court, the Shosaran elves took a single, perfect rose and enchanted it so that it would live forever. To protect it from all harm, they crafted a crystal box, weaving spells around it into a tapestry of magic that no one could break. They placed the beautiful rose inside the crystal box, sealed it shut and sent it to Wyrm Wood as a token of their undying love and loyalty to the Queen of all the world's elves.

Alas, the beautiful Everliving Flower never reached the Queen, mysteriously disappearing somewhere between Shosara and Wyrm Wood. For many years, those who knew of the wonderful treasure believed that the Therans had stolen it and enshrined it in their stronghold city of Parlainth. When the proud Theran capital of Barsaive vanished during the Scourge, many believed the wondrous, Everliving Flower lost along with the Forgotten City's other treasures.

Accounts of the Flower's rediscovery surface periodically. According to one such story, a band of adventurers found the Everliving Flower in the ruins of Parlainth not long ago and delivered it to the Elven Court. It is said by the Seekers of the Heart—elves who believe they can purify the corrupted Elven Court at Blood Wood—that the discovery of the sacred Flower heralds a momentous change for elvenkind. Other tales contend that a wound from the thorns of the rose brings everlasting life.

Adventure Ideas

Recently retrieved from the ruins of Parlainth by hirelings of a wizard named Hiermon, the Everliving Flower currently rests inside Queen Alachia's palace in Blood Wood. Some of these events are fully described in the **Earthdawn** adventure **Mists of Betrayal**.

If the gamemaster wishes to re-create the discovery of the Everliving Flower in detail, he may design an adventure in which the wizard Hiermon hires high-Circle characters to retrieve the artifact from Parlainth. Make the search as difficult a task as the player characters can cope with; the Therans who once possessed it considered the Flower one of Parlainth's most valuable treasures and protected it well enough so that it survived the Horrors' sacking of the Forgotten City. And any protection that can stand up to a Horror onslaught should pose quite a challenge for even the most talented and experienced adventurers.

The gamemaster might also design an adventure in which Monus Byre, leader of the Seekers of the Heart (see **Gamemaster Characters**, p. 20), hires the adventurers to verify the existence of the Everliving Flower. Such an adventure might take the characters to Haven in search of Hiermon the wizard, to Parlainth, or even to Blood Wood to view the Flower firsthand.

THE INVAE BURNINGS

Chorrolis is the Passion of wealth and trade, much venerated along the great trading routes and wealthy cities of the ancient kingdoms of Landis and Cara Fahd. Long ago, when the Scourge was but a dark rumor, one cult of his followers worshipped Chorrolis with greater fervor than any other in those lands. As they grew in number, their rivals in trade began to disappear. The dead bodies of some were found, others never appeared again. When the leaders of Landis and Cara Fahd at last began searching for the killers, they discovered the cult of Chorrolis had come under the sway of an evil, loathsome insect race called the Invae.

The Invae knew no mercy toward the people of Barsaive; they took captives and used them in bizarre, arcane rituals that transformed their captives into insects or summoned more of their cursed race from the black depths of astral space. No one knew how long the Invae had worked their evil will in Barsaive, nor how far their presence had spread.

Panic swept through Landis at the news of the Invae and soon spilled over to other kingdoms. Soldiers and terrified citizens swept through the temples of Chorrolis, slaying all within and burning the buildings. Unable to tell friend from foe in their frenzy, the people also razed temples of Astendar and Floranuus and killed many of their innocent worshippers.

These first attacks killed hundreds of Invae. The rest fought fiercely to protect their brood, and the streets ran red with blood. The terrible battles of sword and magic destroyed the once-proud city of Emmerlich and left the very earth on which it stood lifeless.

The burning of the Invae continued across Barsaive long after the creatures had died or gone into hiding, and thousands of innocents lost their lives. In memory of their dead, followers of Chorrolis hold a bitter feast once a year. As for the Invae—some believe the loathsome creatures survived the burnings and the Scourge and even now work their evil among the races of Barsaive through corrupted followers of Chorrolis.

Adventure Ideas

Though few in number, the Invae still exist. Most live in hivelike societies located near Barsaive's large population centers, including the cities of Travar, Urupa, and possibly even the kingdom of Throal. Though many regard them as another form of Horror, the Invae act quite differently. Rather than feeding off the pain of their victims, the Invae subject their victims to loathsome rituals that induce metamorphosis, transforming the victim into a Name-giver/Invae hybrid. These creatures, in turn, breed new Invae to increase the size and power of the hive. Once the hive reaches a certain strength, it then may summon an Invae queen from astral space.

Game statistics for the Invae appear below. Though a myriad of Invae varieties exist, these statistics apply to all types.

Invae

DEX: 7 **STR:** 9 **TOU:** 19
PER: 6 **WIL:** 8 **CHA:** 9

Initiative: 8
Number of Attacks: 2
Attack: 9
Damage: 11
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: 8
Effect: 11

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 9
Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 5
Knockdown: 11
Recovery Tests: 4

Death Rating: 60
Wound Threshold: 15
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 150
Full Movement: 300

Karma Points: 10

Karma Steps: 8

Legend Points: 160
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

The Invae are human-sized creatures that most often resemble wasps or ants, though they have also been known to appear in termite or mantis forms. Hybrid forms combining these insect features and characteristics of the Name-giver races are also fairly common. Most people believe that other forms of Invae exist, as yet unseen in Barsaive.

All Invae attack by striking their victims with chitinous claws, then rending the victim's flesh with both claws and mandibles. In addition to normal damage, a biting attack exposes the victim to a paralyzing venom. When an Invae bites an opponent, make a Spellcasting Test, using the Invae's Spellcasting rating, against the victim's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the victim must make a Poison Resistance Test against the Spell Defense of the poison (see **Poison Resistance Tests**, p. 208, **ED**). If the resistance test is unsuccessful, the character gradually suffers the effect of the venom. Unlike many paralytic poisons, Invae venom reduces the victim's Dexterity until he or she can no longer move, making him an easy meal for the creature. Make an Effect Test, using the Invae's Effect rating, against the victim's Spell Defense; if Invae prevails, the victim's Dexterity step decreases by 1 per round until it reaches zero, at which point the victim is completely paralyzed.

THE MAD PRINCE

In the year 955 by the reckoning of Throal, a new prince ascended the throne in Madaalen, near the ancient kingdoms of Landis and Ustrect. During the first five years of his reign, Prince Willem simply warmed the throne, using his power only to amuse himself. Though he did no harm, he also did no good. His advisors despaired of their lackluster prince and implored the Passions to shake him from his lazy ways.

In the sixth year of his reign, Willem began to take notice of the affairs of his realm, and his advisors believed their prayers had been answered. At the turning of the year, he decreed the royal castle should have new towers; his advisors hoped that a period of good governance for Madaalen would follow the building of the new turrets. Willem soon proved them terribly wrong. From his gilded throne, he proclaimed new laws that demanded horrific punishments for minor crimes. He declared war on nearby villages and towns, claiming they harbored "ancient and implacable enemies." Not even the fierce resistance of the trolls of neighboring Ustrect could end the prince's madness, for a Horror had possessed him. The abomination gave Willem the power to bend the minds of those around him. His wife, his advisors, his army commanders, bodyguards, and Madaalen's leading citizens all succumbed.

Through the grace of the Passions that love the Name-giver races, Willem's eldest daughter, Eleni, escaped the Horror's wiles. On a moonless night, Eleni escaped from the castle and traveled in secret across Madaalen, trying to rally the villagers and nobles to her cause. She told tales of grotesque festivals held within the castle walls and of the terrible fate that mad Prince Willem had in store for Madaalen. Though her pleas brought sympathy from those who heard them, fear stayed their hands, and none dared oppose Willem.

Just as Eleni had begun to despair, her father issued another proclamation, demanding the villages of Madaalen

include with their taxes a special bloodwine, mingling the blood of chosen, fellow villagers with the fruit of the vine. The people of Madaalen refused to obey such an evil command; outrage and anger swept away fear, and hundreds of thousands joined Eleni to fight against the Horror-crazed tyrant. Under Eleni's command, an army of men and women from Madaalen, Landis, and Ustrect marched toward the castle and won two great victories against Willem's forces. Officers in the rebel army saw that the prince's officers screamed at each other and at their men, raising no weapon until the rebels attacked. Though each of Willem's soldiers fought like a maddened thing, they could not fight side by side, and so the rebel army cut them to tatters like cheap troll cloth.

At last Eleni's armies reached the castle and laid siege to the place. War engines hurled enchanted missiles at the walls, as magicians probed for weaknesses in the castle's defenses. For four months the siege dragged on, until one morning soldiers digging a tunnel saw that the castle's main gate stood open. Suspecting a trap, Eleni and her commanders waited several days then sent patrols inside. Some vanished; those that returned told Eleni that the castle was a bewildering maze. They had found a few servants alive and scores of defenders dead, their throats slit and organs missing. Among the dead lay Eleni's brothers and sister; Willem and his wife had disappeared. A long search turned up nothing, and Eleni ordered the castle entrances mortared shut. Refusing to set foot in what had once been her home, Princess Eleni ruled Madaalen from the village of Cirol. Bad crops and worse luck continued to plague Madaalen, however. Peasants deserted their farms, and merchants took their business elsewhere. As her realm descended into poverty and despair, a saddened and bitter Eleni left Madaalen to spend her final days living off the bounty of the Merchant's Council of Throal.

Willem's final fate remains a mystery, but in villages near the place once called Madaalen, the people tell tales of sudden madness overtaking gentle folk and causing them to commit atrocities unheard of since the reign of the Mad Prince.

Adventure Ideas

The sealed castle of the Mad Prince still stands. The people living near it know nothing of what remains inside. It stands deserted and isolated, and neither plants nor animals live within miles of it.

This legend presents several possibilities for adventures. Willem and his wife may still be alive; the Horror that granted Willem his power may have given them unnatural life, condemning them to observe the atrocities it forced them to commit against their citizens and family and to witness first-hand the devastation of the Scourge. They may still inhabit the castle, hoping that someone can free them from centuries of torture.

Or the Horror may have driven Willem and his wife truly mad, and they committed the horrible acts of the legend of their own volition. These acts of violence may have caused the castle and its surrounding area to become Tainted or Corrupt (see **Casting Raw Magic**, pp. 155-156, **Earthdawn** rulebook). This area might also be the home of a Horror, either the Horror that drove Willem to madness or another Horror drawn by the residue of bloodshed and anguish.

The Horror may also have killed Willem and his wife; they are buried beneath the basement of the castle. The gamemaster might lead the characters to uncover the secret of the legend of Willem.

GAMEMASTER CHARACTERS

In this city, it's not who you know. It's how long you've known them.
—Garlthik One-Eye

As stated in the **Earthdawn** rulebook and the **Earthdawn Gamemaster Pack,** gamemaster characters play an important role in **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns. The gamemaster characters described in this section are Barsaive's movers and shakers, important people whose decisions and actions have consequences beyond their own personal spheres. When designing new adventures, gamemasters may find these characters useful as either central players or important background influences.

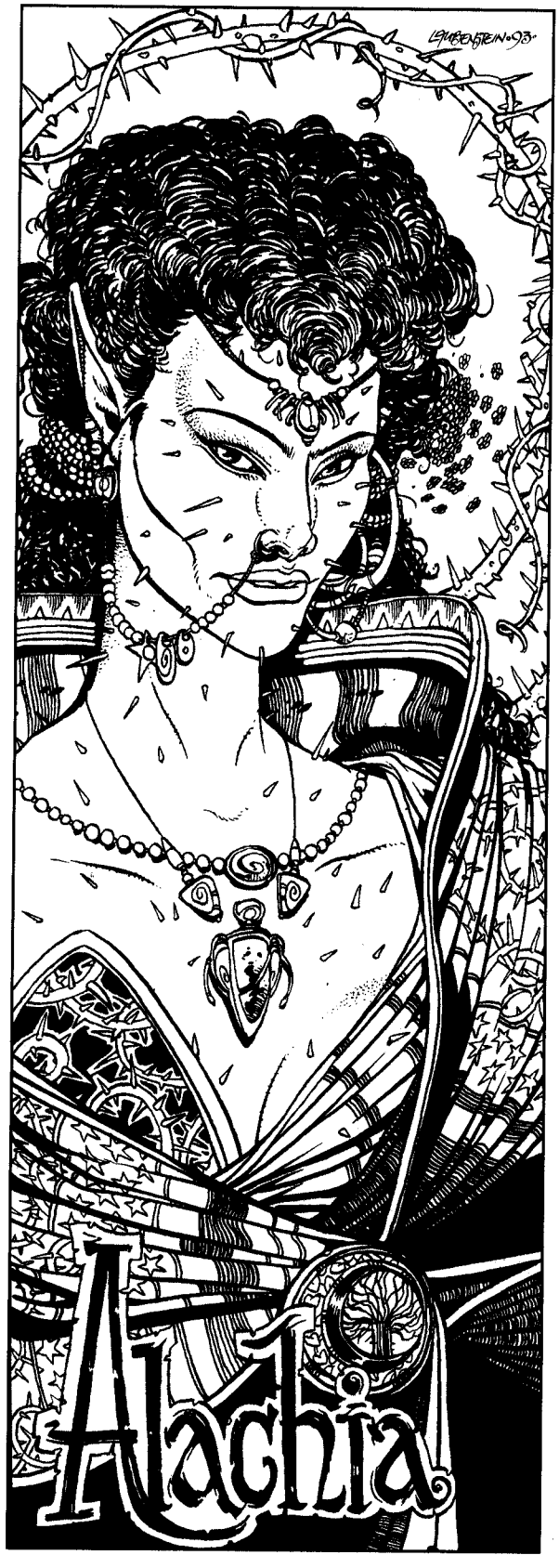
The 39 major personalities described in this section include such notables as Queen Alachia of Blood Wood, King Varulus III of Throal, and the Theran Overgovernor Kypros, plus two gamemaster character profiles of the kind found in the **Gamemaster Pack.**

LAUBENSTEIN
'93

MAJOR PERSONALITIES

Though Barsaive abounds with fascinating cities, landmarks, and other notable places, the people of the province are what truly bring it to life. This section describes some of Barsaive's best-known inhabitants, people who have made a name for themselves either through political power or by the fame of their deeds. Player characters may interact with these gamemaster characters during adventures in any context the gamemaster deems appropriate. They may, for example, become the characters' patrons, enemies, or supporters. Because many of these characters are powerful individuals with concerns far more pressing than those faced by an ordinary band of adventurers, the player characters may not immediately meet these individuals face to face. Instead of a direct encounter with King Varulus, they might first meet one of his messengers, just as they might first have dealings with the personal guard of Uhl Denairastas, leader of Iopos, rather than with the ruler himself. Whether or not the adventurers and the important figure meet in person, these gamemaster characters may still take an interest in the player characters and influence the course of the adventure.

Included in each character's description is the character's Discipline and the place he or she calls home. Those who call Barsaive their home tend to roam the land, rarely staying long in any one place for very long.



ACHARUSS

A swordmaster and notorious pirate, Acharuss is a green-scaled t'skrang nearly six feet tall, with silver-gray flecks along his spine. As he plies the Serpent River north of the Kingdom of Throal in his riverboat, the sight of the *Gorruus'* green and purple prow cutting through the waves strikes fear into the heart of many a villager living along the riverbanks. Though his raids are infrequent, they are are always successful. Acharuss shares every scrap of profit with his loyal crew, each of whom would gladly die for him. (And on occasion some of them have.) Acharuss returns this loyalty in full measure, paying his crewmen well and looking after the families of those who have died in his service. Infamous for his cruelty to prisoners, Acharuss prefers to kill enemies rather than accept surrender. He takes what he wants and leaves the rest floating in the water alongside the corpses.

ALACHIA, ELVEN QUEEN

Beautiful, vain, generous, spoiled, clever, temperamental, and impatient, the Queen of the Elven Court inspires both love and fear beyond measure. Her skin glimmers with the whiteness of the full moon, and her long red hair flows down her back and curls around her shoulders like flames. The thorns that grow from her flesh, far from marring her beauty, give it the power and depth of anguish. Not only her terrible beauty, but also her talents as a masterful troubadour make the queen alluring to all who see or speak with her.

Determined to keep control of her court, Alachia admits to

no one her secret fears that her people erred in escaping the Horrors by ruining their bodies and closing off their souls. She cannot help but remember the time before the Scourge, when all elvenkind was united under her rule. In those days, she commanded a kingdom to be reckoned with, a kingdom whose might and beauty outshone such upstarts as Throal and Thera. Where once other elven realms might have worked against rival states at her command, the diminshed power of Blood Wood means that Alachia must deal directly with the other powers of Barsaive. Rather than choosing sides, she plays Throal and Thera against each other as she rebuilds the Elven Court's strength.

BRONZE EYES

This crafty ork is a cavalryman and the chieftain of the Iron Fist raider tribe. He is thin for his race and has black eyes that shine with unnerving intensity, seeming to penetrate the secret thoughts of everyone in his presence. Though his war-skilled people fight every battle with the practiced discipline of a scorcher cavalry, they are far too unruly to become anything more than raiders. They love violence and looting, and they hate to work with anyone else.

Bronze Eyes' daughter, Tresgg, causes him more than a few troubles. Some among the Iron Fist whisper that Tresgg is in love with Tarjak Stormcloud, the son of the Broken Fang tribe's chieftain. The Iron Fist and Broken Fang tribes thrive on the animosity between their two bands, and Bronze Eyes has ordered his daughter to stay away from the Stormcloud whelp. He is well aware, however, that his daughter has all his cleverness and then some. She will find a way to disobey him if she so chooses, and Bronze Eyes knows it.

Bronze Eyes often lies awake at night, wondering if his daughter is lying to him. Besides being personally painful, the current state of affairs poses real dangers. Already his people have begun to grumble and make mocking jokes about his lack of authority. Bronze Eyes knows it is only a matter of time before some voices begin to whisper that an ork who cannot keep his daughter away from the son of his enemy has not the strength to lead the Iron Fist tribe. He is certain that some of his own people are plotting to remove him, kill his daughter, and take over the tribe.

BYTH VESTEN

An accomplished warrior, this gangling human walks and stands with a permanent stoop. Though he serves capably as magistrate of Jerris, his long, bony face wears a perpetual look of concern. Some suggest that the pressures of administrating such a strange city wear him down. Others with a more mystical bent claim that Byth is haunted by some past event that weighs heavily on his soul, or by a creature that lurks unseen in the city of Jerris.

CHAROK REDHAND

Though aging and weary, this chieftain of the Broken Fang tribe can still turn cantankerous and violent. He is a veteran ork cavalryman, whose broad face is wrinkled with age and whose eyes are so white and cloudy

that many mistakenly believe he is going blind. Turning his apparent weakness to advantage, Redhand plays up the supposed loss of his sight to throw opponents off balance. He can still throw a powerful punch, too, and few among his people would willingly antagonize him.

With his time running out, Charok has been grooming his son to take his place as chieftain and to carry on the tribe's tradition of plunder and mayhem. Though his advisors have tried to tell him of his son's amorous adventures with Tresgg Heatsky of the Iron Fist tribe, Charok dismisses such tales as gossip from people with too much time on their hands.

CHORAK BONECRACKER

A massive troll the size of a tree, this crystal raider almost always appears drenched in red paint or blood. As the chieftain of the Blood Lore crystal raiders who live in the Twilight Peaks, Chorak believes he must set an example for his people and exceed every other living troll in his lust for blood and killing. In recent years, Chorak has taken to laughing unexpectedly in public. His trollmoot is divided on the debatable charm of this habit; some see it as a delightful extension of battle lust, while others wonder if he has taken one too many blows to the head. A third party suspects that this strange behavior may stem from the influence of a Horror, but has not dared say so openly.

CLYSTONE

The beleaguered magistrate of Bartertown, this tall, gaunt human has gone prematurely gray. Clystone's face and body both show the strain of his thankless job, negotiating disputes between the inhabitants of Bartertown and the Kingdom of Throal. Though a clever illusionist, his talents have proved surprisingly useless in resolving the day-to-day difficulties of his job.

Clystone's own people cannot decide whether or not they want independence from Throal, making his task as magistrate that much more difficult. Fiercely committed to independence, Clystone feigned a middle-of-the-road position until receiving his appointment as magistrate. Once installed in office, he began to use his position to polarize the city, but justifies his actions by declaring that decisions are never made until the choices are clear.

Recently, Clystone ordered hikes in the city's import and export taxes in order to provide for more guards and civic improvements. Predictably, the measure led to the development of a burgeoning black market throughout the city. Oddly enough, the surge in smuggling surprised the normally able Clystone, who has scrambled to pull together mercenaries to keep a watchful eye on goods entering and leaving the city.

CROTIAS, THERAN GENERAL

An ork from Thera and a great warrior, Crotias has traveled extensively throughout the Theran Empire, leading her Eighth Legion from victory to victory. She wears her fiery red hair in a long braid that hangs down to the small of her back, and rarely ventures out in public without her heavy silver battle

armor. She has recently brought the Eighth Legion to Sky Point, and her unbroken string of victories has made her overconficent of her ability to bring Barsaive back under the Theran yoke. For the Theran officials she met upon her arrival in Sky Point, Crotias has little but contempt. Not understanding why they have allowed the province to remain such a stumbling block for the past 30 years, she is eager to mount a series of campaigns to crack Barsaivian resistance. Ultimately, she dreams of leading a victorious army into Throal. Enough of a dissembler to survive Theran politics, she keeps her disdain of Overgovernor Kypros and Admiral Tularch to herself, outwardly agreeing to whatever they say while plotting ways to accomplish her own ends.

UHL DENAIRASTAS

Ruler of the Denairasta clan of Iopos, this wizened human stands just under five feet tall, his skin wrinkled and his bones shrunken by advanced age. Though a masterful wizard with more than enough power to protect himself, he seldom leaves his fortresslike home for fear of assassination. His wealth allows him to bring his pleasures to his private chambers, and the loyalty of most of his subjects guarantees his getting virtually anything he demands. Unreachable in his fortress, Uhl conducts magical experiments disturbing in their implications, heedless of any harm he inflicts in the process. Occasional power struggles within his clan can still cause him concern, but he has safeguarded his own position by secretly killing every other Denairasta family member who gained too much power. These selective assassinations have sealed his power over any of his relatives.

EARAL BLOODSTROKE

An ork cavalryman, Earal is the eldest son of Terath the Contemplative, chieftain of Terath's Chargers. A strapping young ork in his mid-twenties, he has already proven himself a capable warrior and worthy successor to his father. Scars cover his body, but the cheerful smile on his broad face belies the fierce impression left by his many war wounds. He bestows charming compliments with the eloquence of an elf and the vivacity of a t'skrang, and makes it a point to reward his troops after well-fought skirmishes.

As commander of the Chargers unit guarding the farmlands outside of Throal, Earal has spent the past three years in constant contact with farmers, the citizens of Bartertown, and representatives of Throal. He has grown fond of the predominantly dwarf families he protects and does not know what he will do if the Chargers choose to cancel their contract with Throal. He has contemplated leaving the Chargers if such a thing comes to pass and volunteering to establish a force under his own command to serve King Varulus. Of course, he hopes very much that events will not force him to make that choice.

FELLIDRA JER

A masterful troubadour, Fellidra Jer currently serves as the Chief Councilor of Urupa. She has led the council for the past eight years and enjoys great

popularity among Urupa's citizens. Among her chief concerns is the flow of trade between the city of Urupa and the Kingdom of Throal. The influx of unique merchandise from across the Aras Sea has drawn many more merchants and traders from Throal and all over Barsaive than Fellidra believes is good for Urupa. Even the local merchants worry that the outsiders will open permanent shops and take up residence in the city.

Recently, Fellidra received word that several cities across the Aras Sea have come under attack by an army approaching from the east. In response to this news, she has hired a group of adventurers to seek out the truth of it.

GARLTHIK ONE-EYE

This ancient ork is approaching at least one hundred years of age—if he has not already passed it. As is so often the case with Garlthik, no one knows for sure. His thick mop of hair has gone stark white, and a black patch tied with a leather cord covers one eye. Only one of his massive teeth still protrudes from his mouth, but he smiles with the same fierce joy that made him famous in his youth.

A master thief, Garlthik rules Kratas, also known as the city of thieves. He likes to be called Magistrate Garlthik, relishing the grim joke of his position as the enforcer of laws in an outlaw city. His gang took control of Kratas 30 years ago during the Theran War, and for the past three decades Garlthik has ruled it with a tight rein except for a few minor upheavals. A thief to his very bones, the old ork truly loves

Kratas and tries to do well by it. More than anything, he wishes to establish Kratas as an independent power capable of standing up to Thera, but knows that such a task will last beyond his lifetime.

Some claim that Garlthik's long life is due to his terrible fear of death and that he wills himself to stay alive each day. Whatever the truth of the matter, he has more than once said over drinks in a tavern, "The only thing I know how to do is be alive. I don't relish the prospect of doing something different."

HEROK SHATTERBONE

Leader of Herok's Lancers and a fine cavalryman, this sturdy ork took over command of the cavalry unit three years ago, at the young age of twenty-two. After the death of his mother, the unit's previous commander, Herok declared that he would fill her place. For a full week he fought more than a duel a day against any who wished to challenge him, defeating every opponent until he collapsed from the pain of his wounds. Having won his right to command in honest battle, he took to bed to heal.

Several of Herok's challengers, however, would not accept their defeat. Bent on revenge, they bribed Herok's healer to poison the young champion. Though barely conscious, Herok perceived the healer's treachery. Still bleeding from his wounds, he grabbed his sword and leaped upon the healer. Just before Herok struck off his head, the healer confessed to the bribe he had taken. Not knowing which of his challengers had paid the healer to kill him, Herok rushed through

the camp and slew every one of them, upholding the Lancers' tradition of harsh justice.

HITHORN

A crafty windling merchant with emerald-green wings, Hithorn makes his home in Bartertown. A questor of Chorrolis, he travels the land in search of rare items to sell to those with too much money and not enough ways to spend it. One way or another, he hears most of the rumors that pass through Bartertown, paying particular attention to those concerning recent events. He knows little about magic or ancient treasures and cares for the latter only insofar as he might acquire and sell them.

When Hithorn hears of a treasure-hunting expedition, he frequently hires his own band of adventurers to race first to the prize and bring it back. Hithorn pays large bonuses for careful, secret work so that the other merchants and explorers won't find out that he disrupted their plans.

ISAM DERR

An obsidiman warrior, Isam Derr has retired to the city of Wishon in the kingdom of Throal. Though few people know it, Isam is the eldest member of the Swords of Light, leaders of the Lightbearers. Isam's position among the Lightbearers, who strive to rid the world of the remaining Horrors and all they represent, has made him a valuable advisor to King Varulus of Throal. Though he has not undertaken adventures and quests for several years, Isam remains aware of such acitivities in Barsaive's many cities and towns through his work with the Lightbearers as well as through his associates and contacts in all the province's major cities.

KARAK BLOODEYES

A battle-ragged but powerful ork cavalryman, Karak Bloodeyes seems to have stayed alive out of sheer spite. The scars that line his face look like the blue lines of rivers on a map, and dried blood more often than not stiffens his short brown hair. This violent chieftain of the Skull Whargs has led his tribespeople into one bloody battle after another. As he invariably throws himself into the thick of the battle, he has often come close to dying from the many wounds he has taken. Amazingly tough, Karak has always managed to keep himself alive just long enough for the questors of Garlen among his folk to tend him.

Karak believes and teaches his people that all other races of Barsaive sprang from the orks generations ago. He particularly hates the dwarfs of Throal, angered that another race has gained so much power. Despising orks who aid the dwarfs, he kills such "traitors" anytime he discovers one. Both Terath the Contemplative and King Varulus III are at the head of his death list.

KERTHALE

A crystal raider, Kerthale leads the Stoneclaws, the most civilized of the crystal raider trollmoots living in the Twilight Peaks. Tall and broad-shouldered, with disturbing red eyes and huge hands, Kerthale is a strange sight at the Throalic court, where he appears at least once a year. Following in his father's footsteps, Kerthale

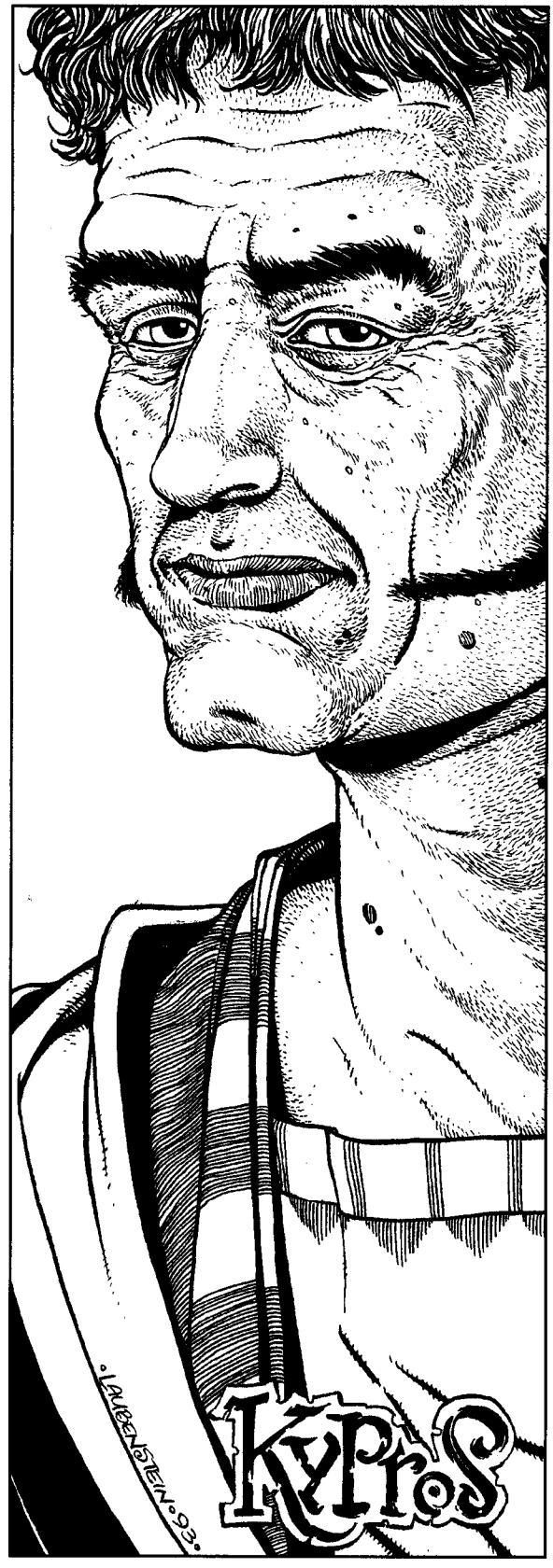
works with his fellow Barsaivians to drive the Therans out of the province. His time at court has taught him to love things Throalic, and he often brings Throalic clothes, music, slang, and customs back to his people on the Twilight Peaks. Though his people respect his fighting prowess, most regard his cooperation with Throal as another of their chief's odd notions. They will go along with Kerthale most of the time, but he often has to argue them into putting themselves at risk for the anti-Theran cause. If he proposes a raid with guaranteed plunder, the Stoneclaws gladly rally to his side against the Therans.

KYPROS, THERAN OVERGOVERNOR

A 40-year-old human and an accomplished troubadour, Kypros remains handsome and strong, the gray streaks in his black hair the only sign of his difficult life. His years at Sky Point have taken their toll on this loyal Theran, but the empire's belief in its righteousness sustains him through every setback he suffers.

Kypros wants to re-impose Theran control over Barsaive, but the previous overgovernor's mistakes have used up most of the resources available to him. Therefore, Kypros must use subtler means of conquest, offering sugar rather than a stick. With a Theran's natural instinct for conquest, Kypros finds this approach slow and cumbersome, especially because the kingdom of Throal has its own sugar to offer to those who waver.

Like most Therans, Kypros never questions the empire's policies. He believes that injustices in the law, if they exist, will be worked out over time. To his way of thinking, addressing them immediately at the expense of moving forward would only weaken the empire. Despite his naivete about Theran government, Kypros is a shrewd man. Though it took him some years to get his bearings, he has begun to make progress in Barsaive. His policy of encouraging Barsaivians to make slave raids on each other is weakening the province from within, and he has also begun to build alliances with several of the larger towns near the Death's Sea.



Ultimately, he intends to conquer Throal, believing that resistance to Theran rule will crumble without dwarf leadership. He believes that his masters in Thera will reward him by making him overgovernor of the entire province, with eight lesser governors reporting to him.

LISTAN FROMM

A red-headed, jovial dwarf and troubadour, Listan Fromm owns the Fromm Merchant Company of Jerris. His merchant house buys and transports goods by land and airship throughout Barsaive, delivering them wherever desired. Because his business depends on his possession of one of Barsaive's few airship fleets, Fromm often finds himself in conflict with airship builders. He constantly lobbies Throal to enforce annual limits on airship production and strict standards for buyers. In the face of Throal's silence on the matter, the Fromm Merchant Company has resorted to acts of sabotage against shipbuilders, especially in the city of Jerris, where Listan has considerable influence.

Pihgram Tor's shipbuilding company, the largest in Jerris, is the primary target of Fromm's illegal activities.

MONUS BYRE

Monus Byre, a pale-skinned elf with golden hair, leads the Living Legend cult known as the Seekers of the Heart. Believing that Blood Wood can be saved from its taint and the Elven Court purified, the Seekers bend all their energies toward this great work. Byre's accession to leadership of the cult occurred under unfortunate circumstances, however. The group's former leader, an elf named Yoruial Tan, turned up dead one morning with his throat ripped open. As yet, no one has determined how Tan's unknown assailant got past the guards and murdered him without a struggle.

Utterly dedicated to her task, Monus Byre uses her considerable skills as a wizard to further her work whenever possible. Regarding her fellow elves as beloved kin, she wants to see the Elven Court cleansed and all the elven kingdoms reunited. To this end, she has even sent emissaries to the ancient elven land of Shosara to speak of reconciliation with the Elven Court. So far, no one knows what has come of such efforts.

In the past few months, Monus Byre has come to realize that a traitor may lurk among her peers. According to secret documents kept by Yoruial Tan, just two short years ago the elf leader had rooted out a cabal in the Seekers that had planned to destroy the Elf Queen and her people. Tan ordered the conspirators executed and considered the matter closed. His murder, however, has raised new questions about those earlier six deaths, publicly blamed on the evil Hand of Corruption. In light of these revelations, Byre has become wary and keeps a close watch on her closest assistants, trying to form a core of loyalists with which to fend off possible corruption.

NEDEN, PRINCE OF THROAL

Son of Varulus III and heir to the throne of Throal, 36-year-old Neden has received the finest education for a future ruler that his father could bestow upon him. Despite the prince's training and formidable skill in combat, however, many people fear that Neden is too young to withstand the rigors of ruling Throal. His life has been threatened by political intrigues almost since his birth, including several assassination attempts and a diabolical plot to poison his mind with fluids taken from the body of a Horror.

Far from weakening Neden, such experiences have only served to strengthen him, giving him maturity beyond his years. He has all of his great father's strength and determination and has begun to develop his sire's wisdom. He has already become a skilled warrior, if a slightly overconfident one. Like his father, Neden believes that he can and should accomplish the impossible.

NISS REEVES

A prominent merchant in the city of Travar, Niss Reeves has served as magistrate for three consecutive terms, a total of nine years. A gregarious troll by nature, she enjoys the job very much. Wearing the finest

gowns and a coy smile to match her sparkling eyes, she cuts an oddly elegant figure for a troll and uses her charm to get her way in political matters. Her Founding Champions are consistently a cut above others, mainly because adepts and magicians enjoy working with her. A master weaponsmith, Niss spent her youth forging weapons, but nowadays deals exclusively with precious stones and jewelry.

NUGH

A talented thief, Nugh leads the Assassins branch of the Hand of Corruption. Unusually tall for a t'skrang, Nugh combines his height with his reptilian features and a lean build to make a terrifying impression. Some say that he need not draw a weapon to kill; his demonic appearance alone has frightened some people to death. He enjoys killing immensely and possesses not an ounce of kindness.

OMASU

An obsidiman and a troubadour, Omasu owns and runs Overland Trading, one of Barsaive's largest trading companies. Overland Trading is located in Travar and does business with almost all the province's major cities, including Throal, Urupa, and even Theran-controlled Vivane. Omasu cares nothing for politics, and will trade with any who can pay him well.

As a troubadour, Omasu traveled across Barsaive, sharing stories and telling tales. His wanderings taught him the importance of trade and the profit he could make from it. Using his troubadour abilities to aid him in making new acquaintances, Omasu formed a network of business relationships that made him immensely successful in a very short time. In recent years, Omasu has focused more on trading than on pursuing his Discipline. Though he remains a troubadour, he has taken few journeys of late, preferring to stay at his luxurious home in Travar.

PIHGRAM TOR

The windling Pihgram Tor, recognizable by her beautiful silver and blue wings, is a skilled air sailor and a master airship builder. Her shipbuilding company, Silver Clouds Shipwrights, is the largest independent company not only in Jerris, but throughout all of Barsaive. Her desire to sell her ships to the highest bidder, without a middleman, has brought her into conflict with the airship merchants, who want such practices stopped. Paid assassins have attacked Tor more than once, and saboteurs have attacked her shipyards and stolen valuable supplies. Determined to overcome every setback, so far she has succeeded. She is generous to those who deal honestly with her, even giving drakkars to a few people who have sacrificed a great deal on her behalf.

POSTRISH

Dark-haired, beautiful, and voluptuous, 40-year-old Postrish has considerable, hidden influence over events in Barsaive. As head of the Broker arm of the Hand of Corruption, she sees to it that farms fail, magistrates die, and mercenaries turn traitor to their employers. Like all members of the Hand of Corruption, she believes that the Scourge left

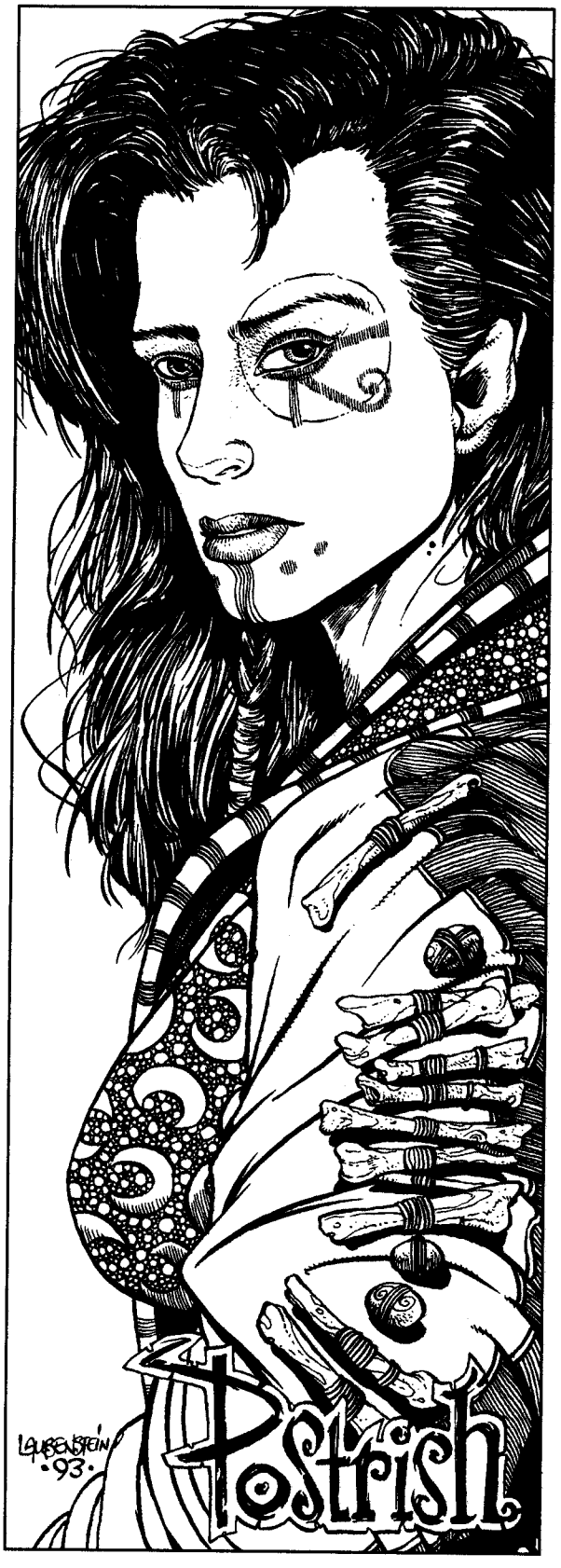
the world diseased beyond redemption. Regarding it as her destiny to destroy all she can before she dies, she turns her considerable skills as a nethermancer toward accomplishing this end. With her identity concealed, she travels back and forth across Barsaive, usually disguised as a merchant and attended by a few loyal guards. She has several residences in the provinces, some well hidden and others in wealthy districts of Jerris and Kratas. Though apparently friendly to all who meet her, she can act without being swayed by emotion whenever necessary.

PREYSTIA TALES

The most powerful Blood Warder of the Elf Queen's Court, Preystia has attained the heights of his Discipline. Like all the corrupted elves of Blood Wood, narrow thorns pierce his otherwise handsome face and body from within. Not even his fellow Blood Warders know of his true ambition, which is to find the means to transcend mortality. Not satisfied with the impossibly long lives granted to elves by nature, he wishes to evade death in whatever form it might come. Corrupt and sinister, he will go to any lengths to achieve this goal. Even Queen Alachia knows nothing of his plans, though she is aware that he sometimes hires outsiders to procure unusual items and spell components.

QUARIQUE OATHSTONE

Chosen by then Overgovernor Povelis to administer the Theran-controlled city of Vivane, Oathstone is a short, rotund, middle-aged human whose stubby fingers shake whenever he is forced to make a decision. He is remarkably cowardly for a warrior—a trait that endeared him to Povelis and won him his current position of apparent influence. Though Oathstone is the titular magistrate, he takes his order from the Therans, who make his decisions and then whisper them into his ear. Unfortunately for Oathstone, the Therans expect him to keep the city running smoothly and blame him when things go wrong.



Quarique Oathstone commands no respect among the people he rules and often gets no help from his masters. He affects a stiffly pointed gray beard in an attempt to look debonair, but succeeds only in looking ridiculous. The sumptuous food at his table does little to console him, and he suspects that all the pretty women at his beck and call laugh at him behind his back.

Two desires, strong and contradictory, drive him. Most of all, he longs to capture Tribas Koar, the commander of the underground that works to weaken Theran authority in Vivane. Tired of being thought a fool, Oathstone believes that capturing the rebel leader will finally win him the respect of the Overgovernor and inspire a proper degree of fear in the citizens of Vivane.

Deep in his heart, Oathstone also wishes to overturn the Overgovernor. Despite his inherent laziness and fear of rocking the boat, he sometimes dreams of aiding Tribas and throwing the Therans out of Barsaive. Such mad ideas make the little magistrate toss and turn in his sleep, yet with each passing day the idea takes a stronger hold on his thoughts.

SHADOWSWIFT

A mere 20 years old, the human Shadowswift is golden-haired and slight of build. An escaped slave from Thera, he put his quick mind to use learning Throalic and studying the troubadour Discipline. Within a few short years of settling in Bartertown, he had attained considerable skill as a troubadour and also became a successful smuggler. Though naturally high-spirited, Shadowswift reacts angrily to questions about Thera, refusing to speak of the place. He remembers nothing of the island where he grew up and does not know if he wants to.

As one of Bartertown's busiest smugglers, Shadowswift works hard to beat the city's newly enacted taxes. Though he supports Clystone's policies of strengthening the city because such measures ultimately make for better business, he feels no loyalty to the place. In his line of work, he knows any number of secret storage areas, fences who sell smuggled goods, and caravan owners willing to sneak contraband into Bartertown.

TERATH THE CONTEMPLATIVE

An ork cavalryman and commander of Terath's Chargers, Barsaive's best ork scorcher cavalry unit, Terath is a pensive individual with reddish brown hair just beginning to turn silver. A brilliant tactician who runs a tight unit, his personal bent toward philosophizing has earned him his famous nickname. He has borrowed and studied many of King Varulus III's books, attempting to master the new legal system the king wishes to extend throughout Barsaive. Terath thinks such ideas noble but impractical, though he admires King Varulus greatly. As long as the king pays well for the services of Terath's troops and deals honestly with them, Terath willingly fights for Throal.

Terath is aware of the growing rivalry between his two children, Zarass Icethought and Earal Bloodstroke, but he mistakenly believes it merely a stage of growth that will pass. He does not understand the murderous jealousy in his daughter's heart and has taken no action to dampen the rivalry between his offspring.

TERRICIA

This black-winged windling is a thief and serves as Garlthik One-Eye's enforcer and confidant in Kratas. Though several decades old, she retains all her skills and abilities as a thief and assassin. She is fiercely loyal to Garlthik, to whom she owes a debt for saving her life many years ago. Fiery-tempered Terricia has a strange sense of humor, often threatening to kill people even though she means them no harm. Having grown accustomed to this odd personality quirk, all of Garlthik's henchmen play Terricia's game along with her, laughing and joking as they threaten to kill each other for careless looks and words.

TORGAK

A huge troll and formidable warrior, Torgak serves as magistrate of sorts for the town of Haven, the tiny community tucked into a corner of the ruins

of Parlainth. Thick-bodied with almost-black skin, he looks like the rough-and-tumble adventurer he has been for most of his life. He and his cronies founded Haven years ago, and Torgak has spent the past decade trying to make his hardscrabble town a respectable place. He skims a cut from the profits on all supplies sold to adventurers who explore the ruins of Parlainth, as well as food and lodging fees paid by people entering or leaving Haven. Despite his desire to be the representative of law and order in Haven, Torgak's impulsive, violent nature often gets him into public brawls.

TRESGG HEATSKY

Strong-boned and oddly beautiful for an ork, Tresgg is a cavalryman and the daughter of Bronze Eyes, chieftain of the Iron Fist tribe. Against her father's wishes, she continues to see her lover Tarjak Stormcloud, son of a rival ork chieftain. She dreams of the day when her and Tarjak's fathers have passed away so that she and Tarjak can unite the two tribes into one huge band of raiders. She pursues this difficult dream partly because of her love for Tarjak, but also to satisfy her own ambitions. Both she and Tarjak believe that their tradition-bound fathers cannot see the potential of such a union. By accomplishing this alliance that their parents lack the imagination to support, Tresgg and Tarjak hope to gain power beyond that of any ork raiding tribe. In spite of her frustration with her father's old-fashioned thinking, Tresgg loves Bronze Eyes and would not willingly hurt him.

TRIBAS KOAR

A young human with dashing good looks and an intellect to match, Tribas Koar wants nothing more than to drive the Therans from Vivane and keep them out of Barsaive. Though he receives funds and occasional, other help from Throal, he manages on his own most of the time. His greatest challenge is to inspire those around him to risk their lives in the struggle against Thera. Many people in Barsaive still too willingly accept Theran rule out of fear or simply force of habit. Tribas desperately wants to see the kinder, more just laws of Throal spread throughout Barsaive and uses his considerable skill as an illusionist to make his case more persuasively. So great is his enthusiasm for the wisdom of Throal that when he speaks of the new laws, the words tumble out faster than he can control.

TULARCH, THERAN ADMIRAL

A tall elven woman with bronze skin, silver hair, and a strong-boned face that might be handsome were its expression less grim, Admiral Tularch commands the Theran airship fleet in Barsaive from the Theran outpost at Sky Point. Years ago, before becoming admiral, Tularch assisted Overgovernor Povelis in administrating Barsaive. Povelis regarded her as a promising protegé, and the two became quite close. When the soldiers of Barsaive killed the overgovernor during the Theran War, Tularch almost went mad with grief. When the Therans appointed her to succeed Povelis as overgovernor, she used her power to exact bloody revenge against the peo-

ple of Barsaive. Tularch's passion for violence led to one political blunder after another, provoking fierce resistance among the local people and the loss of troops in fruitless battles designed more to kill than to conquer.

The officials back in Thera relieved her of the post, but before they could recall Tularch to Thera for discipline, the new Overgovernor Kypros pulled strings on her behalf. The two had been friends ever since the days of their apprenticeship in the Theran bureaucracy. Citing her familiarity with southern Barsaive and her exceptional abilities as an air sailor, Kypros arranged for her promotion to admiral.

In the fifth decade of her life, Tularch wields enormous power and continues to use it for revenge. Over the past decade she has honed her battle tactics, and her raids rarely fail to inflict suffering and death on the people of Barsaive. Competent and dangerous, the only thing that keeps her from being the most dangerous woman in Barsaive is her lack of skill at playing political power games.

VARULUS III, KING OF BARSAIVE

Though almost two hundred years old, Barsaive's great reformer King Varulus III of Throal remains in fine physical and mental shape. He retains his skill as a warrior by engaging in daily mock combat with his guards and through an ongoing game of *pratee*, which he plays every day with his son, Neden. Despite all this, Varulus worries as his death draws nearer. He has done his best to train Neden for the awesome burden of kingship and to mold his kingdom upon the virtues taught him by his own father, Varulus II, but he fears that he has done too little. Bartertown remains a constant source of concern at Throal's very gates, and racial brawls still sometimes break out in Throal's cities. In spite of the king's best efforts, the Therans are gaining influence in Barsaive and may gain more once Varulus is gone.

Wise though he is, even Varulus may be led to the brink of folly by his fear of death. He has secretly set his court wizards to devising a way to extend his life with "good" magic, yet embarking on such a quest might lead him to depend on strange forms of nethermancy or even on Horrors. Only time will tell whether this great ruler succumbs to such temptations.

VELLUNIIUM

Captain Velluniium, a t'skrang with silver-blue scales and a heart of gold, sails the Serpent River in his pride and joy, the *Breeton II*. Son of the famous Captain Patrochian who sailed the first *Breeton*, Velluniium is a swordmaster as well as a sailor, who trades goods, fights pirates, and helps those in need. For all his goodheartedness, he drives a hard bargain with those who can afford to pay, and his ship brings prosperity to his crew covenant.

VISTROSH

Formerly a highly placed Blood Warder, Vistrosh left the Elven Court to seek his fortune outside Blood Wood. Several years ago he settled in Kratas, within a short time becoming

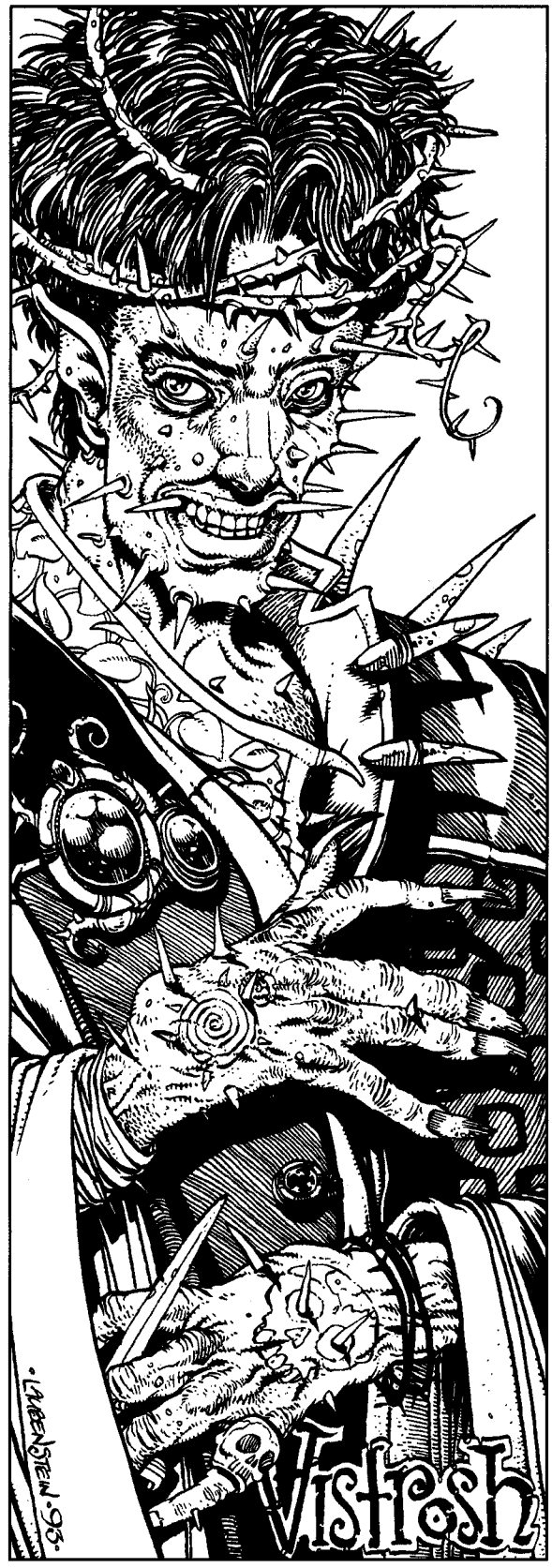
the leader of a powerful gang known as Brocher's Brood, second in strength only to Garlthik One-Eye's gang. Even those who have seen the thorn-pierced elves of Blood Wood find Vistrosh's looks disturbing, even terrifiying. He enjoys frightening people into submission, and plays up his dreadful appearance. Ultimately he hopes to supplant Garlthik as ruler of Kratas.

YASSAL

A troubadour known throughout Barsaive for her eloquence and power, the tall, elegantly dressed elf Yassal has an exotic and wonderful appearance. Her travels take her across the Theran Empire and beyond the farthest borders of Barsaive, and much of what she wears and carries comes from those strange and distant lands.

Yassal has devoted her life to continuing the work of Shantaya Nightstar. She maps the land as she journeys to its remotest regions, and faithfully teaches the travelers she meets how to use Shantaya's Sextant. Yassal frequently visits the Kingdom of Throal, sharing with the library the tales of her adventures and her revised maps of Barsaive.

Said to hail originally from the elven nation of Shosara, Yassal's favorite tales describe the adventures and accomplishments of Shantaya Nightstar. Yassal possesses an impressive repertoire of legends and tales of the time before the Scourge, of the terror and despair brought by the Scourge and the Horrors, and of the hope for the future that kept the peoples of Barsaive alive.



ZARASS ICETHOUGHT

An ork cavalrywoman and only daughter of Terath the Contemplative, Zarass is strong-minded and bitter. Having watched her brother, Earal Bloodstroke, become more and more attached to the kingdom of Throal, she believes he intends to take his half of Terath's Chargers away from their father if Terath should ever choose not to renegotiate his cavalry's contract with the dwarf kingdom. Jealousy sharpens her concern, for she has always resented her father's seeming preference for Earal and believes Terath so blinded by his love for his son that he cannot see the coming betrayal. Already she nurtures secret thoughts of violence toward Earal. Given time, she may yet act on them.

GAMEMASTER CHARACTER PROFILES

In addition to the established gamemaster characters listed above, you can also use the following gamemaster character profiles in your **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns. The Troll City Watch represents the type of guard who patrols the streets in many of Barsaive's cities. The Human Cult Member might come from a Living Legend cult or from a cult devoted to a particual Passion or Horror. For a detailed description of such organizations, see p. 29 of **An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive**, or the **Secret Societies** section, p. 38 in this book.

TROLL CITY WATCH

"The people pay me to keep their town secure, and roving bands of so-called heroes like you make my life difficult. And when my life gets difficult, I get mad, and when I get mad I like to take it out on roving bands of heroes. So I have only one rule—don't make my life difficult."

Quotes

"Meet my good friend Sir Pole-Axe."

"You're beginning to make my life difficult, young *sir*."

"Have you ever had a grown troll sit on your chest until your face turned purple and you begged for mercy? It can be quite easily arranged."

Commentary

The troll city watch's job is to keep the peace, and if he has to break a few skulls to do it, so be it. He's got a bad attitude, a big weapon, and the law on his side. In short, he's your worst nightmare—a troll with a badge of office.

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (17): 7/D12
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (8): 5/D6
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Skills

Artisan
Runic Carving (1): 5/D8

Knowledge
Local Lore (3): 8/2D6
Local Politics (3): 8/2D6

General
*Disarm (2): 7/D12
*Melee Weapons (3): 8/2D6
*Riposte (3): 8/2D6
Tactics (3): 8/2D6
*Unarmed Combat (1): 6/D10

Damage

Death Rating: 39 (37)
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (29)
Recovery Dice: D12
Recovery Tests Per Day: 3

*Denotes a talent used as a skill.

Combat

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 6
Armor: 8
Mystic Armor: 0

Equipment

Blood charm (Absorb Blow)
Buckler
Chain mail
Cloak
Club
2 Daggers
Pole-axe

HUMAN CULT MEMBER

"Have you not heard of the Shield of Slangue the Merciless? Its ancient power would dwarf your wildest imaginings. I will search for the Shield until my bones lie bleaching in the sun. Countless others would also gladly give their lives to return the Shield to its faithful worshippers."

Quotes

"What do you mean my map is wrong? Where's the town that should be here?"

"The Shield is holy, that is all an infidel like you need know."

"Only the holy Shield can remove the evil stain the Horrors left on the world and make our dwelling place pure again."

Commentary

Hope drives the cult member. Striving against all odds, he searches for one legendary artifact, though no proof exists to show that it is real. He believes the artifact holds the power to right the evils the Horrors wrought, and he will spend his entire life on his sacred quest. Some people question his sanity, others join him on his crusade, but none question his dedication.

Attributes

Dexterity (7): 4/D6
Strength (10): 5/D8
Toughness (10): 5/D8
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Skills

Artisan

Dancing (2): 8/2D6

General

*Arcane Mutterings (1): 7/D12
Conversation (3): 9/D8 + D6
*Emotion Song (1): 7/D12
*First Impression (3): 9/D8 + D6

Damage

Death Rating: 31 (29)
Wound Threshold: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 22 (20)
Recovery Dice: D8
Recovery Tests Per Day: 2

*Denotes a talent used as a skill.

Combat

Physical Defense: 5
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 8
Armor: 8
Mystic Armor: 2

Equipment

Ancient map to arcane cult object/person
Backpack
Blood charm (Horror Fend)
2 Booster potions
Broadsword
Dagger
Flint and steel
Footman's shield
Hardened leather armor
Horse packs
Riding horse
Tent
1 week's worth of trail rations
Traveler's garb
2 Waterskins

SECRET SOCIETIES

All right, boy, I'll tell you what you want to know, but remember this. Knowledge is power, and power corrupts.

—The last words heard by an over-curious troubadour in the city of Kratas

The population of Barsaive hides a number of organizations operating to achieve their own ends and whose goals sometimes do not promote the betterment of life in the province. These groups operate province-wide by placing their agents in the governments of many cities, even within the Kingdom of Throal.

Some of these groups work for evil purposes; some simply prefer to operate on their own terms, giving allegiance to no government, loyal only to their stated goals and purposes.

This section gives the gamemaster information about the general nature of Barsaive's secret societies, as well as specific information about a few of the most powerful groups.

THE NEED FOR SECRECY

The many different secret societies in Barsaive have different practices, goals, and means to those goals. Despite their differences, they all share one similarity: they accomplish their aims because they are anonymous and their leaders untouchable by outside influences.

Members of these groups are usually willing to do anything to maintain the secrecy and stability of the group, including killing anyone who threatens that secrecy. Two factors bolster their fanaticism. In a society as paranoid of corruption as Barsaive's, those with the strength to join such a secret organization will be fiercely loyal to it. Because of the Horrors, most people avoid engaging in activities that could be interpreted as corrupt or tainted. Those willing to do so are convinced that the results of such an action justifies the action. Further, the stability of the group often depends on its members maintaining its secrets. For example, if the leader of the Hand of Corruption became known as the head of that group, public and official outcry would surely lead to his (or her) death, which might cause the entire group to dissolve.

Except for those cults dedicated to serving one or more Horrors, secret societies strive to dissociate themselves from the Horrors. Horror cults thrive on the fear they instill in people by allowing their purposes to be known and on the pain they inflict upon their victims. Other secret societies recognize the risk of becoming the target of heroes determined to end their influence, and so try to keep a very low profile.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

Characters should know little to nothing about the activities and plans of secret societies. They may hear an unfamiliar name in the course of obtaining information about a current investigation in various cities in Barsaive, or they may come across a reference to one of these mysterious organizations in the library at Throal (in fact, several such groups are discussed briefly in **An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive**), but the gamemaster should only reveal these hints at a moment that is appropriate or timely. Providing clues to the existence of these groups gives the characters another piece of the puzzle of their world. As heroes, discovery is an important part of the characters' lives, as is uncovering groups that may pose a significant threat to Barsaive and the world.

The players characters cannot begin the game as members of any secret society, which lie beyond the experience of any beginning character. This circumstance allows the gamemaster to add an element of mystery to any adventure he creates simply by using these secret groups as a minor incident or part of a subplot.

Secret societies have a lot of adventure or subplot potential and can be incorporated into campaigns fairly easily and with great success. The difficulty lies in introducing the characters to the appropriate secret society subtly but effectively.

The simplest way for the gamemaster to expose the characters to a secret society is to bring the characters into contact with some consequence of the society's activities. For example, the characters might find the remains of a victim of the Hand of Corruption whose limbs and blood are arranged in some intricate pattern. Their attempts to find out more about this apparently ritualistic slaying could bring them information about these specialized assassins.

The characters may discover the society in the course of an adventure. One of the characters' contacts might turn out to be a member of the Lightbearers or may witness a Lightbearer using his special powers against an agent of the Horrors.

As a way to distance themselves from a particular operation, a secret society might hire the characters to perform an errand or undertake a more serious task. Though they obviously wouldn't reveal their true identity and purpose, the characters might pick up enough rumors to realize that something more is going on. A secret society might also make an attempt on one of the characters' lives. The character may not even recognize the reason for the attack until he remembers witnessing the exchange of goods in a dark alley in Kratas, or overhearing a somehow shady business deal.

The gamemaster can also use this technique to tie together subplots of past adventures. For example, suppose that by gamemaster design or random chance the characters have witnessed a series of unexplained, apparantly unconnected killings. If the killings were the work of the Hand of Corruption, the characters may learn about the Hand's activities by becoming their newest target. Similarities between the deaths the characters have seen and the attempts on their lives force them to look at circumstances in a new way. All those "unexplained" killings suddenly begin to fit together in a frightening pattern, and now the characters are not only aware of the Hand's activities but have also become involved.

Try to avoid constantly pitting the secret society in direct confrontation with the players characters. By their nature, secret societies should only help propel an adventure. Do not use them to arbitrarily kill off a character who has overheard too much. Sometimes it may seem that killing a character is the only way to motivate the players, but such drastic action should remain a last resort. More appropriately, the characters may notice a secret society's existence as a result of the group's failed attempt to perform a mission or even to kill one of the player characters.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION

Certain information is known about the more significant secret societies operating in Barsaive. In the following descriptions, most of the information has been left vague and open-ended enough to allow each gamemaster to use these societies in the manner best suited to his or her group.

CULTS

A wide variety of cults, groups devoted to a particular person, creature, or ideal, operate in Barsaive. Cultists are characterized by their extreme devotion to their patron, including complete willingness to give their own lives for the cause.

The most common cults in Barsaive center on one or more of the Horrors. These cults worship their patron Horror as devoutly as most Barsaivians worship the Passions. They often erect statues to the Horror and perform rituals to sate the Horror's desires or hunger. Many such cults exist for the purpose of summoning a particular Horror into the physical world from its native plane by completing complicated rituals and casting very powerful spells. One such cult, Those of the Great Hunter, serve the Horror Verjigorm, the Named Hunter of Great Dragons. No reliable evidence exists to confirm whether the Horror operates in the physical world at this time or if its cult works to summon it.

Much to the surprise of the cultists, the Horror they choose to serve often wishes nothing at all to do with them. These cultists often end up as food for their patron, learning too late the lesson to only serve those who call.

Another type of cult pervading Barsaive are those devoted to the Mad Passions. Cults have sprung up to serve Dis, Raggok, and Vestrial, though the many different cults devoted to each of the Mad Passions refuse to have anything to do with one another. These cults regard even others devoted to their patron as violators of their faith, and so their enemies. Because the various cults to the Mad Passions fight with each other, none have joined ranks to force the ideals of their patron Passion upon the people of Barsaive. The cult known as the Hand of Corruption is sometimes considered nothing more than a cult of Raggok, but this group and their goals reach far beyond the ideals of even a Mad Passion.

HAND OF CORRUPTION

If there exists in the land of Barsaive a group more loathsome than the Therans, it must be the Hand of Corruption. Despite the name of the group, its members are not corrupted by Horrors, nor do they have any relations with Horrors. The Hand of Corruption see themselves as the proper response to a corrupted world. Their view is that the world is now tainted beyond redemption, and the fact that anyone remains alive on it is an unfortunate fluke. They consider it their job to cleanse the world of all Name-giver races, for once the world is free of their influence, purity will be restored, and the world will be clean again.

Members of the Hand of Corruption fall into three distinct groups. The first are the Nihilists, the philosophical branch of the organization. The second, and arguably most powerful, are the Brokers, who plot and carry out covert operations to destabilize governments and communities throughout Barsaive. The last are the Assassins, who carry out the plans of the Brokers and slay innocents as offerings to the Mad Passion Raggok. Members of all three groups contain questors of Raggok, but that is not a requirement to be a member of the Hand of Corruption. Because the philosophy of the organization completely contradicts the accepted order of the universe, none but the Mad Passions will accept a questor who is a member of the Hand of Corruption. The Mad Passions encourage the work of the Hand of Corruption.

The Nihilists argue that the Scourge made the world a corrupt place that must be destroyed, or at the very least purged of the Name-givers. They reason that it is the existence of the Name-givers that drew the Horrors to Earth in the first place. The Nihilists wear black robes and usually live apart from the rest of society, either in isolation or in small farming settlements. They support themselves through farming and also receive some funds and supplies through the Brokers. The least active group in the Hand of Corruption, the Nihilists often seem innocuous because they mainly talk about their beliefs, rarely acting on them. This they leave to the Brokers and Assassins.

The Brokers, following the lead of the Nihilists, reject the idea that the world is now in balance, the effects of the Scourge balanced by heroes performing daring tasks. They believe all attempts to rebuild the world since the end of the Scourge serve only to feed worse evils yet to come. They want all efforts to rebuild the world to fail. From Thera to Throal to the smallest village of farmers, the Brokers work in subtle ways to destroy every effort toward community and safety. The Brokers have only limited resources and a small membership, however. Rather than attacking villages with swords and spears, they poison the water. Rather than ambush dwarf caravans directly, they encourage hungry villagers to ambush the wealthy merchants. Another typical strategy is their frequent attempts to pit different power factions against one another. Their work often strengthens the hand of Theran Overgovernor Kypros, whose goal of re-conquering Barsaive requires that he divide the province before he can take it, but the Brokers deny that this outcome of their efforts is intentional.

Brokers do not distinguish themselves by their dress, for they must penetrate all levels of society, living as farmers, merchants, miners, sailors, and so on. They use a complicated series of hand signals to identify each other and speak in code. Their role in the Hand of Corruption is so secret that whole villages, towns, and even cities are rumored to be populated entirely by Brokers.

The Assassins commit direct, overt acts of death and destruction. Where the Brokers are subtle and neat, the handiwork of the Assassins is often bloody and terrible. Victims are often found carefully dissected, limbs and blood arranged in patterns that no one but the agents of the Hand of Corruption fully understand. Ahehm of the Blood Wood speculated that the rituals and patterns will eventually bring into existence a new Passion, a Passion of retribution. His research was progressing well until he was killed—in ritual fashion by the Assassins—and his notes destroyed. The fact that Assassins could enter the Elven Queen's palace, kill a Blood Warder, and then escape again, without anyone realizing the murder had taken place until hours after Ahehm's death is either a testament to the skill of the Assassins, or a hint that their influence extends even into the Elven Court.

The Assassins wear black robes with black hoods and a veil that covers their mouth and nose. They work alone or in units of three, depending on the assignment. An Assassin always receives his orders from intermediaries, never directly, which often leads to miscommunication. Individual Assassins feel no compunction over these mistakes, for they are content to kill any number of people in service to the cause. The organization draws talent from diverse sources, and many of its members are magicians and adepts of various Disciplines.

Leaders and adventurers who make a name for themselves anywhere in Barsaive by helping to rebuild society will likely find themselves targeted by the Hand.

KEYS OF DEATH

The Keys of Death is a far-flung cult of assassins, whose every member fancies him or herself a questor of Death. They believe this despite the fact that Death is not a Passion like the twelve Passions the Universe created to inspire Name-givers and that there are no records of Death ever having questors. If people point out that the Keys of Death do not seem to receive mystical benefits for following Death's ideals, they simply recite the legend that Death is imprisoned under Death's Sea and claim it is that which prevents Death from granting them power. Though they believe themselves questors, they must depend on the powers of adept magic to carry out their missions, most often twisting the abilities of the thief and warrior to murder.

The legend of Death says that several Passions imprisoned him under Death's Sea, and though people and creatures still die, Death's influence is now limited. Because Death does not roam free, people can be resurrected, and those who should die sometimes escape death through improbable means. The aspect of the legend on which the Keys of Death focuses says that when enough blood has soaked into the soil of Barsaive, Death will be freed and wreak terrible vengeance.

The Keys of Death assassins intend to curry favor with Death by sowing Barsaive's soil with enough blood to help free Death. They also hope that they will be spared his revenge. To this end, they hire themselves out to anyone willing to pay their price. The cost of an assassination varies greatly, depending on the importance of the victim and the difficulty of the assassination. Sometimes the assassins do not charge for their services—it is their desire, after all, to spill as much blood as possible.

There is no hierarchy in the Keys of Death. People become members through contact with other assassins, and members rarely meet. Members of the Keys of Death always maintain another livelihood, usually one that allows them to constantly relocate without attracting suspicion.

Every assassin owns black robes known as death robes, which they wear only during assassinations and murders. Because Keys of Death assassins are essentially self-motivated and might never have seen another assassin in his death robes, each robe is unique in style and decoration. All death robes are marked with indecipherable symbols that only the assassin himself can explain, usually in the context of how Death is connected to his life.

Theories abound that Horrors have corrupted the minds of the Keys of Death assassins, driving them insane. Most people accept this idea because it allows them to view these assassins as an aberration and not a norm for Name-givers.

LIVING LEGEND CULTS

The world is a better place than it was one hundred years ago — the Horrors are fewer in number, the jungles of the world are full and lush, and Throal is making progress in uniting the people of Barsaive. Yet remnants of the blight that took hold of the world years ago remain, and these remnants make people despair. In an attempt to rise above the despair, people create their own means of keeping hope alive. The living legend cults fall into this category.

Living legend cults consist of groups of people who believe that the answers to the world's problems lie in the past. These answers may sometimes take the form of ancient magical artifacts, lost tomes filled with invaluable

wisdom, and even long-dead heroes. The cultists extensively research the objects or persons of their veneration, and then try to bring the object or person from the past to the present. Some cultists wish merely to preach an ancient philosophy, other groups seek out ancient corpses and attempt to raise them from the dead.

The various living legend cults have nothing but the essence of their beliefs in common. In fact, most resent being grouped together under one name. Most groups consider the work of other groups thoroughly absurd and have no respect for any quest but their own.

The efforts of the cultists keep them busy throughout Barsaive, searching out ancient ruins, exploring lost cities, and browsing through crumbling texts. The cults formed around legends powerful enough and widespread enough to be worth remembering for hundreds of years, but vague enough to allow the cultists to interpret them to their own ends. A thread of truth runs through all their beliefs, though most cultists only believe in the legend they research.

Many of these cultists are decent people, doing what they believe is right and trying to help the world, yet willing to allow others their own efforts toward the same goal. Others believe that non-cultists are trying to stop them from saving the world, and so use bloody methods to advance their cause. In some cases, their paranoia is well-founded.

For example, the Hand of Corruption devotes considerable effort policing the living legend cults, fearing that one day they will actually pull some valuable artifact up out of a ruin. They send spies into the cults, trying to gathering enough information to reach the next clue about ancient power before the cultists. The Hand of Corruption usually destroys the ancient items or uses them to their own ends, if possible.

The most prominent living legend cults are described below.

Cult of Naaman Y'ross

Naaman Y'ross was a hero who fought the Horrors in the years before the Scourge, before the inhabitants of Barsaive sought shelter in the kaers and citadels. Many believed that it was possible for him to lead a massive army against the Horrors and prevent the Scourge from taking place at all. Obviously, he failed, but because the legends of his death contradict each other—one says a Horror killed him during a three-day battle, another says one of his followers was possessed by a Horror and turned on Y'ross. There are even those who suggest he never died and has somehow remained alive for the past five hundred years.

The members of this cult fall into three distinct camps: those who think Y'ross is still alive, but has forgotten his identity and his true destiny; those who think he died, but could be raised from the dead; and those who think that it is possible to find the hero's spirit and invest it in another body.

The cultists engage in endless debates, drawing upon obscure legends and tales to support their separate theories. They also devote a great deal of time to researching the legend of Naaman Y'ross, occasionally discovering an interesting and useful fact. For example, several of the cultists have proved beyond doubt that Y'ross was an elf, making it entirely possible that he still lives.

Several of the Y'ross cult groups claim to have found the hero's tomb. They dug up the bones that they believed belonged to Y'ross, then went off on long quests to raise the man from the dead. Some actually succeeded, and though the resurrected man has been grateful in every case, none has been Y'ross.

Wielders of Purifier

Legend says that when the Horrors first began to appear in Barsaive, King Varulus I, by then old and dying, commissioned the forging of a magical sword to defeat the creatures. He gathered together master weaponsmiths from among his own people, the elven court, the troll-moots, and other groups: the sword they fashioned was Named Purifier.

It is said that the balance of the blade shifts to accommodate the wielder, so that a troll might use it as easily as a windling. It is also said that Purifier burned with red fire

when used against a Horror. Other legends say the blade could kill a Horror with one blow. Still other tales relate that the mere presence of the blade near someone corrupted by a Horror was enough to cure the person and cast out the Horror.

Nearly every hero of the age before the Scourge is reported to have used the blade, and so no one knows what became of it or if it ever really existed. Some tales tell that a Horror named Bryxax stole the sword and carried it back to the plane of the Horrors. Other tales relate that Vrastr, a glorious warrior, lost the blade over Death's Sea when she was killed by Horrors while riding her flying steed. It is also rumored that a powerful wizard hid the sword by casting a powerful spell on the blade to make it look old and rusted, dulling its edge beyond use. If the blade can be found and the spell removed, Purifier will once again be able to smite Horrors.

See **Magical Treasures**, p. 282–83, **ED**, for more information on the magical powers of Purifier.

Seekers of the Heart

Another living legend cult active in Barsaive seeks to transform the Blood Wood into the fair home that once held the Elven Court. Known as Seekers of the Heart, these people claim to possess ancient prophesies that foretold the corruption of the elven court and the creation of the Blood Wood. According to the cultists, the secret texts also contain mystical revelations describing the means to redeem the elves from their self-inflicted corruption.

Members of Seekers of the Heart are mainly uncorrupted elves, though they draw their members from many races. Seekers of the Heart is one of the few living legend cults with a powerful hierarchy, established to ensure the organization's secrecy. The Seekers claim that the ancient texts they possess could also bring about the ruin of the Elven Court and the spread of the corruption of the Blood Wood across the world. Whether or not this is true, the potential for power or destruction will lure many to seek the ancient texts for themselves.

An estimated two to three hundred Seekers of the Heart live in Barsaive. Most are nominal members who listen for rumors, collect funds for the organization, and perform similar small tasks. No member of this group ever discusses the cult's purposes or shares gathered knowledge, a principle that makes them unpopular among other scholars. Only a small percentage count themselves among the cult's scholars and adventurers. Those who belong to this elite group wear robes and armor of white and gold and spend their lives questing for obscure texts and artifacts, some apparently useless. Those outside the cult speculate that the questing is a façade to hide their real purpose from the world.

Seekers of the Heart have no official relations with the Elven Court. Rumor says that Queen Alachia's Blood Warders kill known and suspected members on sight. However, some members of the corrupted court have made contact with the cult to encourage or perhaps warn them.

The one well-known quest undertaken by the Seekers of the Heart is their attempt to make contact with the ancient elven nation of Shosara, declared separated from the Elven Court by Queen Failla. The Seekers believe that if they are to truly save the Elven Court and return it to its former splendor, the elves of Shosara must be accepted back into the Court. This quest seems impossible, because the Shosarans have had no contact with any part of Barsaive since before the Scourge.

A recent rumor and legend has piqued the curiosity of the leaders of the Seekers of the Heart. Certain adventurers report that an ancient elven artifact known as the Everliving Flower has been recovered from the ruins of Parlainth, where it lay since the beginning of the Scourge. Legend says the artifact was a gift from Shosara to Queen Alachia when she became the head of the Elven Court at Wyrm Wood. The treasure was lost in transit, somehow ending up in Theran hands. Ever since the report that this artifact had been found, Seekers of the Heart have been working to verify the truth of the story. To the Seekers, the re-appearance of an artifact of such importance to the pre-Scourge elven kingdom symbolizes that change is coming within the community of elves, and they intend that change to be the one they seek.

LIGHTBEARERS

Though most of the heroes of Barsaive fight against the Horrors that still infest the world, one special group aims at nothing less than freeing this world of the Horrors now and forever. This group is known as the Lightbearers.

Origins of the Lightbearers

The Lightbearers first came into being nearly 300 years before the Scourge. According to legend, a dwarf merchant named Nicolez Trund first originated the idea for the group. Though a native of Throal, Trund traveled in his work to the farthest reaches of Throal's trading empire, thus observing the first unmistakable signs that the Horrors were coming. Though the Kingdom of Thoral enjoyed extensive magical protection, Trund could barely imagine what less-protected parts of the world would experience during the Scourge.

Trund knew that nothing could stop the Scourge, but he still felt the need for an organization to fight against the Horrors. Trund and his allies wanted to build an institution that would survive for centuries, not just the lifetimes of its founders. They wanted to give humanity a weapon against

this Scourge and any Scourges of future millennia.

Trund and his group studied the stories of the Horrors so that they might better know their enemy. In doing so, they learned of the darkness that lies at the heart of the Scourge. Seeing the dark time approaching, Trund wanted a name that would represent the work of struggle against this darkness. The name he chose was Lightbearer.

Lightbearers would be heroes and adventurers. Heroes might only be chosen to become Lightbearers when they had proven their prowess and resilience. Lightbearers would be trained to recognize the taint of Horrors and would have the opportunity to gain abilities to combat the Horrors and their kind. They would be tasked with learning all they could about the Horrors, in the process recording tales and sparking legends themselves. The Lightbearers would help the world reclaim itself from the Scourge, leaving a legacy that would help the Earth thousands of years into the future, the next time the Horrors returned.

Lightbearer Organization

Not much is known about the Lightbearers' organization. They have no formal charter or official headquarters. Their leaders, numbering from six to perhaps a dozen, are called the Swords of Light. The Swords of Light meet in Throal three times a year. The times and locations of these meetings are closely guarded secrets. The Swords of Light set priorities that guide the activities of the Lightbearers until the next meeting. The eldest of the Swords of Light is an obsidiman warrior named Isam Derr. As eldest, Isam leads most meetings of the Swords of Light, though in truth his authority is no greater than that of any of the other Swords of Light.

A member of the Swords of Light may call an emergency meeting at any time. Such calls are normally made in response to evidence of Horror activity that demands an immediate response greater than local resources allow.

The Swords of Light also decide what information is magically preserved in preparation for the next Scourge. These decisions are crucial because creating magic to last thousands of years is a task as difficult as it is expensive.

The Lightbearers maintain a loose network that balances a degree of secrecy with the need to communicate. Trund believed that the Horrors and those they corrupt would go to any lengths to destroy the Lightbearers or any other group actively opposing them. He said, "Our enemy cannot kill what it cannot find." Politics also make secrecy desirable, as the goals of the Lightbearers sometimes conflict with those of local rulers. Lightbearers often find and sometimes enrage forces that tribal chieftains and fearful kings would rather pretend do not exist.

All Lightbearers are asked to choose a name by which other Lightbearers will know them. The Lightbearer uses this name in all contacts with other Lightbearers, including face-to-face conversations. This name is but a label to allow for clandestine communication and does not represent the Lightbearer's True Pattern. Though group members sometimes use conventional means of communication, most Lightbearers use magical means to communicate with one another. They most often conduct face-to-face meetings behind the façade of shimmers, masks of light that Lightbearers use to protect their identities.

The Great Pattern

The Lightbearers draw their power from a magical source known as the Great Pattern. Little is known about the Great Pattern, except what has been written by the historians of the Lightbearers, and it remains a topic of much debate among scholars and even among Lightbearers all across Barsaive.

Most believe the Great Pattern refers to the True Pattern of the Earth. Those who support this theory believe that because the Lightbearers strive to reclaim the Earth from the Scourge, the Earth itself grants them their power via its True Pattern.

Others believe the Great Pattern is actually a combination of the True Patterns of all the Passions. Though this theory contradicts most accepted knowledge of magical theory, the ways of the universe remain mysterious enough to allow for any possibility.

Still others believe the Great Pattern does not exist at all and that the Lightbearers derive their strength from those they claim to oppose. Though many dispute this theory, some scholars insist the Lightbearers are actually servants of the Horrors and that their entire organization is an elaborate deception.

Whatever the truth, the Lightbearers are a powerful organization, capable of performing significant feats toward their goals.

Future **Earthdawn** products will provide more information regarding the Lightbearers, their powers, and abilities.

NEW TREASURES

Finding treasure is easy. It's knowing how to use it that's difficult.
—Jerreck, elven wizard

Barsaive contains many treasures just waiting for adventurers and explorers to wield them once again. The **Earthdawn** rulebook described 18 treasures, and the **Gamemastering Earthdawn** book included in the **Earthdawn Gamemaster Pack** provided nine more. This section describes seven additional treasures for use in an **Earthdawn** campaign. A full-color illustration of each item appears on the corresponding treasure card.

For a refresher on how to use treasures in an **Earthdawn** campaign, see **ED**, p. 273.

GENERAL TREASURE

This section describes magical items of general types. Each type might include several items with the same magical properties.

BRACERS OF ARAS

Maximum Threads: 3
Spell Defense: 9

Bracers of Aras are made of flexible, silvery metal that wraps around the wrists and forearms of the wearer. The flexibility is a result of the elemental water that has been forged into the bracers. The elemental water pieces resemble aquamarine gems approximately 1 inch in diameter. The color of the elemental water gems is constantly changing, oscillating with a swirling effect across the spectrum from deep aqua to bright blue.

Thread Ranks

Rank 1 **Cost:** 100
Key Knowledge: These arm bands are made from metals found only in mines located along the shore of the Aras Sea, and are encrusted with pieces of elemental water. Each set of these bracers is Named by their creator. The wearer must learn the Name of the bracers.
Effect: Increase the wearer's Physical Defense by 1.

Rank 2 **Cost:** 200
Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the name of the mine from which came the metals used to create of the bracers.
Effect: Increase the wearer's Physical Defense by 2.

Rank 3 **Cost:** 300
Key Knowledge: Bracers of Aras are made with elemental water gathered from the Aras Sea. When powered by a thread, the magic inherent in the elemental water protects the wearer from various physical and magical attacks. Each set of bracers is designed to defend against a specific Discipline of spells. The wearer must learn the type of spells against which the bracers protect.
Effect: Increase the wearer's Spell Defense by 1.

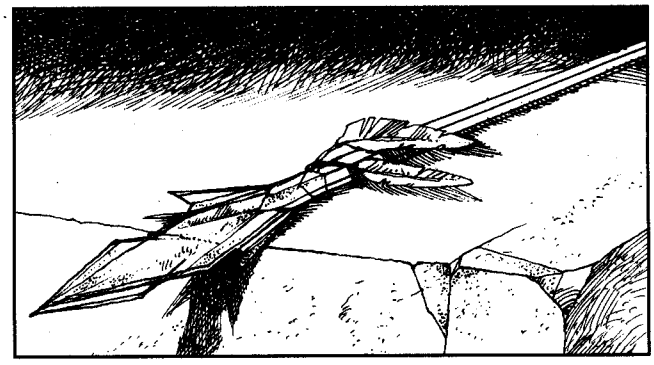
Rank 4 **Cost:** 500
Effect: Increase the wearer's Spell Defense by 2.

Rank 5 **Cost:** 800
Key Knowledge: As mundane water contains oxygen, elemental water contains elemental air. The creators of the Bracers of Aras formed the gems of elemental air. The ratio of water to air varies from bracers to bracers. The wearer must learn the exact ratio of water to air used to create the bracers he wears.
Effect: The bracers grant the wearer the ability to breathe underwater for a period equal to 10 minutes times the thread rank. This ability costs the wearer 2 points of Strain.

CRYSTAL SPEAR

Maximum Threads: 2
Spell Defense: 19

As the name indicates, these magical items are spears made of solid crystal. The shafts of the spears are pentagonal (five-sided) and polished to a fine sheen. The head of the spear has a rougher finish similar to that of the Devastator spear, also made of crystal. The magic of the spear keeps the blade razor-sharp.



Thread Ranks

Rank 1 **Cost:** 300
Key Knowledge: Crystal spears were created by troll weaponsmiths in ancient times to arm the crystal raiders in their attacks against Theran ships. No one knows how many were created or remain intact. The trolls used each spear for a single attack. Each crystal spear is Named by its creator. The wielder must learn the Name of the spear.
Effect: The spear inflicts damage of STR + 5. The range of the spear is the same as that of a mundane spear.

Rank 2 **Cost**: 500
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the spear's creator.
Effect: The damage of the spear increases to STR + 6.

Rank 3 **Cost**: 800
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the troll sky raider for whom the spear was created (the spear's first owner).
Effect: The spear's range increases by 25 yards in each range category: short range is now 2–40; Medium range is now 40–65; long range 65–125.

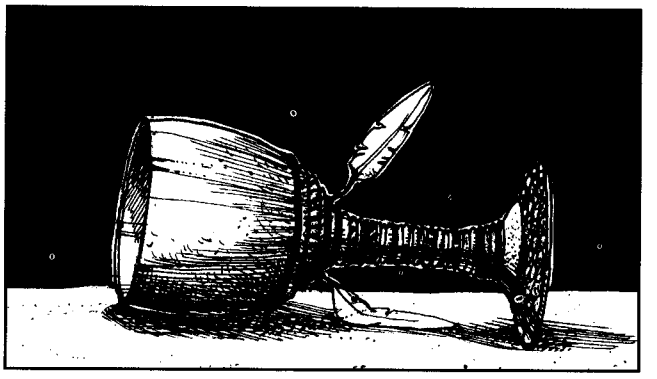
Rank 4 **Cost**: 1,300
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the first Theran killed by the spear.
Effect: The character may choose to take 1 point of Strain to boost his Defense Ratings by 2. The spear glows a pale blue while this bonus is in effect. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the rank of the thread woven to the spear or until the wielder attacks with the spear, whichever comes first.

Rank 5 **Cost**: 2,100
Effect: The spear increases the wielder's Initiative by 1 step when he or she uses the spear as a weapon.

Rank 6 **Cost**: 3,400
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the name of the last person to own the weapon.
Effect: The character may choose to take 2 points of Strain to increase the damage of the spear by 2 steps. The spear glows a bright red when this bonus is in effect. The effect lasts for only one attack.

Rank 7 **Cost**: 5,500
Deed: The wielder must make a pilgrimage to the trollmoot to which the spear's creator, and most likely, first owner, belonged. At the trollmoot, the character must swear a blood-magic oath with the trollmoot's leader and take 2 points of permanent damage. This Deed is worth 3,400 Legend Points.
Effect: The spear negates the use of armor and always causes a Wound when it hits a target.

Rank 8 **Cost**: 8,900
Deed: The wielder must command an airship in an attack. During the attack the character must invoke the Names of the creator, the original owner, and the trollmoot from which they came, then re-Name the spear in his or her own Name.This Deed is worth 5,500 Legend Points.
Effect: At a cost of 5 points of Strain, the wielder can cause fear in his enemies and rally his own troops. This effect causes the spear to glow bright white, the light pulsing like a heartbeat. All allies of the wielder within 100 yards gain the following: +1 step to Initiative, +1 step to Attack Tests, and +1 to all Defense Ratings (including Spell and Social Defenses). To hit the wielder of the spear, an attacker must roll an Excellent success on the Attack Test. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the thread rank or until the wielder uses the spear to attack.



WINDLING CUP OF FRIENDSHIP

Maximum Threads: 5
Spell Defense: 13

These small (windling-sized), carved wooden cups sit atop a long wooden stem. Thin woven cords of various colors are braided around the stem, usually in shades of green and brown, though brighter colors such as blue, red, and yellow sometimes are used.

Thread Ranks

Rank 1 **Cost**: 200
Key Knowledge: These small cups are made by windling villages all across Barsaive for use in community ceremonies. Though the cups were originally used only by windlings, that race has recently begun crafting friendship cups to use when solidifying relations with other Name-giver races.

Each cup is Named when created. The character must learn the Name of the windling friendship cup.
Effect: The cup fills on command with either clear water or windling wine when its name is spoken.

Rank 2 **Cost**: 300
Key Knowledge: The character must discover the windling clan or tribe from which the friendship cup originated.
Effect: The character adds +1 step to any Charisma or Charisma-based Talent Test made against any non-windling Name-giver races.

Rank 3 **Cost**: 500
Key Knowledge: Each cup has a special windling Name. The character must learn that Name.
Effect: The character adds +1 step to any Charisma or Charisma-based Talent Test made against windlings.

Rank 4 **Cost**: 800
Deed: The character must share a drink with a windling he has never met, both parties drinking from the same cup. The Deed is only successful if the two part as friends who have shared tales with one another.
Effect: If the cup's owner shares wine from the cup with a stranger, the stranger's attitude toward the cup's owner improves by one degree.

Rank 5 **Cost**: 1,300
Deed: The character must discover the Name of the last person to own the cup.
Effect: The character adds +2 steps to Charisma and Charisma-related Talent Tests made against windlings.

Rank 6 **Cost**: 2,100
Key Knowledge: The character must discover how the previous owner came into possession of the cup.
Effect: The character adds +3 steps to Charisma and Charisma-related Talent Tests made against windlings.

Rank 7 **Cost**: 3,400
Key Knowledge: Each cup has a special command word in the windling language. The character must discover that word.
Effect: The cup fills on command with a windling-sized healing potion. Anyone larger than a windling who drinks it receives only +4 steps to one Recovery Test. This potion does not heal Wounds. If a windling drinks the potion, it has the same effect as a healing potion (see **ED**, p. 258).

Rank 8 **Cost**: 5,500
Deed: The character must visit the village or clan where the cup was fashioned and return the cup to the village elders. In a formal ritual known as the windling friendship cup ceremony, the character receives the cup back from the village elders. This is not automatic, however. The village may require that a second Deed be accomplished before the ceremony takes place to allow the cup's holder to prove his worthiness to own the cup. The cup ceremony is an elaborate ritual, originally used by windling villages when joining with or swearing loyalty to another village. Since the Scourge most windling villages remain isolated. They view all who approach as enemies rather than potential friends and so the ceremony has been largely forgotten. Part of the Deed is to convince the villagers to perform the ritual, which involves blood magic oaths (most often a blood-sworn oath between the two villages' leaders). In this case, the cup's holder must take this oath with the village's leader.

The ritual concludes with a wind dance, a three-hour long celebration in which participants dance both on land and in the air. The Name-givers bound to the ground can only perform the land-based movements of the dance, but are asked to mimic the flying movements as best they can. This Deed is worth 3,400 Legend Points.
Effect: The cup can grant its owner temporary versions of many windling racial abilities. These versions are less powerful than the racial ability being mimicked, and the cup holder must take Strain to use them (unlike the windlings, who use the abilities naturally). In this sense, the abilities granted are temporary. These abilities include increased physical defense, astral sensitive sight, and flight. The cupholder can only use one of these abilities at a time. Each use of each ability costs the cup holder 2 points of Strain. The abilities function as follows.

Increased Physical Defense: The cup holder's Physical Defense increases by 2 for a number of rounds equal to the thread rank. When this time elapses, the cup holder can use this ability again, at a further cost of 2 points of Strain.

Astral-Sensitive Flight: This works as the racial ability described on p. 54 of the **Earthdawn** rulebook. This ability can be used for a number of rounds equal to the thread rank. The cup holder can use the ability again by taking another 2 points of Strain.

Flight: This is a limited version of the ability windlings have to fly. This ability allows the cup holder to fly 10 yards during a Combat Round. This distance can be increased by the cup holder taking more Strain: for each additional point of Strain, the cup holder can increase the distance by 10 yards per round, up to a maximum distance of 10 times the thread rank in yards per round. This ability can only be used once per day.

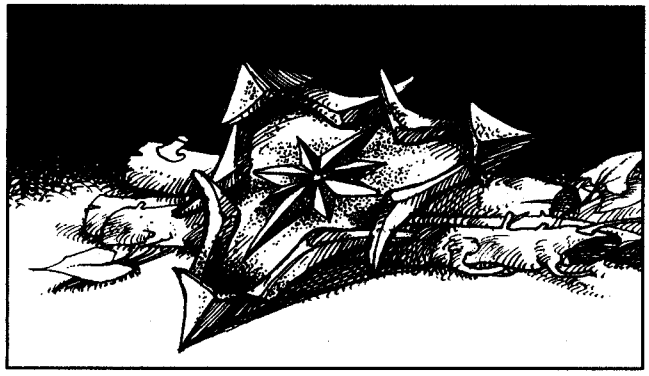
UNIQUE TREASURE

Unique treasure describes one-of-a-kind magical items. If one of these treasures is destroyed, it will never exist in this world again.

DENNA'S BROOCH

Maximum Threads: 2
Spell Defense: 15

Denna's Brooch is made of silver edged with fine gold. The shape of the brooch is an inverted triangle, two inches to each side. In the center of the triangle is a starburst fashioned from red jewels.



Thread Ranks

Rank 1 **Cost**: 200
Key Knowledge: Denna was an elven elementalist who lived in Wyrm Wood before the Scourge. Though she left the Wyrm Wood to find surer protection against the Horrors, she remained loyal in mind and heart to the Elven Court, hoping it would survive the coming devastation. Determined to help if she could, Denna studied elemental wood and its magics. Before she left Blood Wood, Denna's father, one of Queen Alachia's advisors, gave her this brooch to remind her of her home. The wielder must learn that the brooch is Denna's Brooch.
Effect: The brooch adds +1 to the wielder's rank in Spellcasting when casting elementalist spells.

Rank 2 **Cost**: 300
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the spellcasting Discipline that Denna followed.
Effect: The brooch adds +2 to the wielder's rank in Spellcasting when casting elementalist spells.

Rank 3 **Cost**: 500
Key Knowledge: Denna also undertook the task of recording the history of the Elven Court from the separation of the Court from Shosara to the present. The wielder must learn the Name of Denna's father.
Effect: The brooch adds +1 step to any research-based Perception Tests the wielder makes while researching any aspect of the history of Barsaive.

Rank 4 **Cost**: 800
Effect: The brooch adds +1 step to the wielder's rank in Thread Weaving when casting elementalist spells.

Rank 5 **Cost**: 1,300
Deed: The wielder must travel to the site of Denna's home within Wyrm Wood, now Blood Wood, and remain there for five days and nights. During this time, the wielder can take no action against any living denizen of the Blood Wood. This deed is worth 2,100 Legend Points.
Effect: The brooch adds +2 steps to any research-based Perception Tests the wielder makes while researching any aspect of the history of Barsaive.

Rank 6 **Cost**: 2100
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the last person to weave a thread to the brooch.
Effect: The brooch adds +3 steps to any research-based Perception Tests the wielder makes when researching an aspect of the history of the Elven Court or its legends.

Rank 7 **Cost**: 3,400
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn where Denna traveled after leaving Wyrm Wood.
Effect: The brooch adds + 2 steps to all Spellcasting and Thread Weaving Tests made by the wielder while within the confines of the Blood Wood. Add +3 steps when casting elementalist spells that involve wood or plant life.

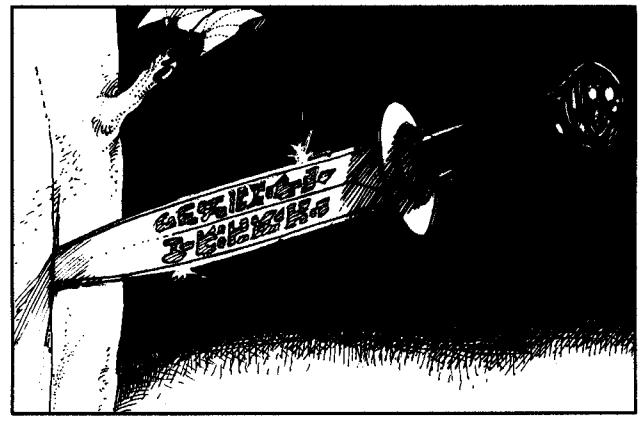
FARLISS' DAGGER

Maximum Threads: 2
Spell Defense: 10

Farliss' Dagger has an ebony handle distinguished by a deep blue gem set in its pommel. The blade is made of shining steel, with blackened runes etched on either side.

Thread Ranks

Rank 1 **Cost**: 100
Key Knowledge: Farliss the Great once wielded this dagger. A troubadour in the time before the Scourge, Farliss told stories describing the legends of the Martyr Scholar and of Jaron the Everliving and he personally battled the Horrors throughout Barsaive. The wielder must learn that this is Farliss' dagger.
Effect: The dagger inflicts STR + 4 damage.



Rank 2 **Cost**: 200
Key Knowledge: In the early days of the Scourge, Farliss traveled all across the province battling Horrors. At the end, when he was forced to retreat into a kaer, he chose to join the village of Tardim. The new wielder must learn where Farliss lived during the Scourge, and how he died.
Effect: The dagger's damage increases to STR + 5.

Rank 3 **Cost**: 300
Key Knowledge: Farliss fought a series of confrontations with a Horror Named R'Ishann. Though he was constantly searching for a way to finally defeat the Horror, Farliss only obtained the dagger, which he learned was destined to destroy Horrors, between their final two battles. Farliss managed to wound the Horror using the dagger. The wielder must learn the Name of the Horror from whom Farliss drew blood while using the dagger.
Effect: The dagger now causes a Wound with every successful attack made against Horrors and Horror constructs.

Rank 4 **Cost**: 500
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the person who last owned the dagger, and where he or she now lives or is buried.
Effect: The dagger's damage increases to STR + 6.

Rank 5 **Cost**: 800
Deed: The wielder must go to Farliss' tomb. There he must pledge to spread the legend of Farliss across Barsaive, sealing this pledge with a blood magic ritual during which he takes 2 permanent points of damage. This Deed is worth 500 Legend Points.
Effect: The dagger can now detect the presence of Horrors and Horror constructs. The wielder must make a Perception Test against the Spell Defense of the Horror or Horror construct. If the test is successful, the gem in the pommel of the dagger glows a faint blue. The range of this ability is 500 yards. This ability does not provide direction to the Horror, but simply indicates that a Horror is within range.

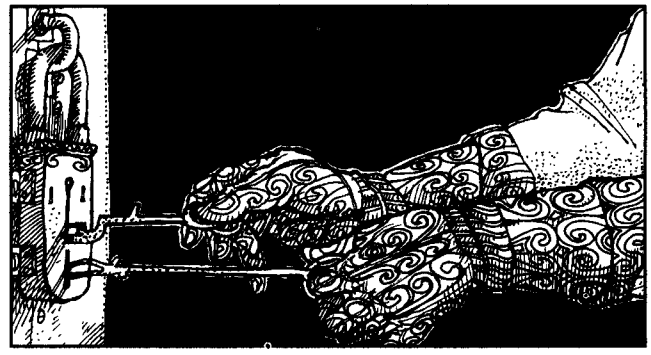
KOLLDAR'S GLOVES

Maximum Threads: 3
Spell Defense: 25

These gloves are made of fine, light brown leather, stitched with an intricate pattern in bright blue thread.

Thread Ranks

Rank 1 **Cost**: 500
Key Knowledge: These gloves belonged to Kolldar the thief, an ork who lived in the ancient ork kingdom of Cara Fahd. The wielder must learn that the Name of the gloves is Kolldar's Gloves.
Effect: Though sized for an ork, the gloves magically adjust to fit any size hand. The gloves grant the user the Lock Pick talent at Rank 1. If the wielder already has this talent, increase his rank by 1.



Rank 2 **Cost**: 800
Effect: The gloves grant the user the Lock Pick talent at Rank 2. If the wielder already has this talent, increase his rank by 2.

Rank 3 **Cost**: 1,300
Key Knowledge: The gloves once belonged to a wealthy merchant who flaunted the gloves in public. Kolldar saw the merchant's attitude as a challenge, and stole the gloves to use in his training as a thief adept. The wielder must learn the Name of the person from whom Kolldar stole the gloves.
Effect: The gloves grant the user the Picking Pockets talent at Rank 1. If the wielder already has this talent, his rank increases by 1.

Rank 4 **Cost**: 2,100
Effect: The gloves grant the user the Picking Pockets talent at Rank 2. If the wielder already has this talent, his rank increases by 2.

Rank 5 **Cost**: 3,400
Deed: Kolldar became a legendary figure before the Scourge, and many tales tell of his wondrous abilities, each tale more glorious than the last. The wielder must learn the tale of one of Kolldar's legendary feats and tell the story to a group of no less than 100, among which one-tenth must be thieves, mundane or adept. This Deed is worth 2,100 Legend Points.
Effect: The gloves can help the wearer talk his way out of troublesome situations. The wearer adds +1 step to any Charisma or Charisma-related talents he or she uses to get or stay out of trouble.

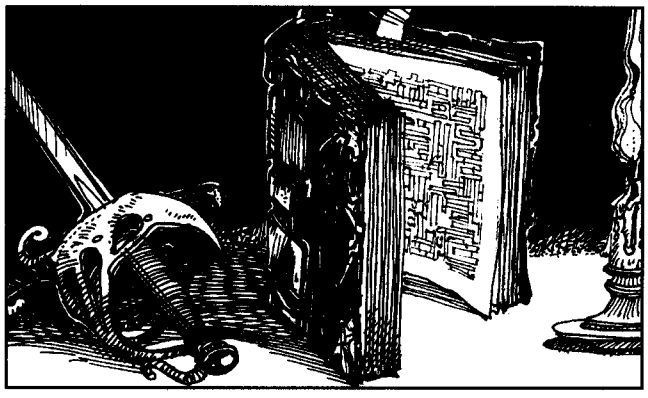
Rank 6 **Cost**: 5,500
Key Knowledge: Kolldar was also known for his talent for dealing with traps, both magical and mundane. His prowess in this area is generally attributed to his gloves, which the ork considered a lucky charm. The wearer must learn the nickname Kolldar gave his gloves.
Effect: The gloves grant the user the Detect Trap talent at Rank 1. If the wearer already has this talent, his rank increases by 1.

Rank 7 **Cost**: 8,900
Effect: The gloves grant the user the Disarm Trap talent at Rank 1. If the wearer already has this talent, his rank increases by 1.

TOME OF MEMORY

Maximum Threads: 3
Spell Defense: 14

The Tome of Memory is a small book, only four inches by six inches by two inches thick. The covers of the book are a flat black, and the edges of the pages are blood red. The tome looks very old and worn, as if it would fall apart if not handled properly.



Thread Ranks

Rank 1 **Cost**: 200
Key Knowledge: The Tome of Memory was created by the Theran nethermancer Ulan Ya before the Scourge. Unsure of what to expect from the Scourge and afraid of losing or forgetting his skills, he created this tome to "help him maintain the facilities to manipulate the facets of magic." The players must learn that this is Ulan Ya's Tome of Memory.
Effect: The wielder of the tome gains +1 step to any Read and Write Magic or Read and Write Language Tests. If the wielder has neither of these talents, he adds 1 to any Perception Tests made when researching lost knowledge or legends.

Rank 2 **Cost**: 300
Effect: Each page of the Tome of Memory contains a pictograph, drawing, maze, or other visual puzzle. In order to "read" each page of this tome and decipher the puzzles, the character must make a Perception Test against the Spell Defense of the tome. An Average success means the wielder understands 25 percent of the puzzles. For each level of success beyond Good, the wielder understands an additional 25 percent of the puzzles. For example, an Excellent success means he understands 75 percent, while an Extraordinary success means he understands 100 percent of the book's contents.

The character can repeatedly attempt to understand the puzzles until he or she solves all of them, though any attempt after the first on any single day costs 1 point of Strain. The character adds +1 step to Read and Write Magic or Read and Write Language Tests for every 25 percent of the puzzles understood, up to a maximum of +4 steps. If the wielder has neither of these talents, add +1 to Perception Tests made when researching lost knowledge or legends. This bonus lasts for a number of days equal to the thread rank, after which the puzzle must be studied again.

Rank 3 **Cost**: 500
Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the last person to weave a thread to the Tome of Memory.
Effect: The character adds +1 to his Spell Defense against nethermancy spells.

Rank 4 **Cost**: 800
Key Knowledge: The character must learn how it was that the Tome of Memory left Thera and ended up in Barsaive.
Effect: The character adds +2 to his Spell Defense against nethermancy spells.

Rank 5 **Cost**: 1,300
Deed: The character must create a puzzle and draw it on a blank page in the Tome. In order for the puzzle to remain in the book, the character needs an Extraordinary success in a Spellcasting Test made against the Spell Defense of the Tome. Inscribing the puzzle into the book requires a blood magic ritual, during which the wielder suffers a Wound and 1 point of permanent damage as a result. This Deed is worth 800 Legend Points. No Karma Points may be spent on this test.
Effect: The wielder can create a spell matrix within the Tome, attuning the matrix to a specific spell at the time of its creation. The spell matrix can be reattuned, but each attempt costs 2 points of Strain damage. The rank of the spell matrix is equal to the rank of the thread attached to the Tome.

CREATURES

. . .and what looked like an innocent monkey
pounced on our guide and proceeded to rip him to shreds. . .
—From the adventuring journal of Thom Hammerblade

The **Earthdawn** rulebook described nearly 40 creatures for gamemasters to pit against their adventurers. Most of those creatures may be encountered anywhere in Barsaive. This section describes additional creatures usually found only in specific areas within Barsaive. Under normal circumstances, these creatures appear only in the areas noted in the following descriptions below. One exception to this rule is the drake, whose apparent relationship to the great dragon spreads them across the province.

CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

The following section describes eight new creatures, including game information and descriptions of their habitats and behavior. For a refresher on using the creature statistics, see page 286 of the **Earthdawn** rulebook.

BLOOD MONKEY

Attributes

DEX: 9	**STR:** 5	**TOU:** 7
PER: 5	**WIL:** 4	**CHA:** 4

Initiative: 9 (12, see below)
Number of Attacks: 3
Attack: 9
Damage: 9
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 7
Armor: NA
Mystic Armor: 3
Knockdown: 10
Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 42
Wound Threshold: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Combat Movement: 42
Full Movement: 85 (in trees)
42 (on the ground)

Legend Points: 100
Equipment: None
Loot: May find bits of treasure, items, weapons, and armor from the last unfortunate adventurers who passed this way.

Commentary

Blood monkeys are small simian creatures that inhabit Blood Wood. Barely two feet tall, they have prehensile tails that extend an additional two feet beyond their overall body length. Their entire bodies are covered with a fine, deep red fur. Though blood monkeys may seem to be harmless, they have proven quite vicious. Each finger ends in a sharp claw, and long, needle-sharp fangs protrude from both their lower and upper jaws.

Blood monkeys are territorial and will attack single individuals as often as they do entire caravans of wagons. In the initial attack, up to 15 of the strongest males drop silently from the thick treetops of Blood Wood, almost always surprising their victims.

On the initial attack, blood monkeys use an Initiative of Step 12. To determine if they are surprised, each target makes a Perception Test against the blood monkeys' Initiative step number.

If any of the blood monkeys' initial attacks cause damage to their victims (because of the nature of the attack, damage always draws blood), the monkeys screech to summon additional groups of 5 to 15 blood monkeys, which will arrive every other Combat Round. If the characters can defend themselves successfully from the initial attack and counterattack, the monkeys will try to escape.

Blood monkeys attack with their claws and by biting their victims. They can attack up to three times in a Combat Round, using either clawing or biting multiple times.

Blood monkeys live in groups of up to 100, but legends tells of attacks by multiple groups numbering into the thousands.

BROCCHA

Attributes

DEX: 6	**STR:** 5	**TOU:** 5
PER: 6	**WIL:** 6	**CHA:** 5

Initiative: 6
Number of Attacks: 4
Attack: 8
Damage: Bite: 4
Claw (x 2): 5
Tail: 6

Number of Spells: 1
Spellcasting: 7
Effect: Fire Spit (9)

Death Rating: 24
Wound Threshold: 5
Unconsciousness Rating: 15

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 7

Armor: NA
Mystic Armor: 1
Knockdown: 8
Recovery Tests: 2

Combat Movement: 19
Full Movement: 38

Legend Points: 95
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

Broccha live on what are known as fool's islands in Death's Sea. Broccha are reptilian in nature, with that species' characteristic snake-like head, four stocky legs, and long tail lined with short spikes. The creature's skin has the odor and texture of the clenkas it lies on, a resemblance accentuated by small, bright-red welts, each roughly an inch in diameter, that dot the broccha's skin. These welts show the elemental fire that runs through the broccha's blood. Their coloration allows broccha to lie motionless on the fool's islands and to blend in perfectly with their environment. Intruders never know the creature is there until too late. Though they look slow and sluggish, they are deadly opponents, made even more so by their two unique attack forms, the tail strike and the fire spit.

Broccha use their spiked, four-foot-long tails in two ways: as a third melee weapon, attacking any character in reach of their tail, or in a defensive tail frenzy. When the tail is used as a melee weapon, treat the tail attack like any other attack. Because a broccha can attack anyone within range, it can attack two characters at once. The tail frenzy is a defensive posture in which the creature whips its tail around in random patterns to keep attacks out of range. The tail frenzy is not an attack, though it causes damage to anyone who gets in the way. The main danger of the tail frenzy is the chance that it will knock a character down. Any successful Attack Test made by the broccha during the tail frenzy means the attacked character must make a special Knockdown Test against a Difficulty Number 5. If the test is successful, the character remains standing. On a failure, the character falls onto molten rock.

The broccha's fire spit power acts as a limited version of the elementalist fireball spell. The broccha can spit fire any time it is not engaged in other melee combat, but may make only one attack that round. Tail frenzy is not considered melee combat. To use fire spit, the broccha makes a Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of the target character. If the test is successful, a sphere of fire two inches in diameter explodes, splashing all characters within 2 feet of the broccha. The gamemaster rolls the Effect dice, and all affected characters take a number of Damage Points equal to the die result. Because the substance of a fire spit sticks to its victims, the attack continues to cause damage equal to the result of the Effect Test for 3 more rounds. The heat from a fire spit is equal to a small campfire (see **Fire** rules, p. 207, **ED**) and can affect nearby targets, the victim's possessions, and the surrounding area. Mystic armor protects against fire spit.

Broccha apparently possess an unlimited capacity for fire spit, though the bright red welts on their skin seem to fade the more they use fire spit. Some tales tell of broccha that have no red welts and never use the fire spit attack, but we cannot begin to understand the implications of these rumors.

CROJEN

Attributes

DEX: 12	**STR:** 10	**TOU:** 9
PER: 6	**WIL:** 6	**CHA:** 4

Initiative: 12
Number of Attacks: 2 (3, see text)
Attack: 13
Damage: 12
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 11
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 6
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 4
Knockdown: 10
Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 50
Wound Threshold: 14
Unconsciousness Rating: 43 (see below)

Combat Movement: 70
Full Movement: 140

Legend Points: 190
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

Crojen are deadly predators that hunt in packs of five to ten males and females in the Servos and Liaj jungles. Small black tigers that resemble panther cubs even when fully grown, crojen are roughly two feet long and one foot tall at the shoulder. Their tails add another foot to their body length, though adventurers who have come into contact with them swear that these creatures are larger.

Crojen patiently hunt their prey for days if necessary, using both normal vision and astral-sensitive sight. This special power makes it hard to elude these creatures except by magic. Crojen have a ferocious bite-and-claw attack, which legend says can rip apart a full-grown troll in just over a minute. No armor can withstand a crojen attack.

A crojen that gets a taste of flesh and blood may go into a feeding frenzy. The gamemaster makes a Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number 7 for each round after a crojen makes a successful attack. On a result of less than 7, the crojen slips into a wild feeding frenzy. When in a feeding frenzy, crojen make three attacks per round. The third attack occurs at the end of the round, after all other combatants have taken their action. A character cannot reserve his action in order to move after the crojen's third attack; the crojen's third attack is always the last attack of a Combat Round. Once in a feeding frenzy, a crojen will not break off an attack and cannot be knocked unconscious. Its Unconsciousness Rating becomes the same as its Death Rating, and the only way to stop one is to kill it.

The feeding frenzy will last as long as there is fresh meat. When there is nothing else left to attack or eat, the crojen will leave the area.

DRAKES

Attributes

DEX: 12	**STR:** 15	**TOU:** 12
PER: 15	**WIL:** 17	**CHA:** 16

Initiative: 15
Number of Attacks: 3*
Attack: 15
Damage: Bite: 18
Claw (x 2): 19
Weapon: (by type)*

Physical Defense: 16
Spell Defense: 18
Social Defense: 17
Armor: 15 (Rating of armor)*
Mystic Armor: 9 (affected by armor)*
Knockdown: 20 (15)*
Recovery Tests: 6

Number of Spells: 2

Spellcasting: 16
Effect: See Commentary

Death Rating: 62
Wound Threshold: 18
Unconsciousness Rating: 54

Combat Movement: 120
Full Movement: 240

Karma Points: 18

Karma Steps: 10

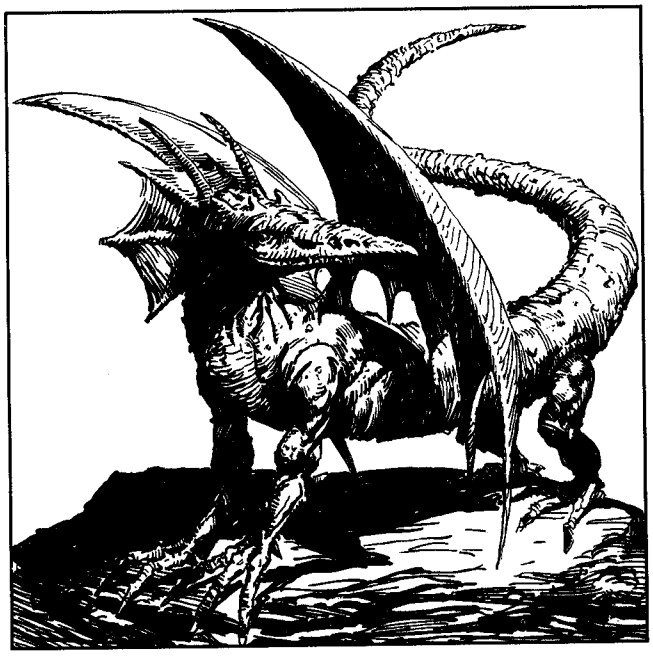
Powers: Armored Scales 15, Astral Sight 10, Dispel Magic 12, Disrupt Fate 5, Dragon Breath 12, Fear 15, Regeneration 5, Spells (see below), Suppress Magic 3

Legend Points: 3,400
Equipment: Varies in human form, but appropriate to race.
Loot: Scales, blood. Worth D6 x 5 silver pieces. Also counts as treasure worth Legend Points.
*This statistic for drake's Name-giver race form.

Commentary

Legends tell us of the existence of drakes, and legends form the basis of facts in the province of Barsaive. No one has reported encountering drakes in post-Scourge Barsaive, but we assume that since the dragons survived, the drakes did too. Nonetheless, all the information presented here is based on legends.

Drakes are small, five- to seven-foot long dragons, the smallest of dragonkind. Their tails make up half the length of their bodies. Legends mostly speak of these creatures in their shape-changed form as one of the Name-giver races. All the Name-giver races have stories of one of their own turning into a drake, though t'skrang legends about drakes



claim the dragons desperately want to become t'skrang. All legends place the drakes near or in the Dragon Mountains.

In their Name-giver form, drakes talk and act just like the race they represent and sometimes possess various skills and magical abilities. Some, like the weaponsmith Luc Nagol, have even been masters of a Discipline. Luc Nagol, who was a drake, taught the villagers of Ulog near the Dragon Mountains to defend themselves against the invading ork scorchers, then amazed them by turning into his dragon form and flying away.

Drakes are believed to possess spell ability as great as that of dragons and share many of the dragons' special powers (see p. 291, **ED**, for more information on dragon powers and magic abilities). Though no records exist of a drake fighting in its dragon form, we assume that they use the claw-and-bite attack of all other dragons. In Name-giver form, they fight using only the weapons and spells available to them in that form.

Drakes in Name-giver form can use limited dragon powers, including Astral Sight, Dispel Magic, Regeneration, and Suppress Magic, and can cast spells in both dragon and Name-giver form. Drakes can be multi-Disciplined in Name-giver form, but cannot use the talents of a Discipline while in dragon form.

Based on the small sampling of known drakes from legends, we calculate that 80 percent of drakes are spellcasters, choosing the Discipline of illusionist (30 percent), elementalist (30 percent), wizard (20 percent) or any combination of the three (20 percent). Most drakes have mastered the spells and matrices of their Disciplines up to Circle 6.

FIRE EAGLES

Attributes
DEX: 11 **STR:** 5 **TOU:** 4
PER: 5 **WIL:** 5 **CHA:** 6

Initiative: 11
Number of Attacks: 3
Attack: 8
Damage: Claw (x 2): 6
Beak: 5

Number of Spells: 1
Spellcasting: 6
Effect: 8 (for fire trail)

Death Rating: 30

Wound Threshold: 7

Unconsciousness Rating: 21

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8

Armor: NA
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 7
Recovery Tests: 2

Combat Movement:
110 (flying)/50 (ground)
Full Movement:
220 (flying)

Legend Points: 85
Equipment: None
Loot: Fire eagle eggs, fire eagle feathers

Commentary

Fire eagles are predatory birds that nest atop the bizarre rock formations that form along the shores of Death's Sea. Their twelve-foot wingspan makes these birds resemble large eagles with continually flaming feathers, the flames fueled by the elemental fire in their blood. The razor-sharp claws of fire eagles are a shiny black and usually more than four inches long. These birds are fiercely territorial; only one person has ever claimed to have tamed one, and that was the great beastmaster Nil Tasio of the Dragon Mountains.

Fire eagles make swooping attacks (see p. 199, **ED**), but do not take the –2 penalty to their Physical Defense. They attack primarily with their claws. A deadly side effect of the swooping attack is the trail of fire that follows a fire eagle. After it attacks, the fire eagle makes a Spellcasting Test. If the result is greater than the target's Spell Defense, the target takes damage from the fire. Mystic Armor and various magical forms of protection from fire are effective against this damage.

If encountered on the ground, a fire eagle will attack with its beak and claws. The fire eagle generates fire equal to a large campfire (see **Fire** rules, p. 207, **ED**).

Fire eagle feathers do not remain on fire if taken from its body; the fire is a side-effect of the elemental fire that courses through its blood. The feathers possess certain other qualities that alchemists, elementalists, and sages find valuable, however, and can be sold for considerable profit. Fire eagle eggs throb with elemental fire. They are extremely rare and extremely valuable, mostly because many magic items based on elemental fire contain pieces of fire eagle egg.

FIRE WRAITHS

Attributes

DEX: 7	**STR:** 6	**TOU:** 7
PER: 6	**WIL:** 9	**CHA:** 5

Initiative: 7
Number of Attacks: 2
Attack: 8
Damage: 8
Number of Spells: 1 (1)
Spellcasting: 8
Effect: 12

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 10
Social Defense: 10
Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 3
Knockdown: 7
Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 42
Wound Threshold: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Combat Movement: 38
Full Movement: 75

Legend Points: 150
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

Fire wraiths figure in most legends about Death's Sea, where they are said to lie in wait for over-confident adventurers. Similar in shape and size to demiwraiths, fire wraiths are composed entirely of living flame and are found only near Death's Sea. Their ghostly movement and appearance create a haunting experience for those confronted by fire wraiths. The most-repeated legend says that these creatures represent the souls of the first to die when Death was imprisoned.

Many of the general characteristics of the fire wraith are the same as those of the demiwraith (p. 290, **ED**). Because fire wraiths are not true undead beings, increase their Spell Defense by 5 against spells specifically designed to target undead beings. They are immune to all fire-based attacks, but decrease their Spell Defense by 5 against water-based spells.

Fire wraiths can cast any and all of the following spells: Fireball (p. 163, **ED**), Flame Flash (p. 184, **ED**), Ignite (p. 184, **ED**), Boil Water (p. 159, **ED**), and Drastic Temperature (p. 163, **ED**).

Fire wraiths attack with their flame-covered limbs, which cause physical damage and a special type of damage called fire touch. To cause fire touch damage, the fire wraith makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, the target feels as if he or she is covered in fire. The victim will take 1 point of damage each round until fire touch is dispelled or the character rolls a Willpower Test with a result of 11 or better. The character's Initiative decreases by 2 steps each round until it no longer has Initiative and can only roll on the ground trying to put out the fire or run wildly about. Treat fire touch as a Circle 3 spell for dispelling.

In one round a fire wraith can either throw a spell or fight in a round, but it cannot do both. A fire wraith causes Step 9 fire damage for purposes of heat and touch (see p. 207, **ED**).

VIRAAS

Attributes

DEX: 8	**STR:** 10	**TOU:** 10
PER: 5	**WIL:** 5	**CHA:** 7

Initiative: 8
Number of Attacks: 3
Attack: 10
Damage: Bite: 12
Claw (x 2): 10

Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Death Rating: 54
Wound Threshold: 15
Unconsciousness Rating: 47

Physical Defense: 13
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 9

Armor: 4
Mystic Armor: 1
Knockdown: 10
Recovery Tests: 5

Combat Movement: 50
Full Movement: 100

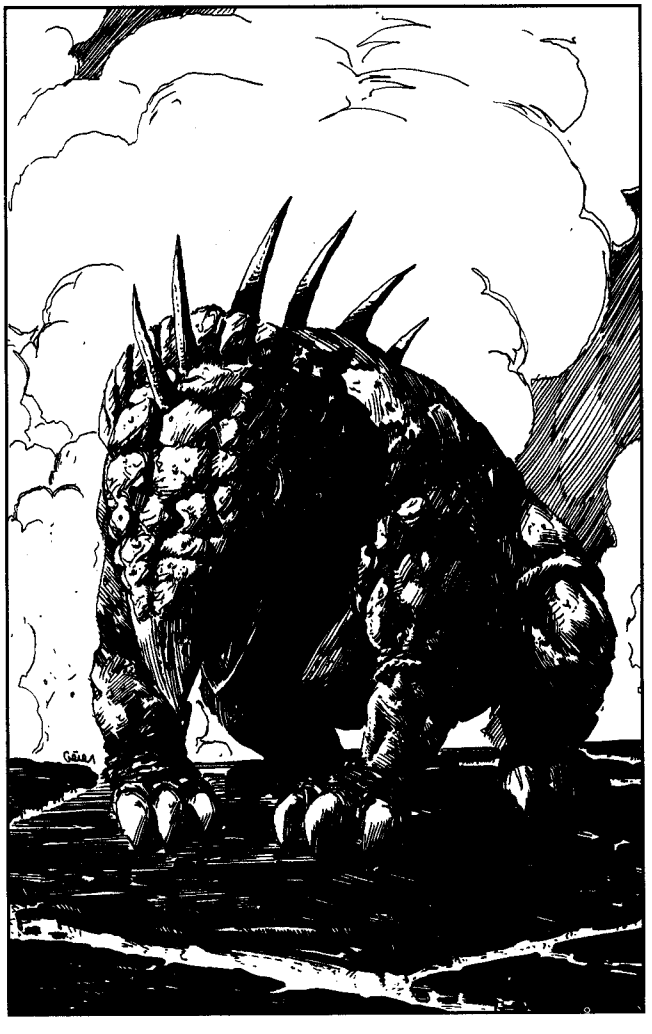
Legend Points: 190
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

Viraas are lizards that live on the massed clenkas in Death's Sea known as fool's islands, usually hiding in relatively cool pockets beneath the surface of the island. Viraas measure five feet long, and stand three feet high at the shoulder. Their thick skin is most often a dark beige or tan color, and is covered with what appear to be warts. These are actually scars from touching the hottest molten stone of Death's Sea. Viraas are very rare. Legends state that Death kept them as pets and that they await his return. Death supposedly loved these creatures so well because they can kill a person with a single bite.

Viraas have incredibly powerful jaws and sharp teeth, capable of penetrating nearly all forms of armor. Viraas attack with their claws and by biting. All successful bite attacks are armor-defeating. Viraas are immune to the effects of all fire-based attacks, both magic and mundane. Because all recorded encounters with viraas have taken place near areas rich in elemental fire, we assume they protect it instinctively.

Viraas armor has no effect against water-based attacks. Attacks made with elemental water can actually daze them into lethargy. An elemental water attack that succeeds with a Good or better result causes the viraas to lose 1 step to its Dexterity and all related stats.



WITHERFANG

Attributes
DEX: 7 **STR:** 5 **TOU:** 6
PER: 4 **WIL:** 4 **CHA:** 4

Initiative: 4
Number of Attacks: 2
Attack: 8
Damage: Bite: 5 (see below)
Tail: 5

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 5
Armor: NA
Mystic Armor: 0
Knockdown: NA
Recovery Tests: 2

Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: 7
Effect: 12

Death Rating: 36
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 29

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Legend Points: 90
Equipment: NA
Loot: None

Commentary

Large snakes inhabiting Blood Wood, witherfangs have thick bodies terminating in flared heads (similar to a cobra). These creatures were named for the powerful poison transmitted through a stinger at the end of their tails, capable of withering a victim's limb to uselessness. Their standard coloration varies, though most are a dull gray-green. What makes witherfangs unique among snakes is an entire mouth of teeth they use to hold their victims immobile.

A witherfang attacks by biting a victim and locking its jaws, clamping onto the victim until it can coil around and attack with its tail stinger. The bite attack inflicts 5 points of damage each round until the witherfang's grip is broken. To break a successful witherfang bite, the target must attack with an Armor-Defeating Hit. A successful Armor-Defeating Hit breaks the mouth grip, but does not prevent a tail attack.

The poison of a witherfang affects the victim like the Circle 5 nethermancer spell of wither limb (see p. 180, **ED**). After a successful tail attack, the witherfang makes a Spellcasting Test. The victim uses that test result as the Difficulty Number when making a Poison Resistance Test (see pp. 207–208, **ED**). If the Poison Resistance Test fails, the target suffers the effect of the poison as in the Wither Limb spell (if the Damage Test inflicts a Wound, the bitten limb withers). No type of armor protects against the damage of this poison.

Only powerful healing magic can restore the limb to usefulness; the Circle 7 nethermancer spell of Reverse Withering (p. 182, **ED**) will heal the limb, for example. There is no known antidote to the poison.

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...You can't find it? I told you, use the index, man!

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KRILWORMS

GRIFFIN

FIRE EAGLES

CROJEN

BLOOD MONKEY

CHATKA BIRDS

FIRE-WRAITHS

WITHERFANG

LIGHTNING LIZARD

FIRE EAGLES

DEX: 11 STR: 5 TOU: 4
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 6

Initiative: 11
# of Attacks: 3
Attack: 8
Damage:
Claws (x 2): 6
Beak: 5
# of Spells: 1
Spellcasting: 6
Effect: 8 (for fire trail)

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Armor: NA
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 7
Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 30
Wound Threshold: 7
Unconsciousness Rating: 21

Combat Movement: 110 (flying)/50 (ground)
Full Movement: 220 (flying)

Legend Points: 85
Loot: Fire eagle eggs, fire eagle feathers

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GRIFFIN

DEX: 5 STR: 7 TOU: 9
PER: 6 WIL: 4 CHA: 5

Initiative: 7
# of Attacks: 2
Attack: 8
Damage: 12
# of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 4
Mystic Armor: 1
Knockdown: 8
Recovery Tests: 4

Death Rating: 50
Wound Threshold: 14
Unconsciousness Rating: 43

Combat Movement: 29
Full Movement: 57
Flight: 60/120* (see text)

Legend Points: 200
Loot: Beak and feathers, and 3D6 x 10 silver pieces. These items count as treasure worth Legend Points.

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KRILWORMS

DEX: 5 STR: 5 TOU: 5
PER: 6 WIL: 7 CHA: 1

Initiative: 4
# of Attacks: 1
Attack: 5
Damage: 6
# of Spells: (1)
Spellcasting: 8
Effect: Locate target

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 5
Recovery Tests: 1

Death Rating: 30
Wound Threshold: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 25

Combat Movement: 75
Full Movement: 150

Legend Points: 75
Loot: None

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CHATKA BIRDS

DEX: 8 STR: 3 TOU: 4
PER: 6 WIL: 7 CHA: 8

Initiative: 8
# of Attacks: 1
Attack: 9
Damage: 10
# of Spells: 1
Spellcasting: 12
Effect: 12

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 10
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 3
Knockdown: 6
Recovery Tests: 1

Death Rating: 30
Wound Threshold: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 21

Combat Movement: 60
Full Movement: 120

Legend Points: 200
Loot: None

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BLOOD MONKEY

DEX: 9 STR: 5 TOU: 7
PER: 5 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

Initiative: 9 (12)
# of Attacks: 3
Attack: 9
Damage: 9
# of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 7
Armor: NA
Mystic Armor: 3
Knockdown: 10
Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 42
Wound Threshold: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Combat Movement: 42
Full Move: 85 (in trees)/42 (on the ground)

Legend Points: 100
Loot: May find bits of treasure, items, weapons, and armor from the last unfortunate adventurers who passed this way.

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CROJEN

DEX: 12 STR: 10 TOU: 9
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 4

Initiative: 12
# of Attacks: 3
Attack: 13
Damage: 12
# of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 11
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 6
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 4
Knockdown: 10
Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 50
Wound Threshold: 14
Unconsciousness Rating: 43 (see text)

Combat Movement: 70
Full Movement: 140

Legend Points: 190
Loot: None

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LIGHTNING LIZARDS

DEX: 6 STR: 5 TOU: 5
PER: 9 WIL: 12 CHA: 5

Initiative: 7
# of Attacks: 1
Attack: 6
Damage: 7
# of Spells: (1)
Spellcasting: 12
Effect: (see text)

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 3
Mystic Armor: 4
Knockdown: 6
Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 38
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 65
Full Movement: 130

Legend Points: 150
Loot: Eyes worth 150 silver pieces each. The eyes count as treasure worth Legend Points.

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WITHERFANG

DEX: 7 STR: 5 TOU: 6
PER: 4 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

Initiative: 4
# of Attacks: 2
Attack: 8
Damage: Bite: 5
Tail: 5
# of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: 7
Effect: 12

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 5
Armor: NA
Mystic Armor: 0
Knockdown: NA
Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 36
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 29

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Legend Points: 90
Loot: None

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FIRE WRAITHS

DEX: 7 STR: 6 TOU: 7
PER: 6 WIL: 9 CHA: 5

Initiative: 7
# of Attacks: 2
Attack: 8
Damage: 8
# of Spells: 1(1)
Spellcasting: 8
Effect: 12

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 10
Social Defense: 10
Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 3
Knockdown: 7
Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 42
Wound Threshold: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Combat Movement: 38
Full Movement: 75

Legend Points: 150
Loot: None

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EARTH DAWN
GARGOYLE

EARTH DAWN
SHADOWMANT

SHADOWMANTS

DEX: 5 STR: 5 TOU: 6
PER: 4 WIL: 5 CHA: 4

Initiative: 7
# of Attacks: 1
Attack: 7
Damage: 7
# of Spells: 1 (Poison)
Spellcasting: 6
Effect: 9 (Poison)

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 4
Mystic Armor: 0
Knockdown: 6
Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 35
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 27

Combat Movement: 45
Full Movement: 90 (Flight)

Legend Points: 100
Loot: Stingers worth 1D10 x 10 silver pieces. The stingers count as treasure worth Legend Points.

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GARGOYLE

DEX: 8 STR: 18 TOU: 12
PER: 4 WIL: 5 CHA: 4

Initiative: 6
# of Attacks: 2
Attack: 11
Damage: 22
# of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 12
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 11
Armor: 13
Mystic Armor: 6
Knockdown: 18
Recovery Tests: 4

Death Rating: 55
Wound Threshold: 13
Unconsciousness Rating: 48

Combat Movement: 25
Full Movement: 50
Flight: 45/90* (see text)

Legend Points: 500
Loot: Horns, 5D6 x 10 silver pieces. These items count as treasure worth Legend Points.

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SPIKE BOMBS

WHIP OF DEFENSE

KEGEL'S SWORD

BRACERS OF ARAS

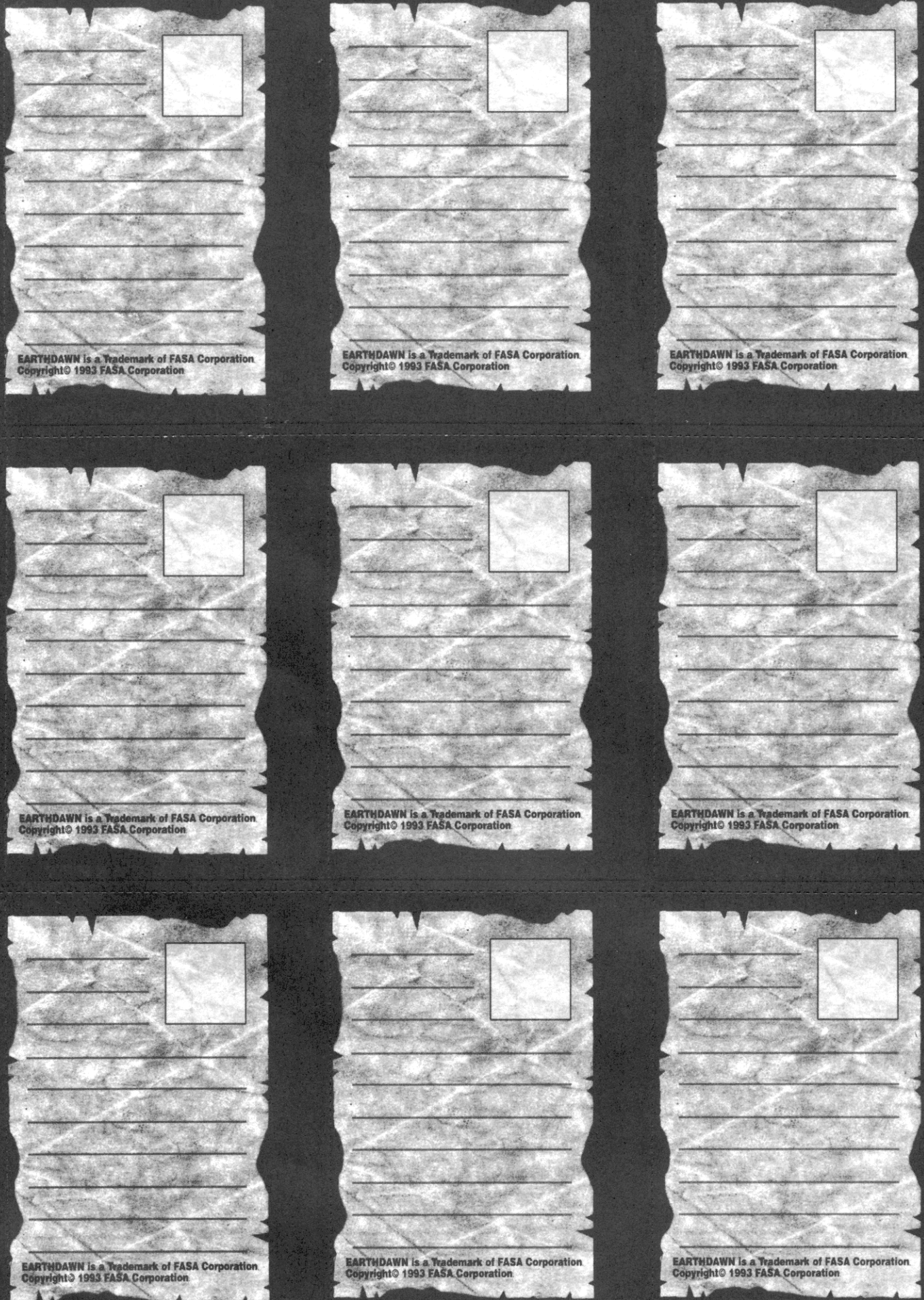
VENNA'S ARMOR

WAR HELM OF LANDIS

CRYSTAL SPELL BOX

CRYSTAL SPEAR

KOLLDAR'S GLOVES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DEVASTATOR SPEAR

COUNTERSPELL STAFF

TOME OF MEMORY

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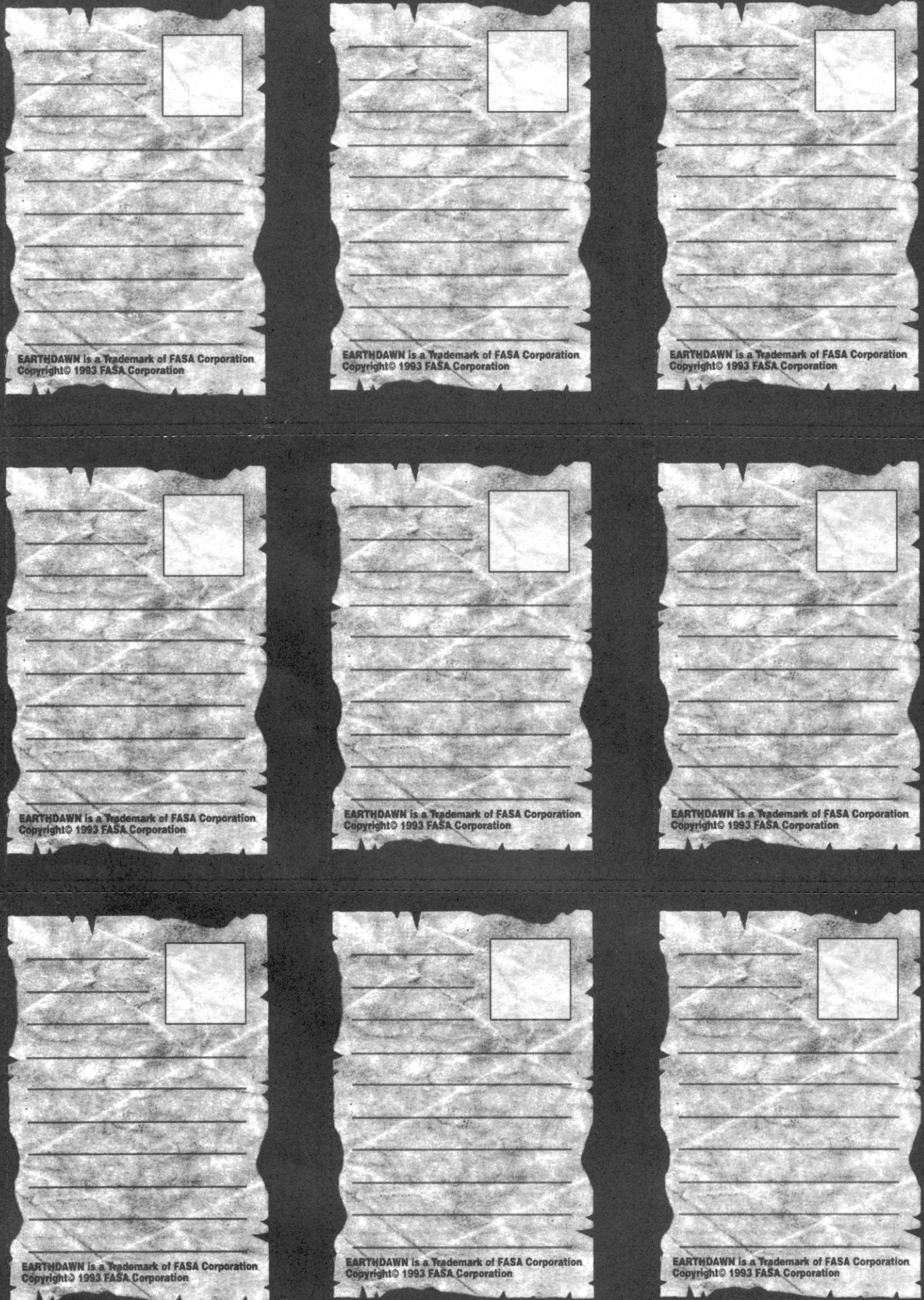
POTION OF LIFE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NIOKU'S BOW

LIGHTNING MACE

SPIKE GUANTLETS

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PURIFIER

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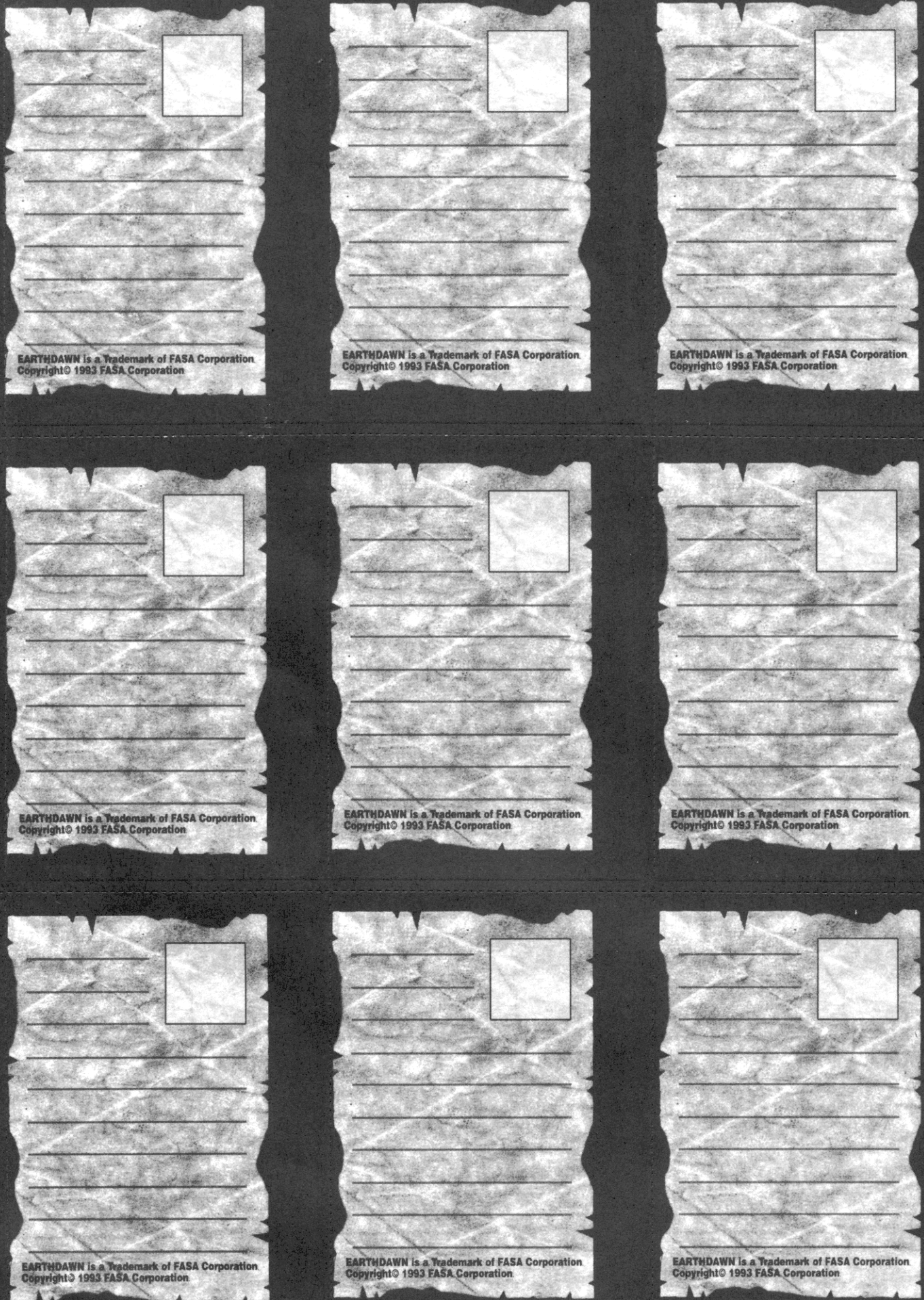
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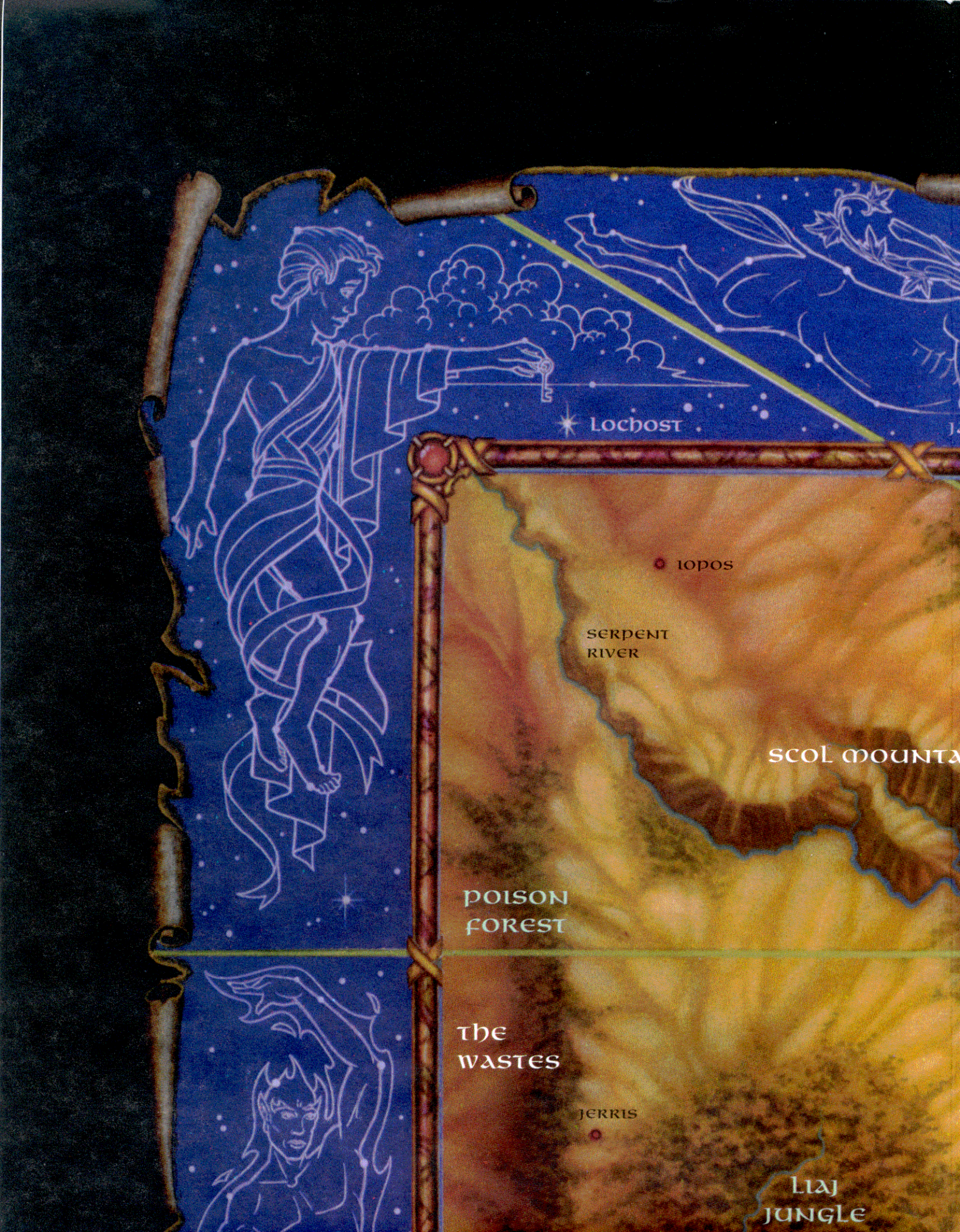
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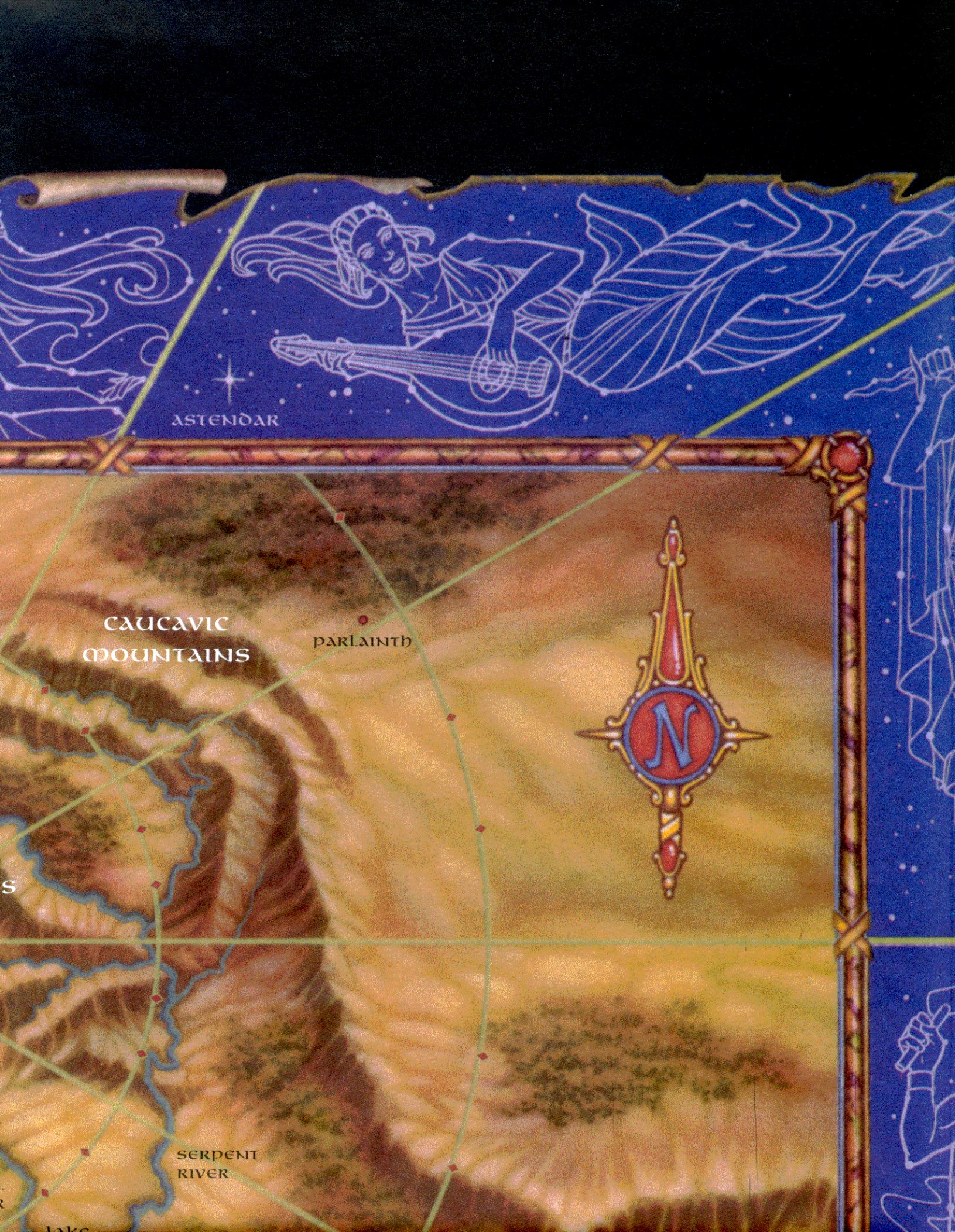
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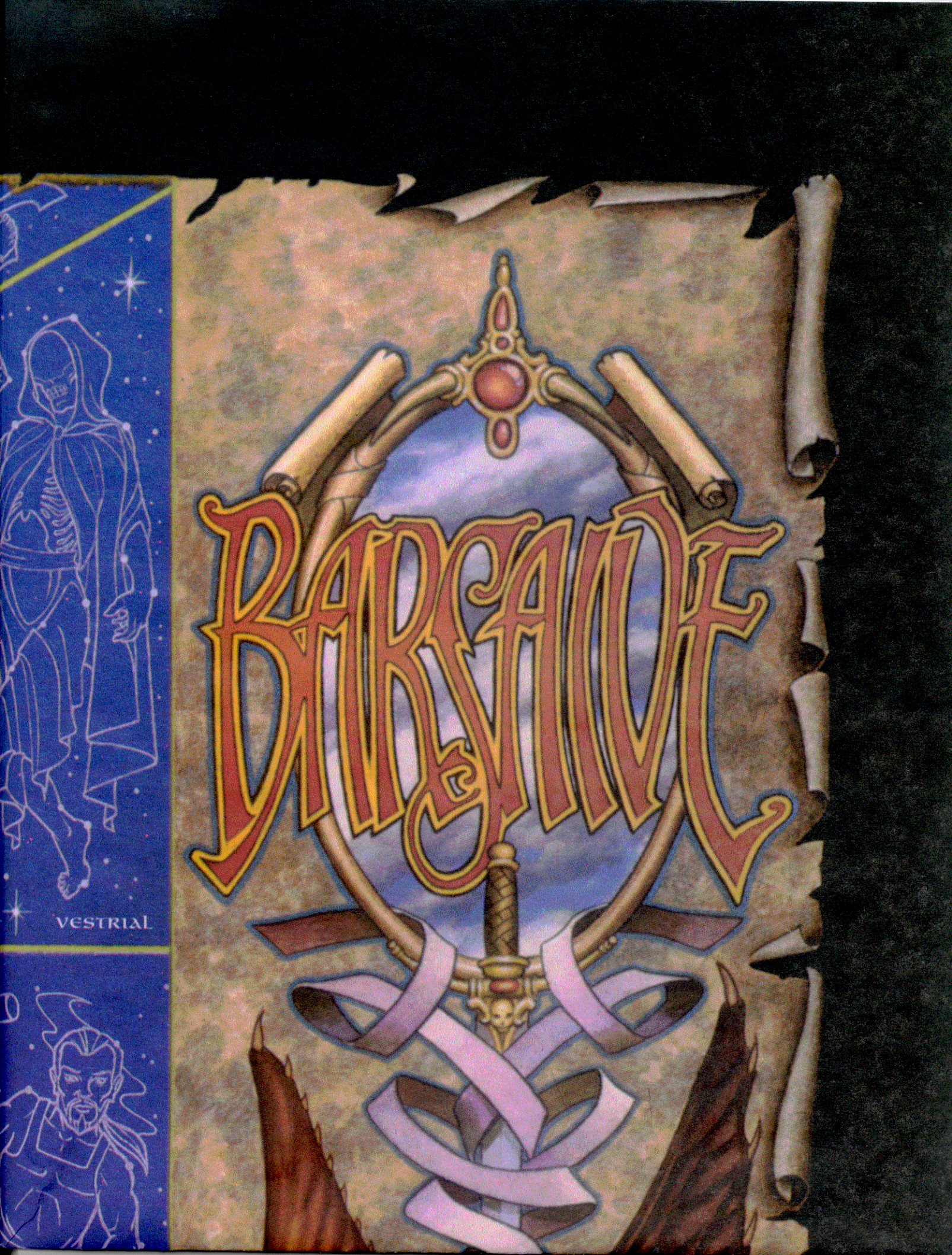
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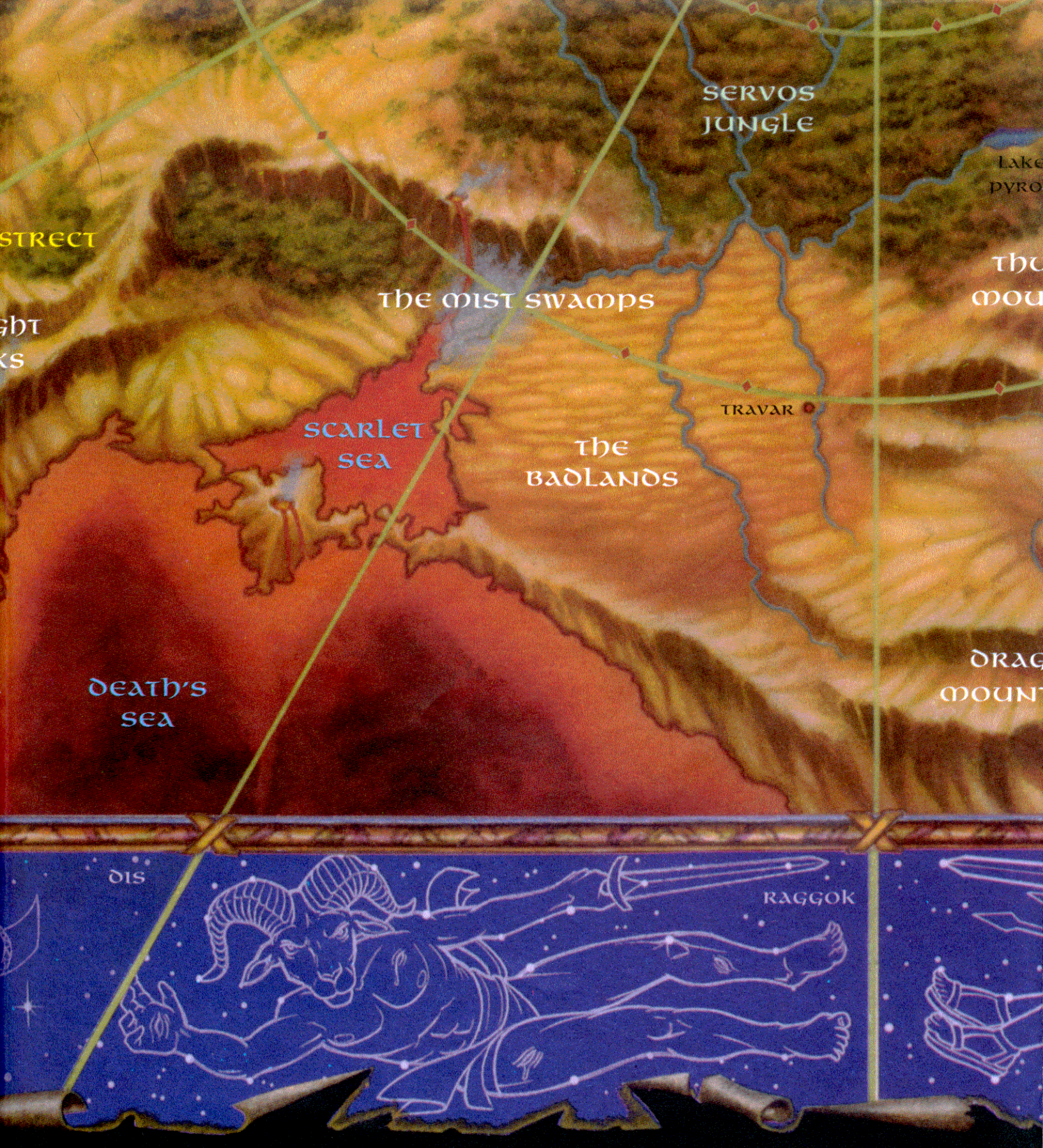
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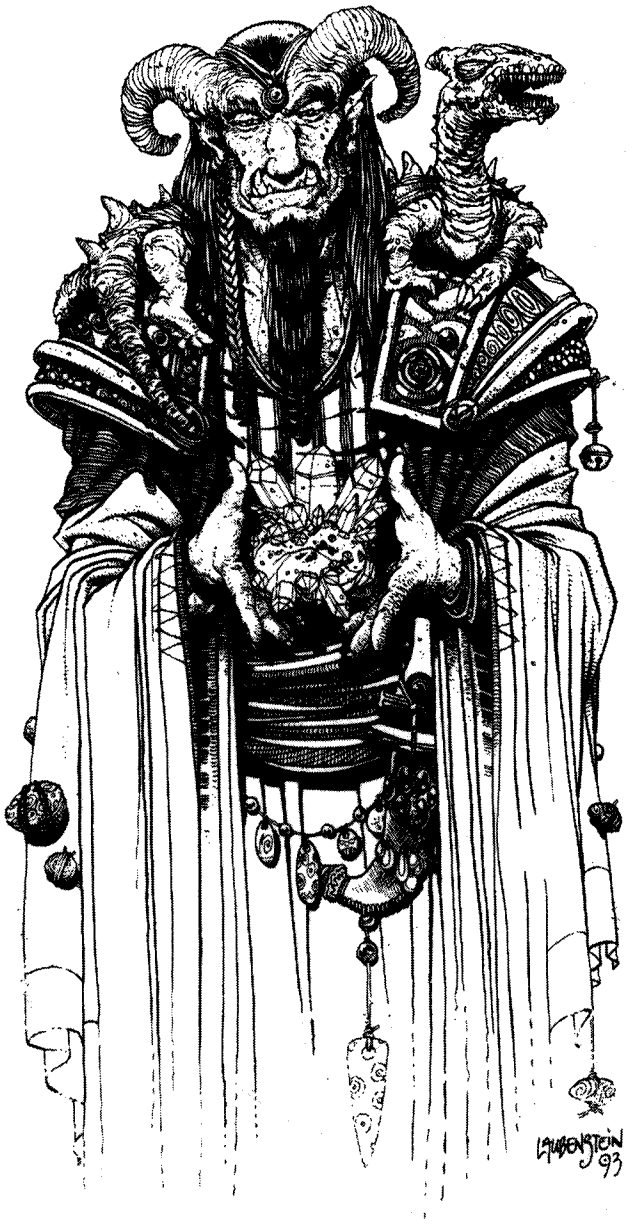

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