

WARLORDS OF
ACCORD

THE WORLD ATLAS

WARLORDS OF THE ACCORDLANDS

World Atlas

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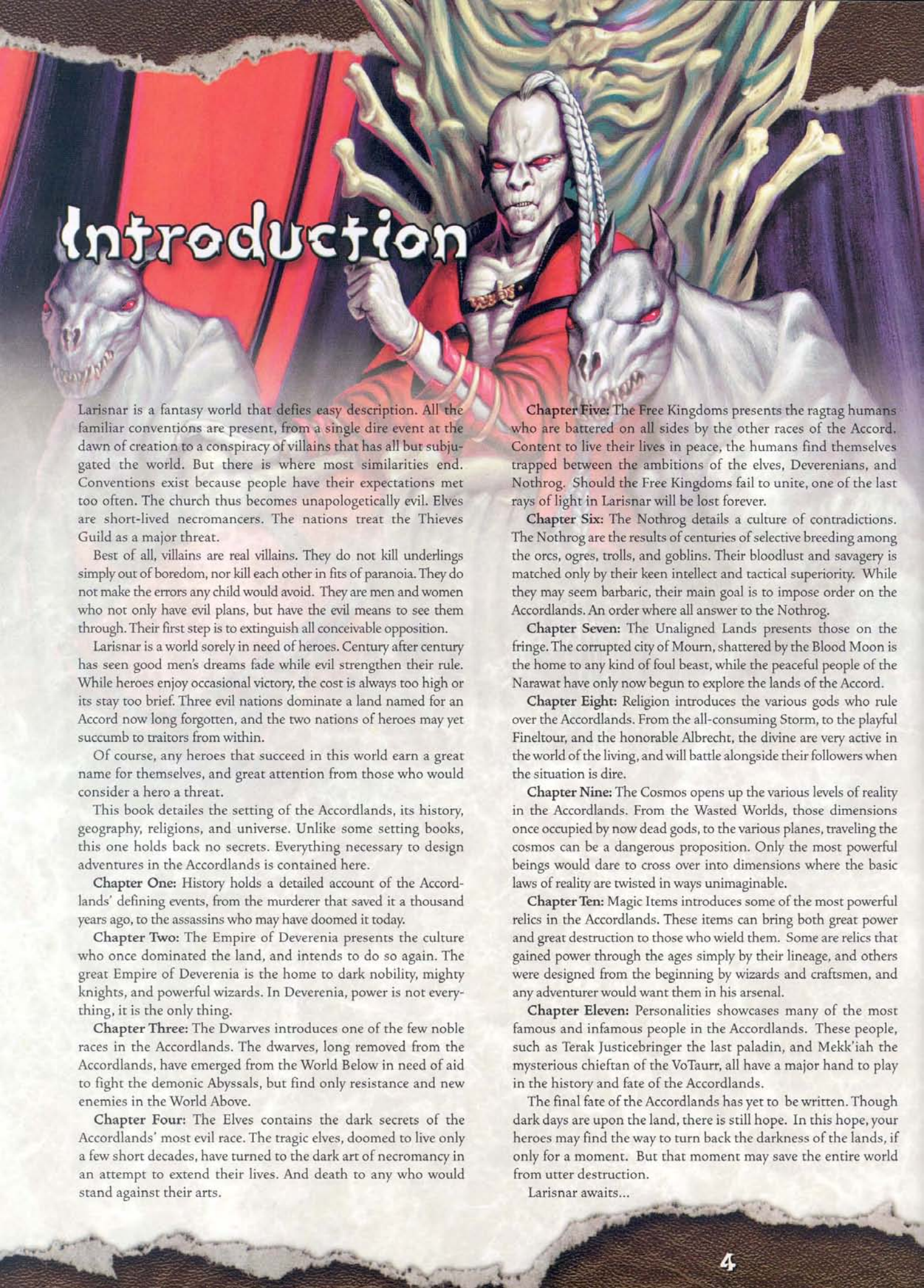
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Introduction

Larisnar is a fantasy world that defies easy description. All the familiar conventions are present, from a single dire event at the dawn of creation to a conspiracy of villains that has all but subjugated the world. But there is where most similarities end. Conventions exist because people have their expectations met too often. The church thus becomes unapologetically evil. Elves are short-lived necromancers. The nations treat the Thieves Guild as a major threat.

Best of all, villains are real villains. They do not kill underlings simply out of boredom, nor kill each other in fits of paranoia. They do not make the errors any child would avoid. They are men and women who not only have evil plans, but have the evil means to see them through. Their first step is to extinguish all conceivable opposition.

Larisnar is a world sorely in need of heroes. Century after century has seen good men's dreams fade while evil strengthen their rule. While heroes enjoy occasional victory, the cost is always too high or its stay too brief. Three evil nations dominate a land named for an Accord now long forgotten, and the two nations of heroes may yet succumb to traitors from within.

Of course, any heroes that succeed in this world earn a great name for themselves, and great attention from those who would consider a hero a threat.

This book details the setting of the Accordlands, its history, geography, religions, and universe. Unlike some setting books, this one holds back no secrets. Everything necessary to design adventures in the Accordlands is contained here.

Chapter One: History holds a detailed account of the Accordlands' defining events, from the murderer that saved it a thousand years ago, to the assassins who may have doomed it today.

Chapter Two: The Empire of Deverenia presents the culture who once dominated the land, and intends to do so again. The great Empire of Deverenia is the home to dark nobility, mighty knights, and powerful wizards. In Deverenia, power is not everything, it is the only thing.

Chapter Three: The Dwarves introduces one of the few noble races in the Accordlands. The dwarves, long removed from the Accordlands, have emerged from the World Below in need of aid to fight the demonic Abyssals, but find only resistance and new enemies in the World Above.

Chapter Four: The Elves contains the dark secrets of the Accordlands' most evil race. The tragic elves, doomed to live only a few short decades, have turned to the dark art of necromancy in an attempt to extend their lives. And death to any who would stand against their arts.

Chapter Five: The Free Kingdoms presents the ragtag humans who are battered on all sides by the other races of the Accord. Content to live their lives in peace, the humans find themselves trapped between the ambitions of the elves, Deverenians, and Nothrog. Should the Free Kingdoms fail to unite, one of the last rays of light in Larisnar will be lost forever.

Chapter Six: The Nothrog details a culture of contradictions. The Nothrog are the results of centuries of selective breeding among the orcs, ogres, trolls, and goblins. Their bloodlust and savagery is matched only by their keen intellect and tactical superiority. While they may seem barbaric, their main goal is to impose order on the Accordlands. An order where all answer to the Nothrog.

Chapter Seven: The Unaligned Lands presents those on the fringe. The corrupted city of Mourn, shattered by the Blood Moon is the home to any kind of foul beast, while the peaceful people of the Narawat have only now begun to explore the lands of the Accord.

Chapter Eight: Religion introduces the various gods who rule over the Accordlands. From the all-consuming Storm, to the playful Fineltour, and the honorable Albrecht, the divine are very active in the world of the living, and will battle alongside their followers when the situation is dire.

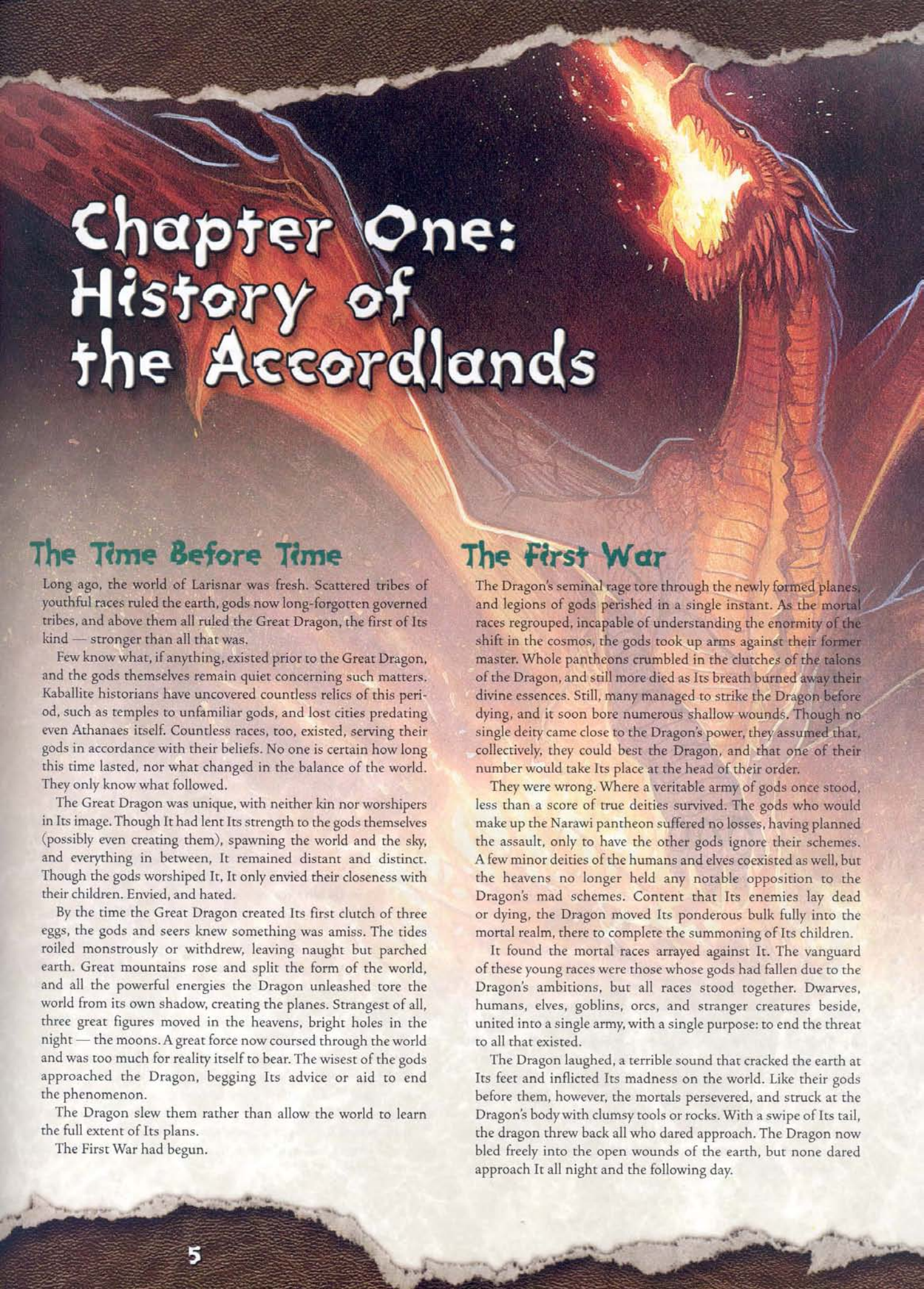
Chapter Nine: The Cosmos opens up the various levels of reality in the Accordlands. From the Wasted Worlds, those dimensions once occupied by now dead gods, to the various planes, traveling the cosmos can be a dangerous proposition. Only the most powerful beings would dare to cross over into dimensions where the basic laws of reality are twisted in ways unimaginable.

Chapter Ten: Magic Items introduces some of the most powerful relics in the Accordlands. These items can bring both great power and great destruction to those who wield them. Some are relics that gained power through the ages simply by their lineage, and others were designed from the beginning by wizards and craftsmen, and any adventurer would want them in his arsenal.

Chapter Eleven: Personalities showcases many of the most famous and infamous people in the Accordlands. These people, such as Terak Justicebringer the last paladin, and Mekk'iah the mysterious chieftan of the VoTaurr, all have a major hand to play in the history and fate of the Accordlands.

The final fate of the Accordlands has yet to be written. Though dark days are upon the land, there is still hope. In this hope, your heroes may find the way to turn back the darkness of the lands, if only for a moment. But that moment may save the entire world from utter destruction.

Larisnar awaits...



Chapter One: History of the Accordlands

The Time Before Time

Long ago, the world of Larisnar was fresh. Scattered tribes of youthful races ruled the earth, gods now long-forgotten governed tribes, and above them all ruled the Great Dragon, the first of Its kind — stronger than all that was.

Few know what, if anything, existed prior to the Great Dragon, and the gods themselves remain quiet concerning such matters. Kaballite historians have uncovered countless relics of this period, such as temples to unfamiliar gods, and lost cities predating even Athanaes itself. Countless races, too, existed, serving their gods in accordance with their beliefs. No one is certain how long this time lasted, nor what changed in the balance of the world. They only know what followed.

The Great Dragon was unique, with neither kin nor worshipers in Its image. Though It had lent Its strength to the gods themselves (possibly even creating them), spawning the world and the sky, and everything in between, It remained distant and distinct. Though the gods worshiped It, It only envied their closeness with their children. Envied, and hated.

By the time the Great Dragon created Its first clutch of three eggs, the gods and seers knew something was amiss. The tides roiled monstrosly or withdrew, leaving naught but parched earth. Great mountains rose and split the form of the world, and all the powerful energies the Dragon unleashed tore the world from its own shadow, creating the planes. Strangest of all, three great figures moved in the heavens, bright holes in the night — the moons. A great force now coursed through the world and was too much for reality itself to bear. The wisest of the gods approached the Dragon, begging Its advice or aid to end the phenomenon.

The Dragon slew them rather than allow the world to learn the full extent of Its plans.

The First War had begun.

The First War

The Dragon's seminal rage tore through the newly formed planes, and legions of gods perished in a single instant. As the mortal races regrouped, incapable of understanding the enormity of the shift in the cosmos, the gods took up arms against their former master. Whole pantheons crumbled in the clutches of the talons of the Dragon, and still more died as Its breath burned away their divine essences. Still, many managed to strike the Dragon before dying, and it soon bore numerous shallow wounds. Though no single deity came close to the Dragon's power, they assumed that, collectively, they could best the Dragon, and that one of their number would take Its place at the head of their order.

They were wrong. Where a veritable army of gods once stood, less than a score of true deities survived. The gods who would make up the Narawi pantheon suffered no losses, having planned the assault, only to have the other gods ignore their schemes. A few minor deities of the humans and elves coexisted as well, but the heavens no longer held any notable opposition to the Dragon's mad schemes. Content that Its enemies lay dead or dying, the Dragon moved Its ponderous bulk fully into the mortal realm, there to complete the summoning of Its children.

It found the mortal races arrayed against It. The vanguard of these young races were those whose gods had fallen due to the Dragon's ambitions, but all races stood together. Dwarves, humans, elves, goblins, orcs, and stranger creatures beside, united into a single army, with a single purpose: to end the threat to all that existed.

The Dragon laughed, a terrible sound that cracked the earth at Its feet and inflicted Its madness on the world. Like their gods before them, however, the mortals persevered, and struck at the Dragon's body with clumsy tools or rocks. With a swipe of Its tail, the dragon threw back all who dared approach. The Dragon now bled freely into the open wounds of the earth, but none dared approach It all night and the following day.

That night, two screams cried out — the twins Deima and Deverenus. Their father had died in the Dragon's initial attack, and their mother, herself a mighty warrior, had remained behind to birth them. Athanae shed no tears for her husband or children, and had barely named them before taking up sword and shield. Many warned her that she would suffer the fate of those who came before, but she did not care. No mother, she said, would let her children suffer so if there were even a chance that she could stop it. Most thought her mad.

One did not.

Though he hid his true name from Athanae, she knew the mysterious figure was far from human. Its furred fingers bent back along its hands, and its head was that of a great, striped cat. The strange creature told her that his race had died foolishly, attacking the Dragon's body instead of Its nature. The Dragon's only weakness was Its heart, the creature said, and none could approach Its heart without first knowing Its fears. The creature then gave Athanae a small bag, and told her that its contents would allow her to slay the Dragon. Athanae looked inside the bag, then turned to thank her strange patron, only to find him gone.

The following morning, the Dragon spotted another army on the horizon. More annoyed than angry, the Dragon called up the spirits of the desert, mountain, forest, marsh, and sky. With powerful magic, It twisted these spirits in Its image, spawning the dragons that would still scour the world centuries later. Though these weak copies bore but a mote of their master's power and will, a single one could easily slay the ragtag army that marched against them.

Athanae rode at the forefront of her army, her shield forgotten but her sword and sack in hand. As the sky filled with the beatings of mighty wings, she heard the terrified shrieks of her fellow soldiers. She calmly reached into the bag, and thought once more of her children.

Athanae then withdrew one of the three eggs, each no larger than her own hand, and held it to the sky for all to see.

The dragons flew back upon themselves almost comically, their myriad breaths wounding each other rather than risk damaging the true heirs of the Dragon. They flew away, and hid in the far corners of the realm, rather than risk their master's wrath.

The Dragon fumed, growled, and gnashed Its mighty jaws as Athanae approached, but It did not move to strike her. As Athanae dismounted, the Dragon inhaled sharply, but the warrior squeezed the egg slightly. The Dragon withheld Its attack. Its baleful will checked. Wordlessly, Athanae pointed to the Dragon's head, then to the cracked and parched earth at her feet. The Dragon laid Its head on the ground, and Athanae walked into Its cavernous mouth, still carrying her precious cargo.

It did not so much as blink for hours, and Athanae's army gathered around the Dragon's motionless form in curiosity. Many wondered if the Dragon had somehow won, and was biding Its time for some unknown purpose. Suddenly, the Great Dragon howled in fury, pain wracking Its body as Athanae's blade pierced Its heart from within. As Athanae ascended into the heavens as a goddess, the ground gave way beneath the Dragon's still-writhing corpse. Many onlookers rushed forward after the terrible quaking had ceased, joyous in their victory and heedless of the mist rising from the Dragon's many wounds.

The Dragon had died, but Its soul escaped — a roiling, angry mass of darkness and misery, a massive black cloud that hungered for others' souls. Though Athanae had won the war, she had unleashed the Storm upon Larisnar, and it hungrily devoured those souls who had drawn too near before vanishing. Even its apparent demise could not put an end to the Dragon's madness, though the Storm itself wandered from the battlefield soon after.

The First Century: Reconstruction

After the Dragon's death, the few remaining mortal races began rebuilding their once-great nations. The casualties proved far more numerous than merely the dead and dying, as the loss of so many gods, cities, and records meant that the rebuilding would be slow and incomplete. A few races felt an urge to exert dominance over the broken remains of the old civilizations, but these peoples — mostly the goblins, orcs, hobgoblins, and ogres of antiquity — fought primarily amongst themselves. The rest of the world, weary of war, chose to concentrate instead on building themselves up. In the days that followed, three races had the most survivors: the dwarves, the elves, and the humans.

The gods, too, concentrated on recovery. Where once many dozens or hundreds existed, perhaps a score had verifiably survived the Dragon's attacks, and some of those had gone mad. During the days following the first war, the first stars burned in the sky — the funeral pyres of the fallen gods.

As the years wore on, a young girl and boy grew into prominence within the humans' society. When Athanae became a goddess, she bestowed part of her divinity upon her twin children, and Deverenus and Deima both came of age as demigods. The elder Deima became the first among Athanae's faithful, and inspired many humans to exalt in her mother's victory. Deverenus, smaller and more reserved, earned renown as a fair arbiter and intelligent leader of men. Though many questioned the motives of the twins, particularly Deverenus' strange denial of shamanic logic, few doubted the outcome. Nearly twenty years after the Dragon's death, both announced the intention to build cities of their own: the temple-city of Athanae, built over the Dragon's own grave; and the iron city of Luthlarius, which Deverenus named for his fallen father.

It was during the cities' construction that the twins fell out. Deima had long held that Deverenus was not properly thankful for their mother's blessing, and argued that building his own city instead of aiding in Athanae's construction was sufficient proof. For his part, Deverenus simply stated that humans needed cities elsewhere, too, and that he was merely providing a service. The argument went nowhere, and the twins eventually chose to remain in silent indifference to each other. Historians continue to debate which city is the elder, though many point to Athanae's larger population and early multiracial citizenry as signs that it came first. For all their tensions, though, the twins' paths rarely intersected. Deverenus busied himself with repeated attempts to destroy the Storm, while Deima sought to commune with her mother.

In the heavens, peace was no less strained. Though the gods mourned together for their fallen comrades, they could reach no consensus on Athanae. Though most acknowledged that she had spared the cosmos from the Dragon's madness, many felt that her actions were unjustifiably evil, even so. Others believed that her actions, however malevolent, were ultimately justified. Still more cared little either way for the methods she used in killing the Dragon, at least in comparison to the fact that she had usurped divine power, and bestowed it upon mere mortals. For her part, Athanae seemed indifferent to the opinions of others. Despite her just newly-won status as a deity, her power was great enough to rival any other god's, and few opposed her openly.

Before the First War, the western lands had been the home of nomads and barbarians who lived off the land. Most of their gods had fallen, and the people were lost. Only a dozen gods remained, primarily Ishara, Goddess of the Sea, and her son, Neus, God of the Hunt. Ishara's people relied upon the sea to provide sustenance and livelihood. Her villages slowly grew into towns and her people taught themselves skills beyond those simply concerning fish and family.

However, farther inland this was impossible. Game was scarce, and Neus's people were starving. In order to help, Neus expanded his domain and became the God of the Harvest. After discovering corn and potatoes, his people were able to grow enough food for twice their number. Unfortunately, this attracted four times the number of followers to his lands. Neus again expanded his domains, and became the God of Scribes. He taught his people to live together, to build community and to support one another. The lands between the sea and Myreth forest had grown from a thousand scattered nomadic families into a land of small farming towns. The culmination of his efforts was the founding of the city of Corinth, followed by its rapid growth into the largest city west of Myreth.

Before the Dragon attacked, the elven race lived in peaceful joy within the forests of the world and experimented with the magic that infused their souls. Their mystical abilities warned them of Its threat and they were the first mortal race to strike against It. Following Its destruction, they returned to their forests and to their lives as they had known them. But something had changed. Trees and living beings deteriorated before their eyes. Fabrics rotted, metal rusted, and living beings sickened and died. Worst of all, the same forces were at work upon the elves themselves. Within a year, many elves grew weak; within a decade, half their race was dead.

The elves abandoned all else to concentrate on their search: why did generation after generation die after thirty winters? They neglected all records and histories not directly involved in their research. They rejected their surviving gods, who could not aid them in uncovering the new threat. Instead the most powerful wizards gathered assistants and devoted all their energies to this

single mystery. After centuries of elves had died, Calix, a young but powerful archmage, discovered the source of the threat. In its final moments of life, the Dragon had warped the nature of the Elements that make up all existence. Now these Elements sapped the strength of creation resulting in its progressive demise. Within each elf, tree, and object, the structures slowly decay until nothing is left. Calix spent years trying to find a way to communicate with this enemy without any success. The mindless Elements prey upon everything, though they are particularly attuned to the elves, causing them to succumb far faster than any other race.

Calix was finally able to contact these forces by making huge sacrifices of living creatures to them. He summoned the avatar of Blood that granted his descendants exceptional mystical powers, but he could not do anything more than appease it. The sacrifices did slow the process of decay slightly. In desperation, the elves began worshipping and sacrificing to these brutal forces, hoping for even a few more days of life. Each of the Archmages formed Houses of those who served him and turned their efforts to finding ways to prolong the lives of the elven race.

The dwarves took longer than other races to rebuild after the defeat of the Dragon. The Dragon's corpse had crashed into the earth, shattering their homeland. The Sarakian plains, once lush and fertile, were now barren. The dwarves did not despair, resettling the land and starting to rebuild their homes and their lives. They were a hearty people and would not allow the destruction of their homes to ruin them. Under the leadership of King Hember, the dwarves rebuilt nearly their entire culture by the end of the first century.

Though the Dragon had wiped out many races, ogres, goblins, orcs and other humanoids had somehow survived. Upon returning to their lands, the survivors fought a new, internal war. Though previously a verdant grassland, the Dragon's madness and the humanoids' own warfare had destroyed their homeland's beauty and slain much of its life. As the tribes fought and conquered each other, the victors would claim wives from the sacked villages. Children of mixed unions, while by no means common, were still common enough to make up a noteworthy portion of the humanoid races.

While the rebuilding continued for the rest of the century, the tensions remained high. The mortals and the gods were alike in this one regard. As the first centennial of the Dragon's death neared, all the lands quietly prepared for a bloody conflict between the twins Deima and Deverenus.

When war returned, however, it was against an entirely new foe.

The Second Century: Accord and Discord

At first, no one understood what had happened. Strange creatures boiled up from the earth. Some were insectoid, others avian, and still more entirely unfamiliar, but all acted like intelligent men gone feral, and proved strangely resistant to mortal weapons. Only magic drove them off, and it was this odd weakness that convinced Deverenus and Deima to call a truce. Deima's magic confirmed that the creatures were unnatural, while Deverenus' experiences against the Storm proved invaluable in understanding the unusual properties of their bodies. Pooling their magic, they searched the bowels of the earth for the monsters' origin, thus confirming their initial fears.

The abominations emerged from the deepest recesses of an immense pit, and at the bottom of this Abyss was the rotting carcass of the Dragon Itself, with new Abyssals constantly crawling from Its decaying flesh.

This, combined with the alien Elements the elves had discovered and the continuing onslaught of the Storm, proved to the twins that the Dragon's menace could never truly be defeated. At Athanaes, Deima announced a convocation between the leaders of all the nations where the mortals could decide how to combat these threats, any one of which could potentially succeed where the Dragon Itself had failed. To formulate appropriate counters, as well as to ensure that each race would stand against the enemy without fear of betrayal, Deverenus drafted an ambitious compact that bound the three great races in mutual peace and combined opposition to the Dragon's three dark legacies.

The humans would continue Deverenus' investigations into the Storm's nature.

The dwarves would descend into the Abyss, there to hold the line against the endless tide of Abyssals.

The elves would expand upon their previous discoveries, attempting to curb the mysterious Elements' ravages on the mortal world.

Should any of the three races abandon their duties or, worse, attack each other, the remaining two could call on each other for aid against the traitor.

Deverenus and Deima, in what would prove to be the last time the twins ever agreed on anything, excluded the savage humanoid races from the discussions on the Accord.

Though the dwarves had volunteered to journey underground to find the home of the Abyssals, it was not enough for the dwarves to defend the other races against their terror. While the dwarves prepared for their new roles and lives, Hember went to Athanaes to speak with Deima.

At Hember's request, Deima summoned a celestial. Hember asked the blessed spirit to carry a message to all the gods that fought against the Dragon: Hember offered his people's eternal faith and devotion in exchange for assistance in the war against their new foes. Hember waited at Athanaes, praying, for an entire year. As he was finally succumbing to doubt and despair, the celestial returned. Though all the gods had listened to Hember's request, only one would grant it. His name was Kor.

With his people assembled, and with Kor's blessings, Hember led the dwarves underground through the same fissure that brought the Abyssals to the surface. Just before he entered the cavern he looked up at the sky. It would be the last time Hember would see the sun.

The lands of the Accord united to stave off major Abyssal incursions long enough for the dwarves to secure the crevasse, and then returned to their previous business.



In Deima's mind, Deverenus' role in the creation of the Accord was little more than opportunism. While it was true the Storm posed a threat, one that he was best equipped to counter, he nevertheless placed himself at the forefront of humanity with the Accord. This proved too much for Deima, whose envy drove her to raise armies in Athanae, ostensibly to provide aid to whomever needed it.

Surprisingly, Deverenus' ambitions led him away from the direct front against the Storm. His experiences with it had uncovered circles of shamans worshiping it, and a host of hazards in simply approaching the Dragon's soul. To combat these, Deverenus pioneered an entirely new form of magic involving an academic understanding of reality's underpinnings: wizardry. He also discovered the powers of blackiron, a metal that could store a magical charge.

Deverenus' followers were not idle during this period, traveling on horseback just within sight of the Storm. Only the hardest men and women could keep up the pace, and only the most careful could avoid the sudden attacks of the Stormborn. While Deverenus' troops lacked the numbers of Deima's, tales of their uncanny skill reached every corner of the Accordlands. Soon Deverenus returned from his studies and met with the lieutenant of his Storm-runners, a powerful and intimidating woman named Madriga. After much deliberation, the two entered the Storm together, and returned after a single day's travel — the first surviving expedition into the Storm.

Deverenus believed he had deduced a means of destroying the Storm from within, and journeyed to Athanae to consult with his sister. Upon his arrival, however, Deverenus discovered Deima's armies, and quickly realized that their true purpose was to oppose him. He magically sent word to Madriga of his capture at Athanae, and then pretended to meet with his sister peacefully. Deima's troops would have been the victor in any conflict they initiated, but Deverenus knew that Madriga's soldiers could easily crush any unprepared foe. The war was swift, as none could approach the battling twins, and Madriga's ambushes decimated the Athanae forces in days. Deverenus, knowing that he could never again trust his sister, slew her on the fields in front of her own city, ending the war.

The price, however, was far dearer than even the victor could have guessed. To the elves and the other humans, Deverenus had not been acting in self-defense, but in defiance of the very Accord he had drafted. Though he made concessions, including recognizing his sister as a goddess and allowing Athanae's sovereignty, Deverenus found that neither the elves nor many humans would follow the Accord any further, for fear that he would attack them too.

Retreating to Luthlarius, Deverenus feigned humility, and publicly yielded leadership of his city to Madriga. Secretly, however, he wed her, and in a few years' time their plans were ready for execution. Madriga's training regimens against the Storm had proven useful in engagements with normal troops, and Deverenus had already traveled over much of the world unknown to the Accordlands. With their combined capabilities, they could force the other races to once more acknowledge the Accord, this time as servants, rather than equals. A decade before

the close of the second century, the armies of the Deverenian Empire marched for conquest, under the command of the aging Madriga and her ageless husband.

The Deverenian armies under Madriga advanced to the edge of Myreth forest and demanded the elves' immediate surrender. On the advice of the Archmage Wyrian, the elves agreed, hoping that the long-lived Deverenians could assist them in their quest for prolonged life. The elven lands joined the Deverenian Empire. For a time, both sides were satisfied with the arrangement. Wyrian and certain select elves interbred with the Deverenians in an attempt to incorporate their extended life span into the elven race. In return, the elves taught the deep secrets of the mystical arts to the Deverenians. However, the Empire had no true interest in the elven lands once they swore fealty, and only a handful of Deverenians lived within the elven borders.

When a young man named Daqtu declared his independence from Deverenia and seized control of the lands north of Lion's Jaw Bay, the elderly Madriga launched a counter-invasion to recapture it. Her scouts discovered that the populace loved their brash young commander, who promised them freedom from Deverenian tyranny in favor of a family-structured culture. The self-proclaimed son of the goddess Ishara and a mortal man, Daqtu possessed mystical powers and lashed Madriga's army with harsh winter storms while warm ocean breezes bathed his lands in springtime. Her age finally catching up with her, Madriga died in the blizzards that winter, leaving her commander, Lord Khalenar, in charge of her troops.

Despite this blow to morale, Khalenar's men were veteran Imperial troops and the Daqtun were no match for them. Again the weather lashed the invaders, and every source of water turned rancid upon touching their lips. Hundreds of men died before they witnessed a single defender. The Daqtun fought as best they could, retreating often. Finally, the Imperial troops pinned down the remaining defenders, but before the battle could open the three moons came together in the skies above them in a powerful conjunction. The lands suddenly ripped apart while the people, Daqtun and Deverenian alike, faced the twisting, destructive power of the Blood Moon. Thousands of men, including Daqtu, fell on the field of battle that day without a blow being struck, while still more transformed into hideous creatures who savagely feasted upon the dead. Within the space of a single evening, an entire country was reduced from prosperity to ruin. Khalenar, the sole survivor of the war, deemed the Daqtun lands uninhabitable, and no sane man would set foot there again for centuries.

While most conquests occurred quickly, one in particular would come to change the course of Deverenian history. Deverenus and his troops conquered the far territories, the places and peoples unknown to the Accordlands. In one such area, a small city organized around a desert oasis and nearby mountain range, Deverenus discovered something unexpected — the creature that Athanae had met the night before she killed the Dragon. Like Deverenus and his departed sister, this creature inherited a portion of Athanae's divinity, expressed in his preternatural ability to change his appearance at will, and to deceive even the most perceptive of men, such as Deverenus himself. The local humans had begun to worship the strange cat-man, and

Deverenus had learned all too well that he could not hope to defeat another demigod without consequence. Instead, he made the creature an offer — join Deverenia and follow its laws, and in exchange all Deverenia would worship him as its true god of treachery. The creature gracefully accepted, and Deverenus allowed Teufeltiger into his religious circle. Several of Deverenus' men remained with Teufeltiger, to worship him directly and to rule over his servitors. The new Deverenian province of Isadran was born.

Deverenus traveled Larisnar for the remainder of the second century, including the lands of present day Kabal, the Shattered Lands, and the Isles of Light and Shade, returning home only when he had killed or broken any who would oppose him. Nearing his 200th birthday but appearing younger than 50, all the world bowed before Deverenus, the god-king of the world. Though his beloved Madriga had died in his absence, their six children had come of age, each bearing signs of their grandmother's divinity. Reestablishing his leadership over his empire, he instituted several sweeping changes, outlawing shamanism, instituting the worship of Teufeltiger, and drawing up the feudal governance of imperial provinces and cities.

On the eve of his 200th birthday, Deverenus died in his sleep, the victim of an exceptional assassination plot.

The Third Century: Rebellion and Revolution

Near the beginning of the third century, the dwarves discovered a massive grotto. In the depths, the dwarves lost track of time and had not encountered a single Abyssal, or anything else for that matter. They were surrounded by rock on all sides and saw nothing but darkness ahead of them, darkness behind them. Many despaired, but for the most part the dwarves persevered. Kor was with them, and their task was a noble one. They made their way ever so slowly into the depths of the earth. It had taken nearly a year for the dwarves to finally encounter other beings, but what they encountered was not quite what they were expecting. They soon discovered they were not alone in the grotto.

Massive piles of rubble were strewn about, and in the grotto's center a huge creature made of earth and rock arose from the ground, surrounded by smaller creatures made of rock and gems. The head of the Dwarven column thought they had at last encountered the Abyssals and prepared for battle, but Hember was none too sure. With his troops edgy, he made his way toward the creatures. By the time he had taken two steps the rock creatures had all fled, some flying or crawling away while others melded into the rock.

All except the great being in the grotto's center.

This was Sjonegaard, the King of the Earth Elementals — father of gargoyles. Over the course of three days and three nights Hember and Sjonegaard conversed, surrounded by Hember's closest advisors. When they were done, Hember spoke to his people en masse for the first time. He relayed to them that Sjonegaard and his people, the gargoyles, had been warring with the Abyssals. Sjonegaard had offered to assist the dwarves in their war, teaching them how to survive under the earth, and all he knew about the creatures from the Abyss. The dwarves cheered

loudly. They had never allowed themselves to hope for allies in their fight, however foreign they might be. Only a few wondered what Sjonegaard had demanded of Hember in return.

Though none ever discovered the identity of Deverenus' killer, the most logical suspects were his six children, his heirs. Without their father's direct teachings, none were particularly gifted magicians, though one proved every bit his mother's martial equal: Mynes. A blademaker beyond compare, Mynes easily slaughtered those of his siblings foolish enough to accuse him of intrigue. The survivors quickly withdrew to the farthest regions of the Empire, to foment rebellion against their murderous brother. The feudal lords themselves fell into factionalism, serving one or more of the exiles, or Mynes himself. To counter this, Mynes formally imposed martial law, taking personal command of all armies in the empire as "Emperor" or commander. Though his enemies initially believed this a political misstep, his loyal armies quickly united and routed any that did not answer his call or stood against him. By the time his wayward kin realized the enormity of his power, Mynes' armies had retaken the Accordlands. Only a few distant provinces remained beyond his grasp, as his magical ability was not equal to the task.

Still, the revolts had proven difficult to manage, as some feudal lords proved unwilling or unable to meet the Emperor's demands for his armies. Rather than cede control of the armies back to the feudal lords, Mynes instituted several knightly Orders, war colleges associated with but separate from the feudal lords. The Orders would draw their ranks from the royalty while answering to the Emperor alone, but their successes and failures would determine the taxation of their associated lords. The first heads of these Orders were Mynes' most trusted lieutenants — Aedroud the warrior, Myereth the magician, and Salis the conspirator — and each established the general methodology of the Order that bore his name.

This plan was to be of limited value. Though the Orders themselves proved loyal to the cause, the feudal lords simply waited until Mynes had an heir, then promptly assassinated the Emperor. The heir, a boy named Tellus, was raised by feudal lords who encouraged his every vice while simultaneously discouraging any signs of leadership. Tellus took many wives and sired many heirs, the youngest of whom the feudal lords promptly married into their own families. When Tellus' eldest heir came of age, the feudal lords began the process anew, slaying Tellus and installing their puppet. Order Salis aided in this treachery, quietly murdering any that tried to free Tellus or his children from the nobles' grip.

The aging general Khalenar chose not to tolerate the puppet-Emperor's increasingly irrational commands. Khalenar declared himself Emperor of the Western Deverenian Empire, and raised an army. They marched eastward to Luthlarius in hopes of marshaling Deverenian support to overthrow the corrupt regime.

Meanwhile, Khalenar approached the elves looking for allies. Their lands covered most of the approaches to Khalenar and he wanted them to break the Deverenian supply lines. The Kings

of the Houses created by the Deverenians still ruled the elven people, and King Kasan of House Calix, obsessed with finding a way to utilize the poison of the bone spider to prolong life, rejected the rebel proposal. However, King Dythanus met with Khalenar's ambassador and accepted the offer for his own house. Houses Dythanus and Rowan joined forces to harry the Deverenian supply lines until Khalenar could no longer delay a decisive battle.

In the battle, Dythanus offered to hold the right flank for his ally. Khalenar placed his inexperienced militia there to assist the elves. On the day of the battle, the elves remained hidden, so the Deverenians attacked in force against the right flank. The militia died in droves while Dythanus watched from the nearby woods. He waited until the souls of the dying filled the air and then, aided by House Rowan's finest priests, summoned the Avatar of Spirit, the most intelligent of the Elements. The creature appeared as a whirling vortex of screaming souls and hurricane force winds. Dythanus bargained with it: in return for knowledge of undeath, he gave Spirit all the Deverenian souls within sight. The hurricane swept over the enemy army, destroying the Deverenian left and forcing a retreat. Khalenar was furious at the methods his elven allies had used, but they had disappeared into the woods and he returned to his own lands. House Rowan was also enraged, since the rituals had cost them the lives of their most gifted priests and spellcasters.

Dythanus did not care. He had traded for the secrets of necromancy and he quickly shared that knowledge throughout his House. Within a year, he had discovered a method of severing the connection between an elf and the Elements. He was the first to attempt this ritual and become a lich. Others followed, and soon Tseuse groaned with the cries of tortured souls and undead creatures. Still, he had found a means of eternal life, by trading mortality for an existence beyond life or death. Dythanus summoned a Council of the Archmages and the rulers of each House came together to hear his proposal. He advocated abandoning other methods of attempting to achieve immortality in order to focus upon necromancy. The Council was split with Syneri leading the opposition. With the others watching, Syneri and Dythanus entered into a wizard duel, using only the magical power at their disposal to decide the fate of all elves. They battled for hours using all the powers at their disposal until the wizards drew close and Syneri decapitated his foe with an illegal blade. The others watched in shock as the first lich collapsed and Syneri fled. Only his powerful magic kept the lich functioning long enough to cast a final spell upon his son, Morghen Dythanus. Morghen knelt beside his father as a stripling, but he rose as a master of the necromantic arts and ruler of his people. Regardless, Syneri's actions convinced the Council to side with Morghen and the entire elven race embraced necromancy.

House Syneri followed its founder into exile and Morghen spent valuable time convincing his House that he was powerful and ruthless enough to lead them. In the power vacuum that followed King Kasan of House Calix seized control of the government and forced the other Houses to declare him High King, with authority over the other Houses. Under his rule, the elven people followed the path of Dythanus and began delving

into necromancy. Though House Rowan found itself largely unable to participate in the necromantic activities of the other houses after the death of so many of its powerful priests and wizards earlier in the century, and House Glyn did not embrace necromancy to the extent of the other Houses. Glyn himself had believed that a true master of a skill, such as archery, could focus his mind and will so tightly within a single moment of time that he could exist forever. His House became the militant branch of the elves, responsible for defense and overall strategies apart from necromantic means. Glyn disappeared during this time and his fate is still unknown, though some elves claimed to have met him as late as the ninth century.

At the same time, House Wyrian underwent a drastic upheaval. Wyrian's years of experimentation, interbreeding elves with other races, had caused his House to be shunned by the other elves. Despite a few successes, such as King Ichaerus and the nimbics, the House was on the verge of exile by Kasan. In an effort to prevent that, Ichaerus supported the new High King and renamed his people House Netheryn after his wife, an Archmage whose experiments were less controversial. The elven people still regarded the House as a race of half-breeds unfit to live, so the House retreated to the northernmost woods of Tyraniel.

Unfortunately for Khalenar, Deverenian's oaths of allegiance were too strong, and no one rallied to his side. Still recovering from elven treachery, Khalenar fought only a single battle against the Empire's general, his son Signon, and managed a stalemate. However, he knew that without support, he could only catapult the Empire into civil war and anarchy. To avoid more bloodshed, he turned back to his adopted lands, eventually renaming them the Free Kingdom of Khalenar.

At the same time, the Deverenian Empire founded the fort of Baraxton near their southern border as their central reserve during skirmishes against the humanoids. A perfectly sited way station for caravans and troops heading back toward the Empire, the fortress soon spawned a city. Drawing upon the wealth of the southern regions, Baraxton flourished as it funneled that wealth into the Empire.

With spirits renewed, the dwarves continued their march under the earth, searching for a suitable place to build their new home. By this time they were at last running afoul of the Abyssals. With the power of Kor and the gargoyles of Sjonegaard at their side, the dwarves drove them back, and morale improved. Their hopeless task was no longer quite as hopeless.

The tunnel they had been traveling in led to a huge cavern, equal in size to the mountains they once knew. As they stood at one end and peered across to the other they saw a huge army of Abyssals waiting for them. The dwarves had stumbled upon a major Abyssal access corridor. The army before them had been assembled to attack the surface, and now only the dwarves stood in their way.

Over the course of the conflict, the dwarves slowly realized that the Abyssals were not all mindless creatures bent on chaos. Some were highly intelligent beings attempting to finish what their sire

had started. The battle itself was brutal, dragging out for many months as each side suffered huge losses, and control of the Abyss switched hands almost daily. If not for the power of Kor and Sjonegaard, the dwarves would surely have died to a man.

While the battle raged, Hember's lieutenants and heroes plotted, drafting plans for a huge fortress city to protect the Abyss' entrance. Enlisting the aid of dwarven artisans and Sjonegaard himself, Vorhim began construction of Rockhome. Realizing that if the dwarves fortified their position, the cavern would be all but impervious to attack, the Abyssals launched a major offensive against the fledgling city. Kor himself held the pit-fiends at bay, his only manifestation in recorded history. The Abyssals fled before the might of the dwarven god, and Vorhim's men finished Rockhome, blocking the way to the surface for the Abyssals.

After their victory, the dwarves did not see or hear from the Abyssals again for decades. Scholars believe the tenacity of the dwarves and the appearance of Kor frightened the Abyssals; they simply were not ready for such an opposing force, and needed to rebuild their forces and create new plans. For the dwarves, this period of time was the Respite, and it is the only period in their time below ground that they did not war with the Abyssals.

They did not waste this time.

After completing Rockhome, the dwarves founded over a dozen other cities, each blocking a major tunnel to the surface. They also trained and rebuilt their armies. Sjonegaard sent his most intelligent and militant gargoyles to teach the dwarves better ways of fighting underground. They learned these new techniques, as well as how to create gargoyles from Sjonegaard. Meanwhile, dwarven magical experiments led to the creation of ironcloth.

Many humanoid tribes attempted to claim land from the Deverenian Empire. The superior tactics of the Devereniens smashed the superior humanoid numbers. Reports of these sound defeats spread throughout the tribes. Warchiefs started to drill their braves in rudimentary tactics, emulating the strategies of the Deverenian Empire. With their advantage in strength and numbers, these strategies augmented the power of the tribes with a new versatility.

The legions, as they called themselves now, were careful not to conquer lands too far from their homelands. Their slow expansion afforded them more control over the lands they held. This paved the way for strong campaigns in the future, as supply lines would be harder to cut. They still sacked and burned any city that could not be held without a great expense of resources and warriors. The tactics and strategies of the humanoid tribes were advancing, but their sheer brutality remained.

With time, the feudal lords controlling Emperor Tellus discovered an interesting trait in the imperial line. Though none of Deverenus' grandchildren had even a tenth of the raw mystical power of their ancestors, they still bore signs of Athanae's favor. The children were far harder than true humans, and aged almost imperceptibly after attaining adulthood. The greediest of these conspirators auctioned off the distant relations to the Emperor,

trading a claim on the throne and healthy descendants for political favors.

This trend lasted for over half a century, with each successive Emperor being weaker than his predecessor. Without a capable leader, Deverenian once more fell into open revolt. Province after province broke away from the nation while the emperors' orders were confused or nonexistent. Many fine generals defected to Khalenar in this time.

Furious with both his father's betrayal and the incompetence of the throne, one general resigned his commission in a cold rage. Signon, formerly of Aedroud, took it upon himself to set an example for all honorable men. As was tradition for retiring soldiers, Signon marched into the Storm, seeking to die there in symbolic service to the all-but-forgotten Accord.

Before the third century, the people who would eventually populate Narawat lived to the north of their future home, in Sarakia and the area around Misearia. They were farmers and tradesmen, with nothing connecting them other than the predominance of darker skin tones. The other people in these regions did not discriminate against their dark-skinned brothers, but these ancestral Narawati felt removed from the other people. While there was no known line to shared ancestors, different from their neighbors, the proto-Narawati found that they had much in common. Many of their family traditions and habits were similar to those in other darker-skinned families — enough to feel a certain kinship that was stronger than a normal neighborly bond.

These similarities, while far from universal, led these people to form bonds between one another. While they had no official ties and did not even all come under the same government authority, their ties felt as close as true family. They helped each other out whenever possible and turned to one another in good times and bad. These support networks looked after their members in case of a bad crop, or a sickness in the family. While primarily darker-skinned people made up these groups, they were not exclusionary and a number of lighter-skinned people were members. They had created an informal social safety net that was a precursor to the society they would build in Narawat.

They were not yet Narawati, but the seeds that would bring together to form a nation had already been sown.

After a brief attack against Rockhome, the dwarves noted a sudden and hasty retreat by the Abyssals, almost before the dwarves had even begun a counteroffensive. Curious, they dispatched a party of Hember's greatest heroes to follow the Abyssals: Cargan, Hember's shieldman; Orenda, Hember's wizard; Leda, his chief cleric; Vorhim, his cunning tactician, and — against his wishes — Afya, Hember's wife. For weeks the dwarven task force fought its way through the depths, meeting with much success. They finally reached the corpse of the dragon nearly two months after they had initially set out. The Abyssals had gathered atop the corpse, too, sensing the arrival of the dwarves. The two sides regarded each other briefly, and joined battle.

The combat was hard fought and bloody, but the dwarves slowly gained the upper hand. Then disaster struck. A strange armored creature burst out of the corpse, hacking away at the dead flesh of the Dragon. It killed anything that came near, slaying many Abyssals. When Vorhim recognized the armor as human in origin, Cargan was overjoyed. Knowing that their allies had at last come to their aid, Cargan ran to the human to express his thanks. After a moment of consideration, the knight cut down Hember's former shieldman. The horrified dwarves rallied to avenge him. The knight waded through the dwarves, straight to the command group, his sword biting deeply into each, killing Orenda and Leda and severely wounding Afya before Vorhim pulled her away. The Abyssals took advantage of the chaos, driving the dwarves back. The human left the battle, but continued murdering dwarves on the way to the surface. He had taken the head and heart of the dwarven army, and the Abyssals were soon victorious. As if to compound the horrors the dwarves faced, a great earthquake opened a fissure leading to tunnels below Rockhome. With this new corridor the Abyssals could circumvent Rockhome and attack less fortified cities, or even reach the surface.

Vorhim eventually made it back to Rockhome, seeing Alya to safety. She told Hember of the horrors of the battle, and the knight that had turned the tide before betraying the dwarves. Despite Hember's many blessings, his beloved wife died of injuries and fatigue three days later.

Fear and outrage swept through the Dwarven nation. If the uplanders were in league with the Abyss, then they were truly alone. The fact that one human had wiped out scores of dwarves, including his greatest generals, frightened Hember. He had become accustomed to dealing solely with Abyssals. This new threat was something he had not dealt with in some time.

Reluctantly, Hember ordered the creation of a new caste that would seek out unseen and pre-

viously unknown threats and eliminate them, whatever they may be. Though they served a needful function, those dwarves selected for this caste would be despised for their very nature.

They became known as the King's Assassins, and Hember forever despised that name and his creation. Still, he found it oddly fitting that Vorhim led the group, having never forgiven the little killer for his failure.

To counter the new tunnel, Hember dispatched three garrisons from nearby cities and a crew of engineers from Rockhome to fortify the area and begin construction on a new city, Steelguard. It quickly became their second most important defensive holding next to Rockhome.

War would never leave the dwarves again.

Five years after walking into the Storm, Signon returned. According to legend, he marched proudly from the Storm, bearing armor and a mace blessed by the Storm itself. The Deverenians had destroyed all those who preached worship of the Storm before Signon, and indeed Signon himself had destroyed more Storm-cults than all other Deverenians in history. So it was when he spoke those familiar words, others listened. Speaking of a return to honor and strength, Signon gathered an army under the banner of the Storm, and plotted against Deverenia itself.

The general's return had not gone unnoticed. While the boyish Emperor Ceihallus and his court discounted tales of Signon's prowess, the true masters of Deverenia knew the gravity of his threat. The nobles bickered in secret over how to deal with the Storm-knight, eventually deciding to dispatch Salis assassins to murder him. One noble, Count Ghenis Lenore, long held that his peers were risking the destruction of Deverenia by manipulating the Emperor so, and warned at the futility of attempting to dishonorably forestall Signon's pleas for a return to honor. Having spent much of his life carefully challenging the status quo while remaining beyond the reach of Salis' knives, Ghenis knew that the assassins would soon come to him, too. Still, it took a personal and private audience with young Ceihallus to convince

the honest nobleman that the throne was beyond care or redemption, as Ceihallus insisted on cutting short the count's advice, choosing to return to his debaucheries instead. Uniting his pragmatism with his honest hope for a better Deverenia, Ghenis abandoned the nobles to their fates and joined Signon's camp.

That Signon led capably surprised no one. Even before his return, he was one of Deverenia's finest warlords, and his experiences with the Storm only added religious fervor to his repertoire. It was expected, too, that he would rally other generals to his cause, as he commanded more respect than the Emperor or the powers behind the throne. What surprised the Accordlands was that Signon's shock troops and reinforcements were three centuries' worth of Stormborn, the souls thought devoured by the Storm's incessant hunger. Even the finest among the loyalist generals failed to provide a counter tactic against these otherworldly knights, who added to their ranks with each victory. Only by fighting defensively could the loyalist factions even hope to slow Signon's advances, much less turn the tide. Twelve years before the turn of the century, Signon's troops moved to end the campaign decisively by taking Luthlarius. By this point, Order Myerdeth had joined Signon's armies, though Aedroud and Salis remained loyal to the throne.

For the only time in history, Luthlarius faced battle on its streets. The defending knights faced defection from their own ranks, while frightened serfs and nobles attempted to flee the city before Signon's arrival. In desperation, the Emperor and his masters offered their combined fortunes to the Thieves Guild to purchase Signon's death, but the guild refused outright. Order Salis also secretly sent a message to Signon, giving command of its knights to the warlord; Signon responded by converting the messenger to a Stormborn, and sending him to dispatch his masters. Eventually, the remaining Luthlarius armies devised a scheme to collapse whole strata of the city on Signon, crushing him beneath the stones of the city. When at last Signon's mortal and Stormborn troops appeared, however, the futility of the planning became clear. Signon's seemingly endless armies surrounded the city, but made no move to advance to the archery range. Instead, Signon unleashed the greatest weapon in his arsenal.

When the Storm rolled over the city, the fear grew into outright panic. The mighty winds collapsed the trapped sections of the city on their defenders. The roiling clouds overtook commoner, noble, and knight in flight toward the Cedus Imperium, the tower from which the Emperor ruled, but there was no escape. The distortions within the Storm stoked the crowd's panic, each witnessing their most personal fears and failings within the Dragon's Soul. As the masses climbed over each other to reach the tower, a terrible cracking sound forced the throng into silence. As one, they looked to the heavens and saw their fate. The Storm, at Signon's direction, had broken the Cedus Imperium in two.

Of the tens of thousands of people in the city before the Battle of Luthlarius, none survived. Serfs unearthed each body. Signon's own wizards identified the remains, and the finest horsemen unflinchingly delivered the dead to their next of kin. Signon's army had won the war, his final victory coming without so much as drawing a blade.

As the century closed, the oldest nation in the Accordlands had fallen to its oldest enemy, the Storm itself.

The Fourth Century: The Forgotten Accord

His Empire secured, Signon imposed sweeping changes. Bitter over the pettiness of the men that had ruined the Empire for their own aims, Signon outlawed politicking. No more could men and women owe their positions to intrigue instead of virtue. Any Deverenian in any position of power above base royalty would have to earn their places through worthiness and combat ability, including magic. Consequently, any position was also as powerful as the person filling it. Among other effects, this eliminated the need for bodyguards, as any person who would normally use them instead relied on self-defense.

Signon severed the last lingering ties between the Orders and the royal families, establishing the knights as superior to the nobility. As an example to the rest of the Orders, Signon personally sentenced the surviving members of Order Salis to public execution by torture. Surprisingly, he not only spared Order Aedroud this fate, but commended them on their steadfast loyalty, even when they knew their cause was unjust and doomed. Signon also added three new Orders to the ranks of knighthood, naming them for their founders in accordance with tradition: Order Ghenis, in honor of the sole nobleman that had spoken with complete honesty and loyalty to both Signon and the Emperor; Order Loth, whose master's magic had aided Signon's spies before the Myerdeth defection; and Order Rellion, led by Signon's chief general and former Aedroud, Sir Rellion d'Ilchant.

Signon further split the governance of Deverenia, evenly dividing power between the secular Emperor and the spiritual Hierophant. He also abandoned the concept of imperial primogeniture. No longer would the Emperor's heir be chosen through mere lineage, but instead by virtue of arms. Should any Deverenian defeat the finest soldier in the land, the Emperor's Champion, they could go on to challenge the Emperor himself. In the event of the Emperor's death by old age or illness, the Champion would marry one of the Emperor's relatives and become the new Emperor. Were the Emperor to die of violence (including poison), the Champion would have failed in his duties, and be banished from Deverenia. The throne would then go to the eldest of the Emperor's children (or nephews or nieces, or cousins if the need was great enough), or to their knightly spouse. The complex system proved capable of ensuring competent emperors, as the throne was only as viable as the Champion protecting it. Meanwhile the Champion could not hope to unseat their lord early, lest their ambition lead them to a shameful exile. This also led to considerable friction between the Orders, as they had to balance their honor, their military aims, and their official duties with the possibility of producing the next Emperor from their own ranks. For his part, the Emperor had to consider potential Champions' service records, martial prowess, and philosophies. Though a few conspiracies have succeeded in placing unworthy knights on the throne, no such Emperor has lasted a decade before losing his seat and his life to the truly worthy.

Strangely, Signon did not choose to become Emperor himself, instead offering the position to a distant cousin of Ceihallus, and the Champion's role to Sir Rellion. Both men were regarded as little more than Signon's mouthpieces, for they never failed to act as the Storm-knight directed.

For the Hierophant, Signon chose a devout cleric, a foreigner who had come to Signon's banner in the earliest days of the war. Modred of Carcius was barely 30 years old when he entered the Storm and emerged as a Stormborn, but he fulfills his duties even unto the present day. Under his immortal guidance, the newly created Church of the Storm destroyed all remnants of the old religion, tearing down the old gods and remaking them in the Storm's image as Védoszentelek, or patron saints. This proved to be no mere conceit on the Church's part, as their rites tore even Athanae and her children from the heavens, forever chaining them to the Storm's will. Other deities escaped this fate, whether through the actions of their own followers or through conscious will.

To aid the Church's mission to spread the Gospel of the Storm, Signon commissioned two military branches of the religion: the Knights Inquisitor and the Paladins of the Black Sun. The latter were the crowning achievement in Signon's holy works, knight-priests who exemplified the Deverenian ideal. Perfect and cruel, the Black Sun would enforce the Church's will by destroying any foolish enough to openly stand against it.

If the Black Sun represented Signon's spiritual ideals made manifest, then the Knights Inquisitor represented the cold pragmatism of the seasoned general. Realizing that no faithful soul abandons his religion without some coercion, Signon's labyrinthine Church held a small section of the clergy apart from the rest of Deverenia. Where the rest of the nation would be honest, honorable, and courageous, the Inquisition remained in the background, their only goal to root out the remnants of any worship that the Storm had already supposedly displaced. Though bound by strict codes of conduct and their own perverted faith, the Knights Inquisitor would remain the least trusted group in Deverenia.

One god Signon and Modred had agreed to annihilate was Teufeltiger, whose ideals were inconsistent with the new Deverenia. Unfortunately for them, Teufeltiger's boundless capacity for treachery made it all but impossible to enslave his divine essence. Still, they believed their task was complete when Teufeltiger ceased to respond except when invoked as an aspect of the Storm. Coincidentally, the day before Modred announced Teufeltiger's conversion is also the last time any Deverenian historian noted the province of Isadrans even in passing.

With his reforms well underway in his homeland, Signon set out to spread his influence over the Accordlands. His armies proved all but unstoppable, and wherever they conquered, they purposefully destroyed any documents referencing converted gods' previous histories.

Signon sent a message to the cities of Baraxton and Phontar in Sarakia, demanding their immediate submission to the Empire. Phontar quickly responded with a brave challenge for them to do

their worst. Signon took them at their word, and the Storm swept out of the mountains and engulfed the lands around Phontar. Baraxton quickly surrendered and watched in horror as the Storm ravaged their neighbors. When Sarakia's rolling hills and green pastures gave way to broken hunks of blasted dirt, the Storm finally passed on. During the occupation of Baraxton that followed the Church seized many relics of the Western gods and forced the gods to take the Trial by Storm. Dozens of lesser gods died, and only luck and the intervention of a group of Kavara's followers prevented the destruction of both their goddess and Albrecht.

Everything changed for the proto-Narawati when the Deverenians returned to the region. They expanded westward, annexing the kingdoms that once were under their rule. Misearis and Sarakia once again became part of the Deverenian Empire. The new rulers treated the people of the west as the conquered subjects that they were. Those who would become Narawati, already feeling kinship through the bonds formed in their social gatherings, began to meet secretly and discussed whether they would stand up and fight or submit to the Empire. Realizing that they could not stand up to the Deverenians and hope to survive, but that they were not willing to become loyal subjects of the Empire, the Narawati council decided to leave and try to find a place where they could start anew. They abandoned their homes and set out to find a place that they could settle out from under the Deverenian thumb.

They headed south, into uncharted territories. The land they found was harsh, and many Narawati died when flames shot out of the ground without warning. Afraid of the divine retribution that would be unleashed upon them if they went back north, the Narawati continued south, trying to avoid the fires and look for a place to settle.

After traveling deep into the land that would be called Narawat, the pioneers found lush terrain, with bountiful plant and animal life. Thinking they had found a new home, the Narawati stayed for a few months, living off the land and planning their new community. Then the fires struck again. The Narawati learned that the fires could come at any time, destroying everything on the land, so they started watching for signs. The behavior of the animals and other, more subtle signs taught them when they would have to move from an area. They continued south, until they were out of this dangerous area.

Past the fire zone, the Narawati reached a land called Isadrans. At first, they were elated, as the Isadrans seemed more like them than the people in the Accordlands were. The Narawati thought they had found a place to settle, but it was not to be. The Isadrans were suspicious of the people who came across the lands to their north. They were aware of the Burnings and believed that anyone who could cross these lands must be demons. The Isadrans attacked the newcomers on sight, believing them to be evil. The Narawati fought well, but gradually gave ground. When they retreated as far as the burning lands, the Isadrans stopped their pursuit. They believed themselves unable to survive in the lands of fire so left the "demons" to retreat.

The Narawati found themselves in a difficult position. They had trapped themselves between the Isadrans to the south and the Deverenians to the north. Rather than face either fate, they made the decision that was responsible for every facet



of Narawati life to follow: they would remain in the land of the fires. They had already discovered certain patterns that let them know when the fires were coming, and witnessed the bounty of the land in the times when the fire was elsewhere. The ability of the land to recover from the fires was a surprise, and the fires were incredibly dangerous, but the Narawati were adaptable and willing to change their lives to fit with what the lands had to give them. With vigilance, they believed that this could be a great place to live. They named the land Narawat, meaning "new vista."

The Narawati broke into tribes, wandering their new land as nomads. They studied the patterns of the Burnings and the deaths from unexpected fire slowed, and then stopped. They became able to predict the Burnings far enough in advance to evacuate the area before the flames erupted. They hunted the herds of animals that always knew where the best plant life was available. They gathered crops, always leaving the root structure so that the plants could return following the next Burning.

While the Deverenian Empire rebuilt itself, the nation that had first rebelled against it was falling apart. Khalenar died at the beginning of the fourth century, and chose to divide his lands among his children, rather than entrust one to govern them all. He created a system under which his children would gather every twenty years and appoint a single leader to govern over the others. He hoped to keep his family united against the dangers he foresaw. However, at the first meeting of the council, his children could not agree upon a single leader and split the nation into a dozen independent countries.

In the north, the twins Calenar and Celinar governed Lion's Jaw Bay while Beor controlled the frozen areas inland. In the south, Georza, Taramas, and Toheuth held sway. In the center, the remaining princes began to squabble over borders and a bloody civil war raged for twenty years. It only ended when the two strongest princes agreed to unite their families by wedding their children to each other. Princess Lynn and Prince Andoverus, both grandchildren of Khalenar, married. Their combined forces finally put an end to the violence. They formed a strong monarchy in which both prince and princess ruled over the newly named Andover, with Corinth as their capital. In the east, Relz brutally but efficiently governed the lands south of Myreth and Tyraniel through the help of his sadistic nobles.

By the end of the century, Signon's efforts to destroy Deverenian's old gods were so thorough that the only remaining accounts of the Accord were in dwarven hands, the rest long since put to the torch for their references to the mortal Deverenus. In later years, historians would refer to the known world as the Accordlands out of habit and precedent, ignorant of the great laws that once bound the lands together.

During the long years of the fourth century, the elven cities of limestone and sandstone began to collapse. Their magic had long held the stones in place, but the force of Bone was too strong and ate away at the rocks. The necromancers delved deep into the earth in search of raw material for their arts, discovering several skeletons of titans and dragons. These were unsuitable for the rituals, but the bones inspired a priest to construct a temple made entirely of these long-dead creatures. At first, the other elves scoffed at the idea, believing that a temple constructed of bone would attract the attention of the Elements rather than keep them at bay. However, when the temple was completed and the cleric became one of the Severed, the other elves were convinced. As the years passed and the bones proved to be far more durable than steel or stone, their use became widespread. By the end of the century bones had become acceptable for clothing, armor, weaponry and buildings.

In the early half of the fourth century, Signon died. Though the Storm-knight was old even by Deverenian standards, he had insisted on personally overseeing as many of the Empire's functions as possible. As per his instructions, Modred cremated Signon's remains, as the dead knight had claimed that he was not yet worthy to enter into the Storm's true embrace. Only a handful of his personal artifacts remained, and these the Emperor housed in a small museum in Luthlarius' Inner City. Among these possessions was a book, apparently penned by Signon himself, describing the trials he and others had endured to free the Empire from its greedy masters without honor, as well as prophecies of the Storm's final ascension over the world. The *Annales Devereniorum* became the seminal work for the Church of the Storm and its teachings, and scholars have pondered its hidden meanings ever since. The common belief is that one day, a Deverenian will come who is worthy of leading the nation as both Emperor and Hierophant, and that the Storm will rend the skin between the planes, allowing the dead and living to be as one once more. Though Modred has officially dismissed this commentary, many people believe that this savior will be none other than Signon himself, reborn to Deverenian in the hour of her greatest need.

Without Signon's guidance, Deverenian expansion faltered. While the Empire lost little ground immediately, Signon's disappearance signaled the end of the nation's second golden age.

The Fifth Century: New Faces of War, New Faces of Enemies

Near the beginning of the fifth century the legion commander of a tribe dedicated to the totem Mammoth began to draft plans for domination of the other humanoid tribes. Instead of moving from location to location, fighting any in their way, this warlord, Grath Longtusk, planned on using a central base of operations.

He had his tribe build a huge city fortress. Such cities were rare in the lands of the humanoids. The handful that did exist predated the Accord itself, and many battles were fought over them. The tribe weathered three attacks during the construction of the city, but each time Longtusk repelled the invaders.

When it was complete he dubbed it Lukkot, meaning "Mammoth's Fury." His plan's first phase complete, he now called for the construction of massive siege engines; enough to besiege every city in the lands of the humanoids. Longtusk also ordered the creation of hundreds of antipersonnel war machines. Most siege engines were designed to simply destroy fortifications and cities; these, he would use against oncoming troops directly, enabling a smaller force to take out a larger one. Twice more, the fledgling city shrugged off attacks while it prepared. Nearly two decades after work had started, Longtusk's army was ready. His grand assaults never took place; he died three days before he could give the order to march. His son canceled the attacks, and started selling the siege engines and war machines to interested legions. The Legion of Mammoth prospered, and Lukkot became the humanoids' center for the manufacture of siege engines.

For centuries, humans and Deverenians quietly settled in the foothills north of the elven forests. Each year, they encroached farther into the forests, an encroachment that High King Kasra of Calix declared at an end in the fifth century. Using the undead experiments they had perfected during the last two hundred years, the elves invaded the territory up to the mountains surrounding Condor Pass. These sparsely populated lands fell quickly. Druids followed the troops and magically forced trees to fill this new land. Soon elven forests stretched in an unbroken arc from Tyraniel to Tseluse.

Then the elves turned their attention to a group of humanoids who had settled alongside Tseluse. The elves attacked one of the largest tribes, Frathtar's Legion, partly with the goal of adding the strong humanoids to their undead army. The organized humanoid tribes were a far more difficult opponent that forced the elves back and then pursued them into Tseluse itself, burning the forests and villages they found. High King Kasra ordered the undead armies brought to bear, but the humanoids had prepared vast siege engines that spat flames upon the revenants and undead minions of the elves. His forces in tatters, Kasra allied himself with another humanoid tribe, Qatar's Legion, who attacked from the east while the remaining undead armies attacked from the west. Frathtar's Legion and totem were destroyed, but before the elven necromancers could raise the humanoid dead, Qatar burned the bodies. With no means of restoring his lost forces, Kasra's plans for domination weakened.

By the fifth century, the Narawati had wandered across all parts of Narawat and discovered a large dormant volcano near the center of their land. Noticing that this was the one place in all Narawat that did not suffer from the fires, the Narawati decided to build a permanent settlement. It would be a meeting place for the nomadic tribes to bring their goods to distribute to the other tribes, which had previously happened only in chance meetings

between wandering tribes. The city of Narawi was a central locale to meet with other tribes at regular intervals. Every time a Narawati tribe gathered as much food and supplies that they could carry, they returned to Narawi to distribute it, and pick up other tools and supplies that they needed. Thus, there were no Narawati who did not spend at least some time in Narawi. Despite holding only a small percentage of the population of Narawat at any one time, Narawi was the hub the country revolved around.

While the Narawati were building the city, they uncovered a pit that emitted intense heat. The night that the pit was uncovered, nine gods visited the Narawati. These gods, the Narawat Pantheon, told the Narawati that they were the chosen of the gods, and that they were destined to come and take care of Narawat. These deities awed the Narawati and the people swore to respect and worship these new gods. Over the next decade or so, the Narawati built temples for each of the gods in the pantheon. The pantheon's god of evil, whose original name history has forgotten, spread evil and corruption everywhere he went and with every word he spoke. He looked upon the Narawati and saw that they were a good and kind people who did not act on the evil impulses that many humans embraced. To spare them, therefore, he stopped moving and speaking. The Narawati built a temple for him as well: Kinamisa, "the Silent One."

Deverenia was relatively quiet for most of the fifth century, as the Emperors sought to enact Signon's reforms, or to undo them in the hopes of gaining absolute power over the Empire. These latter emperors met with little success, usually dying as shortly after coming to power.

Still, the emperors of this century produced a number of lasting changes, including the creation of a new Order (Genecourt, a former royal family who had made considerable contributions to the Church, to serve as liaisons between the Orders and the Church), the formation of an Imperial Guard separate from the Orders, and the decision to refuse to acknowledge any other country as a sovereign nation.

One of the most surprising turns in Deverenian history also occurred during this time. After the legendary vices of the imperial line before Signon's coming, virtually all Deverenians could trace their lineage to Deverenus himself. This was true even of common serfs, as "slumming" was a popular pastime of some of the especially unsavory emperors and their family. Though the change had occurred so slowly as to go unnoticed, by this time it was common for Deverenians to stay healthy and in their prime well into their seventh decade, dying perhaps sixty years later. Though Deverenians had long claimed superiority over the other races, due to Athanae's victory over the Dragon, now they had verifiable proof: even the least Deverenian was still at least partly divine.

Unfortunately, centuries of interbreeding with normal humans thinned the potency of Deverenus' blood, and the Orders, the Church, and the Emperor all agreed to outlaw breeding with the "lesser" species, lest their weaker heritage eliminate the lingering remains of godly heritage in the Deverenian race. Thereafter, miscegenation became one of the most serious crimes in Deverenia that was not a capital offense.

Though the Accordlands had long understood Bascaron's capability for both destruction and corruption, no one could have guessed that the centuries-old destruction of the future Kabal lands was but a sampling of the Broken Moon's power.

While the Medusans were no strangers to the Accordlands, having alternately traded with or paid homage to Deverenia and the humanoid legions for hundreds of years, they were a solitary people. Everything changed literally overnight, as another major conjunction of Bascaron occurred directly over Mourn itself. Unlike the previous such destruction, this wave of chaotic and corruptive energy decimated virtually the entire continent east of Deverenia. The force of the destruction was so great that it pushed the land against itself, creating a new mountain range that separated the western lands from the newly created Shattered Lands. An infinite torrent of warped monsters spilled out from the soured earth here, and perhaps worst of all, the Medusans apparently survived in a twisted, new form. Acting on advice from their seers, Deverenia rebuffed the Medusans' attempts to continue dealings. The Church of the Storm's briefest investigations determined that not only did Mourn still stand, but that the Medusans had apparently willfully summoned Bascaron's mad touch. Further, in an unprecedented move of relative humility, the Emperor sent envoys to the greatest humanoid warlords, the better to unite in stopping any Bascarite movements to or from the Shattered Lands. This agreement was largely successful, though Mourn had a sister cult of wizards and summoners in the western wastes, allowing for occasional travel without difficulty.

The Sixth Century: Interludes and Overtures

The beginning of the sixth century was one of the more horrifying times the dwarves had ever known. An especially powerful Abyssal was killing dwarves in their sleep. It could not be heard nor seen except by its victims, and it could pass through solid stone. It killed scores of dwarves before finally being stopped by a young priestess who awoke just before it was to kill her. The priestess called upon Kor to save her, and an avatar appeared and slew the Abyssal.

While the threat was over, many dwarves called for a final end to the war. A new group, the Blackstone Raiders, begged Hember to attack the corpse of the Dragon again, destroying the Abyssals forever. Hember refused, the memory of his wife's attempt to destroy the corpse still fresh in his mind.

With the legions equipped with massive engines of destruction and using complex, aggressive strategies, it was only a matter of time before one or two legion commanders felt that they could finally conquer the entire humanoid nations, and then the Accordlands themselves.

No one expected ten legion commanders to feel this way.

The Legion of Griffin, Bear's True Tribe, the Legion of the Coiled Constrictor, Wolf's Get, Falcon's Claws, Legion of Boar, Tribe of Fox, Wyvern's Legion, Razorback's Legion, and the Hounds of the Black Wolf all began campaigns to unify the humanoids under their banner at roughly the same time. For five years the legions fought, seemingly at random, until clear lines of battle had been drawn. Griffin, Bear, Constrictor and Boar controlled the south, while Wyvern, Fox, Falcon and Wolf vied for control in the north. The Razorbacks began a lengthy siege of Lukkot, hoping to gain an advantage in war machines over the other legions, while the Black Wolf Legion staged a series of hit-and-run raids, destabilizing the control of the other nine legions. With the legions sufficiently bogged down in defending their holdings, the war dragged on with no clear victor on the horizon.

The conflict came to a dramatic close two decades after it started. Wolf's Get discovered a huge deposit of iron on the eastern side of the mountains south of Baraxton. The other legions did not want Wolf to bolster its army with new weapons, especially Razorback, which had suffered heavy losses in the siege of Lukkot. When word got out that Falcon's Claws were sending the majority of their legion to take the deposit from Wolf's Get, the other legions also set out for the iron deposits, leaving only token forces to hold their lands. Scouts arrived first, engaging in skirmishes with each other, trying to gain knowledge of the terrain. By the time the vanguards arrived each legion had claimed a campsite. Realizing the situation could destroy their forces, the legion commanders grudgingly met in plain sight at the center of the field to search for a diplomatic solution. After a perceived insult led to the death of the Razorback legion commander, his warriors charged Bear's True Tribe, seeking revenge. Soon all the legions were engaged in a pitched battle.

The Battle of the Ten Legions lasted approximately four days and nights. In the end over 10,000 humanoids lay dead, and only two legions, Fox and Black Wolf, had enough members to remain tribes. As word spread of the massive battle, the occupied tribes that had been left behind reclaimed their homelands, ending the power struggle. In a desperate gamble to keep their holdings, Fox and Black Wolf united to become the Red Wolf Legion, and a generation afterward had produced enough crossbreeds between orcs and goblins that virtually the entire legion was of mixed blood. Refusing to call themselves half-breeds or mongrels, they insisted upon calling themselves Nothrog, the goblin word for "master." When they continued to win battles, despite their "thin" blood, other legions followed suit. By the century's close, the pure-blood humanoids were in the minority, and Nothrog control was secure.

As Deverenia's power waned, its people tried to balance their pride with need. Though the only the most arrogant or foolish Deverenians still boasted of ruling the world, in truth most knew that the other nations were growing in power. Though the Empire officially refused to recognize other states, neither could

its people bear to live without their accustomed luxuries. Without the resources to retake his former holdings, the Emperor feared that his already fragile economy would collapse, leading to the final dissolution of the remaining Deverenian regions.

When the solution presented itself, none were comforted by it. The enterprising merchant family of Tremayne offered the solution by taking Deverenia's military tactics into the political arena. Through a combination of forceful personality, cunning manipulation, and outright murder, argued the Tremayne, a handful of masterminds could dominate or destroy any rival. The Tremayne family further argued that this plan had already worked well for them in their own efforts, even against other Deverenians.

The confession angered the traders, as the Orders that had had dealings with the Tremaynes realized how likely it was that the family had duped the knights. Even the Emperor's Champion at the time, Master Caudecus Loth, had heard of the family's schemes, and pronounced a death sentence on the Tremayne line for pretending to power. As the Orders prepared to follow the decree, however, the Emperor stepped forward with a proclamation of his own: that the Inquisition would bend its talents toward uncovering any Tremayne guilt. The Emperor furthermore reminded the Orders that the Tremayne family's primary sphere of influence was its prosperous trading companies, and that any knight found indebted to Tremayne for money had best honor the bargain. The Orders found themselves cornered, as they had to prove that the Tremayne had sought to expand its influence beyond simple mercantilism, while simultaneously ensuring that no knight involved in the accusation had any outstanding loans with the family. The Orders recanted, and insisted that their knights repay the Tremayne immediately.

Unfortunately for Master Caudecus, he had no such opportunity to save face. Though he had had no personal dealings with the Tremayne, and Order Loth had fewer debts than some Orders, an Imperial rebuke to the Emperor's Champion left him with an appearance of guilt. In retaliation, the Tremaynes demanded recompense for their lost money and for the false accusation from Order Loth. The scandal nearly bankrupted Order Loth, but Master Caudecus would yet have his revenge. The Champion threw his weight behind the Tremayne diplomatic plans, aiding the family in an elevation to a true knightly Order, but simultaneously making it appear that Tremayne had blackmailed him into doing so. Master Caudecus and many Loth knights then walked into the Storm, thereby placing themselves beyond mortal judgment. As a result, while Order Tremayne could enact its nefarious plans against other countries, they could not afford even the appearance of politicking amongst their new peers, as the other Orders would be ever-watchful for the chance to avenge themselves.

Toward the end of the sixth century, the phons and dergas of Myreth grew from a minor irritation into a full-blown threat. These two races were minor faeries of the forest who had lived with the elves for centuries. Tales tell that they were once one and the same, a shy race known as the phon that played on the edges of sight and filled the woods with light and laughter, until Syneri began to experiment upon them, twisting them with the

Elements to discover the secret of their immortality. These experiments created the dark and vicious race of derga, who prey upon flesh in packs. Both races are primitive, though they do possess a language and subtle magic of their own. During the sixth century, without warning, both races also became savage.

They formed into bands of a score or more and began attacking isolated travelers and hunters. No one is certain how long this lasted, because the attacks were so violent that none survived them for several years. When the elves became concerned and sent large groups into the heart of the forests to discover what was occurring, they were attacked by hundreds of the creatures, phon and derga alike. Enough escaped to report the nature of the foe. Elves set traps to capture the phon and imprison them within magical glass. Still they would not explain their actions, so the elves used these prisoners as light sources for their bone-shaped cities. The derga were likewise magically captured and used as messengers or spies by the elves. Still, none could explain the actions of the wild creatures. The attacks continued to increase in scope until the entire population of the city of Daragara was wiped out in a single night by a faerie army numbering in the thousands.

Shortly after that, the Council dispatched a small group of adventurers to investigate. They returned a month later with news that a hideous creature calling itself the Terror of Myreth was responsible for the faerie attacks. The terrifying reaver had dominated the simple minds of the faeries into doing its bidding. The adventurers claimed to have destroyed it before it could extend its domination to the elves themselves. The Council dismissed their claims as fanciful, but the attacks did indeed cease. The elves, having grown accustomed to using the phon and derga as slaves, continued to do so.

At the end of the sixth century, life in Narawat was nearly indistinguishable from modern times. The priests of the various temples had discovered that they could get messages from their gods through meditative trances and shared visions with the other temple's priests. The head priests from each temple (now called fundisi) formed a council, the Priests' Circle, and shared a vision. In it, the gods directed them to appoint a nomad named Funiq to lead Narawat. He was the first leader appointed this way, but this system continued for four hundred years without exception — until recently, when the Circle received a vision of blackness rather than the identity of their new leader.



The Seventh Century: Hard-Won Lessons

The Legion of Mammoth, led by the brilliant general Dar Kul, tried to expand its influence at the turn of the century. Realizing the strength of Mammoth was in siege warfare, Dar Kul planned to attack a Deverenian castle on the border of Nothrog lands. While his troops were well trained, they had never drilled as a team. Instead each crew worked on its own, executing orders flawlessly if not in tandem. While the castle took great damage, the Deverenians disrupted the legion's already shoddy communications and isolated units from the main force, picking them off one by one. Dar Kul returned home disgraced.

Not wishing for his heirs to suffer his shame, Dar Kul founded the Lukkot War College. His tactics were sound, and his troops knew their jobs, but they had not fully embraced the coordination necessary to truly present a threat on the battlefield. Soon the War College had a reputation for taking trained but inexperienced troops and turning out devastating leaders. Legion commanders from all the tribes sent their generals and instructors to study at the War College, paying Lukkot handsome prices in return.

Though Denska had rebelled alongside Khalenar long ago, they had fought Deverenia ever since. Facing renewed Deverenian attacks, Denska turned to its elven neighbors for assistance. High King Talishin of Calix agreed to help, but did not immediately name the price of his aid. The Deverenian army was almost to the border before news arrived that the elves had struck Laurel to the south and were marching toward the center of the Empire. The Deverenians turned to Laurel to find the place a wasteland. The elves had slaughtered the villagers, burned the crops, raised the dead as undead conscripts, and then continued on to the north. While the Deverenian scouts searched for signs of the elves, the undead army hit their supply lines. The Imperial troops were stranded without food in a wasteland, under attack from bands of undead. Only half of the Imperial troops made it back to the Empire, and Deverenia ignored Denska for over a decade. The wizards with the Deverenian army chose not to return at all. Instead they struck out for the wastelands of the northwest, which they purged and took for their own — the Lands of the Kabal — though the wizards swore to Deverenia that they were still loyal to the throne.

During these years, elven ambassadors brought word of the price for Denska's salvation. The necromancers had taken thousands of slaves and prisoners to the gloomy woods of Tyraniei, where their priests consecrated the river Tarripur to Blood, and its waters ran red for a decade.

At the beginning of the seventh century, Hember retired as Hethrhod of the Church of Kor, appointing another to take his place. Hember left Goldenaxe and made his way to a small farming village near the city of Steelguard. Here he wrote a rune as Hember, the man, not as the chosen voice of Kor. It contained the wisdom Hember had gained throughout the course of his unnaturally long life. Once finished, he delivered it to the local temple. Then, at long last, Hember left the lands of the dwarves, allowing himself to die of old age.

Many search parties looked for Hember after he left. It was Vorhim, the last surviving hero, who discovered his lord's body two years later. Vorhim brought the body to Rockhome, and entombed it under the temple found there.

As the century drew to a close, a religious crisis struck Narawat. A number of Narawati began to question their role as the Chosen of the gods. They asked how it was possible for the gods to use their divine essences to create the Narawati, when the people existed long before they came to Narawat and discovered the gods there. The Priests' Circle, always a supporter of learning and critical thought, did not discourage this line of reasoning, but attempted to find counter-arguments to present to the dissenters. The arguments proved ineffective.



Ironically, it was the Tarihi-lahn who ended these problems. These students of history claimed to have found evidence that the history that they had passed down through generations was not correct. They said that the Narawati had never lived in the north, and had always lived in Narawat. Over time, they convinced the Narawati that this was the case. Eventually, no single living being had ever heard the previous version of history. The Tarihi-chagua, which the Narawati founded in order to preserve their history, was responsible for destroying the truth and leaving a fabrication as the only history the people of Narawat know. The Tarihi-lahn did this with the best intentions, but their sacrifice of the truth would come as a horrifying shock to the Tarihi-lahn today. The price of peace was truth.

The Eighth Century: Revolutions

Early in the 8th century, two revolutions changed the face of the Accordlands. The first came in Llyr, where the mercantile class's years of accumulation of power came to fruition. Angered by the greed of the nobility, the merchants banded together, hired a large mercenary force, and broke away from Andover. At first, King Maskar demanded the recapture of Llyr, but he was unwilling to mobilize the army before an upcoming Council to elect the new King. The Llyran merchants lobbied and bribed the nobles of Andover so that the Council selected a nobleman who was uninterested in pursuing Llyr. The merchants continued to use monetary incentives to encourage Andover and the Empire to avoid any entanglements in Llyr, eventually leading Baraxton to its own revolt against the weakling Emperor of the time.

In the eighth century, the undying elf Syneri returned to the lands of Deverenia and investigated rumors of the orbs Signon had used to summon and control the Storm. When the Church refused him entry into their temples, he forced his way in and stole two of the orbs. Syneri's followers fought against the Church's army and their Stormborn legions, with the elves suffering the majority of the casualties. Finally, Syneri used the power of one of the orbs to transport himself and his followers back to the forests of Tyraniel.

The badly wounded elves strode through their dark woods unafraid. The eerie moans and calls of the undead fell silent at their approach and the undead fled before their fearsome magic. Necromancers assaulted his troops, but Syneri drove the enemy before him until Morghen Dythanus arrived and reinforced the elves loyal to the throne, hoping to finally slay his father's killer. Necromantic energies and scores of undead attacked the remains of House Syneri, but Syneri nullified the necromancers' spells while his followers drove back the undead army with the orbs. The two leaders fought for long hours until Syneri collapsed. Morghen stalked up to his fallen foe, but Syneri's prostration was merely a ruse. Syneri lashed out with a magical halberd and wounded Morghen grievously. Syneri and his followers escaped once more into obscurity.

By the middle of the eighth century, two Nothrog tribes worshiped a single totem of Wyvern. No new tribes wished to be associated with the vicious, uncaring beasts. Stories of tribes being eaten by their totem were rampant. The druids and shamans of new tribes shied away from such totems, hoping for a strong tribe, not a dead one. With a shortage of true followers, Wyvern's power waned. The legion commander of Wyvern's Gnash planned to conquer the Legion of Wyvern's Fang and absorb its power, hoping to restore his totem's potency.

The ensuing Battle of the Wyverns was a stalemate. The shamans of both tribes summoned their totem, hoping to break the impasse. Both Wyverns succumbed to bloodlust, brought on by the death that surrounded them. With indiscriminate fury the Wyverns destroyed the armies, trying to sate their thirst for blood. After the armies' deaths, the Wyverns continued their fight, delivering fatal wounds to each other. Since that time no shaman or druid has ever tried to summon Wyvern as a totem.

Near the end of the century, House Glyn found members of House Tansiq were harboring several large heretical cults of Flesh. The Tansiq cultists practiced necromantic sacrifices of other elves, indulged in horrible rituals meant to absorb victims' strength, and trained assassins in the art of killing other elves. High Queen Rakisen declared these actions unforgivable, and decreed that anyone found practicing them would be staked out in the forest for animals to devour. She disappeared days later, and her corpse was discovered bound to a tree and partially eaten by wolves. The Council swiftly exiled House Tansiq, but their mandate was toothless. Tansiq's members simply vanished into the deepest forests, emerging only when it suited their unthinkable blasphemies.

The Ninth Century: Wars Without End

At the beginning of the century, the cold inland country of Beor sent a mastodon corps north into the lands of the Kabal. King Rathe, commander of the mastodons, hoped to annex the Kabal lands. Unexpectedly, the invading forces ran into a detachment of Denskan troops, themselves on their way to appeal to Hrolman the Kabal wizard for aid against the Deveranian Empire. The Denskans came to the Kabal's defense, blunting the invasion long enough for Hrolman to turn his lands into a frozen quagmire. The mastodons could not fight in the arctic bogs and turned back. King Rathe returned to his own lands, and in place of foreign conquests renamed the country "Rathe."

Shortly thereafter, Hrolman provided Denska with a large supply of enchanted arrows and magical rods. These magic items benefited Denska greatly when the Empire attacked Condor Pass a few years later, as only the powerful magics of the Kabal allowed

them to survive. The rods created walls of flame, and the arrows pierced the strongest armor plating. However, when the elves struck Denska's western border, the king of Denska rode against them with a small force of his best men. With Albrecht's aid, Denska turned back the undead, but the king died on the field of battle. The nobles of Denska argued over who would rule the country for years, until the next Imperial assault. On the battlefield of Condor Pass, a mysterious figure appeared wearing a set of magical blood-red plate mail. Calling himself the Bruntor, he led the defenses against the Deverenians until he fell in battle. Once scouts recovered the body, they brought it before the nobles, who removed his full helm and discovered him to be one of their own. With this new leader dead, morale risked collapse unless the nobles selected another to take his place. The new Bruntor showed his people that the Deverenians were not all-powerful, and inspired the Denskans to greatness. The Empire's assault failed, and the Bruntor was anointed king. Shortly thereafter, King Bruntor disappeared, promising to return in time of need. He has yet to fail the Denskans, and during times of war or disaster, a Denskan noble secretly takes on the role of King Bruntor.

Baraxton also defended itself against several attacks by the Imperial army. While their mercenary troops and Nothrog-manufactured weaponry held the line, the senators of Baraxton chose a different route to survival. Their heavy taxes paid to the Empire, generous tithes to the Church of the Storm, and extremely low tariffs for Imperial goods made the city-state an indispensable part of the Deverenian economy. This provided the Empire with sufficient reason to allow Baraxton autonomy.

In the southern portions of Andover, monetary conflicts arose. The baronies of Georza and Toheuth believed that Andover was draining them of resources for its own gain. They appealed to the king for several years without success. When Queen Zanfren was crowned, they appealed to her sense of fairness and convinced her to release them from membership. They became appellate regions associated with the country of Andover and responsible for taxes, but freed of other responsibilities — including the right to enter the Council to select the new king. She had hoped they would see the disadvantages and appeal to reenter Andover as full members, but they did not. Toheuth rejoiced in its freedom, but in the absence of central authority each noble began to accumulate an army. Civil war raged through the small region as dozens of petty nobles attempted to become the ruler of the small country. The fighting destroyed the area's resources and the nobles lost control of their armies when they became unable to pay them.

Neighboring Georza instead became a great economic force. Renaming itself Jalpa, after a plant that grew profusely across the country, the country focused on lending money and investing. When Llyr refused to repay one of these loans, Jalpa bribed a Toheuth noble to send his troops into Llyr. This began a practice of mercenary activity for the people of Toheuth and the merchants of Jalpa. Adventurers from both countries also began plundering the nearby country of Markappal. Entire cities disappeared into the swamp, and the people no longer made any attempt to maintain their lands. Instead, they plundered the homes of their ancestors and lived meager lives on the

remains. Monsters and hideous creatures crawled out of the ooze and attacked these settlements, which hired mercenaries to protect them.

The Nothrog shaman Dra'morta had a vision one night of a great corpse that stared upon him, and filled his soul with the beating of an immense heart. He awoke insane, slaughtered his legion commander and, in a complex, bloody rite, bound his totem, Asp, into the corpse. The ritual, which had revealed itself to him in his vision, drained the life of one-third of the tribe in the course of the summoning.

While Dra'morta believed he had bound the power of the Dragon to his tribe, in truth he had merely fallen victim to a powerful Abyssal. Under its command he freed it, using the ritual it described to him, and given it a new, more powerful form.

As soon as Dra'morta declared himself the new commander of the Legion of the Dragon, all other tribes declared war on him. The totems of the tribes ordered their legions to destroy this mad warlord, the only time in their history that all tribes worked as one against a common enemy. Even so, the power Dra'morta had unleashed was great, and fifteen full legions fell in battle before the destruction of Dra'morta and his false totem. Thereafter, anyone that even hinted at attempting to duplicate Dra'morta's feat was punished severely, in some cases even killed outright for suggesting the foul heresy. It is a time few Nothrog ever speak of.

Farther north in Andover, King Valis ruled most of the last century in peace — but in his final days, the elves struck without warning.

Toward the century's end, the elves gathered under High King Sarinaus for a final war with the humans, to gain immortality for their entire race. They had spent decades amassing vast undead armies in the forests of Myreth. Sarinaus planned to wipe out Andover and spread the elven forests to the sea. He had gathered a multitude of undead commanders, the elite of his society, to destroy any opposition and a host of lesser undead to fill the bulk of his army. At first, the plan showed every sign of being a success. The undead army attacked a dozen small communities and grew larger with each attack. The elves used the massive deaths to summon Avatars of the Elements to devastate the lands and destroy any troops foolish enough to oppose them. The army was within sight of Corinth, the capital of Andover, when a lone elf approached the city. The guards immediately opened fire upon him, but he waved his hand and their attacks went awry. He loudly declared that Neus had sent him to aid the people of Andover. An intrigued King David summoned Grandfather Tobias, high priest of Neus, who substantiated the elf's tale.

The elf declared himself Syneri, long outcast from the elves and ready to fight at the humans' side. King David accepted the offer and asked how to defeat the elven armies. Syneri closeted himself with the King and Tobias for several days. When they emerged, a group of adventurers was dispatched to Misearis to retrieve one of Syneri's mystical orbs that he had hidden there. The undead army was camped outside the gate and a vast battle raged around it. But Syneri called upon the power of the glowing orb and a huge swath of undead collapsed into dust. As the undead fell

back, another group of elves sprang into view behind them. They bore the symbol of House Syneri and brandished another glowing orb that cut a similar path of destruction.

The panicked elven priests of Sarinaus called upon the power of the Elements, summoning the Avatar of Bone to destroy the traitorous elves. But Syneri and his followers combined the might of their orbs and banished even that mighty beast. The loyalist elven army fled in terror, the rays of the orbs following them, cutting down undead and destroying the elite of elven society.

In the wake of that battle, the elves surrendered unconditionally. Syneri wanted to show mercy upon his people, but the nation of Andover demanded retribution. They demanded that he lay a geas upon the elves that would prevent any elf from using necromancy for a hundred years. The humans believed that by then the undead would be destroyed and the secrets of necromancy would be long forgotten. Syneri argued against this course of action, declaring that this would only strengthen the elven resolve, but King David was adamant. Syneri reluctantly imposed the geas, knowing that he would be hated and reviled by his people, but hoping that his House would be able to show the loyalist elves another way.

However, a human assassin killed the beloved wife of Syneri's second-in-command, Fahlyn, seconds before the geas was laid. The distraught widower rejected Syneri's calls for peace in favor of becoming Lord Winter, a force of destruction. Tired of their long exile, House Syneri followed Winter and rejoined the elves in the forests, where Winter attempted to organize another invasion of Andover. House Syneri remained in the forests and slowly integrated into elven society while retaining the secret magic they had studied during their long exile. Syneri himself disappeared, and Lord Winter soon followed him into obscurity.

Also rejoining elven society during these years was House Netheryn. They were welcomed back by the High Kings, for they knew methods of extending life other than necromancy. Largely unsuccessful, they were still regarded as the only viable option during the long years of the geas. A number of High Kings ruled the elven people during this time and King Ichaerus suggested that continuity should be maintained in this difficult period. He offered to rule as High King, but the other Houses tolerated him rather than respecting him.

Even before the geas, Morghen Dythanus prepared to defeat it. He summoned the leaders of the elven people and entombed them in necromantic sleep shortly before the geas, for its duration. Guarding them during this long period, he maintained his spell and prevented their ruin.

The Tenth Century: End of Days

Though Deverenian had never truly been weak, it had been centuries since it had lost territory in open revolt. In the opening days of this century, however, one young nobleman engineered a stunning victory, retaking the Laurel lands in a month's time with a single legion of troops. Young Vyacheslav Drac was previously considered merely a dilettante nobleman, a charlatan of a wizard and a pretender of a fighter. After he led a private army to retake Laurel, none could deny his natural leadership and strategic genius.

Within days of his victory, each knightly Order had offered him membership. To the shock of the nation, Drac refused them all, choosing instead to challenge the Emperor's Champion, Master Andanius Aedroud, and then the Emperor himself. Slaying them both, Vyacheslav Drac became the first Emperor since Signon's time to have no previous ties to any Orders. To further cement his claim, Drac married his predecessor's daughter, and adopted her siblings. Though the Orders gritted their teeth at the thought of serving under a man who had never been one of their peers, both public opinion and Drac's apparently boundless talents stayed the knights' hands.

Drac's expansionism halted at Laurel. Though Denska's regular army was no match for Drac's wily strategies or seasoned troops, Condor Pass was a deathtrap, with many of Drac's finest men simply disappearing into the valleys. To the south, the Nothrog lands were no easier to control, as their northern domain belonged to the legendary Siegemaster Kcal'den. Unwilling to risk attacking Baraxton only to lose it to the Nothrog warlord, Drac threw armies at either Denska or Nothrog for forty years, never significantly gaining or losing ground.

In the beginning of the century, the Dominar of Misearis died in an arena battle with a burly man named Kartag, who immediately claimed the title of Dominar and rulership of the country as his own. He was the first of a series of tyrants who ruled the country with an iron fist. Mercenaries and thugs flocked to the country in search of employment and Misearis became a primary hiring point for mercenary troops.

Without their most powerful magic to aid them, the elves pulled back from their borders and the neighboring countries slowly settled the abandoned land. Llyr in particular pushed into the territory between Tyraniel and Myreth in search of more territory. Finding no opposition, they founded several large towns in that area. Rumors began to fly that without their necromancy the elves had died out. The country of Rathe also pushed deeply into the elven lands, settling small communities of wood cutters who lumbered in the dark woods of Myreth.

During the peace of the early tenth century, Andover and its neighbors began exploring the potential of deep-hulled trading ships. While Ishara and her followers had relied for centuries upon small ships to reap the treasures of the sea, it was only now that larger vessels were developed for moving goods quickly and easily from one country to another. Jalpa invested heavily in ship production and profited greatly from the new maritime trade.

In Andover, the Council of Andover selected Duke Douglas of Marroke as the new King. It had split along regional lines, with the north favoring Douglas and the south favoring Duchess Veronica. Supported by the southern regions, Veronica claimed that Douglas had manipulated the voting and declared his selection invalid. Douglas retaliated by imposing heavy taxes upon the southern lands, and sent the army to enforce his will. Veronica mobilized the militias of the southern regions with the support of the bankers of Jalpa and the mercenaries of Toheuth. Long years of civil war followed while moderates such as Duke Michael and his wife,

Duchess Susan, attempted to find a peaceful alternative. In the bloody battle of Edgir, the matter was decided, as the north emerged victorious. Douglas and Veronica both died on the field of battle. The nobles of both the north and the south unanimously chose Duke Michael as the next King. He reduced the taxes and spent the next few years restoring the peace inside Andover. He even allowed Jalpa and Toheuth to sever all ties with Andover rather than raise arms again.

The situation in Markappal took a strange twist, with tales of undead creatures crawling out of the swamp muck. Jalpa seemed strangely reluctant to provide mercenaries to the bottomless bogs, and rumors spread that someone had paid them to allow Markappal to fall. The isolated Markappal leaders disappeared, while scholars from Andover confirmed that the elves were still under the geas. Thus, the rumored army of undead was completely impossible.

The dwarves had been preparing themselves for a major Abyssal assault after a period of small sporadic attacks, and were not disappointed. An army of Abyssals attacked Rockhome, their numbers greater than any since the battle before the city's founding. A new warlord had emerged from the ranks of Abyssals, the truly devious Ter-Soth. With nearly two dozen zhuls under his command, Ter-Soth waged an all-out

offensive against Rockhome, sacrificing tens of thousands of fiends each day to gain a foot of ground against the dwarves.

Reinforcements poured in from every dwarf city. Sjonegaard himself appeared, summoning massive magma gargoyles to counteract the zhuls. While only one dwarf died for every one hundred Abyssals, Ter-Soth's troops never slowed their pace.

During the course of the battle, King Vosh and his two sons, Valhala and Xod, were separated from their forces. Cornered by a powerful zhul, Vosh managed to open a gaping wound in the Abyssal before the fiend returned the favor. With his dying breath, the king commanded his sons to flee.

Upon their return to Rockhome, the clerics performed an impromptu coronation for Valhala, who now led the armies in search of the archfiend Ter-Soth. The mastermind was strangely absent, only a zhul remaining. Taking Xod as his shieldman, Valhala approached the pit spawn, and saw the hole in the creature's chest that his dying father had opened. Valhala leapt at the creature's wound, driving Hember's Fist deep into the weak spot. The mortally wounded zhul backhanded Valhala, embedding the king in the granite wall. The dying king, realizing his foolishness, passed the crown to his brother, then closed his eyes forever.



Twenty years ago, the brutal Vronish Kez became the Dominar of Misearis. He attempted to raise a force large enough to conquer Baraxton, but could not come up with the necessary money. However, one of his scouts in that area discovered the underground complex of the Archmage Syneri. Inside, beyond a number of deathtraps, Kez' men discovered a glowing orb. Kez kept the orb for himself. Recently his daughter Keziah ran away from home, taking the orb with her.

A group of wandering Narawati, led by Baqbou Umbala, joined the army of Sir Robert the Vigilant of Andover. Theirs was the first instance of Narawati following the orders of an oustide power since they originally fled the Deverenians.

When the geas prohibiting elven necromancy ended, Morghen Dythanus was ready. Though three generations had died during the humans' punishment, their revenge was at hand. He transferred the sleeping elven leaders to their homes and awakened them. Reborn, the ancient elves' sleep had left their hatred and bitterness intact. Morghen also released Lord Winter, who would act as the lich's catspaw in his labyrinthine schemes. The elves' undead armies were almost nonexistent and their forces weak. Some wondered at an immediate return to warfare, including Alia, Queen of House Rowan. When she declared her opposition to the war, Queen Tepheroth haughtily exiled her entire house as traitors. Few spoke against the war after that.

Under the guidance of High Queen Tepheroth, the elves quietly infiltrated Corinth, the site of their last defeat, and the cities of Llyr with thousands of troops. In bloody surprise attacks, they killed entire populations. The elven necromancers once again focused their powers upon the dead and dying. New undead armies arose at their commands and marched against their neighbors to continue the slaughter. Without warning, the elves crushed Llyr and Corinth. Though recently defeated at Merrick and Toris Kelt, and facing Deverenian incursions in south Myreth, elven eyes have turned toward Misear. None seem capable of destroying their ever-increasing forces, and this time Syneri is nowhere to be found.

Emperor Drac has kept the throne up to the present day even though he has become bedridden in the last decade. Though older than any emperor in history except Deverenus himself (who had never claimed the title) and alive only through Loth necromancy, Drac's mind remained as sharp as ever. When Lord Gahid of Order Rellion seized the forest of Tyraniel after the House Rowan elves departed, the Emperor invited the victorious young general to visit with him in Luthlarius for a short while. The cocky Rellion had assumed that the Emperor would plead for his life, but instead found that whatever time had stolen from his body, the aged Drac was every bit the wizard of days of yore. Though not cowed by Drac's casual use of magic to extend his life, the experience convinced Lord Gahid to set aside

for the moment his ambitions for the throne. Shortly thereafter, Gahid defeated Master Anandale to become the Emperor's Champion.

While it had been years since any more than a handful of Deverenians have seen the Emperor, he has supposedly been strangely active, drawing upon many of the Empire's greatest minds to perform endless tasks and investigations. Some claimed that the Emperor has gone mad, an accusation rarely even whispered, but reinforced when Drac ordered Modred of Carcius to come to Luthlarius.

To counter this threat, Lord Kestrel du Myerdeth formed a circle of the Empire's finest men and women, Deverenians more loyal to the nation than the throne. Though some had already been part of his secret cult of Vedoszentek worshippers, Lord Kestrel extended the offer to a host of others, including current Queen of Lightning Aenne the Tempest. As time wore on, Lord Kestrel's Conspiracy of Light deduced that Drac sought to summon and bind the Storm, and Lord Myerdeth drove himself to new levels of desperation. Attempting to make contact with one of the old gods of Deverenia, Lord Kestrel and several of his cultists accidentally awoke, summoned, and bound Teufeltiger. Teufeltiger had already lost most of his power to either the encroaching Storm or to the powerful curse that had removed his homeland of Isadran from the world's memory, but the conspiracy's ill-conceived ritual left him with just barely the power of a demigod. Infuriated by their arrogance, Teufeltiger slew the foolish cultists, and used his divine power to disguise himself as Lord Kestrel himself. Though most of the conspiracy was aware of "Lord Kestrel's" true nature, he had since come to agree with their goals, at least for the time being, and brought his unique understanding of deception and craftiness to his role as the new leader of the Conspiracy of Light.

The battle with the Abyss raged on, making the initial year of Xod's reign a bloody one. Then, one day months into the battle, the Abyssals abruptly left. This sudden disengagement startled the dwarves. It was an unprecedented move on the part of the Abyssals and the dwarves found themselves paranoid about what would befall them next.

Soon the city of Steelguard found itself under assault. While Abyssals engaged dwarf troops on the city's walls, teams of Abyssals dug underneath them, weakening its foundation. On the third day of fighting the ground shook and whole sections of the city collapsed; the weight of the city was too much for the weakened foundation. Ter-Soth withdrew his sappers and allowed gravity to finish the work they had started. Half of the population of Steelguard died in the calamity that left the city beyond repair.

As reports of Steelguard's fall poured in, Xod made plans to go to Rockhome to oversee the battle there. He had wanted to take his sons with him, but his wife pleaded to leave them in Goldenaxe. She had had horrible visions of their future, and could not bear to lose any of them. Xod honored his wife's request, and no sooner had he departed than Ter-Soth struck at the king's family.

Summoning a maelstrom of malevolent energy, Ter-Soth leveled the walls of Goldenaxe, and his troops charged inside. Hundreds of thousands of Abyssals sacked the dwarven capital, and the maelstrom alone wiped out nearly a third of the garrison. Of Xod's family, only his son Alaric survived, his shield man Maul failing to alert him to the battle in time. In the aftermath, Xod's wife had committed suicide rather than live with her guilt, knowing that by begging for her sons to stay behind she had doomed them.

Xod waited in Rockhome for an attack that never came. Lost in memory, he approached the site of his brother's death, and found not only the craggy crater in the wall, but his brother, apparently hale and hearty. Suspecting an Abyssal trick, Xod attacked his brother, standing down only when the creature revealed itself to be a divine messenger, a Scion of Kor, and warned the king of the bad news to come. After its disappearance, Xod returned to Rockhome, only to find a solemn Alaric waiting.

Gnorrow Yaw, a high-ranking vicar in the church, went to Xod and pleaded for an opportunity to go to the surface in search of allies. Still shaken by recent events, Xod was hardly receptive, but Yaw was persistent. He had gathered support for his cause, and had many volunteers for such an expedition. Many only wished to escape the death and destruction of their lives, if only for a short time. Supported by two influential generals who agreed to co-lead the expedition with Yaw, Xod reluctantly agreed to the request.

A great host of 7,000 dwarves assembled north of Goldenaxe. In addition to Gnorrow Yaw they were led by the famed general Zeal, known for his unwavering hatred of the Abyssals, and the former City Lord of Steelguard, Doricen. They set out to retrace their ancestors' steps and seek help from the other peoples of the Accord. A cave-in split the expedition in three, and none suspected one of Yaw's students was responsible for the sabotage, believing the journey would risk the souls of all who took it.

Doricen's host arrived on the surface between the Deverenian and Nothrog lands, near Sharn Keep, but did not survive the experience (see the *Campaign* book for details).

Gnorrow Yaw found himself in the lands of the Deverenian Empire. Finally emerging from the tunnels and onto the side of a large mountain, Yaw had a perfect view of his surroundings. After many moments, he spotted a small town in the distance. Fortune was on his side, and Yaw led his men through the tunnels to the village's mines. When the Deverenians saw the stunted half-men boiling up from their precious blackiron mines, they attacked. They had never seen Dwarven tactics, however, and were unprepared to fend off attackers from within the town's walls. The battle lasted a week, and the dwarves ruled the city at combat's end. Yaw renamed it New Goldenaxe, hoping to usher in a new age for the dwarves. He sadly has found himself fending off the Deverenians ever since, but has made some progress. Purge, a talented warrior and tactician, studied the Deverenians and found them honorable, if evil. With Yaw's permission, he began the process of slowly gaining the respect, if not the trust, of the Deverenians camped outside New Goldenaxe.

Zeal traveled many months, lost in a maze of tunnels that had no road to the surface. Eventually the warchief's host ran into an army of Abyssals commanded by Ter-Soth himself. Ter-Soth had

left for the surface shortly after the destruction of Goldenaxe. He had foreseen Yaw's plan, and hoped to discredit the dwarves on the surface. He could not allow Zeal to escape and warn Yaw. The two forces clashed and the battle was fierce, bloody, and short. Zeal's troops were exhausted and morale was low after months of being lost in the tunnels. While they fought tenaciously, they were outmatched. Ter-Soth personally bested Zeal in single combat, mortally wounding the dwarf.

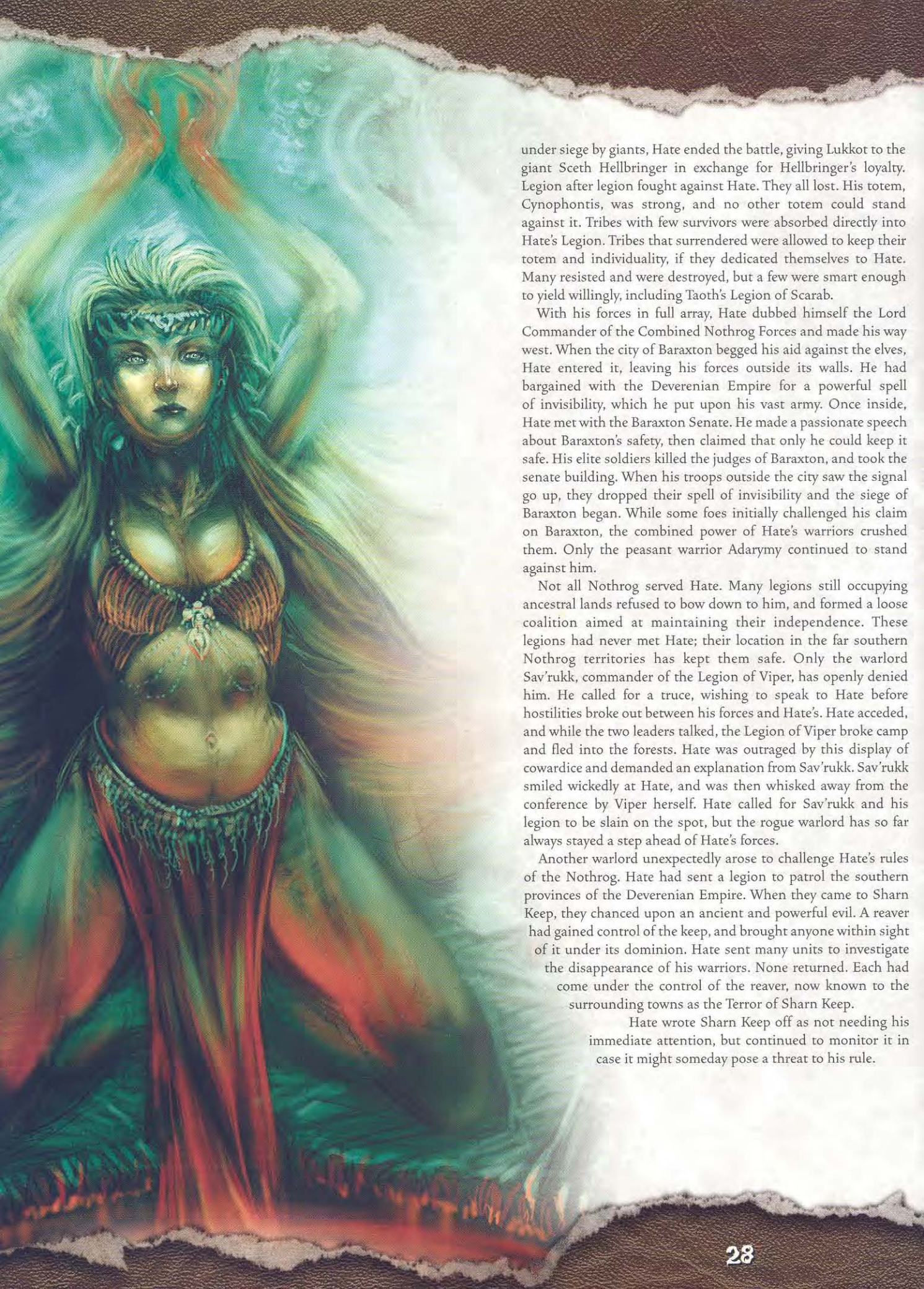
Throughout the fight, Ter-Soth magically rummaged through Zeal's mind, seeking out the hero's weaknesses. Zeal had found himself envious of others who had earned their true names for far less than his actions, oblivious to his own callous disregard for his men's lives. Ter-Soth snatched at the opportunity and asked Zeal why he continued to serve the dwarves who had abandoned him. Ter-Soth worked at Zeal's heart and soul with the general's own doubts. Just as Zeal was about to die, Ter-Soth offered to restore his life and grant him revenge. In return, Zeal would serve as the Abyssal's champion, and Zeal's troops would live, rejuvenated and strong. In a moment of weakness, his devotion to Kor and his hatred for the Abyss left him, and Zeal accepted Ter-Soth's offer.

Empowered by his new master, Zeal became Soren Nihil, a terrible paladin serving the Abyssal's destructive whims. The new Abyssal champion cleverly worked his secret conversion to his advantage, returning to the World Below as Zeal, and warning of the terrible evil of Soren Nihil. Inciting panic, Zeal repeatedly convinced the Dwarves to lend him soldiers to fight off Nihil's advances, then slaughtered any in his armies who would not convert and serve him as Soren. The tactic proved especially devastating at the artisan city of Ironhall, where Soren's army slew so many gargoyles that Sjonggaard collapsed the entire city in a futile attempt to avenge their deaths. Soren survived, but the city's refugees found themselves cut off from the rest of their nation, forced upward by the blocked passages.

When they emerged in the deserts surrounding Narawat, they found themselves changed, warped by the Abyssal magic that Soren had unleashed. Though still pure of soul, their bodies mutated hideously, which only added to the Narawati's hatred of the blasphemous dwarves who claimed to reign where only the gods held dominion. While the dwarves avoided fighting early on, the Narawati pressed the issue, and the two groups' skirmishes now threaten to ensnare the nearby Free Kingdoms.

Many times in their history, powerful warlords have tried to rule the entire Nothrog nation. While they might have conquered many legions and tribes, they rarely remained in power for long, and none succeeded in dominating every tribe. In the tenth century, a new warlord arose and brought beneath his banner every legion he ran across. Nassiral Hate, a powerful cleric and seer, had used his gift of foresight and the resources of his Medusan Lord allies to gain control of the Nothrog Legions. (See the introduction in the *Campaign* book for more information about the Medusan Lords.)

First his legion defeated the most famed legion in the Nothrog lands, Krun's Red Wolf Legion. He then conquered the Legion of Bear ruled by the fierce warlord Uthanak. With these forces under his command, he made his way to Lukkot. Discovering the city



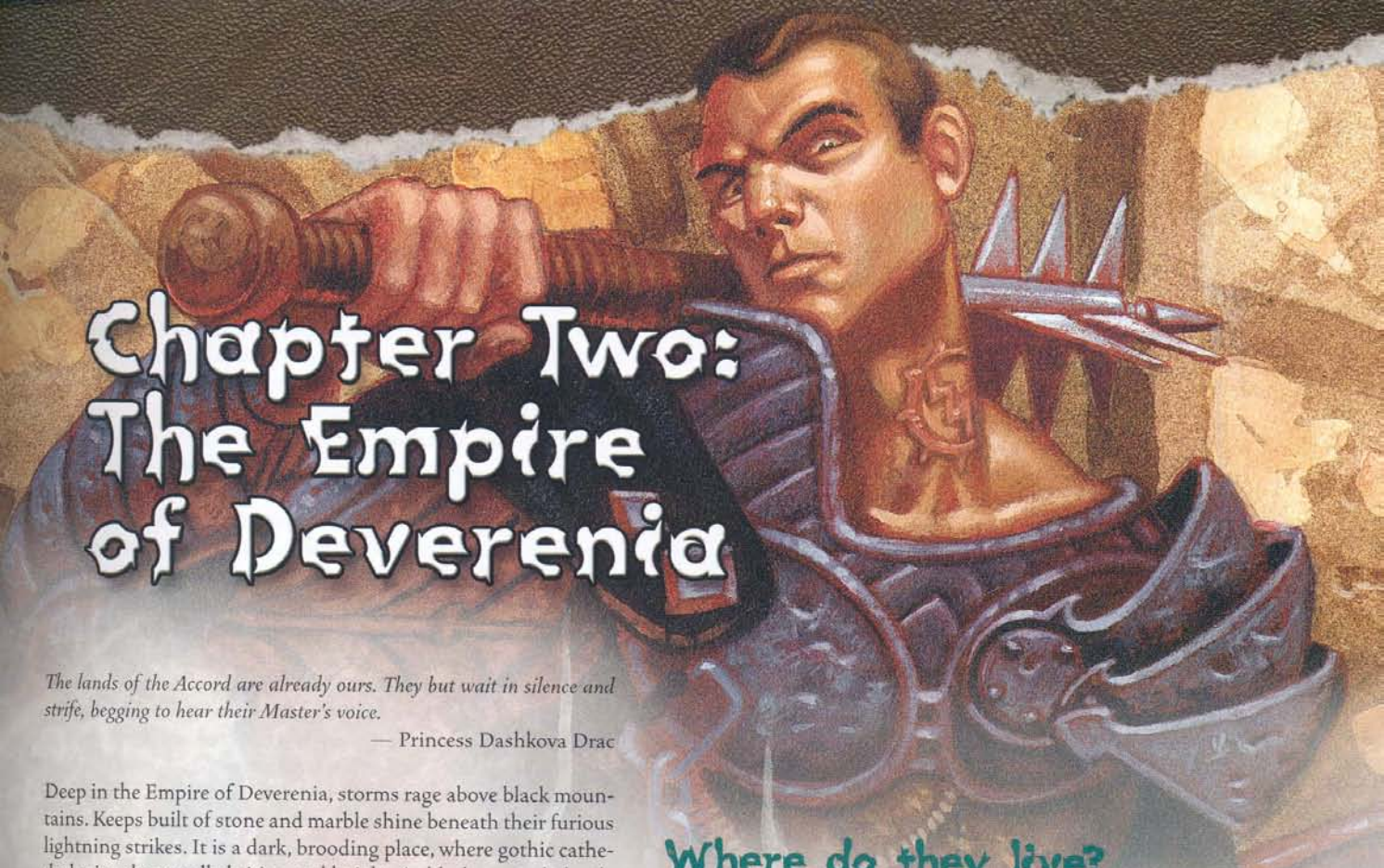
under siege by giants, Hate ended the battle, giving Lukkot to the giant Sceth Hellbringer in exchange for Hellbringer's loyalty. Legion after legion fought against Hate. They all lost. His totem, Cynophontis, was strong, and no other totem could stand against it. Tribes with few survivors were absorbed directly into Hate's Legion. Tribes that surrendered were allowed to keep their totem and individuality, if they dedicated themselves to Hate. Many resisted and were destroyed, but a few were smart enough to yield willingly, including Taoth's Legion of Scarab.

With his forces in full array, Hate dubbed himself the Lord Commander of the Combined Nothrog Forces and made his way west. When the city of Baraxton begged his aid against the elves, Hate entered it, leaving his forces outside its walls. He had bargained with the Deverenian Empire for a powerful spell of invisibility, which he put upon his vast army. Once inside, Hate met with the Baraxton Senate. He made a passionate speech about Baraxton's safety, then claimed that only he could keep it safe. His elite soldiers killed the judges of Baraxton, and took the senate building. When his troops outside the city saw the signal go up, they dropped their spell of invisibility and the siege of Baraxton began. While some foes initially challenged his claim on Baraxton, the combined power of Hate's warriors crushed them. Only the peasant warrior Adarymy continued to stand against him.

Not all Nothrog served Hate. Many legions still occupying ancestral lands refused to bow down to him, and formed a loose coalition aimed at maintaining their independence. These legions had never met Hate; their location in the far southern Nothrog territories has kept them safe. Only the warlord Sav'rukk, commander of the Legion of Viper, has openly denied him. He called for a truce, wishing to speak to Hate before hostilities broke out between his forces and Hate's. Hate acceded, and while the two leaders talked, the Legion of Viper broke camp and fled into the forests. Hate was outraged by this display of cowardice and demanded an explanation from Sav'rukk. Sav'rukk smiled wickedly at Hate, and was then whisked away from the conference by Viper herself. Hate called for Sav'rukk and his legion to be slain on the spot, but the rogue warlord has so far always stayed a step ahead of Hate's forces.

Another warlord unexpectedly arose to challenge Hate's rules of the Nothrog. Hate had sent a legion to patrol the southern provinces of the Deverenian Empire. When they came to Sharn Keep, they chanced upon an ancient and powerful evil. A reaver had gained control of the keep, and brought anyone within sight of it under its dominion. Hate sent many units to investigate the disappearance of his warriors. None returned. Each had come under the control of the reaver, now known to the surrounding towns as the Terror of Sharn Keep.

Hate wrote Sharn Keep off as not needing his immediate attention, but continued to monitor it in case it might someday pose a threat to his rule.



Chapter Two: The Empire of Deverenia

The lands of the Accord are already ours. They but wait in silence and strife, begging to hear their Master's voice.

— Princess Dashkova Drac

Deep in the Empire of Deverenia, storms rage above black mountains. Keeps built of stone and marble shine beneath their furious lightning strikes. It is a dark, brooding place, where gothic cathedrals rise above walled cities, and knights in black armor do battle from the backs of flying dragon-horses. They are a powerful empire on the verge of dominating the entire northern half of the Accordlands, and their knights are known for their dark honor and tyrannical rule.

What do they look like?

Humans populate the Deverenian Empire. Their hair tends toward darker shades, usually black, red, or dark gold. The Deverenians' eyes are perhaps the clearest signs of their divine lineage, with red and gold being common colors. These are tall, warrior-race humans, proud and regal in bearing. Every member of this race can trace his lineage for a thousand years, and all of them are related, however distantly, to the current Emperor, Vyacheslav Drac. They have elaborate tracings on their armor, intricate stitching on their clothes, banners of gold, and jeweled shields. They are a wealthy people, governing large provinces, deriving profit from slave labor as well as nobler pursuits.

They are taller than other human races by as much as half a foot. Men tend to stand 6' to 6'6" tall, women 5'9" to 6'2". Deverenians also live longer than other humans. Their life expectancy is over 130 years, where most normal humans rarely see a century. Master Anandale, a very powerful knight and a master of his Knightly Order, is considered "aging" by Deverenian standards. He is expected to retire and become a swordsmaster at an academy for ten or twenty years before he returns to his estates and abandons warfare forever. He is currently 75, but appears a robust 40 to true humans.

Where do they live?

"Control thy past, and thou wilt command thy future."

— Signon, the Annales Devereniorum

The mountains of Deverenia are dark, scorched by the passing of the Blood Moon. The eastern mountains have turned red with fire and blood, marking the edge of Bascaron's path of destruction. Deverenian palaces rise like gothic cathedrals against a storm-covered sky, and their armies march in rigid formation; armor and steel beneath the lightning sigil of their mighty Emperor.

The lands of Deverenia are in the northeast of the Accordlands, and border on some of the human kingdoms to their west. Surrounded by mountains on all sides, the three means of travel out of the heart of the Empire are through the Nothrog lands to the southeast, through the human kingdoms to the southwest, or through Condor Pass into the center of the Accordlands. Condor Pass, however, is held by one of their greatest enemies, the Kingdom of Denska, and the Deverenians cannot easily use it. Thus, they are often forced to make agreements and trade through the Nothrog lands, giving them access to Baraxton (south of Deverenia), and thereby to the rest of the Lands of the Accord. On the east the Empire borders a large wasteland known as the Shattered Lands, where the earth is red and raw.

Deverenia has several cities throughout the Empire, all fortified. The main cities of note are Aquileia, Moradinum, and Phrygai, as well as the Imperial City of Luthlarius, where the Emperor rules from a shattered tower. The cities of the Deverenians are filled with stone architecture, and some are even carved from the mountain ranges that surround the Empire, massive monuments to ambition and stoic pride.

What is their society like?

The people of the Deverenian Empire are very aware of their lineages and the purity of their bloodlines, and errors or dishonors can stain a family (or an Order of Knights) for generations. Their society is strictly feudal, filled with rank and order in military, courtly, and religious life. Interactions are formal, and Deverenians place great importance on honor, ability, and faith.

Deverenian "politics" are not for the impulsive or the unwise. Their gambits may last decades, and the inept find themselves dead, dishonored, or thrown onto the front lines of whatever war is currently being fought. By ancient decree, politicking — the bartering of favors — is forbidden, replaced by a ruthless system wherein people rule either through their own pure ability, or else because they are owed debts of honor. This latter strategy is especially dangerous, as it not only still borders on politicking, but its inept use is quickly fatal.

The ranks of society are created, in part, by birth. Those born to more prestigious nobility receive great respect in their prepubescent years, but after that, they are judged solely on their merits and their deeds. All Deverenians can trace their bloodlines back to Deverenus, so primogeniture is not as prestigious as it is in many other lands. Instead, Deverenians must constantly prove themselves, joining one of the Knightly Orders, and if they are capable, they may be granted greater title by the Emperor's own hand. Most titles are not left to heirs. Some titles are granted only by the Emperor, and must be granted again to each new individual when the old holder of that title dies. Others are kept within the Knightly Orders (such as the title "Master," designating a mastery of all the ranks of the Order) and are granted for individual achievement within the Order. Others, such as the traditional ranks of baron, count, and duke follow familial lines, but are considered of lower rank than even the most untrained knight in an Order.

They are a meritocracy led by warlords, and because everyone in the country is essentially of noble descent, it is more important to determine the quality of a man by his actions and not his origins. Women serve in the military, where there is no gender bias, although women must often work harder to compete on a physical level. Women are often finer wizards than their male counterparts, as demonstrated by Sorceress Ygraine and the Queen of Lightning.

The people of Deverenia are soldiers, warriors with a dark sense of honor and the iron fists of tyrants. Once, long ago, the Deverenian Empire had conquered all Larisnar, butchering those who did not submit to their rule. Many years passed, and the Empire fell from within, leaving only the crumbling shell of a once-powerful nation. The Empire was in danger of being destroyed — until a hero named Signon unified the warring provinces beneath the banner of one god: the Storm.

With that, the Orders united once more, the Emperor again grew strong, and although Deverenia had lost hold critical lands from Denska to Andover, the Empire rose again beneath the patronage of the Church of the Storm. Signon abolished the imperial line, though all following Emperors have claimed to be his heirs, and the Orders of Knights bent their knee and swore to serve.

Peerage

Deverenia is a staunchly feudal nation. The ranks of nobility are, in descending order of prestige: Emperor/Empress (Royal Prince/Princess), Knight (Sir/Dame), Knight Errant, Lord/Lady Errant, Squire, Squire Errant. The royalty also has its own titles: Duke/Duchess (Ducal Prince/Princess), Count/Countess, Baron/Baroness, and Govenal Lord/Lady. Within the Knightly Orders there are various titles — Master, Archon, Journeyman, Questor, and Apprentice being the most common. Deverenians may choose any or all as their favored honorific, so long as they do not pretend to higher status. For instance, Lord Gahid Rellion is actually a Duke of Rellion lands and a Master of Order Rellion; by claiming the title "Lord," Gahid subtly turns the system on its head, pretending to a humility he has never known.

The nation of Deverenia is divided into principalities, duchies, and corresponding smaller divisions that match the various titles. The nobles — dukes and lesser royalty — rule their own areas, yielding to their superiors and commanding their inferiors. Imperial Law is made by the Emperor with consultation from the Council, a governmental body comprised of the leaders of the Knightly Orders (a few from each; the Council is made of about 50–60 people). Church Law comes from the *Annales Devereniorum*, the Cardinals, or Hierophant Modred of Carcius himself. Ducal law cannot countermand either Church Law or Imperial Law. Ducal law is only effective within the duchy; Imperial Law is enforced throughout Deverenia, and Church Law can occasionally reach even farther.

A peer of the realm holds one or more of six possible titles of nobility, and the estate(s) bestowed upon him or his direct ancestor by the Emperor. Although other members of his family might be addressed by "Lord This" and "Lady That," none of them are peers; their titles are all courtesy titles, including his wife's (although she is usually called a "peeress"). Social equals address a duke or duchess by name; social inferiors use "Your Grace." All other peers and peeresses are called by "Lord" or "Lady" prefixed to the title; for example, Lord Anandale or Lady Beatrix. For their titles to be more than honorary before the reigning Orders, the peers must themselves be members of an Order.

The seven titles, in descending order of precedence, or rank, are: archduke, duke, marquis, earl, count, viscount, and baron. Baronets and Knights are not "peers." A peerage passes from parent to child, but sometimes a peer dies without an heir to succeed him. If duke dies with no heir, the dukedom is traced back in his family line up to three more generations. From there, it descends through the eldest of those other sons who had surviving legitimate male issue. The hereditary nobility is much more hidebound than the parallel Orders, and does not recognize the right of descent through the female line. If there is no legitimate surviving male descendant, then the title of "duke" and the related duchy becomes "extinct." This is one of two ways that a peerage can become extinct. The other is "by attainder," when the sovereign revokes the peerage: this happens for grave offenses such as unsuccessful rebellion against the crown. When a peerage becomes extinct, it reverts to the crown, which may choose to bestow the title anew on a member of any family.

Title and Proper Usage

The following are examples of titular usage in Deverenia. It is critical to know the proper forms of address when dealing with Deverenian nobles, as failing to afford proper respect for their heritage and nobility is a serious insult.

"Sir" goes only with a given name. To address a knight using only his surname, say "Master."

"Lord" implies a peerage (baron or better). While peer titles are best when combined with knightly rank, not every knight is a lord, nor is every lord a knight. It is best not to say "My Lord" to anyone not so entitled.

A territorial title is attached to a particular piece of land, such as a county. Such individuals are best formally addressed as "the Duke of Luthlorian" or "Sir Euain, Baron of Madguire."

Peers sign their names and refer to themselves and each other by their territorial titles, such as "Cador Luthlorian," or "Euain Madguire."

The spouse of a knight or better may be called "my lord" or "my lady" as appropriate. If the spouse has achieved a title, then it is preferable to refer to him or her by that rule, unless he or she is specifically acting as a spouse for some ritual function. The children of a knight, baron, or viscount have no titles. All the sons of a marquis or a duke are styled "lord."

Only the eldest son of an earl is called "lord" (because he takes his father's secondary title and is one, by courtesy), though all an earl's daughters are styled "lady." They retain this courtesy even if they marry a commoner.

"Your Grace" is properly applied only to royal blood: kings and queens, dukes, and visiting princes or princesses. It does not apply to earls or countesses.

"Your Noble Grace" applies to archdukes. Their heirs are called "Your Grace" or "Your Standing Grace" as they are standing as heir for their family title.

The styles of Honorable or Right Honorable for younger sons and daughters of peers is appropriate, and this title is also appropriate if the speaker is unsure of the rank of the individual he is addressing. Esquires are the younger sons of peers, the male heirs of knights, and officials such as judges, sheriffs, and officers of the royal household. Esquire is not actually a title, although it may be used after a surname: William More, Esquire.

The Emperor is referred to as "Your Imperial Majesty," and he is the only one allowed that form of address. His heirs (including those by marriage) are referred to as "Your Imperial Aspirant."

Warriors

The military is comprised of the sons of noble lineage holders, and recruited serfs for the front lines. Knights are equipped and outfitted first by their royal house, and then (if they get into one) by their Order. The military is run by the Orders of Knights, and those knights make up the commanding body of all units. Further, the control of the Knightly Orders extends into the government. Only members of an Order of Knights may speak directly to the Emperor without first receiving explicit permission from him, and members of those Orders have the duty to interpret Imperial Law. Even, say, a prosperous archduke who is

The Fighters' Guild

Though loyal to her homeland, the mighty warrior Duchess Brymin could not bring herself to join one of the Orders of her people. Each represents its own brand of villainy, its own corruption of the honor Brymin holds dear. Faced with a life of servitude under those she despised, Brymin proposed a solution to the Emperor himself — after winning the right to address him by defeating his champion, Master Anandale. Instead of replacing the knight as champion, she asked the Emperor's permission to found an institution in which Deverenians could hire on to enemy armies and learn their techniques. Realizing that this presented not only an interesting method of spying on the enemies of the state, but also a way to weaken Kerebrus' powerful mercenary band the Dark Horsemen by stealing their recruits, the Emperor agreed. Soon, most major cities in Deverenia and beyond had chapters of the Fighters' Guild. While Brymin initially planned to smuggle herself out of Deverenia this way, she has since found it an invaluable method of hiding others who feel as she does about Deverenia's evil. Through these core members of her guild, she hopes to recruit enough allies to conquer Deverenia once more, and install a new Emperor. Though she realizes that she herself is likely the only person she could trust with the throne, she fears that it would corrupt her...

not in an Order may be trampled by the lowest members of a Knightly Order if he is not careful. It does not happen often, but it can happen.

Orders are generally referred to without the definite article: "Order Rellion," not "the Order of Rellion." Fighters are not the only class inducted into Knighthood, as the primary considerations are ruthlessness and victory. The primary Knightly Orders are (in order of current favor with the Emperor): Rellion, Aedroud, Loth, Genecourt, Myerdeth, Ghenis, and Tremayne. There are other, minor Orders struggling to achieve enough military victories to stand out in the great courts.

Deverenia is a society that rewards ruthlessness with advancement. It has no use for weak or incompetent individuals, and believes firmly in the survival of the fittest. Deverenians are committed to conquest and gain, and they are always at each other's throats, using law and tricks of honor in order to overcome each other. They believe that the strongest rise to the top, and the weak die and cease to pollute the mighty Deverenian bloodlines.

Knights and Chivalry

The first orders of chivalry were associations of individuals who committed themselves to certain goals and regulated activities. The commitment typically took the form of vows, and the regulation of activities took the form of an institutional structure defined by statutes and managed by officers — usually those who were priests as well as knights. Thus, orders of chivalry were both religious and militant. The goals were both the sanctification of their members through their devotional and charitable activities, as well as participation in the fight against the "infidels," either by protecting pilgrims or actively taking part in military operations.



Knighthood was originally a professional association. It included only those men who could afford to make and maintain the heavy capital investment required by mounted warfare (horse and armor). Now, the Orders themselves take on some of that financial burden so that their soldiers are properly equipped for battle. Men who are free (not enslaved or serfs) provide this military service, either personally or (if rich enough) using others' services. A more important vassal, when called by his liege, summons his knights and forms a contingent in his liege's army.

The military aspect of these monastic orders separates them from the purely religious groups that also existed. These Orders of Knighthood maintain a militant bent, keeping themselves ready for war — and participating in numerous battles — rather than choosing a monastic life. Fighting is a professional activity, and these professional warriors are called knights. Entrance into the social-professional category of knighthood entails a number of religious rituals.

These chivalric institutions were quite different in nature from templars and other military-monastic orders. To create a further separation between the Knightly Orders and the various churches of ancient Deverenia, various outward elements of the Knightly Orders adapted, altered, and ritualized some of their practices. Military titles were adopted — Knight-General, Knight-Marshall, etc. The head of the order was the Knight Grandmaster. Members wore insignia on their cloaks, or in the form of badges suspended from collars or attached to vestments. This was a direct borrowing from the religious orders, but the insignia were not based on religious icons, but rather on the noble emblem of heraldry designed for each Knightly Order by the Emperor's own herald.

Members of these ancient Knightly Orders met regularly in chapters where matters pertaining to the Order were discussed. The knights swore oaths of allegiance to the Emperor and his or her sibling Knights rather than to the rule of religious law.

The initial development of heraldry certainly owed a lot to the practices of the knightly class, in particular the increased popularity of tournaments, which became more and more popular beginning in the 3rd century, just as knighthood as a military institution was on the wane. Tournaments were the occasion to display coats of arms, and heralds, originally a specialized group of minstrels, became responsible for identifying and cataloguing the arms of participants. Their knowledge of coats of arms also helped them identify fighters in battle and dead on the battlefield, and for this reason heralds became officially associated with battles, truces, and declarations of war.

KNIGHTLY RECRUITMENT

In modern times, the Knightly Orders are shrinking in the face of war and fratricide. Recruitment is therefore constant. As military orders are intricately involved in warfare, death rates are higher in these institutions than in other noble houses, though by no means are all brethren engaged in fighting. Entrants are asked about their health, both physical and spiritual. The Knightly Orders do not want to become refuges for handicapped or sick offspring, and they do not admit those who were excommunicated from the Church of the Storm. They are also anxious to ensure that they do not become liable for a recruit's debts, and therefore closely question a postulant about his financial position.

The average age of entry into a Knightly Order is the mid to late twenties, and only after the postulant has completed a quest to prove his loyalty, bravery and skill. The motives that lead individuals to enter the Knightly Orders vary. Many recruits are younger sons of noblemen, and see a military order as a means of livelihood, even if they do not enter until they are in their twenties.



Wizards

Deveranian wizards are trained in a system of apprenticeship. Their rank in their school is directly tied to their master, who trained them, and their master's reputation affect their own in a serious manner. This sparks infighting among apprentices to get the best masters, and among masters seeking the best apprentices. When a wizard thinks his apprentice is prepared to become a full (and independent) wizard, he takes him to Stormhold, a wizard's city. There the apprentice must pass the Trial Perilous — a life-threatening test.

If the apprentice passes the Trial Perilous, he earns his "wizard's epithet:" the Unkind, the Defiant, the Black, the Quick, etc. That title distinguishes a wizard from an apprentice. The epithet is based on how the wizard defeated the Trial Perilous, and relates to his actions there. Those apprentices who fail the Trial Perilous almost always die, or are killed thereafter by disappointed masters.

Wizards can join Knightly Orders (some arcane masters require their students to join the orders to which they owe allegiance), but they are not obligated to. They are one of the few castes in Deveranian society allowed a form of freedom from the tight constraints of the Order system. While some choose to join a Knightly Order and gain support and allies from their decision, others remain outside the realm of politics, never aligning themselves with any of the Orders and remaining neutral in most conflicts. Knights, for their part, have learned to be careful around wizards. While a knight may outrank a wizard, a wizard has every right to defend his honor to the best of his ability, and some have defended entire families clear out of existence.

What is their religion?

The Deveranians openly worship only one greater power: the Storm.

Long ago, before the Empire nearly fell to insurrection and revolution, the people of Deverenia worshiped many gods. However, the Empire was stabilized and revitalized by the heroic Signon, who brought with him what he claimed to be a "true" religion — the worship of the Storm. At first, the people of the Accordlands rejected it; they had for so long reviled and feared the Storm that to worship it seemed blasphemous. But the longer Signon led his armies across the land, and the more his bishops and priests preached from the *Annales Devereniorum*, the more peasants and nobles converted. The Storm, it was said, was the higher part of the Dragon, the original creator of the world and all things within it. On this much, the legends agreed. The *Annales Devereniorum* preached that the Dragon had not known how much potential remained in Its original creations, and when It sought to destroy them, It had been convinced they were a failure of creation. Now that humanity and the other races had proven their worth, and with the Storm freed from the passions of its base flesh, the Storm was eager to embrace its creations and encourage their strength. The old pains were forgotten, and could be healed with proper worship of the Storm. And indeed, the priests of Signon's religion could prove the power of the Storm as well as using their powers for the betterment of all people. It was easy to believe in the redemption of the greatest power in the cosmos in the wake of the Empire's own rebuilding. The populace of Deverenia surged behind the Church of the Storm... with only a few exceptions.

Those who wished to worship the Old Gods found themselves in exile, murdered for heresy and reviled for their faith. The far western provinces proclaimed their independence from Deverenia, and all those who wished to retain the ancient gods fled to the fledgling countries of Andover, Llyr, and Denska.

Those who remained behind were rewarded by the generosity of the Storm, and granted the lands abandoned by the fleeing heretics. The Empire grew strong once more, and churches of the Storm spread across the land like flowers following a spring rain.

The worship of the Storm revitalized the nation, and was responsible for the stabilization of Deverenia. Those previous gods of Deverenia who bowed before the power of the Storm are now called the Védoszentek, or Minions of the Storm — saints, in common parlance. All other religions are heretical. Until these religious differences can be reconciled, it is unlikely that humanity, as a race, will ever unite. Deverenia already makes war on the blasphemous nation of Denska, and once they have overthrown the heretics there, returned Denska to the Empire and converted its people, they will no doubt proceed to “heal the rift” with the other human nations of the Accordlands. Refugees from the Free Kingdoms war with the Elves are already welcomed into Deverenia, provided they undergo religious purging and rededication to the Storm. The Empire prospers.

The Storm is worshiped as an asexual entity of great power, with whom prayers — and especially sacrifices of blood and courage — gain favor. It is a ferocious power, as much to be feared and placated as to be plied with devotion and asked for favors.

Some lesser priests of Deverenia serve the Védoszentek, either as a unified group or a particular Védoszent, or saint. However, even these priests perform major services to the Storm on high holidays of the Empire. They all give service to the Storm... but some suspect that these priests lead cults and heretics to the Old Gods. It is rumored that some of the Védoszentek are still gods, and encourage their followers to rise up and free Deverenia from the minions of the Storm. Most of these Védoszentek cults have been destroyed, but not all.

The Church celebrates Empire-wide High Holy Days, preaches exclusively from the holy text *Annales Devereniorum*, and favors large cathedrals and formal robes and services. The Deveranian church uses the following titles: Hierophant, Cardinal, Archbishop, Bishop, priest, acolyte.

Who is in charge?

The Emperor of Deverenia is completely in command, though others wonder if he is a puppet of one of his many advisors, or whether he even lives on at all. For nearly a century he has commanded Deverenia, and now seeks for his descendants to rule with an iron fist as he has. Although Emperor Vyacheslav Drac is very old and somewhat frail, he retains command of his faculties. He relies on others to carry out his wishes, but no one challenges his throne. His words and orders are distributed by his daughter, Dashkova, and by his Champion, the Lord Gahid Rellion. Beneath the Emperor are his Orders, as well as the dukes, duchesses, counts and countesses, and the leaders of all the provinces of Deverenia, as well as numerous minor lords and ladies of state.

The Emperor does not reign over the Church of the Storm, however, which is commanded by the Hierophant — the powerful and ancient Modred of Carcius. As the Emperor's religious counterpart, he is the only individual in Deverenia with the ability to overrule an Imperial command, although his power is spiritual and not temporal. The balance of power between

Church and State is a trifle unstable in Deverenia, as Modred has reigned over Deverenia's religion since the rise of the Church of the Storm.

Beyond the crux of state and church lie the third power in Deverenia — that of the Orders of Knighthood. Each of the Orders controls a single province (outside of the taxation and feudal chain of the Emperor). Their chains of command are completely internal, and the Orders answer directly to the Emperor rather than to the landed nobility. While they are not entirely separate from the political climate of the state, they do maintain separate rights and responsibilities from those nobles who own land or control provinces within the Empire.

Current Political Climate

The nation of Imperial Deverenia is filled with a certain lust for power. Their armies challenge the Kingdom of Denska, seeking to restore Imperial territory and reclaim what the Deverenians see as stolen and heretical land. They are single-minded in their belief that all humanity needs to be unified beneath the Storm and the Emperor, and they are unwilling to compromise. This fanaticism has earned the Deverenians few allies among the other human nations, but in the wake of recent wars among the Andoveran people, the other humans have been unable to do anything about Deveranian policy.

The Empire seeks two things: conquest and unification of human-controlled lands, and immortality for their Emperor. The Emperor's search for immortality has been the stuff of legend, with knights of all Orders questing across the Lands of the Accord in search of the legendary cure that will ease his troubled brow. The Emperor has no wish to die — after living a long life in complete control of his body, his nation, and his fate, he is unwilling to surrender to death without a fight. Many knights have lost their lives on this quest, but those who follow it know that if they succeed, they will be rewarded beyond their wildest dreams with gold, honor, and political prestige. For some, it is simply a matter of national pride, or pride in their own abilities and accomplishments. For others, it is a chance to stamp out their enemies and ensure that their own house, province or family will become the most powerful in Deverenia. It is a riddle without answer — and one with only a short time to be solved, for the Emperor grows frailer with each passing day.

The Dwarves

While the Deverenians were aiding the Nothrog in their siege of Baraxton, a deeper threat unearthed itself within their own home. The Dwarves — depth-dwelling creatures no doubt as vile as the servants of the far Abyss — rose beneath the noble city of Phrygai. The city was all but destroyed, its citizens slaughtered, and a strange banner bearing the sign of a mountain and a hammer was raised above it.

No matter how the Deverenians have tried to retake Phrygai (now apparently named “New Goldenaxe” by its conquerors), they have failed. Like the Abyssals of legend, these dwarves are creatures to be reviled and destroyed... or so the Deverenians once thought. After a dwarf used a Deveranian code of honor to

challenge and best a knight in a duel, the Deverenians have stayed their hands against the half-men, at least until such time as they prove themselves unworthy of honor or alliance.

The Elves

For many years, the Elves and the Deverenians have fought half-hearted battles over the forests of Tyraniel, home of the elven House Rowan, and Myreth, the holy site of Signon's birth. The legends of their greatest hero spurred the Deverenians into a frenzy to control the lands, but they have never been able to seize it. When the elven High Queen exiled the House of Rowan from elven lands, both the elves of House Syneri and the Order Rellion attempted to seize Tyraniel, and neither was ultimately successful.

While the ambassadors on both sides politely argue about the province, men die in silence under Tyraniel's black leaves. Deverenian is not in any way in open warfare with the elves (and in some ways, is allied with them against other enemies) but the feud over the forests still causes strife between House Syneri and Order Rellion. The other Houses of the Elves and Orders of the Empire stand allied, and neither side is willing to let this "argument" disrupt the larger political union. It was mostly ignored until Rellion took parts of southern Myreth as well. Though Rellion apparently acted on its own, causing other Orders to decry their actions, the elves still move closer to war.

And yet the Deverenians still want to conquer Myreth. Firstly (and openly) because it is the sacred site of the birth of their greatest hero, Signon of Deverenian. But much of the truth instead comes from this: if the Empire controls Myreth and Tyraniel, the forests will allow them to surround Condor Pass, and likely seize it from their enemies, the people of Denska, and beyond them the Kabal lands. To these ends, the Emperor is willing to gamble with the elves' patience, and send more troops — subtly — to deal with the issue.

The Free Kingdoms

The Deverenians see the Free Kingdoms (and their predecessors in Llyr, Andover, and the other human countries) as heretics and traitors who have thrown off the rightful chains of their sovereign, the Emperor. In less than two hundred years, the Empire lost nearly half of their holdings to these usurpers. Although Andover was the first to leave the Deverenian Empire (followed almost immediately by Llyr) nearly six hundred years ago, the Deverenians still consider those lands are theirs by right.

The Deverenians maintain a few small churches to their beloved Storm within Andover, and even have a rather large following of loyalists in the Twin Kingdoms of Celinar and Calinar, but they have no contact or communication with Rathe. Rathe seems to reject all issues of Deverenian unification, and most of the ambassadors who enter that land are never heard from again.

Still, the Deverenian state believes that reunification is simply a matter of patience. With the newly established war between the humans and the Elven nations, the Empire has gained many allies in the Free Kingdoms. Refugees pour into the Empire, willing to sell their souls to the Storm in exchange for Deverenian protection from the elves. More of the smaller human villages and towns have asked for Deverenian protection, and the Empire is seriously considering retaking the now-empty country of Llyr, although the distance between the two is vast.

Still, many of the human religions — religions that the Deverenian Empire now considers heretical — struggle to keep their independence despite the crushing invasions by the elves. They say that it is better to die free than to sell their freedom for the security that the Deverenian Empire offers, but their voices are growing quieter by the day.

Mercenaries

Deverenians are always willing to hire mercenaries and hurl them into any battle. They have no respect for the sellswords, but grudgingly admire their ability. Knights of Deverenian use them frequently to aid in their battles, and many mercenary bands are currently engaged at Condor Pass to help with the Empire's fight against the Denskans.

Even now, some Deverenian Knights are fleeing to the mercenary armies, hiding their blazons behind the coverings of a black shield and rejecting the Emperor, the Storm, or some local political entanglement. So long as they keep themselves hidden and do not shame the Empire, they are allowed to do so. It is understood that such knights have sullied their honor, but if they eventually return and have not shamed the Empire, then they have not done anything unforgivable.

Others, such as the Lady Ersane, claim this act of abandoning stems from their need to be separate from the social and political structure of the Empire. They claim to be knights errant on quests, sacred trusts that require them to spend their days hunting for the object of their quest, and denying their responsibilities. By the same token, however, their Order has no obligation to protect them or keep them informed of goings-on in the Empire, and knights errant on quests often lose significant standing while they are away.

The Nothrog

For many generations, the Nothrog tribes and the Deverenian Empire have shared a border. More than once, skirmishes and outright battles have been fought there, and there are many villages of both Deverenian and Nothrog stock that have been on both sides of the boundary lines. The most recent Nothrog invasion of the Deverenian lands happened at a keep on the edge of the Shattered Lands, where a legion each of Nothrog and Deverenians have been enslaved by a Dark Reaver. Sharn now lies in the hands of the Nothrog and their grim master, and few Deverenian knights are prepared to fight such a horrible threat to ensure the return of their outpost.

Still, many of the Nothrog tribes have made crucial alliances with the Deverenians, the best known being Hate's Legion, led by Nassiral Hate. Hate has a treaty with the Deverenians, promising 10 years of peace along the Deverenians' southern borders in exchange for the use of Deverenian wizards during the storming of the great city of Baraxton.

The Nothrog secretly intended to betray their alliance with Deverenian and attack Phrygai, one of Baraxton's closest neighbors, and a critical outpost for the security of Deverenian lands. However, the Nothrog assault did not commence simply because when they arrived at Phrygai, they discovered that it already besieged. Not knowing the strength or capacity of these new "dwarven" enemies, the Nothrog commander, Uthanak, wisely opted simply to watch and wait.

The Noble Orders

The Noble Orders of the Empire are those Orders of Knighthood formally acknowledged by the Emperor, with all others being Minor Orders. They are given great leeway in the Empire, and are charged to keep Imperial Law within their own provinces, and to aid in carrying the commands of the Empire to all Deverenia. Although one can be noble without being in a Knightly Order (and many wizards and clerics choose not to join one), the lifetime alliance of an Order can be a powerful political boon to a young knight, provided he chooses carefully.

Joining an Order requires completing many tests, and being evaluated by the Knights of that Order. Typically, no more than ten knights join a single Order within a year, for the tests are stringent. The Emperor keeps a careful eye on the Orders, and does not allow more than a handful to join any Order in a year without his personal dispensation.

Aedroud

Order Aedroud is the oldest of the Orders. Its founding predates Signon, and some say it is the house of the first, and true, ruler of the Empire. Knights and nobles of Aedroud are known for their sense of honor and duty. Tales are woven of the Aedroud knight fighting alone against insurmountable odds, knowing fully that he will die but refusing to turn his back on his honor.

Aedroud was once the favored house of the Old Empire, and many of the saints of the old religion came from the halls of Aedroud. This has not earned them any favor in the new Empire, as they are reviled for their ancient connections to the false gods of yore, and encouraged to turn away from their dark past and embrace the worship of the Storm. The Empire's eye turns upon Aedroud with disfavor, and over the last few decades, the Noble Order of Aedroud has slid into disrepair.

Aedroud has struggled to keep its name intact despite several entanglements that drag it down through dark times. The other orders, particularly Rellion and Tremayne, watch like vultures, hoping to see Aedroud fall so that they can claim its ancient (and wealthy) lands and keeps. Their machinations continually strive to strip Aedroud of prestige, honor, or wealth. Yet still, beneath the powerful and cunning leadership of Master Anandale, Aedroud is still a power in the Empire, if only barely.

Recently, two conflicts nearly overthrew Aedroud's delicate balance. The first was a rumor of high treason from within the Aedroud ranks. The accused family was destroyed, and in exchange for a full confession, Lady Beatrix, one of the daughters of the line, was allowed to live, confined forever in a high tower within the Imperial city. It is whispered that a member of Order Tremayne planted the evidence of treason, but never spoken aloud.

The second of the Aedroud troubles concerns Master Anandale himself. Once the noble Champion of the Emperor and commander of the armies of Deverenia, he was overthrown in a tournament, his title and position stripped from him by the Emperor. His successor, Gahid of Order Rellion, took over the Imperial Armies and has waged a highly successful war against the elves.

Aedroud is a proud Order struggling to resist the inevitable. Those new knights who pledge to Aedroud do so in hopes that they can save the once-revered name, and restore honor to the fading tapestries of the Order. Fewer and fewer step forward to take the tests of Aedroud and join its brotherhood, and one day soon it may fall before its enemies.



Genecourt

One of the smallest Noble Orders, Genecourt struggles every day to prove itself and to vindicate its small holdings and position within the Imperial Court. Genecourt is a young Order, only a few centuries old, and its loyal knights are still few.

The Master of Genecourt was granted the right to hold together a Noble Order when he split from Myerdeth in a religious debate. He bested the Master of Myerdeth in tournaments before the Emperor's own eyes, but did not finish the duel by taking the Master of Myerdeth's head. Instead, Genecourt knelt before the Emperor and begged mercy for the man he had defeated, claiming that it was not his opponent's lack of skill that led to his loss, but instead the fact that the Storm itself flowed through Genecourt veins. The Emperor was intrigued, and asked Sir Genecourt to prove his claim.

Thus began the ten-year quest of the Knight Genecourt, wherein he proved his claim to heritage from the Storm and was granted the right to bear arms and lead a Noble Order. The details of his quest would require an entire bardic opera to detail properly. The Emperor raised the black and gold banner of Genecourt to the High Wall behind his throne, and ever since the Order Genecourt has been considered the most fervent ally of the Church of the Storm, offering its members as templars and servants to the Storm.

That is, at least, the public version.

The truth is much darker. The line of Genecourt descends from smugglers and thieves, men of black hearts and corrupt minds who gained a powerful hold over the Order Myerdeth. They used it to gain an audience with the Hierophant, and received the right to bear arms as a noble Order of Knights in exchange for the lives of 50 men per generation, trained and willing to become Ghed, the undead servants of the Storm.

Because of its past, the Order Genecourt holds a vast wealth of bloodied gold. It continues smuggling and thieving, and is engaged with the underbelly of the Empire — and, some say, with its enemies. Genecourt serves the church, but also has some knowledge of its secrets. Although its members are still few, the Order Genecourt is not to be taken lightly. They have many abilities and contacts that the older, more hidebound Orders do not have, and they are cold-blooded and ruthless when it comes to business or power.

Ghenis

The once-great Order Ghenis fell on hard times shortly after its founding. While their natural diplomatic bent aided Signon during his conquest of Deverenian, his subsequent laws against politicking severely limited Ghenis's options. With warriors and wizards in plentiful supply, Ghenis chose instead to serve as the Emperor's intermediaries. Though derided as the Emperor's errand boys, Ghenis felt it had achieved a safe place within the Deverenian hierarchy.

This changed with the elevation of Tremayne. While Tremayne's goals were nominally to keep trade flowing and sabotage enemy governments, Ghenis knew that the newcomers were rivals for the Emperor's voice. To compete with the

The Deverenian Code of Honor

Though altered by Signon, the Deverenian code of honor derives from the actions of Deverenus himself. Deverenians consider both men to have embodied the ideals of honor and justice, and any knight found violating these codes rarely outlives his shameful behavior. Though Deverenians not of any of the Orders, Chromatic Knights, or the Imperial Guard do not necessarily need to follow the Deverenian code, the Orders have no respect whatsoever for dishonorable behavior.

Though the code is a rambling, almost excessively binding list of commandments, the following are the core tenets:

Absolute loyalty. A Deverenian exists to serve the Emperor, the Storm, and his Order. Their lives belong to these three masters, and any may revoke that life at any time. Unless acting as an advisor or receiving orders contrary to the Deverenian code of honor, questioning commands is strictly forbidden.

Courage. Deverenians are the strongest people of the Accordlands, descended in part from the gods themselves. Deverenians may only flee battle if ordered to by a superior, or if possessing information or goods too vital to risk losing to an enemy.

Honesty. Deceit, politicking, and oath breaking are actions unfit of even the basest Deverenian peasant. Pretending to power is an insult to the honorable men and women of both lesser and greater station, and a betrayal of honorable foes. In battle, Deverenian generals travel with their banners held high so that any honorable foe can find them quickly.

Justice. All men and women that serve honor deserve justice. Should an honorable foe ask for aid against a dishonorable party, the honorable Deverenian bestows it without question. Should an honored foe die at the hands of the dishonorable, the Deverenian must avenge this blight on the enemy's name. Should faithful servants need aid, the Deverenian bestows it as quickly as possible, though orders from above supersede requests from below.

Mercy. An honorable foe deserves to die honorably. If the foe is ill, the Deverenian aids his recovery. If an honored foe is without arms or armor, the Deverenian either bestows equipment equal to his own or fights the enemy without his own armaments. If an honorable foe surrenders, the Deverenian's honor obliges him to accept. Dishonorable foes deserve no such benefits, and rarely even the blessing of a quick death.

Purity. When Athanae ascended to the heavens, she bestowed a portion of her divine powers upon her children Deima and Deverenus, rather than even the mightiest of warriors she knew. The blood of the gods is not for any Deverenian to share with outsiders, and woe to any that begets an abominable half-breed.

Respect. Passion is for bards, peasants, and weaklings, not for Deverenians of honor. Though a Deverenian is free to love or hate as he chooses, above any relationship is the bond of respect. Even mortal enemies must work together to their best ability if ordered to by their masters.

Strength. A Deverenian relies on himself first and foremost for anything he needs. Though he should ask for aid if he absolutely requires it, he should grant it only if a servant or ally is similarly pressed. When given an order, it is his responsibility to fulfill that command, or to accept the consequences for his failures. Should his master prove dishonorable, it is up to him to prove the claim and unseat the pretender; those who do so typically claim their former lord's position.

Tremayne demagogues, Ghenis knights expanded their role in the Empire, becoming mediators between the other Orders, and patrons of the arts. While this did not change its weakling image, Ghenis has slowed if not stopped its descent.

With the recent losses of face for Order Tremayne, Order Ghenis is eager to regain its former place in the Empire.

Loth

Loth is a house of secrets, one that holds its treasures closer than any other Order. Knights of Loth were the first to discover the healing properties of blue willow, and it is said that the Masters of their Order have power over true life and death — actual resurrection, not the half-life of the elves. Although the rumors are unfounded, the surgeons and alchemists of Order Loth have the most advanced medical knowledge in Deverenia. They keep their secrets close, and tell no one — their apprenticeship and squiring is the longest of all the Orders, and few among them become full Knights.

Only its Knights know all the secrets of Loth. Other Orders constantly try to steal their secrets and infiltrate their ranks, but the Masters of Loth always discover them. Their ability to keep such artifacts and ancient wisdom is renowned, and some say they are trusted with the Emperor's own secrets to add to their own.

Certainly, only the surgeons of Order Loth have been allowed private audience with the Emperor during the recent years of his reign, tending to his illness and keeping him strong and hearty despite the age that weakens his bones. They are privy to his deepest plans and know the truth of his illness. Their Master is the eldest of all the Knights of the Empire, and his wisdom is renown. It can be hoped that the Emperor is in good hands, but other Orders mutter about Loth's true desires and their will to claim the Imperial Throne for themselves.

Such rumors, however, cannot easily be confirmed. Although the Knights of Order Loth are not among the most battle-hardened, they are renowned for surges of strength and ability (likely based on their alchemical potions taken before the duel) and the servants of Loth cannot be put aside as weak fighters.

Myerdeth

Myerdeth is a moderately prestigious Order, holding vast tracts of land in the south of Deverenia. Once, many centuries ago, they controlled the northern forests above Sarakia, but those woods were taken by the elves of Calix long ago. The lands still bear Myerdeth's name, and Knights of Order Myerdeth swear to destroy the usurpers and reclaim the lands to rebuild their lost honor.

Myerdeth has long been a home for religious knights, but when the Church of the Storm overtook the Empire, the Myerdeth knights were beaten down and their religious resistance crushed. Unlike other Orders, however, the Knights of Myerdeth were not completely destroyed for their resistance. They were instead forced to publicly renounce their ties to the Old Gods and accept the Storm. Their women and children were held at swordpoint by the Hierophant of the Cathedral until they recanted their false beliefs, so the conversion of Myerdeth proceeded smoothly.

Although the Empire does not much trust them, the Emperor considers Myerdeth to have truly converted. He calls the Order Myerdeth "a regime of Thomas Canner," referring to a popular doubter who was struck by lightning for speaking against the Storm, but who lived to become its most fervent supporter. So, too, do Myerdeth Knights seem to have embraced their oath and the Storm wholeheartedly.

Beneath the surface, however, there are rumors of cults of the other gods. Myerdeth is clever, known more for intellect and cunning than for prowess. If anyone in the Empire can keep such a secret, it is Myerdeth. In the core of the ancient order, a following of Knights sworn still to the Old Gods stands hardy against the ravages of time. They call themselves the Knights of Gold and Silver, in deference to the symbols of the hidden saints whose footsteps they follow, and they must hide their true loyalties lest they and Myerdeth be destroyed. Their worship is highly illegal, a capital offense against Church of the Storm, but they believe they may be the Empire's last hope in these declining times.

Rellion

Order Rellion is the single most powerful Order in the Empire. Its warriors are known for their ruthless efficiency and a driving ambition, and they are led by the Emperor's own Champion, the powerful Lord Gahid. They have a reputation for their group tactics and brotherhood, and even the most evil member among them demonstrates loyalty to his fellows.

Rellion controls the armies of the Empire, having recently roused the Aedroud brotherhood from that post. As such, they (particularly Lord Gahid) are integral to the Emperor's court, and hold a great deal of political power. However, Order Rellion has had several failures at Condor Pass, and do not seem to be able to defeat the impertinent Kingdom of Denska. These failures are brought up often at court by the other Orders of the Empire in an attempt to blackmail or embarrass Rellion, and more often than not, it ends in a duel.

Order Rellion rarely loses a duel.

The leadership of Order Rellion keeps hidden, preferring not to allow younger members to know for certain whom their Masters are. They stay in the shadows, manipulating their Order indirectly, but they are as rigid as steel when it comes to matters of honor and duty. No member of Order Rellion may kill another member of the Order for any reason, on penalty of death.

The rules of the order are simple, and easily explained. Incompetence is not tolerated. Failure is rewarded with death. Beyond that, if a knight does not get caught, and does not shame the Order, his honor is his own responsibility.

Tremayne

The merchant class has spawned several Orders of Knighthood desperate to break into the nobility, but only one had the resources, cleverness and strength to survive. That Order is the noble Tremayne, a young power within the Empire, but one to be reckoned with. Its members control almost all trade, including the manufacture of weapons, siege machinery, and other necessities of war. Without them, the Empire could not fight, and few of the other Orders of Knighthood wish to anger them.

Still, they are looked down upon for their humble origins. They must struggle for every speck of dignity, and they fight for all that they have on a daily basis. Worse, they were recently shamed as a high-ranking countess married an elf and gave birth to his half-breed child. Her other children have not erased the stain on the family; the half-breed lives the free life of an errant warrior, although none in their right minds would grant him the status of knight. What is worse, the knights of Order Tremayne seem to be protecting the beast, hiding his movements to keep him safe. Although many assassination attempts have been made against the new countess and Master of the Order, Elaneor Tremayne, she still lives, and protects her half-brother despite the shame of his birth.

Brotherhoods of Power

Some groups in the Empire supersede both a person's nobility and their Order of Knighthood. These groups, known as brotherhoods, are typically formed by the Emperor, and owe allegiance to him directly, but the Cathedral of the Storm has created fraternities of its own to rival those of the Emperor.

Imperial Guard

The Imperial Guard are men and women sworn to turn away from all political ambition, and dedicated through blood oath and powerful sorcery to the Emperor's command. They serve as his personal guard, messengers, and the wielders of his law throughout the capital city of Luthlarius. They cherish the Emperor more than their own life or honor, and it is unheard of for a member of the Imperial Guard to be compromised or made disloyal. The bond they share, coupled with the Emperor's magic, holds them fast.

All members of the Imperial Guard have a war-hawk, a great bird trained to kill. They are powerful enough to hurt even a Deverenian Knight, and they can easily kill peasants and other untrained warriors. These hawks have near-human intelligence, and can understand the telepathic commands of their owner even at a distance of up to 10 miles. War-hawks live up to 30 years, and are invaluable as allies. They are a symbol of the Imperial Guard, and no one who is not a member of that elite brotherhood is allowed to own one. The secret magic of establishing the link between hawk and guardsman is known only to the Emperor's personal sorcerers.

Chromatic Knights

The Chromatic Knights are a group of knights that uphold honor and duty above all else. If a knight in any of the Orders fails in his duty, shirks his responsibility, or fails in his honor in a heinous way without repentance, then the Chromatic Knights feel they must become involved. They come from all Orders of Knighthood, maintaining their bonds to those Orders while still swearing to fulfill the role of guardians of honor for the Accordlands.

The Chromatic Knights are led by Sir Sorlons d'Ilchant, the Azure Knight. His banner guides them, but the Chromatic Knights most often operate on their own to ensure that honor is respected and upheld by all those who call themselves knights.

Order of the Fourth Wind

The Order of the Fourth Wind is a fraternity of rangers, scouts, and archers who work on the front lines of the Empire's war zones. They risk their lives to bring the Empire information, and they use their skills with archery and stealth to destroy and assassinate the leaders who oppose the Empire. They have little honor, and do not pretend to follow the same code of ethics as most Knights.

The Order of the Fourth Wind is led by Baroness Lucane of Order Rellion. She is a ruthless leader, with little remorse and almost no sense of morality regarding her kills. The men and women of her fraternity agree with her tactics that earn the Empire victory after victory, as one poet put it, on the bloodied and broken back of their honor.

Skyborne Path

The wizards of the Skyborne Path specialize in weather magic. This group existed for centuries before the arrival of Signon and the conversion of the Empire to the Storm. Before the arrival of the Storm Church, those on the Skyborne Path were astronomers and astrologers, students of weather and environmental magic, but with the arrival of the church, new converts became obsessed with using their magical knowledge to study only the Storm.

The Skyborne Path has undergone a great upheaval. Those who refuse to accept the new direction of the fraternity have one by one been silenced by a number of accidents, and the organization is dominated by the minions of the Storm. Soon its original purpose will be lost entirely.

Huntsmen

The Huntsmen of the Empire are feared warriors who fight not with weapons but with beasts. This revered fraternity includes those who train the powerful flying dragon-horses called verdatha, and who train the flame hounds that breathe fire upon their enemies. These men and women are skilled with such beasts. They raise and breed them, training others to use them in battle, but most often the Huntsmen command a unit comprised of as many as three other huntsmen, and up to 50 Hounds.

Knights of the Steel Dragon

The elite Knights of the Steel Dragon are a small apolitical brotherhood dedicated to perfecting martial skills, both skill at arms and cunning strategy. As natural leaders and purely dedicated to the Emperor — some say their dedication is locked with iron bands of magic — they often command city garrisons during times of war or civil unrest. They can form units of their own, creating a formidable force on and above the battlefield. These knights enjoy personal combat and have been known to challenge enemy leaders to duels.



In the heat of battle, Steel Dragon Knights have been known to boast that they will do a thing, such as forcing a rampaging dragon to submit to their will, and once the boast is given they do everything they can to fulfill it. These Bloodoaths are critical to their ideals of duty and their intense sense of loyalty to their word — they will not go back on their word, once it is given on the battlefield, no matter how impossible their task appears.

The Knights of the Steel Dragon pride themselves on personal bravery and their loyalty to the Emperor. The greatest insult one can receive is to be called a traitor to the Emperor, or to the Empire. Their honor and the honor of the other knights of their order is paramount. Their word is not lightly given, for once pledged, a Steel Dragon Knight is honor-bound to complete its terms. Those knights who learn to ride the verdatha into battle are eligible to join the ranks of the Steel Guard, an elite aerial cavalry unit that uses its powerful mounts in battle to defend the Empire.

To become a Steel Dragon Knight a character must either become a squire of the Order, or enter from another Order as a knight. The second choice is not highly looked upon, as those knights willing to break their earlier oaths — even for the Emperor's sake — are always considered forsworn.

Hospitallers of Loth

The Hospitallers are devoted to peace and the protection of all creatures: a non-Deveranian ideal, at first glance. However, the Hospitallers have perfected a form of unarmed combat that stresses disabling an opponent rather than killing him. They believe every life saved is a life that can be converted to the worship of the Storm, and only when someone proves themselves

completely untouchable will they kill him. Conversions may last for years before they decide someone is no longer worth their patience.

Clerics of all other religions, on the other hand, are viewed with great enmity. The Hospitallers are opposed to all other religions, seeing them as scourges of the soul. The Hospitallers are gentle to all members of other races, a point in sharp conflict with their merciless nature when it comes to other religions' priests. In their eyes, claiming to worship another god is a recantable heresy, but calling upon a heretical faith to alter the world pollutes the Lands of the Accord. These false prophets call upon the powers of gods who do not exist (in the minds of the Hospitallers) and they must be eradicated in order to free their enslaved minions and turn them toward the true faith of the Storm.

The Hospitallers are more of a democratic brotherhood than a feudalistic one; each member is considered a knight of the brotherhood first and foremost. He is considered the equal in counsel of his brother-knights regardless of external status. Many of the Orders of Knighthood see this as a critical failing of the Hospitallers, and some even refuse to consider the Hospitallers an equal organization because of this internal structure. Although they are criticized for their internal command, its structure makes the brotherhood of the Hospitallers extremely stable, and its members are unfailingly loyal to one another — something few Deveranian Knightly Orders can truly boast.

The Tenets of the Hospitallers of Loth

- Do not avoid when thou canst heal, do not wound when thou canst avoid, do not maim when thou canst wound, do not kill when thou canst maim.
 - Keep thyself in good repair and good cheer, as befits a physician.
 - Carry no more belongings than thou need'st. Take no more thanks than is thy due.
 - The Empire and all who live within are thy charges.
 - Destroy those who would turn the Faithful from their path.
 - Convert those whose minds have not seen the glory of the Storm. Lend a hand to all men, faithful or forsaken, for within all souls lies a spark of hope that they canst be turned to goodness and right through the guidance of the Storm.
 - Never give up, no matter how hard the path or how twisted the way. The Storm shall guide you.
-

D'Illchant Keep

Background

If Luthlarius is the glorious crown of the Empire of Deverenia, d'Illchant Keep is its unwavering right hand. Home to the dreaded Paladins of the Black Sun, the eldest and largest brotherhood of paladins in the Accordlands, it is training ground for them and also for the Chromatic Knights. While Deverenians may survive by feigning honor elsewhere, those in d'Illchant Keep live by a simple code: Becsület (honor and faith), Testvériség (brotherhood), and Körelesség (duty). Though it possesses neither the mechanical monstrosities of Lukkot, nor the endless ranks of dedicated soldiers of Toris Kelt, d'Illchant Keep produces perhaps the finest soldiers in the Accordlands. Though no more than a score of knights graduate from the formal training, and few of those are paladins, these knights are the finest of the elite in Deverenia, their skills honed over years of remorseless discipline and unbending will.

Economy

D'Illchant Keep is a military installation rather than a true city, to which economics is far less important than military drills. As possibly the finest training academy in Deverenia, if not the whole of the Accordlands, d'Illchant Keep's military budget is virtually unlimited, though the honor of the knights keeps them from asking for more than they need. On very rare occasions, some of the squires and knights have hired on to foreign armies as mercenary units, with all profits going toward the keep's funds, but these are viewed as training exercises in working with or against entirely foreign martial styles.

A handful of serfs maintain the keep's grounds, accompanied sometimes by squires. Though no true black market exists in the keep, these two groups have occasional dealings with each other. Usually, a squire pays one or more serfs to do his chores. Though the knights at the keep discourage the activity, they heap more blame on the squires than on the serfs. The serfs, at least, are not in training to become the epitome of honor.

Laws

On first glance, few can tell the difference between d'Illchant Keep's regimented order and that of any other Deverenian military outpost. In a certain sense, this is wholly the truth: there are no laws, rules, or regulations unique to the keep itself. The difference is rather that the laws are always absolute. From the lowliest squire to the greatest paladin, all must bow to the purity of Imperial and Church law in all things. Should they fail in the slightest — keeping their armor in less than perfect repair, being late for curfew, or failing to be completely truthful in their reports — they face expulsion from the keep, their respective brotherhoods and Orders, and a shame that shall follow them the rest of their days. In contrast, d'Illchant Keep is almost lenient when dealing with military losses or even a lack of martial ability, as failures of tactics are lessons in themselves, and failures in body can improve with adequate training. Nothing can be done for a spiritual failing, and the men and women of d'Illchant Keep have no sympathy in the slightest for those who wish to join the Black Sun or Chromatic Knights, but have not the strength of character.

Population: 75 Paladins of the Black Sun (varying levels of paladin, with some being Champions of the Black Sun; see below), 75 Chromatic Knights (varying levels of fighter, paladin, and high knight of Deverenia; see below), 150 squires (either low-level fighters or paladins; see below), 20 priests and their retinue (see locations 11 and 14, below), 200 serfs (lawful neutral and lawful evil rogues, levels 1–3), 1 doppelganger

Government: Military outpost

Imports: Food, water, military hardware

Exports: None

Important NPCs: Duke Blackthorne (Paladin of the Black Sun and Medusan Lord Agent), Guardian Daethor (Church man-at-arms and Knight Inquisitor), Sir Magnus Arcadis (Paladin of the Black Sun and Imperial spy), Sir Sorlons d'Illchant (the Azure Knight, and leader of the Chromatic Knights), Sir Sorlons d'Illchant (doppelganger and catspaw of Sorscha)

TABLE 2–1: D'ILLCHANT KEEP LEVEL AND EQUIPMENT

Rank	Level*	Equipment**
Squire	1–3	none (may carry his master's equipment, but is forbidden to enter combat; flees if threatened)
Apprentice Knight	3–5	any Medium martial melee weapon, chain mail
Journeyman Knight	5–7	any Medium martial melee weapon, any simple ranged weapon, breast plate; shield (small, steel)
Common Knight	7–10 (1 lvl of a prestige class)	any Medium or Large martial melee weapon, any martial ranged weapon, banded mail, shield (large, steel), warhorse, total enchantment bonuses of +2
Elite Knight	10–13 (2–3 lvl of a prestige class)	any martial melee weapon, any martial ranged weapon, half-plate, shield (tower), verdatha mount, total enchantment bonuses of +4

* Characters are fighters (if Chromatic Knights, or training to join them) or paladins (if Paladins of the Black Sun, or training to join them). If the table indicates a level or levels in a prestige class, the Chromatic Knights are high knights of Deverenia, while the Black Sun are Champions of the Black Sun.

** Listed enchantment bonuses, if any, are cumulative with a paladin's blessed armament class feature.

History

When Signon returned from the Storm and began his purge of Deverenia's corruption, he allied with those righteous few who saw the wisdom in his words. The noble family of d'Ilchant, distant cousins of the loyalists in Orders Myerdeth and Aedroud, were among the first to bow to Signon's wisdom, and offered their homelands for his use as a staging ground. After his victory, Signon rewarded the d'Ilchant's service by assigning the family the responsibility to train and field the Paladins of the Black Sun, the first major military wing of a religion since Deima's death in the second century.

The d'Ilchant took to the task with the same relish that characterized their service during the war. They exceeded Signon's and even Modred's expectations, quickly establishing an inviolable coda as their standard, and enforcing it to the letter. The central institution, the d'Ilchant Keep, produced only four graduates in its first class, but each went on to become one of their generation's most celebrated heroes. It also had an unintentional side-effect, as several would-be paladins found themselves failing not because of a lack of faith or failure to live up to the keep's lofty standards, but because it had been the Storm's unfathomable will to deny these worthy squires its blessing. The Black Sun initially thought little of this, assuming that the Storm had other plans for these disappointed young men and women. Unfortunately, the truth turned out to be far worse, as these otherwise perfect souls wrestled with the knowledge that they were somehow not good enough for the Storm. Some chose to abandon their other hopes, slowly wasting away as their boundless self-hatred consumed them. Others reconciled their failure, only to find that the Orders saw them no different from those squires spurned for dishonor.

One squire turned his back on the very concepts of honor and service to those institutions that had rejected him. Hating the Black Sun, Deverenia, the world, and himself, the squire knew only that he wanted to be someone's favored servant, to be pure and perfect in someone's eyes. He was everything the Cult of Bascaron could hope for in a champion.

Their rituals completely remade him, stealing his face, his memory, and his soul. When the Bascarites were done, the only thing their new Beast Knight could remember was an utter contempt for Deverenia, and for the Black Sun in particular. After a series of attacks on Black Sun holdings, the Beast Knight apparently recanted, and has worked alongside Deverenians ever since. Many believe that the truth behind this mysterious change was what eventually prompted the Aroch paladins' departure, but in truth, the Beast Knight simply fell under the sway of more subtle Bascarites.

In any case, the depravity of the Beast Knight proved to the Black Sun that it was not enough to simply turn away those squires who were honorable but not chosen as paladins. After consulting with the Church of the Storm and the Emperor, the Black Sun announced an allied brotherhood, the Chromatic Knights. Like the Black Sun, these Chromatic Knights embodied the Deverenian ideals of honor, but answered to the Emperor himself, rather than to the Church of the Storm. The two brotherhoods have worked alongside each other at d'Ilchant Keep since.

Society

The foremost training grounds among the Paladins of the Black Sun's many academies, d'Ilchant Keep actually produces very few graduates, perhaps a dozen per decade. Most squires that apply face rejection almost immediately, or else prove themselves wanting by failing to live up to the keep's standards of perfection. This is disgraceful position for a Deverenian, as it is a pointed reminder of the failed squire's weakness. The shame is often too great for these would-be heroes, who flee Deverenia for mercenary work. The keep's knights care little for their castaways.

Within the keep exists a regimented series of ranks similar to those elsewhere in Deverenia. As always, peasants occupy the lowest level of the keep's hierarchy, and they toil endlessly in grounds keeping, cooking, and performing other chores. The drudgery is no less severe than in any other corner of the Empire, but peasants view a life in d'Ilchant Keep as nearly ideal. The knights of the keep not only demand excellence, but reward it as well. Though serfs are no greater in these knights' eyes than anywhere else, the combination of close quarters and the extraordinarily strong sense of honor prevailing in the keep means that a truly capable and dedicated servant has a chance here for promotion to squire.

Brotherhoods and Orders

The Chromatic Knights and Paladins of the Black Sun are two of the most prestigious institutions in Deverenia, and there is literally no higher honor in the nation than to join one of the two groups, short of becoming Emperor's Champion. The men and women in these groups are above reproach, and even the enemies of the Empire acknowledge and respect the brotherhoods' commitment to their duties. In both groups' long histories, they have performed almost flawlessly.

The problem is that the brotherhoods lack the power of the knightly Orders. Though the Black Sun skirts this slightly, as it is an arm of the Church of the Storm, both groups ultimately face the same barrier that the Orders are all too willing to exploit: the two brotherhoods, for all their fame and bluster, are not technically of equal rank to even the lowliest true knight. This puts the two brotherhoods in a bind. Without the aid of a member of a knightly Order, a Black Sun operating in Deverenia must rely solely on Church allies, while a Chromatic Knight has no authority whatsoever.

The solution is obvious, if galling to the proud members of the two brotherhoods, who seek membership in the true Orders. Most of the time this is ridiculously easy, as there is a certain prestige associated with an Order having a sizable number from either brotherhood. Beyond this, the Orders generally do not interfere much in the brotherhood knights' lives, as the brotherhood is almost invariably these knights' priority. Chromatic Knights occasionally buck the trend, however, and keep a private stable of unaffiliated members, who can investigate and hunt any Order without fear of compromising their honor. The Black Sun has no such recourse, as the Church of the Storm is all too eager to bring the Orders closer to its control and requires the Black Sun to join Orders.

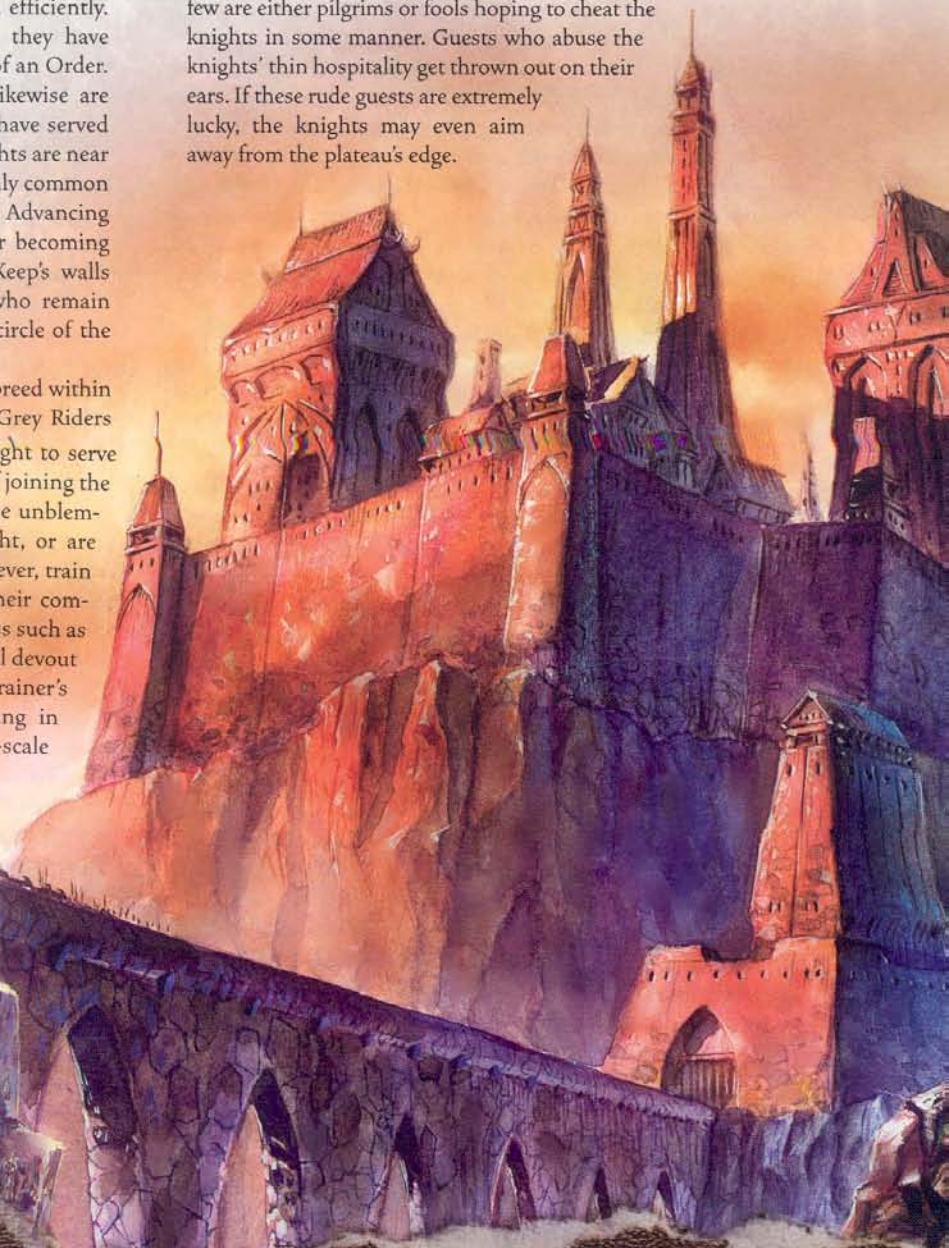
In contrast, squires find d'Ilchant Keep an endless trial of their patience and resolve. They work alongside the serfs at the same duties (though no serf may groom the horses, much less the verdatha), and sleep in the same quarters. For the children of true knights and royalty, this is a humiliating experience, and some squires treat the serfs harshly. So long as this behavior is warranted, the knights do not involve themselves, but the very moment a squire acts against a serf without cause he is forever barred from the keep's gate. Though commonly accepted in Deverenia as a whole, d'Ilchant Keep does not tolerate the shameful behavior of torturing inferiors. This is not out of compassion, but rather pride; a greater man can accept his own faults, and take responsibility for them. Squires may serve either the Chromatic Knights or the Paladins of the Black Sun, though the former brotherhood is marginally easier. Squires are forbidden to enter combat except in self-defense, but travel with their masters during times of war.

Above the squires stand four ranks of knights, in increasing order of rank and privilege: apprentice knights, journeymen knights, common knights, and elite knights. Each rank bows to the ranks above it, following commands quickly and efficiently. Apprentice knights are no better than squires, as they have little battlefield experience and are not yet members of an Order. Journeymen knights have served as soldiers, but likewise are not yet members of a true Order. Common knights have served diligently in war, and are true knights, while elite knights are near legendary figures in both brotherhood and Order. Only common and elite knights may have squires of their own. Advancing in rank within the keep is tediously slow, and after becoming journeyman or common knights, most leave the Keep's walls to serve their brotherhood more publicly. Those who remain either seek additional prestige by joining the inner circle of the brotherhoods, or stay on to become trainers.

The Black Sun trainers are something of a unique breed within the keep, as they are rarely trainers by choice. The Grey Riders (so called for the earliest of their number, who sought to serve the Black Sun well into their dotage) are incapable of joining the Black Sun in battle, though their honor is otherwise unblemished. Most Grey Riders are either too old to fight, or are crippled due by old wounds. A noteworthy few, however, train others because they are not as steely in souls as their comrades, occasionally exhibiting signs of moral weakness such as mercy or doubt. These lawful neutral paladins are still devout servants of the Storm, but must remain strictly in a trainer's role, lest they endanger their comrades by faltering in battle. The Grey Riders remain distant from wide-scale combat, instructing attending squires in the subtleties of the battlefield by pointing to the examples before them. Some people (including the more arrogant or ambitious squires) confuse this for cowardice or incapacity of the aged Riders, and threaten the knights or their charges. This is almost invariably a fatal mistake, as the Grey Riders' every thought is of improving their techniques.

A small but important group remains apart from the knights. The keep's chapel is the center of its faith, but its priests are not members of either brotherhood. Though worship is mandatory, the priests have only moral authority here, offering advice to troubled souls. While the knights are thankful for the clergy's presence in the keep, the priests and the Black Sun follow different Church laws, while the priests and the Chromatic Knights have little in common. As such, the priests have their own small group of men-at-arms, devout laymen who fight to their deaths to protect the Storm's chosen speakers.

Guests are rare in d'Ilchant Keep, and are usually either recruiters from the Orders or the Church, traveling members of the brotherhoods, or foreign envoys touring Deverenia's military installations — a series of none-too-subtle displays of the Empire's strength. Guests receive courteous if cold treatment, as the knights of the keep prefer training, prayer, or planning to entertaining visitors. As d'Ilchant Keep is technically a religious installation (in that the Church of the Storm owns it), it has a standing policy of offering sanctuary to any who ask it. Such unfortunate souls are usually travelers lost in the badlands, but a rare few are either pilgrims or fools hoping to cheat the knights in some manner. Guests who abuse the knights' thin hospitality get thrown out on their ears. If these rude guests are extremely lucky, the knights may even aim away from the plateau's edge.



Geography

D'Ilchant Keep stands atop a wide mesa overlooking the badlands northwest of Luthlarius and east of Denska. The rough earth makes for slow and dangerous travel on foot or horseback, while game animals and edible plant life are scarce. Though the early d'Ilchant built the keep to watch over possible invaders through the rugged terrain, this ancient purpose is virtually obsolete. While knights still man the keep itself, a team of verdatha-riding knights have taken over the scouting duties.

Land travel (including horseback) is difficult, reducing base speed by half. Attempting to run is difficult and bruising (Reflex save or Riding check, as appropriate, with a DC of 20; failure knocks the character and his mount, if any, prone, dealing 1d6 subdual damage), while sprinting is an impossibility. A Survival check (DC 18) reveals safer paths without penalties, but all knights at the keep are automatically aware of such paths. Characters may not take a safe path if they are following or tracking someone who is not.

There are 1d6 verdatha riders (common or elite knights) flying over a ten mile radius around the mesa, and they have a +10 circumstance bonus to their Spot checks to notice any overland movement. The keep itself stands atop a towering mesa whose sheer walls are over 4000 feet high and all but impossible to climb (DC 30). On the southeast side is a single narrow pathway that leads to the plateau. The broad expanse of the mesa is a nearly ideal training ground for the young knights and squires of the keep.

Two Medium, four Small, and eight Tiny or smaller creatures can walk side-by-side along the passage. Should the need arise, one of a series of ancient traps can collapse part of the passage in a landslide, but the traps are old and poorly maintained. In addition to the normal Search attempts, characters with Knowledge (stonemasonry) or Survival may instead use either of those skills to notice the disturbed earth just barely held back by the trap's supports. Characters with two of those skills have a +2 competence bonus to the check, and characters with all three have a +5 competence bonus to it. The traps are normally already disabled (though a successful check still reveals them), but anyone who knows where a trap is may trigger it as a standard action, collapsing the pathway 10 feet farther down. The triggering mechanisms for the traps are gray stones embedded in the stone walls, seven feet above the ramp floor.

The traps are in a poor state of repair, and may collapse on their own. Should combat begin on the pathway, or a character fails a Reflex saving throw (other than to avoid the trap's effects) on it, roll 1d4. The result is the number of rounds combat lasts before accidentally triggering the trap, or the number the Reflex save can be missed by without triggering it. Similarly, should a Disable Devices check fail on a natural 1, the trap's moorings give way. Traps triggered in this fashion center upon the person that triggered them, rather than the normal 10 feet farther down. There are six traps in total.

Landslide Trap: CR 5; no attack roll necessary (see note below); Search (DC 21); Disable Devices (DC 25); Note: The trap causes a landslide with a bury zone of 10 feet (the width of the path) and a slide zone of 20 feet. Pinned characters must make an additional Reflex saving throw (DC 15) or fall off the side of the path. The pathway's height from the ground varies anywhere from 10 to 1000 feet (above this level, the pathway curves into mesa, and there is no danger of falling off).

Knights and squires train atop the mesa at all hours, using practice weapons (dealing subdual damage and never threatening critical hits) and wearing padded armor. The squires present carry their masters' armor and weaponry (up to one squire for each knight of common or elite ranks), as determined on Table 2-1 (page 41).

When determining the number of people sparring on the plateau top, roll 1d6 to determine how many squires are present, then (if the result is above 3) roll to determine the number of apprentice knights, and again until the result is less than 4 or until the number of elite knights is determined. Additionally, there is always at least one elite knight present, already properly armed and equipped, and carrying a loud whistle that alerts the rest of the keep and 1d4 of the scouting verdatha riders in the area. If only one knight is present, he is a lawful neutral Silver Guardsman. Otherwise, there are roughly equal numbers of Chromatic Knights (fighters) and Paladins of the Black Sun. All knights in the keep are no more than one alignment step away from lawful evil, with neutral evil characters adhering to codes of conduct whenever they suspect others might be watching.

Use Table 2-1 (page 41) to determine the levels and standard equipment for knights at d'Ilchant Keep.

D'Ilchant Keep Locations

1. VISITORS' QUARTERS (PRISON)

Whenever the knights of d'Ilchant Keep come across a dishonorable enemy whom they cannot slay outright (such as a visiting dignitary, or a deceitful yet high-ranking knight of an Order), the knights extend their foe the additional courtesy of a stay in the visitors' quarters. This attractive, marble-brick building contains the most luxurious accommodations in the keep. Deeply upholstered furniture, stores of fine foods, and an inspiring view from the second story make those who stay here feel most comfortable. Of course, were these people to realize the origin of the building's name, they might change their minds. The serfs joke about the difference between a guest (see location #3) and a visitor: the guest can stay as long as he likes, but the visitor never stays for long.

The visitors' quarters house stores of enough rich food, alcohol, books, and other diversions to divert even the most depraved glutton for months. While someone occupies the visitors' quarters, the knights and serfs can keep an eye on him. If needs be, any knight of common or greater rank may also lock the building's doors and windows. These locks turn easily from the outside (Open Lock check, DC 11 from the outside, 25 from within), but even then, the fugitive must contend with the careful gaze of the keep's guardians, who have a +5 circumstance bonus to Spot checks to notice him fleeing.

Most visitors, however, have not the first idea that they are prisoners. The most senior-ranking knight in the keep spends much time with the visitors, pretending to enjoy their company and engaging in petty parlor games. Meanwhile, the keep dispatches verdatha-riding envoys to Luthlarius with a list of the prisoners' crimes. The messengers almost invariably return with execution orders, rarely interspersed with sentences of exile or deportation, to say nothing of actual verdicts of innocence. The knights carry out their duties as quickly as possible.

2. SIR RHAWN'S QUARTERS

Aside from the keep itself, this is the largest building in the outpost. Two stories of simple brick, it has been the private quarters of the head of the Paladins of the Black Sun since the brotherhood's founding. As the paladins dedicated their lives to their disciplines, however, they abandoned other more material concerns. At present, the upper floor has only two private sleeping chambers, while the entire bottom floor is open to any in the keep.

The bottom floor includes two rooms, a small antechamber for meeting with others in private, and a large gymnasium. A character may notice that these were actually a series of much smaller rooms once, though someone tore down the walls long ago, making a skill check (DC 18) using any of the following skills: Craft (carpentry), Craft (stonemasonry), Knowledge (architecture), Search, or Spot. Once noted, the character may actually collapse the building by striking at one of the spots weakened without the walls' support. If a character makes a successful Strength check (DC 18) or deals more than 10 hits to such a spot (the years of continuous strain has removed the hardness ratings in these areas), the building collapses in 1d4 rounds, as though it were a cave-in. Characters on the second floor make their Reflex saving throws at a +5 circumstance bonus since far less debris falls on top of them, but suffer 2d6 damage for falling 20 feet. The initial blow sends a shock through the entire building, and characters may escape the destruction by running or sprinting out, though a second-story escape is more difficult. The knights are utterly unaware of this building's unstable architecture, and would gladly pay the 3000 gp fee to refortify it, as well as up to 1000 gp to any who would point the flaws out to them.

The antechamber on the first floor is perhaps the only room in the entire keep that has remained virtually untouched, looking much the way it did even before the d'Ilchant aligned themselves with Signon. A set of comfortable antique wooden chairs and a matching desk have been here since the keep's founding, with the only notable addition since then being a tapestry depicting the d'Ilchant royalty bowing in fealty to Signon. The walls are covered in thick, rich satin curtains, which have the practical purpose of muffling the sounds in the room (those outside the room have a -5 circumstance penalty to their Listen checks to hear what happens inside). A secret compartment underneath the desk holds a loaded light crossbow and a longsword. A person sitting behind the desk may draw either as a free action, and may attempt to catch opponents flat-footed on a successful Bluff check. Sir Sorlons (both of him) and Sir Rhawn are the only ones that know of the hidden weapons, but a Search check (DC 28) reveals the compartment. The desk also contains more mundane effects, including a letter opener (as a dagger, but does 1d3 damage and threatens a critical hit only on a 20), a few books detailing Imperial and Church laws (+4 insight bonus to any Knowledge (Deveranian law) checks made while consulting the books), a quill and ink, several blank sheets of paper, and d'Ilchant Keep's official seal (Forgery check DC 25 to duplicate, but takes 2 days' uninterrupted work to complete). In the unlikely event of their theft, the furniture, curtains, and tapestry are worth a total of 5000 gp (5500 if the seller points out the secret compartment). The official seal and accurate forgeries of it are worth an additional 1000 gp (500 outside Deverenia, Denska, or Nothrog lands) on the black market, but the knights may discover the theft before then.

Sir Rhawn's Motives

When Sir Rhawn dispatched some of his own brotherhood's trainers to aid in the rebuilding of Aroch, he claimed it was because his honor demanded it. A noble foe had fallen upon hard times, and this complicated the relationship between the two paladin sects. Though the Black Sun had sworn to destroy the Aroch, Sir Rhawn has temporarily suspended the war. He could not deny the Black Sun their vendetta, but neither would it be honorable for a host of mighty paladins to assault a single knight, however powerful, and a pup of a squire.

Secretly, however, Sir Rhawn has begun to question his faith. While he still hates the Aroch, he cannot fathom how a gang of criminals could best the Black Sun's great rivals. He has decided upon one of two possibilities: that the Aroch were frauds, and that the Black Sun had wasted centuries respecting charlatans; or that the true killer or killers were more than mere hoodlums. To test the case, he loaned to Terak two of the Silver Guards, Sir Selenoth and Sir Kwell, to determine whether Terak is a weakling or if he needs more direct aid against an unknown enemy. Sir Rhawn fears that it may be a traitor to the Black Sun who is responsible, and sometimes wonders if Terak is the only person left he can trust.

The gymnasium is the other room on the bottom floor, taking up a full 3/4ths of the area. Along the walls are practice weapons (as any mundane melee weapon listed in the *Rules Codex*, including exotic weapons, but dealing subdual damage and never threatening critical hits), several rolls of cotton padding for the floor, and a set of uneven bars, iron weights, and a set of still rings suspended from the ceiling. Characters may use the exercise equipment for a number of hours per day equal to their Constitution modifier before becoming exhausted, and heal temporary ability damage in so doing (1 point healed to any of Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution every hour, but negates any other healing from rest that day, including to regain hit points).

Training in the gymnasium, either with the equipment or by sparring, is an honor rarely extended to anyone except elite knights and specially honored guests. The gymnasium is also the only place in the keep where acting out of turn is not only permissible, but encouraged. Though the whole house is technically off-limits to anyone without an invitation from either Sir Rhawn or Sir Sorlons, any person within the keep's walls may issue a challenge to the keep's master, a fight resolved via a duel using the practice weapons in the room. The outcome of this duel is largely irrelevant, so long as the challenger fights well (reducing his opponent to 50% or fewer hit points) and honorably. Should the challenger fulfill these standards, he earns a private audience with the head of the keep in the antechamber. Should the challenger prove weak or dishonorable, or should the leader of the keep decide that the challenger's chosen subjects during the audience are criminal or unworthy of his time, the challenger finds himself expelled from the keep for his effrontery. For those challengers who do well in the duel and speak with insight during the audience, however, this ancient tradition is a certain way to attract attention from the keep's most noteworthy inhabitants. Normally, Sir Rhawn d'Ilchant would be the person to accept these challenges, but he has decreed that his brother, Sir Sorlons, shall do so in his absence.

The upper floor has several rooms, all but two of which are storage rooms containing detailed historical texts, apocryphal religious accounts of the Védoszentelek, and religious and philosophical treatises written by the keep's lords of ages past. These documents are insightful and innovative, but also incredibly dry. Even assuming Sir Rhawn's permission, reading through these papers could take years, and finding practical information is all but impossible. Anyone who attempts to delve into these archives must make consecutive Knowledge (religion) and Search checks simply to find a place to begin, and then make either a Concentration check or a Will saving throw to stave off tedium long enough to find the desired works. Assign a single DC, based upon the obscurity of the information. Texts covering information that Deverenia has actively tried to stamp out range from a DC of 30 for heretical but relatively innocuous entries (such as the original text of the Accord, detailed accounts of the war between Deverenus and Deima, or details concerning Védoszentelek worship before Signon) to a DC of 50 or more for information that could effectively cause a new civil war in Deverenia, should the researcher survive long enough to publicly reveal it (including evidence that Teufeltiger has not fully converted to the Storm, the location and religious importance of Isadran, or ancient journals describing Signon chastising Modred). One piece of information remains hidden here, centuries after someone else

discovered it. Should the researcher seek out the texts that led to Aroch breaking from the Black Sun, a DC 75 check reveals what the Aroch learned long ago: that Signon engineered the whole premise of the Church of the Storm as part of a plan to end the threat of the Dragon forever. Even the present day Aroch and the knights of d'Ilchant Keep are unaware that the guarded tome in the chapel (see location #14) is a decoy. Researching here takes a number of days equal to the DC, and failure on the Search or Concentration checks, or the Will save, wastes the time entirely. Failure on the Knowledge check is even worse, as the researcher continually looks in the wrong place. The texts cover any information directly relating to Deverenia's religious history, and are truthful as far as the original writers knew.

Sir Rhawn's room is the smallest in the house, barely 10 feet by 10 feet. Inside are all his worldly possessions other than the relics he wears: a single cot, a small shrine to the Storm, a battered copy of the *Annales Devereniorum*, a dresser with three sets of traveling clothes, and a stand for his armor and sword. Sir Rhawn is rarely here, and the room is invariably dusty.

The room next door is a marked contrast: five times the size, and richly furnished with oil paintings, war trophies, tapestries, and a closet full of the finest garments in Deverenia, all in his favored azure hues. This is Sir Sorlons' room, and is something of a mild scandal among the Chromatic Knights. By the time Sir Sorlons became leader of the Chromatic Knights, his younger brother had led the Paladins of the Black Sun for nearly a decade, and many in both brotherhoods quietly believed Sir Sorlons unequal to his role. As a youth, Sir Sorlons had earned a mixed reputation as a capable but hedonistic knight, and his service to the Chromatic Knights was just enough to avoid expulsion. As the knight grew older, however, he made bolder investigations, and eventually earned the respect of his peers. Though hints of the boisterous young man still arise periodically in Sir Sorlons, the bulk of his brotherhood feel that he is growing into his position.



This is a blatant falsehood. Sir Sorlons has not changed in the slightest, and many of his inquiries into dishonorable activities are nothing more than a front for his personal descent into depravity. Sir Sorlons is intensely envious of his younger brother, and feels that his own place in the Chromatic Knights is a burden he must bear, lest he disappear completely into Sir Rhawn's shadow. He does enjoy chasing down dishonorable foes of the Chromatic Knights in the way a hunter enjoys bringing down big game. Still, he is extraordinarily daring, and has charged on horseback into enemy pikes only to leap from the saddle at the last moment, flying over the pikes to land on the enemy. His recklessness, too, is legendary, and while he has some magical weapons and armor, he prefers to use mundane and easily replaceable equipment instead. Sir Sorlons is neutral evil, an 8th level fighter/2nd level high knight of Deverenia, and may wear and wield any nonmagical equipment found in the *Rules Codex*, all in his customary azure tones.

The secret to Sir Sorlons' success is that, on one of his investigations into an underground gladiatorial ring, he rescued an enslaved doppelganger. In gratitude, the doppelganger has taken Sir Sorlons' place during the knight's many forays, and it is only through the efforts of the doppelganger that all Deverenia has not discovered Sir Sorlons' endless capacity for vice. As Sir Sorlons spends more and more time indulging in his decadence, his doppelganger spends more time leading in his stead. This is precisely as ill-considered as it appears, as the doppelganger fully intends to eventually murder and fully replace the true Sir Sorlons. This doppelganger is an agent of Sorscha (see the *Campaign* book for more information on Sorscha), and could deal terrible damage to Deverenia if he takes over the Chromatic Knights on a permanent basis. The doppelganger is lawful evil (though loyal to Sorscha, not Deverenia), a 7th level rogue/6th level fighter. When appearing as Sir Sorlons, it wields the magic Sir Sorlons fears losing: a +4 greatsword and a suit of +4 scale mail of electrical resistance. Additionally, due to its extended expertise at playing the role of Sir Sorlons, it receives an additional +8 competence bonus to all opposed Bluff and Disguise checks to keep its true nature a secret. When the true Sir Sorlons is in the keep, the doppelganger pretends to be one of the keep's serfs, but remains distant from the others lest they notice the stranger among them. Should the doppelganger ever appear publicly as Sir Sorlons in the true Azure Knight's presence, it would almost certainly mean the death of the real knight, as the doppelganger's knowledge of the keep and its activities far outstrip Sir Sorlons' own.

Should thieves loot the room, the collected treasures are worth 50,000 gp. If the true Sir Sorlons is present, the doppelganger's listed equipment is also in his room. A successful Search check (DC 24) reveals an additional 10,000 gp in jewelry, as one of Sir Sorlons' bedposts is hollow, containing a golden chain studded with sapphires.

3. GUESTS' QUARTERS

Like the rest of the keep, this broad, squat building hews to function rather than fashion. Inside are twelve separate rooms built to the same standards as the knights' quarters elsewhere. The walls keep the elements at bay, and the furniture (two beds, two chairs, and a table per room) are sturdy but not as comfortable as most of the keep's guests would like, especially the keep's bimonthly suppliers.

The knights' use of the guests' quarters has led to some friction between the Paladins of the Black Sun and the Knights Inquisitor. Though the knights use the rooms here for visiting dignitaries and ranking officials in Deverenia, they also house travelers granted temporary sanctuary, and hold honorable prisoners of war. Roughly equivalent to house arrest, worthy enemies have the run of the entire area outside the keep proper, so long as they swear to remain in the keep and to follow its laws. The Inquisition finds this practice foolish, but the Black Sun and prisoners rarely trust each other to this extent, leaving the Inquisition without a real foundation to its argument.

In theory, nearly any NPC the GM desires may reside here, either as a prisoner or as an actual guest, though the less trustworthy would need a disguise or immaculate cover story. Sir Sorlons' doppelganger sometimes pretends to be one of his guests here, though it prefers to remain less conspicuous.

4. DINING HALL

The entire keep eats here, even the serfs and squires. The food served is nutritious, filling, and entirely bland. It falls to the keep's squires to supplement the gruel, bread, and water with meat and fruit, but such delicacies are not to be found in the surrounding badlands. Consequently, squires who can provide them are likely on the fast track to advancement. The squires must find these foods themselves, not simply arrange for trade.

Serfs serve meals three times a day: just before dawn, just after dusk, and at noon. The keep's inhabitants eat in order of their rank, with guests and the chapel's priests eating first, then the knights in descending rank, and finally the serfs and squires together. The priests bless all the food before each meal, and the food stores are in a cellar beneath the hall itself, making poisoning a difficult proposition.

5-6. COMMON KNIGHTS' QUARTERS

AND ELITE KNIGHTS' QUARTERS

These two barracks are home to the highest-ranked knights in the keep aside from the d'Illchant brothers. Each knight here is among the most disciplined warriors in the world, their capabilities and loyalties beyond reproach. Twenty Paladins of the Black Sun and fifteen Chromatic Knights stay in the elite quarters, and twenty of each in the common quarters (see above for their base statistics). The barracks are spotless — Search or Spot checks in either building receive a +5 circumstance bonus — but the knights themselves clean them, since squires and serfs may not set foot in these buildings without permission. Foreigners may enter only accompanied by a common or elite knight. Bunkbeds, footlockers, and prayer shrines make up the only furniture in either building.

Two of the knights in the elite knights' quarters are especially noteworthy. The first, Sir Magnus Arcadis, has drawn the personal attention of some of the greatest figures in Deverenia. In recent months, Sir Magnus and his brother, Christopher (the Pitch Knight, who also stays here as a Chromatic Knight), joined Sir Rhawn's pogrom against the bandits that destroyed the Aroch paladins. While Deverenia officially backed the Black Sun in this effort, Lord Gahid privately reprimanded Sir Rhawn for allowing Sir Magnus, an Aedroud knight, to accompany Rellion knights in the battle. Sir Rhawn insisted that the Arcadis brothers had proven their loyalty time and again, and refused to hear more of it. Secretly, however, Gahid is correct in his suspicions. Sir Magnus Arcadis has spent the last decade as a spy for the Emperor, watching over the secretive movements of the Church of the Storm. Though he does his utmost to fulfill his duties to his brotherhood, Order, church, and nation equally, Sir Magnus has fallen prey to the Emperor's magnetic personality. He believes that the Emperor himself is the prophesied hero of the Storm who will unite the Empire and Church. He is absolutely loyal to the Emperor, and would betray even his own brother if necessary. Sir Magnus Arcadis is lawful evil, an 8th level paladin/3rd level Champion of the Black Sun. He wears a suit of *+3 full plate of brilliance*, and wields a *+3 lawful greatsword*.

Still, the greatest traitor is not Sir Magnus, but rather Duke Blackthorne. Due to his family's extensive history of supporting the Church of the Storm, Blackthorne has been the first Paladin of the Black Sun in centuries to not join an Order. Though the Church believes him loyal to them, the real Duke has long since joined the Medusan Lords. "Duke Blackthorne" is merely a magical creature, an extension of the Medusan Lord himself, who seeks to make the Black Sun his own. It was Blackthorne who discovered the whereabouts of the brigands that had murdered the Aroch, for he had directed the killings. Even now, the traitor fans Sir Rhawn's doubts about the righteousness of the Black Sun, and Blackthorne hopes that the loan of two Grey Riders to Aroch may distance Sir Rhawn from the brotherhood. For more details on Duke Blackthorne, see the Campaign book. The Duke is a lawful evil, 11th level paladin who wears a suit of *+4 armor of invulnerability*.

7. MEETING HALL

While Sir Rhawn and Sir Sorlons have a private audience chamber in their home (see location #2), they hold general assemblies here in the meeting hall. Heraldic shields of the royal families, the Orders, and the brotherhoods line the walls before a stage. A slate board with talc sticks is mounted on the wall beyond the stage, and fire pits can light the area at night.

When mobilizing the knights of the keep, Sir Rhawn and Sir Sorlons use the hall to explain the strategies and objectives of the battle. In battles following these assemblies, knights who were present receive a +2 competence bonus to one check in the battle.

8. SQUIRES' QUARTERS

The squire's quarters are the most dismal place in the keep, home to both squires and the serfs. Traditionally squires must learn humility by living the life of a serf, learning to serve a cause before their personal interests. Most squires, the children and heirs of true knights, develop a sense of worth from their family's positions.

Those whose faith and honor are pure can learn to see beyond this self-deception. Those who cannot, cannot become knights of either brotherhood. It is a subtle lesson too few squires take to heart.

In truth, neither brotherhood really cares for the serfs, though the knights of the keep induct a few more serfs as squires than do the true Orders. When the keep punishes squires for abusing serfs, it is simply because a knight should know better.

The brotherhoods favor lessons by example. The squires and serfs have no privacy in their quarters, sleeping on bunk beds and keeping their possessions in knapsacks. The crowded conditions force at least some here to sleep on the dirt floor, and it is a rare week when at least one squire doesn't face expulsion. Advanced squires have simply learned to be more careful with their cruelty.

All the serfs and squires stay here, but only around a third are present at any one time, with the rest either training (squires only, of course) or performing menial tasks around the keep. Despite the over 300 people sleeping here, there are only beds for 200. Serfs are of any nongood alignment, though chaotic serfs have short life spans. They are usually rogues, levels 1–6, with skills emphasizing labor, craftsmanship, and avoiding or apologizing for undue attention.

Knights rarely come here, except to roust sleepy squires. Foreigners may not enter without permission from a common or elite knight, or accompaniment from a journeyman knight.

9. VERDATHA STABLES

Each elite knight in the keep stables a verdatha here. The dragonsteeds are absolutely devoted, allowing only their masters and their masters' squires to touch them. This is a way to discover Sir Sorlons' doppelganger (see location #2), as the verdatha instinctively senses the difference.

The verdatha stables are also one of the few locations where serfs and squires truly stand apart. Serfs may not tend the verdatha. The stables can hold up to 50 verdatha comfortably, but only 42 knights presently have verdatha (including the brothers d'Ilchant). Roughly a quarter of this group are away on duties at any time, and have their mounts with them.

10. D'ILCHANT KEEP

The actual keep is almost a relic, an ancient building that has outlived its purpose. In the days before and just following Signon, it remained a vital outpost, overlooking the movements of invaders or saboteurs. Now that duty falls to the verdatha riders, who can fly farther than the keep's best view, and can speedily warn the rest of the Empire.

Still, Deverenia is a traditionalist nation. Squires who perform their duties effectively and without complaint can expect the minor reward of a week at quiet lookout work from the keep's ramparts. Over 200 feet tall, it is one of the largest towers in Deverenia, its height matched only by Stormhold (which, some say, is less a real building than a powerful display of freestanding magic), and the Cedus Imperium in Lutharius. Squires here sometime sketch the twisted lands around them, as much to enjoy art as to perfect their vision.

The problem with the keep is its size. Though hundreds live in the area, fewer than 150 can man the keep without risking cramped quarters or suffocation. Even the food stores have moved to the dining hall (see location #4, pg 47). Though it is unlikely that any enemy could force the knights into the keep itself, doing so would almost certainly doom the entire settlement.

11. PRIESTS' QUARTERS

Standing in the shadow of the keep itself, the priests' quarters occupy a quaint little marble building, itself an old chapel before the knights' needs demanded a larger temple (see location #14). It is now the home of the keep's eight priests and their bodyguard. Though hardly as luxurious as the cardinals' homes, the priests' quarters are comfortable and private. Their men-at-arms bunk in a small barracks of their own here.

The priests are only here after curfew. There are three seers (levels 1-4) and five clerics (levels 1-8), all lawful evil and in service to the Storm (the clerics uniformly have access to the Lawful and War domains). Though capable combatants in their own right, they defer to the Orders' will, and do not take up arms without orders from the knights.

Their guardians remain on separate payroll from the knights, and act independently of the brotherhoods. Their only mission is to protect the priests, escorting them out of the keep if necessary. Eight lawful evil and lawful neutral fighters, they range in level from 3rd to 11th, but otherwise have equipment similar to the Chromatic Knights of the keep.

The head of the eight men-at-arms is a man named Guardian Daethor. While he is honestly interested in protecting the priests, his true duty in the keep is to spy on the brotherhoods. A Knight Inquisitor, Daethor's mission comes from Erebus Stormchild himself, who finds suspect Sir Rhawn's motives for aiding the Aroch. Though Daethor has yet to uncover any proof of treason, he has noticed Sir Sorlons' subtle changes in behavior and speech. He presently believes that the Azure Knight has gone mad from the difficulties of his position, but is currently more concerned with the Black Sun than the Chromatic Knights.

Guardian Daethor is a level 11 fighter, neutral evil, who wields a +3 *mace of thundering defense*. He has 15 Wisdom and the Versatile feat, allowing him Bluff and Sense Motive at 14 ranks each. Not even his priests know that he is an Inquisitor.

12. GRAVEYARD

The small graveyard holds about two dozen plots and has room for perhaps six more. Oddly, the graves contain no Deverenians, but rather some of the Aroch's honored dead from before the Assassins' Strike. Defiling these sacred remains is a sin worthy of execution, but six *holy avengers* lie entombed with the half-dozen foremost Aroch.

13. SMITHY

The smiths that work the anvil here are knights and squires, often those who lean toward the Grey Riders in matters of principle. They are competent, and can repair any martial or simple melee weapon.



14. TEMPLE OF THE STORM

Though far less impressive than the grand cathedrals of the Empire, d'Illchant Keep's temple is easily the most beautiful building. Shining obsidian bricks support brilliant stained glass windows depicting the Védoszentelek, Signon, and the Storm itself. Metal-tipped spires reach to the heavens, catching the lightning during storms. The interior seats 300, with an additional 250 balcony seats. A silver basin sits near the double doors opening into the building, and the priests bless the waters daily.

Upon the raised dais are a dozen golden candelabra, each dangerous (and priceless) to smuggle out, lighting the darkness around an altar of solid silver speckled with cut amethysts and sapphires. The sacred wine is in a small room behind the altar area, containing 100 bottles worth about 700 gp each. The priests and their keepers are here during daylight hours, and sometimes on private confessions to the keep's populace.

15. STABLES

These stables hold horses for the fifty common knights, as well for twenty for the clergy and any additional for guests or suppliers. Serfs and squires groom the horses.

16–17. APPRENTICE KNIGHTS' QUARTERS AND JOURNEYMEN KNIGHTS' QUARTERS

These are barracks familiar to any soldiers in Deverenia: cold stone floors, wrought iron bed frames bearing harsh mattresses, and footlockers that never open without creaking. The brotherhood knights quarter here until they earn formal entry into an Order, but are yet young. The occasional boisterous competition happens in these halls after hours, usually wrestling or boxing. Young knights who do well in these midnight events sometimes find themselves receiving offers from the Orders.

Serfs, squires, and non-Deverenians may not enter the barracks without permission from a common or elite knight.

Luthlarius

Background

As common folk exist only to serve the Orders, so too must all the world bear the yoke of the Emperor's iron city. Fantastic and terrible, the city entices and entraps scholar and soldier alike. Luthlarius rises from the plains of Deverenia like a blade drawn in salute, a description itself popular among the city's many bards. Spoke roads lead to the Sedes Imperium, an immense tower that juts from the earth, atop which the Emperor holds court in the open air under the Storm. Each section of the city forms a circular ring, called a *stratum*, about the Sedes, beginning with the personal holdings of the imperial family and its guards (the Imperial Stratum); then comes the Church Stratum, home to the city's Bishop Koenraad. The holdings of the Knightly Orders are next, the technical homes of the heads of each order, though only Master Isil Loth maintains residence here, the other lords and ladies remaining in their territories. Outside this stratum is the domain of the wizards, primarily the Skyborne Path (though other orders, such as Slayer's, also have holdings here), who preside over the city's perpetually stormy clime. Beyond the Wizards' Stratum is a thick, tall rampart, which the imperial guard and Skyborne Path patrol in equal numbers. The wall separates the constancy of the inner city from the controlled chaos of the outer city, which changes form and function due to the whims of the Emperor. At present, the city boasts ten strata, though it has had up to sixteen and as few as five.

While Deverenians make up the vast majority of the population, delegates from the Nothrog (whose leader, Nassiral Hate, has a standing peace pact with the Emperor) find themselves welcomed, if coldly, by the city's masters. As is true of the country it rules, there are but two types of Deverenians in Luthlarius — the knights and the commoners — and the distinction between them is obvious even to the newcomer.

Luthlarius has a singular purpose: to feed the appetites of its masters. Though not the den of sin that is Misear, the Deverenians who rule over Luthlarius are nonetheless an evil breed, even for their race. Bloodsports are common behind closed doors, and the surgeons of Loth demand frightening components for the treatments that extend the Emperor's life.

Economy

Luthlarius practices a unique economic system: open extortion. The city itself produces nothing, other than perhaps a government for the nation. It demands high taxes from Deverenian lands, and frequently the nation's neighbors as well. Those who fail to meet the exorbitant demands instead meet the armies of Deverenia, eager to take what was not offered. The city's black market, such as it is, exists only to provide for commoners and foreigners at exorbitant rates.



Laws

Luthlarius' laws restrict action rather than protecting its people. Deverenian law demands that commoners show absolute respect to their betters, the nobility and the knights. It mandates that all kneel before the altar of the greatest of the Storm itself (Nothrog dignitaries are not exempt from this; most prefer to stay in Deverenia only briefly).

While the common man does not fall beneath the aegis of the Emperor's law, Deverenian honor protects them... to an extent. So long as a man serves his lord faithfully and well, his lord's honor demands that the lord protect his servant from harm. Unfortunately, there is little recourse against those who violate this code. The Chromatic Knights seek out those who transgress against honor, but abuse of inferiors is a lesser offense in many Knights' eyes.

The only law unique to Luthlarius is that, while the entrance is open to all, none may leave without the Emperor's written approval. According to legend, Signon himself instituted this law, tremendously simplifying the tasks of the imperial guard and dissuading casual visitors. The guard enforces this law with frightening zeal, and attack any who leave the city by means other than the main roads.

Population: 65,000 Deverenian peasants, serfs, and slaves; 10,000 Knights and wizards of various orders; 5–50 Nothrog dignitaries and their retainers

Government: Absolute monarchy

Imports: Food, spirits, trade goods, slaves, precious metals and ores, exotic items, black market goods

Exports: None

Important NPCs: Master Isil Loth (Lord of Loth; Medusan Lord servant (see the *Campaign* book); Master Halvedar (head of the imperial guard); Bishop Koenraad (Bishop of Luthlarius; Genecourt double-agent); Princess Dashkova (heir to the Deverenian throne); Kzarrik (Nothrog tactician and diplomat)

History

Luthlarius is, according to Deverenian histories, the oldest city in the world (though Behlial, lord of Athanaes, begs to differ). The histories of the Old Empire, before Signon's return, remain a mystery, though none dispute accounts of the following centuries. In the intervening time, it has remained almost defiantly proud, decadent and mighty. Fewer than a dozen emperors have ruled it since Signon's return, and each has left his mark upon the city. The first built a great cathedral for the Storm on the ruins of a temple to other gods. The second commissioned the national Imperial Guard, while the third and fourth invited the heads of the Knightly Orders (at swordpoint) to winter with him in his city. Successive emperors produced the prevailing laws of the city, including raising the rest of Deverenia's taxes to feed Luthlarius (this act, commanded by the ninth emperor, led to one of Baraxton's many revolts).

While the inner city has remained relatively constant (only the emergence of new knightly orders has changed it in recent history), this is not true of the outer city. While a peasant here can use the black market to attain riches and power unavailable anywhere else in Deverenia, Luthlarius is a treacherous master. Should a black marketeer anger his betters, his painful death becomes inevitable.

Only twice has Luthlarius faced attack. The first was against Signon, who led an army of the Storm's faithful into battle against the heathen emperor's forces. The Storm rode into the city with him, and Signon never drew his weapon — the Storm struck down any who opposed his steady march to the Sedes. There, he met privately with the Emperor Cahallaeus, who acknowledged Signon as heir to the empire. The histories are unclear on the subsequent years, insisting that Signon himself was never emperor, but that Signon passed several laws before disappearing again.

The second attack came from the Nothrog warlord Krun's great-uncle Dukar, who was the only enemy warlord to bear a military standard into the inner city of Luthlarius. While the resulting battle destroyed several strata of the outer city (reducing Luthlarius to its present boundaries), Dukar's Legion fell fifteen minutes after entering the Wizard's Stratum. Dukar surrendered after Slayer the Unkind entered the fray, reducing Dukar's entire front line to ash with a single spell. The Emperor ransomed the legion, but Dukar's ultimate fate is unknown.

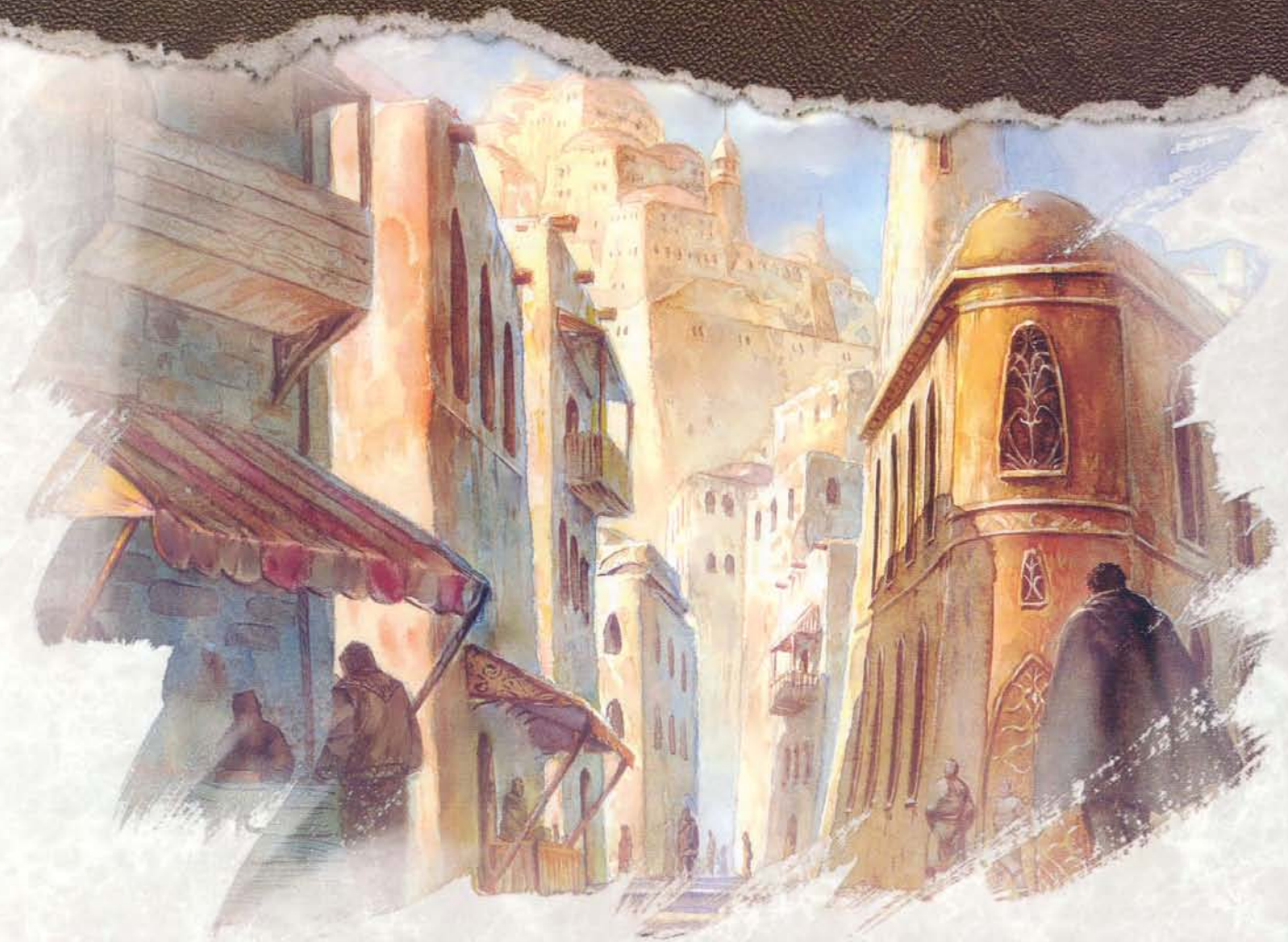
When the present Emperor, Emperor Vyacheslav Drac, seized power, most of his subjects expected further lunatic methods to dominate. Instead, the Emperor's impositions have remained quite mild, the most notable of which was the instatement of Order Loth during his youth in the last century. While he has recently demanded private audiences with Slayer the Unkind and the recently returned Hierophant Modred of Carcius, most assume the dying lord attempts to either extend his life through means other than Loth's methods, or secure a proper heir through the marriage of his daughter, Dashkova, before his death.

Those who feel the Emperor's death draws near fear the results, and justly so: with the Emperor allowing few audiences, not only are political opportunities disappearing, but few can leave Luthlarius at all...

Society

The basic functions of Luthlarius — the preparation of food and lodgings, sewage disposal, etc. — fall to the serfs of the city. These unfortunates may never leave the city's walls without the personal custodianship of an Imperial Guard, usually a trained huntsman. Though potentially quite profitable, smuggling serfs to the outside world is punished harshly, and only Loth's spells sustain the existence of such criminals. Consequently, only the most desperate serfs ever enter Luthlarius, but such courage (if backed by strength) demands attention.

For the city's masters — the knights, nobility, clergy, and wizards — Luthlarius is a completely different place. Such individuals live in the Inner City, venturing forth only when their duties demand it, or to hunt serfs (a sport popularized by the famed huntsman Count Damien). These disparate groups maintain a precarious



balance, with the nobility bowing to the knights, the knights' oaths binding them to serve the Church of the Storm, and the Church of the Storm subsisting on the sponsorship of the nobility. The wizards, most of whom refuse to align themselves with any of the other three, rely solely on personal might or alliances to survive. Fortunately for them, they are largely equal to the task. Still, interaction between even allied factions is strained at best, and Luthlarius' political climate publicly knows only six masters (in descending order of influence): the Emperor; Modred of Carcius; Princess Dashkova; Lord Gahid Rellion; Slayer the Unkind; and Master Isil Loth. Others seek to gain enough power to be politically autonomous themselves, but their foes usually sabotage the efforts first. That such infighting is the Emperor's will is obvious to all, but this knowledge provides no protection.

The elite establish social status based solely on the Emperor's favor, preferably shown by the Emperor granting an indefinite right to leave Luthlarius (at present, only Dashkova, Isil, and Gahid have such writs, as only these three have the Emperor's unconditional support at present; abuse of the privilege ensures its revocation). The Emperor's favor is a monumental prize, constantly sought.

The black market is the sole place in Luthlarius where social status is of no benefit (and can be a great obstacle, particularly if a wayward noble draws the attention of a blackmailing enemy). Black marketeers offer all goods, including writs of departure from the Emperor (most forged, and poorly — 5 gp for a document recognized on a DC of 10; 50 gp for a DC of 20, etc., with the genuine article being 5,000 gp). The black market never operates

within the Inner City, but is otherwise almost utterly open in its dealings. The imperial guard ignores the marketeers in most cases, without even offers of bribes. While some suspect that this is yet another facet of Black Tom's guild, the truth is far closer to home, and more immediately dangerous than any suspect. (See the "Church Stratum," Location 14, for more details.)

Geography

Located in the center of Deverenia's wastelands, Luthlarius is simplicity itself to find — major Deverenian roads lead directly to it. As many Nothrog warlords know, knights regularly patrol these roads, and have few qualms about repelling would-be invaders. Still, so long as a traveler shows proper deference (and has the good fortune not to meet with bored knights on the way), he can expect only wounded pride on his way to Deverenia's capital.

Here, his luck runs out.

Luthlarius has eight gates, one in each of the cardinal and intermediary points. Though heavily guarded by wizards and imperial guardsmen (to say nothing of the knights who reside in the city), any who wish to enter may do so. The guards have standing orders to kill those who leave by any means other than the regular checkpoints (at the entrances to each strata), or who attempt to leave without a writ of departure signed by the Emperor. Patrols regularly march the strata, though the inhabitants of the outermost strata have plenty of time to abuse

the schedule. Each successive stratum has higher and more competent security, until the inner city (the central four strata), wherein resides a virtual army of priests, wizards, and both Imperial and knightly troops. Similarly, each successive stratum has a higher standard of living, with the outermost stratum being a near-slum, and the last before the inner city a series of palatial estates. The inner city's strata are wider and more luxurious than even the most decadent of the outer strata.

No official maps of Luthlarius exist outside the inner city (and are restricted even there). Imperial guards generally give out proper directions, but rarely do they know much of the city beyond the contents of the inner city and the stratum they patrol. A Knowledge (Luthlarius) check of DC 15 can reveal the most direct path to any destination in the city. Navigating without such a check is possible, but almost invariably results in losing time while getting lost.

Outer City Locations

1. FIRST STRATUM — HUMAN WASTELAND

The only dividing line between the first stratum and an outright slum is that of the Emperor's pride. While the cheap lumber and mortar buildings here are built so closely together that a proper fire would destroy the entire stratum, their occupants still maintain these residences (on pain of death). 4d4 members of the imperial guard (level 4 LE fighters) patrol the course of the stratum; a patrol marches by any specific point in the stratum once every three hours. There is extraordinarily little honest business in the first stratum — patrols are so infrequent that miscreants can disappear long before the patrol appears. Some of the locals have armed themselves with pitchforks and crude knives in small (1d8) units of vigilante protectors. As it is illegal for mere peasants to take up arms without orders, such squads are more likely to draw the wrath of the guard than actual criminals.

The inhabitants of this stratum are fighters (levels 1–4) and rogues (levels 1–6), armed with daggers or pitchforks (1d4 or 1d6 damage, respectively). Most do menial labor further inside the city, or prey upon their neighbors. Though panhandling is illegal, some souls still attempt it, usually as precursor to a mugging.

20,000 commoners live here.

2. SECOND STRATUM — VISITORS' STRATUM

Despite the peasants' common nickname for this stratum, it, too, is primarily residential. Though the homes are of marginally better make than those of the first stratum (being primarily brick), they are still quite small. Unlike the first stratum, however, the inhabitants of the second have a viable business: innkeeping. While imperial messengers and foreign dignitaries normally stay in the inner city, clandestine meetings between the inner city's masters and those outside take place here. The inner city's inhabitants pretend to be slumming or engaging in a favored vice, while the outside visitors enter with a caravan of taxes for the Emperor, stay the night, and leave in the morning with a writ of departure (assuming their tribute was worthy).

These inns each have intentionally generic names, the better to avoid unwanted attention, and many inns exist with the same name in separate parts of the stratum (e.g. Bishop Koenraad pretends to enter seclusion, and meets with a subordinate at the Blue Boar Inn; unfortunately for eavesdroppers, six such inns exist, and without further information, there is little chance of catching the clergyman in an indiscretion). Inns also feature a wide variety of attractions, from simple displays of foolery or minstrel work to thinly veiled brothels or animal fights. Such attractions are not illegal, but the imperial guard collects a percentage of the profits.

The imperial guard in the second stratum passes by any given location every two hours, and has an additional die of members per patrol (5d4), but is otherwise identical to those encountered in the first stratum.

20,000 rogues (levels 2–5) call the second stratum home.

3. THIRD STRATUM — MARKET STRATUM

The simplistic architecture of the first two strata gives way to stonemasonry in the third. Homes here are small, but of good quality. Here, the peasants operate their own market, selling food, clothing, and other basic necessities gleaned from unworthy tributes to the Emperor, or made from whatever scraps the serfs could find in the outer city. Though the market has no weapons or armor for sale (at least openly; see the Black Market, location #7) it has all other goods and services, albeit of poor to average quality. Crime consists almost solely of a few talented pickpockets.

From the third stratum inward, the imperial guard actually takes more than a passing interest in patrols. While hardly friends with the peons who live here, guardsmen in these strata know that the Master of the Guard, Master Halvedar, may make a spot inspection, and thus fulfill their duties more stringently. Promotions, while rare, happen frequently enough that the guards adhere to a strict Deverenian code of honor. Patrols are frequent (once an hour), and numerous (5d6 fighters of 5th–8th levels).

15,000 rogues (levels 3–6) live in this stratum.

4. FOURTH STRATUM — WORKERS' STRATUM

Far enough from the inner city for the comfort of those strata's inhabitants, but close enough to defend it against attack, the Workers' Stratum has the fewest buildings of any stratum in the city, but these are of the finest craftsmanship (if not materials) in the outer city. Here, skilled laborers work the rare base materials offered to the Emperor, remaking them into something truly worthy of Signon's scion. While such materials are not sold (at least legally), the workers of this stratum have little to fear but the payment of a job poorly done. Crime in this stratum is virtually nonexistent, as any theft from a workshop is a theft from the Emperor himself.

Though the patrols are more frequent here than anywhere else in the outer city (once a half hour), they are no larger nor better skilled than those of the third stratum.

7,500 peasants live in this stratum, almost all of whom are fighters (levels 5–15). They may be armed with warhammers.

5. FIFTH STRATUM — ARTISTS' STRATUM

While Deverenia places a premium on utility, art has its place as well, and nowhere is this more evident than Luthlarius. The Artists' Stratum houses Deverenia's most talented artists, poets, and musicians, and consequently has the highest murder rate in the city (from rivals, envious members of the lower strata, and displeased patrons). Still, life here is as best as a commoner can expect without testing himself in combat, politics, or magic, and many of those who live here would never leave the city, even were it an option. Homes here are expansive, if simple, and some artists are wealthy enough to hire guards from the sixth stratum. The knights of Order Ghenis who live in the Inner Strata have an unofficial bard school here, and train some of the finest minstrels in the Accordlands.

2,000 peasants live here, all bards, fighters, or rogues (levels 5–15). 50 Deverenian knights live here as well, patronizing and protecting their artists (clerics, fighters, and wizards of levels 2–12, with perhaps 1 level in a prestige class related to their Order).

6. SIXTH STRATUM — THE DISFAVORED

To the other inhabitants of the outer city, the sixth stratum is a virtual paradise — expensive homes abound, with beautiful gardens and relatively lavish lifestyles — but those who live here find it a bitter existence. The sixth stratum is full of unofficial exiles, those who would live in the inner city had they not drawn the Emperor's wrath. No longer allowed in the inner city, neither are they allowed out of Luthlarius, and so they must either find a means to escape, or to regain the Emperor's favor without actually meeting him.

Anger pervades the streets, and duels to the death are so common that they arouse no attention. As this is also the home of those the Emperor has abandoned, the imperial guard turns a blind eye to combat in this stratum, so long as the fights do not spill over into neighboring strata or onto those the Emperor still holds dear (such as the guard itself). Though not as bloody as the Artists' Stratum, the sixth stratum's dwellers have little to lose.

Halvedar believes that the enigmatic master of the black market resides in this stratum, and quietly watches it from the ramparts at night.

One wizard has faked his departure from the Emperor's favor, and resides here as part of a greater scheme. Azhraan the Foul feigns needing agents to regain his former place, and dispatches them throughout the city (and beyond; he has a large stockpile of writs of departure, given to his agents through third parties) for esoteric, sometimes utterly illogical quests. Azhraan is neutral evil, a tenth level necromancer/third level cleric, and worships the broken moon Bascaron.

The sixth stratum holds 500 peasants and slaves (mostly fighters and rogues of levels 6–10), as well as 1000 knights, wizards, and clerics (8th–12th level; at the GM's option, some disfavored inhabitants may be of far higher or lower level, and may even have levels in a prestige class).

7. BLACK MARKET (UNLISTED ON MAP)

The black market's location is something of an open secret among the common folk of Luthlarius, requiring only a Gather Information check (DC 10; DC 20 if the character is a Deverenian of rank or renown). The imperial guard knows of the black market,

but only moves against it if Master Halvedar feels it has grown too powerful, or if the goods are of a special nature. Otherwise, the guard simply collects a percentage of the profits quietly.

The market's location (and its most notable goods for sale) varies from day to day. Roll 1d6, and consult below. If the roll produces the same result as the previous day, roll again, keeping the new result (the owner of the market prefers not to dally overlong, but occasionally does so to throw off the guard).

1. **Human Wasteland.** Primary goods include unusually fine foods and weapons, marked up 150%. Due to the scarcity of such products here, the market has several thugs (1d6 rogues and rogue/fighters of 2–4 levels), armed with clubs.
2. **Visitors' Stratum.** Primary goods here are exotics of all types. Many of the Emperor's tributes somehow fall off the cart in this area, and wind up for sale here. Any exotic goods here are sold at triple the listed value. The imperial guard is most likely to crack down on this black market (most of the goods are stolen from the Emperor), so the market is only open for 1d4 hours. There are no guards on duty during this time — any ruckus risks alerting the Emperor's men, leading to quick deaths for all involved.
3. **Market Stratum.** In stark contrast to the Visitors' Stratum market, the black market here takes place in the open, with its contraband (mostly weapons and armor, but sometimes magical goods) purchased by accepting the exorbitant listed prices for common goods. Haggling over the prices involves thinly veiled references to the actual purchases (e.g. "Thou art a backstabbing brigand," for a dagger or knife; if the seller has no such item, he responds, "I have no idea what thou meanest!"; something like, "I shall cut the prices, but thou'rt bleeding me dry," will acknowledge the item's for sale), with the final purchase given in a wrapped basket or other concealed container. Prices are quite low (125% of the listed value), and again, there are no guards. The imperial guards confiscate any black market goods they discover and capture both customer and marketeer, but are likely to notice such transactions only during a loud scuffle. The guards are aware only of attempts to sell contraband here, and do not know that the black market thrives in the Market Stratum as well. They would be quite angry to discover it, as the taxes on this stratum do not account for these sales.
4. **Workers' Stratum.** This is the only black market center that continually works from the same location. Its front is a store for selling common craftsman tools, but asking for the specials on the appropriate day expands the list to include rare materials and masterwork tools. These cost double the listed price, but this markup does not derive from greed — the imperial guard knows about this front, and demands half the profits. Off-duty guardsmen loiter outside, watching for the customers who buy the market goods, and arrest them for contributing to theft from the Emperor, particularly if the customer is from the Disfavored Stratum.

Inner City Locations

5. **Artists' Stratum.** The primary goods here are slaves, and exotic treasures. Artists purchase these goods at unusually exorbitant rates (sometimes hundreds or even thousands of gp), the better to inspire them to serve their patrons. There are no guards here, but the artists feel they do not need them — while they may face regular arrest from the imperial guard, their patrons typically free their favored servants. Those who press their luck sometimes find that their patrons seek less troublesome toys, so the wisest artists send other peasants to make their purchases for them.

6. **The Disfavored.** This black market specializes in two things: political favors from the inner circle (i.e. blackmail material), and writs of departure (both forged and real). This is the black market that the imperial guard seeks to outright destroy, for obvious reasons. The Disfavored come here to personally inspect the purchases, often bringing with them their finest warriors (fighters and fighter/wizards of 2d4 levels), and the marketeers match the numbers as best they can. Sense Motive and Bluff checks are common, as the marketeers attempt to gouge their customers. As far as most commoners are concerned, a single day's profit here is worth the risk of angering the guard.

8. WIZARD'S STRATUM — SLAYER THE UNKIND, PERSONAL QUARTERS

As the foremost wizard in Deverenia, Slayer is something of a grand advisor to the Emperor. Though technically not allowed to leave Luthlarius, his vast spellcasting abilities make the point moot — he would incinerate any guardsman foolish enough to attempt his arrest. Slayer resides in a small keep with no doors; the only known method of entrance is with *teleportation*. Its contents are unknown, but presumed to be quite valuable. Slayer is believed to spend very little time here.

9. WIZARD'S STRATUM — SKYBORNE PATH ACADEMY

The largest sect of Deverenian wizards who do not owe fealty to Slayer, the Skyborne Path is technically a branch of the Church of the Storm. Wizards here attempt to better control and understand weather, and train on the various strata walls of the outer city, often to the detriment of the locals. Following the wishes of both Church and Emperor, the Skyborne Path work their wills on Luthlarius' skies, and the city is always overcast when the Emperor is home.



The academy contains 1d8 novices (level 1 wizards), 2d6 apprentices (wizards levels 2–6), 1d4 journeymen (wizards of levels 5–9, with one level of the war mage prestige class), and 1d4 masters (wizards of 10th or greater level, with 1d8 levels of the war mage prestige class).

Skyborne Path mages specialize in lightning- and weather-based spells. They are considered one level higher for the purposes of casting spells with the Air, Electricity, or Force descriptors.

10. KNIGHTS' STRATUM — LOTH DOMAIN, PRIVATE QUARTERS

The bulk of Order Loth lives here, including Master Isil himself. Most in Loth are wizards and clerics, and this is the precise extent of what most outside the Order know of it. Master Isil, the Emperor's chief physician, has placed the Emperor under quarantine. Loth was an Order in decline for centuries, and until Isil saved the Emperor's life, it was not even considered powerful enough to warrant the attention of other Orders. At present, however, both Rellion and Aedroud seek to expose Loth's secrets.

Master Isil is a neutral evil 8th level necromancer/3rd level fighter/5th level Loth Chirurgeon. Those of lower level automatically fail saving throws against his necromancy spells, but Isil suffers a like amount of damage (if applicable). He does not converse with his masters while others are in attendance.

11. KNIGHTS' STRATUM — RELLION DOMAIN, PRIVATE QUARTERS

The Rellion Domain is virtually empty, carefully tended by servants and a few lesser members of the d'Ilchant line. With Lord Gahid's ascension as Imperial Champion, he and his retinue have officially moved into the Imperial Stratum.

Aedroud spies seek entrance to these quarters, the better to place traps or reveal any lingering secrets left when Rellion departed.

12. CHURCH STRATUM — CATHEDRAL OF THE STORM

This is the largest church in Luthlarius, and second in grandeur only to the Hierophant's Church. Bishop Koenraad resides here, and celebrates daily Mass for commoner and true Deverenian alike. This is the only time commoners are allowed into the Inner City, except in service to others; they remain under heavy guard, and are locked in the church during Mass.

Surprisingly, this is also the secret heart of the black market. Though no sales go on here, even the Emperor must tithe to the church. Koenraad's lay workers embezzle the tithes as capital for the black market. Koenraad was formerly Conrad Genecourt, lord of his house before his cousin Marcos poisoned him. Koenraad now ages quickly, at the rate of a normal human, and none suspect his true nature. He pays Order Loth to extend his life, but even with his present profits, Loth gives more attention to the Emperor. Koenraad's actions, while treasonous, are technically outside the jurisdiction of Deverenian law. Should any higher clergy or Sir Rhawn d'Ilchant learn of his dealings, Koenraad would no longer need to worry about dying of old age.

Koenraad is lawful evil, a level 6 rogue/level 7 cleric. As a worshiper of the Storm, his Domains are Strength and Law.

13. CHURCH STRATUM/IMPERIAL STRATUM — SIGNON'S KEEP

Signon's Keep was the official residence of Signon, and remained empty for centuries following his departure from the world. The keep, inside the stratum wall between the Church and Imperial strata, is considered one of the holiest places in the empire. Pilgrims commonly visit Luthlarius just to see it, and — so long as they move directly to the Keep, and leave directly afterward, under an armed escort — may leave the city freely afterward.

Recently, Signon's Armor has disappeared from the Keep. The Emperor has issued a standing reward of entrance into (or foundation of, some whisper) a knightly order for its safe return. Modred of Carcius has remained characteristically quiet with regard to this matter.

14. CHURCH STRATUM — FALSE CHURCH

Concealed beneath an old, disused church is one of the few remaining churches from before Signon. Myerdeth cultists quietly gather here to perform their blasphemous rites in the name of its patron god, Teufeltiger. Though Rellion has long suspected Myerdeth of such treacheries, it has never successfully infiltrated the circle (all attempts have found a normal church dedicated to the Storm). The cult has all but disappeared since its suspected leader, Kestrel du Myerdeth, recently became Lord Myerdeth.

Despite what could have been thought of as the disappearance of the cult, the church itself remains quite active.

15. IMPERIAL STRATUM — IMPERIAL QUARTERS

Technically, the entirety of the Imperial Stratum is home to the imperial guard (including its captain, Master Halvedar), as well as both Lord Gahid Rellion and Princess Dashkova. In actuality, the imperial guard takes up most of the stratum's quarters, with Rellion nobility taking up the rest. Dashkova maintains no permanent home, traveling Deverenian as a "guest" thrust upon the Orders, and spending her days in Luthlarius with her father in the Sedes Imperium.

In Lord Gahid's absence, Master Halvedar has full authority to lead all troops in Luthlarius. He is a level 16 fighter.

16. SEDES IMPERIUM

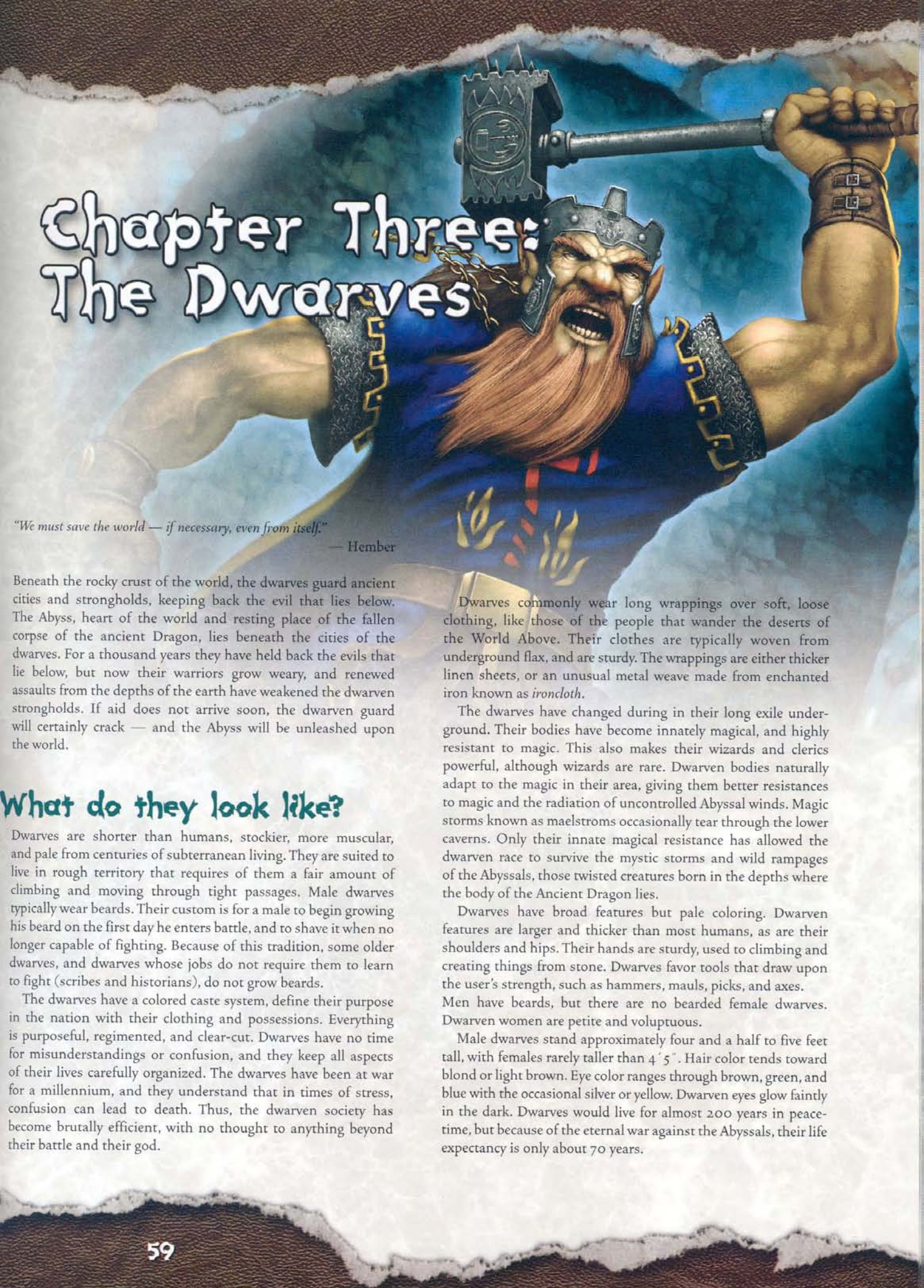
This gigantic tower is the Emperor's true home, though only Isil Loth, Dashkova, and the Emperor himself know the way to his quarters. To all other eyes, it is simply a spiraling staircase leading upward to the throne room, where the Emperor holds court. The Sedes was originally much taller, but when Signon seized the city, the Storm claimed half of the tower. The throne room now has no ceiling, so the Storm can watch over the Emperor directly.

D'elchant Keep



Luthlarius





Chapter Three: The Dwarves

"We must save the world — if necessary, even from itself."

— Hember

Beneath the rocky crust of the world, the dwarves guard ancient cities and strongholds, keeping back the evil that lies below. The Abyss, heart of the world and resting place of the fallen corpse of the ancient Dragon, lies beneath the cities of the dwarves. For a thousand years they have held back the evils that lie below, but now their warriors grow weary, and renewed assaults from the depths of the earth have weakened the dwarven strongholds. If aid does not arrive soon, the dwarven guard will certainly crack — and the Abyss will be unleashed upon the world.

What do they look like?

Dwarves are shorter than humans, stockier, more muscular, and pale from centuries of subterranean living. They are suited to live in rough territory that requires of them a fair amount of climbing and moving through tight passages. Male dwarves typically wear beards. Their custom is for a male to begin growing his beard on the first day he enters battle, and to shave it when no longer capable of fighting. Because of this tradition, some older dwarves, and dwarves whose jobs do not require them to learn to fight (scribes and historians), do not grow beards.

The dwarves have a colored caste system, define their purpose in the nation with their clothing and possessions. Everything is purposeful, regimented, and clear-cut. Dwarves have no time for misunderstandings or confusion, and they keep all aspects of their lives carefully organized. The dwarves have been at war for a millennium, and they understand that in times of stress, confusion can lead to death. Thus, the dwarven society has become brutally efficient, with no thought to anything beyond their battle and their god.

Dwarves commonly wear long wrappings over soft, loose clothing, like those of the people that wander the deserts of the World Above. Their clothes are typically woven from underground flax, and are sturdy. The wrappings are either thicker linen sheets, or an unusual metal weave made from enchanted iron known as *ironcloth*.

The dwarves have changed during in their long exile underground. Their bodies have become innately magical, and highly resistant to magic. This also makes their wizards and clerics powerful, although wizards are rare. Dwarven bodies naturally adapt to the magic in their area, giving them better resistances to magic and the radiation of uncontrolled Abyssal winds. Magic storms known as maelstroms occasionally tear through the lower caverns. Only their innate magical resistance has allowed the dwarven race to survive the mystic storms and wild rampages of the Abyssals, those twisted creatures born in the depths where the body of the Ancient Dragon lies.

Dwarves have broad features but pale coloring. Dwarven features are larger and thicker than most humans, as are their shoulders and hips. Their hands are sturdy, used to climbing and creating things from stone. Dwarves favor tools that draw upon the user's strength, such as hammers, mauls, picks, and axes. Men have beards, but there are no bearded female dwarves. Dwarven women are petite and voluptuous.

Male dwarves stand approximately four and a half to five feet tall, with females rarely taller than 4'5". Hair color tends toward blond or light brown. Eye color ranges through brown, green, and blue with the occasional silver or yellow. Dwarven eyes glow faintly in the dark. Dwarves would live for almost 200 years in peacetime, but because of the eternal war against the Abyssals, their life expectancy is only about 70 years.

Where do they live?

"There's no time for redemption underground."

— Poison

Long ago, the dwarves lived above ground with the other races of the Accordlands. According to myth, when the battle against the Ancient Dragon tore apart the world and cast the body of the Dragon deep into the earth, a decision was made. The other races swore to stay above and fight against the released spirit of the Dragon that had become the Storm. The dwarves marched below, to carve out a new world beneath the surface of the earth and guard the corpse of the Eternal Dragon. Creatures of the depths fed upon the flesh of the ancient beast, and manifested strange and evil powers: the Abyssals. These creatures live to cause havoc, pain, and death. The dwarves fight against them as they always have, but occasionally an Abyssal gets by their guard and escapes into the world above. On these occasions, a dwarven hunter is sent to track the Abyssal, no matter where it goes, and to destroy it. Sometimes, they are successful; other times, the Abyssal continues its havoc upon the upper lands until it is stopped by some other means. The races of the upper world do not understand why Abyssals come out of the earth. They only understand that the depths are filled with evil beings that live to kill.

The races of the upper world have forgotten the dwarves with the passing of the centuries, remembering only legend and myth. But the dwarves remember. And they will stay locked in battle with their ancient enemies until the Abyss spawns no more creatures — which may indeed be until the end of time.

The dwarves have adapted to the rigors of belowground life. In their vast cities, their armies prepare for the constant battles against the Abyssals. The Abyssals rise out of the pits of the deepest earth, not only in single issue, but also in tremendous hordes led by exceptionally powerful generals. These hordes often come toward the surface after a particularly strong maelstrom, hurling themselves at the dwarves or attempting to find passages to the upper world.

Occasionally the Abyssals find a chasm or recently opened crevice, and then the dwarves have to seal it again before too many of the Abyssals get out.

The cities of the dwarves are marvels of construction. They reach from the bottom to the top of the deepest caves, pocketing them like beehives. The cities are as often carved from the rock as they are built of shaped blocks, and many dwarven cities have an organic feel. While they have some structures that humanity would recognize as palaces, homes, or shops, their cities are rarely two-dimensional, but also use layers in order to segregate caste or function. These cities block passage junctures, providing resistance to Abyssal attacks.

The largest of the dwarven cities is Rockhome, which suffers constant Abyssal assaults. Dwarves don't usually like to go closer to the Abyss than Rockhome. Rockhome blocks the opening of the largest and most direct passage to the surface, and is often the last place dwarves stop before they attempt the dangerous journey to the surface. The second largest was the city of Goldenaxe, a powerful bastion against the Abyss. Now, due to treachery and deceit, Goldenaxe lies in ruins, its tunnels collapsed and overrun. Rockhome and the above-ground city of New Goldenaxe (recently seized from the Deverenians) are now the two largest bastions of dwarven resistance against an ever-stronger Abyss.

Intricate cavern systems form the majority of dwarven roads, miles of twisting labyrinths. Various watch-points, like smaller villages, dot these roads, blocking them off with dwarven ingenuity. This cave-system stretches under almost a quarter of the lands of the Accord, with passages leading to the areas that the dwarves don't actually inhabit but still guard. Rockhome's road is one of the few that reaches to the surface, and it is the means by which the dwarven army marched to the upper world in search of allies. The passage opens onto Deverenian lands at a site known as Nyothos Pass, just within view of the Deverenian city of Phrygai — now the dwarven city of New Goldenaxe.

The Abyss is far, far underground, covered in flames and lava. It is a land constantly raked by magic, where storms of enchantment run wild and chaotic, breaking apart the ground and melting the rocks. Enchantments occasionally ravage the lower caverns, whirling like dust devils through the chambers until they spin themselves out — completely unpredictable and uncontrollable. A particularly bad one recently made it as far as Rockhome; it was the dwarves' first realization that things are getting worse.



What is their society like?

Dwarves lived below ground ages before the commencement of the current conflicts that now rock the Accordlands. Most scholars maintained that the dwarven race mentioned in the ancient records was no more than a myth — until the dwarves erupted from beneath the Deverenian mountains and seized the city of Phrygai. Because the dwarves have not been aboveground for long, and their ambassadors have not yet reached many of the races of the Accordlands, they are extremely enigmatic and mysterious to the other races. They are feared and distrusted, believed to be Abyssals themselves by those who reject the dwarven legends. After all, the dwarves admit that they live underground, near the evil that is the center of the earth. Who is to say that they are not some insidious new Abyssal?

Dwarven society was once filled with fun, amusement, and light-hearted days under a burning sun in the lands now known as the Broken Plains of Sarakia. They made the land green and prosperous, knew peaceful magic, and were considered the greatest artisans in the world. But that changed when the Ancient Dragon came. According to dwarven legend, the Ancient Dragon chose their race first for extinction, bearing down upon the magnificent dwarven cities and leveling them in hours. They became refugees in a suddenly acrid land, and were forced to rely on the kindness of the other races.

When the Ancient Dragon was at last destroyed, the corpse fell through the crust of the earth and forged a tremendous chasm in the Sarakian wasteland. With the knowledge that they had no other home, and the omen of the corpse's landing in their shattered homeland, the dwarves accepted their burden. They would follow the dragon's body to the center of the earth, and guard the upper lands from the creatures that would spawn from its dead flesh. They marched, a devastated race, into the bellows of the Abyss.

And there the dwarves have lived for centuries. Their unwavering faith in their god Kor keeps them alive despite the hardship of their existence. They are an incredibly faithful people, their lives rich with legend and religious fervor through even the darkest times. But the difficulties of life in the caverns have been plentiful.

Their greatest hero led the dwarves underground: Hember. He was the first priest of Kor, helped build Rockhome, and established the dwarven caste system and government. Those who descended from him are the kings of the dwarves — his line is their nobility. All the other positions of government are based on ability and efficiency, not bloodline.

Too soon they were forgotten completely by the upper world, and forced to live on their own. Hember's castes assigned responsibilities for tasks critical to the society's survival. Some farmed fungi, or hunted cavern-dwelling creatures for meat. Others became crafters of cities, and more (the largest part) dedicated their lives to the battlefield. Unlike some societies, the dwarves place no differing values on these commitments, but realize that it takes the contributions of many to create a secure civilization.

When children are born they are taken to the Seers of Kor, a group within the church. The child is baptized, and undergoes a simple ritual to determine his future among their people. Whatever color the flame glows is the color of the caste to which the child is destined, and the babe is fostered that day to a loving family within the proper guild. They may or may not have contact with their original family, but this sort of thing does not truly make any difference to a dwarf. Only those who are born to the ruling lineage (the bloodline of Hember) care about the circumstances of their birth. Others rely on their foster family for love and warmth, and they are usually treated well and encouraged along their predestined path.

This is not to say that the Seers have not occasionally been wrong. Sometimes a child's stubbornness or a circumstance in their childhood predicts their destiny more accurately than the color of the flame. The rare dwarf who wishes to change castes may petition the Council of Kor and the priests of their area for induction into another group. If they are granted leave, they are accepted into their new caste — but any dwarf may only make this change once.

The primary (and most common) castes are: priest (blue), warrior (red), merchant (violet), descended of Hember (gold), mage (green), and smith (orange). Other crafters take on browns, grays, yellows and other tones. The two colors no crafter ever chooses are white and black. Black is the color of rusted iron-cloth. That color is reserved for those who have been exiled from the dwarven lands, those who are no longer considered trustworthy enough to fight beside their brothers against the Abyss. This is the harshest punishment a dwarf can receive, and most exiles do not live very long outside the dwarven strongholds.

White is the color of mourning, donned by those who have lost their relatives or loved ones to tragedy. Those who wear it are avoided, for it is rude to intrude on their grief. Mourners dwell as ghosts among their society, for it is bad luck to engage them in conversation or to interrupt them with stares or mundane thoughts.

The dwarven nation is divided into cities, each ruled by a Master of the City. All dwarves owe allegiance to the King, but the High Priest of Kor is a close second on the fealty chain. The dwarves believe in their fight, and they live for justice, honor, and good. They know quite clearly the difference between good and evil, and get annoyed when someone tries to complicate matters with shades of gray.

Gargoyles

Dwarves are innately peaceful, despite the constant war imposed on them, and mostly content to keep the law. Even their artistic nature, once prevalent, has resurfaced in the form of the gargoyles, creatures of stone shaped and forged and given life by their priests.

Created from stone, the gargoyles take on shapes dictated by the priests who fashion them. Gargoyles are semisentient, their intelligence based on the rituals used to create them. Although they are not given a true part in society, neither are they treated as slaves or inanimate soldiers — gargoyles are more like a cross between a favored pet and a church templar.



Names

One of the most time-honored dwarven traditions involves their names. Dwarven children receive a use-name from their foster families on the day that they are sent into their craft (usually, within a week or so of birth). This name is not their true name, but a placeholder while the child develops an identity within the caste. Their real name, the name of their adulthood and the name of heroes, is assigned when the Priests of Kor determine that they have achieved their place in the world. This tradition began in the early days underground, when dwarven children died rapidly. They were often the first victims of raging Abyssals, or died due to lack of food or shelter in the darkness of the underground.

Foster-mothers thought it ill-omened to name children who might soon die, and began to give them nicknames that reflected the world around them such as Stone, Diamond, or Rage. Thus, each child was given a use-name, something to call them until they had proven that they would stay alive long enough to earn a proper name. Once the child had grown up and had lived through a few battles, they would be granted a name by the Priesthood of Kor (usually at the behest of their craft masters or of their commanders).

Given that more than half of dwarves die before they reach their third battle or journeyman rank, very few dwarves have earned their true names. These names are cherished, for no one can take away a dwarf's name once it is earned.

Weapons & Armor

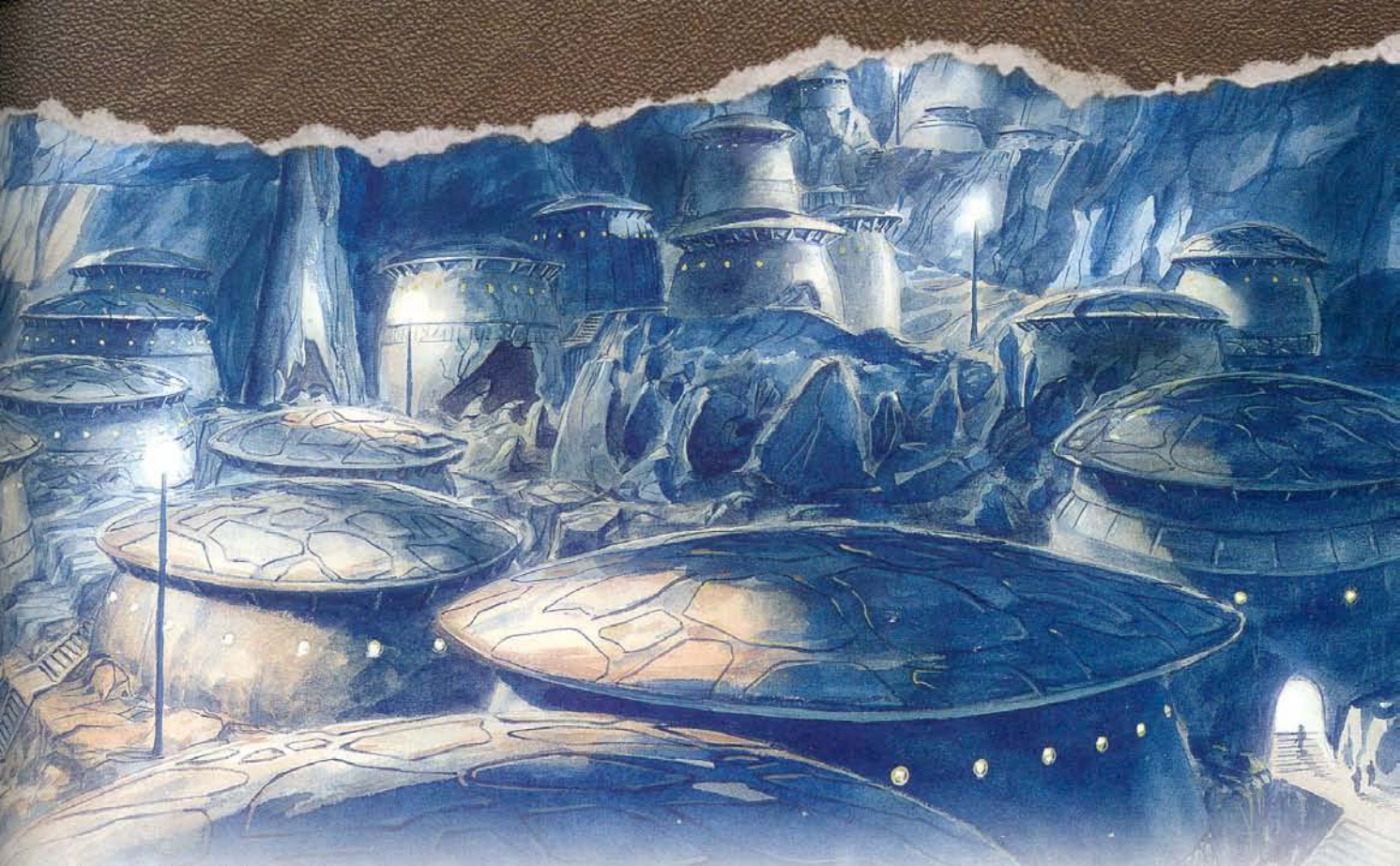
Warrior-caste dwarves are granted a small piece of ironcloth on the day they become true soldiers. After that, they must make do with what they can afford, or from what can be scrounged from the battlefield. A dwarf wearing a full suit of ironcloth is typically either very wealthy, or has seen many comrades fall to the Abyss. When a warrior dies in battle, the dwarf nearest him (the one

who should have been able to save him) takes a scrap of the fallen one's ironcloth to weave into his own, thus accepting responsibility for the death and the destiny of the fallen one. Ironcloth can be altered in color, and many small swatches can be woven together to make many pieces into a larger piece, although tailoring it to fit perfectly is not recommended; it is difficult to do, and loose-flowing robes are more useful for blocking weapons than a tight-fitting tunic.

After time, a dwarf's ironcloth can become patchwork, with threads of different colored ironcloth interwoven into his wrappings in order to designate his caste, rank, position, city of origin, family, and more. When ironcloth is exposed to the sun for too long, it rusts and turns black. This does not affect its usefulness, nor does it make the ironcloth any weaker. Those dwarves who have made their way to the surface after being exiled wear such armor and thus, black is the color of the dwarven exile. Even those who have simply been forced to hunt Abyssals who escape to the surface have a decidedly black cast to their ironcloth, and are treated with suspicion. Things of the surface are not as pure as Kor's favored children below, and thus are suspect.

Those dwarves who do not wear ironcloth (or have little access to the precious material) wear leather or steel armor, both of which are prolific in the caverns. Leather is tanned from the skin of underground food-beasts that the dwarves herd, and iron is mined from the mountains.

They prefer to constantly update their weapons and tactics, and create new weapons for hand-to-hand combat. These new weapon forms take advantage of common Abyssal flaws — tripping them, causing massive damage without much tactical effort, or even creating bright flashes of light in order to temporarily blind the cavern-dwelling creatures. Of course, such flashes may also blind the dwarves using them, so these weapons are used sparingly.



Dwarves have little use for siege engines. These weapons work very poorly underground, and as the dwarves live in the only cities underground, they have no need to besiege them. They have instead developed small-group tactics, weapons that slow as well as damage, and devices that work best in concert with small unit warfare.

What is their religion?

Dwarves take their religion seriously. It has sustained them and kept their hope alive for many years, and is the foundation of their society. There is no race in the Accordlands as fervent about their religion, and perhaps, there is no other race that so depends upon its faith to keep it alive.

The worship of Kor sustains the dwarven spirit, and is their lifeline during an eternal desperate battle. All dwarves are fiercely religious, for Kor is the hope they all share. He is their life, and offers eternal reward for their suffering. Their priests are capable of tremendous magic, granted them by their faith and their unwavering trust of the dwarven people. In this, they are a united race, and Kor and his priests stand ready to aid any dwarf in need. A dwarf would die before giving up his faith.

Dwarves have few large temples, but those are every inch the equal of the grandest Deveronian cathedral. The largest serves the faithful of Rockhome, just at the edge of the Abyss — where the dwarves need the most faith to survive. Rockhome is the most besieged city of the dwarves, located on the main chasm that leads into the maelstrom and the heart of the abyss. Rockhome's priests of Kor must maintain a certain level of hope to strengthen the city's resolve.

The temples of Kor differ from the churches of the upper Accordlands, being gathering places for both priests and laymen rather than formal places for religious services. Each temple can double as a safe haven if its city should fall. Walls are high and reinforced, doors made of solid steel. A courtyard houses a series of gardens for visitors' relaxation — but every plant is edible, and can sustain life if a number of dwarves are trapped within the temple for a long period of time. A temple also has barracks, room for herd animals, and weapons storage in case of dire need. The priests of Kor are never caught unprepared.

Dwarven priests do not often live in their temples, preferring to be out alongside their people. Although the temple is always staffed and a small group of dwarves live there, most priests of Kor spend their nights moving from house to house and exchanging their priestly skills and wisdom for room and board. Because of this, the priests are intimately connected with their cities. They almost always know what is going on in their cities, and why. They know their people intimately, and feel every loss keenly when the Abyss attacks.

Priests of Kor are guardians and warriors as well as wise and faithful advisors. They fight on the front lines of the battlefield, patching up wounded soldiers with their magic, and bringing with them the gargoyles — strange creatures brought to life by the power of Kor. The magic of the priests and the strong defense of the mighty gargoyles help the dwarves keep the line stable against the Abyssals and the maelstroms.

The church of Kor is broken down into several smaller sub-sects, and each priest chooses a saint to worship and to follow. Saints are all dwarves who have been canonized through their faith in Kor and their bravery or sense of duty, and who represent the best of the dwarven race. There are about two dozen saints representing various styles and passions. These saints are less patrons than icons — ideal members of the race for other dwarves to emulate.

Religious Custom

Dwarves observe many religious customs, from religious holidays to sacred rites. These customs are practical, and never require a city to be undefended. Function trumps form, and religious observations take the place of major celebrations, for a city cannot afford to relax its guard.

Religion is not only a requirement for the dwarves; it is a symbol of hope and of the continuity of their race. They treat custom seriously, and the priests meticulously schedule their rituals. With no sun to judge the time, it has fallen to the priestly caste to maintain rituals that ensure that all dwarves are aware of the proper passing of days.

Other rituals represent a more spiritual point of view: those that purify the soul, protect and ensure the soul's safe passage if one should die in battle, or cleanse possible Abyssal taint. The Abyss has many ways of twisting a mortal soul, and is the cause of many diseases both physical and spiritual. Those who fight against it, or anyone who is away from the sanctity of the church of Kor for long, must be purified, lest a plague spread through the city. Dwarves who stay too long on the surface will be considered tainted by other dwarves. A tainted dwarf has two choices: be cleansed by the priests of Kor (not easy, and occasionally fatal), or be exiled from dwarven society for life.

The dwarven church uses the following titles: High Vicar, Holy Father/Mother, Priest/ess, Vicar, and Initiate. Any member of the church may use titles beneath his or her station. Even a Holy Mother might, for instance, call herself a Priestess of Kor, simply to relieve herself of the burden of the more official title of a city's religious leader.

Who is in charge?

The dwarven society has a tight hierarchy led by the lineage of their ancient hero Hember. Dwarven royalty descends from Hember's direct male line, and maintains control over all the final decisions of law and state. However, the High Vicar of Kor is above even the King, and his word is the word of Kor himself. Although the High Vicar rarely interferes in legal or political matters, if the safety of a city or the stability of the dwarven culture is at stake, the High Vicar does not hesitate to pronounce Kor's will.

Below the King and his heir is a large council of Guildmasters, the leaders of all castes and guilds within dwarven society. They are joined by the dwarven military commanders and by influential City Lords such as Rac Ironbone, the Lord of Rockhome. One master is elected by each caste to stand before the King and process law. The King cannot create law: the council creates each proposed law and presents it to the King for approval. The king carries out the law of the land, and his guardsmen and Magisters bring lawbreakers to justice, obeying the laws as written by the council and signed into authority by the king.

Only the High Vicar and the church of Kor can pardon a criminal. Only they can rescue the innocent from abuses of law, and ensure that the law is applied fairly throughout the land. When someone has been arrested for a crime, a priest of Kor attends him or her in prison, listening to his or her side of the story and determining the truth of the accusation. If a priest determines that the individual is not guilty or is guilty of a lesser charge, he may command that the punishment be adjusted.

The current King of the dwarves is Xod Goldenaxe. He was once married, and had four sons — but three of them were killed in the Abyssal attack against the city that bore their ancient name. Goldenaxe was destroyed, three of Xod's sons fell, and his wife committed suicide in the aftermath of the tragedy. Now, only Xod and his youngest son, Alaric, remain to bear the burden of Hember's lineage.

Hember's Rune

After Hember wrote the Laws of Kor, he retired from his rulership of the dwarves and wrote a further text based on his experiences as King. This document is a complement to the Laws of Kor, but contains the words of Hember the man, not Hember the god's chosen avatar. It is known as *Hember's Rune*, and sets forth the legal system that the dwarven government relies upon. *Hember's Rune* also contains several sage pieces of advice for both ruler and commoner, and also contains several strange prophecies' not supposedly given by Kor but which have come true, nonetheless. *Hember's Rune* also contains several riddles, many of which have never been solved, that are said to reveal secret ways to the heart of the Abyss, and also to Hember's own chalice. The chalice is a sacred relic of dwarven antiquity, said to be able to heal any who drink from it, no matter their injury or sickness. It is also said to restore youth, and grant immortality to one who drinks from it often enough. For that very reason, Hember hid it within the caverns of the dwarves, believing that immortality was against the wishes of Kor. He used it three times, to prolong his life so that he could ensure the dwarves would be safe in their new cities; then he hid the chalice and allowed himself to die of old age (having enjoyed more than three times the life span of a normal dwarf). Hember did not want his chalice to fall into the hands of those who would abuse it; he also did not wish the chalice to be lost to those in great need. Therefore, he left enough clues within the *Rune* to allow a brave hero to discover the chalice in time of great need. It has never been recovered from Hember's hiding place.

Current Political Climate

The war against the Abyss grows bitter, and the dwarves are falling back to their strongholds, unable to fight the newest onslaught. Something is rising in the depths, paralleling the return of the Storm to the upper world. It is driving the Abyssals forward in huge numbers, and new armies of dark creatures are swarming toward the surface. Although the dwarves are fighting with every man they can muster, the Abyss seems to have grown stronger and even more filled with demons. In short, the dwarves are losing.

Internally, the dwarves have split into two factions: one that believes these current attacks by the Abyss are just another part of the cycle; and one that thinks this is the Final Battle, and the dwarves are going to need all the help they can get. Because the dwarves are so divided, their monolithic solidarity is threatened. They are no longer able to hold back the Abyss, whose attacks are growing stronger.

Recently, the ancient stronghold of Steelguard was shaken by a massive earthquake deep in the Abyss. Shortly thereafter, Abyssals destroyed the city of Goldenaxe, and the King's own family was slaughtered. The dwarves have suffered a massive blow to their spirituality and their confidence, and their resistance is faltering.

Something is stirring down in the depths of the Abyss, and it is getting stronger. Two legions of dwarves have been sent to discover the source of the recent maelstroms, but they were completely eradicated. Abyssals strike with increasing confidence, and the dwarven strongholds shudder under their terrifying assaults. A massive enchantment storm ravaged through the lower Caverns, destroying anything that stood without the shelter of stone, collapsing caverns and reopening old clefts as that led into the heart of the dwarven territories. Because of this, the city of Rockhome was assaulted by a massive army that came upon them from behind, which had previously been impossible. Unprepared for such an attack, Rockhome's guard was ravaged in the assault. The city was nearly devastated, and has only recently rebuilt its defenses. The dwarves repelled the Abyssals, but did not see the leader of the scurrying creatures and are uncertain what is leading these massive attacks. Shortly thereafter, there was a second attack; had it not been less violent than the first, the weakened city would not have held it off.

With tacit approval from King Xod after this event, the Holy Father Gnorrow Yaw took his servants and a small army of faithful and ventured into the surface world. There, he seeks allies, but has found only evil. When the Deverenians approached the dwarves, they knew immediately that these humans were evil, and they did what dwarves do best: they fought. They took the Deverenians completely by surprise, and the relatively small dwarven band seized the city of Phrygai. Now renamed New Goldenaxe, it is a base of operations from which the dwarves seek allies in the surface world.

The Deverenians

The Deverenians were the first surface-dwellers that the dwarves encountered. Sadly, that meeting formed their entire view of the surface lands. They have almost lost hope that anyone on the surface will aid them in their desperate quest. They are not entirely distraught, for scouts have mentioned possible allies to the southwest, on the far side of the haunted forests.

The dwarven hold on the city of New Goldenaxe is absolute. No matter how the Deverenians have

tried to retake the city, they have failed. Their evil cannot oust the power of Kor. These Deverenians worship the Storm, the heart of the Great Dragon, not recognizing the danger it poses to the entire Accordlands. They are fools, and worse, their souls are corrupted.

The dwarves have had to deal with misguided Abyss cults before, and these Deverenians are no different. They could bring about the ruin of all that the dwarves and their ancient heroes fought for those long years ago. They will be eradicated, and their service to the Storm will be reviled by all in the lands of the Accord.

The Elves

Although the dwarves have had little contact with the elves, they know enough to fear the bone-wearing necromancers. Their forests lie directly south of New Goldenaxe, but all the dwarven messengers and emissaries have returned with the same warning: the forests are evil, almost devoid of spirituality. Still, the dwarves read the ancient legends of their race and realize that the elves were once great heroes. Perhaps there are still those who feel that call.

Until then, the dwarves are treading delicately in interactions with the elves. They know that the elves are not the allies they are hunting for, but then again, they do not hold opposing belief systems as the Deverenians do. Perhaps the dwarves can overlook the corruption of the elves in order to support a greater cause, and root out the evils of the Abyss. It is not a certainty, but the possibility beckons like a faint light in the darkness.



The Free Kingdoms

The Free Kingdoms are an enigma. They seem violent, dangerous, and ruthless, but they hold a greater potential for good than any of the other races of the upper world. While the dwarves do not believe the tales the elves tell about their human oppressors, they also do not believe that the Free Kingdoms have worked entirely for good in the last 100 years. They are cautious with their relations with humans, as their trust toward the race is tainted by the hostile Deverenians.

Mercenaries

These brigands and thieves may prove to be the dwarves' best hope against the Abyss. While many of them are dangerous, few are evil. The leader of the strongest mercenary band, Kerebrus, shines with a light of law that the dwarves cannot deny. Further, these men are willing to give their lives for gold and silver — something the dwarves have in abundance. If the dwarves can strike a bargain with enough of these forces, and if the mercenaries are willing to face the awful terror that is the Abyss, they may prove to be the bulwark that the dwarves are looking for. That is, if the dwarves can trust the mercenaries to stay bought.



The Nothrog

The dwarves have had little contact with the Nothrog, and find them enigmatic and strange. Their legends do not mention the race at all, and the dwarves are unsure what to think of these newcomers. Although the other races have long known the Nothrog, the dwarves can find no trace of their origins, and they find that deeply disturbing.

The Nothrog's primitive demeanor and disconcerting tactical prowess are strange to the dwarves, who are mystified by the Nothrog's advanced military knowledge. They can see that such wisdom would serve them well in their war against the Abyss, but perhaps these strange creatures are the children of escaped Abyssals, or some new demon constructed by the will of the Storm.

The dwarves are approaching Nothrog territory with caution, unsure what to expect. They know so little — virtually no dwarf has ever spoken with one — that they are completely unaware of the potential resting in the hearts of these strangers.

Brotherhoods of Stone

There are many brotherhoods among the dwarves; orders that predate many of the guilds, and have been kept alive throughout the ages. Some are symbols of hope; others are necessary evils that must be allowed to exist if the dwarves are to survive.

Blackstone Raiders

The Blackstone Raiders are, in many ways, complete psychopaths. These scouts travel alone deep into the Abyss to discover what is rising, and they are the ones with the knowledge of the depths where most dwarves never dare to travel. They go on near-suicide missions in the depths of the Abyss, and attempt rescues when the Abyssals have taken prisoners.

Blackstone Raiders are usually half-unhinged and dangerous. Their trips into the Abyss and their time spent outside dwarven strongholds have unbalanced them. The maelstrom storms that rock the lower caverns are unkind to those trapped by them, and the powers of the Abyssals can derange even the strongest mind.

Typically, those who volunteer to join the Raiders are either aware that their lives are short for some other reason, or no longer wish to live. The Raiders have a high rate of attrition, but their job is critical to the survival of the dwarves. Without their reconnaissance work and their successful rescue missions, the dwarves would know few of their enemies' secrets or plans.

Cavebear Masters

Cavebears are one of the few dwarven pets. These large cave-dwellers are ferocious guardians of the home, and make excellent companions for dwarven children. More intelligent than most bears, the largest cavebears fight against the Abyssals. Their natural abilities and acute sense of smell allow dwarves to pinpoint Abyssals long before they appear, and the bears can identify the type and general number of Abyssals.

Some dwarves train cavebears for battle. These trainers do not stay meekly in the stronghold while the bears do their work, but work with a pair of the bears in the same manner that a seeing-eye dog works with its master. Cavebear Masters are quite capable of fighting, and instruct their bears in group tactics. In fact, most Cavebear Masters spend so much time with their charges that they can communicate with them almost as readily as with other dwarves.

Kor's Hammer

The Kor's Hammer elite guard take their responsibilities seriously. They are priests of Kor, and often members of the royal line as well. Their relationship to Hember is unquestioned, as is their loyalty to the dwarves. They guard the royal palace, watch the children of the ruling King, and prepare themselves for any eventualities. As powerful priests of Kor, they heal those wounded on the battlefield, or to use their Kor-given abilities to turn back powerful members of an Abyssal horde.

More often than not, the members of Kor's Hammer are found guarding royalty and other esteemed dwarves in the strongholds, ensuring their safety against assassination attempts or Abyssals that have somehow breached the city. They must defend the leadership of the dwarves, for should the city fall, someone must lead the dwarves to safety.

Broken Hammers

The Broken Hammers are those criminals who have been sentenced to a front-rank army post. They are warriors of Kor, but many of them have not trained as soldiers. Their tactics are unusual, based on happenstance, and although they are given a place to sleep and food to eat, they are considered the lowest of the low.

Dwarves have no prisons. They have labor camps, where minor infractions against the law are punished with difficult tasks. Priests run these labor camps for the most part, although the city guard contributes soldiers to the cause if necessary. However, on occasion a crime is so grave that it cannot be expiated. Such criminals are assigned to the Broken Hammers corps, which promises a sure death, but one with honor. They are given the chance to use the last span of their lives to protect the dwarven society, and potentially to redeem themselves in the eyes of Kor. Even though their lives have been wasted (according to dwarven belief), they can still receive Kor's salvation. The Broken Hammers are led by a priest of Kor who spends his days fighting the Abyss and his nights trying to counsel his soldiers to salvation.

The Broken Hammers are considered the foulest unit in the dwarven corps. They are shunned by the rest of the dwarven army, and always receive the most dangerous and riskiest orders. They understand this, and they also understand that if they choose to abandon their unit, they will die at the hands of the Abyss.

No one watches over the Broken Hammers corps, and they have hazing, violent induction, and other sinister practices. Still, they are men and women on the verge of death, barely teetering on the edge of eternal damnation for transgressing the laws of Kor. What they do in their off time, so long as they remain in their private barracks area, is the business of the damned.

The Abyssal Army

The dwarves sent three expeditions to the surface. Gnorrow Yaw succeeded, Doricen died valiantly, and Zeal ran afoul of the Abyssals. Though Zeal had heroically defeated countless thousands of the Abyssals, making him one of the greatest heroes in dwarven history, his ruthlessness denied him any chance of recognition, and his journey to the surface was as much a sentence of exile as it was a diplomatic mission. By the time Zeal had met Ter-Sorth, he was ripe for conversion.

Soon a new threat assaulted dwarven cities, butchering them to the last inhabitant. The enemy was no Abyssal, but a dwarf in league with them. Only Zeal ever escaped from the clutches of Soren Nihil, the Abyssal Knight, and the dwarves now believe that only Zeal can stop Soren Nihil.

The problem is that Zeal is Soren Nihil.

Everyone who joins Zeal to fight Soren either dies or converts to his cause. Those who return with him are heroes, and their tales are taken as gospel.

Should Prince Alaric die, Zeal is the most likely candidate for King Xod to name his heir.

No one in the World Below suspects.

Soren Nihil is lawful evil, an 11th level fighter/4th level paladin who wields a sacred weapon which Xod gave to "Zeal" for the purpose of slaying "Soren Nihil": Redeemer, a +3 *bane of dwarves, shocking burst battle axe*, which is also his blessed armament. He wears a suit of *abyssal plate* and a *helm of terror*, which forces opponents trying to attack him to make a Will save (DC equal to the wearer's level, 15) or flee in terror. While traveling as Zeal, he hides his armor and helm.

Exile

Rarely, a dwarven soul is deemed too foul, too tainted, too corrupt even to hope for salvation. When a crime is too great, and even time among the Broken Hammers is not going to rescue the soul, then the violator must be exiled from dwarven society. The dwarves refuse to acknowledge exiles, and speak of them as if they were dead.

Exile is the dark road from the dwarven city into the caverns of the lower world. Even the dwarves do not know where the caverns lead, and it is known that many Abyssals live in the twisting labyrinths. To be sent out of the shelter of the dwarven cities with only a single axe to defend yourself is worse than being executed: it is to be cast out spiritually and physically, and left for the Abyss.

Most of those who are sentenced to exile kill themselves in the first few feet of the labyrinths. Others try to travel through them, only to be killed in dangerous pitfalls or by roaming Abyssals. Some are taken Below, to the depths of the Abyss, to be playthings for the Abyssals who live nearest the ancient corpse of the Great Dragon.

Rumors exist of powerful dwarven exiles who actually made it through the labyrinths and to the upper world, but no dwarf has ever confirmed these tales.

New Goldenaxe

Background

While Phrygai was never an unimportant part of Deverenia, it was always a relatively peaceable village. Nestled into a valley beyond the reach of Denska and the Nothrog, its only concern was mining precious blackiron ore from the nearby mountain range. Though the lives of the laborers were hardly ideal, they enjoyed prosperity rare among Deverenian serfs. The knights that governed the town had chosen to do so in retirement, far from the wars of their younger days. So long as the ore shipments flowed freely, and the peasants paid the knights their proper respects, the people of Phrygai lived comparatively idyllic lives. This peace lasted for centuries.

And then the dwarves arrived.

What once was Phrygai is now New Goldenaxe, the solitary dwarven holding in the World Above. Though Gnorrow Yaw has evicted the Deverenian knights from his new home, he and his still live alongside the common folk that once toiled in the town. This uneasy arrangement led to numerous "accidents" from both sides, but all involved hope that the possible alliance with Deverenia may yield happier days yet. In the meantime, however, tensions remain high between Deverenian and dwarf, and none dare comment on the rumors of something terrible breeding in the sewers...

Economy

Before the arrival of the dwarves, Phrygai was a town of hard but important work. Though miners hardly held the same status as wizards, knights, or clerics, the toils of their trade were no secret. This combined with the value of blackiron to produce prosperity. The town never wanted for food or wine, and its inhospitable location left the townspeople generally free from want.

Under dwarven occupation, this has changed dramatically. Where Phrygai's regular imports of food made up for the scarcity of game and the difficult farming, New Goldenaxe experiences near famine. Though the clerics of Kor supplement the meager reserves with *create food and water* spells, they are too few to support the entire population while simultaneously holding off the threat of Deverenian attack. Due to the strong Deverenian encampments outside the city, no supplies could get through, even if New Goldenaxe had allies in the World Above. With the collapsed mines and rumored Abyssal presence, Purge has convinced Yaw to trade a small quantity of blackiron ore for supplies, but the inhabitants of the city dread the possibility of treachery.

Laws

Phrygai's old laws have been suspended, but generally were only enforced in extreme circumstances. Like the rest of Deverenia, they showed obeisance to the Orders, the Storm, and the Emperor. The only law relatively unique to the settlement was a ban against smuggling the blackiron. The common punishment for so doing was to eat any smuggled ore recovered and then endure wizardly cantrips to forestall digestion, ensuring a slow, painful starvation. The guilty were still bound to their work, and the mines are littered with their bodies. The mines are not haunted, giving rise to a suspicion that the blackiron punishment actually consumes the soul as well as the body.

Yaw's reign has proven more egalitarian. Dwarven clerics offer aid to the miners, and their fighters occasionally join in the mining. Though Yaw demands compliance with his dictates, he has yet to execute any man or woman who did not first attack a dwarf, and has refused to harm children. While New Goldenaxe remains under his undeclared martial law, the dwarves and Deverenians are usually content to simply let each other be.

Population: 500 Deverenian miners and their families (no divine spellcasters); 200 dwarves, mostly clerics and fighters; 100 Abyssals (in the tunnels beneath the city, various breeds); 2,000 Deverenian knights and wizards (camped outside the city); 1,000 Nothrog troops (hidden a day's hike southwest in the mountains; Uthanak's Legion)

Government: Martial Occupation

Imports: Food and water

Exports: Blackiron ore

Important NPCs: Carock (miner and insurgent leader); Claw (dwarven Cavebear Master); Duncan Kinslayer (dwarven exile); Gnorrow Yaw (High Vicar of Kor; Order of St. Leda Stonehand); Purge (unofficial ambassador to Deverenia); Strongarm (maimed wizard); Uthas Battleheim (Scion of Kor) Ter-Soth (Abyssal Lord)

History

Phrygai was one in a series of mining towns Deverenus chartered in the days following the First War, though it was among the most productive. The rich veins of blackiron ore from these communities led to the early superiority of the Deverenian armies, first over the forces of Athanaes and then over the world itself.

The centuries passed, and Deverenus gave way to his equally despotic heirs. Signon's revolution toppled the oldest government in the Accordlands, and established the worship of the Storm. Through it all Phrygai emerged untouched, merely replacing the temple of the old gods with a small cathedral to the Storm. The Nothrog legions considered the narrow valley impenetrable, not worth the time or manpower to take. Even bandits knew better than to raid Phrygai, as Deverenia spared no effort to recover the precious ore and avenge its losses. The city was secure in the knowledge that it could withstand any attack long enough for reinforcements to arrive.

Mere months ago, the dwarves boiled up from the mines and sewers, bloodied by combat and disoriented by their mad flight from the world below. The miners were shocked to discover the stunted creatures emerging from the shadowy recesses of the tunnels, but stood aside as the dwarves marched to sunlight. The knights protecting the city immediately attacked, but the Deverenian troops were old and tired, and Yaw prevailed. By the time Lord Gahid Rellion arrived to liberate the city, Yaw had supplemented the Deverenian defenses with ones of dwarven design. Though the outside Deverenians assailed the city again and again, and both sides took casualties, the walls of Phrygai — now renamed New Goldenaxe, in honor of King Xod's fallen city — held.

Inside the walls, however, problems escalated. The knights that had run the town had not survived long enough to order the miners to take up arms against the invaders, and doing so without a command (even in defense of the township or its leaders) would be a violation of imperial law. The miners were content to leave the dwarves to Gahid, but Yaw's defenses proved too strong for the Emperor's Champion to break. When the miners realized that the dwarven occupation could last, they broke ranks internally. Some saw that Yaw had treated them respectfully and considerately, while others looked upon the dwarves as abominations and blasphemers, particularly after Yaw rededicated the town church to Kor.

Worse, the population had nearly doubled overnight, but the stockpiles of food and water were no longer being replenished through trade. Though the clerics' magic reduced the strain, New Goldenaxe could not hold out for long. When news of the shortages hit the miners, street brawls broke out between the two races. Though Gahid had taken to fortifying his own front, rather than pressing the attack, any internal strife within the settlement would almost certainly doom Yaw's mission.

It was one of the guardsmen, Purge, that suggested a possible solution. Purge had witnessed Gahid's troops' own frustrations, and their repeated duels. Purge approached Yaw with the idea of dueling a Deveranian to prove that the dwarves were also honorable, and suggested that — as villainous as the Deverenians might be — their strange ways might yet make them valuable allies in the war against the Abyss. Purge won his duel, and has established a series of small trades with the outside encampments. The mood has not improved.

Society

Under Deveranian rule, Phrygai had a stable set of rules. The serfs obeyed the knights without question, and in return had few complaints.

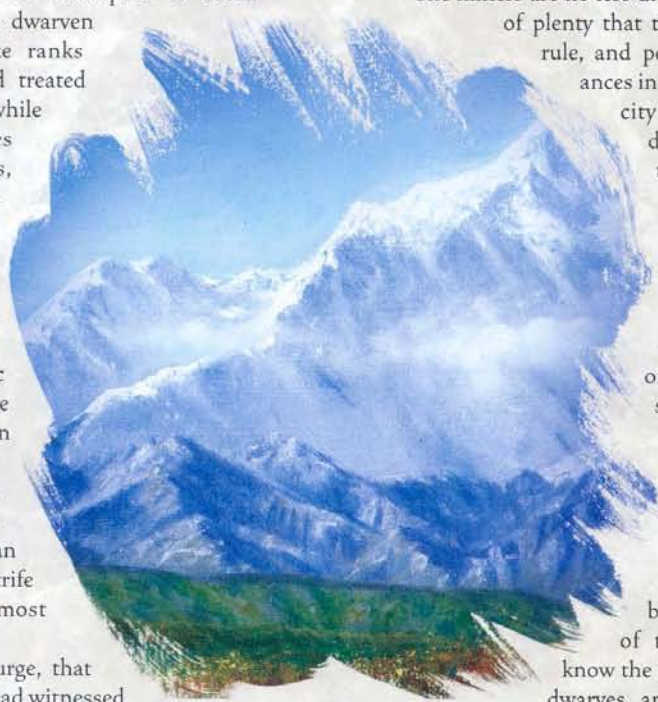
Under the dwarves, things are much different. Though Yaw has no patience for treason, the dwarves respond to fawning with shock and disgust. The dwarves share their meals with the miners and their families, and Yaw has (under Purge's advice) punished several dwarves for mistreating the Deveranian population. Though Purge could not convince Gnorow Yaw to allow worship of the Storm, the dwarves have allowed any who wish to worship Kor to do so freely. Though converts are disappointingly rare, enough exist that Yaw has come to believe that the Deverenians might eventually make worthy comrades.

Still, the mood is anxious. Many dwarves came to the surface with Yaw only because they felt it was their duty to see if the tales of the Upworlders were true. Given the limited information they

have, these dwarves have concluded that the legends were accurate, as the Deverenians and Nothrog are clearly cruel and bloodthirsty. Combined with Purge's insistence on taking up Deveranian mannerisms, and Yaw's acceptance of the exile Duncan Kinslayer, these dwarves are on the verge of revolt. To date, however, Uthas Battleheim has convinced them that an internal conflict would only serve the hated Deverenians.

The miners are no less divided. Some remember the days of plenty that they enjoyed under Deveranian rule, and point to the strange disappearances in town and the desecration of the city's church as signs that the dwarves are clearly evil. Though they cannot take up arms against the dwarven invaders without first receiving orders from a knight, this faction of miners strives to contact the soldiers outside for such orders. Only the watchful eyes of Yaw's followers have forestalled their efforts. Still, a few of them think that such initiative might warrant promotion to knighthood, if they are successful.

Other miners ignore the pangs of hunger in their bellies, and look to the bravery of their dwarven masters. They know the desperation that must drive the dwarves, and are amazed at the restraint the half-men show. Despite the paranoia likely raging through the dwarves' minds, Yaw has taken great pains to treat the miners fairly, and a few other dwarves have even tried to strike up friendships with the Deverenians. New Goldenaxe's miners have lost their luxuries, but a few have discovered something greater: equality. They may even be willing to fight and die for it.



Geography

New Goldenaxe occupies a valley in the western Deveranian lands, about a day's ride south of Condor Pass. The mountains surrounding it are all but impassable, and the city walls nearly block the edges of the valley's sheer peaks, forcing invaders into a gauntlet of defenders. Though this city was once one of Deverenia's major sources of blackiron, it was widely believed that the mines were beyond the reach of any invading force. Yaw proved the common conception wrong by invading through the caverns.

At any point in time other than open battle, there are four armed patrols of 3d4 dwarven guards walking through the town. The dwarven guards are lawful good fighters, levels 3–9, wielding warhammers and slings (they have long since run out of arrows). They wear ironcloth, giving them +2 to +5 AC deflection bonuses.

All dwarven clerics in the town of 5th or higher level have only half their spells of third and higher levels, with the rest spent supplying the town with food.

New Goldenaxe Locations

1. WATCHTOWERS

Standing at the northwest, north central, and northeast points of the town walls, these posts were the only ones manned at all times under Deverenian rule. They rise above the outer wall of the city, and have a commanding view of the rest of the valley. Characters gain a +5 circumstance bonus to Spot checks to notice any approaching figure from the north or northeast, have at least 1/2 concealment from outside attacks (3/4 if simply watching from cover), and gain +5 feet to the range increment of any missile weapons they use. There are always 2d4 dwarven guards (as the patrol guards) in each at any time, and an additional 1d6 arrive at the end of every round if an alarm is raised. Otherwise, guards rotate positions once every six hours. There is a 50% chance that a 4th–8th level cleric is also manning the post, a lawful good priest of Kor, with access to the War domain and one of the following domains: Earth, Healing, and Protection. The cleric has access to the same weapons as the guards.

The northeastern tower has a cot and minor personal effects for one person. Purge tends to sleep and keep watch here even when not on guard duty, leaving only to attend to personal necessities or when dealing with either Yaw or the Deverenians in private. The other guards treat him coolly, because Purge made peace with the foul Deverenians that slaughtered so many dwarves. The Deverenian miners and soldiers outside care little more for him, as he has forced them out of Phrygai. Purge disregards the ill will toward him. He swore to serve Yaw and Xod to the best of his capability, and has done so by making strides toward an alliance that not even Yaw thought possible. Though he bears no love for the Deverenians, Purge finds them fascinating, and has taken to wielding and wearing Deverenian armaments. He is becoming familiar with Deverenian law, and truly believes that a careful alliance with the knights may turn the tide in the war against the Abyssals. Purge wears masterwork full plate armor and wields a two-handed sword. He is a lawful good, 6th level fighter, and has Knowledge (Deverenian Honor & Law) at 4 ranks and a Skill Focus feat in that skill. Purge is the only dwarf allowed into the Deverenian camps, and has learned much from the Deverenians' recent history. With the exception of Yaw's personal retinue (see #13, below), Purge is the only dwarf in the encampment to realize that the other expeditions to the surface have failed. Should it seem appropriate, Purge may advance in level until he earns the Leadership feat. If he does, he may have Deverenians as followers (but not as a cohort), regardless of alignment.

2. DWARF GUARDS' QUARTERS

Located between the northwestern and northern watchtowers, the quarters of the dwarves was once the private mansion of the presiding knight's family. Yaw ordered the two-story building stripped of all nonessential goods, and it now houses all off-duty guards not on patrol or on watch at a specific location, up to 80 guards at a time. The upper level contains endless rows of bedrolls, while the floor and basement have dwarves engaging in quiet conversation or silent prayer. Guards on the top floor are awake and ready for battle in two rounds' time, while those on the first floor and basement are ready in a single round.

The basement is home to the contingent of dwarves that feel Yaw has overstepped his bounds by considering an alliance with the Deverenians. These hard-liners make up 30 of the guard and another dozen of the rest of the dwarven population in the city, including a handful of assassins (no one is sure how many are truly dissatisfied with Yaw, or are simply watching for treason). Though none are willing to take up arms against Gnorrow Yaw yet, almost all of them want Purge dead. Only the persuasive arguments of this faction's leader has stayed its hand: Uthas Battleheim points out that the death of Purge at this point is likely to doom the whole encampment.

Though his words are true, his reasons for stating them are his own. Uthas Battleheim is not merely a noted war hero, but in truth is a Scion of Kor. While he does wonder whether it is wise exposing the dwarves to the corrupt ideals of the Deverenians, Uthas has no intention of allowing anyone to raise a hand to either Yaw or Purge. As one of Kor's literal children, Uthas is all too aware of the consequences of breaking the alliance to the Deverenians before it truly begins, and recognizes the Abyssals as the greater threat. Though the magic binding him to the world prevents him from lying, Uthas has chosen his words carefully.

3. ARMORY

Occupying a long hall along the western wall of the village, the armory remains untouched since the dwarves' arrival. Within are a dozen of each martial weapon, shield, and medium and heavy armor listed in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Rules Codex*, each warding against being taken save by a member of a Deverenian Knightly Order, through a *wizard lock* cast by a 14th level wizard. Anyone who can break or fulfill the enchantment gains access to enough equipment to overthrow New Goldenaxe.

4. TOWN HALL

Located just west of the township, the town hall is where Gnorrow Yaw spends most of his days. The town hall is not merely the meeting place of the mining community, but also its notary and its library. When not presiding over a dispute between the miners and the dwarves, Yaw studies the last nine centuries of the Upworlders' lives. He has uncovered maps of the mines and sewers, as well as detailed documentation of blackiron and its uses. This information interests him greatly, as he believes blackiron might behave in much the same way as normal iron... including in the creation of ironcloth.

Gnorrow Yaw is a 14th level neutral good cleric (Healing and Protection domains). He wields a +4 *holy warhammer*, wears +5 *ironcloth* (+5 deflection bonus to AC), and has Knowledge (Deverenian history) and Knowledge (blackiron), both at 5 ranks. Yaw is aware of the Abyssal presence in the sewer and the mine (locations #10 and 16, respectively), and believes that they seek to ally with the Deverenians before the dwarves can.

5. JAIL

Little more than a holding pen, this building only has two rooms: a series of stocks (two dozen total), and a small, blood caked room for summary execution. Yaw has only used the executioner's room three times, each when dealing with a miner who had severely wounded or killed a dwarf. The stocks are almost always full, with a 10% chance of Carock being imprisoned at any given time, for 1d10 days. Yaw has chosen to confine unruly guards to their quarters or make them labor in the mines instead of using the stocks, which are just tall enough that any dwarf or smaller creature in them begins suffocating from the position, effectively drowning at 1/10th the normal rate (Con check once every 10 rounds, rather than every round).

Carock is the head of the resistance movement among the miners, and one of the few that is willing to take up arms before receiving orders to do so. Though at first it was only his anger that led him to the stocks, he has learned to pay attention to the comings and goings of the nearby town hall, and knows the guard's schedule. None of the dwarves suspect that he is planning an escape from New Goldenaxe. Should he succeed, his information could well lead to Deverenian retaking the town. Carock is a neutral evil Deverenian, a 7th level fighter. He has Listen at 5 ranks, and can call up 2d10 other Deverenian fighters (levels 1-10) to aid him at any time. While he is in the stocks, he is flat-footed, but otherwise has access to leather armor and a pick.

6. STABLES

Once this held the city's visiting horses and verdatha. With the mounts either fled or slaughtered, the stables are a cold and lonely home to a man who finds them almost comfortable: the dwarven hero-turned-exile, Duncan Kinslayer.

Duncan was once Steel, the nephew of Queen Argeyth. All his life he was strong even for a dwarf, and never lost a fight against the Abyssals. He was never without a host of companions, and trained with his generation's other great hero, his brother Zeal. His heroism was noted by all, including his uncle-in-law, King Xod himself. When Steel single-handedly put down a dozen Abyssals rampaging near young Prince Alaric's nursery, it came as no surprise that Xod granted the warrior the right to his true name. The moment before he knelt before the seers was Steel's proudest moment; the moment after, his darkest. The seers told the assembly that Steel's true name was Duncan Kinslayer. Though he had never harmed a dwarf in his life, Duncan found himself exiled before his name came true. He wandered to the surface alone, and entered the World Above with a bitter sob.

That was thirty years ago.

Duncan fights for his sanity daily. He spent the first half of his life in the constant company of close and dear friends, and the latter half as a reviled exile. He still feels the hatred and fear of his people, but rejoices that Gnorrow Yaw has chosen to take him in. Duncan is one of the few people in the



world that has knowingly looked upon a Medusan Lord, the mysterious Lady Bhaine, and lived. After informing Yaw that this terrible woman had at least one dwarf in her service, Duncan earned a respite from his punishment, at least for a while. For his part, Kinslayer is uncertain whether he wishes to remain much longer, since he is fated to murder his own kind — the only thought that terrifies him more than his perpetual loneliness. Duncan Kinslayer is a lawful good dwarf, a level 11 fighter, that wields a *halberd* +3 and a cloak of *blackened ironcloth* +3. He has the Exile feat, but the dwarves under Yaw are forbidden to act upon it unless Duncan gives in to his madness. In combat Duncan always goes out of his way to protect other dwarves even at the cost of personal peril.

7. WORKERS' QUARTERS

Just east of the stables and south of two watchtowers, the workers' quarters are a squalid pit of filth. The living quarters of those unfit to mine and not of a miner's family, this dwelling was originally home to the city's other laborers, the stable keepers, cooks, and sewer workers. Even the other serfs looked on these souls with disgust, and even the cooks found themselves useless after the food stores ran out. It took over a month to notice that any had disappeared.

The interior of this building still reeks from the month the bodies were left here unattended, and something had rent many of them so badly that removing the remains was impossible. Not even rats live here now. They know better than to nest where Abyssals once trod.

8. FEASTHALL

The most central building in the town, the feasthall is home to the twice-daily meals of dwarves and Deverenians alike. The gruel and water are nutritious but dull, a far cry from the dishes the miners once enjoyed. Eating is a silent, quick affair, as the dwarves and Deverenians care little for one another's company.

9. PROVISIONS STOREHOUSE

Just east of the feasthall, the storehouse holds the town's meager food and water supply, whether provided by the divine graces of Kor's clerics or trade with Deverenian. There are only enough supplies here for the town to survive a week without outside aid (or twice that, if one race were removed from the city). Stores are just gruel and barrels of water, but there is enough to stave off malnutrition. Many dwarves are worried that the Deverenians will eventually poison the traded food, though Purge has dismissed it as too dishonorable for the Deverenians.

The dwarves are correct in worrying about the food's safety, but not because of Deverenian influence. The slaughter that took place just north of here in the workers' quarters (location #7) may yet prove to be the downfall of the town. Since so many corpses were in no condition to move, their rotting remains sank into the earth. With so much of the Abyssals' own corruption in these bodies, eventually this will poison the town's soil and corrupt the food and water in these rooms. Yaw is mistaken that the Abyssals might seek an alliance with the Deverenians; ultimately, Ter-Soth's motive is to subvert the entire area. This poisoning occurs as quickly or as slowly as seems appropriate.

The entrance to the storehouse is guarded at all times by 4 dwarven fighters, lawful good, of levels 4–8.

10. SEWER ENTRANCE

Leading from the privies in each building, the sewers below are part of the same network of caves as the mines, though they held no valuable veins of blackiron ore. To protect the miners from the stench and disease, sewer workers used this entrance to ensure that the sewers remained sealed away from the rest of the caverns. After the attack that wiped out the workers, Yaw posted guards to watch over this small building, but all attempts to root out the Abyssals have resulted in bloody losses for the dwarves. The entrance to the sewers is guarded at all times by 4 dwarven fighters.

Ter-Soth bides his time here. He presides over an army of all types of Medium-size or smaller Abyssals, nearly 300 in total. Though not the most powerful of his kind, he is among the craftiest, and has come very close indeed to inflicting the true horrors of the Abyss on the World Above. Though victory is nearly in his grasp, Ter-Soth is patient. While he and his servants have long since discovered other routes to the surface, he knows that his reign on the surface would end quickly if Yaw's dwarves lived to see it, so he plans to destroy them first. His plan is already well underway. He has turned one of Yaw's chief lieutenants, Zeal, into his own paladin, and dispatched the renamed Soren Nihil to cut off any attempt to reach Yaw. Ter-Soth has quietly poisoned ground beneath the food reserves (location #9) as well, but would take the whole of New Goldenaxe in a night if he thought he could swallow it up without attracting undue attention. Ironically, if Purge's alliance with the Deverenians succeeds, the departure of the Deverenian armies outside may well doom the town. No Deverenian is aware of these attacks, or nor have any in town laid eyes on an Abyssal.

Ter-Soth is a lawful evil Brullakha, with 18 HD and 22 Intelligence. Though by far the most cunning creature in or around New Goldenaxe, Ter-Soth speaks in short, clipped statements. He is completely convinced of the inevitability of a personal conquest of the world. He has yet to learn the secrets of blackiron, but would seize the city's stores of it (location #15) if he were to do so.

For every ten minutes spent in the sewers, roll 1d20 and consult the following chart for encounters:

TABLE 2-1: NEW GOLDENAXE CAVE ENCOUNTERS

Roll	Encounter
1–6	Brullakha
7–11	Core Beast
12–15	Golgoth
16–18	Zhul
19	Roll twice, ignoring further results of 19–20.
20	Roll twice. If rolling 20 twice, Ter-Soth himself attacks, leading a contingent of at least one of each of these other Abyssals.

11. MINERS' QUARTERS

The miner's quarters are located near the southern wall, adjacent to the caves. They are relatively luxurious, with each miner and his family living in separate cells within this two-story building or its basement, and many are decorated with items of small luxury (semiprecious stones, heirlooms, etc.; approximately 50 gp per room, for 100 rooms; single miners double-up on rooms). The miners here do not socialize with the dwarves, and ostracize those few of their own that have converted to Yaw's heathen religion. The only exception to this quiet hostility for dwarves is Claw (see location #16).

Though all miners live here, the revolutionaries do not speak of their plots in this building, but rather in the mines themselves. Miners here only enter combat in self-defense, or else to defend each other or their families. They are lawful evil or lawful neutral fighters of levels 2–6, customarily wear leather armor and wield picks. They are combat ready in 1d6 rounds.

300 nonminers live here, though they spend daylight hours on the streets or outside the mines. They are the elderly parents of the miners, their spouses, or their children. They attempt to flee if attacked, making unarmed attacks if cornered.

The rebels have assembled a small shrine to the Storm in one corner of the basement, using the only icon they recovered before the dwarves destroyed it. Though none are clerics, these miners pray nightly to Athanae that the Storm claim the lives of the hated half-men.

12. GRAVEYARD

The graveyard has only Deverenians in it (fallen dwarves are cremated at the Temple of Kor, location #13), including the knights who died fighting off Yaw's invasion. Each received full funerary honors at the insistence of Purge, who even then recognized the honor of these otherwise unredeemable men. Entombed with one knight is a +3 *two-handed sword* and a set of +3 *full plate*, but digging up and searching the body would take (3d6 minus the combined Strength modifiers of up to six diggers) rounds, alerting the guards in 1d4 rounds.

13. TEMPLE OF KOR (PREVIOUSLY CATHEDRAL OF THE STORM)

This three-story cathedral is the largest building in New Goldenaxe, its immense steelshod steeples fashioned to catch the lightning. A prime example of Deverenian excess, it can seat two thousand worshipers, though it has never held more than a thousand. Like all clerics of the Storm, the pastor and aides of the church all had martial experience, but the sheer number of dwarves overwhelmed them during the invasion. Upon seizing the cathedral, Yaw ordered the destruction of the church's icons, altars, and holy texts, replacing each with those of Kor. He offered religious instruction to all Deverenians in the town, but to date only a handful of the miners have accepted. Purge has since explained that the worship of the Storm, while evil, was something very dear to the Deverenians, and the reconsecration of the cathedral further split them from the dwarves.

A further burden has come to the dwarves lately, but only Yaw, Purge, and the clerics that maintain the temple know of it. Purge's duel earned him a modicum of respect from the Deverenians, and he has spoken with them many times. What he learned from the knights has given him pause. Of the two other expeditions to the surface that left with Yaw, one was destroyed attempting to seize Sharn Keep. The third group had the most seasoned warriors with them, including the near-legendary Zeal, but has apparently never surfaced. The seers here confirmed Purge's basic information, and elaborated that Zeal had encountered an especially vicious Abyssal. They have seen no more of him, and Yaw has decreed that the fates of the other dwarves remain a secret from the rest of the populace.

The dwarves maintaining this temple are all lawful good or lawful neutral clerics and seers, levels 4–6. Clerics here usually specialize in War and Protection domains. Clerics and seers alike wield warhammers and wear ironcloth bracers of a bonus equal to half their levels, rounding down.

14. INFIRMARY

A long, brick building to the south of the southern wall and north of the mine, the infirmary houses the wounded and crippled of New Goldenaxe. It is the only place where Deverenians and dwarves work together without complaint. Though the Deverenian healers fell with the cathedral, many miners were medics in their own right, and supplement the dwarven clerics' healing arts. Whether tending to the sick or the recently wounded, the two groups act as one in what may be the most efficient hospital in Deverenia. Any dying characters brought to this location are automatically stabilized in (1d6 + the number of unavailable healers or clerics at the location) rounds.

A dozen Deverenian miners rotate ten hour shifts here, with four in attendance at any time. All these miners are lawful neutral or lawful evil, and have the Heal skill at 6 ranks. There are an additional 20 lawful good or lawful neutral dwarven clerics, levels 3–9, with access to the Healing and War domains and wear ironcloth +3. Four dwarven guards stand watch at the door, but theirs are the only weapons allowed on the premises. An additional twenty dwarves and Deverenians of a smattering of classes remain here, crippled either during mining or the battles for the town. Any who are capable of combat are staggered for the duration.

One dwarf spends a disproportionate amount of time here, though he is no cleric. A rare dwarven wizard, Strongarm lost his right arm during a battle with a Nothrog outside the town. Though fitted with a mechanical prosthesis, he refuses to rest long enough for the wound to heal. Instead, he is magically scouting the mountains to the south, though he has yet to uncover the Nothrog encampment. Strongarm is lawful good, a level 8 wizard with the Spell Focus (divination) feat. If he suffers more than half his hit point total in damage, his wound reopens, and he loses an additional hit point a round until he is stabilized. If reduced to below zero hit points, he loses 2 hit points a round, and may not stabilize on his own. Strongarm is a friend of Purge, and occasionally visits him at the northeast watchtower (location #1).

15. BLACKIRON STOREHOUSE

Contained in this small hut is three tons of raw blackiron, Yaw's entire stock. Though he trades weekly with Deverenia, Yaw secretly used his Earth domain clerics to remove much of the metal itself from roughly half of each week's mining, and keeps this pure blackiron hidden here. He has accumulated 10,000 gp of blackiron for the dwarves in this manner. The Deverenians are aware that the shipments are down, but believe this is because of miner casualties.

This plan may come back to haunt Yaw. Should any area effect spell (including nondamaging ones) affect this hut, the overstocked blackiron explodes as if it were a *meteor swarm* spell cast by a wizard of the catalytic spell's level, centered on the hut. Those wounded by this effect suffer horribly, as the blackiron slowly cools inside their bodies. Normal healing fails until the tiny pieces of blackiron are removed (Heal check, DC equal to the damage suffered for success), while magical healing spells actually inflict damage instead, briefly charging the blackiron once more. Once cooled, the blackiron is so much useless pig iron.



16. BLACKIRON MINE

Though Phrygai's production of blackiron was never the greatest in the Empire, the flow of ore has remained steady over nearly a thousand years of mining. The tunnels extend a mile below the entrance and to either side, and while the miners have exhausted whole veins of the ore, they have yet to run out of leads to new ones. The greater problem is that mine collapses are frequent. Shortly before the arrival of the dwarves, the guards discovered what may be the richest find ever — a cavern laced with ore along the walls, ceiling, and floor. Mines collapse if any area effect damage occurs in them, triggering an avalanche (see the *Rules Codex*).

Though mining continues, Gnorrow Yaw has ordered most of the shafts closed due to unspecified dangers. His fighters and clerics have sealed these tunnels for two reasons: to block the Abyssals, and to hide Yaw's gargoyle reserves. Yaw has 12 sandstone and eight basalt gargoyles hidden in these tunnels, but intends to use them only if the Abyssals attack outright, or if the Deverenians break through the city walls. No Deverenians know of these creatures, but the dwarves that also mine the tunnels know precisely where Yaw hid each and every gargoyle. If a dwarf fights in this tunnel, he may choose to flee for 1d6 rounds, then take a move action to unleash a gargoyle. An unleashed gargoyle surprises its victims if they have never encountered a gargoyle in these tunnels before.

In addition to the many miners here, there are six dwarven guards who aid in the mining. One such guard, Claw, has repeatedly risked his own life and those of his pet bears to save miners from collapsing shafts. While the would-be revolutionaries seek Claw's death, he has endeared himself to all others. Claw is a level 5, neutral good fighter. He wields a pick axe and wears +1 ironcloth. He is always accompanied by two loyal brown bears, Korin and Torek, who fight to the death to protect their master. If Claw is in the tunnels and engaged in combat, there is a 50% chance that 1d10 miners come to his aid, with one arriving at the end of each round until all are present. Like the bears, these miners are prepared to die to save Claw. Claw is unwilling to leave combat, even to unleash gargoyles, so long as either his bears or other miners (including mining dwarves) are engaged in combat. If Claw advances in level until he earns the Leadership feat, he may have Deverenians as followers (but not as a cohort), regardless of alignment.

Collapsed tunnels (both accidentally and intentionally collapsed) take two hours to clear. Clearing a tunnel puts all dwarven guards on alert. The caverns beyond lead to several other caves, including the sewers and tunnels leading throughout the mountains for miles. The Deverenians outside the city have no maps for these tunnels. Exploring these tunnels risks an encounter with the Abyssals, with an hourly check to see if the party has stumbled across some of Ter-Soth's scouts (as at location #10, but a roll of two 20s does not produce Ter-Soth himself).

Outside the City (unmarked on map)

17. DEVERENIAN ARMY ENCAMPMENT

Though the mood has calmed somewhat with Gahid's departure and Purge's overtures of goodwill, the Deverenians remain. With Purge's victory, he won the chance to prove the dwarves' strength equal to their honor. The Deverenians have not forgiven the dwarves for taking Phrygai so quickly, a shame that they hope to avenge soon.

In the absence of Lord Gahid Rellion, Lady Gracia Ghenis has taken charge of the armies. Though young, she is master of the fledgling Order Ghenis, and has proven herself most capable of maintaining morale. She regrettably has no talent for strategy, and simply seeks to maintain the status quo until Gahid's inevitable return from his Myerdeth conquests. Lady Gracia is an inspiring presence on the field, and she hopes to prove her worth to Lord Rellion and forge an alliance between the two Orders.

The only flaw in her plan is that, in attempting to prove the superiority of her Order, she dispatched one of her own knights when Purge challenged a Deverenian to a duel. For all his honor, Fahn Boralis was no match for Purge's careful attacks. While none have yet challenged her authority, she feels it is only a matter of time. Gracia is an impressive bard but a middling warrior, and would surely lose to a seasoned knight. She has taken to entertaining her forces through a mix of alluring suggestions and carefully orchestrated displays of her talents in music and lyrical poetry, quietly hoping for an opportunity to take Phrygai. If someone calls her out, she risks not only losing command of the army to her challenger, but losing her entire Order. While she cannot abandon Phrygai, she cannot take it without proof of dishonor on the dwarves' part. She is eager to find a solution, and Carock — should he be able to reach her — can provide one, reporting on the re consecration of the Church of the Storm. Lady Gracia would happily induct into Order Ghenis any Deverenian who would aid her in retaking the city (non-Deverenians, including non-Deverenian humans and Deverenian halfbreeds, receive thanks in the way of armed escort to Deverenian's borders).

Lady Gracia Ghenis is a neutral evil, level 9 bard. She has 20 Charisma, and the Leadership feat (with a penalty for a notable failure — the lost duel with Purge). While she avoids personal combat whenever possible, she has a +3 dagger of returning. Though she does not have the skill to effectively lead in battle, and worries about the loyalties of the men in her command, most any would leap to her defense outside of an honorable challenge.

The Deverenian army consists of 1,500 fighters of varying levels (750 are 1–3rd, 500 are 4–6th, and 250 are 7–10th; 50 fighters of 4–6th level are Ghenis, while fighters of levels 7–10 are members of Orders Aedroud or Rellion, and are lawful and neutral evil, respectively, and wield martial weapons and heavy armors of +1 enchantments), 400 wizards (300 are 1–3rd level, 100 are 4–6th; Gahid took the greatest wizards with him), and 100 bards, rangers, and clerics (all levels 1–3rd, with the bards and rangers owing allegiance to Ghenis, though not formal members).

18. UTHANAK'S LEGION ENCAMPMENT

When Hate laid claim to Baraxton, he did so with the aid of Deverenian wizards who rendered the Nothrog lord's legions invisible for a time. In return for the Empire's aid, Hate signed a pact to increase Baraxton's taxes paid to Luthlarius, and a ten-year peace pact. The first, Hate delivered upon nightfall of the first day of his reign. The latter, he intended to break a week later.

Uthanak's Legion was the weapon for Hate's treachery. Possessed of a rage that gave even Taoth pause, Uthanak was capable enough that his victory was likely, but mad enough that Hate could reasonably claim that Uthanak was acting of his own accord. With the rage of the Bear totem spurring them on, his legion eagerly traversed the "impassable" mountains. He at last set his eyes on his first target, the village of Phrygai, only to find the prize already taken.

Though Uthanak is mad, he is no fool. He realized that not only were these half-men far stronger than their size indicated, but also that the Deverenian armies were certain to return en masse. His initial orders were to crush cities and fade away, but now, he considers whether to strike as a Deverenian ally, and destroy the dwarves before they obtain lasting peace. He is awaiting orders relayed from Kzarrik in Luthlarius, but waiting has never been Uthanak's strong suit, and Bear thirsts for blood...

Though normally he would be as capable of reasoned planning and leadership as any Nothrog commander, Uthanak's mind is literally not his own. In a gambit to avoid falling to Hate's dreaded totem of Cynophontis, Bear has partially possessed Uthanak, intertwining their spirits. Though still subject to effects that hedge out Outsiders, or dispel possession (in either case, Bear will still prove capable of resistance; should an effect successfully exorcise Bear, Uthanak becomes neutral evil), none have thought to look for Bear inside Uthanak.

Uthanak's legion consists of 600 Nothrog fighters and barbarians (levels 1–8), 150 albino druids (levels 1–5), 100 each of scouts and rangers (levels 1–6), and 50 albino shamans (levels 1–4). The legion is generally chaotic evil, with a few chaotic neutral, neutral evil, and even lawful evil members. All are devoted to Bear, but not necessarily to Uthanak or Hate.

Steelforge

Background

The site of an ancient battle against the Abyssals has become the hope of the dwarven people. While it no longer fights directly against the enemy, its industries create the weapons to fight. This is also a safe place for the badly wounded to recover. A river runs through Steelforge and provides the only means of accessing several positions. All the dwarves here can swim and pilot boats, the only dwarves to master these skills. Although it has not been attacked in years, the dwarves take no chances and maintain a strong defensive force.

Economy

Steelforge exists to support the fight against the Abyssals. Its thousands of forges turn out hundreds of weapons every day. Large areas grow mushrooms, vegetables and other food crops. Others are given over to the care of youngsters in this relatively safe location. Recovering warriors fill the infirmaries and homes, while practice yards allow others to hone their skills before rejoining the fight.

Laws

The laws of the dwarven people are meticulously obeyed, and the laws of the city revolve around maximizing production. Apprentices and journeyman must obey their masters in all matters. Masters obey their grandmaster, and grandmasters obey the City Lord. In cases where a dwarf believes his superior to be unfit or acting against the interests of the city, he may approach his master's superior. This is a very grave charge, and those who make accusations without sufficient cause often find themselves sent to Rockhome to stand against the Abyssals.

Population: 100,000 dwarves (20,000 miners; 14,000 craftsmen and smiths; 14,000 farmers; 50,000 children between the ages of one and twelve; 500 priests and healers; 1,500 soldiers)

Imports: Injured soldiers, ore, and minerals.

Exports: Healed soldiers, weaponry, armor, iron rations, muishin and worked goods.

Important NPCs: City Lord Ashler Heartbeard, Grandmaster of Mushroom Farmers Frondyke Raketon, Grandmaster of Blacksmiths Starlin Bronzecarl, seers Pike (Ashler's wife) and Cowain Blaisheet, Stalwart, Rage and Trogar Helmspike.

History

Six hundred years ago dwarven scouts discovered a rich vein of iron ore in an enormous cavern south of Rockhome. Despite the danger of releasing so many dwarves from the front lines, Hember had no choice. Steel was beginning to run low and without armor and weapons the dwarves were doomed. He sent a thousand miners and a handful of warriors and priests with orders to create a settlement and begin mining the ore. Plans changed when the dwarven scouts arrived at the cavern and discovered thousands of Abyssals massing for an attack.

Harn Axeheart, leader of the expedition, realized that the dwarven strongholds behind him would fall if this force hit their unprotected flanks. He immediately sent a messenger back to warn the king and instructed his scouts to find a good place for a final stand. His men were miners, not soldiers, but they would die holding off the Abyssals rather than flee. As he sat back against the rock tunnel to think for a moment, he felt a rumbling deep within the granite: an enormous river thundering through a tunnel nearby. Suddenly his path became clear.

The miners spent the next two days frantically preparing tunnels, while his sneakiest men scouted. Finally the moment arrived. Five miners smashed asunder a rock wall, releasing thousands of gallons of water to rush through the tunnels. The torrent burst into the chamber high above the Abyssal army. Dwarven priests increased the flow of water while engineers stood shoulder to shoulder across the passage leading upward

from the cavern. Abyssals shrieked as the water drove them back to the tunnel leading into the heart of the world. The battle lasted hours and only a hundred men survived the assaults, but the cavern was theirs and the tunnel leading down was completely flooded. On the site of this great victory, the dwarves created a metropolis dedicated to the extermination of the Abyssals. The ancient foe has not attacked the city in centuries, and it has become the heart of dwarven industry. Veins of minerals and ores in the area remain plentiful and the forges of the city operate constantly.

Society

A single grandmaster presides over each industry under the direction of City Lord Ashler Heartbeard. They monitor and improve their fields of expertise, be it growing mushrooms or forging steel. Beneath them, hundreds of master artisans oversee individual forges, mines and fields, creating the goods that the fighters rely upon. Laboring beneath each master are journeymen and apprentices, learning their crafts and perfecting their skills. Apprentices begin learning their trade at the age of eight years old and must maintain their studies while also training to fight against the Abyssals.

A dwarf may be a master blacksmith most of the time, a journeyman mushroom picker during the harvest and an apprentice warrior during attacks. The only consideration for the social level of the dwarf is the skill and ability he brings to an area of expertise. Overestimating or underestimating one's abilities are both frowned upon.

The city contains a disproportionate number of children because this city is considered safe from the constant attacks of the Abyssals. Many pregnant mothers come here to deliver. This allows them to avoid becoming attached to the children they must give up and ensures the safety of the young dwarves. Steelforge takes its responsibility seriously and every citizen works together to raise the children. They are tested by the Seers and trained to use their natural gifts. All receive the combat training they will need when they stand in the front lines. Most of these young dwarves travel north to Rockhome when they reach the age of responsibility, feeling that they must face their destiny far from their childhood home. Some return, but most never again see the tunnels of Steelforge.

Geography

Located four days south of Rockhome, Steelforge sits in the bend of the Thunderwater River in an enormous cavern. The western section of the city occupies the bottom of this cavern while the eastern section is on a ledge overlooking the cavern three hundred feet below. Guard posts posted along the river and the tunnel passages ensure no attack takes the city by surprise.

There are several dozen small villages of a few hundred dwarves within a day's journey of the city which are both early watch posts and collection points for raw material. These temporary villages are constructed quickly, extract the nearby minerals or fungus, and send it back to Steelforge for processing. Some are established enough to have their own forges, though most consist exclusively of miners and farmers.

Steelforge Locations

1. FRONDYKE RAKETON'S FARM

This large cavern was hollowed out in the early days of the city and has expanded a number of times since. It now houses the largest white mushroom farm in the settlement, and was once the only food source for the city. It is also the primary source for the iron rations manufactured here for shipment to the other dwarven cities. The cave is supervised by Grandmaster of mushroom cultivation Frondyke Raketon, a wizened old dwarf who tends his crops despite the arthritis that racks his body. Few remember that he was a powerful fighter until he lost his left leg to the Abyssals. He is currently working on a mushroom with levitation properties. The caps actually float above the ground, connected only by a thin flexible stalk. This would quadruple production by avoiding space constraints. The only problem is that the stalks are too fragile yet and tend to snap, leaving the caps floating about the cavern. He believes he can cure this deficiency with the correct fertilizer — umber hulk feces — and is willing to hire a party of adventurers to find it for him.

2. STARLIN BRONZECARLT'S FORGE

The Grandmaster of the forge operates this large facility where several hundred

dwarves toil each day to produce weaponry and armor. Starlin Bronzecarlt himself constantly creates new designs here. The burly dwarf is in his prime and maintains both his impressive strength and his quirky sense of humor. He is rumored to move full-size anvils by himself, and gives weapons to adventurers merely to test their strength. Any item created by the Grandmaster will be a masterwork in workmanship and unusual in design, such as his triple-headed morning star. Several dozen master smiths reproduce his designs. Visiting and recovering warriors are often invited to the forge to discuss details of their encounters, for research improves weapon technology.

This building also houses several dozen forges where apprentices and journeymen hone their skills. Their items are carefully inspected, and most are melted down when flaws are discovered. Starlin believes only through trial and error can truly great craftsmen learn their art. Adventurers short on money can buy cut-price apprentice-forged weapons. Any time the wielder of an apprentice-created item rolls a 1 on an attack roll, the item breaks.

Currently Starlin is carefully monitoring the students because of a hooked pike he discovered in the forge ten days ago. The item had no forge markings to indicate which student had created it, but its design and workmanship was astounding. The material appeared to be an iron-silver alloy that he had never seen before. He does not know which student created it and wants to supervise any further products this craftsman creates.

3. ORE STALLS

These enormous buildings store minerals for the blacksmiths. Coal and iron ore fill the two in the lower part of the city while the other two hold rarer metals such as tin, bronze, copper, silver, and magnesium. These are used in alloys and for more unique items. The bins are not guarded, though a steady stream of apprentices retrieves materials for their masters' forges.

A winched pulley system raises a metal cage up to the western bins when necessary.



4. OUTER PORTCULLIS

The lowest point in the city, the outer portcullis is constructed of foot-thick steel bars embedded into the rock walls on either side. It opens toward the north, which means that the weight of the rushing water holds them shut with Strength 30 force. This is the first line of defense against any Abyssal attack launched from the tunnel.

5. INNER PORTCULLIS

Several hundred feet from the outer portcullis lies a second portcullis of similar design, this one guarded. Fifty dwarves are posted here at all times to ensure that the city can be warned before this second gate is breached. Three buildings on either side of the Thunderwater serve as barracks and practice areas for the dwarves stationed here. Each week several dozen youngsters are sent here and given experience in the burden of standing watch. The recruits enter a boat tied up at the Northern Ledge and the rope is slowly let out so the boat floats down to the inner portcullis. Their training here focuses on the use of the pike and the skills necessary for working as a group.

This guard post is also a last-ditch escape route from the city. If Steelforge is attacked from the west and the civilian population must flee, the gateway may be enchanted to seal the tunnel with solid granite. While the water is cut off, the portcullises can be opened so survivors can move down the passageway. Scouts have determined that one mile down, the passage branches out and a quick moving group can reach tunnels safe from the raging river. These tunnels have only been partially explored, and no one knows what will befall anyone who ventures in that direction, nor even if return is possible. Only the Master of the Inner Portcullis, the stern dwarf known as Stalwart, and the City Lord understand this possibility.

6. OUTER BARRICADE

Four pivoting rock walls block the northwestern entrance to the city. These walls are twelve feet thick, with thick steel bars that lock into the floor and ceiling. Only activating a series of levers on the inside releases the bars. The openings created in this manner are each twenty feet wide, though two adjoining doors may open to allow larger items or groups to enter. Ore shipments come into the city this way and are stored in the warehouses in this area. All shipments are carefully searched to ensure that saboteurs and enemies cannot enter via this path. Other buildings in this area house the fifty guards posted here. If an alarm is raised, dwarves from the Citadel reinforce this contingent.

7. STEEL GATES

In the southwestern corner of the city stand the unadorned Steel Gates. Twenty-five feet thick and fifty feet high, they possess powerful enchantments and intricate engineering, so a single man can open or close them by himself. However, their mass means they require at least five minutes to shut. Twenty dwarves are posted in the tunnel leading to the Gates. At any sign of danger, three dwarves rush back and close them to ensure the safety of the city while the others hold off any approaching danger.

On the other side of the gate lie four chambers, each fifty feet across. Ten-foot thick rock walls separate these chambers and another steel gate is locked shut at the western edge of the room.

Murder holes, spiked pits and crushing wall traps fill these chambers, though these traps can only be triggered by several dwarves working in concert on the other side of the steel gates. The controls are difficult to identify, allowing the gates to be guarded from either side without danger of having the traps used against them. This setup is designed to destroy any force capable of breaching the outer Steel Gate, locking it within the chambers while traps mangle its survivors.

There are usually ten dwarves posted beyond the second set of gates carefully examining visitors for any sign of Abyssal influence. Only one chamber is opened at a time to keep traffic flow contained, though the others may be opened if refugees need to be moved past the gates quickly.

8. CITADEL

A few hundred yards behind the Steel Gates a fifty-foot span of granite bridges the raging Thunderwater to a small island in its middle. Another bridge connects the island to the far side of the river, but most visitors stare instead at the fortress built upon the island itself. The walls are steep on the outside, but gradual inclines on the inside provide maximum strength. Two tall towers within the walls provide height for ranged attacks and living room enough for the four hundred dwarves who guard the citadel. In case of attack, the bridges would both be destroyed, forcing enemies to launch attacks across the rushing water and up the twenty-foot walls. Built two centuries ago, the Citadel has never fallen.

Two-man boats are stored atop the northern wall. The dwarves of the Citadel train to launch themselves off the wall with one of the boats. The current carries the fighters alongside the water tunnels and then the Barricades. Anyone not trained in the procedure will receive a rude surprise if they miss these landings. The Thunderwater River empties over a 300-foot cliff, and none have ever survived the plunge. The dwarves of the Citadel are the only dwarves who know how to swim, and young thrill seekers often volunteer for duty here.

Trogar Helmspike is the leader of this fortress and an experienced commander. He is one of the few hale veterans of the dwarven front lines. While City Lord Ashler has control of the city, it is Trogar's duty to protect it from external threats. The soldiers of the Citadel know they are the most important line of defense against any enemy coming from the Steel Gate — the most vulnerable route of attack — and they take pride in that knowledge. Trogar employs unusual weapons and tactics, aware that defeating the Abyssals' twisted forms requires an open mind and a strong arm.

9. BARRACKS

Beyond the Citadel lie the barracks of Steelforge, often empty while their occupants serve in isolated areas such as the Portcullises, the Citadel, and the tunnels surrounding Steelforge. These quarters also house hundreds of youngsters training in weapon use and other military skills. Every child over the age of five trains in these rooms one month out of three. They spend time at the Citadel, the Barricades, and the Portcullis, but return here every day to sleep and train under the watchful eye of experienced warriors.

10. INNER BARRICADE AND MINER'S GATE

This wide wall spans the entire cavern and is the second line of defense. If the Outer Barricade were to fall, twenty dwarves would guard this fortification to stop any invasion. Pots of boiling oil and spear traps are set up along the wall to slow and repel any attack until reinforcements can arrive from the Citadel. Set into the center of the wall is the Miner's Gate, a wide granite slab reinforced with steel bars that lock into the floor and ceiling. Ten dwarves check any strangers entering the city for any signs of Abyssal influence. Beyond the Miner's Gate, the path crosses a bridge over a rushing river.

11. TOMBS OF ST. VHORIM

This large cavern was carefully excavated to serve as a temple, but when the first City Lord, Harn Axebeard, died fighting off a troop of Abyssals in this room, the miners entombed him where he fell. Other tombs followed as the honored dead of the city were laid to rest here.

Only dwarves who have earned their true names may be buried here. They are interred wearing armor and holding weapons in case they must return to defend the city again. The priests scoff at the possibility and allow only castoff items to be sealed in the tombs; it is the responsibility of the living to defend the city, they say, for the dead have already served. Each tomb is a block of stone seven feet long and four feet wide, covered by a thick slab of granite engraved with the image of the dwarf entombed within. Many smiths in the city leave their greatest masterpieces atop tombs when they complete them, hoping that the strength of the fallen dwarf will infuse the item. This is more than an idle wish, as priests of Vhorim often bless the weapons found here. Anyone taking an item from this room other than its creator is shunned as a grave robber.

12. TEMPLE OF ST. VHORIM

This, the largest temple within Steelforge, was built after the original temple became the Tombs of St. Vhorim. Finished only five years after the founding of the city, it was dedicated to Hember's seneschal, St. Vhorim, in honor of the minerals of the area that were already turning Steelforge into a city of engineers. The temple is twenty feet high and contains a large altar to Kor and many pews. The wall carvings show the first battle of Steelforge and the diversion of the river. Kor is not depicted, but his presence is strongly felt watching over the temple. Visitors find the place peaceful, except during times of war when it becomes an infirmary. Then youngsters transport and treat casualties while the priests roam the front lines, aiding the wounded and assisting the defenders.

Living quarters for the priests of Kor lie west of this chamber. Several are seers who privately examine Steelforge's children to determine their aptitudes. The leader of the Steelforge seers is Cowain Blaisheet, a thin dwarf of indeterminate age whose natural abilities and blindness make others uneasy. Despite the loss of his sight in battle, he easily navigates within the temple regardless of obstacles or visitors. He rarely leaves, preferring to invite visitors into his small quarters. Apprentices take care of his appearance and schedule, allowing him to focus on the needs of his suppliants.

13. PRACTICE ROOM

North of the barracks and the Temple of St. Vhorim is the practice area where inhabitants train in the ways of war. Hundreds of blunted weapons are stored here, and dozens of instructors show apprentices the proper method of holding weapons, standing watch, and moving upon a field of battle. Several clay statues of Abyssal creatures give the students an appreciation for common foes and weaknesses. Even the most skilled of warriors spend a few hours here each month to keep skills at their peak. The City Lord often oversees training.

14. CITY LORD'S QUARTERS

A large cavern serves as the living quarters of the City Lord and his family. He personally raises dozens of children: those who are having trouble accepting their destiny, and troublemakers. His efforts to help these troubled children fit in are largely successful. His wife, Pike, is an enormous woman who lost both legs in combat several years ago. She still uses her abilities as a seer to help the children of the city. In fact, after Cowain, she is the most powerful seer in the city. However, she suffers from crises of faith and rarely meets with anyone over the age of ten besides her husband.

15. CARVED TUNNELS

After the first battle of Steelforge, it took the dwarves several months to divert the river into its current bed. During that time, the Thunderwater carved several tunnels through softer rock and emptied into the Steelforge cavern. These tunnels have been enlarged for defensive purposes, but their initial character was maintained. They provide ambush points for any enemy that gets past the Barricade and give the dwarven young practice in moving through the natural tunnels of the underground world. Dwarven fighters heading down the river by boat may use the large landings to leave the river and several large pools provide good places for young dwarves to practice swimming.

Several different mushroom crops are raised here. The most popular is the muis mushroom, which is crushed and then fermented for a year to produce the extremely alcoholic beverage muishin. Served in small doses at dwarven festivals, it has a musky taste and pleasant odor. The yellow muis mushrooms grow from the ceiling, so the barrels of aging muishin are stored directly beneath them. In at least one instance, these served as extremely effective weapons because of their flammable nature.

16. UPPER CITY

The dozens of homes and forges of the Upper City fill a large ledge overlooking the Steelforge cavern. A massive stone gate forestalls entry from the Carved Tunnels in case of attack, but this gate is otherwise left open and unguarded. The artisans here depend upon access to materials coming in from the Barricade or the soldiers in the Citadel area. These include those working in bronze and tin, both rare in this area, and several weapon-smiths who focus on volume rather than craftsmanship. Children in this area tend to be older and more likely to focus upon careers as warriors.

17. CLIFF

A 300-foot cliff face splits the cavern that contains Steelforge. The wall appears too abrupt to be natural, but the dwarves have found no indication of what could have created it. To the north, water pours into a vast pool and then rushes down tunnels around the city. To the south, the cliff divides Steelforge into the Upper City and Lower City. The cliff is very steep and requires six Climb checks (DC 20 in the southern section, DC 30 in the northern section).

On the eastern edge of the Upper City, a strange invention connects the Upper City and Lower City. Two round buildings contain enormous spools of thick cable that carry steel cages up from the cavern floor to the ledge and back down again. This lift is used by most of the city as the practical way of traveling up and down.

Alongside the lift is a road used by those uncomfortable with the lift. This road is fifteen feet wide and has no railing or guards. Most of the traffic is visitors and ore carts in constant motion transporting ore from the Barricade area to the ore stalls below. Those sailing by on the lift often call down to those on the road and engage in friendly conversations.

18. LOWER CITY

Children fill the erratic streets of Lower Steelforge, running errands or simply playing. Smiling adults check on them before turning back to their tasks. A light haze drifts from the forges and shops, and hammers on metal and the clash of weapons fill the air with a pleasant rhythm.

The heart of the city lies upon the cavern floor in hundreds of small homes, forges, and stores. The city streets were carved into the floor as the dwarves extracted the iron ore, leaving a multitude of granite blocks. In the centuries since then, the dwarves have carved dwellings and shops from these blocks. The city is close to capacity and plans are underway to expand the cavern to the south. The buildings are covered in carved images of children at play, dwarves dancing and singing; memories of a happier time. The streets are not marked and wander aimlessly, depending upon the direction the iron ore was running.

There are no barracks or nurseries in the Lower City. The adult dwarves here all live in their own homes, but they travel to the various training facilities to stand watch and practice. The largest buildings are hospitals and infirmaries where the wounded can slowly heal, or learn to live with more permanent injuries. Those who are unable to return to the constant combat with the Abyssals become craftsmen and farmers. More than a quarter of the city's inhabitants possess such injuries.

Entire communities of similar individuals, such as weavers and blacksmiths, live in the same area. These communities also raise children communally, allowing them to see a variety of views and techniques within their field of specialization. Such groups also fight together during attacks.

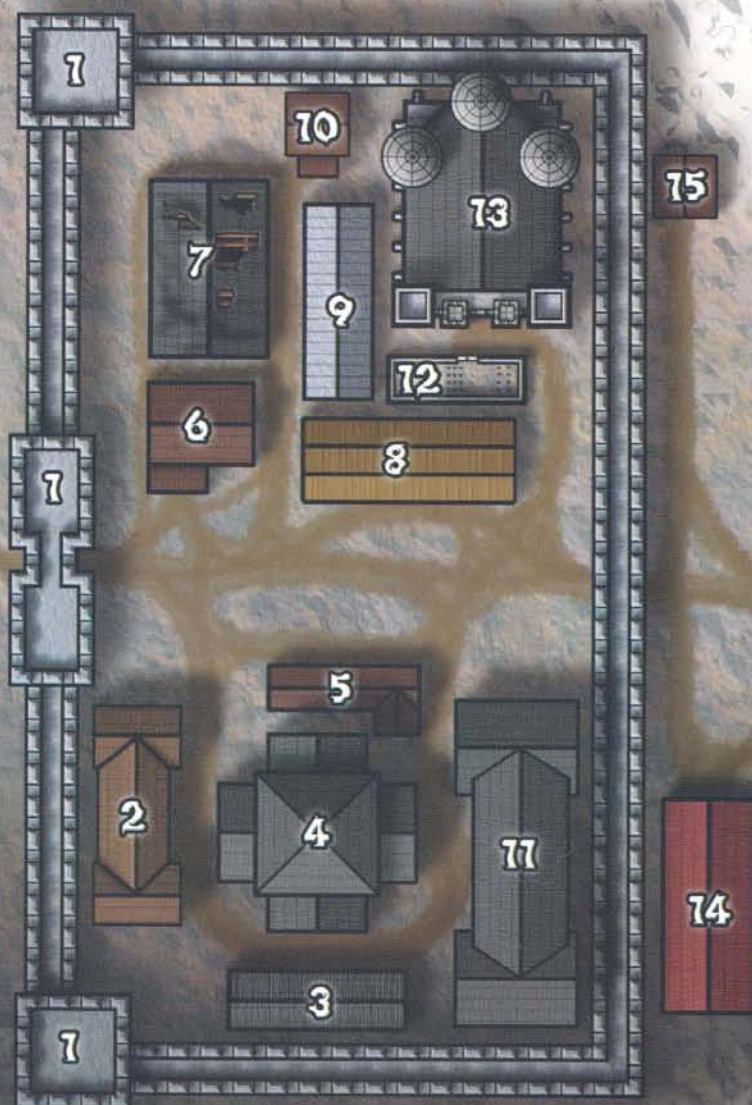
19. NORTHERN LEDGE

A 300-foot waterfall cascades into the cavern alongside Steelforge and forms a small lake alongside the city. The water here is cold, but fish feed upon the algae that grows here. The young dwarves of the city enjoy swimming, but avoid the western end where the water disappears into a massive tunnel leading down. On the northern edge of the lake another ledge holds several buildings where dwarven warriors train.

The dwarves who live here are outcasts. Thieves, heretics, and adulterers are sent here to remove them from the temptations of the city. They also learn responsibility, for the lives of the dwarves in the portcullis are completely dependent upon their handling of the supply boats. These six-person boats are tied up here and the ropes are let out until the boat reaches the inner portcullis. The boats are hauled back to the Northern Ledge six hours later. An enchanted pipe is fastened to the wall all the way down the tunnel to the portcullis, aurally treated to carry voices clearly. These dwarves also are in charge of several other boats that allow travel to and from the Lower City, and of the safety of the dwarves spending time in the lake. Special training here focuses on swimming, strength, and stamina because their leader, Rage, believes that the outcasts can find peace in exhaustion.

A handful of the dwarves who work here are aware of another secret. There is a tall chimney built alongside the waterfall. Two of the dwarves' boats can fit into the chimney at a time. Pulling upon a chain causes a stone wall to seal the bottom of the chimney while a portion of the river is diverted into its top. The chimney quickly fills with water, raising the boats to the top of the chimney. Once the boats have cleared the chimney, another chain releases the stone wall below and the chimney will quickly empty. This has only been used a handful of times and is meant to allow more reinforcements to the upper regions of the city. However, the boats quickly take on water on the way up and must be rowed against the current to the Barricade. The route is incredibly dangerous but it is the fastest way to reach the upper regions.

Unbeknownst to the dwarves, the water of the waterfall has pounded down upon the lakebed and dug it even deeper. At this lower depth, it connects to a spring that increased the water flow and sped up the erosion process. The lakebed now extends down almost sixty feet and has begun to undermine the northern portion of Lower Steelforge. In time, this could collapse Steelforge into the lake.



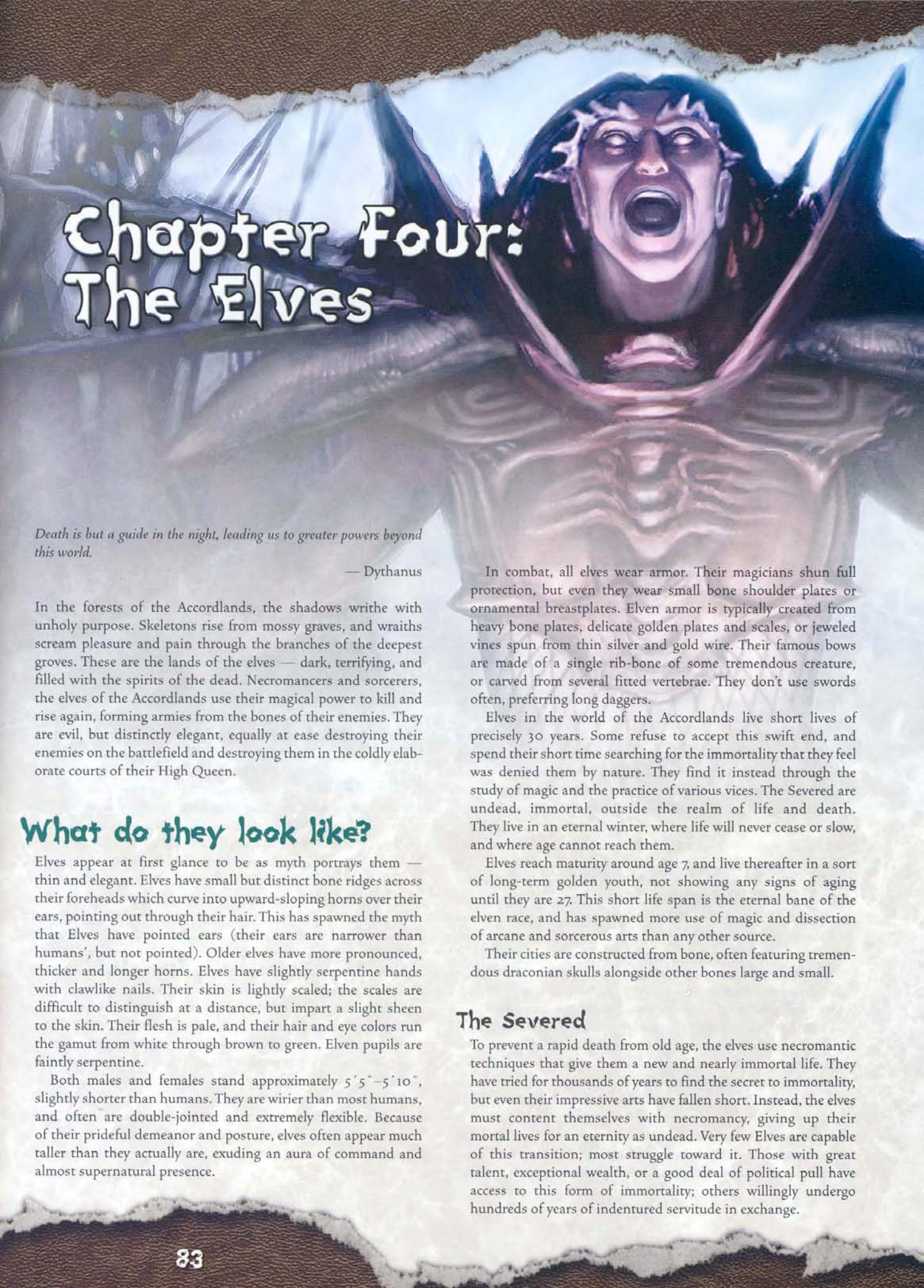
New Goldenaxe

WEST

Steeleforge



WEST



Chapter Four: The Elves

Death is but a guide in the night, leading us to greater powers beyond this world.

— Dythanus

In the forests of the Accordlands, the shadows writhe with unholy purpose. Skeletons rise from mossy graves, and wraiths scream pleasure and pain through the branches of the deepest groves. These are the lands of the elves — dark, terrifying, and filled with the spirits of the dead. Necromancers and sorcerers, the elves of the Accordlands use their magical power to kill and rise again, forming armies from the bones of their enemies. They are evil, but distinctly elegant, equally at ease destroying their enemies on the battlefield and destroying them in the coldly elaborate courts of their High Queen.

What do they look like?

Elves appear at first glance to be as myth portrays them — thin and elegant. Elves have small but distinct bone ridges across their foreheads which curve into upward-sloping horns over their ears, pointing out through their hair. This has spawned the myth that Elves have pointed ears (their ears are narrower than humans', but not pointed). Older elves have more pronounced, thicker and longer horns. Elves have slightly serpentine hands with clawlike nails. Their skin is lightly scaled; the scales are difficult to distinguish at a distance, but impart a slight sheen to the skin. Their flesh is pale, and their hair and eye colors run the gamut from white through brown to green. Elven pupils are faintly serpentine.

Both males and females stand approximately 5'5"–5'10", slightly shorter than humans. They are wirier than most humans, and often are double-jointed and extremely flexible. Because of their prideful demeanor and posture, elves often appear much taller than they actually are, exuding an aura of command and almost supernatural presence.

In combat, all elves wear armor. Their magicians shun full protection, but even they wear small bone shoulder plates or ornamental breastplates. Elven armor is typically created from heavy bone plates, delicate golden plates and scales, or jeweled vines spun from thin silver and gold wire. Their famous bows are made of a single rib-bone of some tremendous creature, or carved from several fitted vertebrae. They don't use swords often, preferring long daggers.

Elves in the world of the Accordlands live short lives of precisely 30 years. Some refuse to accept this swift end, and spend their short time searching for the immortality that they feel was denied them by nature. They find it instead through the study of magic and the practice of various vices. The Severed are undead, immortal, outside the realm of life and death. They live in an eternal winter, where life will never cease or slow, and where age cannot reach them.

Elves reach maturity around age 7, and live thereafter in a sort of long-term golden youth, not showing any signs of aging until they are 27. This short life span is the eternal bane of the elven race, and has spawned more use of magic and dissection of arcane and sorcerous arts than any other source.

Their cities are constructed from bone, often featuring tremendous draconian skulls alongside other bones large and small.

The Severed

To prevent a rapid death from old age, the elves use necromantic techniques that give them a new and nearly immortal life. They have tried for thousands of years to find the secret to immortality, but even their impressive arts have fallen short. Instead, the elves must content themselves with necromancy, giving up their mortal lives for an eternity as undead. Very few Elves are capable of this transition; most struggle toward it. Those with great talent, exceptional wealth, or a good deal of political pull have access to this form of immortality; others willingly undergo hundreds of years of indentured servitude in exchange.



The Severed are undead elves who have willingly traded mortality for the immortal youth of undeath. Elves prize their necromantic magic, and thus to become Severed is considered the epitome of their culture. It is for the strong and the wealthy, or for those masters who can crack the secrets of death and be reborn as a symbol of unending power and magical prestige.

The tradition of severing oneself from the natural world dates to the time of the first archmagi council in ancient days. A fissure occurred within the council, and the necromancers drove out all other practitioners of magic, believing them weak. Their magic, the necromancers said, would lead to the death and annihilation of the elven race. Only by finding immortality, by removing themselves from the cycle of life, could the elven race be preserved. The necromancers took over the culture of the Elves, raising a High King and uniting the Seven Houses of the Elves. The first elf to become Severed was the necromancer Morghen Dythanus, son of the Dythanus the First, the elf credited with the creation of necromantic magic. Since his time, more and more wealthy elves have paid to become Severed during their 25th year of life.

Severed undead elves aren't black and zombielike. Their magic is deeply connected to the purity of bone. They rely on their powerful spiritual beliefs as well as their necromantic arts.

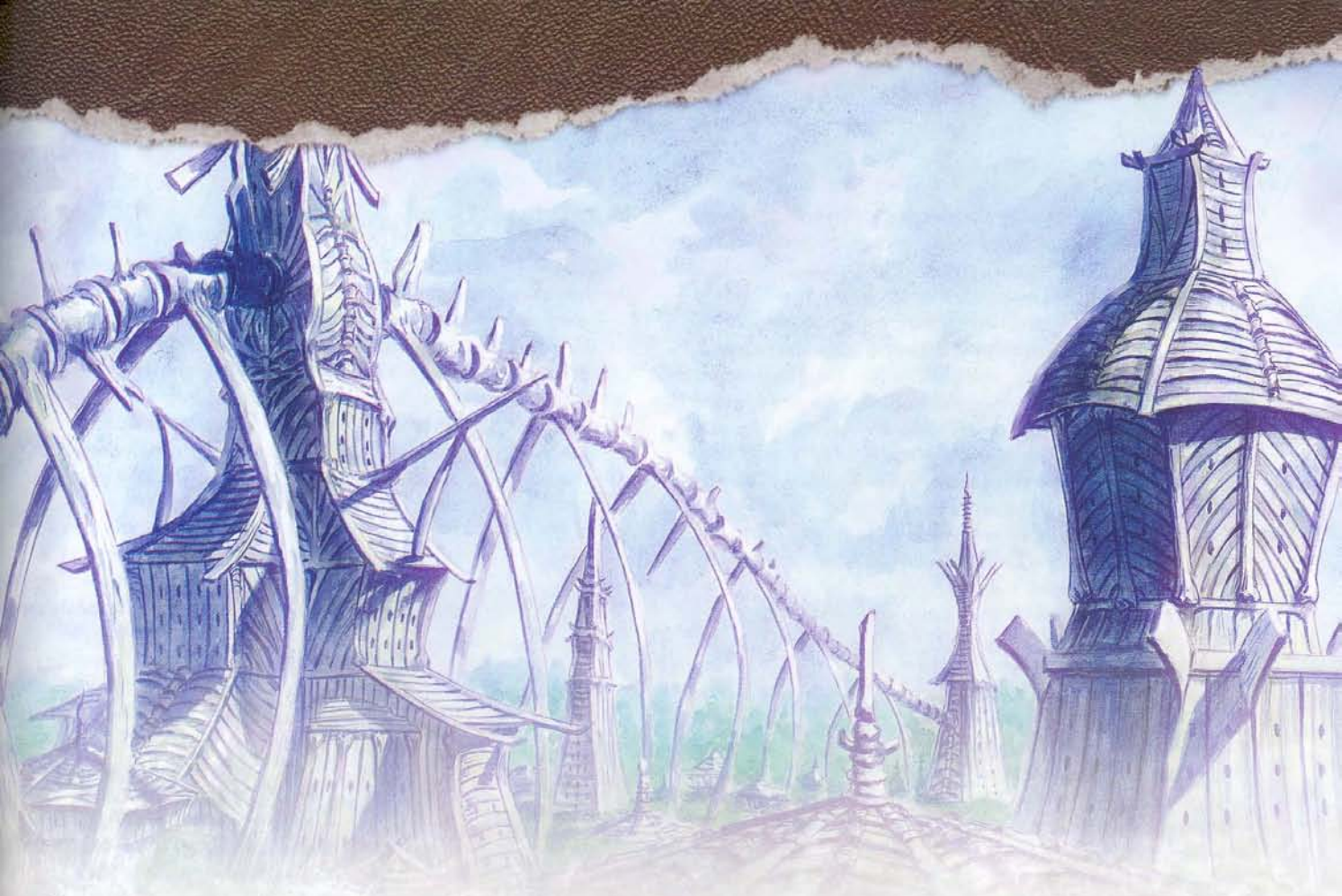
There are many forms of Severed, not all of which are beautiful or powerful. Not every necromancer can create Severed, and the rituals are complex and extremely costly. Some must settle for a sub-standard necromancer, or for less than perfect ritual tools, and their transformation can take a heavy toll. Because of the difference in rituals, the Severed are not all alike, nor can it be assumed that every elf who has stepped into immortality has the same power, abilities, or control over their undead form. Only the most powerful necromancers have the ability to make

a true lich — others must settle for becoming vampire, revenant, wraith, or even ghoul. Yet thousands of elves rush to join the elite clique of the Severed, frightened of death and eager for any alternative. Although there are theories that the ritual works on members of other races, the elves fiercely protect their secrets, and only their necromancers know the ceremonies. There are no known nonelven Severed, nor would any be allowed to exist for long.

Revenants

Revenants are the most common form of undead. They are humanoid, with gaunt faces and limbs, painfully thin, and very pale. They have dark features, and their eyes are intense. They dress normally, although their clothing often reflects the era in which they lived. Older revenants wrap themselves in bandages beneath their fine vestments to keep their flesh in place. Where their flesh has completely withered away, their skeletal structure shows through even the finest coverings. They do not smell nor rot, but they gradually wither until the body can no longer support even unlife and collapses into a pile of ash and bone.

A Severed revenant has few physical differences from its original physical form. They may be somewhat paler, or gaunter, or have slightly longer fingernails, but the change from mortal to immortal being is generally slight. Only as decades pass does their form begin to change, elongating and becoming as pale as a sheet of paper. They are not easily controlled by necromantic spells, and often live productive lives as members of elven society. Two-thirds of the Severed become revenants, and it is considered the norm for immortality among the elves.



Vampires

Vampires are much more fleshly than revenants, spectrally beautiful. Their features take on an unearthly beauty, classically elven and delicate. Their lips are red, and their eyes turn jet-black at the moment they first taste blood. Vampires are considered the nobility among the Severed, and it is both expensive and difficult to complete the transformation into vampire state. Those who fail either die in horrible agony, or are raised as insane wraiths, their spirits forever bound on the ethereal plane just beyond the physical plane.

For those who are successfully raised to a vampire state, the world is a plaything. They are extremely powerful, keeping all abilities and levels gained before their transformation and adding vampiric powers as well. They are truly immortal, as well as being immortally young, and their beauty is almost unearthly.

Spectres

The most piteous of the undead, those who rise as spectres tend to do so because of a flaw in the ritual. Their lack of a physical body has driven many spectres insane, and their moans and howls echo through the forest of Myreth.

Spectres are wraithlike knights. They appear in mistlike form within armor shells, plate mail and torn chain. Spectral armor is always blackened bone; their swords are made of glowing energy, a shaft of colored mist at their side. Some of these swords can reach across into the physical world to harm and injure their opponent, but for the most part, a wraith cannot affect this world physically. They resort to their powerful energy attacks, using their ability to weaken an enemy by their presence, and forsaking all that is solid or real.

Liches

Liches are the most powerful elven undead. Many of them are the strongest necromancers in the world. They have actually tied their life-force to the heart of the ethereal plane, fueling their immortality with its limitless power.

Each lich is different, as the power of the spell that created them interacts with the individual. Some are ancient, appearing to be haggard elves thousands of years old. Others are skeletal, with little flesh left on their shining bones, their bodies covered in velvet robes and golden crowns. Still others appear ordinary, their undead nature revealed only in the faint halo of luminescent silver that hovers about their bodies. No two are the same in appearance, nor have the powers of necromancy taken equal toll on their physical form. This much can be said for all liches: they are phenomenally powerful.

Where do they live?

The Elven lands consist of three massive forests: Myreth, Tseluse, and Tyraniel. Each spans thousands of miles, with thick stands of pine and oak hiding the ground from an inquisitive sky. It is said that some stretches of ground within the largest forest, Myreth, have not seen sunlight in thousands of years. The deep forests are inhabited by many different kinds of beasts, magical and undead as well as natural. They live in the deafening silence of the shrouded forest, beneath the bitter cold winds.

The forests of the elves are shadowy, mystic places with mist that clings to the ground and heavy ivy that twists around the wet black tree trunks. They are cold, especially deep in their hearts where the sun cannot reach, and the ground is often covered with

frost even in the height of summer. Some of this frost is brought out by the footsteps of the undead that make their homes in these forests — but no matter its genesis, the elves enjoy the chill sanctuary that their forests offer.

City walls, gates, and architecture appear to be pure bone, huge skulls of giants and Dragons, their ribcages curving into the structure of their houses and palaces. Not all of them are truly bone; some are carved marble, plaster, or stone carved to mimic it. Gold and silver decorates an elven city in strange patterns, sometimes forming letters and symbols.

Elven cities are spaced far apart, in deep valleys within their forests. The quiet tang of death lingers in the air, and thick mists hang in the tree limbs. The only illumination comes from the soft glow of crystal high upon the city walls, cascading from the branches of trees that grow and twist among the city streets. Their cities are lit by phosphorescent mosses, and by captive faeries known as “phon.” These creatures are forced into service within items called “phonstones,” crystal spheres or faceted stones that reflect their immortal light.

The other two portions of elven lands are smaller. The northern one is known as Tyraniel, once ruled by the now-exiled House of Rowan, but now held tightly in the icy grip of House Syneri. This forest is a dark battlefield, occasionally invaded from the north by Deverenian. The elves hold it securely, but the Deverenians will not yield their claim to the forest of Tyraniel.

The southernmost forest is Tseluse, controlled jointly by the powerful House Glyn and House Dythanus. The latter is the most powerful necromantic house, while the warriors of Glyn are the finest archers among the elves.

The main body of the elven forest is controlled by three of the Seven Great Houses — Calix, House of the High Queen; Syneri, the most ancient elven lineage; and Netheryn, the mad line of the ancient priests.

The climate of the elven forests ranges from hot sage land and twisted scrub trees in southern Tseluse, near Narawat, to cold pine forests with perpetual snowdrifts in upper Myreth and Tyraniel. Rivers criss-cross the forests, providing a natural avenue of trade between the elven houses. Cities are built in petrified trees, connected by large arched bridges of bone, or on or even beneath the ground, among the twisting roots of giant trees.

The forests are populated by myriad beasts, largely the result of elven experiments in necromancy and summoning.

What is their society like?

The enigmatic elves, cold and distant, care little for life other than their own. In the somber Myreth forest they research necromantic practices, and collect research specimens from the other races of the world. In order to fulfill their need, they began a war against many of the human kingdoms, stealing away thousands of human soldiers to make of them undead servants.

But long ago, the elves were compassionate, mystical, and interested in all forms of magic. Their spells and sorceries were gentle and enchanting, and they enjoyed pranks. They were firm advocates of peace.

That changed as elves grew more and more disgruntled with their lot in the world. Most elves were not willing to accept their dramatically shortened lives, and struggled to find other means of extending them. Some turned to religion, while others began researching alchemical potions. Still more began to seek immortality with sorcery, turning to spells and incantations to add even a few more months. Most failed, and many elves gave their lives on hopeless quests for fountains of youth, immortality, or eternal life.

In the end, the seven greatest elven magicians gathered to discuss options for saving their race. Dythanus and his necromantic servants defeated the others in a challenge of sorceries, and it was determined that the elves would seek

eternity through necromantic means. Only one other sorcerer, the powerful Syneri, refused to take any part of the research, condemning their pursuit of black magic. His house shunned him, and he left the forests forever.

Dythanus and his house led the elves into a society where the elite became eternal undead, and the underclasses struggled to prove themselves worthy or sought indentured servitude to pay for the expensive and dangerous transformation. A few hundred years of service is considered a fair fee for the more powerful transformations, and many elves pay it gladly.

A century ago the elves warred with the humans of the western kingdoms. The war went badly for the humans until the ancient wizard Syneri appeared from out of legend, lending his magic to their cause. The elves were stopped, most of the undead among their upper echelons of society were destroyed, and the entire elven kingdom was placed under a powerful geas. For a hundred years, no elf would be able to practice black magic. The humans thought that under such a restriction, elven necromancy would die out. One hundred years to the day later, a new army of elves marched west from Myreth, determined to seize Andover and burn the human kingdoms to the ground.



The plans of the elves have worked out over generations, their magic researched and their revenge honed to razor sharpness, decades of forbidden studies and covert practice. They wage war with unrelenting savagery, raising their enemies' fallen bodies from the earth to fight against their former comrades. The elves are enjoying this war. After all, they are winning.

Despite their short life spans, Elves have no compassion for nonelfen life, and see other races as test subjects for their necromantic experiments. They refuse to kill one another; an elf who kills another elf suffers a death cruel even by elven standards.

Because Elves have such short life spans, they are obsessed with becoming immortal, either literally or by having tales of their deeds live on after them. Many elven mothers name their children after land features, countries, cities, or other permanent world structures. The permanency of their names is supposed to bring solidity to the child's life, and good fortune to their short existence. Despite this, they rarely name them after truly dangerous things: immortal demons, Bascaron, the gods of other races, and so forth, which would negatively influence the child's short existence.

Magic

Elves have an innate knack for magic. Over a thousand years ago, they excelled in all sorts of magic, but the necromancers took over their society, and their style of magic became very nearly the only one practiced. Their latent abilities in other avenues are subservient to the study of necromancy. Those elves who waste their studies on other paths of magic are reviled.

Most elves are sorcerers in one form or another. It is common practice in the elven lands to teach all children the basics of magic. In this way, the secrets of their necromantic practices will continue to be passed down. The secrets of such magic, of course, are highly guarded by the Masters of the Dythanus house and their allies.

There is a small cult of non-necromancers in the elven lands, comprised of elves from each of the Seven Houses. This select and cautious group rarely accepts new members; it is said they are working toward unlocking a secret of eternal life that does not depend on necromancy. Some even whisper that this so-called "Cult of the Serpent" is in contact with Syneri and the Grey Elves of myth, and is determined to unlock his ancient mysteries.

The Seven Houses

Noble Elves are segregated into houses delineated by the birth line. The names of the houses are passed down like family names, but only noble elves (of the highest birth order) may use them. The noble houses of the elves, in order of prominence, are Calix, Syneri, Rowan (now exiled), Glyn, Dythanus, Netheryn and Tansiq (presumed dead for their cannibalism). Those houses trace their lineages to the first seven sorcerers among the elven people, the most powerful wizards ever known. Five of these ancient wizards have been destroyed, but it is said that Syneri and Glyn still live somewhere in the Accordlands. None can prove their existence; none can prove their death.

Each house is ruled by a King or Queen with utter power over the other members of the house and all those pledged to it. Those of the house owe their liege complete obeisance; this is sometimes enforced by magical means. Those who betray the laws of their house are often put to death.

Each of these Kings and Queens is ruled in turn by a single High King or Queen chosen from among the seven, typically from House Dythanus. A majority vote elects the High Monarch every half-century. The current High Queen of the Elves is the Lady Tepheroth, Queen of Calix. The Elven system of government is formed around a council of the Kings and Queens, with final decision-making power firmly in the hands of the High King or Queen. Tepheroth is a Neutral Evil level 16 necromancer.

Not all the immortals (liches, vampires, etc.) have the interest or power to play the political game, and as such, not all the houses are led by undead. Alia, once Queen of Rowan, was a young elf of only 15 years. She took the post after her father was killed by assassins in a *coup d'état*. Alia, and Rowan, were exiled in disgrace from the elven forests because they did not support the High Queen's war against Andover. Cordeos is the King of Dythanus, ruling with the support of one of the oldest lichs in existence: Morghen Dythanus, son of the first Dythanus. Morghen is a Neutral Evil level 18 necromancer.

House Glyn practically invented elven archery. They are renowned as scouts and hunters, as bowyers and snipers. The other houses hold diverse powers and abilities, but Calix is known for intelligence and apt political maneuvering, Syneri is drawn to the magic arts as well as diplomacy and warcraft. Dythanus invented necromancy and far outstrips the other elven houses in that craft.

Politics

Elven society is a magocracy, governed by the most powerful magic-users. Although clerics are respected, only mages wield clout in this society. The High King or Queen must be a wizard, and all Kings and Queens of the Seven Houses are expected to wield magical power. Rowan was the only exception to this custom, as its power has always lain in the sword; it is a house of warriors rather than sages.

Below the ruling mages, the Elves live in a pseudo-republic. An elven Council is made up of the Seven Kings and seven Councilors from each House. The High Queen can ratify actions proposed by the Council, but cannot propose any actions herself other than to address the Council and ask for their support on an issue. Only those individuals selected to attend Council by the King or Queen of their House actually get a vote. There are seven such individuals at each Council; these individuals are selected by the King of their House and replaced at that King's whim.

Elven Houses have their own inner councils, which are much larger than the Great Council. Once an elf is granted a formal seat on his house's council, he retains that seat all his life. A seat in the house is seen as a public affirmation of power and citizenry, and can only be granted by the King of that house. However, that responsibility is for the individual only, and is not heritable. Once an individual elf is granted a vote, they get to vote their opinion on everything from lawmaking to who rules the house so long as they are physically in council for that vote to be summoned.

Once someone has a vote on the Elven Council, it can't be taken away. Technically, Rowan members still have votes, and Alia could still cast them in the court of the Queen. However, since she would be slain if she dared to appear in court, that's a technicality at the moment. Rowan (as a House) will be officially dead when its last voting member dies.

Noble elves not born into a house are, rarely, granted a place on another house's council. These votes must be cast personally, at least a day before tally is taken. This, of course, means that if a spontaneous vote comes up before the council, the independent votes can't participate unless the House decides to postpone it.

Faeries

Small magical creatures are common in the elven forests. Some are benevolent, and others have been twisted by darkness. The darker faeries of the forest are called *derga*, and the lighter faeries are *phon*. Elves use these creatures as beasts of burden, pets, and personal servants, and such creatures often flit about an elven city carrying out some errand or mission for their masters.

Derga living in the wild are feral, vicious, and bloodthirsty. The buzz of their wings sounds like the rending of flesh. They live in packs within the wild, but can be domesticated if captured young and fed often. *Derga* speak their own primitive language, and are more intelligent than animals, but do not have a level of sophistication to their personalities or intellect to be considered civilized. They are easily subdued with magical power, and they fear elves of the Syneri bloodline with a passion that borders on the insane.

Phon, on the other hand, seem to be the typical faeries of myth. They are kind, gentle, and playful, with a shyness that keeps them hidden in groves within the deepest forests. However, as *phon* are both immortal and give off a phosphorescent glow, they are highly prized in elven society as a source of light. Captive *phon* are sealed in crystal to be used as light sources throughout the cities of the elves, and some are enslaved as messengers and pets by the very wealthy.

What is their religion?

"Elven gods are not spirits that live in a dream world distant from our own. They are within us — our blood, our bone. To stay alive, we must appease them."

— Behlial

The elves technically have no gods as most races understand them. The gods of the elves aren't deities that wander around, answer prayers, or materialize. Elven gods are completely animistic. The elves believe in semisentient powers that manifest through the essences of life: Bone, Blood, Spirit, and Flesh. Most elves believe that the power of Spirit is the strongest of the four, and most elven clerics gain their powers from this source. Few elves worship the manifestation of Flesh, and the cities of the elves often lack places of worship for this Element. Although their society respects it, not many elves turn to the priesthood of Flesh, as it is considered to be the weakest of the gods.

According to elven belief, these Eternal Elements exist inside every living thing in the Accordlands, and the Elements are hungry. They destroy life, eating through the natural lifespan

of a creature and feeding on its source. The Elements, if left uncontrolled, ravage from within, and leave a body in ruins when it dies. The ravaging of the Elements is the source of all aging, and only by making a pact with them can an elf find immortality.

This worldview implies that all elven necromancers are also clerics, which is inaccurate, but they do greatly respect elven religions and myth. It is a necessary skill for their rituals, and all necromancers must know how to deal with and revere the Elements (even if they do not formally worship them) in order to work their greatest magic.

A majority of elves seek to appease the Elements by offering them sacrifices. The elves believe that if the Elements receive an offering of blood (or flesh, or bone) from other sources, the elf offering the sacrifice will be spared. To further appease their gods, the elves perform elaborate sacrifices of bone and flesh and idealize the Elements in their sculpture, art and civilization. When these rites are performed correctly, goes the theory, the Eternal Elements will move on for a time.

Elven clerics are responsible for temples, active in government, and often advise the Kings of the Seven Houses. On occasion one holds the title of King, and it is not unheard of for a cleric to become High King. The clerics of the elves are unusual in that they are rarely altruistic; their services can be purchased by any member of the community, but they are not charitable souls who use their magic for the good of the people.

In Elven society, clerics are extremely prestigious. They are revered for the power they hold, and each House fights bitterly to have children who have real potential to be adopted into the priesthood. Those who choose this course never know need, as the church provides for their material and spiritual comfort (and because the services of a cleric are always much in demand).

Each of the Eternal Elements has a High Priest. These four individuals know each other, but do not necessarily work together, many of those who follow only one Element have a great disdain for the servants of the other three. Some priests don't serve a particular Element, preferring to worship all four at once. Others dedicate their lives and studies only to one aspect of the Eternal Elements, pledging themselves in singular service and turning their potential toward becoming an ultimate master of that power. These lines of division between the Elements cross cultural and religious boundaries, and quiet wars are always occurring among the priests of the Four Elements. These political machinations are rarely to eradicate any of the Elements, but rather to prove one Element's superiority over the rest. It is a continual struggle, and one that rocks the elven nation from time to time in strange and subtle ways.

That High Priest of an element is usually, but not always, an undead of an appropriate type, having found a way to permanently appease his god. Elven clerics pray to their gods, but not because they think those gods are listening. The Elements are primitive hungers, not civilized beings, and give power only to those who have fed their hungers. Elves believe their clerical powers come from their blood, their bone, and that their bodies are strengthened by the divine power of each Element. They draw on their own spirit, flesh, or blood as strengthened by the Eternal Elements in order to utilize its strength and cast their spells.

Who is in charge?

The ruling High Queen of the Elves is Tephroth, Queen of House Calix. Her closest advisor is Morghen Dythanus. Her command of necromantic magic is exceptionally powerful, and there are those who say the ghost of Dythanus tutored her. Certainly, she is one of the most powerful necromancers of the age, and her powers as a lich have only made her magical strength greater.

The elves of Myreth worship her nearly as a goddess. They serve her unquestioningly, and she inspires loyalty that even goes above the elves' sense of duty to their Great Houses. This is unprecedented, and many priests and powerful sorcerers of the elves fear this blind fanaticism that Tephroth wields. She is their gloriana, their greatest hope, and her followers believe wholeheartedly in her war of vengeance against the humans of the Free Kingdoms. The only open dissenters were the elves of House Rowan, who had always maintained peaceful relations with the humans and had little sorcery in their blood. For its disloyalty in refusing the High Queen's request for troops to march against the human kingdoms, House Rowan was stripped of rank and position and exiled forever from the elven lands.

Beneath Tephroth's iron control are the Kings of the various houses, and then the Court of Citizens (voting members of society). Interspersed in this court are the rest of the nobles, both simply titled and landed nobility. Below them are the merchant and peasant classes, and the carrion class, made up of both reviled undead and the living scum of the elven nation.

Current Political Climate

The Elves a thousand years ago were much different from what they are now. They were students of every magic, and despite their swift lives, they burned like brilliant flames. Their magic was powerful and elegant, their goals internal. They sought to be scholars, and students of knowledge. Then their lives changed with the arrival of the sorcerous Dythanus. Frustrated that his quest for knowledge would be cut short by his limited time on this plane, he inspired the elves to wish for longer lives and showed them how to accomplish their hopes for immortality.

Another sorcerer, Syneri, wanted the elves to return to their original ways and forswear Dythanus' dark teachings. After prolonged infighting, the elves converted wholesale to necromancy. A bitter Syneri murdered Dythanus, and then left the Elven Kingdom to find his path elsewhere. He was not seen again for many years.

A hundred years ago, the human kingdom of Andover went to war against the elves in defiance of their necromantic ways. The humans considered elven necromancy an abomination, and believed the elves to be defiling human graveyards to find servitors among human dead. Against all odds, the kingdom of Andover and its allies brought the elven kingdom to its knees.



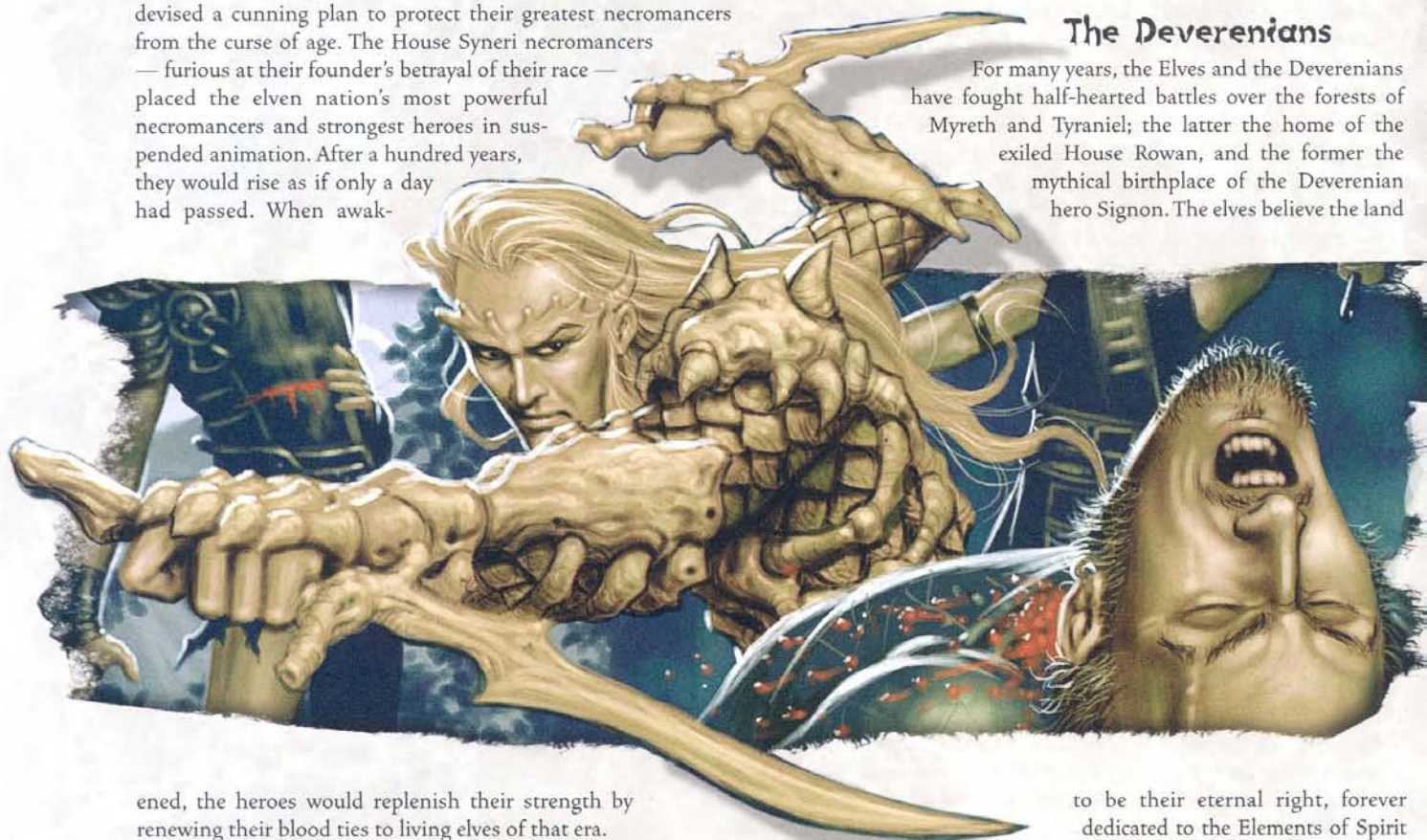
The largest reason for their success was the Archmage Syneri. He came from nowhere to ally with the humans of Andover, driving back the elven armies and wrapping their forests in spells as strong as iron. Syneri was even more powerful than the strongest necromancer, and he placed a geas upon his fellow elves not to practice necromancy for a century. Most of the great elven lichs had been destroyed, and there was no time to create more undead with all but a handful of their undead lords gone. The elves would need to survive a hundred years without necromancy, and most of those who knew the powers of their magic would die of old age long before the geas ended. Syneri hoped that this geas would force the elves to find other paths, and perhaps to leave necromancy behind forever.

Just before the geas was laid, the necromancers of the elves devised a cunning plan to protect their greatest necromancers from the curse of age. The House Syneri necromancers — furious at their founder's betrayal of their race — placed the elven nation's most powerful necromancers and strongest heroes in suspended animation. After a hundred years, they would rise as if only a day had passed. When awak-

Elven warfare is ugly. Their revenants, spirits, haunts and vampires feed on the living, and the corpses of their enemies provide the elves with new soldiers. These bodies are raised as zombies and other mindless servitors to be used as soldiers so that the Elves do not have to risk their own short lives. Their style of warfare consists of a series of attacks with massive numbers of undead, followed by crushing assaults of necromantic sorcery. This is then followed by another wave of undead as the necromancers raise the fallen and return them to the fight. Elven scouts, clever and quick, gather information so that their powerful sorcerers can use long-range spells or aim their massive armies of undead toward their foes.

The Deverenians

For many years, the Elves and the Deverenians have fought half-hearted battles over the forests of Myreth and Tyraniei; the latter the home of the exiled House Rowan, and the former the mythical birthplace of the Deverenian hero Signon. The elves believe the land



ened, the heroes would replenish their strength by renewing their blood ties to living elves of that era.

When the geas elapsed, the necromancers and heroes of the elves rose from their slumber, and the war began. The Elves swooped down on an Andover weakened by its own civil war, and crushed the eastern reaches of the human kingdoms. They burned Corinth, razed eastern Andover, besieged Toris Kelt, and utterly destroyed the kingdom of Llyr and its five great cities. Queen Alia and House Rowan, now exiled by the High Queen of the Elves, traveled south out of Tyraniei and into Andover. With their exile, the Deverenians seized her homeland almost immediately, although the elves of House Calix and House Syneri struggle against that invasion, determined to keep elf lands for elves. The situation in Tyraniei has not yet broken out into open war.

to be their eternal right, forever dedicated to the Elements of Spirit and Blood, and they fight tooth and nail for it. Although neither side

is willing to commit to total war, the forests have become quiet battlefields.

Both the Deverenians and the elves are fighting already: the Deverenians against the Kingdom of Denska, the elves against the Free Kingdoms of Andover and Toris Kelt. Neither can afford another to open a second front, but neither will relent and allow the other to seize control of either forest. Thus, it has become a quiet fight, where soldiers die uncounted and political power keeps the fighting hidden from the public eye. When the High Queen Tephroth exiled the House of Rowan, both the elves

of House Syneri and the Order Rellion attempted to seize Tyraniel. Neither was ultimately successful. This has only fanned the flames of the war, giving the Deverenians a more successful foothold. It is certain that when the elves finish their vengeance against Andover, they will turn their attention to the forests again — but their fight might come too late, as the Deverenians quietly seize more land with each passing year.

Aside from this undeclared war, the elves and Deverenians have a loose political alliance founded on their mutual distrust of the Nothrog to the southwest of both nations. The Emperor and the High Queen are said to exchange formal letters, and it is whispered that the Emperor is bartering with the High Queen for immortal life. The elves have never shared the secret of immortality outside their race, but the Deverenian Emperor is not one to take no for an answer.

The Dwarves

The elves have only recently discovered the dwarves, and are unsure what to think of the newcomers to the upper lands. Ancient scrolls and texts portray the dwarves as a tall, intelligent people whose beauty exceeded even that of the elven nobility, but these stunted cavern-dwellers bear little resemblance to the descriptions of their ancient ancestors. Further, prophecy states that when the dwarves return to the upper lands, it shall herald the end of the world, and the elves take prophecy seriously. They have a great fear of the dwarves who have come to the surface.

The Free Kingdoms

"The Free Kingdoms are vicious, wretched, and deceitful. They place their own twisted morality above the rights of others, and they sanctimoniously hold their beliefs over the heads of their superiors. They must be stamped out, crushed, destroyed."

"A hundred years ago, with the help of the great Betrayer Syneri, these humans dared to condemn us for our very way of life. They attempted to destroy our pride, our beliefs, and our civilization. Only through perseverance and superior intelligence did we escape total annihilation. With our newfound power and our restored strength, we will crush these vermin as they should have been crushed a hundred years ago."

"There is no hope for them, no mercy left in our cold hearts. Each and every one must be destroyed if we are to survive. Our very race was threatened with extinction, and we will visit that fear upon them ten-thousandfold."

"Let them freeze in the cold grip of death."

— High Queen Tepheroth,
pronouncing war upon the Free Kingdoms

Mercenaries

The elves have little respect for the mercenaries, but understand their purpose in the world. They are necessary, a place for the homeless and hopeless to congregate and eke out their pitiful existences.

Mercenaries have been a fact of life forever, beginning with the lone wolves that hunt and circle at the edge of their packs. There are even some elves among this bunch, exiled from their homelands or existing in a self-imposed hermitage. While many of them are dangerous, few of them actively work against the interests of the elven kingdom, and as such, the elves are not inclined to take any action against them.

The only thing that troubles the elves about the increasing numbers of mercenaries is the increasing number of former Free Kingdoms soldiers. If the mercenaries are paid, they will join the fight on Andover's side, and provide a greater defense for the dying human nations. The elves cannot afford this, and they struggle to maintain ties with the mercenary leaders, cutting off any hint of aid for the human kingdoms. The elves are willing to match any deal the humans attempt to cut with Kerebrus and his Horsemen, but to let that be known would only cause the elven coffers to be drained by mercenary greed. The elves must watch and wait, hoping that the humans cannot afford mercenary assistance and maintaining their own ties with Kerebrus' men and with the other factions of wolves outside the gates.

The Nothrog

The elves once considered the Nothrog allies, and indeed, the two races have a long history of maintaining peace between their borders to the east. However, as the plains of Sarakia fall to dust and the Nothrog conquer the free city of Baraxton, their relationship with the elves has become impossibly strained.

It is known throughout the Accordlands that Nassiral Hate, the new Overlord of the Nothrog tribes, hates and reviles the elves. He has forced all those Nothrog tribes loyal to him to discontinue all contact with their elven allies. The elves believe that, were he strong enough, Nassiral would war on them simply out of dislike. Luckily, between the Nothrog lands and the elven forests is the Sarakian expanse of broken plains. Only this keeps the two factions from war.

Still, many Nothrog legions not under Hate's thumb remain friendly with the elves, and trade openly and freely with them. The High Queen's ambassadors continue a steady commerce with these tribes, helping to strengthen them against any further incursions of Nassiral Hate's men, and trying to encourage them not to fall beneath the banner of the Overlord.

Alliances of Ice

Grey Elves (The Silver Path)

Some elves within the forests claim no allegiance to the Seven Houses, the High Queen, or any other order of elven life. They remain hidden in the depths of the Myreth, and keep their faces and names shrouded in mystery. If found, they fight against capture, and those who have been discovered by the High Queen's forces have been dragged back to the elven cities in chains as heretics. These elves are powerful wizards, and their magic radiates the pure force of good.

They are not necromancers, yet they have found immortality. These Grey Elves are therefore accused of being allies of Syneri the Betrayer. For their heresy, they are hunted by the most powerful necromancers in the elven nation, and their fate is invariably gruesome. Only eleven of these Grey Elves have ever been discovered, and seven have been put to death.

The elves of the Silver Path are beautiful, their features eerily perfect. Their hair and eyes are always silver, and their horns spiral up into silver antlers above their moonlit hair. It is said that such elves are the result of Syneri's experiments to find a method of immortality that did not rely on necromancy, and indeed, the few that have been dissected by the elven nation were several hundred years old. No mystic explanation has yet been discovered for their extended life, and the elves consider them to be both a blasphemy and a mystery.

Dark Elves (The Golden Path)

The elves have always believed in infernal powers, and there are those among the elven nation who know for a fact that powerful Abyssal beasts exist. Some elves seize this Abyssal power for their own, either by enslaving a powerful demon or by swearing allegiance to the Abyss and being touched by a piece of the corruption that is the Dragon.

Dark elves have black eyes with a sheen like oil upon water. Their skin is golden, with an oily texture. Small dark scales prick their flesh, interrupting its singular shine, and their features seem shrunk upon a prominent skull. They have a definite serpentine look about them, but their voices are melodious and entrancing. Their horns are thick and yellowed like old bone.

The Clerics' Guild

When the Elven nation suffered Syneri's geas, Behlial was already part of the Triumph. When the Free Kingdoms came to oust him, claiming his religion made him unfit to rule Athanaes, he routed their armies with his own legions of the faithful, then issued a proclamation: any who would draw arms against a religion also drew arms against Athanaes. Behlial's doctrine meant that any warlord who began a holy war would instantly bar his followers from the holy city, and would likely die shortly thereafter. Though he specifically refused to recognize the Cult of Bascaron or its enemies the Yscarite Heresy — theirs was a single religion, fighting an internal war — only the Church of the Storm has thenceforth been banned. All others are welcome.

The "Clerics' Guild" is not a formal organization, and its mocking nickname compares it to the infamous Thieves' Guild. Still, most religions abide by its concepts and accept any foreign priests as guests in their temples, protecting visitors with their lives. Many governments have begun sending priests as ambassadors, since any act against their ambassador could theoretically be against Athanaes, too, netting an instant ally for the conflict. While Behlial dislikes such abuses of his laws, it has yet to become an issue.

Although the elves of the Gold Path are immortal, few among the elves would trade necromantic eternity for the path of the Abyss. They are shunned, but not excluded from elven society, and they are considered too powerful to hunt and destroy. Thus, they live in elven society, occasionally even taking part in elven politics, but remain aloof from any social functions or interactions.

Nimbics

The feral nimbics rarely grow above 4 feet high. They live in the deepest forests and are strikingly beautiful, with only small points on their fangs to indicate their nature. They dress in furred clothing, well maintained to display their kills. They kill animals (and people) for fun and to experience the thrill of life. They aren't grunting primitives, but they feel no respect for life. They are priests and specialists in the Element of Flesh, and are the most powerful practitioners of that magic. For this they are shunned, as the worship of Flesh makes them cannibalistic and violent.

Almost all Priests of Flesh among the elves are nimbics, and rarely found in the elven cities. These elves tend to be clerics, not magic-users, and their armor is made of waxed hide rather than metal or bone. They have sharp fangs and clawed hands, although it is known that powerful priests of Flesh can shift and shape their own bodies (and others) into anything they desire.

Athanaes

Background

Athanaes is a city holy in the eyes of every religion in the Accordlands, and one of the few places where intolerance is a sin.

History

The city's history begins before history itself. During the battle against the Dragon, the armies of the entire world marshaled upon a mountain from which seven rivers flowed. A flight of wyrms destroyed the entire mountaintop, leaving only a wide plateau. It was upon this plain that the human woman Athanae slew the Dragon. After the Storm erupted from Its corpse and swept across the survivors, Athanae emerged from the corpse and raised her face to the heavens. No longer human, she had absorbed a portion of the Dragon's power and become a goddess. The people knelt before her in terror and awe — all except her newborn children. Her daughter Deima toddled toward her mother, calling out praises for her in all the tongues of the Accordlands while her son Deverenus stood back and watched silently.

After Athanae ascended into the heavens, her children took separate paths. Deverenus focused on his personal power while Deima ministered to the spiritual needs of the people. She spread the teachings of her mother for several years before returning to the plateau where she first walked.



Pilgrims had already begun traveling from across the Accordlands to the site and offering up prayers. Deima heard dwarves, elves and humans praising a multitude of gods, each seeing something different in the center of the plateau. The followers of Ishara beheld an underwater palace of beauty while others saw the sacred forests and trails of Neus the Hunter. Deima realized that the barriers between mortals and the divine were lowered in this place and vowed to consecrate the site to her mother.

Gathering the faithful from across the Accordlands, she built the city of Athanaes into the cliff sides to the south of the holy summit. White marble buildings and streets illuminated the holy truths of the goddess and Athanaes's statues graced each open plaza. As her brother strayed from their mother's holy ways, Deima transformed the city into a rallying point for her followers and an armed camp capable of supporting an enormous army. When war broke out, she was ready to defend her lands against any foe, but she could not marshal enough force to destroy her brother. At the height of the conflict, the two siblings chose to settle the matter in single combat.

Deima offered to allow the fight to occur upon the holy plain above Athanaes if both siblings agreed to guarantee the neutrality of the city in perpetuity. When Deverenus won and immediately declared his sister a goddess equal in stature to himself, the agreement became divine law, though it was only later that anyone realized what that agreement meant.

The agreement declared the city neutral in all matters, in perpetuity. Neither politics or military matters could intrude here and all faiths were granted equal standing. Within its walls,

no one could be oppressed or discriminated against for their beliefs. The newly created Church of Deima which ruled the city were shocked and appalled when one of its priests declared these new truths to the masses. Pilgrims of all races traveled from across the Accordlands to test the matter and found it binding. When Deima's own worshipers declared the elven pilgrims blasphemers and attempted to kill them, Athanaes and Deima themselves appeared and struck down the erring priests.

Even centuries later when the religion of the Storm absorbed Athanaes and Deima, the prohibitions against a single religion in the holy city remained. Those who broke these rules found themselves assaulted by the other faiths present in the city and their deities. Upheld now by tradition and a unity of belief, the city withstood a dozen civil wars meant to eliminate one faith or another.

The city has been attacked three times during its history. During a siege inhabitants must first declare their allegiance to Athanaes; failure to do so results in their expulsion. Those who remain muster against the invaders. Tens of thousands of priests acting in concert are a terrifying force, and no army has succeeded in capturing the city. Afterward, those who attacked the city and those who share their faith are banned from the city for a century. Few care to find themselves barred from this holy site. The most recent attack occurred seventy years ago from the Deverenian Empire, but was repulsed when Behlial and his aides rained fire and lightning upon their army. Priests of the Church of the Storm are still denied access to the city, though those who follow individual Védoszentek are granted access.

Economy

Athanaes was founded solely for worship's sake, although a few industries have arisen over the centuries. Production of blessed items is common, as are dream interpretation, prophecy, and prayers. Hand crafted items are also popular, though shady merchants frequently make fraudulent claims about their origins. Followers of the god Fineltour are notorious for bogus aphrodisiacs such as baskets "woven from the hair of virgin priestesses of Kavara."

The city relies on the purses of the visitors that flock there. Some come in search of instruction in the holy mysteries of the various faiths and to study in the libraries, largest in the Accordlands. Others seek blessed items, or seers, while some pilgrims wish only to deepen their faith by visiting this holy site. Regardless of the reason for their journey, they bring the money and goods that the city needs to survive. Nonordained people must pay a high fee to enter the city.

Athanaes has its own currency, the kahu, from the ancient term for prayer. These round brass tokens are magic items that contain divine spell energy. One side of the token displays the holy symbol of the cleric that enchanted it. The other bears an indication of the total spell levels in the token, which changes as these spells are used or recharged. A kahu token is worth 25 gp per stored spell level. Any divine spellcaster may cast spell levels into the kahu. If used by a divine spellcaster while casting a spell, the user may cast a memorized spell without losing from it their memory, but the kahu's value is reduced by ten times the spell level. Nondivine spellcasters may expend twenty levels from the kahu by casting *bleed* or *cure light wounds* directly from it. These tokens lose their magical properties away from the city, shedding one spell level per day away from the city. When a kahu's value is reduced to zero, it crumbles to dust.

Within the city, the most important economic activities are real estate transactions, which are restricted to faiths registered with the Triumph. Land-owning faiths must pay an annual tithe, and

default is grounds for the Triumph's seizure and resale of the lands and everything upon them. By purchasing adjacent land, a faith can accommodate more worshipers or visitors. Declining faiths often sell off parcels of land in an attempt to keep up the tithes on their remaining parcels. This causes the districts of the city to constantly shift and change as land purchases are made. (See "Government" for more information about the Triumph.)

Laws

The city of Athanaes has a separate community for each faith, and each applies its own laws. Only a handful of laws apply to all within the city. The first and most important is that the city is open to all regardless of faith or beliefs. Intolerance of other faiths is punishable by exile or death depending upon the severity of the act. Churches and indoor shrines are outlawed because they compete with the holy place in the plateau above the city, although outdoor shrines and statues are permissible. Destruction of holy symbols or imagery is completely banned, as are non-Severed undead.

Secondary laws outlaw murder, theft, assault, and public endangerment. Within public areas, these laws are rigidly enforced. However, individual communities may define the secondary laws to fit their cultural beliefs. For example, the Nothrogs of the Square of Boar define murder as killing an unarmed or unconscious being, so fatal duels and brawls are common there. Likewise, the followers of Neus the Peaceful have defined public endangerment to include any weapons not contained within peace knots, and anyone running within their streets. These laws are binding within those areas of the city and enforced by the city's Deputies, though many of the Deputies do not enforce rules in areas with which they are unfamiliar.

A Nothrog Deputy will rarely enforce every rule in the community of Neus



the Peaceful simply because he doesn't know them all. Deputies of any faith are arbiters of disputes and enforcers of the law, and demand respect. Failure to obey a law can result in fines or banishment from an individual community or from the holy city. Deputies enforce these laws under the guidance of the Triumph and their Voices. (See "Government" for more information about Deputies, the Triumph, and the Voices.)

Society

The city of Athanaes is broken into small communities united in a common faith. Followers of a single totem, a single deity, or a single aspect of worship congregate in communities of a score to several hundred worshipers, and often have their own marketplaces, shrines, homes, and shops. Many faiths have more than one of these communities. Each elects its own leaders and enforces its own interpretation of the city's laws. While the laws of Athanaes are enforced within the entire city and a community's laws may not conflict with them, anyone on a community's grounds must obey its laws. The communities within the Vestibule (inner city) are organized in the same manner, but they are generally more established. The members of the related communities within the Vestibule can move and live freely within the Narthex (outer city), though the reverse is not true.

Geography

Athanaes's buildings occupy the southern slope of a plateau on the western edge of Sarakia, but the city actually encompasses the entire plateau. Major roads lead to the city from the east and west, and these skirt the southern edge of the city and connect. A fifty-foot marble wall surrounds the buildings of the city but only the sheer drop outside the city walls restricts access to the plateau. Both gates allow access to the lower reaches of the city, or "Narthex," but the upper levels — the "Vestibule" — are behind an inner wall. The north-south roads are very steep while the east-west roads form levels along the incline. Above the Vestibule is the Plateau of Athanaes, a place of gardens and small shrines. No buildings are allowed upon the sacred lands of the Plateau. In the middle of the city is the Center of the Plateau, the holiest place in the Accordlands.

Government

Each faith in the city designates its officials by its own methods, and they rule their own people in whatever manner they deem fit. These officials select three individuals from their faithful to serve as Deputies, who enforce the faith's regulations and judge their brethren's disputes or criminal matters. Deputies serve until they choose to step down, so they are chosen carefully. If all the officials of a faith agree, they may remove a Deputy from office, but this has happened only a handful of times during the history of the city. Ministries with large memberships may choose Subdeputies under the guidance of the Deputies. There are currently one thousand elders, six hundred Subdeputies, and four hundred Deputies in Athanaes.

The Deputies of Athanaes serve as arbitrators in conflicts between members of different faiths, seeing that justice is done and both sides are satisfied with the matter. The desires of the plaintiff and defendant in the case are not considered; only the wishes of a majority of the two faiths.

Deputies also select the members of the Triumph of Athanaes, the ruling body of three individuals that oversees the city. The Triumph also judges Deputies who are accused of crimes and rules on cases where individuals feel that a Deputy has judged unfairly. The Triumph has complete authority and can reverse or uphold judgments at will. Each member of the Triumph must be selected from a different faith, and only Deputies are eligible. Candidates must meditate in the Center of the Plateau from sunrise until sundown, proving their strength of faith. When they emerge at sunset, candidates must take the Oath of Athanaes, vowing to show no preference for any faith and treat each worshiper equally. The vow and the office are for life. The members of the Triumph are honored by the ordained of all faiths.

The eldest member of the Triumph is Behlial, a Severed elven priest of Spirit. He became a member of the Triumph over a hundred years ago, shortly before the geas was enacted. He regularly strolls across the Plateau and ensures that conflicts do not occur in that holy place. One of the most respected elves in the Accordlands, he no longer has any interest in the politics or expansionist goals of his race. His deep faith in the debilitating role of Spirit makes him cold and unfeeling, and he disapproves of those who trust in the benevolence of deities. Shortly after he joined the Triumph, the other members decided to bar the holy city to undead creatures. Severed elves who do not rely upon necromancy, such as Behlial, are welcome, but the undead are proscribed from entering the city, and those who try are destroyed. Because of this, the undead minions dispatched to apprise him of Queen Tepheroth's plans have not reached him. He remains unaware of her true goals. Behlial is a Neutral Evil level 10 seer, level 4 Priest of Spirit.

The middle member of the Triumph is Yanalis, an Andoverian priestess of Neus who reveres his Scribe aspect. She joined the Triumph ten years ago at the age of forty and is in excellent health. Conflicts in the Narthex are common, so she spends much of her time overseeing the Deputies who keep the peace there. Most people find her warm smile comforting and trust her wisdom. Those that do not quickly discover that she is quite capable of enforcing the will of the Triumph. Yanalis is a Lawful Good level 14 cleric.

Bg'Sut is the newest member of the Triumph, having joined only a year ago. A Nothrog shaman of the rattlesnake totem Ss'Tar, he came to Athanaes a decade ago in search of his totem's wisdom and remained to ensure that his people were allowed free access to the city. Nothrog shamans rarely remain in the city long, preferring to remain with their tribes. In fact, Bg'Sut stepped down as head shaman of his own tribe to allow another to hold that important position, a loss which he bears stoically. He regards other races as inferior to his own, though he does not allow that to influence his judgments. He enforces the rules in the Vestibule, and those who would flout the law discover the might of a Nothrog's faith. Bg'Sut is a Neutral Evil level 14 shaman.

Each Triumph member appoints a Voice, roaming Deputies who pass judgments, investigate odd occurrences, and settle disputes involving anyone in the city other than the Triumphs.

The Voices have few limits to their authority, but their positions may be revoked at the discretion of the Triumph. Behlial's Voice is a silent elven rogue named Kevral who keeps assassinations and criminal guilds out of the city. Yalanis' Voice is a human knight from Andover named Sir Hotaku who maintains a close eye upon the Deverenians within the city. Bg'Sut's Voice is T'Kan, a Nothrog soldier whose battleaxe is the only weapon carried openly in the Vestibule. Each member of the Triumph also has a small group of assistants who help them keep track of events in the city. These aides have no official title, and no authority aside from their close communication with the Triumph.

Population: 100,000 (40,000 humans; 10,000 Deverenians; 35,000 elves and 15,000 Nothrogs)

Imports: Food, finished goods and pilgrims

Exports: Blessed items, kahus

Important NPCs: The Triumph of Athanaes (Behlial, Yalanis and Bg'Sut) and their Voices (Kevral, Sir Hotaku and T'Kan)

Notable Locations

1. THE DAWN GATE

On the eastern edge of the city, two massive pillars of rose marble frame a forty-foot wide gate of obsidian. Intricate engineering allows the gates to open easily, but their mass makes it a tedious process. At dawn each morning, six guards swing the gates open to allow entrance into the city. The process takes ten minutes and afterward the guards ensure that order is maintained and that everyone enters places a fee of ten kahus upon a massive altar just past the gates. The guards bar known troublemakers and anyone who cannot pay the fee. Moneychangers just within the gates stand behind the guards, exchanging visitors' coins or goods for kahus. The gates are closed every night at dusk. The road from Baraxton and the Deverenian Empire skirts the city wall along the southern edge and leads to the Twilight Gate.

2. THE TWILIGHT GATE

The Twilight Gate lies on the western edge of the city between two tall pillars of obsidian. The rose marble gates have the same engineering as the Dawn Gates and are opened every night as the last ray of sunlight disappears. Ten guards swing the gates open and position torches outside to improve visibility. The fee here is only nine kahus, and drops by a kahu with every hourly chime. The guards always include one man trained in appraisal who allows visitors to pay their fee in equivalent value rather than kahus. When the first rays of dawn strike the gate, the guards swing it shut. Anyone approaching the city during the daylight hours is directed down the road skirting the southern edge of the city toward the Dawn Gate.

Unknown to almost everyone, both gates are magical. As long as they are not barred, they open and close of themselves. The guards pretend to do the work for ceremonial purposes, but they actually keep an eye on the crowd. Closing or opening the gates otherwise requires at least twenty men working together.

3. THE ENTRY

Between the Dawn and Twilight Gates runs a wide, level road paved in dazzling white marble. All the buildings upon the Entry face away from the road with neither window or doorway.

There are lighted lanterns upon delicate silver posts every fifty feet and frequent side streets leading to the north and south.

4. THE AISLE

A straight, steeply rising road runs north and south through the center of the city. Its white marble blocks and lantern-lit length are constantly filled with throngs of people. It is the busiest thoroughfare in the city, and is constantly patrolled by Deputies.

The Narthex

Between the Inner Wall and the Outer Wall lies the Narthex, a sprawling group of single-story buildings and interconnected small terraces that fill most of the city. Each community has its own set of laws and elected officials who enforce those laws as well as the laws of the entire city. Most of these communities contain inns for visitors of their faith. Communities are constantly changing in size as new members join and leave, but the areas under their control are generally stable. If a community grows or shrinks, it may purchase adjacent territory and expand or sell off its property to raise money. For newcomers, the areas off the Aisle and Entry are a bewildering array of small side streets and districts with changing laws and beliefs on each new street. Outdoor shrines and statues devoted to innumerable gods have small piles of offerings on the ground before them.

5. THE CLOCK

Near the Twilight Gate upon the Entry is an enormous pillar of white marble, and upon its side is a clock face. The pillar chimes every hour in deep melodious tones. The clock operates magically without internal parts or tending. In the last few decades, the clock has slowed down. It was created in the early fifth century by an unnamed priest of Neus, who infused it with his essence; a plaque on the pillar gave thanks to Neus and the name of the creator, but the plaque disappeared a hundred years ago. The only way to repair the clock is to discover the identity of the creator and recreate the plaque. No one knows who stole the plaque, or why.

6. FOUNTAIN OF ISHARA

In the center of the southeastern part of the Narthex is a community dedicated to the worship of Ishara the Mother. This particular sect, popular near Lion's Jaw Bay, focuses on the fertility of the Sea Mother. Those in Athanaes who worship this aspect of Ishara created a beautiful fountain in a square within their living area. Blue swirled marble forms a basin with a stern female figure at its center. Water from the basin swirls up into the air around the statue and falls back into the basin. There is a small altar before the fount where offerings may be placed in exchange for a flask of the holy water. This water acts as a potion of cure light wounds, though truly faithful followers of Ishara often find that the water can neutralize poison and cure disease as well.

The buildings around the fount sell crafts and goods for the neighborhood. Many priests and pilgrims live in the homes in the adjoining streets and gather here each night to sing hymns of praise. The only unusual law in this district is the proscription

against red meat. This has caused some concern to a nearby Nothrog butcher who must receive shipments via a long, round-about route. He is attempting to purchase the house farthest from the fountain owned by Isharans in order to create a path to reach his business.

7. THE PLACE OF ABSTINENCE

In the middle of the Narthex is a building dedicated to the worship of Kavara. The fifteen powerful female spellcasters who live here focus upon expanding their mystical abilities. These women believe in the full expression of their feelings and powers except when it comes to dealing with members of the opposite sex. Unlike the other Kavarans of the city, these Sisters have all taken vows of celibacy, believing that abstinence increases their mystical powers. The other Kavarans consider this heresy, but cannot act against these women by Athanean law. Dozens of male worshipers of Kavara therefore continually try to seduce them, thereby correcting this misinterpretation of Kavara's laws. While several members succumb each year, new adherents occasionally arrive in the city, anxious to find a place where they can find peace. These priestesses receive their spells normally, and the goddess herself has not commented upon the situation.

8. THE DANCE HALL

In the midst of several communities — some human, some elven — which believe that silent meditation brings one closer to the divine, there is a strange building. From the exterior it is an austere two-story block of granite with a single oaken door, the words "Dance Hall" engraved above it. No sound escapes from within, as the surrounding districts have placed permanent spells of *silence* completely around it. Inside, the building is filled with shadowy reaches and loud music. Dozens of tables fill the lower level while sleeping chambers lie above. Strangely, there is a staircase leading up to the ceiling as well, and anyone climbing it finds gravity is reversed; there are always several patrons dancing upside-down. A kitchen and bar serve food at all hours while minstrels play for tips.

A hundred years ago, the worshipers of Fineltour could afford only one building. They thought they would be able to purchase parts of the surrounding area as time passed, but their neighbors refused, so the Dance Hall remains landlocked. The place does allow unaffiliated people to rent rooms, and it serves excellent food. Games of chance and slightly unscrupulous dealings are ubiquitous. This is one of several dozen "districts" comprising only a single building.

9. SQUARE OF BOAR

Near the northeastern edge of the Narthex lies the Square of Boar, one of the largest Nothrog areas in the city. While few Nothrog communities survive more than a decade, this one has endured for almost three-quarters of a century. The reason for this strange continuity is their devotion to several totems, all

embodying the spirit of the Boar. While the area dedicated to a particular totem never outlasts its Legion, the priests of the Square revere five totems equally and freely welcome all Nothrogs to their district. Many Nothrog shamans regard this as scandalous, but it has given all Nothrogs a place to gather while they search for their own areas to set up worship.

The Nothrogs ripped down several buildings to provide space for brawls. The prohibitions against murder in the city are relaxed here, and an object is only considered a weapon if it has killed at least a dozen men, so most Nothrogs go armed in the bars and brothels located here. Few Deputies patrol this section because very little is outlawed. The neighboring areas do not approve of the actions condoned here and rigorously prosecute anyone whose activities extend into their own regions.

The most notorious location in the Square is the T'usk's Charge, a squat building that serves the strongest liquor in Athaneas. The building is owned by a goblin who lowered the ceiling as a way to discourage taller folks from entering. The interior is roughly thirty feet square, contains no furniture, and its only windows open into the storage area in the back. The only drink at T'usk's is a concoction called blouck made of





fermented oats and blood sealed into a clay flask. Patrons order it from T'usk himself and pay before he calls out the order to his servants in the back. The servants then hurl the flasks toward the customer. If he doesn't catch it, that is his problem. The servants generally throw far more accurately for smaller customers. Fights are common inside T'usk's, especially when a customer's blouck hits someone in the back of the head.

10. VITH'S WELL

In the farthest northwestern corner of the Narthex, a dark side street of a run-down area ends at a well in a small square. The single building that opens onto the court declares this to be Vith's Well. Vith, a minor snake totem of K'mpur's Legion, is obscure. Visitors passing down the side street must make a Will save (DC 10) or become extremely thirsty due to a spell placed there by P'mar, a shaman of Vith. Those who enter the building discover dozens of snakes slithering around the living quarters of a Nothrog shaman. They hiss to alert P'Mar whenever anyone enters.

P'mar taints the water of the well with snake venom (Ingestion DC 12, Initial damage 1 Con, Secondary damage 1d8 Con). P'Mar was too old to retain her position as head shaman of her tribe, and she provides an antidote to anyone who asks politely and

donates at least ten kahu. She responds to rudeness or attacks with her meager spells and sends her pet snakes after enemies. She hopes to gather enough kahu to allow her to enter the Center of the Plateau and meet with her deity. She has tried this three times, but awe kept her from entering.

11. FLESH'S FLAME

In the northwestern portion of the Narthex are the homes of a group of elven priests of Flesh, white marble buildings engraved with images of flames. Almost a thousand elves live and work here in one of the city's largest elven communities. The homes are austere on the inside, but several beautiful altars extend from the sides of the buildings providing places for sacrifices to the Elements. The most important altar is actually a large fire pit in the center of the homes.

It is here that the priests delve into the secrets of the Severed, attempting to reach that hallowed status. None of them have succumbed to necromancy, preferring to find another method, but false rumors of cannibalism and unwholesome rites have haunted the area for decades. The priests believe that by creating the perfect fire, they can burn the Elements out of their bodies. They have attempted thousands of combinations of wood, minerals, plants and mystical energy without success. So far every volunteer has died, but they continue to experiment. Their common goal transcends elven politics, so no mention of House is allowed in this small district. No one, including Tephroth, has yet realized that several members of House Tansiq and Rowan live here.

12. THE FARMER'S RISE

Near the southern wall of the Narthex atop a small hill lies a district of flat-topped single-story buildings dedicated to Neus the Farmer. Several hundred years ago the priests of Neus purchased a single building here, imported tons of topsoil, and covered the roof with it. When spring arrived, they planted a small crop. With the growth of worship of Neus, the community has expanded to several hundred homes, shops, and stores. Each has its own rooftop crops. The area has no remarkable laws

other than a prohibition against harming any living thing. Much of the Narthex's food comes from this district.

Dozens of statues of Neus in various guises litter the area, but the streets are dominated by the friendly smell of growing things and a lifelike statue of a man hoeing the street. The art piece appears to be moving at a glacial pace, moving perhaps a fraction of an inch per month. Every year the priests hold a festival on Midsummer and measure its movement over the past year.

13. THE INNER WALL AND GATE

A granite wall only twenty feet tall divides the Narthex from the Vestibule, and only one gate pierces it. The Aisle leads directly through the gate and twelve guards constantly watch it. Ordained priests may pass through the gate after casting a divine spell to prove their qualifications. A layman's fee to pass into the Vestibule is a steep 100 kahus. The names of every person who enters the Vestibule is recorded and given to the Triumph.

The Vestibule

The inner city of Athanaes is the domain of small established communities. Primarily the homes of high-level priests and their assistants, these buildings are old, tall structures. Only few stores and shops serve the needs of the inhabitants, but their inventory is quite extensive. The areas are well terraced, but quite steep.

14. LIBRARY OF NEUS

One of the oldest buildings in the Vestibule is the Library of Neus. Anyone may enter, but all visitors must donate a text of some type to the collection. The building is five stories high, the tallest within the city, and contains thousands of scrolls and tomes. The books are organized by rarity, with the rarest books kept on the first floor where the Library's priests can keep an eye on them. The priests have memorized the locations of every book in the building and help visitors to find whatever they seek. Destruction or theft of the texts is a capital offense and weapons must be left at the door, but otherwise, there are no unusual laws. The living quarters of the Neus priests surround the building and they form a tightly knit community.

15. PALADIN'S REST

The first road leading off the Aisle after entering the Vestibule is Paladin's Rest. This small collection of five buildings on the east side of the road is the home of a group that worships Albrecht. There is a weaponry and armory shop, a small general market, and three private homes that all contain several guestrooms. Bronze plate mail stands along one wall, symbolizing Albrecht's strength, and the faithful bow their heads as they pass. The twenty worshipers who live here all originally came from the Denskan area, as did most of their guests. Unusual visitors are common as Trandle Pureheart, a high-ranked priest of Albrecht and a Deputy of Athanaes, continually attempts to form an alliance to oppose the Deverenian Empire. Most reject his suggestions when they realize that all his plans begin with reinforcements being sent to Denska. The city's laws and regulations are strictly upheld in this area, and all conflicts must

be resolved outside the city in an honorable fashion. Infractions result in permanent banishment from the area. Since several dozen districts lie beyond Paladin's Rest, banishment is extremely inconvenient, so the laws are rarely disobeyed.

16. THE PALACE OF BONE

The Palace of Bone is a three-story tower on the eastern end of the Vestibule constructed entirely out of thigh bones. The palace is the home and workshop of the city's foremost elven sculptors and artists. Customers come from as far away as the Deverenian Empire and Andover to obtain holy images, but at least half of the artists' work is done for customers within Athanaes. By a special dispensation from the city's Priests of Bone, they are allowed to create images and statues of nonelven deities. Each sculpture is first created as a skeletal figure constructed entirely of bones, and then built up with other materials. This secret practice ensures that each figure pays homage to Bone in addition to its visible subject.

17. DEIMA'S HOME

While the Church of the Storm has been banished from the city due to its attack upon Athanaes, the priests of the Védoszentek are still welcomed within the city. Two, Athanaes and Deima, are revered even by those who disapprove of the Church of the Storm. A building measuring only fifty feet square and containing only a single room remains one of the most revered locations in the city, for Deima lived here centuries ago. It now holds her only remaining relic, a rod that she wielded, now encased in five feet of solid crystal. Otherwise, the room is empty but for a cot and a pitcher of water. These represent her only other possessions; the originals have long since rotted away.

Many visit this site and give thanks to Deima or ask her blessing. Unfortunately for them, a priest of the Church of the Storm has secretly entered the city and purchased the home next door. He watches carefully and records the names of everyone who worships here. The records are sent to the Church of the Storm, which deals with those who still worship a dead god.

18. THE PLATEAU

Seven rivers spring forth upon the flat plain above the city of Athanaes. Tall shrubs and gardens create hundreds of secluded meditation spots for those communing with higher powers. Priests and divine spellcasters feel closer to their deities here, and all spells are cast as if the caster was a level higher than normal. Steep and dangerous cliffs ring the Plateau; only the southern face is climbable. The view of the surrounding terrain is breathtaking, though most have eyes only for whatever they see in the Center of the Plateau (see below).

On the western edge of the Plateau, surrounded by high shrubs, is a bizarre collection of statues and objects. A result of the law against destruction of holy images, this collection of forgotten gods reminds priests of the need to proselytize. Few ever visit for more than a few minutes, and even those who come upon the place unexpectedly find a chill seeping into their souls. In truth, several undead live here and use their powers to drive visitors away. Behlial suspects their existence, but has not moved against them so long as they do not emerge onto more well-trod parts of the Plateau. Their reason for being here is unknown.

19. BATTLEGROUND

At the edge of the Plateau at the end of the Aisle is a gate of bronze. Six guards staff this entry point and only ordained priests may pass, after casting a divine spell of third level or higher and donating at least fifty kahus. The area beyond the gate is filled with a mosaic of tiles showing two figures locked in mortal combat. The female calls lightning from the sky while the man hurls fire at her. This was the spot of the battle between Deima and Deverenus centuries ago. Four paths lead from here into the shrub mazes that fill the Plateau.

20. THE CENTER OF THE PLATEAU

The Center of the Plateau is the holiest of holies within Athanaes, the spot where the goddess destroyed the Dragon. The appearance of the place is different for every viewer, providing them a glimpse of the divine they cherish or fear the most. For Deverenians, this is a tall cathedral of awesome majesty. Elves see an enormous pillar of the Elements draining the world's energy. Nothrogs see the dark caves that hold the birthing places and homes of the Nothrog totems. Regardless of what they behold, those faced with their personal vision are deeply moved by the experience. Few can approach the Center, and it may only be viewed from the secluded benches and meditation spots around the Plateau.

Those who approach must make a Will save (DC 25) or fall to their knees in awe, unable to approach the Center for the next day. Those who make their save are able to draw near their vision, but must make another Will save (DC 30) to enter. The experience inside the Center is completely unique to each person and none have ever spoken of it. Scholars have learned that time passes at a different rate, and the priest comes face to face with his deity in a test. A third Will save (DC 30) must be made. Failure indicates that the priest never returns from this test. Success results in the priest gaining experience points sufficient to raise him to halfway to his next level and allows him to return to Athanaes. Only a handful of people have ever accomplished this task, but only those who do may become one of the Triumphs of Athanaes.

Morghen Dythanus defied the geas and spent the years weaving spells to protect his secret from prying eyes. His followers and students formed this city around him: a city without a name.

History

A century ago this was a small village called Caber, built upon a tall mound rising out of the forest. In the days leading up to the geas, the leader of House Dythanus arrived in this area with only a raven as a companion. Morghen Dythanus immediately ordered all the elves from the site and began preparing a great spell. Those still objecting when he completed the spell a few hours later were driven off by a cloying yellow fog that arose from the mound. It filled the forest for miles with the stench of decay; when the villagers could bear to return, they found that their homes had been destroyed. Where the mound had been there was now an enormous skeleton, two miles long with enormous rib bones that pierced upward into the air almost fifty feet. Along the ground was a spine so large that four elves holding hands couldn't reach around it. Shattered wing bones and piles of bone fragments were scattered about beneath the ribs and across the clearing. Morghen nodded grimly and ordered the refugees to bring him food. No one argued with him.

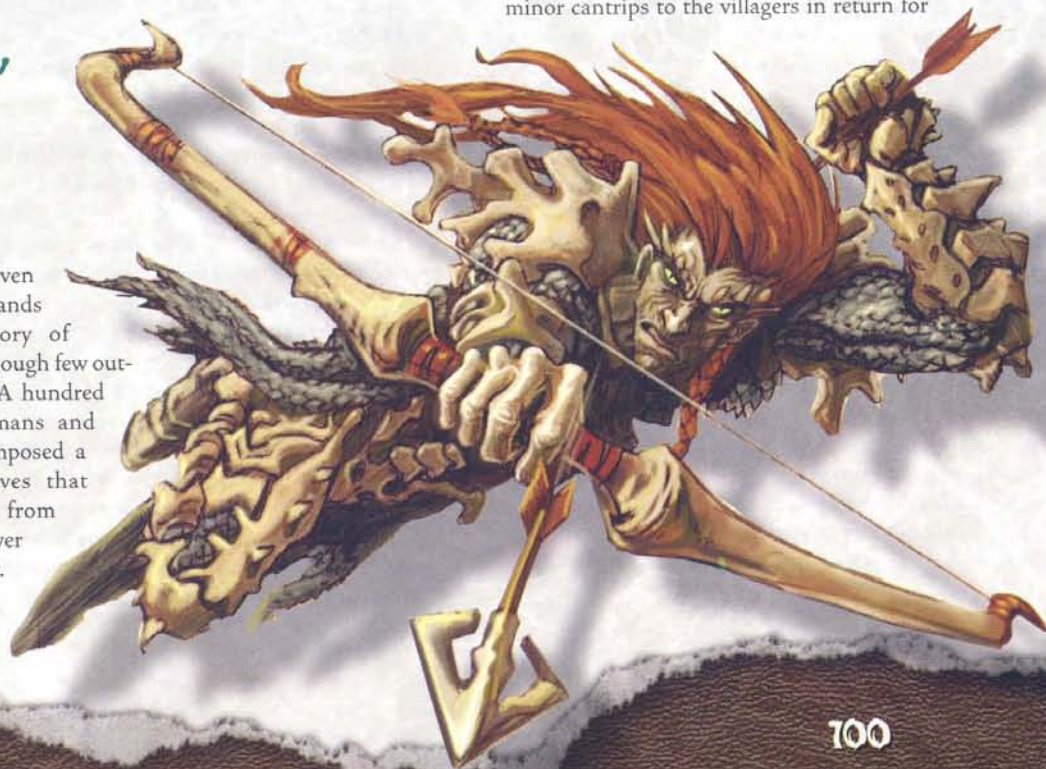
Over the next few days, he summoned dozens of the mightiest elven leaders and wove dozens of spells around each of them, culminating with a final spell that bonded each ensorcelled leader with a vertebra of the mighty spine, timelessly entombed within the huge bone. Other necromancers aided him in his work before entering tombs of their own. Once the elite of elven society had been protected from the ravages of time within skeleton tombs, Morghen Dythanus and his handful of remaining assistants collapsed in exhausted stupor.

They awoke upon crude beds strung beneath hide tarps. The villagers had protected the wizards as the wizards had protected the leaders. Many of the wizards were weakened from the mighty energy they'd expended and spent the next few weeks teaching minor cantrips to the villagers in return for

Dythanus' Capital

Background

One of the largest elven cities in the Accordlands lies in the territory of House Dythanus, though few outsiders know of it. A hundred years ago the humans and their ally Syneri imposed a geas upon the elves that prevented them from harnessing the power of necromancy.



food and shelter, beginning a tradition of magical instruction in exchange for basic necessities.

While they had slept, the geas had been laid. The elves were now completely cut off from all necromantic energy. Despite all his plans, Dythanus found himself unable to cast the simplest spells needed to maintain the stasis of the enchanted leaders. For weeks he attempted to circumvent the geas without success. One day while attempting a simple cantrip to cause a severed hand to glow, he noticed his pet raven croaking out the words after him. To his astonishment, the hand began to shine with a dim green light. While the geas prevented elves from using necromantic powers, they were able to cast the spells through others. He and the other wizards experimented with spells to increase their pets' mental and spellcasting abilities. The power they could exert through their familiars was extremely limited, but other elven wizards traveled from across the Accordlands to learn this spell and other secrets from the wizards of the growing city. They formed an informal academy of students that rivaled that of Arak Spire.

Dythanus had already set up a small community around the skeleton. He crafted a tower for himself from one of the rib bones and several of the other wizards did likewise. The other elves built their own homes from the bone fragments found here and at Dythanus' command, providing food and assistance to the wizards. Despite the fact that he held absolute power over the community, Dythanus was an indulgent ruler who imposed few laws. He did insist that the elves not refer to the city by any name. This strengthened a spell of *nondetection* he wove around the area. The settlement is now referred to as Dythanus' Capital, or simply The City.

Since then elves have gathered here in increasing numbers to receive instruction in the mystical arts. This was one of the few locations where the elves could perform necromancy and create undead minions. Outside The City, the elves tried to avoid attracting the attention of human wizards, but in it every household boasted at least one zombie or skeleton.

When the geas expired, Dythanus magically returned the elven leaders. They awoke near their former homes, ready to move against those responsible for their imprisonment: the humans of Andover. Elves in The City girded themselves for battle far earlier than those elsewhere, and many simply marched out to war without thought of returning. Armies of undead followed, while a second undead horde remained behind performing the mundane tasks of keeping the city alive. The necromancers can wield their full powers for the first time in a century, and they are casting wildly to determine the limits of their abilities.

Economy

The capital of House Dythanus survived due to the patronage of the elven necromancers. The industries of The City revolve around the dead. The preeminent bone sculptors are trained here and an informal academy of necromancy sprung up. In exchange for instruction, pupils support their instructors with food, clothing, and spell components. Even the lowest peasant has typically learned a few spells in exchange for part of his hunt.

One of the most important components of the economy is the vast wealth with which outsiders purchase transformations into minor undead creatures. The more powerful undead were beyond the capability of the necromancers under the geas, but lately the necromancers have been creating new, more powerful servitors.

Merchants and artisans flock to this city to exchange their wares for artifacts and spells, simply opening a stall in an open-air market and leaving when they sell out. It is difficult to find any particular stall since they tend to move each day. The entire mercantile system is chaotic; few outsiders can compete with the locals. The selection is quite extensive, particularly for items related to spellcraft, but items from outside the elven lands are limited.

Local artisans and merchants own one-story shops scattered throughout the city. Shops that offer common wares and services — inns, bakeries, scribes, and martial instructors — nestle alongside shops selling magic components, undead servitors, poisons, and curses. Most shops are manned by undead who perform the simpler functions. Even elves are sometimes disturbed to enter a bakery and find a rotting zombie kneading the dough.

Laws

There are few laws in The City, and those that exist protect the undead rather than the living. It is illegal to destroy or damage the tombs of the Spine. Any magic that destroys undead is outlawed, though all the advanced wizards could cast it if necessary. One may not discuss The City or its teachings with outsiders, who must simply find out about it first hand. Punishment is brutal and can include maiming or permanent sorcerous silence. The range of the punishment spells is extensive, and offenders are found maimed or bound in a sorcerous silence hundreds of miles away.

The Dead Still Serve

The characters are approached by an elderly gentleman asking for help. He claims to be from Corinth, having been away on business when the city fell to the elves, and is desperate to learn the fate of his family. He has a magic amulet that his wife gave him on the day they were married. He can use it to track the matching amulet that his wife carries. Unfortunately his amulet leads toward Corinth, where the elves still prowl.

If the characters agree to look for the man's wife, he gives them the amulet, arranges a safe place to meet afterwards, and wishes them well. The magical device leads them on the trail of its partner, which has left the fallen city. It seems that the amulet's bearer — the old man's son, who picked up the heirloom after his mother was slain — was taken to the Dythanus' capital. Following this trail will be fraught with dangers, as the elves do not approve of strangers seeking out the city of bone.

The old man's son died at Corinth, raised, and brought back to Dythanus' capital along with dozens of other expired Corinthians to serve as slaves. All possessions were stripped from them, but no special notice was taken of the amulet. It has found its way into the hands of Ramon Tirez (see the location "Ramon Tirez's Hovel"). If the characters approach him and let on why they are looking for the amulet, Tirez will claim to be from Corinth, hoping that the characters will free him from the city.

The tradition of elves not killing each other is in full force here and violators are punished by the spells of Dythanus' students. The City follows High Queen Tepheroth, and all of her laws are in full effect. However, unless violators cause a public nuisance, they are likely to escape detection.

While it is never publicly stated, any necromancer may impose a new law by fiat. These impromptu laws are enforced by the individual making the decree and those who support him. Given the powerful magic at their command, few will argue with the declared laws of any necromancer. Most enforcement is actually done by undead servitors or the wizards.

Society

The City divides itself into three groups. Those with the most prestige are the necromancers, wizards, and priests who rule the city. Morghen allows them to enforce The City's few laws and takes a hand only when matters are dire. A handful of the necromancers are undead from the time before the geas, while others have undergone the transformation in the months since then. All these wizards focus upon their mystical research.

The second group in the City is the other elves, the hunters, artisans, scouts, farmers, scribes and warriors. They make up the majority of the living population and almost all of them possess limited magical abilities. The most respected of this class are the bone sculptors who are responsible for crafting useful items. Members of this lower class defer to the wizards, but treat each other as equals.

The third group comprises the zombies, skeletons, ghouls and other undead. A few are elves who are still paying off the eternal unlife they received from the wizards. Most are simply mindless shambling undead created from all the races of the Accordlands and used as shock troops or laborers. Each household typically owns several zombies who perform the manual and unskilled labor. They rarely last more than a few years, but the necromancers animate scores at a time and sell them to other elves. Newcomers often think that the entire city is undead after seeing dozens of skeletons at work in the small fields outside the city, manning the gates and walking the streets. These undead follow the commands of their owners without question.

Geography

The City is located in the northeastern forests of Myreth, close to the foothills of Tyraniel. The only road leading here is from the west, straight through the center of darkest Myreth. The trees stretch up to the walls except on the southern end where zombies toil endlessly raising crops. A small river flows along the eastern edge, where more undead form bricks from mud and blood; these pave the streets in The City.

The first sign of The City is the odor. The stench of rotting flesh permeates the nearby forests. Those who spend more than a few hours here find their sense of smell shutting down under the stench's assault. For those who come out of the forest, The City appears to be a jumbled pile of huge bones rising out of the center of the forest. As the viewer comes closer, it becomes clear that the yellowing bones form towers, buildings and gates. A ring of six-story towers, each built from a single enormous bone, surround the city. The smaller interior structures combine

thousands of lesser bones. These structures are generally single-story buildings, though a few two-story buildings exist. There is no pattern to the layout of the buildings; they appear to have sprung up at whim. The narrow red-brick streets twist without warning around sharp corners or simply dead end.

Population: 100 elven necromancers of various levels of power; 10,000 elves and intelligent undead; and 15,000 mindless undead.

Government: Magocracy. While Morghen Dythanus is the King of House Dythanus, he has allowed others to rule the city in his stead. His student Rasna is the de facto ruler of the city. His undead minions are the primary police force, though roving undead enforcers of the other wizards also police the populace.

Imports: Food, corpses, spell components, and trade goods

Exports: Undead, mystical items and crafted bones

Important NPCs: Morghen Dythanus, Siernon (Bone Sculptor), Rasna (Wizard), Cestrel the Shaper (Priest of Bone)

Notable Locations

1. THE GRAVE

Just outside The City in a grove of dark, twisted trees lies a clearing filled with a jumbled pile of bones and corpses that reaches twenty feet into the air. Merchants earn a few silver pieces for each corpse they deliver. A hunchbacked elf lives here and pays in bright silver coins. The wizards of the city come here looking for particular parts or simply to gather bodies for their experimentation. They also ensure that the hunchback has enough money to continue his grisly enterprise. When he dies, they will find someone else to maintain the place, as they have for decades. Several merchants have discovered they can get more money by selling select items, such as a female virgin, directly to the necromancers, while others have discovered that interrupting a wizard's experiments is a good way to receive a hideous curse.

2. THE GATES

Visitors' first sight of The City is the Gates. Emerging from the dark, twisted forests, two gleaming spires of bone reflect bright sunlight. Each is thirty feet tall and curves slightly inward. They are ten feet in diameter at ground level, narrowing into points at the top. Suspended from them are two massive doors that stand twenty feet high made out of bronze scales. Each scale is larger than a man's fist and shimmers brightly. The road leads straight up to the open Gates and a dozen figures stand in undead repose to either side of the road. These zombies and skeletons do not move unless a non-elf humanoid attempts to enter. If a non-elf enters, they attack, ignoring everyone else present until the intruder is dead or they are destroyed.

Closing the Gates activates a strong enchantment. A shimmering field of energy springs up around the city, extending from the gates to the towers on either side and between the towers around the entire city. These walls are equivalent to a *wall of force*, except they extend up fifty feet into the air. Living creatures in the area

are pushed aside. The walls remain in place for a full day before vanishing, and then cannot be reactivated for a full year. This power has not been used for almost forty years, and a number of homes and trees have grown into the area where the walls appear. They would be destroyed if the gates were activated.

3. THE SPINE

Just a few yards past the Gates a line of unusual buildings stretch down the center of The City ending at the foot of Dythanus' own tower. Each is ten feet square and composed of a single large vertebra. Between each one is a ten-foot-square spot of barren ground. Anyone entering the barren areas feels a chill. Rumor states that this chill represents one's life draining away, so most elves who wish to visit the other end of The City go around the Spine and walk alongside the Gate. The structures have one sealed door only large enough for a single person to pass through which faces north. These vertebrae entombed great elven leaders in stasis during the time of the geas. Other elves left sacrifices at these tombs during the long years of the geas, and those sacrifices always vanished mystically.

There were fifty occupied vertebrae in The City, while others could not be filled in time. The geas prevented Dythanus from preserving any more leaders and they stood empty for a century. Several wizards discovered that magical energy flows strongly within the vertebrae, and used unoccupied tombs for experimentation.

After the geas expired, Dythanus moved the tombs' occupants to graveyards and tombs closer to their homes. A number of the elves in The City who had made sacrifices to the tombs followed their leaders. The remaining elves continue to provide sacrifices at the tombs, and they are still absorbed. No one knows what effect stopping the sacrifices will have.

4. TEMPLE OF THE SPIRIT

This temple lies fifty feet beneath the heart of The City in a vast cavern beneath the enormous skeleton. The only decorations are the dozens of stone pillars that support the ceiling of bones. The pillars are engraved with images of wraithlike beings emerging from elves performing everyday activities. The ceilings and walls have been sheathed in black reflective marble. In the center of the cavern lies an altar made out of a ten-foot wide vertebra that fell out of place. Objects precious to worshipers are placed upon the altar and grow gradually insubstantial, fading to nothing within a few hours. The area above the altar always seems to be filled with half-seen shadows and nearly visible objects. Small chambers adjacent to the cavern house the twenty priests of Spirit who live in The City.

5. TEMPLE OF BLOOD

In the northeast corner of The City sits a marble pool of blood with a fountain in its center. Every elf in The City comes here several times a month to bleed into the fountain. The area exudes

a creeping sensation of blasphemous evil, so few remain here long. A number of important rituals occur throughout the week when various creatures have their blood drained into the fountain. At least once a month, a worshiper is given a crystal with a single drop of blood from the fountain. The bearer travels to a distant body of water and releases the blood into it, signifying that Blood's power is omnipresent. The priests of the fountain sell weaponry and potions from stalls adjacent to the plaza of the fountain. Most of the priests are vampires who drink from the fountain to maintain their power.

6. TEMPLE OF FLESH

In the southwest corner of The City is a deep pit fifty feet across and a hundred feet deep. Its bottom twenty feet are always filled with flames. A narrow bridge with no railings passes over part of the pit. Elves cross the bridge and drop their sacrifices into the pit, then wait a moment until the flames have consumed their offering. Occasionally the flames leap high enough to immolate those worthy of the Element's fury. This ritual demonstrates that everyone is subject to the ravages of Flesh. Few other rituals occur here, and only a couple of

priests live in the small huts near the chasm. They keep the area free of ash and soot as well, and every week they fell at least one enormous tree and topple it into the pit as a offering.

7. TEMPLE OF BONE

The largest building in The City is the Temple of Bone. It lies several hundred yards from the Gates and is housed within and beneath the enormous skull of some long-dead creature. The skull is forty feet tall; light streams in through the eye sockets. The room is crammed full with pews and decorated with mosaics of bone spurs and fragments which depict all things being slowly eroded by Bone and crumbling into dust. The only colors are shades between the white of freshly exposed bones and the yellow of aging bones. A solid wheel of leg bones that stands ten feet tall dominates the main room. Sacrifices to Bone are placed in its path, and it slowly rolls back and forth across the front of the room crushing them.



There are dozens of rooms in the temple: shrines to the leaders that were entombed in the Spine, decorated with bone mosaics depicting their exploits. The shrines have fallen into disuse since the leaders emerged from the tombs of the Spine. Still, the Temple of Bone is the most powerful temple in The City and Cestrel the Shaper, one of the leading priests of Bone, resides here. Scores of other high-level priests of Bone also live near the temple and ensure its primacy. Cestrel is a Neutral Evil level 7 cleric, level 3 Priest of Bone.

8. RAMON TIREZ'S HOVEL

At the end of a dead end alley is a small hovel built from a broken down merchant's wagon. This is the home of the only human in The City, the last survivor from an expedition from Arak Spire to investigate rumors of a city of spellcasters. They found their escape closed off by magical walls while waves of undead creatures assaulted them. Ramon Tirez was a skilled wizard who killed several necromancers in the battle; to punish him, Morghen blinded him, stripped him of his magic, and cast him into the streets. Enchantments prevent Tirez from leaving The City, so he has spent almost forty years as a beggar. He eats scraps from the trash while avoiding the elves who enjoy tormenting him. They are under strict instructions from Dythanus to not allow him to die.

His home is filled with select trash: broken bottles, rotting food, and rags are interspersed with several magic items that include a *ring of warmth* and a *brooch of shielding*. Tirez has written down everything he discovered about The City, including secrets of elven necromancy and the existence of the tombs. The journal is extremely messy but would be valuable to the Arak Spire. Tirez is half-mad and constantly mutters beneath his breath. He remains intelligent enough to avoid elves and stay alive, and he yearns to escape The City. If outsiders are under attack, he comes to their aid and leads them to safety.

9. TOWERS

Thirteen towers surround The City, the abodes of the greatest wizards who live here. Each is a single rib bone that thrusts out of the ground thirty feet into the air, hollowed into towers by the necromantic followers of Morghen Dythanus and the Bone Sculptors. Each possesses a handful of rooms used for magical study and research. Most wizards have left The City since the release of the geas. Their powers have increased a hundredfold and they are still coming to grips with some of their new abilities. When the elven leaders were released from the tombs, a few of the wizards including Artheon followed them. These wizards' towers now lie empty except for undead guardians.

10. BONE SCULPTORS

One of the most impressive buildings in The City is the guildhouse of the Bone Sculptors. It stands two stories high and is composed entirely of ancient bones. While the Temple of Bone's mosaics are of fine quality, the exterior of the building has been formed into enormous glyphs of strength where each stroke is six feet wide. It is here that a select group of craftsmen practice their trade and train apprentices. Their combination of magic, craftsmanship, and artistry fashions objects and structures out of bone. Weapons and armor are the most prestigious items, but they work ceaselessly on hundreds of different projects. While Bone Sculptors can be found throughout the elven lands, the

most promising students are trained here. After a few seasons, most return to their own lands or open shops here. Only the most skilled remain in the Guildhouse, working on projects requested by the High Queen or the Guildmaster Siernon. The Sculptors maintain close ties with the Temple of Bone and all apprentices must improve and expand it during their training.

11. RASNA'S TOWER

The most renowned of Dythanus' students, Rasna is the true ruler of The City. He is short and stout for an elf, partly due to his experimentation while transforming himself into an undead creature. He must feed upon flesh almost constantly and is always holding food in one hand while lecturing on magic. He teaches a wide assortment of people from The City in exchange for sustenance and favors. While he seems quite jovial and friendly, especially compared to more serious wizards, his intellect is razor sharp and brutal.

Rasna has willingly transformed many elves into undead in exchange for ten years' service. His minions patrol The City looking for those acting against Rasna or The City and enforcing its few laws. Lately his minions have often been in the forefront of the fighting against the Free Kingdoms.

Rasna's tower comprises only a handful of rooms. The first floor is a single enormous room filled with tables, shelves of books, chests of spell components and strange apparatus used for necromantic spell casting. He instructs people from all the elven lands and takes the reports of his minions here. The second floor consists of his personal quarters while the third floor is devoted to his personal research. The tower lies on the outskirts of the town near both The City's Gates and the Temple of Flesh. It seems shorter than its true height because the first floor of the tower has expanded to both sides to accommodate the large training room situated there. Rasna is an undead Neutral Evil level 12 necromancer.

12. DYTHANUS' TOWER

Morghen Dythanus has lived in the city he created for a hundred years, but he cannot be found here now. His tower is a tall spire at the back of The City. However, inside it are dozens of rooms extending far beyond its outer dimensions. It is here that he retired to weave his great enchantments upon The City's Gates and to preserve the elven leaders during the years of the geas. It is also here that he instructed a dozen of the most powerful necromancers, including Cordeos, Krait, and Rasna.

In the lowest level of the tower lies a chamber constructed of a single vertebra identical to those found in the Spine. Morghen frequently retired to this chamber to sustain himself over the years and ensure that his power was sufficient to the task he had set himself. When the geas finally passed, his power rebounded to its previous levels. One of the final stages of the rituals to reawaken the elves in stasis was to sacrifice his pet raven, and its spirit now haunts his tower. Now that the geas is spent, he has begun to travel as he never could when he was maintaining the Spine. He has not been back to his tower or The City. His tower remains sealed against all intruders and filled with fabulous treasures, lethal guardians, powerful artifacts, and daunting enchantments.



Dythanus' Capital



4 (50 ft. below city)

WEST



Chapter Five: The Free Kingdoms

Sometimes, at night, I can still hear the sentries screaming.

— Cassandra, Duchess of Andover

On the western seacoast of the Lands of the Accord, several small human kingdoms fight for their lives against an invasion born of vengeance. Once the western lands held many great human nations, from proud Andover to distant Toris Kelt, but those lands are now besieged by hordes of undead, their citizens driven into the sea.

What do they look like?

The Free Kingdoms forces are the remnants of the human kingdoms held under siege by the elves. Their armor is battered, sometimes piecemeal, often made of leather or light chain. Their generals are older, wiser, and battle-scarred. Some display elf-horns, braids, or other tokens on their shields. The human nations were peaceful societies, and Andover itself had just put down a civil insurrection. They weren't ready for this new war; it was too sudden, too horrible, too devastating.

These people have with them only what they could carry from the devastation of their nations, though some of the luckier ones still have a city to return to, possessions, and organized troops. They are poorly clothed, wearing whatever they can find. Where there once were the people of Andover, Toris Kelt, and Llyr, now there are only the Free Kingdoms, fighting for the survival of their species against the vicious elves.

Andover was once filled with heroes and bright-eyed idealists, but her people have seen everything they cherished ruined by the elves. All that remains is a final, desperate fight, and organized resistance.

In general, the people of the Free Kingdoms are hardworking and honest, although they have scoundrels and criminals in their midst (as do all nations). But even their scoundrels tend more toward the "Robin Hood" ideal than actual evil, and their thieves fight for the last remnants of their nation alongside the guardsmen who once were their enemies.

The ragtag people of the Free Kingdoms have blond or light brown hair and pale eyes (blue, gray and green); they have lightly tanned skin and round, country faces. Even the nobility dresses simply, with little jewelry aside from a small coronet of office. Men sometimes keep their hair short, but the women braid their long, thick hair intricately when they are working in the fields, leave it loose when they are not. An average human man stands approximately 5'8" to 6'2", and women stand 5'3" to 5'8". The extremely aged may live for a century, but most do not see their eightieth birthday.

Where do they live?

The Free Kingdoms are the remnants of several once-powerful human nations, unified after the shattering elven invasion. Now, only abiding hope that the world will be reborn keeps them intact. The former countries have died, and the Free Kingdoms, a united force of nobles, merchants, soldiers, and peasants, are risen from their ashes.



The people of the Free Kingdoms have been badly traumatized. Still, they turn their eyes toward a brighter future, uniting their meager armies into one last force for good, determined to try to restore the balance of the world or die trying. Their faith is strong; their courage stronger.

Andover

Andover was the largest and oldest of the Kingdoms of the West. It stretched from the border of the Myreth forest all the way to the western sea. Composed of several smaller baronies, Andover practices democratic feudalism. A King is elected every twenty years, and may reign until his term of office is complete, he retires, or he dies. The occasional Queen has ruled Andover, as the system has little inherent chauvinism.

Only landed Dukes, Counts, Viscounts, Barons and Esquires may vote. Each landed Lord has a certain number of votes before the council which depends on the taxes he has paid. This council serves only to elect the King and to approve any other landed title being awarded; in all other things, the King rules with utmost authority. The landed council may attempt to force the King's abdication, but it requires a unanimous decision of the council in order to be successful, and has never happened.

The most recent King of Andover was the fairly young King Michael, who ruled honorably beside his Queen, Susan. His brother was the most prominent general in the nation, Duke Robert of Corinth, and the King ruled both well and wisely.

Three years ago, Andover was immersed in civil war. The southern duchies fought against the ascension of Duke Douglas of Marroke to the Kingship. Many of the landed nobility believed

that King Douglas had somehow "cheated" in his election, and refused to support him. In truth, the newly elected King Douglas was strict on trade policy, and intended to force the southern duchies to tithe heavily to the northern cities. These events launched southern Andover into insurrection. During the civil war, Douglas was killed in battle, and his cousin Michael was elected by a full vote of both northern and southern duchies. Michael lessened the taxes on the south, enforced more equal trade relations on both sides of the country, and saw to it that all provinces harmed by the war were compensated. This resulted in Michael being seen as an angel of peace, as well as a good and just ruler. Andover was at last united, and had just begun to live in true harmony.

Then, the 100-year geas on the elves ended, and armies marched from the forests of Myreth, destroying Corinth in a single day.

Michael sued for peace. However, on the day when that peace treaty was to be signed, Michael, Susan, and several other prominent members of both elven and Andover nobility were discovered to have been murdered. This shattered any hope of peace, and the elves rolled over eastern Andover like lava.

Andover is in terrible shape. Most of its western and northern baronies are destroyed, and there are few cities still standing east of the province of Arak. The elven necromancers raise entire graveyards of Andover corpses, and the armies of Andover are hopelessly outnumbered. With the elves marching farther each day, Andover's citizens continue to lose hope that their nation can be saved. Michael's death drove wedges between factions, reawakening the rifts of the civil war. No King can be elected, as



the landed council is flung wide apart by the war. Many have died. More are missing, their whereabouts completely unknown. Only Sir Robert is seen as a leader of the roughshod armies of the nation. He is acclaimed as the one voice that can unite the ruins of Andover and possibly lead them to peace.

Celinar/Calenar

The Twin Kingdoms descended from a single country once known as Khalenar, one of the first provinces to rebel successfully against the Deverenian Empire. The independent attitude of its people eventually split the free land into two kingdoms. The factions, once united in war against the Deverenian Empire, could not come to terms on the government that would replace it.

They are tied together for monetary and political reasons; their governments rely on each other to survive in a form of political symbiosis. The northern kingdom, Celinar, is ruled by a military democracy, where only those citizens who serve in the military may affect how their country is run. Each city has a military Governor who both rules the armies and makes law for the area they govern. Any man who serves in the military and does well may rise in station.

The southern kingdom, Calenar, is a pure feudalism. Position is tied to blood line, balanced by a council of priestly Judges. These five priests must confirm any laws that reach beyond a single city, and they have the power to dethrone any landed noble (removing their title, lineage, and in worst cases, removing any ties of blood they may have claimed).

The Twin Kingdoms control the Lion's Mouth, the largest bay in the West, and keep a vigilant eye on all trade up and down the western coast. They are quite powerful, and their lands are among the richest and most fertile in the Accordlands. The Twin Kingdoms fear that the elves will turn north after their sack of Andover. For that reason, Calenar and Celinar have sent forces for the defense of Andover. Men are coming from the military regime of Celinar, and foodstuffs and supplies from Calenar.

Already, this friendship and assistance has earned the Twin Kingdoms the ire of the elven nations. Elven scouts have made their way into the cities of the Twin Kingdoms, unleashing undead threats and magical explosions on their valuable warehouses to destroy the food and equipment they dare send to Andover. The Twin Kingdoms are prepared for all-out war and they are already beginning to feel its bite.

Calif Saran

The Calif Saran are more a tribe than a nation, and they live to the north of the other civilized countries. The Deverenian Empire (who considers the Calif Saran official citizens of the Empire) has usurped much of their native land, and they can gain little ground against the fierce and powerful Deverenian armies.

The Calif Saran do not look like the other humans of the Accordlands. Their eyes are narrow, their skin is olive or yellow-toned, and their hair is always black. Their society seems primitive, and they reject any type of magic-based civilization brought to their homelands. They wear furs, carry iron weapons, and enjoy rough contests of honor and courage, often risking their lives for prizes of honor.

The Calif Saran cannot be trusted; this much is obvious to all the other races of the Accordlands. They do not consider a pledge inviolate except to another Calif Saran, and they do not care for treaties or trade. They do not care for interaction with the other cultures, and only their forced "slavery" to the Deverenian Empire pushes them out of their homeland.

The Calif Saran cannot fight directly against the Empire, for its armies vastly outnumber their own, but the Calif Saran use subtlety and sabotage to ruin Deverenian plans. As a result, the rest of the Empire views them as traitors and "unbelievers," and many Calif Saran women and children are held captive far from their homeland.

Denska

Denska, closest neighbor to Deverenia, survives constant threat of invasion only through their magical strength and their absolute control over Condor Pass. It is the only pass through the mountains of Deverenia, allowing unlimited access from the Imperial City to the lands of Sarakia, Tyraniel, and Llyr. However, the pass is completely controlled by the Denskans, who guard it with a series of watchtowers, forts, and magical wards.

The Denskans are a feudal people, led by a king named Bruntor whose powers in battle and with magic are legendary. He is an inspirational figure, though his name is kept strictly secret. A council of Dukes who claim to swear allegiance to Bruntor leads the Denskan government. Though no one except them knows it, the King never comes to council and plays no part in the government. He is a figurehead, a warrior of great renown, and a mystery even to the Dukes of the country. The true leaders of the Denska are its mages, well practiced in protective spells, who lead the people they ward.

Because of their close relationships with the mysterious Kabal (a land of sorcerers and spellcasters) Denska is famous for its access to sorcerous powers. The wizards of Denska specialize in protective and defensive spells, and have held back the mighty Empire of Deverenia for many years. The latest war between them has raged on for nearly fifty years, with Denska successfully defending Condor Pass and preventing the Deverenians from easy access to the rest of the Lands of the Accord.

The Denskans are open and friendly with the other human lands. They have not yet joined the coalition of Free Kingdoms (completely uninterested in joining the war against the elven nations), but Denska has already offered refuge to those who need succor. However, the land of Denska is far from the flames of Corinth and Andover, and to reach it, one must travel through the heart of the elven lands.

Llyr

Llyr was once a place of great beauty and rolling hills. Now it is blackened ash. Llyr was the first human kingdom struck by elven forces when the geas elapsed. Their heartland was charred, their cities were enslaved; their people murdered or raised to create elven foot troops. Llyr is now a haunted land, barren, blackened, and lost.

Llyr was once a mercantile bastion, boiling in trade and prosperity. It was the Western Kingdoms' link to the great trade city of Baraxton, and a haven for eastern trade. Because of its location at the southern tip of the Myreth forest, Llyr could easily trade from elven lands, to Andover and the west, and through Sarakia and Baraxton into the lands of the Nothrog. Its location was perfect,

and its land lush and fertile. No trade, nor travelers, came into the west except through Fairhaven and the Five Cities of Llyr. Their government was based on a powerful merchant class that bought and sold titles and land. The wealthy could purchase representative power, buying a title and rank from the Merchant Princes with gold and favors. In the same vein, a Merchant Prince of Llyr who lost his fortune was forced to auction his title, removing himself to the rank of a mere Marquis, Knight, or Mercer. Money bought the way in Llyr, and an ancient bloodline without money commanded no respect. Only the wealthiest could afford to rule, and Llyr's Merchant Princes were once the wealthiest in the Lands of the Accord.

Now the proud city of Fairhaven has been seized by the elves, and much of the countryside has been destroyed. Once Tephroth completely stabilizes her control of Llyr, all trade to the Free Kingdoms armies will be cut off. Llyr's surviving soldiers have scattered to the winds. Now advance scouts of opportunistic Nothrog legions hold the easternmost parts of Llyr, while the middle and west is under elven control.

To the north and south, elven forests bar all passage, and to the east, the Nothrog hold Baraxton. Those who lived through the attack must either go west to join the refugees, south to hide in the marshes of Markappal, or northwest to fling themselves on the mercy of their Andover cousins. Even the most cultured citizens of Llyr recognize that they have limited options: to serve, or to fight and die.

Markappal

Markappal is less a true kingdom than a massive, unclaimed swamp. It is a large salt-water flood land with thick trees and acres of silt. Dangerous to cross, the swamps of Markappal claim thousands of lives each year.

Rulership within Markappal is simple, direct, and extremely cutthroat. Several lesser "March Lords" claim rulership of various parts of the country, and their lands are loosely divided by natural features that shift and change with the tides. These rulers of Markappal are bandit lords, fifth sons of poor nobility in the Western Kingdoms, or cult leaders hiding in the most inhospitable region of the Accordlands.

Markappal is swampy, salty, and difficult to navigate. Some parts are bayou and cannot be crossed except by boat, while others are junglelike, with thick brush and winding grasses as tall as a man. Ruins abound. There was once a major city in Markappal known as Sadrasheer, but now its ruins and rubble cover a vast labyrinth of half-sunken streets. Sadrasheer boasted a massive temple to a powerful sun god, but the temple is now destroyed, its valuables plundered, and the city half-buried beneath silt and muck.

The monsters of Markappal range from the unthinking gar, a great fish that lives beneath the surface in the deeper areas of salt-brine, to the society of Hags that lives within the thick jungles of the warmest climes. Brindle, the acclaimed Marsh Hag, is sometimes called the "Queen of the Hags" (although never to her revolting face). There are numerous beasts there, and many adventurers make a living from the bounties on their heads.

The March Lords of Markappal do not bother with the rest of the human nations and, in fact, are known as a refuge for any thief, murderer, or cutthroat who wishes to serve under them. Such men are given refuge and protected from punishment, so long as they remain within the borders of Markappal and are true to their oath to the March Lords.

Misearis

Past the broken plains of Sarakia, in the mountains that surround Baraxton to the south, lies one of the most tyrannical countries in the world. It is called Misearis, and it is a country of pig-farmers, gamblers, and mercenaries. Home to many of the most powerful mercenary bands in the Lands of the Accord, Misearis opens its doors to people of all nations, races, and religions. It levies high fees on those who cross its borders, but beyond that the taxes are light and the standard of living reasonable. Misearis makes money by being a home to mercenary bands, and its laws are designed to offer them protection.

Misearis is known for upholding the letter of the law rather than its spirit. The tyrannical dictator who keeps the country in line, the Misesaran Dominar, has great power that goes unquestioned by his subordinates. Those who challenge his decisions are given the option to fight for their beliefs in the gladiatorial pit. The winners may actually change the law or be pardoned for their crimes. In Misearis, swiftness of blade and strength of will rule the day, and only the strong are granted self-rule. Trial by combat is the most common form of justice in Misearis, and the large gladiatorial pits are open two days out of every five specifically to accommodate the judicial system. It is a brutal place, and one where the uninitiated will not likely survive.

Rathe

Rathe is a region of dark-skinned people who specialize in cavalry warcraft. Their land is rugged, and the residents live in small villages that support themselves mostly through herding. They have ample access to minerals and rich deposits of gold and silver, and trade once kept the Rathemen well supplied even in the coldest of winter months.

Snow falls in Rathe eight months out of the year, filling the passes and blocking all movement within the country during three of them. During the other cold months, trade slowed to a trickle, pushed forward only by the Rathemen's incredible means of transport — wooly mammoths, fully capable of walking in the deepest snow, protected from the elements by thick layers of hair.

In addition to their stores of gold and silver, the Rathemen are known for their elephants. The country once had an army of war elephants, but now the few that survive are closely guarded. Scant months ago, squat men came up out of the earth like the legends of Abyssals, laying waste to many Rathe encampments. The Rathemen did not understand this new threat, but they went to war against it anyway.

Barely ten weeks later, Rathe has been completely routed, its war-elephants slain. Only the onrush of the winter snow (and the resulting halting of movement through the passes) saved the war-mammoths from obliteration at the hands of these abyssal beasts who call themselves "dwarves."

However, the battle against the dwarves has had another devastating effect on Rathe. The Rathemen were all drawn to the north in order to fight the dwarves; this left them completely open to a southern attack by the elves. Trapped between two forces and deprived of maneuverability, the armies of Rathe disintegrated.

There are a few lost war-bands in Rathe today, struggling as the snows melt to find safety both within their own country, and in the armies of the Free Kingdoms. They have seen the viciousness of the "dwarves" and are completely unwilling to trust them.

Sarakia

The Broken Plains of Sarakia are arid and covered in scrub brush and sage grass. They are home to nomad tribes. The Western Tribes tend to be the least hospitable, fighting the elves and often joining mercenary bands. Although these people are human, they owe no allegiance to any king or empire. Recently, the Northern and Eastern tribes have been intermittently attacked by the Nothrog, a sure sign of trouble to come.

Sarakia is not a hospitable place. Its wide plains are filled with grasses and thick clay, and high mountains rise from the middle of lunar deserts. These tall cliffs are riddled with holes, and often served as housing for the tribes of Sarakia, but now they are empty and the wind howls through them, echoing across the empty plains.

At one time Sarakia was filled with hundreds of splinter tribes, small nomadic families, and some larger organized tribes. However, as Braxton's trade slowed and then ceased in the Nothrog invasion, and as the Nothrog began to push into Sarakia to establish a firm grip on the lands surrounding Baraxton, the tribes essentially had three choices: leave Sarakia for lands to the north and south; join forces and create tribes large enough to withstand the Nothrog invasion; or submit to Nothrog rule.

The most prominent tribes left on the Sarakian plains are the Swords, the Stags, and the Hawks. The once-powerful tribe known as the Bears has in the last two years been destroyed. While other tribes still roam the Sarakian plains, none know how much longer they will be able to escape the dangers that press down upon their homelands.

Toris Kelt

In the northern reaches of human civilization, Toris Kelt is an open-minded kingdom situated in a large volcanic bowl, surrounded on all sides by high mountains, drawing water from a single pure lake. The volcanic bowl is large enough to accommodate three cities, with plenty of farmland between them, and a fourth city on the lip of the bowl guards the passes down to the lake and the cities below. Toris Kelt is nearly unassailable — ten grandmothers with broomsticks could likely hold off an army at the narrow mountain passes.

Toris Kelt was founded by an adventuring band, and from this humble beginning has arisen one of the most scholarly communities in the Lands of the Accord. Many who are ostracized by their own people (half-elves, half-Nothrog) find haven here, and the laws of Toris Kelt forbid bigotry against an individual based on his religion, race, or customs. Even the temples of evil gods are accepted here, although they (and their practitioners) are watched closely by the rest.

Toris Kelt came under attack by the elves at the same time as Rathe, Andover, and Llyr. There has been no communication between Toris Kelt and the other Western countries (they are cut off by the armies of the elves and dwarves). However, Toris Kelt has not fallen, it has simply blocked access to outsiders by guarding its mountain passes.

Jalpa

Jalpa is one of the most highly respected mercantile nations in the world. Nearly every civilized country in the Lands of the Accord has some finances tied up in Jalpa's coffers, and with the fall of the Merchant Princes of Llyr, Jalpa has become the largest money-lending agency in the world.

Being so close to Toheuth, the "kingdom of mercenaries," the Lords of Jalpa make quite a killing as the middle man for bounties offered against bandits in Markappal, or against the lords of Andover, Llyr, or the elven lands. In Jalpa, everything is for sale, even morals.

Jalpa is one of the few nations that still practices slavery. The slaves in Jalpa are bought, sold, and traded for hard labor in the fields, in homes, or in gladiatorial pits. Purchasers from all over the Accordlands come to Jalpa to buy the finest flesh available anywhere.

Travel in the lands of Jalpa is dangerous, as there are always mercenary units marching through the country either toward the plains of Sarakia, west to the coast, or south into Toheuth and Markappal. There are constant dangers of banditry and open

violence even on the main thoroughfares, and the presence of the forbidding watchtowers placed throughout the country only keeps such violence subdued in the small areas around them.

Every road in Jalpa is a toll road, and most of the cities require both a fee on entry and a tax on any goods leaving the city. To successfully navigate Jalpa's darkened streets and dangerous roadways, it is imperative to understand of bartering, haggling, and "greasing the wheels" of society.

Toheuth

Toheuth is one of the two "mercenary nations." Along with Misearis, it provides home and haven to wandering bands of sell-swords. However, unlike Misearis (which has a stable government and keeps track of the mercenary bands within its borders), Toheuth does not track the movements and actions of the mercenaries within its borders.

Toheuth makes a living by stocking up for mercenary and adventuring bands. It is near the swamps of Markappal and is on the boat route to the far south. Many adventurers from the west, and from Llyr, travel through Toheuth before they enter the plains of Sarakia or the mountains of the southeast.

Toheuth's disorganization and apathy toward taxation, census and other concerns make it an easy land to become lost in for those on the run from authorities. And with the number of mercenary bands at an all-time high, such people can even find employment where no one will ask for their name or inquire about their background.

What is their society like?

The "Free Kingdoms" are those nations that have banded together against the invasion of the elves: primarily Andover, Toris Kelt, the remnants of Llyr and Rathe, and the Twin Kingdoms. The other human nations in the west have thus far chosen to remain neutral.

Everyone in the Free Kingdoms has a designated role; there aren't any beggars or useless bureaucrats. Nothing is wasted, and everyone must work together or society will crumble. In the camps of the Free Kingdoms, it is not uncommon to see a nobleman rolling up his velvet shirtsleeves and helping to feed horses or clean gear.

Already, the soldiers of the Free Kingdoms have seen many a battle. They are a rag-tag group comprised of those good enough (or lucky enough) to have survived the destruction of their native kingdoms. Many of them are too old or too young, but in these desperate times, everyone who can fight must. Their armies are comprised of archers and pikemen, the clever and the lucky. Where the other armies of the world have strength, the Free Kingdoms have guile. Thieves are not uncommon; many of their new leaders manipulated their way into power. Those fighters who relied on strength and conventional warfare were cut down by the elves; there aren't many left to recommend such noble tactics. Instead, they use guerilla warfare, and the few wizards who have survived are typically those who specialize in movement, illusions, or divinatory spells.



Noble rank in the Free Kingdoms means little right now — Duke or peasant, everyone must learn to contribute if the western nations are to survive. Even their military doesn't really have true ranks, although among Robert's men it is not uncommon to find a knight, or a structure loosely based on the military system (Lieutenant, Sergeant, etc.).

In some countries, women are seen as second-class citizens (primarily in Celinar/Calenar and Jalpa), but on the whole, they are equal to men where both political and military matters are concerned. Familial structure varies in each of the Free Kingdoms, but is mostly based on a nuclear family arrangement, with a caste system based on arranged marriage.

The society of the Free Kingdoms is at the moment experiencing famine. The few foodstuffs they were able to carry out of their burning cities are quickly being depleted, and the food they can get from their travels is meager indeed. It is unknown if the people of the Free Kingdoms will simply die of famine before the elves drive them into the sea, but it is nonetheless a race the leaders of the Free Kingdoms do not wish to witness.

What is their religion?

Each kingdom follows its own gods. The Andoverans worship Neus the God of Knowledge and an ocean goddess known as Ishara. Other gods among the multitude of nations include multiple pantheons and monotheistic religions. Some in Toris Kelt revere the elven Elements of Blood, Bone, Flesh, and Spirit, and occasionally the worship of the Banshee Moon, Bascaron, surfaces in the human lands (although this form of worship is forbidden in all civilized lands except Toris Kelt).

Some peoples have formal churches; others (such as the Tribes of Sarakia) operate on shamanic principles. The Free Kingdoms are distinct entities, forced together by desperation.

Who is in charge?

The nations that have banded together into the Free Kingdoms rely on a leadership both military and feudal, assembled from each of the beleaguered nations. No one of the Free Kingdoms nations "rules" another. The Free Kingdoms armies fight without concern for ultimate leadership beyond each unit's individual performance. Most of the armies of the Free Kingdoms look to Sir Robert the Vigilant for leadership due to his unparalleled ability to unify tactics of disparate groups. However, he does not claim rulership of the "Free Kingdoms" nor of the ruins of Andover. Still, as the most visible and popular leader of the alliance, Sir Robert stands poised to become king.

The kingdoms below are separated by their original layout to prevent confusion. To clarify, the kingdoms of Andover, Toris Kelt, the remnants of Llyr and Rathe, and the Twin Kingdoms are ruled by separate governments, although their armies war beneath a unified leadership.

Andover: Currently, Sir Robert, Duke of Corinth. However, the Duchies of Treyntis, Nathl, and Vorte (those closest to the sea) are as yet unscathed by elven attack, and still have ruling Dukes or Duchesses. These duchies vary in their responsiveness to the war. Some feel that Andover should surrender, throwing themselves on the mercy of the elves. Others feel that not to fight is simply to submit to the execution of the human race. The armies of the Free Kingdoms rely on these duchies for food, supplies, arms, and resources, but the elven forces are coming to destroy them, one by one.

For now, the Dukes of the semi-independent duchies rely heavily on Robert's guidance and tactical information. Although they have no ability to ratify him as King of Andover (and were he made King, there would be little for him to rule), they look to him for protection.

Celinar/Calenar: There is a King of each of these countries, and a combined House of the Gods between them. The king of Celinar is a military governor who rules with absolute authority, the general of all the armies of Celinar. His name is General Andros ValMarr.

The King of Calenar is chosen by the Judges of the Law, a council of priests who read the omens and base their decisions on the will of the Gods. The king is responsible for all earthly matters, but can be overruled by the Judges whenever the gods send omens that disagree with the King's statements or decisions. The current king is Tibern, the Second of that name.

Denska: The Denskans are a feudal people led by King Bruntor, whose powers in battle and with magic are legendary. He is an inspirational figure, though no one knows his name, and he leads the armies of Denska against the Deverenians. The government of the Denskans is led by a council of Dukes who claim to serve Bruntor. In truth he never comes to council and plays no part in the government. He is a figurehead, a warrior of great renown, and a mystery even to the Dukes. The true leaders of the Denskans are its mages, practiced in protective spells.

Llyr: At this time, no one rules Llyr. Once powerful Merchant Princes controlled all trade, but their power was broken by the elves. Now, the land is loosely ruled by Sarakian tribes, some few small cities that retain human rulership, and Nothrog eager to stake their claim on the ruined soil.

Markappal: No one really is in charge here, but a variety of March Lords claim to be. Each of these March Lords controls some of the ever-shifting ground of the marshes, and usually centralizes his power base in a stronghold, keep, or walled city of some sort. The roads of Markappal are not patrolled, and many of the March Lords claim the same territory, their land merging through the constant shifting of the marshy terrain. It is difficult to find a single ruler among the March Lords, and it would be nearly impossible to choose a single one of these bandits and proclaim him the most powerful.

Misearan: The Dominar rules Misearis with an iron fist. Misearis makes money by being a home to mercenary bands, and its laws offer them protection against other countries and external disputes. The dominar is chosen by bloodline, but his strongest child, not his firstborn, takes control when he can no longer rule. This is usually determined by a series of assassinations and violent feuding before the throne lands in the hands of the successor. The Dominar frequently has as many as five wives, and tends to sire multiple children on each one to ensure that the succession feud is a bitter one.

Rathe: No one has ever ruled the Rathemen. Their villages were autonomous, led by a chieftain rather than a king. These small villages kept to themselves, each self-sustaining, keeping itself fully supplied with food, water, clothing, and weapons. There was little trade and no taxation. No government was needed.

Sarakia: The Tribe of Swords is one of the most powerful tribes left, and they tend to lord over the smaller tribes that still scurry about the barren plains. The chief of the Tribe of Swords has called the tribes together into a peace meeting to discuss the current events and, some say, to unify the Tribes under his tyrannical rule.

Toris Kelt: The King of Toris Kelt is only an arbiter of the laws passed by his council, and has no power to make law of his own accord. He is, however, in charge of finances and taxation for the nation (separate taxes are collected for the city-states and for the national fund), so he does exercise a certain amount of power.

Toris Kelt is an independent nation, and the cities are proud of their accomplishments. The King is a figurehead, but his position gives a feeling of internal stability and strength to the free-thinking kingdom.

Jalpa: Jalpa has many money-lenders and banks, and the leaders of these banks control all politics. Those without money have no votes and votes cost money. Each crime has a fine as well as an accompanying punishment. If the petitioner can pay the fine for the crime, he is set free. If he cannot, he is tortured to the full extent of the law.

Toheuth: The land of Toheuth has no real government. It is governed by lords who hold their territories against all comers. There is no basis of law, no organization of a feudal or other type of hierarchy, and even the church is loath to step between two lords who are engaged in a local feud. It is a near-anarchy, held together only by the fact that the few lords who claim rulership are powerful tyrants, good swordsmen, and excellent magicians.

Current Political Climate

The Free Kingdoms are in factions, broken apart, struggling to put an army together before they are driven into the sea. Tepheroth's elven armies grow stronger with each battle as more dead are added to her ranks. Huge bonfires are the only defense against this elven blasphemy, and the soldiers of the Free Kingdoms know full well that it is better to burn than to rise again.

The lands of Andover, once peaceful and prosperous, are now a gigantic battlefield with ravens and blood to spare. The ocean to the west is growing closer and closer as the elves push the humans toward their doom, and thus far, no hero has risen with the power to change the course of battle. It seems only a matter of time until the elves push the Free Kingdoms into the sea.

Still, they have hope. Several Free Kingdoms armies allied to free Toris Kelt, and the alliance tentatively holds and even grows, adding Misearis to its membership. The last paladin of Aroch, Terak Justicebringer, has also joined the fight.

The Deverenians

The Deverenians see the Free Kingdoms (and their predecessors in Llyr, Andover, and the other human countries) as heretics who have thrown off the rightful chains of their sovereign, the Emperor. The Free Kingdoms consider the Deverenians to be blasphemers, usurpers, and tyrants ruling a kingdom of slaves in a climate of oppression. The land that would become Andover and the Twin Kingdoms of Celinar and Calinar was the first to leave the Deverenian Empire (followed almost immediately by Llyr) nearly two hundred years ago. Because of their great distance and the defection of other countries, such as Toris Kelt and Denska, the Deverenian Empire has never been able to retake the freed lands.

The Deverenians maintain a few small churches to their beloved Storm in Andover, and even have a rather large following in the Twin Kingdoms. Many of the kingdoms of the west consider the worship of the Storm to be aberrant, but liberal kingdoms such as Toris Kelt support a small following of Storm-worshippers. These individuals are not treated kindly within the Free Kingdoms, but many different voices must be heard on the path to true enlightenment. Those Storm followers who travel with the armies of the Free Kingdoms are finding more and more converts, as Deverenian offers a form of protection against the elven armies. Because of this, many of the soldiers of the armies have begun to whisper about an "underground road" through the elven forests and into Denska and Deverenia. This war is gaining Deverenian converts.

Of course, this also creates a great deal of bitterness among the other religions of Andover and the Free Kingdoms. Great tensions are liable to rise among the armies, and the generals must do all they can to stop these uprisings before they destroy morale.

While the Deverenians believe that reunification is simply a matter of time and patience, the kingdoms to the west have not forgotten their disdain for the tyranny of the Deverenian government, nor their revulsion of the Church of the Storm. The divides between the two groups of humans are as great now as they were during the civil war that split humanity, and it is not likely to be eased simply because of a war with the elves. Some wounds simply cannot be healed.

The Dwarves

Dwarves are an enigma to the Free Kingdoms. For centuries they have been taught that all evil comes from below, and that the beasts that rise from the earth are to be destroyed before their evil can propagate. Now, these small humanoids are rising in great numbers, seizing cities on the upper world and claiming the right to speak in council with the races of the Accord? Ridiculous! To make it even more obvious that these dwarves are evil, it is known throughout the western kingdoms that they have sent an ambassador to the Court of the Elves! Surely, these "dwarves" are allying with the elves, and if they are willing to ally themselves with necromancers they are obviously evil.

These dwarves have already attacked the innocent city of Phrygai and claimed it for their own, casting out men, women, and children into the winter cold. They deal with the elves and the Nothrog, and they come from the Abyss. The people of the Free Kingdom need little more justification to turn their backs on these creatures.

The dwarves have sent a group of their scouts to initiate discussion and diplomatic ties with some of the northern Free Kingdoms (Rathe and Toris Kelt, respectively), but misunderstandings degenerated into open conflict, leading to the dwarven razing of Rathe. One or two dwarves (notably, a dwarf named Angus) have made their way into the Free Kingdom armies, seemingly intent on "proving themselves in battle" against the zombie armies of the elves. The generals of the Free Kingdoms do not trust these dwarves, but so long as they are willing to give their lives against the elves, they will be tolerated.

The Elves

The Free Kingdoms hold tightly to the hope that they will be able to defeat the elves on their own, but their battles are growing increasingly grim. No sign has been seen of the Archmage Syneri since his great geas a hundred years ago. Many believe that he has died, or has been captured by the elves. Without his great magic, the battles go poorly, and it is taking the entire combined might of the Free Kingdoms to hold the elves back. Yet with each inch of land they lose, with every battle lost, the people of Andover are only more assured that there is nowhere to run. They are being pushed into the sea and to utter destruction.

The Mercenaries

The Free Kingdoms are the single greatest supporter of mercenary activity in the Lands of the Accord. Many of the kingdoms of the west, especially Toheuth and Misesaris, have always supported mercenary bands.

There have been many arguments against the mercenary bands, deriding them for not automatically assisting the human kingdoms of the west in their fight against the elves. It is true, the major mercenary bands have done nothing to aid in the war effort, but neither have they accepted elven payments to join the necromancers. They remain neutral in the conflict, protecting Misesaris, Toheuth and Markappal, and otherwise do not get involved.

The major mercenary bands know where their safety lies, which is in the three countries that they keep safe. If the elves should attack Markappal, Toheuth or Misesaris, the mercenary bands will almost certainly get involved. The elves are quite aware of this, and it may be why those countries have not yet been involved in the war.

The Nothrog

The Free Kingdoms have a certain loathing for the Nothrog, tempered by fear that is a fear that Nassiral Hate has managed to turn their loose tribes into an organized and tempered fighting force. The bands of Nothrog are no longer loose, nor are they disorganized. Nassiral Hate, the overlord of the Nothrog that have taken the human trade city of Baraxton, proved that they are a force to be greatly feared. And with his stated goals of conquering the entirety of the Accordlands, those who fight the elves know that even if they should manage to win, there will be nothing more than a shred of an army left to fight Hate and his minions.

Many Nothrog tribes, both those controlled by Nassiral Hate and those free of his influence, are friendly with the elves, and trade freely with them. The best hope that the Free Kingdoms can muster is to somehow create a rift between the High Queen and the Nothrog Overlord, hoping to turn these two powerful allies against one another in hopes of weakening them both. It is not much, but it may be the best chance the Free Kingdoms have for survival.

Loyalties of Fire

Servants of Sin

An elite group of priests of the god Neus are taking matters into their own hands. They have forsaken the oaths of their church not to make war, and they have been consecrated as templars to a long-forgotten order: The rules against war in the temple of Neus are strict: death is a sin. Yet these templars have already offered their souls to death, accepting the sin of their actions and going forth to battle with the full knowledge that their god will watch over them. They will accept the judgment of Neus when their time is finished.

These priests of Neus understand that they have given their lives to the sins of war, of killing, and of brutality. Yet they struggle to keep every other aspect of their lives pure. They understand that they are lost, looked down upon by their more pious brothers, but at the same time they are fulfilling a necessary function. The Church of Neus accepts them as priests, and Neus does not withhold from them from his healing powers.

Children of Llyr

Those known as the "children of Llyr" are the children whose parents have died in the war against the elves. When Llyr was destroyed, thousands of its refugees were children with no knowledge of weaponry, government or sorcery. Their parents, all those capable of holding a weapon, remained behind to hold off the elves. Only their children survived, and those children are now being forced into leadership roles, made to govern themselves as best they can, and to contribute to the gathering forces of the Free Kingdoms. None of the other attacked countries can afford to "baby" these lost youths, and so they must quickly learn to fend for themselves, to fight, to survive on their own.

Yet these "children" have already contributed to the war effort in ways no one might have anticipated. They make excellent scouts and messengers, traveling long distances on horses that might grow tired but for the light burden on their backs. Many of them are fair hands at street-fighting, and they run errands and drag the wounded off the battlefield. Another task given to them is to light the corpses on fire before the elven necromancers can reach them. The Children of Llyr are constantly finding new ways to be useful to the Free Kingdoms.

Arak Spire

In the lost city of Corinth, a single building stands among the ruins of the city streets. It has resisted every siege of the elves, and refuses to crumble even to the most powerful spells the necromancers control. The Spire of Arak, the oldest wizard's school in the Accordlands, simply refuses to be put out by a minor war. It is said that the Spire will not fall until the final battle with the Storm.

The Spire of Arak is completely invulnerable to all magical attack, and allows none to enter or exit its boundaries by any means, magical or nonmagical, unless the Chatelain wills their entry. It is impenetrable, indestructible, and stands boldly over the ruins of Corinth.

The elves, of course, have left a number of troops to watch the Spire and its inhabitants. They have raised magical wards to prevent the wizards in the Spire from helping their beleaguered allies in the Free Kingdoms, and so the situation seems to be at a standoff.

Corinth

Overview

Corinth was once the greatest city west of Baraxton, and some would argue that it was greater than the eastern trade center. It was a bustling hive of business, politics, art and entertainment before the elves razed it.

The elves infiltrated the city during the Midsummer Festival, during which drunken revelers wandered the streets in regalia and masks. While the city was hung over, the elves attacked. As people scrambled to mount a defense, the elves garbed in Festival clothing joined the attack. The chaos that erupted prevented the town guard from rallying. In the second phase of the attack, the elves assaulted the buildings outside the city's walls, killing most inhabitants and driving refugees into the city through the breaches blown in the walls. Meanwhile, the elven advance scouts set fires throughout the city.

The people who remain face constant forays from the elves. The city is in such a state that the full force of the elven armies are no longer brought to bear, but it is also hurt badly enough that even small patrols can cause extreme damage.

Demographics

Corinth used to hold one hundred thousand people; no more than fifteen hundred remain, mostly widows and orphans. The majority of men and many women of fighting age have left to help either Sir Robert or Logan Ebonwoulfe, depending on their own proclivities.

Regions

1. SURROUNDINGS (NOT SHOWN ON MAP)

The area around Corinth is totally in the hands of the elves. Any humans traveling to or from Corinth will not be able to do so unmolested. The response will vary depending on the size of the group. If it is an army the elves will respond tactically. Small groups draw correspondingly less attention. See "Elven Forces."

2. OUTER CORINTH

The areas outside Corinth's walls were called Outer Corinth. Now it is a stretch to call them part of the city at all. They have been destroyed, or nearly so. Anyone spending time in Outer Corinth is likely to find one or more young Corinthians scavenging the ruins, although little is left to find. If captured, these scavengers try to claim status in the Thieves' Guild, although in truth they know nothing about it.

3. ENTERING CORINTH

There are a number of ways in and out of the city. The large main gate is not one of them; although broken in places, it has been fortified from the inside. Over the gate is carved the city motto, which now has an ironic ring to it: KNOWLEDGE COMES, BUT WISDOM LINGERS.

Despite the permanent sealing of the gate, the city is not safe, for its wall is breached in many places. Wherever possible the Corinthians have barricaded the breaks. The elves destroy these barricades, and have posted zombie guards outside. The elves may allow someone to enter the city, but they will allow no one to leave. Those who try to get out are slain, and replace the guards at the gate. That serves as a strong reminder for anyone else who wishes to try.

4. BAZAAR

The bazaar was the original market area for the city; when a new one sprang up in Outer Corinth, the original began to sell luxury merchandise. Merchants traveled from all parts of the Accordlands to sell their goods to the nobles that passed through Corinth.

Now the stalls have all been burned or pulled down. Any items of immediate value have been taken, and decorations have been damaged. One stall has been reestablished, though it is so well disguised that the elves don't yet know it's there. An older woman has food to trade, and accepts anything she thinks has value elsewhere in the Accordlands. She claims that this food is grown in a hidden garden that she tends. Many Corinthians have doubts, but her large bodyguard discourages questions.

5. BARRACKS / PYRE

The elves burned the town guard's barracks to the ground, taking with it many other buildings in the area. After the fall of the city, when Corinthians learned that it was not safe to leave the city walls, the barracks became known as the Pyre. There were many thousands of dead bodies in Corinth, which if left untended would spread disease. The most burned-out area of the city therefore became a pyre that burned day and night for weeks. No one in the city goes to that area of town, and anyone who tries will be steered away.

6. FINANCIAL DISTRICT

Corinth had a few banking houses that were primarily involved in financing large mercantile ventures. Consensus has it that these banking houses had safes filled with riches that the Thieves' Guild was unable to access. When the elves destroyed much of the city, the sturdy banks survived mostly intact. They are solid enough that many of the remaining Corinthians chose this district to try and regroup.

Within the banking houses great safes were found, but no one has found a way to open them yet.

7. BUREAUCRATIC DISTRICT

A city the size of Corinth runs on its bureaucracy. This district housed all the offices that issued licenses. It was said that any application would be processed as long as you submitted it at least three years in advance. It was also said that it took that long because the bureaucrats were busy processing the applications that were accompanied by fat purses.

This district is ruined. The buildings that remain have been ransacked for the few valuables they contained.

8. CHURCH OF NEUS

While the people of Corinth worshiped deities in many churches and temples, the one that really stood out was the Church of Neus. It was an incredibly grand building that was one of the main landmarks in the city. Where once there were leaded stained-glass windows, shards hang in stone frames. The rows of pews are gone to fortify the gate and walls, and the cavernous room is filled with refugees. It is still a place of sanctuary; the elves go right past it when on patrol as if it weren't even there, almost as if Neus were hiding his House from them.

One of the Priests of Neus still performs services, trying to maintain the faith of the survivors. It has been very difficult.

9. ESTATE DISTRICT

Anyone who could afford to live within the city walls but was not a member of the nobility lived in the Estate District. The homes tended to be gaudy, though their owners thought them elegant. Those that lived in this district considered themselves somewhat of a junior noble class (though those of the Noble District would certainly say otherwise).

The Estate District was not specifically targeted by the elves, but it burned anyway. The homes that were not destroyed have been extensively looted.

10. NOBLE DISTRICT

The Andoveran nobles that lived in Corinth made their homes in the Noble District. This area had truly stately homes, lavishly appointed. While many of the homes touched on the ostentatious,

none of them were as tacky as those in the Estate District. While nobles in Corinth were less aloof than those in Deverenia, they still held themselves apart from the city's other residents. These homes were popular targets for the Thieves' Guild, but they never took so much as to ruin the victimized nobleman.

Much of this district was destroyed in the attack, and the houses that remain have been extensively looted. The couple that are still fairly intact now house the Elders, though not in the opulent manner of their predecessors. (See "Corinth Elders," below.)

11. THE HIGHWAY (NOT SHOWN ON MAP)

There is an extensive sewer system under Corinth that is now called "The Highway." The surviving Corinthians use it to move around the city without being noticed by the elves. They believe that this is the only place in the city that they can be sure they aren't being watched. They are wrong. The elves do not harass the humans who use the Highway, because if they don't know the elves are watching it's easier to keep tabs on them. If they were forced to find a different method of travel, the elves would have to go through the trouble of uncovering it.

12. ARAK SPIRE

The Arak Spire is one of the Accordlands' leading centers for thaumaturgic learning. Wizards come here to study either alone or with their peers, using the tower's vast resources.

When the elves struck, Chatelaine of the Spire Gaston Bonhomme led a group of fellow wizards in erecting a magical barrier around their stronghold. Unfortunately the spell does not distinguish between friend and foe, so many Corinthians were slain by the elves when they could not take refuge in the Spire.

Now the wizards work in shifts to ensure their continued safety. The elves have no respect for the magic practiced in the Spire, although they regret that it is the only structure undamaged by the attack. The surviving Corinthians see the Spire as the ultimate ivory tower; it stands while they die. There is no doubt that if the elves were to be defeated, the surviving Corinthians would see the Wizards of the Arak Spire as their next foes.



Gaston Bonhomme is a neutral good, level 6 wizard level 5 summoner.

People of Corinth

ELVEN FORCES

The elves are everpresent in and around Corinth. A newcomer to the city can wander its streets without seeing any, and may assume that there are no elves within the walls. The natives of Corinth know better. The elves cling to the shadows, striking at lone humans and leaving the bodies for the other Corinthians to find. The Pyre is rarely dormant for long.

After the initial attack on the city, the elves' necromancers revived many of the fallen defenders. Now these zombie Guards watch all points of access to the city. This is incredibly demoralizing to the survivors. They sometimes attack these posts just to put an undead friend or neighbor decently in the grave. When they do, though, the elves simply "recruit" more dead Corinthians. The elves found here are mostly rogues and fighters.

CORINTH ELDERS

The former ruling nobility of Corinth is no longer in power. The few that survived joined Sir Robert's army or tried to flee the city with as much as they could carry. Most of the latter fared no better than their brethren who died on the first night.

After the initial chaos subsided, the city found itself bereft of young and middle-aged adults. The children looked toward those who were too infirm to join the fighting. This group became known as the Elders.

The Elders are more an informal council than a government, but with Corinth as it is, it doesn't matter much. The word of the Elders is law. They live in the Noble District, mostly to ensure that there is a place the younger Corinthians can go when they need advice.

They know about the activities of the Thieves' Guild, but they realize that the supplies the Thieves bring in, despite the price, are sorely needed.

The Wizards' Guild

Arcane spellcasters are an independent lot, each wanting to make his own mark on the world. Many go to the Lands of the Kabal to study in isolation, only to find that politics still creep into their lives. Disputes over ownership of new spells or magic items led the Kaballites to institute a formal process for study and copyright.

Choosing Arak Spire as its headquarters, the informal Wizards' Guild imposes patents on all new magical creations and research. This is largely a matter of pride, as other wizards must neither make payment nor seek permission to copy a patented item or spell. The Spire nevertheless became a safe neutral ground for debate and demonstration. Even some imperialist Deverenian spellcasters have joined, and Order Myerdeath holds the patent for illusionism as a separate style of magic.

An informal convention between arcane wizards has also occurred: that of sanctuary among colleagues. Even dire enemies protect each other, if it is in the guild's best interests.

The Elders are grooming certain natural leaders among the Works and the Scavengers (see below). They know that if the elves aren't beaten soon that the Elders will start to die, leaving Corinth's fate in the hands of the young — if the elves don't finish them off first.

THE CITY WORKS

Most surviving Corinthians make up the group called the City Works. The name was adopted in jest but has stuck. They are the backbone of the city, constantly repairing the damage inflicted by the elves. They shore up walls, repair gates, and try to ensure the structural integrity of the remaining buildings. If Corinth remains after the war ends, it will be because of the efforts of the City Works.

Those of the Works are both young and old, though the nature of the work requires a certain degree of physical prowess. One of the Elders is a retired engineer who spends all his time with the Works rather than the Council.

THE SCAVENGERS

The children of Corinth need to contribute as much as the adults. Those between the ages of ten and fifteen gravitate toward the Scavengers. The work they do is very dangerous, but the adults realize it is necessary.

Originally they scrounged through the wreckage of buildings inside the city. They could get into spaces where adults wouldn't fit, in order to find survivors and supplies. Soon they expanded their activities to include Outer Corinth.

The Scavengers are largely self-governing and consider themselves adventurers. They have seen a lot in their short lives, and it would be a big mistake to underestimate even the youngest.

THE THIEVES' GUILD

The Guild is Corinth's dirty little secret. Before the fall they were involved in the city in a way that no one suspected. Everyone knew that they stole, and the nobles occasionally got upset about missing heirlooms, but that wasn't where the Guild made its real money.

Instead, virtually every major financial deal involved the Thieves' Guild. They lent out their stolen money to the merchants, receiving an incredible rate of return. Eventually they indirectly owned much of the merchandise passing through the city. The rumors of the theft-proof safes in the banking houses were true, but those very safes belonged to the Guild.

When Corinth fell, the Thieves' Guild fell along with it. Many of its operatives were killed and many of the survivors left to join the war (usually under Logan Ebonwoulfe). Most Corinthians think that the only remnants of the Thieves' Guild left in the city are the Scavengers who like to claim membership.

The Guild still holds power in the city in much the same way it did before the fall. The Elders know this but they keep the peace, knowing that the service given is needed for the city to survive.

Before the fall the Guild used secret tunnels under the city in order to smuggle things (and people) in and out of Corinth. Those tunnels still exist, through which the Guild smuggles food into the city and trades it for whatever valuables the Scavengers can find. They use the bazaar as a front, and their fence claims that the food comes from a secret garden. In the short term they

are taking advantage of the people in the city when they could be using the tunnels to help them escape. It is hard to say what will happen when Corinth has been stripped bare of valuables to trade.

There are two ways to access the Guild's tunnels. The main entrance is through a trap door hidden in each of the safes in the banking houses of the Financial District. The safes are still sealed but there are so many refugees living in the banking houses that the Guild had to dig an alternate entrance. It is hidden in the wreckage of the burned-out barracks. Since that area (now known as the Pyre) is universally shunned, it is unlikely that anyone will stumble across it.

Merrick

Background

Sometimes there is only so much a city can endure before its spirit crumbles. The buildings may stand and people may still walk the streets, but the spark that makes cities great drains away. Merrick is such a city.

Foreign powers have conquered and reconquered Merrick many times. Merrickers now pay little heed to whomever it is who declares dominion over the city. In fact, many citizens do not even know who now claims to rule.

War has left its signs all over the city. Most buildings have taken damage, and repairs are haphazard with no concern for aesthetics. Some sections of the city that are burnt-out and uninhabitable. The city walls have been breached, and only a token effort made to repair them.

The mountains that surround Merrick seem ageless. Merrick just seems aged.

The Free Kingdoms are fighting back against the hardships thrust upon them. Outwardly, Merrick has yet to do that. The Merrickers are starting to see what can be accomplished just with heart and desire. If someone could find that spark, Merrick could become a rallying point for all the Free Kingdoms.

Merrick already houses an underground that smuggles refugees and notables to safety while also selling black-market supplies. People fighting for both good and evil can be found here.

People come here for one of two reasons: they are trying to hide from someone, or they are trying to find someone.

Economy

Merrick's economy has suffered under years of warfare and its people are desperately poor. The farmers struggle to produce enough food. Sick and homeless people sleep in the streets or in heavily damaged buildings. There are very few shops or market stalls, and the ones that are there are sparsely stocked.

There is money in Merrick — it just is not advertised. The innkeepers do the real business of Merrick. The taverns are completely unmarked, and casual visitors are hard-pressed to find the ones that offer "special services" like anonymity. Those with money, connections, and patience can find a superior place

to drop out of sight for a while. People come from all over the Accordlands to do business behind these closed doors, and buy Merrick's primary trade-good: anonymity.

Laws

Merrick has a city council, and a city guard that answers to it. Unfortunately for well-meaning travelers, neither the council nor the guard cares about enforcing the law. They completely ignore petty street crime and all crimes against the poor Merrickers. Those who come to the city to hide generally kill those who try to attack or rob them.

There is a single exception. The underworld of Merrick relies completely on secrecy. If those who wish to remain hidden do not have faith in their ability to do so in Merrick, they will not come. If that were to happen the city would lose its primary source of income. The city guard quickly kills anyone who threatens to expose any of Merrick's "guests."

Population: 20,000 Merrickers (43% Human, 30% Deveranian, 25% Nothrog, 2% Elf), 500–1,000 "guests" of all races.

Government: Oligarchy. The innkeepers, who run the primary business of Merrick, elect the city council.

Imports: Expensive luxury goods of many types. The guest-houses import these directly, and the innkeepers do not sell these goods outside their houses.

Exports: None.

Important NPCs: Currently Merrick is hosting Black Tom of Corinth, the executor of the Assassins' Strike. Killian, an innkeeper, is the unofficial ruler of Merrick. Gottle is the captain of the city guard. Drason is a farmer who acts as a contact man for Killian. Father Indur is a priest of Neus who is hiding in the catacombs beneath the church.

History

Every time another nation conquers Merrick, the "official" history of the city changes. Only a few know the true origins of the city, but there is no way to differentiate their stories from the other versions floating around.

The Deveranian Empire founded Merrick more than 400 years ago. The Emperor believed in expansion through commerce, and he founded Merrick with the intention of competing with Baraxton as the major commercial city in the area. Before Merrick realized this lofty ambition, the Emperor died and his heir turned his attention toward the Nothrog instead.

Over time, Merrick had less contact with Deverenia. Eventually, even the tax collectors stopped coming. Merrick became an independent city-state, at least in the eyes of the Merrickers. The Emperor saw things differently. Three generations after the last contact with Merrick, the Deveranian Emperor decided to claim a century of back taxes. The Merrick city council unwisely arrested and executed the tax collectors for treason.

The Emperor sent an army detachment to reclaim the city. This was not unexpected, but the Merrickers had never faced an invading army and had no idea how overmatched they were. The Deveranian army quashed Merrick's resistance and reclaimed the city, imposing military rule and reducing the city to a vassal state. The people were taxed heavily and the soldiers assigned to the city ruled it with an iron hand. The Merrickers learned to stay as far away from the Deverenians as they could, and to try to remain unnoticed.



Over the next three centuries Merrick changed hands a number of times. The rulers varied: the Deverenians, the Nothrog, the Corinthians, the Denskans, the Andoverans, and even the elves of Tyraniel ruled the city. Sometimes the conquering army considered themselves saviors, but the Merrickers grew to recognize them as just the next in line.

Recently, a fire giant named Sceth Hellbringer held Merrick on behalf of Nassiral Hate. Hellbringer nearly destroyed the city in his effort to take it. Hellbringer's Nothrogs occupied Merrick for a little more than a year before a Toris Kelt army under Captain Dukat attacked. Though primarily concerned with the defense of Toris Kelt, Dukat believed that he could save Merrick and forge an alliance, bolstering his own troops with Merrick recruits. In addition, convincing Merrick to ally with Toris Kelt, even in Merrick's usual lackluster way, could create the trading route to the east that the Deverenians had previously envisioned. More importantly, it would forge links between two human lands.

Sceth Hellbringer held the city while Nothrog commander Rreg'jen rallied his troops for a counterattack. Meanwhile, an elf named Saunginel, watching from Tyraniel, saw an opportunity to catch the hated humans off guard, and struck at Dukat's rear. Between the elves and the Nothrog, Dukat took severe losses before a fourth army entered the picture. A Dwarven army from Rockhome emerged from a new tunnel near Merrick. The army's leader, Trench, believed that King Xod had sent him to join the fight — although his orders had in fact been forged by Poison, the king's assassin. It did not matter to Poison whether Trench won or lost, as long as he returned wanting nothing more to do with the upworlders.

When Trench arrived, Rreg'jen quickly marginalized the dwarves with his unfamiliar tactics. Meanwhile, Saunginel and Hellbringer continued their own, independent attacks on Dukat's forces. Neither the Toris Kelt army nor the dwarven army could break the Nothrog hold on Merrick. Trench realized that neither of their forces could break the Nothrog units on their own, so he yielded to Dukat's experience with surface combat, placing his army under the human general's command. Following Dukat's orders still grated on him, however, especially once the dwarven casualties mounted. For his part, Dukat found the dwarves' tactics alien, and could not persuade the berserkers not to charge Hellbringer's siege weapons.

As soon as Saunginel saw that the humans and dwarves were working together, he pulled his army back into Tyraniel.

This was finally too much for the Nothrog. Dukat sent the dwarves into the heart of Merrick while the Toris Kelt army took the flanks. After taking heavy losses, Rreg'jen and Hellbringer withdrew.

When the fighting ended, the two victorious forces were still uneasy. Dukat was unfamiliar with the fighting expertise of the dwarves, so he had used them as shock troops while leaving the more complicated tactical maneuvers to his own men. Trench found Dukat's orders insulting to his seasoned troops, and withdrew his army to Rockhome, without any word to Dukat.

Captain Dukat attempted to recruit Merrick into an alliance with Toris Kelt, and they agreed to join. Yet, when Dukat tried recruiting into his army, no Merrickers agreed to take up arms. In reality, Killian and the

council told the spokesman to accept Dukat's offer because they believed in capitulation. Merrick had refused to fight for hundreds of years; this time was no different.

Dukat was not happy that he was unable to bolster his army's ranks. He was confident that the Merrickers would see the wisdom of actually fighting alongside Toris Kelt in time, but he could not afford to stay and convince them. He supplied his army with gear and foodstuffs seized from the Nothrog, and left the city.

For the first time since early in the city's history, Merrick now finds itself without an occupying force. The innkeepers see this freedom, combined with the war, as an opportunity for brisk business. The idea that there can be victory in merely fighting back is taking hold for the first time. The first emigrants have left the city, with more certainly to follow.

Society

In the early years of Merrick, the society in and around the city was surprisingly egalitarian. They practiced democracy and there was no real class structure to speak of. Those days are long gone. Over the years of occupations and war, two distinct classes have emerged in Merrick: the commoners and the innkeepers.

THE COMMONERS

The commoners make up the majority of the population. Centuries of abuse have left them beaten down. With an unending series of masters, they learned that the best chance for survival lay in not being singled out. Everything about their dress and bearing is innocuous. Their clothes are almost always brown, and made of inexpensive materials. They tend to wear hoods pulled up to obscure their faces, even when not warranted by the weather. When they move around the city, they avoid eye contact with anyone else.

The commoners do not live far from a subsistence level. They are universally poor, and rely on what they grow to keep them alive. Throughout most of their history, they had to turn a large percentage of their crops over to the ruling groups. This has changed now, but not enough time has passed for them to reap any rewards. Even as they find themselves with more than they have ever had, they refuse to revel in it, as they are not convinced that it will last.

There is not much religion here. Most commoners see the idea of gods as just another power ruling over them. They do not ask for redemption, because they do not believe in it. Occasionally a priest enters Merrick and tries to show the people a new path. A few invariably follow, but the majority of the citizens continue to remain without a religion.

The conquering rulers have broken the will of the commoners. They used to fight back against their masters, but they have long since given up any hope of true freedom. They view the world through the eyes of the downtrodden, and until recently had no real concept that the whole world was not the same as Merrick. The arrival of Captain Dukat and the Toris Kelt army exposed the Merrickers to the idea of fighting for freedom. It will take more than that to break centuries of conditioning, but the seed has been planted. Not all Merrickers are going to remain as meek as they have always been.

THE INNKEEPERS

As far back as the original occupation by the Deverenians, an underground existed in Merrick, initially formed by resistance fighters who wanted to overthrow the Empire's control of the city initially formed it. They built secret residences around the city to hide people who wanted by the rulers. The resistance never had the strength to strike back at the Deverenians, but they tried to undermine the conquerors by hiding the rebels who were wanted for prosecution.

Over time, the resistance vanished as the Merrickers lost the will to fight. The rooms and halls still existed, and it was not long before people figured out how to profit from this hidden network and created a series of guest houses to hide those who did not want to be found. Initially this operated exactly the same way it did under the resistance, with one important distinction: these new innkeepers charged for this service.

No matter who had dominion over the city, the network continued operating. The guest houses soon became much more lavish than anything available in the public areas of the city. The innkeepers could make anything available to the guests, as long as they could pay. This stopped being those who were hiding from the rulers of Merrick. Rather, people came from all over the Accordlands, seeking anonymity and privacy.

Geography

Merrick sits in the foothills of the mountain range to the north of Baraxton and near the edge of Tyraniel. It backs onto the mountain range, but faces open land on all other sides. The land is arable but not very fertile, and crops struggle. Poor roads lead west toward the Free Kingdoms, east into the Deverenian Empire, and southeast into Nothrog territory.

Defection

A servant of the Deverenian Emperor has stolen various Imperial items and sold them to interested collectors. The items were worthless, but if someone were to discover his thefts, he would be put to death. When one of these items fell into the hands of a noble who presented it to the Emperor in an attempt to curry favor, the servant elected to leave.

The servant slipped out of Luthlarius and made his way to Merrick. He used some of the wealth he accumulated from selling the Emperor's possessions to get into one of the guest houses. He then sent word to the various nations of the Accordlands that he was looking for asylum, and a former Imperial servant is a valuable person indeed. The characters go to Merrick to bring this man back with them.

Killian (the *de facto* ruler of Merrick) will not be happy when he finds out that representatives of all nations and races are descending on Merrick. He will do anything he can to preserve the secret of the guesthouses. If he can help the Free Kingdoms group obtain the defector's services, so much the better.

What does the defector actually know? He refuses to divulge any information until he is safely away from Merrick. Once he is safe to talk, he will speak freely about politics in the Empire, as well as discussions the Emperor held with his generals. Whether any of this information is true or not is up to the GM.

City Locations

1. FARMLANDS

The area surrounding Merrick is mostly open farmlands. The ground is hard but arable, and the farmers make no effort to improve it. There is no irrigation system, and the crops are at the mercy of the weather. Farmhouses dot the landscape, ranging in quality from poor to uninhabitable.

The farmers shy away from confrontation, to the point of avoiding speaking to strangers. If armed strangers ask for anything, the farmers hand it over without resistance. They offer nothing until asked.

A farmer named Drason acts as a contact man for Killian. He arranges meetings when required, but only after he gets enough evidence to convince Killian that the guest is truly fighting for the side of good. (See "NPCs".)

2. MOUNTAINS

A mountain range looms behind Merrick. Although scenic, it provides no real protection. It is not treacherous, and travelers can easily traverse the range. The mountains are infested with monsters, but they stay away from the city itself. Not too far from the city, wanderers will likely find small tribes of sutekh. These are intelligent creatures and can be reasoned with, but do not hesitate to kill for food or supplies. Farther into the mountains, wanderers can find ettin and other types of giants. They consider any foray into the mountains punishable by death. Giant eagles live at higher altitudes and only come into contact with travelers if they threaten the eagles' nests.

3. CITY WALLS

The walls that surround Merrick are barely functional. Heavy warfare has damaged them over the centuries, with only token efforts made to repair them. When Sceth Hellbringer took the city, his siege engines destroyed much of the walls. The latest assault by Captain Dukat and the dwarves did more damage. No one in Merrick would use them as cover in case of an attack, because an assault on the walls may well cause them to collapse. If the city fathers were ever to try to monitor comings and goings, they would find it a daunting task. Too many places offer complete access to the inner city. This makes it possible for the guest houses to operate even while occupied by enemy forces.

Anyone approaching any part of the walls other than the main gate will only be noticed by the city guard 10% of the time. At night that number drops in half. Even if a guardsman sees the approaching person(s), he will only accost them if they appear to be a threat to the city. Otherwise, he will assume that they are clients of the guest houses and notify Jesud, who will pass the information on to Killian. (See Location #9, Tavern Row.)

4. GARRISON

The first occupying Deverenian legions erected the garrison buildings, and they did such a competent job that every subsequent occupying army has lodged its troops there. Right now the city guard is using them; they are the only military force in the city, but they are barely competent. Even if they need to deal with someone who threatens to expose the underworld, they allow the aggrieved parties to take the lead.

The Deverenians constructed the garrison building of stone and heavy oak timbers. Unlike most of the city, the building is solid and well maintained. Anyone who wanted to break in would

have a hard time without siege equipment. This assumes the occupants know that there is a reason to defend themselves; most of the time they do not even lock the doors.

The current captain of the guard is a drunk named Gottle. If someone from a Deverenian knightly order were to come in close contact with Gottle, they might recognize him as Lord Gottlington, a former member of Order Rellion (See "NPCs".)

5. COUNCIL BUILDING

The ruling council of Merrick conducts business here. None of the Merrickers knows who chose the council, or under whose authority they rule. The people certainly did not elect them. In fact, the innkeepers appoint the council, which serves as a public face for the city but has no real purpose. The innkeepers make the actual decisions, and the council does nothing without their approval.

Previously, while various nations occupied Merrick, the city council existed in absolute secrecy. The conquering nation appointed a ruler for the city, and the council ruled only the underground. Periodically the Merrickers would designate a spokesman to air grievances to the occupiers, and he would act as if he were an unofficial city leader. The true leaders (like Killian, the current leader) never exposed themselves this way. The figurehead spokesmen were frequently executed for impudence.

Jesud, the barkeeper at Lentom's, is the public head of the council. Any stranger that tries to get an official decision out of him will be stonewalled. When pressed, he becomes nervous. If he gets time to speak to Killian, he brings back rulings in a confident manner, quite unlike his normal persona. Jesud is not stupid, and he realizes that his position allows him a more comfortable lifestyle than most Merrickers ever get. He is also aware that many of the former figureheads in the city were sacrificed to keep the secret of the guest houses. He follows Killian's instructions exactly, hoping that the city's shadow ruler will consider Jesud valuable enough to keep.

The Merrickers built the Council Building during the period when they were independent from Deverenia. The style uses less stonework than most of the other buildings, and the woodwork is both of skillful craftsmanship and aesthetically pleasing. The walls are scorched in places, but the building survived Merrick's violent history intact.

6. CHURCH OF NEUS

During one of the Andoveran occupations of Merrick, some of the occupying forces were devout followers of Neus. In their unending desire to "help" the Merrickers by converting them, these followers commissioned a church. At the time, the church of Neus was the most spectacular and beautiful building in Merrick. Of course, considering the state of most of the other buildings at the time, that was not very difficult.

When the Deverenians reclaimed Merrick, they destroyed Neus' heretical church, smashing all of the icons and virtually gutting the building. Nothing of religious significance remained. It remains in that state, but the few believers still in Merrick gather there, away from prying eyes. Now that Merrick is back under the control of Merrickers, Father Indur would like to bring his circle out of hiding. (See "NPCs".)

7. CITY CIRCLE

In the very center of Merrick is a circular area with flagstone laid in an artistic pattern. In the very center of the circle (and therefore the exact center of the city) is the plinth for a statue. In the original city plans, a statue of the Deverenian Emperor who founded Merrick was to stand there, but the Emperor died before the statue could be carved, and none of the later occupiers removed the pedestal.

Now the flagstones are broken and the aesthetics of the pattern are but a memory. The pedestal still sits, untouched.

8. MARKETPLACE

The city planners set aside a large area for a marketplace. The Emperor had pictured the city as a bustling center of commerce, but no one has ever used the area the way he had intended. Even in the rare instances when merchants set up a market, it occupies only a small corner of the area. The open ground is perhaps the greatest testimony to what the Emperor meant Merrick to be, and what it has become.

9. TAVERN ROW

What would a city whose very economy is built on failure be without alcohol? The taverns are seedy, run-down, and completely without external markers. An outsider would have no way of telling which buildings were taverns without standing on the street and watching people come and go.

The buildings along Tavern Row have stood since the city was founded. The Deverenians built them out of stone and heavy timbers, with solid oak doors.

The taverns also double as fronts for the underground. Rear entrances lead to Merrick's guest houses. No one goes through those doors without an innkeeper's invitation. It is impossible to tell which taverns hold entrances, or which ones lead to which guest houses.

Killian (see "NPCs") owns a tavern called Lentom's. Like the other taverns, it has no sign, but all the locals know it by name. It leads to the number-one guest house in Merrick, O'Shaughnessy's. Jesud is the loyal manager of Lentom's, and takes his directions from Killian.

If anyone tries to find out what goes on behind the back doors, the staff will remove the offenders from the tavern with as much force as required. Tavern patrons assist them (3–12 low-level thugs during the day; 12–24 at night).

10. GUEST HOUSES

The standard guest houses are about the quality of a decent inn. They are not lavish, but they seem like it when compared to the rest of Merrick. They typically get thieves looking to hide out until the commotion from their last job has died down. Here they get good food, good drink, and a good bed.

Visitors find a mixture of guests. Some demand their privacy, while others crave company. Each guest has his own room with a good bed, a table, and a basin. The sheets are changed weekly and the basin water daily.

11. DELUXE GUEST HOUSES

Some of the guest houses strive to outdo their counterparts. These inns stack up well against the finest inns of Andover, where the nobility stayed before the war. In fact, after the elven attack on the Western Kingdoms, these guest houses just may be the finest in the land.

Each guest has a suite, with a master bedroom, sitting room for guests, smaller rooms for servants, and a dressing room. The servants' quarters are smaller versions of the rooms in the regular guest houses, while the other rooms are very well appointed. All the furniture is artisan quality; the soft linens are changed daily, and the basin is emptied and refilled three times per day.

The guests who stay here are a higher class of criminal. Out-of-favor Deverenian nobles often hide out here until the political climate shifts. If these nobles believe that any newcomers understand their plight, they will be happy to receive news from home. They especially look for news that they are welcome to return.

12. O'SHAUGHNESSY'S

O'Shaughnessy's is the number one guest house in Merrick. Though the houses have no actual names, locals know this one by the name of the man who built it a century ago. Officially it has only one suite, and the only contact the guest has is with its owner Killian, the *de facto* ruler of Merrick. (There are actually three suites, but the existence of the others is hidden even from the occupants of the other suites.)

The suites are similar to the ones in the deluxe guest houses; it is the level of service that makes O'Shaughnessy's the best. Each room comes with closed-mouthed servants who will provide the guests with anything they request. Exotic requests are cleared with Killian first, but they are still usually accommodated. Killian just adds the total to his bill.

Currently there is one person staying at O'Shaughnessy's. Black Tom of Corinth has gone to ground there after organizing the Assassins' Strike.

NPCs

KILLIAN

The previous owner of O'Shaughnessy's was a man named Laurin. When he was still new to the business, he started a relationship with a female guest named Karrin, who just passing through Merrick. Twenty years later, a young man turned up, looking for his father. Based on the visitor's age and features, Laurin decided that this young man was indeed his son.

He was wrong. Killian was the son of a Corinthian businessman and his wife. Both parents died when Corinth fell, and Killian pledged his inheritance to the Free Kingdoms. He fell in with Logan Ebonwoulfe, but soon realized that he was not cut out for combat. Logan introduced him to Karrin, and the three of them came up with a plan. Killian would convince the ailing Laurin that he was his heir, and take over O'Shaughnessy's upon his death.

The plan worked to perfection. Laurin named Killian his heir. The council was pleased, even if some had doubts, because the last thing they wanted was a turf war over the top guest house. Laurin died of natural causes in under a year. Since then, Killian has used his influence and charisma to become leader of the council.

Now O'Shaughnessy's is more than just a hiding spot for criminals. Killian has secretly returned the guest house to its original calling as part of a resistance movement. The Free Kingdoms forces use it to smuggle people escaping Baraxton or the eastern Accordlands. Logan considers Killian an important, though anonymous, part of the Free Kingdoms' efforts.

Killian has no idea that his current guest is responsible for so much of what he and the Free Kingdoms are fighting against.

Killian is a neutral 7th-level rogue.

BLACK TOM OF CORINTH

Tom is hiding in Merrick after having orchestrated the Assassins' Strike. He would be the most wanted man in the Accordlands if anyone knew he had been behind it. He has to hide for two reasons. The first is the growing number of people, from all parts of the land, who are intent on solving the mystery of all those murders. People looking for vengeance do not need proof — suspicion is enough. The second is Cear Adinerach; Tom is the only person who knows Cear is behind the assassinations. That makes him a dangerous loose end. Tom sent Rora Blackmane to Logan Ebonwoulfe, hoping the little bit of knowledge that she possesses will set Logan after Cear. In the meantime, he waits at O'Shaughnessy's, planning how he will deal with Cear if Logan does not. Tom always has multiple contingency plans, and gladly manipulates others to further his own ends.

He knows that he cannot stay ahead of Cear forever, and he may have only a few months before the elf gets too close and force him to flee to Misearis or Denska. Before he does so, he may have to tie off some loose ends himself. Killian may not realize who he is, but he has seen Tom's face.

Black Tom is a neutral 15th-level assassin.

GOTTE (LORD GOTTLINGTON)

Lord Gottlington was a Knight of Order Rellion whose embarrassingly public love of drink got him posted to Merrick thirty years ago, to keep him out of sight. His drinking problem worsened, until his second-in-command ran all the day-to-day operations and Gottlington spent the days in the taverns or passed out at the garrison.

Five years ago, the Nothrog attacked the city. The Deverenian garrison had grown complacent under Gottlington's rule, and were completely unprepared for the assault. The Nothrog killed almost all of them. Gottlington, or "Gottle" as the locals called him, was sleeping off a bender in a dark corner at Lentom's, and missed the whole thing. When the Nothrog found him, they saw just another drunken Merricker.

Gottle realized that returning to Deverenia would not be in his best interest. The Emperor would blame the loss of the city on him and no doubt some of his officers sent reports of his drunkenness. Instead he stayed in Merrick and left his old life behind.

If Gottle felt that someone was going to expose his previous identity, he would stop at nothing to silence them.

Gottlington was a 10th-level fighter. He can still perform at that level when sober, but most of the time he acts as if he were 5 levels lower.

FATHER INDUR

A few years before Nassiral Hate took that Baraxton, Father Indur moved from it to Nothrog-occupied Merrick. Slipping into the city through a damaged wall, Indur took up residence in the catacombs below the Church of Neus.

He garbs himself in the gray and brown cloak and trousers preferred by Merrickers, and spreads the word of Neus in the taverns. Most Merrickers wanted nothing to do with him, but they disliked the Nothrog more, so they left him alone. He has gathered a small congregation, and some nights they sneak into the catacombs under the old church for services. He looks forward to the day when he can open the church again and spread the word of Neus openly throughout Merrick.

Father Indur is a lawful good 5th-level cleric.

DRASON

Drason is a Merricker who was recruited for the underground by Killian. He is the youngest of three brothers, but both of his older siblings were slain by the Nothrog during their last occupation. He wanted to leave Merrick to find a way to strike back at the Nothrog, but Killian convinced Drason that he could hurt them more by helping the underground.

Drason stayed, though he is sorely tempted to join Captain Dukat's army. It is only a matter of time before he leaves Merrick.

Drason is a neutral good 2nd-level rogue/1st-level fighter.

JESUD

Jesud started washing plates at Lentom's when Laurin's father owned it. Over the years he moved up to barkeeper and finally, once Laurin took over, manager. He always stayed out of politics, and only involved himself in the business of the guest houses on the rare occasions when Laurin directly ordered him to do so. Laurin paid him well, and Jesud kept quiet and did his job.

When Killian took over, this changed. Jesud could tell that Killian was not Laurin's son, but he kept it to himself. His new employer asked a little more of Jesud, bringing him slowly into his confidence. Eventually, when the innkeepers needed someone to act as figurehead for the city council, Killian volunteered Jesud.

The Thieves' Guild

The Thieves' Guild is perhaps the largest mercenary organization within the Accordlands, surpassing even Kerebrus' Dark Horsemen. Not even Black Tom is certain how many people are in his guild. Formed centuries ago in Andover, the guild's job was originally threefold: to provide jobs for its members, to fence goods, and to hide members in trouble. When the first assassins joined, some members protested, but after a few dozen deaths the guild remembered who it was complaining about. There is little love for the assassins within the guild, but they have been more than worth the trouble... until recently.

After the Assassins' Strike, most of the guild is either in open rebellion against its leadership, or on the run from vengeful nations. When Black Tom took the contracts on every known hero's life, he risked the guild's exposure, and lost the bet. Like most of his guild, he is now in hiding. He dreads the true master of the guild, the elf Cear Adinerach.

For more details about the events and people behind the Assassins' Strike, see the *Campaign* book.

His advanced age (by this point he was past 70) made him a believable spokesman, and his loyalty to Killian made him unlikely to try and take advantage of the position.

Jesud was once a low-level fighter, but his age has rendered him a complete noncombatant.

The Free Kingdom of Toris Kelt

Background

Toris Kelt boasts perhaps the most complex and cosmopolitan society in the Accordlands. Situated in a volcanic bowl, surrounded on all sides by high mountains, Toris Kelt thrives in a lush valley. At the northern end a lake supplies lavish pure water. The volcanic bowl is large enough to accommodate three or four large cities, with plenty of farmland to support them. A military outpost on the southwest rim guards the passes down to the lake and the homes below. Toris Kelt is nearly unassailable, so it has no need for a large army. A Nothrog legion might outnumber the defenders ten to one, but even with their great siege engines they would be hard pressed to dent Toris Kelt's defenses.

Founded by a group of adventurers, Toris Kelt has blossomed from a series of simple farming communities into a haven of tolerance and scholarly works. All are welcome in the city-state: elves, Nothrog, and humans. Many smaller religious sects have made their home here to

escape persecution. Even unsavory cults are welcome here, though their neighbors keep a wary eye on them.

Each citizen is free to pursue his own goals, and due to this policy of acceptance many wondrous innovations have been born here. The diverse nation's open and cooperative spirit is responsible for its stability.

Unfortunately, Toris Kelt's neighbors are not impressed by its internal harmony. Seen as "merely a collection of refuse," citizens of Toris Kelt receive little respect when traveling. The city-state's open acceptance of half-breeds and perceived lack of culture gives Toris Kelt a reputation for being a hovel nestled in a mountain.

Economy

Toris Kelt's economy lives and dies in the marketplaces of the southern county of Aonach. Most trade between Toris Kelt and other nations is barter only even though the city-state strikes its own large silver coin, the Knot.

The Deverenian Empire is bitter about Toris Kelt's independence, although the empire does not at present have the capacity to absorb the distant city-state. Until it can turn its military attention to Toris Kelt, Deverenian is flexing its economic muscles. It values the Knot at a lower rate than the market would otherwise peg it, and forces its preferred trading partners to do the same. The Free Kingdoms closest to Toris Kelt usually give full value for a Knot, but Baraxton and Miesaris are quite harsh. Some merchants in these nations refuse to even accept the coin at all.

The merchants of Toris Kelt must therefore trade good for good based on the current price of the wares. So while the nation has a currency that could rival any other, their marketplaces seem backward.



Laws

The laws of Toris Kelt remain practically unchanged. Aside from regulations that detail the governing bodies, the laws merely state that each citizen has the same rights as any other. No one is judged by his beliefs or race, but by his actions alone.

Apart from this, Toris Kelt could be viewed as an anarchist commune. The Prince Regent is less a monarch than a mediator. The county councils merely bring the concerns of the people before the Prince Regent. Most times these concerns are economic; one guild accuses another of undermining their work. Sometimes a county (usually Meain Yiarn) requests an ambitious new project, and the other two counties worry about the project's effects and cost. Given the open-minded attitude of his people, the Prince Regent rarely has difficult decisions.

The laws provide for a force of constables, but these posts are viewed as soft jobs. There is hardly any crime within the borders of the principality outside of petty theft. In truth they are more mediators, helping to settle disputes before they escalate to the point where they require the attention of the county council.

Population: Toris Kelt has only about 75,000 citizens. 35,000 people work its farms and ranches. The guilds employ roughly 32,000 members, including all the miners that work in Meain Yiarn. 5,000 soldiers make up the army of Toris Kelt, while the remaining population consists of scholars, priests, and a few nobles.

Government: Toris Kelt, while technically a single city, has been split into three counties: Gliannon in the east, Aonach in the south, and Meain Yiarn in the west. A council of four, known as the Ard-Choonsel, is made up of the aldermen of Gliannon, Aonach, and Meain Yiarn, and the captain of the garrison at Cummal Magh. The reigning Prince Regent moderates this council, and makes rulings based on their recommendations.

Each alderman presides over his county's own council, made up of that county's guild masters, two representatives elected by the residents of that county, and the chief constable. The councils vary in size. Aonach, with its many guild representatives, has the largest council, while scholarly Gliannon has the smallest. Cummal Magh, being a military installation rather than a county in its own right, has no council, although its few guilds send representatives to counsel the garrison captain. The captain's seneschal advises the captain on the day-to-day issues affecting the mountain fort.

These county councils do not dictate policy. They implement the rulings of the Prince Regent. The aldermen draft lists of concerns and ideas to be presented at the monthly meetings of the Ard-Choonsel, held at the Prince Regent's manor in Gliannon.

Imports: Exotic goods, books, information, leather, and agricultural supplies (seed stock, etc.)

Exports: Iron, silver, gold, pottery, craftwork, and wool

Important NPCs: Prince Regent Gaalus Lanrunnel (Reigning Prince); Prince Kal Lanrunnel (Gaalus' son); Captain Dukat (Captain of the Garrison at Cummal Magh); Garth Drac (Gliannon Alderman); Bevan "Harty" Tate (Aonach Alderman); Einion Mallory (Meain Yiarn Alderman); Fauve Mightyheart (Liaison between Ard-Choonsel and Andover refugees)

History

Toris Kelt was founded just over 800 years ago by a group of Deverenian refugees that fled through the Kabal lands from Denska. Seizing the opportunity to make a new home for themselves, they settled in the easily-fortified mountain valley. Ten years later the Deverenian Empire caught up with them. The archon of Denska led a party of his soldiers to recapture the refugees, but the fortuitous intervention of a band of monster hunters drove them off. Once news of Signon's coup reached the settlement, the refugees knew that they would be safe for a little while. The monster hunters, led by a half-Nothrog named Maelgad who wished to live in a place that would not shun those like him, joined the settlement. With the help of his friend, a Deverenian wizard named Gregor the Bold, he set about creating the city of Toris Kelt.

Recently Toris Kelt has been at the center of major strife. The city-state broke the elven siege in alliance with Duke Robert of Andover. The people of Toris Kelt are welcoming the refugees, but resources are already being strained. Inns are packed full, as are the marketplaces of Aonach. While the reserves of Cummal Magh can keep the army fed and supplied for another year, civilian food is becoming scarce. The elven siege may be broken, but there are still many enemies in the lands surrounding Toris Kelt, enough to keep trade caravans away. "Harty" Tate, alderman of Aonach, believes that famine will not set in for another six months.

Society

The society of Toris Kelt is as diverse as those who comprise it. Each home has its own traditions and practices, and there are only a few national festivals, such as harvest time. Like-minded individuals nevertheless give each of the three counties of the principality a unique atmosphere.

Gliannon is a scholarly retreat, with the University of Gliannon at its hub. It hosts many plays and concerts. Most of its commerce involves the production of books and alchemical supplies. It is a quiet and serene county.

Aonach is its exact opposite, a lively jumble of people passionate about craftsmanship. Most merchants here make and sell their wares. Everything here revolves around the markets, which rarely close. When a large caravan arrives, they stay open all night. Most of Toris Kelt's bars and gambling dens enliven this area's nightlife. Fortunately the people are generally happy, so there is rarely any work for the constabulary.

To the west, in the county of Meain Yiarn, the work is demanding. This is the roughest section of Toris Kelt. The miners' work is dangerous, so their off hours they tend to be brash and exuberant. Toris Kelt's few criminals are shipped here to work off their crimes in the mines. This area requires the most attention of the constables and Meain Yiarn's council always brings up the most issues before the Ard-Choonsel. Those who inhabit this county are of hardy stock, and for the most part they enjoy their work.

The only commonality between the counties is their farmland. Each county devotes some acreage to feeding the city. Toris Kelt's highly educated farmers do not merely till the soil and harvest the

crops, but constantly work to improve their methods. A third of Glionnan University students are farmers, and their advances have greatly accelerated the city's agricultural development.

Geography

Toris Kelt's valley is a large oval, its long axis along a northwest-southeast line, and encompassing about 500 square miles.

A dead caldera holds a large freshwater lake which dominates the north. A river flows south from the lake, dividing Toris Kelt in two before it empties into a grotto in the southeastern mountain range. The eastern half contains lush forests of juniper, birch, and evergreens, supporting ample game. Cultivated lands to the east of the river are mainly orchards and vineyards.

West of the river is most of Toris Kelt's farmland, its soil rich and dark. The northern section grows staple crops, while the slightly warmer southern lands produce almost all the cash crops the city exports.

The mountain range that rings the valley is steeper toward the northwest, and veined with rich mineral deposits. The southeastern end of the mountain range has a shallower grade, making it easier to navigate through the mountain passes. The peaks to the south are far higher, capped by the mountain fortress of Cummal Magh.

Winters in Toris Kelt are crippling. Only the mines and university remain in operation, as the farms and markets must shut down in the cold. However harsh the winters are though, they are brief. Few storms can penetrate the tall mountains that ring the valley, so the winters are mercifully short. Spring, summer and autumn all blend into one long season.

Aonach

The marketplaces of Aonach are the economic heart of Toris Kelt. Most of the county's land farms tea, cotton, and vegetables. Most of its people live and work on the farms, but the rest operate the vast marketplaces that dominate the center of the county. It is this area that people refer to when they talk of Aonach.

The markets themselves are mostly one-story wooden buildings, with huge open porches as display areas. A few of the grander structures rise as high as three stories, and feature items from some of the best artisans in the city-state. The buildings are grouped into districts that sell similar items. The wide streets have pedestrian walkways to keep foot traffic from impeding carts. Little has changed here since Gregor the Bold first laid out the street grid, although the markets now cover ten square miles. The original marketplace is used as a meeting hall, hosting county council meetings and annual festivals. The constables that patrol this vast area are not physically imposing, but they can deal with the cutpurses that wander the markets (2d4 rogues of 2–5th level). The marketplace can be quite confusing to those unfamiliar with the layout. Guides can be hired for one Knot per day. Otherwise, visitors must make a Knowledge (Toris Kelt) check of DC 30. If they have Knowledge (Aonach) the check is DC 15.

Over 150 guilds are represented in the markets, from teamsters to carpenters to makers of water clocks to sell-swords. Because of the nature of Toris Kelt's government, this presents quite a hassle for the alderman of Aonach. Meetings of the council normally

consist of loud debates that resemble the haggling in the markets outside. Over the course of three weeks the council hashes out the most pressing issues and concerns of the markets and farms. Typically differences between guilds over pricing or contracts dominate the talks. Guild masters must split their attention between the constant debates and managing their businesses. A major concern for all the guilds currently is the demand on food and raw materials for the construction of emergency shelters. With the lack of trade caravans coming into the city supplies will be dwindling faster than anyone would care to think about. A number of merchants are paying upward of 10,000 Knots to groups willing to smuggle supplies past the elven armies. Even though the siege is broken, this is still a dangerous proposition and few are taking the jobs.

It is the job of the alderman to run these meetings and maintain some sort of order. Normally the alderman is elected from within the council. The position is so stressful that there is a high turnover rate. Most aldermen only last two or three years in the position before they resign to return to their previous lives.

The current alderman is Bevan "Harty" Tate, a former scholar of the University at Glionnan. After years of study, he decided to retire to the farms of Aonach to live out his days under the sun. Soon he was elected by his peers to represent them on the county council. Within a year he was voted alderman. He has held the post for the past five years, and shows no signs of giving it up. Tate is nearly eighty years old, and only wishes to see an end to the conflicts that span the Accordlands. Before the elven siege of Toris Kelt, he gathered information on the world outside the mountain range in the markets of Aonach. He currently counsels the Prince Regent to extend a hand to the other Free Kingdoms in the hope of bringing about a lasting peace. "Harty" Tate was once a level 12 wizard, but time away from studies has rendered him effectively a level 4 wizard.

Approximately half of Toris Kelt's total population lives and works in Aonach County.

Cummal Magh

There are many paths into the valley of Toris Kelt, but most are too narrow to be passable. Even though some of the paths high up in the mountains are large enough to move an army through, the climb to them is too treacherous for any army to attempt safely. Only the pass in the southeastern mountains is large and safe enough to accommodate large numbers of travelers. It is here that Prince Maelgad built a great fort. Twin towers of granite frame a huge portcullis. Behind these towers live the men and women who comprise the army of Toris Kelt.

Cummal Magh is the only military installation in the mountain city-state. It consists of the two towers and portcullis, a large training yard, and stables. The land immediately behind the fortress, while rocky, grows a few crops. Mines dot the mountains to the left and right of the fortress, supplying the blacksmiths with iron for weapons and armor. Cummal Magh is nearly autonomous, needing only those few goods it cannot manufacture on its own, and recruits.

The troops live in barracks in the lower levels of the towers. The barracks are large enough to host up to 10,000 troops each, although Toris Kelt's total military might only numbers around 5,000 troops. A lot of the space is given over to storage. The garrison currently boasts enough supplies to last through a two-year siege. A small staff of workers, overseen by a seneschal (usually a retired army officer), maintains these storage rooms.



The majority of the troops are young rangers and scouts who grew bored hunting in the forests of Gliionnan, and who thought their craving for excitement would be sated in the army. This romantic attitude has generated a constant supply of recruits through the years, most of whom returned home even more bored when their enlistment was up.

Since the geography of Toris Kelt makes a stand in the valley a hopeless cause, the army is not trained in standard military tactics. Troops learn guerrilla tactics, and how to use the land outside Toris Kelt to assault invaders, leading them into areas where the siege engines atop the towers can dismantle them. They also build elaborate earthworks to hinder hostile armies. Scouts guide merchant caravans into the city, so they do not wander into any of these hidden dangers.

The current captain of the Cummal Magh garrison is a man known only as Dukat. He joined the army of Toris Kelt nearly twenty years ago and steadily rose through the ranks until he claimed his current position nearly eight years ago. His soldiers say that Dukat is a dark and complex man. To those that truly know him he is quite passionate, and has but one simple goal: to protect his home from all harm. Since the elven armies began their siege, it has been his defenses that have allowed Toris Kelt to remain unscathed. While the mountains are most formidable, the magic of the elven necromancers and the skill of their scouts have enabled the elven siege. Without them, the elven army would fall back under the vicious onslaught of Dukat's men. The ranks of the city-states' army are growing, and with plentiful resources still at their disposal, Dukat and his garrison seem capable of holding out the invaders indefinitely. The patrols in Cummal Magh are better trained more numerous than anywhere else in Toris Kelt, except the Prince Regent's manor (3d6 fighters of 5–7th levels). If trouble arises that any patrol can not handle on its own, reinforcements are close by (1d4 rounds).

For information on Captain Dukat see page 263.

Only 5% of the population lives here, including troops stationed here and the support staff.

Gliionnan

Unlike the bustle of the markets of Aonach or the grand projects that dominate Meain Yiarn, Gliionnan is home to a quiet scholarly community. This is where Prince Maelgad and his followers first built their homes, and it is here that the Ard-Choonsel meets. Gliionnan County could well be described as the heart of Toris Kelt.

Most of the inhabitants live in small manors, in a sleepy valley near the northeastern rim of the mountain ring. These dwellings grew out of the ancestral homes of the founders of Toris Kelt, which held entire extended families. Intermingled with these homes are shops and markets that lack the fierce haggling seen in Aonach.

The two places of great importance to Gliannon are its library and university. Gregor the Bold, hoping to educate the serfs that populated the valley, founded both over a thousand years ago. Here the guilds instruct those that wish to learn new trades, scholars debate historical curiosities, and priests of all faiths contemplate spiritual matters. Very few outside of Toris Kelt itself are aware of the depth of resources the university has to offer, though its presence is known throughout most of the Free Kingdoms and the Deverenian Empire. Traditionally the chancellor of the university serves as Gliannon's alderman.

The library holds thousands of tomes from all corners of the Accordlands. These tomes are overseen by clerics from various religions, most notably the followers of Neus. Every citizen is free to use the library, but most patrons are students or faculty at the university. The bottommost levels of the library are said to contain powerful artifacts once owned by Gregor the Bold. Stories about deadly wards and restless spirits prevent all but the bravest (or most foolish) from searching for them.

The ancestral manor of the Prince Regent is set almost against the wall of the mountain range. The vast estates below it have some of the richest vineyards in Toris Kelt, and the wine made here is among the most coveted in the northern Accordlands. Prince Regent Gaalus Lanrunnel lives here with his son. The Prince is a half-elf, his father having fallen in love with an elven merchant's daughter. He is not the most philosophical or creative Prince Regent Toris Kelt has seen, but he is practical and fair. He spent his youth as a ranger, later joining the garrison of Cummal Magh. Gaalus married a Deverenian noble, hoping to foster peace between his principality and the Empire. She died giving birth to their son Kal, and her family blamed Gaalus' elven heritage. The young prince spent years visiting with priests, hoping to find a meaning to his mother's death, while his father has merely tried to keep his kingdom at peace. Gaalus is a neutral good 5th-level fighter/3rd-level ranger.

Recent developments have deeply disturbed the alderman of Gliannon, Garth Drac; even his abilities as a seer could not predict these tragedies. Garth emigrated from Deverenian to Toris Kelt three decades ago, fleeing a horrifying vision, and started a new life teaching Deverenian history at the university. His upbringing gave him a keen mind for politics, and soon found himself university chancellor. He uses his gifts to help the Prince Regent and his adoptive homeland. Realizing that Toris Kelt could become a new model for human civilization, he has urged the Prince to offer sanctuary to the refugees in the south. Secretly he hopes that a great coalition of the Free Kingdoms will be able to stop the mad plans of the Deverenian Emperor. Garth Drac is a neutral good 13th level seer.

Gliannon County is the permanent home of 10% of the city-state's population, though attendance at the university jumps significantly during the winter months. The few local constables are mainly scholarly types who patrol the university area almost to the exclusion of all other territories (1d4 wizards and bards of 2nd–4th level). The guards responsible for the Prince Regent's manor are the best available (5d6 fighters and rangers of 6–7th level).

Meain Yiarn

Meain Yiarn is the largest of Toris Kelt's counties. Its large tracts of farmland see the population through the long winter months. The mines keep the markets filled with raw materials for craft and barter. Without either of these resources Toris Kelt would never have grown to its current size, nor would it be able to bear up under siege.

The most noteworthy structure in Meain Yiarn is the huge mining complex built into the northwestern rim, easily the size of a small Deverenian city. Extending for miles along the side of the mountain face, and burrowing nearly a half-mile into it, this complex has grown steadily since its founding 500 years ago. Originally it was merely a series of independent mines. After the guilds formed, they organized the mining effort, maximizing output. Nothrog and Deverenian merchants constantly demanded raw materials, especially iron. The books, tools, and goods that the iron brought could not be crafted within the city-state. With the support of Toris Kelt's political leaders the mining guilds thrived.

As the nation became more self-reliant, the expansion of the complex slowed. Today its output is tightly managed so the market does not become flooded. Recently the complex has begun to process its own steel for trade in the markets. Alchemists from the University of Gliannon are constantly trying new smelting techniques. Cummal Magh's few siege engines were built here, based on designs supplied by Captain Dukat and university engineers.

The chief mining operations foreman doubles as the county's alderman. Einion Mallory is a gruff, taciturn individual whose engineering skill is unquestioned, and he is solely responsible for maintaining the mine's strict quotas. Mallory could not care less about his duties with the Ard-Choonseil, but he does not shirk his obligations. He brusquely presents his county's list of concerns, and then brings back the Prince Regent's word and sees that it is enforced. He is currently unhappy with the Prince Regent's decision to offer sanctuary to the Andover refugees. Mallory is an isolationist, and would rather see the Andoverans cast out to fend for themselves instead of consuming all his resources. He holds to the minority opinion that Dukat's men could have held off the elven siege indefinitely, and sees nothing but trouble in an alliance with Sir Robert.

The constables that patrol Meain Yiarn have to deal with some of the rowdiest residents. Patrols operate in large groups and arm themselves with cudgels and saps. Numerous they might be, but they are poorly trained (6d4 fighters of 1–3rd level). The miners and farmers of Meain Yiarn County make up the remaining 30% of Toris Kelt's population.



WEST







Chapter Six: The Nothrog

In the wastes and plains of the harshest territory of the Accordlands roam the tribes of Nothrog. Although some may consider them “primitive,” the Nothrog are some of the greatest tacticians and military strategists in the Lands of the Accord, and they are both intelligent and cultured. Nothrog tribes simply prefer a nomadic lifestyle, using their excellent skills with the sword to conquer and pillage as they make their way across their broad homeland. These skills are always honed, as all Nothrog are constantly at war. It is their calling, their art and their ardent pleasure.

The Nothrog specialize in group tactics, and use siege engines and unusual equipment. Their magicians and clerics are rare but dangerously skilled, ideal support units for the Nothrog legions. Most Nothrog are warriors, scouts and soldiers, ready to give their lives for the legion that has been both mother and father to them.

What do they look like?

Most Nothrog are big, broad, and scary. Their skin is blackish-brown or green, and they have open fangs, sharp teeth, and single-colored eyes with yellow pupils. Their strawlike hair is black or green, and their hands have three fingers with gnarled, wooden-looking claws.

Long ago, many different humanoid races wandered the Accordlands. Then, the Storm came; the humanoids were all but wiped out. The surviving humanoid races interbred, formed tribes and villages, and evolved into the common culture known today as the Nothrog.

The Nothrog descend from a number of humanoid races: ogres, goblins, hobgoblins, orcs, and the like. Most blend several humanoid cultures, but some are born as “throwbacks” or bred out of a more limited tribal pattern. These retain certain aspects of their heritage: the advanced healing powers of trolls, the sheer size of ogres, or the superior intelligence of ancient goblins. Most, though, are simply “Nothrog,” indistinguishable by bloodline.

Everyone in a Nothrog legion — the extended family unit — knows how to contribute to the fighting. Children learn the art of sabotage, how to drag the wounded from the battlefield, and how to defend themselves in close quarters. Men and women are no different in a Nothrog legion, how one fights being the only determinant of status. Both sexes are extremely muscular, usually armored in studded leathers or other less restrictive protective gear. The lands of the Nothrog are mountainous but hot, so they often are dressed in nothing but their armor. Their other clothing is simple; flowing robes, or small wrappings around vital areas.

One Nothrog in a thousand is born an albino (red eyes and all), and they are considered to have a special purpose. They are often clerics and sorcerers and dress in pale greens, wearing robes rather than armor.

Nothrog males and females are usually the same size, but that size is determined by their legion. A legion descended from orcs might stand a sturdy 6' on the average, while one descended from Ogres would stand closer to 8' tall. A legion that evolved from goblins might not stand quite 5', so the variance is noticeable. Features and body types are universal: wiry and muscular. The various legions interbreed, and this is slowly leading to a more unified culture and consistent appearance. Nothrog life expectancy is 60 years, and most normal Nothrog could live at most to be 80. However, few live that long, and most die in battle by the time they are 40.

Where do they live?

The Nothrog live in the mountains at the edge of the eastern plains. Their homeland is wide and fertile, with many hundreds of miles of plains bordered with thick hillocks. The eastern border runs along the Shattered Lands, where the banshee moon Bascaron turned the earth to waste. The land there does not grow grass nor does the soil prosper, and strange creatures come out of the wildlands, escaping from even greater horrors that roam the land beyond the Broken Mountains.

The Nothrog lands are harsh and unforgiving, and their villages are maintained by captive races such as humans or kobolds. When a legion conquers another people, they may enslave them and keep them on their lands, or they may move them to existing

villages deeper in that legion's territories. Those unfortunates must then provide the wandering patron tribe with all its non war-based needs such as clothing, food, and medicine. A Nothrog tribe has blacksmiths, combat medics, and shamans, but rarely bothers to learn tailoring or husbandry. Were it not for the parasitic relationship between the Nothrog tribe and these slave-villages, the Nothrog would starve to death.

The lands of the Nothrog are also inhabited by many mercenaries and wandering adventurers. They are filled with ancient ruins, fallen cities, and other adventure settings, but the Nothrog rarely remain in one area long enough to care about "scenery." Monsters roam freely, providing the Nothrog legions with sport throughout the year.

Summers are terribly hot in the Nothrog lands, and winters are bitter. The land is a long north-south strip, and its climate varies widely. Those who live there must be hardy, or the weather will destroy them. Wild electrical storms blow holes in tall buildings or tree lines, and the earth is carved by heavy rains and thick snows.

The few Nothrog cities have haphazard temporary architecture. The Nothrog do not build in stone, leaving such work to their kobold slaves. Their cities are rarely more than semipermanent encampments, made solid by the fact that they exist on a trading ground, or because the tribes are constantly filtering in and out of the area.

There are a few exceptions to this rule, cities built of the grayish stone common to the Nothrog mountains to serve as watchposts over the Broken Mountains. These posts were built long ago, perhaps even before the Nothrog seized control. They expanded into sprawling, haphazard cities that bore into the top of mountains and somberly overlook the major passes into the Shattered Lands. Some tribes remain stationary within these great cities, keeping generations of human and kobold slaves to do their bidding rather than conquering land and holding villages like the other legions.

These sedentary Nothrog prove their courage by venturing into the Shattered Lands and returning with the heads of fantastic beasts. It is said that the Nothrog city of Burrdechtod has a gate made from the skull of a giant catlike creature, its mouth large enough to ride three horses abreast through. Other beasts occasionally try to make their way through the larger mountain passes. While small ones can creep through the high mountains, massive predators must use the passes to cross the Broken Mountains where they come upon the Nothrog heathrod (watch-cities) and are forced to fight the defenders who protect the passes.

The Nothrog, it must be said, do not guard these passes out of any desire to protect the rest of the Accordlands. Rather, they eagerly look forward to the creatures that attempt to cross through the Broken Mountains (sometimes to the point of sending out scouts to herd them toward the passes). They want to battle the strongest and most dangerous things the Shattered Lands can send against them.

What is their society like?

Nothrog are by no means primitive. They are military tacticians, clever soldiers, and brutal fighters. They have advanced weapons, military machines, and siege engines. They typically don't wear helmets, their skulls being so strong that they are unnecessary.

Their massive tribes cross the lands of the Accord, remaining mostly within their own homeland, in order to enslave other cultures, seek adventures, and face great dangers. Such things are the bread and meat of the Nothrog culture: if you aren't a warrior, you are negligible.

Nothrog live in extended family organizations known as "legions" or "tribes." They travel though the easternmost Lands of the Accord, for the most part keeping to themselves. The legions fight when they come too near one another, more to prove their dominance than to defend territory. Nothrog will fight over almost anything, throwing caution to the wind in order to test their skill, courage, and cunning.

Nothrog legions live for battle. Young Nothrog spend their time learning how to care for the injured, drag the wounded off the battlefield, and reload the catapults. Even pregnant mothers do what they can to aid the tribe, and more than one Nothrog has actually been born on the field in the middle of combat. It is all part of the Nothrog culture: live free, die gloriously, and spend the time in between proving your courage and your skill.

The Nothrog "nation" (more accurately, "region") is not divided into smaller territories. The legions challenge each other for control of a hill, village, or wealthy portion of their lands. Because territorial subdivisions change so rapidly, it is impossible to track any regional power centers other than the few established towns and cities.

The most important lesson of Nothrog society can be summed up in the war chant of the Scarab Legion: everything dies. The basic Nothrog philosophy is simple. Life is war. The two are inseparable; there is no way to have one without the other, and no Nothrog would want to.

Nothrog therefore have few if any close friends, and certainly none from outside their tribe. The Nothrog of one's tribe are father and mother, brother and sister. Most Nothrog never really know their parents, as the death rate is quite high, but they do not care. The legion is everything, no other blood ties are of any importance. Every battle brings a Nothrog closer to glory, prestige, and power — and eventually, to his own bitter end. A Nothrog's life is spent burying his companions and celebrating their victories.

This is not to say that all Nothrog are death-fanatics. A well-trained legion can go for months without a loss, and their casualties may be light if their enemies are weak. Certainly, warriors in a legion always have someone watching their backs — and they do the same for their sword-brothers and sisters. Every victory enhances the souls of those gone before. There are no tears shed, but a tremendous bonfire is created to pay proper tribute to those who have died on the battlefield. Typically, a battle between two Nothrog factions ends one hour before dusk, so that the bodies of the brave warriors who have fallen on both sides can be gathered into a single massive funeral pyre. This ensures that the spirits hear both tales of the battle, and that they will know the truth in each warrior's heart by seeing the strength of the Nothrog that bested them.

Children scour the field, dragging back the wounded and killing the horribly impaired. They gather the weapons that can be salvaged, and fight over treasures found on the bodies of the

dead. This last hour is commonly called the "Battle of Cubs," and it can be as vicious as any battle between grown warriors. It is considered a mark of honor to return with treasures stolen from those who fell on the far side of battle (usually the enemy). Some children play this game too fervently, and end up captured by the other legion or even killed by other children loose on the field. Life isn't easy for Nothrog children — but then again, they have to learn that early, or they won't learn it at all.

The finest tacticians and group fighters in the Accord, the Nothrog have seized control of the Southern Lands and taken the city of Baraxton, the hub of civilization. They build and use most of the Accordlands' siege engines. They developed legions and strategies before any other race did, and their tactics surpass the military understanding of the other races of the Accord. With the seizure of Baraxton, the Nothrog have become a truly powerful force, and have the strength to back up their demands.

Legion Totems

The religious Nothrog believe that the power of a legion comes from its totem, a strong animal or creature whose spirit-presence inspires the tribe. This creature may be real, such as Bear or Scarab, or it may be semimythical like Griffon or Wyvern, but it is always as real as a sibling to those members of the tribe. Such sayings as "Wyvern walks beside us" are common, and the legionnaires consider their tribe's spirit totem to be as much a part of the legion as their own brothers and sisters.

The albino shamans of the Nothrog commune with these powerful spirits, casting spells in their name and constantly strengthening the totem. When two legions fight, their totems also do combat on the spirit-realm. If one totem is obviously stronger, it may devour the energy of the weaker totem, and the stronger legion enslaves the weaker. The totem of the stronger legion grows more powerful, and the weaker one is destroyed.

A legion whose totem has been destroyed in this manner has only two choices: permanently join the victorious legion and hope to find a place as equals and soldiers for their group; or seek escape from their slavery and rebuild their tribe. If they manage the second task (usually by performing some great deed and having their freedom returned to them), then the shamans of the newly freed tribe must contact the spirit realm and seek out another totem. If no shamans remain in a tribe, then it cannot perform this rite. It is condemned to live under the other tribe forever, never again having its own identity. The weaker tribe will be completely subsumed, its legends forgotten.

Each totem must be summoned from the spirit realm. This can only be done by shamans dedicated more to the spirit world than the physical life that their brethren enjoy. Each tribe of Nothrog has its own shamans, and without these powerful spiritualists, the legion would fall apart. The shaman of a Nothrog tribe communes with the legion's totem spirit, discovering what it needs or wants, and keeps it content so that it will give the legion strength and lead it to victory. The shamans must appease the totem as well as asking it for advice and counsel, and when the legion wars with another, the totem must also be prepared to fight for its life.

Legions frequently model their societies after the needs and desires of their totems. A Nothrog legion whose totem is Bear, for

example, would never harm a bear in the wilderness, no matter how great the need. The totem Scarab may insist that its shamans know a great deal about poison, or that the legion's leader feast on poisoned food from time to time in order to "grow closer" to the totem spirit. Most totems impose requirements or insist that their legion observe a taboo in order to properly respect its spiritual powers.

When a legion's shaman is inept or misguided, or if he does not pay proper respect and attention to the legion's totem, the totem may get sick or even abandon its legion. Such shamans are usually treated to a painful and horrifying death.

Slaves

Nothrog make slaves of anyone they can subdue, and rely on conquered races for supplies and labor. Need food? Attack that farmer; take his. Better yet, make him grow you some more food while you're off fighting. Slaves are for tasks that Nothrog do not want to do, or that would demean them.

Nothrog are brutal masters, but they are rarely around to watch over their slave villages. Only slaves that actually travel with the legions are ill-treated. For those villagers who remain with their own kind, the Nothrog are lords to be tithed to, and groveled to when the legion visits the village. Yes, they are slaves, but their slavery lies in their tribute of food, armor, and other goods rather than in day-to-day mistreatment and demand.

Those slaves who do travel with the Nothrog have the poorest quality of life imaginable. They must fulfill every requirement of a traveling camp of warriors except for the actual fighting. They assemble tents, build siege engines, perform heavy labor, and haggle for goods. They track supplies, maintain the troops' equipment, and pack and unpack the wagons. In some legions, slaves are even used for weapons or poison testing.

Most Nothrog slaves are kobolds, a furred doglike race that is as intelligent but far less ferocious than the Nothrog. It is assumed that the kobold did not join the unification of the goblinoid races that formed the Nothrog so many years ago, and that their punishment for this lack of "vision" resulted in them becoming the favored slaves of the Nothrog. Whatever the reason, kobolds are generally peaceful creatures, who live to tend their fields and keep their mines, and must rely on cleverness and thrift in order to survive in the dangerous Nothrog world.

Slaves of the Nothrog can be any race or gender. A recent influx of human slaves captured during skirmishes with the human kingdoms has pleased the many tribes fighting with Nassiral Hate, who grow stronger with such bounty. The tribes following Nassiral Hate are lavishly armed and supplied, and they can see the day coming when they will be able to crush all opposing legions.

What is their religion?

The Nothrog have a religion rivaling all others in the Accordlands. They believe that another realm exists, peopled by incredibly powerful spirits. These totem spirits can be given form through worship, and those forms are chosen by the legion that reveres them. The longer a spirit remains in its form, and the stronger its legion is, the more powerful the totem becomes.



When a legion forms, each of its members spills blood into a cauldron, and some sacrificial creature is placed in a ceremonial pit. The creature to be sacrificed must be unharmed and in good condition both mentally and physically. It can be a Nothrog (some totems prefer this) or any other sentient being. The shamans of the legion perform a great ceremony with the blood, summoning the chosen totem. The totem spirit battles the creature in the pit, overcoming it after a great struggle. The stronger the struggle and the more powerful the creature sacrificed to the totem, the stronger the totem's physical form will be.

Once the totem has its flesh body, it returns to the spirit lands with that "shroud," returning only when called upon by the legionary shamans. The older a spirit's shroud, and the more powerful the legion becomes, the stronger the legion's totem will also become. When two legions meet in combat to conquer one another (as opposed to a mere dispute of land or pride), their priests summon forth their totems, which fight until one or the other is dead. Because a totem's strength is partly drawn from its legion, a legion that is being defeated by another will see its totem losing strength as well.

Nothrog clerics are animists, believing that the world around them is filled with lessons to be learned from every animal and occurrence of nature. They consider the Storm a blasphemy, a deceased spirit without a shroud that continues to plague the world. If it could be harnessed and given a shroud, it would make a phenomenal legion totem, but one might as well try to shackle the sun.

All Nothrog clerics are totem clerics for their legion. Only the high priest may bear a carving of the totem itself, but all the priests carry or wear images of the totem and other creatures as a reminder of the wisdom, experience, and power of that creature.

These likenesses honor these teachers, while inspiring the clerics in a direction of a clearer understanding of their own strengths and reminding them weaknesses of that must be remedied.

Nothrog don't pray to their totems, instead beseeching a shaman or cleric to intervene for them. They ask him to convince the spirit to loan them its strength, cunning, or other ability. Totem priests receive prizes and gold in exchange for their ability to speak to the totem and divine the future, or confer a spiritual gift upon the petitioner that has come to them.

When the Legion Priest dies, a sacrificial pit is dug for his body, where the legion's totem consumes it and renews its shroud. The totem then chooses another favored priest to lead the spiritual life of the legion, and that priest receives the carving of the totem. Should a totem's head priest die and the totem not be able to consume him for some reason, the totem will become angry, and impose harsh punishments or demand additional sacrifices.

Priestly ranks are as follows: High Priest, Totem Priest/Legion Priest, Priest, and Supplicant.

Who is in charge?

Nothrog are divided into military legions with a precisely delineated chain of command. Each legion follows its legion commander. When one legion defeats another and destroys its totem, the vanquished legion is absorbed by its conquerors. Often, the beaten legion remains submissive only while rebuilding its strength, and then subsequently breaks away. Less commonly, the secondary legion may remain for generations, eventually forming a single unit with its conquerors.



The legions of the Nothrog follow a single commander, whose power comes from his strength at arms and the victories of his past. For each victory, a Nothrog takes a prize. In some legions, this may be a bone tied to his hair, or a scar, in others, it is a measure of gold that the Nothrog is given by his companions. In time, these "trophy" add up, and the one with the greatest proof of his exploits is considered to be the legion commander. That commander rules his legion with an iron fist, keeping order, appointing seconds-in-command, and ensuring that the legion runs like clockwork.

When alone or abandoned by his unit, a Nothrog has no idea how to relate to the world. They are a race of law and order. The Nothrog life is military from birth to death, and they always know where they fit in society and follow their legion's regulations. Should that suddenly change — through exile or the loss of one's legion — a Nothrog is utterly lost. Instinctively, adrift Nothrog seek the strongest leader possible to once again impose order.

The most powerful legions of the Nothrog are known for their brutality, their strength, and their cohesive units. These units are led by such powerful soldiers as Krun, Uthanak, and Taoth, and their legends reach throughout the Nothrog nation wrapped in tales of terror and pride. It is a point of pride for a Nothrog to be in such a legion. It is said that when Krun's legion defeated and swallowed the Swarm Legion, the Nothrog of the Swarm killed their own shaman so that they would not be asked to rebuild their own legion. They were prouder to have been adopted into the legion of Krun, and would never go back to their place outside that tribe.

That, of course, is not typical of the Nothrog, who value their independence more than anything else. Most legions will die

rather than being totally subsumed and that makes recent events even more baffling. Recently, several Nothrog legions have come together under the albino priest Nassiral Hate. Although their individual legions have not been dissolved, they all swear allegiance through their military chain of command to the same overlord, and all the tribes beneath Hate swear to the same fealty chain, and are expected to work together.

Such a thing has never happened in the Nothrog history, and many tribes are now concerned that they may be the next to submit to Hate's power. If this happens, the chain of independent military command in the Nothrog nation may end up becoming a singular kingship; the Nothrog would lose their tribal independence and become like any other nation of the Accordlands. However, that is still a long way off. It would require an exceptional show of strength from Nassiral Hate in order to overthrow more than 500 years of societal training.

Hate has incredible power as well as a natural Nothrog instinct for strategy. More importantly, he has the strength of will to weld together warring legions and force them to obey him. That alone makes him a terrible force to be reckoned with. Seated on his throne in Baraxton, Nassiral has a single thought about other races; he is only concerned with how to rule them.

Current Political Climate

The Nothrog have just seized the human city of Baraxton in the Southern Plains, a hub of trade for the Accordlands. From there, they intend to enslave the southern and eastern lands of the Accord. They have an alliance with Misearis, which has become an "independent but tithing principality" under Nassiral Hate. The Nothrog took advantage of the elf-human war with a surprise

slaughter of the city leaders in the Council chambers, with 10,000 Nothrog led by Krun hidden nearby under a Deverenian invisibility spell.

Logan Ebonwoulfe, former head of the Baraxton's Thieves' Guild, is having troubles leading a surviving band of humans past the Nothrog and elves to join the humans in the north. The refugees of Baraxton are hunted by the Nothrog legions who are seeking to ensure that Hate's control of the city is uncontested. Their power is great, and they do not want Logan and his misfits to sabotage a Baraxton under Nothrog control.

Hate's rule is not uncontested. A legion of Nothrog sent to Sharn Keep fell under the control of a monstrous reaver, a terrifying sorcerous eye. This reaver is collecting stragglers from broken Nothrog legions, exiles, and gaining allies in those legions who oppose Hate's total dominance over Nothrog society. These allies are preparing an army to destroy Hate and all he is creating; they feel that Hate is contravening the rules of Nothrog society, and is fighting to destroy hundreds of years of Nothrog culture. Although it is unclear why a reaver would care, its allies consider themselves the freedom fighters of the Nothrog.

Deverenians

The Nothrog tribes and the Deverenian Empire have shared a border for generations, clashing occasionally over the borderlands. Many villages of both human and Nothrog stock have been on both sides of the boundary lines. The most recent Nothrog invasion of the Deverenian lands happened at a keep on the edge of the Shattered Lands. A tribe of Nothrog that had been enslaved by a reaver besieged the outpost of Sharn, now in the hands of the Nothrog and their grim master.

Deverenian culture seems almost antithetical to Nothrog society, in how they view their ultimate hierarchy within law — but if you set aside the Emperor, the two are not that different. They have fought together on a number of battlefields, and the Nothrog consider the Deverenians worthy opponents. They rarely fight on the same side (Nothrog do not trust opponents who cover their faces with steel), but they have a healthy respect for one another.

Many of the Nothrog tribes have made crucial alliances with the Deverenians, including Hate's own legion. This, of course, does not endear the Deverenians to the Nothrog insurrectionists who oppose Hate's rule, and that alone has caused war to erupt near the Sharn borders from time to time. Hate's legions have a treaty with the Deverenians, promising ten years of peace along the Deverenians' southern borders in exchange for the use of Deverenian wizards during the storming of the great city of Baraxton.

The Deverenians intended to betray Hate, but he discovered the Emperor's plans to seize Baraxton from its Nothrog conquerors. In order to forestall the Emperor's treachery, Nassiral Hate sent Uthanak, one of his most powerful commanders, against the Deverenians at the moment when Baraxton was conquered. When Uthanak's legion arrived at its target, Phrygai, it discovered the town already under siege. Not knowing the strength or capacity of these new "dwarven" enemies, the Nothrog commander, Uthanak, wisely opted simply to wait and see.

Dwarves

The Dwarves have had little contact with the Nothrog, and the legions have no idea what to make of these strange, stunted creatures. Dwarves are an unknown factor, and that alone makes them dangerous. Added to that is the fact that dwarves come from beneath the earth, where the Abyssals live, and that leaves the Nothrog eager to test their blades against these small opponents. If they are evil, all the better — they will fall to Nothrog steel. If they are worthy, then they will fight well, and the Nothrog will learn from being defeated by their tactics. Potentially, they may ally with the dwarves in order to learn their unique fighting style, and then use it to crush the other Lands of the Accord.

Unlike most of the creatures of the Accordlands, the Nothrog have no particular hatred for Abyssals. They see these escapees of the depths to be simply more vicious predators to be hunted down and destroyed. The Abyssals make glorious sport, and the Nothrog are always eager to prove themselves against the finest and most dangerous. Although they do not go in search of Abyssals, when one arises in the Accordlands the legions race to be the first to take it on in combat.

Elves

The Nothrog and the elves were once allies, seeing more or less eye-to-eye on their mutual xenophobia and exclusive goals. They had no reason to be enemies, so why not be allies? The two races share a border through the broken country of Sarakia, and Nothrog legions patrol those lands often, killing and maiming the human barbarians there for sport. However, as the plains of Sarakia and their inhabitants fall to dust, the Nothrog and the elves begin to realize that their alliance is crumbling.

After the Nothrog siege and conquer of the free city of Baraxton, the relationship with the elves has become almost impossibly strained. The elves fear that Nassiral Hate's interest in trade and unification may hurt their trade agreements with the western lands, and the city is no longer supplying needed trade goods. The elves are involved with their war against the Free Kingdoms, but in the eyes of many ambitious Nothrog, that simply makes them easier to attack from the rear.

It is well known throughout the Accordlands that Nassiral Hate, the new overlord of the Nothrog tribes, hates the elves. He has forced all those Nothrog tribes loyal to him to cease trade and contact with their elven allies. Many of the free Nothrog tribes are still friendly with the elves, and trade openly with them. The High Queen's ambassadors have promised wealth, strength, and magical support to the reaver in Sharn Keep and the free legions. Such subterfuge, were it known by Nassiral Hate, would surely bring his wrath upon high Queen Tepheroth and her elves. However, as yet Hate seems preoccupied with the human refugee "army" from Baraxton.

The rest of the Nothrog, on a one-on-one basis, consider the elves to be weak fighters, hiding behind shields of bone and magic. They do not respect them as warriors, but believe that if enslaved, the elves would do very well as support staff for a strong Nothrog legion. They do not mention this to the elven Houses, of course, but more than one Nothrog legion has a captured elf or

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two, and sometimes try to coerce them into becoming full-time sorcerers to strengthen the legion. From these experiments the Nothrog have learned a very important lesson: elves break.

The Free Kingdoms

The chaotic temperament of the western kingdoms infuriates the Nothrog, and the human penchant for ignoring orders would doom them within a year inside Nothrog culture. The Nothrog tribes simply don't understand how the humans of the west have survived without the Deverenian temperament and their strong sense of foundation.

The sack of Baraxton was a critical first step in civilizing the seemingly untamable humans of the west. When Baraxton is strengthened by Nothrog ingenuity and force, the humans will realize that their own ways are obviously inferior, and be grateful to Hate for his attention to their useless race. So the Nothrog believe. Hate has stated that his eventual goal is to conquer the entirety of the Accordlands. At the moment it seems all he must do is wait until the elves have tired themselves in destroying the western rabble, so that he may scoop up both exhausted nations. In order to make this more possible, Hate has been supplying the Free Kingdoms with foodstuffs, weapons, and occasional more formidable help. He doesn't want the humans to win, but only wants the war to stretch on long enough to weaken both sides.

The free Nothrog are too far away to have any concern for the Free Kingdoms or their war. They don't care for the humans, and they certainly aren't interested in whether or not the elves kill them all. What they do care about is that the humans are a pawn in Nassiral Hate's game, and that there may be a way to use them against him.

Mercenaries

The Nothrog tribes regard the skilled mercenaries of the Accordlands as brethren. Many Nothrog tribes have ongoing treaties with mercenary bands, as if those bands were governments unto themselves. The Nothrog hire mercenaries often, and enjoy fighting beside them rather than sending them alone into the most dangerous part of the conflict. The two share stories and test their skills against each other. Mercenaries have always been welcomed into Nothrog lands, so long as they obey the formalities.

Nothrog see mercenaries as kindred spirits. They, too, travel the land in search of adventure and battle, and they take trophies in the form of gold and wealth. They do not shy from perpetual combat, and they live on the move, always seeking the next challenge and the next combat.

That has begun to change. The new Nothrog Overlord, Nassiral Hate, does not allow the Nothrog tribes to spend time with mercenary associates, and when he hires mercenaries they receive suicidal missions. The pay is good, but few survive long enough to spend it. Hate believes that mercenaries are a plague to be eradicated. Some say that he intends to hire out legions of Nothrog to do mercenaries' jobs, thus keeping the Nothrog capacity to fight in groups and to travel, while still creating a solid foundation for his rule over their society.

Red Wolf Legion

The brutal and infamous Krun leads the Red Wolf battalion, guiding them to victory after victory. It was a shock when Krun bent his knee to Nassiral Hate, and those outside his legion do not know the true story of Krun's obedience. The most popular tale is that Hate bested him in a duel of arms, and threatened to destroy the Wolf totem if Krun did not pledge his faith. In truth Krun's wife, a human woman named Marta, is in Hate's control. He has threatened to kill her if the Red Wolf Legion is not utterly obedient.

Krun is a legion commander whose legion now belongs to Hate. He does what he's told because he has no choice, but he would rather not be putting his legion into constant jeopardy. Nevertheless, Krun is practical. If Hate leads him to victory, and keeps the oaths that he has made, then Krun will accede to Hate's commands for now.

The Red Wolf legion is best known for its tactical superiority. Krun is an excellent tactician, and his legionnaires are exceptionally trained in both hand-to-hand and small group tactics. As the Red Wolves are one of the largest tribes of Nothrog in the west, they often break upon the battlefield into several smaller forces to flank opponents.

Krun's soldiers are unfailingly loyal. Some have offered to trade their lives for Krun's human wife, even though such a pairing is an abomination to the Nothrog. They frequently state that they would have Krun for their overlord rather than Nassiral Hate — a sentiment that does not please those members of the Elite Hate Guard who travel with Krun's legion as spies and councilors.

For information on Krun, see page 269.

Savage Bear Legion

The savage but cunning Uthanak commands the legion of the Bear. He's a butcher, restrained by Hate only because Hate can out-think him. Uthanak's legion was captured by the Elite Hate Guard, and their totem was spared only because it submitted to chains of iron around its spiritual neck. Uthanak and his men must follow the will of their totem — and that totem is now utterly controlled by Nassiral Hate.

The legionnaires of the Savage Bear have become better known as the "Black Banner Battalion" because Uthanak carries only a plain, tattered black banner into battle. He wears no symbol, and does not allow his men to bear any personal symbols. Uthanak feels that their totem is best served by the pure darkness of despair, and that no other symbol can capture the devastation they wreak in Bear's name.

The Savage Bear still believe that their totem is all-powerful, and they follow it as much out of fear as devotion. Rather than allow Bear to die for Hate, Uthanak bound his soul to the totem, irrevocably chaining his mind to the mad spirit. Nassiral Hate gives Uthanak's men the harshest assignments and has no fear of sending them into situations where many will die. The Bear tribe is large and ruthless, and by sheer ferocity alone they always return.

For information on Uthanak, see page 270.



Legion of the Scarab

The commander of the spiritual Legion of the Scarab is the powerful Nothrog shaman Taoth. She has led the Scarab since she was a girl and her mother died bringing the Scarab's poison to her people. Since then, Taoth has been immune to all forms of poison. Her skills as a politician and her cunning are often underestimated. She is highly intelligent, as are all those of the Scarab Legion, but Taoth's wits are said to rival even Nassiral Hate's. Often, the legionnaires of other tribes miscalculate her actions, to their detriment.

The Scarab Legion has gained a reputation for surpassing wisdom, and for its infamous poisons and lethal combat style. The Scarab legion is not like most other Nothrog tribes, preferring the silent kill to screaming combat. Those who fight against Scarab had best choose not to eat or drink, or they will surely die before they ever see the battlefield.

Of all the legions who serve under Hate, the story of the Scarab Legion is perhaps the strangest. They chose to serve with Hate, offering their swords and their cunning without even the slightest hint of pressure from the Elite Hate Guard or Nassiral Hate's magical power. Yet they are the least trusted of all the legions under Hate's command, and the Elite Guards who serve alongside the Scarab are quite aware that their every breath may be their last.

For information on Taoth, see page 272

VoTaurr

These odd humanoids, led by the "Great Bull," Mekk'iah, have the heads of bulls and the bodies of men. Their females, however, seem entirely human, with striking features and hair the color of rainbow silk. VoTaurr men and women are both highly magical, and extremely adept with magic. The women often have exceptional voices capable of luring non-VoTaurr men to enslavement or death. These "Sirens" are feared and rarely seen.

The ratio of male to female among VoTaurrs is over 5 to 1, so the VoTaurr nation treats its women like goddesses. Only the finest "bulls" among the VoTaurr, proven in battle and in sorcery, may petition for a wife. This has led to a large portion of VoTaurr males pursuing the quiet life of monks. When a female VoTaurr leaves their homeland, she is always escorted by the strongest and most capable guardsmen.

Male VoTaurrs are known for their fighting skills, their easy mastery of sorcery, and the legend behind their creation. It is said that VoTaurrs were created like golems but developed self-awareness and destroyed their creators.

The VoTaurr live south of the Nothrog lands, where their herds move across the grassy plains.

For information on Mekk'iah, see page 274. (see *Monsters and Lairs* for more info on VoTaurr).

Baraxton

Background

The independent city-state of Baraxton is a major Accordlands trade hub. Located near the center of the Accordlands, Baraxton has played a major role for nearly eight centuries. Its senate's policy of compliant neutrality, enforced by the judges, has allowed the city to flourish through the centuries. Baraxton's true power lies in its merchants, who do not care who rules the city as long as business is not interrupted. Baraxton has passed in and out of Deverenian control many times in its history. Its latest independence came at a steep price, and Baraxton's trade with the Empire is lopsided in Deverenian's favor.

While Baraxton has had friendly relationships with many nations in the past, it distances itself from conflict. Only the merchants take part, making sure all armies are equipped for a lengthy campaign. War is good for business, as long as it is happening far away. When word of the elves' assault on the western kingdoms reached Baraxton, the human pleas for help were ignored. The senators would not risk their city in a futile war and planned on staying out of the conflict.

This changed when Nassiral Hate took Baraxton. After a brief period of chaos the Nothrog forces imposed a harsh order on the city. Hate's goal was not to destroy the city, but to occupy it. The merchants have been allowed to continue their endeavors, providing gold for the Nothrog coffers. With Hate's connections to the Deverenian Empire and the brutal martial law imposed by the Elite Guard, business has never been more profitable. What was initially seen as a great tragedy has become a huge benefit to the merchants of Baraxton. While they are pleased with the situation, however, the general populace is not. Many resistance cells have appeared since Hate took the city. Most do not last long, with the former Cartwright's Guild being the exception. The thieves of Baraxton fled the city the night Hate claimed it. Under the leadership of Logan Ebonwoulfe they have freed prisoners and raided supplies. They are a constant thorn in Hate's side and do not plan to give up on the city-state's independence any time soon.

Economy

Most trade is conducted in the markets of the New City. Merchants travel from craftsman to craftsman haggling and purchasing goods for export. Many moneylenders have shops in this area to facilitate deals. Craftsmen of extraordinary talent occasionally find a patron to sponsor them. The richest merchants sponsor many craftsmen who create exclusive items for sale.

Laws

Before Nassiral Hate's occupation a triumvirate of judges and a large senate ruled Baraxton. Property owners elected senators. While many commoners own the small areas their homes and shops are located on, to vote a citizen must own at least an acre of land in or around Baraxton. Since land is very costly, this keeps

the government solely in the hands of the elite. The judges are appointed by the senate, and serve for life. Most judges are distinguished senators, but occasionally they have been Priests of Neus or wizards from Arak Spire.

The senate would create and revoke laws seemingly at whim. As long as it would benefit the city and maintain neutrality, any law could pass. The legal system was so convoluted only a few senators knew the details. They relied upon their aides, usually young scholars from the Temple of Neus, to track the current laws and procedures of the city-state. While most laws favored the elite, the senate was not cruel to the peasants and rarely restricted their activity — as long as it was not disruptive.

Now Hate rules Baraxton, but has surprisingly not adversely affected the city. His troops may enforce strict martial law and curfews, but Hate has allowed the people — especially the merchants — to continue running their businesses. They are not officially taxed, though all merchants regularly give Hate generous "gifts" of gold and supplies. Hate's Elite Guard patrols all sections of the city equally, unlike the biased Baraxton guard. Most gangs have been eliminated and crime is rare. Hate's laws are strict, his punishments harsh. As long as Baraxton remains under his control and provides for his legions, Hate could not care less about its citizens.

Population: 40,000 human peasants, farmers and unskilled laborers. 10,000 craftsmen and artisans. 5,000 merchants and senators. 7,500 soldiers and guardsmen. 3,000 Nothrog soldiers and guards. 50 Nothrog clerics and shamans. Four Nothrog legions surround the city. Each legion is composed of roughly 10,000 Nothrog.

Government: Formerly representative oligarchy, currently absolute dictatorship.

Imports: Raw materials, finished goods, exotic goods, spices, cloth, livestock, pack animals, precious metals and ores

Exports: Finished goods, jewelry, weapons, art, grain

Important NPCs: Nassiral Hate (Commander of the combined Nothrog Legions, ruler of Baraxton, Medusan Lord); Krun (Legion Commander of the Red Wolf legion, Hate's second-in-command); Rraag'nar (Captain of Hate's Elite Guard); Rreg'jen (Member of Elite Hate Guard, oversees city patrols); Taoth (Legion Captain of the Scarab Legion, camped at the eastern wall); Sceth Hellbringer (Legion Commander of the Mammoth Legion, camped at the western wall); Phar'Dunn (large Nothrog soldier, keeps watch over the south wall); Savruk (Legion Commander of the Viper Legion, currently rogue and evading Hate's troops north of Baraxton); Logan Ebonwoulfe (Head of the Baraxton Thieves' Guild, south of city conducting raids); Basil Nemis (second-story man, Logan's chief lieutenant); Keziah (young member of the Thieves' Guild, frequently infiltrates Baraxton); Lord Theissen (Deverenian Ambassador); Devon Harper (young member of Black Tom's Assassin's Guild, Nightwalker).

History

Baraxton was founded nearly 800 years ago as an outpost of the fledgling Deverenian Empire. Originally a fort built to halt Nothrog expansion, its location made it a perfect trade town. The city was initially built on top of a hill, with the surrounding slopes given over to farmland. As the city expanded, farms gave

way to streets and marketplaces. One hundred years ago the senate replaced the old timber city wall with a twenty-foot wall of stone and masonry. While it provides more protection for the city, it has stopped further expansion.

Over the centuries it gained and lost its independence from the Empire a handful of times. Most periods of independence were brief; the senate took advantage of trouble in the Empire to grab for power. In these instances the Empire merely had to threaten war and Baraxton would return to its control. Three young, opportunistic judges ruled the senate the last time Baraxton declared its independence, appointed because their ambitious natures were deemed profitable. The senate didn't know what it was getting itself into. The judges ignored the senate, and began purchasing Nothrog siege weapons and hiring mercenaries from the west. They also signed treaties with Andover, Llyr and Toris Kelt, and forced an Empire already stretched thin to face a protracted war that would only drain Imperial resources. The judges offered to pay heavy subsidies and tithes to the Empire and its church, and keep tariffs on Imperial goods low, in return for their freedom. The Emperor's court agreed and Baraxton remained a free city-state.

Recently Baraxton has been immersed in turmoil. Nearly two dozen influential people died in the city during the Assassins' Strike. Shortly after that, a request came from the western kingdoms for aid. The judges, taking their cue from a wary senate, denied military support for Andover and its allies, not wishing to draw the ire of the elves. That day, Hate seized the senate, killed the judges, and assumed control.

Society

Baraxton has three classes of society: the merchants, the craftsmen, and the laborers. Unskilled and mostly uneducated laborers make up the bulk of society. They work the docks, warehouses, and fields in and around Baraxton. The merchants run the city-state's economy, and elect senators from among their number. While the city could not survive without the efforts of the merchants and laborers, its true heart is its craftsmen. Without them, the merchants would have no goods to sell, the laborers no employment. The classes depend on one another, but that doesn't mean that Baraxton society is harmonious.

Rank among the merchants is established by wealth. A miserly hoarding of coins does not demonstrate wealth; instead, the truly wealthy prove their solvency with extravagant parties. The richer one is perceived to be, the more outlandish the party must be. A merchant is truly wealthy when he can spend vast amounts on such frivolous activities. Before his death in the Assassins' Strike, Sabart Tiderious, a wealthy merchant who fancied himself a philanthropist, threw the largest party in recent memory, its centerpiece a fifteen-foot statue of himself. These parties are the highlight of the social season, but the craftsmen and laborers have to hear about them secondhand. Both classes consider merchants arrogant, although they range from "amusingly" so to "unforgivably."

Craftsmen, while they earn a good living, lead subdued lives. They busy themselves year-round with their craft. There is a great demand for their products, so most find themselves waking early and going to bed late. They celebrate the city's festivals vigorously, simply because they have no other time available to attend celebrations and parties. The laborers, who feel they work just as hard

for far smaller wages, only despise them a little. For their part the craftsmen don't seem to notice either other group, merely the gold or materials they deliver.

Bitter, overworked and underpaid: that is how the peasants and laborers of Baraxton describe themselves. The merchants see them as oxen that can carry boxes up stairs, while the craftsmen hardly notice them at all. They are, however, the most numerous members of Baraxton society, so the senate grudgingly pays attention to their needs. Each family is assigned its own home; generally two rooms for smaller families, up to four rooms for large ones. This housing is located in southern Baraxton, well away from the merchants' quarter. Although built cheaply, the houses are sturdy enough to keep the rain out and the heat in. In return for government-sponsored free housing, Baraxton's laborers receive a wage much lower than the average. This keeps the laborers from buying land and electing senators, keeping the power in the hands of the merchants.

The only time all three groups interact outside of business is during the midsummer and harvest festivals. People of every class wear masks and large, billowy tunics. Regardless of their general attitudes toward one another, they know that they have it far better then most, and must rely upon each other to keep it that way. These festivals are joyous affairs filled with dance, food, and drink.

Currently there is a great deal of tension between the humans and Nothrog in the city. While it may appear to be business as usual, aside from the wealthy merchants the citizens of Baraxton are not happy with the situation. Realizing that open rebellion would end badly, they instead engage in minor acts of sabotage. Shipments run later than usual and crafts, while adequate, are not of the quality they used to be. The remaining city guard has little leeway, being under the direct control of Hate's Elite Guard. They have been known to let minor indiscretions escape notice, and a few have covertly assisted Logan Ebonwoulfe's thieves in freeing prisoners.

Geography

Baraxton is located on the plains east of Sarakia, near the center of the Accordlands, on the shore of the Athanaen, central river of the Accordlands. The northwestern section of the city is located on a high hill. The areas to the west and south of the city are where the bulk of the farms and ranches are located.

A 60-foot stone wall surrounds the city itself. Guard towers are placed every 100 yards. Most of Baraxton, excluding the markets, is easy to navigate. Any passerby can give fairly detailed directions to most locales, or at least point the right direction. A Knowledge (Baraxton) check of DC 10 can reveal the most direct routes to any given location. The bustle of the markets is compounded by the fact they are cramped for space. During the day, when the markets are full, a Knowledge (Baraxton) check of DC 20 can lead the party accurately out of the confusing confines. At night, when the markets are closed and mostly empty, a Knowledge (Baraxton) check of DC 15 will lead the party out of the warren of shops.

Baraxton Locations

While many locations in Baraxton have signature goods that cannot be found elsewhere, the owners of these businesses do not volunteer this information. They generally reserve such items for special clients; adventurers must first earn the respect of the owner, either by flashing a lot of coin or doing him a great favor.

1. GANITHE'S COLLEGE OF THE ARCANE AND MYSTICAL

This was once a powerful and useful source of arcane research, but in the sack Sceth Hellbringer displaced the wizards and destroyed all books and alchemical reagents he could find. The wizards have gone into hiding, researching magic in secret. To date, no one has found the labyrinth of tunnels beneath the academy.

2. BARAXTON GUILDHOUSE

A civic building where all guild members go to update their permits and licenses and pay dues. It operates normally even during the occupation. Every legal guild in Baraxton operates through the guild house, with the merchants' guild being the only exception.

3. SMALL KEEP

Baron Klyyndar of Seilur once lived here, but vanished during the occupation. Rraag'nar, head of Hate's Elite Guard, now commands his troops from here and has made the largest room his personal chamber. The keep is fortified and undamaged — it was taken without force.

4. MERCHANTS' GUILDHOUSE

Due to its size and wealth, the merchants' guild operates independent of the other guilds. While they do not openly contest the Baraxton Guildhouse, they do operate differently in many respects offering permits and licenses separately to those vendors who are not craftsmen. The head of the merchants' guild is Tellish Mushalor; he lives in location #96.

5. VISITING SENATE HOUSE

Senators that represented areas outside the city walls stayed here when they came in for votes. With the Senate deposed, Hate now houses his best warriors and generals here. The interior is palatial, as one would expect in a rich city like Baraxton.

6. CITY GUARD

The City Guard of Baraxton was once housed here. The guards made a futile attempt to resist Sceth Hellbringer's legions. Obvious remnants of a fight mar the guardhouse. Sceth himself has taken it over, stationing his nongiant troops here. The giants remain on his "estate" (location #101).

7. CONSTABLE STATION

All guards in the city operate from here, but seldom report back here. Instead, human runners bring orders and duty rosters to command posts throughout the city. Surprisingly, little has changed and Hate keeps the station well manned.

8. CLERICS' GUILD

Once used to resolve disputes between disparate religions, it was spared the heavy hand of Sceth and his legions. It remains open, and is one of the few places where Hate allows open criticism of his reign.

9. GATHERING HALL

The location of formal banquets and meetings hosted by the most important people in the city, this building is still in use. The guilds get the most use from it, putting on elaborate parties and gatherings.

10. JAIL

The population of the jail doubled since Hate's arrival and crime has dropped to almost nothing. No bargain exists between the Thieves' Guild and the constable station any longer, so crimes as simple as pick-pocketing are nonexistent now and more violent crimes are dealt with swiftly.

11. DUKE'S ESTATE

Duke Riis Orritan's estate was left unscathed by the sack. Attempts to enter the building have been met with magical resistance in the form of wards and arcane sigils. It is not an important enough matter to press, so the Nothrog are leaving it alone for now.

12. SUMMONER'S TEMPLE

Scurl, one of Sceth's personal attendants, died in his self-serving attempt to destroy this temple. Many arcane icons were defiled, but the temple is still functioning. As a result, the Nothrog keep their distance.

13. SENATE BUILDING

Once the center of all political action in the city, the interior is now unrecognizable. The senate building has been gutted, and become one of the largest barracks in the world.

14 A. GOD'S EYE INN

The God's Eye Inn and the neighboring building (location #14b) are now run by the Nothrog Hasth'rok. A giant hole in the wall connects the two buildings.

14 B. TOWN HALL

The second common room for the God's Eye Inn, this was once a gathering place for commoners and trademen. Most now patronize taverns in the heart of the city.

14 C. ALCHEMIST'S SHOP

Juurn Hauk is an aging wizard who now makes healing potions for Sceth's soldiers. He is kept under close watch and while he fears for his life, he has made no attempt to escape. He would pay handsomely if someone would smuggle him out of occupied Baraxton.

15 A. ALLYVOR DESMIN, BARRISTER

This business continues to run, although there are few disputes he can argue against the commanders of the city. Instead, he argues cases with the guilds and has aligned himself with the Nothrog in instances where his life would be threatened.

15 B. TIME STOP INN

Named for its special rooms, customers can rest here for only four hours and still gain a full night's rest. The secret of this inn is not well known, and its expatriate Kaballite proprietor, Tsien, rents these rooms (for 2 gp per four hours) only to those he trusts.

15 C. VELDUSHAN'S RESTAURANT

Veldushan's continues to serve its unique dishes despite the occupation, and most Nothrog enjoy the exotic cuisine. His menu, however, has changed radically to suit the voracious and indiscriminating tastes of his new patrons, and while typical elven, Kaballite, Nothrog, or even refined Deverenian dishes are well-prepared, the restaurant no longer serves anything resembling "normal" human food.

16 A. HOME OF SAAR VARGNETH

Saar is a 10th-level wizard, but keeps his knowledge of magic hidden from the Nothrog. He passes himself off as a rich recluse and treats some of the local guards to drinks and meals. He is the most knowledgeable person in the city, keeping tabs on comings and goings and secretly noting troop movements, guard schedules, and so on. Saar comes across as flippant, but underneath the façade is always watching carefully.

16 B. GUARD HALL

Once a clubhouse for city guards, this is now the main meeting place for the city watch and its schedules, patrol patterns, maps, and handful of assistants.

16 C. BARDSONG TAVERN

Owned and operated by an elven woman named Ambyr, the Bardsong has become a hangout for Nothrog and humans alike. She is a savvy business woman who sells strong drinks at a good price. When the mood begins to sour, she brings out a bard or two to entertain the guests. Those interested in causing trouble here must succeed at a Will save (DC 20) or succumb to the tavern's calming atmosphere.

16 D. UNDEAD HUNTERS

This is the base of operations for three of the nastiest undead hunters in the world. They come and go as they please, not fazed by the city's occupation. They have no religious convictions about undead; they're just talented hunters. They are Khurdis Gr'l, an 8th-level fighter, Father Hyden Dunilgar, a 9th-level cleric, and Allyn Harpir, a 7th-level ranger. A fourth member, 10th-level paladin Lord Cyrrl Shineblade, has been missing for months.

16 E. MERCENARY/BOUNTY HUNTER'S GUILD

This place sees a great deal of visitors now, as more and more mercenaries respond to Nassiral Hate's demands. There is always work here for those willing to put their lives on the line for 5 gp per week. To date, Kerebrus has not allowed any Dark Horsemen to work through this guild, insisting on personally reviewing any contracts Hate proposes. So far he has refused every one, though the Fighters' Guild has been more lenient.

17. NASSIRAL HATE'S TEMPLE

Hate has commandeered the senate building for use as his personal temple. The area now looks like a Nothrog camp dominated by a huge totem lodge (the former main dormitory).

This area is home to Hate's Elite Guard as well, and they patrol the grounds routinely (2d4 10th level Nothrog fighters every 1d12 rounds).

Beneath the temple is the city prison, an endless catacomb full of political prisoners and mundane criminals. In the deepest recesses are Hate's own additions: a torture chamber and gallows.

18 A. THE HORN AND BOW

This tavern is owned by a small cartel of human investors. While they no longer expect the business to turn a profit, the innkeeper, Jarl, has done his best to make it successful. Drinks are cheap, food is bland, and entertainment is rare. The one advantage of the Horn and Bow is the lack of traffic, making it an ideal place to meet discreetly but comfortably.

18 B. VO TAURR CONSULATE

ShiLara is the VoTaurr attaché to Baraxton. She monitors trade between the two and works to ally herself with all the nations of the Accordlands. Secretly, she is trying to bring an army into Baraxton to free it from within. As the VoTaurr have been Nothrog allies for generations, few suspect her true allegiances.

18 C. THIEVES' GUILD SAFEHOUSE

Although it looks like an abandoned residence, this safehouse is actually well stocked and homey. A series of secret doors throughout the home lead to the stores and bedrooms; those not stooped to the rogue find only a front room with destroyed furniture and debris. With the capture or flight of most local members, the safehouse is presently abandoned.

18 D. FORTUNE TELLER

Erica Rodemaker can cast *augury* for anyone willing to pay 50 gp. In addition, for another 50 gp, she can bestow a small blessing on someone. Any one die roll or check made in the next 2 weeks can be made with 2 dice, choosing the higher of the two.

19 A. CHARM SHOP

Justinian Solt sells decorative charms for those interested in beautifying their clothing or home. For those in the know, small wondrous magic items (up to 4,000 gp in value) can be purchased here. Justinian is a 7th level seer and good friends with Erica Rodemaker (location #18d).

19 B. TZIZZ'LAK'S ALEHOUSE

There are no beds here, but liquor is cheap and the menu is short.

19 C. GAMBLING HOUSE

One of the few respectable gambling houses in Baraxton, there are regulations here to protect the patrons from those who would cheat them. The house edge is 10%, but at least everybody knows this going in.

20 A. EYE OF THE DRAGON ADVENTURE SUPPLY STORE

The crotchety old storekeeper Dougan refuses to budge on his prices. He *does* carry everything, and will special order items the PCs can't find. His favorite saying is, "You're wrong, and I will tell you why."

20 B. IRON MACE FLOPHOUSE

Floor space here is 2 sp for the night, and Janik Eiselden makes sure the floor is swept and patrons are out by noon each day.

21. FOOD STORAGE

Dry food. 10d10 days' worth of iron rations are here.

22. CONFISCATED ITEMS

Since the Nothrog occupation the warehouse has filled up with confiscated weapons. It is unlikely that any magic items have survived the occupation.

23. MILITARY GOODS

Upon seizing Baraxton, Hate claimed this warehouse to store his armies' siege weapons and maintenance goods. While all stored weapons are disassembled (requiring appropriate skill checks to build), there are no blueprints handy. Two dozen soldiers from Krun's legion are always on guard duty in and around the warehouse (including on the roofs of adjacent buildings): fighters of levels 1–4 led by Hechun, a lawful evil, level 6 summoner/level 2 fighter, albino Nothrog.

24. MISCELLANEOUS STORAGE

Those who can afford the 1 sp per square foot monthly rate can rent a storage room of 10 (100 units), 50 (10 units), 100 (5 units), 500 (5 units), or 1000 (2 units) square feet. The smaller units are on the second floor. At any given time $1d8 \times 10\%$ (rounding up) of each are already rented. Overdue payments cost an astronomical 25% of the compounded dues per day, ending a week later with an auction of all items stored in unpaid lots.

25. BUILDING MATERIALS

Mostly bricks and mortar. Wood does not store well for long periods and only a small section is dedicated to it. Hate has already tapped these goods for his reconstruction efforts.

26. PRIVATE WAREHOUSE

Cylien, an elf trader, has been importing golems here for years, bringing in one a month and storing them here in stasis. There are 31 golems of varying types, all of which he can control with a single gem.

27. CARTWRIGHTS' GUILD (THIEVES' GUILD)

Following the events of the Assassins' Strike (see the *Campaign* book for more details), Logan Ebonwoulf finds his betrayal of the Thieves' Guild coming back to haunt him. Though the Cartwrights' Guild (the Baraxton front for the Thieves' Guild, headquartered here) survives the night intact, the additional scrutiny makes operations difficult. As the Cartwrights are the primary resistance to Hate's rule, the killings turn the tide of public opinion, and even most humans in the city no longer trust Logan. Soon after (during "The Dragon's Lair" adventure in the *Campaign* book, Krun and Rreg'jen lead a series of sting operations on guild holdings throughout the city. Though most of the guild flees, many important members die or remain imprisoned afterward. Logan Ebonwoulf is a chaotic good 13th level scout.

28. SEASONAL STORAGE

Owned by the city, this warehouse remains stocked with holiday decorations and parade equipment. Lightly guarded (two level 1 fighters with no Spot or Listen skill



ranks), any attempt at sabotage goes unnoticed until the city attempts to use the goods. Afterward, the two inept guards' replacements are a squad of 4d4 Nothrog guards, fighters and rogues of levels 1–4, each of whom has maximum levels of Spot and Listen.

29. MISCELLANEOUS STORAGE

Despite the large "Condemned" sign on the front of this warehouse, the Elite Hate Guard deposits a large wagon full of meat here every other day. In actuality, the totem Cynophontis (see page 220) remains here, waiting for Hate's bidding. The 2d4 escorts are of any possible class and prestige class combinations, totaling level 10 for each guard. All are absolutely loyal to Hate, and willing to die to serve either him or Cynophontis.

30. PRIVATE WAREHOUSE

This warehouse is filled with coffins. Who owns it and why they are storing coffins here is a mystery, but the rent is paid for the next 26 years, so no one asks any questions.

31. EMPTY WAREHOUSE

32. ICEHOUSE

Large blocks of ice are stored here. Hidden among its contents are three victims of the Assassins' Strike — Lord Cyrrl Shineblade, Sylvia Mist, and Baron Klyyndar, the previous captain of the guard. Sylvia was a human mage and the best friend of Anton Cyldragen. The bodies are perfectly preserved.

33. BARRACKS AND PARADE GROUNDS

This complex once housed the city's militia. Sceth's irregular infantry have made it their home, and use the parade grounds to house their siege engines and makusog.

34 A. SUMMONER CHIRURGEON

Martus Ghuldun, a 12th-level summoner, lives here, but while the Nothrog occupy the city he must pose as a surgeon in order to avoid arrest. He is loyal to the underground network of wizards (see location #52c), but otherwise cannot avoid capture. He has absolutely no skill as a surgeon and if forced to operate he will probably kill his patient.

34 B. HOSPICE

The hospice tends to the sick and dying. Those who cannot afford a cleric come here to rest and hopefully recover.

34 C. OBSERVATORY

Shayla, the head of the observatory, is working on a lunar orrery that predicts Bascaron's movements. She will pay handsomely for any information travelers can provide about the planes or the geography of the earth. Maps, journals, diaries, and tomes of lore are all useful.

34 D. DARK HUNTERS GUILDHALL

They are not assassins, but the Dark Hunters of Jaarran will hunt anything for the right price. Their most famous member, Berig Lin, charges 5 gp per week plus expenses to hunt down any target. The guild has over two dozen members and there is always someone about looking for work.

35. UNIVERSITY

Comprising over 300 students and 15 professors, the elite of Baraxton attend school here. The school offers courses in etiquette, diplomacy, economics, history, language, negotiation, and bodyguarding.

36 A. HIDDEN SHIELD GUARDS

This is a special training school that teaches guards how to blend into the shadows and remain unobtrusive. Students must protect a client while never exposing themselves to the enemy. This school suffered greatly after its failures during Hate's occupation and the Assassins' Strike, and is willing to offer half rates to heroes who have saved important officials.

36 B. TEMPLE OF THE ELEMENTS

Also known as the Temple of Harmony, the priests of this temple are Kaballite clerics representing each of the traditional elements and their symbolic roles in the city. Air is the political might of Baraxton, which brings civilization and leadership to the city. Earth is the farmers and laborers of the city, and every ounce of goods and services make up its weight. Fire is order and justice, provided by the enforcers of the city. Water is commerce, a byproduct of the trade and economic standing of Baraxton. The priest representing Fire died in the Assassins' Strike, and the Kabal have yet to send a replacement.

37 A. LIBRARY.

Run by Silas Tzin.

37 B. HISTORIAN

Silas Tzin keeps his own library of historic documents while also drawing upon the books of his neighbors, whom he doesn't particularly care for. Tzin is secretly a worshiper of Kamatayon, the evil aspect of Kasugoan, Kerebrus' god (see pages 202–204). He keeps his true religion private, but has no qualms against meting out harsh judgments on his neighbors. Tzin is a lawful evil monk, level 13. Though he is human, his skin has darkened to the color of midnight, and he bears several ritual scars of devotion, both of which he hides beneath monk's robes. Should he and Kerebrus ever meet, they become each others' nemeses.

37 C. ORDER OF KUN

A branch of the school from the western kingdoms, this monk order teaches techniques as varied as the Twelve Dragon Fist and Eagle Claw Strike.

37 D. MAYOR'S OFFICE

The mayor of Baraxton, a half-Nothrog by the name of Ky'vikk, is everyone's best friend. He tells listeners what they want to hear, and he agrees with the nearest authority figure in earshot. His primary role is to convince everyone that the Nothrog presence is not a problem. Rumor has it that Ky'vikk was sent into the city by Hate over a decade ago to aid in the takeover and assimilation of the city.

37 E. SCROLL MAKER

Torridan, a 9th-level wizard, can scribe any scroll of up to 5th level. For an exorbitant additional price (base price x 25), he can scribe a scroll onto troll skin; the spell fades after casting but reappears the following day, allowing it to be used once a day.

37 F. ILLUSIONARY DUNGEON

A training hall for warriors, the illusionary dungeon can change at the owners' will to allow adventurers to challenge themselves in over 60 predesigned dungeons, at a fee of 100 gp a head. For an additional 100 gp flat fee, a designer can make a specialized dungeon for PCs preparing for the worst.

38. THE PARTY'S END

A two-story inn, the Party's End is a popular location for merchant-guards and mercenaries. The fare is plain, but plentiful portions at reasonable prices keep the patrons coming back. The patrons use the tavern as a place to meet contacts and arrange work while gambling their pay on dice and card games. Those seeking information on almost any topic can probably find it here.

39 A. CITY WARDEN

Among one of the nicest homes in the city, this building doubles as the office of the city warden. The previous warden is dead, replaced by Hate's public works commissioner (and the city's primary slaver), Bershar Nin. Nin is a 13th-level Nothrog fighter, lawful evil, and wields a *whip of wounding* +2 that deals normal or subdual damage at his discretion.

39 B. MUSEUM

Baraxton's history is amply documented, but the outlying regions are filled with mystery. The museum specializes in artifacts and relics from the river and its environs.

40 A. DEATH'S END TOWN GUARD

Named after the street it is posted on, the Death's End Town Guard watch post is among the busiest in the city.

40 B. FIGHTERS' GUILD

This is a ceremonial hall and membership office. Daily operations include mundane paperwork and projections. Members of the Fighters' Guild enjoy a 10% discount at the Illusionary Dungeon (see location #37f).

41. CATHEDRAL OF THE STORM

As part of Hate's pact with Deverenian, the Cathedral of the Storm has remained firmly under Deverenian rule. The presiding priest, Father Ignatio, has never had any problems with the Nothrog invaders, and the city incorrectly assumes that this is because of the pact. In actuality, Ignatio is not even truly a cleric or seer, although several of the cathedral's other priests are. Ignatio's role in the city is to destabilize Hate's grip, and he anonymously offers advice, support, and even equipment and intelligence to the resistance movement (including Trespass and the dwarves; see the *Campaign* book for more on Trespass). Ignatio is a level 7 rogue/level 5 cleric, a lawful evil Deverenian. He reports directly to Bishop Koenraad in Luthlarius (see page 58).

42 A. APOTHECARY

Jilhara, a nimble adept, sells potions and herbs (up to 500 gp in value) and sells them to anyone who can meet her prices. She does not haggle, because her customers have nowhere else to get the potions she sells. In addition to all the magical potions in the *Master Codex*, Jilhara also sells a preventive potion that provides the drinker with one free reroll. The potion lasts for 12 hours and costs 500 gp per dose.

42 B. ENGINEER

Tara Casey's family lives here, while the engineer herself has relocated outside the city where siege engines are built in preparation for Hate's impending assaults. Tara, a human, is actually a member of the resistance, and quietly sabotages equipment during her inspections.

42 C. DENTIST

Business has never been better for Grimjack. While he does not pull as many teeth as he used to, he spends a majority of his time capping, filling, and otherwise improving Nothrog teeth. Originally from Toheuth, Grimjack came to Baraxton as part of a caravan, and stayed here ever since.

42 D. BOARDING HOUSE

Beds are 2 gp for the night, which includes dinner and breakfast. There are two and sometimes three beds open in this three-story flat.

42 E. CARTOGRAPHER

Longinus, a Deverenian expatriate (and heretical worshiper of the Storm) keeps a magical scrying table that allows him to trace incredibly accurate maps and detailed topographical plans. His cost is high — 15 gp per hour — but no one has ever complained about the quality of his work.

43 A. BLACKSMITH

Torrin Hapiir is one of the best blacksmiths in Baraxton. His forge is kept warm by a piece of stone from the Shattered Lands that has stayed hot for the past 8 years. As a result, his weapons are better tempered than any others in the city. Torrin sells only masterwork weapons, but for +250 gp, instead of +300 gp.

43 B. BROTHER OF THE MASK

This is a secret society of necromancers led by an elven vampire, Elias Dythanus. The society has a secret handshake, passwords, and utterly paranoid security. All 25 dress alike, shrouding themselves in the manner of vampires. On nights that Elias must hunt, the members of this society pop up in every corner of the city imitating the actions of a vampire and helping to disguise his action.

43 C. ELIAS' ESTATE

From the outside this looks like as a normal boarding house with one entrance, but once inside, visitors must pass through secret doors and a maze of tombs to finally reach the inner sanctum. Every inch of his home is trapped, and those uninvited few who are unlucky enough to stumble inside never leave.

44 A. WYVERN'S WING TAVERN

This is a small, exclusive tavern. The prices are high and the drinks are mediocre, but the atmosphere is unmistakable.

Those who visit the Wyvern's Wing are expected to buy two drinks an hour at three times the normal cost. Business has been off since the sack, as many Nothrog find it disconcerting to patronize a tavern named after the most infamous totem in history.

44 B. THE WARRIOR'S TOUCH

The owner, West, sells *vampiric touch* potions for 150% of the standard price.

44 C. MESSENGER SERVICE

Using magic, pigeons, couriers, and anything else at their disposal, the messengers here guarantee delivery of any single message or parcel up to one pound to any location in the Accordlands. Due to their 100% success rate, the price is 1 gp per mile, plus 2 gp per day. This is one of the few businesses to openly patronize the Dark Horsemen outside the city.

44 D. JHANAK'S KITCHEN

The food is good, the prices fair, and the turn-around fast. There is no seating, only stand-up counters. People come from all over the city for a taste of Jhanak's secret-recipe shepherd's pie (5 sp).

44 E. JADE AND IVORY SHOP

All jewelry here is fake, but priced as if it were real. The three attractive saleswomen (one human, one Deverenian, and one Nothrog) keep customers coming back to spend their well-earned coin. Each makes Appraise, Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sleight

of Hand checks at +6, and gains an additional +5 circumstance bonus to these checks if opposed by someone who accepts their flirtatious suggestions.

45 A. BASKETMAKER

This shopkeeper owns 10 *baskets of holding* in addition to the hundred or so normal baskets he has for sale. He will hide anything — for a price. The *baskets of holding* are not for sale.

45 B. FLOWER SHOP

This shop's owner exploits every religious holiday and invents new ones whenever necessary to increase sales. However, his memory is weak and he forgets from year to year which ones he's invented and which are real.

45 C. MUSIC SHOP

In addition to a number of normal and masterwork musical instruments, the owner also sells special bard scrolls (300 gp each), which automatically scribe any bard song sung to the scroll.

44 D. FORTUNE'S DEBT INN

Food, drinks, and gambling are the theme. Every game of chance and skill can be found here. They extend credit to patrons (up to 1,000 gp), but also have the means to collect from those who fall delinquent on their debts.

44 E. TELLER'S LIBRARY

From the front this looks like a single residence, well-kept but empty. Below the house is a Teller's Library (see page 175 of *Monsters and Lairs*). A teller from this library attempts to attach himself to heroes of renown, recording the deeds and events of his life. However, since Hate killed many of the city's most prominent members, it is eager to find anyone with a story to tell.

46 A. ENGRAVER

This shop is closed. Unbeknownst to the owner, Teleth the runemaker (see location #46e) places wards and symbols around this business to drive patrons away.

46 B. SIGN MAKER

The owners carve wooden signs, tombstones, and other placards for customers throughout the city.

46 C. LANTERN SHOP

Ogom sells lanterns, ever-burning torches, and special lanterns that, when thrown (like a grenade-like item) and broken, *turn undead* as a 5th level cleric in a 30-ft. radius.



46 D. MOUSER

Delbin, "the king of cats," maintains this unconventional business of upward of 200 cats. He rents out cats for 1 sp/day, knowing that at the end of the day the cat will return to eat the wonderful stew he makes.

46 E. RUNEMAKER

An elven runecarver, Teleth, is an angry, competitive elf. He never lets someone get the best of him, nor allows them to get the last word. Teleth is a chaotic neutral 8th-level shaman and the pettiest elf in Baraxton.

47 A. FOLLOWERS OF THE FIRST SCROLL

Fifteen seers, shamans, and wizards spend their days here trying to decipher the hidden message of the First Scroll. Written in archaic languages (including draconic) and exotic mathematics, the First Scroll is supposed provide the key for understanding every language ever written, should it ever be deciphered. The Followers of the First Scroll are devoted, learned men, willing to go to great lengths to discover the scroll's secrets.

47 B. ARTIST COLONY

Over 100 different artists, both has-beens and undiscovered talents, live here in tight quarters. Once a place of creativity and thriving commerce, few people need a portrait painted or song written during these trying times. Some of the colony's best writers and singers have yet to be noticed by Baraxton's elite.

47 C. PLAYWRIGHT

Melissa Mast is the city's best-known and most prolific playwright. She writes stories of intrigue that she lifts from the dreams of adventurers, for she is really a nighthag disguised as a beautiful 30-year-old woman. Melissa's one weakness is that she often falls for her hero and goes to great lengths to win his affection.

47 D. CLOAKS AND TUNICS

The uncreative name accurately reflects a lack of attention to detail: the quality of the goods here has slipped. While the prices are good, the material is shoddy and the clothing here lasts for only a few months before shedding, tearing, or fraying.

48 A. CHEAP BARRISTER

A Deverenian, Daevanus the Drunk came to Baraxton to track the infamous Cult of Yscar, particularly the cult's seer Toren. Daevanus was once an adventurer whose party chanced upon a meeting with Toren, and he blithely asked when next he would get a drink. Toren's response of "never" has haunted Daevanus ever since, and his every attempt to find alcohol has met with failure. Daevanus has Bluff and Diplomacy skills at 13 ranks each, but *automatically* fails if he smells alcohol.

48 B. BACK ALLEY WELL

This well supplies not only water for the interior of the city, but also gossip: it is nicknamed "the information hole." Spending an hour here gains a PC a +2 circumstance bonus to his Gather Information checks. This bonus increases by +1 for every additional hour up to 6.

48 C. SOAPMAKER

A combination of lilac, lavender, and other exotic plants, plus a unique herb that no one has been able to identify, keeps Alisia Ghurie in business. Her soap sells for 8 gp a bar and could bring twice that if she wanted to charge it.

48 D. TANNER

Unfriendly and xenophobic, Eraldos cuts away the skin and hide of animals from the butcher (see locations #71c and #93d), and sells the scraps to leatherworkers throughout the city.

49 A. BOOKSTORE

Rumor has it that Lushan has important and useful books, but he always seems to be out of whatever the PCs are looking for. Fiction and relaxing reading are on every shelf, but useful books are elusive.

49 B. SPICE MERCHANT

While he still sells spices and exotic herbs, Nabbar has expanded into imported goods. Small collectibles, crafts, and knickknacks now fill his modest shop.

49 C. EXOTIC ANIMALS

Skoura is a hunter who can acquire nearly any sort of animal. He keeps a small squad of rangers who can return with a hippogriff, manticore, or just about anything else you can imagine. However, he is not cheap, as bringing in a feral animal alive isn't easy. He charges about 500 gp per CR.

49 D. ANIMAL TRAINER

Having a unique relationship with Skoura next door, Mobi can teach animals tricks and has a knack for increasing an animal's Intelligence by 1 or 2 points depending on the amount of training. He charges 5 gp per day to train smaller animals such as dogs and hawks, while larger animals are 10 gp/day. Exotic animals are harder to train, and rates are negotiable upward.

50 A. BRICKLAYER AND MASON

These two brothers (Antonyn and Grimaldi) are responsible for helping to rebuild much of the city. They have lived here for over three decades and know the city's defenses, secret passageways, and underground complexes. They will not give up this information cheaply, however, and know nothing of certain secret societies (like the vampire's, location #43b).

50 B. INDOOR ARCHERY CONTEST HALL

This hall hosts daily and weekly contests in a bewildering variety of tournaments; the only constant is the house claiming 10% of the winnings. Archery hotshots have been known to sneak into competitions and weasel local farmers out of their money. Entry fees can range from 1 to 100 gp per person, with the winner's purse usually being 80% of the total fees.

50 C. THE DEAD DRAGON

While the front of this business looks like an inn, the interior has been redesigned to house elves in perfect comfort. The temperature is just right, the windows are closed up, and the interior is mostly ivory inlaid. A small spring of water and a magical keg provides them with an ample supply of elven wine, making elves feel at home.

51 A. VINDICATOR KORRYN

Korryn keeps ten corpses of powerful mages that he purchased from cutthroats during the Assassins' Strike. These bodies fuel his powerful divinations, as he drains their residual magic into his prophecies.

51 B. APOTHECARY

A young man named Warren opened this shop just under a month ago, bringing with him tomes of knowledge from his previous mentor's library. He has yet to master all of its information, but his books hold a staggering wealth of information about herbalism, potions, and magic.

51 C. BLACKSMITH

Blacksteel forgemaster Marivar has been in Baraxton his entire life, and inherited this shop from his father. Always covered in soot and charcoal, he now seeks to sell his enterprise to any who can meet the 80,000 gp price of his secret to blacksteel forging.

51 D. BOWYER/FLETCHER

Two employees can always be found here selling high-quality elven bone arrows. Secretly, however, there are twelve elves using *disguise self* spells to sneak into the city and sell the arrows, while transporting information all over the Accordlands. They have yet to be discovered, and would kill anyone who tried to reveal their secret.

51 E. LOCKSMITH

Gyyj is a twisted individual who locks a thief in his basement every week. If they can undo his locks, they are free to go. Those who fail are left to die. To date, none have survived, filling his basement with the bones of unworthy adversaries.

51 F. CARPENTER

Devoted to the Storm, Gustaphus is a pious carpenter who is a masterful craftsman in his own right, and also makes religious icons for any who need them. His buildings cost 25% more to build than other structures, but normally last twice as long.

52 A. ENGINEER

Alyn Pline is a skilled engineer, who helped to restore most of the walls and permanent structures in the city. Oddly, he doesn't speak much, using grunts and nods to communicate his needs. When he does talk, his answers are short and direct.

52 B. ORPHANAGE

Many, many children live here. The orphanage population has tripled since the Assassins' Strike. Most of these children are 12 years old or younger, but have unique insight into the events that befell the Accordlands that fateful night. Bershar Nin has twice failed to convince Hate to put the children to work for the city's renovations.

52 C. NEW MAGIC ACADEMY

More a secret gathering place than an academy, wizards congregate here to protect themselves from the prying eyes of the Nothrog hierarchy. Its entrance is a secret, and masters of the academy seek out those they want, rather than other way around. The outside of the business looks like an abandoned butcher shop, with the true academy nestled underground in a series of tunnels and catacombs.

53. TEMPLE OF NEUS

Near the center of the city bordering the marketplaces is the Temple of Neus. Donations from pious merchants have made this one of the plushiest temples of Neus in the Accordlands. The temple is staffed by 100 clerics and acolytes and is ruled by Grandfather Mackibus Welby of the Farmers.

The temple is a trove of treasure and artifacts, and guarded by patrols (3d6 3rd–5th level fighters). Many of the clerics rally to the defense of the temple in the event of a burglary or other such breach in security (2d4 4th–7th level clerics). The stores include several divine scrolls, a *mace of disruption* +4, and a number of potions of varying amounts of healing (enough to bring the party back up to half their maximum hp if needed). Any major magical items hidden in the temple are concealed from the occupying Nothrog forces at great risk to the temple. The clergy would only acknowledge that they have any such artifacts, much less use them, in the direst of emergencies.

54 A. DYER

A Misearian dyer who set up shop in Baraxton, Renard Sol is constantly hiring guards to add to his small army of bodyguards and assistants. He always has at least three armed guards with him, and sends the rest to guard caravans on the trade routes to Misear. He is independently wealthy, and no longer needs to run his dye business, but keeps up appearances.

54 B. EMBROIDERER.

Linda Faye tailors fine clothing and adds details to nearly all kinds of clothing and linen. She has a great working relationship with All Things Soft (location #54e) and helps them with their sewing circles.

54 C. HERBALIST

Hayden has perfected a style of herbalism that uses the crushed bones of exotic animals and monsters. Most clients are hunters looking for an edge against hydras, manticores, and similar beasts. For 10 gp per HD, a PC can purchase a single dose of a special unguent distilled from a creature's essence that increases the critical threat range of a bladed weapon by 6 against the creature in question. The unguent is smeared on the inside of the weapon sheath and stays on the weapon for two hits per dose. Presently, he has so much Nothrog bone that a single dose is only 5 gp. In either case, Hayden also requests a portion of any creatures slain, usually no more than a vial of blood. Hayden can brew a dozen unguents from each such vial, but may only brew them for creatures who are not immune to critical hits.

54 D. GILLY'S BARBERSHOP

Everyone in Baraxton is in on this joke. "New in town? Go to Gilly's. A shave and haircut for only 1 sp, and they're the best in town." Gilly cuts hair like a blind butcher and victims leave looking ragged. Luckily, the old mirrors have smoked over and most people don't know how bad they look until they leave. Whenever someone is misled in Baraxton, the locals say, "You've been Gillied." Baths are also 1 sp and include soap and a shampoo, but few take advantage of this once their hair has been mangled.

54 E. ALL THINGS SOFT

This shop, which sells linen and pillows, is run by one old man and three women. It looks like a quiet, dull place, but once a week, on a different day each week, they host a sewing circle of Baraxton's best informants and share stories. The old man, Renard, keeps careful notes.

55 A. SCRIBE

Therra Jitt is loyal to the Nothrog. A senatorial scribe before the siege, he now brings the Nothrog information he considers important. Rumors of the PCs making copies of maps, rumors on the street, and anything out of the ordinary go quickly from his lips to the Nothrog guards' ears. As a result, he spends as much time in his shop as he does in the local Nothrog guard station. Smart PCs can find a shrewd way to use this to their advantage. Among his neighbors, he is considered a fool. Among the underground, he is considered a thorn in their side.

55 B. TOTEMS

Once an armorer, Seilek now spends most of his time making totem symbols, war banners, and effective charms. Secretly, he puts arcane marks on items he feels would draw the most attention.

56 A. BARRISTER

This eleven-building block is known to locals as Judge, Jury, and Executioner Square. Since the occupation, Garith Assok has become its leader, and vocally proposes that the city take advantage of the harsh Nothrog law enforcement. As a result, he's been the target of many death threats, and always has a small entourage of bodyguards.

56 B. COURTHOUSE

Corruption has always been rampant in Baraxton, but with the occupation a number of humans in positions of minor power are unopposed. The local courthouse has fewer crimes to judge, but those proceedings they do preside over are swift, merciless, and one-sided.

56 C. HOLDING JAIL

Most prisoners remain here only for a few hours before being sentenced to a public works gang, or remanded to the dungeons beneath Hate's temple. Unless a criminal has proven troublesome to Hate's regime, he can expect grueling labor rebuilding and expanding Baraxton. Members of the resistance who survive capture officially dwell in Hate's dungeon for the rest of their days, but rarely outlive the interrogations.

56 D. EXECUTIONER

Hate has decreed an end to capital punishment, but the observant notice that the executioner is still paid in full. In actuality, executions are commonplace, but never public.

57. MASTERWORK CORNER

Known throughout Baraxton as the place to buy the best of the best, the Corner's artisans do not haggle. They sell what they want to sell at the prices they set. Namdroth owns all the buildings and takes a percentage of all the sales. He does not even suggest prices; his artisans make him more money than he could ever spend. Namdroth interviews all new artisans looking to join the Corner, but does not replace anyone unless they wish to retire. Currently, a masterwork armorer, cooper, fletcher, goldsmith, jeweler, swordsmith, and weaponsmith keep shops here.

58 A. COVERED BAZAAR

Many business owners keep a small booth here, selling goods for low rates. The bazaar is owned and operated by Bulis Shelling, known for buying anything and everything. He pays 10% of the value of everything, but even takes rusted swords, damaged rings, and dented cups. His warehouse of goods is filled the brim with useless trinkets, but Bulis Shelling continues to buy everything without blinking. No one is quite sure where he gets his money.

58 B. THE UNDERTAKER'S INN

Darren Under runs this swanky inn on the edge of the city. People come here for privacy: rooms are windowless, and clients do not sign in at the registrar. Sleep in the middle of the day is typical and each room is lit by a single candle. Rates are 1 gp per half-day. Darren rents rooms to those looking to get away for a short while, not to people staying for weeks on end.

59 A. TAXIDERMIST

The giant stuffed roc mounted on the roof is visible from nearly every point in the city. This creature is the crowning achievement in Baalsam Gray's 40-year career as a taxidermist. He can stuff any creature needed and awaits the challenge he cannot meet.

59 B. TOMBSTONE MAKER

Gregor Fahl is a retired cleric who believes in the sanctity of life. He wards his tombstones against spells that would raise those interred under them, so family members never have to see their loved ones lurching away.



59 C. ICEHOUSE

Huge slabs of ice are brought down from the mountains on sheets of straw, hauled by a team of horses. A single wizard, protected by city statute, keeps the room as cold as possible to keep the ice from melting.

59 D. GUARDHOUSE

Another in a series of Nothrog patrol points, this guardhouse holds 20 men and their weapons. In addition, there is a small aviary of hawks and other birds of prey used to scout sections of the city and send messages to allied cities such as Misearis and Lukkot. A 12-block radius around the guardhouse is devoid of pigeons.

60 A. BASKETWEAVER

Murin Haile is a gifted basket maker and entrepreneur. His business has been in Baraxton for over a decade, and he has built a reputation as an honest and decent man who takes care of others. He is an anomaly in a city known for people looking to become rich; apparently he was rich before he got here. Murin owns a magical basket that creates a complete meal for four people, twice per day. He would not part with it for less than 25,000 gp. It would be very difficult for him to replace, and Murin has grown fond of feeding the hungry and using the money he saves on food to help charity causes.

60 B. HAIRDRESSER

Tarje Lorrinthal is a well-known hairdresser and wigmaker. He keeps the trimmed locks of his customers' hair and sells some of the city's best wigs. In addition to wigs, he sells disguises to those who have earned his trust or paid him extravagantly.

60 C. URNS AND VASES

Kina's Shop is the leading and best-known ceramics shop in Baraxton. Its exotic, expensive, and ornate vases and urns often conceal secrets. Kina is a master at building hidden compartments into even the simplest and smallest urns. Kina does not admit VoTaurr.

60 D. BLACK FOREST EATERY

One of Baraxton's finest restaurants, the Black Forest Eatery caters to the upper class and theatergoers. They keep moderate hours, serve excellent food, and charge rates that even high-level adventurers have trouble paying. The owner is one of the city's best known citizens, Craal Karrasik, who secretly trades in exotic spices and wines from his climate-controlled basement.

61 A. ANIMAL AND HORSE TRAINING

Thalin Muur is a 55-year old horse trainer whose two sons aid him in his work. He can teach nearly any animal simple tricks and displays of acrobatics. He works mostly with



the theater and parade grounds, as his talents have little application in warfare. He has a small stable of the healthiest and brightest animals, selling them for five times their value to those in need of a good show pony.

61 B. CARVER'S INN AND STABLERY

Carver and his wife Jelen never had children. Instead, they run one of Baraxton's friendliest inns. A young groom looks after the horses in the stables while the proprietors offer services such as baths, laundry, and — outside in the alley — a small steam room with hot rocks and water for their more pampered customers. Everything has a price, but Jelen hates to say no and often sells services for less than her husband.

62 A. RETIRED THIEF/LOCKSMITH

Out of shape, grizzled, and blunt, Skaal does not care who knows what he did before. He lives a modest life now and revels in his skills. However, age has caught up with him and going on adventures is not in his plans. He travels as far as a mile to help someone, but he knows his past could catch up with him. Skaal's getaway stash of travel goods and cash is in a locked chest under a rock in a small canyon, 5 miles north of the city.

62 B. WELL SERVICE

Korvin is a young businessman who employs street urchins to help him deliver water from his well to all over the city. He makes a great deal of money, and augments his income by smuggling items in buckets. He does not advertise this service, not wishing to press his luck.

62 C. RETIRED GENTRY

Like many of his neighbors, Baronet Malcolm is retired and enjoys a quiet life in his luxurious home. When crime was high he kept bodyguards, but the Nothrog imposed order during their occupation, so he and his neighbors have let their personal security go. This was a mistake, and the guards are seeking the Thieves' Guild in the hopes of making some of their lost earnings back. The guards are unwilling to actually take part in any robbery, but expect 25% of any profits for their information. The guards know Malcolm's grounds so well that they can report the location of hidden alarms, traps, and even squeaky doors and floorboards.

62 D. TRANSLATER

Laurle, an elven ambassador, keeps a modest home in the city. He translates foreign text from or to any of the 15 languages he has mastered. Laurle would be offended at the suggestion that he sell his services. He merely accepts gifts from his generous friends to read manuscripts for them.

63 A. THE BARAXTON PLAYHOUSE

Capacity 500. The rates are 25 gp for boxseats, 10 gp for the balcony, 3 gp for the risers, and 1 gp for the floor. Even the poor cannot afford to see plays, unless they attend matinees or off-season plays that are 1/5th the cost of seats during the regular season.

63 B. TAILOR

Benjir's was said to sell the finest clothing in Baraxton, renowned for the fine material in the latest fashions. The shop was recently victimized by a whispering campaign among the merchant class, claiming that Benjir was in fact selling inferior clothing and vulgarly skimming the profits. While there seems to be nothing to the rumor, judgmental rich people have taken their business elsewhere. As a result, Benjir is eager to outfit anyone famous for a low price, just to get his fashions onto the street again.

64 A. PALADIN SHRINE

No longer in use, this shrine has been boarded up and sealed by the Nothrog guard. It took so much damage during the siege that it requires a great deal of polish and repair if it is ever to be glorious again.

64 B. CARRIAGE HOUSE

The service here can take customers anywhere in the city for 1 gp a block, and can even pick up people at prearranged spots with prior payments. The drivers are unarmed (all fees are paid here, in advance).

65 A. BLACKSMITH

Hargin Bourr is a packrat. His smithy and private quarters are filled with scrap iron, trinkets, and all manner of tools and supplies he intends to use someday.

65 B. TOYMAKER

A master of puzzles and riddles, Vennis Wyrgard is a rich man who dabbles in toymaking. He enjoys creating toys and games that make people think. Should the PCs bring a puzzle to him, he is likely to be able to assist them with his Knowledge (riddles) +12 skill.

66 A. STORYTELLER'S MEADHALL

The most popular tavern among Baraxton's bards, the Storyteller's Meadhall is known for its freestyle contests. Each night, bards compete to recite the best stories, rhymes, epics, or songs. It doesn't matter how accurate the stories are, just how compelling. The barkeep determines the victor, rewarding him or her with a pitcher of the hall's finest honey mead.

66 B. BIOGRAPHER

Next door to the meadhall, Whit Rook writes the tales of heroes. He is the most famous bard in the city and often visits the meadhall to listen to the tales of others — but he never competes. For 200 gp, he sets anyone's life to song, making sure their deeds live on, with a Performance skill of 10 ranks.

66 C. STEINMANN'S

Known for their barbecued meats and excellent feasts, Steinmann's is a friendly place where people gather for loud and boisterous meals. The meal is 1 gp, but customers are welcome to all they can eat, usually filling up on the cheesebread and other savory treats that Steinmann puts out for his customers. Drinks are 1 sp each, but he only serves red ale and Nothrog beer. PCs looking for a night of revelry are unlikely to find a safer venue.

67 A. SEAMSTRESS

Bethany Mansfield has outlived six husbands and lives off their estates. A mediocre seamstress, she spends most of her time meeting with friends and entertaining guests with stories of mystery and intrigue. She reads a great deal in her free time, and uses her vivid imagination to detail her elaborate stories.

67B. COBBLER

Jorgen Knappe makes exotic and fashionable shoes. He pays well for exotic hides and other materials he can use to make boots, shoes, and leather greaves. Although griffon hide does not make for long-lasting shoes, it is presently all the rage in the merchant class. Unfortunately, most of the hide comes from poached Miserean griffins, leading to one of the few true conflicts between Baraxton and Misear. Griffin-hide goods cost 50% more than normal.

68 A. WILTED ROSE ARMOR SHOP

Run by a disgraced Deverenian blacksmith named Luther, this armor shop is popular with mercenaries. The armor is excellent in quality, and only slightly above market prices (10% above normal). Luther has many contacts with merchant caravans, and often helps place adventurers as guards. Luther refuses to speak of his past, but his shame is entirely personal: he failed his entrance quest for Order Ghenis, and left Deverenia rather than bear the scorn. He regularly attends services at the Cathedral of the Storm, and no Deverenian in town thinks ill of him.

68 B. CUTHBERT'S WEAPON SHOP

An old, three story shop, Cuthbert's Weapon Shop was one of the more respected stores in Baraxton until five years ago. Cuthbert, who managed the store, had been cheating his brother Thom, the blacksmith, of his share of profit. When Thom discovered this he opened a competing shop next door. Since then Cuthbert has seen declining sales, and is plotting revenge against his brother. Should he discover that a PC is an assassin, Cuthbert offers the character 100 gp to kill Thom, but is willing to pay up to 300 gp. If the assassin is successful, Cuthbert realizes how terribly he has betrayed his brother. He leaves town overnight, without paying, intending to walk into the Shattered Lands.

68 C. THOM'S WEAPON EMPORIUM

Thom's shop has prospered. His items are of excellent quality (50% above normal cost) and are in high demand. His wife, Margaret, runs the shop for him while he forges his weapons. After five years, he no longer bears ill will toward his brother, being content to let Cuthbert's shop prosper or fail as it will.

68 D. SIGNON'S SHIELDS

Before this shop opened, most shields in Baraxton were of standard quality. Hoping to corner the market, a Deverenian merchant named Belevre bought this building and began importing shields from his homeland. The shields sell well even though they are expensive (15% above normal cost), but Belevre has yet to make the fortune he sought.

68 E. MISEAR'S TOOTH

The least expensive swords in Baraxton (20% below normal cost) can be found in this dingy shop. The owner, a foul-tempered woman named Felina, makes most of her money by duping poor

customers into "displaying their skills" in the Misearis gladiator games. Though miserable to deal with, she is adept in manipulating an adventurer's emotions into getting what she wants (Bluff at +8).

68 F. METAL WORKS

Most smiths who own shops in Baraxton have their forges here. The communal nature allows for easy delivery of raw materials, while its proximity to the shops allows for the finished goods to be delivered quickly. The foundry is open at all hours, but most smiths go home shortly after sundown, leaving apprentices to keep the fires stoked so production is not slowed when they return in the morning.

68 G. FENCE

Gregory Smeck is perhaps the only person left in town who still deals with Black Tom and the Thieves' Guild, but operates with the grudging support of the Cartwrights. He honestly does not care who he works with, so long as he makes a profit and avoids capture by the guard. He buys stolen goods at 10% their market value, or 15% if the seller is a member of either the Thieves' Guild or the Cartwrights. Characters without membership in either group must make a successful Gather Information check (DC 25) to even find him, and failure may alert either the guard or Smeck to their hamfisted investigations. Smeck secretly has a working relationship with Rreg'jenn, informing the Nothrog of the identities of anyone who sells him Nothrog weaponry or siege equipment. 1d10 days after making these purchases, the stolen goods show up in a shop in town.

69 A. HORN OF THE UNICORN

This is the least successful shop in Baraxton: it carries only lances and lance-related paraphernalia (saddles with lance-hooks, lance wax, pennants, and so on). Aaron, the optimistic owner, constantly expects business to pick up, but unless he improves sales the shop will close within a year.

69 B. ARMORY WAREHOUSE SHOP

"Quantity and quality." The motto of the Armory Warehouse says it all. They are the largest suppliers of weapons and equipment in Baraxton. Nearly anything can be found here, and what can't be found can usually be ordered. Costs vary (10% below normal up to 150% above normal), but the sales staff is adept at directing customers to the more expensive wares. The Armory also owns a large storage building nearby to warehouse excess stock and a stable that sells barding.

69 C. GOLDEN STAG INN

The most popular inn in Baraxton, the Golden Stag has been an institution for nearly two centuries. Bards perform nightly and the common room is nearly always full. The rooms are expensive (20% above normal cost), but spacious and well appointed.

69 D. MONEYCHANGER

While many shops can deal with small amounts of foreign currencies, this is the largest shop that specializes in changing large sums of money from one country's coin to another. Gavin Dionian charges a 15% fee to change money, and also offers

loans. Interest rates and payment are handled on a case-by-case basis, depending on how long the applicant has lived in Baraxton, what collateral is available, and their occupation (adventurers, naturally, are high-risk loans).

70 A. ELENOR'S HABERDASHERY

This simple hat shop is a favorite of actors and well-to-do merchants. Elenor is a middle-aged spinster, hoping to find herself a husband to help her run the shop. She has no magical hats to sell.

70 B. NEUS' BLESSING HERB SHOP

Nora Miller is the apothecary who runs Neus' Blessing. After her husband died she opened this shop to support herself. Her vast knowledge of herbs and plants has secured its reputation. Senators and wealthy merchants sometimes visit the shop personally, though they most often send servants.

70 C. RED DRAGON INN

The Red Dragon Inn has fallen on tough times. While other inns and taverns have adapted to the Nothrog occupation, the Red Dragon catered almost exclusively to merchant guards, mercenaries, and adventurers. Caravan trade has thinned, and the mercenaries and adventurers have left Baraxton in droves, seeking better fortune elsewhere. Still, the Red Dragon Inn is a good place to find information, granting +5 circumstance bonuses to any Gather Information checks made concerning neighboring states.

70 D. THE UNQUIET THOUGHT

This tavern is quite popular among craftsmen. It houses an extensive library and many games, such as chess and puzzles. It is generally quiet, with an ambience more like a house of learning than a tavern. Many of the patrons come here to simply wind down after a long day, but a good number come here to engage in nightly debates on topics from politics to philosophy.

70 E. THE HAWK'S WING

Cal, the owner of this fletcher's shop, is a simple man doing a simple job. This is a popular place among hunters and mercenaries, and Cal has a wide variety of arrows and a few bows available for sale.

71 A. THE EMPTY LENS

This map shop contains a plethora of maps detailing the Accordlands, as well as a few that supposedly depict the Shattered Lands. Rarer maps of Kabal and Narawat are available, but not for sale. The owner charges an exorbitant fee (50 gp) just to study these maps for an hour. Maps sell for the market price.

71 B. BAKER

Torin Glenkirk makes delicate, fanciful treats for the rich merchants of Baraxton. He is famous for his excellent pies and cakes, and he prepares incredible breads and cheeses for larger gatherings. Torin has become a wealthy man from his talents and hides coins in various places throughout his shop.



71 C. BUTCHER

In addition to selling raw meat to taverns and restaurants all over town, Sammiah also smokes meat in the back alley and sells jerky and dried goods to travelers. He only buys the healthiest animals to slaughter and is known throughout the city as a prize-winning butcher. His specialty is smoked pork for 5 sp a pound.

72 A. ROPEMAKER

Yendor Locksleeves claims to have lived for 300 years. In the back of his shop, he keeps a long braid of hair and rope that he's woven to represent all the lost loves from his life. He says the knots represent each of the years he's been alive. People listen to his stories, but nervously nod whenever he appears too serious about his claim.

72 B. NETMAKER

The elf Kassah makes nets of silk and hemp. He is a skilled fisherman, understanding the needs of those who trawl the river. His nets are suited for heavy fish such as bass and king salmon. He's been living in Baraxton for nearly 10 years now, in hiding, under an assumed name. He is really Havellin Tansiq, wanted by both elves and humans for ghastly murders and barbaric fighting tactics.

73. BAKER

The Nothrog Thurrig took over a small bakery in the sack, killing the previous owner, and started baking Nothrog-style breads and hardtack. While his food is mediocre, his Nothrog compatriots send customers his way from time to time. He misses his son, thought lost in Sarakia, and is willing to pay up to 50 gp to anyone who can find his son and deliver a message.

74. BROTHERS OF FIRE BLACKSMITH AND BLACKIRON

Semm and Jollan are actually cousins who built their shops together after Semm realized the existing forge could be enchanted heavily enough to forge blackiron. The cousins have set up a deal with Deverenian blackiron suppliers, and turn out high-quality weapons.

Semm and Jollan offer two uses for blackiron: alloyed weapons and pure. Pure weapons cost 50% more than standard for blackiron weapons, but have all the associated benefits of blackiron. Alloyed weapons have very little blackiron content, just enough to tarnish the steel and provide a minor benefit. Semm and Jollan can balance the alloy just right, allowing it to feed off low-level enchantments. Alloyed weapons, while masterwork, cannot carry enchantments, but ignore magical bonuses to AC of +1 equivalent strength. Alloyed weapons cost 25% more than normal masterwork weapons of that type, and only Semm and Jollan know the proper mixture for this effect.

75 A. GOLDSMITH

Horvakk Iisem is a goldsmith with a reputation that precedes him. Having amassed a fortune, Horvakk now dedicates his efforts toward more artistic endeavors. Combining his skills with gold and silver, he augments the efforts of the Brothers of Fire (see location #74) with interlaced gold, glass, and steel. The finished products are works of art. Horvakk's work is considered masterwork and the cost to employ him is twice that of other masterwork craftsmen.

75 B. ORACLE

Lleenanroyn is known for his great insight. For 200 gp he will cast *augury*, with a 85% chance of success. He refuses to cast any other spells and comes across as curt, responding only to the questions asked. He never volunteers information and tries not to get involved in the lives of his customers.

75 C. FALCONER

Rorn sells all manner of trained birds, and secretly sells Deverenian falcons (100 gp). This crime is punishable by death should a Deverenian guard find out. However, he is very secretive about his dealings. Should someone he does not know ask about the falcons, he denies everything and sends the falcons off as soon as he can do so quietly.

76. WARPOST

This is the only tavern in town that allows weapons, if only because the customers find it amusing to have the occasional chump walk into the bar thinking he's safely armed. The Warpost is an unofficial hiring center for low-rent mercenaries and fighters, patronized by both off-duty Dark Horsemen and members of the Fighters' Guild. The patrons frown on fights to the death, but a little roughhousing never killed anyone important.

77 A. SAXTON'S

This shop's appearance is plain, but its wares are anything but. A former Misearian gladiator who bought his freedom, Saxton brought his money to Baraxton and opened a shop that exclusively sells exotic and rare weapons. He deals with caravans from Kabal to the border settlements by the Shattered Lands, and has a wide selection. All his weapons are expensive (50% above normal price). He is willing to acquire anything he does not have in stock, but charges double the normal price.

77 B. THE BRIGHT PATH

This lantern shop carries a great variety of lanterns and lights made by owner Abner Fulbright. The prices are fair, and based on the quality of the lantern. If asked, Abner can show customers a small selection of magical lanterns that do not require oil, but their limited supply raises their price (50% above normal cost).

78 A. ORIEL'S AND GYN'S JEWELERS

These two buildings were separate shops until their owners, Oriel and Gyn, decided to combine resources. Oriel specializes in gold jewelry and fixtures while Gyn deals with silver. Sharing designs and costs has enabled both shops to experience renewed growth.

78 B. BLACK BOAR

This inn is typical of most in Baraxton, with one notable difference: its patronage is almost exclusively Deverenian, and the owner and all the staff are originally from the Empire. While the Deverenians know they must trade with Baraxton, they do not wish to socialize with the citizens. Non-Deverenians entering this establishment receive coldly polite treatment.

79 A. BARAXTON GARDENS

Located directly across from the front gate are expansive gardens. Senators and merchants often come here to broker clandestine deals. The gardens are famed throughout the region and visitors throng the gardens during all hours of the day.

The gardens are lightly patrolled (1d4 1st–3rd level fighters every 1d10 + 20 minutes) and provide many opportunities for concealment.

79 B. TEMPLE TO FINELTOUR

Less a temple than a waystation for every superstitious coward in the city, this small shrine is apparently blessed by the god himself. Though the guard has known of it for years, no stakeout here has ever uncovered a criminal who honestly worshiped Fineltour. Sacrifices are mandatory, of course, consisting of valuables (10 gp per character level minimum), though those who leave especially valuable items might gain the benefits of bless or other divine favor. Similarly, those who attempt to steal from Fineltour may earn terrible curses...

80 A. CHEESE SHOP

Terrac Myrrin is a cheesemaker of the highest skill. He sells fine cheeses and carves them into interesting and unique shapes. Carved cheese goes for 1 to 5 gp per pound, depending on the work involved. The scraps are sold off at 1 cp per pound, mostly to taverns. Due to lack of customer demand, the store carries no cheddar.

80 B. COPPERSMITH

Years ago, Johrig Smeth did a great favor for a priest of Neus. In return, the priest blessed Johrig and his small forge, and days later returned with a new pair of snips for cutting copper. Ever since, Johrig's work has radiated a faint trace of holiness, and anyone carrying Johrig's goods registers as good-aligned for the purposes of alignment detection. Those who are aware of this effect have sometimes exploited it, planting a small copper trinket in an enemy's bag, and using *detect good* to track their adversaries. Johrig does not know that his work emanates holy energy.

81 A. BAKER

These days, Kylik sells and bakes standard breads and pastries. However, he was once an enterprising adventurer, and the walls of his shop hide a great treasure of gold and jewels. Under the shop, a small barrel contains magical potions, weapons, and rings. The total value of his hoard is nearly 300,000 gp, but no one else in Baraxton knows it is there. The magic items do not radiate magic, as Kylik paid a wizard to conceal their nature.

81 B. BRICKLAYER/MASON

Considering himself an artist, Holden Tide collects rocks, stones, and other minerals from all over the world to build his exotic and outlandish structures. His warehouse is filled with stonework from foreign lands. Those wishing to hire Tide should expect to pay 3 to 5 times normal price for his labor and 10 times normal price for his materials, but those he works for claim he is worth every copper piece.

81 C. BUTCHER

Ballic the Black is old, overweight, and sports a gray mane down to the center of his back. He may have once been a handsome man. He has retired from his calling as a Black Sun paladin, and is trying to forget his past. He would only come out of retirement if he were truly needed.

81 D. CREMATORIUM

For a fee, the retired assassin owners of this crematorium "disappear" customers, sending them on to wizards to gain new identities. Quick cremation of a duplicate body ensures that the guards ask few incriminating questions. Rates are exorbitant but negotiable.

82 A. COOPER

Business has been slow for years, and over time Ghurlin, a barrel-maker of no acclaim, has slowly converted his business into a series of fast-moving shell games. Ghurlin is incredibly talented at his new calling, and marks must succeed in opposed checks for Sense Motive and Spot to notice the cheating. Ghurlin never takes more than 10 gp on a bet, and allows people to make up to half again their opening bets before he robs them in earnest. Odds equal the number of shells in the game, up to 1 in 10 with ten shells. Ghurlin has both Bluff and Sleight of Hand skills at 12 ranks each, and gains an additional competence bonus equal to the number of shells in the game for these checks.

82 B. POTTER

Harrison Gray sells more pottery than he makes. He has never been very good at shaping clay, but buys a great deal of leftovers from adventuring groups and traveling merchants. The pottery business is a front for Gray's various nightly activities. He belongs to a cult, a secret order of adventurers, and a librarians' guild. None of these orders knows of the others, and Gray juggles his many activities with delicacy and aplomb.

82 C. TAILOR

The daughter of Callinor Saul disappeared during the Assassins' Strike. Although he has only saved up 840 gp as a reward, he offers favors and his undying gratitude to those who can find her. The tailor's daughter was last seen leaving Baraxton when she joined the Aroch Paladins in Denska.

82 D. ASTROLOGER

Balian the elf is expert on the three moons as well as Bascarite lore, but does not impart his knowledge cheaply. For 50 gp a day, he will research nearly any topic of the moons and planes, and in might exchange information for favors. He is widely viewed as a crank, which suits his small Bascarite coven just fine. The larger cult (location #103) does not know of this coven.

82 E. WELL

This well is open for public use, although most of the local businesses throw a few copper pieces at young boys eager to earn money hauling buckets of water around the neighborhood. Because the well sees so much use, it is always in need of repair and mud cakes the quality brickwork surrounding it.

83 A. CRAFTSMAN'S GUILD

Woodworkers, bricklayers, and other craftsmen congregate here to meet, pay dues, and vote. Journeyman craftsmen without a business wait here for work assignments. The president of the guild is Johannus Zyner, but he is rarely here. Daily operations are looked after by Morina Cyte and her three assistants.

83 B. STABLES

The Tender Groom is a high-priced stabling service for rich merchants and visiting royalty. For 2 gp per day, a horse is treated to a daily bath, grooming, freshly cut apples and carrots, and reshoeing. Riek Plyan is a pleasant man ready for the Nothrog occupation to end.

84. BARAXTON CITY CONSTRUCTION AND LUMBER YARD

These two areas are the heart of Baraxton's public works efforts. Located relatively close to the docks to make transporting raw lumber easier, Nothrog ingenuity has combined the two businesses into one. Under their guidance, construction finished on the new barracks in just over a week, and the city has already repaired much of the damage Baraxton suffered during the siege.

85. MARKET

In the southeastern corner of Baraxton is a sprawling marketplace. Every craftsman in the city has a stall here, and they are joined by various merchants that keep offices close by, and moneylenders. From sunrise to sunset, this is the busiest area of the city. If adventurers need something, it can usually be found here.

86. METALSMITHS

A coppersmith, goldsmith, and silversmith run separate yet cooperative businesses here. Nehris, Rown, and Aeshe are Yscarite lycanthropes, sworn to seek out the greatest copper, gold, and silver dragons. They are not open with this information, but adorn their businesses with fantastic paintings of dragons. They keep to themselves, and meet privately in the wild, once a week, to organize meetings of their respective orders with those who know their secret.

87 A. HOUNDSMAN

Hector Koben takes clients on a hunt. Fees start at 1 gp per person per day. Higher expenditures bring more luxuries — such as horses, tracking dogs, and a few additional men to help return with the animal carcass — and time. Hector is a skilled Deverenian hunter and knows better than to take people into the same patch of forest every time. For a few gold pieces more, customers can make a weekend of it, with a small entourage, camping equipment, and a cook.

87 B. SAGE

Simon Fuller is a fraud. While he cannot tell people much about what they seek, he uses an object called *the mirror of secrets* to discern one secret about each person who enters his business. Whenever a PC asks anything regarding someone in the city, there is a 75% chance that he knows something about them. He charges 2–10 gp for the information, depending on the secret. He is a bit of an oaf and is unable to help people with real problems.

87 C. PAWN SHOP

McCorin is a scrounger. When not selling obscure trinkets from his shop, he's out in city, on the trails, and in the back alleys scooping up remnants that people have discarded or lost. He does not purchase scraps from other people. He makes his money selling detritus, not buying it.

88 A. HORSEBREEDING

Borgen Ferriss maintains a small ranch outside the city, but does his business inside the walls. He keeps 20 to 30 horses at a time and sells them for 10% more than the going rate. However, his animals are hardy breeds and all have the Toughness feat in addition to any other abilities they might possess.

Anyone entering his shop cannot leave without hearing his sales pitch about a race track for the city. He earnestly believes that

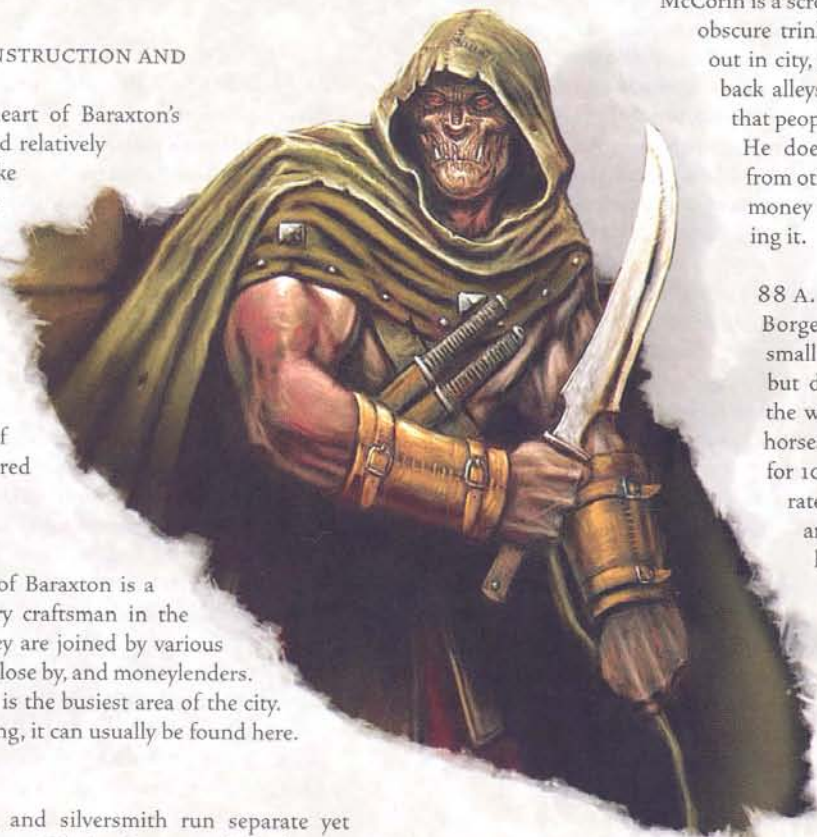
Baraxton needs one and is willing to use a portion of his land for the endeavor, but seeks investors to help him make his dream a reality.

88 B. WAINWRIGHT

In addition to making fine wagon wheels, Greald makes custom wagons on request. He's been known to add secret compartments, and to fit weapon racks on wagon sides for caravan masters seeking a little extra security. His goods go for 20% more than normal, but last a little longer than most and are worth the price.

89 A. HORSE GROOMER

Catering to merchants with money to throw around, Westman bathes, combs, walks, and generally treats his client horses better than he does his clients. In addition to his excellent services, he sells *horseshoes of speed* and *horseshoes of a zephyr* for twice the normal price.



89 B. SADDLE AND LEATHERWORKS

A master leatherworker, Thallok is a Nothrog who specializes in saddle making. In addition to masterwork saddles and combat saddles, he also sells magic items to those with the money to burn. For 1,000 gp, a PC can purchase a *saddle of control* that confers a +10 bonus to all Ride checks. For 2,000 gp, a PC can buy a saddle that confers a +4 bonus against fear and mind-influencing effects targeted at the mount. Lastly, for 2,500 gp he will sell his last *saddle of endurance* that bestows the Endurance feat on the horse.

89 C. FARRIER (SHOESMITH)

Freyd produces inferior horseshoes and does shoddy work. How he stays in business is a mystery. He is missing one eye, and rumors abound that a Deveronian general cut it out of his head when his horse threw a shoe two miles outside the city. He is not trusted by anyone who knows of his reputation.

89 D. THE FEEDBAG INN AND STABLES

Run by three intimidating young ladies, the Feedbag is known for its generous portions and constant horse-fancier talk. Most patrons are familiar with Borgen Ferriss's plans for a racetrack and have firm opinions about its feasibility (see location #88a).

90 A. STABLES

This is a long-term stabling service run by two young men and their father. Each day, they walk the horses a few miles outside the city to an enclosed glen where the horses graze and roam free. They are careful handlers and rarely lose a horse. In such instances, they help the customer find a new horse of equal value and pay half the amount to replace it. Luckily, this rarely happens and their contract absolves them from having to pay at all.

90 B. MAPMAKER

An average mapmaker, Genia Moliar does not sell overland maps, but rather pens rough maps of buildings throughout the city, both interior and exterior. She has an excellent memory and can draw most areas without having to revisit them. However, highly secure areas run a risk and she charges accordingly.

90 C. JEWELRY SETTINGS

Yuri Jolfor sets gems into the heads, hilts, and pommels of weapons and the mantle, greaves, and helmets of armor. He charges 10% of the value of the gem and equipment combined to set the gem, but does not sell gems worth more than 50 gp in his shop. He expects customers to bring in the gem or jewel they want set.

90 D. FAITHFUL HOUND

This pawn shop offers loans equal to 15% of an item's market value. Customers have a month to repay the loan (plus 25% interest) before the shop claims ownership of the goods. Virtually anything legally available is here and on sale at 50% off.

91. FRONT GATE

A mixture of Nothrog guards and human levies, the front gate is always maintained by at least 12 men, 20 during peak hours. Guardsmen working the front gate patrol 100 feet from the gate inside the city and half a mile outside the city.

92 A. TEAHOUSE

The new owners of this teahouse have been here only 3 months, having missed the siege of the city and the ensuing chaos. The previous tenants were so eager to sell that they forgot to mention the passage to the Thieves' Guild hidden behind a grate in the basement. The new owners, from Sarakia, also purchased the business next door, the smoke shop (location #92b).

92 B. SMOKE SHOP

Purchased by the same people who bought the teahouse (location #92a) after the sack, this shop now boasts the world's largest hookah pipe. It stands 14 feet tall and up to 22 people can smoke from it at once. A skylight had to be installed in the existing 12-foot ceiling. While tea sales are down, tobacco sales are up.

92 C. THE PIG BELLY SMOKESTACK

Known for their mesquite and honey-glazed barbecue, the sausages and jerky from the Pig Belly Smokestack are among the best in the city. For 1 sp, customers can get a small strip of jerky; a fully smoked pig runs 10 gp. The owner, Borjs Jacquis, has a specialty that he makes once a year for the judicial triumvirate. He stuffs a deboned pig with a deboned turkey, itself stuffed with a deboned chicken which has been stuffed with a deboned quail. Each portion is generously seasoned, marinated, and then smoked for a fortnight. It is a delicacy like nothing else in the city, but he does not sell it. It is his gift to the city, once a year.

92 D. SPINNER

Bringing in sometimes as many as 50 sheep a day, Senna shears sheep herself to produce her wool yarn. She supplies craftsmen, tailors, and clothiers throughout the city. She has been working in Baraxton all her life, and is privy to many secrets. Anyone asking her about a particular detail about someone or something in the city has a 35% chance of getting useful information.

93 A. FLETCHER/BOWYER

Arabek makes specialty arrow shafts that allow the user to interchange tips. By threading the inside of the arrowhead, the shafts can be changed out. He sells all the arrowheads from the Rules Codex as well as a couple of others:

Arabek's Flaming Arrowhead: Like most flaming arrows, the tip stores a small amount of pitch. Under the pitch is a small alchemical concoction that explodes 1d4 rounds after the arrow is lit. It deals 3d6 damage to the target and 1d6 splash damage in a 5-ft. radius.

Poison-tipped arrowhead: The head can store one dose of any contact poison.

Arabek also sells four different shaft designs:

Arabek's Vengeance: An attempt to get his name out to people, this arrow is a work of art. Colorful flights, a smooth shaft, and any arrowhead the buyer likes. 5 sp each, or one free with any 10 gp purchase.

Hollow Shaft: These shafts whistle when fired. They produce no additional effect, but break on impact. 1 cp each.

Dense Shaft: These are heavier than normal arrows. When firing this arrow from a mighty composite bow, the archer may add his Strength bonus (up to the bonus of the bow) to the attack roll. 1 gp each.

Lanlin Shaft: Lightweight and durable. Increase the range increment of the bow by 10 ft. 1 sp each.

93 B. STONECARVER

In addition to carving reliefs into walls and pillars, Baris Mygor, a Sarakian stonecarver, also sells special stones known as whistlers. Whistlers can be thrown as a standard action, and create a unique sound as they fly through the air. A Listen check (DC 15) within 60 ft. reveals the noise, but not the source. Baris has 20 different designs that he will sell for 1 gp each. For 10 gp and with 2 days to work on it, he can create a special stone that mimics a particular whistle that the customer wants imitated.

93 C. STABLE

This stable caters not only to normal horses but to exotic steeds as well. The stables are not responsible for undomesticated mounts, however, and bill for damage.

93 D. BUTCHER

Sammael may well be the only truly honest man in Baraxton. His meat is priced accordingly, he never gives short weight, and he never sells spoiled food. Somehow, he is also one of the city's most well-to-do workers.

93 E. THATCHER

Aronel is a druid in a city, and is naturally one of the most unhappy people in Baraxton. She offers to help build huts for anyone who wishes, but not even the Nothrog pay her heed. She has come to regret leaving Sarakia, but cannot swallow her pride and return.

93 F. HEALER

A Nothrog surgeon and shaman, Gorrek took over the previous business here when the owner fled the city. For 500 gp, Gorrek will cut open a character's skin and inserts a metal plate in his arm or leg. This plate increases the character's natural armor bonus by 1. One plate can be installed in each arm and each leg. This plating lasts until the PC suffers massive damage (per the rules in the Codex), at which point the bonus is cut in half, rounded down.

The process deals 5d6 points of damage to the character, 3d8 of which is healed after the surgery, but most people pass out from the pain. Gorrek has no qualms about who he does this to, and doesn't flinch if someone dies during the surgery. If the PC survives the hour-long operation, Gorrek can insert another one right away, given that the character has the funds to cover it. For 300 gp, he will perform the operation without healing the character afterward, but the chance of scarring increases. For the purposes of hiring Gorrek to cast cure spells, consider him 12th level.

94. SMUGGLER

Olian's cover is that of spice trader, shipping bags of exotic salts and herbs. He doesn't often smuggle contraband, but assiduously avoids tariffs and guild control over merchandise. A member of the resistance against Nothrog rule, he can aid those in need and

maybe even smuggle someone out of the city... for a price. He can get illegal goods, but not often.

95. SENATOR'S ESTATE

This was previously the home of Judge Albier Dolimag. Krun commandeered it during the sack, and now uses it as a barracks, headquarters for scouting and raiding, and occasional residence. High-quality weapons, food, and other supplies are kept in the basement.

96. PRIVATE ESTATE

Tellish Mushalor is the head of the trade commission. Immediately after the siege, he met with Nassiral Hate to protect the city's trade. While Hate had always planned to keep the city's infrastructure intact, Tellish believes himself responsible for saving the city. Hate keeps him around as long as he considers him useful, but would not hesitate to kill Tellish and appoint someone else. The grounds of Tellish's vast home are guarded by both mercenary and Nothrog guards. The Nothrog are loyal to Hate, and make use of two of the estate's four wings as temporary barracks.

97. CARRIAGE HOUSE

Rich members of the community who live outside the city walls store their carriages here.

98. DIPLOMATIC ESTATE

Nassiral Hate took over these buildings after ousting the nobility. He uses it for visiting dignitaries and other nobles. It is a favorite haunt for Tiberius Blackthorn when he visits the city. Many human servants work the grounds and have seen all manner of people come and go during the Nothrog occupation.

99. KRUN'S ESTATE

Once a palatial manse for visiting Deverenian traders, Krun has converted the building and its surrounding grounds into a sprawling barracks for his legionnaires. Literally hundreds of fighters of 1st–14th levels are here, and Krun's private armory can outfit them all in less than half an hour. The result is an impenetrable fortress.

100. TAOTH'S ESTATE

Formerly the eastern vacation home for the Dominar of Misearis, Taoth claimed this house. Unlike Krun's nearby estate, Taoth left her mansion intact. It sports a swimming pond, several well-stocked kitchens, and most importantly, a room where no scrying can reach. Unfortunately, after one of her soldiers attacks Krun's men on her orders (and against Hate's; this occurs concurrently with the "Ichaerus Rising" adventure in the *Campaign* book), Hate orders Taoth to leave Baraxton to capture Sav'ruk, and Krun takes over this estate and half her legion.

101. HELLBRINGER'S ESTATE

This once-magnificent home is literally a shell of its former self. Sceth Hellbringer has hollowed it out, and his giant troops live here in a makeshift barracks. 1d6 of each type of giant is here at any time.

102. ABANDONED ESTATE

Once a villa for a Sarakian trader, this building fell into disrepair in his absence. The Nothrog never bothered to touch the place. As such, Sav'rukk hides here whenever he must enter Baraxton to make his deals with Krün.

103. YSCAR CULT TEMPLE AND LEADER

A dozen Yscarites worship beneath this abandoned building. Though Baraxton, like most other places, has banned the cult, this coven is one of the largest anywhere, and has hosted Yscar the Elder himself on several occasions. As Baraxton is the last safe point between the rest of the Accordlands and the Shattered Lands, its cultists are an especially brutal breed.

It falls to them to keep not only this temple safe, but also to ensure that all other Yscarites pass through safely. Otho Yscar, a level 6 scout/level 5 Yscarite cultist, heads the Baraxton chapter. Yscar the Elder has repeatedly chastised Otho for his extreme measures, but has yet to strip Otho of his rank. While Yscar the Elder is away, Otho orders all Yscarites in the city to kill any outsiders who discover even the faintest traces of the cult's presence. Otho is unaware of the smaller Bascarite sect in the city (see location #82d).

104. ARCHITECT

Jellora Mullshar is the foremost architect of the city, and has kept detailed sketches of everything she ever designed. Nearly 50 years old, with no family or prospects, she has dedicated her spare hours to designing birdhouses. She makes all manner of birdhouses, many being identical replicas of buildings in and around the city. For 25 to 75 gp, one can purchase a birdhouse that looks just like any building in the city, depending on its complexity. In addition, she keeps every plan that she ever designed or worked on (including the sewers), and is willing to share them for stiff fees of 1,000 gp or more, depending on the importance of the buildings involved.

105. FINISHING SCHOOL

Sons and daughters of the nobility are sent here to learn the proper tools of etiquette. A young man learns to ride a horse, play polo, and behave properly in court, while girls learn how to walk, dress, and behave like ladies. It is not uncommon for young men and women to graduate years later, having developed strong bonds with one another and working together once they enter the inner political machine of Baraxton (or any city in the Accordlands). The owner of the school, Duchess Sarla Ichennir, keeps a *crystal ball* in her study and *scrys* on previous attendees of the school, keeping tabs on their comings and goings.

106. COMMON GRAVEYARD

A mere 5 cp buys a common plot, and another 5 cp nets a headstone. The stench is outrageous, but exploring the cemetery uncovers a curious series of tombstones, all marked "Jonah."



107. UNDERTAKER

No one has survived more than a month running this business, as no one has been able to balance the constant presence of elfen graverobbers with the mobs who riot every time they discover a disturbed grave.

108. SUNKEN SEPULCHER

Once a tomb for a forgotten Baraxton noble, the soft ground has given way beneath it, opening the only unguarded entrance to the sewers in the city.

109 A. TORUS' DISCOUNT ARMORY

Torus sells discount weapons and armor. While his shop and its supplies are worn down, the occasional gem can be found. He sells his goods for 20% of the listed price, but is likely to have something only 75% of the time. He also buys used goods for 10 to 25%

of the list price. He is known for his short cuts. If, for instance, he is repairing a notched longsword, he trims away portions of the blade, unbalancing it, and turning the blade into a short sword. There is a 2% chance that a weapon purchased at Torus' shop is a +1 weapon. He often throws in a scabbard with sword purchases, mostly because he has so many he can't get rid of them.

109 B. DISCOUNT ADVENTURING SUPPLY

An annex to Torus' Discount Armory, this used to be a high-quality, high-priced establishment. Torus bought out the previous owner after the siege and has filled it with random equipment. Equipment is run-down, but 50–75% the price of new.

109 C. FURRIER

Corbin skins dead animals and sells the materials to tailors and seamstresses. He buys most of his furs from nearby tribes, and is on good terms with both the Sarakian barbarians and the Nothrog legions. The resistance frowns on this, and has taken to vandalizing his shop. Corbin has placed a bounty of 50 gp for information leading to the arrest of these vandals, but would balk if he knew that they were only

children. In truth, Corbin is simply one of many in the city who has fallen for Nassiral Hare's benevolent image.

109 D. VINTNER

Josef Cros' small vineyard produces only 100 bottles of his fine red wine a year, and they sell for 250 gp each. A glass of the smooth, fruity wine heals 1 hp once per day. Most people buy the wine for its rarity and exotic flavor, not its medicinal qualities.

Ten of the 100 bottles are pear wine, where an actual pear is grown into the empty bottle before the wine goes into it. The pear does not affect the taste, but makes for an exotic place setting. These crystal bottles go for 500 gp each. Cros refuses to sell any bottles to Daevanus (see location #48a), as the last time he did so, the entire year turned to vinegar.

Cros' brother Rudolph maintains a small vineyard to the east of the city. He sells his more modest table wine for 5 gp a bottle; his bottles look nothing like his brother's so as to not confuse the customer. Rudolph has had even less luck with Daevanus (see location #48a), whose horse trampled part of the vineyard when it saw a snake.

110. NEST OF VIPERS

Once a tavern for a smalltime gang of rogues and assassins, the Nest of Vipers has, like the Vipers themselves, taken on an air of authority in the city. The gang has surreptitiously aided the resistance on a few occasions, but eventually betrays them to Rreg'jenn, helping the Nothrog drive the Cartwrights out of the city. Shortly afterward, Rreg'jenn kills most of the Vipers. Those who survive retreat here, and seek out a new patron.

The Vipers are a gang of rogues and assassins, 5d6 of whom are here at any time before Rreg'jenn turns on them. They do not take kindly to uninvited guests, but are more likely to beat and rob them than to commit murder in their own bar.

111 A. TARNEL'S TREASON

This glorified flophouse is Baraxton's very own haunted house. According to legend, this was a respectable inn until Tarnel killed his family to inherit it. Unfortunately for him, Tarnel had no talent for conspiracy, and his murder had a witness. When he dispatched that witness, someone else saw it... Tarnel killed dozens of people before the guard discovered him and executed him on the spot. Though the inn remains open, the few who dare to sleep here tell horrifying tales about the ghosts of Tarnel and his family. These rumors are incomplete; it is not simply Tarnel and his kin who haunt this spot, but



everyone he ever killed. 3d12 spectres appear here every night, though they are more concerned with destroying Tarnel than attacking the living. Tarnel is the most terrible of them all, having 14 HD and the ability to rise again each night at dusk, even if destroyed the previous day. The haunting only ends if a cleric or paladin of sufficient level destroys Tarnel by turning him.

111 B. THE GOLDEN LILY

Once a respectable restaurant, the Golden Lily fell on hard times when the surrounding neighborhood did. Its customers gradually declined in both number and wealth until they were almost solely Cartwrights' Guild members. When the Nothrog drive the Cartwrights from the city, the Golden Lily will have the dubious honor of being the only spot that Krun personally raids. Surprisingly, he lets most of the Cartwrights escape, taking prisoner only Keziah. The raid is a cover for this one attack, as Krun has discovered that Keziah was the Dominar of Misear's daughter. In a moment of rare arrogance, he mentions this during the raid. Afterward, Gather Information checks made to find the Dominar's daughter (DC 20) reveal that Krun has taken her hostage. She escapes very quickly, possibly entangling herself in the Medusan Lords' plot.

111 C. ALE AND WENCH

Despite the name, this is not a tavern or brothel, but a local jail. The guards here have a reputation for raiding the slums, taking only the titular goods. These guards are thoroughly corrupt, pocketing money from the resistance and Nothrog both. 4d4 of them are here at any time, but despite being 2nd–5th level fighters, they flee any combat.

111 D. THE LAST CHANCE

Manned entirely by soldiers from Krun's legion, this converted storefront is the most reviled spot in town. Anyone may come here and confess their crimes to the Nothrog clerks, naming all their accomplices and turning over evidence as part of a plea for leniency. Those who prove true to their word receive reduced sentences, but many ask for transportation to allied Misearis instead. More murders occur within a one-block radius of this spot than in the rest of the city combined.

112 A. THE CUSTOMS HOUSE

The most notorious brothel in Baraxton, the Customs House is a clean and surprisingly up-front business. Customers can find a talented companion of any PC race for 100 gp an hour, and all are held to strict confidentiality. Clients must relinquish weapons at the door, but the establishment returns them when the client leaves. Should someone still attempt violence, the House guards are trained fighters (3rd–7th levels; 1d6 arrive at the end of every round if a fight breaks out). Customers who start fights receive no refunds, and the brothel turns any confiscated weapons over to the city guard.

112 B. COOPER

This ramshackle building was the only Cartwright front never discovered by the Nothrog. Before the raids, this is simply another gathering place, but afterward, it is the only rallying point left for

the beleaguered guild. Should Logan ever return to Baraxton, he will most likely rebuild his guild from here.

112 C. FORTUNE TELLER

This is a poorly run confidence scheme (the fortune teller has only 1 rank of Bluff), but makes a small profit just from "customers" who come to laugh at the ineptness of the establishment.

112 D. COBBLER

Horace is a quiet, unassuming man who fixes shoes quickly and competently. Many wonder how he stays in business surrounded by a decaying neighborhood. The answer is simple: Horace, in addition to being a fine cobbler, is also an exemplary detective. Whenever he repairs a shoe, he notes the type of soil in the sole, the unusual scuffs or scrapes, etc., and compares anything unusual with announcements of crimes in the city. Horace's keen mind has led to the capture of many members of the resistance, and none suspect him of duplicity.

112 E. TATTOO ARTIST

Though rumored to paint magical tattoos, Carver Jay has no such ability. He is an extraordinarily talented artist, and his distinctive tattoos are popular among gangs and Nothrog alike. Jay has Craft (Tattoos) at 12 ranks, and charges 10–1,000 gp or more depending on the size and complexity of the tattoo.

The Nothrog City of Lukkot

History

The city of Lukkot (Nothrog for "Mammoth's Fury") is one of the oldest Nothrog cities. It is the center of Nothrog siege engine construction and design. The war machines constructed here are sought by every legion, and have played crucial roles in almost all Nothrog wars in the last 500 years, especially the recent sack of Baraxton.

Lukkot was founded 500 years ago by the Legion of the Mammoth. Grath Longtusk, Mammoth's leader, concluded that to rule all the other Legions he would need mighty engines of destruction and a center from which to conduct his war efforts. Within twenty years of its founding Lukkot was the preeminent producer of war machines and Longtusk's plans had been carefully worked out.

Three days before Longtusk was ready to launch his attacks he contracted a mysterious fatal disease. His son had secretly conspired with the legion's shaman to kill him. They knew that the Legion would be destroyed if it warred upon all the other tribes. After killing Longtusk they began producing war machines for the Nothrog nation, thus securing a place that could never be questioned, and ensuring the survival of Mammoth's Legion.

Lukkot's history has been quiet up until recently. In the past decade Lukkot has gone from being a silent center of production to the forefront of Hate's control of the Nothrog and the siege of Baraxton.

It began when the giant Sceth Hellbringer brought his war band down from the mountains in an attempt to conquer the city. He had planned to control all the land he could see from the top of his mountain fortress, and Lukkot was the closest city.

For three weeks the fighting raged outside the city's walls. Hellbringer's band was outnumbered nearly a hundred to one, but the giants' quick raids overwhelmed the Nothrog defenders. In the final hours of the fighting, Mammoth Legion's leader Dul'Goth had his shamans persuade the totem itself to battle Hellbringer.

Both sides stopped to watch the single combat between the fire giant and the ancient totem. The battle raged for nearly a day, but when Hellbringer was about to finish off Mammoth, a fiery bolt stunned the giant warlord. The giants and Nothrog both turned to see who had the audacity to interrupt. Standing in front of the combined legions of Krun and Uthanak was Nassiral Hate. The albino shaman proclaimed that he had witnessed the fight, and declared Hellbringer the new leader of the Mammoth Legion by right of combat. Hate had arrived to take that mantle from him.

Dul'Goth immediately protested, but Hate quickly dispatched him. Dul'Goth's smoldering body lay as a testament to Hate's power. The Legion of the Mammoth and Hellbringer both succumbed to Hate's rule.

Hate ordered Hellbringer to construct a huge number of siege engines for the Legions under his control, and then left to conquer other legions.

Dul'Goth survived Hate's attack, albeit crippled. Hellbringer realized that to throw away his knowledge would be foolish, so he installed his predecessor as an adviser. Dul'Goth oversaw the construction of the new war machines, and took charge of the city whenever Hellbringer went on campaign for Hate.

While Lukkot seems to be firmly in Hate's grasp, things are not always as they appear.

Economy

Lukkot's economy is its siege engines. While other Nothrog cities produce siege equipment, none can rival the sheer scope of Lukkot's foundries. The city equips Sceth Hellbringer's legions with the latest in siege technology. Other Nothrog legions that wish to have these superior machines (and there are few that don't) pay a steep price for them. Since Bascaron destroyed most of Lukkot's raw material capacity when it passed over the Shattered Lands, most legions trade for engines with lumber and ore.

While its dependence on the other legions for materials could leave it vulnerable, no legion would dare take advantage of this situation for fear of drawing the wrath of the other legions.

Laws

Sceth Hellbringer has taken over the city and the legion, but he allows the legion to continue its traditions, which he now considers his own. He simultaneously grants all of his giants amnesty for any actions they take.

This has increased the tension in the city, as the Nothrog population must follow their traditions or risk upsetting their totem, while the giants are free to do whatever they please. The only time the giants are taken to task by Hellbringer is if they disrupt the city's siege engine production. The giants know this, and behave themselves when it comes to production.

Population: The city of Lukkot has 50,000 Nothrog, 500 giants, and 100,000 slave laborers from varied races. The giants arrived when Sceth Hellbringer conquered the city, and there is a

great deal of tension between the older city population and the newer arrivals. It has not yet erupted into open hostility.

Government: Sceth Hellbringer rules the city of Lukkot while he is present. When he is campaigning he leaves the city in the hands of Dul'Goth.

Imports: Raw materials (lumber, ore, etc.), slaves

Exports: Siege engines

Society

Lukkot's social make-up is unusual. Mammoth Legion numbers roughly 50,000 Nothrog. Most of these have had very little interaction with other legions. Though all members of the Legion are capable fighters, as all Nothrog are, they are far more effective strategists and siege masters. Every member of the Legion spends a period constructing and designing the war machines. About 5% of the total population dedicate their lives to engineering.

In order to construct their machines, the city of Lukkot employs about 100,000 slaves, far more than other legions. The life span of slaves once they reach Lukkot is roughly three years. Slave labor is the city's second-largest import, behind only raw materials. The taskmasters of Lukkot are known as the fiercest in the legions. If the slaves were ever able to revolt, they would destroy Lukkot's production capabilities, even though they could never actually overthrow their captors. Slaves are therefore kept in small compounds throughout the city's interior, and their movements are tightly restricted.

The most recent addition to the city has been Hellbringer's giants. A section of the city nearest the main gate has been relinquished to them. They spend little time in the city, being frequently out on campaign. Still, the tension surrounding them is almost tangible.

Many Nothrog are still unhappy with Hate's having given Hellbringer control of their Legion. Roughly one third of the total population of Lukkot would love to toss out Hellbringer and his war band. Only the fact that Hate truly controls the city stops them. If the giants and Hellbringer know about this social undercurrent, they don't care, as long as siege engine production continues.

The only times that the city is truly unified and relatively joyful is during the two annual festivals in Mammoth's honor. For the first and last days of winter the city halts all production and turns its collective attention to the grand feasts and tournaments that honor their totem.

Contests are held for single combat and small unit tactics. Master engineers show off their latest and best creations, and pit them against each other in a unique contest for which the winner is the last engine left in operating condition. Needless to say, winning designs are often copied and sent into full production while older or less-successful models are discontinued. After all the contests have been decided, the Nothrog pit old and infirm slaves against creatures captured from the Shattered Lands.

Day-to-day life revolves, of course, around the production of the siege engines and other war machines. Each day the city completes roughly fifty new war machines of various types. These are in turn sent via the river or overland routes to Hellbringer's Legion or other legions that have purchased them.

In addition to the construction of war machines, engineers are constantly reinforcing the walls of the fortress. The walls started at 25 feet in height, and over the years have quadrupled their stature. Since the Nothrog developed the pulley system (see location #4), the walls have always had the most advanced ballistae and onagers available for the city's defense, and many new designs are tested up on the guard towers.

Physical Description

Lukkot is located at the base of a large mountain that separates the Shattered Lands from the Nothrog nation. To the south is the mighty river the Nothrog call Bar'gen'thol, "Flowing Rage," after its vicious upstream rapids. This is the same great river that flows just north of Baraxton, and it has allowed the Nothrog to float siege engines to that city on massive barges.

The city shelters behind five great walls, each a hundred feet high. Massive guard towers that stand one hundred and seventy feet tall join the walls. Atop each tower are siege engines: ballistae, flamespitters, and onagers. Walkways on each wall allow sentries to trot between the guard towers.

Lukkot Locations

1. THE MAIN GATE

The massive main gate of the city of Lukkot is eighty feet high, affording enough room for even the largest siege engines to roll out four abreast. It takes quite a long time to close the main gate, so the two immense guard towers that flank it are topped with some of the most accurate and destructive siege engines in the Accordlands. During his siege, Hellbringer sent his troops against the other walls rather than face the combined firepower of the front gate.

2. THE FOUNDRIES

The southern area of Lukkot is where the vast construction areas are located. They contain over one hundred smithies and a huge open area for assembly. The assembly areas are divided according to what machines are being built. Catapults, trebuchets, and onagers occupy one area. Ballistae, dragon's breaths, and the infamous Machines of Lukkot are assembled in another area, while the third area is given over to more exotic engines such as flamespitters and warplows.

The second entrance to the city is also located here. It grants access to the Bar'gen'thol. Twenty water wheels power massive tools that shape lumber and large sheets of metal for construction. More slaves lose their lives here than anywhere else in the city, crushed in industrial accidents.

3. LUKKOT WAR COLLEGE

Four centuries ago a general named Dar Kul returned from a failed attack on a southern Deverenian stronghold. Even with the great engines of destruction at his disposal he found it impossible to take the Deverenian city. He determined that while his tactics were sound, his troops were trained only in the operation of the new weapons. Each unit operated on its own, and without coordination

they could not break the city's defenses. Taking a cue from the very Empire he was assaulting, Kul created a place to share his thoughts on siege engine tactics and strategies, which has become the foremost center for Nothrog military tactics. The mighty Krun himself attended the college before taking charge of his Legion.

4. GUARD TOWERS OF LUKKOT

The guard towers are the most important strategic points in the city. They alone forestall thoughts of invasion. In the city's 500-year history, it has been attacked two dozen times, but only the consecutive assaults by Hellbringer and Hate brought it low. Each tower is capped with a massive platform bearing four to eight siege engines. The two guard towers that flank the main gate have the most engines. Flamespitters and onagers are both useful against invading armies and opposing siege engines. The southern guard tower is normally crewed with trebuchets to sink invading naval forces, while massive ballistae at the northern two posts keep at bay escaped beasts from the Shattered Lands.

Each tower has a massive pulley system on the inside of the city wall to lift the engines up to the platforms. The northern towers also stage tests for new siege engine designs.

5. PORT

The port is a collection of barges outside the city and on the banks of the Bar'gen'thol. It is the shipping and receiving area for the city. Incoming lumber, food, and supplies are brought upstream, while the massive siege engines are loaded onto even more massive barges to be sent downstream. Barges are constantly coming and going, average turnaround time being two days.

Each barge is a work of engineering brilliance, requiring a hundred slaves to man its poles. Each corner of the barge is manned by a small ballista and a squad of twenty Nothrog crew the barge, protecting the shipment.

6. THE NORTH GATE

This, the third entrance to the city of Lukkot, is not as large or as grand as the other two. It is often referred to as the Hunter's Gate, as the Nothrog parties that hunt in the Shattered Lands depart from here. Just inside the gate are massive kitchens that prepare and cook the food that the city's hunters bring back.

It was this gate that Hellbringer assaulted most often during his attack on the city. The guard towers are mostly designed to repel monsters that have wandered out of the Shattered Lands, and are less prepared against a coordinated assault. If there is a weak point in the city's defenses, this is it. During a protracted engagement the Legion can exchange the ballistae for more appropriate siege engines.

7. PATH OF THE MAMMOTH

This path leads from Lukkot to the Shattered Lands. The Mammoth Legion traditionally maintains that their totem forced its way through the mountains, creating it. The path itself has been fortified to make it more difficult for the denizens of the Shattered Lands to wander out and damage the city. A huge dry moat has been dug around the base of the pass closest to the mountain. Six-foot spikes of sharp, but rusted, iron line the bottom of the moat, which is bridged by a huge drawbridge. The fort that houses the drawbridge is built to take a massive amount of punishment. It cannot muster enough force to turn back a serious assault, it can merely endure one.

NPCs

DUL'GOTH

The former commander of the Mammoth Legion, Dul'Goth is bitter about his loss of position. He detests Nassiral Hate and Sceth Hellbringer, but realizes that open revolt would lead only to a swift death. Instead he has been slowly working these past ten years to suborn the legion.

Hate is aware of Dul'Goth's plans, but finds him laughable. If Dul'Goth were ever to pose a threat, Hate would simply have him killed. It is this arrogance that Dul'Goth is counting on, and soon he hopes to prove to Hate and Hellbringer that he is the true leader of the Mammoth.

MAARKTH

Maarkth is the chief engineer of the city of Lukkot, who designs all major projects. His latest creation is the dreaded Machine of Lukkot. He is content to design and construct his death machines, and stays out of legion politics. Hellbringer, Dul'Goth, or Hate: it makes no difference to Maarkth who leads the legion, as long as he is left alone.

KAL'HL

The oldest Nothrog in the city of Lukkot, Kal'hl has fought in the Legion armies for 40 years, and trained them for the last 10. She has the best tactical mind in the legion, and only Sceth Hellbringer himself surpasses her skill at siegecraft.

While she enjoys teaching the next generation of Nothrog, she wants to be with Hellbringer on the front lines of Hate's war. She is a soldier and she wishes to die as one.

Knowledge Is Power

The characters are charged with obtaining the plans for the siege weapons that the Nothrog use to decimate their enemies. They must make their way to Lukkot, get inside, find the plans, and get out without getting caught. Few people wish to face the full might of Lukkot's defenses.

Lukkot is difficult, though not impossible, for non-Nothrogs to infiltrate. Once in Lukkot, the characters need to find the library that houses the plans. They may be distracted along the way by the plight of the slaves who build the machines. The Nothrog engineers do not destroy old plans, even if they are no longer making that model.

The library has literally thousands of books describing the workings of various war machines. How will the characters decide which books to take? How many can they remove without the Nothrog catching them? Can they bring themselves to leave without doing anything to help the slaves?

If the characters bring the plans to any faction in the Accordlands (including the Nothrog tribes resisting Hate's rule), they will be welcomed and rewarded. If the plans turn out to be for older models of equipment, the PCs may be accused of trying to pass false information to help the Nothrog.

CONTAL

Chief among the shamans of the Legion of the Mammoth is Contal. He has seen only twenty winters, but his skills match any Nothrog shaman's. Shortly after Hate captured Lukkot, he took Contal as his apprentice. Seven years later Contal returned to Lukkot and, with Hate's blessing, took control of the shamans in the city. Though at first reluctant to be led by one so young, the shamans could soon tell that Contal was the best to lead them. Rituals go more smoothly when he is involved, and the machines and hunters he blesses have greater success.

SCETH HELLBRINGER

Hellbringer is a natural tactician. Whether he outthought or outfought his opponents, none could stand in the presence of his wrath, and soon all the giants in the mountains around Lukkot were his to rule.

Ten years ago he decided to rule all the lands he could see from his mountain. He started his campaign at Lukkot, which was nearly his when Nassiral Hate showed up. He was as impressed by Hate's arrogance as he was furious at it. Still, if Hate's power could overcome both a totem and a giant, either one alone could not stand long against him. Hellbringer bent the knee.

Originally he bided his time, planning like Dul'Goth to overthrow the shaman, but Hellbringer soon learned it was far more entertaining to serve. Hate's goals and vision were far broader than his own, and Hate had the power to see them through. Hellbringer knew he would go further following Hate than fighting against him. He has since made himself indispensable, mastering siegecraft. Sceth hopes to become first among Hate's warlords, and is well on his way to seeing this come to pass. Hellbringer splits his time between Lukkot and Baraxton.

Dul'Goth's Plan

Dul'Goth and his followers are trying to regain control of the Legion and the city. Since Hellbringer is often away at war, Dul'Goth has plenty of opportunity to sow dissent. A number of Nothrog feel that Dul'Goth shames the Legion, insulting the strength of Mammoth by politicking. Nothrog lead by strength, and Dul'Goth is showing his weakness.

His supporters are often at odds with Hellbringer's loyalists, and when not constructing engines, supporters often debate who is the rightful leader. It is a volatile situation, which could split the city of Lukkot.



Baraxton

Lukkot





Chapter Seven: The Unaligned Lands

It is a dangerous time to be alone. With the nations of evil on the march, and the bastions of heroism dying or dead, most otherwise independent peoples have chosen a side. Those who have not done so are either hoping to avoid the fight altogether, or are waiting to join a side until they are certain of its victory.

To say these nations are cowardly is inaccurate. The people of Narawat and Isadran live in hostile lands, and have devoted their lives to their mysteriously mute gods. Other places, such as distant Mourn and the Isles of Light and Shadow, are so far removed that they are quite beyond the reach of these conflicts.

The lands described below are far from the only unaligned nations. Barbarian tribes wander the world, and some distant nations have not heard of the Accordlands in centuries. Eventually, however, they must all choose their destinies or die unmourned.

Isadran

Located south of Narawat, the Isadran nation is a series of oasis villages and mountain cities. Once it was a major holy site of the old Deveranian religion, and pilgrims would come here to pay homage to the favored province of Teufeltiger. When Signon conquered Deverenia and instituted the Church of the Storm, Teufeltiger sacrificed a great deal of his power to hide Isadran and its relics from the Church's conversions. Only the oldest Deveranian documents make any mention of the place.

The Isadrans have spent six centuries trying to figure out what happened. While they remembered receiving many foreign holy men as their guests and brethren, they no longer remembered where these foreigners came from, nor indeed any details at all about the world outside their lands. Realizing that only something of unparalleled power could achieve this end, and that this power was secret or its use would be commonplace, the Isadrans chose to investigate. With so little to go on, and no idea as to the reason behind their removal from the world, the

Isadrans chose to become a nation of scholar-assassins, scouring the world for arcana in all their forms, and slaying those whom they could not trust with their secrets. To date, they have accepted only the Narawati as neighbors, due to their own isolationism and their willingness to work with the Isadrans without asking too many questions. The Isadrans still worship Teufeltiger as a god, though he has not responded directly to their prayers since the night Isadran broke off from the rest of the Accordlands.

In the mountainous reaches of Isadran is its greatest temple, a vast repository of knowledge called the Temple of Lore. The temple's librarian-guardian is the Loremaster, and the only outsider they have ever accepted. One of Teufeltiger's last declarations foretold of the Loremaster's coming, and how it would precede Teufeltiger's own glorious return.

The Isles of Light and Shadow

Far to the east of even the Shattered Lands is another ocean shore, and off that coast is a series of six small tropical islands. These were the last lands that Deverenus conquered before his return to Deverenia, and they are the only province which he did not bequeath to his children. It exists in no official records, though sailors eagerly retell legends of the place. Each island represents a paradise still more perfect than the one before, with the last freeing mortal men of their cares.

The legends were true, long ago, and only Deverenus' superior willpower let him turn away from their temptations. Since his time, the islands have fallen on extremely unfortunate times, and suffered no fewer than three Supreme Conjunctions (see Chapter 9, pages 241–242). They are still magical lands that fulfill their occupants' dreams, but they plunge into a different Bascaron Elemental Plane each night, stranding their guests in worlds characterized by corruption and despair.



The Lands of the Kabal

North of the elven forests and beyond Toris Kelt's mountain range is a desert waste, the first site to have fallen to Bascaron's deadly shadows. It was hundreds of years before anyone dared try to eke out an existence in these lands, and to this day it has no true cities or villages. It is governed through a loose consensus among its wizards, having no formal code of law. There are no treaties between the Kabal and foreign lands, as the land holds no natural resources, and even power-mad nations such as Deverenia and the Nothrog have enough agents present that they are confident that the lands are already "theirs."

The Lands of the Kabal draw illusionists, necromancers, shamans, summoners, and wizards from all over, with each magician erecting a tower for his own purposes. So long as no one trespasses on a neighbor's tower or otherwise interferes with another's research, the Kabal does not act against its own.

Narawat

"Our land perfectly mirrors her people. We are strong, wild, and unpredictable, yet to those who understand, we are giving and true."

— Kumbani Apolo, former leader of Narawat

Narawat is a nation at the very southern edge of the Accordlands. Most of the peoples of the Accord consider it an inhospitable and barbaric land. The Narawati seem to be nomadic tribesmen who eschew the modern advancements that the rest of the Accordlands takes for granted. Appearances can be deceiving.

What do they look like?

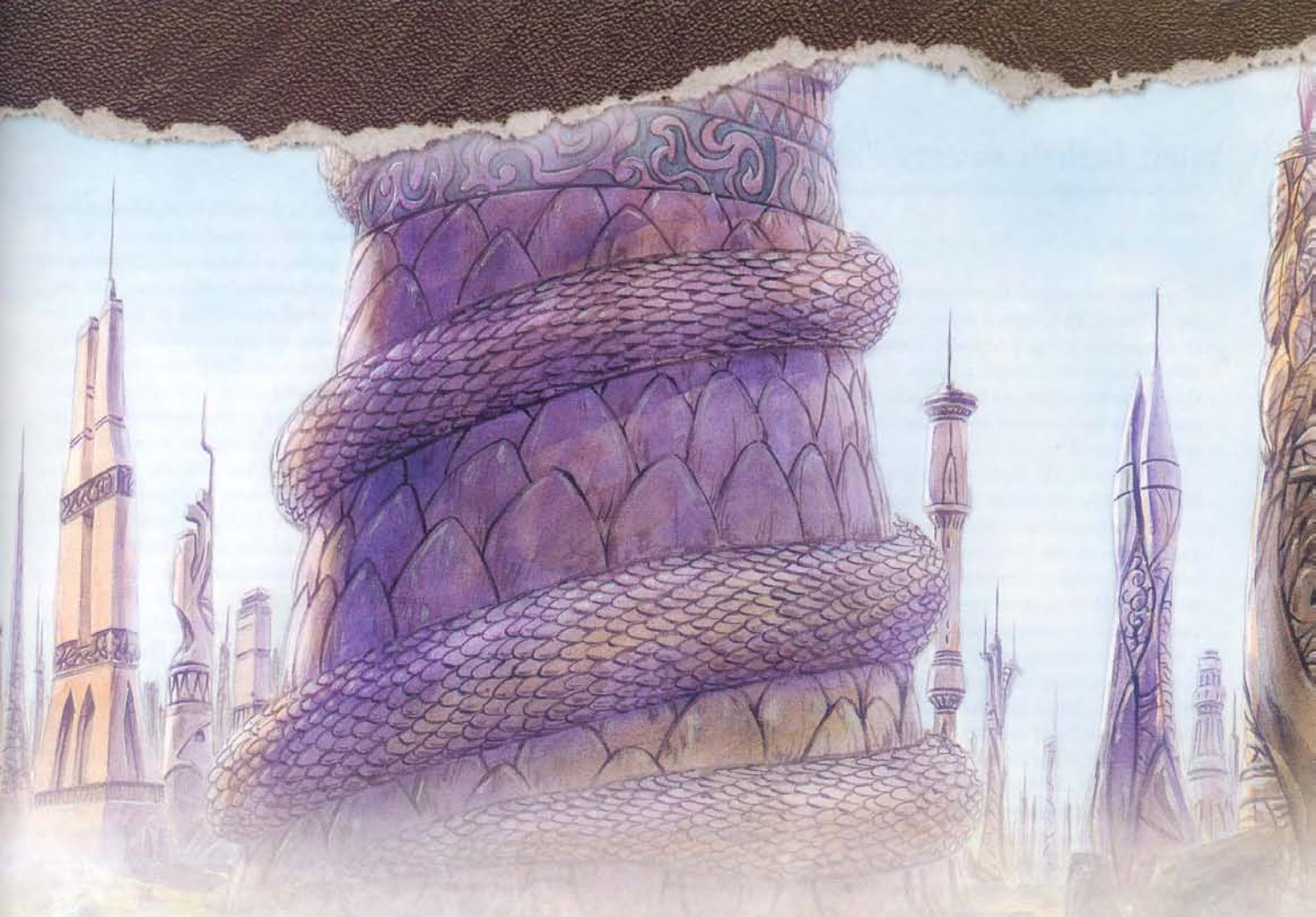
"When I first met the priest from the land called Narawat, I was taken aback. I have seen many different races, but I never knew that men came in different hues."

— Sir Robert the Vigilant of Andover

Narawat is a nation of humans who have darker skins than other Accordlands humans. While their complexion is the most obvious difference between Narawati and citizens of the Free Kingdoms, it is not the only one. Life in Narawat is physically demanding and the Narawati have the bodies to prove it, muscled and fit. Their skin is leathery and their hands are callused and strong.

Narawati physiques advertise their hard lives in a way their demeanors do not. The Narawati are a pleasant people who do not challenge or even look askance at visitors, instead welcoming them into camps or homes as if they were family. Whenever possible, the Narawati break into song to make the work go faster, or just to enjoy the sound of their voices. Nights around the fires always feature songs accompanied on instruments.

The Narawati dress varies wildly. The only true constant is that there is no formality in their clothing, from the members of the Priests' Circle to the wandering nomad. Those who follow Amoudosi the god of fire especially prefer bright colors. Everybody wears light, breezy materials — silk, linen, and cotton — that are both comfortable and attractive, if inadequate on



those rare times when they travel outside Narawat's borders.

The Narawati are no taller or shorter than their northern neighbors, with men generally ranging from 5'8" to 6'2" and females from about 5'3" to 5'8". Despite their hard lives, or because of their positive natures, their life expectancy is good, and many Narawati live into their eighties.

Where do they live?

"Can I sing to you of Narawat? The land is as beautiful as it is dangerous. It is a hidden jewel, protected by a veil of other people's ignorance."

— Jamr ibn al-as of Isadran

Narawat is very large. Within the Accordlands, only the Deverenian Empire has more square feet. Those who are not Narawati rarely realize its size, for it does not encourage casual travel.

To the north of Narawat is the elven forest Tseluse. Both the western and eastern borders are mountain ranges, with the western range separating Narawat from the sea and the eastern one keeping the Nothrog at bay. Narawat stretches far to the south before reaching the lands of Isadran.

The rolling lands, alternating irregularly between fertile grasslands and burned ground, continues virtually uninterrupted for the length and breadth of Narawat. The only aberration is near the center, where an old volcano sits. This volcano (incorrectly believed to be dormant) houses the nation's only city, Narawi.

The Burning

The Burning truly sets Narawat apart from the rest of the Lands of the Accord. To the untrained eye the lands of Narawat combust spontaneously without warning. There is no pattern to the fires and no way to predict where the Burning will occur next. The Burning affects every inch of Narawat outside the volcano that protects Narawi.

Plant life in Narawat is very hardy, surviving unless pulled roots and all from the ground. The Burning incinerates the stem and leaves, but leaves the root structure. The plants that have evolved in Narawat thrive on this fire. The seeds germinate directly from the roots and do not prosper unless they reach a certain temperature. The fire keeps the plants healthy, despite appearances to the contrary.

The Burning takes newcomers by surprise, but there are signs for those who know where to look. The most obvious is the behavior of the animals in the region; one never finds herds in an area that will be about to combust. Other signs are more subtle, but someone trained in the temple of Amoudosi, the god of fire, can always predict a Burning and one accompanies every tribe.

The Narawati believe that Amoudosi is responsible for the Burnings. He ensures that the cycle of growth and rebirth continues so that the land may prosper away from prying eyes. Outsiders never understand the Burnings and what they mean to Narawat, and that is just the way the Narawati like it.

What is their society like?

"Baqbou Umbala's men are always singing. Don't they realize we are at war?"

— Lt. Dunbar

The Narawati are different from the other humans in the Accordlands. They appear less civilized to people from Deverenia or Corinth, leading a nomadic lifestyle, yet they produce great artists. They have a simple religion, based on the forces of nature that shape their lives, yet have an advanced understanding of science. They are educated and pious. They train in the arts of war and in art itself.

The nomadic life, a necessity when living in Narawat, suits the Narawati. The Burnings would destroy permanent structures. Even semipermanent buildings are impractical due to the irregularity of the fire. The people instead move to an area, harvest the crop and hunt the animals until the tribe's chieftain decides that it is time to move on, or until the fire-watcher (usually a Flamekeeper or priest of Amoudosi) tells them a Burning is coming.

The tribes store the vegetables and meat they do not need to consume. Some members use materials on hand to make tools and works of art. When they have gathered all that they can transport, the tribe delivers its excess to Narawi, the only site protected from the Burning. They move into one of the residences in the outer circle, set up small shops to display their wares, and wander the streets to sample the wares of the other tribes and the city's artisans.

The Narawati use a loose barter system in which no direct exchanges are ever made. The nomads and craftsmen give their goods away, and no one takes more than he needs. The nomads take pride in the fact that they are contributing to the good of the nation and the craftspeople and artisans consider it a great honor to have their goods used and/or admired. The Narawati are proud of who they are and the way they live.

This sense of pride stems directly from their belief system. The Narawati believe that they are created by the gods, who were in turn created by the primordial energies of the universe. They consider themselves closer to the divine than any other people: they are the Chosen, and Narawat is a holy land that the gods gave them the honor of tending.

Despite the Narawati's lofty view of their origins, they do not treat outsiders as inferiors. They feel a certain amount of pity, since outsiders can never know what it is like to be touched by the gods, but they never display it.

The nomadic tribes represent just one aspect of Narawati life. Narawi's artisans craft the materials brought by the nomads into tools and works of art. Every item is signed, usually with a barely legible mark, so that the proper honor can be given to its manufacturer.

The madhehebu are learning centers. Each is dedicated to a single area of study, and students swear oaths binding them to the quest for knowledge and understanding. While breaking this oath would lead to no official punishment other than expulsion from the madhehebu, the shame would force the student to leave the city.

Each madhehebu's name ends in the suffix -chagua: the Havat-chagua. When a new student joins a madhehebu, his title is the school's name with the suffix -chuo: new students at the Havat-chagua are called Havat-chuo. Students bearing the -chuo suffix have not yet gained enough knowledge to teach. When a -chuo feels that he is ready to share knowledge as well as gather it, he takes the suffix -lahn: the Havat-chuo become Havat-lahn. The -lahn designation is always self-awarded and no one would gainsay a -chuo the right to change to the -lahn suffix.

The madhehebu cover a range of subjects, from the purely practical Havat-chagua which teaches the art of combat, to the theoretical Manyota-chagua whose Manyota-lahn study the ways in which heavenly bodies affect the world and each other. The students of the madhehebu are normally the only Narawati to travel outside its borders; their quest for knowledge leads them to seek new wisdom abroad.

The other major group of people in Narawi are the priests of the nine temples to the gods of Narawat, and their followers. The Narawati are not overtly pious away from the city, but in Narawi they pay respect to all the gods. The temples provide both practical and religious services. For example, the temple of Urashrasha, the god of rain, is responsible for the collection devices that ensure the city has fresh water. The temples also teach the Narawati who are not willing to take the oaths needed for the madhehebu. There is no competition between the madhehebu and the temples and they often exchange ideas. The Havat-lahn put in service at the temple of Djarat, and use it as a forum to train all other Narawati in the handling of weapons and other forms of combat.

The Quest For Knowledge

While the details of life in Narawat are not widely known outside its borders, word has spread about the quality of the madhehebu (schools). A PC may wish to seek out one of the madhehebu to further his or her learning (the Havat-chagua perhaps?). If not, the characters can be approached by someone wishing their help in reaching a madhehebu in Narawi. The land is known to be treacherous and a lone scholar would find the journey too dangerous.

If there are no Narawati in the party they will need to find a guide, unless they are foolhardy enough to brave the Burnings without one. There are Narawati in the Accordlands, but they are uncommon. Those serving under Baqbou Umbala with Sir Robert are not available to travel. It may be easier to find an Isadran who had previously traveled through the harsh land. Finding a guide would be an adventure in and of itself.

The Priests' Circle has ordered the borders of Narawat closed. Visitors are not welcomed. If they do not have a good reason for entering the country, they will be turned away. Any Narawati will be concerned by this behavior. Narawat is uneasy, in danger of losing the serenity that has become its way of life.

WEAPONS & ARMOR

The Narawati seldom wear armor, though there is no restriction against it. They do use shields, which are generally small and made of metal. Their range of weaponry is as varied as their garb. Craftsmen in Narawi make swords, spears, knives, and bows. The Havat-lahn sometimes return from their travels with new weapons for the craftsmen to duplicate. The nomads are most comfortable with the bows and spears they hunt with. The Narawati were once fabled for their proficiency with the bow, but few still remember those days.

What is their religion?

"I follow Fundisi Umbala because he is a great man. I follow Amoudosi because he gives us the fire that allows us to live. Narawati never confuse the two."

—Cunia Ukwu

The Narawati are a pious people. Their religion influences every aspect of their lives, often in ways that outsiders fail to notice.

They believe that the universe created nine gods to represent the nine foundational aspects of life. Those gods live under the earth directly beneath the land they named Narawat. In time, the gods decided that they needed someone to care for Narawat. Kizazi, also known as the life-bringer, collected some of their essence from each of the gods. With these essences, she created the first Narawati, and every Narawati that has been born since. This is why the Narawati call themselves the Chosen, and why they stay in Narawat despite its harsh environment.

Each of the nine gods has a temple in Narawi. Anyone who wishes to become a priest and learn the ways of the gods is welcome to do so. There is very little structure in the temples. The head priest, or "fundisi," is elected by the other priests in the temple, with advice from the fundisi of the other temples. There is no seniority system or any other formal method for choosing the fundisi. The other priests simply pick someone whom they trust to lead them.

The nine fundisi make up the Priests' Circle, sometimes referred to as the Circle of Nine. The Circle has only one official duty: appointing the leader of Narawat (see "Who is in charge?", below). Unofficially, they protect the welfare of Narawat and the Narawati.

The Narawati do not believe that the fundisi's connection to the gods is any more direct than any other Narawati's. Their respect for the fundisi is independent of their devotion to their gods. Fundisi tend to garner respect anyway, because their fellow priests do not elect those who cannot be strong leaders.

RELIGIOUS CUSTOM

Religious custom pervades a Narawati's life. Seven of the nine temples offer services that no Narawati would ever do without. When a couple is expecting a new child, they visit the temple of Kizazi and ask her to take a little more essence from one god than others, in order to ensure a certain personality. At the other end of life, the temple of Mauti conducts the cremation services and the deceased's friends and relatives pray to ensure the koma (wandering spirit) finds its way to Mauti.

The nomads pray to Amoudosi, and ask the priests and Flamekeepers to show them where the Burning will occur so they can harvest elsewhere. They pray at the temple of Vuno for a strong crop so they can bring a lot of food and materials back to Narawi.

Artisans pray at the temple of Sanaa before starting a project to ask for guidance in making great works of art. Everyone prays at the temple of Urashrasha so that the shy god will bring rain to the dry land.

The temple of Djarat trains the Narawati in the martial arts, but the priests keep the religious services to a minimum. Djarat believes in self-sufficiency and his followers believe that prayer is to no avail.

The two remaining temples are different. At the temple of Kinyamkela people pray for the coming of the Storm and the end of the world. Its priests offer no practical services, and many Narawati are not sure that this is something that they should be praying for. The temple of Kinamisa is a place for pure devotion. Many Narawati consider Kinamisa to be the greatest hero in the history of the world. The Narawati go to the temple to pay respect, but would never ask for anything. (See the section on Narawati gods for more information.)

Who is in charge?

I led Narawat for three years, until the Circle announced that they were taking over. We all heard about the vision and what it could mean. I was happy to give up the job.

—Kumbani Apolo

A theocratic dictatorship rules Narawat, but the dictator changes almost annually. Each year, on the summer solstice, the Circle of Nine lock themselves in the tower called Milango ya Maarifa, in Narawi. The fundisi join in a shared vision that lasts for nine days. The gods send them images, hints of the trials that Narawat will face in the coming year. The gods also send a vision of the person who is best suited to lead them through these trials. When they emerge, they appoint this person as the new leader of Narawat. There is no stigma in being removed from the position, nor overriding pride resulting from being selected. The Narawati see it simply as a duty that they need to perform and respect the gods' decision.

There are no apparent patterns to this selection process. The leader selected is just as likely to be female as male. There have been leaders as young as 17 and as old as 93. They have hailed from the nomadic tribes, artisans, craftsmen, and temples. In one instance, the gods chose an Isadran to lead Narawat.

The leader of Narawat has no official title. Even referring to him or her as "leader" is just a convenience.

During the yearlong reign (which often lasts more than a year if the gods choose the same person multiple times), the leader has absolute dictatorial authority over Narawat. The leader never abuses this power, because the gods would never choose someone who would abuse it. The fundisi often act as unofficial advisors and the leader usually follows their recommendations.

The leader establishes laws and acts as their only judge. He punishes those who break the law based on the severity of the misdeed. For example, Kumbani Apolo led Narawat for three years before the Priests' Circle received their dark vision (see "Current Political Climate"). During that time, the fundisi

decided that the study of black magic within the Azima-chagua was threatening the country, and Apolo concurred. He outlawed the study of black magic in Narawat and decreed its practitioners banned. After that decree a number of Azima-lahn continued the practice, calling themselves Ulalami-lahn. They were captured and banished. The Ulalami-chagua continues to practice, but now there are four members of the Priests' Circle ruling Narawat. If they capture these criminals, the sentence might be much stricter, and more fatal.

Current Political Climate

The Circle would hide the heads of all Narawati in the sand. Will closing our borders stop the vision? No! I stand with my brother. We must get help.

— Rustiq Umbala

Narawat has had little traffic with the rest of the Accordlands. It has diplomatic relations only with Isadran to the south. Members of the madhehebu travel abroad, so other countries know of Narawat, but they do not consider them significant.

Last year, during the summer solstice the fundisi received a vision of pure blackness. This was not a lack of a vision, which would have concerned them for other reasons, but rather a future so dark that even the gods had nothing to show their priests. Before the ninth night had expired, three of the fundisi had slain themselves. Two of them had taken some of their followers and left Narawi, with the intention of leaving the country. The remaining four gave the order to close the borders of Narawat. They took the responsibility of leading Narawat upon themselves, for better or for worse.

Rumors of the vision have spread all over Narawat. The normally unflappable people are nervous. No one knows for sure what is coming, and whether anyone is prepared. It is a frightening time.

The Deverenians

Narawat has had no contact with the Deverenians since they quit traveling to Isadran. They certainly would not agree with the Deverenian Empire's opinion of itself as the Accordlands' rightful owners. The gods put the Narawati in Narawat to care for it and no foreign power shall usurp that responsibility.

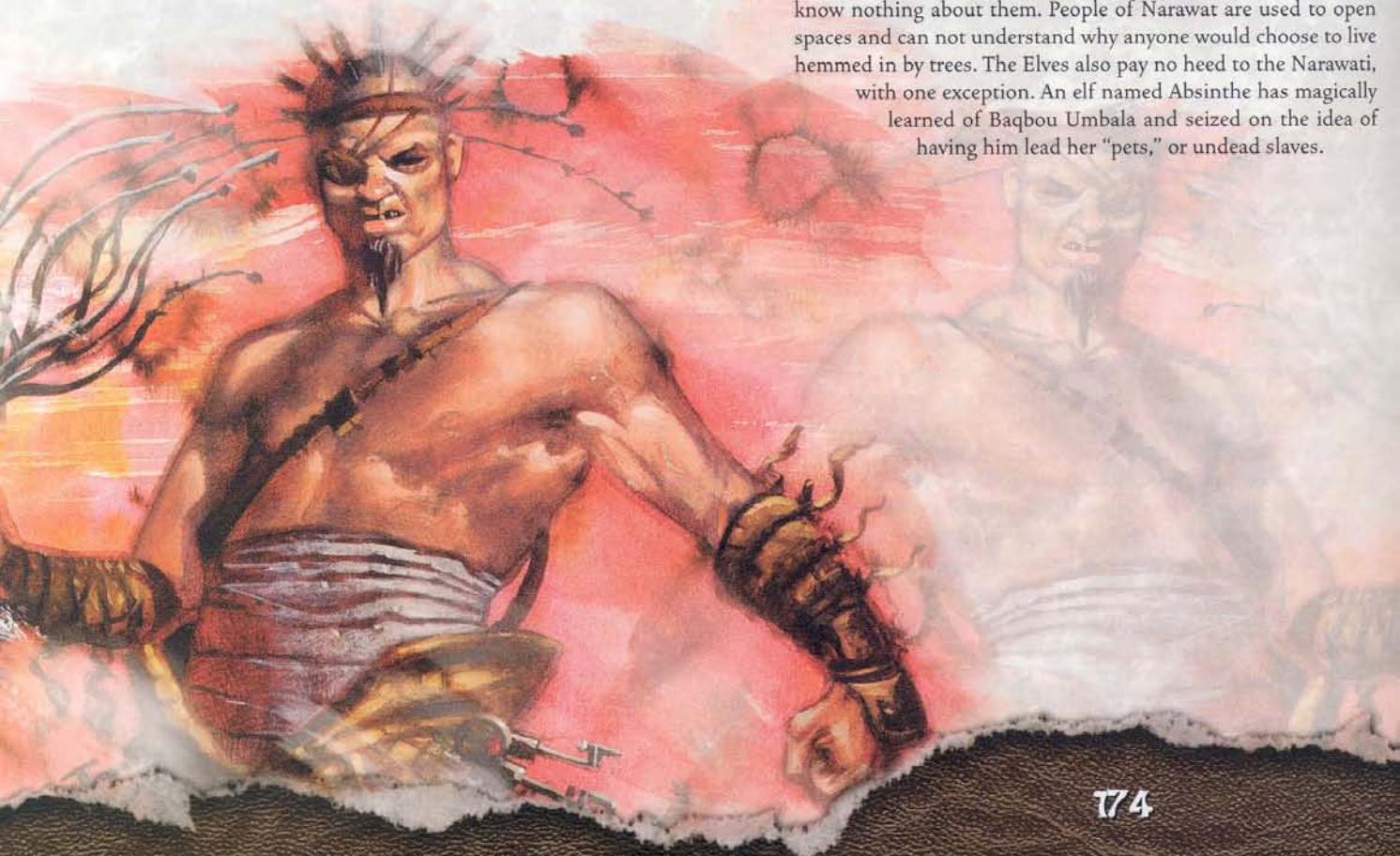
It is unlikely that the Deverenians would care about Narawat regardless. They would see no advantage to taking the land, and would pay no heed to the people there, as long as they did not stray from their borders.

The Dwarves

The Dwarves and the Narawati have never officially met. Baqbou Umbala and his followers have encountered the occasional dwarf, but they have never discussed their origins or homelands. This is for the best. The Narawati would take the dwarven claim on the World Beneath as blasphemous. The gods of Narawat live beneath the earth, and the idea of sharing their home with these short people is preposterous. If the dwarves were to tell the Narawati of the Abyssals, it could mean war. This would be a direct affront to everything that the Narawati believe in. There are no monsters beneath the earth. The gods would not allow it.

The Elves

The Narawati know that there are elves living in Tseluse, but they know nothing about them. People of Narawat are used to open spaces and can not understand why anyone would choose to live hemmed in by trees. The Elves also pay no heed to the Narawati, with one exception. An elf named Absinthe has magically learned of Baqbou Umbala and seized on the idea of having him lead her "pets," or undead slaves.



Baqbou and his brother Rustiq, both fundisi, left Narawat to find the source of the black vision. Initially Baqbou was going to go into Tseluse to speak with the elves, while Rustiq was going to travel to Baraxton and ask for the humans' help. At the border, before they were to separate, Amoudosi sent Baqbou a vision of a Tseluse full of decay and corruption being burnt to the ground in a cleansing fire. Uncertain how to interpret this vision, he turned toward the forest. He had not gotten far before the ground beneath his feet burst into flames, as if a localized Burning had started with no warning. Amazingly, the fire did not injure him. He and his brother agreed that Amoudosi was telling Baqbou not to go into the forest. Despite his brother's protests, Rustiq went to Tseluse in his place, arguing that Djarat would protect him as Amoudosi had protected Baqbou. Rustiq knew that in truth Djarat would never interfere, but he wanted to take the dangerous mission to help Narawat.

Rustiq Umbala led his men into Tseluse. They got completely lost before the elves captured them and brought them before Absinthe. She was angry that Rustiq had come to her instead of his brother, and had all the Narawati slain.

No Narawati, even Baqbou, know of Rustiq's fate.

The Free Kingdoms

The Narawati people used to live on the Broken Plains so long ago that they do not remember the details. Their contact with the kingdoms to the north has been minimal since then, though travelers leaving Narawat often head that direction.

When Baqbou Umbala left his brother, he traveled across the Broken Plains toward Baraxton. Before he arrived, Nassiral Hate's Nothrog took the city. Baqbou met some soldiers who took him to see their leader, a noble named Sir Robert. He recognized the strength of their cause and also saw the possibility that the war in the Accordlands was connected to the dark vision that plagues Narawat, so Baqbou and his men joined Sir Robert's army.

Mercenaries

The Narawati do not understand mercenaries. Since Narawat has no currency, they can not fathom using a sword for any reason other than the justness of a cause.

The Nothrog

Most Narawati do not know of the Nothrog. The mountain range that divides them is treacherous and neither side sees reason to cross. The Narawati in Sir Robert's army know what the Nothrog have done in Baraxton and consider them an evil force that must be fought.

Orders in Narawat

Everyone must serve; it is only a matter of which master you choose.

— Azmareth Flamekeeper

MADHEHEBU

Each of the madhehebu has students/teachers that have sworn themselves to the pursuit of knowledge in their chosen fields. These oaths supersede all others, with the exception of the protection of Narawat. There are eight of these madhehebu (including the banned one).

ARDHI-CHAGUA

The Ardhi-lahn have sworn to study the earth. They note the effects of the Burning on the soil and plants, know more about plate tectonic theory than anyone else in the Accordlands. The Ardhi-lahn travel to investigate phenomena, but are not adventurous sorts.

AZIMA-CHAGUA

The Azima-lahn study magic, although they are less skilled than the Deverenian sorcerers or the magicians from the Arak Spire. They are still recovering from losing many students and teachers to the powers of black magic.

The Azima-lahn used to travel outside Narawat, but not since the departing Ulalami-lahn thinned their ranks.

HAVAT-CHAGUA

The Havat-lahn study the martial arts. They attempt to master every form of fighting, with every type of weapon. They are incredibly dangerous opponents, but do not kill unless they believe their opponent deserves death.

The Havat-lahn travel outside Narawat more than any other group of Narawati.

HULUKI-CHAGUA

The Huluki-lahn are the strangest of all the madhehebu students. They study the other races and peoples of the Accordlands, yet do not like to meet them. All they know comes from second-hand accounts told by the Havat-lahn and others who leave Narawat. Of all the madhehebu, this school's theories are the least reliable.

MANYOTA-CHAGUA

The Manyota-lahn study all celestial bodies, understanding that all these bodies are moving, including the earth (though they are sketchy on what they are moving through). They know that the sun is just like a star, just closer. This has led them to hypothesize that there may be other worlds, but they have no way of proving or disproving this theory.

The Manyota-lahn travel outside Narawat at times to study other cultures' views of the heavens, but they rarely find anything that supports any of their ideas.

MBINU-CHAGUA

The Mbinu-lahn are the masters of strategy. Instead of studying individual combat, as the Havat-lahn do, the Mbinu-lahn study military tactics, troop movements, and formations. While Narawat has been blessed with many years of peace, this has left the Mbinu-lahn with few ways to prove their theories.

The Mbinu-lahn travel more than any other group except the Havat-lahn. They avidly study foreign military texts.

TARIHI-CHAGUA

The Tarihi-lahn are the keepers of history. There are no written records, so all history is transmitted through word of mouth. Long ago, the Tarihi-chagua changed the nation's official history. The truth was never passed on, so now all Narawati, including the Tarihi-lahn, believe that they never lived outside Narawat.

The Tarihi-lahn never travel outside Narawat.

ULALAMI-CHAGUA

The Ulalami-lahn are former Azima-lahn who illegally study black magic. They call on dark powers to enhance their spells, but many pay a terrible price. The concept of seeking power is alien to most Narawati, so the Ulalami-lahn hide their true natures while delving into the unknown.

The Ulalami-lahn travel outside Narawat conservatively, and always under false pretenses.

The Temple Orders

Most of the temples in Narawi have orders specific to them.

THE FLAMEKEEPERS (AMOUDOSI)

The Flamekeepers help the priests of Amoudosi manage the fire that they need to perform their rituals.

THE ARM OF DJARAT (DJARAT)

The Arm of Djarat is an honor guard for the temple of Djarat. This is an unusual order, for membership is temporary. Havat-lahn fill its ranks, serving Narawat by protecting the temple and teaching the proper use of weapons.

THE ORDER OF SILENCE (KINAMISA)

The Order of Silence does not fulfill a task like the other orders. They are simply devoted followers of Kinamisa that have taken a vow of silence. Some even remove their tongues.

THE LIFE-KEEPERS (KIZAZI)

The Life-keepers are the healers of Narawat. They try to preserve the life that Kizazi gives to Narawat.

THE VANGUARD (MAUTI)

The Vanguard endeavors to ensure that the dead reach their final resting places and do not "get lost" in their travels. This can involve protecting Narawat from people who would use the dead for their own purposes.

THE IMPLEMENTS (SANAA)

The Implements are an order of artisans who believe that, if they enter a meditative trance, Sanaa will actually create works of art through them rather than just guiding their hands.

THE WATER-BEARERS (URASHRASHA)

The water-bearers use magical and mundane means to purify water, so that all Narawati have enough pure water.

THE HORTICULTURISTS (VUNO)

The horticulturists study crossbreeding and other bioengineering in order to make the crops in Narawat sturdier, with greater yields.

Narawi

Background

Few non-Narawati know that the city of Narawi exists. Narawat is believed to be a near wasteland, home only to bands of wandering nomads. The Narawati find this a useful and harmless deception.

Narawat's Burnings do not allow permanent structures, but deep within the country sits a dormant volcano. It is the only rise that overlooks the flat ground of the rest of Narawat. The volcano sits fairly low to the ground, with its natural edges sitting about one hundred feet from the packed earth. Towering above that, however, is the city of Narawi.

Physical Structure

From a distance Narawi appears to be a large fortress carved directly from the rock of the volcano. Closer in it resolves into a collection of buildings of increasing dimensions as they near the center of the city, culminating in a large spire that towers above the other structures.

The buildings are made from stone and adobe brick. Mud is used as filler between all the stones and as a surface protector, to give the buildings a smooth appearance. The final product is hardy, but this method of construction demands intense heat. In fact, the heat required is high enough that no further construction is possible using this method as long as the city is inhabited.

The city looks large set against the open plains, but it could house a maximum of about 10,000 people. Its permanent population is no more than 3,000, with the Bedawi District housing another 2-3,000.

1. OUTER RIM

Narawi doesn't have man-made walls, but the outer rim of the volcano functions in much the same manner. Four ramps, wide enough for two carts, allow access to the city. These ramps appear unguarded, and there are no gates at the top or the bottom. The Narawati feel that Amoudosi, the God of Fire, would never allow an invading army to reach Narawi. This doesn't mean they are completely unprepared. The ramps funnel into the city so a handful of Havat-lahn can defend each point. An army cannot bring its full force to these narrow openings. In case of an attack each ramp would be defended by Havat-lahn accompanied by Flamekeepers to pour fire down the ramp at the assailants.

2. BEDAWI DISTRICT

The outermost collection of buildings includes plain residences and shop-fronts. They are not privately owned and have no permanent residents, only the visiting nomadic Narawati. Anyone may stay in any residence, and they are always left open. The décor is minimal, but this suits the nomads. The shop-fronts are also available for nomadic Narawati to distribute the food-stuffs, manufactured goods, and artwork that they have collected or created since last in Narawi. All these goods are distributed free of charge. (See the Economics section.)

3. USANIFU DISTRICT

The Usanifu District looks much like the Bedawi District, a mixture of residences and shop-fronts, but the shops here never sell raw materials; this is where Narawi's artisans live. The shops tend to be closed in the morning as the artisans wander the Bedawi district searching for raw materials. The rest of the day they are hard at work fashioning tools, artwork and other goods. When they have completed a particular object they place it in the shop front for anyone to take. Each good is "signed" with the artisan's personal mark and it is considered a great honor to have your weapons carried by the top hunters or your artwork displayed in the madhehebu and temples.

4. MADHEHEBU DISTRICT

Beyond the Usanifu District the buildings grow larger, assuming a more institutional feel. The Madhehebu (or "School") District houses a group of institutions concerned with the quest for knowledge. Each Madhehebu focuses on a different aspect of knowledge. They eschew political power, although the Circle of Nine sometimes calls on their members to serve in political positions. (See the Government section.)

5. MLANGO DISTRICT

The Mlango District houses the Circle of Nine and temples for each of the Deities of Narawat. It also contains the spire called Milango ya Maarifa.

Each of the Nine Gods of Narawat has its own Temple and followers. There is no competition between them, as all Narawati believe in all their Nine Gods. Each Temple is open at all times for both personal worship and individual instruction. These teachings are not always be theological; for instance, the followers of Djarat often train in the use of the sword.

In the center of the Mlango District, and therefore in the center of Narawi itself, is the spire called Milango ya Maarifa, surrounded by the Priest Circle. This is the only place in Narawi to which access is restricted. The Priest Circle is where the fundisi of each of the nine temples meet to elect the Chief of the Narawat.

Milango ya Maarifa, the spire itself, is visited by even fewer people. While anyone who can gain access to the Priest Circle is permitted to enter the spire, very few do. Normally only the fundisi of Amoudosi, or his representatives, visits the spire. The spire is completely hollow, and open at the top. It is filled with light, both from the sun and from the pit that is the main feature of the floor. The pit belies the general belief that Narawi sits in a dormant volcano, for magma bubbles far below the floor level. The only thing keeping the volcano from erupting is the daily incantation of the priests of Amoudosi. If the Narawati were ever to forget or betray Amoudosi, Narawi would be no more.

Government

Narawat is ruled by a single dictator for a year at a time. It resembles a theocracy, but the religious leaders don't actually run the country. Once a year the fundisi (head priests) join in meditation and receive a shared vision from the Nine Gods, showing them the person who is best suited to lead the country for the next year. Since the Gods are able to look into the hearts and minds of all the Narawati, the appointment has no relationship to social status.

There is no dishonor in being removed from power. It is not a measure of a leader's success or lack thereof, but rather predicts whose skills best match up with the challenges that face Narawat in the coming year.

Once the new leader is appointed, the authority of the Priest Circle officially ends. They are still available in an advisory capacity and traditionally the Head Priest of Amoudosi acts as Chief Advisor.



Economics

Narawat has no form of currency and no barter system, for it has no concept of personal ownership. The nomads collect food and craft goods, keep what they need, and bring the rest to Narawi. The Seekers of the Madhehebu openly dispense with any knowledge they have obtained while partaking of the food and goods returned by the nomads in the Bedawi District. The Narawat language has no word for greed. Even those unfortunates who are drawn to the Ulalami-chagua do so in order to expand knowledge, and not for the power they acquire. All this is possible due to the limited exposure Narawat has had with the rest of the Accordlands. If the future sees the Narawat borders opened, capitalism will likely follow.

Military

Narawat has no standing army, but it is not defenseless. Once a Narawati reaches adulthood at the age of 14, he begins military training. Most training is conducted by Priests of Djarat but if there are none available it can be conducted by older Narawati in the vicinity.

Normally a militia couldn't perform as well as a standing army, but the Mbinu-chagua take command of the militia in an emergency. Their study of warfare techniques makes them as dangerous as any Accordlands tactician. The members of the militia follow instructions without hesitation, so the plans of the Mbinu-lahn wreak great havoc.

Religion

Nine gods watch over the Narawati. The Narawat pantheon is not thought of in human terms, and their gods have no gender. Information on each of the nine gods may be found in **Chapter 8: Religion**.

Current Situation in Narawi

The Priest Circle currently has only four members, the fundisi of Kinyamkela, Kizazi, Mauti, and Sanaa. After the vision of darkness, the fundisi of Kinamisa, Urashrasha, and Vuno killed themselves, believing the end of the world was upon them. The Head Priests of Amoudosi and Djarat left Narawat in order to find help.

The remaining members of the Priest Circle ordered the borders closed. There is rarely any traffic across the borders anyway, but now there is none.

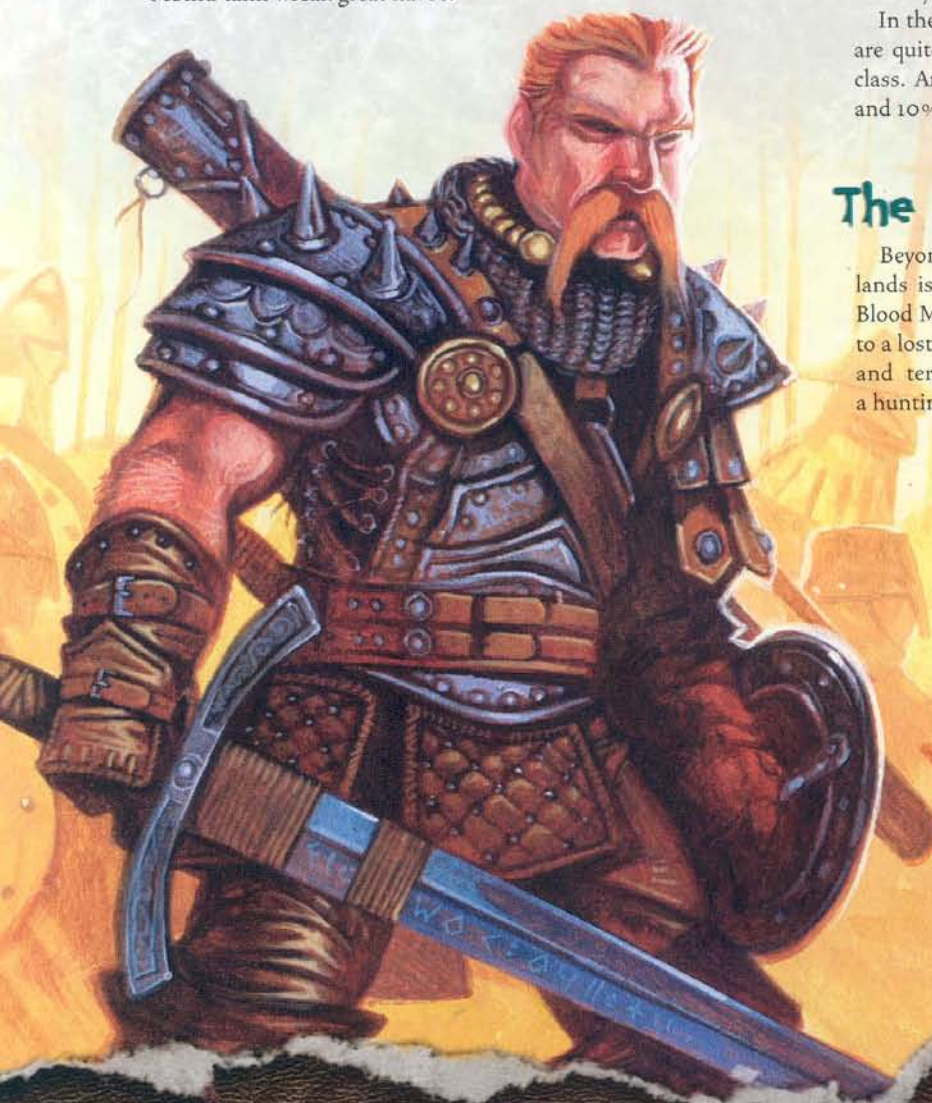
Character Classes

Most of those who live in Narawi have no character classes. Approximately 20% are of one class or another. Of this group about 40% are clerics, 40% fighters, and 20% wizards. There are virtually no rogues in Narawi's permanent population.

In the Bedawi District, where the nomads live, these numbers are quite different. Only 10% of the nomads have a character class. Among those about 60% are fighters, 30% are rogues, and 10% are clerics. Wizards make up less than one percent.

The Shattered Lands

Beyond the eastern mountains of Deverenia and the Nothrog lands is a terrible wasteland. Destroyed by the passing of the Blood Moon Bascaron, the Shattered Lands are now a graveyard to a lost civilization, the Medusans. Home to countless monsters and terrible secrets best left unearthed, they have become a hunting ground for the masterful and the mad alike.



The Lost City of Mourn

Background

The Lost City. Heart of the Blight. The Shattered City. The ancient city of Mourn is known by many names, but to most it is merely a tale to scare children into submission. Those that know more know Mourn to have been a home to the dreaded Bascaron cults, and only the occupations of Deverenian slowed their corruptive plans. Before the Shattering any who dared travel there were considered harbingers of doom. When Bascaron destroyed Mourn all saw it as a blessing; the world was thought safe from the city's mad designs.

Since that time, however, Mourn has become home to numerous beasts, including the legendary Jackals of Mourn, the Cult of Bascaron, and even more sinister forces. Those who foolishly disregard the warnings set out in search of Mourn; no one has ever returned.

Most of what Mourn was is lost to the ages. Bascaron's touch did not leave much intact. The ruins reveal only a few vague details, being mostly warped beyond imagination, and their original purposes can only be guessed at. Kaballite wizards are the greatest source of information on the Lost City, though their information is sketchy.

What is known is that Mourn was a spectacular city-state. Its people, the Medusans, were wise and crafty. The city itself fused magic with engineering. The Medusans did not want for anything, and yet there was desire. Desire to reach even greater heights than they had achieved. Desire for personal accomplishment. Desire for safety for their families. Desire to help the world.

It is theorized in Kabal that this desire was what called down Bascaron.

The Broken Moon had disastrous effects on Mourn. The souls of its people were torn from their bodies, creating the Jackals and the Reavers. The city itself was warped beyond recognition. Where once it was a marvel of geometry it is now an endless maze that leads, seemingly, into a nightmare.

Economy

Mourn's economy was destroyed with its civilization. While mounds of gold and other precious metals have been found throughout the city by the Bascaron cults, any distinguishing marks or shapes have been lost to time.

The cultists that now live there have no need for money. They take from the weak, hide their valuable possessions from the strong, and occasionally barter if they feel to do so is in their best interest.

Pilgrims bring most of the food and supplies the cultists need, offering them to Angu Mournwater who dispenses items as he sees fit. Currying Angu Mournwater's favor is therefore a common activity among the cultists.

Laws

The only laws in Mourn are the whims of Angu Mournwater. Any pilgrim coming to Mourn enters his domain. While he is mostly above the needs of his followers, occasionally he delves into their affairs and changes them as he sees fit.

Population: 50–75 cultists of Bascaron (numbers vary)

Government: Total anarchy

Imports: Pilgrims, food

Exports: None

Important NPCs: Angu Mournwater (leader of the Mourn Cult of Bascaron); Giehox Nemesis (lich); occasionally Lady Tornhawk (monster slayer)

History

Mourn was founded shortly after the death of the Dragon by a powerful cult of Bascaron worshipers, the Medusans. The Banshee Moon fascinated them, and they built Mourn as a center for all those who wished to devote their lives to their new "god." The cultists were mostly talented wizards and skilled artificers, and Mourn became a remarkable city even grander and more complex than Luthlarius. Their tremendous ability was nevertheless overshadowed by their desire to worship a chaotic force of nature.

The Medusans felt that while they had power, Bascaron held the key to even more. They looked upon it as a living, sentient being that would bestow its gifts upon its faithful. With that power they planned to conquer the world, reshaping it into an image of the Broken Moon. Their plans came to a halt with the arrival of the Deverenian armies.

After establishing his Empire, Deverenus began his conquest of the world. His powerful magic and mighty troops made short work of all that stood before him. His magic surpassed all the Medusans combined, and Deverenus soon ruled Mourn. He installed a garrison and military governor and left to conquer new areas. The Medusans' worship of Bascaron repulsed the Deverenians, and they were treated harshly while the Deverenians tried (unsuccessfully) to convert them. The Medusans tried to rebel, but the strength of the Deverenian troops was too much. They became docile, reluctantly accepting the rule of their conquerors, and continued to worship Bascaron in secret.

Roughly twenty years after they were conquered, the Medusans were once again free: Deverenus had been murdered by his children, and the Deverenian troops were cut off from their empire. Instead of trying to deal with the Medusans on their own, they returned to Deverenia.

With their newfound freedom the Medusans began a brutal campaign to make up for lost time. Having learned to fear Deverenia they struck out to the east, where they found other peoples that had recently been freed from Deverenian rule. The Medusans, while not powerful enough to repel Deverenus, casually conquered their eastern neighbors. With new resources at their disposal Mourn's influence spread almost as far as Deverenia's had, spawning more cults dedicated to the Blood Moon.

Roughly around this time a particular Medusan began to make a name for himself. Ablung was a highly skilled artificer, probably the best in Mourn's history. Like all Medusans he saw Bascaron as a source of unimaginable power, but unlike the others he was not

content to gain its favor. If Ablung could somehow siphon Bascaron's power into weapons, he would gain enough power to become a god himself. Ablung worked feverishly for years, only slowing his efforts when he was approached by the archmage Syneri. Ablung saw the elf as a kindred spirit, and assisted Syneri in crafting the perfect blade, though in his madness he forgot to tell Syneri the price he would pay for using it. Soon after Syneri left Ablung the mad artificer began work on his ultimate weapon, the sword Stormbrand.

Mourn's influence over the eastern lands lasted for nearly a century until the Deverenians returned. Now under the leadership of Signon, the Deverenian Empire had set out to repossess all territory it had previously controlled. Even with their new strength and extended influence the Medusans could not stop Signon's forces. Again Mourn fell, and again Deverenian ruled.

During this second occupation Ablung had finished crafting his final blade. He mentally dominated a Deverenian soldier and ordered the knight to quench the blade in the bladesmith's heart, allowing Ablung to transfer his soul into the blade. He would henceforth gather the power of the lives the sword ended, accumulating enough power to open a portal to the Ethereal plane and achieve apotheosis. To take enough souls, Ablung needed a powerful warrior to wield his creation. Forcing his will upon the Deverenian yet again, Ablung steered the blade to a powerful member of the Black Sun paladins. The sword has been in the order ever since, its origins unknown to those who wield it.

Eventually Deverenian's influence waned, and Mourn was free again for a short time. Roughly five hundred years ago, Bascaron's twisted gaze fell upon Mourn and the surrounding lands, shattering them beyond recognition. The very thing they worshiped had destroyed them. The strange energies transformed the Medusans in the city into Jackals of Mourn and the hideous Reavers. Their civilization lay in ruins, and those Medusans outside the Shattered Lands returned home in a state of great despair.

The Road To Nowhere

The characters find an ancient parchment that shows a great city beyond the mountains in the Shattered Lands. Legends speak of the destruction of the great city of Mourn. Could this map show how to reach Mourn? Could this tattered parchment lead to a city that has been lost for centuries?

Well, not quite. These "ancient" maps were created by a reaver and scattered around the Accordlands by mercenaries working for him. The map does lead past the mountains and into the Shattered Lands, but not to Mourn. Rather, it ends at the lair of a reaver who has led the party there merely for the sport of killing them. The characters are certainly not the first adventurers to have been duped this way, and if the reaver is not dispatched they will not be the last.

The map is a tool to get the characters to the reaver, and not to Mourn. If the GM feels that Mourn would be a good direction for the game to go in, however, this is a good place to start. The reaver lives in the Shattered Lands and his kind once came from Mourn, so while the initial map was a fake, clues in the reaver's lair may lead to that legendary city.

The Medusans could no longer afford to wait for Bascaron's favor. Mourn's surviving mages and priests formulated a grand ritual that would compress the power of Bascaron within a single entity; a champion to protect Mourn from her enemies. It took almost two centuries to prepare the Medusans' ritual.

They hired a young thief to steal from a wizard a black dragon egg, into which the energies of Bascaron would be channeled. The resulting hatchling would lead them to a new age of power and glory in the name of Bascaron. The ritual was successful, to a point. The draconic creature did arise, empowered by Bascaron's touch; the creature known as Angu Mournwater was born.

The ritual had an unforeseen side effect. The Medusans who participated in the ritual not only channeled Bascaron's energies into the egg, but also their own essences. Without anyone left to guide him, Angu took control of the city's cultists. He has yet to reveal his grand scheme to his followers. Many travel to Mourn hoping to take part in whatever their leader has planned, for it surely will be glorious.

THE JACKALS OF MOURN

When Bascaron's power was brought to bear on the city, a great many people died in the calamity, but not all. The people of Mourn were very powerful, and those strong enough to embrace the moon's corrupting energies survived the onslaught — but not as they once were.

For all their shortcomings and evil ways, there was some good in the people of Mourn. They married for love and for life. All were judged on their own merits and worth. To the world at large they were despicable cultists, but in the privacy of their homes they were as tender and gentle as any person could hope to be.

Bascaron's touch tore the people of Mourn apart, but their essence of good and decency survived. With the moon's ambient energies they created new bodies, becoming the Jackals of Mourn.

They still inhabit the ruins of their ancient homes, slaying intruders. Most often this brings them into conflict with the cult of Bascaron, but they also clash with the beasts that roam the ancient city and other, more evil, threats.

THE REAVERS

While all that was good in the people of Mourn was torn from their souls, their remaining essences were set free. Twisted and warped, they bear no resemblance to their former selves, becoming the bloated and gruesome Reavers.

Almost as soon as the Reavers and Jackals were created they began to fight, as each was what the other most despised. While the Reavers' powers were great, the Jackals proved immune to them. Hopelessly outmatched, the surviving Reavers fled Mourn. If they could not control Mourn, they would control the rest of the world.

Many headed east, where Bascaron's hand lay less heavily, and the people were still weakened from the previous occupations of the Deverenian armies. Others claimed chunks of the Shattered Lands, dominating its warped creatures. A few headed into the Accordlands, eager for the challenge of conquering the lands their Deverenian oppressors had controlled.



Until recently the Reavers have kept their existence secret. The one known as the Terror of Sharn Keep has now broken cover, and openly rules any that pass within its domain.

THE CULT OF BASCARON

Almost as soon as Bascaron decimated Mourn, the cults that worshiped it made their way here. The wizards in the lands of the Kabal had kept the cultists out of that holy place, and they were not about to suffer the same indignity with Mourn.

The cults have been active in the city since, quietly going about their business of worshiping Bascaron. Angu rules them utterly, and pilgrims to Mourn find themselves staying forever.

Geography

Mourn is located roughly at the center of The Shattered Lands. The city proper is situated on the shore of a lake; its surface has an oily sheen and the water is like mercury. Travelers coming upon the city are never quite sure where Mourn is in relation to this lake. At times it looks to be on the far shore, while other times it blocks the view of the lake — obviously an extension of the damage Bascaron inflicted centuries ago. The Cult of Bascaron has marked the road into the city very carefully. They feel at home and comfortable amid the ruins, but have no wish to get lost in the wasteland surrounding the city.

The city originally covered 100 square miles, laid out like a spider web; six concentric circles were connected by a dozen spokes. Since the disaster only its general shape has remained. The northwest section of the city is mostly under the lake. The northeastern section of the city is a confusing jumble of ruined streets and buildings that seem to continue off into the Shattered Lands for eternity, as if that whole section of Mourn were being stretched out. In the southwest, the least-damaged section, the Cult of Bascaron has made its home, as have the Jackals. The southeastern section is perhaps the most dangerous, for not only does it suffer some of the same effects as the northeastern quarter, but also it is the home of the lich, Giehox Nemesis.

Northwest Quarter: The Lake of Nightmares

The lake that lies to the northwest of Mourn provided clear, pure water until the passing of Bascaron warped it into a thick, oily sludge. The aftershocks of Bascaron's passing submerged most of the northwestern portion of the city.

The ruins of this area are now some of the most treacherous in the city. Not only is the lake highly poisonous, but erosion has caused a great majority of the structures here to become unstable. Walls are constantly crumbling, and the lake claims more of this area with each passing year. The same warping effect that changes the position of the lake relative to Mourn to vary carries over here as well. Adventurers think they are many yards from the lake, and heading away from it, before they find themselves at its shore.

Other than the creatures that live here, this quarter of Mourn has little to offer. The Bascaron cults have stripped this area clean of anything of value.

Adventurers traveling through can expect to be constantly harassed by swarms of stirges (6d6 stirges every 1d6 turns). Great care must also be taken near the ruins at the edges of the northwest quarter, for a dangerous assassin vine clings to them, but the most dangerous beast waits for adventurers to get close to the mercury lake.

Aboleths are the descendants of the great fish that inhabited the lake before Bascaron decimated the region. The Broken Moon mutated them as it mutated everything else. They are voracious and cunning. Angu Mournwater disposes of the occasional heretic by feeding him to the Aboleths. Anyone who wanders within a yard of the lake risks drawing the attention of one of these beasts.

1. LAKE OF FROZEN DREAMS

This is a shallow extension of the main lake. Under its silvery surface the forms of countless twisted and broken creatures can be seen. Many of the citizens of Mourn tried to escape the carnage of Bascaron via the waterways surrounding their home, and now the lake is their permanent home.



The lake has imbued the dead with an unlife of sorts, and the cults of Bascaron learned long ago not to venture near the place. Even the Jackals are wary of it, and only venture there in times of great need.

Parties that wander within 30 feet of the lake are instantly attacked by a group of vengeful wraiths (3d6 5th–7th level), looking to claim the victims' bodies as their own to escape their painful existence.

2. HALL OF BONES

The people of Mourn were powerful and inquisitive wizards. Whenever they encountered a new beast in their travels, they brought back several specimens. When they finished their research the bodies of the creatures would be enshrined in a great museum.

In addition to the fantastic creatures, many ancient and wondrous artifacts were also kept here. While all the items have been warped or rendered inert they are still invaluable to mages and scholars. If any were to be recovered they would fetch a high price, especially in the lands of the Kabal.

Getting these items is no easy task. The museum's creatures have been transformed by Bascaron into undead, twisted versions of their former selves. The few live specimens the museum housed have become grotesque monstrosities that feed off their undead fellows. Any party wandering through the Hall of Bones must contend with various living and undead Bascaron-born monsters (1d4 creatures every 1d12 turns).

3. THE DRAGON'S FANG

At the northernmost section, right near the outer wall, a tall, thin structure reaches nearly a thousand feet into the sky. Bascaron cult scholars presume it was a watchtower of some sort, though they do not know exactly what it would have watched for. Given the tendency of other nearby buildings to collapse, very few have thought about ascending the spire to see what is at the top. None have ever tried.

The spire was built for Ablung's pet: a red dragon, which nested at its peak. While the dragon itself did not survive Bascaron's touch, it used its last embers of power to save its only egg. The priceless egg lies there yet, cold and dormant, waiting for a power to rejuvenate it and bring the dragon inside it out into the world.

The spire itself is solid stone, crafted by Ablung's magic. An adventurer could, in theory, climb the entire height of the spire and retrieve the egg. A successful Climb check every 100 feet, starting with a DC 10 and adding 10 to the DC every check, would enable an adventurer to reach the summit, where the dragon egg rests. Getting it back down requires the same Climb checks, in reverse order. Every 200 feet, 4d10 stirges are disturbed from their slumber in the small caverns in the spire and attack the climbers.

4. THE DREAD MARSHES

Close to the southwest quarter of Mourn, near the mercury lake, are the Dread Marshes, home to tenacious brine fiends. The fiends attack anything that enters their home, even in the face of superior numbers. Jackals commonly hunt here as the fiends are easy prey and one fiend can feed an entire pack of Jackals for a week.

The marshes hold nothing of value. Anyone who enters them can expect to encounter 3d6 brine fiends within 1d4 turns.

Southwest Quarter: The Temple of Bascaron

No section of Mourn was untouched when Bascaron hit it, but the southwestern quarter was least affected. It is as warped as the rest of Mourn, but its buildings are less prone to crumbling. The mutated beasts that plague the rest of the ruined city do not congregate here, aside from some stirges and assassin vines, for they fear the Jackals of Mourn and Angu Mournwater.

Because of Mournwater's presence the Cult of Bascaron enjoys relative stability in its holy land. The only time cult members are in danger is when they wander off on their own. The cult left most of this quarter as it was when they arrived, but have converted the portion closest to the center of the city into a great temple.

These three buildings, among the tallest in the city, easily stretch 500 feet into the sky. The upper levels are left as untouched as possible; typically structures this tall are unstable past the first 100 feet. At the center of these buildings the cultists built a large altar, on which Angu Mournwater was summoned over 500 years ago. This is where pilgrims receive Bascaron's blessing.

The altar is located in the exact center of Mourn, the place where Bascaron's touch was strongest. Cultists that are truly worthy of receiving Bascaron's gift lie upon the altar. Angu Mournwater ritually channels Bascaron's energies into them, changing supplicants into whatever they desire. The results are rarely pretty.

5. PILGRIM'S ROAD

There is only one road into Mourn. With the distance-altering effects left in the wake of Bascaron's touch, the surrounding area is difficult to navigate. The cultists of Bascaron have carefully marked the road into the city, all the way to the Great Altar itself.

The road is not guarded, but crews go out once a week to make sure the markers are still intact. Any party traveling the road has a chance of encountering one of these crews (one chance in six; roll for each week on the road). Various creatures ambush parties on the road (3d6 creatures every 1d4 days). Angu Mournwater feels that pilgrims are only worthy of Bascaron's gifts if they can make the journey under their own power.

6. JACKAL DENS (UNLISTED ON MAP, VARIOUS LOCATIONS)

While the cult makes its home in this section of the city, so do the Jackals of Mourn. The cult has unsuccessfully tried to purge the Jackals, but for every den they are able to locate and destroy there are at least another dozen unaccounted for. The Jackals are canny and use hit-and-run tactics against their foes, so even a small group of Jackals can deal with a good sized threat.

A few Jackals have left Mourn to hunt Reavers, and some of those have been captured by powerful wizards for use as guard dogs. In the lands of the Kabal, Jackal pups fetch a high price. Anyone wishing to trap Jackals must first make four Track checks, DC 20, and spend at least one hour searching in order to locate a den. Dens contain 1d6 pups, but any attempt to remove the pups draws the wrath of the pack (10d4 Jackals).

7. TOWER OF DESIRE

This is the largest of the cultists' three towers, and most of them live here. It rises fifteen stories, but only the first three are in use. The cultists fear that the building will topple if they use any rooms higher up, and occasionally large pieces from the structure fall on unwary wanderers below (a roll of 1 on 1d20, every 1d10 turns).

Cultists that stay here hope to be judged worthy of receiving Bascaron's gift. The rooms are spare; most do not even include a bed. The only things of value here are items the cultists brought with them. While as friendly as can be expected with each other, they disdain outsiders, considering them heretics and spies. They do not patrol the grounds, but stay here while they are not praying near the Great Altar (3d4 3rd–8th level cultists every 1d6 turns).

8. TOWER OF THE BLESSED

The sturdiest of the three towers, the Tower of the Blessed is home to the priests of the cult, including Angu Mournwater. It is only four stories tall, though indications are that it once stood much higher.

It has room to house up to 40 priests, though not even a dozen live here. The rooms are not much different than the ones in the Tower of Desire, although they have beds. Most priests have a workshop adjoining their rooms where they conduct research and private rites.

Angu Mournwater's room is the exception, being a small room in the basement of the building. The only adornment in the room is the broken shell of the black dragon egg he hatched from.

The possessions of the priests are unremarkable, but their research into Bascaron's powers is invaluable. In order to steal any of the research from the tower an adventurer must get past the priests who live here (2d4 5th–10th level clerics and wizards every 1d10 turns, up to 10 priests). Some heavily ward their chambers against intrusion, while others take no precautions.

9. TOWER OF HERETICS

Not everyone in the cultists' camp is there of their own free will. Many who make the journey lack the conviction to remain devoted to the teachings of the cult after seeing Mourn. Others are poor souls that wandered into the Shattered Lands and somehow found their way to the city. Whatever brought them to Mourn, their situations are now all the same. Trapped in this crumbling six-story building near the center of Mourn, they are unwilling sacrifices for the cult's rituals.

There is only one entrance to the tower, watched by six guards (7th level fighters). Occasionally prisoners try to escape by climbing out of the decaying building, but the lowest windows are on the third floor. A Climb check of DC 40 is required to successfully escape the building. Anyone who survives then must sneak past the guards to flee the compound.

10. THE GREAT ALTAR

At the exact center of Mourn the cult has built a huge altar of bone and rubble. They conduct all their major rituals here, including the one that summoned Angu Mournwater from his egg.

The cult is fiercely protective of its altar, and anyone found near it when it is not being used ritually — cultists as well as intruders — can expect the entire cult to descend en masse.

Southeast Quarter: Lair of the Nemesis

Decades ago the wizard Giehox traveled from the lands of the Kabal to Mourn to uncover the secrets of the Lost City. What he learned there forever changed both him and the Accordlands. He and his fellows surmised that a city that could still stand, no matter how warped and twisted, after Bascaron's gaze fell upon it was a testament to a glorious civilization. Untold secrets laid there, Giehox thought, and he set out to find them.

He traveled through the land of Andover during its bloody civil war. He traveled through the forests of the elves and witnessed the deaths caused by the geas that forestalled their magic. He traveled through the lands of the Nothrog tribes and saw their never-ending bloodshed. Giehox traveled from death to death while seeking a race that was long dead. His crusade for knowledge became a crusade to conquer death, to put an end to its cold and mindless touch. His desire was so strong that it lured Bascaron's energy as he traveled into the Shattered Lands in search of Mourn, killing along the way the twisted creatures that attacked him. Death was his life.

With Mourn in his sight, Giebox was ambushed by a beast he could not defeat, one immune to the spells he leveled at it. After a short, one-sided conflict it left Giebox for dead, not even bothering to eat its prey.

Outraged that he too would fall to death, Giebox summoned all his remaining energies and invited Bascaron's power into him. He desired nothing more than the power over death. Bascaron granted it.

An unknown time later Giebox awoke. In a fetid pool of water he saw his visage reflected, and his scream could be heard for many miles. He had become a skeletal vision of death, a lich of immense power. Death had played a cruel joke on him. Allowed to live, but to not be truly alive was more than he could stand. It was then that Giebox decided to spare countless generations his suffering by eliminating all life in the world.

He set off to Mourn with renewed purpose, and a new use for its hidden, terrible secrets.

Seeking complete power over death, Giebox delved deep into Mourn's past and secrets and uncovered Ablung's forge and mad writings. He now lives in Ablung's former home, and believes that the mad smith's power was granted by the city itself. Giebox has visited nearly every blade Ablung forged. While he has left each in its place, his studies have convinced him that the secrets of Mourn can be coupled with the everpresent power of Bascaron to craft a weapon that can remove all life from the world.

The cults of Bascaron do not go near the section of the city occupied by Giebox. They warn pilgrims away from the place, saying that "The Nemesis" lives there, and not even Angu Mournwater is ready to encounter him yet.

11. ABLUNG'S FORGE

The first place of any worth that Giebox discovered in Mourn was Ablung's forge. Far below the surface in a natural cavern,

the forge is a huge affair designed to mix metals and magic in the act of creation. Not even Giebox fully understands how or why Ablung built it as he did.

So far Giebox has found one item, the blade called "Excessus," and he has led the monster hunter Lady Tornhawk, a human chaotic good 12th-level fighter to believe it is her heritage. Giebox plans to lure her to Mourn in order to harvest her soul.

The writings of Ablung put a strong emphasis on the power of souls and Giebox has sensed the strength in hers.

Tornhawk slays any evil creature she encounters with unnatural ease, an ability she never

learned, but has possessed as long as she can remember. This power is what Giebox seeks. He plans to somehow use her soul as a component of his ultimate weapon.

The precious minerals stored in the forge alone have a combined value of over 10,000,000 gold pieces. The value of the various artifacts strewn about cannot be calculated. Of particular interest is the second sword Giebox has now begun forging. It is by no means complete, but in the hands of a skilled artificer it could reveal untold secrets about Ablung's forging process.

To enter the forge a number of assorted wards set in place by Giebox must be passed. The lich is constantly replacing them out of a paranoid fear that the cult is able to enter his home while he is away on his research missions. In addition the forge is no stranger to creatures spawned by Bascaron's touch. While they do not go near the forge while Giebox is near, they wander freely about when he is away. Anyone in the forge must deal with them (2d4 random creatures every 1d6 turns).

12. ABLUNG'S LIBRARY

Built into the side of the cavern housing the forge, hidden from view by rock formations, is Ablung's true legacy: his writings. Giebox has spent most of his time since he discovered the forge deciphering the nearly incoherent texts. The few secrets they have yielded let him use the forge to craft Excessus. Giebox stays in the library when he is in Mourn.

A Spot or Search check of DC 25 is needed to locate the entrance to the library. Giebox has placed a powerful but obvious ward upon the entrance that only he can disarm. Any who passes through this ward suffers instantaneous death, without a save. Nothing short of a wish or miracle will remove the ward.



13. MINES OF MOURN (UNLISTED ON MAP)

The Lost City still sits on generous deposits of iron, silver and platinum. Ablung spent a great deal of time mining these ores for his work, and though his stockpiles still rest in his forge, what remains underground far surpasses the mined ores. The value of these mines cannot be calculated, and mining here would be wildly profitable if the deposits were located anywhere else but under Mourn.

These are the safest areas of the city. While the creatures that live here are no less dangerous, they are fewer. Encounters with them are far less common than on the surface (1d4 random creatures every 1d20 turns).

14. THE GRAND HALL

The largest standing ruin in this section of the city, the Grand Hall was discovered by the cult of Bascaron centuries ago. Giehox learned of its location from them. The cult believes the area is home to an avatar of Bascaron, and considers it sacred ground, forbidden to walk upon. As Giehox approached it, he could indeed sense a being of great power — not an avatar, but a Reaver.

The Reaver had returned to Mourn hoping to destroy the Jackals. Its powers could not affect the Jackals themselves, but the Reaver could still dominate the creatures living in the city

and use them to wage its war against the Jackals. Its plan did not go smoothly, and it was severely wounded. It used its remaining power to seal itself into the Hall, keeping the Jackals at bay. The Jackals left it for dead.

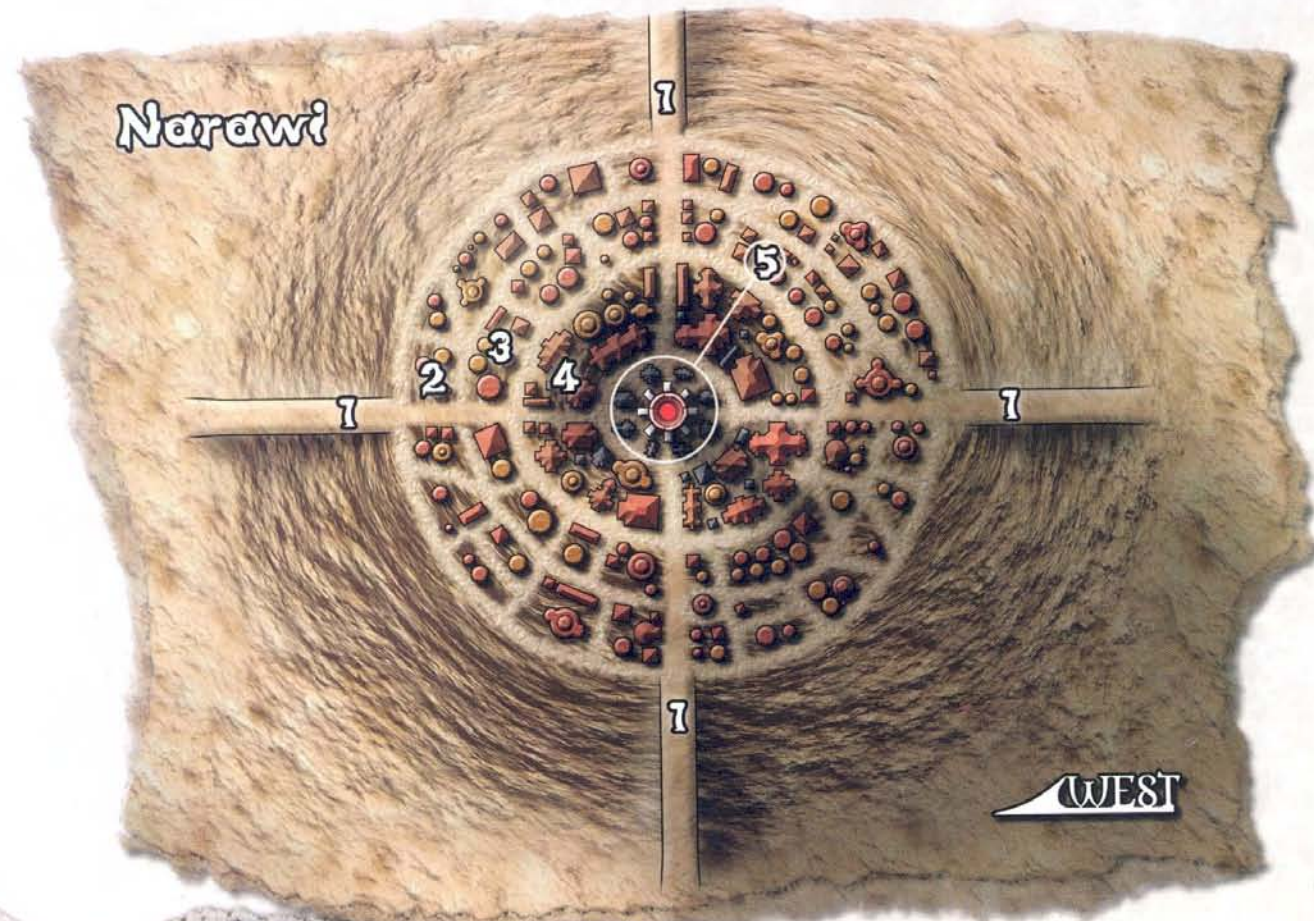
When Giehox found the Reaver it tried to dominate him, and in return Giehox killed it. Soon Giehox discovered the only entrance to Ablung's forge, underneath the Grand Hall. The lich animated the dead Reaver with a portion of his own essence, and it now guards the entrance into Ablung's forge.

Northeast Quarter:
Gateway to Bascaron

When the Medusans summoned the power of the Bascaron the Banshee Moon was in the southwestern sky. Its terrible energies affected all of Mourn, but left a trail bleeding off into the northeast, a wound in the reality of the city that has not healed.

This is by far the most dangerous area in the city. Those that enter rarely return, and the few that do rave insanely about traveling to Bascaron's surface.

Those foolish enough to visit this section of Mourn are constantly assaulted by creatures spawned by Bascaron (1d20 creatures every 1d6 turns). Occasionally creatures attack each other, leaving the party alone, but any respite will be brief.



The Lake of
Nightmares

The Gateway
to Bascaron

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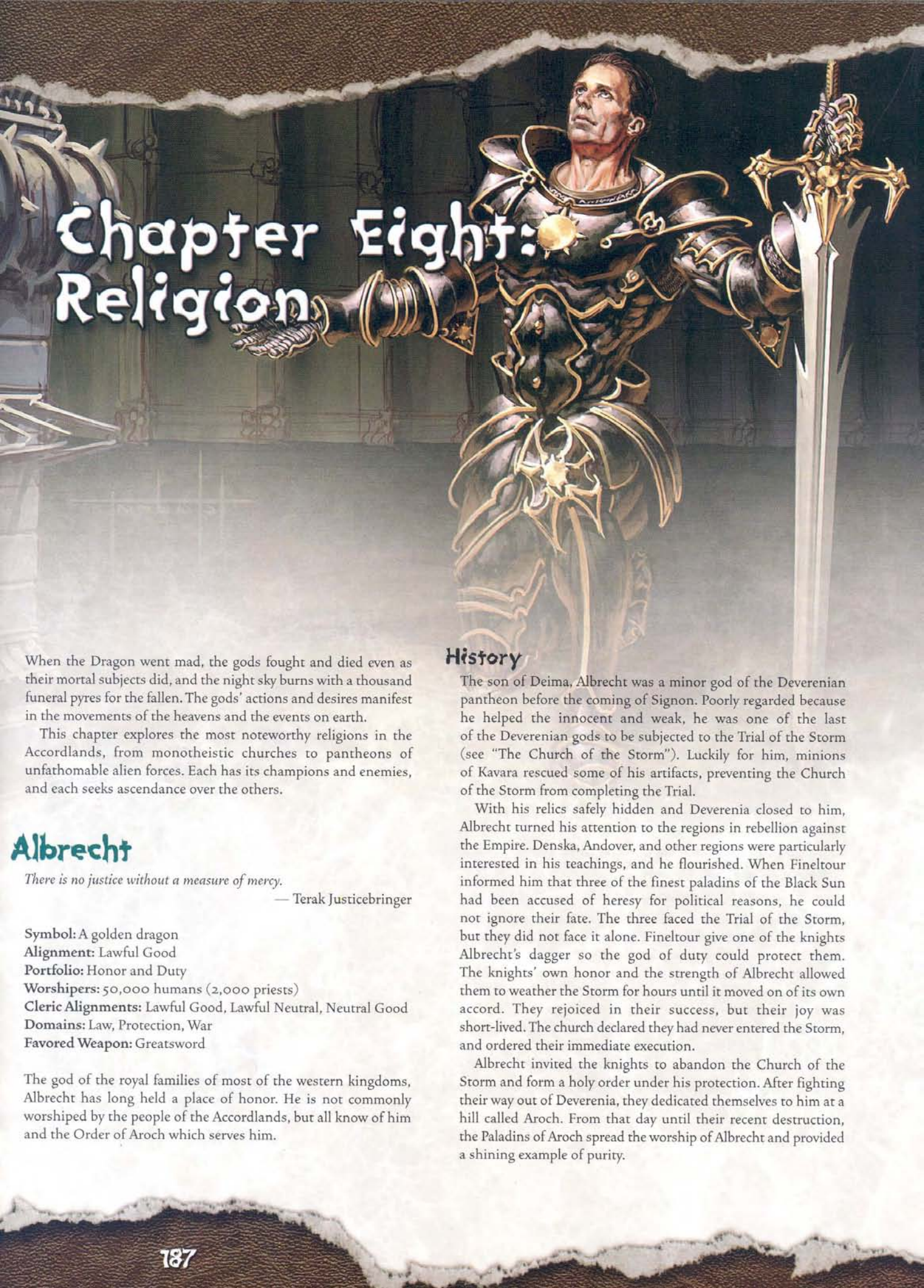
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11 & 12
Located 6 stories
below #14

The Lost City of Mourn

WEST



Chapter Eight: Religion

When the Dragon went mad, the gods fought and died even as their mortal subjects did, and the night sky burns with a thousand funeral pyres for the fallen. The gods' actions and desires manifest in the movements of the heavens and the events on earth.

This chapter explores the most noteworthy religions in the Accordlands, from monotheistic churches to pantheons of unfathomable alien forces. Each has its champions and enemies, and each seeks ascendance over the others.

Albrecht

There is no justice without a measure of mercy.

— Terak Justicebringer

Symbol: A golden dragon

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: Honor and Duty

Worshippers: 50,000 humans (2,000 priests)

Cleric Alignments: Lawful Good, Lawful Neutral, Neutral Good

Domains: Law, Protection, War

Favored Weapon: Greatsword

The god of the royal families of most of the western kingdoms, Albrecht has long held a place of honor. He is not commonly worshiped by the people of the Accordlands, but all know of him and the Order of Aroch which serves him.

History

The son of Deima, Albrecht was a minor god of the Deverenian pantheon before the coming of Signon. Poorly regarded because he helped the innocent and weak, he was one of the last of the Deverenian gods to be subjected to the Trial of the Storm (see "The Church of the Storm"). Luckily for him, minions of Kavara rescued some of his artifacts, preventing the Church of the Storm from completing the Trial.

With his relics safely hidden and Deverenia closed to him, Albrecht turned his attention to the regions in rebellion against the Empire. Denska, Andover, and other regions were particularly interested in his teachings, and he flourished. When Fineltour informed him that three of the finest paladins of the Black Sun had been accused of heresy for political reasons, he could not ignore their fate. The three faced the Trial of the Storm, but they did not face it alone. Fineltour gave one of the knights Albrecht's dagger so the god of duty could protect them. The knights' own honor and the strength of Albrecht allowed them to weather the Storm for hours until it moved on of its own accord. They rejoiced in their success, but their joy was short-lived. The church declared they had never entered the Storm, and ordered their immediate execution.

Albrecht invited the knights to abandon the Church of the Storm and form a holy order under his protection. After fighting their way out of Deverenia, they dedicated themselves to him at a hill called Aroch. From that day until their recent destruction, the Paladins of Aroch spread the worship of Albrecht and provided a shining example of purity.

Dogma

Albrecht teaches his followers that every man is born, grows old and dies. Neither a baby nor an old man can protect himself from this inevitability. There is no sin in weakness. Each man is weak at some juncture, and he must rely upon his comrades. Albrecht therefore calls upon his followers to aid the weak, the innocent, and those in need. Each man must do his duty and maintain his honor so he can be ready when called upon to aid his fellows.

The Storm is the greatest evil upon the world, since it destroys everything it contacts without remorse. Like the Dragon that spawned it, it must be opposed. However, Albrecht saved several of the Dragon's children and cleansed them of evil. Dragons spun of gold, silver, and brass vowed to aid the weaker races. Few believe any of these creatures still exist, but Albrecht's followers consider them the epitome of virtue.

The Church of Albrecht was strongest within the nobility and warriors of the Western Kingdoms. The Assassins' Strike and subsequent invasions devastated these groups, and Albrecht's power declined.

Sins & Repentance

The Church of Albrecht does not dwell upon a person's failings or sins, instead focusing on his virtues and good works. Sins lessen his readiness to help others, while the greatest of sins is to oppress and injure another. The true follower of Albrecht protects the innocent and preserves order. If that requires the use of force, even lethal force, that is an unhappy duty. But to set out to cause injury to another blackens the soul and dulls the keen edge of a man's honor. Sins therefore include murder, assault, thievery, envy and greed.

Being prepared to aid another requires more than willingness. Failure to keep equipment in prime condition is a minor sin, as are excessive pride and ambition. A follower of Albrecht does his duty without thought of consequence or reward. Many communities that do not follow Albrecht nevertheless donate to his church in support of a knight to maintain order. These places often celebrate the holidays of Albrecht in honor of these leaders.

Keeping the Faith

Changing religions is not a matter of personal taste, but a major and irrevocable change of life. Whole races and nations follow the same faith, and abandoning it is tantamount to treason. Even changing from deity to deity in a pantheon is frowned upon.

Characters should think carefully before changing religions, as many religions habitually kill apostate members. Even the more liberal churches are unlikely to trust those who have betrayed their lifelong beliefs. Divine spellcasters must be especially careful, lest they lose their abilities permanently.

Albrecht knows that people are weak, so his priests meet privately with his followers every week for lengthy discussions. The priest asks probing questions and delves into the follower's actions and thoughts. When sin is discovered, the priest imposes penance ranging from simple repetition of prayers and public service to great quests that take years to fulfill. The relationship between the confessor and sinner is intimate. No records are kept and most sins never go further than a confessor. In cases of enormous guilt or evil, the confessor brings the matter to his superiors so they may determine the correct penance. Refusal to complete a penance is grounds for expulsion from the Church.



The Afterlife

Those who die in the faithful service of Albrecht are inducted into a great army of light. Here they will remain in peace until the final battle. On that day, the army will return to fight and destroy the reawakened Dragon. Those who died with minor sins upon their souls will spend years polishing their armor in recognition of their faults and the need for them to redeem themselves. Those that died with evil in their hearts will find themselves frozen in turmoil and despair, able to see the army of light, but never able to join it.

Leadership

The head of the Church of Albrecht is General-Priest Simon Petrus. This battle-hardened soldier commands forces in the Denskan region, one of several leaders there who oppose the Deverenian attacks. He commands his men with an iron fist and a steely glare. Few care to risk his wrath, though all know that he will never abandon a single man. He also works to ensure that advancement in the Church is based upon faith and character rather than internal politics.

Hierarchy

The Church of Albrecht is highly structured. In the lowest tier are individual confessors and priests. Each twelve priests has a lieutenant-priest who watches over them and ensures that they remain pure. Every twelve lieutenant-priests is presided over by a captain-priest. Four major-priests preside over the captains and ensure the faith of entire regions. The major-priests report directly to the General-Priest.

Advancement in the Church occurs when a vacancy or major expansion occurs and the priest within the area with the strongest character advances. He is given a small staff to ensure he can continue the daily operations of his post.

Orders

The major order of the Church is the Order of Aroch. These paladins are seen as the greatest example of redemption in the Accordlands. If a group of the Black Sun paladins can realize the necessity of protecting and helping each other, then there is hope for anyone. Unfortunately, the Order of Aroch was recently attacked and only a single member, Terak Justicebringer, survived.

Bascaron

It's not a lie, it's not a pitch; it's the truth. Bascaron can give you anything you've ever wanted. You just have to want it badly enough.

— Angu Mournwater

Symbol: A blood-red full moon

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Portfolio: The crippled, desire, despair, the poor, want

Worshippers: Exiles, monsters

Cleric Alignments: Chaotic Neutral, Chaotic Evil

Domains: Chaos, Healing, Travel, and Trickery

Favored Weapon: Whip

Bascaron has many names: the Bloody Moon, the Broken Moon, the Banshee Moon. A shadowy presence from another plane, the whole world shudders when Bascaron moves in the sky. While the Storm has ultimately been responsible for more deaths, Bascaron's touch lingers for longer, scarring the land for centuries. Unlike most other worshiped powers, Bascaron is not actually intelligent, nor does it seek followers. Instead, any creature that desires to may become a cultist of Bascaron, should their wants outstrip their discipline while Bascaron is near. Thus, while the Cult of Bascaron is not particularly large, it is widespread. The Cult of Bascaron is arguably the most hated religion in the Accordlands, banned from Athanae and universally hunted. Even the Elves consider Bascaron worship so heinous that it is one of their only capital offenses.

By The Light Of A Bloody Moon

The characters travel through a town that is plagued by crime. Both people and items of value have been going missing, and the authorities are at a loss. The characters are approached by a prominent citizen whose daughter has vanished. He assumes the worst, but refuses to give up without finding out what happened to her. He tries to appeal to their sense of honor, but offers a reward for her return if that is what it will take.

The town is home to a dozen Bascaron cultists, upstanding members of the community on the surface. They do everything possible to impede the characters' investigation, to the point of killing a harmless drifter and claiming that he was responsible for the girl's disappearance. The cult maintains a hidden temple outside the city, where the girl is.

The girl was not kidnapped. She joined the cult of her own volition. Recently she had the local cult leader ritually disfigure her face, to show her devotion to Bascaron. She has lived at the temple ever since, to avoid having to explain her appearance. She has no desire to return to her father, and fights any attempt to take her back.

Outside of the rare Yscarite heretic, no good-aligned creature worships Bascaron, as the Broken Moon gives at the expense of others.

History

Though early civilizations recorded sightings of the Broken Moon in the sky (a bad omen, which was followed by disasters and the birth of two-headed livestock), its first major appearance on this plane was over the lands of the Kabal. More recently, it devastated the city of Mourn and the earth for leagues around. Mourn remains the greatest of Bascaron's holy sites. The cult regards the whole of the Shattered Lands as holy land, and have pledged to remake all the world in its image.

Dogma

For a religious group, the Bascarites are a remarkably varied lot, with few actual ideals. Above all else, they believe in seizing anything they desire. While often greedy, Bascarites place little value on ownership, believing the most worthy people are those who can take and keep their objects of desire. Thieves are common, and many are multiclassed cleric/rogues or rogue/wizards. While the cult does not go out of its way to harm others, it has long since learned that the only certain ways to silence those who discover them are to murder or convert them.

Loyalty is scarce among the Bascarites. With such a selfish and decentralized population, the standard congregation is a small, independent cult of personality. Cult leaders have separate aims, and individual cells rarely last for longer than a few years before being exposed or fracturing. A typical cult has anywhere from five to twenty-five followers under a single leader, though the Cult of Yscar and the Mourn cult are far larger. These cult leaders may not even be clerics themselves, with wizards and rogues also common. Additionally, many individual Bascarites live and die without ever knowingly meeting another member of their nominal religion.

Only rarely do the cells of Bascarites join together. The most common reason is when a Bascarite discovers one of the Yscar clan, which leads to a general slaughter (either of the Yscarites, or the Bascaron cultists themselves). The Yscarites have hunted the other Bascaron cultists for centuries, and the two cults thoroughly believe in the complete eradication of their opponents. Many Bascaron cultists, particularly the cult leaders and survivors of dead cells, also make pilgrimages to Mourn. Many cults offer sanctuary to pilgrims, so long as there is no obvious danger, and the pilgrim respects the wishes of his hosts. Finally, the greatest of the Bascarites, Angu Mournwater, may send out a call or dictate to the cults outside Mourn. Those who do not heed it find Mourn (and possibly Bascaron itself) closed to them forever after. This is a singularly risky tactic, and neither Mournwater nor any of his predecessors has ever sent out such a call.

Sins & Repentance

The only sin in the Bascarite mindset is that of self-denial. Indulgence of every whim leads to a grand variety of experiences and a more complete understanding of the world. Any crime is forgivable if the Bascarite seeks self-gratification, though forgiveness is not freedom from punishment. Those who preach or openly practice self-denial are assumed to be Yscarites, and do not survive long enough to seek forgiveness.

The Afterlife

Bascarites are almost uniformly converts from other religions. Many refuse to believe in an afterlife, which they consider the wishful thinking of deluded minds. The world of the Accord and its shadow-realm of Bascaron are the only lands, the Bascarites whisper, and the gods and priests are liars for teaching otherwise.

Cult Leadership

The Cult of Bascaron acknowledges only one true leader, the warped dragonspawn Angu Mournwater. A product of the Mourn sect's greatest experiments, Mournwater has expanded his personal cult's numbers greatly. He hopes to establish Mourn as an independent nation in its own right, with a new Church of Bascaron as its official religion. To do this, however, he must prove himself by ending the Yscarite threat and by recovering the lost sword Excessus.

Cult Hierarchy

Individual leaders hold sway only so long as they can satisfy their servants while staving off their ambitions. As such, individual cult cells rarely last longer than a single generation, and have at most a leader and a handful of assistants. While the greater Cult of Bascaron nominally pays heed to Mournwater, the further removed from Mourn, the more independent each cell truly is.

Heresies

As it is such a disorganized religion, few have thought it even possible for the Cult of Bascaron to have heresies. Yscar the Elder could be considered a heretic Bascarite, but the Yscarites' beliefs are so drastically different that it is essentially a new religion in its own right (see "Yscar," later in this chapter).

Secrets

This disorganized religion has many secrets, but few important ones. The cult prizes boldness as well as trickery, and any great secret rarely remains so for long.

Still, one mystery eludes the cultists: the location of their prophesied champion's weapon, the sword Excessus. Mournwater's minions found it and sent a messenger to their lord, but Mournwater arrived only to find his men's dead bodies quietly cooking in the heat of the wasted land. Lady Tornhawk, its bearer, is oblivious to her new blade's significance. Her secret guide would have it no other way.

The Blighted Beast

No one is quite certain what the Blighted Beast truly is. Some of the more studious cultists believe it to be the first creature to worship Bascaron, its own desires now all that keep it alive. Others hold that it truly is the power behind Bascaron itself, and that it protects its faithful in its tumorous embrace.

The Blighted Beast is a boneless lump of flesh, immense and grotesque. None can look at it without going mad, but those who have say that it might long ago have been human. It lives on the plane of Bascaron, but occasionally journeys into the Accord for its own purposes. Bascarites have seen it wandering the wastes of the Shattered Lands.

Avatars of Bascaron

Avatars of Bascaron are extraordinarily rare, generally being short-lived abominations suffused with the Broken Moon's energies. Such creatures are little more than marauding forces of nature, valued mainly for their blood's qualities and the mayhem they can wreak.

Avatars of Bascaron are mutated creatures of the highest advancement of their type (unless they advance by level, in which case they only gain the listed abilities), and gain the following qualities and abilities:

- Barbarian rage, as per a 20th level barbarian
- Corruptive Presence - Upon encountering an Avatar of Bascaron, characters have a 1 in 20 chance of contracting the (Bascaron) type modifier.
- Double their physical abilities (Str, Dex, and Con), but halve their mental abilities (Int, Wis, and Cha)
- Every weapon striking the avatar of Bascaron acts as though it had the *wounding* enchantment; if it already had the *wounding* enchantment, it acts as though it had the *keen* enchantment (even if not a slashing weapon); if it had both, increase the critical threat multiplier by 1.
- Blood from an avatar of Bascaron permanently corrupts anything drenched in it, including people and earth. Any plant or animal feeding on such tainted matter gains the (Bascaron) type modifier, and may mutate into a true Bascaron monster in 1d6 days. Intelligent creatures must announce that they

wish to avoid the blood sprays of combat (a move action every round), and those striking at the avatar with slashing or piercing weapons must make a Reflexes save (DC equal to the damage inflicted) or gain the (Bascaron) type modifier, and mutate in 1d10 days. Creatures tainted may be saved by a *remove disease* spell cast before the mutation, or a *wish* or *miracle* spell afterward. If a significant amount of the blood of the avatar pools in one area (it suffers more than 25% its total hit points in damage from slashing or piercing weapons in an area equal to less than twice its face area, or the ground naturally allows for pooling, such as in a ditch), the whole area must either be *hallowed* (as per the spell) or a *gate* to the plane of Bascaron forms there at midnight every 1d10 days for 1 hour.

The Elven Elements

It is not madness to worship the very forces that seek your destruction. It is madness to allow them to destroy you when you have an alternative.

— Slovien

History

Elves do not worship a pantheon of gods, pray for their blessing, or dream of an afterlife. All that ended when the Dragon released the Elements upon them. According to their legends, before the Dragon went mad, the elves and other races knew nothing of age, illness, or infirmity. They lived in an idyllic world of peace and enchantment. When the Dragon began to destroy the earth, the elves were the first race to join the alliance against it; during the battle, the elves attacked first with powerful magic and all their gods. In retaliation, the Dragon devoured their gods and released its hunger upon the world. Only after the Dragon was defeated did the elves learn the cost of their victory.

The elves and the other races began to age, their bodies and minds slowly deteriorating until they died. Even inanimate objects were subject to this calamity, as metals rusted and fabrics rotted. For the other races, this was a terrible shock, but for the elves it was the greatest disaster of all. Unlike humans who might live a hundred years barring accident or injury, the elves never saw their fourth decade. In desperation, they searched for a method of prolonging their lives, but without success. They tried to fight the forces that drained their lives away while generations died. The few remaining elven gods were powerless even to explain the threat, so the elves rejected them. Finally, when the entire race seemed on the edge of extinction, an elf named Calix discovered the nature of their foe. The Dragon had changed the very fabric of reality so that the Elements that comprised all living things now worked against them.

Near death himself, Calix tried to speak to these Elements, but found them mindless and unresponsive. In despair, he burned offerings to the Elements, and as the smoke drifted through the air, his coughing subsided. This was the beginning of centuries of elven worship of the Elements: Blood, Bone, Flesh, and Spirit. They worship not out of gratitude or hope, but out of fear.

Elves that dedicated themselves to an Element learned to seize a tiny fragment of the Element's raw power for themselves. This power could be channeled in much the same way that other priests channel their deity's divine favor, or even to sever the connection to the Elements so the worshipers ceased to age. These Severed are the most elite of elvenkind, and only a handful ever achieve this state. Other elves must rely upon constant sacrifices to appease the Elements' unending hunger.

Because of the Dragon's malice, the elves age faster than others, but the Elements prey upon all the races. All eventually succumb to death. A few of the longer-lived races sacrifice to the Elements as well, but the elves see this as sacrilege.

Sins and Repentance

The Elements are a part of the elves and every other living being, continually destroying them all. With this mindless hostility as an example, the elves have almost abandoned the concept of sin. The most grievous sin is to murder another elf. With the very Elements killing the elves, it is unthinkable for elves to aid them. This prohibition does not extend to other races, whom the elves consider beneath them.

The Afterlife

The elves know that existence after death does exist, but it is not an existence that anyone desires. The Elements do not cease their work after a person's death. An elf's flesh sloughs off his bones, his bones fall into ash, his blood drenches the ground, and his spirit is cast off. However, the elf still feels all the pain and suffering of each portion of himself as the Elements drain strength and substance from his remains. In fact, the stimulation grows in intensity without the distractions of life. Long after the elf loses the strength to manifest as a ghost, he feels the agony of his blood draining drop by drop, and his bones disintegrating mote by mote. An elf exists for centuries after his death in unceasing torment. That is why so many are willing to pay any price for transformation into undeath. Even servitude under the cruelest master cannot compare to this horror.

Blood

Symbol: Droplet of blood with a leering face inside

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Portfolio: Corruption, pollution, water

Worshippers: 270,000 (95% elves, 5% humans)

Cleric Alignment: Lawful Evil, Lawful Neutral, Neutral Evil

Domains: Evil, Magic, Water

Favored Weapon: Kris dagger

DOGMA

Blood is the most corrupting of the Elements. Even a few drops of blood can pollute an area both physically and mystically, which the priests of Blood use to their advantage. They carry flasks of blood from which they anoint the targets of their spells. A minor healing requires only a splash upon the injured part, while more powerful spells require the target to be bathed in the liquid. This focuses the attention of Blood upon the target as it literally devours the wounds. This carries its own dangers, since Blood is

the thirstiest Element. Those touched by Blood must be sure to expunge it, lest it build up in their systems and begin corrupting their bodies. Leeches are a common method of reducing Blood's hold, as is sacrifice.

Sacrifices to this Element demand that blood be drawn. Normally the blood of an animal or a member of another race will do, but all elves must shed at least a few drops of their own blood every week to ensure the Element does not grow too powerful within them. Every month, elves spill at least a handful of their own blood. All sacrifices of blood are collected in basins or fountains in the temple. If any of the priests of the temple are vampires, they may drink from it.

Dozens of rituals specify the Church of Blood's sacrifices, their manner and timing. One of the common rituals is the quest of consecration, where an elf takes a drop of blood from a temple's sacrificial basin to a distant body of water. The drop of blood spreads throughout the water and consecrates it to Blood. When the elves attacked the Western Kingdoms, priests of Blood were among the earliest forces to arrive. They desecrated temples, defiled the farmlands and wells, and destroyed mystical opposition to the attacks. Blood's priests happily ravage and murder to glorify their patron Element. More than any other sect, they see Blood as a source of power to be honored rather than a predator.

Over the years, the quests of consecration have planted the taint of Blood across a variety of locations. Some humans have been touched by its power and now worship Blood in primitive rituals that involve human sacrifice and dismemberment. Other humans hate these cultists and wipe them out wherever possible.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Falatiernon the Corrupter is the High Priest of Blood and a vampire from before the time of the geas against necromancy. Falatiernon is increasing the number of sacrifices and Quests of Consecration to amplify Blood's power. He wants the elven people to bathe in blood until his patron can defeat every foe.

CHURCH HIERARCHY

Beneath the Corrupter, bishops administer the Church. They ensure that sacrifices and worship ceremonies proceed as necessary and command a multitude of functionaries who administer the church's doctrine and protocols. The taint of their Element has begun affecting the entire Church. Over the last hundred years, corruption has spread. Unlike other elven sects, Blood creates a multitude of laws, and to break any of them is to invite functionaries to plague one with powerful magic. The bishops do not interfere as long as they receive a portion of the bribes. The only way to advance within the church is to offer substantial bribes to highly placed officials.

More than other priests, the priests of Blood are legal experts whose elaborate rituals exist only to give the cleric an excuse to obtain bribes. They rarely work outside the temple and tend not to wear bone armor, relying upon their dexterity. They prefer spells that twist or corrupt their opponents rather than physical attacks.

ORDERS

The Daggers are a dozen rogues and assassins who hold an honored place by bringing the touch of Blood to those outside the elven nation. They believe that the blood of a nonelven nobleman spilled upon his land will blight it for a dozen years. They answer only to the bishops of the church, who assign them their missions on the first moonless night of the year.

The Bleeding Council is a group of the clergy of Blood who oppose the bribery and corruption in the lower ranks of the church. The Corrupter has given them permission to deal with the sources of the tangled edicts. When they find a priest who has abused his position, they bar him from advancing further. This group is as unpopular among the priests as it is popular among the laity.

HERESIES

A group of devoted Blood worshipers believe that the Storm and Blood are one and the same. Eight years ago, rumors spread throughout Myreth that the drops falling from the Storm were actually blood red. None of those present survived the encounter, but the rumor has been impossible to stop. The thought of channeling the Storm through sacrifices appeals to many elves, and the cult has over a hundred members.

SECRETS

The Daggers are willing to strike down other elves if the bishops deem it necessary. They were in fact responsible for the death of the previous Corrupter over a hundred and fifty years ago. A group of Bishops who have tired of Falatiernon are planning on repeating that assassination on the next moonless night.

Bone

Symbol: Skull cracked down center

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Portfolio: Physical nature, strength, earth

Worshippers: 300,000 (95% elves 5% Deverenians)

Cleric Alignment: Lawful Evil, Lawful Neutral, Neutral Evil

Domains: Destruction, Earth, Strength

Favored Weapon: Heavy Mace

DOGMA

Bone is the most respected of the Elements. It drains the strength from all solid things, which decay to feed its unending hunger. Those who seek to appease the force of Bone crush physical objects to satisfy its destructive power, and in return Bone refrains from draining their strength. The most common sacrifices are metal, rock, and wood, though shells, glass, ceramics, and living beings are also seen. One material that is never destroyed in this manner is actual bones. To show their reverence and respect for the Element, the elves fashion weapons, armor and tools from it. Their homes are built of, their streets are paved with the bones of the dead to show that they understand the Element's power. The objects created from bone last far longer than other materials.

Even the priests of other Elements revere Bone enough to wear and live within this most enduring of the Elements. The priests of Bone harness its strength and power, but understand that even that will eventually fade.

Because of its utility, Bone has more devotees than the other Elements. This may be why it requires more sacrifices, but since it is satisfied with any physical object, the sacrifices are not overly burdensome. All elves, even priests of the other Elements, must pay tribute to Bone.

Bone has some Deverenian worshipers who believe that they are favored because of their longer lives. They seek immortality, but if caught they face the Trial by Storm.

LEADERSHIP

The High Priest of Bone is Cestrel the Shaper in the capital of House Dythanus. She is the most recent of the High Priests to take office and the only one who is still mortal. Her continuous sacrifices to Bone and great command of the divine power she channels makes her a formidable opponent. She gained her exalted office because Tesina, the last High Priest of Bone, was one of Alia's supporters and a member of House Rowan. When the House was outlawed, Tesina simply vanished. No one else wanted the position, fearing that Tesina might return to reclaim her position. Cestrel is ambitious enough to overlook the risks, and supports Tephroth completely.

HIERARCHY

Beneath the High Priest are fifteen kanarans, high-ranking priests who advise and assist her, but also possess a great deal of power in their own right. If two-thirds of the kanarans disagree with the High Priest, they may cast weakness spells upon her until she is unable to lift the symbol of her rank, a sacred thighbone scepter. Should this happen, the kanarans, including the former High Priest, may not leave the council room until they select the next High Priest.

Each kanaran controls a hundred priests who administer the areas under their control. Each of these priests is in charge of all the clerics in the area. When a vacancy at the priest or kanaran level opens up, the matter is decided by a test of physical strength; whoever can lift the heaviest object advances. Since spells are encouraged, this is generally a test of a person's faith rather than the strength of his body.

Priests of Bone proudly wear their armor during services and wield maces to symbolize Bone's physical domination. In combat, priests of Bone tend to use physical attacks and spells that increase their combat abilities.

ORDER

One of the most prestigious groups within the Church of Bone is the Bone Sculptors. While they are supposedly a secular group, in practice they are an arm of the Church. They shape bone into armor, weapons, tools, buildings and monuments. They accept any member willing to learn, but the physical work and divine spell casting involved is grueling. Most areas have a few Bone Sculptors, though the largest concentrations can be found in the cities.

HERESIES

Some elves believe that Bone is greater than the other Elements, rules over the others and should be the most revered. While many priests of Bone quietly agree with this opinion, the Church's official stance is that all Elements are equal. The Church fears that if this talk continues, the other Elements may feel slighted and conflict between the four Elements may result. The thought of the Elements at war with one another is enough to terrify even the boldest elven priest.

SECRETS

The Scepter of the High Priest is actually the thighbone of an unnamed avatar of an elven god. After Calix discovered the truth of the Elements, this forgotten god declared that he would destroy them. He and his followers forced Bone to manifest itself, the only time it has ever happened. Bone appeared as a tightly packed tower of bone that stretched so high it blocked out the sun. When the unnamed god leapt forward and struck Bone, the god shattered, and only his thighbone survived. Since that day, some have declared that the Scepter is simply evidence that none may withstand the might of Bone. Others wonder at the fact that the Scepter has not been destroyed by Bone after hundreds of years. Perhaps some things can withstand the Elements.

Flesh

Symbol: Clutching hand

Alignment: Chaotic evil, Neutral Evil

Portfolio: Living beings, Fire

Worshippers: 150,000 (95% elves, 5% Nothrog)

Cleric Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Domains: Animal, Fire, Healing

Favored Weapon: Flail

DOGMA

Flesh is the most reviled of the Elements and few openly worship it. It represents physical matter that is easily consumed. Fabrics, soil, plants and animals all quickly decay as Flesh eats them. Most elves avoid eating red meat because they feel that to ingest one of the Elements is to encourage it to grow inside them. Fowl and fish are not likely to cause this confusion because they are so dissimilar in form, so red meats are largely used as sacrifices.

Flesh is the fastest of the Elements and those who do not sacrifice to it often contract rapidly fatal illnesses. Flesh decays so quickly that it cannot be used for any purpose other than sacrifice. The more recent the kill, the more respect is shown, and sacrifices are consumed by flame to mirror the speed with which Flesh devours its prey.

If an elf feels a need to show further respect for Flesh, he may cut off a portion of his own body and burn it. Flesh is generally satisfied with red meat, though, so it is considered the easiest Element to satisfy.

LEADERSHIP

The other elven priests look down upon the priests of Flesh as a savage group who live far from the cities and focus on their own private devotions. A ragged network of Flesh priests stay in the cities to ensure the upkeep of the temples. The High Priest of Flesh is Wevral the Render, whose large sturdy frame is unusual for an elf, and rumors about her physical strength abound. Some say she engages in cannibalism, but in truth she simply gained immortality by siphoning the energy from other elves. She travels from town to town performing large rituals, sanctifying the temples to Flesh anew, and absorbing a little energy from each member of the mob.

HIERARCHY

Beneath Wevral are a hundred priests she has appointed to oversee large territories. These priests have no official title or authority, but have been selected because of the power of their faith and magical ability. Beneath these priests are the low level clergy who oversee a village or a few city blocks. They tend to have other professions and perform their duties somewhat haphazardly, but they are the most powerful elven healers.

Priests of Flesh do not wear any special robes or items other than a holy symbol that they keep concealed. Due to their poor standing, they often conceal their identity during services with red hooded cloaks. In combat, they tend to summon creatures and animals to fight for them.

HERESIES

To the followers of Flesh, the greatest heresy is cannibalism. This heresy has appeared several times during the past two centuries, and may well recur in the present unsettled situation. Other heretics are the Burners, who believe that Flesh will accept wood in place of the meat of animals. They build fires in the deep woodlands and burn down ancient trees. The ensuing forest fires turn vast areas into ash. The Church outlawed these arsonists because the fires do not appease Flesh and several elves died in the flames. Small sects of Burners still exist, believing that Flesh was not appeased because the fire was not large enough. They plan to make a more pleasing sacrifice soon.

Years ago, an outcast Nothrog shaman discovered that burnt offerings of animals and flesh would grant him a measure of power. He formed a tribe known as Kag'ar's Legion, followers of the Flame Totem. This minor legion follows Hate. The elves recently discovered their existence and Wevral wants to wipe them out, but none of the Houses has any interest in aiding her in this matter.

SECRETS

The number of sacrifices made to Flesh has declined, starting when game grew scarce a decade ago. Many elves noticed that even when the sacrifice was skipped for several weeks at a time, nothing happened. Now few elves sacrifice more than once a month. Wevral is concerned that if this continues, the Element will be insulted.

Spirit

Symbol: Swirling mass of vapors

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Portfolio: Incorporeals, Secrets, Air

Worshippers: 280,000 (95% elves, 2% Human and 3% Deveranian)

Cleric Alignment: Lawful Evil, Neutral Evil, Lawful Neutral

Domains: Air, Knowledge, Trickery

Favored Weapon: Whip

DOGMA

Calix did not discover the existence of the fourth Element until years after revealing the first three. During that time, the elves prospered physically, but they had a high rate of insanity. Finally the elves realized that a fourth Element existed. Spirit is a being's soul, memory, feelings and thoughts. Like the other Elements, if it is not appeased it destroys that aspect of itself within each person.

After discovering Spirit, the elves spent years uncovering the sacrifices that most pleased it. Items precious to the owner or those that brought up strong emotions or memories work best. Pictures of loved ones, poetry written by suppliants, and heirlooms are all sacrifices that Spirit finds pleasing. By destroying these objects, the suppliant hopes to retain his memories and keep his soul intact.

Spirit is the most respected Element since so many elves transform into incorporeal undead. To survive eternally is considered worth the loss of a body, and even though they sacrifice to Spirit to ensure their continued existence, that is a small price to pay.

Spirit includes emotions and feelings. Someone who allows his emotions to rule him is allowing the Element too much influence. The priests suggest strong sacrifices to Spirit, cleansing the person of these emotions.

Spirit is the only Element with a mind and will: it wants to consume all intelligent thought. It contains thousands of memories and knows secrets long forgotten by all other living beings.

LEADERSHIP

Behlial is the High Priest of the Spirit and one of the Severed. He sees normal undead as unworthy of life, so a hundred years ago he eschewed his title of Wracker to become a member of the Triumph of Athanaes. Since that time, the Church of Spirit has awaited his return. They attempted to summon him back several times, but the messengers never returned. His former deputy, Quaglan, a ghost who has managed to maintain his sanity, rules the Church. While Quaglan does not possess enough support to become Wracker in his own right, he rules as Behlial's deputy. The ghost is a calm, logical figure but prone to insane giggling fits when no one else is present; a sure sign of Spirit's disfavor. Behlial attempted to kill him before leaving the elves and he has no interest in his former master's return.



HIERARCHY

Beneath Quaglan, a score of bishops oversee hundreds of priests within the Accordlands. There are no intermediate steps between the bishops and the lay priests of the church. The Spirit priests capture and bind imps and sprites to their service as messengers and spies to keep the priests in line and prevent doctrinal shift. The bishops all report directly to Quaglan.

Priests of Spirit are often wizards as well. They tend to focus on the use of necromantic spells and spells that affect the emotions and minds of their opponents rather than their physical bodies.

HERESIES

In a small village in the southern end of Myreth, a group of elves still worship the ancient elven gods. These elves believe that the gods were a good and virtuous pantheon who protected and aided their people. They wish to reinstate worship of these benevolent gods and block the power of the Elements forever. Unfortunately for them, no one remembers the names of any of these ancient gods or knows any means of summoning them.

Fineltour

What's mine is mine. What's yours is mine.

— Zagreb Umbala

Symbol: A silver crescent

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Portfolio: Luck and fools

Worshippers: 50,000 humans (700 priests)

Cleric Alignment: Chaotic Good, Chaotic Neutral, Neutral Good, Neutral

Domains: Luck, Travel, Trickery

Favorite Weapons: Dagger

Fineltour is seen by most as the god who looks out for idiots and simpletons, but the truth is more complicated. He has always relied upon twists of fortune to aid him, but those who truly believe in the god know that his cunning mind and devious nature are just as important.

History

While most mortals who achieve godhood do so through great deeds and magnificent achievements, Fineltour just happened into it. The Church of the Storm destroyed dozens of minor gods in the Trial of the Storm (see "The Storm") two hundred years ago. As the Storm devoured it, one of these minor gods manifested its avatar far from the Storm in a failed bid for survival. As it lay dying, a young man walked up, offered it a drink from his canteen, and sang a song to ease its pain. As a last act of defiance, the god poured all its remaining power into the young man, denying it to the Storm and elevating Fineltour.

Dogma

Fineltour is the god of gamblers, fools, and rogues. He favors boldness and outrageousness, and loves anyone willing to put everything on the line. His followers are happy-go-lucky types who squeeze every drop out of life. They do realize that a plan can make its own luck.

While his true followers are few in number, anyone in need of a lucky break may call upon him. He responds to 1% of all such invocations by granting the person a lucky coincidence, though as often as not the luck he grants is bad.

Sins & Repentance

Fineltour is not concerned about sins or repentance. Instead, he focuses on a person's zest for life and willingness to take chances. A person's acts mark him as a follower of Fineltour, not his words or his willingness to do penance.

He abhors one act more than any other: violence for its own sake. The followers of Fineltour are by no means pacifists, but they strive to use trickery, stealth, and quick wits rather than violence. This is less a belief in the sanctity of life than it is a disdain for vulgar means of defeating an enemy.

The Afterlife

The followers of Fineltour believe that when they die, he will take them to his home, a wondrous labyrinth filled with lost treasures where nothing is as it seems. There they will make their way with their skills and wits. Those unworthy of this supreme adventure will simply fade away.

Leadership

Danar Coltrap is the head of Fineltour's church, which has built scores of roadside shrines: flat altars upon which rest several strangely shaped dice. Travelers drop a coin onto the altar and roll the dice for good luck. The priests use the donated money for their own purposes, but Danar dreams of building an elaborate temple someday. A former con-woman and thief, she dedicated her life to Fineltour after a close encounter with the law of Baraxton. Every two years the priests gather at Benpint, the location where Fineltour became a god, and roll the sacred dice to see who will head the church for the next year. Danar must be in favor, since she has won the honor for the last eight years.

Hierarchy

The church consists of a scattering of priests who run inns, brothels, and gambling establishments across the Accordlands. At these facilities they instruct the common people of the blessings of Fineltour and his views upon life. Due to his willingness to accept anyone into his faith, the church is growing steadily.

Secrets

Fineltour is far more intelligent than he appears. He engineered the conversion of the Aroch paladins to the worship of Albrecht in an effort to weaken the Church of the Storm. He used his power to divert the Storm slightly so it would move away from the knights. When they emerged, Fineltour informed the Church of their survival to ensure the knights would be driven into Albrecht's service.

He has also taken a tremendous interest in the dwarves who recently emerged onto the Accordlands. His avatar is currently exploring their passageways to discover the source of the evil that radiates from below.

Ishara

May the waters of Ishara carry us from danger, but drown us all should we abandon another in need.

— Rabinus Zon

Symbol: A wave with a woman's face hidden within it

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: The sea, mothers

Worshippers: 250,000 (3000 priests)

Cleric Alignment: Lawful Good, Neutral Good, Chaotic Good, Neutral

Domains: Healing, Strength, and Water

Favorite Weapons: Net

While Neus is now the most widely worshiped deity in the Western Kingdoms, that was not always the case. His mother Ishara ruled a vast area in the early days after the Dragon's defeat. Her influence has diminished over the years, but she still commands an enormous number of followers in coastal regions.

History

After the defeat of the Dragon, the people of the Accordlands turned to the remaining gods for guidance and support. Along the coast, the foremost deity was Ishara, Goddess of the Sea. She promoted stability based on family life. The mother was in charge of the household and ruled her family while the father fished. Children grew up and assumed their parents' roles.

Her son Neus, god of the hunt, disagreed. He refused to acknowledge her sovereignty, instead embracing change to help his own people survive. While Ishara continued to rule coastal villages, Neus expanded his domain inland over herders and farmers, scholars and engineers.

When the Deverenians conquered the territory he had so painstakingly cultivated, Neus came to his mother for advice. She explained that mankind was fickle like the tides, but no matter how the waves change, the water remains. Neus returned to his people, who quietly revered him while maintaining a public allegiance to the Deverenian deities. Ishara's people did likewise when Deverenian conquered all the way to the sea. It took centuries, but both gods eventually regained their authority over their people and emerged stronger for it.

A hundred years ago, Neus approached his mother again. Elves had invaded Andover, slaying his followers. Neus begged Ishara for aid. With a heavy heart, she refused. The Elements that the elves revered were alien to her, and she found it extremely difficult to come to grips with them. Out of the sight of the ocean, Ishara could not muster sufficient power to oppose the eleven Elements. A disappointed and furious Neus turned to oth-

ers for assistance. After he defeated the elves, Neus sent missions to Ishara's worshipers. Buoyed by word of his victory and his connection to Ishara, many converted to his worship. Ishara was incensed and demanded an apology — an apology she has not yet received. Ishara remains powerful, but now she stands in the shadow of her son.

Dogma

Ishara is a mother. She nurtures her followers and instructs them in their duties, punishing them when they disobey and rewarding them when they please her. She is stern when her children are in the wrong, but always loving and willing to forgive. She treats them all fairly, even those who have strayed from the truth.

Just as importantly, Ishara is the sea. The sea is turbulent and peaceful, dangerous and life giving, familiar and mysterious. While it is impossible to understand, it provides all the answers a man can ever need. Ishara teaches her people to rely upon the sea, but never to trust it. What the sea gives depends upon how much effort they are willing to give it.

Ishara knows that some people cannot handle the strict discipline to which her faithful aspire. She allows freedom of worship for communities of her followers, but has no place for loners or those who believe they can survive without their family or friends. Those just reaching adulthood know that they must create a family and stand by it. During this time, they have more freedom than usual while they discover their true place within the community, but after that has been established they are expected to remain in their station.

Sins & Repentance

Ishara believes strongly in order. Once, men gathered the food while women supervised the household; these divisions are still necessary, though no longer along gender lines. The greatest sin is usurping authority or breaking the division between those who act and those who direct. Those who act can rarely see the long-range impact of those actions, like a coastal village that overfishes its territory. Those who rule must allow others to act for them. Without delegation, every man is rowing the boat but no one is steering it. This is one of the primary conflicts between Ishara and her son Neus; she feels that he has usurped her authority.

The other great sins for Ishara are sloth and ineptitude. These are always addressed together because those who will not or cannot complete their duties threaten themselves and the entire community. Ishara does not particularly care about the cause of their failing. Other sins include theft, murder and harming the social structure of the family. These all tie together because they break down a community's social order.

Sinners must recant their actions before the congregation on an altar, symbolizing her early worshipers' boats. In olden times, if a follower did not confess to his sins, then his boat was set adrift. Those who sincerely repent ask for the mercy of the Sea Mother and serve the community in public works. The public penance for a great sin varies depending upon the views of the community. Serving the family of the injured party for years or the confiscation of all a sinner's possessions are both commonplace. Those who do not recant or who are not believed by the community are cast out of the community. All their possessions are forfeit and the congregation ignores them until they repent.

Outsiders who break the laws of the community must also recant and repent. If they do not, they are sent to monasteries to meditate upon their crimes. These monastic prisons house some of the most dangerous men in their areas. Many of these criminals have repented their sins and joined the Church as faithful monks who oversee the other prisoners.

The Afterlife

When Ishara's worshipers die, their souls sink into the depths of the sea where her Paradise awaits them. They cavort with the fish and monsters of the deep, live in coral castles, and drift through an eternity of peace. Those who have not yet earned their place enter the sea as well, but before they can reach Paradise they are transformed into sea creatures. When the creatures of the sea die, they are reborn into the world above. This creates a flow of life, slowly changing and utterly orderly.

Leadership

The current leader of the Church of Ishara is Rabinus Zon, a former criminal who repented his crimes in one of the Monasteries of the Wave and became a priest. He has since risen through the ranks to become the Navtor, a position granted by Ishara herself. He feels humbled by this position, but is determined to do his best to ensure that the Church and its followers survive the dark days he believes are ahead.

Hierarchy

Each community, whether it is a village or simply a city block, selects one member to lead worship. This person does not need to be a priest — simple devotion to Ishara is enough — though the majority are ordained. Above these worship leaders are the rowmans, named after the men who do the work upon the fishing vessels. The rowmans are solid administrators who continue to advance the work of the Church. They ensure that the worship leaders maintain discipline among their followers. They report to the bosuns, six high-ranking priests who coordinate the activities of the Church, select and supervise the rowmans, and aid Navtor Zon in expanding the faith.

Orders

Most cities with a strong Isharan presence have cloisters known as Monasteries of the Wave. Running water from a nearby river or creek is always diverted through them to allow the faithful to focus on its sounds. Some of the monasteries also serve as prisons where sinners, criminals, and malcontents learn to

embrace Ishara's teachings. They are educated and advised on the faith and taught useful noncriminal skills. The monks who teach and guard the prisoners are primarily reformed criminals themselves, so they are highly motivated and extremely sophisticated.

Heresies

Some of Ishara's followers believe that she should have dominion over all the waters of the Accordlands, including the waters of the Storm. Ishara herself has no interest in further conflict with the Storm, but these followers strike against the Church. This has caused the Church to attack some of Ishara's temples, but the distance is so great that they cannot bring the full weight of their displeasure upon the Sea Mother's followers.

Secrets

Ishara has hidden several relics of that belong to her, Neus, Fineltour, Albrecht, and Kavara in the waters beneath Lion's Jaw Bay. She guards these with all her might, as the Church of the Storm desires to use them to destroy the Western Kingdoms' gods.

Kavara

Of course it hurts, but apathy is more painful.

— Cassandra the Arcane

Symbol: A ball of flame

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Portfolio: Magic, Emotions, and Revenge

Worshippers: 50,000 humans (500 priests)

Cleric Alignment: Neutral Good, Neutral, Neutral Evil,

Chaotic Good, Chaotic Neutral, Chaotic Evil

Domains: Destruction, Fire, and Magic

Favorite Weapons: Quarterstaff

Raw emotion is a powerful force, especially when combined with magic. Kavara is the Mistress of Emotion and the Lady of Magic. She encourages her followers to follow their hearts. Her followers are primarily wizards and young warriors who enjoy her focus on emotions rather than reason.

History

Kavara was one of the minor gods who survived the battle with the Dragon. She struggled to find new followers, and it wasn't until she helped Queen Ignace of Andover destroy an invading army in the second century that her worship became more widespread. When Signon came to power, he chose her as one of the gods who should be judged by the Storm. He gathered several



of her relics and ordered them brought to the Storm, but a group of Kavara's followers seized the artifacts and fled to the sea, taking ship for Lion's Jaw Bay. The Church of the Storm pursued them but before they could recapture the relics, Kavara's wizards incinerated the boat and the relics sank to the sea floor.

Until recently, many powerful wizards revered Kavara for her control of the mystical arts. Many of her followers have recently died in the elven and Nothrog attacks, her power is at its lowest in years.

Dogma

As the Goddess of Magic, Kavara encourages her believers to spread its use to anyone who demonstrates the talent for it. Magic is a powerful force that can advance a multitude of causes, but for her followers it is an end in itself. While more studious spellcasters tend to follow Neus, Kavara appeals to those desiring quick results or who are impatient with cautious approaches.

As Mistress of Emotion, Kavara encourages her followers to allow their emotions free rein. To hold back anger or sorrow is to deny one's true self. Her followers are turbulent people who always follow the most recent urgings of their hearts; the Deverenians hate them for abandoning self-control and logic. Her worshipers go to emotional extremes and disdain moderation.

Many call upon Kavara during emotional outbursts, and most swear oaths by her — "Kavara's Kiss" for passion, "Kavara's Frown" during fervent opposition, and "Kavara's Wrath" to express anger. This practice expands her acceptance and attracts new followers. Worshipers who have displayed great faith and who call upon Kavara's Wrath while enraged have a 1% chance to channel a portion of her power. The person gains the spellcasting ability of a 10th-level wizard with only one spell of each appropriate level. The supplicant has no way of knowing what spells he has gained in this manner until he attempts them. More than one follower has called upon this power only to incinerate himself.

There is a softer side to the Mistress of Emotions, who teaches that true love honestly declared is more powerful than anything in the world. Her followers search for that love throughout their entire lives. While they do not deny themselves physical pleasures, they consider other attachments only temporary. Many are open and friendly people who enjoy passion and joy enough to suffer through the occasional depression or rage.

Sins & Repentance

Dishonesty is the greatest sin against Kavara. Denying one's emotions is acting against one's true self and is therefore dishonest. Breaking an oath or betraying a comrade are other aspects of this gravest sin.

The second great sin to the church is smothering. Whether they are the embers of passion in a man's heart, the spark of magic in a child's soul, or the flames of a campfire, fire is meant to spread. Those who would limit the spread of fire are as bad as those who would extinguish the passion in a person's soul.

Penance is a personal thing, and must come from within. It is each follower's duty to admit his sins to himself. Once admitted, the Kavarite must build a fire the size of his sins, into which he shouts his crimes against Kavara (preferably under the supervision of a priest). Then the sinner steps within the flames which burn the sin from his soul. When the sinner feels that he has been purified, he may step out of the flames so the priest can heal him. If the priest feels that the sinner is not truly repentant or did not allow the sin to burn away completely he may hold back healing, but this is rare. Those sinners who do not burn away their sins find that those sins cool their passions and magic. Those that continually resist their emotions sometimes even lose their magical ability, not as a punishment, but as a simple consequence of extinguishing the energy within themselves.

The Afterlife

Those who follow Kavara know that after death they will be transformed into flames that burn in savage joy. Those who have sinned against Kavara will have their transgressions burned away, a process that might result in decades of agony.

Kavara has warned her priests that some day a final time of tribulation will come. On that day, those who died in her service will return to turn their mystical might upon her foe.

Leadership

The Church of Kavara was always a decentralized organization, but it had leaders who were killed in the elven invasion. Now Kavara is thinking of sending an avatar to oversee the church directly.

Hierarchy

The church of Kavara is a small faith whose few hundred priests are scattered across the Accordlands. Those who feel the calling must study with a priest for at least a year to understand the nuances of worship, and then choose their own parishes. They teach the rudiments of the faith and encourage people to seek Kavara in their everyday lives.

The priests of each area select one from their number to be the "stoker." This title confers oversight over the priests of that area and authority to deal with the unfaithful. The authority of a stoker can range from a single city to several hundred square miles. There are currently ninety-eight stokers within the Church. They are supposedly in direct communication with Kavara herself and see visions within flames that direct their undertakings.

Orders

There is only one significant order within the Church of Kavara: the Order of the Flame, wizards who act in her name. These chaotic spell casters rarely agree upon a course of action and hardly ever meet. They do obey the orders of the stokers. When united, they are a formidable force.

Secrets

Her Church has long forgotten that before the battle with the Dragon, Kavara was not a human goddess, but the elven goddess of magic and passion. When the Great Dragon unleashed the Elements, she was powerless to stop them. The elves turned away from her, and she spent decades without followers until she aided a group of human sorcerers in dire straits. Old records and statues may reveal the truth, but Kavara's followers have no interest in research so her secret remains hidden.

Kasugoan/Kamatayon

The world is a very orderly place. It is only people that fill it with chaos.

— Kerebrus

Symbol: A black horse head / a white horse head

Alignment: Lawful Good / Lawful Evil

Portfolio: Law, justice, magistrates

Worshippers: Citizens of Avendeen, a country destroyed by the Storm (almost all now dead)

Cleric Alignments: Any Lawful (LG worships Kasugoan only, LE worships Kamatayon only, LN can worship either)

Domains: Law, Magic, Knowledge (both); Death (Kamatayon only)

Favored Weapon: Long Sword

Kasugoan / Kamatayon was the sole deity of a nation called Avendeen, located past the Shattered Mountains. The country and its inhabitants were destroyed by the Storm, leaving only Kerebrus to remember this dual god.

Kasugoan / Kamatayon is a single god with two different aspects. Kasugoan presides over the justice of the living, while Kamatayon judges the dead. The two aspects constantly war with each other, with Kasugoan trying to save the worthy from Kamatayon's grasp.

History

Kasugoan was the god of law in a flourishing pantheon of gods that presided over the land of Avendeen. In the first century of the Accord, Bascaron appeared over the lands of the Kabal. Kasugoan's father Goandin, the god of the sky and leader of the pantheon, felt the presence of the Blood Moon and asked Kasugoan to investigate. Goandin was rightly concerned; Kasugoan was twisted by Bascaron's power. She had been a god of balance, but Bascaron split the balance and created a new aspect for the god of law. Kasugoan became a god of noble justice, while her new aspect, Kamatayon, judged unfairly.

Initially this drove both aspects mad. Kamatayon returned to his family and slaughtered them all. Blood fell from the sky like rain for fifty days and nights. Kasugoan fought for ascendancy, but it was too late. She forced the other aspect of herself back, and set wards to stop Kamatayon from influencing the living world. In retaliation, Kamatayon set similar wards to stop Kasugoan from affecting Dulon, the land of the dead.

They reigned as the only gods of the land for eight centuries until the Storm arrived on the scene and ravaged the land, slaying nearly everyone. Only a young Kerebrus, away on a hunting trip, escaped the destruction. He is the only surviving Avendeen, and the only remaining worshiper of Kasugoan. Kamatayon eagerly awaits his death so he can eternally torture the final Avendeen.

Dogma

The followers of Kasugoan believed that she was responsible for keeping the world an orderly place. They felt that change defied the natural order set down by their deity.

The followers of Kamatayon believed that people were inherently chaotic, and only the gods were naturally lawful. When people died, he decided whether they had been successful in overcoming their chaotic natures. They also believed that no one achieves that goal. Kamatayon punishes the dead for their failure in life.

Kerebrus is a devout follower of Kasugoan, never deviating from his personal moral code. He believes that this denial of chaos will protect him on his deathbed. He believes that if he lives his life correctly, and imposes order whenever possible, that Kasugoan will come to him the moment before his death and spirit him away from the torments of Kamatayon.

Sins & Repentance

Followers of Kasugoan saw anything that was out of the ordinary as sinful. They were not radicals who killed anyone who was different, but they did try to ensure that everything occurred in a natural way. Those who committed sins repented by correcting whatever deviation they caused, and then prayed and fasted for days. In extreme cases they would be banished and excommunicated.

Followers of Kamatayon took sin far more seriously. Their definition of sin was similar, but their idea of repentance completely different. They believed that no amount of prayer or fasting could atone for an affront to their god. They actually believed that it would be the height of arrogance to presume to forgive a sin on behalf of Kamatayon. Instead the sinner was simply executed, and sent to his ultimate judgment early.

Kerebrus has been forced to alter this philosophy somewhat, as much as it galls him to do so. In the lands of the Accord he is surrounded by people who break the natural order. He watches people ignore orders from superiors, drink alcohol, and consort with members of the opposite sex outside the bonds of marriage, any of which would have merited punishment back in Avendeen. He imposes his code on the Dark Horsemen, his mercenary army. When soldiers of the Dark Horsemen break the code, he enforces an appropriate punishment. In serious cases, he sends the offender away from the Dark Horsemen, and their former comrades-in-arms shun them. In extreme cases, Kerebrus kills transgressors, but only when the breach has seriously affected the livelihood of all of the Dark Horsemen.

Kerebrus' Code

Kerebrus has created his code from the rules of the Templars of Kasugoan. When a Templar in Avendeen, he treated everyone as if they followed those rules, but now he only enforces the code on anyone who swears to abide by it. The Dark Horsemen, his mercenary group, lives by the code. New recruits must swear to follow it.

- **Do not lie.** Kerebrus takes any equivocation as a lie. Any attempt to mislead, whether through speech or magical means such as illusions, is considered a lie.
- **Do not break your word.** Once something is spoken, it cannot be called back. The Dark Horsemen do not speak much because every statement is considered a solemn oath.
- **Do not improvise.** Every task must be planned. Once the plan is set in motion, it must be adhered to. If faced with a choice to either adapt the plan or fail, the plan has already failed.
- **Do not behave immorally.** This is a tough stricture for mercenaries to follow. Kerebrus does not allow, alcohol, sexual congress out of wedlock, gambling, singing, dancing, excessive laughter, yelling, or other overt displays of emotions. He considers all these expressions to be immoral.
- **Do not accept a task unless you are sure you can complete it.** This is an extension of "do not lie." Kerebrus believes that taking on a responsibility one is not sure he can manage is lying to the other party. As a mercenary he is offered many jobs. He analyzes each fully and only accepts if he knows he can complete it without breaking his code.
- **Do not create chaos.** Some mercenary jobs have no clear objective. The client wants to create an environment of chaos so that he can profit on a different front. Kerebrus cannot abide this. In fact, if he discovers that another group has taken such a job, he will thwart them in any way he can.
- **Do not allow someone to break the code.** Anyone who breaks any of these rules is to be reported to Kerebrus instantly. He judges the infraction and imposes the appropriate punishment.
- **Do not fail.** If a task is undertaken, nothing should stop its completion. There are no excuses for failure.

The Afterlife

Believers know that Kasugoan has no authority over the dead. Upon death people stand before Kamatayon in Dulon, the land of the dead, and a list of their sins is read. It can take longer to read the sins than it did to actually live the life, since in the eyes of Kamatayon people sin incessantly. When the reading is finished he passes sentence, and the dead soul is sent to work off its sins through torture.

Dulon looks like the stereotypical hell: lakes of fire send jets of magma into the sky, cries of pain and agony fill the land, and ubiquitous demons torture the dead souls.

It is a little unclear what happens when the debt of sin is expunged, or what happens if the judged has no sins to punish. So far neither has ever happened.



Devout followers of Kasugoan do not believe that they must face Kamatayon. They believe that if they prove worthy, Kasugoan will save them moments before they die and they will serve him forever.

Orders

Followers of Kamatayon formed a terrifying order of Templars to enforce their deity's laws. They traveled the land on black horses, wielding their faith like a sword. Anyone caught committing even the slightest infraction — anything from bringing crops in before the scheduled date to speaking too loudly in public — was summarily executed.

The followers of Kasugoan realized that the Templars would leave Kamatayon the only faith in the land. They countered this by creating their own order of Templars. Nominally they served the same purpose of scourging sin. What they actually did was try to stay one step ahead of the Templars of Kamatayon. One order never interfered with the duties of the other. Each would try to uncover sin before the other could do so. If the Kasugoan Templars passed sentence on a sinner before the Kamatayon Templars could do so, their sentence of prayer and fasting would save the sinner from execution.

Kerebrus was a Kasugoan Templar.

Heresies

Historically, the biggest heresy for either type of follower was the promotion of chaos. People who fought against their society's rigid structure were attended to by the Templars of Kamatayon.

For Kerebrus there is one heresy that pervades the Accordlands: the worship of the Storm, the ultimate symbol of chaos. He believes his birthplace was destroyed because its people did not adhere closely enough to the strictures of Kasugoan. He would eradicate every sign of Storm worship in the Accordlands if he thought it possible.

Secrets

No one is aware that Kasugoan and Kamatayon are the same god. The existence of good and evil aspects to the same deity would force the followers of "both" gods to reexamine their faith. Also, no one knows the true origin of these gods, nor its connection to Bascaron.

Kor

No matter how deep we delve, or what horrors we may face, we shall have Kor's fire to light our way, and His strength to vanquish our foes.

— St. Hember, the First Hethrhod

Symbol: A dull gray hammer, flanked by orange flames

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: Perseverance, fortitude, compassion, valor, and self-sacrifice

Worshippers: Dwarves

Cleric Alignments: Lawful Good, Lawful Neutral, Neutral Good

Domains: Earth, Healing, Protection, and War

Favored Weapon: War Hammer

When the dwarves first made their way into the earth to fight the Abyss, Hember went to all the gods that had helped bring down the Dragon and asked each in turn to accompany his people and lend their strength to the fight. Only Kor accepted.

A minor deity worshiped for the most part by blacksmiths, Kor could not turn his back on an entire nation willing to sacrifice itself for the benefit of others. Most dwarves hated to abandon their peaceful, artistic ways to engage in a war they might never win. Kor's presence alone gave them strength and carried the dwarven people through those first hard years; it is this strength that carries them today.

History

When Hember supplicated the gods, most felt that with the Dragon already dead, no good could come from hacking at its corpse. Kor was a more tactical thinker. Whether or not there really was a danger, these people had faith that they could put an end to the great evil at the center of the earth. This devotion touched Kor deeply, and he agreed to journey with the dwarves.

Kor named Hember his first Hethrhod (HETH-er-od), his voice among his new followers. Hember in turn named his companions his High Vicars.

The dwarves embraced their new god. If none of the old ones they used to worship wished to come with them, then they would turn to the one who had. All throughout their initial journey into the earth Kor, through Hember, promised his people that their time in battle would be short, and when they were through he would welcome them into his home. The dwarves eagerly received this message, and they have worshiped Kor throughout centuries of conflict.



Dogma

Kor's church preaches the values of self-sacrifice. Parents never know the joy of bringing up their children. Friendships, due to the high casualty rate, are short-lived. Most dwarves do not know their given names. A millennium ago the dwarven people gave up everything for the benefit of those on the surface. There is not a day that goes by that they don't wish they could escape their fate.

The Church of Kor therefore preaches the rewards of Kor's blessing. All those who die in the line of duty guarantee themselves and their kin a place at Kor's table. Those that do not are granted another chance to escape the hellish confines of their lives. The clerics stress that by giving of themselves here, dwarves can find a greater peace in H'mmelle (the afterlife).

Those that live up to this ideal are canonized alongside Hember and his companions. By elevating noble examples of self-sacrifice the Church of Kor hopes to inspire others. It is easier for some to believe in the strength of other dwarves than in Kor himself. The clerics are careful not to raise any dwarven saints, including Hember, to equal footing with Kor. The saints are examples of Kor's strength and will, not substitutes for him.

Sins & Repentance

Dwarves can never know what they will be called upon to do in the course of their lives. For this reason, the Church of Kor recognizes very few actions as sins. The priests feel that if Kor approves of their actions, the people will not be averse to performing their duties. Kor does not, however, dispense blanket approval.

The murder of another dwarf is the single greatest sin. A dwarf relies on his fellows, and the trust between dwarves is sacred. Even the King's Assassins, not well regarded or liked, can be trusted in the heat of battle. To break this trust is to forever sever oneself from the dwarven nation. This crime demands exile.

Failure to perform one's duty is a grave sin. No dwarf is expected to be perfect, but to truly fail offends not only against Kor, but also against oneself. Laziness, ineptitude, and cowardice are not tolerated, for they are other ways to violate the trust each dwarf places in others. Those who allow themselves to sin in this way are sent to Rockhome where they can absolve themselves and find renewed purpose, or die, to be reincarnated and given another chance to figure things out.

The rarest sin, and the only one punishable by death, is to deal with the Abyss. Abyssals are cunning and twisted creatures, who have on occasion turned weak-minded dwarves against their own kin. Rumors of such dealings, no matter how quiet, receive the attention of the scions, who examine such claims and apprehend actual conspirators.

Maul is the only dwarf alive to have dealt with the Abyssals. Now known as Angus Hammerfall, the dwarves believe he betrayed Goldenaxe to receive his true name. Angus escaped to the surface shortly after Goldenaxe fell. Any dwarf that encounters Angus would surely attempt to kill him immediately.

The Afterlife

Dwarves believe in Kor's homeland H'mmelle as strongly as they believe in him. They know that when they die Kor will accept them unconditionally, allowing them to embrace their artistic nature in a land of peace.

H'mmelle is a refuge of prairie lands under open skies. Copses of trees dot its landscape. The dwarves stay in spacious adobe huts and practice their arts in the open air. At night they dance and celebrate and reveal their works in the light of the bright constellations. It is as Sarakia was before the Dragon fell from the sky. Everyone in H'mmelle has earned his or her name.

This image of an ideal eternity free from war and strife is what keeps the dwarven people going. No matter how arduous their battle with the Abyssals, they know that they can rest when they reach H'mmelle.

Dwarves do not believe in hell. They don't need to. They are already there. Those who are not yet worthy of entering H'mmelle are reborn into dwarven society and return to the constant conflict, with another chance to gain acceptance in H'mmelle.

The dwarves that have reached the surface with Gnorow Yaw are in a place much like H'mmelle. The sky is clear above their heads, and they slumber under the stars. War nevertheless plagues the land, and the dwarves worry; if war can invade H'mmelle, can they ever know peace?

Members of the Blackstone Raiders have a different take on the afterlife. Those worthy of fighting the Abyssals are reborn to join the fight anew. Those who are too weak continue on to H'mmelle to escape the war. The Blackstone Raiders fight with such fervor that the other dwarves accept this belief as just one more of the Raiders' eccentricities.

Leadership

The Hethrhod heads the Church of Kor. Hember was the first Hethrhod, appointed by Kor himself. The new Hethrhod is chosen by Kor's seers. While this leaves a gap between the death of the previous Hethrhod and the anointing of his successor, dwarves live for so long that the transfer of power has happened only three times. Hember was Hethrhod for nearly 600 years. He owned a precious chalice with life-extending qualities. Hember feared its power; immortality could not be natural. His strong sense of duty compelled Hember to use the chalice three times. After the third time Hember hid the chalice, writing a prophecy of the one who would find it. The second Hethrhod, Olver Sunstone, ruled the church for nearly 170 years. Olver was well liked, if not an outstanding leader. Ragnall Bonebeater, the third Hethrhod, was a powerful and ambitious dwarf who felt that a direct attack against the Abyss could end its threat forever. He had significant support from the Blackstone Raiders, but the king would not countenance the expedition. Ragnall led his assault anyway. He was never heard from again. His tenure as Hethrhod lasted barely a decade.

Avinoam Blightlifter is the current Hethrhod, having served since coming of age 180 years ago. Avinoam is not only the longest-serving Hethrhod since Hember, but he is the oldest dwarf. After the tragedy of the previous Hethrhod, his penchant for patience and the arts of healing renewed the faith of the

dwarven nation. His steadfastness in the recent trying times has helped to maintain it. Avinoam was in Steelguard when the Abyss claimed it, and had relocated to Goldenaxe just before that city fell. While the rest of the dwarven nation mourns and frets about the future, Avinoam soothes their souls.

Under the Hethrhod are the High Vicars. Gnorrow Yaw, who leads the order of St. Leda Stonehand, is first among them. Yaw believes strongly that the Final Battle approaches; he knows, deep in his heart, that the dwarves cannot go it alone. He is the leader of the dwarven expedition that successfully reached the surface, but there his progress ends. Instead of finding ready allies, he has found evil-minded nations at war. He has nevertheless made headway, sending an emissary to make peace with the Deverenians. That dwarf, Purge, learned the Deverenian code of honor and is now on speaking terms with the Empire. The Free Kingdoms, while receptive, are in no position to offer support. Yaw fears that he will have to enter the war on the side of the humans to receive their support. The Elves have been less receptive and Yaw has not yet dealt with the Nothrog. Gnorrow Yaw is losing faith. Xod desperately needs reinforcements, while Yaw finds himself miring the dwarves in surface world conflicts.

While Yaw rallies support for the Final Battle, Garn Hearthstone of the order of St. Torgny Battlescar is fighting it. Garn is the Vicar of Rockhome, and the longest-serving High Vicar alive. Trained to aid wounded soldiers, Garn became a capable and inspirational leader. Under his guidance the clerics in Rockhome have evolved into the most gifted healers in dwarven history. Garn is often credited with Rockhome's success against the Abyss in these difficult times.

Four other High Vicars assist the Hethrhod. They are Cervius Lightrock of the order of St. Vhorim, Denail Deepwater of the order of St. Afya Soulsight, Brac Silvervein of the order of St. Orenda Heartfire, and the young dwarf Innocence, who has recently been raised to lead the order of St. Cargan.

Hierarchy

The Church of Kor is just as hierarchical as the dwarven military, and has a well-defined chain of command. Priests sometimes receive battlefield promotions if the ranking cleric falls in combat. The head of the church is the Hethrhod, chosen by Kor through his seers. The Hethrhod is the moral center of the dwarven people. He travels from stronghold to stronghold, bringing the blessings of Kor to the dwarves that need them the most. Assisting the Hethrhod in his duties are the High Vicars, who represent the original followers of Hember. Underneath the High Vicars are the Holy Fathers and Mothers, who head the major temples in each dwarven stronghold. They oversee the well being of the dwarves in the city and in the surrounding areas. The priests and priestesses they oversee conduct the day-to-day rituals, everything from weddings to funerals. Vicars assist the priests and priestesses, and have initiates to help them perform the chores of running the church, from cleaning to provisioning to gardening. Any cleric in the church may refer to themselves by a lower rank. It is quite common for all who serve Kor to call themselves simply priests. Other dwarves refer to the priests by their true title.

The Seers of Kor assign dwarven children to the priesthood at birth. Unlike other children, they are not given to a family but to a temple, usually one that has an older membership. Constantly surrounded by the blessings of Kor, they have the gentlest upbringing of any dwarven children. For the seers to pronounce that one of their offspring is destined for the Church of Kor is a joyous day for parents.

Orders

Upon attaining the rank of Vicar, a cleric chooses one of the many saints to serve. Throughout his career a cleric is expected to live up to this saint's standard. As living examples of the most accomplished of their race, the priests inspire those in their care. The most commonly chosen saints are Cargan and Leda Stonehand, while Vhorim is unpopular. Only the Hethrhod belongs to the Order of Hember.

The Seers of Kor are a handful of clerics that determine where dwarven children are placed. Only the king knows and raises his own children. The rest of the dwarven nation hands its children to the Seers, who look into the child's soul to determine his or her path. They are rarely mistaken.

The smallest order in the church may be the busiest: the Order of the Great Cavern buries the dead. Closer to the surface than any other dwarven outpost, the Great Cavern houses the body of every dwarf who has died in untold centuries of conflict. Uncertain whether the Abyssals practiced necromancy, the dwarves did not wish to find out by facing an army of their ancestors. The dead are mummified, brought to the Great Cavern, and interred in alcoves carved into the steep rock faces. Few dwarves receive the calling to this order; they are generally considered those that could not find their places among the living in their previous incarnations. Until recently Saul Tombcarver headed the Order of the Great Cavern, but he chose to travel with Yaw to the surface. The Hethrhod appointed an old dwarf named Remorse to succeed him. Remorse was stunned by this appointment, and strives to not disappoint.

Heresies

The Church of Kor recognizes only one heresy: dealings with the surface.

Centuries ago the dwarves brought the war to the corpse of the Dragon Itself. They fought a pitched battle, and just as they were to claim victory, a figure burst out of the Dragon and drove back their army. It was not an Abyssal, but a human. The human left before the dwarves could discern his identity, but there was no mistaking his origin. Those that returned spread the tale; the uplanders were in league with the Dragon. The dwarves were alone in their fight. Until recently this view was unchanged.

Gnorrow Yaw believes that the uplanders will be necessary allies in the Final Battle. His conviction is so strong that others are beginning to think as he does. A desperate King Xod allowed him to lead a contingent to the surface in search of allies, over the protests of priestess Faith and the King's Assassin Poison.

Gnorrow Yaw was Faith's teacher, and she does not like to see her mentor head down the path toward damnation. She is doing everything in her power to stop Yaw, and nearly barred his path to the surface by causing a great cave-in. Poison does not trust anything that lives on the surface. The dwarves have been fighting this war for centuries; they need no help. So far the Hethrhod has been unusually silent concerning this matter.

Saints

Those who serve Kor in an exemplary fashion are canonized. These are the ideal dwarves: the most courageous fighters, cunning scouts, compassionate priests and powerful wizards. Aspiration to sainthood is yet another thing that gives dwarves a sense of purpose.

There are well over 100 saints, but the most talked about are Hember's companions, dwarves of legend. During the war against the Dragon they were Hember's lieutenants and command staff, and became his High Vicars when he was named the first Hethrhod of Kor.

ST. AFYA SOULSIGHT — HEMBER'S CONSCIENCE

Hember's chief advisor Afya was a powerful seer and healer. Her wisdom helped Hember to lead the dwarves below ground. Cargan listened when Hember was troubled, but Afya consoled him. Many times during the early years of the war with the Abyss, Hember doubted his decision to lead his people into danger. Afya was the one who always restored his faith.

After the first major battle at Rockhome, Afya and Hember married. The stability she offered Hember was greater, perhaps, than all her visions and advice. His new family also renewed his conviction to protect his people. The custom of handing children over to the castes to save their parents the pain of their deaths had recently taken hold, and it was Afya who decided that the family of the king would always know its own children. In this way, she hoped that the desire to protect would never falter, even if the king's faith did.

Clerics who follow St. Afya Soulsight are compassionate and wise. They provide faith and advice when the world is at its darkest. Often they are seers. As healers they tend to the wounded, easing pain when they can and holding the hands of those unlikely to see the morning.

ST. CARGAN — HEMBER'S SHIELD

Only Hember is more revered than Cargan. He was Hember's shield man and best friend. Whenever Hember was troubled Cargan would be there to listen. In battle he kept Hember safe while the Hethrhod fought. He saved Hember countless times, and was a shining example of both self-sacrifice and loyalty.

Originally a farmer, Cargan was one of the first to join Hember as he rallied the support of the dwarves in the battle against the Dragon. Upon his first meeting with Hember, he was asked by the dwarf King if he could fight. Cargan answered, "No. But you can. Allow me to carry your shield, and you can fight for me with your other hand." Those priests who choose Cargan as their saint exemplify self-sacrifice. They put themselves in harm's way to save others, and often serve as combat medics.

ST. LEDA STONEHAND — HEMBER'S PRIDE

Before Hember and the dwarves encountered the Abyssals, they found Sjonegaard and his gargoyles. The two sides almost fought, but the Elemental King sensed the good in Hember's heart and sent away his children so the dwarf King would not feel threatened by them. The two spoke at length and struck the famous bargain, joining forces. Sjonegaard taught Hember and his High Vicars the craft of summoning gargoyles. None of them took to it as Leda Stonehand did.

Before the battle with the Dragon she had been one of the foremost sculptors of her people. A close friend of Afya, she joined Hember's cause and acted as a messenger for him. After the compact with Sjonegaard, she created many gargoyles to help supplement the dwarven forces, and carried messages between Hember and the gargoyle master. She came to love her creations almost as much as Sjonegaard did, and was regarded as a kind, sensitive soul.

Many priests, including Gnorrow Yaw, belong to the order of St. Leda. While any dwarf cleric can create and control gargoyles, members of this order are especially good at it. Their gargoyles are stronger and more resilient, intelligent, and cunning.

ST. ORENDA HEARTFIRE — HEMBER'S MIGHT

Magic users are rare in the dwarven population and prized, especially on the battlefield where one mage can make a substantial difference. The greatest dwarven mage of all was Orenda Heartfire. Her mastery over magic, combined with the Elemental King Sjonegaard's power, crafted the city of Rockhome out of the walls and floor of the mighty cavern in a fortnight. Her spellcraft staved off the initial attacks of the Abyssals and her work led to the discovery of ironcloth. She used her powers ceaselessly in the name of protecting her people.

Those who follow St. Orenda are strong but disciplined. They never tire of their work and constantly strive to discover new ways to combat the Abyss.

ST. TORGNY BATTLESCAR — HEMBER'S AXE

The first City Lord of Rockhome was Hember's greatest general. Rockhome is the oldest, deepest city of the dwarves, placed across a major travel corridor of the Abyssals. While Hember had his people begin the construction of other sanctuaries, Torgny Battlescar made sure they had the time to do it. For 235 years he ruled Rockhome, longer than any other City Lord in the history of the dwarves. He was a brilliant tactician and an unrivaled combatant. In Rockhome his name is legend, and he features in all the popular campfire stories. One of the most popular tales is how he still fights, standing atop the Dragon's corpse, hacking away at it and spitting in its eye.

A good many priests feel the call of St. Torgny; they are valorous and resolute. They can be found in the thick of battle, rallying troops and using the power of Kor against the creatures of the Abyss. Clerics who admire St. Torgny Battlescar often wield battle-axes, as that was his favored weapon.

ST. VHORIM — HEMBER'S SENESCHAL

The least celebrated of the original saints is St. Vhorim. A quartermaster in Hember's army, he had a keen knack for making the most out of every provision. He could equip a unit with cast-off armor and weapons and still turn them into a decisive force on the battlefield. When the dwarves first made

their homes under the earth, it was Vhorim who discovered what could be eaten and what could be refined and adapted. He rooted out veins of iron and helped to organize the dwarven economy.

St. Vhorim's few followers are practical and thrifty. Most are located in the larger temples of Kor and oversee their upkeep.

Secrets

Dwarven folklore is rich with tales of fierce warrior-clerics, dwarves that bring hope into hopeless battles. There are many names associated with these legends, but the most common is "scion." While tales of their martial prowess dominate, there are also stories of retribution. To betray the dwarves is to arouse the ire of the scions, their judgment swift and their punishment severe. Few dwarves claim to have met scions, and all dwarves are in awe of them.

The seers of Kor alone know the truth.

The dwarves are hardy after centuries of conflict, and it is very rare that a dwarf child is stillborn. The seers beseech Kor to infuse his spirit into the dead child, and when he does, a scion is created. Occasionally a great hero falls in battle before his time, and sometimes Kor infuses his essence into these fallen dwarves. Scions are far more than the dwarves they were. Kor's power absorbs the dead dwarf's soul. Kor sees the faith of his people waver as the generations progress. Their god will not allow them to betray Hember's memory by being weak.

Most dwarves would seriously begin to question their deity if they knew that he used their dead children in such a fashion. Kor is careful to make sure the heroes he turns into scions die far away from their army. The dwarves are eager to believe that their great heroes cannot be lost, and Kor uses this belief to keep his secret safe. So far only King Xod has realized the truth, as Kor saw fit to make a scion out of his brother Valhala Abyssbane after Xod witnessed Valhala's gruesome death.

The other secret, known only to the Hethrhod, is perhaps even more startling. The Dragon is not altogether dead. Its soul wanders the surface world and seeks to reattach itself to the corpse. Twenty years ago the Hethrhod awoke from a terrifying vision: the Dragon's eye regarding him with cold hate.

Since that time the Hethrhod has been plagued by terrible visions of destruction and death. It is only a matter of time before the Dragon's soul and its corpse reunite. When that happens the first people to be destroyed will be the dwarves. Avinoam has not mentioned this to anyone. He is terrified that his people, who have handled so much, would crack and abandon their duties. It is no coincidence that he was present for the destruction of Steelguard and Goldenaxe. His visions are significant, and he wishes to be at the center of the onslaught to comfort the dwarves. He is terribly worried for his people and prays to Kor daily that this terrible secret is not revealed.

In the history of their war against the Abyss, the dwarves have only one recorded incident of their god manifesting and fighting alongside them. Early in the war, the city of Rockhome, still under construction, was attacked by an overwhelming horde of Abyssals. Kor saved the city, and has not been seen by his people since.

Kor appeared as a 12-foot-tall dwarf, his eyes shining with the fires of his forge, his skin iron. Kor's armor is a collection of precious metals in the style of a dwarven warrior. He wields a huge war hammer, which is wreathed in flame. Its haft is wrapped in colored cloth, one strip for each caste. Kor's symbol is etched into his diamond shield.

Kor feels that if he were to fight beside his people consistently they would grow weak, and rely upon him for everything. Only when the situation is dire will he arrive in person to assist the dwarves. Since he has not arrived with the destruction of Steelguard and Goldenaxe, many dwarves believe he is readying himself for something worse.

Narawat Pantheon

*We are the Chosen of the Nine. We are the earth and the fire.
We shall burn and be renewed.*

— Baqbou Umbala

The gods do not lie! It is the end. There is no future!

— Mouboli Ehioze

Symbol: Varies (see individual gods)

Alignment: Varies (see individual gods)

Portfolio: Varies (see individual gods)

Worshippers: The Chosen (all Narawati)

Cleric Alignments: Varies (see individual gods)

Domains: Varies (see individual gods)

Favored Weapon: Varies (see individual gods)

There are nine gods in the Narawat religion, each embodying an aspect of Narawati life. Though universally worshiped in Narawat, they are unknown outside the nation's borders. The gods represent abstract thoughts, and do not naturally have human forms, but they are still literal beings rather than conceptual ones.

The Narawat religion seems primitive on first inspection, but the Narawati are in fact highly educated, and their madhehebu are some of the most advanced places of learning in the Accordlands. The Narawati have a good understanding of how the natural world operates. The energies of the world created the gods, and the gods created the Narawati, so they pray to the gods to affect the different aspects of the environment. The gods manipulate the energies that spawned them to create the desired effect.

History

Oral history tells the Narawati that the universe created the Narawat pantheon immediately after it created the world. The gods lived under the earth, and created people to live on the lands above them, their Chosen people.

Recently an event occurred that was unique in Narawat history. The Priests' Circle took their annual vision in which the Narawat gods would tell them who should lead the nation for the upcoming year. What they saw was complete darkness. Some priests believed that this was an absence of vision; that they received no vision because the gods had abandoned them. These priests killed themselves in despair.

Others saw the vision as a looming threat to Narawat. This group held two views on how to deal with this threat. The Umbala brothers decided to leave Narawat and look for answers elsewhere in the Accordlands, believing that a threat of this magnitude could not affect only Narawat. They were convinced that they could find the source of the threat and allies to help them combat it. The other opinion was that only the gods could save Narawat. The Narawati are the Chosen, and the gods would never allow them to be destroyed. The remaining members of the Priests' Circle have taken over governance of the country and have sealed the borders. No Narawati are to leave and no one is to enter. The nomadic nature of the people of Narawat makes this close to impossible to enforce.

One of the priests who have remained to rule is certain that he knows what the threat is: Kinyamkela, the Storm, is coming. It is time for the world to be reborn.

Dogma

The Narawati believe themselves closer to divinity than other peoples. This does not manifest itself as arrogance, and Narawati generally do not flaunt this belief in front of others. Being Chosen is a gift, not an excuse to look down on those who have no godhood in them.

This belief extends to the land itself. Narawat's ground spontaneously combusts, burning plant life down to the root structure and scorching the earth. The plants always come back stronger and hardier, but this is due to natural growth patterns, and not divine intervention. Rather than seeing this as reason to move, the Narawati see it as proof of the gods' work on earth. They believe that Amoudosi, the god of fire, brings the flame in order to continue the cycle of death and rebirth.

Narawati believe that the Nine live beneath Narawat in great caverns, traveling into Narawat when they must. Some, such as Amoudosi, do so in a scorching fire at regular intervals. Others, such as Urashrasha, the god of rain, emerge sporadically.

Each of the nine gods has a temple in Narawi with its own priests and followers, though all believers worship all the Nine. Narawati gravitate to an individual god and temple based on their backgrounds and professions. They visit other temples depending on their need at the moment. For example, all Narawati visit the Temple of Kizazi when expecting children.

Narawat does not often entertain visitors. A small number of outsiders come to Narawat to join the madhehebu and dedicate their lives to learning. Narawati do not proselytize, and when these outsiders ask about the gods of Narawat, the Narawati discourage them from looking too deeply. This is because the Narawati do not want these people to face the moment when they discover that only Narawati are the Chosen, and no matter what outsiders do, they can not truly be one with the gods.

Despite this, a small number convert. Once they have done so, the converts are treated just as any other worshiper, although they are never referred to as Chosen.

In the center of Narawi there is a tower called Milango ya Maarifa. The only people who enter the tower are priests of Amoudosi. An intense heat fills Milango ya Maarifa, as it houses a deep pit that opens into lava. This is the only indication that the volcano beneath the city is not entirely dormant. The priests of Amoudosi pray over the pit and give offerings of works of art created by Narawati artisans. They believe that if they were to anger Amoudosi in any way, he would destroy Narawi from his home beneath Narawat.

Sins & Repentance

The Narawati do not concern themselves excessively with sin. Anyone who strays from the path of the gods is to be pitied, not scorned. If a follower fails to participate in the rituals, the priests gently remind him of their importance. If the follower does not change his ways, the priests continue the gentle reminders, neither lessening nor increasing them, for as long as the follower remains in Narawat.

The only exception is less a religious matter than it is self-preservation. Anyone who threatens Narawat in any way must be cast out, and in extreme cases killed. This can be interpreted rather broadly. The last major occurrence of this type was when the Ulalami-chagua broke free from the Azima-chagua and started studying black magic. While there is nothing innately heretical about this practice, the Priests' Circle saw it as a threat to Narawat, so attempted to eradicate the rogue madhehebu. They failed, though most believe otherwise. Instead, the school was driven underground.

The Afterlife

When a Narawati dies, he becomes a *koma*, or spirit. The koma wanders Narawat for eight days, in deference to eight of the nine Narawati gods (no koma would pay homage to Kinamisa). After this period Mauti, the god of death, welcomes the koma and absorbs it into his own body. The Narawati believe this to be a moment of pure bliss.

When Narawati are born, Kizazi, the goddess of fertility, gathers energy from each of the nine gods to create the new Narawati. This could lead some philosophers into thinking that the Narawati believe in reincarnation, since the essence of Mauti is used in these new people. The Narawati do not look at it that way. They believe that following the blissful moment being absorbed into Mauti there is nothing further to experience.

The Priests' Circle

The head priests are the *fundisi*, and collectively they make up the Priests' Circle. The Circle officially has only one duty (appointing an annual leader for Narawat), but they are powerful unofficial advisors to the appointed leader. Usually the *fundisi* of Amoudosi takes the lead in that role, but that can change, based on the wishes and experience of the Circle. It is rare for a leader to go against the recommendations of the *fundisi*. Thus the Priests' Circle can make decisions and bring them to the appointed leader, who implements them.

Despite the great power wielded by the Priests' Circle, it is rarely used. They only interfere in the running of Narawat when they see a threat. The last recorded instance of this occurring is the outlawing of the Ululami-chagua.

Presently, four members of the Priests' Circle rule Narawat directly, after the recent failed rite to find a new leader resulted in a crisis of faith. Three fundisi took their own lives. Two of the Circle left Narawat secretly, in order to find the source of this unknown darkness. The remaining four guide Narawat. Word of the black vision has spread all over Narawat, and the entire nation is uneasy.



Organization

Each of the nine temples has an informal structure. The priests of the temple elect the fundisi, with the other members of the Priests' Circle acting as advisors. It is quite rare for the temple to choose a fundisi not approved by the Circle. The fundisi of each temple is the head priest and authority on all things connected to the temple's deity. The fundisi of Mauti is responsible for funeral arrangements, the Fundisi of Urashrasha is responsible for water collection, and so on.

The next level in the temple hierarchy is the priests. They have no formal hierarchy, though seniority is respected. The priests perform all the day-to-day operations of the temple.

Every temple has a number of lay volunteers who help the priests. These people mostly take care of the mundane details of the temple, like cleaning and general maintenance.

Finally there are the worshipers. All Narawati worship the entire pantheon, so the temples are quite busy. Some people come to request the services of the temple, while others come to make offerings or pray.

Orders

Each temple has an order that specializes in skills to better serve the temple and the god. These orders are similar to the madhehebu, but those who join a madhehebu swear to dedicate themselves to expanding the scope of knowledge in the world. Those who join the temple orders do so in order to better serve their deities. Each order is detailed below.

Heresies

Narawati do not take offense at beliefs that differ from their own. Those who worship other gods do so because they can never be Chosen. They can not correct this, so Narawati leave them in peace. The only exception to this might be the dwarves, with whom the Narawati have had almost no contact. If a Narawati ever heard a dwarf say that the dwarves live under the earth, where they must fight horrible monsters, the Narawati would consider it blasphemy.

The Ululami-chagua is treated almost like a heretical organization, though they have broken no religious doctrine. They are simply a former madhehebu that devotes its time to the investigation of the dark side of magic. The Priests' Circle has outlawed it, but it continues to operate out of the public eye.

The priests of Kinyamkela believe that those who worship the Storm under names other than Kinyamkela are blaspheming their god. The Church of the Storm, in contrast, would seek to "correct" the Kinyamkelan vision of the Storm.

Secrets

Most Narawati religious orders do not believe in secrets, sharing their knowledge freely. The exceptions are the temple of Amoudosi, which keeps the volcanic nature of Narawi secret, and the most advanced followers of Sanaa, who have seen evidence that a blacksmith god still exists, one who may well be their goddess' husband.

The gods themselves have their own secret: the entire pantheon's origin story is a lie. In truth, the Narawati gods did not involve themselves in the First War, either for or against the Dragon. As punishment for their weakness, the other gods eradicated the pantheon's homeland, forcing the gods to move to the desert of Narawat.

Kinyamkela is not truly a god but rather an aspect of the Storm, perhaps the only one remaining since the founding of the Deverenian Church of the Storm. Like the Védoszentelek of Deverenia, the Storm may manifest an avatar in the guise of Kinyamkela. When it does it acts as listed here, not as a normal avatar of the Storm. All the pantheon's gods and Kinyamkela himself know the truth, and hope to keep the Storm at least partly free of Deverenia's fanatical corruption.

Sanaa's husband lives, and the dwarves worship him as Kor. The parting between the two was so bitter that Sanaa considers all dwarves evil fools.

The Burning

Amoudosi always warns when he brings the Burning to an area, though his warnings can only be read by trained priests of Amoudosi and Flamekeepers. Those with an affinity for fire can see the warning signs of a Burning 10 days before it actually happens on a successful Wisdom check (DC 30, minus the number of Burnings they have witnessed personally; clerics of Amoudosi and Flamekeepers have a base DC of 20). When the flames start, anyone in a mile radius takes 1d6 damage for 5 rounds (Reflex save DC 20 for half), after which the flames intensify as per the following table. After the 20th round, the Burning stops abruptly. While the flames no longer renew themselves, anything that caught on fire during the Burning will continue to burn until extinguished or incinerated.

TABLE 8-1: BURNING TIMES

Number of Rounds	Damage	Reflex Save for Half Damage
1-5	1d6	DC 20
6-10	3d6	DC 25
11-15	6d6	DC 30
16-20	12d6	No save
20+	—	(Burning ends)

The Vision

Each fundisi has abilities similar to a seer's, but the level of insight varies. When two or more fundisi form the Priests' Circle and join in a vision, they are considered to have the Knowledge domain, even if it is not normally available to them. When the fundisi join their powers together they may spontaneously cast any spell from the Knowledge Domain list, as long as at least one of the fundisi is high enough level to cast the spell (caster level equal to the highest casting level among fundisi, plus one for every additional fundisi joining in the spell). Each spell may be cast this way only once per day, and all participating fundisi expend one spell of the casting level, or all spells of their highest available level.

The Gods and Temples

AMOUDOSI

Symbol: A single flame

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Portfolio: Fire, cycle of life

Cleric Alignments: Chaotic Good, Chaotic Neutral, Neutral Good

Domains: Fire, Destruction, Plants

Favored Weapon: Long bow

Amoudosi is the god of fire and rebirth, and the Narawati consider him the unofficial patriarch of the Narawat pantheon. Life in Narawat is completely molded by his Burnings that scorch the land at irregular intervals.

The priests of the Temple of Amoudosi predict when and where the Burnings occur. Priests journey to all corners of Narawat to pray to Amoudosi, consult visions, and watch for other signs. They are aided in this task by the Flamekeepers, an order of followers of Amoudosi. The Flamekeepers study fire exclusively, both holy and mundane.



The priests of Amoudosi monitor the pit in Milango ya Maarifa, the spire in the center of Narawi which hides the only access to the volcano below. The priests offer artworks to Amoudosi by dropping them in the pit. They believe that if Amoudosi were to become angry with them, he would cause the volcano that protects Narawi to erupt.

Narawati go to the Temple of Amoudosi whenever they are about to travel anywhere in Narawat, and ask which areas to avoid. The priests records of recent Burnings and reports of upcoming Burnings, to send the Narawati to areas that should have strong growth and no fire damage.

The current Fundisi of Amoudosi is Baqbou Umbala. He has left Narawat to find the source of the dark vision that he and the Priests' Circle witnessed. He believes that the wars sweeping over the Accordlands are another aspect of this darkness, and he has sought out the Free Kingdoms armies to try and find the true source of this conflict.

DJARAT

Symbol: A tree with twelve long, snakelike branches, each holding a sword

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: Combat, Protection

Cleric Alignments: Lawful Good, Neutral Good

Domains: Protection, Strength, War

Favored Weapon: Long sword

Djarat is known as the Protector with Twelve Blades. He teaches that it is the duty of every Narawati to fight to preserve the Narawat way of life, yet he also teaches not to seek out conflict. When faced with an enemy, Djarat instructs his followers to offer a hand in friendship. If that enemy cuts off the offered hand, the Narawati should have already had his sword in his other hand to kill the treacherous foe. It is a world view that even many Narawati do not grasp.

The Temple of Djarat runs a facility to train all Narawati how to defend themselves and Narawat. The priests bring in teachers from among the havat-lahn and share their own expertise. It is considered second only to the Havat-chagua as a martial academy. All Narawati who are not members of the Havat-chagua train here.

An order called the Arm of Djarat is the personal guard of the temple's fundisi. This order is unusual because membership is always temporary; each member is an havat-lahn, and the oath taken when entering the Havat-chagua does not permit its students to join another permanent order. Instead, they take membership in the Arm of Djarat as a temporary posting.

The current fundisi of Djarat is Rustiq Umbala. He bears the sword *Mkono-Djarat*, "the Hand of Djarat," which is a +4 defending long sword. He left Narawat with his brother, Baqbou, to discover the source of the shared vision's darkness. The last time he was seen, he led a group of his followers into Tseleuse to ask the elves for aid.

KINAMISA

Symbol: No symbol

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Portfolio: Good, Evil

Cleric Alignments: Neutral, Neutral Evil (rarely), Neutral Good

Domains: Evil, Good, Protection

Favored Weapon: Staff

Kinamisa was not this god's original name. Before Narawat existed, the gods of the pantheon spun out of the fundamental forces of the universe, including evil. When the people of Narawat discovered the nine gods, the God of Evil was disturbed. He said, "I was born of the universe because there is a part of the universe that is truly evil. Yet these people have done no wrong. They are made from me, along with the other gods, yet they do not act on their evil natures. Why should I bring evil upon them?" The God of Evil considered dissipation, but he knew that if he were to cease to exist that there would be a void, and the universe would just create a new and terrible god to replace him. So he instead decided to do nothing. Wherever he went, evil would follow, and whenever he spoke, evil would fester, so he stopped moving and stopped speaking. He became Kinamisa, "the Silent One."

The Temple of Kinamisa is a place of pure devotion. The worshipers do not worship evil, but rather they give thanks for one who would mask his own true self in order to save the people of Narawat. Many see Kinamisa as the greatest hero in the history of the world.

The Order of Silence serves the temple of Kinamisa. Members of this group have no official tasks, but are simply followers of Kinamisa so devout that they have taken vows of silence. A rare few actually remove their tongues.

The last fundisi of Kinamisa was Olu Issa. He took his own life, believing that the vision of blackness foretold the end of Kinamisa's reverie and his return to spreading evil. This thought destroyed his faith. He is not the only one who has considered this possibility, and far fewer Narawati visit the temple of Kinamisa than ever before.

Clerics of Kinamisa may take the Good or Evil domains (or both) regardless of their personal alignment.

KINYAMKELA

Symbol: A cloud, often with lightning erupting from within

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Portfolio: Chaos, Destruction, End of the World

Cleric Alignments: Chaotic Good, Chaotic Neutral

Domains: Air, Destruction, Chaos

Favored Weapon: Mace

Kinyamkela is in fact the Narawati name for the Storm. The Narawati believe that the Storm was born at the same moment that Amoudosi descended into the earth to give the gods their home. One great day Kinyamkela will join himself with Amoudosi, and that will mark the destruction of this world and the birth of a new one.

The Temple of Kinyamkela is the smallest of the temples. The priests here have heard stories that there are worshipers elsewhere in the Accordlands that do not recognize the Storm as Kinyamkela. They believe these false worshipers will be the first slain when Kinyamkela returns his attention to these lands. Fortunately for the Narawati, Deverenia has not yet heard this heresy, or the Empire would spare no expense in eradicating the desert people. There is no special order for the Temple of Kinyamkela. Kinyamkela is a distant god who has shown no great favor or wrath to Narawat in the centuries since the nation's founding, though he still grants spells to his followers.

The fundisi of Kinyamkela is Shomari Jawara. He is one of the four fundisi that remained to rule Narawat. A brusque and forbidding man, Shomari believes that the vision of darkness that they saw is an indication that Kinyamkela is coming to join himself with Amoudosi. He keeps this opinion to himself, because of the panic such a revelation would cause.

KIZAZI

Symbol: A ball of swirling energy of many different colors

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: Birth

Cleric Alignments: Lawful Good, Lawful Neutral, Neutral Good

Domains: Earth, Good, Healing

Favored Weapon: Staff

Kizazi is the Life-bringer, the one who takes energy from each of the nine gods to form the souls that animate newborn Narawati. In this way, the people of Narawat are truly people of the gods.

The Temple of Kizazi is staffed predominately by women, and Narawati go to the temple in order to pray to Kizazi while they are trying to conceive or waiting for delivery. They ask Kizazi to take more energy from one god or another in order to influence the kind of person the child will become.

The order of the Life-keepers believes that the life brought forth by Kizazi is so precious that every measure must be made to preserve it, and study healing both magical and mundane. They serve in the temple, and travel throughout Narawat in order to find people in need.

The fundisi of Kizazi is Nandiri Foluke, the only female fundisi, and one of the four who remained to rule Narawat. Nandiri has overcome her initial sorrow to become the strongest leader in the Circle, and is responsible for holding the other remaining three together.

MAUTI

Symbol: The outline of a man with a body of pure light

Alignment: Neutral

Portfolio: Death

Cleric Alignments: Neutral

Domains: Death, Travel, Fire

Favored Weapon: Morningstar

Mauti is called the Keeper of the Spirit, and the Narawati believe that he is the least judgmental of the gods. When a Narawati dies, he is beyond earthly concerns, so how he lived his mortal life is of no concern to Mauti.

The temple of Mauti handles all funeral practices for Narawat. The bodies are burned to give the physical form back to Amoudosi. The priests of Mauti chant and pray for the full eight days to help the koma find their way to blissful union with Mauti.

The temple is served by the Order of the Vanguard, trained to detect the koma traveling around Narawat. It is the duty of the Vanguard to ensure that nothing interferes with the final trip of the koma and their union with Mauti.

The fundisi of Mauti is Dume Kodwo. He is the eldest of the Priests' Circle, and is one of the four who remains to rule Narawat. The idea that he could die without joining with his god is the most horrifying thing he can imagine.



SANAA

Symbol: A mirror

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Portfolio: Artwork, Beauty, Perfection

Cleric Alignments: Lawful Good (rarely), Lawful Neutral, Lawful Evil

Domains: Earth, Knowledge, Magic

Favored Weapon: Hammer

Sanaa is the Goddess of Beauty and Art. Works of art are very important in Narawati culture, and the Narawati believe that the more perfect a piece is, the more blessings it brings. Sanaa is happy to see beauty, a happiness that spreads to all the gods. This appeases Amoudosi under the city, as well as bringing a better harvest from Vuno, and makes Kizaki more receptive to expectant parents. Sanaa is unique among the Narawati pantheon, as she is widely said to have abandoned her blacksmith-god husband. She is not actually native to the pantheon, and is much paler than the other gods, though she has many arms like Djarat.

Artisans bring their raw materials to the Temple of Sanaa to have her priests pray over them. The artisans believe that if Sanaa guides their hands, they will be able to create works of art more perfect than mere mortals can achieve.

Some artisans join Sanaa's Order of the Implements. All Narawati artisans believe that Sanaa will help them to create works of art. The Implements believe that Sanaa actually creates the art, using the artisans themselves as tools. An Implement meditates and enters a trance state, in which he creates a piece of art. He takes no credit for the artwork, but rather claims that Sanaa created it himself.

The fundisi of Sanaa is Bem Kaundodo, one of the four remaining members of the Priests' Circle. He is opposed to the current policy of the Circle retaining the power of governance, but has agreed to go along with the others. He knows a time of brutish ugliness is upon the Narawati, and that fills him with great sorrow.

URASHRASHA

Symbol: A drop of water

Alignment: Neutral Good

Portfolio: Rain, Water

Cleric Alignments: Chaotic Good, Lawful Good, Neutral Good

Domains: Water, Healing, Air

Favored Weapon: Dagger

Urashrasha is the God of Rain — and rain is a rare occurrence in Narawat, marking Urashrasha as the shyest of the gods. He keeps to himself and interferes as little as possible. About twice a year he comes to visit. He looks upon the land of Narawat to sob over its beauty and the beauty of its people.

The Temple of Urashrasha is responsible for keeping Narawi in fresh water. They pray to Urashrasha, so that when he comes he is moved enough to weep extra tears, and fill their cisterns.

The Order of Water-Bearers believes that rain is a gift so valuable that it should not be wasted. They study purification methods; both magical and mundane, and travel Narawat purifying water. No Narawati would use water to put out fires,

even in the worst Burning. Instead, the people use sand to choke the flames. When someone drowns, it is because Urashrasha has claimed him: a great blessing on his family if the person lived a good life, or a judgment on an evil so terrible that it moves even Urashrasha to act.

The last fundisi of Urashrasha was Dnamdi Gyamfi, who killed himself after witnessing the vision of darkness. The temple continues to perform its duties, but has not yet elected a new fundisi.

VUNO

Symbol: A single vegetable bulb

Alignment: Neutral Good

Portfolio: Harvest, Sustenance

Cleric Alignments: Chaotic Good, Lawful Good, Neutral, Neutral Good

Domains: Plants, Sun, Water

Favored Weapon: Sickle

Vuno is the God of the Harvest, he who causes the hardy plants to grow once Amoudosi's fiery blessing passes. Without Vuno's protection, Amoudosi might accidentally damage the roots of the plants, slowing their regrowth.

The Temple of Vuno prays to ensure a bountiful harvest, and the nomadic Narawati visit it every time they leave Narawi to gather food from the land.

The Order of Mabotea works out of the Temple of Vuno. They study the plants gathered by the nomads to find out why some species are stronger than others. They experiment in cross-pollination and other forms of farming to make the plants hardier, and quicker to return after a burning.

The fundisi of Vuno was Mouboli Ehioze, the first to commit suicide after the dark vision. The temple continues to pray for good harvests, but has not yet chosen a new fundisi.

Neus

Fineltour once asked Neus the Farmer whether an all-knowing, all-powerful creature could make something stronger and wiser than himself. Neus the Farmer looked to humanity, and became Neus the Hunter and Neus the Scribe.

— Frederick Lahr

Symbol: Circle divided into three equal portions

Alignment: Neutral Good

Portfolio: Hunter, Farmer, Scribe

Worshippers: 600,000 (4000 priests)

Cleric Alignments: Lawful Good, Neutral Good, Lawful Neutral, Neutral

Domains: Hunter: Animal, Healing. Farmer: Plant, Protection. Scribe: Good, Knowledge.

History

Before the destruction the Dragon wrought, gods filled the earth. Each ruled over a tribe and lived among its people. In its madness, the Dragon devoured most of these beings until the earth was laid waste. Neus was the god of the hunt for a tribe that survived that fateful battle, but his lands were scarred; hundreds died of famine while searching for game. Neus looked upon his people, recognized their need, and resolved to answer their prayers. Most gods refuse to change, remaining stagnant for eons, but Neus devoted himself to uncovering other sources of knowledge, alternate ways of accomplishing things. He extended himself into the earth and became one with the soil. He learned to harvest the fruit of the land and to replant it, to water the crops and to burn the husks. He created the skills needed to coax food from the scarred ground and gave that knowledge to his people. Thousands flocked to him, and he taught them to survive.

As more starving people came to worship him, the fields strained to feed them all. Families lacked for potable water, hides to shelter them, and tools. Neus studied the nature of men and devised systems to allow people to live together, combining their knowledge and talents. He taught his people how to build sturdy homes to shelter their bodies, how to carve words in stone for others to read, how to preserve knowledge and support each other as a community. Towns grew into cities and prospered under his tutelage, and his worshipers spread to fill the Accordlands.

While the Deverenians built their Empire, the common people wanted nothing to do with the bloodthirsty gods they followed. They publicly praised the Deverenian deities, but privately revered Neus and the other gods who had survived the battle with the Dragon. Eventually the people grew tired of rule by the cold Emperors and threw off their shackles, once more openly worshipping Neus.

With their newfound freedom, dissension broke out among Neus' people. Some declared him the Lord of Hunters, others hailed him as the Father of the Farmer, and yet others called him the Scribe of Heaven. Despite his urgings for peace, the conflict between these factions grew until brother fought brother over his true nature. Until then Neus had simply wandered from one gathering of his people to another, but now each town and village demanded the honor of housing him.

Finally the god summoned his followers to a meeting on a sacred plain. Neus confounded them all by holding aloft a large disc and declaring that it held his essence. With a thunderous crack, he split the disc in three equal pieces and declared himself Hunter, Farmer and Scribe: each part of equal importance and each a part of his whole. Then he ascended from this world, never to set foot among his beloved folk again. His people finally understood his will and lived together peacefully.

A century ago, the elven people struck at Andover hoping to annihilate it. Avatars of all four Elements decimated the human armies in unprecedented carnage. Hordes of undead rose from the battlefields and threatened to exterminate the humans of Andover. Still refusing to appear personally,

Neus contacted an elf named Syneri who was deeply opposed the elven use of necromancy. With Syneri's powerful magic and his knowledge of elven habits, the humans banished the Elements and undead armies, striking deeply into Myreth until the elves surrendered. With that tremendous victory, the worship of Neus has spread like wildfire across the Western lands.

Dogma

Neus sees all his followers as members of a single tribe who must look out for each others' well-being. Neus embodies different principles depending on which of his aspects he emphasizes. Worshipers revere all three of them and call upon the one that matches their most immediate needs while selecting one aspect as the object for their deepest devotion.

The Hunter aspect of Neus stalks his prey through darkest night. He is both a warrior and provider in this manifestation. Warriors, woodsmen and rogues are the primary worshipers of the Hunter, who teaches them self-reliance.

The Farmer aspect plants grain and harvests it to feed his people. Those who follow him make their living from the earth. He teaches them patience and common sense; the secrets of when to plant and when to allow the land to lie fallow.



The Scribe aspect gathers wisdom for his people. Those who follow him are scribes, craftsmen, and wizards. He teaches them to be quick-witted and lays the wisdom of the world at their feet.

Sins & Repentance

Neus saw his people as an extended family. Thus, he decreed, the greatest misdeed was to strike down a fellow brother. Murder is a sin in all circumstances because it harms a sibling. The Dragon's great evil resided in striving to destroy family life. Owing to this everything created by the Dragon after it went mad is tainted. The Storm and the Elven Elements are abhorrent and must be subjugated. However, the family of life is tenuous and crimes short of murder against nonbelievers are considered minor transgressions.

Criminal activity against another believer of Neus is tantamount to striking out against a brother. To abscond with the goods of another believer is a sin because it injures him, but believers are expected to be generous with their brothers. If a believer does not share, then a thief who steals from him is simply redressing the wrong. Rogues who follow Neus prey upon the rich and treat the poor with dignity. To harm another believer is a sin, but if done in aid of another it is forgiven.

Neus does not dwell on punishment. Those who believe in him and act for the good of their people prosper. Those who act wickedly suffer. Priests remind sinners to act righteously, but do not scold. If a believer sins against a brother, he must immediately make amends. The wronged may forgive the sinner or not, but if the apology is sincere the sin is cleansed. Insincere apologies or those made when the wronged cannot accept it are sins, as is not forgiving a repentant sinner. These acts prevent the family of Neus from being healed from the injury done to it.

The Afterlife

If a person leads a decent life, has remorse for his wrongdoings and seeks the forgiveness of those he sins against, death holds no terror. The believer ascends to a world that Neus has prepared for. The details of this other world are unknown except that everyone lives harmoniously. Followers of the Hunter see it as a forest where they eternally stalk the evil in others. Followers of the Farmer imagine it as an enormous garden where the believers bloom eternally. Scribes see it as an enormous machine moving in eternal perfection.

For those weighed down by sin and cruelty, the next world is less enjoyable. They perceive the true happiness of those in heaven, but cannot experience it until they truly repent of their misdeeds in life. Heavenly visions aside, all know that they await the day when a great threat shall rise once again against all the Accordlands. On that prophetic day, they will return from heaven as a huge host and destroy the threat.

Church Leadership

Great-Grandfather Ardolus Gal leads the Church of Neus from the city of Saraga. He oversees the church, ensuring that doctrine remains pure. Gal is an older priest who has watched Nothrog, elves, and Deverenians attack his people. Now he desires nothing more than peace. He is willing to sacrifice anything to achieve it,

even allowing his people to become slaves to these cruel masters. Gal is also the Grandfather — the highest-ranking priest — of the Scribe faction.

The other two Grandfathers, Rognel Faldeen of the Hunters and Mackibus Welby of the Farmers, lead their factions and serve underneath the Great-Grandfather. Whenever the Great-Grandfather can no longer administer the church, he selects one of the other Grandfathers to take his place.

Orders

Neus encourages people to seek apprenticeships to become craftsmen, scholars, warriors, or farmers. Once they taste life and see what it holds, those who feel the call of Neus are invited to become members of the church. The church rarely accepts anyone under the age of twenty-five into their ranks. The lower ranks focus on serving their community and spreading the blessings of Neus. Advancement comes when a person's wisdom and maturity are primed for it, regardless of what openings exist. It is common for high-ranking priests to outnumber novices. The priests answer to the Fathers, a group of twenty priests from each faction who administer the church. The Fathers report to the Grandfather who rules their faction. An important focus for the church is adapting the church to fit the needs of the worshipers of their area. Priests often convert from one faction of Neus to another to better serve the needs of their people.

Heresies

Some of the followers of the Scribe present when Neus ascended claimed that the holy disc broke unevenly, signifying that their faction of the church is superior to the others. They strive to prove this in order to ensure that the Scribe rules the Church. While the Church disapproves of this group, they have not taken any action against it.

Secrets

The holy disc *did* break unevenly; the section of the Hunter was larger than the other two. This was a simple accident, and Neus did not wish for it to cause problems, so he ordered the holy disc buried in a tomb to keep it from causing a schism.

The Nothrog Totems

Scarab lends us Her knowledge and power. Through Her we have the wisdom to choose our fights and the strength to win them.

— Taoth, Legion Commander of the Tribe of Scarab

Symbol: Various, imagery based on totem

Alignment: Any (Lawful Evil, Neutral Evil, Chaotic Evil are most common)

Portfolio: Courage, martial prowess, ingenuity, etc.
(based on appropriateness of totem)

Worshippers: Nothrog and any races belonging to a Legion or Tribe

Cleric Alignments: Any appropriate to totem

Domains: Various, though all totems have access to War

Favored Weapon: Various

The Nothrog have at once the most varied and the most unified religion in the Accordlands. There are no heresies, no wars over ideology. The totems, whatever they might be, provide each legion their strength, and that is all that matters.

Their totem defines a legion, just as the totem is initially defined by the legion. The siege engines of Hellbringer's Legion embody the power and strength of Mammoth. The fury of Uthanak's warriors is clearly representative of Bear. The canny tactics of Savrukk's scouts is a reflection of Viper's trickery.

History

Before the Nothrog existed, a number of humanoid races wandered the southeastern Accordlands. When the Storm ravaged their lands after the death of the Dragon, many of these races were wiped out. The survivors banded together and within a few generations the Nothrog were born.

The fierce early Nothrog were primitive and highly superstitious. The nomadic tribes admired the various animals that they encountered for the traits each exhibited. A tribe near Deverenia needing strength would make supplications to the bears. Those near the elves needed to be stealthy and remained so by offering gifts to snakes or bats.

The shamans and druids of the Nothrog discovered how to summon spirits and bind them within a carving of their favored animal, creating a totem. The longer such a spirit stays within this form, the stronger it became, and the stronger its legion became.

So has it been for centuries, and there is no reason to think that matters will change. Regardless of which totem they follow, the Nothrog have always been devout. They draw their strength from their rituals. Legions and tribes come and go. Cities change hands on a continual basis. Totems die. This is all part of the cycle that governs the Nothrog, and this tumultuous chaos, ironically enough, gives the Nothrog a sense of stability.

Dogma

Totems look for specific qualities or traits. The totem priests of the tribe preach to the Nothrog about how they should behave, giving examples of what they should aspire to. All the rituals the priests perform are dedicated to certain aspects of their totem. Most are considered battle rites.

The priests are animists. While they honor their totem above all others, they know there are lessons to be learned from each animal, as well as from occurrences of nature. Just because a Nothrog follows Viper

does not mean he ignores Bear's lessons in strength or Fox's wily cunning. The Nothrog respect nature and of their place in it. Since they place themselves at the top, however, they sometimes act with less respect than the priests expect.

When a new tribe is formed, it seeks a totem. Each member of the legion bleeds into a vast cauldron while a sacrificial creature is placed in a ceremonial pit. This creature must be sentient, unharmed, and both mentally and physically sound. It is quite common for a strong Nothrog warrior to volunteer to be the sacrifice, hoping his strength will give them a strong totem. The highest-ranking shaman or druid drops a carving of the totem they wish for into the cauldron of boiling blood. The spirit arrives and battles the sacrifice, with a longer battle forming a stronger totem. Once the totem has defeated the sacrifice, the totem can manifest its physical form. It returns to the spirit realm of the Nothrog to await the summonings of the priests. Normally the shaman or druid who performed the rite becomes the new totem's first high priest.

One practice that separates them from other religions is the fact that the Nothrog do not pray to their totems, instead asking a totem priest to have the totem intervene. Nothrog soldiers ask to have their totem lend them strength, speed or another ability to take with them into battle. Totem priests are given gifts in exchange for speaking to the totems on the supplicant's behalf. Truly great requests must go through the high priest, as totem priests cannot speak to their totem nearly as efficiently as the high priest.



Typically a totem places a restriction on a tribe, such as not hunting its kind. If the totem does not feel that the tribe is meeting this condition, it will leave them. Totems also leave a tribe if the high priest becomes weak. Once a totem leaves, the tribe is essentially dissolved, and those responsible are treated to a hideous death.

The only other time a totem can die and the legion dissolve is when one totem destroys another in battle. A legion whose totem is destroyed in combat has two choices: permanently join the victorious legion or rebuild their tribe. Rebuilding is a challenging feat, practically impossible to accomplish. If they do succeed — and such tribes are legendary — then the shamans and druids of the tribe must seek out a new totem. These totems take on the form of a stronger animal, because the previous form was too weak to contain the strength of the tribe.

Outside of their totems the Nothrog believe in only one other thing: the Final Battle That Breaks the World, the Nothrog apocalypse. While others pray that the end of the world won't occur during their lifetime, the Nothrog revel in the thought. It will be a glorious battle that will destroy everything, and the race that survives will be the basis for the next world. That the Nothrog will win this battle is unquestioned. They merely prepare themselves so that their tribe will be primed to accept the final glory in true Nothrog style.

Sins & Repentance

There is only one Nothrog sin: cowardice. Murder, treachery and brutality are all accepted aspects of Nothrog life. The legions and tribes constantly war against one another, and to not participate in these activities signifies a weak soul that disgraces the totem.

Cowardice comes in all forms. Running from a battle or just plain not engaging an enemy are most common, though on some occasions the chief shaman accuses merciful Legion Commanders of cowardice. Normally these shamans have designs of their own for the legion, and use this condemnation as the means to accomplish their goals.

Punishment varies. The legion commander always determines it, though the highest-ranking druid or shaman advises on an appropriate course of action. Sometimes it is death or exile, other times slavery. Occasionally a ritual is devised for the sinner to prove their worth. The outcome is usually death, though sometimes the accused emerges victorious, having proven his dedication to the tribe. These trials always occur when a shaman accuses the legion commander of cowardice. If the legion commander proves worthy, the shaman's life is forfeit. If the legion commander fails, then the high priest assumes leadership of the legion or tribe.

The Afterlife

As one might expect, the Nothrog afterlife is a brutal death-filled place where every day is another opportunity to win glory.

Nothrog believe that when they die their spirits travel to the realm of their totem. Here they battle alongside their totem against other spirit warriors. Each day the Nothrog fight and die, then return to feast in the great halls of their totem, drinking and eating all through the night, never tiring. This cycle lasts for eternity and it is believed that these battles influence the strength of their totem and tribe. To the Nothrog it is paradise.



This afterlife is known as N'will'skirg. It is said that when the Final Battle That Breaks the World comes, all the tribes of the Nothrog from N'will'skirg will join in the fight, using the skills they have honed for centuries in combat to bring victory to the Nothrog people and glory to their tribe.

For cowards there is no glorious battle. They too go to N'will'skirg in death, where they are hung from mighty war banners. Their horrific screams of torment herald the legions' entry into battle.

Religious Leadership

A legion commander rules the tribes and legions of the Nothrog, but in matters of religion the high priest holds sway. Typically the totem of the tribe or legion chooses the high priest from among the totem priests. Even the lowliest are considered if they have enough conviction. No high priest takes orders from another. Each is an autonomous ruler of their tribes' rituals and religion. Often the high priest from one tribe wars with another during battle, using the power of their totem directly to sway the outcome of the battle.

Taoth, legion commander of the Tribe of Scarab, is a reputable shaman, equally respected and feared. Previously the High Priest of Scarab, she became the legion commander when the previous one died in battle. While his death was everything a Nothrog could wish for, his chief general wished to sound a retreat. Taoth slew him on the spot for cowardice and assumed command of the legion. Under her leadership the Tribe of Scarab has grown in strength and numbers. Scarab is a crafty totem, and guides Taoth carefully. When Taoth first became commander, her tribe was fierce but small. At its peak Scarab's tribe was two legions strong. The arrival of Nassiral Hate was the only thing that stopped its growth. When Taoth encountered him he already controlled the legions of the Bear, the Red Wolf, and Mammoth. Not wishing to waste her resources or risk Scarab needlessly, she joined Hate's cause of her own free will. She has gained only time and Hate's suspicions for this, and has yet to prove herself to Hate. She prays to Scarab for guidance, and awaits the opportunity to break free from Hate's rule.

The Legion of Mammoth has been thrust into the center of Nothrog politics. From the city of Lukkot, the legion is the main supplier of Nothrog siege engines. While all legions manufacture their own siege weapons, none touch the quality and effectiveness of Lukkot's. This is the reason Hate was sure to conquer it. After defeating Uthanak and Krun, Hate made his way to Lukkot. When he arrived, a peculiar sight greeted him. A giant named Sceth Hellbringer was battling Mammoth, trying to take Lukkot for his own. Hate intervened and stopped the battle, and gave the legion and the city to Hellbringer in return for his fealty. Hate also took an albino child from the city. Two years later the child returned, slew the High Priest of Mammoth for cowardice, and was chosen by Mammoth as its new high priest. Contal has served Mammoth and Hate equally ever since. Most in the city believe him to be Hate's watchdog, but they dare not move against him while he has Mammoth's blessing.

Nassiral Hate is the high priest of his personal totem, Cynophontis. With the power of his totem he has conquered more legions than anyone in the history of the Nothrog. While Taoth is respected, Hate is feared. Bear, Red Wolf, Mammoth, Boar, Wyvern, Stag, and Griffon have all fallen before his might and joined his cause. Scarab has joined as well, but cannot rightly be said to have been conquered. Hate has his own plans and they are slowly coming to fruition. He has taken the human city of Baraxton and made a pact with the Deverenians.

Not all tribes worship a totem. The Nothrog around Sharn Keep, on the border of Deverenian Empire, worship something far more terrible. A reaver, an evil creature bent on domination, has taken control of many Nothrog and captured Sharn from the Deverenians. Why the Terror of Sharn Keep has done this is not clear at the moment. Hate sent three armies to investigate before he decided not to risk further assaults. The Terror continues to augment its power base, and has total control of the Nothrog there.

Tribe Hierarchy

All Nothrog albinos become shamans and druids, totem priests for their legions. All totem priests are equal and answer to the high priest the totem chooses. In some cases the high priest is also the legion commander. When this happens the focus of the legion becomes so strong and its dedication so unwavering that the legion is highly respected, and sometimes feared. The Legion of Scarab and the Legion of Cynophontis are two such legions.

The high priest is the only one allowed to wear a carving of the legion's totem, though all shamans and druids bear images of creatures to remind them of the power, wisdom or experience of these creatures. These likenesses honor the totems while inspiring the shaman or druid to a better understanding of his own strengths.

When the high priest of the legion dies, a pit is dug and his body thrown into it. The legion totem manifests and consumes its former high priest. In this way the totem's form is strengthened. At that point the totem chooses its next high priest.

Secrets

High priests of every tribe ask one question: where did Nassiral Hate get his totem?

None dare ask him.

Nassiral Hate received the ritual to summon his totem, Cynophontis, from the Medusan Lord Malrog Ironface, who also increased Hate's abilities as a seer. In return for these gifts, Hate would deliver the Nothrog legions to Malrog. To assist Hate further, Malrog took him to the Ethereal Plane. With knowledge of the inner workings of the totems, Hate plans to control every legion and tribe.

If any shaman or druid could discover the ritual Hate used to create Cynophontis, he could merge his totem with other spirits. Such a merged spirit would be able to challenge Cynophontis and upset Hate's rule over the Nothrog. Hate is assiduously careful to keep the ritual secret; not even his own priests know it exists.

Totems

As varied as the totems might be in appearance, they are all quite similar. There is little variety in favored weapons, with most like-minded totems favoring the same weapon.

A totem can be any animal, real or magical (including magical beasts). There can be multiple instances of totems; many tribes have been dedicated to Boar and Bear. The Domains a totem has access to are limited. All totems can access War. If the totem is Lawful, then it has access to Law. Chaotic totems have access to the Domain of Chaos, while Neutral totems can access Trickery. The rare good-aligned totems have access to Protection. Evil totems have access to the Evil domain. Totems that are neutral in respect to the forces of good and evil grant access to the Travel Domain. A totem might have another domain, if it were to destroy another totem in combat or through age and power, but most rely on their high priest to shape their will and give them access to a domain of the high priest's choosing. However, in the rare instances that the totem is insulted by the choice (Bear dislikes the Domain of Healing, for instance), the totem manifests itself before the legion commander, ordering him to kill the disrespectful high priest.

When one totem defeats another through combat it absorbs that totem's energy, gaining strength. If the defeated totem granted access to a Domain the victorious totem did not, then the victorious totem can take that Domain as one of its own.

A totem's favored weapon is based on its disposition. While there is some variation between tribes, they rarely stray from the norm.

Lawful Good:	Mace
Lawful Neutral:	War Hammer
Lawful Evil:	Greatsword
Neutral Good:	Morningstar
Neutral:	Flail
Neutral Evil:	Shortsword
Chaotic Good:	Halberd
Chaotic Neutral:	Spear
Chaotic Evil:	Battle Axe

Through the centuries there have been many totems. The constant struggle between tribes has led to the birth and death of hundreds, if not thousands, of totems. Once a totem dies, the priests cease spreading its legends and tales, so its memory dies as well. While all totems are respected, only a few are powerful enough to be feared.

BEAR — UTHANAK'S TOTEM (CHAOTIC EVIL)

Domains: War, Chaos, Evil and Strength

There have been many tribes dedicated to Bear; Uthanak's is currently the most powerful.

Uthanak's father Gorkhan was a noble leader who guided his people diligently through a prosperous era. While martial and combative by nature, the Tribe of Bear limited itself to skirmishes with neighboring tribes and the Deverenian Empire. The harvests were ample and the people content. Bear, however, was not.

Five years ago, during the annual rite to rouse Bear from his winter slumber, Bear awoke angry. His tribe had grown soft. His spirit tore through the ranks of Nothrog, killing rampantly. He growled at Gorkhan, shouting that war had come for his people, and they were not ready. Bear would not suffer a weak tribe any further.

Uthanak shouted to Bear, promising him blood. The pact was sealed, and Uthanak became the new legion commander. He burnt their home to the ground and then made his way south. Bear had shown him the vision of a mighty cleric, Nassiral Hate. When Uthanak found him Hate had already defeated the Legion of the Red Wolf, led by the warlord Krun. With the fervor of Bear running through him, Uthanak challenged Hate in combat for supremacy of all the legions present. He lost.

Bear knew this defeat must come to pass. However strong Uthanak might be, his soft life had not prepared him with true martial power. Bear led Uthanak to Hate so that the young Nothrog could learn how to make war. Hate has used Uthanak's talents well, and Bear is not disappointed.

Bear appears as a huge dire bear, and once engaged in combat nothing short of death will stop it. While Bear can cast spells, it rarely does so, preferring to use its claws and teeth.

CYNOPHONTIS — NASSIRAL HATE'S TOTEM (LAWFUL EVIL)

Domains: War, Law, Evil, Death, Destruction, Protection, and Knowledge

Favored Weapon: Whip

The most powerful of the Nothrog totems is Cynophontis, the totem of Nassiral Hate. Cynophontis manifests as a pack of enormous, vicious dogs, four feet high at the shoulder and powerfully built. On the occasions when it has manifested, Cynophontis' pack has numbered as few as six, or as many as a few dozen. No totem has yet been able to stand up to it, and few legions are as yet willing to risk their totems and instead subject themselves to Hate's will.

It is not known where Hate first summoned Cynophontis, nor how he controlled a spirit so powerful. Other tribes have attempted to tap the incredibly powerful spirit as their totem, but have generally met with destruction. No single spirit that powerful will allow itself to be subjugated. Hate realized this, and ritually bound the spirits of many smaller totems into one powerful entity. Much like his conquest of the Nothrog, Hate forced a number of spirits to relinquish their individuality to serve his needs.

Cynophontis has not yet consumed another totem; Hate will not allow it. Hate wishes to bend the legions to his will, not break them. Hate also realizes that if Cynophontis grows more powerful by feasting on other totems, he may not be able to control it. While he is not truly worried about this happening, he still does not wish to tempt fate.

When summoned Cynophontis appears as a pack of 6d6 giant dogs or wolves. It attacks with highly coordinated pack tactics. Normally a few stay outside melee ranged and cast spells against their foes while their pack mates enter close combat.

FENRIS — KRUN'S TOTEM (LAWFUL EVIL)

Domains: War, Law, Evil and Protection

Fenris is a young totem. A replacement given to Krun's legion by Nassiral Hate, Fenris is one of Cynophontis' brood. The high priest was quite upset, claiming that Hate should have absorbed the legion outright or allowed Krun to quest to rebuild his legion. Krun killed him, and Fenris chose a more receptive totem priest to serve him.

The majority of the legion does not know Fenris is not their original totem. The legion's morale would have shattered if they knew their totem was dead and they could not properly replace it. When he is summoned into battle the Red Wolf is bigger, stronger and more tenacious than he has ever been. Those who do know the truth realize that Fenris himself would kill them if they revealed his true nature. Fenris has found his new position to his liking, and does not wish his legion to fracture.

The reason for this duplicity is Krun's wife. The warlord secretly married a human woman, Marta. Nassiral Hate has taken Marta into his custody; her safety is his leverage against Krun.

Because Fenris is essentially an extension of Cynophontis (since totems do not actually reproduce) it remains to be seen how the two aspects will evolve. Currently, the high priest of Fenris has chosen the Domain of Protection for his legion, one currently accessible by Cynophontis. If this were to change, it is not known if Cynophontis would gain access to the new Domain as well.

Fenris is still a young totem. When summoned it appears as a large dire wolf. It has taken this appearance to continue the illusion that Red Wolf is still the tribe's totem. In combat Fenris charges its enemies, using its massive jaws to bite.

MAMMOTH — SCETH HELLBRINGER'S TOTEM (LAWFUL NEUTRAL)

Domains: War, Law, Travel and Destruction

Perhaps the oldest totem is Mammoth of the Tribe of Lukkot. For 500 years Mammoth's tribe has provided siege engines and weapons of war to the Nothrog. Machines made in Mammoth's image roam the Nothrog lands, and whenever a siege weapon is used, if it was built in Lukkot it does service in the name of Mammoth.

Mammoth is perhaps the most distant totem, rarely intervening in the politics that plague Lukkot. The city was founded on treachery and ambition, two ideologies that would seem at odds with its nature, but Mammoth does not care. As long as the rites are performed and Mammoth is honored it lends its strength to the legion. One of Mammoth's most perplexing acts is the ascension of its new high priest, Contal.

When Mammoth fought Sceth Hellbringer, the giant was going to destroy it. The giant was battle hardened, while Mammoth had not been summoned for centuries. When Nassiral Hate interfered and gave control of the legion to Hellbringer, Mammoth was pleased. It finally had a legion commander who could make it strong again, a feeling Mammoth had all but forgotten. Mammoth spoke to Hate and gave the warlord a young boy, Contal. He told Hate to finish the boy's education and then send him back to Lukkot to replace the high priest in office. Hate was more than happy to oblige.

When Contal returned he murdered the high priest, calling him a coward, and Mammoth chose Contal to replace the fallen shaman. The tribe did not understand, and does not trust Contal, but Mammoth does not care. Sceth and Contal are making more conquests in the name of Mammoth, giving the totem strength. That is all Mammoth cares about.

When Mammoth is summoned, it appears as an enormous brown woolly mammoth with cracked, burned tusks. Mammoth's favored tactic is to charge its enemies, trampling them underfoot and spearing them on the ends of its large tusks.

SCARAB — TAOTH'S TOTEM (NEUTRAL EVIL)

Domains: War, Trickery, Evil, Knowledge and Magic

Originally a common totem, with many Nothrog priests wishing to call upon its guile, Scarab wished to be more powerful than the others of its kind. Scarab led its legion to destroy and absorb every tribe that called upon another Scarab. Eventually Scarab's legion commander fell in battle with one of these tribes, and the next in line for command called for retreat. Scarab ordered the high priest, the powerful shaman Taoth, to kill the cowardly general. She did so, assuming command of the legion, and led it to victory.

In Taoth, Scarab had the perfect legion commander: loyal, powerful, cunning and utterly fearless. Soon all other tribes that called upon a form of Scarab were laid to waste, and Scarab had accomplished its goal. The ten legions of Scarab united in one great tribe dedicated to its wisdom. Taoth began planning to conquer the elven forest of Tyrael, as the constant fighting had depleted some of the tribe's resources, and the forest would provide wood for new siege weapons.

Then Hate came.

Scarab is strong, but not foolish. It could sense Hate's power as well as the power of his totem. Scarab ordered Taoth to capitulate to Hate, and wait until an opportunity presented itself. While the headstrong Taoth did not wish to bow before anyone as arrogant as Nassiral Hate, she complied. The opportunity that Scarab has been waiting for has yet to present itself. When it does, it is sure Taoth and her legions will take full advantage.

When Scarab is summoned it prefers to fly above its enemies, casting spells until they are weakened. In close combat it uses its poisonous bite. Scarab appears as a tremendous scarab beetle with a black and green carapace whose mandibles constantly drip poison.

VIPER — SAV'RUKK'S TOTEM (NEUTRAL)

Domains: War, Trickery, Travel and Animal

Viper is not interested in the conflicts between the Nothrog legions, caring only for its chosen people. It wants its legion to be strong and cunning, and much like Scarab, chooses to pick its fights. When Nassiral Hate arrived to conquer Viper's legion, the totem ordered its legion commander Sav'rukk to refuse and leave. Hate laughed. No one was beyond his power. But Sav'rukk eluded Hate's troops, annoying the powerful shaman.

Viper has led its people deep into the woods and highlands north of Baraxton. The legion's shaman and rangers have kept the legion away from Hate's troops and out of the conflict, which they consider meaningless. The tribe is rising to the challenge; they take as much joy in this current test of their skills as in open battle.

Viper is proud of its people, and is leading them north toward the Deverenian border. Not only will its people be better able to hide from Hate's Nothrog in the rugged terrain, but also Hate would not dare send a huge force after them for fear of provoking the Deverenians. Viper feels that it is only a matter of time before Hate's arrogance causes his downfall, so it leads its legion from one hidden sanctuary to the next.



Viper is rarely summoned into combat, appearing on those instances as a huge snake which attempts to poison its enemies before they can do any harm. Viper makes great use of spells, preferring to confuse and outmaneuver opponents. Viper attempts to constrict particularly threatening foes.

The Storm

Pain is a blazing emblem of weakness. Abandon thy pain, and become greater even than the gods.

—the *Annales Devereniorum*

Symbol: A golden circle, bisected with a lightning bolt (the Inquisition uses a black circle and silver bolt)
Alignment: Any (depends on aspect; the Church of the Storm portrays it as Lawful Evil)
Portfolio: Any (Church of the Storm: conquest, destiny, Deverenia, discipline, personal ability)
Worshippers: Deverenians, soldiers, wizards
Cleric Alignments: Any (Church of the Storm: Lawful Evil, Lawful Neutral)
Domains: Any (Church domains: Air, Evil, Law, Strength, and War)
Favored Weapon: Heavy Mace

The Storm is no mere god, but rather the wandering soul of the Great Dragon. The Church of the Storm is its largest and most fervent sect, and worship of the Storm is the official religion of Deverenia. Aided by the tireless investigations of the Inquisition, the purity of the Paladins of the Black Sun, and the undying faith of the Stormborn, the Church of the Storm seeks the complete subjugation of the world under the Storm's perfect enlightenment.

Independent cults of the Storm do not follow trends, and behave like the cults of Bascaron, though the servants of the Deverenian Church place a higher priority on destroying Storm-cults than on hunting Bascarites.

History

For three centuries it laid waste to all that crossed it, and the Storm remains as terrifying a presence in the Accordlands as the Broken Moon. Then as now, the Storm's winds and rain tore souls from their bodies. Entire cities fled as it approached, and many retiring Deverenians chose to enter it, dying in a symbolic effort to finish off the threat the Great Dragon posed. Though scattered cults devoted to it existed, common belief was that the Storm consumed anything that entered it, leaving no survivors.

All of this changed when Signon returned. Not only had he communed directly with the Storm, but he returned with an army of Stormborn, those whose souls had fallen under the Storm's influence. Signon laid siege to Deverenia, usurping the throne, establishing the Church of the Storm, and converting the old gods into the Védoszentelek, or patron saints. Since then, the Church of the Storm remains largely unchanged, and has prominent missions in most large cities.

The Church of the Storm is highly evangelical, and not above murder if it results in more converts. The Church still has the rites Signon used to convert the old gods into Védoszentelek, and uses this knowledge on rival religions if possible.

Dogma

The Church of the Storm values complete self-reliance. A true devotee respects only power earned through exertion. He aids only those worthy of his help, and asks for support only if he has diligently served his faith and done his duty. While he abides by the rules of Deverenian honor, and demands the same of his servants, he does not expect the same of others. Neither does he disdain those who follow other codes of conduct, so long as they strictly adhere to those codes. He lives his life without passion or emotion, totally devoted to the values of pragmatism and loyalty. While the Church of the Storm demands that he seek out power, he is to use it for the greater glory of Deverenia and the Storm, and not for personal gain. The embodiments of such selfless virtue are the Védoszentelek and, to a far greater extent, Signon himself. Others include founders of the Deverenian Orders, the Emperors, the Ghed stormsaints, and both the Hierophant and the Paladins of the Black Sun.

Unsurprisingly, such noble examples are rare. The Church acts exclusively against three groups of sinners, in ascending order of priority: the heathens, those who deny the Storm and all its majesties; the faithless, those who pretend to serve the Church but undermine it for their own purposes; and the heretics, those who either dismiss Church doctrine or take part in the Védoszentelek cults. Indeed, such is the cold hatred of heretics that both the Inquisition and the Paladins of the Black Sun hunt such individuals almost exclusively.

Sins & Repentance

An emotionless religion, the Church of the Storm's dogma centers on sins rather than virtues. It is a sin to assume to have power, a sin to show even unintentional disrespect to those of greater station, and a sin to acknowledge any connection between the Storm and the Great Dragon that spawned it (excepting only the *Annales Devereniorum's* historical accounts). Priests (especially Inquisitors) can purge these venial sins from worshippers through monthly mortification rites, most popularly a ritual whipping. During the rite, the penitent recites as many of his sins as he can between lashings, beginning again if he screams, hesitates, or loses consciousness. At the rite's completion, the presiding cleric chooses whether and how much healing the confession merits. It is not unheard of for cruel priests to refuse to believe the litany of sins, and let their charges bleed to death. More often, however, the rite ends with the ritual absolution of the worshiper's sins. The confessor priest is not obliged to keep the confession's details confidential, though he cannot speak of them with lay people. Instead, records of significant transgressions pass into the Inquisition's hands, and that order decides whether to simply keep the confessions in their libraries or to excommunicate the penitent as a mortal sinner.

Mortal sins are comparatively rare in the Church of the Storm, numbering only six. The first and greatest sin is that of betrayal, particularly betraying the Church, the Emperor, Deverenia, or (rarely) the Storm itself. The other mortal sins include dealing with heretical or heathen religions, especially the Védoszentelek

cults and the Bascarites (pilgrims on their way to or actually within Athanaes are exempt); creating or communing with undead (including undead ambassadors of either the Kaballite and Elven nations); claiming the actions, properties, or words of another as one's own; displaying cowardice; and translating the *Annales Devereniorum* into a language other than Deverenian. Mortal sins prompt excommunication and subsequent execution at the hands of any faithful servant of the Storm, and such murders are among the highest of good works performed in the Church's name. A man accused of a mortal sin may take the Trial by Storm to prove himself innocent or forgiven, but has no other legal recourse. Falsely accusing a man of a mortal sin is considered itself to be mortal sin, those of displaying cowardice and betraying the Church, as the accuser is acknowledging that his own weakness is so great that he must manipulate the Church against an enemy. Other mortification practices include ritual mutilation by removing offending organs.

The most unusual rite of the Church (and, according to other religions, the most blasphemous) is the tradition of the Trial by Storm. The trial begins under the purview of the Storm, with a formal intonation of the defendant's sins, usually by an inquisitor or Black Sun paladin. The defendant may then make any last words or requests (the Church records both, but may refuse any requests). He then walks into the Storm, there to either transcend flesh and become a Stormborn, or to die a terrible death as the spirits of the Storm rend his spirit. Should the defendant become a Stormborn, he may do as he wishes with those who accused him. In times past, Deverenians have forced this rite onto gods by subjugating all the god's relics to the test, though only the original six Védoszentelek have had their holy artifacts survive this test. The other gods tested have remained quiet ever since, their true fates unknown even to the Stormborn.

Suspicion

Any group of characters will find themselves in situations that require drastic actions. While these actions may seem correct at the time, outside sources may look on them with other opinions. Now the characters have drawn the attention of the Deverenian Inquisition. Something the characters have done has led the Inquisition to suspect them of a mortal sin. Whether the characters are guilty or not does not matter.

The Inquisition first brings the characters in for questioning. How they react could condemn them without any chance for redemption. If they accede to the Inquisitors' wishes, they may find themselves with no avenue of escape. Once in the hands of the Inquisitors, they will be forced to justify their actions, and their accusers are not forgiving.

Why were the Inquisitors set upon the characters? With the threat of excommunication and execution looming, the PCs might be pressured into tasks that would be unseemly for holy men to undertake. They would become a secret arm of the church, forced to follow orders or face the ultimate punishment.

The Afterlife

The Deverenians believe a man's actions in life utterly determine what happens to him after he dies. Souls of extraordinary virtue (including those who pass the Trial by Storm) are absorbed into the Storm and transformed into Ghed: the Stormborn saints. Those who die with venial sins have not exhibited enough worth to pass on to the next state of grace, but the Storm destroys their souls to mercifully spare them the torments of mortal sinners. Mortal sinners (including, by default, all those who do not worship the Storm) find their souls drawn into the Storm itself as food for the Stormborn. The spirits of mortal sinners are barely visible within the Storm, and too weak to control their own movements. When possible, priests dispose of any bodies by sending them in wagon trains to the Storm itself. Recently, the knights of Order Loth have received permission to use the bodies of mortal sinners in experiments. The Inquisition, like the rest of Loth's rivals, have yet to discover any proof of misconduct, though suspicions abound.

The Church holds that the creation of undead, particularly incorporeal undead such as ghosts and specters, corrupts the world. While those whose spirits fall victim to such base magic are obviously unworthy (or else they could overcome the necromancy binding them), those who raise the dead or commune with undead spirits are the basest of villains, usurping the Storm's own power over death.

Church Leadership

At the head of the Church of the Storm is the Hierophant, Modred of Carcius. An ascended Stormborn, Modred is the oldest of his breed, the first to follow Signon's example and enter the Storm. Barely thirty when he transcended his flesh, Modred has spent seven centuries as an immortal member of the Ghed, and his devotion is unwavering. He has murdered six Emperors for heresies, usually by hauling them into the Storm's embrace. Many Deverenians believe that Modred covets the throne, as the *Annales Devereniorum* speaks of a time when Emperor and Hierophant are one and the same, a sign heralding the glorious paradise on earth known as the Age of the Black Sun. Others believe that the legendary weapon, Lothian Lawhammer, was originally his, and he desires its return. Whatever desires rule Modred's alien mind, he leaves the greater businesses of the Church to his three mortal lieutenants, each equal in power and responsibility.

Cardinal Scelus sits at the head of the Council of Cardinals, as he has for nearly thirty years. Until Modred's recent activity, Scelus effectively defined Church doctrine, and his silent alliances with the Genecourt, Ghenis, Myerdeth, and Rellion Orders convinced the Emperor of Lord Gahid Rellion's appropriateness to succeed Master Anandale Aedroud as his champion. While Scelus is no less devout a servant of the Storm than the Hierophant is, he is far more pragmatic. Scelus wishes to ease Deverenian away from its present feudal state and into an enlightened theocracy, ruled benignly by himself.

Though not officially a priest, the Inquisition's true leader is Erebus Stormchild, a former Ghenis squire who, in a pique of religious fervor, cut out his own eyes rather than give into the tempting sight of his beloved Order's mistress. Cardinal Scelus, satisfied with Lady Ghenis' demonstration, immediately appointed the boy to the Inquisition. He has adjusted very well to his blindness, and is an accomplished duelist despite it.

Sir Rhawn d'Ilchant was once Modred's favored servant, and possibly his heir apparent. Indeed, none was happier at Modred's return than the head of the Black Sun paladins. Sir Rhawn had watched in outrage as lowly bandits destroyed the only foes he had ever respected: the Aroch knights. His erratic behavior apparently ended when the Black Sun paladins slaughtered the brigands responsible, but a crisis of faith has all but broken him. He had spent his whole life hating and honoring these great foes, but if they were not the equals of mere bandits, how did his choice of "worthy" enemy reflect on him?

Church Hierarchy

The Church of the Storm models itself loosely after Deverenian's feudal system. Advancement is rare, usually based on internal politics rather than merit, and tends to occur because of death or scandal in a higher rank. Priests (referred to as "father" or "mother") serve small settlements, new foreign missions, or traveling soldiers. Directly above the priests are bishops, who preside over parishes of four to ten priests, as well as local worshipers of their own. Archbishops similarly guide anywhere from a dozen to fifty bishops while tending to their own faithful. Ruling the Church in the Hierophant's absences are the Council of Cardinals, ten archbishops whose combined voices dictate church policy. United, the Cardinals can overrule even the Emperor, though assassinations usually forestall such occasions. The Cardinals serve the Hierophant of the Storm, who generally allows them to run the Church without his interference. Due to Deverenian's official refusal to acknowledge any former Deverenian holding's sovereignty, many Deverenian bishops and archbishops technically preside over priests in other nations (Baraxton nominally answers to Luthlarius' archbishop, for instance).

Clergy are expected to remain apart from secular concerns such as politics, and to remain celibate and poor. In actuality, most men and women of the cloth have dalliances. More tellingly, it is a rare bishop or archbishop that totally refuses political power or financial gain, though most couch their gains as gains for the Church. While it is considered rude to openly accuse a clergyman of the Storm of hypocrisy (at least without damning evidence), the common perception of the priesthood is that they are hungry for power. Of course, given the Church's own proclamations of power being inherently worth having, few quibble.

Orders

The Church feels it necessary to use additional means to inspire their followers, beyond the Védoszentelek and the regular priesthood. To this end, two wings of the Church have existed since Signon's days: the Deverenian Inquisition and the Paladins of the Black Sun.

The Deverenian Inquisition governs dogma, overseeing sacred rituals and meting out punishment for heresy. Inquisitors are cruel even for Deverenians, as the *Annales Devereniorum* specifically exempt them from following the dictates of honor. So long as an inquisitor himself remains innocent of heresy and loyal to Deverenia, he can do no wrong in the eyes of the Church. Only a rare appeal to a higher-ranking inquisitor can spare a man proclaimed a heretic, and even then the stigma haunts him for the rest of his life. Inquisitors generally try their prey in absentia, either because the accused heretic has fled justice (an admission of guilt), or because he has died under torture. For all their sadism, however, an inquisitor charged with heresy must pass a trial by Storm to prove himself — only eleven accused inquisitors have returned as Ghed, with the rest assumed guilty. Most Inquisitors are not formally priests, though they are frequently clerics or faithful fighters. Due to the paladin's code, paladins of any stripe may not be inquisitors.

In contrast to the base villainies of the Inquisition, the Paladins of the Black Sun represent the zenith of the Church's ideals. Though most of its leaders are nominally beholden to one of the true Knightly Orders, almost all these paladins remain apolitical, moving only when their Church or honor demands that they must. They held a special hatred for the Aroch paladins, who splintered from the Black Sun ages ago, and who were also the only outside group that the Black Sun truly respected. Most Deverenians only pretend to the honor that the Aroch adhered to, and while the Black Sun serves the Church loyally, its members have long since realized that the cardinals have employed paladins for selfish ends. When the Aroch fell, the Black Sun avenged their deaths in a bloody pogrom against the brigands they believed responsible (in actuality, they only managed to kill a handful of those involved in the attack, which was part of the Assassins' Strike). They now seek to either slay or convert any surviving Aroch.

Heresies

Before Signon established the Church of the Storm, Deverenians worshiped a pantheon of former mortals, those who had transcended the trappings of mortal flesh and become powers in their own right. With Signon's ascendancy, the Church of the Storm held that some of these old heroes were worthy of reverence, but they were not truly divine. These Védoszentelek, as Signon called them, instead each embodied an ideal of the Storm. Though actual worship of the Védoszentelek is a heresy, showing reverence for their examples is not. Clerics of the Storm may choose to serve a Védoszentelek, allowing them to choose the Védoszentelek's listed domain but either limiting their advancement in the Church to the level of priest (or level 5), or risking exposure as a heretic and possible Védoszentelek cultist. All servitors of the Védoszentelek are suspect in the Inquisition's eyes.

With the singular exception of Teufeltiger, the Storm has utterly subsumed the Védoszentelek. Though each was once a god in his or her own right, they now draw their power from the Storm. While extended worship of cultists might draw these once-gods further away from the Storm and reawaken their powers, the Inquisition excels at its work. In the 700-year history of the Church of the Storm, no Védoszentelek cult has survived longer than a decade. Excepting Teufeltiger (who has already materialized

as an avatar; see below), attempted summons of a Védoszente instead call an avatar of the Storm in the Védoszente's likeness, though the avatar's abilities remain unchanged.

The following list contains a brief history of each of the major Védoszente, as well as their previous domains and favored weapon. The Védoszente now allow access to only the parenthetical domain, with the other domains and favored weapon listed for historical reference only. At the GM's discretion, other Védoszente may exist, but each additional one demands an increase of both cultists and inquisitors.

Athanae (Death)

Athanae occupies a position of honor not only in Deveranian society, but in the greater Accordlands. The warrior who slew the Dragon, Athanae inherited a great deal of the creature's power, and was the first mortal known to have achieved apotheosis. Before the Church of the Storm, Deveranians honored Athanae as the savior and therefore ruler of the world. This rulership passed to her children, Deima and Deverenus, so the Deveranians claimed the whole of the Accordlands as their domain.

As the head of the original Deveranian pantheon, however, she was Signon's primary target, and he placed special emphasis on subverting Athanae's followers and relics. Though she was not the first of the Védoszente to fall, she fell more completely than any other. Outside of the *Annales Devereniorum*, few historical texts remain to detail Athanae's life, and Signon's pogrom against her worshipers struck even in Athanae herself. Though she has had no fewer cults than any of the other Védoszente, her cultists even have scant understanding of who and what she really was.

Athanae was the Warrior-Queen, Savior of the Accord. Her original domains were Death, Destruction, Strength, and War, and her favored weapon was the simple broadsword she used to slay the Dragon. Deveranians view her as the model of sincerity and strength. She slew the Dragon when the gods and other, less fathomable creatures failed.

Deima (Healing)

With Athanae's ascension, both of her children inherited a portion of their mother's new power. Deima used her divine link to become Athanae's first priestess, and founded Athanae as part of her faith. Though a healer by nature, Deima's designs were hardly benign. She demanded unwavering loyalty from those she saved, and personally murdered those unwilling to comply. She and Deverenus were leading voices in the creation of the Accord. Though his own magic was great, Deverenus nearly died slaying surviving dragonspawn. Deima healed him, but Deverenus refused to serve his sister, causing a rift between Athanae and Deverenia that continues to the present day. The war between the siblings was brief but furious, climaxing with Deima's death at her brother's hands. Eager to ease hatreds, Deverenus proclaimed his sister a goddess, and insisted that any prayer to him include her as well. Deima enjoyed a following second only to her brother's until the Church of the Storm was established. She retains a devoted following, particularly among the Knightly Orders. The Inquisition presently believes that Order Loth houses a cult in her name, as their rumored practices closely resemble those of Deima's original religion.

Deima was the Blighting Healer and the Highest Star. Before her worshipers fell to the Church of the Storm, her domains were Chaos, Destruction, Healing, and War, and her favored weapon was the heavy flail. As a Védoszente, Deima represents the Church's demands of faith, and absolute commitment to expanding the Storm's influence.

Deverenus (Magic)

Like his elder sister, Deverenus took on the greatness of Athanae, but unlike her he became a stoic wizard. Where Deima pursued her faith with fanatic zeal, he rejected emotion in the wake of his mother's departure from the realm of mortals. A vicious pragmatist, Deverenus played heavily on his mother's image during the early discussions of the Accord, and ruthlessly struck down those who opposed his tyrannical ideals — an exponentially expanding list of enemies that eventually included Deima herself. Deverenus systematically stripped his sister of her defenses, then martyred her in front of her own troops. Her voice silenced, Deverenus used her legend to make peace with her followers, and established Deverenia with their support, naming himself its first Emperor.

When Signon twisted the old gods into the Védoszente, Deverenus remained remarkably unchanged. Though prayer to him gave way to Storm worship, Deverenus already embodied the ideals that Signon so valued. Instead, Signon exposed the doctored histories of Deverenus' heirs, a corrupt dynasty of weakling emperors that cared less about Deverenia's glory than their own. This proved that a line of men, even those descended from the gods, were not inherently worthy to rule. With Deverenus' descendants cast down in shame, none objected to Signon's rituals over the old god's most holy relics. Deverenus, like the other Védoszente, became a limb of the Storm.

Before the old religion crumbled, Deverenus was the First King and held domain over Fire, Knowledge, Law, and Magic. His favored weapon was the dagger. Deveranians believe him to be the model of Deveranian honor.

Kígyó Tanár (Animal)

Kígyó Tanár was Athanae's general, and served Deverenus after her apotheosis. When Deverenus himself died as a result of his children's ambitions, Tanár formally retired rather than serve the murderous heirs. The elderly general spent his remaining days hunting game. He quickly grew tired of this sport, however, as he had grown too used to fighting more cunning foes. To everyone's surprise, Tanár emerged from retirement as a slayer of monsters. He killed no fewer than four dragons before dying in combat with a fifth, a feat the ancient Deveranians believed could only be accomplished by Athanae or one of her own blood. These last, great kills mystifyingly also raised him to godhood, though others have since attempted to duplicate his actions and failed. Despite his bloodthirsty reputation, Tanár viewed himself as a student of the creatures he hunted, and even bred the unlikely mounts now common among Deveranian warriors, the verdatha.

A minor deity in the old pantheon, Kígyó Tanár nevertheless remains a Védoszent. Signon never explained why he chose to honor Tanár when he destroyed so many other gods, but his reason was simple: though Signon appreciated Deverenus' will, it was Tanár alone among the old gods that Signon felt any sympathy for. Like Signon himself, Kígyó Tanár had lost his faith in his people, only to find a new way to serve them.

Kígyó Tanár, the Beast King and the Dragon Lord, ruled over the aspects of Animal, Protection, and War. His favored weapon was the lance. Many Deverenian fighters revere Kígyó Tanár for his uncanny wisdom in understanding the best way to defeat his foes, whether through outright force or through subjugation.

Teufeltiger (Trickery)

Of all the original gods in the Deverenian pantheon that survived to become the present-day Védoszentek, none evokes as much confusion as Teufeltiger. Even in Signon's days none knew the origins of this god, nor even when he entered the pantheon. The politicians that Signon so despised worshiped Teufeltiger, elevating him over Deverenus himself. Signon wanted to thoroughly destroy this sect of the old religion, but Teufeltiger's followers foresaw his wrath and hid the major relics of their god. With the fall of the Emperor, the Teufelites approached Signon with an offer: either accept Teufeltiger as one of the Védoszentek, or face the old god's followers as a constant menace to the new regime. Thoroughly angered but forced to risk his plans either way, Signon relented despite his utter disgust with Teufeltiger's nature. In direct response, he began formulating what would later evolve into the Inquisition. He feared the day that Teufeltiger's minions would undo everything he sought to create.

That day has come. A group of Deverenians has formed a self-described Conspiracy of Light, opposed to the Emperor and the Church of the Storm. While each member of the conspiracy was powerful in his or her own way, they found that the Church's seers had anticipated their attacks. A group of the conspirators, a small cell of Myerdeth Védoszentek cultists, uncovered two items in their Order's archives: a statue of a tiger-headed god dressed in finery, and a partially burned scrap of paper describing a ritual of communion to the deity. The conspirators, headed by Lord Kestrel du Myerdeth himself, badly botched the rite. Upon the spell's completion, the icon shattered, its representative god forever beyond the Storm's control, but now terribly limited in his own power. More shocking, however, was the physical appearance of the god himself. The spell had summoned and bound Teufeltiger, forcing him to remain on the mortal plane until he could gather the power to leave. Teufeltiger slew Lord Kestrel and assumed his form. The surviving cultists serve Teufeltiger with a mix of awe and abject terror; though Teufeltiger has goals in common with the Conspiracy of Light, the cult had meant to summon a hero to lead them, not a new villain to drive them. The Inquisition is as yet utterly oblivious to this development.

Before the Conspiracy of Light hobbled him, Teufeltiger was a god of Evil, Knowledge, Law, and Trickery. Though he personally disdained weapons, his worshipers wielded vicious daggers. As Lord Kestrel, Teufeltiger leads the Conspiracy of Light and seeks

a return to divinity. Many people still revere him for his boundless capacity for treachery, though few would openly admit it.

Secrets

The greatest secret of the Church of the Storm is hidden even from its own clergy, from the lowest priest to the Hierophant himself, and even most of the independent cults are ignorant of the truth. The only ones privy to this secret are the decimated Aroch paladins, who abandoned Deverenia when accused of heresy for its discovery.

The *Annales Devereniorum* is not an accurate accounting of Signon's life.

Though truthful up until Signon entered the Storm, and largely faithful to the particulars of his subsequent war against old Deverenia, Signon hid his true discovery within the Storm.

There, Signon found that his unyielding will kept him alive, despite the Stormborn's best efforts. Hoping to find his match eventually, he pressed onward, eventually losing himself in the Dragon's soul. After a few days' time Signon found himself staving off manifestations of his own fears and illusions, and while he bested each in turn, he only did so by further despairing for his wayward homeland. He passed into a great darkness and wandered there, blindly fighting unseen foes, eventually spying a light in the distance.

Pursuing the light, Signon found himself in the midst of a heated conflict between stunted half-men and slaving monstrosities, with each side unwilling to trust the newcomer. Signon held his own in the fight, eventually driving off both foes long enough to gather his wits. Taking up a torch from a fallen runt, Signon finally had the chance to look about him, and saw that he stood atop the corpse of the Dragon Itself. Worse, though he knew the immense figure was dead, its glazed eye nevertheless blinked as he approached. Signon turned from the body and marched steadily back toward the lands he knew lay above.

Signon examined the ramifications of what had transpired. He knew then that the historical accounts of the Dragon's death were wrong: the Storm retained a tenuous link to the Dragon's restless cadaver. He knew, too, that the Storm was a reactive presence, both in terms of the wide variety of abilities it granted its worshipers, and how it had reacted to his presence. Eventually, the Storm would gain enough power to return to its former body, and the Dragon would rise from its grave. This time, however, no great alliance of gods and mortals would oppose It, and It would crush the world.

By the time Signon saw daylight again, an untold time later, he had his solution, a great lie to deceive and save the Accordlands. Though he could not hope to destroy what even the gods themselves could not harm, he knew that the Storm's powers could be influenced by mortal will. With enough effort, the Storm could do anything expected of it, and so Signon set out to fulfill his plan.

His creation would tear the Storm away from the Dragon's body by subverting Its own nature. Where the Dragon was selfish, madly passionate, and impulsive, Signon's creation was disciplined, regimented, and tactical. Though he found it distasteful, Signon even decided to make his grand opus evil, that it might propagate as quickly and ruthlessly as possible, lest the Dragon return before Signon's plan reached fruition. Stealing a suit of enchanted armor from a Kaballite wizard, Signon returned to Deverenia and turned loose his plan upon the world.

The Church of the Storm still does its master's will.



The Queen of Lightning

Unlike true gods, the Storm has no physical form. It is instead a plane of existence unto itself. When others seek to commune with it, the Storm normally dispatches Stormborn or avatars.

More rarely, it suffuses a mortal with the tiniest portion of its true essence and will. The Storm itself chooses each such Queen of Lightning, though there is only one at a time, and the Storm has yet to share its criteria for this choice. While each of these empowered mortals has been a Deverenian woman, they have been fighters, wizards, clerics, peasants, nobles, good and evil, children and elderly. It is wholly possible that the Storm may eventually choose a man for the role.

The Queen of Lightning is normally no more than she was before, though her natural form's skin blanches to whiteness. When the Storm chooses, her latent gifts resurface, and she rides its winds to enact its will. While on these manifestations, the Queen of Lightning is merely an extension of the Storm itself; the words that escape her lips are the Storm's, and her every action is dictated by the Storm itself. While her appearance changes, the abilities of the manifested Queen of Lightning remain constant.

The appearance of the Queen of Lightning is generally either a symbolic gesture of support of Deverenia (such as when the Storm especially approves of a new Emperor), or, more often, when the Storm wishes to properly display its fearsome power by utterly annihilating an entire city. The Queen of Lightning has a personality alien to any mortal mindset, recalling knowledge her host is unaware of, and forgetting even close allies between incarnations. No Queen has given any sign that she knows of the heretical cult worshipping the Storm in Narawat.

The current incarnation of the Queen of Lightning is Aenne the Tempest, a leader of the Skyborne Path and secretly one of the Conspiracy of Light. If the Storm disapproves of her actions, it has yet to punish her for them.

Yscar

Do not hate the weak of will. They are children, and it is natural for children to want beyond reason. Teach those who let you, and kill those who do not.

—Yscar the Elder

Symbol: A silver crescent (the Mark of Yscar)

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Portfolio: Nature's patterns, self-discipline, natural change

Worshippers: Lycanthropes, would-be lycanthropes

Cleric Alignments: Lawful Evil, Lawful Neutral, Lawful Good, Neutral

Domains: Animal, Knowledge, Law, Trickery

Favored Weapon: Natural weapons

Ironically, the most infamous Bascarite cult in history is also the most benign. The Cult of Yscar formed in direct response to the depredations of the Bascarites, and seeks the absolute destruction of its parent religion. Like the Bascarite religion, Yscarite clerics channel the power of Bascaron. Unlike the other cults, the Yscarites minimize the destructive appetites of that realm by limiting their desires to what is already possible. The Cult of Yscar is small, barely a tiny fraction of the Bascaron cult's own numbers, but far more organized and capable.

Though nominally opposed to the selfish, evil fumbings for power that characterize the Cult of Bascaron, the Cult of Yscar nevertheless accepts evil minions that demonstrate self-restraint and the ability to follow orders. While Yscar the Elder opposes atrocities, he condemns noble failure more than ruthless success.

History

The man now known as Yscar the Elder was once a simple boy wandering the Kabal wastes, a thief preying upon the wizards' towers. He worked for hire, playing off the rivalries of great sorcerers, sabotaging or pilfering at his employers' requests. The last task the boy ever completed was the theft of a black egg. Though he was successful, a ward struck the boy with a terrible disease. The boy begged his employer to help him, and the employer did the worst thing possible: he did.

Feverish and pained, the boy regained consciousness in the domain of nightmares: the city of Mourn. Feigning chronic illness, he crept out at night to watch the strange rituals of his saviors, only to see a deformed creature rise from the black wyrm's egg he had stolen. Realizing too late that his mysterious patron was a Bascaron cultist, Yscar desired only to flee like a tiny bird. He was astonished to find his wish granted, as his flesh and bones reshaped themselves into the very image of the bird he had thought of. Returning to the lands of the Kabal, he approached the very wizard he had wronged and poured out his story. Together they explored his newfound abilities, all the while quietly searching for the motives behind the cult. The boy learned to shut off his emotions, as his time in Mourn had marked him with an unusually strong link to Bascaron. Though his powers warped his body and nearly drove him mad, he ultimately retained control.

The creature spawned from the egg, Angu Mournwater, intuitively felt the thief's resistance to Bascaron's call. After murdering Mourn's leader and assuming his role, Mournwater led a contingent of cultists against the Kaballite wizard's tower. The thief and Angu fought to a draw, the Bascarite's inherent power opposed by the boy's measured and thoughtful shapeshifting. When the tower fell, the two paused for just long enough for the Mournwater to notice a crescent-shaped silver scar on the boy's right hand — the mark foretold by early Bascarites to be the sign of Yscar, the traitor to the moon who would destroy them all. Shouting out a warning to his compatriots, the Bascarite lord ordered a retreat as the boy attended to his dying mentor.

The wizard gave his heir a scroll containing a spell that would conceal the boy's power, and a warning that the Bascarites would never stop hunting him or his brood. Taking the name his enemies gave him, Yscar disappeared. He carefully copied the spell and left it for others to find, and soon took a wife. Within a generation, he had a small cult of his own, both of his children and of the products of his spell. Centuries later, Yscar the Elder remains fiercely protective of his brood, his only family, and counts both evil and good children among his followers. Yscar does not enjoy forcing his curse on others, but believes it preferable to allowing the Bascarites to win their war.

Dogma

In contrast with the mainstream Bascarite beliefs, Yscarite philosophy exalts controlled desire. By focusing on a precise memory, the cultist limits his shapechanges to forms that already exist, and thereby limits Bascaron's warping effect. While madness and deformity are common, they are far less debilitating than in true Bascarites. Those who fail to control their desires become monstrosities barred from learning the more dangerous arts of the cult, though they are still members.

Yscar's cult does not worship a deity, though its philosophy is akin to a religion.

Sins & Repentance

The greatest sins in the cult of Yscar arise from unchecked desire — jealousy, envy, and greed. Money and power are only means to the cult's ends. Those who regularly place themselves above others must not only deal with the Blood Moon's corruptive influence, but do so without outside help. Those who can control themselves may return to the cult. Those who cannot find enemies in both Yscarite and Bascarite camps. By this time, the Yscarite has likely advanced as a member of the Yscarite lycanthrope prestige class, and has little alternative but to return to the fold.

The Afterlife

Yscar's teachings deal with little concerning the afterlife. Yscar the Elder himself is immortal, consequently having little to say. Instead, he preaches that actions and faith in this incarnation are more important than anything that happens after death. Doing what must be done without hope of reward, he argues, is the highest virtue. Clouding that nobility with hope — the most subversive desire of all — corrupts its grace.

Cult Leadership

Yscar the Elder is the only formal leader in his cult, a combination of father figure, teacher, and taskmaster. While protective of his cult (whom he universally refers to as his children), he does not tolerate dissenting opinions once he has decided upon an action. Fortunately, he expects his children to operate on their own or in loose alliance with each other (or even unbelievers), and generally entrusts them to find their own solution to any problems they find.

Cult Hierarchy

While Yscar alone leads the cult, several other individuals have earned places of respect. Each cultist respects the wisdom and experience of those who have mastered lycanthropy, with these wiser pupils in turn protecting and guiding their less capable brethren. While this tutelage is commonplace, it is still strictly informal, more akin to sibling relationships than a master/student bond.

Yscar strongly emphasizes finding the prodigals — those who would bear his mark, but either have not received the training to control it or have lost contact with the cult. While Yscar genuinely cares for these missing children, he also worries about the possibility of the Bascarites using them as bait to lure other Yscarites. With so few faithful to oppose so many, his fears are well-founded. A prodigal (particularly one new to lycanthropy) finds himself cursed amidst a host of monsters, but in time, these become the only family he truly knows. Those who have rescued and taught many prodigals have high esteem from Yscar himself, and the rest of the cult usually honors such individuals.

Heresies

Though the cult is tiny, numbering maybe a hundred members at any time, a trace of apostasy exists within even Yscar's own Bascarite heresy. Though the Yscarites fight their Bascarite foes, they prefer not to do so blindly. Of necessity, several of Yscar's cult have become Bascarite ascendants, cultists who draw the Broken Moon's corruptive nature into their own bodies. Even more misshapen than their true brothers and sisters, these Yscarites act as spies in the enemy camp. There, these watchers find their discipline well-suited to resisting the horrors of the greatest of their foes.

Unfortunately, a spy's ability to hide among the Bascarites is in direct proportion to the amount of temptation he has succumbed to, and therefore how untrustworthy the other Yscarites (including Yscar himself) find him. This paranoia, however well founded, only increases the chances that the spy abandons his former loyalties, and a few Yscarite "prodigals" are those who have defected rather than suffer the consequences of betrayal.

Secrets

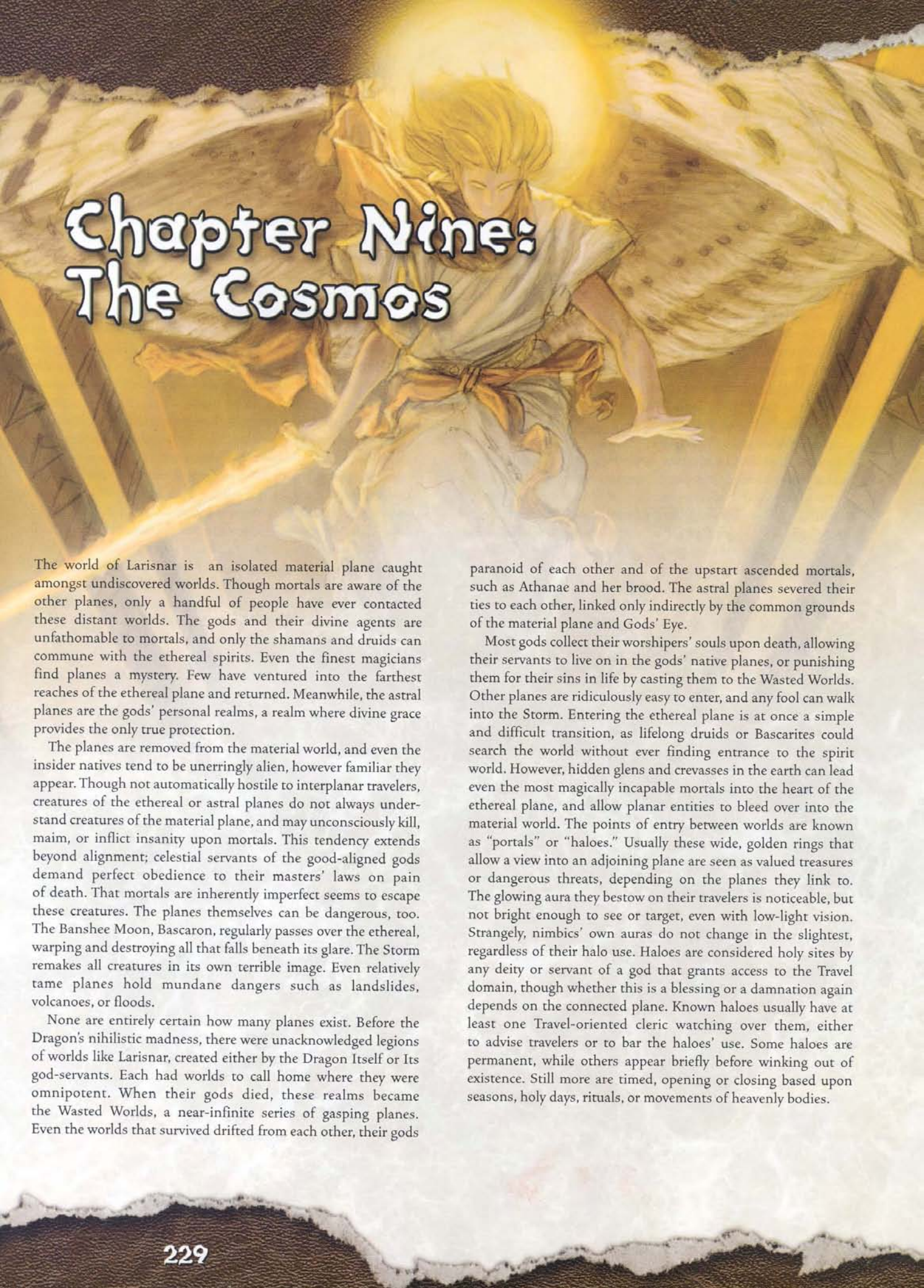
The greatest secret of the Yscar heretics is barely a secret. Though all members of the cult take the name Yscar in honor of their founder, none have ever asked why. Yscar understands prophecy all too well, and has taken steps to exploit it. As he faces Mournwater ever more frequently, he has long since realized that the Bascarite will eventually best him. Most of the heresy would presumably follow him to the grave, but Yscar is counting on the legendary shortsightedness of the Cult of Bascaron. So long as even one who bears the Yscar name still lives, the prophecy may yet come to pass.

The God of Yscar

Unbeknownst to even Yscar the Elder himself, the disciplined worship of Bascaron has led to the creation of a godling, an ordered extension of Bascaron's own mad energies. The Yscarites shape the new deity with their beliefs, and while it is barely aware or active, it seeks the destruction of the Banshee Moon just as the heretics do. Its form flows and shifts with its whims, and those rare few who have seen its avatar have not guessed at its true potential. Nameless and mindless, the God of Yscar grows ever stronger.

The God of Yscar is a twisting, mottled mass of flesh, continually reshaping itself into anything it sees. With difficulty, it may mimic other creatures, but does so only out of self-defense and instinct. Though its personality is based on the overall tendencies of the Yscarites, its few avatars have all met with hostility, leading it to assume a slightly more evil stance. It has no discernible gender. It is an unstable creature, defined by law but created by chaos.





Chapter Nine: The Cosmos

The world of Larisnar is an isolated material plane caught amongst undiscovered worlds. Though mortals are aware of the other planes, only a handful of people have ever contacted these distant worlds. The gods and their divine agents are unfathomable to mortals, and only the shamans and druids can commune with the ethereal spirits. Even the finest magicians find planes a mystery. Few have ventured into the farthest reaches of the ethereal plane and returned. Meanwhile, the astral planes are the gods' personal realms, a realm where divine grace provides the only true protection.

The planes are removed from the material world, and even the insider natives tend to be unerringly alien, however familiar they appear. Though not automatically hostile to interplanar travelers, creatures of the ethereal or astral planes do not always understand creatures of the material plane, and may unconsciously kill, maim, or inflict insanity upon mortals. This tendency extends beyond alignment; celestial servants of the good-aligned gods demand perfect obedience to their masters' laws on pain of death. That mortals are inherently imperfect seems to escape these creatures. The planes themselves can be dangerous, too. The Banshee Moon, Bascaron, regularly passes over the ethereal, warping and destroying all that falls beneath its glare. The Storm remakes all creatures in its own terrible image. Even relatively tame planes hold mundane dangers such as landslides, volcanoes, or floods.

None are entirely certain how many planes exist. Before the Dragon's nihilistic madness, there were unacknowledged legions of worlds like Larisnar, created either by the Dragon Itself or Its god-servants. Each had worlds to call home where they were omnipotent. When their gods died, these realms became the Wasted Worlds, a near-infinite series of gasping planes. Even the worlds that survived drifted from each other, their gods

paranoid of each other and of the upstart ascended mortals, such as Athanae and her brood. The astral planes severed their ties to each other, linked only indirectly by the common grounds of the material plane and Gods' Eye.

Most gods collect their worshipers' souls upon death, allowing their servants to live on in the gods' native planes, or punishing them for their sins in life by casting them to the Wasted Worlds. Other planes are ridiculously easy to enter, and any fool can walk into the Storm. Entering the ethereal plane is at once a simple and difficult transition, as lifelong druids or Bascarites could search the world without ever finding entrance to the spirit world. However, hidden glens and crevasses in the earth can lead even the most magically incapable mortals into the heart of the ethereal plane, and allow planar entities to bleed over into the material world. The points of entry between worlds are known as "portals" or "haloes." Usually these wide, golden rings that allow a view into an adjoining plane are seen as valued treasures or dangerous threats, depending on the planes they link to. The glowing aura they bestow on their travelers is noticeable, but not bright enough to see or target, even with low-light vision. Strangely, nimbics' own auras do not change in the slightest, regardless of their halo use. Haloes are considered holy sites by any deity or servant of a god that grants access to the Travel domain, though whether this is a blessing or a damnation again depends on the connected plane. Known haloes usually have at least one Travel-oriented cleric watching over them, either to advise travelers or to bar the haloes' use. Some haloes are permanent, while others appear briefly before winking out of existence. Still more are timed, opening or closing based upon seasons, holy days, rituals, or movements of heavenly bodies.

The Astral Planes

The astral planes are so-named because of their coordinates in the cosmos: almost without exception, they are in the skies above Larisnar. In effect, the entire sky is a series of haloes to the astral planes, moving around the heavens in an annual rotation. These haloes remain in the sky in their respective astral planes, too, severely limiting the haloes' utility for even the most proficient fliers. Still, correctly tying a constellation or star to its corresponding astral sky shows which gods are most likely to be active in the world at any given moment. For more information on heavenly phenomena, see *The Triple Moons and Conjunctions* later in this chapter.

Other astral planes are more visible and accessible. Though the gods dwell for the most part in their home planes, they spend the bulk of their time at Gods' Eye, the moon and halo-plane that provides the most complete view in the cosmos of Larisnar. The darkness between stars marks the burial-lands of the forgotten and neglected gods: the Wasted Worlds.

Two other astral planes are not in the sky at all, but are closely tied to the mortal world. The Storm travels over the surface of the Accordlands, destroying and dominating in equal measure, while the Abyss lies at the bottom of the world, the eternal grave of the Dragon. Because of the Dragon's power lingering in both areas, each plane is both part of and alien to the material world around it.

The following are the most significant astral planes, though by no means are they the only ones.

The Abyss

Appearance: The Abyss is a cavern, its blood-caked walls climbing ever higher into the perfect darkness above. At the pit's base is the Dragon's corpse, rotting and half crushed beneath stone, and spewing forth Abyssals from its every pore.

Native Deities: None, though some dwarven traitors worship the more powerful Abyssals.

Native Creatures: Abyssals (any)

Common Dangers: Aside from the hordes of Abyssals, the Abyss itself boasts dangers associated with an unstable subterranean location, including landslides, cave-ins, earthquakes, volcanic activity, and poisonous gases. Since Signon's passing the Dwarves have standing orders to kill even non-Abyssals that come from the Abyss.

As the name implies, the Abyss is essentially a yawning pit. While tunnels honeycomb the edges, most dead-end or meet with Abyssal lairs. The only reliable way to the bottom of the Abyss is through its central cavern. The edges are narrow (less than 10 feet in most places, and sometimes less than 2 feet), and any Abyssal capable of flight can easily outmaneuver creatures stuck on the precipices. The GM may require creatures to make Balance checks or Reflex saves to avoid fatally plunging into the depths of the Abyss.

Unique Features: The Abyss is home to the Dragon's body, now crushed beneath the weight of the world. Indeed, the massive corpse is plainly visible from any point in the central cavern, and even to onlookers from outside the Abyss' halo. The Dragon's body decays and renews, with Its sloughed-off flesh either devoured by vermin or evolving into new life. In either case, the spawned creatures are Abyssals, the dire enemies of all that is. Living creatures that partake of the Dragon's flesh transform into Abyssals of a new or random kind, becoming NPC servants of the Dragon and falling fully under Its sway. No known effect can reverse the process, as even *wishes* and *miracles* are weaker than the Dragon's corruptive influence.

Though the Abyss overlaps with the material plane, its nature overrules conflicting effects, such as determining whether effects hedge a creature out.



The Abyss has the following features:

Strongly chaotic evil-aligned. Creatures with nonchaotic and nonevil alignments suffer a -2 circumstance penalty on all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks while in the Abyss. Creatures that are neither chaotic nor evil suffer the effect twice, having a -4 circumstance penalty.

Impeded magic. To cast divine spells in the Abyss, the caster must make a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + the level of the spell). If the check fails, the spell does not function but is still lost as a prepared spell or spell slot. If the check succeeds, the spell functions normally. Divine spells granted from worship of the Storm function unimpeded, as do divine spells granted through service to an Abyssal cause (i.e. a paladin whose driving mission is to serve the Abyss). If a deity physically enters the Abyss, sends one of its avatars there, or has a major artifact there, that deity's granted divine spells also function normally.

Limited magic. All attempts to raise the dead automatically fail in the Abyss.

Known Haloes: Material plane (the mouth of the Abyss is a miles-wide halo, with the dwarven city of Rockhome towering over its edge). There is also a halo hidden within the Dragon's heart that leads to the Storm, though not even Modred of Carcius nor any Abyssals are aware of it.

Gods' Eye

Appearance: Gods' Eye is an infinite platform, brilliantly white and flat. Gazing upward allows a perfect view of Larisnar. Looking around reveals indistinct forms in the distance: the gods.

Native Deities: All human gods other than the Védoszente, who dwelled here when they were still gods but are now aspects of the Storm, and the Narawati gods, who have had no ties to the other deities since the Dragon's death. Forgotten or abandoned gods (such as the few surviving old dwarven and elven deities) also stay here, though they are impartial observers. Though not actually native to Gods' Eye, these deities spend their time watching the world via the realm's halo.

Native Creatures: None. Gods' Eye is a realm inhabited solely by gods and their most trusted advisors, such as the near-mythical metallic dragons.

Common Dangers: No known mortal has ever crossed over into Gods' Eye. Any who did would presumably face divine judgment for interrupting the gods' duties. A more subtle threat might be the loss of any illusions as to the gods' true nature, as a personal meeting with a god exposes the deity's faults.

Unique Features: Gods' Eye was once like the other two moons, subtly twisted by ties to the Dragon Orbs' evils. Where Bascaron's Orb was greedy and insatiable, and La Hashan's was pondering, Gods' Eye had a natural desire for knowledge. Due to the efforts of Albrecht and his mortal servants, the Aroch Paladins, Gods' Eye is now free of lingering traces of the Dragon's vicious nihilism, even as the paladins have purged the orb of its evil.

Additionally, a unique property of Gods' Eye's halo is that it can gaze on any part of Larisnar at any time except during certain lunar conjunctions, and can even magnify so as to look closely upon local events. Seeing another world so closely in the sky is disorienting to mortal eyes, however.

God's Eye also has the following traits:

Enhanced magic. The unique vantage point naturally improves casters' abilities to spy upon Larisnar and its inhabitants. Any successfully cast divination spell with a target in Larisnar is cast as though it had the Empowered Spell and Heightened Spell metamagic feats.

Limited magic. To cast any spell at all, creatures must have the patronage of one of the gods presently on the plane. While this usually implies that human clerics and paladins may cast spells normally, deities may choose to impede individual spells, rather than all. Divine spells granted by the Storm are unimpeded, as are spells granted by Bascaron (or having the Bascaron descriptor) while the Blood Moon moves in the sky. Deities, their avatars, and their outsider servants may cast spells without difficulty.

Known Haloes: Material plane, though the halo is in the sky in both planes. Haloes also exist to all the gods' home planes, but open and close solely through the will of those gods.

The Storm

Appearance: A turbulent storm cloud emitting lightning and soul-shattering thunder. Its size changes from an outside perspective: sometimes it is no larger than a normal storm, other times it swallows the horizon whole. Stormcrows and Stormborn fly at its forefront, descending upon hapless victims. Inside, the Storm becomes a vast world unto itself, its landscapes familiar but their perspectives and proportions twisted.

Native Deities: The Storm itself is more powerful than a deity, and has a small circle of former deities that serve it — the Védoszente — so that its worshippers may associate familiar faces with the ancient power.

Native Creatures: Stormborn (any)

Common Dangers: Exposure to the Storm is potentially fatal, as it seeps directly into living creatures' souls. Those who resist the Storm's advances through strength of will may resist, while those who serve the Storm already and are worthy become Stormborn themselves. All others face oblivion within the Dragon Soul's hungry embrace.

These effects should be role-played as a series of interactive morality plays, testing the characters' sense of identity, their faith, and their feelings surrounding their failures. These experiences take place in the characters' minds, and occur at the GM's discretion. The Stormborn do not attack anyone enraptured by the Storm, though those who repeatedly defy the Storm's advances should face constant struggle between such episodes. Characters returned as Stormborn become NPC servants of the Storm. No known effect can reverse the process, as even *wishes* and *miracles* are weaker than the Storm's purifying influence. Characters that the Storm finds unworthy of conversion it destroys with its servants or spell-like abilities. All living things are either the Storm's willing subjects, or gross matter ripe for oblivion.

The conversion process takes place after acceptance into the Storm's fold, which requires that the subject has no negative ability modifiers (even temporary ones, or nonexistent abilities, such as an ooze's lack of Intelligence); a Wisdom of at least 15; a type modifier (if any) other than Abyssal, Bascaron, or Ethereal; and a type other than Outsider. A character is fully converted after passing a number of trials equal to his Wisdom modifier, and immediately gains new special abilities or qualities as described on Table 9–1: New Stormborn Progression.

A more mundane threat is one adventurers fail to account for: the weather. The Storm earned its name not only through its appearance, but also because it behaves like an actual storm. Those inside the Storm may face weather conditions similar to the spells as cast by a 20th-level spellcaster: *acid fog*, *begone*, *blindness/deafness* (in reaction to particularly bright lightning or loud thunder), *cause fear*, *chain lightning*, *chill metal*, *chill touch*, *color spray*, *control weather*, *control winds*, *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *deeper darkness*, *doom*, *faerie fire*, *find the path*, *flare*, *freezing sphere*, *ghost sound*, *gust of wind*, *heat metal*, *ice storm*, *light*, *mind fog*, *nightmare*, *nondetection*, *obscuring mist*, *open/close*, *prismatic spray*, *protection from arrows*, *rainbow pattern*, *ray of frost*, *shatter*, *shocking grasp*, *silence*, *sleet storm*, *slow*, *solid fog*, *storm of vengeance*, *telekinesis*, *telekinetic sphere*, *transmute rock to mud*, *ventriloquism*, *wail of the banshee*, *whispering wind*, *wind walk*, and *wind wall*. The Storm may

use any or all these effects as often as it wishes, but may not affect the same subject more than once in a single round. The Storm may grant its blessings or unleash its wrath on anyone inside it, or standing within a distance to a halo equal to or less than range of the effect. These are considered supernatural abilities.

Unique Features: The Storm is the soul of the Dragon, a conscious and mobile entity. Though most of the time it is only barely aware (roughly equivalent to a mortal on the verge of sleep), it can occasionally awaken and begin moving and attacking deliberately. No one is sure why this happens, or for how long it will last. When not fully aware, it is subject to the guiding forces of willful entities linked to it, such as Modred of Carcius (the Hierophant of the Church of the Storm), the Queen of Lightning and her mortal form (see Chapter 8: Religion), dragons, or a wielder of a dragon orb. Struggles of dominance are opposed Will saves, with a natural 1 or natural 20 resulting in the Storm awakening and making its own choice. The Storm has no physical or even incorporeal form, instead being part of the cosmos itself. Its awakened Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma are 40 each; 20 each when it is unaware. It understands but does not speak any known language, and may communicate telepathically with any creature of the Stormborn type modifier.

When not thundering actively, the Storm is absolutely quiet, except for a rhythmic thumping (the Dragon's heart beating on the other side of the halo).

TABLE 9–1: NEW STORMBORN PROGRESSION

Wisdom Modifier	New Special Abilities or Qualities
+2	The character may choose to become one of Signon's Disciples (losing all individuality), or remain unique, gaining the Outsider (Stormborn) type, immunity to lightning-based effects, and cold and fire resistances of 30. The character's alignment shifts one step closer to lawful evil, with the lawful shift coming first, and the character becomes an NPC in service to the Storm.
+3	The character gains the Astral special quality. He exists simultaneously both on the material plane and in the heart of the Storm. As such, any melee or ranged attack that targets him has a 50% miss chance, unless the attack is made with a +1 or better magical weapon (in the case of ranged attacks, only the projectile must bear the enchantment, not necessarily the weapon itself). The character's alignment shifts one step closer to lawful evil, with the lawful shift coming first. Stormborn with a Wisdom modifier of less than +3 advance to this state after spending 1/10th their former maximum life span continuously inside the Storm.
+4	The character gains the fast healing quality at 2, or at 6 while within the Storm. His alignment shifts one step closer to lawful evil, and he must make a Will save to avoid following the orders of any other Stormborn with more Hit Dice (DC equal to the superior's HD + 5). Stormborn with a Wisdom modifier of less than +4 advance to this state after spending 1/5th their former maximum life span continuously inside the Storm.
+5	The character gains several spell-like abilities. He can detect living at will as a free action. He can use <i>cause light wounds</i> 3/day, <i>darkness</i> 3/day, <i>obscuring fog</i> 3/day, <i>lightning bolt</i> 3/day, <i>cause moderate wounds</i> 1/day, and <i>ice storm</i> 1/day. He must also spend at least 12 hours a day inside the Storm, or lose all abilities. Stormborn with a Wisdom modifier of less than +6 advance to this state after spending 1/3rd their former maximum life span continuously inside the Storm.
+6	The character gains the ability to summon and control stormcrows once per day, 11–20 at a time. The character must be outside and near the Storm (less than a mile away), and the Stormcrows arrive in 3 rounds. He may no longer benefit from any magical healing. Stormborn with a Wisdom modifier of less than +6 advance to this state after spending 1/2 their former maximum life span continuously inside the Storm.

For example: Sir Lionel du Myereth, a noted cleric of the Storm, decides to achieve his greatest ambition and become a Storm-saint. Upon entering the Storm, the stalwart Sir Lionel finds his soul at the Storm's mercy, its influence seeping into his mind to root out any weaknesses. In his first vision, he sees a truth for the first time: the existence of an old god cult within his own Order. Thinking quickly, he chooses to subject the entire cult to Trials by Storm, rather than kill them or leave them be. He is on his way to becoming a true Stormborn, but needs two more trials of his own to match his +3 Wisdom modifier. Once he does so, Sir Lionel may choose to either become one of Signon's Disciples, losing his will to the Storm forever, or gain the benefits and restrictions of being Astral and an Outsider.

The Storm's rain (its tears) is a natural healing salve. A vial full acts like a *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Though the Storm overlaps with the material plane, its nature overrules conflicting effects, such as determining whether effects hedge a creature out.

The Storm has the following traits:

Divinely morphic. While the Storm rarely uses this trait, it can instantly and dramatically alter any aspect of reality within its bounds, including (but not limited to) changing the landscape, altering or destroying objects or creatures, or spontaneously opening or closing haloes to other planes. These effects linger even after the Storm has left the area. Only the Storm itself may use this trait; no creature, no matter how strongly linked to the Storm, may use its power to remake reality.

Strongly lawful evil-aligned. Creatures with nonlawful and nonevil alignments suffer a -2 circumstance penalty on all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks while in the Storm. Creatures that are neither lawful nor evil suffer the effect twice, having a -4 circumstance penalty. Stormborn and creatures who can cast divine spells granted by the Storm are immune to this effect.

Enhanced magic. All spells cast within the bounds of the Storm are cast as though the caster had used the Maximize Spell metamagic feat.

Known Haloes: Several haloes ring the edges of the Storm, appearing as a single, continuous halo from the outside, but several widely spaced ones from within.

The Wasted Worlds

Appearance: When the Dragon turned Its wrath upon Its creations, the planes were not spared. Many planes exist that are now fundamentally identical: burning wastes spewing the toxic smoke of annihilated realities. Some have coagulated, running over one another in a roiling maelstrom of self-destructive fury. The Wasted Worlds retain a semblance of their original appearance, in terms of broken ruins, floes of ice or lava, or churning marshlands.

Native Deities: Potentially any entity of the GM's design. Gods in these realms are dead, dying, forgotten, mad, or several of the above, and are unlikely to come to the party's aid.

Native Creatures: Potentially any Outsider. That any creatures exist on these planes is something of a miracle in itself, but these fallen spirits have long since abandoned their faith in higher powers. They are shadows of gods long dead, and have succumbed to their bitter self-hatred for having outlived their masters. A rare few have escaped their home planes for other worlds, serving new gods or continuing the legacy of the Dragon's malice. When many of the Wasted Worlds, as the rare planar traveler calls them, fell under Bascaron's gaze and joined the ethereal plane (see *Bascaron Planes*, below), their inhabitants also came to serve the Blood Moon.

Common Dangers: Natural disasters are common, as the Wasted Worlds are slowly dissolving into nothing or breaking upon each other. It is especially dangerous at the planes' edges, where the realms' reality itself is dubious.

Unique Features: While filled with obvious risks, journeys here can bring unique rewards: mixed-state elements such as solid fire or liquid earth (not mud or quicksand), plant life of living gemstones, and other such oddities. These odd objects fetch astounding prices from wizards and other arcanists, who pay only upon delivery.

The mad changes go beyond inanimate matter, and the surviving native creatures may fall prey to their planes' decay, changing types or type modifiers without any regard for logic.

Known Haloes: Any number. As each Wasted World is a separate plane, each has its own haloes to other realms. This eventually endangers the connected planes, as stray matter washes through the haloes before the Wasted Worlds' final destruction. Those trapped on a Wasted World in its final death throes may have trouble leaving, as the world loses cohesion around the halo itself, destroying it or casting its travelers into randomly scattered worlds.

The Ethereal Plane

Appearance: To hear druids and shamans speak of it, the ethereal plane is not a separate place but a spiritual layer of the material plane. Looking upon the ethereal for the first time, most would agree. The world of the ethereal plane is a nearly perfect mirror of the material, matching hill for hill, river for river, tree for tree. The more time newcomers spend there, however, the more they notice discrepancies. First, everything is the same... just more so. The colors are a little more vibrant, the weather more extreme, and the landmarks more distinctive. The animal spirits appear to be normal (if large) creatures, but are intelligent, their animal natures heightened into full blown personalities. The spirits of the recently dead may linger on for reasons known only to them. There are stranger spirits still, including those of inanimate objects and even the vaguest of concepts. Monstrous spirits are unheard of.

The greatest change, though, is in the heavens, and indeed all around, lurking just out of sight. The ethereal plane is home to only one celestial body: Bascaron, the Blood Moon. Bascaron moves freely in the heavens of the ethereal plane at night.

Native Deities: Technically no actual deities, though Bascaron and the Elven Elements all originate in the ethereal plain.

Native Creatures: All kinds of spirits. Some spirits may be of the (Bascaron) type modifier, even if they normally are not. Additionally, other creatures sometimes wander into the ethereal from the Bascaron planes (see below), all having the (Bascaron) type modifier.

Common Dangers: For the most part, the ethereal plane holds no greater danger than its material double. The most common threats are environmental or combat related. The exception is Bascaron itself. For more details on Bascaron's warping effects, see below. The portions of the ethereal plane bordering on the Bascaron planes are much more dangerous, however, as those realms spew forth chaos.

Unique Features: Aside from the raw variety of creatures and planes in the ethereal plane and Bascaron's near-constant presence, the ethereal plane is almost dull compared to the other worlds. Were it not for its mad conglomeration of resources and inhabitants, only the naturalist classes such as barbarians, druids, rangers, and shamans would find anything of interest there, and even they would likely care only for the totem spirits.

The ethereal plane has the following traits:

Enhanced magic. Druid, ranger, and shaman spells are cast as though they had the Empowered Spell metamagic feat. If Bascaron is in the ethereal sky, all spells are cast as though they had the "chaotic" and "Bascaron" descriptors.

Impeded magic. While Bascaron is in the ethereal sky, all Law domain spells are impeded. To cast an impeded spell, the caster must make a successful Spellcraft check (DC 20 + the level of the spell). If the check fails, the spell does not function but is still lost as a prepared spell or spell slot. If the check succeeds, the spell functions normally.

Known Haloes: Most of the ethereal plane's known haloes connect to either the material plane or to one of the Bascarite elemental planes. A rare few may lead to the astral planes, most often one of the Wasted Worlds, but the combined astral and ethereal energies usually destroy the halo in mere days.

The haloes binding the ethereal plane to the material are usually in places of awe-inspiring beauty or terror, where the illusions of civilization cannot survive. The haloes in these places are as permanent or fleeting as the emotions the area inspires, but travelers should understand that the more dreaded the area, the more dangerous its ethereal counterpart. Places such as the ethereal mirror of the Shattered Lands are swarming with violent spirits. The destruction of these areas usually obliterates their haloes, too, though wilder parts of civilization have their own gateways such as Lukkot's war factories.

Rarer and more dangerous by far, the haloes leading to the Bascaron planes are constantly receding to mere feet in circumference or advancing like a voracious maw tearing at the world, depending on the strength of their plane at the time. Ethereal spirits shun these sites, as the Bascarite spirits relentlessly attack anything they come across. Fortunately, these haloes are an established threat, and experienced planar travelers can steer clear of them (Knowledge (planes) check, DC 20, to determine whether such a halo is nearby).

The Bascaron Elemental Planes

The Broken Moon's passing is a danger to both the material and ethereal planes, but one of its worst effects occurs when it shines upon a halo joining the ethereal plane to one of the Wasted Worlds. While the other astral planes suffer little damage, as their presiding gods simply close their haloes, the exposed Wasted Worlds bathe in Bascaron's energy, irrevocably altering them. While this stabilizes the former Wasted Worlds, remaking them as sub-realms in the ethereal plane, the transformation is also drastic, reducing the planes to their core natures, or elements. Due to their new, indirect ties to the material world, the Bascaron elemental planes share the basic geographic features and wildlife with the area surrounding their haloes, though these features have changed to reflect the planes' intent. The Bascaron Elemental Planes also have less predictable effects, often symbolically associated with their elements. They are as big as small islands, perhaps ten miles square, but are much more dangerous than their size suggests.

Due to the corruptive influence of Bascaron, any creature that dies in these realms may be reborn in the plane's image, giving them the associated abilities and penalties of the associated templates in the sidebars.

While many Bascaron elemental planes exist, the following are four of those most feared throughout the Accordlands:

FLAME

Appearance: The Bascaron Elemental Plane of Flame is a charred wasteland. A surprisingly dark realm, most of its colors are muted and indistinct. This is especially odd since objects' edges glow softly like embers. Faint crackling sounds linger in the background, and small clouds of sparks burst up from the ground with every footstep. This world is uncomfortably warm.

Native Deities: None. Whatever god once lived here died long ago.

Native Creatures: As the areas surrounding its halo (both on the material and in the ethereal plane), modified with the template for this realm. More common elemental creatures of the (fire) type modifier may dwell here as well, gaining the (Bascaron) type modifier but no other effects.

Common Dangers: Even in the best-case scenario, the oppressive heat of the Bascaron Elemental Plane of Flame is a threat, which increases to extreme heat if a small open flame is present (campfire size or smaller, or creatures of the (fire) type modifier up to size Small), or abysmal if a large flame is present (larger than a campfire, or Medium-size or larger creatures of the (fire) type modifier). Water evaporates quickly, and characters who stay here suffer dehydration.

The larger problem is that the visible glow of the native creatures and items hint at the flames burning deep within. Should any creature or object native to the realm suffer damage, it makes a Fortitude save with a DC equal to the damage inflicted. Failure destroys the creature or item instantly as it explodes violently, like a *fireball* spell cast by a wizard of a level equal to the creature's Challenge Rating or the object's Hardness, centered on the creature. Though the creatures and objects native to the plane are immune to heat and fire, they must still make their Fortitude saves against heat and fire-based attacks (with the DC being the amount of damage they would have suffered), or else explode anyway. While these explosions do not gain the normal benefit of the more powerful fire effects of the realm, they may set off other explosions in turn. Landslides, avalanches, cave-ins, and earthquakes may result in equivalent dangers. Native creatures and items may still explode outside their home realm.

A more subtle threat is that passions come to the forefront. Whenever an intelligent creature (including those native to the plane) becomes emotional, it must make a Will save (DC 10, +1 per hour in the plane) or have its emotions heightened to extreme levels, as though it had failed a save against the effects of the corresponding passion from the *emotion* spell. Effects such as barbarian rage and favored enemies may trigger this enhanced emotion. Though these passions are fanned to unnaturally high levels, they cannot exist without the core emotion, and characters who lose control of their passions are still responsible for their actions' ill effects, such as possible code of conduct breaches.

Unique Features: Creatures of the (water) or (ice) type modifiers cannot survive here for long, suffering abysmal heat from the moment they enter the plane. Spells and effects that produce water or ice, or deal water, ice, or cold damage have half the effects or deal half damage, or no damage at all on successful saves.

Weapons forged on the Bascaron Plane of Flame automatically have the *flaming* enchantment, which may not be turned off. Forging equipment is difficult, requiring open flames for the forge and water for the cooling process.

Divine spellcasters may not recover lost spells here if their deity provides access to the Water domain, nor may they use their domain ability to turn fire creatures.

The Bascaron Plane of Flame has the following traits:

Fire-dominant. Unprotected wood, paper, cloth, or other flammable materials ignite almost immediately, and those wearing inflammable clothing catch on fire. In addition, creatures take 3d10 points of fire damage every round. Creatures of the water type modifier, or who are composed of water, take double damage every round.

Strongly chaotic-aligned. All nonchaotic creatures suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks. Creatures with the Bascaron type modifier are immune to this effect.

Enhanced magic. Spells that create flame or smoke, or mind-affecting spells that produce or heighten anger, are cast as though the caster had used the Maximize Spell metamagic feat.

Known Haloes: A halo connects the Bascaron Plane of Flame to the ethereal plane somewhere in the ethereal double of the Narawat desert. The halo raises temperatures to excruciating for a 15 foot radius around it, and the halo grows from its normal 10 foot radius to over 100 feet wide during Narawat's periodic burning seasons.

ICE

Appearance: A flawless crystalline forest, the Bascaron Plane of Ice is a frigid marvel locked in perpetual winter. Sheets of hard-packed ice and snow cover the ground, making travel difficult, and the sky is interminably overcast. The giants believe that this place is the one, true Hell, and traps the souls of those who die with mortal enemies still alive.

Native Deities: While its original god is missing and presumed dead, another creature ruled here for a nearly a hundred years, and only recently were he and his servants free to leave. Lord Winter, the transformed elf who unwittingly used a powerful Bascaron artifact to become an entity of death, was well on his way to becoming a god himself (see the sidebar, "Lord Winter's Ascension") before Morghen Dythanus unleashed him and his death knights on the material plane once more. Protected by *Syneri's Ring*, the artifact that remade him, Winter and his associates were spared the side effects of Bascaron's power, and do not have the (Bascaron) type modifier.

Native Creatures: As the forests of northern Myreth and its ethereal twin, modified with this realm's template (see sidebar). Many undead also dwell here, gaining the planar template. They are hostile to humans and Deverenians on sight, and are likely to attack any nonelves they see.

Native to the Bascaron Elemental Plane of Fire

To create creatures native to this realm, use the following template summary:

Type: Becomes Elemental (Bascaron, Fire)

Alignment: One step closer to chaotic

Special Attacks: Explosions (see *Common Dangers*)

Special Qualities: *Etherealness* (Su): While outside its native plane, the creature gains the (Incorporeal, Ethereal) type modifiers.

CR: +3

Creatures with this template appear charred, with burning red highlights on their clothing and in their eyes, nostrils, and mouth.

Common Dangers: The entire plane suffers extreme cold, and no fire can exist in the realm. Creatures who remain in the realm too long may die from thirst because they cannot reliably melt ice nor prevent water from freezing. Additionally, creatures not resistant or immune to cold are *slowed* as per the spell of the same name.

A more subtle problem is that the realm encourages petty resentments. Characters must make Will saves every hour (DC 10+1 for every hour since the last successful save) or attack the nearest person. The anger lasts until the attacker kills his target, or for a number of rounds equal to the number he missed his save by, whichever comes first. Lawful characters have a +2 circumstance bonus to this save, while chaotic creatures have a -2 circumstance penalty to it. Though these passions are fanned to unnaturally high levels, they cannot exist without the core emotion, and characters who lose control of their passions are still responsible for their actions' ill effects, such as possible code of conduct breaches.

Unique Features: Divine spellcasters may not recover lost spells here if their deity provides access to the Fire domain, nor may they use their domain ability to turn water creatures.

The Bascaron Plane of Ice also has the following traits:

Strongly chaotic-aligned. All nonchaotic creatures suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks. Creatures with the Bascaron type modifier are immune to this effect.

Enhanced magic. All spells creating ice or cold are cast as though their caster had used the Maximize Spell metamagic feat.

Limited magic. No spell producing fire or heat may be cast within the Bascaron Plane of Ice.

Known Haloes: The Bascaron Plane of Ice has a halo inside a cave in northern Myreth in the ethereal plane. It was here that Syneri bound Lord Winter and his servants. The halo expands and contracts with the seasons, from 5 feet to 500 feet wide.

Lord Winter's Ascension

Should Winter return and spend more time expanding both his plane and his mortal followers, he may yet become a god. While the other elves would oppose both Winter and his cult, lest they tempt the Elements' fury, Houses Netheryn and Syneri would likely have sympathizers and followers in equal numbers. If Lord Winter ascends during the course of a campaign, use the following statistics to represent the new deity:

Symbol: A broadsword, with a human skull as its crosspiece

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Portfolio: Blind vengeance, cold, painful death, hatred, House Syneri

Worshippers: Elves (if Lord Winter loses Syneri's Ring before his apotheosis, he also gains Bascarites as worshippers)

Cleric Alignments: Chaotic Evil, Chaotic Neutral, Neutral Evil

Domains: Death, Destruction, and War (if Lord Winter loses Syneri's Ring before his apotheosis, he also gains Chaos)

Favored Weapon: Broadsword

It would take centuries for Winter to reach the power levels attributed to other gods. His abilities and avatar form would be equivalent to his current state: a 16th-level chaotic evil fighter with the Native of the Bascaron Plane of Ice template (without the Bascaron type modifier), and the following special abilities (which he already possesses, but would be heightened as listed):

Vengeful Strike (Ex): Whenever Lord Winter suffers damage from a melee attack, he gains an attack of opportunity against his attacker. After his ascension, he could perform any number of such attacks of opportunity in a round, and these attacks would automatically threaten a critical hit. His avatar would gain only the latter ability to threaten critical hits.

Winter's Chill (Su): Whenever Lord Winter strikes an opponent he has already dealt damage to in this combat, the opponent must make a Fortitude save (DC equal to the total amount of unhealed damage Winter has inflicted on them) or die instantly. At present, this ability requires that Winter use his favored weapon, also named Winter's Chill, a +3 broadsword of frost which is his listed holy symbol. After achieving apotheosis, Lord Winter and his avatars would be able to use this ability regardless of weaponry, and the broadsword itself would keep the power, becoming an artifact.

The transformation drained Syneri's Ring of most of its power, but the wearer gains the (Incorporeal, Ethereal) type modifiers and immunity to Bascaron's energies until he removes the ring once more.

MADNESS

Appearance: No two travelers agree on what anything looks like on the Bascaron Elemental Plane of Madness. As perhaps the purest single source of Bascaron's energies, the plane reacts to anyone that enters. It can appear as virtually anything, though most people that enter it first see it as what they expect, the ethereal plane outside the halo.

Native to the Bascaron Elemental Plane of Ice

To create creatures native to this realm, use the following template summary:

Type: Becomes Elemental (Bascaron, Ice); Undead keep their type, but gain the type modifiers

Alignment: One step closer to chaotic

Special Attacks: *Cold Touch* (Su/Sp): When attacking with natural weapons or an unarmed attack, the creature deals +2d6 cold damage. Additionally, the modified creature may *chill metal* at will as a spell-like ability, by touching it.

Special Qualities: *Etherealness* (Su): While outside its native plane, the creature gains the (Incorporeal, Ethereal) type modifiers. *Turning Vulnerability* (Su): The creature is considered a water creature for the purposes of the Fire domain's granted ability. Clerics with access to the Fire domain turn the creature as though it were two levels or hit dice lower.

CR: +2

Creatures with this template appear to be at least partially made of crystalline ice.

Native Deities: Impossible to determine. Those who claim to have met a god or gods in the plane may simply have been hallucinating.

Native Creatures: Almost any creature in existence can live in or even be native to the Bascaron Elemental Plane of Madness, though even the natives find the place disorienting and try to leave. The natives are no more likely to be hostile than they are to be playful or indifferent, though they are usually still dangerous to others regardless of attitude.

Common Dangers: The primary danger of the Madness realm is that the entire landscape changes with the thought process of its foreign visitors. Creatures must make Will saves to avoid severely changing the landscape to match their deepest thoughts (DC 10 + 1 per round, more if their visions are especially horrific or attractive), which may trigger any environmental effect the GM deems appropriate. Charismatic characters who made the save may try to talk sense into those who have failed, allowing a one-time retest with a bonus equal to the speaker's Charisma modifier. A second failed save here indicates the reality (or realities) has taken hold, and the failing creature(s) must be physically removed from the world to have any hope of salvation. The halo itself moves within the plane, and finding it again may prove difficult.

Everyone entering the realm faces a wave of chaos energies, as though stuck by a *chaos hammer* spell from a 16th level spellcaster.

The Bascaron Plane of Madness breeds insanity. Creatures within it (including natives) must make Will saves (DC 10, +1 for every hour since the last successful save) or take a *random action*, as per the spell of the same name cast by a 16th level cleric, with each successive failed save lasting an additional round. Lawful characters have a +2 circumstance bonus to this save, while chaotic creatures have a -2 circumstance penalty to it. Though these passions are fanned to unnaturally high levels, they cannot exist without the

core emotion, and characters who lose control of their passions are still responsible for their actions' ill effects, such as possible breaches of conduct. The effects of this madness end if the affected creature leaves the realm.

Unique Features: Since the whole plane is formless and changes size constantly, any effect used to find directions automatically fails. With no outside means of leaving the Madness realm or method of finding its halo reliably (i.e. tethering a rope to something outside it, and following the rope back to leave), there is no reliable way of leaving again.

Divine spellcasters may not recover lost spells here if their deity provides access to the Law domain, nor may they use their domain ability to increase their effective casting levels for Law domain spells.

The Bascaron Plane of Madness has the following traits:

Subjective directional gravity. The strength of gravity is normal, but each individual chooses the direction of gravity's pull. The plane has no gravity for unattended objects and nonsentient creatures. Characters on the plane may move normally along a solid surface by imagining "down" near their feet. If suspended in midair, a character "flies" by merely choosing a "down" direction and "falling" that way. Under such a procedure, an individual "falls" 150 feet the first round and 300 feet in each succeeding round. Movement is straight-line only. In order to stop, one has to slow one's movements by changing the designated "down" direction (again, moving 150 feet the in the new direction the first round, and 300 feet per round thereafter). It takes a DC 16 Wisdom check to set a new direction of gravity as a free action; this check can be made once per round. Any character who fails this Wisdom check in successive rounds receives a +6 bonus on subsequent checks until he or she succeeds.

Timeless. While time still passes, its effects are diminished. Characters within the Bascaron Plane of Madness need neither eat nor sleep (though spellcasters must rest to prepare or renew spells, as normal), and do not age. Should characters leave the plane after an extended stay, all of time's ravages retroactively take hold. Creatures who spent centuries there may age to dust in seconds, while those who escaped the plane after a week may find themselves ravenously hungry or thirsty.

Infinite. There is no end to the plane. It literally expands in whatever direction its inhabitants imagine.

Highly Morphic. Sentients on the plane unconsciously shape it according to their hidden desires and fears. This may produce any effect the GM deems appropriate, such as sudden pitfalls for characters who are afraid of heights, or imaginary kingdoms spontaneously created to serve the whims of power-hungry characters.

Strongly chaotic-aligned. All nonchaotic creatures suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks. Creatures with the Bascaron type modifier are immune to this effect.

Enhanced magic. All spells that produce insanity act as though their caster had cast the spell with the Empowered Spell metamagic feat.



Known Haloes: There is only one known halo to the Madness realm, somewhere in the Shattered Lands' ethereal counterpart. All Bascarite attempts to harness the Madness realm have failed, as the cultists gave themselves over to its blessed chaos rather than work toward any common goal. The halo itself yawns wide or narrows to a point randomly.

SECRETS

Appearance: The Bascaron Elemental Plane of Secrets is an endless labyrinth of narrow city streets and alleys set beneath a sky of endless dusk. The buildings themselves are a motley mix from across the Accordlands; here a smoky Lukkot warsmithy, there a vaulted Deverenian cathedral, all of it hauntingly familiar. In fact, the longer someone stays in the plane, the more they recognize, as the plane lures them in. Those who return from the plane often claim to have heard whispered voices offering forgotten lore, even though companions heard nothing.

Native Deities: Long ago this was Teufeltiger's realm, but the encroaching Church of the Storm forced him to flee to other planes, lest they seize him after he hid Isadran from the world. Without his steady hand to guide the realm, it crashed into a neighboring Wasted World, and from there into the ethereal plane where Bascaron corrupted the Lord of Treachery's former home.

Native to the Bascaron Elemental Plane of Madness

To create creatures native to this realm, use the following template summary:

Type: Becomes Shapeshifter (Bascaron, Chaos)

Alignment: Becomes chaotic

Special Attacks: As form

Special Qualities: *Etherealness* (Su): While outside their native plane, the creature gains the (Incorporeal, Ethereal) type modifiers. *Polymorph* (Sp): As the spell of the same name, cast by a wizard of the creature's level or Challenge Rating, as appropriate. This ability is not under the creature's conscious control. Instead, it involuntarily shifts form in reaction to the thoughts of others. By babbling or shouting before its appearance, the creature may make a Bluff check to convince someone else to think of a specific creature (including specific people) mentioned or suggested by its ramblings. Others may enter an opposed Will save with the native creature, with the victor imposing a specific form on it. Otherwise, the creature must make a Will save (DC equal to his present form's CR +2) every round there is an intelligent creature within 15 feet, or involuntarily shift forms to whatever the other person is thinking about.

Racial Qualities: Natives of the Bascaron Plane of Madness have a +10 racial bonus to their Bluff and Disguise checks when appearing as a specific person.

CR: +2

Creatures with this template appear to be almost liquid mockeries of their base type, with their bodies oozing constantly.

Native Creatures: Any creatures native to cities, deserts, or wastelands (either in the material plane or its ethereal reflection) with the added template for the realm, as well as invisible stalkers and tellers, who gain the (Bascaron) type modifier but are otherwise unchanged by their lives in the realm. Though initially mistrustful of strangers, the creatures are only attack if threatened or if they would benefit from their opponents' deaths, such as by stealing their equipment.

Common Dangers: The most common danger is getting lost in the plane's shifting streets and forest paths. To find a way to any given destination in the area (including the halo out) requires a Survival check (DC 18), with failure wasting an hour and getting lost. Though this is not directly a problem, wasting time in the Secrets realm leads to nightmarish paranoia.

For every hour spent in the realm, creatures must make a Will save (DC 10+1 for every hour since the last successful save) or decipher one of the many whispers passing through the streets, revealing the darkest secret of one of the people they care most about. While this does not have an immediate effect, any time the creature attempts to interact with this person again, or acts on that person's behalf, he suffers a -5 morale penalty to all rolls and checks except attacks against that person. Chaotic characters have a +2 circumstance bonus to this save, while lawful creatures have a -2 circumstance penalty to it.

Unique Features: Any secret in the world is here somewhere, inside one of the buildings or shallowly buried in front of a forest tree. For every day spent in the realm, a character may make a Search check (DC 30 minus the number of consecutive days spent looking) to find the answer to any question. Finding the answer does not guarantee that it presents an easy solution, nor does searching guarantee that an answer is to the seeker's liking or that it even exists.

Divine spellcasters may not recover lost spells here if their deity provides access to the Knowledge domain, nor may they use their domain ability to increase their effective casting levels for Knowledge domain spells. Characters gain a +4 competence bonus to all their Bluff, Disguise, and Hide checks in the realm.

The Bascaron Plane of Secrets has the following traits:

Timeless. While time still passes, its effects are diminished. Characters within the Bascaron Plane of Madness need not eat or sleep (though spellcasters must rest to prepare or renew spells, as normal), and do not age. Should characters leave the plane after an extended stay, all of time's ravages retroactively take hold. Creatures who spent centuries there may age to dust in seconds, while those who escaped the plane after a week may find themselves ravenously hungry or thirsty.

Infinite. There is no end to the plane. Any attempt to map the "city" of Secrets is futile, as the streets loop back upon each other randomly. Not even natives to the plane are immune to this effect, and it is impossible to track a character through mundane means (such as the Track feat).

Strongly chaotic-aligned. All nonchaotic creatures suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks. Creatures with the Bascaron type modifier are immune to this effect.

Enhanced magic. All spells from the Trickery domain and all divination spells are cast as though their caster had used the Empowered Spell metamagic. The nature of the plane warps any knowledge gained through these spells, however; while the information is never wrong, the plane perverts it to appear malicious and threatening whenever possible.

Limited magic. Any spells that discern the truth or detect lies automatically fail within the Bascaron Plane of Secrets.

Known Haloes: Though not widely known, there is a halo to the Bascaron Elemental Plane of Secrets in the ethereal twin of Isadran, at the altar inside Teufeltiger's old temple. Teufeltiger himself is unaware of this halo, though he instinctively understands that his former home is no longer safe even for him.

Lunar Conjunctions

Larisnar has three moons to govern fate: Bascaron, a baleful red moon that travels between the material and ethereal worlds in a manic orbit; the pure white Gods' Eye, which is always visible in the night sky; and La Hashan, whose erratic orbit causes that sandy-colored moon to appear just over the edge of the horizon. In isolation, their effects are negligible, usually producing minor effects on creatures born in their passing (see the Lunar feats in the *Master Codex* for more details). Bascaron sometimes produces greater effects on its own (see the sidebar), but usually an eclipse or conjunction between moons is necessary for more pronounced effects. The moons do not have perfect orbits, and each may appear anywhere in the night sky, larger and or smaller than any of the others.

Lunar conjunctions are rare events lasting a full night, each occurring less than ten times in nearly a thousand years.

The Supreme Conjunction, for instance, has happened only twice in the Accordlands' recorded history, centuries ago over the present-day Kabal lands and, later, over Mourn. Each has its own effects and superstitions.

BASCARON BEHIND GOD'S EYE

During these nights, the power of the gods is all but absolute. Larisnar hums with divine power, and its holy sites receive visits from thousands of pilgrims on these most holy days. The gods share their good fortune with their followers, and on these nights all divine spellcasters may cast one additional spell for each of their levels, none of which requires any preparation to cast.

Once per night during this conjunction, a divine spellcaster of 15th or higher level may pronounce a prophecy, and receive a sign whether their deity backs or denies it. Prophecies are usually cryptic, promising a definite event but rarely its outcome, and rarely occur until years have passed. GMs should carefully consider any prophecy's effects before approving it.

Bascaron servitors (including Yscarites) do not gain these benefits.

BASCARON BEHIND LA HASHAN

When La Hashan moves in front of Bascaron, it symbolizes the victory of mortal will over mindless destruction. On nights like this, the Kabal lands come alight with sorcerous energies, and Deveronian wizards perform terrific rituals to reclaim the

Native to the Bascaron Elemental Plane of Secrets

To create creatures native to this realm, use the following template summary:

Type: Becomes Elemental (Bascaron, Secrets)

Alignment: Becomes one step closer to chaotic

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack: +2d6

Special Qualities: *Etherealness* (Su): While outside its native plane, the creature gains the (Incorporeal, Ethereal) type modifiers. *Shadows and Fog*: The creature is always considered to have 50% concealment against ranged and range touch attacks, and has a +6 racial bonus to Hide checks.

CR: +1

Creatures with this template appear hazy and indistinct.

world. Arcane spellcasters cast spells as though they were two levels higher, and need no components except XP and expensive material components (the latter of which they may forgo by spending an amount of XP equal to the components' cost).

Once per night during this conjunction, when crafting a magic item, the arcane spellcaster may sacrifice several thousand XP to enhance his creation in powerful ways. Using the listed enchantments and items and the spellcaster's personality as guidelines, the GM creates an enchantment unique to the new creation. The resulting enchantment should cost no more gp than twice the character's sacrificed XP.

GODS' EYE BEHIND BASCARON

On this night of exceedingly ill omens the ethereal plane itself materializes for the night, and all its haloes into the various Bascaron Elemental Planes belch forth their foul denizens. Divine spellcasters hear voices on these nights, giving them nightmares and wreaking havoc with their spells. Should a divine spellcaster cast a spell on this night, he must make a Will save with a DC equal to the combined levels of spells he has already cast that night. If he fails, he unwittingly taps into Bascaron's energies instead of his god's, and he and all creatures he targets with the spell must make a Fortitude save (DC as per a spell of the same level) or become Monstrous Humanoids or Magic Beasts, each with the (Bascaron) type modifier, and move one alignment step closer to chaotic. These are permanent changes short of an atonement followed by a *limited wish*, *wish*, or *miracle*.

Bascaron worshipers may choose to fail the above saves.

GODS' EYE BEHIND LA HASHAN

As La Hashan eclipses Gods' Eye, mortals can defy the gods themselves. For the duration of this conjunction, the gods are blind to what transpires outside their planes, and divine spellcasters cannot use their spells or class features. Prophecies fail entirely during this night, and mortal will can triumph over divine destiny.

LA HASHAN BEHIND BASCARON

When La Hashan is behind Bascaron, mortals dread the night. Nightmarish creatures spawn from the dreams of men, creating mad new monsters to serve the Blood Moon. That night, every



Bascaron's Gaze

Sometimes Bascaron appears unusually low in the sky, brushing the tops of mountains. This is merely its planar shadow, but it is still endangers what lies beneath it.

When Bascaron is near, it brings out the worst in people. Every pitiful desire, every lifelong dream, every halfhearted hope: all of it comes true, as the worst case scenario.

Creatures (even unintelligent ones) receive a *wish* from Bascaron at a variable intervals as per the spell of the same name cast by a 20th level wizard, as interpreted by an inordinately sadistic GM. Creatures receive this "blessing" every round if they are directly exposed to Bascaron's energies, every hour if they are slightly shielded from it (in a heavy forest, or indoors with no further protection), or not at all if completely shielded from it (such as within a building that has no light filter from outside, and is protected by powerful wards against chaos, or if within a cavern a quarter-mile or more beneath the surface). At the end of the night, most creatures touched by Bascaron become Monstrous Humanoids with the (Bascaron) type modifier. GMs should only spare creatures this fate if they have received a number of *wishes* equal to or less than their Wisdom modifier, and even then only if the *wishes* haven't physically affected the creatures involved.

creature capable of dreaming spawns a new monster of either the Monstrous Humanoid (Bascaron) or Magical Beast (Bascaron) types, with a Challenge Rating equal to their own. Should the creature survive the night, it may spawn children, creating a new race of monsters.

LA HASHAN BEHIND GODS' EYE

As the reverse configuration bans gods from interfering with mortal destiny for a night, this night binds mortals to the gods' will. Creatures must make a Will save (DC 35) or become the mindless minions of one or more gods for the night. While they survive the night, healing all damage, they have no idea what transpired or why. Only those who fought off the gods' control may witness what occurs. Gods usually use this night to fulfill their prophecies.

GOD'S EYE BEHIND LA HASHAN BEHIND BASCARON

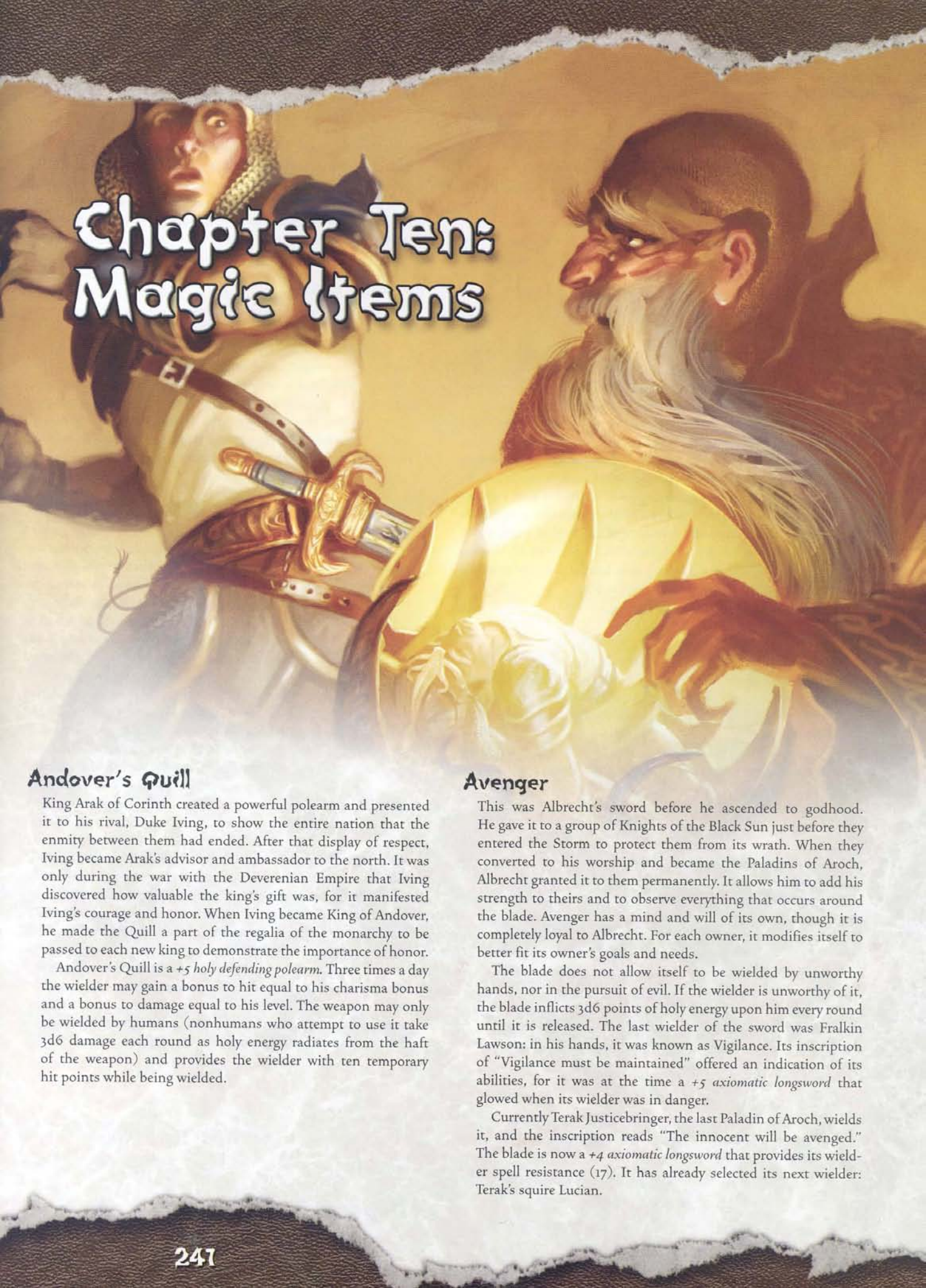
Also known as the Supreme Conjunction, this has only occurred twice in recorded history, each time laying waste whole regions. All living creatures within hundreds or thousands of miles are destroyed or transformed into monsters, as the GM chooses, though some protections may protect individuals against its energies.

It is prophesied by the Bascaron cult that another Supreme Conjunction will occur soon, at the site of the final battle between the Cult of Bascaron and the Yscarite Heretics, with the victor choosing whom to spare from Bascaron's touch, and whom to annihilate with it...

If there are other triple conjunctions, they have not occurred since the First War.

Dwarves and Conjunctions

Trapped miles below the earth's surface, the Dwarven Kingdom is effectively beyond any conjunction's reach. Anyone more than 100 feet below the surface gains no benefit and suffers no penalty from any of these conjunctions.



Chapter Ten: Magic Items

Andover's Quill

King Arak of Corinth created a powerful polearm and presented it to his rival, Duke Iving, to show the entire nation that the enmity between them had ended. After that display of respect, Iving became Arak's advisor and ambassador to the north. It was only during the war with the Deverenian Empire that Iving discovered how valuable the king's gift was, for it manifested Iving's courage and honor. When Iving became King of Andover, he made the Quill a part of the regalia of the monarchy to be passed to each new king to demonstrate the importance of honor.

Andover's Quill is a *+5 holy defending polearm*. Three times a day the wielder may gain a bonus to hit equal to his charisma bonus and a bonus to damage equal to his level. The weapon may only be wielded by humans (nonhumans who attempt to use it take 3d6 damage each round as holy energy radiates from the haft of the weapon) and provides the wielder with ten temporary hit points while being wielded.

Avenger

This was Albrecht's sword before he ascended to godhood. He gave it to a group of Knights of the Black Sun just before they entered the Storm to protect them from its wrath. When they converted to his worship and became the Paladins of Aroch, Albrecht granted it to them permanently. It allows him to add his strength to theirs and to observe everything that occurs around the blade. Avenger has a mind and will of its own, though it is completely loyal to Albrecht. For each owner, it modifies itself to better fit its owner's goals and needs.

The blade does not allow itself to be wielded by unworthy hands, nor in the pursuit of evil. If the wielder is unworthy of it, the blade inflicts 3d6 points of holy energy upon him every round until it is released. The last wielder of the sword was Fralkin Lawson: in his hands, it was known as Vigilance. Its inscription of "Vigilance must be maintained" offered an indication of its abilities, for it was at the time a *+5 axiomatic longsword* that glowed when its wielder was in danger.

Currently Terak Justicebringer, the last Paladin of Aroch, wields it, and the inscription reads "The innocent will be avenged." The blade is now a *+4 axiomatic longsword* that provides its wielder spell resistance (17). It has already selected its next wielder: Terak's squire Lucian.

The Black Banner

One of the most honored Nothrog magic items was the fabled Black Banner. The first to create one was a Nothrog of the fourth century called Sg'nall. He raised it over the battlefield of his first victory over a small tribe of goblins. The banner bore the insignia of his tribe's totem, the scorpion, and he raised it upon each of his victories. Other legions began to fear it, and the shaman of the tribe enchanted the banner to encourage his troops. Upon Sg'nall's death, his son raised the banner and barked out his father's war cry. The legion echoed the cry and pledged its loyalty to him.

Since that time, each Nothrog legion has created a Black Banner and used it to ensure the continuation of the Legion. No tribe may contain more than a single Banner and it is always destroyed when a tribe is conquered. When raised at the death of a Legion's commander or at his funeral, the Legion may swear loyalty to the holder as the new commander. If the Legion does not do so, it is a bad omen and the Legion's leaders fight among themselves until a new commander is selected. A Black Banner can only be created when the Legion is victorious over another army in a battle. When raised at a battle, it provides a +1 morale bonus to all rolls made by members of the Legion engaging in combat. Because of this and the obvious benefits of holding the Banner should the Legion's commander die, the position of Bannerman is a coveted, if dangerous one.

Blackiron

Unique to the mountain ranges surrounding Condor Pass, blackiron veins closely resemble those of normal iron, having the same weight and forging properties, but no amount of polish ever brightens its tarnish. Like true iron, it conducts electricity, but it also channels magic. Though it is no easier to make a masterwork object out of blackiron, it is well worth the effort. A masterwork object of blackiron temporarily mimics enchanting effects.

TABLE 9-1: BLACKIRON COST MODIFIERS

Item	Market Price Modifier	Effect
Light armor (chain shirts only)	+1,000 gp	bonus to deflection AC equal to the expended spell's level, for 1 round
Medium armor (not including hide armor)	+2,000 gp	bonus to deflection AC equal to the expended spell's level, for 2 rounds
Heavy armor	+4,000 gp	bonus to deflection AC equal to the expended spell's level, for 3 rounds
Shield (not including wooden)	+1,000 gp	bonus to deflection AC equal to the expended spell's level, for 1 round
Weapons	+2,000 gp	bonus to attack and damage equal to the expended spell's level, for 1 round
Holy Symbol	+1,000 gp	bonus to turning and divine casting spell level equal to the expended spell's level, for the next turning or casting or 2 rounds, whichever comes first
Spell Aid	+1,000 gp	bonus to arcane casting level equal to the expended spell's level, for the next casting or 2 rounds, whichever comes first

TABLE 9-2: BONE ARMOR

Name	Armor Bonus	Dex Penalty	Max Dex.	Arcane Spell Failure	Cost
Bone Shoulder Guards	1	0	-5	0%	leather
Bone Shirt	3	-1	-3	10%	chain
Full Bone Armor	5	-2	-2	25%	scale

To channel magic through blackiron, a spellcaster must touch the object and expend one of his daily spells to produce one of the following effects. Objects must be masterwork and have at least 75% blackiron content to produce any effect. Masterwork armor and shields made from blackiron have 10% less arcane spell failure penalties.

Bone Armor

All elves wear bone armor and most wield curved blades with bone hilts, but most of these items are not magical. Bone sculptors carefully shape the bones into arms and armor, and then spellcasters enchant the material for strength. The items must be specifically fitted to each individual. Once the items are created, a necromancer takes the item and retreats into his workspace where he sacrifices animals or humans in conjunction with spells. The armor is changed to be even stronger and to increase its flexibility. Bone armor can accept magical improvements.

The Crown of Command

With his sister's death, Deverenus realized that his divine powers were not sufficient to reshape the Accordlands. Deverenus wrought a blackiron crown with which to chain the wills of weaker men. Aided by this ritual ornament, Deverenus conquered the known world, including distant lands long since forgotten. Following his murder, his heirs found vastly diminished power in the throne. By Signon's time, the crown's powers had all but lapsed, and the headpiece was just another part of the royal regalia.

When Signon overthrew the imperial line, however, he reawakened the dormant relic. The crown allowed Signon to use the dragon orbs safely, and through the orbs he influenced the Storm itself. Signon rededicated Deverenia in the Storm's name, but never wore the crown as Emperor. Since then, the Crown of Command

has remained in imperial hands, and the coronation of each new Emperor ends with Modred of Carcius crowning the new master of the world. The current Emperor wears it even now, though he barely has the strength to lift his head.

The Crown of Command is an immense, gaudy work: a circlet with stylized, brass wings that fits uncomfortably on the head of any Medium-sized humanoid. Though it belongs solely to the Emperor, any lawful-aligned spellcaster can activate its properties. By sacrificing one of his daily spells, the wearer may cast one of the following spells:

<i>command</i> (3)	<i>dominate person</i> (5)
<i>hold person</i> (3)	<i>geas</i> (6)
<i>suggestion</i> (3)	<i>demand</i> (8)
<i>lesser geas</i> (4)	

In each case, the wearer must expend a spell of a level equal to or greater than the listed spell's level. The wearer must still meet verbal or somatic components, but the crown itself replaces the need for any material components. Spellcasters may use the Crown of Command's blackiron abilities as normal (like a spell aid).

Additionally, the crown continually grants its wearer all the following effects: *foresight* (as per the spell of the same name, cast by a 20th level wizard), *mind blank* (as per the spell of the same name, cast by a 20th level wizard), *shield of law* (as per the spell of the same name, cast by a 20th level wizard), and *zone of truth* (centered on the crown; as per the spell of the same name, cast by a 20th level wizard, except the wearer of the crown may lie as normal).

Finally, the crown is one of the five artifacts (along with the Master's Rod of Absorption and the three Dragon Orbs) which collectively allow mortals to control the Storm. The Crown of Command temporarily chains the Storm's will to the wearer's, but this requires at least one Dragon Orb as a focus.

Nonlawful creatures so much as touching the Crown of Command gain a negative level until releasing it. Chaotic creatures foolish enough to actually wear the crown suffer as though a 20th level cleric of the Lawful domain had cast *dictum* on them once per round or until the creature removes the crown.

Demonlayer

In the fifth century, the Deverenian wizard Rigibaz the Unlucky watched in horror as the ground outside his tower split open and unrecognizable creatures burst forth into the adjacent village. The monsters ripped apart several villagers before the mage could cast his first spell. Fire and lightning destroyed half a dozen of the things, but that exhausted his arsenal of offensive magic. Though a powerful wizard, he was an artificer and unprepared for a fierce combat.





Although his tower's defenses prevented the creatures from entering, he was powerless to prevent the slaughter beneath his tower. Normal weapons passed through the creature's bodies like smoke and scores of villagers fell to their attacks. Rather than simply watch as lives were lost, Rigibaz funneled his raw life energy into a black steel casing he fashioned from his own body, hurling it into a villager's hand. With its aid, the Abyssals were destroyed. The Deverenian nobles of Myerdeth seized the weapon for their own use and kept the extent of its power secret, particularly after discovering that it could injure the incorporeal minions of the Storm. The blade is currently held by the Conspiracy of Light, which plans to use it to pierce the Emperor's defenses.

Demonslayer is a +3 *ghost touch* longsword. When fighting abominations or incorporeal creatures, its magic bonus increases to +8 and it inflicts double damage.

The Dragon Orbs

When Athanae slew the Dragon, she had carried its eggs into its heart with her. She ascended into the heavens after the Dragon's death, but left the eggs behind. They waited there for centuries, incubating in the Dragon's unnatural body heat, until Signon arrived.

Signon followed the passage from the Storm to the Dragon's body, emerging from its mortal wound. Recognizing the three eggs, now petrified into crystalline orbs, Signon carried them on his arduous quest from the Abyss to the surface. The three artifacts helped him control the Storm long enough to overthrow the Emperor, but Signon decided they were too dangerous for extended use and hid them.

The next time the orbs interfered in Accordlands history, Syneri wielded two of them to drive back the Elven hordes. The orbs' unspeakable power killed even the nigh-immortal leaders of the Severed, the eldest of the elven people. Then, as quickly as Syneri had decimated the elven ranks, the orbs vanished.

Though the Dragon Orbs have individual properties, each is highly intelligent in its own right (lawful evil alignment, Int, Wis, and Cha of 20, +1 for every month since its awakening). The centuries spent in the breast of the Great Dragon preserved them beyond the ability to hatch. They now must be used by others, but this awakens them and may allow them to subsume the user's personality. An awakened orb is incandescent and may float near the user. An orb left without a user for more than a month's time becomes opaque.

All orbs grant their users several abilities. The user of an orb may cast any arcane spell of a level equal to or lower than his Intelligence modifier (if the modifier is 0, the character may cast cantrips; if the modifier is negative, he may not cast any arcane spells through the orb), as though he were a wizard of a level equal to his character level, and without need for material components. The user also has a +5 inherent bonus to all Charisma-based checks with all creatures of the dragon type or the Stormborn or Abyssal sub-types, and is immune to any spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities of those creatures. The user may cast *dominate monster* at will as if he were a 20th level wizard, but may only target creatures of the dragon type or the Stormborn or Abyssal sub-types.

Each orb attracts its patron moon. Combined, the three orbs can control the Storm's sinister intelligence. To summon the Storm otherwise is to invite its attention without restricting it.

There is a price to hold this power. When an orb's equivalent ability scores exceeds its user's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, the orb attempts to replace the user's soul with its own. In such cases, every time the user taps into the orb's powers he must make a Will save (DC 20 + the spell level of the orb's effect) or lose control to the dragon spirit within the orb for a number of hours equal to the spirit's combined Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma modifiers. The spirit may elect not to use these hours immediately, or all at once, subtly altering the course of the wielder's future. If the user ever rolls a natural 1 during this save check, the orb takes permanent control, and locks the user's soul in the orb (as though with the *soul bind* spell, as cast by a 20th level wizard).

While in control, the spirit's primary goal is to extend its periods of dominance by forcing the host into situations where he must rely on the orb's benefits. An orb in control of its bearer usually tries to make contact with its sibling orbs and to further its host's potential political, social, and/or economic power. An orb in control of its bearer also temporarily replaces his Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma with its own; he becomes lawful evil, and may still use any or all the orb's abilities. The orb casts spells as if it were a 20th level wizard. Hosts may or may not be liable for any alignment breaches the spirit inflicts, depending on the effect (i.e. a good-aligned paladin who unwittingly used the orb's powers may find that his deity forgives him the spirit's actions while in his body, but a cleric who knowingly accessed the orb's abilities in spite of its potential dangers would have no such protection). Should an orb take permanent possession of its bearer, it is likely to attempt to construct a more appropriate body, potentially recreating the crisis of the First War.

Each orb has its own abilities, related to its namesake moon.

BASCARON

The youngest of the three orbs, the Orb of Bascaron is nonetheless the most dangerous. After Syneri wielded it against the elves, the archmage hid it in one of his libraries. Recently uncovered by Slayer the Unkind, who was far too cautious to use it himself, it passed into the hands of neophyte wizard Sir Euain. This may prove a costly mistake on Slayer's part, as Euain uses the orb compulsively, and has all but lost his mind to it.

The Orb of Bascaron, like its moon, pays no heed to the normal limits of planar logic. The user of the orb may cast the following spells at will as if a 20th level wizard: *gate*, *haste*, *plane shift*, *slow*, and *teleport*, *greater*. Despite its ties to Bascaron, the orb is as lawful as its brethren, and bears no sign of the Blood Moon's taint. Neither does it project any control over Bascaron's worshippers or victims.

The Orb of Bascaron is blood red when opaque.

GOD'S EYE

The second of the orbs, the Orb of God's Eye, is the only one not awake. The other orb in Syneri's war against the Elves, one of Slayer's agents stole it from Syneri's retreat, selling it on the Miserean black market. In her flight from Miseris, the bard Keziah pilfered the orb from her father, but has yet to realize its powers or its sinister intelligence.

The Orb of God's Eye provides the user with the inhuman knowledge of all that exists. The user may cast the following spells at will as if a 20th level cleric: *contact other plane*, all *detect* spells, *divination*, *true seeing*, *legend lore*, and *foresight*.

The Orb of God's Eye is blue when opaque.

LA HASHAN

The eldest orb, the Orb of La Hashan is also the only one to have continually remained in Deverenian hands... or so the Deverenians believe. In truth its present master, Al'drich von Grossynkiir, has chosen to serve the mysterious Medusan Lords instead of his nominal Emperor. Calling himself the Dragon Lord, he now privately gathers an army of wyrms.

The Orb of La Hashan grants the user incredible power over his own form. The user may cast the following spells at will as if he were a 20th level wizard: *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *expeditious retreat*, *fly*, *shapechange*, *statue* and *true strike*.

The Orb of La Hashan is brown when opaque.

Edge of Silverflame

When the Dragon devoured the elven gods, one of them hid a portion of his life force in a pair of daggers. The daggers were discovered early in the second century. The Calix family used one while Dythanus cherished the other because he was able to tap into its power and channel it. Unfortunately, the secret of the blades was lost with his passing and no one has ever discovered how he accomplished this feat.

The Edge of Silverflame are a pair of +2 *flaming burst daggers*. Their magical bonus increases to +4 when they are wielded together. Each one also provides 5 temporary cumulative hit points to its wielder. A spirit hides within the blade. It will not contact the wielder for fear of attracting the Elements, but it will not allow a nonelf to wield the blade. Nonelves take 2d6 fire damage each round they hold the weapons. If contacted, the wielder could force the blades to increase his own power so that all class abilities including caster level act as if he was one level higher. Queen Tepheroth owns the daggers and has discovered the spirit within them, but has not yet contacted it.

Excessus

Excessus, the Bascaron Blade, is one of Ablung the Mad's many masterpieces. Its plain design belies its nature. It is a weapon made to murder the gods, forged on a night when La Hashan passed before Gods' Eye and blinded them. The Cult of Bascaron eagerly seek it, as it is their most powerful symbol of office. Until he recovers it, Angu Mournwater is but a nominal leader. The blade is currently in the hands of Lady Tornhawk, who has no idea of the weapon's origin, but plans to destroy the Cult of Bascaron with it.

Excessus is a +4 *longsword of mighty cleaving* that also renders its wielder immune to prophecy. Its wielder may voluntarily suffer any amount of damage to deliver an identical amount to his target when he successfully hits with an attack.

Grimsteel

In the early days of the Accordlands, the ogre mage B'ktoth attempted to unite the goblinoid races into a powerful army. He forged a powerful weapon to aid him in his quest. Tempered in the blood of dozens of goblins, Grimsteel could destroy a being with a single stroke. After he conquered several weak tribes, the surviving tribes united against him and slew him. His blade became a fabulous Nothrog treasure. Krun seized it shortly before his legion yielded to Nassiral Hate's.

Grimsteel is a +5 *greatsword*. If the wielder scores a critical hit, the victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or die instantly, his soul drawn into the blade. It may only be wielded by a Nothrog or ogre and provides the wielder with 10 temporary hit points.

Hember's Fist

Hember, the dwarven leader who led his people underground, wielded a powerful war pick, and this cherished ancestral weapon is always wielded by the most courageous. When the Scions of Kor appeared, they were granted the weapon as a token of respect, and they have wielded it against the Abyssals for centuries. No battle has ever been lost when the commander wielded Hember's Fist. Bragle Mithton of Rockhome currently wields it.

Hember's Fist is a +3 *abyssal bane lawful war pick* that inflicts double damage against abyssals and emanates a permanent *magic circle against evil*. Only dwarves may wield it. It provides its wielder with 10 temporary hit points. If a non-dwarf holds the weapon, it inflicts 2d6 damage per round until it is dropped.

Ironcloth

One of the most common magic items among the dwarves is ironcloth fabric. While iron is being forged into wire, Kor's priests bless it, and weave the wire into a sheet. Their spells transform the woven iron into a flexible cloth which maintains the metal's strength. The final product is a swatch a few inches square; each dwarf receives one at birth. The fabric is resistant to damage, does not conduct heat or cold, and provides good traction. Upon reaching puberty, the dwarf weaves the ironcloth into his clothing. When a dwarf falls in battle, his closest companion takes his ironcloth and weaves it into his own swatch. One sign of how long a dwarf has fought the Abyssals is how much ironcloth he has accumulated. Older veterans have entire shirts of the material. An interesting property of ironcloth is that sunlight darkens it. Black ironcloth is the sign of an outcast and dwarves shun those who wear it.

Ironcloth provides different bonuses depending upon how much is worn. If one or two pieces are worn, it provides a +1 deflection bonus to Will saving throws. If three, four, or five pieces are worn, the owner receives a +1 bonus to armor class (it does not apply when the wearer does not get dexterity bonuses) as well as the +1 deflection bonus to Will saving throws. If six through twelve pieces are worn, the dwarf receives a +1 deflection bonus to all saving throws as well as the +1 bonus to armor class. If more than a dozen pieces are worn, the owner receives a +2 armor class bonus (with the same restriction) and a +1 deflection bonus to all saving throws. The armor class bonuses do not stack with armor.

Knives of Betrayal

Lady Serina of House Genecourt was the most famous explorer of the sixth century. She climbed Mount Kisna, visited the lands of the Narawati, and spelunked the caverns beneath Sarakia. While traveling in the elven forests, she encountered a hideous creature, a tentacled snake as wide across as a man is tall, poison dripping from its fangs. She dodged backward, firing arrows into its hide, but it took no notice. Desperate, she noticed a poisonous black lotus nearby and sliced it with her daggers to coat them



before hurling them toward the creature. It shrieked as the daggers plunged into its maw, hesitated a moment, and collapsed. When Lady Serina retrieved her daggers, she found them coated in a green sheen that clung to the blades.

When she returned to her home in Deverenia, a figure accosted her, and she instinctively slashed at it. Her younger brother fell to the ground, convulsed, and died; she was not being attacked, but welcomed. Disconsolate, she left the Empire and settled in Baraxton. Since then the thieves of Baraxton have passed down the treasured daggers in a unique fashion: anyone who can steal them from their current owner is assumed to deserve them. The current owner is Logan Ebonwoulfe, leader of the Baraxton Thieves' Guild, though he has vowed never to take a human life with them.

The Knives of Betrayal are a matched pair of *+1 daggers* with poisoned blades (Fortitude DC 15, Initial Damage 2d6 Con, Secondary damage 2d6 Con). The poison is particularly deadly to elves (Fortitude DC 25 for them).

Loris Daggers

Vronish Kez was a Miserean rogue whose brutal ambition led him to rule that mercenary city. His passion for life won him the affection of a beautiful woman and a pair of enchanted daggers. The daggers were a ransom from a wizard of Kabal for the return of his spellbooks; they lent swiftness to his strikes. Once he had his spellbooks again, the wizard's mystical flames incinerated Vronish's wife in front of their daughter and Vronish himself. Vronish killed the wizard with the Loris Daggers, and then put them aside to focus his attention upon ruling. His advisors and seers raised his daughter, though she preferred to spend time in taverns and music halls. She finally ran away to escape her father's scrutiny and her destiny, taking the name of Keziah. She took the daggers that had cost her mother her life, and a glowing orb of whose powers she was ignorant.

The Loris Daggers are a matched pair of *+2 speed daggers*. The speed ability works only when they are used in conjunction.

Lothian, Lawhammer

When Signon returned to Deverenia, he was assaulted by savage creatures, the last among them a gigantic snake covered in spines. He swung his mace at the monster and the lightning of the Storm crashed into it, ripping it apart. After his passing it became the weapon of the Emperor, symbolizing the favor of the Storm. Thirty years ago, the Emperor presented the weapon to his Champion to use against the enemies of the Empire. Currently Lord Gahid of Order Rellion possesses the weapon, though the Hierophant Modred has suggested that the Church of the Storm should have possession of it.

Lothian is a +3 *shocking burst* *thundering mace* that can cast *call lightning* three times a week. Only Deverenians may wield it, and it gives them 10 temporary hit points when wielded.

The Master Rod of Absorption

When Deverenus fought his sister Deima, one of her spells was so powerful that it destroyed his staff as he countered one of her spells with it. The nub still functioned as a normal *rod of absorption*, but in an even greater capacity. Deverenus kept the rod with him up until his death, at which point it became part of the trappings of the Emperor's office. Unlike the Crown of Command (see above), the Master Rod's powers were always self-evident, foiling many an ambitious plot. Signon was the first outside of Deverenus' line to even touch the rod, though he returned it and the crown to the next Emperor. It remains in imperial custody, carried by the present, ailing Emperor on his rare public appearances.



As with its less significant copies, the Master Rod of Absorption can absorb and store spells directed at the caster so long as it is held. Unlike more common variants, there is no limit to the number of spell levels the Master Rod can channel. When its wielder is targeted with a spell, he may choose to channel the spell's energies, negating its effects and allowing him to cast one of his own prepared spells of equal or lower level. This casting is immediate (as though cast with the Quicken Spell metamagic feat), but does not cost higher ranks nor expend any of the user's daily spell allotments.

So long as the user holds the Master Rod of Absorption, it protects him from other potentially lethal energies. With the rod in hand, he is immune to all damage of the following types: acid, fire (or heat), ice (or cold), lightning (or electricity), or negative energy (including negative levels from necromancy spells, or undead's energy or ability drain attacks). The Master Rod of Absorption also protects against the hostile environments of the Abyss, the Storm, and the plane of Bascaron, though it provides no additional protection against those realms' inhabitants.

Mkono-Djarat

The Narawati deity Djarat, Protector with Twelve Blades, rarely manifests to protect his people. Instead, he demands that his followers defend the land. To aid them in this difficult task, he gave them a long sword called Mkono-Djarat: "the Hand of Djarat." The sword is passed from fundisi to fundisi through the temple of Djarat and is rarely used for anything other than ceremonial purposes. The current fundisi of Djarat is Rustiq Umbala, who was last seen entering Tseluse bearing the sword. The current whereabouts of Rustiq and Mkono-Djarat are unknown.

Mkono-Djarat is a *+4 defending longsword* that glows faintly when a nearby Narawati is endangered. When more than one is threatened, the sword glows more brightly; when Rustiq disappeared, the sword glowed like the sun at noon.

Tome of the Archmage

In the years before Dythanus discovered the secrets of necromancy, Syneri delved into the other aspects of magecraft. He is considered the greatest archmage of all time, and performed arcane rituals that no mage has ever duplicated. After his exile, he wrote down his findings in the Tome of the Archmage and gave it to the descendants of his House, hoping that others would follow in his footsteps. Few elves have undertaken that journey, but for centuries wizards from across the Accordlands have lusted after his book. Currently Anton Cyldragen is the foremost scholar of the work and has searched for the Tome for several years.

The book reveals the underlying truths of the world and how magic interacts with it. The reader learns of forces and possibilities only a handful of mortals have discovered. The book cannot benefit someone who is not at least a sixth level wizard. After a month of study, the reader gains enough experience points to raise him halfway to his next level. The

gained level must be as a wizard. While held the Tome grants its owner a *+10* bonus to all Knowledge and Spellcraft checks. The Tome cannot be copied or destroyed by any nondivine agency.

Tome of Champions

Mynes, the first Deverenian Emperor, studied the ways of war for decades before beginning his Imperial expansions. Toward the end of his life, he wrote down his observations to preserve them for posterity. The book was distributed throughout the Empire until the Church of the Storm declared it heretical due to its praise of Athanaes. They destroyed all copies of the book except for the original text, preserved by Imperial fiat.

The book cannot benefit someone who is not at least a sixth level fighter or paladin. If the owner of the book spends a month studying it, he gains the fundamental knowledge of where and when to strike. The owner gains enough experience points to raise him halfway through his next level, but this gained level must be taken as a fighter or paladin. While carried, the Tome doubles its bearer's threat range. After the XP gain, the owner will only willingly give up the Tome after another fighter or paladin bests him or her in combat. Currently Duchess Brymin owns the book, having obtained it from a Narawati havat-lahn. The Tome cannot be copied or destroyed by any nondivine agency.

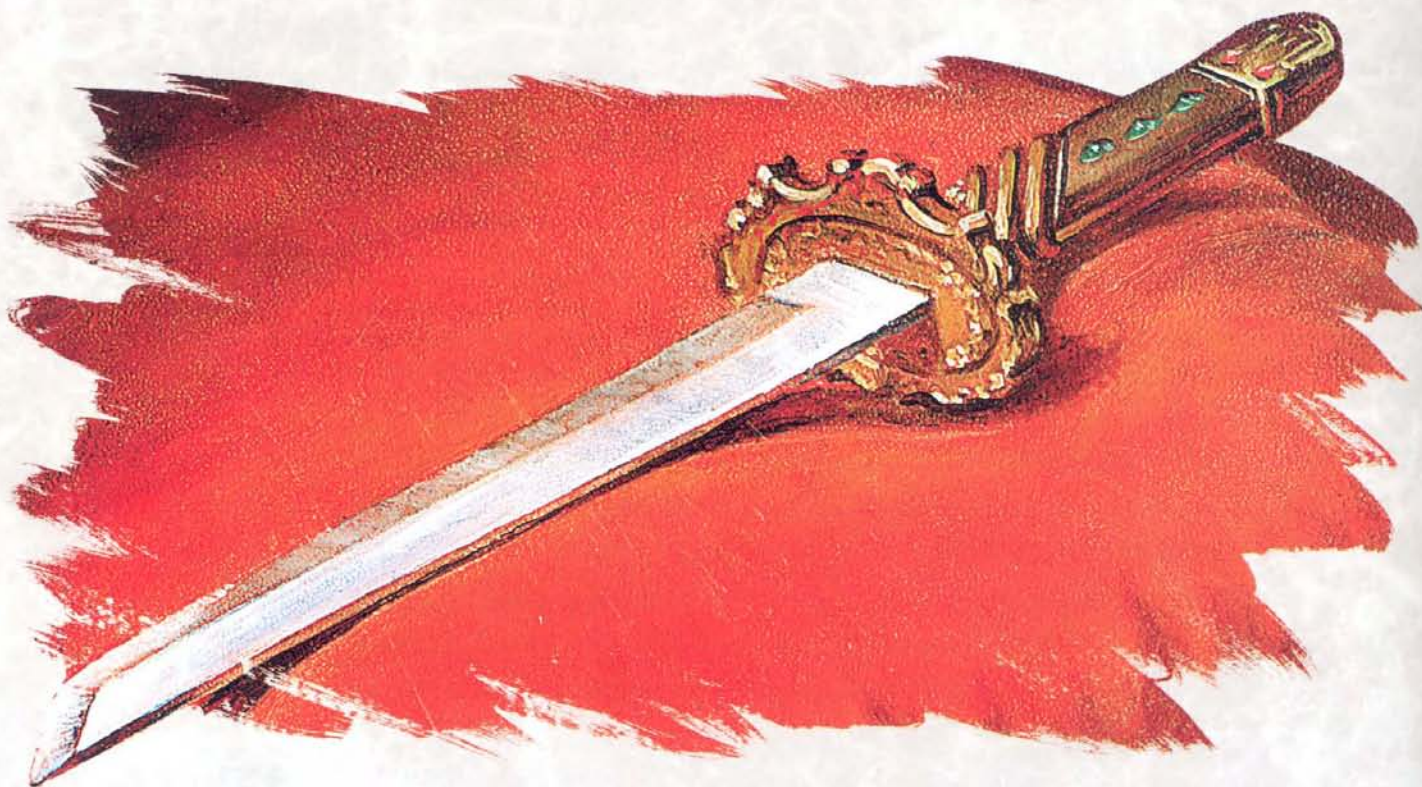
The Tome of Divine Wisdom

During the first century, Neus the Farmer became Neus the Scribe. His first act was to gather his most gifted followers and instruct them in the practices that heralded western culture. He also explained secrets of divine guidance that surpassed mortal understanding. Simon, one of his followers, collected this information in a massive book, held by Neus' followers until the Deverenian Empire conquered them. Neus himself kept the book safe until Khalemar converted to his worship. The royal families of Khalemar and Andover kept the book for centuries until King Yarstan placed the book into the protection of Athanaes. It remains there to this day, waiting in the depths of the Library of Neus.

The book cannot benefit someone who is not at least a 6th level cleric or shaman. If a dedicated cleric of any faith studies the Tome for a month, he gains enough experience points to raise him halfway to his next level. The gained level must be as a cleric. If carried upon his person, it grants the cleric or shaman a *+10* bonus to Spellcraft, Religion, and turning checks. The Tome cannot be copied or destroyed by any nondivine agency.

The Tome of Shadows

The god Fineltour spent a century traveling for pleasure through the Accordlands. One dark night, while he relaxed with a group of female minstrels, Xr'ogn — the Ferret totem of Q'tar's Legion — attacked him. Seven of the minstrels were killed in the attack and Fineltour was badly injured. An enraged Fineltour vanished into the shadows. Three years passed without a sign of him, and rumors surfaced that he was dead. Then one night when the moons were dark, Xr'ogn and all his followers perished simultaneously. A few days later Fineltour strode into the city of Baraxton and handed a book to a young rogue. This book,



the Tome of Shadows, chronicled how he had moved unnoticed, observing the Nothrogs, until he knew how to destroy them. Many infamous rogues have studied its pages. Black Tom of Corinth learned the arts of assassination and murder from it. Logan Ebonwoulfe learned that Fineltour turned from these tactics to avoid succumbing to their evil.

The tome rarely remains in anyone's hands for long. Once the owner has studied the book for a few weeks, it vanishes and reappears elsewhere in the Accordlands. The book cannot benefit someone who is not at least a 6th level rogue. If the reader studies the book for at least forty hours, he gains enough experience points to raise him halfway to his next level. The gained level must be as a rogue. If carried upon his person, it grants the rogue a +10 bonus to Hide, Listen, and Move Silently rolls. The Tome cannot be copied or destroyed by any nondivine agency.

Uthanak's Ring

Even before becoming leader of his legion, Uthanak was renowned for his size and strength. When Gralch's Legion attacked his tribe, Uthanak lumbered into their front ranks, smashing opponents to reach the Gralch's bannerman. He embedded his sword in the man's chest, picked up the banner and used the twelve-foot pole as a quarterstaff. When the fighting ended, Gralch's Legion was no more.

The shaman of Uthanak's tribe enchanted the ring he had worn to give him the speed to reach his foes more quickly. When he became his legion's leader, Uthanak used the power of his ring to improve the mobility of his small units and make up for his strategic weaknesses. The ring is a simple band of gold adorned with a black onyx bear head.

Ten times a week, the ring can double the base movement of a character for an hour. This effect is lost as soon as the character makes an attack. When Hate's Legion defeated Uthanak's, the black onyx stone began to decay. Flakes of onyx came off it and revealed a white skull beneath it. Believing its power lost, Uthanak abandoned his ring. Kenia of Krun's Legion currently possesses the ring.

Yedraw's Tooth

Created by the mad smith Ablung with the assistance of the Archmage Syneri, Yedraw's Tooth is one of the most potent weapons in the Accordlands. In exchange for the secrets of Ablung's art, Syneri provided a single tooth from an ancient dragon's skeleton. With powerful magic, Ablung shaped it into a short sword blade. The tooth retained a touch of the dragon's power and could slice through most material. The sword was given to Karaban, the king of Avendeen, and passed down to his heirs. Yedraw, Kerebus' father, held the sword when Bascaran destroyed the lands of Avendeen. The blade, its powers intact, was retrieved by a human merchant. He sold the weapon to a one-eyed beggar for a bag of gems that later hatched and devoured him. The beggar — Morghen Dythanus in disguise — presented the blade to Rathe when he emerged from the magical coma by which Morghen had protected him from the geas.

Yedraw's Tooth is a +4 *keen vorpal* shortsword that grants the wielder the Increased Critical feat for one strike every other round.

Chapter Eleven: Personalities

Ghed Lionel

Lionel Du Myrdeth has long served the Church of the Storm, and will continue to for all eternity. He began as a cleric of the church, acting as a field medic for the Deveronian armies. As the knights marched to battle and the mages enhanced their power, it was Lionel and his core of priests who healed their wounds and bolstered them to join the fray again. During his tenure with the knights under the command of Master Anandale, Lionel became famous for his rousing sermons before battle. Few in the church could rival his fervor and passion for the might of the Storm.

During a skirmish with a Nothrog legion, Lionel saw a member of the enemy preparing to fire on Anandale with his crossbow. With no time to beseech the Storm for aid, Lionel threw himself before the bolt, taking it in his chest. After the battle he was taken to the church in Luthlarius for treatment. With little strength remaining, he begged to join with the Storm, in the trials. Modred of Carcius was quick to grant the request of the devoted priest, and Lionel was taken to meet the Storm itself.

When the mighty force of nature arrived, Lionel was stricken with tears of joy. As the rain and lightening enveloped him, he rose into the air and disappeared. Where he had been, a stormwraith now stood, its skeletal body draped in flowing black robes as it moved to join Modred. Now sainted as Ghed Lionel, he still travels with the troops of the Empire, bringing the healing and guidance of the Storm to all who serve.

Ghed Lionel: Male Deveronian Cleric 12 (*Stormborn Template*); CR 12; Medium Humanoid; HD 12d8; hp 50; Init +2; Spd 20ft; AC 21, touch 14, flatfooted 19; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +14 melee

(1d8+4 [x2], *unholy Heavy Mace* +4) or +14 melee (1d6+4 [x2], *Sickle of Lifestealing* +4); Full Atk +12/+12/+7 melee (1d4+8 [x2], *Sickle of Lifestealing* +4 (main hand); 1d8+4, *unholy Heavy Mace* +4 [off hand]); SA Spells; SQ Stormborn Template, Deveronian traits, low-light vision, +2 save vs. mind affecting spells; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 19, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +10, Diplomacy +7, Heal +19, Knowledge (arcane) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Spellcraft +19; Weapon Focus (Heavy Mace), Weapon Focus (Sickle), Storm-Touched (Inflict Minor Wounds, Read Magic, Detect Magic), Divine Chastisement, Two Weapon Fighting, Grasp the Power.

Abilities: Call Lightning, Electricity Resistance, Spontaneous Casting (inflict spells); Rebuke Undead.

Possessions: *Sickle of Lifestealing* +4, *unholy Heavy Mace* +4, Chainmail +2, Ring of Force Shield.

Cleric Spells Prepared: (6/6+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; Save DC 14 + spell level): 0 — Detect Magic, Inflict Pain, Light, Detect Poison, Resistance, Strangled Steel; 1st — Cure Light Wounds (3), Begone, Shield of Faith, Curse of the Lady, Protection from Good*; 2nd — Cure Moderate Wounds (2), Inflict Moderate Wounds (2), Hold Person, Desecrate*; 3rd — Cure Serious Wounds (2), Dispel Magic, Inflict Serious Wounds (2), Magic Circle Against Good*; 4th — Cure Critical Wounds (2), Divine Power (2)*, Inferno; 5th — Cure Lethal Wounds, Greater Bull's Strength (2), Flame Strike*; 6th — Ethereal Assault, Hand of Destruction, Create Undead*.

*Domain Spell. **Domains:** War (Martial Weapon Proficiency and Weapon Focus of deity's favored weapon), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).



Slayer the Unkind

Slayer the Unkind is the most powerful and influential wizard in all of Deverenia. He serves as the headmaster of the Empire's most respected school of wizardry, and many a young apprentice would give anything to study with the great master. Few realize exactly how much such a bargain entails.

Slayer is power-mad, but it is a controlled sort of madness. He is obsessed with gaining the Dragon Orbs, which he believes can command the power of the Storm itself. To the church this is heresy, but Slayer cares little. He knows that once he has the power, none would be able to stand in his way.

Slayer uses his students to reach his goals. Whether this involves research, questing for artifacts, or even menial work, the students do so willingly, for none wish to disappoint him. Any student who fails Slayer in any task receives a quick and painful death. In the few battles that Slayer has fought of late, he is more than willing to drain the magic power — and life — from an apprentice to fuel his own spells. Slayer is a cruel master, but students know that any who survive their apprenticeship will command respect which other wizards can only dream of.

Currently Slayer is in possession of one of the three Dragon Orbs, and he is constantly searching for traces of the other two. In his quest, he has uncovered countless other artifacts of great power, most of which he considers mere baubles compared to his ultimate goal.

Slayer the Unkind: Male Deverinian Wizard 15; CR 15; Medium Humanoid; HD 15d4+45; hp 91; Init +3; Spd 30ft; AC 16, touch 11, flatfooted 16; Base Atk +7; Grp +6; Atk +8 melee (1d6+1/1d6+1 [x2], *Staff of Power*); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6+1/1d6+1 [x2], *Staff of Power*); SA Spells; SQ Deverinian traits, low-light vision, +2 save vs. mind affecting spells, spell resistance 18; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +9, Will +18; Str 8, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 25, Wis 16, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +21, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (architecture) +12, Knowledge (battle) +12, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +12, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (Local) +12, Knowledge (nature) +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Knowledge (research) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Spellcraft +28; Quicken Spell, Empower Spell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Improved Initiative, Seize the Day, Dimensional Attack, Craft Wondrous Item, Combat Casting.

Abilities: Summon Familiar, Eidetic Memory: Magic Missile, Scorching Ray, Fireball, Dimension Door, Ball Lightning, Prismatic Surge, Prismatic Spray. Sacrifice Fortitude, Sacrifice Other, Sacrifice Vitality.

Possessions: Spellbook (see notes). *Headband of Intellect* +4, *Ring of Wizardry II*, *Robe of the Archmagi*, *Necklace of Fireballs* (Type VII), *Pearl of Power* (2 spells/day, 6th level or lower), *Brooch of Shielding*, *Staff of Power*.

Wizard Spells Prepared: (4/6/10/6/5/5/4/3/1; Save DC 17+ spell level): 0 — Detect Magic (2), Message (2); 1st — Mage Armor, Shield, Expeditious Retreat, Emperors Will (3); 2nd — See Invisible, Knock, Resist Energy, Acid Arrow, Web, Detect Thoughts (2), Mirror Image, Essence Flow (2); 3rd — Acid Spittle, Dispel Magic (2), Fly, Hold Person, Haste; 4th — Greater Invisibility, Dimensional Anchor, Animate Dead, Black Tentacles, Charm Monster; 5th — Quickened Magic Missile, Teleport (2), Cone of Cold, Telekinesis; 6th — Quickened Invisibility, Globe of Invulnerability, Disintegrate, Sickly Physique; 7th — Forcecage, Finger of Death, Limited Wish; 8th — Charm Monster Mass.

Notes: Due to his stature within Deverenia, Slayer has access to nearly any magic item or spell, the ones listed here are what he typically carries with him.



Master Anandale

The Deverian knights hold honor as the highest of their virtues. Though younger generations care more for power, and indeed see power as honor, the older generations still uphold their dignity at any cost. The price is high indeed, as in the case of Master Anandale Aedroud.

Anandale was the Emperor's Champion, the highest rank attainable outside of the throne itself. He served as the supreme commander of the imperial armies, and was as much a voice in imperial law as the Emperor himself. A brilliant warrior, he led the Deverians to countless victories, while his honesty and nobility prevented his enemies in court from gaining any foothold against him. He was truly a shining star of Deveria.

Until his senior years when a young knight named Sir Gahid Rellion challenged him for his position. Under Deverian law, a knight must accept any challenge, lest his honor be sullied. The young knight was amazingly swift with the sword, and resourceful in combat. Caught by surprise at his opponent's skill, Anandale was bested. As he knelt, ready to accept his fate, the young knight told him to rise. In a moment of surprising compassion, he allowed Anandale to live, to continue to serve the Empire as advisor and trainer to knights. Gahid was lauded at court for his foresight and noble concern for the Empire. No one except for Anandale himself saw the smirk on Gahid's face after the decree had been issued.

Though the idea of serving the impudent knight sickens Anandale and fills him with shame every day, he continues to submit to his fate. He obeys any order coming from the Emperor's

Champion, for it is law and a true Deverian knight would not fail to uphold the law. Perhaps someday, circumstances will change, but for now Master Anandale continues to serve the Empire as he has done all his life.

Master Anandale: Male Deverian Fighter 13; CR 13; Medium Humanoid; HD 13d10+13; hp 95; Init +6; Spd 40ft; AC 22, touch 12, flatfooted 17; Base Atk +13; Grp +17; Atk +19 melee (1d8+8+1d6 cold [15-20/x2], +1 frost Longsword) or +16 ranged (1d8+7, Composite Longbow [+4 Str]); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d8+8+1d6 cold [15-20/x2], frost Longsword +1) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+7, Composite Longbow [+4 Str]); SQ Deverian traits, low-light Vision, +2 save vs. mind affecting spells; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Climb +20, Diplomacy +17, Jump +20, Knowledge (battle) +20, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (architecture & engineering) +4, Ride +18, Swim +20; Versatile (Knowledge [battle] & Diplomacy); Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (Longsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Seize the Day, Whirlwind Attack.

Abilities: Favored Weapon: Longsword, Longbow, Shortsword; Improved Damage: Longsword, Longbow; Improved Critical Threat: Longsword, Luxury Training, Military History, Rank and Privilege.

Possessions: frost Longsword +1, Mithral Breastplate +2, Heavy Steel Shield +1, Ring of Invisibility, Boots of Striding and Springing, Composite Longbow [+4 Str], Quiver (20 arrows).

Roar

The Dwarves eternal enemy is less a tangible foe than the embodiment of chaos itself. The madness and destruction of an abyssal attack creates great difficulty in maintaining order amongst troops. The booming voices of dwarven bards are one of the few reliable forms of direction in the midst of battle.

Roar was stationed at Goldenaxe just before the abyssals' final assault. As the lines absorbed each growing attack, Roar's voice thundered commands across the city, even over the screeching wail of the abyssals. Though the city did eventually fall, Roar's commands and shouts of encouragement allowed the troops to hold the line long enough for over half of the non-combatants to escape into the caves and tunnels.

Roar himself was one of the last to retreat, and even then it broke his heart to leave knowing that some dwarves continued to fight a losing battle. His only desire was to stay and help, offering songs that reminded the warriors of the glory that awaited them in the afterlife. However the commanders understood Roar's value, and ordered him to retreat with the final waves.

Roar spent the months since then in the city of Rockhome, but he recently received new orders. Gnarrow Yaw's group has encountered a new evil in the World Above, and Roar's voice of inspiration is needed to bolster them against a new and confusing enemy. He has taken this new duty to heart, and hopes again to serve his people with the gifts of his stalwart voice.

Roar: Male Dwarf Bard
12: CR 12; Medium
Humanoid;
HD 12d6+24;
hp 65; Init
+3; Spd 20

ft; AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +9; Grp +11; Atk +12 melee (1d8+3 [17-20/x2], keen Longsword +1) or +11 melee (1d6+2 [19-20/x2], short sword); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3 [17-20/x2], keen Longsword +1) or +11/+6 melee (1d6+2 [19-20/x2], short sword); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Bardic Music; SQ Dwarf traits, darkvision 60 ft, magical senses 1/day, resistance to toxins, weapon familiarity; AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Bluff +12, Climb +8, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +6, Gather Information +12, Hide +9, Intimidate +6, Jump +10, Knowledge (Dwarven history) +9, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Perform (Sing) +22, Perform (String Instrument) +14, Sense motive +8, Tumble +17, Use Magic Device +19; Dodge, Skill Focus: Perform (Sing); Power of Song, Improved Inspiration.

Abilities: Bardic Knowledge; Bardic Lore: Dwarven History, Bardic Music: Inspire Courage, Knowledgeable, Photographic Memory, Rhythm of Defiance, Inspire Competence; Advanced Bardic Music: Instill Fear, Inspire Greatness; Greater Bardic Music: Tales of Blood and Fire; Lingering Melody.

Languages: Dwarven, Abyssal, Common, Terran.

Possessions: Bracers of Armor +8, keen Longsword +1, Short Sword, Harp of Charming.

Bard Spells Prepared: (6/5/5/5/4; Save DC: 14 + spell level); 0 — Mage Hand, Read Magic, Detect Magic, Flare, Light, Ghost Sound; 1st — Cause Fear, Cure Light Wounds, Expeditious Retreat, Unnerve, Sleep; 2nd — Cat's Grace, Cat's Strength, Mirror Image, Song of Blood, Words of Woe; 3rd — Battle Cry, Charm Monster, Rhythm of Defiance, Slow, Magical Circle Against Chaos; 4th — Legend Lore, Rainbow Pattern, Invisibility (Greater), Dimension Door.



Kohn Peacehand

Kohn Peacehand is a divinely gifted priest of Kor. His superiors have offered him higher station multiple times, yet Kohn always refuses. He wishes only to serve the troops on the front lines, and he feels his powers of healing would be wasted tending to endless rituals in the church hall.

Kohn has an interesting relationship with Kor.

Though he reveres and respects his god as much as any dwarf, he views the war with the abyssal as more of a competition than a conflict.

Each injured dwarf a contest between him and Kor. Kor may be prepared to let the warrior join him at his great table, yet Kohn refuses to let their army lose a good fighter. "You won't have this one, not yet" he often whispers during prayers of healing.

Kohn deeply loves dwarves with all his being. At any funeral — be it a distinguished dwarf leader or a mass funeral after a battle — he weeps longer and more deeply than any other attendant. Though he isn't consciously aware of it, this simple part of his persona has been the inspiration for many a defender of the dwarven cities. To know that a servant of their god — and by extension their god himself — loves them so much fills them with joy and drives them to fight all the harder for their people.

Kohn Peacehand: Male Dwarf Cleric 12: CR 12; Medium Humanoid; HD 12d8+24; hp 75; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +9; Grp +11; Atk +14 melee (1d8+5 [x2], *axiomatic holy* Heavy Mace +3); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+5 [x2], *axiomatic holy* Heavy Mace +3); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead 11/day; SQ Dwarf traits, darkvision 60 ft, magical senses 4/day, resistance to toxins, weapon familiarity; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +12; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 19, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +17, Diplomacy +13, Heal +22, Knowledge (religion) +13, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Spellcraft +16, Sense Motive +7; Divine Chastisement, Extra Turning, Gloried, Skill Focus (Heal), Maximize Spell.

Abilities: Spontaneous Casting (*cure* spells), Sainly Zeal, Turn Undead, Warrior Training.

Languages: Dwarven, Abyssal, Common, Terran, Deveranian.

Possessions: Mithral Full Plate +2, *axiomatic holy* Heavy Mace +3, Silver Holy Symbol of Kor.

Cleric Spells Prepared: 6/6+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/4+1/3+1; Save DC: 14 + spell level); o — Cure Minor Wounds, Light, Read Magic, Resistance, Mending, Strangled Steel; 1st — Soothe Pain, Cause

Fear, Divine Favor, Cure Light wounds (3)*, Remove Fear; 2nd — Gift from Above,

Scourge of Dythanus, Cure Moderate Wounds (3)*, Hold

Person; 3rd — Banish the Wound, Divine Protection,

Hember's Hammer, Mass Blessing, Cure Serious

Wounds (2)*; 4th — Decay, Minister the Wounds,

Cure Critical Wounds (2)*, Dismissal; 5th —

Cure Lethal Wounds, Greater Bull's

Strength, Mass Cure Light

Wounds, Raise Dead,

Spell Resistance*; 6th —

Divine Selection,

Mass Cure Moderate

Wounds, Heal,

Antimagic Field*.

*Domain Spell.

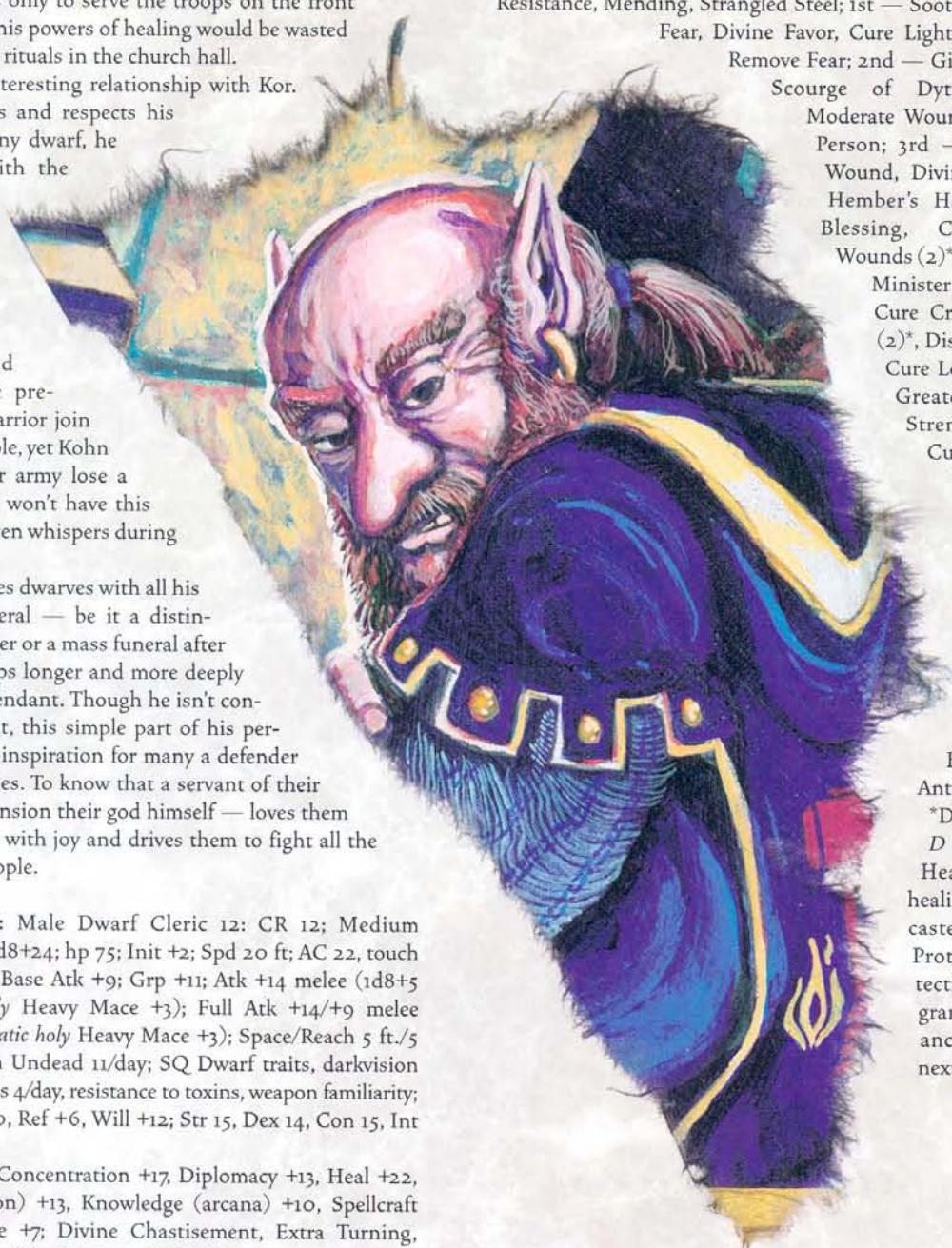
Domains: Healing (cast

healing spells at +1

caster level), Protection (pro-

tection grants +5 resist-

ance bonus on next save, 1/day).



Bulwark

The life of the typical dwarven foot soldier is harsh and unforgiving. From the time of their birth they have no knowledge of their family, and forge friendships only with those who face the same grim existence. However, it is not unheard of for a dwarf to recognize something in another dwarf, something familiar. This was the case with Bulwark.

Stationed as a city guard in Goldenaxe, his unit served alongside another that included an older dwarf within it. Something bothered Bulwark about the dwarf; he mulled it over for days until it finally hit him — it must be his birth father. As much as Bulwark wished to speak with him, however, he knew that it would break all social taboos. As such, he refrained.

The regular attacks of the abyssals soon grew in force and power, threatening to overwhelm the city. During the final onslaught, Bulwark — preoccupied with his father — saw that the older dwarf's unit was about to falter. The urge to run to his defense was incredible, but though dwarven discipline, Bulwark stayed at his post, even as he watched the blade of a shadowreaver cleave into the old dwarf.

As the call of retreat rang through the city, Bulwark took one final moment to run to the bleeding body of his father. His eyes closed, the old dwarf was able to whisper one word, "proud", just before his life left him.

In the days since, Bulwark has fought a mix of emotions. He is bitter that he was never able to know the man, yet driven to defend the dwarves with honor due to that one word: a sign of admiration from a sire he never knew.

Bulwark: Male Dwarf Fighter 5; CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 5d10+15; hp 50; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +7 melee (1d10+6 [x3], Dwarven waraxe +1) or +6 melee (1d10+3 [19–20/x2], heavy flail); Full Atk +7 melee (1d10+6 [x3], Dwarven waraxe +1) or +6 melee (1d10+3 [19–20/x2], heavy flail); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ Dwarf traits, darkvision 60 ft, magical senses 1/day, resistance to toxins, weapon familiarity; AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Craft (weaponsmithing) +5, Handle Animal +2, Jump +2, Ride +2, Swim –9; Weapon Focus (Dwarven waraxe), Power Attack, Formation Fighting, Formation Defense.

Abilities: Favored Weapon: Dwarven waraxe, heavy flail; Improved Damage: Dwarven waraxe, Natural Born Warrior.

Languages: Dwarven, Abyssal, Common.

Possessions: Dwarven waraxe +1, heavy flail, chainmail +2, heavy steel shield +1.





Ophorus

The deep forests of Myreth are haunted by the ghosts of the dead. The results of the elves' twisted necromantic experiments roam deep in the woods, a danger to any who cannot control or destroy them. These wandering undead have become a natural defense for the elves, keeping intruders from penetrating their land.

Yet not all the damned who roam the woods are the dead of men or elves. Deep within its heart lie areas where the forest itself has been corrupted into an undead menagerie all its own. The very trees stand rotted and bare, writhing in a strange sort of unlife unlike that of man or beast. The dark druid Ophorus does not carry the love and respect of nature shared by her brethren. Ophorus bends nature to her will, fueling her own power and life with that of the forest. While not truly Severed, Ophorus has lived beyond her normal 30 years by stealing the life from the land. However, having tied her life-force so closely to the forest, she is now unable to leave it, cursed by the very dark magic which grants her unholy life.

Wherever Ophorus travels, the plant life withers and dies. Animals are stricken with maladies that wrack their bodies and leave them as rotting husks. Some return to unlife, and serve the dark druid as familiars and guardians. Many elves have heard stories of Ophorus, and the leadership has grown concerned, since her path of destruction leaves the forest unable to renew it. Myreth is the elves' shelter, and they are not prepared to lose it under any circumstances. Many elves would be happy to see Ophorus destroyed, even if their own law forbids the killing of another elf. Human druids would also be grateful to see the defiler killed. While they may be at war with the elves, nature should not suffer due to such a conflict... and Ophorus is a perversion of everything they hold dear.

Ophorus: Female Elf Druid 14; CR 14; Medium Humanoid; HD 14d8+28; hp 100; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +10; Grp +12; Atk +12 melee (1d6+4/1d6+4 [x2], *Staff of the Woodlands*); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d6+4/1d6+4 [x2], *Staff of the Woodlands*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Nature Sense, Totem Animal (Viper), Woodland Stride, Trackless Step,

Animal Speech (silent, range), Sense Totem, Wild Shape (dire 5/day, +/- 1 size, partial), Totem's Vision, Venom Immunity, Totem Bond, Elf traits, low-light vision, bonemail proficiency; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +13; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +10, Climb +8, Handle Animal +16, Knowledge (nature) +20, Listen +8, Ride +5, Search +3, Spellcraft +4, Spot +8, Swim +22, Survival +23; Alertness, Athletic, Better Part of Valor, Snakeblood, Natural Spell.

Abilities: Skin Shed, Nature Sense, Totem Animal (Viper), Woodland Stride, Trackless Step, Animal Speech (silent, range), Harden Skeleton, Sense Totem, Wild Shape (dire 5/day, +/- 1 size, partial), Totem's Vision, Venom Immunity, Wood to Bone.

Languages: Elven, Common, Nothrog.

Possessions: *Staff of the Woodlands*, *Druid's Vestment*, *Periapt of Health*, Ring of Protection +5.

Druid Spells Prepared: (6/6/6/5/5/3/3/2; Save DC: 14 + spell level); 0 — Read Magic, Know Direction, Detect Magic, Create Water, Flare, Purify Food and Drink; 1st — Obscuring Mist, Expeditious Journey, Magic Fang, Nature Provides, Summon Nature's Ally, Entangle; 2nd — Barkskin, Summon Nature's Ally II, Forest's Hunger, Flaming Sphere, Heat Metal, Wood Shape; 3rd — Contagion, Plant Growth, Poison, Spike Growth, Summon Nature's Ally III; 4th — Flamestrike, Dispel Magic, Banish the Wound, Summon Nature's Ally IV, Rusting Grasp; 5th — Animal Growth, Summon Nature's Ally V, Cure Critical Wounds; 6th — Ironwood, Liveoak, Summon Nature's Ally VI; 7th — Harm, Summon Nature's Ally VII.



Adoramus Te

Unlike most elves, Adoramus Te cares little for extending his life. He doesn't worry about his own mortality or let it affect his actions. Adoramus instead chooses to live his life to the fullest, and enjoy each day.

Adoramus has always been a scholar at heart. His instinctual inquisitiveness has led him to study both the arcane and the divine with great passion. His pursuit of knowledge helped him uncover many secrets, but none so great as what was found in the City of Bone. Having snuck deep within a temple, Adoramus found evidence of the great puppet masters behind the recent Assassin's Strike. Church elders caught him, but having no knowledge of the weight of the discovery, they simply sent Adoramus on a banishment quest deep into the blighted areas of the elven forests. Few elves who journeyed there ever survive.

While wandering through the blight, Adormaus came upon an ancient crypt. Within he found the remains of an elf still wearing a death mask. Adoramus removed the mask, and as he held it to his own face, a creature living within bound itself to him. The process caused Adoramus incredible pain, yet the creature sustained his life throughout. When completed, he had gained the extended life he never asked for, as well as many new magical powers.

After returning to the City of Bone and surviving the blighted forest, he was cleared of charges. He left the city intent on finding those behind the Assassin's Strike. He now possesses the tools to do the job properly.

Adoramus Te: Male Elf Wizard 5/Cleric 7/Priest of Bone 3; CR 15; Medium Humanoid; HD 5d4+10d8+30; hp 85; Init +2; Spd 30 ft;

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +9; Grp +10; Atk +12 melee (1d8+3 [x2], Heavy Mace +2); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3 [x2], Heavy Mace +2); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Rebuke Undead 9/day (as a 7th level cleric); SQ Elf traits, low-light vision, bonemail proficiency; AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +17, Knowledge (religion) +18, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Listen +6, Search +5, Spellcraft +22, Spot +6, Diplomacy +5, Heal +5; Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Innate Ability (Cause Fear, 3/day), Craft Staff, Divine Right, Pledged Oath, Extra Turning, Alertness.

Abilities: Spontaneous Casting (*inflict spells*), Summon Familiar, Eidetic Memory: Cause Fear, Command Undead; Rebuke Undead 9/day (as a 7th level cleric), Vigor Born of Death, Chill of the Grave, Unliving Focus, Share Spells, Empathic Link, Damage Reduction, Range Touch.

Languages: Elven, Common, Deveranian, Nothrog, Kabal.

Possessions: Spellbook; Scrolls (*Vampiric Touch*, *Lightning Bolt*, *Fireball*, *Arcane Sight*, *Inflict Moderate Wounds*, *Shatter*, *Death Knell*, *Raise Dead*, *Summon Monster V*); Staff of Abjuration; Wand of Unholy Blight; Mask of the Skull; Robe of Bones; Ring of Protection +3; Ring of Spell Turning; Heavy Mace +2, Holy Symbol.

Wizard Spells Prepared: (4/4/3/2; Save DC: 13 + spell level); 0 — Mending, Read Magic, Arcane Mark, Mage Hand; 1st — Unnerve, Mage Armor, Power Spike, Cause Fear; 2nd — Weakness, Melf's Acid Arrow, Command Undead; 3rd — Dispel Magic, Wall of Bone.

Cleric Spells Prepared: (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; Save DC: 14 + spell level); 0 — Inflict Pain, Inflict Minor Wounds, Guidance, Detect Magic, Read Magic, Resistance; 1st — Inflict Light Wounds*, Begone, Curse of the Lady, Minor Necromantic Regeneration,

Protection from Good, Divine Favor; 2nd — Phantom Touch, Scourge of Dythanus, Silent Guardian, Inflict Moderate Wounds, Desecrate*; 3rd — Mass Blessing, Divine Senses, Animate Dead, Contagion*; 4th — Rally of the Damned, Inferno, Unholy Blight*.

*Domain Spell. *Domains*: Destruction (Smite 1/day), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Cordeos

Many elves are driven with a desire to achieve immortality, but few as much as Cordeos, acting head of House Dythanus.

While Morghen Dythanus still lives on as a lich, he does not care for the day-to-day work of his city and house. As such, he appointed Cordeos, a young and brilliant necromancer to handle the magocracy in his stead. Cordeos has cemented many allies in the elven courts, with his smooth tongue and his promise of potential immortality. When not practicing his honeyed tongue, he has been busily researching methods for achieving unlfe; several have born fruit. For a price (generally returned in courtly favors) Cordeos will use his rituals and alchemies to turn elves into wraiths. However, the process is risky; only one in four elves survive it. Still, the life-hungry creatures are often willing to take that risk.



What they don't know is that there is no risk at all. Cordeos can turn anyone into a wraith without flaw. However, he has greater goals than even his own lofty position suggests. Cordeos does not wish to become a wraith, but to become a full bodily Severed such as Rathe and Tepheroth. His "failures" are actually the result of his experiments — a form of testing various methods and formulae without drawing undue attention to himself. Cordeos will continue saving the ones who can gain him the most in court, and using the rest as fodder for his own dreams as long as he can.

Of course, should Morghen Dythanus or indeed any other elf learn the true nature of his activities, the backlash could be dire. Cordeos is confident, however, that his many friends and favors in court can protect him should that day come.

Cordeos: Male Elf Necromancer 12; CR 12; Medium Humanoid; HD 12d4+12; hp 40; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +6; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (1d3, unarmed); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d3, unarmed); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Rebuke Undead 10/day (as a 8th level cleric); SQ Elf traits, low-light vision, bonemail proficiency; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +16, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (religion) +20, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +14, Listen +8, Search +7, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +22, Spot +6; Scribe Scroll, Improved Unarmed Strike, Shadow of Fear, Extra Rebuking, Shroud of Grace, Forge Ring.

Abilities: Spontaneous Casting (Necromancy Spells); Rebuke Undead 10/day (as a 8th level cleric), Steal life (1d6+Cha), Cheat Death, Death's Threshold (paralysis, sleep, stun, disease, poison), Improved Rebuke, Speak with Dead.

Languages: Elven, Common, Deveranian, Nothrog, Dwarven, Nimbic, Draconic.

Possessions: Spellbook; Scrolls (Vampiric Touch, Animate Dead, Contagion, Create Undead, Summon Monster VI, Permanency); Darkskull; Ring of Feather Falling; Ring of Climbing; Ring of Wizardry II, Hand of Glory.

Necromancer Spells Prepared: (4/6/9/5/4/4/2; Save DC: 15 + spell level); 0 — Necromancy, Inflict Pain, Read Magic, Ray of Frost; 1st — Blood Rite, Drain Soul, Bleeding, Unnerve, Essence Flow, Cause Fear; 2nd — Limb Disruption, Necromancer's Minor Blessing, Silent Guardian, Song of Blood, Words of Woe, Cloak of Fear, Bone Spikes, Spectral Hand, Web; 3rd — Death Stench, Shard Storm, Soul Knife, Undead Attraction, Necromantic Regeneration; 4th — Lifetap, Necromancer's Blessing, Twice-Fatal Blast, Soul Link; 5th — Leech Life, Greater Bull's Strength, Release the Lifeblood, Necromantic Channel; 6th — Create Undead, Deathshriek.

Master Gyere

Elves fear the wrath of Spirit more than any other element. Bone, Flesh, and Blood can all cause terrible physical torment, but Spirit can deprive you of your sanity, your very identity as an individual. As a child, Gyere watched his father falter to Spirit's whims after the untimely death of his mother. The madness that overtook his father terrified him. The fear nearly drew Spirit's wrath, but Gyere's consciousness eventually hardened. He began to train himself to accept nothing but logic. If he entertained no random thoughts, Spirit would never have a door into his mind. As he grew older, the results of this stoicism began to show. Though divorced from emotion, his mind sharpened to razor keenness. With such concentration, he could quickly accumulate new knowledge. In turn, he could also teach others with remarkable speed.

He is now considered a considerable asset to the elves. Many younger priests study his ways in hopes of fighting off the effects of Spirit, though few have come close to his level of restraint. Gyere also demonstrates control the element of Spirit, though in admittedly small ways. Never before has an elf so attuned his mind that Spirit could be bent to his will. Many other priests of

Spirit are worried that this will frustrate the element, causing it to lash out in unexpected ways.

With war growing each day, Gyere sees the possibility of passionate thoughts entering his mind. This causes him great concern, and he is considering relocating to the neutral city of Athanaes in order to ease him of the pressures.

Master Gyere: Male Elf Cleric 9/Priest of Spirit 3; CR 12; Medium Humanoid; HD 12d8+29; hp 70; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +8; Grp +9; Atk +9 melee (1d3+1 [x2], whip); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d3+1 [x2], whip); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Rebuke Undead 5/day (as a 9th level cleric); SQ Elf traits, low-light vision, bonemail proficiency; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +15; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 19, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +11, Hide +14, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (religion) +13, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (spirit) +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Search +5, Spellcraft +15, Spot +6; Iron Will, Skill Focus (Concentration), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Whip), Natural Gift (Intimidate); Vision Sharing.

Abilities: Spontaneous Casting (*inflict* spells), Rebuke Undead 5/day (as a 9th level cleric), Ethereal (20%), Eternal Gaze, Silent as the Grave, Spiritual Armor, Spiritual Attack, Wrath Weakness.

Languages: Elven, Common, Deveronian, Nothrog, Nimbic.

Possessions: Whip +4, Bonemail (banded mail) of Improved Shadow +3, Boots of Elvenkind.

Cleric Spells Prepared: (6/6+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; Save DC: 14 + spell level); 0 — *Inflict Pain*, *Strangled Steel*, *Inflict Minor Wounds*, *Read Magic*, *Detect Magic*, *Mending*; 1st — *Disguise Self**, *Begone*, *Summon Object*, *Bane*, *Cause Fear*, *Divine Favor*, *Shield of Faith*; 2nd — *Invisibility**, *Concentrate*, *Gift From Above*, *Phantom Touch*, *Water Weird*, *Weakness*; 3rd — *Nondetection**, *Bestow Curse*, *Magic Vestment*, *Invisibility Purge*, *Inflict Serious Wounds*, *Hember's Hammer*; 4th — *Divination**, *Soul Binding*, *Decay*, *Death Rune*, *Divine Power*; 5th — *True Seeing**, *Slay Living*, *Ethereal Drain*, *Spectral Advisor*; 6th — *Find the Path**, *Ethereal Assault*, *Harm*.

*Domain Spell. **Domains:** Knowledge (all Knowledge skills are class skills; casts divinations at +1 caster level), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).



Rathe

Rathe ranks among the greatest leaders of elven armies. Named for the Rathe mountains, he leads the troops beneath him to victory after victory. His complete understanding of the elves' numerous military strengths — archery, necromancy, assassination — has carried a fearsome reputation among friends and foes alike.

Rathe was considered so valuable that centuries ago, he was interred in a sort of holding crystal, to be revived when his skills were needed (his short elven lifespan necessitated it). Rathe's love for his people and passion for the art of war made him willing to accept this disjointed life.

Queen Tepheroth awoke him upon ascending the throne, charging him with the prosecution of her genocidal war. Her desire to destroy the human race has given Rathe an open license to destroy the humans, no matter the cost. Rathe has turned his eyes toward Andover, and made a new enemy in Sir Robert. So far, his tactics have brought many victories, though the city of Andover still stands.

Interestingly, Rathe's war brings him into direct conflict with the one he most loves. Alia Rowan, a Severed elf, recently led her house to join the human defenses in defiance of the mandate of genocide. Though Rathe knows his beloved fights alongside the humans, he does not cease his assault. One day, they may find themselves across the field from each other. What happens then could ultimately decide the fate of the human race.

Rathe: Male Elf Rogue 15; CR 15; Medium Humanoid; HD 15d6+15; hp 85; Init +9; Spd 30 ft; AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +11; Grp +14; Atk +20 melee (1d6+7 [19–20/x2], Vorpal Short Sword +4) or +5 ranged (1d6+1 [x3], Composite Shortbow); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d6+7 [19–20/x2],

Vorpal Short Sword +4) or +5 ranged (1d6+1 [x3], Composite Shortbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak Attack; SQ Elf traits, low-light vision (3x distance), bonemail proficiency; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +14, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 20, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +4, Balance +25, Bluff +20, Climb +21, Concentration +2, Decipher Script +4, Diplomacy +3, Disable Device +9, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +6, Forgery +4, Gather Information +10, Handle Animal +3, Heal +3, Hide +23, Intimidate +3, Jump +13, Listen +20, Move Silently +23, Open Lock +6, Perform +3, Ride +6, Search +15, Sense Motive +20, Sleight of Hand +6, Spellcraft +4, Spot +20, Survival +3, Swim +4, Tumble +25, Use Magic Device +13, Use Rope +6; Weapon Finesse (Short Sword), Dodge, Mobility, Combat Expertise, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack.

Abilities: Sneak Attack +6d6, Traps, Hide in Plain Sight, Evasion, Improved Nightsight, Catfall, Whisperstep, Danger Sense, Jack of All Trades, Improved Flanking, Improved Sneak Attack, Reflexive Strike, "This Way..."

Languages: Elven, Common, Deveronian, Nothrog, Nimbic.

Possessions: Vorpal Short Sword +4 (Yedraw's Tooth), Composite Shortbow, Quiver (20 blackoak arrows), Cloak of Displacement (Major), Bracers of Armor +8, Ring of Blinking, Thieves Kit.





Darrian Windson

Darrian Windson is but one of thousands of tragic figures in the Free Kingdoms. He was a ranger who worked out of Baraxton, leading hunts and tracking down criminals for pay. Darrian was out on the night the Nothrog took Baraxton, and came back to find smoke and flames rising from the city he called home. He quickly ran towards the carnage, desperate to save his family if he could. Before he could arrive his bloody and beaten younger brother, Timothy, stopped him.

Timothy warned Darrian to not enter the city; to do so would be suicide until the Nothrog had established their control. He also revealed that Darrian's wife Jaqueline had been taken by a Nothrog known as Varg, to join the slave camps in the Nothrog lands. The news filled the ranger with rage, but he was not so blinded by his emotions that he couldn't act.

Since then Darrian has relentlessly hunted Varg. Slaying the Nothrog and reuniting with his wife is all that drives him. Though Timothy has since joined up with Sir Robert's army, and Darrian himself hunts alone. With each passing day his fervor grows stronger. He no longer distinguishes Nothrog from Nothrog, and will attempt to kill any that he can find. His social skills have degenerated also, as he simply lives off the wilderness as his hunt continues.

Perhaps the most tragic twist is that — for all Darrian's obsessive hunting — Varg did not take Jaqueline at all. The Nothrog's men had captured her, but using her silver tongue, developed by years of work as a bard, she talked her way out of slavery. She now

works as a leader of the underground resistance in Baraxton, and wonders what became of her ranger husband...

Darrian Windson: Male Human Ranger 10; CR 10; Medium Humanoid; HD 10d8+30; hp 85; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +10; Grp +12; Atk +15 melee (1d8+5 [19–20/x2], *bane* (Nothrog) Longsword +3) or +13 ranged (1d8 [x3], Longbow); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+5 [19–20/x2], *Bane* (Nothrog) Longsword +3) or +13/+8 ranged (1d8 [x3], Longbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ Human traits; AL NG; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Handle Animal +6, Heal +7, Hide +13, Jump +9, Knowledge (nature) +12, Listen +14, Move Silently +28, Ride +6, Search +13, Spot +15, Swim +4, Survival +14, Use Rope +7; Dodge, Alertness, Analyze Foe, Endurance, Power Attack, Final Stand, Reflexive Throwing, Favored Enemy (Nothrog), Track, Improved Track.

Abilities: Cover Bonus, Favored Terrain (forest, mountain, plains/farmland), Uncanny Track.

Languages: Common, Nothrog.

Possessions: Studded Leather Armor of *Greater Silent Moves* +4, *bane* (Nothrog) Longsword +3, Longbow, Quiver (20 arrows).

Druid Spells Prepared: (0/2/2; Save DC: 13 + spell level); 1st — Longstrider, Cure Light Wounds; 2nd — Fog Cloud, Charm Animal.

Captain Dukat

Toris Kelt is a melting pot, one of the few cities that openly accepts not only most races of the Accordlands, but many half-breeds as well. Deveranian nobles who found it necessary to leave their Empire tend to find their way to the city, as do banished elves and other outcasts who have nowhere else to go. As one could imagine, hostility is always simmering just below the surface.

The policing and defense of the city falls on Captain Dukat, and the weight is noticeable on his shoulders. The middle-aged human commands the city with fairness and justice, and maintains an active standing guard to keep a lid on any disputes. The elders of the city respect his ability to lead, even if they rarely notice of the stress it puts on him. Dukat would gladly allow another to take his position if only there were anyone he could trust with the job. Unfortunately for him, his own standards are far too high to find an acceptable replacement.

To compound Dukat's tension, the Free Kingdoms have now been drawn into war, and Toris Kelt has been drawn in as well due to old alliances. The elves have marched on Toris Kelt, and Dukat has commanded the city's defenses. On two separate occasions, he fiercely repelled the enemy from the city walls.

Dukat's aides say that he rarely sleeps anymore; insomnia has set in, leaving him ill-tempered and short with people. When not engaged in other duties, he works to find a leader to bring all the Free Kingdoms together; in his mind, the disjointed efforts of the current "leadership" are doomed to fail. Dukat has sent scouts to Sir Robert's army, Lion's Jaw Bay, Markappal, Misear, and all the large cities in the Free Kingdoms, asking for a summit to help unify the Free Kingdoms. He awaits their response.

Captain Dukat: Male Human Scout 16; CR 16; Medium Humanoid; HD 16d8+48; hp 140; Init +4; Spd 40 ft; AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +12; Grp +14; Atk +16 melee (1d8+4 [19-20/x2], Longsword of Speed +2) or +18 ranged (1d8+4 [19-20/x3], Oathbow Composite Longbow); Full Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+4 [19-20/x2], Longsword of Speed +2) or +18/+13/+8 ranged (1d8+4 [19-20/x3], Oathbow Composite Longbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak Attack; SQ Human traits; AL NG; SV Fort +13, Ref +14, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 19, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Craft (bowyer) +11, Hide +12, Jump +12, Knowledge (nature) +6, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +12, Move Silently +14, Profession (soldier) +9, Ride +9, Search +14, Spot +19, Swim +7, Survival +9; Point Blank Shot, Dodge, Experienced Archer, Manyshot, Scouting the Target, Leadership (23), Improved Precise Shot.

Abilities: Sneak Attack +4d6, Camouflage, Hide in Plain Sight, Uncanny Dodge (+2 vs. traps), Sniper, Sniper Shot, Sniper Tactics, Precision, Uncanny Aim (+2), Guide, Improved Precision.

Languages:

Common,
Nothrog.

Possessions:

Studded Leather Armor of Greater Fire Resistance +5, Oathbow Composite Longbow, Quiver (20 blackoak arrows), Longsword of Speed +2, Ring of Freedom of Movement, Greater Bracers of Archery, Boots of Striding and Springing.



Sister Amanda

One of the greatest voices of Neus was once farthest from his religion of purity and compassion. Amanda was a singer and entertainer who worked her way through the seediest establishments in the land, bilking the patrons for all they were worth and stealing from the house before moving on under the cover of night. That was until one evening in Corinth, when she was caught raiding the safe at the Red Stallion bar. The bouncers took her to the alley and beat her senseless. They might have killed her had not a great blinding light appeared without warning, and a booming voice drove them from the alley in fear.

The next morning she awoke in a small room, containing only a bed, a small table, and a book. Shortly, a young man came in and offered her food. She was hesitant at first, and threatened him with violence should he come any closer. He smiled and simply left the food for her. After eating, she examined the book, and found it to be the teachings of Neus. Amanda had never had much need for religion, but since she could hardly move from her injuries, there was nothing to do but read.

During the next few weeks, the words of the book played over and over in her head. Tales of forgiveness and a better life tugged at her heart. She knew it was just a fairy tale, and that hard coin was all that really helped anyone, but something within that book kept tugging at her soul. After a time, her wounds had healed and she felt strong enough to leave the room.

She found that she had been staying at an abbey of Neus, and emerged from her room as the local choir was having practice. One little girl was constantly hitting the wrong note, and Amanda finally interrupted the choir director to correct her. When the little girl hit the right note, she felt a deep shift with her heart. For the first time, her path in life became clear.

In the years since, she has become a leading member of the Church of Neus, and has sought to reach out to the underprivileged and darker areas of society with a hand of help and a song of hope. She feels fulfilled in her duty in ways she never knew as a thief, and views her staunch faith as a way of giving back to the forces which saved her from certain death.

Sister Amanda: Female Human Cleric 7/Bard 7: CR 14; Medium Humanoid; HD 7d8+7d6+28; hp 85; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +10; Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d6+4 [x2], Rod of Thunder and Lightning) or +12 ranged (1d6 [x3], Shortbow); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d6+4 [x2], Rod of Thunder and Lightning) or +12/+7 ranged (1d6 [x3], Shortbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead 6/day; SQ Human traits; AL NG; SV Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +16; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Bluff +8, Climb +7, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +3, Gather Information +8, Heal +18, Hide +7, Intimidate +3, Jump +9, Knowledge (religion) +7, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Perform (Sing) +14, Perform (String Instrument) +18, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +11, Tumble +9, Use Magic Device +8; Courage From Faith, Combat Casting, Power of Song, Improved Inspiration, Iron Will, Leadership (15), Martial Weapon Proficiency: Shortbow.

Abilities: Godly Knowledge, Inspire Hope, Turn Undead 6/day, Spontaneous Casting (cure spells), Bardic Knowledge; Bardic Music: Inspire Courage, Fascinate, Rhythm of Defiance; Advanced Bardic Music: Suggestion.

Languages: Common, Deveranian, Elven.

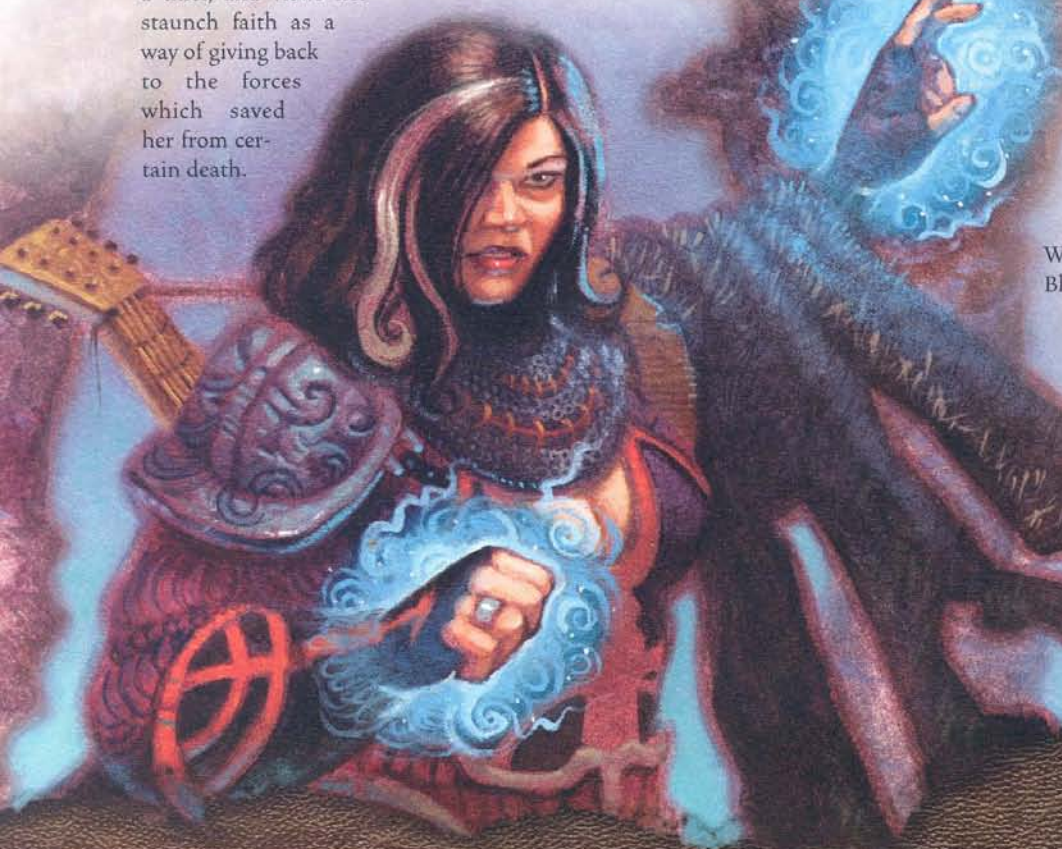
Possessions: Rod of Thunder and Lightning, Scrolls (Delay Poison, Break Enchantment, Remove Curse, Neutralize Poison); Staff of Healing; Ring of Protection +5, Shortbow, Quiver (20 arrows), Mithral Shirt +2, Amulet of Natural Armor +3.

Bard Spells Prepared: (3/4/4/3; Save DC: 13 + spell level); 0 — Daze, Message, Resistance; 1st — Sleep, Feather Fall, Cure light

Wounds, Charm Person; 2nd — Tongues, Mirror Image, Hold Person, Cure Moderate Wounds; 3rd — Cure Serious Wounds, Dishearten, Inspiration.

Cleric Spells Prepared: (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1; Save DC: 14 + spell level); 0 — Mending, Light, Cure Minor Wounds, Purify Food and Drink, Create Water, Strangled Steel; 1st — Protection From Evil*, Cure Light Wounds, Remove Fear, Begone, Cause Fear, Soothe Pain; 2nd — Detect Thoughts*, Silence, Hold Person, Water Weird, Weakness; 3rd — Mass Blessing, Spirit Singing, Divine Protection, Magic Circle Against Evil*; 4th — Minister the Wounds, Inferno, Divination*.

*Domain Spell. Domains: Knowledge (All Knowledge skills are cleric class skills; cast divination spells at +1 caster level), Good (cast good spells at +1 caster level).



Reinholt

Reinholt has always served the church of Neus to the best of her ability: tending the needs of the poor and outcast, bringing hope to the hopeless, and giving rest to the weary. Reinholt has held up all of Neus' teachings of compassion and passivity.

Until the Nothrog armies went on the march.

As they made their way towards Baraxton, they looted and pillaged smaller villages. One of them contained Reinholt's chapel. The people had built the chapel together, each contributing their time and energy to its construction. It had been a symbol of their unity and devotion.

In the span of a morning, it was cinders and rubble.

Reinholt experienced her first true crisis of faith that day, and has yet to recover. A single Nothrog had fallen behind the army, wounded by one of the people defending the city. Reinholt saw him straggling out of the city, and couldn't control herself. She doesn't remember finding the mace, but she does remember beating the soldier more viciously than the Nothrog themselves beat the members of her village.

When the act was over, Reinholt was changed. Now, she no longer opposes violence as a rule. Though she still preaches against harming members of her own race, she feels that the Nothrog can only be stopped if people fight back. In fact, she dares to claim it is Neus' will. This wins over many to her cause, though the greater church of Neus may not agree.

Reinholt: Female Human Cleric 4/Fighter 1: CR 5; Medium Humanoid; HD 4d8+1d10+5; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +4; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (1d6+2 [x2], Light Mace +1); Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+2 [x2], Light Mace +1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead 5/day; SQ Human traits; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +1, Jump +1, Swim -8, Knowledge (religion) +4, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +4, Heal +7; Divine Smite, Quicken Spell, Virtuous Shield.

Abilities: Godly Knowledge, Turn Undead 5/day, Favored Weapon: Light Mace, Spontaneous Casting (cure spells).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Small Shield +1, Chainmail +1, Light Mace +1, Scrolls (Cure Moderate Wounds, Web, Magic Missile).

Cleric Spells Prepared: (5/4+1/2+1; Save DC: 12 + spell level); 0 — Mending, Light, Cure Minor Wounds, Purify Food and Drink, Guidance; 1st — Calm Animals*, Cure Light Wounds, Remove Fear, Doom, Cause Fear; 2nd — Cure Moderate Wounds*, Silence, Hold Person.

*Domain Spell. **Domains:** Healing (cast healing spells at +1 caster level), Animal (can use *speak with animals* 1/day as spell-like ability; add Knowledge (nature) to class skills).



Terak Justicebringer

While every race and group in the Accordlands suffered from the Assassin's Strike, none suffered as horribly as the Paladins of Aroch, champions of the Golden Dragon. In that single, fateful night, a great light in the Accordlands was completely extinguished.

Or so the assassins thought.

Terak Justicebringer, a paladin of Albrecht, was born in Andover to a blacksmith father and a mother who ran the shop and kept the books for their business. Terak was a dutiful child, helping his father from before sunrise to late in the evening. Then one day, while traveling to sell their wares at a nearby village, they were accosted by brigands and killed. With no one to raise him, the local priests took him in at the monastery.

Terak was raised to become a cleric of the church, but when he saw the knights training outside the cloistered walls of the monastery, he felt a pull inside. He took it upon himself to imitate their training in order to win his way into service. After showing aptitude in

combat, the knights agreed to induct him as a squire. He was on a mission to escort an elderly and dying cleric to a prayer shrine on the night of the Assassin's Strike. When the two returned from their pilgrimage, they found the church sacked and the other paladins dead. The shock was too much for the old cleric's heart, but with his final strength he performed the ritual to knight Terak. He warned the young man that those who had killed his brethren would soon come for him, so he must hold his true identity close to his vest.

After burying the cleric, Terak rode out from the church. A short ways down the road he came upon a group of brigands who had kidnapped a young price and were attempting to kill him. Terak trounced the brigands in combat and saved the price with his healing powers. He brought them bound to the city square, judged them guilty of the murder of his fellows, and hanged them outside a tavern. He then ordered the barkeep to leave them up for two days; if asked who had passed judgment, the man was to reply "Terak the Paladin."

This act earned him the name Terak Justicebringer among the peasantry. It also sent the clear message that he was ready for whoever had planned the attack on his brothers.

Terak Justicebringer: Male Human Paladin 10/Champion of Golden Dragon 5; CR 15; Medium Humanoid; HD 10d8+5d10+45; hp 150; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AC 32, touch 12, flat-footed 30; Base Atk +15; Grp +19; Atk +23 melee (1d8+8 [19-20/x2], *Avenger*); Full Atk +23/+18/+13 melee (1d8+8 [19-20/x2], *Avenger*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead 7/day (as a 13th level cleric); SQ Human traits, DR 5/magic, spell resistance 17; AL LG; SV Fort +17, Ref +9, Will +13; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 19.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8, Craft (Blacksmithing) +5, Diplomacy +20, Handle Animal +18, Heal +12, Knowledge (religion) +7, Ride +18, Intimidate +9, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +7, Survival +9, Climb +1; Favored Enemy (Medusan Lords), Leadership (25), Loyalty's Reward, Gloried, Membership (Aroch Paladins), Mounted Combat, Iron Will.

Abilities: Turn Undead 7/day (as a 13th level cleric), Detect Alignment, Lay on Hands, Divine Health, Aura of Courage, Blessed Armament (+3, bless, dispel, consecration), Zeal, Paladin Progression, Divine Vigilance, First Among Equals, Fantastic Mount (Helix), Light of Truth, Summon Weapon, Blessed Aura.

Languages: Common, Deveranian, Celestial.

Possessions: *Avenger*, Mithral Full Plate of *Glamered Invulnerability* +5 (DR 5/magic), Mithral Heavy Shield of *Heavy Fortification* +5, Ring of *Mind Shielding*, Winged Boots, Major Circlet of *Blasting*, Cloak of *Resistance* +3.

Paladin Spells Prepared: (0/3/2/2/2; Save DC: 12 + spell level); 1st — Bless Arms, Divine Favor, Protection From Evil; 2nd — Battle Cry, Shield Other; 3rd — Mass Blessing, Heal Mount; 4th — Hember's Hammer, War Chant.

Avenger: +4 *axiomatic longsword*; AL LG; Int 18 Wis 18 Cha 10; Speech, telepathy, 120 ft. darkvision, blindsense, and hearing; Ego score 29.

Lesser Powers: *bless allies* 3/day, *cure moderate wounds* (2d8+3) on wielder 3/day, spell resistance 17.

Greater Powers: *haste on owner* 3/day, *detect scrying* (continuous).



Kra'ake

Kra'ake fought with the Red Wolf Legion since the days before Krun was its commander. Now stationed in Baraxton, this venerable Nothrog has seen many seasons, and trains the younger Nothrog as the sun sets on his life.

Kra'ake trained at the Lukkot military college in his youth, and attained respectable commands within his legion throughout the years. Several key victories earned him the respect of his commanders and troops. Kra'ake had no ambitions to rule a legion; he was content to merely serve his role to the totem and bring victory. That humility remains a key part of his nature and has endeared him to a new generation of Nothrog warriors.

Kra'ake does have one issue that troubles him constantly. His son, Hrunting, is rumored to be serving in the traitorous Viper Legion. Though Kra'ake would war with the Viper whenever possible, he truly bears his son no ill will, and would be grateful for even a moment to speak with him, and reconcile past differences. Little does Kra'ake know that a reunion may be in the future regardless of his actions.

Kra'ake is the consummate teacher, and takes no lip from his students. He is not blind enough to expect perfection, but he does expect discipline and a drive to achieve. Should a PC exhibit these

traits, Kra'ake would be willing to take them under his wing. For Nothrog, this means that they gain an additional number experience points equal to 10% of their total the next time they gain a level; for non-Nothrog, the next time they gain a level, they may select the racial class ability appropriate to that level for Nothrog fighters in place of the class ability they would normally gain.

Kra'ake: Male Nothrog Fighter 13; CR 13; Medium Humanoid; HD 13d10+39; hp 125; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +13; Grp +17; Atk +23 melee (1d12+12 [18–20/x3], Greataxe) or +20 melee (1d8+7 [x3], Nothrog S'sike +2) or +19 melee (2d6+6 [19–20/x3], Greatsword +1); Full Atk +23/+18/+13 melee (1d12+12 [18–20/x3], Greataxe +4) or +20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+7 [x3], Nothrog S'sike +2) or +19/+14/+9 melee (2d6+6 [18–20/x3], Greatsword +1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ Nothrog traits, darkvision 120 ft, combat prowess; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Jump +10, Ride +11, Swim +4; Weapon Focus (Greataxe), Power Attack, Combat Expertise, Viscous Block, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Nothrog S'sike), Tearing Weapon, Improved Sunder, Hunger for Death, Weapon Specialization (Greataxe).

Abilities: Aptitude, Favored Weapon: Greataxe, Nothrog S'sike, Greatsword; Improved Damage: Greataxe, Nothrog S'sike; Improved Critical Threat: Greataxe, Rage, Magical Immunity.

Languages: Nothrog, Common, Giant.

Possessions: Greataxe +4, Nothrog S'sike +2, Greatsword +1, Banded Mail +2.



Ram'zar

Nothrog who know him call Ram'zar "the sleeping wolf." His tactfulness and polite attitude towards others belies a feral nature that comes to the forefront on the battlefield. Often other Nothrog may consider him weak, as he rarely asserts his power in day-to-day dealings. They learn their mistake soon, often at the end of his blade.

Ram'zar had been a small child, often picked on and overlooked by his contemporaries. During training sessions he was often kicked around, and few trainers thought he would survive his first battle. That changed after a skirmish between his legion and that of the Legion of the Soaring Eagle. The Eagle had been defeated, and the Battle of the Cubs had begun. As Ram'zar and the other children were gathering goods off the fallen bodies on the field, a still-dying enemy used his last bit of strength to hurl his axe at the warriors that stood on the edge of the battlefield. The axe struck true, in the chest of Ram'zar's father.

When the boy realized what happened, his mind shut down. He raced toward the enemy and tore into his flesh with any weapon he could find. The scene was brutal and graphic, even by Nothrog standards. When one of the other boys came to pull him away, Ram'zar spun around and attacked with a fury that left the other boy a bleeding, broken pile on the ground.

Since that fateful day, the Legion commander had the shamen of the legion create a special fetish, which when activated pierces Ram'zar's soul with the same feelings he had when his father died. The other members of his Legion simply stay away from him, knowing that he will fell more than his share of enemies when the time comes.

Ram'zar: Male Nothrog Fighter 12; CR 12; Medium Humanoid; HD 12d10+51; hp 140; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +12; Grp +16; Atk +21 melee (1d8+12 [x2], Heavy Mace +3) or +17 melee (1d8+7 [19-20/x2], Longsword) or +13 ranged (1d8+1 [x3], Longbow); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+12 [x2], Heavy Mace +3) or +17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+7 [19-20/x2], Longsword) or +13/+8/+3 ranged (1d8+1 [x3], Longbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ Nothrog traits, darkvision 120 ft, combat prowess; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 11, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +9, Jump +9, Ride +11, Swim +2; Weapon Focus (Heavy Mace), Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Feat of Strength, Improved Overrun, My Kind of Odds, Heritage of Ogre, Weapon Specialization (Heavy Mace).

Abilities: Aptitude, Favored Weapon: Heavy Mace, Longsword, Longbow; Improved Damage: Heavy Mace, Longsword; Improved Critical Threat: Heavy Mace, Rage.

Languages: Nothrog, Common.

Possessions: Heavy Mace +3, Longsword, Longbow, Splint Mail +3, Ring of Regeneration.

Krun

If ever a Nothrog has sought power for its own sake, it is Krun: one of the most tactically brilliant Nothrog to ever take the field. He extends his mind from the battlefield to the arena of politics with brutal cunning. Krun was the leader of the Red Wolf Legion, and won many victories over smaller legions, bringing them under his control. That was, until he ran afoul of Nassiral Hate. When Hate demanded Krun's allegiance, Krun was defiant. Hate responded by destroying the Red Wolf Totem, the source of Krun's power. Krun had no choice but to bend his knee to this new master. His shamen immediately summoned Fenris, a younger totem, and none but they and Hate knew that it was not the original Red Wolf.

Though Krun has since appeared to dutifully serve Hate (and assisted in his conquest of Baraxton) he began secretly plotting the despot's downfall. Soon thereafter, Krun's supposed rival Sav'rukk become his greatest ally. Sav'rukk launched attacks to harass the Nothrog forces, and Krun ensured that the response was inefficient and easily repelled. Now, word has finally come to Krun that insurgents are planning an assassination of Hate. Luckily for Krun, he has been charged with the disposition of guards in Baraxton and in Hate's own temple. Krun has already scheduled a convenient duty shift at the time of the proposed assassination. Now he waits to see what happens. If Hate is removed and his own hands need not be sullied, Krun can assume control with little difficulty.

And things will be as they were always intended.

Krun: Male Nothrog Fighter 16; CR 16; Medium Humanoid; HD 16d10+60; hp 164; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 30, touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +16; Grapple +22; Atk +30 melee (2d6+21 [13-20/x3], keen Greatsword +5) or +20 ranged (1d8+9 [18-20/x3], Composite Longbow [+6 Str]); Full Atk +30/+25/+20/+15 melee (2d6+21 [13-20/x3], keen Greatsword +5) or +20/+15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8+9 [18-20/x3], Composite Longbow [+6 Str]); SQ Nothrog traits, darkvision 120 ft, combat prowess; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +22, Jump +22, Ride +22, Swim +19; Weapon Focus (Greatsword), Weapon Specialization (Greatsword), Greater Weapon Focus (Greatsword), Greater Weapon Specialization (Greatsword), Improved Critical (Greatsword), Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Overpowering Force.

Abilities: Aptitude, Favored Weapons: Greatsword, Longbow, Dire Flail, Longsword; Improved Damage: Greatsword, Longbow, Dire Flail; Improved Critical: Greatsword, Longbow; Improved Critical Multiplier: Greatsword, Magical Immunity, Rage.

Possessions: keen Greatsword +5, Gauntlets of Ogre Power +2, Composite Longbow [+6 Str], Mithril Breastplate +2, Quiver (20 arrows).





Uthanak

The commander of the Legion of Bear, Uthanak is the embodiment of Nothrog ferocity. He cares not for conquest; he simply lusts for the heat of battle. Uthanak, while a brilliant and effective commander, is really more like a dog on a chain. Occasionally Nassiral Hate will loosen his restraints, but even he knows better than to push Uthanak's ferocity too far.

The reason for Uthanak's insatiable bloodlust comes from how he came to join Nassiral Hate. As Hate traveled the Nothrog lands, subduing legions to his will, he met the Legion of Bear. Uthanak refused to join the shaman until Hate beat Uthanak's totem to within an inch of its life. In a bid for survival, Bear infused itself in Uthanak, becoming part of his soul. Uthanak then bent the knee to Hate.

Since then, Uthanak has grown more and more thirsty for battle. Whenever a potential offensive is developed he pleads to be at the forefront. Such is the effect of the totem on his soul. Bear wants to be strong again, and he needs war to fuel his power. Uthanak leads his troops by example, often the very first one to engage the enemy. He is not without some sense of his previous strategic intellect, however. When recently ordered to move against the Deverenians, Uthanak saw something strange. The Deverenians were already being attacked, by a race of half-men flooding out of mines. He chose, wisely, to observe the battle as opposed to charging in against a force he knew nothing about. He has been in a holding pattern since then, awaiting word from Hate as to whether to attack or withdraw. As days pass with diplomats from the Nothrog and Deverenians bantering, Uthanak grows weary, and the fire of Bear burns hotter in his heart. Soon, it may overpower him, leading him to attack regardless of the consequences.

Uthanak: Male Nothrog Fighter 13; CR 13; Medium Humanoid; HD 15d10+60; hp 165; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +15; Grp +20; Atk +27 melee (1d12+15 [18–20/x4], Greataxe +5) or +24 melee (1d10+13 [18–20/x2], *Maul of the Titans*); Full Atk +27/+22/+17 melee (1d12+13 [18–20/x4], Greataxe +5) or +24/+19/+14 melee (1d10+11 [18–20/x2], *Maul of the Titans*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ Nothrog traits, darkvision 120 ft, combat prowess; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Jump +10, Ride +11, Swim –4; Weapon Focus (Greataxe), Power Attack, Hunger for Death, Cleave, Great Cleave, Endurance, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Run, Final Blow, Follow Through.

Abilities: Aptitude, Favored Weapon: Greataxe, Greatclub, Greatsword, Heavy Flail; Improved Damage: Greataxe, Greatclub, Greatsword; Improved Critical Threat: Greataxe, Greatclub; Improved Critical Multiplier: Greataxe, Magical Immunity, Rage.

Languages: Nothrog, Common.

Possessions: Greataxe +5, Heavy Flail, Greatsword, *Maul of the Titans*, Banded Mail of Greater Cold Resistance +4, Ring of Evasion, Boots of Speed.



Rress

The Elite Hate Guard are the best of the best among the Nothrog ranks. Those who defend Nassiral Hate himself receive an honor that few Nothrog even dream of. Though many are warriors filled with the power of Hate's totem, there are a few who work behind the scenes. A few like Rress.

While physically intimidating, Rress has more talent in subtlety than in direct fighting. There are many enemies who choose not to face Hate head on, working in the shadows and plotting against him. Rress, through his own talents and his considerable network of contacts, makes many of those threats disappear. His quick and quiet methods cause more fear amongst Hate's enemies than the brutal punishments faced by common prisoners, and he's very good at ferreting out dissent. Those he targets usually have no idea of the danger until it is too late.

Despite Hate's continued support, Rress has few allies outside of the Elite Hate Guard. Other Nothrog view him as a backstabbing worm, without the courage to face his enemies head on. Should Hate's power falter, Rress would quickly find himself an open target. Though dedicated to Hate's rule, he is always pragmatic and has prepared for all eventualities. He has hidden large amounts of gold throughout Baraxton, and keeps a close accounting of it all. Should his political standing fall, he has the resources to flee and start again somewhere else. He doesn't believe it will ever come to that, but the fortunes of war can shift on a moment's notice...

Rress: Male Nothrog Assassin 2; CR 2; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d8+4; hp 12; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp +1; Atk +0 melee (1d4 [19-20/x2], dagger) or +1 melee (1d6+1 [19-20/x2], Short Sword) or +3 ranged (1d4 [19-20/x2], dagger); Full Atk +0 melee (1d4 [19-20/x2], dagger) or +1 melee (1d6+1 [19-20/x2], Short Sword) or +3 ranged (1d4 [19-20/x2], dagger); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison, Sneak Attack; SQ Nothrog traits, darkvision 120 ft, combat prowess; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Balance +3, Climb +1, Disguise -1, Gather Information -1, Hide +3, Jump +1, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +3, Poison +6, Search +6, Sense Motive +1, Spot +1, Tumble +8; Stealthy.

Abilities: Increased Hit Dice, Poison Use, Skilled Brewer, Poison Immunity and Resistance +1 (Dragon Bile), Sneak Attack +1d6.

Languages: Nothrog, Common, Giant.

Possessions: Leather Armor, Dagger (2), Short Sword +1, Thieves Kit.

Taoth

Amongst the Nothrog, might makes right. While the warriors prove their might through strength of arms, the shamen prove theirs through powers with the totems. And few have been able to create the destructive power wielded by Taoth of the Scarab Legion.

Taoth had been a lesser shaman of the Scarab Legion, serving the lead shaman, who in turn served the legion commander. She always felt underutilized; that is, until the voice of Scarab came to her. It said that if she could take control of the legion, it would give her more than enough power to keep it. At that Taoth challenged for position of lead shaman. In a quick and violently explosive duel, little remained of Taoth's opponent. With the sweat of the fight still on her brow, she turned to the legion commander and issued yet another challenge, this time for total control of the legion. The commander had little choice but to accept. The fight was even shorter, but the outcome was no different.

With control of the legion, Taoth now awaited Scarab's next order. The order came shortly after Nassiral Hate began his conquest of the Nothrog. Rather than putting up some sort of resistance, as most totems did, Scarab commanded Taoth to submit to Hate. Taoth understood that — when allied with Hate — her Totem could gain more power and avoid being destroyed in the process. Unlike Krun, Uthanak, and Sceth Hellbringer, Taoth willingly joined. This has created a fiery rivalry between them, Krun especially. Taoth has no trust or respect for the fearsome warrior, and the feeling is mutual. Though they work together under Hate by necessity, their mutual hatred could erupt at any moment. Taoth, however, feels confident that Krun can be dealt with.

She hasn't yet met a Nothrog leader who can't.

Taoth: Female Albino Nothrog Shaman 14: CR 14: Medium Humanoid; HD 14d4+28; hp 60; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +7; Grp +8; Atk +11 melee (1d6+4 [18-20/x2], Scimitar of Wounding +3); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6+4 [18-20/x2], Scimitar of Wounding +3); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Nothrog traits, low-light vision, magical prowess; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 22, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +19, Craft (leatherworking) +23, Knowledge (nature) +23, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Spellcraft +23,



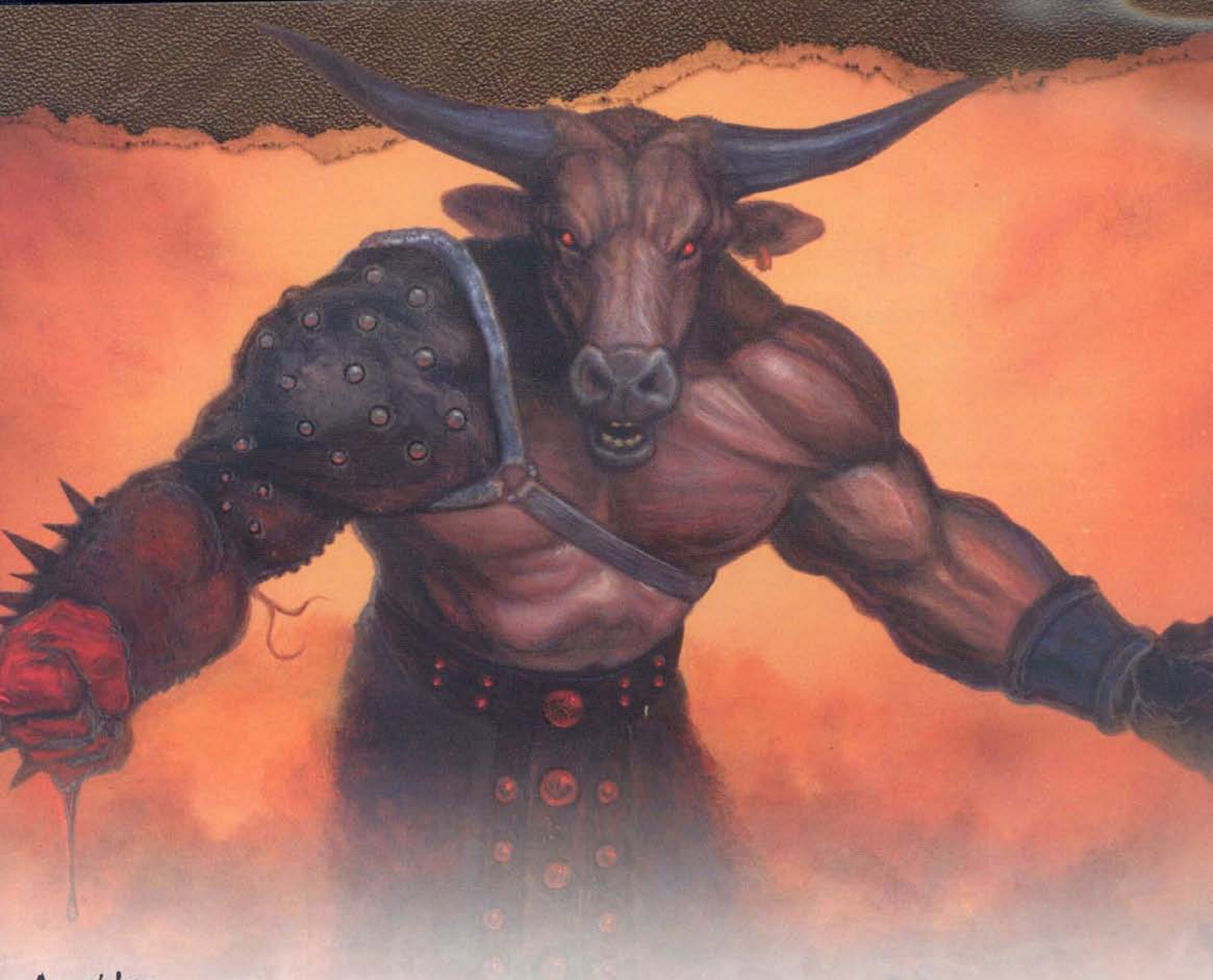
Spot +12, Survival +20; Totemic Familiar (Eagle), Craft Wand, Craft Metamagic Fetish, Tap Metamagic Fetish, Magic Shifting, Point Blank Shot, Alertness.

Abilities: Familiar, Favored Terrain (forest, hill, mountain), Beast Bond, Medicine Bag, Scarab Carapace, Scarab's Quickness, Share Spells, Empathic Link, Scry on Familiar.

Languages: Nothrog, Common, Giant, Elven, Deveranian, Sylvan, Kabal, Draconic.

Possessions: Fetishes, Scimitar of Wounding +3, Wand of Magic Missile (7th), Wand of Lightning Bolt (5th), Scarab of Protection, Ioun Stone (dusty rose — +1 insight bonus to AC), Boots of Teleportation, Ring of Protection +5.

Shaman Spells Prepared: (6/8/8/7/7/6/3; Save DC: 16 (18 in favored terrain) + spell level); 0 — Read Magic, Detect Magic, Flare, Ghost Sound, Daze, Disrupt Undead; 1st — Begone, Expeditious Journey, Curse of the Lady, Stone Hands, Mage Armor, Blast, Magic Missile, Power Bolt; 2nd — Shard Storm, Tail Strike, Words of Woe, Acid Arrow, Web, Push, See Invisibility, Hideous Laughter; 3rd — Acid Spittle, Cloak of Fear, Hail of Thorns, Premonition, Tremor, War Rune, Wilderness Stride; 4th — Acid Storm, Banish the Wound, Claws of Ash, Soul Binding, A Line in the Sand, Decay, Inferno; 5th — Clinging Miasma, Greater Bull's Strength, Hermetic Armor, Howling Rain, Hate, Ethereal Drain, Permanency; 6th — Exposure, Strangulation, Acid Fog, Summon Monster VI, Repulsion, Prismatic Surge; 7th — Acid Burst, Choking Cloud, Despair.



Arra'dan

Arra'dan is an oddity amongst the VoTaurr. When bulls take up the life of a monk after being passed over as potential mates, they turn their pent up frustration into perfecting their bodies and souls. Through mediation and practice, they can become balanced. Arra'dan would have none of that. He trained with the masters, and learned their ways of fighting, but cared little for peacefulness. Arra'dan would often pick fights with the younger bulls, looking for any way to lash out and cause pain. Eventually the master of their school ejected him for his aggression, and the dominant bull of his herd banished him for being a detriment to the herd.

Arra'dan wandered the plains alone, his fury growing ever-larger. Eventually he wandered north and into the Nothrog badlands. He encountered a Nothrog patrol, and just as he was about to pummel them into nothing, they opened their arms in welcome. Confused, Arra'dan decided to listen to them. They claimed to belong something called a Bear Legion, and that he had been sent to join them by Mekk'iah. They assured Arra'dan he would see great battles and spill much blood. At this, Arra'dan decided on the spot to stay with the Bear Legion.

Since then, Arra'dan has been one of Uthanak's most valued warriors, a whirling mass of death that gives even the most fearsome enemy pause. When a defense seems entrenched, Arra'dan

can be counted on to break it with his unusual fighting style, and with the focused anger that continues to grow larger with each passing day.

Arra'dan: Male VoTaurr Monk 12; CR 13; Large Humanoid; HD 1d8+12d8+40; hp 100; Init +2; Spd 70 ft; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +12; Grp +21; Atk +19 melee (1d20+8 [x2], unarmed); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d20+8 [x2], unarmed) or +19/+19/+19/+14/+9 melee (1d12+8 [x2], unarmed, flurry of blows); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Charge attack; SQ VoTaurr traits, cold resistance 5; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 9, Wis 16, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Climb +10, Hide +7, Jump +17, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Swim +10, Survival +8, Tumble +9; Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Grapple, Combat Expertise, Death From Above, Improved Trip.

Abilities: Strength Choice, Strike as Leopard, Unbound Leap, Flurry of Blows, Unarmed Strike, Wind Punch, Energy Sense (flanking, circumstance), Reflexive Blow, Fasting, Energy Strike (+2), Healing Hands, Shield of the Soul, Strength of the Earth, Greater Flurry, Disrupting Strike.

Languages: Nothrog, Common.

Possessions: Amulet of Mighty Fists +3, Bracers of Armor +4, Monk Belt.

Mekk'iah

The VoTaurr have always been a collection of independent herds, none answering to any other. However, all herds recognize the wisdom of born leaders, and none more so than Mekk'iah. Mekk'iah is an elder bull of his tribe, and has seen many moons. Only a few are older than he, but even they acknowledge his greater wisdom. When the VoTaurr formalized relations with the Nothrog, Mekk'iah was chosen to speak for the race.

Mekk'iah is a powerful wizard and seasoned fighter. He has a knack for both the arcane and martial that few can image. Though his prowess is great, he does not actively seek to engage the VoTaurr in war. Mekk'iah is simply wise enough to see the scope of the world, and the ways that war creeps into every corner. To the west of his people's lands are the Narawati. Their pacifistic nature may doom them, but they are not ones to worry about. To the north are the Nothrog, whose power and aptitude for aggression would lead them south eventually. Mekk'iah chose to head them off and create allies before they became enemies.

In the years since, Mekk'iah has made contributions to the Nothrog war machine, though only partially. Through debates with Hate and various acts of diplomacy, he has kept most of his kinfolk on their home soil, with only a select few of the greatest warriors making their way north to join the Nothrog. By convincing Hate of greater threats to the south which may or may not actually exist, Mekk'iah has set up the VoTaurr as a buffer between the Nothrog and forces unknown.

He rarely appears pandering, and is anything but a sycophant. On the rare occasions he has been called by Hate, he has led his warriors into battle with stunning

success. The VoTaurr are physically intimidating, even to Nothrog, and the humans they fought were absolutely terrified, making for quick victories. Mekk'iah quickly parlayed them into increased political clout, and he intends to do the same for any such events in the future.

Mekk'iah: Male VoTaurr Fighter 7/Wizard 8: CR 16: Large Humanoid; HD 1d8+7d10+8d4+49; hp 90; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +11; Grp +19; Atk +20 melee (1d8+12 [x3], Battleaxe) or +19 melee (1d8+9 [x3], Warhammer); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+12 [x3], Battleaxe) or +19/+14/+9 melee (1d8+9 [x3], Warhammer); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ VoTaurr traits; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +12; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 19, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +17, Jump +14, Ride +11, Swim 14, Sense Motive +7, Concentration +11, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (geography) +12, Spellcraft +15; Scribe Scroll, Alertness, Power Attack, Cleave, Weapon Focus (Battleaxe), Create Magic Arms and Armor; Combat Casting; Extend Spell, Silent Spell, Touch of Power, Unseen Spell.

Abilities: Summon Familiar, Eidetic Memory; Magic Missile, Bull's Strength, Fireball, Ice Storm; Share Spells, Empathic Link, Favored Weapon: Battleaxe, Warhammer; Improved Damage: Battleaxe.

Languages: Nothrog, Common, Kabal, Deverenian, Elven, Dwarven.

Possessions: Spellbook; Scrolls (*Stoneskin*, *Fear*, *Cure Critical Wounds*, *Haste*, *Flame Arrow*, *Blink*); Rod of Metamagic (*Maximize*); Ring of Invisibility; Battleaxe of Flaming Burst +5, Warhammer of Shocking Burst +4, animated Large Darkwood Shield +4, Leather Armor of Moderate Fortification +3, Glove of Storing.

Wizard Spells Prepared: (5/6/5/5/4; Save DC: 14 + spell level); 0 — Mending, Read Magic, Detect Magic, Light, Flare; 1st — Charm Person, Mage Armor, Power Spike, Cause Fear, Magic Missile, Burning Hands; 2nd — Weakness, Melf's Acid Arrow, Bull's Strength, Spider Climb, Web; 3rd — Dispel Magic, Greater Identify, Hail of Thorns, Aurora Flame, Fireball; 4th — Ice Storm, Charm Monster, Ice Bolt, Shout.

School Specialization: Evocation; Prohibited schools: Necromancy, Illusion.





Benedric

The corrupting influence of Bascaron takes a toll not only on the mind but on the body. The elf Benedric had no idea the great price he would have to pay to serve the Blood Moon. As with many elves, Benedric desired an immortal life, and he was willing to do anything short of killing another elf to get it. Unlike most other elves, thoughts of immortality dominated his every thought. The desire grew and grew in his soul and infused his every action with unholy determination.

As the Blood Moon passed over the earth, Benedric's emotions were pulled by its corrupting influence. He became convinced that the answers to his desire existed in the Shattered Lands. Abandoning his family, friends, and responsibilities, Benedric journeyed to that broken realm. Never resting, never stopping, he continued his travels through storms and heat. During the journey, his body underwent changes as well. As the desire festered, he developed horrid boils and his hair fell out. His skin took on a sickly yellow pallor, and his teeth grew into fangs. By the time Benedric reached the Shattered Lands, there was little remaining of the elf he once was. He had become a monster.

Now the desire has corrupted him, and it wracks his body with physical pain. While he appears to have stopped aging — a sign that he may have finally achieved his goal — the cost has been great. The pain is unending. The only release he has found is the rush of adrenaline he receives when he causes pain to others. He now roams the Shattered Lands, attacking anyone who crosses

his path, even other Bascarite cultists on pilgrimages to Mourn. It doesn't matter to him; but then again, nothing ever did.

Benedric: Male Elf Fighter 8/Bascarite Ascendant 3; CR 11; Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Bascarite); HD 8d10+3d8; hp 70; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +10; Grp +14; Atk +14 melee (1d8+4 [x2], bone spurs) or +16 melee (1d4+8 [19–20/x2], *Dagger of Venom*); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+4 [x2], bone spurs) or +16/+11 melee (1d4+8 [19–20/x2], *Dagger of Venom*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Natural Weapons (bony spurs); SQ Elf traits, darkvision 60 ft, bonemail proficiency; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Hide +4, Intimidate +3, Jump +7, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Search +1, Spot +3, Survival +2; Great Fortitude, Toughness, Improved Unarmed Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Bascarite Ascending (assassin), Endurance, Sacrifice.

Abilities: Favored Weapon: Dagger, Longsword; Hit and Run Tactics, Improved Critical: Dagger, Improved Damage: Dagger; Monstrous Form (–3 to Cha-based skill checks), Lesser Mutation (Natural Weapons, Skin [+4 Hide check in forests]).

Languages: Elven, Common.

Possessions: *Dagger of Venom*, *Ring of Freedom of Movement*, *Periapt of Proof Against Poison*, *Ring of Protection* +1.

Kerebrus

Kerebrus is the leader of the Dark Horsemen, the Accordlands' most respected and powerful mercenary company. They function as a unit, bound to each other with ties that transcend the mere camaraderie of the sword. Their lifestyle is rigid and uncompromising, designed to keep them on the razor's edge. It all springs from Kerebrus' devotion to his god.

Kerebrus is the last of a line of templars who worship Kasugoan, the god of order. His devotion causes him to apply his code of conduct to all those within his service. If his underlings can't meet his rigid standards, he passes them over. He views the Dark Horsemen as an expression of his faith, and shapes them accordingly. Kerebrus also chooses contracts based on his opinion of the potential client. If the contract would spread disorder, Kerebrus will always refuse. In a time of war, the Dark Horsemen are in high demand, but he has turned down many lucrative contracts only because he feels they would sow discord... and thus violate the spirit of his god.

What he hopes to obtain through the Horsemen is a mystery. He has no apparent love for gold (though his is the highest-paid mercenary company in the Accordlands) and conquest suits him not. Some whisper that Horsemen are the only hope he has of establishing order in a time so filled with chaos: that the life of a mercenary retains the flexibility needed to survive without compromising the structure demanded by his god. If so, it is a strange form of worship indeed, for the Horsemen's efficiency spreads as much discord as it creates. Someday, he may reveal his ultimate goals — the purpose he serves through leadership of the Horsemen — but for now, his lips are sealed. His men respond to him with fanatical devotion, however, and whatever destiny he has in mind for them, they will embrace it without question.

For more information on the Dark Horsemen, see page 340 in *The Master Codex*.

Kerebrus: Male Human Fighter 8/Cleric 7: CR 15; Medium Humanoid; HD 8d10+7d8+45; hp 140; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AC 31, touch 17, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +13; Grp +16; Atk +22 melee (1d8+11 [19–20/x2], *axiomatic Longsword* +5) or +16 ranged (1d8+4, Composite Longbow [+3 Str]); Full Atk +22/+17/+12 melee (1d8+11 [19–20/x2], *axiomatic Longsword* +5) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+4 [x3], Composite Longbow [+3 Str]); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead 8/day; SQ Human traits; AL LG; SV Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +11; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Handle Animal +11, Jump +6, Ride +10, Swim +7, Knowledge (arcane) +4, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (battle) +4, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +25, Heal +7, Profession (soldier) +7; Leadership (28), Membership (Dark Horseman), Wise Leadership, Power Attack, Improved Initiative, Formation Defense, Formation Fighting, Follow Me, Weapon Focus (Longsword).

Abilities: Courage, Evade, Favored Weapon: Longsword, Longbow; Improved Damage: Longsword; Turn Undead 8/day, Spontaneous Casting (cure spells), Wisdom of the Magistrate.

Languages: Common, Nothrog, Deverenian.

Possessions: Mithral Breastplate of Command, Heavy Steel Shield of Ghost Touch +5, *axiomatic Longsword* +5, Composite Longbow (+3 Str), Ring of Mind Shielding, Ring of Protection +5, *Figurine of Wondrous Power* (Onyx Dog), Horn of Goodness, Medallion of Thoughts, Silver Holy Symbol of Kasugoan.

Cleric Spells Prepared: (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/1+1; Save DC: 13 + spell level); 0 — Cure Minor Wounds, Light, Detect Magic, Resistance, Mending, Strangled Steel; 1st — Shield of Faith, Protection from Evil (2)*, Divine Favor, Detect Evil, Cure Light Wounds; 2nd — Gift from Above, Heat Metal, Aid*, Bull's Strength, Resist Energy; 3rd — Divine Protection, Hember's Hammer, Mass Blessing, Clairaudience/Clairvoyance*; 4th — Divine Power, Holy Smite*.

*Domain Spell. **Domains:** Knowledge (All Knowledge skills are cleric class skills; cast divination spells at +1 caster level), Good (cast good spells at +1 caster level).



Lady Tornhawk

Originally of Deverenian ancestry, Lady Tornhawk has abandoned her birthright to roam the wastes of the Shattered Lands, seeking out and destroying all forms of evil that she can find. She finds many.

In a dream she saw a vision of a sword, and awoke with the knowledge that she was meant to destroy a great evil. What that evil was, she did not know, nor had she ever seen a sword that resembled the glowing blade of her vision. Fixating on what she perceived to be her destiny, she eventually sold her gowns, jewels, and other noble trappings in favor of armor and weapons. After researching maps and legends, Tornhawk traveled east, to the Shattered Lands, to seek whatever fate had in store for her. Her first encounter was with a twisted creature that resembled an insect more than a man. With nearly no thought, her sword raced out of its scabbard and brought the vile thing down. Though her own martial training had been minimal for a Deverenian, her battle prowess against this monster was stunning. It was as if she had been training from the day she was born.

For many months she continued her journeys, slaying one beast after another. Her greatest victory was perhaps her least-known, for no one in the civilized world has heard how she slew a mighty Brullakha that had found another exit from the World Below. The act averted a certainly devastating calamity for the World Above, yet it remains unheralded. Not that Lady Tornhawk cares. She focuses only on her perceived destiny, and how to send the next Shattered horror in her path to its grave.

Her travels recently brought her in contact with the Bascarites, and she has single-handedly destroyed many of their covens, leaving no survivors behind. The leaders of the cult in Mourn have no way to find the killer, leaving her free to strike almost at will. A recent ambush of a group of Bascarite pilgrims resulted in a new treasure for her: the same glowing sword of her earlier dreams. When she picked up the blade the light grew incredibly bright, and it felt as if it weighed nothing. With this new power, she has vowed to bring an end to the Bascarites once and for all, and cleanse the twisted city of Mourn of all the unnatural beings within.

Little does she know the blade was delivered to her purposefully, guided by a hand that seeks to turn her innate power against the entire world...

Lady Tornhawk: Female Deverenian Fighter 12; CR 12: Medium Humanoid; HD 12d10+45; hp 115; Init +7; Spd 20 ft; AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +12; Grp +15; Atk +20 melee (1d8+10 [15-20/x2], Longsword of *Mighty Cleaving* +4) or +16 melee (1d8+4 [x4/x2], Havat-Lahn Spear) or +16 ranged (1d8 [19-20/x2], Light Crossbow); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+10 [15-20/x2], Longsword of *Mighty Cleaving* +4) or +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+4 [x4/x2], Havat-Lahn Spear) or

+16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8 [19-20/x2], Light Crossbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ Deverenian traits, low-light vision, +2 save vs. mind affecting spells; AL CG; SV Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Handle Animal +7, Jump +8, Knowledge (aberration) +7, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +4, Ride +13, Swim +13, Listen +8, Tumble +0; Versatile [Knowledge (aberrations) and Listen], Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Havat-lahn Spear), Favored Enemy (aberrations), Defier (aberrations), Combat Expertise, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (Longsword), Power Attack.

Abilities: Favored Weapon: Longsword, Havat-lahn Spear, Light Crossbow; Improved Damage: Longsword, Havat-lahn Spear; Improved Critical Threat: Longsword, Luxury Training, Military History, Rank and Privilege.

Languages: Deverenian, Common, Nothrog, Elven.

Possessions: Plate Armor of the Deep, Longsword of *Mighty Cleaving* +4, Quiver (20 bolts), Mithral Heavy Shield, Ring of *Evasion*, Havat-lahn Spear, Light Crossbow.





Sakar

Sakar was born into the nobility of the Deveranian Empire. His father had earned much power and position in the Empire, and Sakar enjoyed a lush life in his early years. However, as with many landed nobles, he became bored with the day-to-day responsibilities of his class. So Sakar created a different persona for himself, and took up the life of a thief. He didn't need the rewards of course, and often left his ill-got gains behind once he had them in hand, but the excitement of thievery was a rush he couldn't get over.

Unfortunately for Sakar, life in the underworld brought him into contact with the Assassin's Guild. Black Tom's organization extended membership to him, an invitation that truly cannot be refused. Near the time of the Assassin's Strike, Sakar's mentor in

the guild, Malakai, contacted him, gave him a target to kill, and sent him on his way. Sakar could not bring himself to kill the innocent target, however. He instead turned on Malakai, then fled Deverenia before Black Tom found the corpse.

For the next year he traveled the land, working as a sword for hire, and generally trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. His journeys eventually brought him to an elderly priest and young paladin, both desperately fighting off a group of rogues outside some old ruins. Recognizing a few faces from his old guild, Sakar leapt into the fight and helped dispatch the rogues. After the battle, Sakar introduced himself; he was surprised to learn that the young paladin was Terak Justicebringer, last of the Aroch. A bond of friendship quickly formed between them. Though Sakar lacks the moral conviction to help rebuild the Aroch, Terak knows he can always count on him as an ally.

Sakar: Male Deveranian Rogue 16: CR 16: Medium Humanoid; HD 16d6+48; hp 125; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +12; Grp +15; Atk +21 melee (1d4+8 [19-20/x2], Dagger of Subtlety +5) or +16 ranged (1d4 [19-20/x2], dagger); Full Atk +20/20/+20/+15/+15/+6/+6 melee (1d4+8 (main hand)/+6 (off-hand) [19-20/x2], daggers, twin weapons) or +21/+21/+16/+11 melee (1d4+8 [19-20/x2], Dagger of Speed +5) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d4 [19-20/x2], dagger); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak Attack; SQ Deveranian traits, low-light vision, +2 save vs. mind affecting spells; AL NG; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +4, Balance +16, Bluff +13, Climb +14, Concentration +4, Decipher Script +14, Diplomacy +15, Disable Device +14, Disguise +14, Escape Artist +15, Forgery +4, Gather Information +13, Handle Animal +3, Heal +2, Hide +30, Intimidate +15, Jump +16, Listen +12, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +15, Perform +3, Ride +5, Search +14, Sense Motive +2, Sleight of Hand +17, Spellcraft +4, Spot +12, Survival +2, Swim +14, Tumble +17, Use Magic Device +13, Use Rope +13; Weapon Finesse (Dagger), Two Weapon Fighting, Twin Weapon Fighting, Two Weapon Defense, Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Greater Two Weapon Fighting, Precise Backstab.

Abilities: Armor Focus (light, medium), Guild Contact (Assassin's Guild - abandoned), Life of a Noble, Life of Privilege, Sneak Attack +7d6+10, Traps, Hide in Plain Sight, Evasion, Improved Nightsight, Catfall, Whisperstep, Jack of All Trades, Improved Sneak Attack, Improved Evasion, Skill Mastery (Tumble, Move Silently, Hide, Spot, Listen, Search), "This Way...".

Languages: Deveranian, Common, Nothrog, Elven, Dwarven.

Possessions: Composite Shortbow, Quiver (20 arrows), Studded Leather of Greater Shadow +5, Dagger of Speed +5, Dagger of Subtlety +5 (+4 on sneak attack and damage rolls), Daggers (4), Ring of Regeneration, Minor Cloak of Displacement (20% miss chance), Necklace of Adaptation, Thieves Kit.

Squire Orban

Orban was the squire of a Deverenian knight in the house of Rellion. He served his master well and rode to glorious battle with him time and again. Orban's master always had the most gleaming armor and the best-groomed steed thanks to the young man's diligence, and he rewarded his squire with respect and approval. Orban was easily on his way to assuming knighthood in but a few short years.

Then one day, on the way back from a battle, Orban and his master encountered a Deverenian peasant's farmstead. Low on food, they came to the home and demanded a meal. Orban thought nothing of his master's actions, as the station of knight afforded such luxuries. The farmer's wife brought a meager offering before them. Orban's master became outraged, demanding more food. The farmer's wife showed their stores, proving that they had nothing more to offer. When Orban's master demanded that the farmer hunt down a deer or boar for him, the farmer replied that his local landowner forbade hunting the wildlife. Orban's master was furious and attacked hapless couple, killing them both. A toddler came into the room, horrified to see his parents butchered. Orban was shocked, but his master simply left, abandoning the child to his fate and ordering his squire to accompany him.

In the months that followed, the scene ate at Orban's soul. He had never seen this side of his master, though it had been there all along. The glory of knighthood had blinded him to the man's true evil, an evil to which he was now bound in service. Finally, in the dead of night, Orban left a note to his master — informing him of his resignation of duties — and fled. Knowing that such a

betrayal meant a death sentence, Orban escaped to the southern Free Kingdoms.

Now Orban travels the land, searching for a master of pure heart, who may truly understand nobility and help him claim the true knighthood he desires.

Squire Orban: Male Deverenian Fighter 6: CR 6: Medium Humanoid; HD 6d10+18; hp 45; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +6; Grp +8; Atk +10 melee (1d8+6 [19–20/x2], Longsword +1) or +8 ranged (1d8 [x3], Longbow); Full Atk +10/+4 melee (1d8+6 [19–20/x2], Longsword +1) or +8/+3 ranged (1d8 [x3], Longbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ Deverenian traits, low-light vision, +2 save vs. mind affecting spells; AL LG; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Jump +5, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +4, Knowledge (history) +4, Ride +9, Swim +2; Allied Tactics, Quick Draw, Formation Fighting, Formation Defense, Dodge.

Abilities: Favored Weapon: Longsword, Longbow; Improved Damage: Longsword, Luxury Training, Military History.

Languages: Deverenian, Common, Nothrog.

Possessions: Longsword +1, Longbow, masterwork Breastplate, Ring of Protection +1.





Tyrgen the Brave

Tyrgen the Brave is perhaps the most famous bounty hunter in the Accordlands. While others may be flashier and win their contracts through charm, Tyrgen has a proven track record. Many local guard forces and provincial leaders are willing to pay hefty sums of gold for his services, and he never disappoints. While some bounty hunters employ elaborate methods, such as scrying orbs, or networks of paid seers, Tyrgen is one of the few that still rely on old fashioned tracking. He can, through his training as a ranger and his skill at extracting information, successfully track a target for months, through varied nations and landscapes. Many a criminal thought themselves safe deep in the Shattered Lands, only to find themselves watching a white horse in the distance bearing Tyrgen to them.

Tyrgen is currently roaming the forests of the elves in search of a traitor to the Free Kingdoms named Zachary Blaize. While many would consider extended time in the elven forests suicidal, Tyrgen is a trained survivor. He knows the land and can hold his own against the undead creatures within. Tyrgen also knows the value of paying off local elven forces during his hunt. They do not bother him and he, in return, stays out of their way.

When determining Tyrgen's rate, take an average cost of a standard quarry and double it. Then add an additional 10% of the total for incidentals and travel expenses. When given any reasonable time of delivery, Tyrgen will almost always return with his quarry before the designated deadline.

Tyrgen the Brave: Male Human Ranger 10/Bounty Hunter 5; CR 15; Medium Humanoid; HD 10d8+5d10+30; hp 85; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +15; Grp +17; Atk +20 melee (1d8+5 [19-20/x2], Longsword +3) or +21 ranged (1d8+4 [x3], Composite Longbow [+2 Str]); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+5 [19-20/x2], Longsword +3) or +19/+19/+14/+9 ranged (1d8+4 [x3], Composite Longbow [+2 Str]); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ Human traits; AL NG; SV Fort +15, Ref +10, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Concentration +7, Craft (bowyer) +5, Handle Animal +7, Heal +6, Gather Information +19, Hide +12, Jump +9, Knowledge (nature) +19, Listen +13, Move Silently +12, Ride +10, Search +19, Spot +18, Swim +3, Survival +18, Tumble +4, Use Rope +9; Point Blank Shot, Track, Improved Track, Rapid Shot, Dodge, Mobility, Shot on the Run, Analyze Foe, Investigator, Endurance, Run, Run Like Hell.

Abilities: Cover Bonus, Favored Terrain (forest, urban, plains/farmland), Uncanny Track, Scour, Take Him Alive, Prey (+4), Knock Out, Know Thine Enemy.

Languages: Common, Nothrog, Elven.

Possessions: Mithral Chain Shirt of Greater Cold Resistance +5, Longsword +3, merciful Composite Longbow (+2 Str), 40 arrows +1, 20 arrows of sleep, Ring of Sustenance, Boots of the Winterlands, Lesser Bracers of Archery, Gloves of Swimming and Climbing, Goggles of Night.

Druid Spells Prepared: (0/2/2; Save DC: 13 + spell level); 1st — Expeditious Journey, Heightened Senses; 2nd — Wilderness Stride, Charm Animal.



Validan

The famous pit-fighter known as Validan was born to a poor farming family in the lands of Misear. His parents had suffered from several seasons of drought, and — unable to pay the Dominar's harsh taxes — lost not only their farm, but themselves as well. Validan's mother became a handmaiden for the Dominar's current liaison, and Validan and his father were drafted into the city-state's standing guard.

One evening, the guard received a report of a band of mercenaries causing an uproar at a local tavern; the guard commander ordered Validan's father to take care of it. The old man was nearing 60 and in no shape to stop a band of young hooligans. Validan demanded to accompany his father, but the commander would not hear of it. The next morning Validan learned of his father's final fate. The young guardsman killed his commander and several guards before he was brought down. Taken before the Dominar, Validan was ordered to join the slaves in the pits, fighting for the sport of the people of Misear.

He has been there for years, battling endlessly for the luxury of staying alive one more day. In the process, he has channeled his rage and frustration to become the most famous of the pit fighters, having bested every foe and beast put before him. He has also become a crowd favorite for never failing to spit towards Dominar Kez after each match. While this irritates Kez, he recognizes the power of Validan's popularity, and how it sells passes to the pit fights.

What the Dominar is not aware of is a secret pact Validan has made with two other pit fighters, the Nothrogs Hurgg and Koratcghuk. They plan to assassinate the Dominar at the next

fight that affords them a javelin or another ranged weapon. Even though the Dominar knows nothing of their plot, however, he did not ascend to his place of power without being prudent. As such, he has his own eyes and ears in the pits, in the form of the lizardman Kermess-sh. Should he catch wind of their plot, the reptilian gladiator would do whatever is necessary to protect his benefactor.

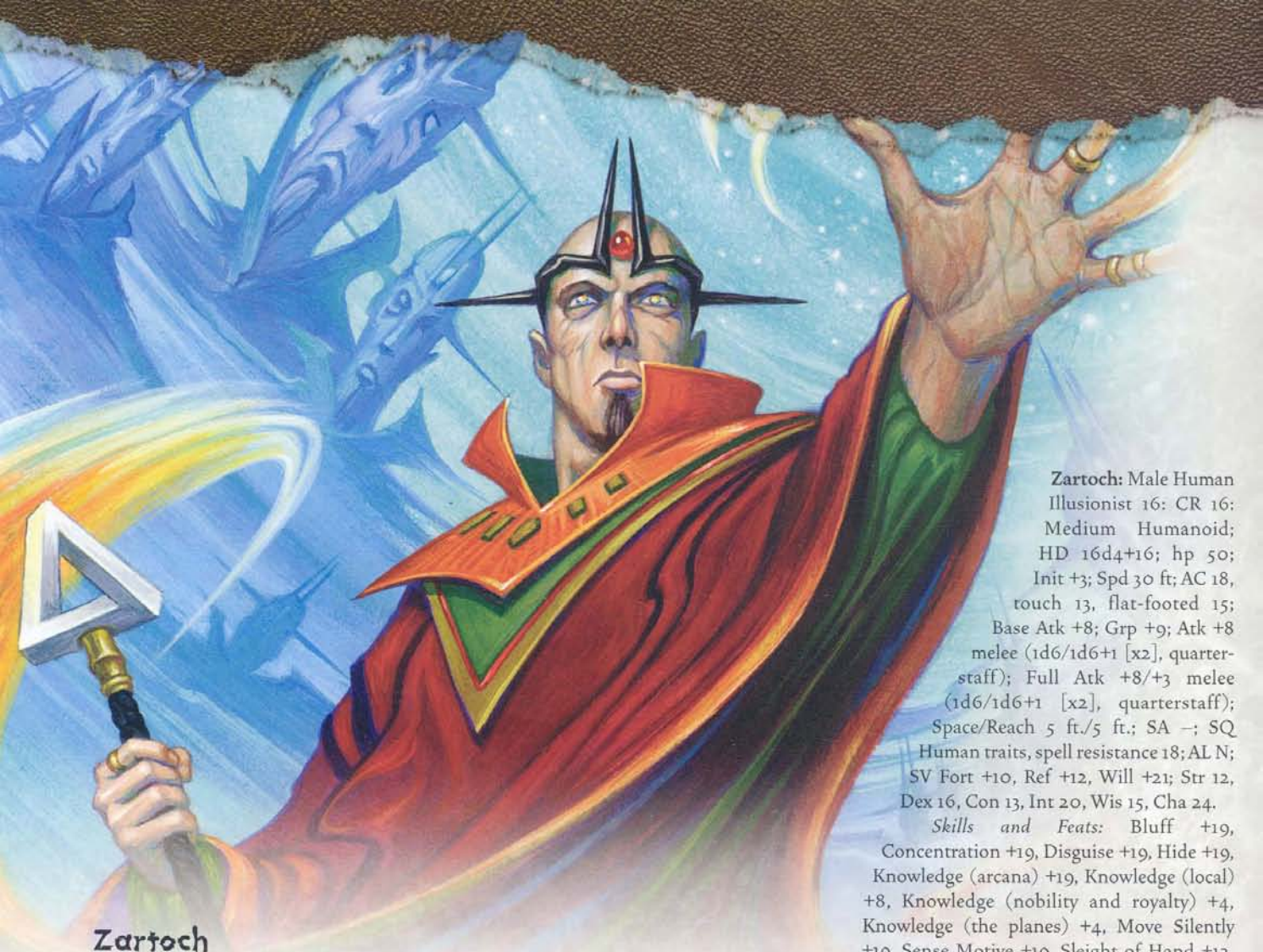
Validan: Male Human Fighter 13; CR 13; Medium Humanoid; HD 13d10+39; hp 120; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +13; Grp +18; Atk +23 melee (1d8+11 [18-20/x3], Battleaxe) or +21 melee (1d10+8 [x3], Halberd +2) or +18 melee (1d6+5 [x2], Spined Shield); Full Atk +21/+21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+11 [18-20/x3], Battleaxes) or +21/+21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+11 [18-20/x3], Battleaxe; 1d6+5 [x2], Spined Shield) or +21/+16/+11 melee (1d10+8 [x3], Halberd +2); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA -; SQ Human traits; AL N; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Climb +18, Jump +19, Ride +7, Swim +5, Tumble +10; Power Attack, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Sunder, Dodge, Weapon Focus (Battleaxe), Two Weapon Fighting, Improved Shield Bash, Improved Overrun.

Abilities: Courage, Evade, Favored Weapon: Battleaxe, Halberd, Greataxe; Improved Damage: Battleaxe, Halberd; Improved Critical Threat: Battleaxe, Resist.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: (2) Battle Axe +3, Halberd +2, Spined Shield, Bracers of Armor +8.



Zartoch

Perhaps the greatest pure illusionist the world has ever known, Zartoch is a unique soul in the Accordlands, one who refuses to draw blood, no matter the circumstances. He was always a pacifist, even to the point of his choice of profession. Zartoch knew that if one can make an enemy leave the field of battle, then none need perish. He uses his grand illusions towards just such a purpose, diverting combatants through a mixture of fear, enticement and common sense. In so doing, Zartoch prevented significant bloodshed, but unfortunately the world produces far more than he can ever stop.

Zartoch infests the mind of his opponents with powerful visions, causing disarray in the enemy. His ability to create massive hallucinations has caused entire armies to become useless on the field, forcing their leaders to retreat in frustration. Recently employed by the Denskans, he has sought to slow the advance of the Deverenian armies and protect the peasants of Denska from harm. Unfortunately for Zartoch, while the Deverenians may be driven from the field through trickery one day, Deverenian resolve brings them back the next.

Zartoch is not opposed to assisting those who resort to violence, though he always expresses his distaste at doing so. He knows that preaching such makes few converts, however, and prefers to offer alternative solutions instead of simply badgering. His keen mind often finds peaceable solutions to seemingly hopeless situations, and he greets the challenge of such riddles with open enthusiasm.

Zartoch: Male Human

Illusionist 16; CR 16;

Medium Humanoid;

HD 16d4+16; hp 50;

Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 18,

touch 13, flat-footed 15;

Base Atk +8; Grp +9; Atk +8

melee (1d6/1d6+1 [x2], quarter-

staff); Full Atk +8/+3 melee

(1d6/1d6+1 [x2], quarterstaff);

Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ

Human traits, spell resistance 18; AL N;

SV Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +21; Str 12,

Dex 16, Con 13, Int 20, Wis 15, Cha 24.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +19,

Concentration +19, Disguise +19, Hide +19,

Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (local)

+8, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +4,

Knowledge (the planes) +4, Move Silently

+19, Sense Motive +19, Sleight of Hand +12,

Spellcraft +19; Iron Will (+4), Scribe Scroll,

Spell Focus (Illusion), Greater Spell Focus

(Illusion), Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous

Item, Extend Spell, Second Chance, School Resistance (Illusion).

Abilities: Spontaneous Casting, Persistence of Vision,

Dreamslayer, Reduce Senses, Nightmare, Improved Dreamslayer..

Languages: Common, Draconic, Nothrog, Deverenian, Elven,

Dwarven.

Possessions: Spellbook; Scrolls (*Hallucinatory Terrain, False*

Vision, Greater Shadow Evocation); *Hat of Disguise, Deck of Illusions,*

Staff of Illusion, Tome of Leadership and Influence +5, *Robe of the*

Archmagi.

Illusionist Spells Prepared: (4/6/5/5/5/3/2/1; Save DC: 17 +

spell level; 23 + spell level [Illusion spells]); 0 — Detect Magic,

Prestidigitation, Daze, Read Magic; 1st — Cone of Silence,

Sheep's Clothing, Color Spray, Disguise Self, Silent Image, Cause

Fear; 2nd — Face of Mirrors, Intimidating Aura, Words of Woe,

Blur, Mirror Image; 3rd — Magnify Pain, Primal Fear,

Displacement, Invisibility Sphere, Major Image; 4th — Face of

Mirrors, Hallucinatory Terrain, Greater Invisibility, Shadow

Conjuration; 5th — Intemperate Mind, Repulsive Manner, False

Vision, Greater Shadow Conjuration, Persistent Image; 6th —

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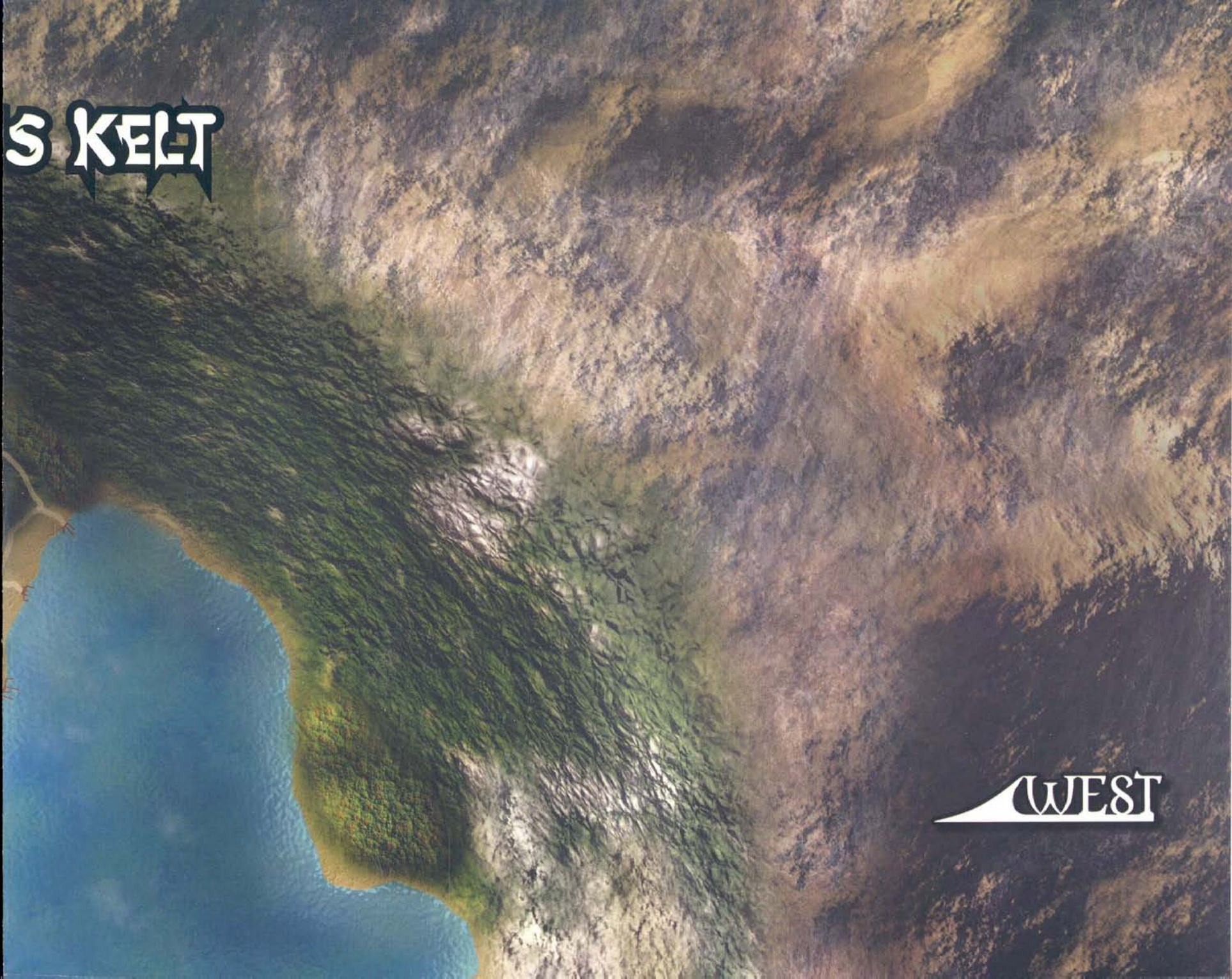
AXTON

WEST

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Meain Ylarn



An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. In the bottom left, a deep blue bay is visible. A narrow, forested peninsula extends from the left side into the bay. The rest of the image shows a vast, rugged landscape with a mix of green, brown, and tan colors, suggesting a mix of forest, tundra, and rocky terrain. The overall texture is very rough and uneven.

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AN ANCIENT ACCORD IS BROKEN...

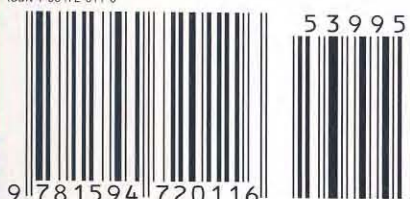
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