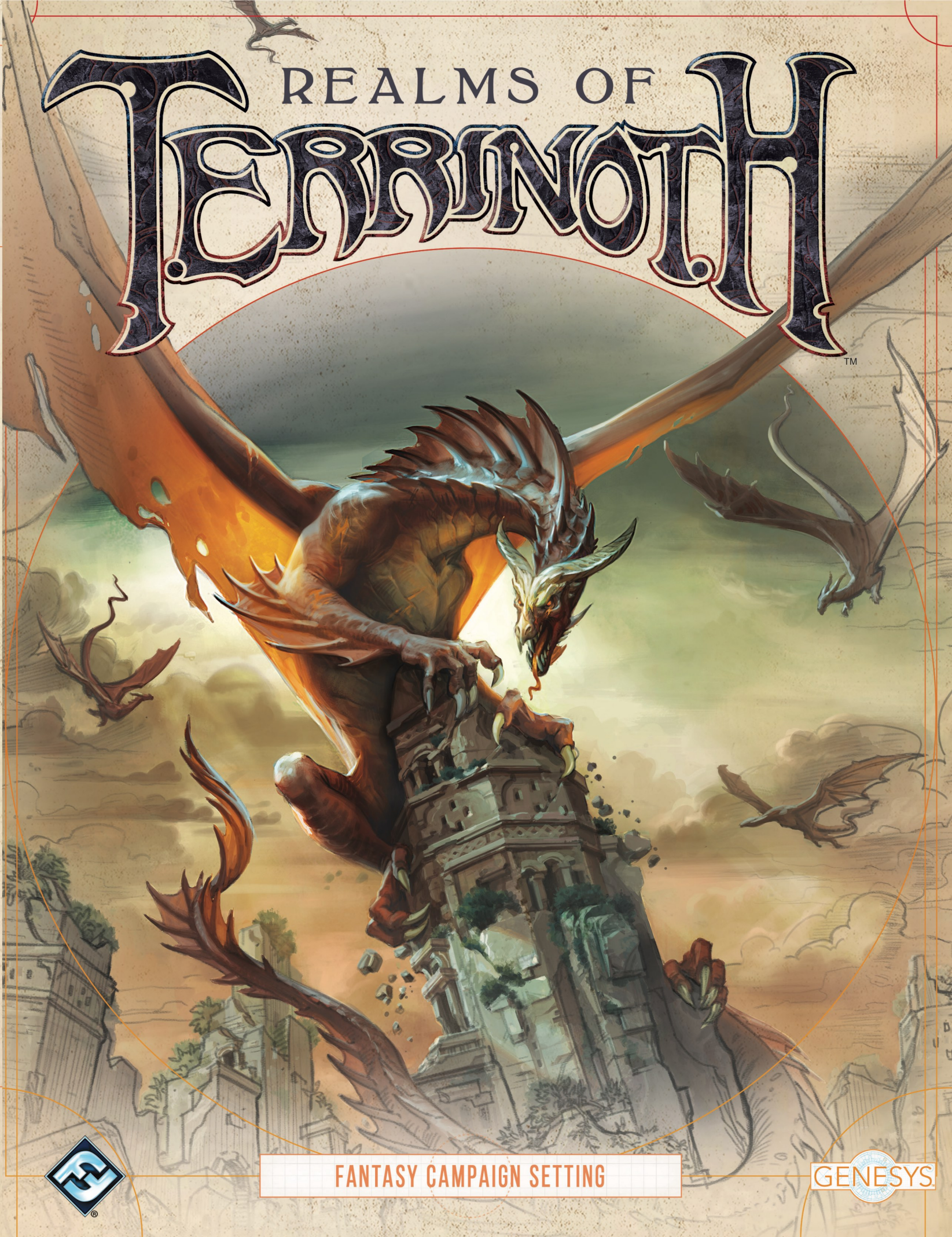
REALMS OF TERRINOTH™



FANTASY CAMPAIGN SETTING

GENESYS



CREDITS

FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES

EXPANSION DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Tim Cox, Tim Huckelbery, and Katrina Ostrander

ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dave Allen, Owen Barnes,
Mark Brendan, Mark Slabinski, and Greg Spyridis

EDITING

Christine Crabb

PROOFREADING

Molly Glover, David Johnson, and Jeremiah J. Shaw

RPG DEPARTMENT MANAGER

Sam Stewart

FICTION

Craig Gallant

RUNEBOUND STORY REVIEW

Kara Centell-Dunk and Daniel Lovat Clark

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Duane Nichols and Evan Simonet

GRAPHIC DESIGN MANAGER

Brian Schomburg

COVER ART

Anna Christenson

INTERIOR ART

Alex Aparin, Alberto Bontempi, Andrew Bosley, Marius Bota, Dmitry Burmak, Anna Christenson, Emile Denis, Dinodrawing, Simon Dominic, Carolina Eade, Simon Echert, Mariusz Gandzel, Nicholas Gregory, Johan Grenier, David Griffith, Margaret Hardy, Tyler Jacobson, Thomas Karlsson, David Kegg, Jordan Kerbow, Mathias Kollros, Limetown Studios, Antonio Maínez, Jaime Martinez, Enrique Rivera, Michael Rookard, Charlène Le Scanff, Chris Seaman, Timur Shevtsov, Stephen Somers, Florian Stitz, Sandara Tang, Allison Theus, Jokubas Uogintas, Wibben, and Matt Zeilinger

ART DIRECTION

Taylor Ingvarsson

MANAGING ART DIRECTOR

Melissa Shetler

QUALITY ASSURANCE COORDINATOR

Zach Tewalthomas

SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER

John Franz-Wichlacz

SENIOR MANAGER OF PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Chris Gerber

EXECUTIVE GAME DESIGNER

Corey Konieczka

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Andrew Navaro

ASMODEE NORTH AMERICA

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

Jason Beaudoin and Megan Duehn

PUBLISHER

Christian T. Petersen

PLAYTESTERS

Jerad Bailey, James Binnie, William Jeremiah Bumgarner, Dana Cartwright, James J. Cartwright, Dan Clark, Anthony DeMinico, Ali Eddy, Dawn Fannin, Mike Fannin, Tim Flanders, Casey Grover, Mary Hershey, Sterling Hershey, Dominic Hoeppner, TK Jusola-Sanders, Keesjan Kleef, Christian Knapp, Skyler Latshaw, Josh Lease, Brian Lewis, Jamie Lewis, Dean Lutz, Thomas Lutz, Pim Mauve, Nathaniel Kyle Ng, Tara Ng, Allison Parker, Brandon Perdue, James Quam, Rob Quillen, Eric Roos, Juan Rosales, Michelle Stepp, Jake Tighe, Regine Mualla Tighe, Jeff Tyler Will Vaughan, Rex Vogen, Joris Voogd, Jan-Kees Voogd, and Alex West

FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES

Fantasy Flight Games
1995 West County Road B2
Roseville, MN 55113
USA

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WELCOME TO THE LAND OF STEEL

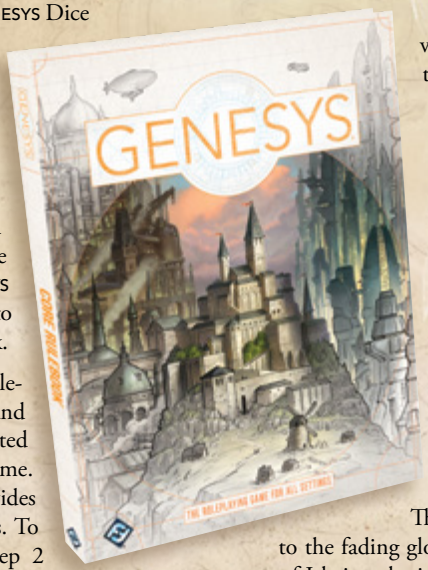
Hello, and welcome to the REALMS OF TERRINOTH! This book is a supplement for the GENESYS game line that lets you use our Narrative Dice System in the same epic fantasy world where the games DESCENT: JOURNEYS IN THE DARK, RUNEBOUND, and RUNEWARS take place. In REALMS OF TERRINOTH you'll become a hero of legend, ready to take up sword and spellbook and stand against the terrors of the undead, the fires of the dragons, and the dark secrets of the demonic realms. Whether you become a noble defender of all that's good and just, a cunning rogue out for riches and glory, or a dastardly villain seeking unlimited power, you're in for some amazing adventures!

If you're already so excited that you can't wait to get started, go ahead and skip to page 24, where we delve into the history of Terrinoth, or page 60 where we get into the nuts and bolts of how to build and play your character. Otherwise, we're going to take a few minutes to talk about exactly what this book is and how you'll use it, and give you and overview of what's inside. If you're new to roleplaying games (or just new to GENESYS) you may want to give this a read first.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK, AND HOW DO I USE IT?

REALMS OF TERRINOTH is a sourcebook—or expansion—for the GENESYS Core Rulebook. That means you'll need a copy of the Core Rulebook as well as this book to play. You'll also need some GENESYS Roleplaying Dice, either by picking up a pack of them, or by downloading the GENESYS Dice App onto your Android or iOS device.

REALMS OF TERRINOTH serves as a setting for the game; like the settings presented in Part II of the Core Rulebook, only much more detailed. This means you use the basic rules out of Part I of the Core Rulebook combined with the rules presented here. The rules in REALMS OF TERRINOTH are designed to supersede those in the GENESYS Core Rulebook—so whenever there seem to be contradictions, use the rules in this book.



For example, the GENESYS Core Rulebook has the rules for character creation, and you'll still follow the seven steps presented there when making a character for this game. However, REALMS OF TERRINOTH provides new choices when you follow those steps. To expand this example further, during Step 2 you select an archetype or species. In the GENESYS Core Rulebook, you would choose from the four human archetypes. In REALMS OF TERRINOTH, you can choose to play a Human, Dwarf, Elf, Orc, Gnome, Cat-folk, or one of the several other options found starting on page 60.

In short, the GENESYS Core Rulebook is where you find the engine that runs the game, and REALMS OF TERRINOTH fleshes that out into a game of adventurers and heroes exploring a lush and detailed fantasy realm.

TELL ME ABOUT TERRINOTH

Terrinoth is a land of forgotten greatness and lost legacies. Once ruled by the Elder Kings who called upon mighty magics to perform great deeds and work marvels, the land has suffered greatly at the hands of its three great foes; the undead armies of Waiqar the Betrayer, the demon-possessed hordes of the bloodthirsty Uthuk Y'llan, and the terrifying dragons of the Molten Heath. Many of its great cities have been cast down into ruins, and many wondrous secrets and powerful artifacts have been lost.

For hundreds of years, Terrinoth slipped into gloom and decay. But heroes arise just when their lands need them the most. Courageous adventurers brave the ruins of past ages and the foul creatures within to uncover the treasures of their ancestors. The Daqan Barons, inheritors of the ancient kingdoms, rebuild their walls and muster their armies, while the wizards of Greyhaven gather runes of power to awaken guardians of stone and steel. All this is just in time, for the ancient enemies of the lawful races are stirring again, and Terrinoth needs champions of courage and cunning to stand against the rising darkness.

But Terrinoth is just one land in the vast world of Mennara, and all across the realms good and evil muster for battle once more. To the south, the Elves of the vast Aymhelin forest call forth the spirits of the trees and the powers of light and air to fend off the demonic hordes that would despoil their woodland realm. In the Dunwarr Mountains of the north, the Dwarves muster to face their hated nemeses, the great wyrms who nearly destroyed them twice before. And to the east, the Orc Tribes of the Broken Plains prepare to honor their ancient pacts and fight alongside the armies of Humanity once more.

The world even extends across the seas to the fading glory of the Lorimor Empire, the frozen wastes of Isheim, the jungles of Zanaga, and the desert kingdoms of Al-Kalim. All of these lands are ripe with stories waiting to be told and full of secrets just waiting for an adventurer bold enough to uncover them.

WHAT WILL I FIND IN THIS BOOK?

We've broken REALMS OF TERRINOTH up into three chapters. In **Chapter I: Tales of Darkness**, we lay out the history of the entire world of Mennara. A lot of this is rumors and hearsay, gathered by the noted scholar Alanya of Greyhaven (that is to say, we've left things open for you to tweak if you want your own story to go in a slightly different direction).

In Chapter I, we start with the very forming of the world and how the various races came to be. We then follow Mennara's history through the apocryphal War of the Shadow Tear that tore the primordial Elven tribes asunder, and the three great Darknesses that have plagued this world over millennia. Each Darkness saw a new enemy that nearly brought Terrinoth to its knees, only to be defeated by heroes who rose to defend their land when they were needed most.

An astute reader may notice that each of the enemies that brought about one of the three Darknesses—the Uthuk, the undead, and the dragons—have begun to stir once again. Can the heroes of Elves, Dwarves, Humanity, and Orcs stand against all three of their ancient foes at once? The fate of the realms rests in the hands of you and your fellow players!

This brings us to **Chapter II: Call to Adventure**, where we provide all the options you'll need to create and build characters for adventuring in the lands of Terrinoth and beyond. The first third of this chapter is basically an expansion of Part I: Chapters 2–4 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook, with new species, skills, and talents for building your character. It also has some unique rules for REALMS OF TERRINOTH, including a system for designing a unique and customizable Heroic Ability for your character!

The second third of the chapter is an expansion of the gear and items found in the fantasy setting section in Part II of GENESYS. We've taken the basic gear list from that book and really fleshed it out with everything you could possibly want to give your character for a life of adventure!

The final third of the chapter goes over magic in our setting, and the rules for using it. We base this off the magic rules found in Part III of the GENESYS Core Rulebook, but take those rules and expand them. You can also find a lot of interesting information on what makes magic unique in Terrinoth.

Finally, we have **Chapter III: Lands of Magic**. This is an exhaustive gazetteer of Terrinoth and the rest of the world of Mennara. If you're a GM, this section is going to be really helpful for you, because each location also includes profiles for NPCs and enemies that we thought it would be fun to encounter (and fight) in your adventures. So this chapter is also your bestiary, organized by location.

You'll also notice that scattered throughout the book are installments from ***The Journal of Tarik Al Farabi***. This is the record of a servant of the Great Caliph of Al-Kalim, charged with traveling across the world to unlock the secrets of a mysterious gem. Tarik provides you with an "in-universe" guide to our setting, and his outsider's perspective provides a complementary viewpoint to your own (except when he writes about Al-Kalim, which he obviously considers the most advanced and sophisticated nation in Mennara).

CAN I USE THIS TO HELP MAKE MY OWN FANTASY SETTING?

Of course you can! One of our goals when making GENESYS was to allow you to use it to create your own worlds, and that remains our goal with REALMS OF TERRINOTH. This book can be a valuable tool when you build your own fantasy setting instead of playing in ours.

For example, our rules for Orcs, Dwarves, Elves, and Gnomes work equally well in any fantasy setting with those species, and our weapons and gear can likewise be imported wholesale. REALMS OF TERRINOTH also fleshes out GENESYS's magic rules to adapt them to a fantasy setting. So if you want bardic magic in your setting, go ahead and use our rules! Likewise, the careers, talents, and skills are all flexible enough to be used in just about any fantasy setting, and most of our adversaries like dragons and goblins could be adopted without much trouble. You may even want to use the rules for the runebound shards and other magic items unique to our setting, while changing the names and stories behind them.

So that's an overview of the book and how you can use it. Good luck on your adventures, and we hope you have a great time exploring the REALMS OF TERRINOTH!







LIGHTS AGAINST THE DARKNESS

It is an age of faded glory; an age of courage in song and poem; of hallowed, legendary names. It is an age of history bearing down upon the living. Once, long ago, mighty heroes stood against evil and disaster. They are gone now, and though some have emerged to take their place, it is not enough. Heroes are needed now more than ever, or Mennara shall be lost forever.

The myths and legends of Terrinoth and the other realms of Mennara have always spoken of heroes, those figures who arise at precisely the right time with enough courage, skill, and luck to ward off whatever doom has spilled out onto the land. Those who heed the call of the hero emerge from every corner of the world and from every walk of life. Honorable knights stand firm against all that is unjust, while sneaky rogues venture into forgotten tombs and catacombs in search of lost artifacts. Lithe hunters unerringly track dangerous prey across vast distances, and wandering priests of the gods banish evil wherever it may lurk. The call of the hero knows no bounds and no lineages. Cynical, blaspheming knaves might find themselves marching alongside zealots of the gods in quests for justice and harmony. They may have been the bitterest enemies anywhere else, but as heroes, their sight and cause become clear.

In these troubling times, heroes are as great a boon as ever, no matter their motivation. Fate has a way of bringing these figures to the forefront. When a village is burned, or a dark temple unearthed, or a world-shattering monster rises from the depths, heroes will inevitably appear. In their hands, history is made and the path forward becomes visible to all. When mystical lightning rolls across the plains or pirates plunder the coast, heroes are often the only ones with the courage and skill to break the storm.

Whether through martial excellence, roguish cunning, or sagacious learning, heroes push through adversity, each in their own way. Heroes have risen and fallen, but no hero of any stature has ever truly run for long from the call of adventure in wild lands. Just as the pendulum of history swings toward chaos and desolation, so does it swing back in the direction of courage and resistance. Whether there is a cosmic balance that must be maintained or the world itself reacts to those forces that would destroy it, none can say. All that is certain is that heroes have always been a part of the history of the world, and they will continue to be a part of that history for as long as people remain to tell it.

WONDROUS LANDSCAPES

From the frigid peaks of Isheim to the searing dunes of Al-Kalim, from the desiccated shores of the Kaylor Morbis to the rain-drenched tropics of Zanaga, the lands of Mennara are as varied as the people who inhabit them. There is no shortage of fantastic places to discover and explore. In Terrinoth, plains and rivers roll on from barony to barony, and towering cities offer sanctuary for travelers and traders alike. The fortress city of Archaut, capital of the Daqan Lords, is one of many bastions keeping watch between Terrinoth's fierce mountain ranges and isolated forests.

In distant Al-Kalim, deserts stretch out for hundreds of leagues, hiding jeweled cities and lonely caravans among the seemingly endless dunes. In the west, the sun-washed islands of the Torue Albes fill the mind with dreams of treasure-laden coves and bountiful reefs, while the peninsula of Lorimor, where long ago exiles found safe haven, exults in the order of its fields and the delicate, artful cultivation of what little wilderness has been allowed to remain.

In the north of Terrinoth, strange mists obscure all, leading to peculiar sightings of once-noble halls where foul magics have desecrated stone and wood, transfiguring them into forms unfit for the light of day. It is a place of bogs, marshes, and blood-chilling mausoleums where the undead roam freely.

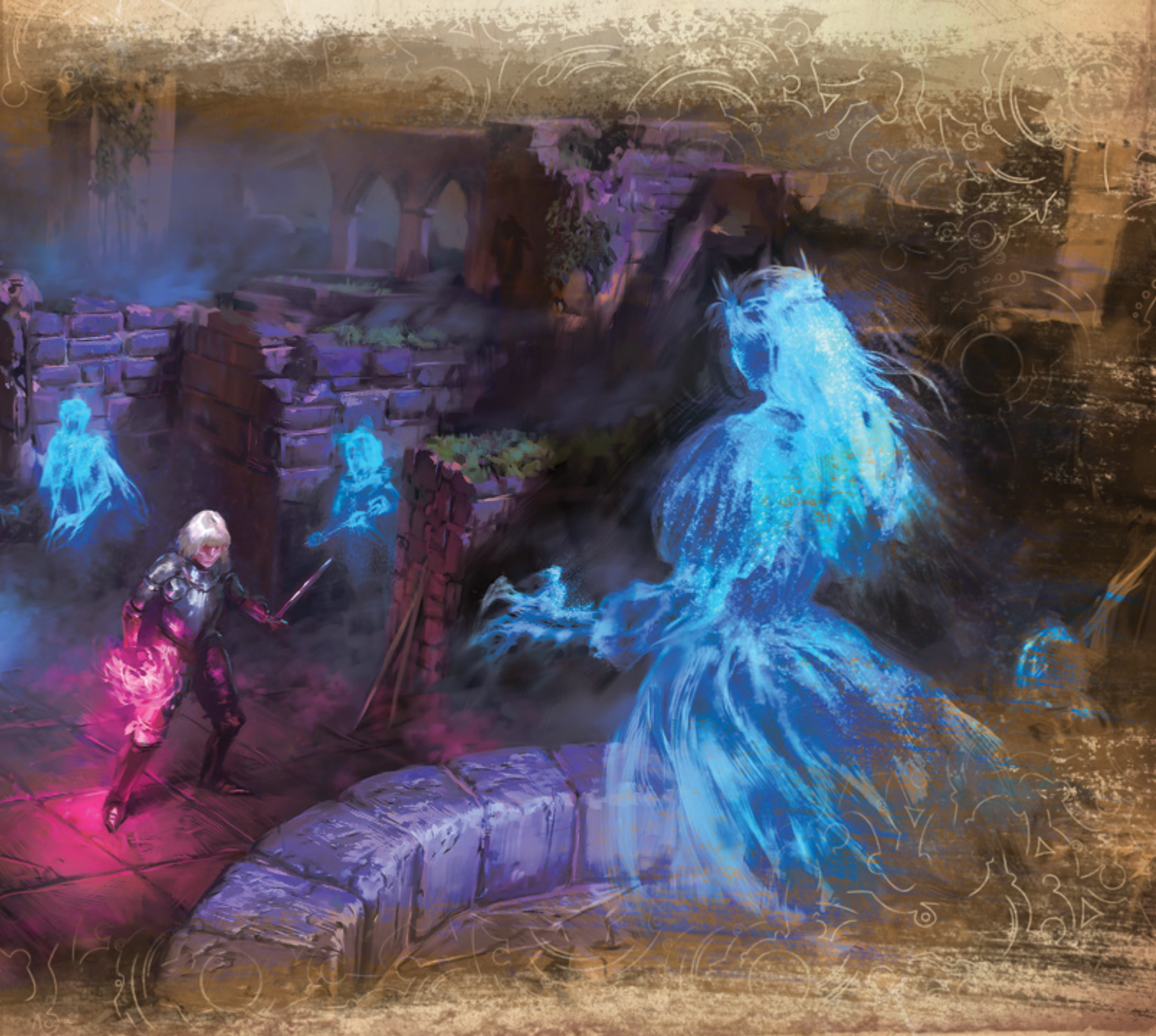


In neighboring Dunwarr, the mountains both isolate and protect the Dwarven communities. Despite torrential snowstorms, chill winds, and barren landscapes, life nonetheless finds a way to hold on in this difficult place. The rough landscape of the Dunwarr Mountains is the perfect reflection of its rugged and hardy inhabitants.

Still farther north, the frigid lands of Isheim manifest an austere beauty. Isheim is a place of tranquility and danger, where nights are long and cities few. The land is its own sculptor, carving out great waves of ice and snow, or flash-freezing whole forests, turning trees into gleaming statues. Still, amid this harsh territory, there are small holdfasts of warmth, sacred places all alone in an uncompromising land.

Far to the east, barren wastes dominate, luring those foolish enough to believe that anything other than death lies at the other side of the Ru Steppes and the Charg'r Wastes. Here, far from civilization, beyond the last vestiges of the protections of the Daqan Lords, the boundaries of the world break down, letting forth the Ynfernael. Blood-soaked thorns snake through the ground, and all vegetation is stripped by a constant swarm of ravenous insects. Horrific pits of violence and Ynfernael conjuring dot the most corrupted regions of the Darklands.

To the south of Terrinoth, the forest of the Aymhelin rises and falls along every hill and mountaintop, its canopy as dark and foreboding as the deepest ocean. A land of whispers, it is the site of ancient sorceries and ethereal beauty to offset the brutal and dark world that the Elves see beyond its borders. Such are the world's landscapes: beautiful, savage, and teeming with possibility and legends to be made.



MAGIC IS PRECIOUS

Mennara is a world infused with magic, though at times it might not appear so. The Verto Magica, the inherent turning of the world, is the source of all arcane energy. Long ago, when Humans and other races began to emerge, the ease with which magic could be touched was stronger in some than in others. True sorcerers were born, those with rare, preternatural affinity for feeling the flow and rhythm of magic. When magic was at its height, Timmorran Lokander, the greatest wizard ever to have lived, thought to harness it for the good of all Mennara.

Unfortunately, with such power comes great hubris. Timmorran's Orb of the Sky remade the relationship between magical and the physical. Magic became forever divided between that which came before Timmorran, and that which came after. The titanic undertaking of creating the artifact required power the world had never seen before, and Timmorran was forced to make a terrible choice. He wanted to create the Orb to help the inhabitants of Terrinoth, but to do so, a part of the inherent magical connection they all shared would need to be connected to the Orb.



When Timmorran was forced to shatter the Orb, he also changed the fundamental connection all beings have to magic. Though the magical nature of the world itself remained unchanged, many magic users suddenly found themselves adrift, unable to draw upon the powers that had once come so easily. Some, like Waiqar, were still able to draw upon magic by will alone, but for many others, the only sources of magic remaining were the shattered remnants of the Orb: the Stars of Timmorran.

However, not all was lost. The dragonlords later forcibly gathered the shattered remnants in a time of terrible war, breaking them further and carving them with binding runes to better harness the potent magic within. Thus were born the runebound shards, small pieces of the Orb of the Sky that can be used to augment material, artifacts, and more as the user sees fit. Humanity, in its infinite resiliency, found a way to adapt to this new situation and use these objects for its benefit.

Rune magic, as it is called, is now the most easily accessible form of magic in Terrinoth, and runebound shards are the most valuable treasures an adventurer could ever hope to possess. It is the runebound shards that power the world's most potent magical devices and adorn the greatest weapons Humans possess. The scholars at the University of Greyhaven closely study these shards to learn more of their secrets.

Wars have been fought over the shards; many beings covet their power for their own selfish ends, while heroes seek them out for the power to stand against foes of unimaginable strength. Though magic may be scarce, it has not disappeared forever. The runebound shards remain to give Humans and other races hope against otherwise impossible challenges.

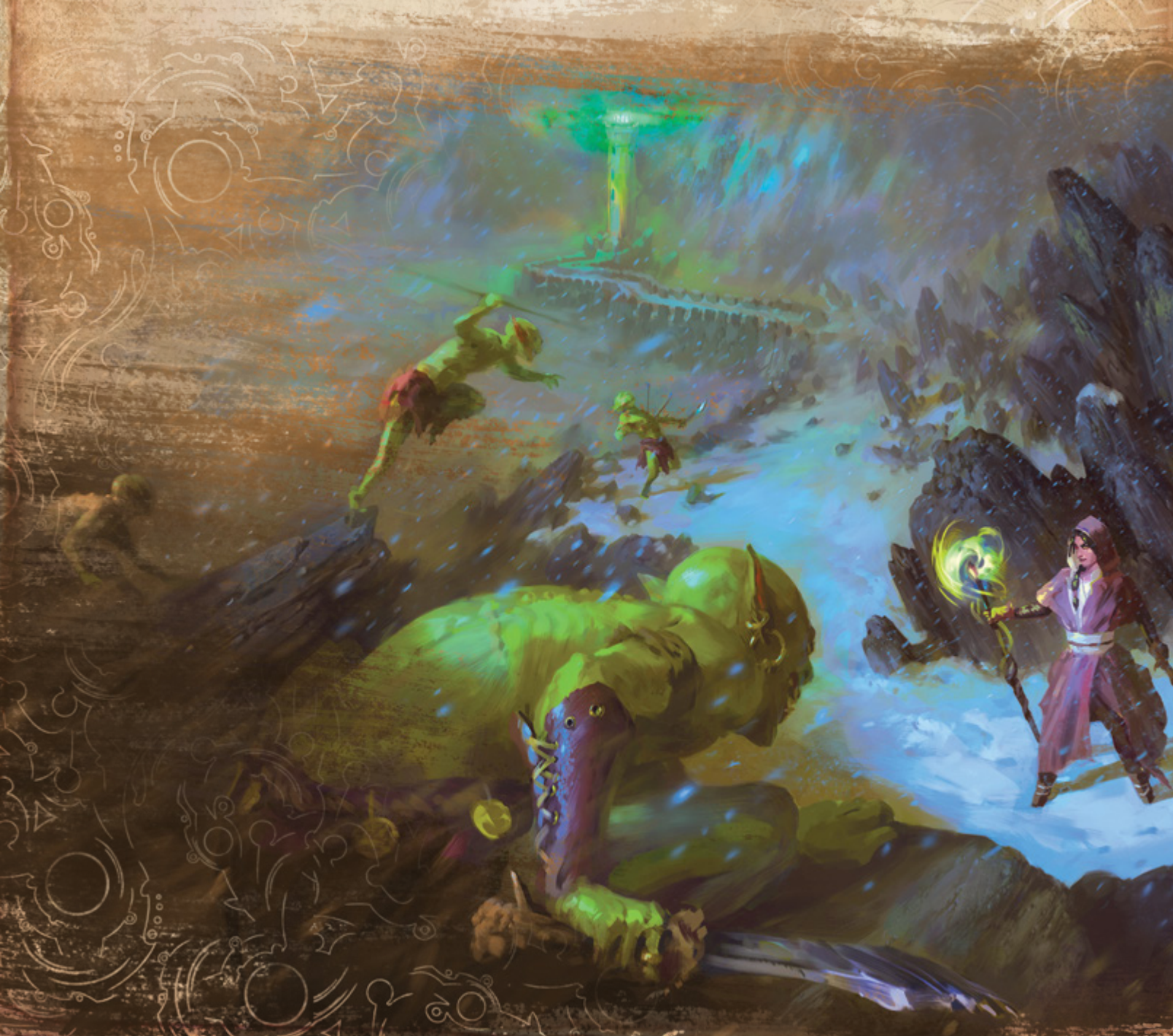


ADVENTURES TO BE HAD

As the saying goes, "the treasure was theirs for the taking. If they could find it, that is." Countless stories have begun this way since time immemorial, inspiring heroes to delve into the forgotten places of Mennara, torch in hand, to retrieve riches and relics lost to history.

Fate is cruel, leaving countless castles, keeps, and fortresses to fall to ruin over the course of history—abandoned, razed, or simply forgotten as denizens moved elsewhere. Though Terrinoth's ruins remind its peoples of their ancient past, the fact that they have been allowed to decay speaks of the region's long, slow decline through the centuries. The legacy of the Elder Kings, both in legend and in their physical works, is one of hubris, teaching the lesson that those who misuse powerful magics do so at their own peril.

Baron Cedrick Soulstone, who began the reign of the Elder Kings and their mighty construction efforts, was not the only builder in Terrinoth's history. Many others throughout the centuries have also worked to ensconce their legacy in mighty works of towering stone and carved rock. The ancient city of Archaut remains one such work, as do the sentinel towers of the Thelsvan Highway leading to Tamalir. The most decrepit castles, fortresses, and holdfasts from the eras of the

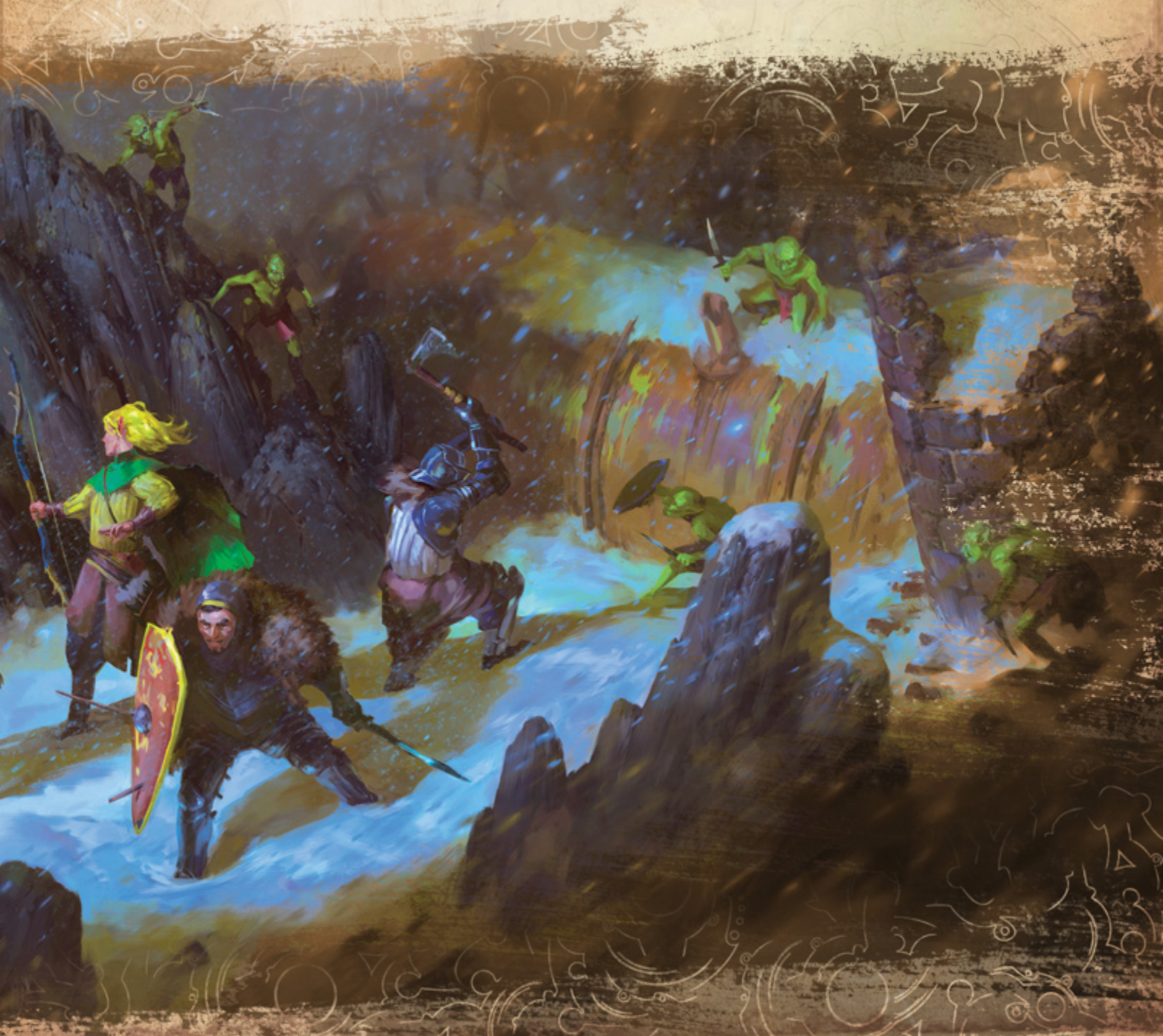


Darknesses are veritable treasure troves. Some of these have been transformed into temples dedicated to draconic gods, whose followers believe they will remake creation in flame and ash; or to the spider-mother, whose believers say she will wrap the world in silk so that all might be held in her cold embrace.

These follies of vain builders are the gain of all adventurers in Terrinoth. The Soulstone line made sure that each and every fortress they built was well-stocked with treasures, powerful magical artifacts, and the mightiest weapons of their age with which to defend the people of Terrinoth. Though many of their buildings have been stripped bare of the most obvious valuables, the magic that lingers within them is immense, and the artifacts that remain hidden may be the most powerful. Countless are the treasures to be discovered, but the greatest finds of all remain the runebound shards.

How many of these shards are hidden across the world, none can say. The hope of finding one drives many to plunge headlong into danger and darkness. An abandoned castle might be just that—abandoned and empty—but there's always the chance that some piece of the ancient world remains buried inside, ripe for the taking for those of courage. Whether for gold, for power, or simply for glory, any hero who finds a runebound shard and keeps it out of evil hands is a boon to all righteous beings.

Heroes may take heart, for adventure and opportunity yet await in those decaying crypts, fallen castles, and crumbling dungeons. Where such edifices once stood proud, grand legacies and powerful relics still remain in their withered halls for those of courage and skill to discover.



DARKNESS RISING

It is said that the ink of history is made of blood and ashes, and nowhere is this more true than in Terrinoth. From the mythical Founding itself, from the time when Humans first set foot upon its lands, tragedy has swept down upon them on inescapable wings of fire.

The worst tragedies were the Ages of Darkness, those times when unspeakable evil emerged from beyond the veil into civilized lands to ravage, pillage, and destroy. More than mere chaos, this evil comprised forces whose purpose was to annihilate Terrinoth. Llovar, Waiqar, the dragonlords: these are names that echo through time, whose very utterance stirs ancestral fears.

The first, Llovar, was a Dream Walker of immense power who had been born with a gift for magic and a connection to the forces of that cursed, demonic realm known as the Ynfernael. He raised a great war host of his people—the Uthuk Y'llan—as well as demons, Orcs, dragons, and any others who would fight alongside him. The era when he and his forces attacked is known as the First Darkness, the conflict that nearly destroyed Human, Dwarven, and Elven civilization. Next came the betrayal of Waiqar. Once a mighty general in the war against Llovar and his horde, Waiqar became jealous and mistrustful of his allies, succumbing to the allure of necromancy and dark magics. Scant decades after Terrinoth



averted destruction at the hands of Llovar and his demonic horde, it was again fighting a war for its very survival. In this era, known as the Second Darkness, the living warred against Waiqar's unfeeling, unthinking army of undead horrors.

Waiqar, too, was eventually defeated, and for a time, it seemed that darkness had been banished forever. There were no great conflagrations, no titanic wars, and the ancient battles drifted into the tomes of history. Then, the dragons came. Nearly five hundred years after the defeat of Waiqar, the dragonlords fell upon Terrinoth in a great storm of talons and flame, driven with a hunger for the near-infinite magic of the Stars of Timmorran. The Third Darkness had descended.

The dragons burned cities and slew scores of great heroes who fought against them valiantly and desperately. The world of Mennara itself roiled under the baleful, consuming heat of the terrible invaders. Many of the races of Terrinoth banded together to resist the dragons, but the war ended as suddenly as it had begun, with the dragons returning to their distant homeland laden with plundered magical treasures. The remnants from this era, such as the dragon hybrids left behind and the feral dragons raised outside of draconic society, still ravage and terrorize the countrysides of Terrinoth without warning.

The Dragon Wars left Terrinoth devastated, a shadow of its former self, a desolate wasteland. In the aftermath, its people were so drained of vigor, of life, of hope, that they feared Terrinoth could not withstand another Age of Darkness. The strength of the ancient heroes was gone, and the dragons had shattered the old royal lines, plunged fortresses into ruin, and stolen countless Stars of Timmorran. Now, shadows grow long on the ground, and the chill in the air foretells that something is coming. Perhaps another Darkness brews on the horizon, one more devastating than any in the past.



DEFENDING CIVILIZATION

Decline is sometimes incremental, sometimes disastrously sudden. The lands of Mennara are caught somewhere in between. Though dangerous forces are growing on the horizon, without a powerful enemy to unite against, its leaders will squabble to the very last. In Terrinoth, various powers compete with each other for dominance over the continent. In the Daqan Baronies, familial politics dominate all, with parochial feuds and blood oaths over ancient grievances often embroiling whole counties. Even the once-strong unified front that protected the Free Cities is slowly being replaced by selfish competition. While they are unwilling to declare outright war on one another, the Free Cities are not above encroaching upon each other's territory, and sabotaging trade and craft guilds for their own benefit.

The imperial splendor that once marked the peninsula of Lorimor as the jewel of Mennara is fading, and many of the Empire's famous legionary outposts and warrior schools have been reclaimed by the wilderness.

In the Torue Albes, the Queen's fleet struggles to keep warring pirate crews under control, and feral monsters grow stronger in the islands of the archipelago. Elsewhere, from Isheim to Al-Kalim, little that is good seems to be thriving in the current age. Waterways are becoming infested with strange aquatic creatures, and the shadows of winged beasts pass over lonely hills. As the nights begin to teem with monsters both common and uncommon, watchtowers and fortresses remain largely empty.

The Latari Elves, too, feel the world slipping through their grasp. The Aymhelin's defenses are still strong, but the might and splendor of the ancient Latari forces has long since waned, shattered during the cataclysm of the Third Darkness.

Elsewhere, the Orcish tribes range farther and farther across the plains in search of food and shelter. Raiding, a long-abandoned tradition of the nomadic Orcs, has made a return, although the tribal leaders openly denounce such barbarism.



To the north, the Dwarves seal themselves into their holdfasts and allow trade routes to descend into lawless highways infested with bandits and rogues. With each passing season, the number of Dwarven shipments decreases, and as the Dwarves further distance themselves from the world, the world distances itself from them.

All is not lost, however.

Within each of these lands there have been those who have risen to the challenge of facing down darkness, for whenever Mennara has been threatened, its heroes have arisen. Warriors stood firm against swarms of twisted raiders and their demonic allies from the Ynfernael. Leaders rallied people to take up arms against Waiqar Sumarion and his legions of undead horrors. Diplomats gathered a mighty alliance to challenge a seemingly unstoppable host of rampaging dragons. Without them, civilization would have fallen to ruin many times throughout Mennara's history. With shadows looming once again over civilization, the need for new heroes to defend it rises as well.

As the Locust Swarm has returned to threaten Terrinoth, Daqan patrols have thus far been able to repulse their blood-soaked efforts. Battlemages from Greyhaven have lent their mighty rune golems to halt the vile necromantic magics of the Undying One and his armies of the Mistlands. In other lands, Orcs, Elves, Dwarves, and other races face similar perils against their own civilizations. The threats are growing, but the actions of courageous individuals can have a large impact against them.

Rampaging hordes might be poised to ravage disparate villages along a countryside, but a single person with a powerful voice can unite disparate the inhabitants to form an united front. Ghastly creatures can slither out from the ruins of long-forgotten keeps, only to face a group of brave adventurers ready to stop their terrible menace before entire baronies would be devastated. Eldritch entities and sinister wizards probe for weaknesses from which to attack, only to be repulsed when met by valiant scouts or even piratical sailors.

This is a never-ending battle against the dangers that would consume Mennara. The combined heroism and courage of people everywhere, from Isheim to Zanaga and Al-Kalim to Terrinoth, must prove themselves ready and equal to the task of its defense lest the light of civilization be snuffed out forever.





A view, as I might imagine the blessed birds would see, of the Caliphs's most wondrous Court of Wisdom. It is hard now to remember what it actually looks like.

My sons and daughters yet to be, for whom I write these words, my name is Tarik Al Farabi and I am your father. I once held the esteemed position of Keeper of the Third Key to the Small Door of the Lower Hall in my Most Glorious Caliph's Court of Wisdom. I spent my early years among the lowest servants of the Caliph, sullying my hands at the menial labors of the great Court of Wisdom even as I honed my mind against the intrigues of the upper levels. Ever keeping my eyes open for greater opportunities, I rose through the lowly ranks, often at the expense of less gifted servants of the Caliph, may the Great Sun look ever favorably upon me. And as my rise continued, the count of the petty and small-minded beneath me continued to grow.

Eventually, through a series of strange coincidences, I came upon a small piece of information concerning a grave indiscretion committed by Ali Ibn al-Nafis, Keeper of the First Key to the Sun Door of the High Hall. My duty to the Caliph, may the milk of good fortune inundate him every day of his long and blessed life, would not allow such a vile canker to remain in such an exalted position, and so I brought my information to an acquaintance of mine, a friend named Zakaria Zaybaq, who served as a plebeian gatekeeper to the Grand Vizier himself.

I had done some small services for Zakaria in the past, and the man owed me a hearing. You can imagine my surprise, my daughters and sons yet to be, when I was summoned not to Zaybaq's small, dingy office, then, but to the chambers of the Grand Vizier herself!

The Grand Vizier took one penetrating look at me and, with a single nod of her gaunt head, gestured without a word for me to follow her. Against every expectation, I was led, in stunned silence, to the private audience chamber of the Caliph himself.

Upon entering the presence of the Caliph, my legs failed me, throwing me to my knees before my sovereign, and I abased myself, as was only right and proper, by tapping my forehead against the cool stone of the chamber's floor.

"Stand up." I would never describe the dulcet tones of the Caliph's voice as a bark, oh my children, although there was something vaguely bark-like there.

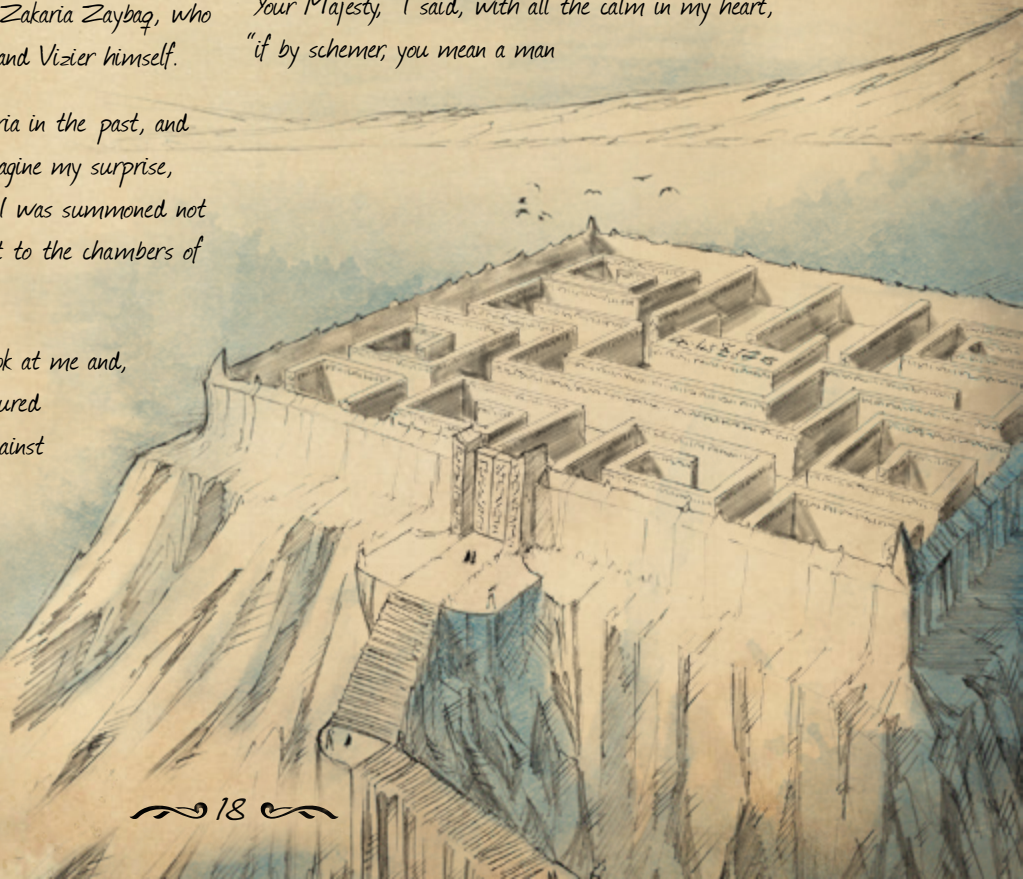
"This is the one?" The Caliph's lip seemed to take on a strange, discomfiting curl as he turned to the Grand Vizier, who nodded.

"Yes, Holy One."

The Caliph seemed to regard me with something less than the admiration and respect I might have wished. "So, you fancy yourself something of a schemer, do you?"

I could tell from the great man's tone that he felt this was a less-than-salutary description. However, there are as many meanings of a word as there are people in a room. I bowed low to the descendant of the great Sun God and then met him with as steady a gaze as I could muster.

"Your Majesty," I said, with all the calm in my heart, "if by schemer, you mean a man



who plots and plans in the dark, who seeks to turn every disadvantage of others into an advantage for himself, a man with no sense of collective respect and responsibility, then no, I cannot claim to be a schemer." The great man's bushy grey eyebrows seemed to crawl up his forehead, and I sensed that I might have angered him with my contradiction, so I rushed to continue. "But if you mean a man who bends his mind's every thought to the betterment of Your Majesty's realm, who seeks to bring every ability he carries to bear against the enemies of my lord and master, a man who cannot abide base treachery and dishonesty when he finds it eating like a tumor at the heart of the Court of Wisdom, to the detriment of the Great Caliph, may A'tar and all the Djinni smile eternally down upon your least endeavor, then yes, Your Majesty, I do fancy myself something of a schemer."

My words, traveling a long and circuitous path, seemed at last to hit upon something that the Caliph found amusing, and I was gratified to see those dark, old eyes lighten with mirth.

"He's a sharp one." The Caliph nodded to the Grand Vizier and turned to walk slowly up the steps to his high-perched throne. "Show him."

These two words seemed to carry a dark and sinister tone far heavier than their apparent mundanity.

As the Caliph sat upon the golden chair, my eyes flicked to the Grand Vizier, who was pulling something out of a small pouch affixed to her waist.

The Grand Vizier brought forth into the flickering lamplight a shimmering stone of deep, mesmerizing blue. The gem seemed to glow with its own inner radiance, and the moment my eyes fixed upon it, I knew that I was seeing some powerful object, heavy with the weight of kismet.

"Do you recognize this stone?" It took me a moment to shake off the mesmerizing power of the jewel, and another to realize that the Caliph was speaking to me. I looked at him, and he looked upon me again with that gaze that seemed to convey less esteem than I would have wished.

"Have you ever seen a stone such as this before?" The Caliph repeated his question more slowly, as if speaking to a child, and I felt my soul shrink ever so slightly in my heart.

I looked at the gem again, held delicately in the Grand Vizier's long, nimble fingers. It seemed to radiate waves of heat, like a mundane stone would at midday in the high desert. And yet, the jewel burned that cool blue color, bathing the vizier's face with its pale glow.

"Never have I beheld such a wonder, my glorious sovereign." I bowed again.

"I would be surprised if you had. That stone was recently discovered by a caravan master braving the Desolation of Faruun. According to her tale, the sands of the Desolation recently receded into the deep barrens. The stone was found within the newly uncovered area."

At the Caliph's words, the Grand Vizier walked around me and moved to ascend the steps to stand beside our lord and master, the stone now bathing them both in its sapphire glow.

"A lesser vizier acquired the stone, and a cavalcade of scholars, historians, and sycophants has proven insufficient to unlock its mysteries."

The Caliph's voice darkened. "The fools of the Collegiate Arcane tell me it contains a vast well of power, but they cannot tell me the nature of this power, or how I might unlock it."

The Caliph's mighty voice turned softer, then, as his eyes stared into the depths of the stone, blue sparks dancing in his dark eyes.

"There are tales from the North, Keeper, of stones of vast power, capable of making a man a king, or even a god." That last word chilled me to the bone. "The oldest, dustiest records kept at the First College tell of a collection of such stones that became scattered across the world. But they are gone now. All gone, according to those records. Dragons carved them up, or some such nonsense."

The Caliph's eyes did not waver from the stone now. A moment of stillness stretched on, and the silence in the small hall grew heavy. When the Caliph next moved, it was to turn toward me, shaking as if from some great effort.

"I need someone to journey north, across the sea. I need someone to seek out the nature of this stone's mysteries, to bring me back the key to unlocking its powers." He turned, as if he could not help it, to stare once more at the gem, and his next words were whispered in hushed, reverential tones. "To unlocking the gates of the heavens."

And just like that, my future was revealed. The humblest and most loyal servant of the mighty Caliph of Al-Kalim, may wisdom and light stand always at his shoulder, was to be sent north on a fool's errand. North, to the realm of feckless adventurers and deluded charlatans, where it is said the very air is cold enough to suck the life from one's lungs, and ice falls from the sky like sand after a dry desert storm.

"Do not think me ungrateful," he finally continued. Coupled with the stony inflexibility of his eyes, the smile that crept across his lips conveyed less comfort than it might have. "Were a man to return to Al-Kalim with the secrets of this stone in his possession, my gratitude would know no bounds."

Such an offer, from such a man, might mean much. But there was one aspect of this endeavor, aside from the terrors of the North, that struck me.

"Great Caliph, may all the powers of the heavens shine down upon you and bring you peace, might your humble servant make one request, to aid him in this search, before his sandals strike the dusty trail and thence into oblivion?"

The great man looked down upon me from beneath an arched, regal brow, and gestured for me to continue.

"Your most puissant and noble Majesty." My thoughts were wild, my heart in my mouth for fear of what was to come and hope for what might come to pass for you, my sons and daughters yet to be. "My lord, might I bring this mysterious gem with me into the North, so that I might more directly entreat the barbarians there for assistance?"

Even as the words left my mouth, I knew them for folly. The Caliph, mighty among the strong, wise among the sage, and keen among the brightest minds of Al-Kalim, would never let such a treasure disappear in the hands of a keeper of any rank. Such jewels are for the great and powerful. And although I knew in my heart that one day I would join that exalted rank, I also knew that the Caliph did not see that in me then.

The shadow of my lord's brow deepened further, and I feared his next words as I have feared nothing before in my life.

And then he laughed.

The Grand Vizier shared in the mirth, and both august personages, scarcely capable of taking a breath, slowly came to their senses, wiping tears from their eyes.

"Give him his due, and send him on his way." The Caliph turned from me then, and I had the strangest feeling that I would never set eyes upon the man again. I looked to the lord's advisor, and saw in her hands a heavy pouch of soft, sand-colored velvet. It chinked most enticingly, and I knew at once that it must contain a princely sum.

"You will journey north with this, Keeper, and you will find out what your wits and your bravery allow. Should you survive the journey and fail to return, know this: the Caliph has servants in every shadow. Should you betray him, you will be hunted down and dragged back to the Court of Wisdom in chains. Your end will make a long, painful, and edifying tale that will keep centuries of the Caliph's future servants from making a similar mistake."

The bag was heavy, but not as heavy as these words. I was ushered down through the palace by a minor functionary, leaving the great people to contemplate the celestial questions of the realm.

Back in my little room, I sat on the narrow bed, the bag in my hand, and considered my options. I will not lie to you:

the idea of leaving the coins and disappearing into the desert, to strike out on my own and conjure up a new destiny, held a great attraction. Perhaps, if I left the coins behind, my disappearance would go unremarked?

But the North?

Terrinoth and the various lands across the vast northern sea are not well regarded in the tales of Al-Kalim. It is a strange, barbarous realm, ruled over by crass, unsophisticated creatures who know nothing of the refinements and considerations of civilization. It is a land that swallowed up the greatest military mind our realm has ever produced, and ground him away to nothing, leaving only cruel and vicious lies behind.

For in Al-Kalim, we still remember the true Waiqar. Waiqar the Unconquered. Waiqar the Bold. Waiqar ibn Neshar al-Bagavad, whose exploits before he ever crossed the northern waters would have justified his exaltation for all the centuries to come. His army of champions, the Acolytes, is still spoken of with awe and reverence, and little credence is given to the foolish tales that have reached us from that world of oafs and liars to the north.

I do not know how long I sat on my hard bed, wracked with doubt and tortured by my own dark imaginings. It must have been deep into the night, however, when a soft tap on my door broke into my hopeless reveries. My body was stiff and aching as I tried to stand. Eventually I stopped trying, turning painfully to the door and calling for my visitor to enter.

I knew him not, but by his robes I assumed he was some functionary of the Caliph's court. The man seemed nervous, casting continuous glances into the dark hall behind him and clutching a small bag in one hand.

"I come from the Caliph, may grasses sprout forever in his wake." The man gave a jerky nod, doing nothing to dispel my growing doubts. "He has come to agree with your assessment."

I stood there, confused and dumbfounded, and a look of exasperation momentarily passed over the man's constant, twitching fear. He held the bag out to me. "The stone. You must take it with you."

A moment's surge of joy was immediately drowned in the dry hiss of suspicion.

I nodded, forcing my body to rise. "I shall go at once to the Caliph and thank him for his change of heart. I have no doubt–"

"No!" the fear in the man's eyes flared. "The Caliph sends his blessings with this boon, and his desire that you leave at once for the North."

A deeper, burning fear began to rise up in my throat, and I took a step away from the man as he held out the bag again. "You must be gone by dawn. The Caliph wishes you to go quietly through the Fields of Fertility, let no one know you move at his command, and take a ship from Cutpurse Bay."

This tale was becoming wilder and wilder. Why would the Caliph send me, with one of his most precious treasures, into that lawless den of pirates?

"I should speak with the Caliph." I tried to push past the man, avoiding the bag as if it held a desert scorpion, but he moved to stop me, shoving the jewel into my witless grasp.

"No. You will head north now, without delay." The fear was still there, but now coupled with a cold resolve.

It was then that I noticed the others in the hall behind him. They wore dark armor, their helms wrapped in dun-colored fabric, cruel scimitars naked in their hands.

And I knew I would be leaving with the stone that night.

I was already riding a horse from the Caliph's stables into the chill of the desert night, the glittering lights of the Court of Wisdom fading behind me, by the time I realized that the soldiers had not been wearing the colors of the Caliph at all, but those of Abdullah al-Qaswani, one of his distant, and estranged, cousins.



The glowing stone that became the force that led me across lands I could never dream of, for years that seem to stretch without end.





TALES OF DARKNESS: A BRIEF COMPENDIUM OF HISTORICAL LEARNING

as compiled by ALANYA of GREYHAVEN

THE MYTHS OF CREATION

To reflect upon the earliest legends of the Elves is to challenge the imagination, for we are to take it that personalities existed before there were such things as persons, and that stages of creation occurred before what we would recognize as form. Aspects of these myths seem incomprehensible, or outright contradictory.

During my traveling days, I consulted with Elves myself about these matters but rarely found the exercise enlightening. They blithely insist that their accounts, which blend the metaphorical with the literal, somehow represent the same truth. I can't say I have much fondness for Elven folk. While they have been erstwhile allies to us in times past, remember that a popular Elven saying has it that "a Human life is but a day." Well, if mayflies matched us for height, strength, and will, we might learn respect for them!

Another thing: they love to lord it over us with regard to their deep wisdom. However, by their own accounts, Elven history is marked by folly of such extremes that the worst Human blunders seem trivial in comparison.

To my memory, the *Legendum Magicara* corroborates much Elven legend, and whose word should we trust more than that of its author, Timmorran Lokander? Should you ever be lucky enough to come across a collection of his theses, be sure to compare your notes with the wisdom therein, for it has been many years since I had the fortune to study it. However, even Timmorran, with all his insight, had to take the word of the Elves on this issue, and as you will no doubt go on to learn, Timmorran was not always the finest judge of character.

THE FIRST AND THE COLD VOID

Imagine, if you can, a time before barons, before wars, before earth and stars and air, before sorely mistreated horses and narroot strips. Before there was even physical form or time or dreams, there were the First. To conceive of them (I will use the pronoun "them" for sake of simplicity, the First being thought of as neither single nor plural, neither male nor female) is to imagine the very idea of an entity. The First are greater in terms of potential than mighty gods, for it is to the First that gods owe their own existence. Yet also they are lesser, for the First lack personality and form, and therefore have nothing to which a thinking creature can relate.

The legends are not clear as to whether the Void came into being with the First or the First created the Void. Some interpretations suggest that they are one and the same. Whatever the truth, the Void is the space within which all later creation took place.

THE LAYS OF THE FIRST, AND THEIR ECHO

Without breath, tongue, or lips, the First are said to have uttered songs or poems that shaped the Void, defining its potential and giving birth to all things. These verses described ideal forms and natures. Elves insist that echoes of the Lays can be heard to this day in the rhythms of nature. They say the sounds of these songs nourish spirits like food, and it is in this tradition that the Wealdweavers work their craft.

THE YRTHWRIGHTS ARE HATCHED

I will introduce the matter of dragons and their creation by way of a marginal gloss, partly because I have no clear idea of when it occurred, and partly because these terrible beasts of fire and fury deserve no better in my view. We know the First cannot have created Dragonkin before the creation of the Aenlong, for the Dragonkin are of it. Further, the Dragonkin must have existed before the First created mortal realm, because the Dragonkin played a part in its construction.

Regardless of when it occurred, the first dragons were molded from the debris of creation and granted the ability to speak matter into existence in a manner reminiscent of the Lays of the First (note here that the Runemasters of Greyhaven disagree as to whether the runes of the dragons are vestiges of this language).

Through these incantations, they set about creating the Firma Dracem, the mortal realm, and adorned it with spinning bodies, planets, and suns. Their great work is nothing less than existence as we mortals perceive it. Thanks to their talents, they were termed the Foundrakes, also called the Yrthwrights.

THREE PLANES OF POWER ARE CONJURED FROM THE VOID

The First conjured three distinct existences from the Void, called the Planes of Power. The highest of these is the Empyrean, a plane of perfection. Elven legends talk of the four spheres: the spheres of light, air, life, and dreams. These spheres exist in such an unadulterated form in the Empyrean that the cares of hunger, age, and discomfort are utterly unknown there.

The lowest of the Planes of Power is the Ynfernael. Whether the First intended the Ynfernael, or whether it was through the influence of some other malign power, is quite unknown. What is clear is that it is a dismal place populated by monstrous entities that crave to visit torture and degradation upon mortals. The Elves speak of several spheres that they associate with the Ynfernael, and these include (but may not be limited to) Darkness, Pain, Death, and Hunger.

Between them, the Aenlong was formed, the realm to which the plane of physical existence is connected. The Aenlong is a spiritual plane, however, believed to be the same as the fabled Grey Lands spoken of in the practices of the Dream Walkers. Over time, the Aenlong became full of the refuse of creation, half-tangible, unfinished things that belong in neither the Empyrean, nor the Ynfernael, nor the mortal realm.

SETTING IN MOTION THE VERTO MAGICA

The First then set into motion the Verto Magica, which you may have heard referred to as "the Turning." According to Elven sources, to create the Verto Magica, the First employed a sort of spiritual mechanism involving the rise and fall of the Empyrean and the Ynfernael planes. Without the Verto Magica, everything would be fixed in place, and time would stand still. Learned beings propose that for something to occur, the energy for such an occurrence must exist, and I speculate that all such energy is due to the Turning.

You may raise an objection here, in that the earlier myths implied the existence of such things as movement and the passing of time. After all, the Void existed before the Elves, did it not? Perhaps a purely spiritual existence does not require such things as distinction between the figurative and the literal.

PRIMORDIAL CREATURES: THE FAE AND THE DIMORA

Once the Aenlong was established, the First turned their attention to the creation of life. Elven sources suggest that by the time they themselves were created, other beings already existed, including two races that bear resemblance to ourselves in that they possess corporeal bodies and thinking minds. Whether these beings were created by the First in a deliberate manner or were unintended manifestations of the Empyrean spheres of air and life is not a settled matter.

THE RIVER TAARE AND THE DARKWOOD

I must digress here for a moment and mention two locations that are within the Aenlong, yet also sometimes outside or crossing into the mortal realm. These locations present yet another challenge to the non-Elven imagination, for how can physical places exist outside of the purview of reality? Once again, the Elves choose to obfuscate the issue, claiming that such locations are simply understood as both spiritual and physical.

The roaming Darkwood is one of these locations. Said to be a massive and ancient woodland, it is dense with mossy tree trunks and thick undergrowth full of ferns and fungi. The Darkwood has no fixed position in the Aenlong, but alters its position and the limit of its borders according to an unheard and random rhythm.

The River Taare appears in the myths of many races (including the Orcs, who I have never known to worry themselves with cosmology). The river is said to form a border between the Empyrean and the Aenlong. The Elves draw a poetic comparison between the waters of the river and tears shed in sorrow, claiming that sadness, like the waters of the river, is not present in the Empyrean. Timmorran himself theorized that the river was formed from the "condensation of the Void" in a moment of somewhat scholarly humor.

The tales say that these beings were the Fae and the Dimora, who can sometimes be found in our mortal realm. The Fae and the Dimora are wild, hostile, and rarely seen, although they do have the rudiments of language and culture. Little is known of them, and even in my vagabond days, I only ever heard rumors of their existence.

I would offer my own educated opinion that they are experiments on the creation of intelligent life that met with mixed success, and are not quite real as we know reality. The Fae are at home in the air and the Dimora in the earth; they are believed to be disturbing even to one another and are said to harbor mutual abhorrence. The only known protection against them is cold iron, and all books pondering their existence are girded with the thick metal.



THE ELVES

The First then undertook the creation of more familiar beings, and prominent among them were Lord Emorial and Lady Latariana, called Father and Mother to the Elves. If the Elven myths are true (and I remind you of all the usual warnings against taking them too seriously) then light (in the form of an archetypal sun) and air (in the form of a primeval sky) were initially created separately, but then "light was drawn in to bask in the sky" (as the *Legendum Magicara* has it), and the two were married.

This tale may well relate to the creation of Emorial and Latariana and the relationship between them, for he was said to be the Lord Protector of Light and she the Lady Protectress of Air. Quite what light and air needed protection from is a mystery to me, but the granting of such offices nevertheless seems to have been a source of great pride. The Elves dwelt within the Empyrean, and had little to do with true physical existence in the mortal realm. Instead, their spirits were nourished wholly through their relation to the spheres.

It is not entirely clear whether Emorial and Latariana were themselves the progenitors of the Elven people, or merely the first of them to be created and gain particular recognition. If they were the literal Father and Mother of the Elves, they must have made a fecund pair, for soon enough the Elves numbered in legions. Certainly they were lovers, and wedded in the fashion of their folk.

DESIRE AND BETRAYAL

The Turning turned and time passed, and Lady Latariana slowly began to covet more than her current existence. She longed for greater power than the Elves had in the Empyrean plane, and she told Emorial of her heart's fervent desire, a Crown of Dreams and Life.

Scholars ponder over why Latariana became avaricious, but consensus suggests that a shadowy spirit from the Ynfernael plane tempted her in secret murmurs. Others suggest that the First, lacking personality, were too cold an entity (or entities) for Elves to form any sort of deep relationship with them. Whatever her motives, she cajoled her husband and made ceaseless requests for him to win her dominion over the primary spheres, or perhaps all the spheres, of the Empyrean. Emorial eventually agreed to her pleas, and to please his love he set off to grant her wish. He traveled to the farthest edge of creation and called for the First to relinquish control. The First did not so much as deign to respond, leaving Emorial humiliated and wrathful.

He returned to the Elves and marshaled them in mutiny against the First. He marched his host through the Gate of Years, Lady Latariana at his side. The Elves thought they would pass into the halls of the First, but instead found themselves on a bridge over a great river. Though they did not realize it, they were crossing over into the Aenlong.

THE ELVES ARE IMPRISONED

For countless days, the Elves marched, perhaps never realizing they were hopelessly lost. They fell to the predations of the Fae and the Dimora. They traversed the hazardous wastes of the Grey Lands. Then, one day, they found themselves on narrow tracks that led through a great foreboding forest, and they came, eventually, to a great green glade bathed in golden sunlight. This was the Aymhelin forest, whose northernmost eaves reach into the lands of Terrinoth to this day.

For a brief moment, Emorial dared to think that their mutiny had succeeded and their dominion over the four spheres of the Empyrean had been won. Then he spied the architect of the glade, a great winged serpent—the Yrthwright Mennara.

The majestic dragon is said to have held Emorial's cold gaze with its own implacable one, and it passed the judgments of the First down upon the rebellious Elves. They were exiled from the Empyrean. Light and Air would no longer be theirs to command. The Lays of the First would no longer come freely to their hearts to nourish them. Lastly, they were now imprisoned on the mortal plane—which the Elves now realized they had emerged into during their march. Then the realization dawned on Emorial that, for their desire, the Elves would be bound to the object that was both their destination and their damnation, a crowning realm of light, of air, of life, and of dreams. This world. Our world, which some dare name after the Yrthwright of this tale.

THE TEARS OF LATARIANA

The Elves begged Mennara for mercy, but it would not heed them. Instead, it turned to Latariana, and it offered her a terrible choice. It suggested that there was a way the Elves might win an eventual reprieve. A window to the Empyrean could be left open for the Elves to return through one day, but the cost for such a favor was high. Latariana would have to enter the Void, taking with her the Ynfernael temptations that had led to her greed.

With a heavy heart, Latariana agreed. She turned to Emorial, and she whispered to him the last tender words he would ever hear. They embraced then, and she wept brave tears of sorrow and regret before climbing on the back of the Yrthwright. The majestic creature then spread its vast wings and flew up into the darkening skies.

The Elves watched as Latariana was borne from the world into the Void, and as she grew too distant to see, a bright light shone in her place—the first star. More stars began to appear, reminders of Latariana's sacrifice for her people, and the Elves watched them in sorrow and awe.

But one could not look. Emorial was staring at his hands, wet with the tears of Latariana. Before his eyes, the tears transformed into eleven stunning pearlescent jewels, but mere echoes of his lost love's beauty. Like the stars, they were tokens of hope for the Elves, signs that they could earn forgiveness.

However, Emorial was wracked with shame, anger, and grief. The promise of eventual forgiveness he could not countenance for himself. He called forth eleven Elven nobles and shared between them the Tears of Latariana. The jewels were to serve as marks of office, for Emorial divided his host into eleven tribes, and directed the nobles to lead each faction. He bade them take his people into the future of this new world until a path back to the Empyrean was made clear.

Then, he took up his sword and with cold fury in his heart, left his people. The Elves say that he journeyed to the Ynfernael plane, seeking to mete out vengeance on the corrupting shadow that had murmured temptations to his bride.

THE WAR OF THE SHADOW TEAR

It is a sad fact that history focuses more on violent moments than on periods of peace, and so it is that there is little to be said of the harmonious years in which Elves settled in the mortal realm. Two centuries after their arrival, the tribes scattered to far-flung territories and developed distinct cultures. Only the Latari Elves remained in the forested clearing. Still, the eleven Elven tribes kept links of trade and friendship.

THE DISMAL HISTORY OF MALCORNE

Malcorne was the proud bearer of a Tear of Latariana and chieftain of the eleventh Elven tribe, the Malcari. They ventured forth from the boughs of the Aymhelin and roamed far from other Elves, settling at last in what would become known as the Jornall Mountains, where Emorial was believed to have pursued the demons into their home. Among the other tribes, Malcorne's folk had a mixed reputation. They were hailed as heroes for carrying Emorial's legacy into the present, but also sometimes regarded as aloof and often criticized for taking action without consulting with the other tribes. In their efforts to fight the Ynfernael, they had begun to study and use the demons' very power against them, earning them the consternation of their allies.

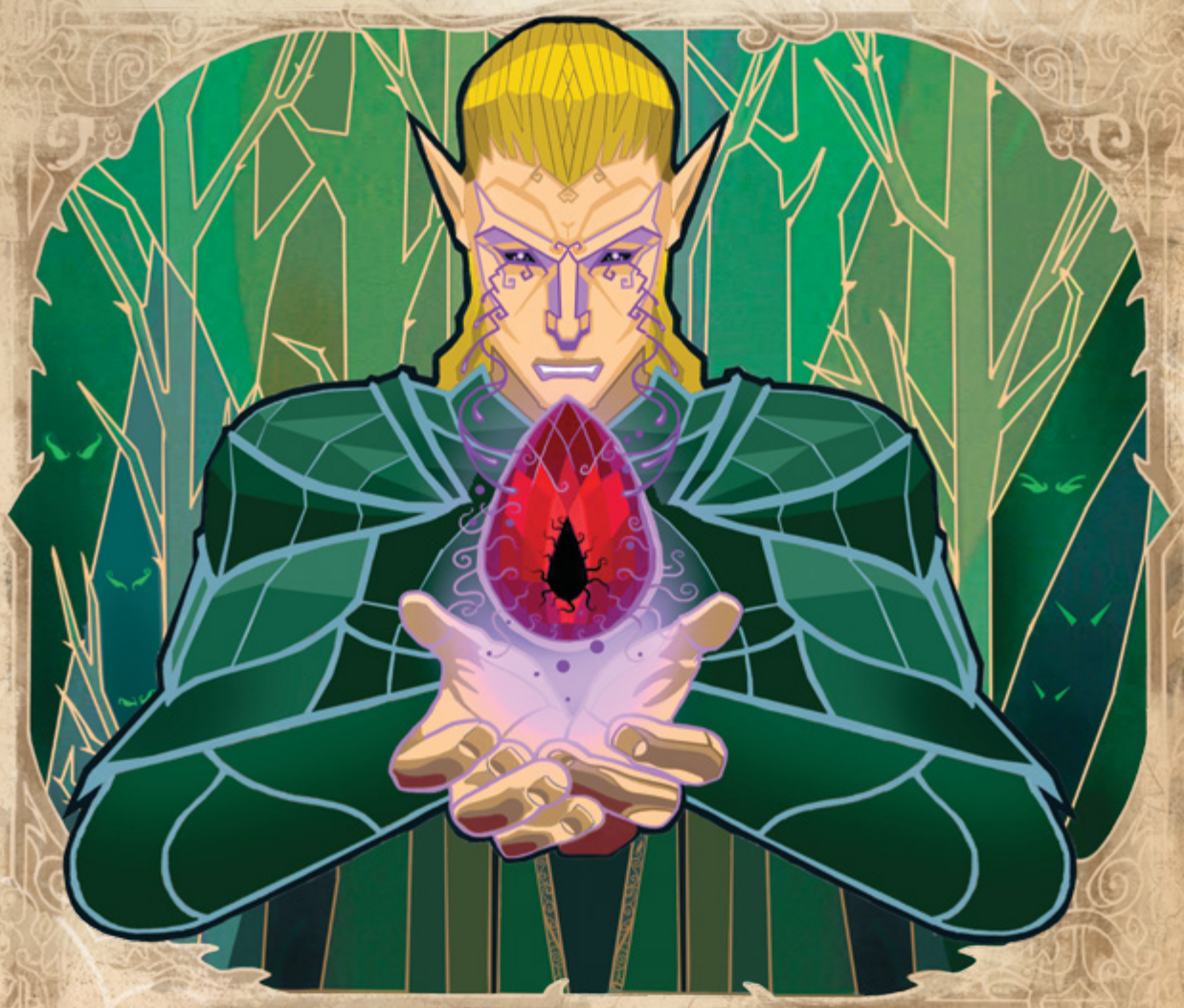
During one patrol, Malcorne was leading a band of demon hunters deep into the caverns when their battles caused a cave-in that separated him from the others. He was thought to have perished alongside the treacherous demons, and his tribe wept for their lost leader. When he returned to the Malcari city, having somehow miraculously survived his encounter with a demon, Malcorne was a changed chieftain, given to brooding moods and regarding his fellows with suspicious glances.

In time, Malcorne gathered a small coterie of his most trusted allies to his side and explained that in his wanderings he had found Emorial, their long-lost king. Emorial had explained to Malcorne that the Tears of Latariana were a gift in disguise, powerful enough to open a door to other planes of existence—to the Aenlong—allowing the Elves to return to their rightful home. In Emorial's time hunting down the forces of the Ynfernael, he came to realize that the First were tyrants, afraid of being usurped by their own children. The promise the Foundrake Mennara had given Latariana was a lie: the false hope it had instilled in the Elves would keep them subservient in their prison and obsequious toward the First for the rest of eternity. In his dying breath, Emorial charged Malcorne with revealing the truth of the First to the other Elven tribes and leading them in rebellion against their former masters, lest they be prisoners forever. The Latari Elves maintain to this day that it was not Emorial whom Malcorne encountered in the cave, but a cunning demon wearing his face.

A TEAR IN SHADOW

Malcorne knew the Elves would need strong allies if they were to cast down the First, and so he used his Tear to pull down the shields between the Firma Dracem and the Aenlong. There, he found the allies he had been looking for: a horde of demons who had crossed over from where the Ynfernael overlapped with the Aenlong. In that moment, the Tear of Latariana that Malcorne possessed grew dull and shadowy, losing the light it once held.

Once he had corrupted his birthright, Malcorne used the Shadow Tear to open up rents in the fabric of reality. However, the process was arduous. Malcorne reached out to the other tribes, explaining the Foundrake's lie and that their Tears were needed in order to break the shackles of this reality and gather allies from the Aenlong. The other tribes saw Malcorne's plans for what they were: evil and corrupt, twisted by the whisperings of demons. The two sides could not be reconciled, so Malcorne launched an attack on the other Elven tribes, determined to capture their precious Tears of Latariana by force.



Backed by ranks of savage demons and packs of Ynfernael creatures, Malcorne's followers ravaged and routed the first few Elven armies sent to stop them. Soon, the other Elven tribes scattered before Malcorne and what they called the Daewyl or "Twice Fallen" Elves. The surviving Elves fled to remote regions, distant islands, and lonely mountaintops in order to protect their precious Tears from capture.

THE BATTLE OF ENFREIL

In the depths of darkness, however, a beacon of hope shone through. Glaciel Snowstar, son of the chieftain of the tenth tribe, the Nivalis, had witnessed firsthand the devastation of Malcorne's assaults but refused to give in to despair. He rescued his father's Tear and resolved to travel to the Yrthwrights' own home, where he would ask the dragons for their guidance and help in defeating the corrupted Elven chieftain. Along the way, he gathered companions to his cause: High Priestess Celeneth of the Salish, the Feredel sorcerer Keldarim, Erenil the Swift of the Latari, and others. The extent of Glaciel's adventures and the exploits of his companions have made their way into countless lays that are still sung in the verdent settlements of the Aymhelin.

The dragons, whom the First had tasked with preserving the world, seemed to anticipate Glaciel's coming, but remained aloof even as he begged them for aid. They rebuffed Glaciel's appeal—this was the Elves' own doing, and the Elves would need to bear this burden. Yet the Navlis lordling would not give up. When he refused to leave, the dragons explained that if they interceded in the Elves' affairs, one day the tribes would be forced to pay a terrible price. Glaciel could not allow his people to suffer any longer, and accepted the dragon's deal. Glaciel and his companions returned to rally their respective tribes with a flight of dragons at their back. On the Plains of Enfreil, they fought a final battle against Malcorne. In the world's most desperate hour, their combined forces ultimately achieved victory and struck down the dark Elven lord.

The remaining Daewyl Elves retreated from the combined Elven and draconic forces, hoping to hide themselves away. The victors could not afford for the corruption to spread, so they hunted down their foes to burn them from the face of this world. Malcorne's wretched tribe was nearly extinguished in the slaughter. Many worry that small enclaves of the Daewyl still lurk in the dark nooks of the world, but at least one group claims to have come back to the light. Now calling themselves the Deep Elves, they seek to atone for their sins by destroying demons in this realm—and in others beyond.

THE TROUBLED RISE OF THE YOUNGER RACES

The War of the Shadow Tear had been won, but the Elves still faced trouble. Daewyl sorcerers had opened up many rifts between the mortal realm and the Ynfernael, and any demon wishing to enter Mennara could use them to cross over into our vulnerable world.

For the Elves, these rents were a curse, but from our perspective, perhaps they should be thought of as a mixed blessing. The direct influence of the Ynfernael is no doubt inimical to life, as demons love nothing more than to cause suffering for mortal beings. However, the indirect consequence of Ynfernael energies bleeding through was geographical change and the alteration of animal kinds that has led to life as we know it.

The Elves strove to locate the rifts and close them, sealing them with powerful wards of Empyrean magic, yet they never found them all, and despite their efforts to guard the sites of warded portals, Daewyl agents still occasionally managed to sabotage their work.

It was during this time that other races, driven into being through the mutating forces of Ynfernael power, came to make their mark on the world. The Dragonkin had always shared a semblance of culture and learning and had assisted the Elves in the past, but now they were joined by younger races, such as the Dwarves, Orcs, and we Humans. The Elves were concerned by the emergence of such folk, but after much debate, they decided to allow the younger races to live and develop their own civilizations. The Dragonkin did not concur. Unwilling to interact with the newcomers, they cut their ties with the Elves and journeyed to the craggy volcanic wastes of the far north.

THE YEARS OF HUNGER

No one knows what caused the Great Cataclysm, a series of quakes and upheavals of unprecedented proportion that wracked our world. Its tempests washed away great swaths of land or shattered them into archipelagos. Scholars have advanced numerous theories about its origins. Some say Ynfernael energies tore the land apart, or that it was the work of the Daewyl in an appalling act of revenge. Others suggest it was a terrible mishap resulting from Elven rites designed to seal the remaining portals shut. Many, however, tend to agree that such upheavals are simply a fact of the world's nature, and that we will bear witness to even greater destruction in the fullness of time—a view I myself share.

Most scholars hold that the Great Cataclysm occurred several thousands of years after the Elves' arrival in the mortal realm (one of my Greyhaven colleagues is quite firm it was exactly three thousand and thirty years). In the wake of the destruction, the younger races began to play a greater role in the shaping of history. Presumably, the ancestors of Dwarves, Orcs, and Humans were created and performed great acts during the times we think of as prehistoric, but the Elven narrative does not deign to mention much about their activities.

The Years of Hunger were appropriately named, for in the years following the Great Cataclysm, the skies darkened, and the waterlogged soil yielded meager harvests. Hard times are said to produce hard people, and a will to survive drove the Humans and the other newer races onward. A savage, nomadic culture was winning a reputation for ruthless marauding in the far northern wastes; perhaps these barbarians were the ancestors of the great and terrible Uthuk people. If so, they can be credited as the oldest of the Human civilizations, just as with the next breath, they can be condemned for descending deeper into savagery ever since.

FROM DUBIOUS MYTH TO RECORDED HISTORY

Our world is an ancient and often mysterious place. There is no hard line one can draw to separate verifiable historical accounts, as written by noted scholars and checked against numerous written records, from the more doubtful and metaphorical myths of the Elves.

Once again, I will take the great wizard's *Legendum Magicara* as my guide and draw a line at the end of the War of the Shadow Tear, before which all ought to be treated as Elven mysticism and legend, pertaining to no more than metaphorical accounts of real events.

There follows a lengthy period of a somewhat uncertain duration. This era deals with the effect of the Tears, the appearance of sentient races besides the Elves, and the rise of Humanity.

The first historical occasions I would personally vouch for as being a real event, the effects of which are still apparent and which we can study for certain, are the Great Cataclysm and the Years of Hunger that followed it.

Humanity spread from the Ru Steppes into other lands. Perhaps these Humans fled as refugees from the ancestors of the Uthuk. In the lands that were to become Terrinoth, they found temperate climes, cool lakes teeming with fish, abundant woodlands, and fertile valleys. Early settlers soon found that they were able to give up their roaming ways in favor of permanent residence in villages and farmsteads.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE DWARVES

Whatever else I have said about the Elves, at least some have proven willing to talk to me. The Dwarves, however, are singularly closemouthed about their past. For all my journeys through the Dunwarr Mountains and visits to their capital of Thelgrim, my best insights came from an itinerant Dwarven sailor in Orris. This story cost me two large amphorae of strong wine and the worst headache I have ever suffered, for of course she insisted I join her in enjoying the gift.

What I learned—and have since corroborated via a surreptitious visit to the Runescribes' Guild Libraries—was that Dwarven history has been a series of tragedies that has seen its people constantly flee deeper and deeper underground. I see in them what might have become of our own race in such early days, had we not heroes such as Timmorran and Daqan to steady us.

When the rents left by the Shadow Tear spilled otherworldly energies across the world, the Dwarves are said to have sprung forth from the rocky, flame-wreathed crags of the Molten Heath, which certainly fits with their grim, dour demeanors and fiery tempers. The early Dwarves scraped out a miserable existence amongst the basalt outcroppings and lava flows of the Molten Heath's heart, hunting the salamanders that basked along the shores of the molten lakes and foraging for shar-roots and lindengrass beneath the rocks.

THE EPIC OF HELKA THE BOLD

Amongst the Dwarves lived a skilled miner named Helka, who struggled to raise her daughter, Valnir, after the death of her mate. The legends say that one day Valnir grew sick from the ash-laden skies, and all knew that she would soon die. But Helka refused to accept this, and instead chose to journey with her daughter deep into the heart of the Heath to find the great and terrible beings that made their lairs in the tallest fire-mountains. There, she would demand the dragons' aid.

The journey was long and perilous, but finally, Helka found a vast cave on the top of the tallest mountain. Within dwelled a monstrous serpent with silver scales and golden eyes, regarding the Dwarf as one might study an insect crawling up one's arm. Fearlessly, Helka faced the dragon and demanded that it help save her daughter's life.

The dragon gestured to the walls of the cave, and Helka could see claw-carved runes covering the rock. The dragon would let her use the runes to save her daughter, but in turn, it would take Helka's sight, so that she could not pass that knowledge on to others.

The Dwarf agreed, and the dragon showed her which runes could be spoken to heal her child. They would be the last thing she saw, as its wondrous visage grew in brilliance and seared her eyes. The mighty being left, and Helka spoke the words of power to cure Valnir. Then, she felt her way to the cave wall and, by touch, began memorizing the shapes of the other runes carved into the cave walls.

When Helka returned to her kin, she took a stone and scratched every rune she could remember into a slab of basalt. As the Dwarves began to unlock these secrets, the days of their primitive existence ended.

THE KAROK DOUM

The runes contained the secrets of magic, metalworking, farming, and masonry. With this knowledge, the dwarves were able to travel from the fire-scorched heart and into the green prairies that encircled the Heath. They built great cities of brass and basalt in the mountains overlooking these verdant lands, and called their home the Karok Doum, or "gift of dragons" in the Dwarven tongue. For many years, they worked to build a realm of stability and peace, as Helka the Bold continued to study the secrets of the runes and Valnir became a great leader of her people. But the peace was not to last.

THE WAR OF FIRE

The dragons of the Molten Heath grew to resent the Dwarves, calling them thieves who had stolen draconic knowledge. They cast wrothful eyes on the growing Karok Doum, and eventually, they went to war.

Though the Dwarves fought valiantly, such a war could only have one outcome. One by one, their cities burned. The shattered remnants of their armies made a final stand at Black Ember Gorge. Behind them, caravans of refugees fled from the Heath into the hills and plains beyond. Before them, the dragon armies circled.

Though old and frail, Helka the Bold led a final army against the dragons, telling Valnir to lead the remainder of their people to safety. At the last, Helka was said to have unleashed her most devastating runes to destroy the pass along with many dragons. Alas, the rune magic also took the lives of Helka and the brave Dwarves who stood with her that final day.

EXILE TO DUNWARR

The Dwarves found no refuge in the rolling, treeless hills and steep ravines that bordered the Molten Heath to the southwest. Eventually, however, their wanderings led them to a vast mountain chain. Some journeyed east, forming the settlements in the Jornall mountains, while others continued traveling south. Beside a volcano in the heart of a bountiful valley, these refugees would build the city of Yrthwright's Forge—named as a reminder of the glory of their former kingdom.

However, Valnir and many of her people instead built homes amongst the mist-shrouded peaks to the north of where Terrinoth would arise. The occasional dragon still flew out of the north, and so the Dwarves began to build their fortresses underground. As they followed caves deep below the surface, they left the sky behind. Eventually, they called the mountains the Dunwarr, or "sanctuary." The children of Valnir became the first Deeplords, protecting and leading their people.

HUMANITY STEPS FORTH

The Hunger Years mark the end of history as the Elves tell it and the beginning of our own. At that time, Humans had made tentative movement toward civilization but did not yet keep calendars, and the lands that would go on to become Terrinoth were largely uninhabited save for a few fledgling farmsteads and villages.

LORD ARCUS PENACOR AND THE AGE OF STEEL

We trace the start of the Human calendar to the campaigns of Lord Arcus Penacor, who would become first of the Penacor Kings. Arcus was a noble chieftain of one of the small village fiefdoms. In the latter days of the Years of Hunger, his homeland faced constant attack from brutal Orcish raiders and those who would eventually become the terrible Bloodguard Knights.



Arcus forged a confederation with neighboring fiefs, convincing them to pool resources and fighters in order to secure a safer land. Soon after, these united armies vanquished their enemies. Lord Arcus, who had not only provided the vision to form the confederation but also fought bravely in many battles, was hailed as a hero by the people of the lands. He was declared king of the new realm of Talindon, the central kingdom of the continent. It is from this momentous event, nearly two thousand years ago, that we date our years

King Arcus proved to be a capable ruler. He set to drafting charters that codified the governing of Talindon, and one can see traces of these ancient laws in the codes that the Daqan Lords enforce today. He raised funds for temples and great works of art. He kept the people safe, establishing fortifications, border patrols, and chivalric orders. Fortune smiled on the newfound kingdom, and its many strong children dedicated their own efforts to its glory.

THE EARLY DAYS OF THE KING OF GRIEF

The Years of Hunger were over, and for nearly three centuries, the realm flourished under the rule of the Penacor Kings. When he first came to the throne in the year 286, King Jerlon Penacor showed every sign of proving worthy of the crown. His capable queen, Riya, was celebrated at court for her intelligence and charm, and their infant sons, Farrengol and Farrendon, showed every sign of becoming fine princes of the Penacor line.

Love tore the realm apart, however, as it is ever wont to do. By all accounts, Queen Riya and the king's greatest friend and highest councilor, Rusticar Lorimor, had fallen deeply for each other, despite their respective vows to husband and throne. When the king learned of this, his priests and advisors begged him to show no clemency, warning him that to tolerate such a betrayal flew in the face of the will of the gods and made him weak in the eyes of his people. But King Jerlon still loved his queen, and he grew melancholic rather than wrathful. He annulled his marriage and forever banished Riya and Rusticar from the nascent kingdom.

A large group of the king's subjects joined Rusticar and Riya in exile, a strange happenstance that leads me to wonder if there was more to the betrayal than mere love. King Jerlon seems to have had trouble commanding the loyalty of his subjects, and this speaks to a lack of charisma or other weakness of character. Whatever the truth, Rusticar was to prove a great leader and Riya at least his equal in all matters. Shortly after arriving on the shores of the western ocean, they founded a legacy of their own that rivaled anything the Penacor line produced (as heretical as that may be to state). This is, of course, the Lorimor Empire, and we will speak more of it later.

FARRENGOL PENACOR'S WAYWARD WAYS

In Talindon, King Jerlon lamented his lost love. He refused to countenance taking another queen. Behind his back, Jerlon's courtiers began to call him the King of Grief.

Like some other young nobles whom I might mention, Prince Farrengol had always been a boisterous child, but with his mother exiled and his father lost to melancholy, he now lacked any sort of parental hand. Farrengol took to training in the tiltyard with some of the coarser members of his father's household guard, and an unwise bond of mutual support was forged. The guards taught the young prince how to ride and fight, but they also brought him along when they secretly raided far-flung farmsteads for their own merriment. For his part, the prince made sure that his friends never had to face any serious consequences for their wicked behavior.

On the occasion of the prince's sixteenth birthday, the court jester performed a verse penned for the occasion. When Farrengol realized that the first letter of each line spelled out the word "bastard," he flew into a fierce rage and summoned his friends. They galloped from the castle, calling for a pox to take the morose king and his gossiping court. They did not return.

In time, news spread of vicious outlaws who set upon travelers and isolated farms in the north of the country, around the borders and wild lands of Nerekhall. Reports of their crimes were grave and only increased in frequency, but the gloomy King of Grief would not rouse himself to order their capture. It was thus left up to the Lord of Nerekhall to place a bounty on the heads of the outlaws. Roving knights soon tracked the outlaws down to a farmstead. The scene within was one of unspeakable horror.

The next morning, a narrow file of knights arrived at the gates of the Lord of Nerekhall's castle. They carried a number of long poles from which dangled a score of heads. Under the dried blood and grime of the road, some of the heads could be recognized as those of members of the household guard who had ridden out with Prince Farrengol. The prince was there, too. He and his closest companions had been taken alive, and now they sat astride the knights' spare horses, their hands and feet held fast in iron fetters.

THE FORBIDDING TOWER OF NEREK

Nerekhall was named for the strange and forbidding ruin that stood upon lonely downs in the center of the region. No farms or homesteads stood in the shadow of the Tower of Nerek, for so awful was its aspect that a deep sense of foreboding began to gnaw at the sanity of anyone who spent any time nearby. It is said that Elves originally built the tower, though they refuse to confirm this rumor and stake no claim on the dismal ruin. Anyone who lived in the vicinity found their sleep wracked with nightmares, and delusions coming to haunt their waking thoughts. The Lord of Nerekhall used it as a prison.

Prince Farrengol and his companions were interred within and left there to wait for the King, for the Lord of Nerekhall was too circumspect to dare pass judgment on a Penacor. In the dark nights in the tower, the group is said to have discovered the secret behind the tower's ill repute: a Daewyl portal nestled in an attic nook, and within an Ynfernael shade. Farrengol no sooner encountered the demon than he promised it fealty if only it might somehow grant him freedom.

When King Jerlon arrived at the keep of the Lord of Nerekhall, he was presented with evidence of his son's crimes and the heads of his household guard. The King wasted little time in condemning Prince Farrengol to death. He ordered the outlaws to be hanged from the Tower of Nerek and their bodies taken from the borders of Talindon and cast into the mires of the northeastern swampland.

RETURN OF THE DREAD PRINCE

The King of Grief returned to his castle, and there, he eked out a few more miserable years, dying a lonely and largely unmourned monarch. His surviving son, Farrendon, shared none of his father's frailties and displayed more of the robust spirit associated with the Penacor line.

And yet, Prince Farrengol and his companions had not yet passed from this world. Their bodies lay putrefied in the swamp, but the shade in the tower had not forgotten its promise. Invigorated by dark magic, the bodies of Farrengol and his companions at last rose from the swamp and set about their old crimes once more. The undead raiders terrorized the lonely homesteads that nestled around the borders of the swamp, and with the loot and weapons they captured, they set up a fastness of their own, inhabiting a ruined keep among the Misty Hills that overlooked the marshes that had been their grave. Lord Farrenghast, as the foul wretch came to be known, went on to terrorize the surrounding lands with his skeletal followers. They were as a plague upon this region, seemingly unstoppable in their dark thirsts.



THE RISE OF LLOVAR AND THE UTHUK Y'LLAN

More than a century would pass before a valiant band caught Farrenghast. That was believed to be his end, but I know of accounts that have him haunting Terrinoth several times since then. Despite the wight's actions, a long period of relative peace settled on most the land in these years.

That peace ended when the Penacor Kings faced a far greater adversary. This was the terrible Uthuk Y'llan, whose origin is found among the nomadic Loth K'har. The Loth K'har may have been one of the oldest of Human civilizations, but they certainly became the most horrific.

THE WANDERING LOTH K'HAR AND THEIR METHODS OF DIVINATION

During good times, the Loth K'har roved the plains, searching for fresh grazing grounds for their animals and trading with the many settlements that ringed the wastes. In leaner times, they would turn into vicious raiders, falling on those same settlements for loot. Their shamans learned of a realm known as T'mara T'rusheen, and from it, they gleaned prophetic advice. The most skillful among these shamans formed a caste known as the nightseers. They were said to have been close to members of a distant Elven tribe who were so impressed by their talents that they called them the Loth Caara, Elven for "dream walkers." From this term, the Loth K'har derive their name.

THE EVIL THAT SLEPT IN THE SANDS

By our best reckoning, Llovar Rutonu Lokander was born in the year 412. The people of his parents' tribe were noted among the Loth K'har for their ability to survive even in the far-eastern wastes, where little grows and deep volcanic vents usher poisonous fumes from the world's depths. Llovar's family was noted in the tribe for producing many renowned nightseers and chiefs, and Llovar's elder brother, Llander, had shown quality as a raider and forager despite his tender years.

Much was expected of the young Llovar, but even so, he defied expectations. Scholars called to account for his prodigy suspect that one of the Daewyl rents between our mortal realm and the Ynfernael can be found within the eastern wastes, and that Llovar was sensitive to the influence of the Ynfernael from infancy. An interesting theory, if perhaps one forever to be unproven given the quite deadly reaction that region has towards visitors.

LLOVAR ASCENDANT

Llovar quickly became recognized for his prodigious dream-walking abilities, earning the title of nightseer by his eleventh birthday. He grew increasingly reckless, though, and during a lengthy sojourn in the T'mara T'rusheen, Llovar is said to have met with an aspect of the Ynfernael and to have fallen into irrevocable corruption.

Within the harsh but otherwise peaceful society of the Loth K'har, Llovar's prowess and wayward genius was celebrated despite the clear signs of malign influence. The young seer was hailed by the chieftains of his tribe as a holy figure, brought to them in order to exalt their tribe above all others. Soon they made him their peer, then their leader. Those who opposed Llovar's increasing power and influence were shunned or executed, though it is said that Llander remained a close confidant of Llovar despite having voiced misgivings about his brother's rule.

THE NIGHT OF SUMMONS

Llovar sprung his carefully laid scheme during the Night of Summons. Promising great rewards and using forbidden bindings, he led his tribe's greatest warriors into the T'mara T'rusheen. They emerged physically transformed, shaped by Ynfernael influence. Their wiry muscles became supernaturally powerful, and their very bones became weapons that pushed through their skin to form great spikes and blades.

With these warriors at his side, Llovar began to form a confederation of tribes, conquering those who refused to form alliances willingly. Even the chiefs of the Scal and L'jan tribes, which were many times larger than the Loth K'har, bent their knee to Llovar. Soon his campaign bloomed into full-scale civil war between the tribes of the plains. The Loth K'har and their allies took on a new title, the Uthuk Y'llan, which means "locust swarm" in the language of the plains people, as they conquered more and more of the Ru.



THE RISE OF TIMMORRAN

On the Night of Summons, Llander's wife, Rala, gave birth to a son. Nightseers hailed the child, prophesying that he would grow into a man of great import. Fearful of his brother's increasing depravity, Llander and his family fled to the wastes to start life anew before they too became fresh victims of Llovar's blood-soaked predations.

LLANDER'S FLIGHT TO LORIMOR

The fugitives made for Lorimor, which was by now a burgeoning coastal empire with a reputation for cosmopolitan culture and schools of learning. Llovar regarded his brother's abandonment as a dreadful betrayal, and he called for Ynfernael forces to curse the runaways. The effectiveness of such curses is not known, though Rala died of a lingering sickness on the road and Llander mysteriously vanished shortly before Timmorran, by now a boy of five, reached the gates of Lorimor far to the west.

TIMMORRAN STUDIES MAGIC

Timmorran struggled for a while as a friendless orphan, begging for copper coins on the streets of Lorimor. His talents for magic were untrained, but already apparent, and he turned to street sorcery in order to obtain money. (There are those who suggest he used tricks to swindle and rob, though I suggest we cleave to the accepted history that he performed miracles for the entertainment of astonished crowds.)

A conclave of local wizards learned of Timmorran's talents, and they swiftly inducted him into their order and taught him to apply magic in a more methodical fashion. (Students should bear this in mind while reading these words: Timmorran's later successes are the result of his allowing himself to be disciplined by his teachers.)

ASSASSINS OF THE Q'ARO FENN

As Timmorran's powers grew, a nightseer warned Llovar about the threat his nephew posed, prophesying that one day Timmorran would strike down the Lord of the Uthuk Y'llan. Llovar publicly scorned such pessimism and had the nightseer's brains struck from his skull.

While his public attitude was arrogant and dismissive, he must have been secretly concerned, for he dispatched three killers, feared mage-assassins known as the servants of Q'aro Fenn, to find and slay Timmorran. (Q'aro Fenn is thought not to be a name so much as a title that translates roughly as "demon-bone witch" in our language. Or at least one of my colleagues who studies the tongue of the eastern lands says; I do not claim a talent in that area. It certainly does seem appropriate, as she was one of Llovar's lieutenants and chief of his assassins according to some of Timmorran's writings.)

THE MERCURIAL SAL MERINGYR

In Lorimor, Timmorran had become apprenticed to a celebrated wizard named Sal Meringyr. The impulsive Sal exercised great power and heroism, but he had an overweening ambition to pursue the possibility of crystallizing arcane energy. After all, were not the Tears of Latariana supposedly crystallized Empyrean energy? While he must be taken to task for planting this dangerous idea in his young apprentice's head, the fact is that without Sal Meringyr, the tale of Timmorran would have ended here. The assassins of the Q'aro Fenn finally tracked Timmorran down and assailed him, but Sal fought to save his apprentice, killing two of the assassins and sending the third into flight. The wizard paid dearly for his bravery and died of the wounds he received that day.

Timmorran fled across the seas to the far-off continent of Ghom and made a new life for himself in Al-Kalim, also known as the Sunderlands. He offered his services to the tribe of Ashan the Elder and grew to become an ever more potent magician and adventurer, as well as a friend to one Waiqar Sumarion.

THE FIRST DARKNESS

According to ancient records, Llovar had finished his consolidation of the tribes of the northern plains by the year 478. The armies of the Uthuk Y'llan brought about the time of the First Darkness as they marched to despoil the southern lands.

LLOVAR SWARMS INTO THE WEST

The Uthuk Y'llan already comprised a fearsome host of warriors, fueled by Ynfernael energies and filled with a desire to pillage foreign lands and destroy any resistance. Yet, while these warriors were terrible, Llovar could not have brought war to Talindon without the help of allies who swore themselves to his cause. The Orcs of the Broken Plains were the first to pledge allegiance to the Locust Lord, their bellicose Chief Lukosh seeking any opportunity for violence. Later, they were joined by Warlord Hellspanth and his band of dragons from the far north. These forces combined into a great army, though the Uthuk Y'llan always formed the vanguard, and Llovar reserved final say on matters of strategy. He led the Uthuk atop his beloved steed Dire, a carnivorous beast he had personally summoned from the Ynfernael.

War came to Penacor lands, and the armies of Llovar scattered the uncoordinated forces they met across the region. Throughout 478, they burned the eastern groves of the Aymhelin and plundered Talindon. King Falladir Penacor mustered his soldiers to face the foe, but they were comprehensively bested in open battle. A chief of the Uthuk named Nashaia struck King Falladir from his steed and was poised to dispatch him, but a desperate counterattack by Prince Parren forced the foe back long enough to rescue the king and carry him from the field. While King Falladir nursed his wounds, the tattered remnants of his army became merely a fugitive band of vagabonds, able to do little more than harass wayward and straggling units from Llovar's horde.

The following year, Llovar ordered his Orc allies to continue raiding throughout Talindon while he marched his Uthuk north through narrow defiles in the Dunwarr Mountains to the gates of the great fortress of Thelgrim. Llovar considered the Dwarven capital a particular prize, for it commanded a position from which an army could strike at strategically important locations throughout surrounding lands and opened up the entire northern border of Talindon. Thelgrim also straddled important supply routes through the mountains. As powerful as Llovar's forces were, however, they did not have the equipment to storm Thelgrim; instead, they encircled the fortress, planning to starve the defenders into surrender.

AN ALLIANCE FORMED

Falladir Penacor worked tirelessly to restore law and order to his realm following the destruction wrought by the Uthuk, but he knew he was on borrowed time. If Llovar were to break Thelgrim, he would no doubt return to ravage Penacor lands. Falladir mustered a new army with which to confront the Locust Swarm, but those volunteers who answered the call were few in number, barely trained, and ill equipped.

The situation grew increasingly grim, and even as he struggled to muster an army, King Falladir was forced to hang a number of blackguards for their talk of surrender—an action that may seem extreme, but I remind my readers that these were indeed extreme times. Then, from the Aymhelin marched a force of Latari Elves led by King Triamlavar. They pledged to fight alongside the Penacor forces, and so began a great tradition of alliance between Humans and Elves against Ynfernael threats. An elite force was hastily assembled, combining the best of the fast and hard-hitting troops that they could muster. They force-marched through mountain passes and fell upon the rear of Llovar's forces in a devastating surprise attack.

The Humans and Elves threw the Uthuk into disarray and forced Llovar to retreat and regroup. Falladir and Triamlavar were able to relieve the Dwarven fortress and entreated the Dwarves to join the war, but the Dunwarr Deeplords were unwilling to commit to military action. While they did promise the use of Thelgrim to the new alliance, they stubbornly refused to allow their own troops to be risked in battle, claiming they would fight only in self-defense. A Dwarven Deeplord named Halgir Son of Grom argued that the Dwarves should accept their share of responsibilities on the battlefield, but the other Deeplords ignored his pleas.

In the meantime, Uthuk raiders preyed upon Penacor freeholds, and an old enemy reemerged. From the sullen Misty Hills to the northeast marched a column of skeletal warriors with Farrenghast riding at their head. Some, especially those far from Nerekhall, had forgotten his evil, but he was a deathless curse on the land. The vile wight had no hesitation, of course, in pledging his assistance to the Ynfernael cause.

THE HEROES OF OLD AND THEIR GREAT DEEDS

In the year 481, Timmorran persuaded his friend Ashan the Elder to send forces to the defense of Talindon, reasoning that if Llovar could not be stopped there, he would bring war to Ghom in time. They arranged for an army of Sundermen to be assembled and a struck a deal with the fleet of Lorimor to sail them from Ghom to Lorimor and then up the Flametail River to join Falladir's forces. The plan took a full year to come to fruition, and in 482, Timmorran reinforced the alliance. His army began to mop up bands of raiders that were harrowing the farmlands of southeastern Talindon.

In 483, Timmorran's campaign began in earnest. With the consent of Falladir and Triamlavar, he ordered the allied army to split into two contingents, one commanded by himself and the other by the famed Sunderland general Waiqar Sumarion.

Timmorran sent Waiqar to relieve Thelgrim, which was once again besieged, and the task proved simple enough for the Sunderman (who was a proficient wizard as well as skilled military leader). By autumn, he had even grown bored with his duty and devised his own campaign against the forces of Farrenghast. This campaign proved a great success, and Waiqar's forces banished the undead horde.

In the meantime, Timmorran's force, now joined by Falladir and Triamlavar, sought out the Uthuk and their allies. At the Battle of the Burning Hills, they baited an army of Orcs into attacking their strong, elevated position, leading to a conclusive victory in which Timmorran struck down Chief Lukosh with his magic. Timmorran considered Orcs violent brutes, but he sensed that they had little love for the Ynfernael. He reckoned that the only reason Llovar could rely on his Orc allies was because of Lukosh's bloodthirsty brand of personal loyalty. Sure enough, the Orcs soon began to desert the Ynfernael cause and by 486 Llovar would no longer be able to call upon a single Orcish regiment.

Waiqar was keen to press the advantage, though Timmorran was more circumspect, advising that the allies consolidate their victories and concentrate on defeating Uthuk forces in southern Talindon. Regrettably, Waiqar would not heed this advice. He gathered a warhost and led them into the wastes of the Charg'r, directly to where Llovar was said to have raised a great Black Citadel from which he was directing his campaign.

Throughout 485, Timmorran continued to oversee the reconquest of Penacor lands, and his armies scattered the Uthuk before them. Timmorran found it hard to celebrate, however, for there was no news of what had become of Waiqar and his army. To all appearances, they had simply vanished into the Charg'r Wastes.

THE HOST OF THORNS

In the distant Ru Darklands, Llovar gathered his reserves. With the undead of Farrenghast eliminated and the Orcs of Lukosh routed to the Broken Plains, though, he could now only rely upon the dragons of Warlord Hellspanth as powerful allies. Still, the army of Llovar was so great that it was said to blacken the face of the world, and it was despairingly called the Host of Thorns. Llovar had split the forces into several contingents, each led by a trusted lieutenant. The names of these captains soon became bywords for wickedness and treachery: the dreaded bone-witch Q'aro Fenn; Melinesh the Cruel and Terrible; Nashaia King's Bane; and Kul the Serpent, otherwise known as the Viper, the greatest archer of the Uthuk. Even today, these names draw shudders when my fellow historians here in Greyhaven discuss the events.

In 487, the Host of Thorns invaded Talindon, sweeping all before them. On the Ashen Field, the Host fell upon an army led by King Falladir and his sons. They fought valiantly. A blow from King Falladir's sword nearly cleaved the head from Melinesh, while Prince Parren drove a lance through the heart of Nashaia. But Llovar had numbers, magic, and malice on his side, and by the end of the day, the three Penacors lay dead upon the field together with the soldiers who had pledged to follow their banner. A small group of ragged survivors, led by the noble young Baron Daqan, escaped the slaughter. Only the fury of a great tempest prevented Llovar from running the shattered survivors down. They could only ride off through the pelting rain to warn Timmorran of Llovar's renewed force.

THE LOCUST IS ENDED

Timmorran ordered his troops to regroup in the foothills of the Razor Crags. He chose a strategic location for a desperate stand, the flanks of his force protected on one side by the deep waters of Lake Clearstar and on the other by the sheer slopes of Mount Goltok.

While he waited for Llovar's Host of Thorns, Timmorran was astonished to hear reports of an army approaching from the rear. He and his troops were relieved to find that it was a force of Dwarves from Thelgrim. Halgir Son of Grom had finally talked the Dunwarr Deeplords into committing Dwarven troops to the war. This is well remembered in Dwarven history; my friend the sailor in Orris even brought it up after our fourth or fifth cup.

Llovar's troops arrived at dawn and threw themselves forward in waves, with frenzied Uthuk line-breakers and demonic beasts spearheading each blood-filled attack. The Battle of the Locusts had begun. The air was thick with arrows and bolts of magical power, and the Uthuk fell in droves, but still they came on. Kul led the third wave, concentrating on giving covering fire to his vanguard as they broke through to Timmorran's position.

Scything bone blades slashed at Timmorran, but King Triamlavar leapt before the charging Uthuk. While Triamlavar was distracted, Kul punched an envenomed arrow through the Elf king's belly. Enraged, Halgir Son of Grom challenged Kul to face his axe. For his bravery, the Deeplord's brains were pierced with a bodkin. Ashan the Elder then stepped up. Kul sent a barrage of shafts that perforated the Sunderman's lungs. These three sacrifices were not in vain, though, for Kul's efforts had exhausted him, and Timmorran survived the onslaught.

On learning that Kul's assault had been repulsed, Llovar called for Dire, his demonic steed whose harness was bedecked with the heads of freshly-fallen lords. The Locust Master called for Q'aro Fenn to join him with his remaining elite warriors. He acted quickly, trying to take advantage of the disorder around Timmorran's position caused by Kul's assault.

What Llovar had not anticipated was that Timmorran had been conserving his own magical energies for this very occasion. The two armies clashed once more, and the mountains themselves quailed as Timmorran and Llovar unleashed sorcerous energies of incredible potency. Llovar summoned forth Ynfernael monstrosities only for Timmorran to boil them away with blazing arcane light. Llovar's blade swung, ensorcelled with green flames and dripping black venom, but Timmorran shrouded himself within a shield of pure force and withstood its blows. Then, Timmorran stretched forth his hand, and a lance of the wizard's power pierced his uncle's rotten heart.

So Llovar fell. Dire fell alongside him, the terrible beast's body dissolving as its energies returned to the Ynfernael. I have to imagine this was a rather unnerving display, if my own limited experiences with the magic of the dark realm are anything to use as a standard. Then, rank by rank, the forces of the Host of Thorns turned and fled from the Broken Crags. The Battle of the Locusts was over; the First Darkness had passed.

In the ensuing chaos, Timmorran and Baron Daqan sought to control their forces, but fueled by desire for loot and revenge, their soldiers lost all discipline. They ran down the fleeing Uthuk and plundered their baggage train. By the time order was restored, the body of the Locust Lord was lost, and the fate of his lieutenants was unknown.

Some say that Q'aro Fenn rescued Llovar's corpse from the crags and took it to a secret place far beyond the Ru. If such a thing occurred, the resting place of the Locust Master must be a venerated monument to all who seek to curry the favor of Ynfernael forces. It is also said, though, that one may find Llovar's tomb if one can locate and follow the trail of Q'aro Fenn's bitter tears. The ultimate fates of Kul, Q'aro Fenn, and the Warlord Hellspanth are not known; it is a source of great regret that the allied soldiers did not keep better discipline, such that those villains would have faced final justice that day.

THE RISE AND FALL OF KING DAQAN

The realm of Talindon was left shattered, and the Penacor line extinguished. Timmorran thought to take advantage of the situation and attempt a new form of government inspired by the lands he had visited in his travels.

FORGING A NEW PEACE

The Lords of Talindon suggested that Baron Daqan accept the Penacor crown. Timmorran considered this reasonable and a suitable transitional step from Penacor rule to the sort of government he envisioned. He persuaded the baron to take the throne, but he also advised him to openly swear that he would have no heirs and would instead install a Council of Barons to govern after him.

Whether King Daqan exercised his own will or merely acted as Timmorran's puppet makes for much scholarly debate; I myself contend that Daqan and Timmorran simply held the same view and thus string-pulling wasn't needed. His coronation was held in 488, and Daqan was soon regarded as a confident and self-assured ruler.

THE RESCUE OF WAIQAR

Shortly after Daqan took the throne, Timmorran assembled an army and traveled deep into the Charg'r Wastes to discover the fate of Waiqar Sumarion. After nearly six months, they came upon the Black Citadel of Llovar and vanquished various horrors that dwelt therein. In a deep oubliette, amongst Llovar's many prisoners, they discovered the forlorn figure of a once-proud general.

Little is known of the details of the rescue of Waiqar, save that when Timmorran returned to Talindon, he urged King Daqan to forbid travel east into the those lands. He gathered every map that depicted the Charg'r Wastes and had them all destroyed.

TERRINOTH

As Daqan organized the rebuilding of the kingdom, many noted that the character of his society was different than that of the Penacor realm. Elves traveled the land openly, assisting in the rehabilitation of rural communities, and Dwarven engineers from Dunwarr directed the mining of rich deposits of iron found in the northern hills. This cosmopolitan flavor, and the increasing authority provided to the Council of Barons (to be known in more recent times as the Council of Thirteen due to its number), led to a new age of optimism and prosperity.

King Daqan, perhaps following Timmorran's instruction, gave a speech in which he declared himself unworthy of the Penacor name and stated that the realm of Talindon ought to pass into history with its rulers. He proposed a new name for the nation: Terrinoth, or "Land of Steel."

THE RU CAMPAIGN

Waiqar's recuperation took many months, and the signs of emaciation and neglect never left him. Once confident and brash, the general was now given to sullen moods. Timmorran beseeched him to command the army once again. To the rejoicing of his troops, Waiqar accepted.

The general's taste for recklessness had been wrung from him. He now favored a colder approach to warfare, yet he still managed to win glory for himself. When an Uthuk warlord named Da'Roul Bonesplicer marched from the Wastes, Waiqar commenced the Ru Campaign. He and his troops vanquished Da'Roul, and throughout Ru and the Darklands they annihilated the Uthuk camps. Daqan ordered the building of guard towers along the borders of the forbidden lands so that he could station patrols there to watch for signs of resurgent Uthuk. In the years since, the watchtowers have fallen into disuse, for the Uthuk had been utterly destroyed.

Yet, in the hour of his triumph, Waiqar scorned all praise. Instead of reveling in his victories, he complained to his captains of the complacency and arrogance of Timmorran, stating that had the wizard seen fit to augment their military efforts with magic, the lives of many brave soldiers could have been saved. I know Timmorran was his comrade and friend, but I cannot help to wonder if the great mage had inklings of Waiqar's turning personality as these insults became more vocal.

DAQAN'S REFORMS, THE COUNCIL OF BARONS, AND THE FOUNDING OF THE FREE CITIES

King Daqan never occupied the Penacor keep in its ancestral home of Tamalir. He drafted a charter by which the city's elders were granted both the keep and governance of the city. They were to be left largely independent, provided they abided by majority decisions of the Council of Barons, tithed the Council a portion of their taxes, and kept a standing force of soldiers for Tamalir's own protection and that of the realm. So it was that the greatest of Terrinoth's cities became the first of the Free Cities.

Daqan founded the great citadel of Archaut in a calm southern valley and placed at its center a great hall. At the beginning of every spring, Terrinoth's barons met there to accept King Daqan's hospitality and discuss matters of the realm. During one of these discussions, it was decided that Waiqar Sumarion would be elevated to the Council and granted lands in the northwest of Terrinoth, near the Misty Hills and marshes of the Karahesh. Many Sundermen, veterans of Waiqar's campaigns, settled in his barony, the thirteenth of the realm. Waiqar ruled justly, though he encouraged a militaristic culture and oversaw the training of a legion of warriors.

Not everyone was pleased with King Daqan's reforms. In particular, the Baron Ulon Heronglade held a number of reactionary opinions regarding kingship, and his opposition to Daqan often resulted in heated arguments.

TIMMORRAN'S PREOCCUPATIONS

Timmorran was often absent during this time, traveling widely throughout the world. He was becoming increasingly absorbed with the need to preserve his teachings and abilities for future generations, and he raised a village that would bo on to become a place of learning and study: Greyhaven. While he occasionally met with the barons at Archaut, he seemed preoccupied and soon retreated to the Tower of Meringyr, a tall keep he had ordered built in the remote Wizard's Vale for the purpose of magical research. The keep was, of course, named in tribute to Timmorran's old tutor, the great Sal Meringyr, whose ambition to tap the Verto Magica had become Timmorran's own.

THE MURDER OF KING DAQAN

In 513, King Daqan traveled to the southwestern reaches of Terrinoth to arbitrate a dispute between two barons. What had begun as a petty dispute about the borders of their neighboring realms had developed into a series of skirmishes, and King Daqan hoped to settle matters before bloody war broke out. He never arrived, and later, his crowned helmet was discovered near a lonely stretch of road. It seemed that King Daqan's party had been ambushed and slaughtered on their journey, their remains scattered by wolves.



In the cities of Terrinoth, it was whispered that the Bloodguard Knights had been hired to waylay and murder the king by none other than Baron Ulon Heronglade. Led by Waiqar, the Council took resolute action: it had Castle Heronglade razed to the ground and the baron seized. Ulon Heronglade never stopped protesting his innocence, even as he dangled from a cage from the gates of Archaut and slowly starved to death.

THE SECOND DARKNESS

The death of King Daqan set in motion the Second Darkness. Consider here that various people could have benefited from Daqan's demise, and while official records state that Baron Heronglade was justly found guilty, scholars argue that Waiqar Sumarion may have been the real culprit. After all, he soon used the situation to unleash evil upon Terrinoth.

An alternative explanation—one I recommend that you should be diplomatic about if you ever wish to suggest such a thing in public—would be to note that Timmorran also stood to gain much from the death of Daqan. After the regicide, those who had voiced opposition to the Council of Barons wished no association with Baron Heronglade, and they became markedly circumspect regarding political matters. The Council now ruled supreme.

Others suggest that, as his body was never recovered, King Daqan may not have been killed. I find this a comforting hope, for surely his return would be a glorious event that heralds a new golden age.

THE CREATION OF THE ORB OF THE SKY

Timmorran had become ever increasingly obsessed in his ambition to preserve his power for future generations. His dream was to create a reservoir of magical power so potent that wizards who came after him would be able to use it to power countless spells. This magic would be relatively easy to work, and run less risk of inviting any Ynfernael corruption.

He designed a powerful artifact, a huge crystalline sphere of pure magic to be called the Orb of the Sky, which would contain a portion of the Verto Magica's energy. At the Tower of Meringyr, Timmorran and his acolytes strove to create the Orb, and he invested so much of his own energy into the artifact that he grew visibly infirm.

Oh, to have seen this wondrous item! I have tried to describe it, but readers should know mere words are as lacking as an empty skin to a parched traveler. That much condensed power—my mind reels.



In 513, Timmorran made a fleeting public appearance at a memorial service for King Daqan held at Archaut. The wizard's emaciation was a source of shock to those present, and after he left, Waiqar worried aloud about the wizard's frailty and the trouble it would cause if the Orb fell into the wrong hands.

THE NIGHT OF BETRAYAL

The motives behind our history's most famous act of betrayal are known only to Waiqar Sumarion, though it is popularly supposed that he had been turned against Timmorran and civilized people while incarcerated and tortured in Llovar's dungeons. There in the Black Citadel, a darkness that had grown in the depths must have sprouted into the full bloom of hatred and violence. Waiqar now gathered troops to his barony in Terrinoth, claiming that only he could be trusted with the power of the Orb. As twilight fell on a cool autumn day in 515, a legion led by Waiqar launched an assault on the Wizard's Vale. His soldiers were well prepared to storm the keep, using an iron-bound ram to shatter the gates. They slew the guards and put Timmorran's apprentices to the sword.

As Waiqar and his warriors neared Timmorran's workshop, the wizard realized his folly in making the Orb. He cast spells of unbinding and hurled the crystal sphere to the steel floor of the forge so powerfully that it shattered. Using magic, he channeled the myriad pieces into an enchanted velvet pouch. This he placed in the safekeeping of Lumii Tamar, foremost of the acolytes who studied at Meringyr. Timmorran had Lumii swear that he would distribute the fragments of the Orb throughout the world, entrusting each only to a being he deemed wise enough to use it.

Through a quite unprecedented act of high magic, Lumii slipped past the terrible forces that laid waste to the Vale, and all but a single fragment went with him. Waiqar and his bodyguard burst into the workshop, and the vile baron was enraged to find that the Orb had been destroyed. Timmorran was exhausted from his efforts, and it was a simple matter for Waiqar to slay the defenseless wizard who was once his friend. Surely the foulest act to ever occur in our lands, at least in my eyes.

Waiqar grasped the one piece of the Orb he could find, lifting it from the dead hands of the great wizard. He vowed to hunt down the remaining fragments, to take no rest until he possessed every last piece of the Orb. He swore that anyone who sought to deny him so much as the tiniest sliver would face his murderous wrath.

Such was the dire weight of that oath, and perhaps so volatile were the magical energies that had been unleashed in the destruction of the Orb, that through his vow, Waiqar summoned into being a great tempest that lashed the Wizard's Vale with a freezing and poisonous rain. The lives of those who stood within sight of Meringyr were snuffed out by the vow's utterance. Yet the dead did not rest easy. Waiqar Sumarion, now Waiqar the Undying, left the Wizard's Vale at the head of a fearful column of shambling corpses, the Deathborn Legion.

LUMII TAMAR CONCOCTS A PLAN

Waiqar returned to his lands, referred to now as the Cursed Barony. The northwest of Terrinoth had always been a forbidding place of misty moorland and sucking slough. After the Night of Betrayal, though, it darkened even more, becoming continually shrouded in dense, dank fog through which sunlight would not penetrate.

It took time for the news to reach the other barons. During the Council of 516, they struggled to piece together the rumors they had heard. They were troubled by reports of fearsome undead raiders that harried the lands around Waiqar's barony, and they were concerned that messengers they had sent to contact Waiqar had not returned.

As they conferred, a shrouded stranger arrived at Archaut, claiming to be a survivor of the slaughter in the Wizard's Vale. As he bore nothing more offensive than a velvet pouch, he was permitted to address the Council, and so, Lumii Tamar was able to give his account of Waiqar's betrayal.

Incensed by this news, the young and impetuous Baron Irehythe seized the empty chair reserved for Waiqar at the Council table, intending to fling it from the hallway window. As he strained to lift the chair, he succumbed to a shrieking fit and fell to the floor, seized by searing pain and nightmarish visions before he passed away. He left no heirs and, as none of his subjects dared to brave a similar fate, his barony died with him.

In the wake of the discussion and Irehythe's tragic death, Tamar Lumii suggested that the fragments of the Orb he carried, which he referred to as the Stars of Timmorran, be kept secret and safe. The Council of Barons granted Lumii the authority to create and head an order of wizards tasked with protecting the Stars and advising on matters regarding them. Lumii, and the Stars, pass from history at this moment.

If only they had remained there. But so much of the historical accounts of which I have written, I fear, is filled with those terrible words. "If only."

DEATH CULTS, A HIDDEN WAR

The remaining Barons of Terrinoth prepared for war with Waiqar, mustering their forces in the lands around the mist-wreathed barony. Waiqar, however, was cunning. I believe many of his opponents in this war forgot the martial skills he displayed while alive, concentrating only on his current unnatural abilities. He, too, had been gathering his forces, but he had also sent an agent to the Free City of Tamalir who would cause untold mischief.

Certain rumors suggest that Zarihell had been liberated from the dungeons of the Black Citadel alongside Waiqar after the First Darkness, although no official records state such a thing. Most agree that she was an Elf of a mysterious lineage as well as surpassing persuasive ability, and that this no doubt contributed to the ease with which she spread Waiqar's message. In Tamalir, she established the first of the Death Cults of Waiqar, which promised liberation both from corrupt baronial rule and, ultimately, from mortality itself. As the armies of Terrinoth closed in on Waiqar, the cult in Tamalir instigated a destructive riot in the city.



The Barons of Terrinoth were now vexed. Should they continue to commit their military assets to containing and confronting Waiqar, or should they work instead to quell the unrest in Tamalir?

Day after day, the Barons and their armies watched the borders of Waiqar's land for signs of activity. And day after day, they received only new reports of chaos and murder in the Free City. In the early days of autumn, the Barons tired of watching nothing more than shifting banks of fog drifting from the sullen moors of Waiqar's realm. They turned their armies around and marched toward Tamalir.

THE SCOURGE

Waiqar seized the opportunity. His armies marched forth and laid waste to the surrounding regions, but unlike the rampaging hordes of the Uthuk Y'llan, he and his armies had a purpose. Waiqar did not simply wish to conquer and despoil; instead, he fixed on the goal of finding and acquiring the Stars of Timmorran. While his legions plundered towns and farmsteads for weapons and the fresh, raw materials for new undead soldiers, Waiqar directed them to take specific people prisoner, drag them back to his lands, and interrogate them for news of the Stars.

By the time the Barons arrived at Tamalir, the death dult there had vanished. Waiqar's agents had abandoned the city. They had begun to travel throughout Terrinoth, establishing new cells of the death cult wherever they came to rest. Now that Waiqar and his armies were on the move, the leaders of the cults kept in communication with the captains of the Deathborn Legion. In particular, Waiqar's two chief lieutenants—Zarihell, who organized cult activity (though rumors have this as something she perhaps deigned to do more for her own benefit or amusement), and Ardus Ix'Erebus, who directed the movement of troops on the field—coordinated their efforts expertly. Between them, they ensured that every major action taken by the Deathborn Legion occurred in concert with riots in one or more of Terrinoth's cities.

The barons chased after Waiqar. Their combined forces might have been enough to shatter the Deathborn Legion, but Waiqar, still a superlative strategist, always managed to avoid conclusive engagements. Life in the cities became so perilous that citizens left them in droves, and a number of refugees soon set up a rough camp by the banks of the Flametail River. This position was advantageous, as it allowed supplies from Lorimor to easily reach the camp. Soon, the camp gained the name Dawnsmoor, perhaps as the refugees began to see some glimmer of hope for their future. Dawnsmoor became a bustling settlement, and its residents began raising permanent buildings among the tents and shacks.

At the Battle of Ramscrossing, a force led by Baron Jerem Camford was ambushed by undead cavalry as Camford's force negotiated a swollen river. The baron ordered a retreat back to his own lands, but a Deathborn force led by Ardus Ix'Erebus harried his forces so brutally that when they finally regrouped, they were in no state to defend their lands. The Deathborn Legion soon fell on the Barony of Camford in force. It was utterly ravaged, and the baron and his heirs were slaughtered.

Waiqar came upon the knowledge that the Stars of Timmorran were in the keeping of the newly formed Lumii Order. He focused on Archaut, both as the capital of Terrinoth and also a likely location for the Order, but it was well defended and resistant to the influence of the death cults. Thus, Waiqar turned his attention to weakening the baronies through plunder and destruction, and for six years, the Deathborn Legion scourged the lands of Terrinoth.

A COALITION FORMED AND VICTORY WON

One spring morning, the growing settlement of Dawnsmoor was bathed in a bright sunshine of unseasonable intensity. A boat arrived at the makeshift harbor that had been dug into the riverbank, and a stranger walked onto the quay. He introduced himself as Kellos and claimed he was a holy man. He said that he had studied a magical tradition that had mastered fire and vitality, and he worked miracles of healing among the refugees of Dawnsmoor. Wherever there were enemies, the burning hand of Kellos was also there with righteous flames.

Within weeks, Kellos was the central figure of a burgeoning cult. He had an eye for recognizing magical potential in his acolytes, and soon he was surrounded by a bevy of priests who could perform minor versions of his own miracles. In particular, many claimed Kellos himself had recovered from death. According to his followers, he was once struck down by an assassin's blade and languished in death for days before arising again. After this tale became widespread, Kellos was spoken of not merely as a holy man, but as a divine being.

Kellos was able to free the baronial forces from the need to guard the cities of Terrinoth. He and his priests concentrated on locating the ringleaders of the death cults and executing them. He also sent envoys to beseech the Latari Elves and Dunwarr Dwarves for assistance against Waiqar.

Once more, the Elves and Dwarves mustered their own forces to aid Terrinoth. The combined might of the allied armies proved too much for the Deathborn Legion. Waiqar could not avoid open battle against so many foes, and while he could summon more Reanimates from the fallen warriors, he could not do so quickly without another Star to power his necromancy. Soon, the numbers of the Deathborn Legion dwindled, and in 521, they were forced to retreat back to the Cursed Barony.

The allies celebrated victory over Waiqar. They sought to honor Kellos for his invaluable assistance, but the holy man had disappeared as mysteriously as he had arrived. According to his devout followers, he sought new foes to defeat and would gather new followers elsewhere to assist him in his noble endeavors. He still travels the world to this very day, it is said, and those in Vynelvale patiently await his eventual return to Terrinoth.

I myself do not know if this is the true origin of Kellos, whom so many worship in our times, but we do know the power and sanctity of his priests. Once in my travels I witnessed one raise a fallen comrade back to life. Many others have spoken in our halls here at Greyhaven of similarly impressive feats. If this is indeed the god's beginning, it is a fine one indeed. For readers those interested in learning more, a visit to Vynelvale is certainly in order.



THE RISE OF THE ELDER KINGS

Waiqar Sumarion was defeated, but not destroyed. Within the mist-shrouded borders of his barony sat the dreaded fortress of Zorgas, modeled on the Black Citadel, within which he had languished as a prisoner. The leaders of Terrinoth erected a series of towers from which to keep watch over the borders of the Cursed Barony. However, they were mindful of the expense that had been lavished previously on the towers that overlooked the eastern wastes, towers they had yet to benefit from. The new towers were far more modest constructions, staffed by a meager body of guards.

A WOUNDED NATION HEALS

Waiqar launched no further invasion, but he still posed a threat, and he had wreaked awful damage upon Terrinoth. Where once there had been seventeen baronies, now there were fourteen, one of those being Waiqar's cursed realm. The lands that had previously been the possessions of Barons Heronglade, Camford, and Irehythe were shared among the neighboring nobles, leading to a particular extension of the borders of Soulstone lands.

As time passed and a feeling of security began to return to Terrinoth, the Stars of Timmorran began to emerge from the places in which Lumii and his followers had hidden them. They slowly made their way into the treasuries of barons and the laboratories of wizards, and they were used in the workings of magical wonders. Some Stars of Timmorran even made their way to the Courts of the Latari, the Deeplord Halls of Dunwarr, and the Throne Room of the Lorimor Empire.

THE RISE OF THE FREE CITIES

In the wake of the destruction caused by the Second Darkness, more cities throughout Terrinoth received the status of Free City. The barons initially resisted these developments, but they had lost face due to their indecisive actions during the Second Darkness. If they could not defend the cities, the cities would ensure their own protection. In time, Frostgate in the far north, Greyhaven with its famed university, the southern town of Riverwatch and its skilled riders, Vynelvale with its many followers of Kellos, and forbidding Nerekhall, were all granted charters modeled on that which was granted to Tamalir. Even Dawnsmoor, while still largely a settlement of shacks, commanded enough influence to be deemed a Free City.

Despite their waning influence, the Daqan Lords of this period oversaw increasing prosperity and freedom. The Dunwarr Dwarves shared in this good fortune, and they built many great mining colonies and strongholds across the mountainsides of the land.

THE USURPER KING

In the early decades of the tenth century, infighting began to plague Terrinoth. The barons, while presenting the outside world with a united face, schemed against one another. Many of them sought to increase their own power by acquiring Stars of Timmorran for themselves or luring away talented sorcerers who were central to the glory of their rivals' courts. Cooperation between the barons ground to a halt, and other than funding patrols to guard against resurgent enemies, they no longer pooled resources in the way King Daqan had hoped and encouraged for them to do.

In 936, hostilities reached such a point that the barons turned to warring with each other. These battles were cautious affairs, for the barons still felt it necessary to garrison Terrinoth against its many enemies, but sometimes a barony would send a portion of its military forces to attempt to conquer a neighboring barony. Then, in 941, Baron Cedrick Soulstone claimed the Kingdom of Terrinoth, dominating his rivals through a carefully orchestrated synergy of military action, political intrigue, and popular support. In particular, Soulstone promised a more open attitude with regard to the Stars of Timmorran, promising his allies and people that, were he to be made king, he would encourage more open and widespread use of those artifacts.

The members of the Council of Barons were unanimous in their opposition to Baron Soulstone, but he had the support of the Church of Kellos, the guildmasters and other leaders of the Free Cities, and the populace at large. Grudgingly, the other barons withdrew their opposition, and Soulstone held a lavish coronation in Vynelvale's Grand Cathedral of Kellos.

King Soulstone became known as the Usurper King, for he soon abolished the Council of Thirteen and peacefully took over governance of the Free Cities. He still held councils with the other barons at Archaut, but he refused to sit in his old chair, taking for himself the massive throne that had sat empty since the death of Daqan. This move was seen as a grave insult to Daqan's memory. Even Soulstone's loyal supporters condemned him for this arrogance, claiming that the act invited ill fortune to Terrinoth. Whether they knew it or not, their words would prove true.

THE WAGES OF GREED AND COMPLACENCY

Under Cedrick Soulstone's rule, the degree of secrecy and security that had surrounded the ownership and use of the Stars of Timmorran broke down. They were traded for gold and used to engineer many public works and spectacles. Many of these still exist today, though sadly most are in poor states of repair or are only blackened ruins.

King Cedrick Soulstone passed away from a fever in 954. The new monarch, King Rhys Soulstone, shared his father's taste for pageantry and shows of wealth. He planned a number of extravagant castles and holdfasts, the ruins of which can still be found throughout the country.

The extravagant use of the Stars saw all manner of miracles performed, including many feats of engineering, medicine, landscaping, and even statecraft. The ruling Soulstone line became especially adept in their use. Eleanor II, for example, was as renowned for her amethyst Star as she was for her exceptional battlefield prowess in the Great Goblin Uprising of 997. Her serene yet stern image can still be seen in the many gold coins minted during her days.

This wondrous period of history is known by many names. To some, it is the Time of the Elder Kings, a reminder that during this period, the lands of Elves, Dwarves, and Humans flourished. Trade and cooperation between the Dunwarr, the Latari, the Lorimor Empire, and Terrinoth peaked, and the treasuries of these nations grew fat with the profits of commerce and innovation.

Yet, in accomplishing such feats the seeds of catastrophe were planted, for overt use of the powerful and desirable objects gained the attention of a terrible foe. The Latari Elves do not refer to the Time of the Elder Kings, and I think their own name is, sadly, more appropriate. They call this time "The Days before the Dragons."



THE THIRD DARKNESS

The Kingdom of Terrinoth, the Dwarves of the Dunwarr Mountains, the Latari of the Aymhelin, and the Lorimor Empire had all grown wealthy from, and entirely dependent upon, the Stars during this time. These lands began to be referred to collectively as the Fair Realms, reflecting the fact that mutual standards of civilized behavior, rule of law, military alliance, and appreciation of wonder were shared between the peoples. Although denizens of Terrinoth might find life among the Elves difficult due to their aloof arrogance and inscrutable philosophies, or might abhor Dunwarr life for its grimy claustrophobia and bland food, they would be able to live in either place nevertheless.

However, the Time of the Elder Kings, along with all its times of harmony and seemingly easy prosperity, was about to come to a violent and terrible end.

DAWN OF THE DRAGON WARS

In 1024, several hordes of dragons invaded Terrinoth from Molten Heath far to the northeast. Their fiery arrival heralded the Third Darkness. These dragons were motivated by greed, for having heard so many tales of the Stars in common use for so long, they decided to win them for themselves. Margath the Unkind, Levirax, Baalesh, Zir the Black, Avox, and Gehennor each led a band of lesser drakes to attack a different part of the world. While these attacks were almost simultaneous, the dragonlords were not initially in alliance with one another, and they even sent portions of their hordes to attack the forces of rival dragonlords if they strayed too close. They were each simply out to collect as many Stars as they could.

The appearance of the dragon hybrids confirmed this approach, as these creatures were previously not seen in Terrinoth. They are said to have been the offspring of a being known as the Wyrm Queen, though some Greyhaven scholars (such as myself) hold that they are the result of cruel experimentations or forbidden magics. That they are the spawn of dragons is clear from their form. They have long snouts filled with sharp teeth, snaking tails, and thick scales that cover their flesh. In stature they are similar to Humans, albeit taller and more heavily muscled. Unsurprisingly, as they are kin to dragons, some hybrids have wings and some breathe fire, though not all do. As they are also kin to Humans, some hybrids also made deadly use of armor and weaponry.

Swarms of these hybrids accompanied their larger cousins in the invasion, and their presence gave the forces of dragons a degree of tactical flexibility they had lacked in times past.

The people of Terrinoth had faced dragons before, for during the time of the First Darkness, the drakes of Hellspanth had proved deadly. Yet, while those drakes had been terrible foes, they had been lacking in numbers. Before the start of the Third Darkness, an organized defense centered on heavy missile fire, dispersed formations, and support from massed pikemen was thought to effectively counter a dragon attack, and such formations were recommended in a number of military treatises.

THE END OF THE USURPER'S LINE

While the armies of the Uthuk Y'llan had rampaged across Talindon with few goals beyond those of plunder and destruction, and while Waiqar's Deathborn Legion had taken years to locate a number of the Stars he craved, the Dragonlord Margath knew from the outset of his campaign what he wanted and where to get it. He too hungered for the Stars of Timmorran, and while they could be found throughout the world, a great cache of them was held in the treasury of King Trevnor Soulstone, who kept his court in the Free City of Tamalir.

So it was to Tamalir that the dragon host flew, pausing only at isolated villages to reprovision (for which dragons is a euphemism for eating everything and anyone they could lay their claws on). At the walls of the city, the dragons faced little opposition. The dragon hybrids descended on towers and artillery positions that would have troubled the larger drakes, and the drakes in turn incinerated infantry forces sent to slay the hybrids. It is said that Margath himself broke into the royal palace and burned the king to charred meat, along with his family and retainers. Terrinoth was left without a ruler once more, and the dragons gathered up the riches from the palace treasury, including a sizable cache of the Stars of Timmorran.

THE RUNES ARE WRITTEN

As the wars dragged on, the dragons' greed for more Stars only increased, and in their desperation, they were even willing to turn the Stars they had in their possession into weapons of war with which they could win even greater hoards of plunder. According to some accounts, it was the Dragonlord Zir who first broke down some of the Stars into smaller fragments and inscribed runes upon them. This process involved the use of dragonfire to soften the Star, and the incredible sharpness of her own claws to inscribe the mark.

This transformed a Star of Timmorran, in itself an unstable magical artifact that could be used by a trained magician to perform all manner of magical spells, into a runebound shard, a smaller, stable artifact that could be used by a bearer with no magical knowledge to cast a particular spell.

As you may recall, Elven myths attest to the creation of the physical realm through the words of the Yrthwrights. My Runemaster colleagues at Greyhaven suspect that the carved runes are the dragons' representations of the Yrthwrights' words. Some of these runes are known as dragon runes, which are thought to have the name of the dragonlord who inscribed the rune incorporated into them. Make of this what you will; I, however, trust my learned colleagues in this matter.

The immediate effect of this work was to transform Margath's host from a formidable army into one that was nigh unbeatable. Now, the dragon hybrids that formed the vanguard of an assault could carry with them runebound shards that made their armor impervious to missile fire, and mighty drakes could teleport short distances and leach energy from their foes in order to heal their own injuries.

THE DRAGONS TURN TO WANTON SLAUGHTER

Margath was so confident in the power the runebound shards provided his forces that he no longer bothered to manage his horde as a coherent entity. Instead, his forces fractured, and each dragonlord led a smaller pack of its own. These raiding armies swooped upon the realms of the Elves, Dwarves, and Humans, burning and ravaging as they went with no discernible battle strategy. The aim of the dragons at this time becomes less clear, for while they continued to search for Stars with which to create more runebound shards, they also seemed to acquire a taste for slaughter for its own sake. Even the Orcs of the Broken Plains suffered from the depredations of the dragons, despite the fact that not a single Star of Timmorran had ever been in their possession.

A force of dragons led by Gehennor took to persecuting the Dunwarr Dwarves in particular. His dragon hybrids made assaults into the cavernous halls of the Dunwarr Deeps, while the larger dragons ambushed any forces sent to reinforce the beleaguered defenders. As bad as these raids were, they were as nothing to his final, devastating attack later in the war.

Dwarves also suffered terribly at the hold of Yrthwright's Forge. This city was a desirable prize for the dragons, as volcanic fires burned within the depths of the mountain. Not only did the heat from this blaze power industry and mining works throughout the city, but the volcanic vents provided a comforting habitat for the dragons, as if the area were a little portion of Molten Heath nestled within the heart of the continent. The Dragonlord Avox led the assault on the city. He enslaved the Dwarves and forced them to dig deep into the mountains, reserving for himself the riches they found. The dragons roved the countryside around the hold, abducting Human from nearby villages to join the slaves in the mines.

The Latari came to the unfortunate attention of the Dragonlord Baalesh and her hybrid brood. The dragons burned the Lithelin gate and laid siege to the silver palace of Caelcira. The Elves were better able to weather an assault than the Dwarves. Their archers shot at the attackers' small groups from hidden positions that were hard for the dragons to locate and burn. Even with the protection granted by the runebound shards, the hybrids suffered heavy losses, and when they fell, the Elves were quick to capture the runes and work out how to use them.

And thus Caelcira, the silver palace, remained unbowed. The dragons inflicted terrible suffering on the Elves, but they took heavy losses in return and never overran the Aymhelin as they did Tamalir and Thelgrim.

Farther afield, dragon forces harried the skies of Lorimor, though the Imperial army was quick to construct a great array of ballistae around their cities, with which they repelled the worst of the dragon attacks. Across the sea, even the cities of Al-Kalim came under attack by dragon forces.



SEEKING THE FAVOR OF THE DRAGONLORDS

In the years following Margath's invasion, many enemies of Terrinoth allied themselves to his cause. The first of these, perhaps predictably enough, was Waiqar the Betrayer, who dispatched columns of undead warriors to aid the dragons. What he hoped to gain by this remains a mystery, but I speculate that he was less interested in aiding the dragons so much as desperate to find Stars of Timmorran for himself before they were all broken down and refined by Zir's process. Perhaps the Undying thought the dragons might repay him with an unbroken Star of Timmorran, or a cache of runebound shards. Perhaps he merely sought to wreak revenge on the lands of the barons who had humiliated him in times past. Some even believe Waiqar himself was the cause of the dragon war, having planted word of the Stars and their use across the Heath to attract Margath's attention.

The mysterious Bloodguard Knights also reappeared at this time, lending their lances to the dragons' cause. Quite who these terrible warriors are and why they seem to appear throughout history is unclear. In the earliest days of Penacor rule, King Arcus had vanquished a band of reavers operating under such a name, and the murder of King Daqan has also been attributed to them, among other atrocities.

Whether the Bloodguard Knights who harried Terrinoth during the Third Darkness held anything more than name in common with this ancient threat is not known. It is safe to say that they were committed to wickedness, equipped in the manner of elite heavy cavalry, and happy to fight for the reward of runebound shards. Even some corrupt Terrinoth lords were tempted to throw their lot in with the dragonlords for a similar reward.

The dragons sorely needed such allies, for despite the dragons' great strength, they risked losing a battle of attrition due to their low numbers. Once again, Dwarves, Elves, and Humans began to coordinate a defense against the darkness.

AN ALLIANCE AT SUDANYA

During a cold winter's day in 1028, a meeting was held in the village of Sudanya, nestled near the borders of the Ru. Winter was considered an advantageous time to organize efforts against the dragons. The cold weather turned the reptilian beings sluggish and drowsy, and they spent the sunless months consolidating their victories and conserving their strength.

At Sudanya, representatives from Terrinoth met with those from Dunwarr, the Aymhelin, and the Lorimor Empire to discuss strategy, and for the first time in Terrinoth's history, Orc chieftains from the Broken Plains also joined the conclave. The Orcs were in an unusual position: they desperately needed help facing the threat posed by the dragons, but they were widely distrusted due to the part they had played in aiding Llovar during the First Darkness, and for the many raids they had carried out on neighboring lands in the centuries since. Before being invited to the conclave, the chiefs from a number of important Orcish tribes swore powerful oaths that they would never raise arms against the Fair Realms again. I cannot relate any occurrences of them violating these oaths in the years since, despite several unconfirmed accounts.

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

The allies coordinated their counterattacks, taking advantage of the dragons' lack of numbers and inability to respond to threats on numerous fronts. Thanks to these efforts, the dragons faced increasing pressure, and their campaigns suffered unexpected setbacks. Fortunately for the other races, some of the runebound shards had also been captured in battle or stolen from dragon lairs. Now the allies had the means to fight back on the magical front as well.

The Dragonlord Gehennor, in what turned out to be an overly confident action, gathered a small force of dragon hybrids and launched a subterranean campaign against the Dwarves of the Jornall Clan. However, he found his hybrid warriors repulsed at tremendous cost. The arrival of Orc reinforcements caught him completely by surprise as well, and he was forced to retreat with what was left of his hybrids.

While this was heralded as a major victory for the Dwarves and their new Orc allies, they would soon face terrible devastation at the mountains of Dunwarr. Gehennor had learned from his errors under the Jornall range, and with a larger contingent of hybrids he would later be victorious.

The Terrinoth noble Lady Ysbet led an army to Yrthwright's Forge and orchestrated a brilliant series of tunnel fights that ended in her slaying the Dragonlord Avox. The slaves there hailed her as a savior and asked her to become governor of Forge (after the depredations of the dragons, the inhabitants brooked no association with the Yrthwrights), now envisioned as a new Free City.

In northeastern Terrinoth, the dragons suffered the most decisive defeat of their campaign. They had fallen upon the city of Kell, rumored to contain a number of Stars of Timmorran. However, the rumors were part of a ruse. No Stars were to be found in Kell, but the city was ringed with defensive redoubts containing ballistae of Lorimorian design. Leading the defense of Kell was none other than the bold adventurer Lord Roland, who had equipped himself with the tools needed to slay a dragonlord. He bore an ice storm runebound shard, with which he could summon freezing rain, and a rare soulstone runebound shard from the royal vaults in Archaut, which leached the life from his enemies and filled him with stolen vigor in turn. He was mounted upon a rare Yeron, one of the winged horses of the Elves.

As the dragons reeled from a hail of bolts and arrows, they retreated to the cold skies above the Mountains of Despair, out of reach of the deadly artillery fire. Lord Roland had anticipated this, and from his mountainside perch, he took to the air and used his runebound shard to call forth freezing rain on the position of Margath the Unkind.

The dragonlord was left dazed and weakened from the cold, and Lord Roland was able to drive his lance through the neck of the great drake. The valiant lord did not live to celebrate his victory, however, for in the dragonlord's death throes, Margath broke the wings of Roland's Yeron. Horse and rider tumbled from the sky to their deaths. The people of Kell hailed a great victory, but with heavy hearts. In the years to come, the mountainsides would be combed for the remains of Lord Roland and Margath, but no bodies have ever been recovered from the snow-shrouded peaks.

Hungry to win a victory in turn, King Aanir of the Latari organized a massive sally from the silver palace of Caelcira. Under cover of darkness, he led a spearhead of Leonx Riders into the heart of the encamped foe. Unfortunately for the king, his charge did not prove the decisive action he had hoped, and before his cavalry could regroup, he was pinned to the ground by the Dragonlord Baalesh and devoured.

Baalesh consolidated her own forces in the aftermath of this battle, and she judged that the Elven defenders were now so weakened that she could finally storm the silver palace and end the siege. Before she could act, however, Baalesh was called away by a message from Zir the Black, who demanded that she reinforce the Dragonkin under attack in Terrinoth rather than attempt to storm Caelcira.

DESTRUCTION IN THE DEEPS

The Dwarven sailor spoke bitterly about the War of Fire, but true hatred filled her voice when she remembered the Third Darkness. As Terrinoth burned, she said, the Dragonlord Gehennor attacked the Dunwarr Mountains and sent his armies of dragon hybrids deep into the very halls of the Dunwarr Deeps. Filled with fury at their ancient foe's return, the Deeplords led a counter-assault against the draconic horde. On the slopes of Felfrost Spike, the Deeplord brothers Bran and Ordan faced Gehennor, only to perish against the dragon's claws. Their cousins tried to reclaim their bodies, only to themselves burn.

So died the last of a line of Dwarven rulers stretching back to the dawn of their history. I believe this led to the ascension of the guilds in the aftermath of the Third Darkness, and that it is why the Dunwarr Dwarves elect their rulers from among their guild elders. None of the Dwarves I've spoken to believe the blood of the Deeplords still runs in their people, and this makes their hatred of dragons eternal.

SHAARINA'S JUDGEMENT

By 1029, the armies of the dragonlords were greatly diminished. Those cities of Terrinoth that had not been burned to the ground were now ringed with so many archers and artillery emplacements that no dragons dared approach them. The Bloodguard Knights had vanished as mysteriously as they had appeared, and Waiqar the Betrayer sent no further regiments of shambling Reanimates from his Cursed Barony. Zir the Black and her battered force of drakes and hybrids roamed the wilds of Terrinoth, hiding alongside their stolen hauls of treasure.

Then came a sight that chilled the hearts of the allies: a great host of mighty dragons swooping over the land. Drakes dwarfing even the dragonlords in size, escorted by teeming flocks of other Dragonkin, darkened the skies of Terrinoth. I have to imagine many thought the end had arrived, and soon a final, fiery death would come. The dragon host flew from the Molten Heath in the north, heading for Zir's last known lair.

The allies held an emergency conclave, drafting plans for how to deal with the renewed threat. Certain craven lords even suggested negotiating surrender, though no red-blooded being would countenance such a thing. Life lived under the cruel yoke of a dragonlord, whose only concern about their slaves is how much wealth they can produce or how they might taste as a meal, is a life I would not consider worth living.

Within days, reports came in suggesting that those same dragons that had appeared to be fresh reinforcements for Zir's army were now flying back to the Heath, carrying in their claws piles of the treasure that had been looted from the cities of the Fair Realms. To all accounts, the newcomers had not troubled the people of Terrinoth, and they had devoured not even so much as a sheep during their sojourn.

In time, the site of a terrible act of violence was discovered in the wilds. Orc scouts found the bodies of Zir the Black and hundreds of lesser Dragonkin, torn apart and burned. We at Greyhaven suspect that the actions of Margath and the other dragonlords had not met with the consent of the Great Dragon Rex Shaarina. After much contemplation, she and her court had acted to end the Third Darkness by executing those who had taken part in the invasion and claiming the plunder they had amassed for her own hoard.

By all accounts, Shaarina the Rex still lives on the Molten Heath, and she must own a priceless haul of bound and unbound shards, unbroken Stars, and as other magical riches from the Time of the Elder Kings. Periodically, particularly brave adventurers present themselves as envoys to the Dragonkin, seeking both an explanation of the events of the Third Darkness and opportunities to engage in trade. They typically end up inside the belly of a drake, but some come back telling tales of the Dragonlord Rex's displeasure at the wanton excesses of the Elder Kings and the abuse of power not meant for mortals.

Tales are also told of how lesser dragons inhabit lonely mountain caves or moorland lakes, survivors of the Third Darkness who escaped the wrath of Shaarina. Some even claim to have conversed with such dragons, and they say the dragons confirm the tales of those of beings who have won an audience with Dragonlord Rex. On very rare occasions, a dragon hybrid attempts to pass itself off as a civilized creature, earning a place among mercenary cohorts or adventuring bands. How such misbegotten things are suffered to live is beyond my understanding, for even true dragons appear to find them offensive.

The ultimate fate of the Dragonlords Baalesh, Levirax, and Gehennor is not recorded in any scrolls to be found. A most worrisome note on which to end this account, I fear.

THE AGE OF LORIMOR

Terrinoth was a wounded land after the Third Darkness, and many of its great cities were left in smoldering ruins, including, Thelsvan, Tamalir, and Archaut. The Soulstone Kings, who had been compassionate rulers for all of their hubris, were dead and gone.

REBUILDING TERRINOTH

The Council was reestablished. In the times following the Third Darkness, the Barons of Terrinoth who sat upon the Council (now of Thirteen) would often be referred to as the Daqan Lords, and they had a great challenge ahead of them.

The nation was impoverished. Treasuries had been emptied by the dragons, and those funds that had remained had been spent on the war effort. While Terrinoth would endure, its influence waned. The rubble was cleared from city streets, but the cities were mere shadows of their grandeur in the days of the Elder Kings. The countryside became plagued with bandits, goblins, and worse. The cities were claimed by new lords: merchants, guilds, and the greedy gangs that sprang up around them.

LORIMOR'S STAR ASCENDANT

While the dragons had ravaged the lands of the Lorimor Empire, Lorimor's great cities had largely weathered their assaults, thanks to the invention of particularly powerful ballistae and the buffer that was Terrinoth separating Lorimor from the Molten Heath. While swaths of the countryside and certain city quarters had been consumed by dragonfire, enough remained to ensure that a thorough renewal of Lorimor was imminent. The rebuilding of Lorimor was overseen by Emperor Viason I. Of the so-called Elder Kings and other rulers of this age, it was he alone who had survived the Third Darkness.

In the centuries following the Dragons Wars, Lorimor would not only recover, but flourish. Many migrants from Terrinoth, refugees from the devastation of the Third Darkness, moved to the peninsula, and soon new settlements were founded to house them all. Many fine civic works were set in place, for while Lorimor had possessed Stars of Timmorran, its people had never relied on them for construction as the Soulstone line had, and their masons and engineers had kept alive the skills and ambition to produce great works.

Expansionist ambitions saw Lorimor establish colonies on the coastlines of the Torue Albes and other far-flung places. Fleets of trading vessels reached distant Ghom, and Lorimor began to foster close ties with the Caliphate of Al-Kalim.

Viason I was a beloved monarch, and he took advantage of his celebrity through self-indulgent hedonism. While he never grew fat or gouty, he was to go down in history as one of the world's most fecund monarchs, and within a generation, his extended family made for a complex web of interwoven aristocracy. Palace intrigues and arguments over inheritance became a feature of Lorimor politics.

THE SUN SETS ON AN EMPIRE

In 1312, the Emperor Derisian IV of the noble House Harthorn delivered a speech from the balcony of his palace. A rousing orator, Derisian carefully crafted his words as a polemic condemning the manipulations of his second cousin, but disguised as both a eulogy for his recently deceased mother and an acknowledgment of the hard work performed by the humble citizens of the empire. As Derisian raised his arms to accept the crowd's thunderous ovation, a crossbow bolt stuck him through the heart. The assassin was never apprehended, although rumor has it that Derisian's sister, Deliana, who had helped him draft the speech, also hired his killer.

The case for suspecting Deliana rests on her subsequent behavior. Derisian left an heir, but Emperor Viason III was still in his cradle, leaving Deliana regent until he came of age. From the outset of her rule, she was pronounced "more murderess than empress" and, while no hard evidence ever linked her to the assassination, she was subjected to widespread contempt.

In 1315, Viason III was seized by persons unknown. For more than a year, the fate of the young emperor was a mystery, until it was revealed that he was in the care of a distant uncle, much removed, who had an estate on one of the islands of the Torue Albes. While related, this uncle was allied with a rival noble line, that of House Varnii.

Deliana at once denounced her relative, calling him an abductor and a corrupter of children. For his part, the noble claimed he was the savior of Viason III, having rescued him from "a gang of pirates." The implication was not lost on Deliana. She began a military response, but Lorimor was spared civil war at this time, as the empress regent became intensely sick and died. A poisoner in the pay of House Varnii was suspected, but never proven.

Personally, I view all this as representing the disloyalty that led to the founding of this empire. Things like that ripple through the generations, after all, so I wasn't too surprised when I myself read of these rather squalid events involving the "royalty" to the west.

For the next century and a half, the noble houses quarreled over legitimacy and the need to redress historical grievances, and rather than funding civic works and feats of exploration as they had in the past, they squandered their treasuries in political pageantry and the buying of favors. Finally, in 1485, the inevitable came to pass. The competing factions gathered armies to their sides, and Lorimor's dynastic difficulties were settled in a ferocious civil war.

THE BATTLE OF RANTHOR BAY

For the next five years, the Lorimor Empire underwent tremendous strife and misery as families and communities tore each other apart based on their allegiances to the disputatious imperial factions. This came to an abrupt end in the nearby Torue Albes.

The sitting emperor, Gentias II of House Harthorn, possessed the advantage in that his faction was the most powerful, but the disadvantage in that were his enemies to form an allegiance against him, he would surely be overwhelmed. Gentias II is believed to have won the war more through his clever propaganda battle than military genius. He is said to have compromised a number of the messengers employed by his rivals and private enterprises, and to have tasked them with relaying a constant stream of deliberate misinformation regarding various factions' intentions and movements. At three points during the course of the civil war, armies clashed under the impression that they were fighting the forces of House Harthorn when, in fact, they were battling allied forces.



Finally, Gentias II brought the war to an end at the Battle of Ranthor Bay in 1490. At this time, his enemies amounted to three rebellious cousins, all with equally tenuous links to the throne. These cousins represented the interests of House Varnii, House Crosta, and House Ferastii. He convinced two of them that the third wished to combine their might in Ranthor Bay, a minor feature on the nearby island of Alben. In reality, his own force was encamped around the cliffs, and as his enemies landed and assembled their troops, he launched a surprise assault, burning their boats with magical fire as massed ranks of archers rained bolts on their soldiers.

By the battle's end, the head of House Crosta was dead, the head of House Varnii was in chains, and the head of House Ferastii, once news reached him, abandoned his cause and fled into exile. The Battle of Ranthor Bay marked the end of the war, but it is also considered the end of the Lorimor Age. The empire would endure, but would never dominate the continent as it had done in the past.

THE QUEENDOM OF THE TORUE ALBES

After the civil war ended, the focus of imperial power shifted away from strife and establishing colonies—most importantly, those in the Torue Albes—and back to the Lorimor peninsula. House Varnii's possessions on the nearby archipelago were liquidated by House Harthorn, and everything of value was lost, either pawned or looted for the benefit of the greater empire. The people of the islands began to curse their distant rulers.

In 1497, the first of a series of revolts took place. While House Varnii had been effectively destroyed, the remnants of older noble families and military dynasties emerged from the chaos, each making a play for control of the Torue Albes. By 1505, the self-proclaimed Grand Duke Consino had established himself as the ruler, having first won a victory against the small army belonging to House Harthorn, which had been sent to try to maintain Lorimor's interests in the area. He immediately set about repairing his reputation with his enemies, for he knew that if Lorimor were to turn its attention to the reconquest of the Torue Albes, it would be able to conclusively beat his remaining army.

To demonstrate his loyalty to Lorimor, Consino tried to arrange for the death of the famed mercenary captain Lutetia Dallia. She had conducted a brilliant campaign on Consino's behalf in order to win him the throne, but he was happy to sell her out if it meant gaining the favor of House Harthorn.

Lutetia survived several assassination attempts organized by Consino, and she managed to capture and interrogate one of her intended killers. She would not show him any mercy until he provided her with information about who had paid him. She then led a force of elite mercenaries to storm the Grand Duke's castle and threw him into his own deepest oubliette.

Lutetia then took the position of ruler of the Torue Albes for herself, naming the city for her line. In time, she would give birth to many sons and daughters and, wishing to keep control of the islands in the family, she established a strong system of royal rule that persists there. To this day, the rulers —especially the queens—of the Torue Albes are fierce in their independence and have a reputation for ruthless governance.

THE AGE OF COURAGE

Even as Lorimor rose and fell, Terrinoth struggled to slowly rebuild itself in the wake of the Third Darkness. The monumental task of restoring raised castles and replanting scorched fields was only compounded by how fractured and isolated the baronies found themselves. Each baron focused on their own lands and their own people, and as a result, generations were born, grew old, and died without seeing anything more than a frail echo of what had been. The magic of the shards that had fueled such wonders in the past were gone, now, and many had to reinvent the old ways of doing things.

It would take centuries to restore what had been lost, and such a momentous task was only compounded by the exodus of peoples to "fair" Lorimor. Many of Daqan's brightest leaders and most skilled artificers left their ravaged lands behind, and not a few Dwarves and Elves followed suit.

Those races faced similar struggles as well. Amongst the charred cinders of the Lithelin Gate, Aeoneth of the Latari had taken up his dead brother's crown. He set to work rallying an ancient and tired people driven to the brink of total destruction by the very creatures the First had named their wardens. Meanwhile, the Dunwarr Dwarves mourned the loss of not just their rulers, but their entire ruling line. An entire people suddenly found themselves leaderless and bereaved.

Lorimor itself withdrew and its Empire grew fractured, and much of Human civilization grew quiet. Trade between Terrinoth, Isheim, and the Sunderlands slowed as only a few brave captains would risk the pirates and monsters that plagued the seas. Even on land, traveling amongst Terrinoth's scattered cities became infrequent and risky. For each merchant caravan that made it safely to its destination, two more fell prey to bandits and goblins.

Soon, each barony became a small collection of hamlets and villages surrounded by trackless wilderness. Dust lay thick upon the Council chairs at Archaut, as the Daqan Lords traveled to convene the Council of Thirteen less and less frequently. Decades would pass between their meetings, and when they did, they were naught but broken men and women huddling together and mourning the passing of better days.

RISE OF THE GUILDS

Years before that fateful reconvening of the Council of Barons, the Dunwarr Dwarves began the long and slow process of restoring some shadow of their own former glory. After five centuries, the Dunwarr Deepholds had split and fractured much as our own baronies had, and each holdfast and fortress had dwindled into isolated communities ruled by whatever noble had some glimmer of legitimacy. This likely would have continued had not Ingunn Vergsbold, the head of the Masons' Guild in Thelgrim, set out to rebuild the long-destroyed portions of the city.

The Guild's work was slow to start, yet it continued without pause through the last decades of the 1500s, and in that time steadily grew in scope. Ingunn did not stop with reconstructing Thelgrim's destroyed districts. Calling upon the last of Thelgrim's nobles' wealth—what little had been hoarded and preserved through the Dragon Wars—the guilder worked with the Miners' Guild to link a great chasm between Thelgrim and the Hearth Road that led to the outside world. By then, the Merchants' Guild had partnered with the Miners' and Explorers' Guilds to reestablish ties with the other Dunwarr holds. As each road in the Deeps reopened, trade and travel increased, and the power of the guilds grew.

Yet, many lords refused to invest their painfully scrimped gold, too wary to lose what little they had left. When trade along the Hearth Road finally blossomed, these lords lost out on the profits. Many of these pauper-lords lost their estates in Thelgrim to the expansion of the guilds, but they have not forgotten their past, and even now they plot in the shadows of far-off holds, dead-set on clawing their way back to the top or, at the very least, getting their revenge against the Miners', Merchants', and Explorers' Guilds.

By 1550, the Guilds ruled Dunwarr in all but name. It would take two more decades for them to consolidate their power and codify the laws that governed the elections of Dunwarr's speakers by and among the Guildmasters. But by the time of Elyana's council, First Speaker Ingunn was busy rebuilding the glory of the Deepholds.

THE COUNCIL RESTORED

The plight of the baronies worsened with each passing season until the last years of the 1500s, when a dreadful famine gripped the lands of Terrinoth. Thousands starved, and those few fortunate enough to have food hoarded it behind guards and locked doors. After the third failed harvest, the baronies teetered on the edge of savagery. It was then that Baroness Elyana of Kell mustered her loyal retainers and dispatched riders to the barons and the Free Cities. The barons would convene the Council of Thirteen that winter in Archaut.

By now, the Council had not met for thirty years, but desperation spurred them to action. Each of the barons, as well as many of the merchant princes and guild masters of the Free Cities, made the long and arduous trek to Archaut. The last arrived just before the first snowfall, at the end of 1596.

The first two days of the Council quickly dissolved into petty squabbles and the airing of old grievances. Finally, on the third day, Baroness Elyana slammed her mailed fist onto the Council table so hard the wood cracked beneath the blow. Were all of them, she demanded, not the inheritors of a great kingdom? Did they not have a responsibility to save it? And if not them, then who else would?

Under her harsh words, the barons slunk from the hall. Although I would like to say that they put aside their squabbles from that day on, that would be a lie. But when on the morrow Elyana laid out plans to restore some semblance of trade between their baronies and distribute food to fight the worst of the famine, they grudgingly agreed. And though none spoke of it, the barons would return to Archaut on the following year, and the Council would never go so long without convening.

That is why we remember the baroness's death with a day of fasting and night of feasting, and why we say that King Daqan forged our realm, King Soulstone doomed it, and Baroness Elyana restored it.

THE RETURN OF THE ELVES

The Latari Elves navigated the quiet lessening of civilization better than their neighbors. Though their kingdom and capital had been scorched, they had not been razed, and King Aeoneth proved to be as wise and capable as his brother. Slowly and methodically he restored the Aymhelin, healing the wounds that Baalesh had wrought on his forest and his people. He tried to heal the rifts that had divided the Eolam and the Verdelam Elves, renewing their bonds as fellow members of the Latari Tribe. The Leonx Riders, once considered savages by their city-dwelling kin, earned names for themselves as couriers of important messages and hunters of any remaining dragon hybrids beneath the boughs of the Aymhelin.

In the early years of the 1600s, Aeoneth finally judged that it was time for his people to take interest in the outside world once more. At the urging of the sorcerer Maegan Cyndewin, he dispatched scouts into the lands of Terrinoth and beyond to see what had become of the other races.

Prince Faolan, protector of the northern borders and son of the late King Aanir, opposed this move vehemently. Nevertheless, the scouts rode forth to find our lands slowly rebuilding themselves. The scouts also established ties with those Elves who had emigrated to the Free Cities so long ago, and some even chose to settle with their cousins rather than return to the Aymhelin. Much of the Elves' involvement (or as some might say, "interference") in our affairs can be traced to this point in history.

THE THREE-LORDS ALLIANCE

In the decades following the restoration of the Council, the baronies tended to remain distrustful and isolated from each other. The Wardens of the Citadel worked tirelessly to try and unite Daqan's heirs with greater ties of diplomacy and trade. Though they had some successes, the barons still tended to drag their feet at every turn.

This nearly proved disastrous in the summer of 1627. In that year, the dread Waiqar the Undying charged a loyal follower known only as the Raven Priest with destroying the Citadel once and for all. To accomplish this goal, Waiqar gave his minion the Carrion Fetish, a grim talisman infused with the bone dust of dozens of Reanimates. With this powerful artifact, the Raven Priest raised a massive army of skeletons and wraiths from one of the ancient battlegrounds deep in the Tanglewood in a single night. Then he marched his Raven Horde north across the Flametail River and towards Archaut, burning and looting as he went.

The guards at the Citadel were but a token force, and though the Warden petitioned the barons for aid, none would arrive in time. Fortunately, to the south of the city, Count Aleks Fairfax of Dragonholt County in Allerfeldt raised a muster of troops and quickly allied with the neighboring counties of Rostum and Haverford.

The allied armies met the Raven Horde at the ford of Carum's Cross, which the quick thinking Fairfax had ordered fortified on the river's northern bank. A hail of arrows met the undead horde, and as they slogged up the northern bank, Countess Belmont of Rostrum led the combined knights of three counties in a counterattack that drove them back to the water. When the Raven Priest attempted to resurrect his fallen troops, Countess Cunningham of Haverford called down a bolt of lightning to burn the foul creature to cinders.

While the victory at Carum's Cross was a cause for great celebration, what I find more troubling is that though all three counts searched for the Carrion Fetish after the battle, none claimed to have found it. Perhaps such a powerful artifact was incinerated by the same blast that killed the Raven Priest, for I cannot imagine any use an ambitious noble might have for such a thing.

THE WAR OF TEN BROTHERS

In the fall of 1659, Baron Deiterhelm of Otrin died suddenly, leaving ten sons from various wives and consorts and no clear heir amongst them. A vicious civil war quickly consumed the barony, fought between three alliances of siblings. The other barons were willing to let Deiterhelm's children settle this among themselves, until a new player entered the conflict. One of the brothers had long ago left the barony and renounced any claim of inheritance to study in Nerekhall. What he learned in that cursed city we do not know, but two years into the conflict, this Geist suddenly returned at the head of an army of vicious ferrox raised from the wildlands of the Broken Crags.

Geist quickly crushed one of the alliances, and is said to have personally slain two of his half-siblings. The other brothers quickly decried this "Usurper" and pled for aid against his obviously evil magics. When the barons still refused to answer the Warden's call to convene the armies of the Citadel, Lady Anastel of Kellos's Order was anointed as Justicar to combat the threat. She retrieved the Shield of Coals from its resting place in the vaults beneath the Eternal Flame and marched alongside a force of zealous priests and knights.

Anastel assumed that with such a powerful artifact and her followers' bright-burning faith, she could bring this Usurper to heel quickly. However, Geist's magics warned him of her approach, and he ambushed the forces of Kellos as soon as they crossed the border. Most of those who did not fall were corrupted and turned by the foul bite of the ferrox, and barely one in four lived to return to Vynelvale. Anastel was not among them, and Geist pried the Shield of Coals from her dead hands.

Geist seemed unstoppable, and in the winter of 1662 he laid siege to the fortress of Black Rock. A victory here would allow him to dominate the Morshan River all the way from Skydown to the Aymhelin forest. Geist bore the Shield of Coals, and used its power to summon a hail of fire onto the defenders. It fell to the free city of Riverwatch to stand alone against Geist. The city depended on trade along the Morshan, and they knew that if the Usurper took Black Rock, he would soon be at their gates. During the coldest days of Deepwinter, the entire company of the Riverwatch Riders mustered forth from the city and rode to meet the Usurper.

The Riders were outnumbered ten to one by Geist's ferrox, but the Usurper had deployed his forces to surround Black Rock. The company attacked his flanks before his horde could turn to meet the foe. As the charge drove deep into the horde, the ferrox faltered before the steel-eyed riders in blue. They fled with their master to the frozen river. But even as they crossed, the shield in Geist's hands began to glow with searing heat. With a howl, he dropped it on the ice, which melted away in the face of Kellos's wrath. In moments the ice was gone, and Geist and his ferrox drowned in the freezing water.

Under the urging of Riverwatch's Lords of the Watch, the surviving children of Deiterhelm peacefully chose a successor. But this war also demonstrated to the barons that the Free Cities were not to be ignored. When Riverwatch and Tamalir pushed for an organization that would watch the wilderness for nascent threats, the barons had to agree. This saw the establishment of the Outland Scouts, who two centuries later still patrol the wilds of Terrinoth.

THE DESTRUCTION OF TAIRNHEATH CASTLE

Though the Third Darkness ended centuries ago, the threat of dragons remains ever-present. No stories demonstrate this more ably than the cautionary tale of Count Hector Ysphane.

The Count was an avid collector of rare artifacts, and in 1701, he obtained his greatest prize yet. Three dragon eggs, each the size of a small man and covered in iridescent scales of marvelous hues, were discovered in a cave on Ysphane's lands. The Count had the eggs carried at great expense to his ancestral castle at Tairnheath. There, he ignored the frantic advice of his court wizard, and displayed the eggs in a place of honor—directly next to the great hall's hearth!

Honestly, does anyone outside of our august university actually remember anything of dragons? I charge you, my readers, with extending knowledge to those who seem to have turnips between their ears, before Terrinoth collapses all on its own.

The wizard, of course, wisely fled that very night, and carried the story to Greyhaven. He waited for a month for news from Tairnheath, and when none was forthcoming, he enlisted the services of a group of adventurers before returning.

They found the castle reduced to a burned-out husk. It appeared that not a single person within had survived. As the adventurers explored the ruins, they came across the culprit quite by accident. In the cellar beneath the castle, a dragon hatchling (now twice the size of a horse) had made its lair.

The fight that followed cost the wizard his hand, and things would have been far worse had the group's apothecary not been skilled in the arts of healing. But in the end, the young dragon was slain, and the group rightfully picked over the Count's treasury as payment before returning to Greyhaven.

None of the records I have studied answered this question—and given the lifespan of dragons, I feel it is an important question even to this day. If the hatchling came from one of the three eggs Ysphane purchased, what happened to the other two?

A Voyage of Discovery

As the baronies grew and ships began to ply the waves once more, tales of long-forgotten lands entranced would-be explorers. Two of these were the Free Cities Elf Lathina Veintralla and the Gnome rogue Keiren O'Brallen. The unlikely duo met in Archaut and traveled to Dallak in the Torue Albes, where they commissioned a sturdy vessel called *Wavedancer*.

Lathina hired a crew and the ship set sail, heading west into the sunset. As the weeks dragged on to months and months to years, the folk of Dallak assumed the ship lost. They were shocked when five years later *Wavedancer* returned to port, less one of its masts and half its crew. Lathina brought back marvelous tales of the lands of Zanaga and the Sunderlands. Lest anyone think her stories fabrications, she also had a hold of animal and plant specimens, gems, exotic spices, and even the skull of a "great aquatic wyrm" that they had just barely slain.

Keiren had merely brought back a small gold humanoid statue, and a newfound paranoia towards "curses" and "monkey hunters." Even as Lathina granted Greyhaven the great gift of maps from her travels—maps we still use today— Keiren vanished into the crowded streets of Dawnsmoor and was never heard from again.

The Rise of the Willful

Baronial politics have ever been the plague of our lands, not least because it seems few barons can resist delighting in a good scandal—especially if it concerns their rivals! Such was the case when Baroness Georgiana Delacroux of Frest abdicated her position in 1827 to marry the orc chieftain Lazra the Huntress. Since the baroness had no children and she had failed to name an heir before her departure, soon her various relatives vied to control the barony. Perhaps not the wisest thing she could have done, but love does drive all before it, or so I have heard.

The other barons treated the situation as a great sport, backing one noble then the other in a conflict that ranged between court politics and occasional clashes between groups of loyal supporters. But their amusement waned when a local carpenter named Harriet Laurel grew tired of the constant fighting and led a rebellion of Frest's peasants and merchants.

The rebellion quickly grew in strength, and Harriet proved a capable leader and commander. Before the neighboring baronies could muster their levies, Harriet had eliminated most of Georgiana's legitimate claimants to Frest and taken control of the barony's major towns. She and her generals ruled under siege for fourteen years, repulsing all attempts by the other barons to put down this "peasant uprising."



Eventually, the barons relented and treated with Harriet at Archaut. Under the neutral eyes of the Warden of the Citadel, they agreed that she should be granted title and domain of Frest. Harriet became Baroness Harriet the Willful, and though the other barons resent her common heritage, none can argue that she has not ruled Frest justly in these recent years.

The Slow Dawn Rises

And thus we arrive to our current times. I am proud to say we survived the fires of the Dragonlords, and since have relit the flickering torch of civilization. There is still much to be done, however, and threats to overcome.

Terrinoth is still beset with political discord. Horrid creatures still lurk everywhere it seems, and certainly many regions are still unsafe for open travel. I have talked with scholars from other areas of Mennara and they also relate of troubles in their homelands. Thus some of my colleagues have dubbed our times the "grey years." I call them fools at best, cowards at worst.

This is really an age of what is most crucial now—courage! Ours is an era of exploration, adventure, and heroism, but also of looming threats. The undead stir in their graves, demons terrorize the Borderlands, and dragons burn what they please. Our actions now will either mark the end of Mennara or the beginning of a new age to rival the glories of the past. Be a light of courage, lest the darkness return forever.



rom a distance, it was a grand sight. Manors, monuments, and temples rose above the orderly horizon of roofs to create a jagged skyline against the rising sun. But something seemed a little off as our road dipped down into a shallow valley before the city: a trick of distance, I thought, playing with the scale of what must surely be a massive, vital community.

I expected to see a bustling line of travelers on the road between the city and myself, although looking at these words now, I'm not sure where I thought they might have come from, as vast and empty as the land was behind me. Instead, the road stretched on ahead, as barren as the others behind.

Forcing Ibn's rambling gait up the gentle slope, I watched as the grey and white city grew above us. It was nothing compared to the soaring, graceful walls and minarets of the Caliph's glorious city, of course, but it was impressive in its own right, owning a brand of barbaric strength and splendor all its own, despite the simplicity of its architecture and the drab, cold colors of its stone.

As we approached the great walls, the feeling of something being off grew in my mind. Despite the grand monuments and manors that rose up behind the wall, the city itself seemed to shrink in on itself as we drew nearer. What had loomed so large in my mind for the long weeks of my journey—a touchstone of hope, in fact, within my heart—now seemed to contract before me.

The city of Archaut, if such this was, would be dwarfed by any of the great cities of Al-Kalim. In fact, the complex of the Caliph's palace in the Court of Wisdom alone would dominate the greater portion of this little town that seems so overburdened by its own sense of self-importance.

An empty guard post overlooked the large gate leading into the strange city. Inside were more people than I had seen since arriving in this peculiar land, but even so, there were barely enough to make an impression in the vast emptiness all around them. Those people I did see served more to underscore the echoing silence than to fill it. And here, too, the people's eyes were hooded. They cast a glance at me and my loyal steed and looked away quickly, not willing to meet my eyes.

It was easy to see that the city was intended to hold many times the scant number of inhabitants that now wandered its wide, tree-lined streets, and I wondered at the words of old Captain Whitemane once again. If this was the grand capital of the Dagan Barons, the mighty lords of this vast and sprawling land, then where were they?

My halting mastery of the common speech here was by now sufficient, at least, to earn me vague directions to what I assumed would be the palace. When I finally arrived, though, all I saw was an empty building. Its grand structure hinted at lordship and dominion, but the dark and empty windows spoke more loudly still of abandonment and decay.

I found plenty of functionaries among the desultory crowd. Their ilk is never hard to identify, between the elaborate uniforms and general cast of uselessness to their features. But between my weak hold of the tongue and my innate contempt for bureaucracy—always hard to keep in check before such supercilious fools—what knowledge I gained from them was of less than no value to me.

And so I continued to wander the streets throughout that day. It seemed that every ten paces or so, there was another commemorative square, memorial statue, or enormous layered monument to some past glory. Battles long faded into history and grand acts of charity and surcease featured as strong themes among the collection. Each was carved from the dark-grey stone native to this part of the world, and whether it was a fountain spraying clear water in great fans into the sky; a fluttering flag or pennant held in rigid stone hands; or a manicured, well-kept lawn of sere, winter-burned grasses; each seemed more dead and moribund than the last.

And yet there was a quiet, hopeless strength to the society that had placed these shrines here on such brave display. I thought of the tragedy that must underlie a civilization as old as my own, but so plagued by misfortune and calamity as to have been rendered into little better than the ragged barbarians

of the Thieves' Coast. I felt pity for the wretches stumbling past me, most wrapped up in their own miseries against the buffets of the world as tightly as they wrapped themselves in their ragged cloaks against the frigid air. Pity, but at the same time wonder as well. For they were superior to me in one regard that had not occurred to me until that very day.

The richness of the smells I had encountered ever since disembarking from Captain Nazrat's Wolf's Gaze continued to amaze my sensitive nose. Accustomed as I had become to the dry, clear air of my homeland after a lifetime of wandering its deserts and clean-swept streets, I was still continually dumbfounded by the sheer array of olfactory experiences awaiting me around every bend.

The cold monuments, for instance, smelled wet to me, and isolated, as though Human eyes had not caressed their grandiose lines and minute details in a thousand years. It was as if the moisture in the air itself had permeated the stone. I reached out on more than one occasion to graze the cold solidity with my fingers, and I was ever surprised that they came away dry.

The streets, now, were a true panoply of assaults and impressions upon my sensitive nostrils. Even in the most destitute quarters of the Court of Wisdom, garbage left in the streets would desiccate into a still, scentless pile in mere days. Not so in the near-deserted streets of Archaut. I was intrigued, I will admit to you, my sons and daughters, that a city so empty of inhabitants could produce such a volume of refuse to laden the air.

And yet, the stench seemed to not bother those few revenants wandering the empty streets in the slightest.

Eventually, my hunger overpowered the constant, nagging nausea caused by the odors of the city, and I procured a midday meal from a small tavern that had begun to fill with the coming of noon. Having left Ibn in a small livery stable across the street, I pushed the plain door open. I braced myself for a wave of foul aromas I expected, but was very pleasantly surprised as the unmistakable smells of roasting meats seemed to reach out and embrace me, driving off the ordure of the streets and pulling me in through the dark door. The fare, in the end, was plain by even my own humble standards, but it was pleasant and filling. There was meat, probably cow or pig, although to be honest I did not put too much effort into discovering which. This was served with a healthy portion of some root vegetable mashed into anonymity, the entire plate smothered in a thick gravy that seemed to weigh the meal down and fortify the body against the cold outside.



The massive stone walls of the city. Statues and monuments lined every street, each more grandiose than the last.



The distinctive shield and hammer of the city's watch. I was fortunate to not have been on the receiving end of either in my travels here.

I was able to speak with several citizens who, for their own reasons, were more willing than the others to speak to a foreigner from a far-off, exotic land. It was from these loquacious companions that I learned of the true powers that ruled these lands. The Dagan Lords, it appears, reside in their far-flung holdings, ruling over each region with near-autonomous power, and seldom venturing out of their rural strongholds.

Much to my chagrin and dismay, I learned that this empty shell of a city is little more than an empty husk for most of each year, save when these mighty lords, accompanied by their retinues, households, and countless shiftless hangers-on, descend to take scheduled counsel with one another and to strut and prance in what I am certain is a continual dance to establish their ever-shifting primacy over each other. Such nobles may hail from distant lands, speak incomprehensible languages, and follow customs as unimaginable as one can imagine, but they will always act the same, the world over.

It seems a terribly chaotic way to rule a realm, but I am far from home, and this is no stranger than any of the other places I have seen since leaving the clean sands of the desert behind me.

One of my dining companions informed me that there is, near the center of Archaut, a great and blocky edifice known only as the Citadel, and for a moment, I found hope rekindled in my breast. In Al-Kalim, any structure so strongly built as the one my companion described would be a receptacle of great wisdom and power. Surely I would find someone there capable of telling me the history behind the strange stone that I carried; perhaps, at the very least, some assistance might be found as to where to look next?

Alas, that hope, seemingly like all the others I have harbored on this ill-fated journey, was to be dashed all too soon. When I approached the squat, ugly fortress later that day, a feeling of heavy foreboding settled upon my shoulders. It is a stronghold, no doubt. It has none of the fine detailing and overwrought design of the city's other buildings. It is an edifice to strength and defense and, unfortunately, my heart tells me, little else. At the heavy front gate, I was met with stony silence by elaborately armored guards—for there, at least, there were sentries.

Before those gates, ignored by the guards, was a small crowd of pathetic people, their weak voices demanding entry. It was easily the largest group I have seen since leaving the pirate haven of Karya Cove, but for all their numbers they were no less fearful than the peasants of the field. The soldiers ignored them, as did anyone who might have responded from inside. In wavering voices, they cried for protection from some great evil coming out of the north. I heard the term "Mistlands," and a cold chill swept down my back. On a hunch, I asked a man at the rear of the assembly if it was the fabled Waigar who threatened them, and I thought the man was going to die of apoplexy before my very eyes. The people to either side of him stared at me as well, their eyes wide and white.

In the end, I left the wretches to their seemingly hopeless crusade, happy enough to have that particular question go unanswered. In my land, Waigar might well be remembered as a great hero, but here in these distant lands across the sea, a different picture is emerging.

I walked away from the Citadel no wiser than when I approached, and I settled down to rest beside a tall monument whose fountains looked to have been dry for many years. From a distance, I saw several warriors whom someone on the street told me were Marshals, the capitalization of the term clear from the man's tone. Who these Marshals might be,

however, or whom they serve, I do not know. They walked with pride and purpose, displaying none of the fear that seems to infect their countrymen, which was enough to arouse my curiosity. I couldn't see how they might assist me in my current plight, however, and so I reluctantly turned from them and continued on my way.

I had thought to find mystical schools here, not unlike those at the Court of Wisdom back home. Magical academies seem exactly the sorts of places to learn more about this mysterious stone that has come to dominate my life. And if not in the grand capital of the largest realm on this side of the world, where else might one find a magical academy?

That evening, I swept into the common room of a pleasant-enough inn, having had Ibn stabled across the street for a princely sum. The lack of populace does not seem to have impacted the prices being charged by the hostelers of Archaut, at least. The smells that welcomed me were not so fine as those that had accompanied my earlier meal, and I knew at once that I was in a different sort of place.

Again I marked the careful, fear-ridden looks, and for a while merely sat in a dark corner, content to sip at the foul local brew while assaying an occasional desultory attempt upon a bland and pasty stew that had been the establishment's only offering for dinner. I remembered my lunch with fond and wistful longing as I watched the gelid soup of my current meal glop slowly down into the wooden bowl, and I listened halfheartedly to the conversations rolling around me.

Once more I heard the Mistlands mentioned, as well as somewhere off to the east, I think, referred to as the Plains of Rue, or the Plains of Ruin, maybe. Both of these regions seem to share much of the blame for the fear that blankets this realm, and I hope that my own quest will take me neither too far north nor too much farther east. At this point, my life is burdened enough with my own troubles; anything capable of rendering an entire kingdom petrified with dread is certainly something I have no interest in facing.

I ran over all the words of those I have met since leaving the Court of Wisdom so long ago, trying to trace back the path that has led me to such a fruitless destination. I remembered Marcus Phindar—once of Lorimor, now of the Torue Albes—referring to this place as the city of monuments, and my equating it with the Caliph's own capital. In my eagerness to follow my quest, I had thought it the best gamble as a launching point for my inquiries in this strange land. But this dry, cold shell of a city offers me nothing but more of the same fear and silence that has marked the many days of my journey here.

Eventually, having learned nothing more than I had known before, and having grown tired of honing my skills with Terrinoth's common tongue further, I slipped up the stairs to my cold bed. Here I would complete this latest entry in my ongoing missive to you, my children, and then wonder, silently, what my next course of action could possibly be. Archaut seems to have nothing to offer me, and given the prices charged in the empty capital, and no ready way of avoiding them, the Caliph's purse would be empty much sooner than I might like, should I remain.

Tomorrow, I will make one more attempt to find these elusive schools of magic I have imagined—and heard about in Trelton town and Karya Cove—and then I will have to move on.

There must be schools, not unlike the Caliph's own Collegiate Arcane, tucked away somewhere in this cold maze of stone and statues. When the Barons descend upon this soulless collection of empty palaces and feckless monuments, are they not advised by the best minds Terrinoth can muster? And when the great lords are off in their little petty kingdoms, where do those scholars and sages reside?

There has to be somewhere, some school or academy or guildhall, where the wise bide their time between their masters' calls.

I just need to know where to look...

Chapter II:
Call to Adventure

Mennara has many cities and settlements, but these are but small islands of civilization in oceans of myth and legend. This is in truth a world of mysteries, one of magic, myth, and steel. Terrinoth itself contains endless lost treasures, castle ruins, and harrowing dungeons. Across Mennara, ravenous monsters threaten the defenseless, while foul villains seek to destroy or dominate all in their path. Its wilds are filled with dark magics and unnatural creatures, where the dead rise against the living and demonic beings of blood and bone spread like horrid clouds over the far horizon.

Fortunately, there are also those daring enough to take up the challenge to explore the wilds and thwart evil wherever they find it, be it for glory or gold. They may not need to even travel far; there are also deadly intrigues and wicked schemes wherever people live, and here a silver tongue or barbed wit can be just as lethal as a sword or claw. Whatever their calling may be, all adventurers will find excitement and reward in the lands of Mennara.

Endless opportunities await adventurers here, and they need only the will to reach out and seize one for themselves. Mennara's endless horizon beckons; the brave do not shirk the call to adventure!

This chapter expands the Runebound setting entry in the Genesys Core Rulebook to present everything players need to adventure in the magical, untamed world of Mennara. They can create new types of hero characters that reflect the various beings of this world, such as Sunderland Orcs, Forge Dwarves, and Wanderer Gnomes, and outfit them with a host of new weapons, armor, and gear to aid in their quests. The chapter also offers new types of magic and magical items, including several of the fabled runebound shards for those worthy to possess the ultimate treasures of Mennara.



CREATING YOUR HERO

This section introduces the character creation and advancement options specific to the Runebound setting for GENESYS. Character creation in REALMS OF TERRINOTH follows the standard process described in the GENESYS Core Rulebook, with the addition of Heroic Ability creation, which is performed during **Step 4: Invest Experience Points**.

CHARACTER SPECIES

The following pages present the species options available when creating a player character for the Runebound setting. Players should choose from these options instead of those in the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

HUMANS

Humanity, short-lived and disadvantaged in many ways by nature, has nonetheless proven to be one of the most resilient and diverse races in Mennara. What Humans, a curious lot, lack in natural gifts of the sort bestowed on other races they make up for in their willingness to learn, their determination, and their sheer adaptability. Humans have weathered cataclysms beyond compare, and today it is largely by their strength of will and arms that the world is kept safe.

Appearance: Having colonized nearly every part of Mennara over the centuries, Humans display no lack of variation. Skin tones range from deep brown and red to gold and pale pink. Most Albesians, Lorimorians, and Sayr-Savim have dark or heavily tanned appearances, while Humans in central and northern Terrinoth tend toward paler shades. Humans are generally tall, and tend to stand at least a head taller than most Dwarves, though they are usually not as tall as most Elves. As with all things Human, variety is the only constant.

Society: In keeping with Humanity's tendency toward variation, Human society has branched out from the moment the first Humans arose ages ago. Human society differs dramatically between continents, and even between neighboring counties in Terrinoth. Whereas the baronies and their inhabitants are bound by a strict and complex code of oaths, duties, and obligations, they share borders with the Free Cities, whose people generally share a belief in self-reliance and independence and have a far more flippant view toward tradition.

The inherent nature of the surrounding lands seem to impart its own character on each Human civilization wherever they arise. It's almost impossible to imagine the regimented life of the baronies surviving for very long in the fractured, disconnected islands of the Torue Albes, or the Lorimorian life of leisure and poetry holding much stock in the Borderlands. Thus, Humanity has often lived with the need to master the world while being a servant to it. Humans have carved out paradises from frozen rock and burning desert sands alike, changing themselves in the process, and they will likely not stop until all of Mennara is charted on their maps.

Structurally, Human societies tend to adopt some form of hierarchy, with power consolidated in a few individuals who govern from the top. Most Human territories have a stable high authority, such as the Empress in Lorimor, the Caliph in Al-Kalim, and the numerous councils of Guildmasters in the Free Cities. Even in the eastern wastes, the normally anarchistic blood-touched still respect and obey the authority of those chiefs deemed worthy enough.

Though they have innumerable differences, Human cultures tend to share more bonds than even they might realize. Dozens of languages can be heard in the markets of Tamalir, but nearly all the speakers can, at the very least, understand common speech, a simple tongue birthed in the days of the Elder Kings. When separated from their cultures of origin, Humans tend to naturally gravitate toward other Humans, forming new communities out of a distinct necessity for companionship.

Culture: The most learned minds in all of Terrinoth have argued about the exact nature of Humanity for generations. At times, Humans have proven themselves to be little more than brutes, greedy for power and violent in their hunger for glory and riches. At other times, they have demonstrated a spirit so noble as to outshine any other, driven by a profound need to see goodness triumphant in the world.

In truth, from the most opulent spires of Lorimor to the frigid towns of Isheim, all Human societies are in some way or another predicated upon a few simple desires. Humanity, more than any other race that dwells in Mennara, defines itself by the challenges it faces. When it is cold, Humanity seeks to create warmth, and when it is hot, it seeks to create a cool place to rest. When Humanity hungers, it seeks to feed itself, and when Humanity is dominated, it strives with all its might for freedom. The Humans who live in Terrinoth and its surrounding lands are the descendants of explorers, conquerors, warriors, and scholars, and no amount of time could ever dim their spark to seek out, to explore, to build, and to stand for something. This is the driving force at the heart of every Human culture, whatever their location or form of governance.

To the Humans of the Daqan Baronies, order and duty are prized as the highest standards. Their greatest heroes are paragons of loyalty and adherence to the law. Meanwhile, their neighbors in Terrinoth's Free Cities tend to be more cosmopolitan, adventurous, and willing to appreciate the finer pleasures in life.

Elsewhere, in Lorimor, art and civics are the most highly valued pursuits. Many of Lorimor's emperors rank among the finest artists and poets ever to put brush to canvas or quill to parchment. In the Caliphate of Al-Kalim, politics and magic are considered equally worthy pursuits, and the Sayr-Savim take great pains to hold on to the mystical origins of their ancestors. To the people who dwell in the savage parts of Terrinoth and beyond, the sparsely populated areas of Isheim, the isolated, untamed islands of the Torue Albes, or the Borderlands along the blighted Ru Darklands, power and brutality are often the sole measures of virtue.

SPECIES ABILITY

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	2	2	2

- **Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 110 XP



- **Starting Skills:** Humans begin with one rank in each of two different non-career skills. You still cannot train these skills above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Ready for Adventure:** Once per session as an out-of-turn incidental, a Human may move one Story Point from the Game Master's pool to the players' pool.

HUMANS ACROSS MENNARA

Though their appearances and sizes seem to have no limit in their variety, Humans aren't subdivided into localized variations with unique rules. This is due to their far-roaming nature, for Humans have spread from their origins in the Ru Steppes to occupy nearly every nook and cranny of Mennara. Their restless nature also means many don't stay in the lands their ancestors settled, thus spreading their customs and traditions as they go. That doesn't mean, though, that Humans are all the same! Players can use the character's home city or land to aid in selecting the two non-career skills they pick as part of character creation, in order to add flavor to their new adventurer.

PCs from Tamalir, for example, might have Streetwise and Knowledge (Adventuring), representing the city's rough nature and starting point for so many quests. Those from Forge might favor Mechanics, while characters from the friendly village of Dragonholt could go with Charm. Humans of Greyhaven could have Discipline and Knowledge (Lore), even if they aren't actual scholars at the university. Denizens of Nerekhall may have picked up Coercion and Deception in life in the dark city. The furtive peoples who dare live along the Borderlands would also use Deception, but matched with Stealth to avoid notice.

Humans from outside of Terrinoth can similarly benefit from skills that stem from their location. The piratical islands of the Torue Albes make Brawl and Skulduggery clear choices, as do Athletics and Resilience for the frozen lands of Isheim. Knowledge (Geography) and Leadership work well with the subjects of the Lorimor Empire. Those who have lived in the jungles of Zanaga likely have become skilled at Athletics and Survival—or they wouldn't have lived long. The Caliph's peoples, though, may excel at Alchemy and Charm to represent the learning and social skills of that far-away land.

ELVES

Even to those who work or trade with them regularly, the ancient race of Elves is the very definition of mysterious. Simultaneously familiar and remarkable, at least to Humans, almost everything about them is an intoxicating, surreal collection of contradictions. They are commanding, yet effortlessly graceful. Mirthful, but ancient and wise. Withdrawn, though compassionate and kind.

When the denizens of Terrinoth think of Elves, they usually think of the Elves belonging to the Latari Tribe, who have dwelled in the Aymhelin Forest since time immemorial. Yet Elves have developed several distinct cultures in the tribes scattered across Mennara: the Deep Elves in the Dunwarr Mountains, the Salish Tribe in Isheim, and the Nivalis and Feredel tribes of even more distant, legendary lands. Those who wander Mennara follow the siren calls of righteousness, adventure, and lost knowledge.

Appearance: Despite being elegantly lithe and often preternaturally beautiful, at a glance, most Elves could be mistaken for Humans: their hair, skin, and general proportions tend to run a gamut similar to that of Humans. However, farther into the wilderness, where the Elves have dwelled alongside nature for millennia, those similarities tend to fade. In these primordial and forbidding places, Elves possess sharper, more distinctly inhuman features and coloring that strongly resembles the natural world around them. Their hair or eyes may be as white as a falling star, as green as an emerald, as burgundy as ripe grapes, or as scarlet as a turning maple leaf.



Society: Elven society has spent millennia slowly evolving into two distinct groups: the highborn nobility and everyone else, considered "lowborn" by comparison. The highborn are those Elves only one or two generations removed from the Elves of Emorial and Latariana's time. They occupy almost all positions of power in the government, temples, or military of the tribes. In the court of the Latari Tribe, they vie for King Aeoneth's favor and make great shows of forming alliances and working toward agendas that are in the "best interests" of all Elvenkind. Those highborn Elves who have never left the comfort of Lithelin are referred to as the "Eolam," or blue-bloods. They nominally work together to return the Elven peoples to the Empyrean or root out the vestiges of the Ynfernael from this world. Meanwhile, they secretly work toward sabotaging their rivals and enhancing their own influence and prestige. Elsewhere, highborn serve as tribal leaders and the arbiters of Elven culture.

The lowborn Elves are those born several generations removed from the ancient ones. The tribes' artisans, craftspeople, hunters, and warriors tend to be drawn from this lower caste of the Elves. Because of Elves' incredibly long lives, lowborn Elves have little chance for advancement—only in times of great tumult and grave losses are the upper positions in Elven society opened up, and not without great hesitation. Instead, most lowborn Elves dedicate themselves to becoming masters of the various vocations that their tribes need for survival. Lowborn Elves of the Latari Tribe often live in the wilder regions of the Aymhelin and enjoy a life more in tune with the natural cycles of the world, calling themselves the "Verdelam," or green-blooded. They dwell in and among the trees, hunt the various game that roam the woods, and trade for the few necessities the deep forest doesn't provide. Sometimes, lowborn Elves journey out into the world in search of adventure, fame, and fortune. Many of them take residence in Human and other cities where they establish their own societies alongside the natives quite independent of Latari societal structures.

Culture: Elven culture varies widely between the various tribes, yet a few common threads run throughout their species. The majority of Elves prefer a reclusive, isolated existence and interact only with other Elves. They are not xenophobic, but they possess a certain air of superiority when it comes to dealing with the younger races. The Elves achieved marvelous technological advancements and formed complex societies while the rest of the world was still hunting and gathering, so they grew to depend solely on their own kind.

When Elves do interact with the other races, typically during the course of trade or adventure, most are compassionate and kind—although their benevolence comes with a very noticeable condescension. Elves have spent millennia waiting for the rest of the world to mature to their level, a fact they are not shy about expressing in the most paternalistic way possible. To discuss politics with Elves is to suffer endless quips about the superiority of Elven court, to ask for their help is to invite a lecture on personal growth, and showing baser emotions to them is to provoke several "tsk, tsks" and deeply disappointed stares.

SPECIES ABILITY

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	2	1	2

- **Wound Threshold:** 9 + Brawn
- **Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90 XP
- **Special Abilities:** Each type of Elf has its own special abilities, listed in the corresponding entry.

DEEP ELF

All Elves feel the pain and loss of falling from the Empyrean to dwell among the younger races, and many are striving to ascend again. However, the Tribe of the Deep Elves feels an additional, far more ignoble shame: they fell not once but twice, the second time to Malcorne's corruption.

Those who survived the War of the Shadow Tear—the darkness that enveloped Mennara long before the mortal races came into being—have spent their long lives trying to atone by hunting Ynfernael creatures wherever they are found. The Deep Elves have an almost singular focus in this crusade and will stop at nothing to purge the Ynfernael from the world, as well as purge their still-fallen counterparts, the Daewyl Elves.

However, there are those who feel that this drive is leading their clan down a dangerous path, as their search for a strategic advantage finds them ever more willing to embrace any power that may help them in their quest. This means that many Elves, including some among the Deep Elves themselves, are watching things unfold with a wary eye, guarding diligently against the day when the rest of the Elves might again be forced to wage war against their cousins.

- **Starting Skills:** Deep Elves begin with one rank in Discipline. You still cannot train their Discipline above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Ynfernael Lore:** Deep Elves gain Knowledge (Forbidden) as a career skill and begin with two ranks in Knowledge (Forbidden). You still cannot train their Knowledge (Forbidden) above rank 2 during character creation.

FREE CITIES ELF

Although there are many ways for Elves to escape the rigid caste system of their society, it is the Free Cities Elves who do it the most brazenly. Those who refer to themselves as Free Cities Elves, a voluntary colloquialism, are Elves who have forsaken their tribe or were born to Elves who did. They have chosen to live alongside the short-lived races as urbanites and are most commonly found in cities such as Dawnsmoor and Tamalir. Those calling themselves Free Cities Elves can also include Elves whose bloodline has mingled with that of Humans.

- **Starting Skills:** Free Cities Elves begin with one rank in Streetwise. You still cannot train their Streetwise above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Nimble:** Free Cities Elves have a melee and ranged defense of 1.

HIGHBORN ELF

The Highborn Elves are those only slightly removed from the most ancient bloodlines, those original Elves who dwelled in the Empyrean. As a result, these Elves have the strongest natural connection to Latariana's Door, and many have devoted their lives to deepening that connection and ascending Latariana's Stair to earn redemption. The Daughters of the Empyrean and the Darnati Warriors are most often drawn from this caste, and their proximity to the court at Caelcira necessitates a basic knowledge of etiquette and diplomacy. Beyond the Latari, the highborn of the other Elven tribes occupy similar positions of prestige.



- **Starting Skills:** Highborn Elves begin with one rank in Negotiation. You still cannot train their Negotiation above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Empyrean Magic:** Highborn Elves gain Divine as a career skill and begin with one rank in Divine. You still cannot train their Divine above rank 2 during character creation.

LOWBORN ELF

The Elves were not always at one with nature, but after their fall from grace, many found a new, deepened connection with the wilds. As successive generations were born and raised in Mennara, they felt an even greater calling to the world around them rather than the lofty heavens of their distant ancestors. They resolved to live in harmony with their new home and become its greatest protectors.

It is from these Elves that the bulk of the Latari armies are drawn. Among the lowborn Elves are the famed Deepwood Archers, unrivaled in lethality with their extraordinary longbows, and the Leonx Riders and their fearsome feline mounts. Among the other Elven tribes, the lowborn occupy similarly martial or practical roles, and many leave Elven society entirely for a life of purpose and adventure experiencing the world.

- **Starting Skills:** Lowborn Elves begin with one rank in Survival. You still cannot train their Survival above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Nimble:** Lowborn Elves have a melee and ranged defense of 1.

DWARVES

The way the Dwarves see it, members of other races are divided into two separate camps. On one side are those who see the short, tunnel-dwelling Dwarves as pointlessly reclusive and too small to be truly dangerous. On the other are those who understand that it was their size and toughness that let them fight the dragons to a standstill in the tunnels beneath the Dunwarr Mountains and survive the wyrms' genocidal wrath.

Reclusive and understated, Dwarves are a gruff, suspicious, and often surly lot. They still bear the pain and secret shame of being chased underground by the dragons, which makes them usually quick to anger, slow to forgive, and capable of holding even simple grudges for decades.

Dwarves who wander from their mountain homes almost always do so with a purpose. Sometimes, such missions can be as simple as trading for the meats and grains that the mountains don't provide. But just as often, their goals are grander: to recruit allies, achieve power, and work toward reclaiming their ancestral home of the Molten Heath from the dragons.

Appearance: While Dwarves' skin and hair are similar to those of Humans, it is the proportions that differentiate the two races. Dwarves' chests are barreled, their legs are stocky, and their arms are thick and powerful. Everything about them has evolved to make them more effective in tight, compact spaces, and there are few creatures as dangerous to meet in a tunnel as Dwarves defending their homes.



Society: Dwarven society in Dunwarr is commonly separated into guilds, with political power—including the monarchy—being held by the guild that is most profitable for the community as a whole. That inequity means that the guilds are constantly vying for superiority and frequently at each other's throats. It also means that ruling a Dwarven kingdom can be an exhausting, endlessly frustrating endeavor that commonly makes the monarch regret ever having taken the throne. Dwarves in other lands have developed their own societies, but still tend to look towards competence rather than blood for leadership.

Culture: There are ten guilds in Dunwarr—those of Masons, Miners, Smiths, Artificers, Brewers, Merchants, Warriors, Rangers, Explorers, and Runescribers—and they dominate much of life there. Not all Dwarves belong to a guild, though. By law, there can only be ten guilds, so Dwarves devoted to other traditions continually struggle to promote their own craft to replace an existing guild. Each of the guilds also engages in constant fights for power and prestige. The divisions between guilds and other groups, each of which promotes their own traditions and expertise as the most worthy, tend to affect every aspect of life in Dunwarr. It is generally assumed that Dwarves will follow in the footsteps of their parents, joining the same guild and contributing to the same cultural struggle.

Though the Dwarves of Forge originally came from Dunwarr, they operate with a more mercantile bent than through guild-driven dictates. This has created a more open, independent way of life, though some Forge Dwarves chafe at working with and relying on Humans for their livelihoods.

SPECIES ABILITY

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	1	2	2	3	2

- **Wound Threshold:** 11 + Brawn
- **Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90 XP
- **Special Abilities:** Each type of Dwarf has its own special abilities, listed in the corresponding entry.

DUNWARR DWARF

Dunwarr is the oldest of all the Dwarven kingdoms. The Dwarves who hail from beneath the Dunwarr Mountains see their lineage as predating almost every other culture on the planet. According to their histories, they watched the Humans first gather in rudimentary villages, saw the Orcs first trade for steel to tip their sharpened sticks, and even witnessed the Elves settling into their land of the Aymhelin.

Those histories also recount with bitterness and frustration how the dragons chased the Dwarves from their home in Molten Heath and followed them all the way into the caves beneath the Dunwarr Mountains. They recount, with absolute accuracy, how the dragons tried to eradicate the Dwarves from the face of the Mennara.

THE ART OF DWARVEN CRAFTING

The craft of the Dwarves embodies exceptional metallurgy and stonemasonry married to ancient traditions, the result of a people seemingly made to create objects of tremendous beauty and efficacy. The very bodies of Dwarves give them a natural affinity for crafting, possessing muscles strong enough to swing hammers with perfect control and the manual dexterity to work the most intricate patterns seen in all the world. Where other civilizations use poetry and painting to convey their deepest emotions, Dwarves rely on the ancient forge to express themselves and can see emotion placed in a blade, in a hammer, or in a warrior's talisman.

The work of hundreds of generations of Dwarves adorns most of their cities, and to call these settlements treasure troves would not be much of a stretch. The care they invest in their work stems from more than simple artisan's pride. Dwarves see each piece they make as belonging to an unbroken chain of the artistry and memories of the Dwarven people as a whole, going back hundreds of generations.

To the Dwarves, craftsmanship is a part of their way of life, but stories are told of a craftsmanship that transcends even this—the creation of a Dwarven masterwork. Such a masterwork might be made but once a generation. This masterwork begins as a vision planted deep within the mind of a Dwarven artisan: a vision of a weapon, an artifact, or a suit of armor that is capable of surpassing the limits of its physical form.

A Dwarf might spend decades at their forge crafting brilliant jewelry, cannons, armor, fixtures, or anything else their people might need, until one day the urge to create a particular work becomes too great, prompting them into seclusion to complete it. More than one Dwarf has departed on a quest to find a singular material needed to bring their vision into existence. Some never return, but those who do become champions of their race.

Such was the story of the outcast smith Gildspar, who forged the Mirror Hammer. Struck by a vision of this weapon and its function, he spent ten long years journeying to the heights of a mountain range where a perpetual lightning storm, said to be created by a floating runebound shard, blasted away at the jagged peaks. Gildspar set metal ingots where lightning could strike them and infuse them with its energies. He then carved runes upon each ingot for every bolt of lightning that found its mark. He finally put the metal, charged with the energies of a thousand bolts of lightning, to the forge.

What emerged was the Mirror Hammer. In accordance with its name, when swung, the Mirror Hammer could reflect any magic and repel any blow. However, it had another power, one that revealed its true nature. When the Mirror Hammer struck the surface of a lake, the water would freeze into a silver pane, and anyone who looked into it could see visions of the distant past, the reflection of the ages.

The Dunwarr Dwarves see that history as their birthright. They believe that Dwarven society is among the most noble in the world, and that they deserve the respect and deference they once commanded. Their loftiest goal is to retake the Molten Heath and force the dragons who occupy their lands to accept their right to live there once and for all.

- **Starting Skills:** Dunwarr Dwarves begin with one rank in Resilience. You still cannot train their Resilience above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Dark Vision**: When making skill checks, Dunwarr Dwarves remove up to ■■ imposed due to darkness.
- **Tough as Nails:** Once per session, a Dwarf may spend a Story Point as an out-of-turn incidental immediately after suffering a Critical Injury and determining the result. If they do so, they count the result rolled as "01."

FORGE DWARF

Not all Dwarves feel that their destiny belongs underground. Like their ancestors of old, some of them wish to spread out under the sky, an aspiration they can largely achieve in Terrinoth. These Forge Dwarves have made their homes in Free Cities and baronial settlements across the Land of Steel, using their distinctive craftsmanship to create their own fate. They wheel and deal alongside other races, content to make their home away from the shadows and fire of the Molten Heath.

- **Starting Skills:** Forge Dwarves begin with one rank in Negotiation. You still cannot train their Negotiation above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Stubborn:** Forge Dwarves add ■ to social skill checks targeting them.
- **Tough as Nails:** Once per session, a Dwarf may spend a Story Point as an out-of-turn incidental immediately after suffering a Critical Injury and determining the result. If they do so, they count the result rolled as "01."

ORCS

It is easy for the other races to see the rigid brows, square jaws, and jutting tusks of the Orcs as signs of an overly simplistic, feral species, but few things could be further from the truth. They are as intelligent and complex as almost every other race—and smart enough to take advantage of anyone who dares underestimate them.

Appearance: Though almost all Orcs have black hair, the Orcs' skin tones have acted as a kind of evolutionary camouflage, slowly changing over generations to match the terrain where a particular branch of Orcs lives. Orcs in woodland areas tend to be shades of green or brown, while plains Orcs display brown or light grey tones and those dwelling in mountain regions are commonly stony grey or dark brown.

Society: Like Humans, Orcs have widely diversified societies across Mennara, and even those within an area might wildly differ from another nearby. The Broken Plains Orcs pride themselves on a natural and nomadic life, moving with the seasons and following game across the countryside. Stone-Dweller Orcs, though, have abandoned their "primitive" ancestral ways and live happily alongside the other races in cities all over the world. The Orcs of the Sunderlands are one of the rarest examples of Orc society, and occupy hidden villages across the burning desert sands. They are so few in number, though, that even the other Orcs dismiss them as outliers.

Culture: Broken Plains Orcs tend to view most civilizations as exercises in excess and degradation, believing that people must stay close to nature in order to be both happy and whole. All one must do is set foot within a city, they say, to see how life among stone towers and dirty streets has corrupted the soul and diminished the spirit of everyone who lives within its walls. Instead of succumbing to stagnation, the Broken Plains Orcs migrate with the seasons, trade with the small villages they encounter, and live a life that they feel best suits the strength and resilience that are the Orcs' birthright.

Meanwhile, Stone-Dweller Orcs have abandoned that tribal philosophy as a form of "primitive superstition" and happily enjoy all of the comforts and advantages that city life has to offer. Once upon a time, these two factions of Orcs viewed each other with suspicion and derision, though in the past century or so it has become increasingly common for Orcs to



migrate from one society to the other, each hoping that the other style of living and different location will offer whatever they feel is missing in their own lives.

The Sunderland Orcs remain much more insular than their kin across the sea. They do occasionally venture outside of their sun-baked homes, but rarely interact with any other Orcs they find. Their culture is highly focused on learning and experimentation rather than combat, though, of course, even the weakest of their scholars can be a match for any Human.

SPECIES ABILITY

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	2	2	2	1

- **Wound Threshold:** 12 + Brawn
- **Strain Threshold:** 8 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100 XP
- **Special Abilities:** Each type of Orc has its own special abilities, listed in the corresponding entry.

BROKEN PLAINS ORC

The Orcs who hunt the Broken Plains are among the most powerful, ferocious beings in the world. They live the hard, lean life of nomads, following the great herds of elk, boars, and moose from one side of the Broken Plains to the other, forging a society that is equally influenced by their spirit-based magic, brutal war axes, and fearsome throwing spears.

- **Starting Skills:** Broken Plains Orcs begin with one rank in Coercion. You still cannot train their Coercion above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Battle Rage:** When making a melee attack, a Broken Plains Orc can choose to add ■ to the check to add +2 to the damage dealt by one hit of that attack.

STONE-DWELLER ORC

Though Orcs are generally as intellectually and socially capable as any other being in Mennara, their immense size and incredible strength gives them some highly unusual advantages. While there is no inherent need for them to make a living using those assets, most find it too tempting a lure to resist. As such, Stone-Dweller Orcs often find themselves living lives of adventure as mercenaries, soldiers, constables, or crooks.

- **Starting Skills:** Stone-Dweller Orcs begin with one rank in Cool. You still cannot train their Cool above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Hot Tempered:** While a Stone-Dweller Orc's strain exceeds half of their strain threshold, they add ■ ■ to all social skill checks and add 1 to the damage of one hit of each melee attack they make.

SUNDERLANDS ORC

The mysterious Orcs of the Sunderlands eschew both nomadic and city life, instead living in small, secretive villages. This has the effect of helping to preserve Orc culture and heritage and to advance their race in step with the rest of the world. Within these villages, which dot the great deserts of Al-Kalim, the Sunderlands Orcs study magic and medicine with equal diligence. Such are their skills at potion making that the alchemical contents within their signature black glass flasks are renowned throughout Mennara.

- **Starting Skills:** Sunderlands Orcs begin with one rank in Alchemy. You still cannot train their Alchemy above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Tenacious:** After a Sunderlands Orc hits a character with a successful combat check, they add □ to combat checks targeting the same character until the end of the encounter.



CATFOLK AND HALF-CATFOLK

Given their animalistic appearance, straightforward culture, and soft-spoken nature, it is easy for the other races to see the Catfolk as lesser beings. They are surprisingly quick-witted and incredibly cunning, although most are happy to "play primitive" if it gains them an advantage while bartering or fighting.

Appearance: Catfolk are distinctive for their bipedal stance despite their catlike claws, feet, tail, and fur, though the latter traits can vary. The huge, muscular Singhara of Zanaga, for example, have a full mane and rich gold and auburn fur, while the compact Hyrrinx have lynx-like tall ears and a bobbed tail.

Society: Among the best hunters and trackers in all of Mennara, Catfolk are able to effortlessly live as hunter-gatherers no matter their location. Hyrrinx, for example, can be found in desolate areas across Terrinoth and Dunwarr. Each of their small villages governed by council of elders. When food runs scarce, as is often in winters, the village exiles adults who are unmarried, less productive, or have run afoul of the reigning council.

Most of these exiles, called Rythkin, become adventurers or mercenaries and may make new lives in Human and Dwarf cities. A small few walk a different path entirely, hunting less and becoming merchants or caravan traders who might roam through far reaches of Mennara. The Singhara, though, always exist for the hunt. Fierce and deadly, they abhor city or village life for the wilds of the jungle.

Culture: Hyrrinx Catfolk culture is based on communal simplicity. Food is shared, all aid in village upkeep and building dens, and trades are designed so that the needs of all met. Those who cannot hunt are expected to develop a skill that provides for the tribe. The Singhara, though they operate in packs, are instead fiercely independent and each kills to meet their own hunger.



SPECIES ABILITY

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	1	3	2	2

- **Wound Threshold:** 9 + Brawn
- **Strain Threshold:** 8 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90 XP
- **Starting Skills:** Catfolk begin with one rank in Perception. You still cannot train their Perception above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Claws:** Catfolk possess sharp, retractable claws and may choose to attack with the following weapon profile: (Brawl; Damage +1; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1).
- **Fleet of Paw:** Catfolk can perform a second maneuver to move without suffering strain. They still cannot exceed the limitation of two maneuvers in a turn.

HALF-CATFOLK

Though village-dwelling Catfolk predominantly keep to themselves, those exiled into the world must find their place among the other races. This often leads to love, marriage, and offspring.

Half-Catfolk most often retain the reflexes, senses, and coordination of their Catfolk parent, but commonly gain the aesthetics of their other parent's species. Many Half-Catfolk appear as heavily furred Humans with cat-like ears and clawed fingers, though there are nearly limitless variations. While most of the nearby societies accept such beings for what they are, full-blooded Catfolk see them as the byproducts of unworthy exiles. Thus, Half-Catfolk are often shunned and ridiculed by their pure-blooded cousins.

SPECIES ABILITY

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	2	2	2

- **Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Strain Threshold:** 9 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100 XP
- **Starting Skills:** Half-Catfolk begin with one rank in Cool. You still cannot train their Cool above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Catfolk Ancestry:** Half-Catfolk choose either the Claws or Fleet of Paw special ability from the Catfolk entry.

GNOMES

Gnomes love and embrace all of the attributes that most races would see as inherent disadvantages. They are small in stature, slight of frame, youthful in appearance, and warm of disposition—and they wouldn't change a thing, even if they could.

Their size makes them exceptionally nimble and allows them to live in small, easily defensible tunnels. Their diminutive frames and youthful faces make it almost effortless for them to adopt an unassuming air and put others at ease. And their warm disposition makes all kinds of social interactions, from cutthroat negotiations to interpersonal relationships, incredibly easy.

However, they admit to none of that if one asks them directly. Ask a Gnome about their inborn advantages, and they will whine pitifully about how cruel it is to be the most picked-on, pixie-esque, and defenseless member of the civilized races—but one shouldn't believe it for a second.

Appearance: Gnomes tend to have a flushed pink, red, or brown complexion and light brown or reddish hair—which, when combined with their predilection for pastel colors, tends to make them look perpetually cheerful.

Society: Burrow Gnomes gather into large matriarchal bands that function almost like a huge extended family. Each township is ruled by a chieftain, who in turn rules over the leaders of the various clans. Duties are most commonly divided by clan, with the homesteads within each working cooperatively to carry out the needs of their township. All serve at least one year with their township's militia, which patrols borders, defends tunnels, and occasionally conducts raids against surrounding enemies.

Wanderer Gnomes, on the other hand, rarely have a fixed home. Either singly or in large communal caravans, they instead roam all over Mennara as traders, performers, and occasionally even laborers in local farms and smithies.

The Gnomes of Isheim, also known as the Onoit, are perhaps the rarest of Gnomes. In these frozen lands they have developed a unique society based around the sentient canines of this land and the magical abilities of their shamans.

Culture: Thanks to the combination of their jovial nature and tight living quarters, most Gnomes tend to possess the paradoxical contradiction of being friendly, giving people who may not think twice about taking the money or any other items not currently being used right out of a person's pocket. It's not that they are deliberately intending to be troublesome; they just come from a world where people live in such tight quarters and with such accommodating attitudes that everyone helps themselves to everything when it's needed—including coins or any possessions laying about.

Maybe that's the cause of Gnomish reclusiveness—or maybe it's a product of it—but regardless, it unquestionably affects their tendency to keep to themselves. When they do venture out among the other races, they are frequently greeted with an interesting combination of joy and suspicion. The Onoit of Isheim themselves are even more suspicious and wary, though, when they encounter outsiders, especially those who dare venture into their sacred regions. Those strangers who tread farther than the boundary stones are met with deadly force.

SPECIES ABILITY

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	2	3	1	3

- **Wound Threshold:** 6 + Brawn
- **Strain Threshold:** 11 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90 XP
- **Small:** Gnomes are silhouette 0.
- **Special Abilities:** Each type of Gnome has its own special abilities, listed in the corresponding entry.



BURROW GNOME

Burrow Gnomes are those who have mostly abandoned interactions with the other races. When they do leave their comfortable homes, it is typically for trade, alliance building, espionage, or, of course, the lure of adventure.

- **Starting Skills:** Burrow Gnomes begin with one rank in Charm and one rank in Resilience. You still cannot train their Charm or Resilience above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Militia Training:** Burrow Gnomes add ▢ to all combat checks that target characters who have a larger silhouette than they do.

WANDERER GNOME

Some Gnomes get a taste of the outside world during their year with the militia and set out to "scratch their itchy feet." Whether on their own or in a small band, Wanderer Gnomes are a common sight throughout all of Mennara.

- **Starting Skills:** Wanderer Gnomes begin with one rank in Charm and one rank in Stealth. You still cannot train their Charm or Stealth above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Tricksy:** Once per encounter during their turn, a Wanderer Gnome may use this ability and spend a Story Point to produce a previously undocumented small item (encumbrance 1 or less) with a rarity no greater than 4 from a pocket, bag, pouch, nearby windowsill, passing cart, or other convenient location—even if there is no logical explanation for the item's presence. This item cannot be a weapon unless the weapon has the Limited Ammo 1 quality.

CAREERS

A player who is creating a character for the Runebound setting must select a career for that character. The following careers take the place of those described in the GENESYS Core Rulebook. In addition to determining a character's career skills and granting ranks in four of those skills, each career includes a list of starting gear. If the Game Master allows it, the player may take this starting gear for their character instead of following the process for **Starting Gear** on page 51 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. Note that all items listed use steel craftsmanship or oak materials where applicable.

DISCIPLE

Disciples are mystics dedicated to aiding others. Their power comes from calling upon the mysterious aid of the gods or drawing on their own determination. Some channel the blessed flames of Kellos, while others walk the Latari Elves' enigmatic Path of the Stars, still others observe the druidic traditions of Kurnos, or follow one of the countless other deities who watch over the world. What they all have in common is a talent for helping others, whether through physical or spiritual healing, via divine guidance, or with weapons blessed by the gods. The majority of Disciples are trained within isolated monasteries or great temples, and live by strict codes of conduct, often having taken sacred oaths.

Adventuring Disciples take what they have learned among the devotees in their conclaves out into the world, where they might enact the will of their god upon the land. This can range from gathering gold and glory for their temple or converting the ignorant to the true path, to personal quests of enlightenment or wars of salvation that can only end when a great evil is undone or an ancient prophecy fulfilled.

The Disciple counts the following skills as career skills: **Athletics**, **Charm**, **Discipline**, **Divine**, **Knowledge (Lore)**, **Leadership**, **Melee (Light)**, and **Resilience**. Before spending experience points (XP) during character creation, a Disciple may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: Players with a Disciple character may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending currency during **Step 7** of character creation:

- A mace
- A holy icon *or* shield and leather armor
- A lantern and 2 herbs of healing *or* traveling gear consisting of a backpack, a bedroll, a rope, flint and steel, 3 torches, and a waterskin
- 1d100 silver coins

ENVOY

Envoys are masters of negotiation, charm, and social intrigue. These charismatic heroes are often the voice of their group: they broker deals or convince others to offer aid, give up their secrets, or believe the hero's lies. Where blade and spell fail, Envoys find success, fighting as skillfully with words as their companions do with swords. Whether they are Terrinothian nobility, ambassadors, stewards, or chamberlains of any the many keeps or estates scattered throughout the land, their connections and emotional intuition serve the adventuring party well. Also counted among their number are Guildmasters of Tamalir, bards of the wandering Motley Circus or the Children of the Harp, and even ambassadors of the Latari Elves and the Orc Tribes.

Envoys adventure for a variety of reasons, whether to escape the oppressive climate of court life, to disappear after some unforgivable deed, to make new deals and find new wealth for their guild or lords, or just to spread the gift of song, all the while learning more about the world around them. In most cases, they seek out able fighters to share their travels, trading wit and charm for a bit of cold steel when it is called for.

The Envoy counts the following skills as career skills: **Charm**, **Cool**, **Deception**, **Knowledge (Geography)**, **Leadership**, **Melee (Light)**, **Negotiation**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, an Envoy may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: Players with an Envoy character may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending currency during **Step 7** of character creation:

- A dagger
- A sword *or* a musical instrument
- A fine cloak *or* traveling gear consisting of a backpack, a bedroll, a rope, flint and steel, 3 torches, and a waterskin
- Padded armor
- 200 + 1d100 silver coins

MAGE

Mennara is a world shaped by magic. Natural-born sorcerers can tap into the arcane energies of the Verto Magica, while others may be inadvertently launched on a path of magic after discovering a powerful artifact or lost relic. Each land has its own magical traditions, from the court wizardry of Terrinoth to the colleges of sorcery in Al-Kalim. Despite their differences in culture and training, all spellcasters have an understanding of mysteries beyond the ken of other mortals that allows them to dispatch their enemies or manipulate the world around them by sorcerous means.

The reasons why Mages go adventuring are as varied as the disciplines of magic they practice. The Runemasters of Greyhaven might seek out the sundered shards of the Orb of the Sky, while Elven storm sorceresses defend their forest homelands by hunting down ancient artifacts and Greyhaven-trained battlemages support the Citadel's armies. Those who bargain with dark powers—including the reviled hexers, necromancers, and warlocks rumored to exchange secrets in Nerekhall—furtively travel the lands in their selfish pursuits or in service to their master's bidding. Wizards have not only the potential to incinerate monsters with balls of fire, but are also students of knowledge; most Mages are well-read scholars of the world's secret lore.

The Mage counts the following skills as career skills: **Alchemy**, **Arcana**, **Cool**, **Discipline**, **Knowledge (Adventuring)**, **Knowledge (Forbidden)**, **Knowledge (Lore)**, and **Perception**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Mage may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: Players with a Mage character may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending currency during **Step 7** of character creation:

- A magic staff *or* magic wand
- A dagger *or* sling
- Heavy robes *or* 1 stamina elixir
- 1d100 silver coins



RUNEMASTER

Players may select the Runemaster career as an variant of the Mage career. A Runemaster is similar to a Mage in most respects, but focuses solely on the magic of runes. They count Runes as a career skill instead of the Arcana skill, and rather than choosing a magic staff or wand, they receive a Lesser Rune (see page 119) as part of their starting gear.

PRIMALIST

Fierce gods and the forces of nature are the domain of the Primalists. These spellcasters are chosen by their people be the vessel of either a god or a powerful natural force, and channel the power of the storm through their soul. Some come from far-off lands and are beholden to living gods, like the spellcasters of the Zanagan Singhara who worship Hamzah the Pridelord. Others, like the Onoit elders of Isheim, the Wealdweavers of the Elves, and the Orc spiritspeakers of the Broken Plains are at one with the world around them. Calling upon the great forces of the natural world, Primalists can manipulate weather, fortify their allies, or summon benign spirits to protect them.

A Primalist answers the call to adventure because it is the will of the great power that fills their flesh and bones. As a storm wind must blow, so too a Primalist traverses the world, in search of places and objects sacred to their god or to follow the whispered guidance of the earth spirits. The aid of a Primalist can be invaluable, for few can command the powers of nature as they do.

The Primalist counts the following skills as career skills: **Alchemy**, **Brawl**, **Discipline**, **Knowledge (Lore)**, **Medicine**, **Melee (Heavy)**, **Primal**, and **Survival**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Primalist may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: Players with a Primalist character may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending currency during **Step 7** of character creation:

- A staff *or* a greataxe and leather armor
- An apothecary's kit *or* traveling gear consisting of a backpack, a bedroll, a rope, flint and steel, 3 torches, and a waterskin
- 1d100 silver coins

SCHOLAR

Whereas Mages, Disciples, and Primalists call upon arcane, divine, or primal energies for their power, Scholars are masters of the secrets of the natural world and the cultures within it. They are firm believers in the axiom "Knowledge is Power." The civilizations of the world, past and present, have collected millennia of lore, much of which lies buried beneath the noses of the various races. Wherever they go, Scholars see these hidden histories. Whether they are the old markings of the Locust Swarm upon the border stones of Hernfar Isle, the Djinn statues that rise up from the sands of Al-Kalim, or the scarred deepwyrm scales glittering on the trade ships of the Torue Albes, a Scholar knows their meanings. There are as many kinds of Scholars as there are secrets, and most have their own specialization. Gnomish alchemists hail from insular lodges that deal in healing elixirs and acid bombs, Dwarven craftspeople forge weapons and armor of immense power, and Rune Scholars unlock the ancient secrets of the markings inscribed into the runebound shards.

Scholars adventure to add to their vast wealth of knowledge. Some, like the Weik Stormspeakers, travel the world gathering stories like gold to bring back to their lords, while others, like the Latari Elven Loremasters, live for hundreds of years, becoming the living archives of their people's long history.

The Scholar counts the following skills as career skills: **Alchemy**, **Knowledge (Forbidden)**, **Knowledge (Geography)**, **Knowledge (Lore)**, **Mechanics**, **Medicine**, **Perception**, and **Runes**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Scholar may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: Players with a Scholar character may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending currency during **Step 7** of character creation:

- A dagger
- An alchemists' kit *or* a sword
- A lantern *or* healing herbs
- A fine cloak *or* traveling gear consisting of a backpack, a bedroll, a rope, flint and steel, 3 torches, and a waterskin
- 1d100 silver coins

SCOUNDREL

A quick wit and a swift blade are often better than a swift blade alone. From the merchant districts of Tamalir to the winding streets of Last Haven and in a thousand haunts in between, rogues and outsiders live by their cunning. These Scoundrels take many guises, whether they are scurvy pirates from the Kingless Coast, enigmatic assassins of the Al-Kalim fighting temples, cunning bandits roving the wilds of the Borderlands, savvy gamblers or confidence artists, or simple Free City cutpurses trying to make a living. Merchants, too, can be counted among the ranks of the Scoundrel; the canny Dunwarr Dwarf shopkeep who knows how to get the best price for his wares and the master Lorimor clockmaker who is as adept at traps as she is at crafting timepieces both fit the bill.

As adventurers, Scoundrels survive by skill and wit rather than brawn or sorcerous talents. They tend to favor weapons of finesse and surprise over those that require raw might to use. A talented Scoundrel might be an archer or knife fighter, but is just as likely to be skilled in avoiding battle altogether, able to slip away into the shadows in the blink of an eye. Adventuring groups are always ready to welcome a Scoundrel into their ranks, for many situations require their unique talents. Whether the party needs someone to navigate a trap-filled dungeon, evade a watchful foe, or find an ally in a shadowy city, often only a Scoundrel will know just the trick.

The Scoundrel counts the following skills as career skills: **Charm**, **Cool**, **Coordination**, **Deception**, **Ranged**, **Skulduggery**, **Stealth**, and **Streetwise**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Scoundrel may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: Players with a Scoundrel character may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending currency during **Step 7** of character creation:

- A dagger *or* a cestus
- A sword and dagger *or* a bow
- A fine cloak *or* thieves' tools
- Traveling gear consisting of a backpack, a bedroll, a rope, flint and steel, 3 torches, and a waterskin
- 1d100 silver coins



SCOUT

Scouts are outlanders and wanderers, more at home among the forbidding wilds than in winding city streets. Because Scouts are skilled hunters and trackers, many governments employ them in the vanguard of their armies. The Leonx Riders of the Latari and the outland rangers of Daqan, for instance, spearhead legions deep into enemy territory. In contrast, inquisitors and bounty hunters seek out the solitary life of the Scout, traveling alone or with small groups as they complete their missions away from the direct control of their lords. Regardless of their role, Scouts are every bit as skilled at stalking Human prey as they are at hunting animals.

Scouts take to adventuring naturally, their comfort in the wilds and their skills with blades and bows make them well suited to anything Terrinoth or the realms beyond can throw at them. All races can claim Scouts among their ranks; the Latari Deepwood Rangers move as shadows among the trees, the Scouts of the Onoit Gnomes are able to cross the frozen wilds of Isheim swifter than a rider on horseback, and the Scouts of the Mistwatch protect their Human settlements from roaming undead. Scouts are warriors of the wilds, and the vastness of the world is their battlefield.

The Scout counts the following skills as career skills: **Knowledge (Adventuring)**, **Knowledge (Geography)**, **Perception**, **Ranged**, **Riding**, **Stealth**, **Survival**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Scout may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: Players with a Scout character may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending currency during **Step** 7 of character creation:

- A bow *or* a light spear and leather armor
- A dagger *or* 2 healing elixirs
- Leather armor
- Herbs of healing and climbing gear *or* winter clothing
- Traveling gear consisting of a backpack, a bedroll, a rope, flint and steel, 3 torches, and a waterskin
- 1d100 silver coins

WARRIOR

Warriors dedicate themselves to the mastery of blade, axe, and other weapons of war. Whether they rely upon raw strength to crush their enemies, hefty armor to soak hits before dishing them out, or speed and skill to avoid attacks—and deliver killing ripostes—all Warriors excel in the art of combat.



Warriors can hail from any number of cultures and peoples. The Baronies of Daqan train some of the finest knights in the world, their lance tips flashing in the sun as they carry out quests for their lords. Meanwhile, Marshals of the Citadel mete out justice in the name of the Common Law, and Weik berserkers bring unbridled savagery to the battlefield. Adventuring Warriors may have set out from their homes to abide by a royal decree, to prove themselves worthy in keeping with a tribal tradition, or simply because there is no better place to master a blade than out in the wilds of Terrinoth or the vast lands beyond its borders.

If a Warrior can master the ways of battle, they might rise up to a position of command, taking over a garrison along the Borderlands, leading a contingent of Lorimor marines as a champion, or perhaps simply finding fortune and glory as a lone fighter wandering the wastelands.

The Warrior counts the following skills as career skills: **Brawl**, **Coercion**, **Leadership**, **Melee (Heavy)**, **Melee (Light)**, **Resilience**, **Riding**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Warrior may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: Players with a Warrior character may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending currency during **Step** 7 of character creation:

- A sword and a shield *or* an axe and shield *or* a halberd
- Leather armor
- 2 healing elixirs
- Traveling gear consisting of a backpack, a bedroll, a rope, flint and steel, 3 torches, and a waterskin
- 1d100 silver coins

HEROIC ABILITIES

Player characters are heroes, with unique capabilities that set them apart from the ordinary inhabitants of Mennara. When you create your GENESYS character for the Runebound setting, you also choose a Heroic Ability for your character during **Step 4** of character creation (see page 44 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). Each player character has only one Heroic Ability, which helps set them apart as a hero. As your character grows in experience, they receive ability points, which you spend on upgrades that further customize your character's Heroic Ability.

USING A HEROIC ABILITY

Heroic Abilities are quite powerful, so there are some pretty significant limitations on when you can use them. However, as you'll see on page 79, one of the ways you can customize your Heroic Ability is by spending ability points to reduce these restrictions.

By default, activating a Heroic Ability requires you to spend 2 Story Points. The effects of the Heroic Ability last until the end of your character's next turn, and you can only activate it once per session. Unless stated otherwise in the description of a specific effect, activating a Heroic Ability is an incidental.

CREATING A HEROIC ABILITY

To create your Heroic Ability, you'll need to follow a series of simple steps. Once you finish, you will have a Heroic Ability tailored to your character.

1. **Choose Primary Ability Effect:** The primary effect is the core of your Heroic Ability. It defines what the ability does when you activate it. Even at the base level, these effects are potent.
2. **Determine Your Ability's Origin:** How does your character come by their extraordinary abilities? You can make something up or roll randomly to determine the origin of your Heroic Ability.
3. **Name Your Ability:** Every Heroic Ability needs a unique, evocative name!

CHOOSE A PRIMARY ABILITY EFFECT

A primary ability effect is the core of a Heroic Ability. The effect tells you what your ability does—the benefit your character from activating it. A Heroic Ability gets only one primary ability effect, so choose carefully! Your character receives the benefits for the base ability, unless you spend ability points to upgrade to the improved or supreme version. Unless stated otherwise, the benefits of each level of the effect are cumulative, so if you spend ability points for the improved effect, your character still get all the benefits of the base effect.

When deciding on a primary ability effect, look to your character's concept and what you know about them already. Their Heroic Ability is central to who your character is, and why they adventure. It helps define your character.

ALL THE FACTS

Your character has a knack for knowing vital information when it is needed. They might pick up on significant clues others missed at the scene of a crime, or recall an ancient Elven song that sheds light on a situation. Whether your character remembers important information they already know or discovers something in the moment, their ability to do so is extraordinary. It could be thanks to an eidetic memory, years of study, magic, alchemically enhanced senses, or anything else.

Base: While this ability is active, during each of their turns your character learns (or remembers) an important fact about a situation, person, creature, place, or object of their choice. The subject of the information must be either observable by your character or directly relevant to the situation.

Improved: Additionally, while this ability is active your character upgrades the ability of all checks they make once if the check relates to the new information.

GM ADVICE: RESISTING HEROIC ABILITIES

Many Heroic Abilities directly affect NPCs, and the impact can be significant. For the most part, NPCs targeted by a character using a Heroic Ability do not have an opportunity to try to resist or avoid the Heroic Ability's effects. Usually, this is a good thing; the PCs are the heroes of the story, and Heroic Abilities exist to showcase this.

However, you might want to allow some important NPCs, particularly nemeses, to attempt to avoid the full effects of a Heroic Ability. Rather than simply having the NPC roll a skill check to resist a Heroic Ability's effect, you might consider having the PC who is using the Heroic Ability make an opposed check, even if the ability does not usually require one. The adversary resists with Discipline if they are using force of will or intellect, or Resilience if they are using physical strength (the GM should feel free to choose another skill if they think it makes more sense).

Supreme: For each fact you learn using the ability, you gain a temporary Story Point that you or another player may spend before the end of the session. A temporary Story Point is removed from the pool when it is used, but it is not converted to a GM Story Point. When you use these temporary Story Points, describe how the information your character learned or provided benefits the group.

CONNECTED

Your character seems to know everyone—or at least everyone who's worth knowing. Many people who are highly placed or just plain powerful owe you favors, and you can call these in when the time is right. Alternatively, your character might have blackmail information or other leverage over such NPCs.

Base: When your character activates this ability, choose one NPC and reveal that they owe your character a favor. Work with the GM to establish the relevant details of the existing relationship between your character and the NPC. In some cases, the GM might determine that there is just no way you could know the NPC in question, in which case your Heroic Ability does not activate (you don't spend any Story Points, and you can still activate it later in the session). The NPC won't risk their life or kill anyone as the favor. They also won't do something that's obviously going to ruin their social standing, finances, or so on. However, your character might be able to convince them there is no such risk!



HEROIC ABILITIES IN THE NARRATIVE

Although Heroic Abilities have to be activated and last only for a short time, at the GM's discretion, characters may receive some small, narrative benefit from an ability at all times, not only when it is activated. After all, a character's Heroic Ability says something important about who they are, and is likely to have an impact on much of what they do. However, it's important that these minor considerations don't duplicate or rival the benefits provided by activating a Heroic Ability.

The Sixth Sense effect is a good example. If a character can speak with animals, they might be able to do so at any time—although there is no guarantee they will receive useful information without activating their ability! On the other hand, if a character can read thoughts, the GM might decide that it requires a high degree of focus, or even that external circumstances have to be just right. Similarly, if a character's primary ability effect is Connected, the player and GM might decide that the character already knows many of the NPCs encountered in the game, even though they don't all owe the character a significant favor.

Improved: While this ability is active, your character downgrades the difficulty of all social skill checks they make once.

Supreme: While this ability is active, when an intelligent adversary declares your character the target of an attack, as an out-of-turn incidental you may force the adversary to choose a different target instead.

FORETELLING

Your character possesses mystical means of predicting future events, or lives their life in pursuit of an ancient prophecy—of which they might even be the subject. Whether through interpreting others' dreams, seeing omens in the movement of animals, scrying in a crystal ball, or interpreting the words of ancient prophets, your character has access to useful information about events in progress and those yet to happen.

Base: Each round while this ability remains active, each round you may ask the GM one yes-or-no question about knowledge your character doesn't have any mundane or logical reason to possess, which the GM must answer truthfully. Your character gains this information through whatever esoteric means are appropriate. (Acting on this information is another matter entirely, of course. You can't go around accusing nobles of crimes without evidence just because some spirit told you!)

Improved: While this ability is active, you may reroll one skill check relevant to a question you asked the GM.

Supreme: Once, while this ability is active, when an NPC makes a skill check you can roll an identical dice pool and choose to substitute its results for the NPC's check.

HARD TO KILL

When your character steels their resolve and tightens their grip on weapon or staff, they can shrug off the worst the enemy throws at them. In moments of dire import, they face down overwhelming opposition without taking a scratch. This might represent raw toughness and the will to power through, or it might be an effect of magic.

Base: While this ability is active, your character gains +4 soak.

Improved: While this ability is active, your character also increases the difficulty of combat checks targeting them by one.

Supreme: While their Heroic Ability is active, your character becomes immune to damage; reduce all damage the character suffers to 0.

INFLUENTIAL

Your character is an unparalleled orator, impossibly charming, or even possessed of a supernatural ability to influence others. Whether through lying, impassioned speeches, moving poetry recitations, or any number of methods, your character gets people to do what they want.

Base: While this ability is active, when your character uses a social skill to inflict strain during a social encounter (see page 118 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), they inflict additional strain equal to their characteristic linked to the skill. If the social encounter is resolved with a single skill check, your character instead adds a number of ✲ equal to their characteristic linked to the skill.

Improved: While this ability is active, your character only needs to spend ⩓ ⩓ to trigger a "critical remark" (see the sidebar on page 123 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook) and inflict 5 strain on the target. Your character can inflict multiple critical remarks with a single check.

Supreme: While this ability is active during a social encounter, your character also reduces any strain they suffer by an amount equal to their Presence or their ranks in Cool (whichever is higher). This reduction applies to skill checks, talents, and abilities that inflict strain, but it applies only during a social encounter and does not apply to strain your character suffers voluntarily.

MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

Your character's injuries often turn out to be not as bad as they look, or perhaps your character actually heals physical wounds so rapidly as to defy explanation. In any case, they have a tendency to walk away from bloody fights with nothing more than scratches.

Base: When your character activates this ability, and at the beginning of their turn each round while it remains active, your character heals 3 wounds.

Improved: When you activate this ability, your character heals all current wounds they are suffering.

Supreme: When you activate this ability, your character heals one Critical Injury they are suffering.

PARAGON

When it comes to a particular skill, your character is simply the best. Whether their abilities really are supernatural (or just seem that way), your character always achieves the check they want when it really counts. More importantly, even when things could go disastrously wrong, they never do.

Base: When you select this primary ability effect, choose one skill. While this ability is active, after rolling the dice for a check using that skill but before resolving the results, you may remove ◆ of your choice from the pool. (Ignore the symbols shown on that die when resolving the check.)

Improved: While this ability is active, you may remove ■ of your choice from the results of checks using your chosen skill.

Supreme: While this ability is active, you may remove ⬢ instead of ◆ from the results of checks you make using the chosen skill.

GM ADVICE: ADJUDICATING HEROIC ABILITIES

While all Heroic Abilities have an important narrative impact, some abilities have a stronger or entirely narrative effect. While it's simple to resolve the use of abilities that directly interact with the mechanics of the game, primary ability effects like Foretelling and Connected can leave a lot up to the GM. As the GM, you should resolve these abilities in much the same way as any other activity the PCs undertake that doesn't call for a skill check, or any other question the players might ask about the setting.

While these effects do place certain restrictions on your response, they also allow plenty of freedom to resolve the use of an ability in the way that works best for your game and campaign. The favor a PC gains by using Connected or the knowledge they gain through All the Facts provide opportunities for you to keep the action on track by providing the PCs with the information or opportunity they need to progress the adventure. However you choose to resolve the ability, just make sure the player gains the benefit they expect from their chosen ability and that it has a suitably heroic impact on the game!

SIXTH SENSE

Your character possesses a rare, maybe even unique, capacity to perceive that goes beyond the five senses that limit most mortals. They might be able to understand the language of animals, sense the thoughts of others, or even communicate with the spirits of the recently dead.

Base: When you choose this Heroic Ability, you and the GM decide what type of entity your character's extrasensory perception applies to, such as animals, the dead, others' minds, and so on. While this ability is active, your character can communicate in a limited fashion with this type of entity, receiving emotions and vague impressions. In addition, when you activate this ability, your character uses this method of communication to automatically gain one important piece of information relevant to the current encounter.

Improved: While this ability is active, your character can understand and exchange simple ideas through their unusual method of perception and communication. In addition, they automatically gain another important piece of information that is relevant to the current session.

Supreme: While this ability is active, your character can engage in complex conversations through their unusual method of perception and communication; it is just as effective and efficient as ordinary speech, if not better. In addition, they automatically gain another important piece of information that is relevant to the adventure or campaign.

SIGNATURE WEAPON

Some heroes (and their reputations) are inseparable from their chosen weapon. These weapons are often just as famous as the heroes who wield them. Your character's signature weapon may be enchanted, or even intelligent. It could instead simply be a well-crafted weapon that your character wields effortlessly. The full capabilities of such a singular weapon, particularly one of magical or unknown provenance, sometimes only become apparent in the crucible of battle, in moments of true hardship and heroism.



TABLE 2–1: SIGNATURE WEAPONS

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	SPECIAL
Brawl Weapon	Brawl	+2	4	Engaged	1	2	Disorient 3, Superior
Melee Weapon (One-Handed)	Melee (Light)	+3	3	Engaged	1	2	Superior
Melee Weapon (Two-Handed)	Melee (Heavy)	+5	3	Engaged	3	2	Knockdown, Superior
Ranged Weapon	Ranged	8	3	Long	2	2	Superior

Base: Your character has a signature weapon, which is chosen from **Table 2–1: Signature Weapons** which can be of Dwarven, Elven, or Steel craftsmanship (see page 97). You and the GM should work together to determine what form the weapon takes and how it came to your character's possession. The appearance of the weapon does not affect its profile, but may dictate what attachments are available. (For instance, if you describe your Signature Weapon as a halberd, you can't add the weighted head attachment.) In addition, choose one attachment that the signature weapon does not possess. When you activate this ability, your signature weapon gains the effects of that attachment while the ability remains active (this does not have a cost or require any hard points). Other attachments can be added to the signature weapon in the standard way.

If your character's signature weapon is ever lost or destroyed, it either finds its way back to your character against all odds, or your character obtains a new signature weapon. Work with the GM to decide how this happens, based on the ongoing story. Your character should obtain their new weapon (or reacquire it) at the start of the next session, if not sooner. Conversely, your character can never possess more than one signature weapon at a time. If this ever occurs (as a result of finding a lost signature weapon after obtaining a replacement, for instance), work with the GM to remove all but one signature weapon from your character's possession in a suitably dramatic fashion.

Improved: Your character's signature weapon gains either the Reinforced quality or can be revealed to actually be of ancient craftsmanship (see page 97) and thus gain that benefit.

Supreme: Your character's signature weapon gains 2 hard points and an attachment of your choice of rarity 9 or less at no cost (subject to the limits of its new total hard points).

UNBOWED

Your character can fight on despite having the most horrendous injuries. It might be sheer willpower that lets them accomplish this feat, or perhaps they are something more than mortal. In any case, even the most grievous wounds do not slow them down in the heat of battle.

Base: When you activate this Heroic Ability, choose one Critical Injury your character is suffering (except for "dead"). As long as this ability is active, do not suffer any effects of that Critical Injury, including adding +10 to further rolls on the Critical Injury Result table. You can also activate this Heroic Ability as an out-of-turn incidental when your character suffers a Critical Injury.

Improved: While this ability is active, your character does not suffer the effects of any Critical Injuries they are suffering (except for the "dead" Critical Injury).

Supreme: While this ability is active, your character also ignores the effects of the "dead" result. They still die when the ability ends, unless the Critical Injury is somehow removed first.

UNLEASH

When pushed to the breaking point—or maybe just when they want to show off—your character unleashes their full abilities, laying low any who oppose them. This might be achieved in a flurry of blows as your character lays about with weapon strikes, or in a sudden surge of magical energy that blasts away whatever monsters and foes stand too close. This effect could even represent your character calling down the wrath of a deity or other supernatural being.

Base: While this ability is active, your character may perform a maneuver once per round on their turn to immediately defeat one minion group within short range.

Improved: While this ability is active, your character may instead perform an incidental once per round on their turn to immediately defeat one minion group within short range. (This replaces the base effect.)

Supreme: When you activate this ability, your character immediately defeats all minions within short range.



HEROIC ABILITY UPGRADES

As your character grows in experience, they gain ability points to spend on upgrades for their Heroic Ability. Obviously, upgrades improve the ability, but more importantly, they help to differentiate it. Even if two player characters have the same primary ability effect for their Heroic Abilities, different choices of upgrades can result in very different abilities.

Your character receives ability points based on the XP they gain through play. Every time your character's XP total increases by 50, they gain one ability point to spend. Your character does not gain ability points based on their starting XP determined by their species, but if you are creating a character with additional XP (see the **Experienced Characters** sidebar on page 44 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), your character does gain an ability point for each additional 50 XP.

When your character gains ability points, you decide how to spend them. Each upgrade includes a cost, and spending the required ability points on an upgrade permanently adds the benefit of that upgrade to your Heroic Ability. Some upgrades have a cumulative effect if you purchase that upgrade multiple times.

DURATION

Cost: 1 Ability Point
Your character's Heroic Ability effect lasts for one additional turn for each purchase of Duration.

FREQUENCY

Cost: 2 Ability Points
Your character can activate their Heroic Ability one additional time per session for each purchase of Frequency.

POWER

Cost: Special
The first time you purchase this upgrade, it costs one ability point and your character's primary ability gains the improved effect. You may purchase this upgrade a second time at a cost of another two ability points to gain the supreme effect.

SECONDARY EFFECT

Cost: 1 Ability Point
Add a secondary effect to your character's Heroic Ability. When you purchase this upgrade, select one of the following secondary effects. You may purchase this upgrade a second time to choose a different effect, for a total of two secondary effects. As with the primary ability effect, you should work with the GM to come up with an exciting narrative explanation for each secondary effect.

Even if the primary effect is instantaneous, the duration of the Heroic Ability matters for many secondary effects. Remember, a Heroic Ability lasts until the end of your character's next turn, or longer if you take the Duration upgrade.

DEVASTATING

While the ability is active, your character adds +2 damage to one hit of each of their attacks.

DIMINISH

While the ability is active, enemies within short range add ■ to their skill checks.

DRAIN

When your character activates their Heroic Ability and at the beginning of each of their turns it remains active, enemies within short range suffer 2 strain.

EMPOWERED

While the ability is active, your character adds □ to their skill checks.

EMPOWER ALLIES

While the ability is active, allies within short range add □ to their skill checks.

REJUVENATION

When your character activates the ability and at the beginning of each turn they take while it remains active, your character heals 2 strain.

REJUVENATE ALLIES

When your character activates the ability and at the beginning of each turn they take while it remains active, all allies within short range heal 2 strain.

RENEWAL

When your character activates the ability, you may choose to generate a new PC Initiative slot. You may choose to use Cool or Vigilance for this roll. The new result remains for the duration of the encounter. The new Initiative slot is immediately available for use, but it does not allow any PC to take an extra turn during a round.

STORY

Cost: 1 Ability Point
Your character only needs to spend one Story Point to activate the ability. You can only purchase this upgrade once.

HEROIC ABILITY ORIGINS

Your character's Heroic Ability is an important part of who they are, so you'll want to decide how they came by such an impressive ability. It's likely that during this process you've already thought about the explanation for your character's ability and how they first obtained it, in which case you should discuss your ideas with the GM and make sure you both agree on what it means for the campaign.

TABLE 2–2: HEROIC ABILITY ORIGINS

D10 ROLL	ORIGIN
1	**In Your Blood:** Heroism runs in the character's family. Perhaps their ancestor was a mighty hero or powerful mage, or the blood of a magical creature runs in their veins.
2	**Chosen One:** The character has been chosen for a great destiny. They might be blissfully unaware of this, but sooner or later, others will take an interest. There is likely a prophecy involved.
3	**Artifact of Power:** The character's Heroic Ability doesn't come naturally, but from an enchanted object in the character's possession. Whether the object was a chance find, a gift, or an inheritance, the character's life changed forever when they obtained this item.
4	**Favored by Unseen Forces:** The character is watched over and protected by powerful supernatural forces. These might be spirits, the character's deity, or even demons of the Ynfernael.
5	**Driven:** The character's Heroic Ability is a manifestation of their powerful drive to excel and succeed. This drive could stem from a sense of duty, a sacred oath, or even an obsession with vengeance.
6	**Life-Changing Experience:** The character's ability is the result of a singular experience that changed their life. Perhaps a great hero saved them from monsters, or the character stumbled upon a powerful source of magic.
7	**Blessed/Cursed:** The character's ability is the result of a blessing or a curse. Perhaps the character hopes to find a way to lift the curse, or must abide by a code of behavior in order to retain the benefits of their blessing.
8	**Peerless Training:** The character's Heroic Ability is the result of long hours of intensive and unique training. The character's teacher might have been a legendary master in their field, a mysterious stranger, or even a supernatural entity.
9	**Magical Exposure:** The character's Heroic Ability developed as a result of exposure to uncontrolled magical energies. Perhaps they were a witness to a duel between wizards, or they stumbled upon a natural source of magic or a powerful artifact in a hidden location.
0	Roll again, ignoring duplicates of this result, and apply both origins.

If you don't have an idea yet, or just want to leave it to fate, you can roll on **Table 2–2: Heroic Ability Origins** to find out how your character obtained their ability.

CREATING HEROIC ABILITIES

The following are two examples to illustrate the process of creating Heroic Abilities for PCs, including crafting origins that tie into character creation.

EXAMPLE: UNLEASHED

Jayda is ready to choose a Heroic Ability for her character, a Warrior of humble birth named Aidira. Aidira desires to be a knight, even though she was born a commoner. Jayda hasn't quite decided yet how Aidira became such a skilled swordswoman, considering her origin, but she decides on the Unleashed primary effect to represent Aidira's ability to swiftly best most foes in battle.

She rolls a 9 for the ability's origin, obtaining a result of Magical Exposure. Based on this, Jayda decides that Aidira first took up a sword to defend her family from a dark wizard, and was struck by a discharge of magical energy at the same moment she dealt a fatal blow to the wizard. Ever since, in times of similar desperation and bravery, Aidira has exhibited heightened reflexes and preternatural skill with a weapon.

Now, Jayda has her character's Heroic Ability and the answer to her questions about Aidira's background, and decides to call her Heroic Ability "Echoed Power."

EXAMPLE: CONNECTED

Brandon is creating his character, a Wanderer Gnome named Tarfel Banderbloom, for a new campaign. His character concept is that of a charming storyteller and all-around rogue, so he chose the Scoundrel career. Brandon is now on step 4 of character creation and has already spent his starting XP, so he's ready to choose his Heroic Ability.

He decides the Connected primary effect is a good fit for the character—Tarfel knows lots of people and is well liked, so at least a few people are bound to owe him favors (possibly for less-than-legal reasons). He rolls on the Heroic Ability Origins table and gets a 1, and the In Your Blood origin. This fits with the concept, so Brandon decides the Heroic Ability represents the natural results of Tarfel's inherited charm and his family's illicit pursuits.

He's not sure what to call the ability, so he thinks about upgrades he might purchase in the future. He likes the idea of the Empower Allies secondary effect, which could represent Tarfel's ability to inspire his allies with his antics, and he calls his ability "Life of the Party."

NEW SKILLS AND RULES

This section introduces new skills specific to the Runebound setting. **Table 2–3: Skills for the Runebound Setting**, on page 82, includes both these new skills and the skills from the GENESYS Core Rulebook that are used in the Runebound setting. It also covers rules for mounted combat, an important mode of conflict in the Runebound setting.

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

The new skills in this section take the place of the single Knowledge skill presented in the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

ADVENTURING (INTELLECT)

Life as an adventurer offers unique perils and challenges. Adventurers tend to run toward the sorts of danger from which common folk flee. Experienced adventurers see a side of the world that most people never do, and they learn a great deal during their journeys and quests. The Knowledge (Adventuring) skill represents this sort of practical experience, as well as discussions in taverns with fellow adventurers about monsters, ruins, and other threats—and how best to overcome them. For many adventurers, it represents a kind of learned instinct; they might not be able to explain exactly why it's a bad idea to touch the ancient statue, but they know it is.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character tries to identify a strange, slimy mass hanging from a dungeon ceiling.
- Your character attempts to find the safest course across a treacherously unstable ruin.
- Your character is attempting to solve a complicated puzzle of moving statues and levers in the depths of an ancient tomb.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to determine the provenance of a strange amulet found in the depths of a ruin. That would use Knowledge (Lore).
- Your character tries to use their reflexes and dexterity to avoid falling into a pit trap. Coordination is the appropriate skill for this situation (although Vigilance might help them avoid stepping on the trap in the first place).
- Your character is relying on their alertness to avoid dangers underground, which would use Vigilance.

FORBIDDEN (INTELLECT)

Knowledge (Forbidden) concerns matters of blood magic, necromancy, the Ynfernael, and other proscribed affairs. In addition to topics of an arcane nature, this skill covers any knowledge of subjects outlawed by the ruling classes and spiritual authorities, including particular historical incidents, purged lineages, and unspeakable monsters. A character with the Knowledge (Forbidden) skill may specialize in a particular category or dabble in all these and more, but they must be careful about revealing their knowledge to others.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character attempts to decipher the arcane glyphs adorning a Reanimate's ancient blade.
- Your character tries to uncover the ritual by which to contact a denizen of the Ynfernael.
- Your character wants to identify the magic employed by a Daewyl Elf.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character attempts to cast a spell using energy drawn from the Ynfernael. That would use Divine.
- Your character researches the magic practiced by the wizards at Greyhaven University. Magic of this sort is covered by Knowledge (Lore).
- Your character attempts to identify a magic amulet from the days of the Penacor Kings. That would use Knowledge (Lore).

GEOGRAPHY (INTELLECT)

Geography is a character's understanding of the lay of the land and its different cultures, including those cultures' customs and laws. Geography includes the comprehension of maps and cartography, regional variations in etiquette, and matters of navigation. A character with ranks in Knowledge (Geography) can chart a course over land or sea, describe the locations of major cities and landmarks from memory, avoid unknowingly violating local laws, and warn their allies of the sensitive conversation topics to avoid in a particular town.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to chart a course through dangerous wilderness to a nearby village.
- Your character wants to indicate the approximate location of a landmark or settlement from memory.
- Your character needs to select appropriate garb so as not to stand out among the locals.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to recall information about the Darklands. This would require the Knowledge (Forbidden) skill.
- Your character needs to set a camp or deal with the other practical matters of traversing the wilderness. That would use Survival.
- Your character tries to recall the history of a ruin. They would use Knowledge (Lore) for that.

TABLE 2-3: SKILLS FOR THE RUNEBOUND SETTING

SKILL	CHARACTERISTIC	TYPE	SOURCE
Alchemy	Intellect	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 57)
Arcana	Intellect	Magic	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 70)
Athletics	Brawn	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 58)
Brawl	Brawn	Combat	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 67)
Charm	Presence	Social	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 54)
Coercion	Willpower	Social	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 55)
Cool	Presence	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 59)
Coordination	Agility	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 59)
Deception	Cunning	Social	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 56)
Discipline	Willpower	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 60)
Divine	Willpower	Magic	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 70)
Knowledge (Adventuring)	Intellect	Knowledge	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Knowledge (Forbidden)	Intellect	Knowledge	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Knowledge (Geography)	Intellect	Knowledge	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Knowledge (Lore)	Intellect	Knowledge	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Leadership	Presence	Social	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 56)
Mechanics	Intellect	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 60)
Medicine	Intellect	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 61)
Melee (Heavy)	Brawn	Combat	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 68)
Melee (Light)	Brawn	Combat	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 68)
Negotiation	Presence	Social	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 56)
Perception	Cunning	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 62)
Primal	Cunning	Magic	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 70)
Ranged	Agility	Combat	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 68)
Resilience	Brawn	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 63)
Riding	Agility	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 63)
Runes	Intellect	Magic	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Skulduggery	Cunning	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 64)
Stealth	Agility	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 64)
Streetwise	Cunning	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 65)
Survival	Cunning	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 65)
Verse	Presence	Magic	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Vigilance	Willpower	General	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 65)

LORE (INTELLECT)

Lore represents a character's knowledge of magic, legends, religion, and similar matters. It includes both folktales and recent history, as well as matters arcane and obscure that only sages could know. Lore encompasses specialized, scholarly, and esoteric knowledge of the type that most common folk would consider impractical. A character with ranks in Knowledge (Lore) can recall relevant details from ancient legends, recognize rare religious icons, and even identify whether an event is magical or mundane in cause.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character tries to identify the origins of an ancient sword recovered from a ruin.
- Your character wants to determine the source of a wizard's magic after witnessing it in action.
- Your character attempts to recall a terrible legend of the First Darkness.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character tries to cast a spell. This would require the use of a magic skill.
- Your character attempts to read a map. That would use Knowledge (Geography).
- Your character wants to chart a safe course through ancient ruins. That would use Knowledge (Adventuring).

MAGIC SKILLS

Characters may use the new magic skills in this section in addition to the magic skills described on page 70 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. For more on using magic skills in the Runebound setting, see page 115.

RUNES (INTELLECT)

The Runes skill represents a character's understanding of runebound shards and their ability to tap into and control the magic of those stones. While anyone can activate a runebound shard to unleash the specific magical effect that the rune inscribed upon it dictates, a character with the Runes skill can draw out and manipulate that power to achieve greater and more versatile results. Although only a rare few can control raw magic, most individuals have the potential—with extensive study and practice—to harness runebound shards.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to use an immolation rune to unleash a great gout of flame or simply light a campfire.
- Your character wants to create a protective barrier of ice using an ice storm rune.
- Your character wants to identify the meaning and purpose of a rune inscribed on a runebound shard.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to cast a spell without the aid of a runebound shard. That would require a different magic skill, depending on the spell involved.
- Your character attempts to translate the glyphs in an ancient Dwarven ruin. That would use the Knowledge (Lore) skill.
- Your character wants to use a runebound shard's activation effect, as this does not require a magic skill check.

VERSE (PRESENCE)

The Verse skill is a character's ability to achieve magical effects through poetry, song, or performance. Most users of this skill learn their repertoire and techniques by rote and improvise by instinct. Unlike other magic skills, Verse is defined by its signature methods and practices. It may even draw from the same sources of power as Arcana, Divine, or Primal magic, depending on the storytelling and performing tradition of the character. A character with ranks in Verse can achieve supernatural effects through the seemingly mundane acts of singing, playing music, or other type of performing.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to fortify their allies in battle with an inspiring song.
- Your character wants to demoralize their foe with a scathing limerick, to the point that it physically hampers their abilities.
- Your character wants to counteract the baleful spells of a necromancer with a rousing speech.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wants to sing an ordinary song. That would use Charm.
- Your character wants to throw a fireball or otherwise physically damage the foe. That would require a different magic skill, such as Arcana.

MOUNTED COMBAT

From the destriers of the Daqan Baronies to the Leonx of the Latari Elves, mounted warriors across Mennara ride a bewildering array of creatures ranging from common steeds to flying reptiles to gain speed and maneuverability in combat. A skilled rider also has numerous advantages over opponents on foot.

Mounting or dismounting from a riding animal requires a maneuver. Once mounted, a rider and steed should be treated as one character in most situations (attacks target the rider, the steed does not act independently in structured encounters, and both act when a player chooses an initiative slot for their mounted character).

A mounted character can perform a maneuver to direct their mount to move. The rider and mount immediately move as if they had performed two maneuvers to do so. In certain situations, such as controlling a mount not trained for combat in the midst of a large battle, your GM may instead require the character to make a Riding check as an action to direct and control the mount.

Generally, a mounted character has an advantage in melee against opponents on foot and should add ▯ to melee combat checks targeting them, while opponents on foot add ■ to melee attacks against mounted characters. Conversely, firing a ranged weapon or casting a spell from the back of a galloping horse is more difficult, and a mounted character should add ■ to ranged attack checks and magic skill checks. Your GM will make the final call on adding ▯ and ■ to checks performed while mounted, as with any check.

Since we treat a mount and rider as one character, the only way to target a mount is by using the aim maneuver to target specific "parts" of an opponent, as per page 98 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). (In certain circumstances, your GM may allow characters to attack a particularly large mount such as a dragon without penalty.)

A character whose mount is slain or incapacitated is knocked prone and suffers 3 strain. Depending on the situation and the results of any related check, the character might suffer additional damage or become trapped under the fallen mount.

NEW TALENTS

This section introduces new talents specific to the Runebound setting. These talents, along with those listed in **Table 2–4: GENESYS Talents for the Runebound Setting**, on page 85, can also be used in other settings should the GM and players desire.

TIER 1

APOTHECARY

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: Yes
When a patient under your character's care heals wounds from natural rest, they heal additional wounds equal to twice your character's ranks in Apothecary.

BULLRUSH

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character makes a Brawl, Melee (Light), or Melee (Heavy) combat check after using a maneuver to engage a target, you may spend ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⯐ to use this talent to knock the target prone and move them up to one range band away from your character.

CHALLENGE!

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: Yes
Once per encounter, your character may use this talent to choose a number of adversaries within short range no greater than your character's ranks in Challenge! (a minion group counts as a single adversary for this purpose). Until the encounter ends or your character is incapacitated, these adversaries add ■ to combat checks targeting your character and ■ ■ to combat checks targeting other characters.

DARK INSIGHT

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When a spell adds a quality to your character's spell with a rating determined by your character's ranks in Knowledge (Lore), your character may use their ranks in Knowledge (Forbidden) instead.

DUNGEONEER

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: Yes
After your character makes a Perception, Vigilance, or Knowledge (Adventuring) check to notice, identify, or avoid a threat in a cavern, subterranean ruin, or similar location, your character cancels a number of uncanceled ⮝ no greater than your character's ranks in Dungeoneer.

FINESSE

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When making a Brawl or Melee (Light) check, your character may use Agility instead of Brawn.

PAINFUL BLOW

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character makes a combat check, you may voluntarily increase the difficulty by one to use this talent. If the target suffers one or more wounds from the combat check, the target suffers 2 strain each time they perform a maneuver until the end of the encounter.

PRECISION

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When making a Brawl or Ranged check, your character may use Cunning instead of Brawn and Agility.

SHAPESHIFTER

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When your character is incapacitated due to having exceeded their strain threshold while in their normal form, they undergo the following change as an out-of-turn incidental: they heal all strain, increase their Brawn and Agility by one to a maximum of 5 and reduce their Intellect and Willpower by one to a minimum of 1. They deal +1 damage when making unarmed attacks and their unarmed attacks have a Critical rating of 3, but they cannot use magic skills or make ranged attacks.

Your GM should ensure that NPCs react appropriately to this (at the very least, upgrading the difficulty of social skill checks twice). Your character reverts to their normal form after eight hours or if they become incapacitated (for instance, by exceeding their wound or strain threshold).

SHIELD SLAM

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character uses a shield to attack a minion or rival, you may spend ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⯐ to stagger the target until the end of the target's next turn.

TABLE 2-4: GENESYS TALENTS FOR THE RUNEBOUND SETTING

TALENT	TIER	ACTIVATION	RANKED	SOURCE
Adventurer	2	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Animal Companion	3	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 77)
Apothecary	1	Passive	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth
Back-to-Back	4	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Backstab	3	Active (Action)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Bard	2	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Battle Casting	3	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Berserk	2	Active (Maneuver)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Block	2	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Blood Sacrifice	2	Active (Incidental)	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth
Body Guard	3	Active (Maneuver)	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth
Bought Info	1	Active (Action)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 72)
Bullrush	1	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Bulwark	2	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Can't We Talk About This?	4	Active (Action)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Cavalier	3	Active (Maneuver)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Challenge!	1	Active (Maneuver)	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth
Chill of Nordros	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Clever Retort	1	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Conduit	4	Active (Maneuver)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Coordinated Assault	2	Active (Maneuver)	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Counterattack	3	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Counteroffer	2	Active (Action)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Crushing Blow	5	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Dark Insight	1	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Deadeye	4	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Death Rage	4	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Dedication	5	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 81)
Defensive	4	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Defensive Stance	2	Active (Maneuver)	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Desperate Recovery	1	Passive	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Dirty Tricks	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Dissonance	3	Active (Action)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Dodge	3	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Dominion of the Dimora	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Dual Strike	3	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Dual Wielder	2	Active (Maneuver)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Duelist	1	Passive	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Dungeoneer	1	Passive	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth
Durable	1	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Eagle Eyes	3	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Easy Prey	3	Active (Maneuver)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Encouraging Song	2	Active (Action)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Enduring	4	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Exploit	2	Active (Incidental)	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth

TABLE 2-4: GENESYS TALENTS FOR THE RUNEBOUND SETTING (CONTINUED)

TALENT	TIER	ACTIVATION	RANKED	SOURCE
Favor of the Fae	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Field Commander	3	Active (Action)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Field Commander (Improved)	4	Passive	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Finesse	1	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Flames of Kellos	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Flash of Insight	2	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Forager	1	Passive	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Grapple	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Grit	1	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Hamstring Shot	1	Active (Action)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Heightened Awareness	2	Passive	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Heroic Recovery	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Heroic Will	3	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Hunter	2	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Impaling Strike	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Inspiring Rhetoric	2	Active (Action)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Inspiring Rhetoric (Improved)	3	Passive	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Inspiring Rhetoric (Supreme)	4	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Inventor	2	Active (Incidental)	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Jump Up	1	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Justice of the Citadel	3	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Knack for It	1	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Know Somebody	1	Active (Incidental)	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Let's Ride	1	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Let's Talk This Over	5	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Lucky Strike	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Master	5	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 81)
Natural	3	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Natural Communion	2	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
One with Nature	1	Passive	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Painful Blow	1	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Painkiller Specialization	3	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Parry	1	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Parry (Improved)	3	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Potent Concoctions	3	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Precise Archery	3	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Precision	1	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Pressure Point	3	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Proper Upbringing	1	Active (Incidental)	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Quick Draw	1	Active (Incidental)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Quick Strike	1	Passive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Rapid Archery	3	Active (Maneuver)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Reckless Charge	2	Active (Incidental)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Retribution!	5	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	No	Realms of Terrinoth
Runic Lore	2	Passive	No	Realms of Terrinoth

TABLE 2-4: GENESYS TALENTS FOR THE RUNEBOUND SETTING (CONTINUED)

TALENT	TIER	ACTIVATION	RANKED	SOURCE
Shapeshifter	1	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Shapeshifter (Improved)	2	Active (Incidental)	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Shield Slam	1	Active (Incidental)	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Shockwave	3	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Signature Spell	2	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Signature Spell (Improved)	4	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Tavern Brawler	1	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Templar	1	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Templar (Improved)	2	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Threaten	2	Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)	Yes	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Tumble	1	Active (Incidental)	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Unrelenting	4	Active (Incidental)	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Venom Soaked Blade	4	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Well-Traveled	2	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Whirlwind	5	Active (Action)	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Wraithbane	2	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Zealous Fire	5	Passive	No	REALMS OF TERRINOTH

TAVERN BRAWLER

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character adds ⮝ to Brawl checks and combat checks using improvised weapons.

TEMPLAR

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Divine is now a career skill for your character. They can only cast one spell using this skill per encounter.

TUMBLE

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per round on your character's turn, they may suffer 2 strain to disengage from all engaged adversaries.

TIER 2

ADVENTURER

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Athletics and Knowledge (Adventuring) are now career skills for your character.

BARD

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Knowledge (Lore) and Verse are now career skills for your character.

BLOCK

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: No
Your character must have purchased the Parry talent to benefit from this talent. While wielding a shield, your character may use the Parry talent to reduce damage from ranged attacks as well as melee attacks targeting your character.

BLOOD SACRIFICE

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: Yes
Your character must have purchased the Dark Insight talent to benefit from this talent. Before your character makes a magic skill check, they may suffer a number of wounds to use this talent to add an equal number of ✡ to the check. The number cannot exceed your character's ranks in Blood Sacrifice.

BULWARK

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: No
Your character must have purchased the Parry talent to benefit from this talent. While wielding a weapon with the Defensive quality, your character may use Parry to reduce the damage of an attack targeting an engaged ally.

CHILL OF NORDROS

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character cannot take this talent if they have taken the Flames of Kellos talent. When casting an Attack spell, your character may add the Ice effect without increasing the difficulty. Your character can never add the Fire effect.

DIRTY TRICKS

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
After your character inflicts a Critical Injury on an adversary, they may use this talent to upgrade the difficulty of that adversary's next check.

DOMINION OF THE DIMORA

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character cannot take this talent if they have taken the Favor of the Fae talent. When casting an Attack spell, your character may add the Impact effect without increasing the difficulty. Your character can never add the Manipulative effect.

ENCOURAGING SONG

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
While equipped with a musical instrument, your character may use this talent to make an **Average (◆ ◆) Charm** or **Verse check**. For each ✲ the check generates, one ally within medium range adds ■ to their next skill check. For each ⩓, one ally benefiting from Encouraging Song heals 1 strain.

EXPLOIT

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: Yes
When your character makes a combat checkwith a Ranged or Melee (Light) weapon, they may suffer 2 strain to use this talent to add the Ensnare quality to the attack. The rating of the Ensnare quality is equal to your character's ranks in Exploit.

FAVOR OF THE FAE

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character cannot take this talent if they have taken the Dominion of the Dimora talent. When casting an Attack spell, your character may add the Manipulative effect without increasing the difficulty. Your character can never add the Impact effect.

FLAMES OF KELLOS

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character cannot take this talent if they have taken the Chill of Nordros talent. When casting an Attack spell, your character may add the Fire effect without increasing the difficulty. Your character can never add the Ice effect.

FLASH OF INSIGHT

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When your character generates ❁ on a knowledge skill check, roll ■ ■ and add the results to the check, in addition to spending the ❁ as usual.

GRAPPLE

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character may suffer 2 strain to use this talent. Until the start of your character's next turn, enemies must spend two maneuvers to disengage from your character.

HEROIC RECOVERY

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character acquires this talent, choose one characteristic. Once per encounter, you may spend one Story Point to use this talent to have your character heal strain equal to the rating of the chosen characteristic.

HUNTER

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Knowledge (Geography), Ranged, and Survival are now career skills for your character.

IMPALING STRIKE

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character inflicts a Critical Injury with a melee weapon, until the end of the target's next turn they may use this talent to immobilize the target (in addition to the other effects of the Critical Injury).

NATURAL COMMUNION

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When your character uses the Conjure magic action, the spell gains the Summon Ally effect without increasing the difficulty. All creatures your character summons must be naturally occurring animals native to the area.

RECKLESS CHARGE

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
After using a maneuver to move engage an adversary, your character may suffer 2 strain to use this talent. They then add ✲ ✲ ♺ ♺ to the results of the next Brawl, Melee (Light), or Melee (Heavy) combat check they make this turn.

RUNIC LORE

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Knowledge (Lore) and Runes are now career skills for your character.

SHAPESHIFTER (IMPROVED)

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per session, your character may make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Discipline check** as an out-of-turn incidental either to trigger Shapeshifter or to avoid triggering it when they exceed their strain threshold.

SIGNATURE SPELL

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When your character gains this talent, decide on a signature spell for them, consisting of a particular magic action and a specific set of one or more effects. When your character casts their signature spell (consisting of the exact combination of action and effects previously chosen), reduce the difficulty of the check by one.

TEMPLAR (IMPROVED)

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character must have purchased the Templar talent to benefit from this talent. When your character casts the single Divine spell per encounter granted by the Templar talent, they do not add ■ for wearing heavy armor (armor with +2 soak or higher), using a shield, or not having at least one hand free (see **Table III.2–3: Penalties When Casting Spells**, on page 210 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).

THREATEN

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: Yes
After an adversary within short range of your character resolves a combat check that deals damage to one of your character's allies, your character may suffer 3 strain to use this talent to inflict a number of strain on the adversary equal to your character's ranks in Coercion. The range of this talent increases by one band per rank of Threaten beyond the first.

WELL-TRAVELED

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Knowledge (Geography), Negotiation, and Vigilance are now career skills for your character.

WRAITHBANE

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character counts the Critical rating of their weapon as one lower to a minimum of 1 when making an attack targeting an undead adversary.

TIER 3

BACKSTAB

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Your character may use this talent to attack an unaware adversary using a Melee (Light) weapon. A Backstab is a melee attack, and follows the normal rules for performing a combat check (see page 101 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), using the character's Skulduggery skill instead of Melee (Light). If the check succeeds, each uncanceled ✲ adds +2 damage (instead of the normal +1).



BATTLE CASTING

Tier: 3
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character does not add ■ to magic skill checks for wearing heavy armor (armor with +2 soak or higher), using a shield, or not having at least one hand free (see **Table III.2–3: Penalties When Casting Spells**, on page 210 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).

BODY GUARD

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: Yes
Once per round, your character may suffer a number of strain no greater than their ranks in Body Guard to use this talent. Choose one ally engaged with your character; until the end of your character's next turn, upgrade the difficulty of all combat checks targeting that ally a number of times equal to the strain suffered.

CAVALIER

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
While riding a mount trained for battle (typically a war mount [see page 105] or flying mount [see page 104]), once per round your character may use this talent to direct the mount to perform an action.

COUNTERATTACK

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: No
Your character must have purchased the Improved Parry talent to benefit from this talent. When your character uses the Improved Parry talent to hit an attacker, they may also activate an item quality of the weapon they used as if they had generated ⮝ ⮝ on a combat check using that weapon.

DISSONANCE

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
While wielding a musical instrument, your character may use this talent to make an **Average (◆◆) Charm** or **Verse check**. For each ✲ the check generates, one enemy of the player's choosing within medium range suffers 1 wound. For each ⮝, one enemy affected by Dissonance suffers 1 additional wound.

DUAL STRIKE

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When resolving a combined check to attack with two weapons in a melee combat, your character may suffer 2 strain to use this talent to hit with the secondary weapon (instead of spending ⮝ ⮝).

EASY PREY

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
Your character may suffer 3 strain to use this talent. Until the start of your character's next turn, your character and allies within short range add ■■ to combat checks against immobilized targets.

JUSTICE OF THE CITADEL

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per round on your character's turn, your character may suffer 3 strain to use this talent to add damage equal to their ranks in Discipline to one hit of a successful melee attack.

POTENT CONCOCTIONS

Tier: 3
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When your character makes an Alchemy check that generates ⊛, roll an additional ⬢ and add its results to the pool, in addition to spending the ⊛ normally. When your character makes an Alchemy check that generates ⊗, roll an additional ⬢ and add its results to the pool, in addition to spending the ⊗ normally. Each of these effects can occur only once per check.

PRECISE ARCHERY

Tier: 3
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When making a Ranged combat check targeting a character engaged with one of your character's allies, downgrade the difficulty of the check once (thus negating the penalty for shooting at engaged targets).

PRESSURE POINT

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character makes an unarmed Brawl check targeting a living opponent, they may use this talent to deal strain damage instead of wound damage, and inflict additional strain damage equal to their ranks in Medicine.

SHOCKWAVE

Tier: 3
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character treats Melee (Heavy) weapons as possessing the Blast item quality with a rating equal to your character's ranks in Melee (Heavy). Your character does not suffer damage from their weapon's Blast quality (but allies do!).

TIER 4

BACK-TO-BACK

Tier: 4
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
While engaged with one or more allies, your character and allies they are engaged with add ▢ to combat checks. If one or more allies engaged with your character also have Back-to-Back, the effects are cumulative to a maximum of ▢▢.

CONDUIT

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
Once per encounter, your character may spend a Story Point to perform a magic action as a maneuver.

DEATH RAGE

Tier: 4
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character adds +2 damage to melee attacks for each Critical Injury they are currently suffering. (Your GM may also impost additional penalties on social skill checks your character makes if they are suffering Critical Injuries due to their frenzied behavior.)

VENOM SOAKED BLADE

Tier: 4
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When making a Melee (Light) combat check using a poisoned weapon, your character treats it as possessing the Burn 2 item quality.

SIGNATURE SPELL (IMPROVED)

Tier: 4
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character must have purchased the Signature Spell talent to benefit from this talent. When your character casts their signature spell, reduce the difficulty of the check by two instead of one.

UNRELENTING

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per round after resolving a successful Brawl, Melee (Light), or Melee (Heavy) combat check, your character may suffer 4 strain to use this talent to make an additional melee attack as an incidental against the same target. Increase the difficulty of the combat check by one if this attack uses a second weapon, or by two if the attack uses the same weapon.

TIER 5

CRUSHING BLOW

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per session after rolling a melee attack but before resolving the check, your character may suffer 4 strain to use this talent. While resolving the check, the weapon gains the Breach 1 and Knockdown item qualities, and destroys one item the target is wielding that does not have the Reinforced quality.

LET'S TALK THIS OVER

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: No
Once per game session, when a combat encounter against one or more sentient beings is about to begin, the character make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Charm check**. If successful, the combat encounter instead becomes a social encounter, with the PCs attempting to convince their opposition to back down, come around to their viewpoint, or accept a compromise. The GM is the final arbiter of how the situation resolves without violence (or how the combat encounter continues if the character's check is unsuccessful).

RETRIBUTION!

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: No
Once per round when an adversary attacks an ally within medium range, your character may spend one Story Point to use this talent to automatically hit that enemy once with a weapon your character is wielding, if the enemy is within the weapon's range. The hit deals the weapon's base damage, plus any damage from applicable talents or abilities.

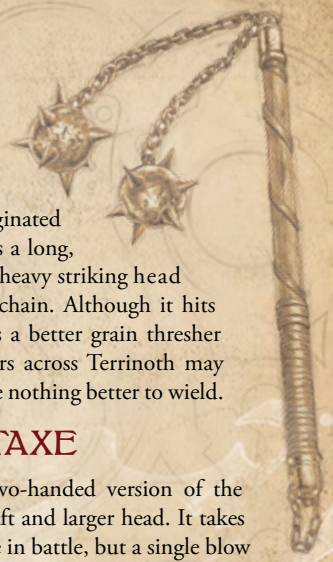
WHIRLWIND

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Your character may suffer 4 strain to use this talent to make a Brawl, Melee (Light), or Melee (Heavy) attack against the engaged adversary who is hardest to hit (as determined by the GM), increasing the difficulty by one. If the combat check succeeds, each adversary engaged with the character suffers one hit from the attack, that deals base damage plus damage equal to the total ✡ scored on the check.

ZEALOUS FIRE

Tier: 5
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Each time your Game Master spends a Story Point, your character heals 2 strain.

WEAPONS



Though some warriors fighting across the myriad lands of Mennara wield strange and exotic weapons, most rely on the tried and trusted swords and spears that their parents and grandparents carried into battle. This section includes many of the more mundane weapons to be found in Terrinoth and the surrounding regions. Note that the tables for weapons in REALMS OF TERRINOTH also have a number for HP, or Hard Points. This indicates how many item attachments and enchantments (see page 106) that item can be fitted with and overrides the rules for how many hard points an item has found on page 206 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

Unless otherwise stated in its rules, a thrown weapon's base damage is equal to the user's Brawn plus the listed damage modifier. Additionally, the weapons in this book use the guidance from the **Tracking Ammo** sidebar on page 89 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

MELEE WEAPONS

These are weapons designed to be used in close combat.

AXE

Though originally a simple woodcutter's tool, in skilled (or desperate) hands, an axe can be a vicious weapon. The curved and heavy blade of the axe-head takes brutal bites out of flesh as well as timber, and many cultures have crafted axes designed specifically for war. The Orcs of the Broken Plains prefer stone axes that land pulverizing blows, for example, while the Dwarves of the Dunwarr Mountains forge double-bladed axes with long beards and a keen bite.

CESTUS

Some say that cestuses came from the fighting pits of the Torue Albes, where brawlers still bludgeon each other senseless to the delight of drunken spectators. Though these weapons are no match for a proper sword, some adventurers prefer these heavy leather gloves with iron-studded knuckles. A well-thrown punch can still break bones and lay out an opponent, and wearing a pair of cestus draws a lot less attention than carrying a naked blade.

DAGGER

Nearly everyone in Terrinoth carries a knife at their belt; it is a useful tool for any number of mundane tasks. Daggers, on the other hand, are designed purely for killing. Their thin, razor-sharp blades tend to be perfectly balanced so they can be thrown with the flick of a wrist just as easily as they can slit an unwary throat.

Your character can stab or slash with a dagger using the profile in **Table 2–5: Melee Weapons** on page 94, or they can throw one using the following profile: (Ranged; Damage +2; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Accurate 1, Limited Ammo 1).

FLAIL

Another weapon that originated as a peasant's tool, a flail has a long, two-handed haft linked to a heavy striking head with a length of leather or chain. Although it hits hard, this implement makes a better grain thresher than a weapon. Still, farmers across Terrinoth may take up a flail when they have nothing better to wield.

GREATAXE

The greataxe is simply a two-handed version of the regular axe, with a longer haft and larger head. It takes a strong warrior to wield one in battle, but a single blow from a greataxe can shatter shields and rip through leather armor. Some Dwarves favor these weapons, and claim the heirloom axes of their ancestors were crafted to cleave through dragon hide.

GREATSWORD

Greatswords are some of the most difficult weapons to wield effectively, and thus one usually sees them in the hands of knights or other highly trained warriors. These lengthy blades are precisely balanced and crafted to be both strong and flexible. Proper greatsword fighting emphasizes precise control of the pommel to send the tip of the blade into an unarmored chink in an opponent's armor. Without that hand-eye coordination, the wielder is left making clumsy swings that are easily blocked or dodged.

Nobles and warriors of the baronies prefer greatswords with straight blades and crossguard hilts. Most greatswords in Terrinoth follow this design, but the Latari Elves often craft greatswords with long hilts and even longer curved blades. These blades are perfect for wide, sweeping cuts and slashes.

HALBERD

Halberds have the haft of a spear and the head of an axe (though many have a long spearhead as well). Their versatility makes them popular among the garrisons of some of the Free Cities. A company of soldiers can use the reach of their halberds to prepare for cavalry and still cut through armor with the weapon's axe blade. Still, most of the baronies prefer to equip their armies with the cheaper and simpler spear.

KATAR

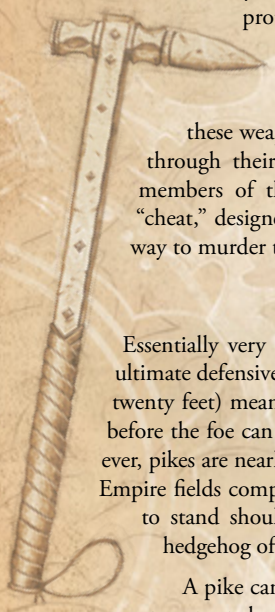
Most scholars agree that katars did not originate in Terrinoth. Their best guess is that these push daggers originally came from the jungles of Zanaga or far-off Al-Kalim, before the design found popularity among the rogues who haunt the back alleys of Orris, Riverwatch, and Nerekhall. The broad, stabbing blade and horizontal grip allow cutthroats to dispatch their victims with a burst of swift, powerful thrusts.

MACE

One step up from a simple club, a mace is a wooden haft topped off with a heavy studded or spiked head. There's nothing subtle or elegant about this weapon. However, it is simple and cheap to make, so nearly every culture in Mennara has its own form of mace.

MILITARY PICK

Military picks have a superficial resemblance to mining picks, but they are usually smaller, and only a single spike protrudes from the head. As the knights of the Daqan Baronies increasingly began to wear plate mail and breastplates, blacksmiths started crafting these weapons to give opponents a way to punch through their heavy armor. Needless to say, many members of the nobility consider these weapons a "cheat," designed to give commoners an underhanded way to murder their betters.



PIKE

Essentially very long, two-handed spears, pikes are the ultimate defensive weapons. Their reach (between ten and twenty feet) means they can be used to attack a foe long before the foe can bring their own weapon to bear. However, pikes are nearly useless in close quarters. The Lorimor Empire fields companies of pikes: soldiers who are trained to stand shoulder to shoulder and create a bristling hedgehog of spearheads four or five layers deep.

A pike can be used to make melee attacks against targets at short range (the difficulty remains **Average** [◆◆]), but it cannot be used to attack engaged targets.

SHIELD

The shape and design of shields varies wildly from culture to culture. The warriors of Al-Kalim prefer light, round shields of bronze, while the barbarians of Isheim wield wooden shields covered in tough hide. The knights of Terrinoth, of course, use shields crafted from iron or steel, often emblazoned with their barony's heraldry. Whatever their shape or material, shields can deflect arrows or blades and, in a pinch, can be used to bash a foe's face in.

Large shields are sturdier and heavier than standard ones, and provide more protection. The Dunwarr Dwarves use large shields exclusively (to the point of mocking anything smaller), and those baronies that can afford it often equip their companies of spearmen with large shields as well.



SWORD AND BOARD

Fighting with a shield and one-handed melee weapon is a classic and very effective combat style. Although Genesys classifies shields as weapons, their primary purpose is defensive. This is reflected in their Defensive and Deflection item qualities, which represent a shield's ability to both block melee strikes and catch arrows or other projectiles. Defensive and Deflection are passive item qualities that apply any time a user wields a shield (or other item with these qualities), and not only when the character uses the shield to attack. Most of the time, a character wielding a shield probably does so to benefit from these passive qualities. Using a shield like this does not affect the character's combat checks unless the shield possesses the Cumbersome item quality (which states in its description that it applies whenever the character uses the item).

Shields can also be used offensively, either singly or in conjunction with another weapon. A character who wishes to attack with their shield can do so using the normal rules for melee attacks, or use it with another weapon as per the two-weapon combat rules on page 108 of the Genesys Core Rulebook. If desired, the player may designate the shield as the primary weapon for a two-weapon attack. Whether the shield is the primary weapon or not, the character applies all passive qualities of the shield, including Defensive and Deflection, as well as Inaccurate. In addition, the character has the option to activate a shield's active qualities, such as Knockdown, if the shield hits.

Bulwark shields are quite huge, tall enough to protect knights from shoulder to shins and almost as wide as they are tall. They are particularly useful for protection from missile fire, allowing a warrior to close with archers while avoiding being peppered by arrows.

SPEAR

Spears are perfect for fighting in tight formation, where soldiers can't swing a sword or axe without hitting one of their fellows. Thus, foot soldiers of the baronies tend to train with spear and shield in the art of forming a defensive wall of thrusting spear tips.

TABLE 2–5: MELEE WEAPONS

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	PRICE	RARITY	SPECIAL
Axe	Melee (Light)	+3	3	Engaged	2	1	150	1	Vicious 1
Cestus	Brawl	+1	4	Engaged	1	0	40	1	Disorient 3
Dagger	Melee (Light)	+2	3	Engaged	1	1	60	1	Accurate 1
Flail	Melee (Heavy)	+4	3	Engaged	4	2	150	3	Cumbersome 3, Linked 1, Unwieldy 3
Greataxe	Melee (Heavy)	+4	3	Engaged	4	2	300	4	Cumbersome 3, Pierce 2, Vicious 1
Greatsword	Melee (Heavy)	+4	2	Engaged	3	2	300	4	Defensive 1, Pierce 1, Unwieldy 3
Halberd	Melee (Heavy)	+3	3	Engaged	5	3	250	3	Defensive 1, Pierce 3
Katar	Brawl	+1	2	Engaged	1	1	175	4	Accurate 1
Mace	Melee (Light)	+3	4	Engaged	2	1	75	1	
Military Pick	Melee (Light)	+1	2	Engaged	3	1	160	2	Pierce 2
Pike	Melee (Heavy)	+4	4	Short	4	2	100	2	Prepare 1
Shield	Melee (Light)	+0	6	Engaged	1	1	80	1	Defensive 1, Deflection 1, Inaccurate 1, Knockdown
Shield, Large	Melee (Light)	+1	5	Engaged	2	2	160	2	Defensive 2, Deflection 2, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown
Shield, Bulwark	Melee (Light)	+2	5	Engaged	3	2	280	3	Cumbersome 4, Defensive 2, Deflection 3, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown, Reinforced
Spear	Melee (Heavy)	+3	3	Engaged	3	1	110	2	Accurate 1
Spear, Light	Melee (Light)	+2	4	Engaged	2	1	90	1	Accurate 1, Defensive 1
Staff	Melee (Heavy)	+2	4	Engaged	2	1	40	0	Defensive 1
Sword	Melee (Light)	+3	2	Engaged	1	1	200	2	Defensive 1
War Hammer	Melee (Heavy)	+5	4	Engaged	4	2	600	3	Concussive 1, Cumbersome 4, Inaccurate 1, Knockdown

Standard spears are too heavy to be wielded in one hand or thrown. "Light" spears (sometimes called javelins) on the other hand can be wielded one-handed and consist of a thick, four-foot-long wooden shaft topped by a heavy iron spearhead. These spears are also light enough to be thrown over short distances; the Orcs of the Broken Plains often use thrown spears to skewer their prey while hunting.

Your character can thrust or stab with a light spear using the profile in **Table 2–5: Melee Weapons**, or they can throw one using the following profile: (Ranged; Damage +2; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Accurate 1, Limited Ammo 1).

STAFF

Cheap to buy (or make from fallen branches), staffs can be found across Terrinoth, where they often serve as walking sticks or prods to move herds along. Those expert in their use, though, can use them to defend against many of the fell creatures that lurk across wilderness areas.

SWORD

For many cultures, the sword is a symbol of both nobility and martial prowess. It cannot be used as a tool like an axe or flail, and it cannot be used to hunt like a bow or spear. A sword is purely a weapon, and those who carry one announce to the world that they are warriors.

Swords vary wildly in design, depending on the culture that produces them. Al-Kalim swordsmiths craft scimitars with thin, curved blades that share some similarities with the delicate sabers of the Latari Elves. Warriors in some of the kingdoms and tribes of Zanaga wield sickle-bladed swords, while Lorimor nobles favor broad-bladed shortswords. Daqan swords tend to be straight bladed and double-edged, and they are almost always well balanced and forged from steel.

Swords have iconic status in the history of Terrinoth and the Daqan Baronies. Legend holds that the first human kingdom owes its founding to the use of good, steel swords, which gave its lands their name—"Terrinoth" means "Land of Steel."

WAR HAMMER

Some say the Dwarves of Forge first carried hammers to war when they took up their smithing tools to overthrow the Dragonlord Avox. Although this is almost assuredly a fanciful tale, many Dwarves (both those who live in Forge and those who live in the Dunwarr Mountains) wield these oversized mauls in battle. A proper war hammer must be balanced for combat, and even then, only the strongest warriors can carry it. A single, thunderous blow from a war hammer can leave any foe stunned and reeling—if the blow doesn't slay them outright!

ITEMS BEYOND PRICE

Some items have a listed price of "–." This doesn't mean the items are free, but rather that they are priceless. Such items are simply too valuable to be bought and sold freely. They are the goals of quests, or must be plundered from an ancient treasure hoard at great peril. For the most part, priceless objects are magic items of varying sorts, including runebound shards.

RANGED WEAPONS

Most of the ranged weapons here are variants of bows and crossbows. This tried technology has spread, largely unchanged, across Mennara over the centuries.

BOW

Bows can be found throughout Mennara and are used for hunting and warfare alike. The desert riders of Al-Kalim use their bows from horseback, and nearly every forester cabin in the woodlands of Terrinoth has a bow hanging above the door. The pirates of Torue Albes pepper the ships they are about to board with bowfire, and up along the cold, haunted border between the baronies and the Mistlands, an attack out of the fog is often preceded by a silent, deadly hail of arrows.

CROSSBOW

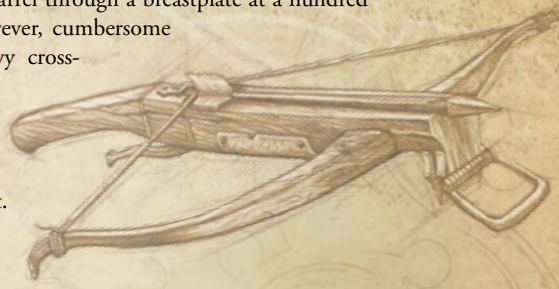
Crossbows pack a more powerful punch than bows, though they take longer to load and ready for firing. Just as importantly, they only require the wielder to point the crossbow at the target and pull the trigger. The wealthy Free City of Riverwatch has long been able to afford keeping a company of city guards armed with crossbows, and those who hunt cultists and other dark creatures in the sewers of Nerekhall find them easier to use in tight spaces than a bow.

HAND CROSSBOW

A favorite weapon for assassins and bounty hunters, these small crossbows can easily fit under a cloak or can even be mounted on a reinforced glove. As such, they are frowned upon by many Town Watch members across Terrinoth, who view anyone they find carrying one with automatic suspicion.

HEAVY CROSSBOW

Built for sieges and large battles, heavy crossbows have the power to punch a quarrel through a breastplate at a hundred paces. They are, however, cumbersome weapons. Some heavy crossbows even have siege bucklers attached just before the limbs, which only increases their weight. Recently, some of the baronies have begun fielding soldiers clad in plate mail and armed with heavy crossbows. The weight of their equipment makes them almost immobile, but they are nearly impervious to return fire and can hit nearly any target on the battlefield.



LONGBOW

Known as the signature weapon of the Elves, the longbow takes skill and grace to use. A practiced archer can take advantage of its tall, recurved limbs to propel an arrow over a great distance. Better yet, a truly skilled archer can draw and fire a longbow more quickly than a crossbow. Some Elves of the Free Cities claim their woodland cousins can fire three arrows in as many breaths, and with each shot pluck a feather from an eagle's wing.

REPEATING CROSSBOW

Nobody is quite sure who first invented this outlandish weapon, but most are quick to blame it on the Gnomes. A repeating crossbow has two pairs of limbs and strings that allow it to fire multiple shots in rapid succession. However, the lengthy reloading time makes many warriors wonder if the overcomplicated mechanism is really worth the fuss.

TABLE 2-6: RANGED WEAPONS

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	PRICE	RARITY	SPECIAL
Bow	Ranged	7	3	Medium	2	1	275	2	Unwieldy 2
Crossbow	Ranged	7	2	Medium	3	1	600	4	Pierce 2, Prepare 1
Crossbow, Hand	Ranged	5	2	Short	2	0	750	5	Pierce 1, Prepare 1
Crossbow, Heavy	Ranged	8	2	Long	4	2	1,000	5	Cumbersome 3, Pierce 3, Prepare 2
Crossbow, Repeating	Ranged	6	2	Short	3	2	800	7	Linked 2, Prepare 2
Longbow	Ranged	8	3	Long	3	2	450	4	Unwieldy 3
Sling	Ranged	4	4	Medium	0	0	20	0	Disorient 2, Prepare 1
Throwing Axe	Ranged	+2	3	Short	1	1	50	1	Inaccurate 1, Limited Ammo 1, Vicious 1

SLING

Basically a leather cup attached to two lengths of cord, a sling is dirt cheap and its ammunition (any roughly spherical rock) even more so. A sling is more likely to be carried by shepherds and street urchins than by seasoned warriors, but a few adventurers keep one tucked away in a pouch as a weapon of desperation.

⊗ or ⟲ cannot be spent to cause a sling to run out of ammo.

THROWING AXE

The rangers of the Dunwarr Mountains are fond of saying that the only thing better than an axe is an axe you can throw at someone. No amount of balancing a hand axe for throwing can make it a truly accurate weapon, but if it hits, it is likely to do some serious damage.

Your character can hurl a throwing axe at their foe using the profile in **Table 2–6: Ranged Weapons** on page 95, or they can wield one using the following profile: (Melee (Light); Damage +2; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Inaccurate 1, Vicious 1).

ARMOR

This section covers the most common types of armor to be found in Terrinoth. If a type of armor appears in the GENESYS Core Rulebook as well, use the rules in this book instead. Note that items in **Table 2-7: Armor** also have a number for HP, or Hard Points. This indicates how many item attachments and enchantments (see page 106) that item can be fitted with overrides the rules for how many hard points an item has found on page 206 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

BRIGANDINE

Many bards, rogues, and nobles in Terrinoth prefer brigandine armor, which consists of small iron or steel plates riveted between two layers of fabric. The resulting armor looks like a bulky tunic, but it can absorb or deflect blows better than boiled leather. The fabric can be embroidered or decorated, which appeals to the vanity of many in the nobility (and quite a few scoundrels and rogues as well).

CHAINMAIL

As heavy as it is reliable, chainmail offers protection matched with flexibility. Thousands of small linked rings make up a suit of chainmail, providing a reliable defense against slashing and piercing weapons. Some adventurers wear suits of chainmail passed down from their ancestors; others still use the hauberk they looted from the first tomb they explored. The only drawback is the time it takes to forge and link the numerous rings together adds significantly to the cost.

Chainmail is restrictive and noisy, so your character adds ■ to Stealth checks they make while wearing it.

HEAVY ROBES

Heavy robes of wool or fur are better at keeping the wearer warm than protecting from a sword or spear. However, loose-fitting robes can obscure a person's shape and make it hard to land a blow, or even tangle an attacker's weapon in their voluminous folds.

LEATHER ARMOR

Armor made from boiled leather is stiff and tough enough to offer modest protection, and relatively inexpensive as well. Leather armor ranges from the rancid and reeking leathers worn by bandits, to the cured and dust-stained hide favored by nomadic Orcs, to the supple and finely decorated armor of the Latari Elves.

PADDED ARMOR

Padded armor consists of thick, quilted layers of cloth, and resembles a winter coat more than a piece of armor. However, the thick padding can blunt blows and offer some protection for the wearer. Padded armor is most common in the northern realms of Isheim and in Daqan's poorest baronies, where warriors can afford little better.

TABLE 2–7: ARMOR

TYPE	DEFENSE	SOAK	ENCUMBRANCE	HP	PRICE	RARITY
Brigandine	1	+1	2	1	400	5
Chainmail	0	+2	3	2	550	4
Heavy Robes	1	0	1	1	45	0
Leather	0	+1	2	1	50	3
Padded	0	+1	2	0	35	2
Plate	1	+2	4	2	1,000	6
Scale	0	+2	4	1	410	4

PLATE ARMOR



Few things on the battlefield are more impressive and awe-inspiring than a full suit of plate armor, and few items are a sterner test of the smith's craft. Forging even a light breastplate takes time and care, and constructing an entire suit of interlocking armor plates can take months of painstaking work. Unsurprisingly, only the finest knights of the baronies wear plate armor, although occasionally a wandering adventurer may discover a set of plate buried in some long-forgotten crypt or dungeon and claim it for their own.

Plate armor is heavy and very noisy. Your character adds ■ ■ to Stealth checks they make while wearing it.

SCALE ARMOR

Something of a compromise between leather and chainmail armor, scale armor consists of hundreds of tiny metal scales attached to a leather jerkin. It is easier to forge than chainmail, but the scales and the leather combined make the armor heavy and unwieldy. Many spear companies mustered by the Barons wear scale armor reinforced with greaves and a breastplate.

The rattling of hundreds of scales is fairly noisy, so your character adds ■ to Stealth checks they make while wearing it.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

The quality of materials that go into an item and the skill of the crafter contribute greatly to its effectiveness and durability. Most weapons and suits of armor aren't particularly remarkable; the standard item profiles presented in this book represent items crafted by a competent creator using the standard material in Terrinoth—namely steel. This section includes rules for representing items of truly exceptional craftsmanship, constructed with rare and potent materials.

An item can only have one type of craftsmanship, which your GM determines when the item is bought or obtained. The type of craftsmanship can never change after the item is created or obtained.

ANCIENT

Ancient weapons and armor back date to the time of the Penacor Kings, when magic was more potent and widespread in the world. Ancient weaponry and armor is remarkably tough, resistant to corrosion, and able to hold a sharp edge despite heavy use.

Armor: Increase the armor's soak and defense by 1. The armor gains the Reinforced item quality. Reduce the armor's hard points by 1 (to a minimum of 0).

Weapon: Increase the weapon's damage by 1 and reduce its Critical rating by 1. The weapon gains the Reinforced item quality. Reduce the weapon's hard points by 1 (to a minimum of 0).

Price: Cost x 20

Rarity: 10.

DWARVEN

Dwarven smiths are masters of metallurgy. The alloys they concoct and from which they forge armor and weapons are superior to those made from simple steel. In truth, the peerless blacksmithery of the Dwarves is due to skill rather than magic, although the results seem miraculous to lesser smiths.

Armor: Increase the armor's encumbrance value by 1 and add 1 hard point.

Weapon: Increase the weapon's damage by 1 and encumbrance value by 1.

Price: Cost x 2.

Rarity: +2.

ELVEN

Elven craft weaves wood harvested from the Deepwoods of the Aymhelin with iridescent moonstone and inlays of gleaming silver. The resulting items are as beautiful as they are light and durable, and blades crafted from moonstone are said to be as sharp as starlight on the coldest winter nights.

Armor: Reduce the armor's encumbrance value by 2, to a minimum of 0. In addition, your character removes ■ from Stealth checks they make.

Weapon: Reduce the weapon's damage by 1 and Critical rating by 1, to a minimum of 1.

Price: Cost x 2.

Rarity: +3.

IRON

Iron is not as strong or workable as steel, but the smelting of that alloy is beyond many smiths. Further, when both iron and steel items are available, steel fetches a higher price. Many adventurers, militia members, and soldiers in the service of lesser nobles must make do with iron weapons and armor. Iron weapons are rumored to have special effects on certain otherwordly foes, such as the Dimora and the Fae.
Armor: Increase the armor's encumbrance value by 2. In addition, your character adds ■ to Athletics, Coordination, Riding, and Stealth checks they make while wearing this armor.
Weapon: Increase the weapon's Critical rating by 1.
Price: Cost x ½.
Rarity: –1.

STEEL

Steel is preferred by smiths across Terrinoth, and those warriors and nobles who can afford to do so invariably equip themselves and their retainers with steel arms and armor. The standard weapon and armor profiles in this chapter represent steel items, and steel craftsmanship has no additional effect.
Price: No Change.
Rarity: No Change.

MAGIC IMPLEMENTS

A character with a magic skill can use an implement to enhance magic skill checks, as described in Part III, Chapter 2 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

HOLY ICON

Priests and templars wear these devices to proclaim their faith, and thus holy icons usually incorporate the iconography of a particular deity. In the Land of Steel, one is most likely to see priests wearing pendants crafted in the likeness of a hand holding a flame, the symbol of the god Kellos. Many priests of the Latari Elves favor icons depicting a star wrought in cold, gleaming silver—a reminder of their lost birthright. Likewise, some Dunwarr Dwarves have a badge or icon on their shield or armor that is etched in runes or depicts the face of a Dwarven woman. They treat these icons with religious reverence, but any attempts to ask about their significance gets a cold glare and a suggestion to go bother someone else.

When your character casts a spell while using a holy icon, adding any Divine Only effects increases the spell's difficulty one less than they would normally. In addition, when your character casts a Heal spell, the number of wounds healed increases by two.

MAGIC SCEPTER

A magic scepter superficially resembles a mace, though many are wrought from the finest materials or are intricately decorated with words of power. Greyhaven scholars claim that the resemblance to a weapon helps the scepter boost and channel magical energies in battle.

When your character casts a spell while using a magic scepter, add ■ to the check and adding the Close Combat effect does not increase the difficulty. In addition, Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by two.

MAGIC STAFF

Most of the mages in Terrinoth prefer the trusty and reliable staff over other options. Whether carved from wood, forged from iron, or even wrought from bone, a staff signifies travel and distance. This link helps wizards increase the range at which they can cast spells. A staff also doubles as a handy walking stick for many an elderly mage on the road.

When your character casts a spell while using a magic staff, the first Range effect added to the spell does not increase the spell's difficulty. In addition, Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by four.

MAGIC TOME

Unless one manages to break into the libraries of Greyhaven, most magic tomes are found in the depths of the tombs of long-forgotten spellcasters. A tome is not simply an instruction manual on how to cast a spell. The very act of writing spells upon the page can leave some small resonance with the world's energies, and if the reader can read and follow the instructions exactly, they can call upon that resonance to boost their own spells.

When your character makes or obtains a tome, your GM determines up to two effects that the tome lets your character add to any appropriate spell without increasing the spell's difficulty. The effects your GM chooses should normally (without the tome) only increase the difficulty of a spell by a total of three.

MAGIC WAND

Wands can be crafted from just about anything that has suitable magical significance, but most are small sticks easily slipped into a pocket or pouch. Learned and powerful wizards tend to craft multiple wands, making each one a focus for a different type of spell. Thus, wands are usually known by their effects and are referred to with names such as "wand of fire," "wand of enervation," or "wand of restoration." Of course, even

TABLE 2-8: MAGIC IMPLEMENTS

ITEM	DAMAGE	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Holy Icon	+0	0	250	4
Magic Scepter	+2	1	350	5
Magic Staff	+4	2	400	6
Magic Tome	+0	1	750	7
Magic Wand	+3	1	400	7
Musical Instrument	+0	1	200	4

though wizards may craft multiple wands during their studies, this doesn't make wands common by any means.

When your character makes or obtains a wand, your GM determines one effect that the wand lets your character add to any appropriate spell without increasing the spell's difficulty. Without a wand, the effect your GM chooses should only increase the difficulty of a spell by one. Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by three.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

While the scholars of Greyhaven University continuously and vigorously disagree as to whether bards are actual users of magic or are a bunch of charlatans, the truth is that most bards are probably a mixture of both. Their use of magic—such as it is—is likely entirely instinctive and affected greatly by the bard's charisma. What this means is that bards do not craft magical implements as other spellcasters do, but over time, they tend to infuse the instruments they play with some small measure of power.

Some instruments have even been passed from bard to bard and, over generations, have become magical relics in their own right. Of course, a great many more instruments get passed off as magical relics when their owners need to make up the money lost in an ill-advised night of carousing.

When your character casts a spell using the Verse skill while using a musical instrument, adding the Additional Target effect does not increase its difficulty.

IMPLEMENT MATERIALS

Like the metal in arms and armor, and perhaps even more so, the material used in crafting magic implements such as staffs and wands is an important choice that greatly affects the performance of the resulting object. Many types of wood and other substances have inherent mystical properties that are only unlocked when fashioned into a magic implement.

A magic implement can only have one implement material, which your GM determines when the item is bought or obtained. This can never change after the implement is created or obtained.

BONE

Implements carved of animal bone have long been used by spiritspeakers, witches, and the nightseers of the ancient Loth Caara tribes. Implements crafted from the bones of Humans and their kind are associated with necromancy and other dark magics. When properly prepared, the bones of an ordinary mortal creature can produce frightening effects.

When your character successfully casts an Attack or Curse spell, they heal 1 wound.
Price: Cost x ½.
Rarity: +2.

OAK

Oak is a plentiful wood that many practitioners of magic have found to channel arcane energies effectively. A few Greyhaven scholars theorize that oak's durability and age resonates with the Turning, but most just feel that it makes sense to craft an implement from wood that's tough.

Oak implements do not have any additional effects.
Price: No Change.
Rarity: No Change.

HAZEL

Hazel is associated with inspiration, prophecy, and wisdom. Some magic practitioners prefer it for their implements, attributing their greatest successes to moments of inexplicable inspiration.

When your character generates ❁ while casting a spell with this implement, you may roll ▢ and add it to the results, in addition to spending the ❁ normally.
Price: Cost x ½.
Rarity: +1.

WILLOW

Relatively uncommon in Terrinoth, willow trees are associated with the potential for great purification and healing as well as great despair and death. Willow wands and books bound in willow bark are highly prized among sorcerers.

When your character successfully casts a spell using a willow implement, you may add ⮝ to the results.
Price: Cost x 2.
Rarity: +2.

YEW

Students of spiritspeakers and old magical traditions associate the yew with the natural cycle of renewal and rebirth. The Latari Elves who guard the borders of the Aymhelin prize it for this natural resonance, and sometimes even bind tomes between thinly laminated sheets of yew.

When your character successfully casts an Augment, Barrier, or Heal spell using this implement, they heal 1 strain.
Price: Cost x ½.
Rarity: +1.

GEAR AND SERVICES

This section presents items that characters in Mennara might find useful in the course of their travels.

GEAR

Though adventurers vary wildly in both their origins and motivations, most rely on a similar stable of gear items to get safely from one underground ruin to the next.

ALCHEMIST'S KIT AND LAB

Alchemists work with an impressive array of specialized tools to craft their potions and elixirs. Those who travel tend to rely on a portable kit of the devices most essential to their trade, such as a simple mortar and pestle along with a number of flasks, tin measuring cups, and pouches in which to store various alchemical ingredients. Those with access to fully stocked labs, though, can use also use alembics, crucibles, glassware, and more to create even more wondrous concoctions.

When your character uses an alchemists' kit, they have the right tool for the job (as per page 93 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook) when making Alchemy checks, although some potions and elixirs may require specialized ingredients. At your GM's discretion, some complex alchemical items may not be crafted with the limited resources of an alchemists' kit.

An alchemists' lab includes all the items in an alchemists' kit and more. When your character uses an alchemists' lab, they add ▢ to Alchemy checks. While the many tools and devices included are extremely heavy and cumbersome (and thus require a room to contain them), a lab can be considered somewhat portable if a wagon and draft animal are given over entirely to transporting it.

APOTHECARY'S KIT

Like alchemists, apothecaries often travel with specialized kits. These kits commonly contain bandages, salves, poultices, and other items necessary to heal the injured and sick.

An apothecary's kit allows your character to perform Medicine checks to heal wounds and Critical Injuries without penalty.

BACKPACK

Few things are more essential to the traveler and adventurer than the humble backpack. Without its copious storage space, one could not carry the supplies needed for a lengthy journey—or escape from a spider-infested tomb with a haul of loot.

While wearing a backpack, your character increases their encumbrance threshold by four.

BEDROLL

Whether camping beneath the boughs of the Aymhelin, sleeping on a dune in the Sunderlands, or lying amid the rubble of a ruined castle, a good bedroll can be just what one needs to get a restful night's sleep. Bedrolls usually consist of a thick lower blanket for padding and an upper blanket for warmth. Wealthier individuals sometimes use blankets treated with an alchemical resin to resist rain and damp.

CLIMBING GEAR

Ropes, pitons, and a small hammer make climbing up a sheer cliff or wall merely difficult, rather than nearly impossible (and possibly fatal).

When your character uses climbing gear they remove ■ from any Athletics checks they make to climb something.

EXTRA QUIVER

This can include additional arrows in a spare pouch, crossbow bolts wrapped in a leather pouch, or missiles for other ranged weapons such as blowpipes or dart throwers.

If your character has an extra quiver, they can spend a maneuver to replenish their ranged weapon when it has suffered an "out of ammo" ⊗ result. Note this does not replenish weapons with the Limited Ammo quality as they do not actually run out of ammunition.

FINE CLOAK

Whether it is cut from bolts of vibrant, colorful silk or fashioned from rich, fur-lined velvet, nothing says someone is ludicrously wealthy and powerful (or wants to pass as such) like a fine cloak.

When wearing a fine cloak, your character removes ■ from any Charm, Deception, or Leadership checks they make. While worn, a cloak's encumbrance is 0.

FLASK

A clay or pewter flask can be just the thing for carrying water on a long journey. Of course, a Dwarf would probably consider carrying water a waste of a good flask.

Most flasks can carry roughly ten ounces of liquid, and have a cork or latching top to keep the contents from spilling.

FLINT AND STEEL

As long as an adventurer has time, patience, and a supply of fine, dry kindling, they can use a flint and steel to strike sparks and start a fire.

HERBS OF HEALING

Though most of the folks of the Free Cities assume that the forests of Terrinoth are full of kobolds and bane spiders, those who live beyond the walls of civilization know that there are wonders to be found among the trees. One of these is a certain blend of herbs said to have been discovered by the Elves. When crushed and packed into a wound (or cast into a pot of boiling water to form an aromatic vapor), these herbs have the almost supernatural ability to help the injured recover from grievous wounds.

TABLE 2-9: GEAR

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Alchemist's Kit	3	300	5
Alchemist's Lab (Supplies)	8	600	6
Apothecary's Kit	2	150	4
Backpack	+4	50	3
Bedroll	1	15	1
Climbing Gear	1	20	2
Extra Quiver	2	25	2
Fine Cloak	1	90	4
Flask (Empty)	0	1	1
Flint and Steel	0	10	2
Herbs of Healing	0	50	6
Lantern	1	50	1
Pole (30 hands long)	2	10	1
Rope	1	5	1
Thieves' Tools	1	75	5
Torches (3)	1	1	0
Trail Rations (1 day)	0	2	0
Wagon	–	200	2
Waterskin (Empty)	1	5	1
Winter Clothing	4	100	3

When making a Medicine check, your character may use herbs of healing to add ✲ ⮝ to the results. The herbs are consumed when used.

LANTERN

An iron lantern is easier to handle than a torch and can be hung from a belt or shield. Protected inside a cage of metal and sturdy glass, its flame is relatively safe even if the lantern is knocked about. This can prove vital in the darkest caverns that run through the bedrock of Mennara.

A lit lantern provides light and removes ■ added to checks due to darkness. (If it becomes important to determine how far the light reaches, a lantern can provide light out to short range.)

POLE (THIRTY HANDS LONG)

While some may consider a long pole to be an odd thing for an adventurer to carry, clearly those people have not been on many adventures.

ROPE

No self-respecting soldier, sailor, miner, merchant, or traveler would ever be caught without a length of sturdy rope close at hand, and that goes doubly for an adventurer. The richest adventurers sometimes carry rope woven from silk, but hempen ropes work just as well.

A length of rope stretches out to roughly medium range, but other lengths can be purchased at your GM's discretion.

THIEVES' TOOLS

Thieves' tools allow those without keys to attempt to open any mechanical locks or latches, even complicated ones.

When making a Skulduggery check to open a lock or latch, your character adds ⮝ to the results.

TORCHES (3)

Wrap the end of a length of wood in cloth, dip it in pitch or tar, and light it. The resulting torch should burn for an hour or so, and is a simple way to light up the darkness.

A lit torch provides light and removes ■ added to checks due to darkness. (If it becomes important to determine how far the light reaches, a torch can provide light out to short range.)

TRAIL RATIONS

Most races craft daily trail rations to be compact as possible and last as long as possible without molding or rotting. Any edibility is incidental. Trail rations generally include smoked jerky with the consistency of shoe leather, biscuits that can double as sling bullets, and bricks of fat mixed with berries and ground dried meat.

Elves, of course, forgo such foodstuffs and subsist off a mix of delectable dried fruits, cunningly preserved cheeses, and thin-baked bread that lasts for months without losing its light and fluffy texture. Without exception, travelers from other races resent them mightily for this.

WAGON

Wagons can be expensive enough that several farmers may share one. A farmer's wagon is usually constructed from heavy, rough-hewn timbers—a marked contrast to the varnished wood of a merchant's wagon or the brightly painted covered wagon of a wandering Gnome.

A wagon can hold characters and gear totaling up to 50 encumbrance. A wagon features two or more wheels and can move at moderate speed if a beast of burden pulls it.

WATERSKIN

Generally made from the bladders of sheep or cows, waterskins provide a simple and effective way to transport liquids from well water to traveling wines. Some Gnomes have experimented with making them from canvas treated with alchemical resins, but most people complain about the bitter taste and insist that these will never replace the natural version.

A waterskin can carry enough liquid to quench the thirst of two people per day. When full, its encumbrance increases to 2.

WINTER CLOTHING

Made of thick wool and furs, winter clothing keeps the wearer warm in the coldest environments.

When wearing winter clothing, your character removes ■■ from any Survival or Resilience checks they make due to cold weather. When worn, winter clothing's encumbrance is 1.

POTIONS AND ELIXIRS

Unless stated otherwise, consuming a potion or elixir (or administering one to an engaged character) is a maneuver and consumes the item in the process. The effects of multiple doses of the same potion do not stack.

Some alchemists and herbalists produce highly specialized potions for sale, and such items vary greatly in quality, potency, and safety. Some potions are simply too rare to be purchased like ordinary goods.

ACID FLASK

Alchemists often use acids to etch metals or break down components into their constituent parts. These acids are usually strong enough to also serve as dangerous—albeit dangerously indiscriminate—weapons.

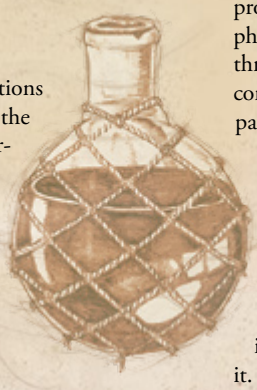
As an action, your character can throw an acid flask at a point within short range, where it releases a cloud of acidic mist large enough to encompass a single character and other characters engaged with the target. The cloud is a corrosive atmosphere with a rating of 4 (see **Fire, Acid, and Corrosive Atmospheres** on page 111 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). The cloud remains for the duration of the encounter, unless the GM determines that circumstances (such as an outdoor location or a strong draft) cause it to dissipate faster.

BOTTLED COURAGE

Bottled courage is usually nothing more than a stiff measure of alcohol mixed with a concoction of stimulating herbs and mushrooms. The imbiber becomes heedless of danger and immune to sights and experiences that might otherwise leave them traumatized.

When your character uses bottled courage, they upgrade Discipline checks made to resist fear and Coercion once until the end of the scene or encounter.

HEALTH ELIXIR



Health elixirs are the most common potions created by apothecaries. They imbue the taker with feelings of warmth and nourishment and are used to ward off illness. They do not actually heal injuries, although they can help comfort and stabilize an injured individual.

A health elixir is a painkiller, as described on page 116 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

IMMUNITY ELIXIR

Immunity elixirs are concocted to act as antidotes to a wide variety of common poisons and diseases. Once a person has imbibed an immunity elixir, they will not as easily succumb to the disease or poison it is designed to counteract for a short period of time thereafter.

TABLE 2-10: POTIONS AND ELIXIRS

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Acid Flask	0	200	6
Bottled Courage	1	25	5
Health Elixir	0	25	3
Immunity Elixir	1	100	4
Invisibility Potion	1	1,000	9
Poison	0	200	5
Power Potion	1	250	6
Protective Tonic	1	125	6
Regeneration Elixir	1	50	4
Smokebomb Vial	0	25	4
Speed Potion	1	200	7
Stamina Elixir	0	50	3

Using an immunity elixir immediately nullifies any mundane poisons or toxins currently afflicting your character (some magical or otherwise extraordinary poisons might not be affected, at the GM's discretion). In addition, for the rest of the encounter or scene, your character upgrades Resilience checks made to resist poisons and toxins twice.

INVISIBILITY POTION

Potions such as the fabled invisibility potion blur the line between the scientific craft of the alchemist and true magic. In this case, the ingredients (razor-sharp strands of silk from shadowlurker spiders, the crystalline herb avathian, and a puff of elemental air) are certainly magical, even if the process of combining them is not. In any case, consuming the potion renders the user completely invisible to the unaided eye.

When your character imbibes an invisibility potion they become invisible for 3 rounds. During this time, your character cannot be seen and casts no reflection or shadow. They produce noise, smells, and so on as usual, and they have a physical presence. An invisible character may also be detected through magical means. An invisible character benefits from concealment worth +4 dice (see the **Concealment** section on page 110 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).

POISON

Every culture in Mennara has its own poisons, ranging from abundant botanical extracts to refined alchemical potions. Most are easy to use, if not easy to obtain.

Your character can apply poison to a target's food or drink, in which case the target suffers the effects when they ingest it. Poison can also be applied to smokebombs or other items at your GM's discretion. As a maneuver, it can also be applied to a weapon with a sharp point or edge, such as a dagger or arrow, that can induce the poison into the target's bloodstream. If applied to a weapon, the first successful hit that deals at least one wound causes the target to suffer the effects of the poison. Once the poison has affected one target, it is depleted and another dose must be applied.

Characters affected by poison or within a poison cloud must make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Resilience check** as an out-of-turn incidental or suffer 4 wounds (not reduced by soak) plus 1 strain per ♻. You or your GM can spend ⊗ on the check to inflict a Critical Injury or to force the target to repeat the check at the beginning of their next turn, as the poison continues to wrack their body.



POWER POTION

Power potions are similar to speed potions (see page 104), save that they increase upper body and core strength in particular. Those who imbibe power potions are better able to strike and block blows. Feats of strength, such as hefting weights and shifting objects, are also facilitated through the use of a power potion.

When your character uses a power potion they increase their Brawn by 1. This effect lasts until the end of the encounter or scene. If your character's Brawn is already 5, they instead add ■■ to all checks using Brawn. When the potion wears off, your character suffers 6 strain.

PROTECTIVE TONIC

Protective tonics imbue the drinker with reserves of physical and psychological resilience. They do this through mildly soporific effects that deaden pain and increase feelings of well-being. They also have an effect on the body, shrinking the capillaries near the skin's surface to reduce bruising and bleeding, and speeding the clotting process.

When your character imbibes a protective tonic they gain +1 soak for your character's next three turns.

REGENERATION ELIXIR

Regeneration elixirs help heal injuries. They take the form of a drink to be taken orally or a poultice to be applied to the wounded area. The elixir causes torn flesh to knit back together and broken bones to fuse. Even internal wounds can be cured by regeneration elixirs.

When your character uses a regeneration elixir they make a **Simple (–) Resilience check**, healing 1 wound for each ✹ and 1 strain for each ⮝. You may spend ❁ to repeat the check at the start of your character's next turn, as the elixir continues to accelerate their healing.

SMOKEBOMB VIAL

Smokebomb vials contain yet smaller vials that each hold different concoctions. When the vials are broken, typically by flinging the main vial to the floor as hard as possible, the various chemicals mix to produce a cloud of thick, choking fog. The fog is not harmful (unless treated with poison, which must be purchased separately), though it is unpleasant to be caught within and is impossible to see through.

APOTHECARIES

Whether they learned their art through academic study at a college or by hard-won mastery of an inherited system of folklore, apothecaries are able to harvest various plants and combine them in such a way as to create potions with magical effects. The living environment is affected by the rhythms of nature, the Lays of the First, which Humans cannot hear but which Elves are able to discern and derive sustenance from. Plants also absorb these energies and store them.

The apothecary's art is somewhat similar to that of those who make mundane poisons or tonics. However, unlike poisoners, apothecaries do not simply make use of natural properties of the plants they harvest; rather, they balance the magical components of plants as they concoct their recipes. Selecting and measuring out botanical ingredients in exact quantities, they engage in complex processes of cooking and alchemical extraction. The end result is the production of potions that have an effect similar to a spell when they are imbibed, though they can only directly affect the imbiber.

Talented apothecaries learn additional alchemical practices as well, such as the ability to produce vials of liquids that emit thick smoke or poisonous gas when mixed and exposed to air. Such alchemical tricks are more associated with apothecaries who learned their craft at a university; elixirs are more typical of those who learn their craft as an apprentice to a rural folk apothecary, though there is a great deal of overlap between the two approaches.

Elixirs are best taken when they have been freshly prepared. In Terrinoth, this means the most effective elixirs are available between the spring and autumn equinoxes, when diverse and abundant plant life is available for foraging. During the winter months, elixirs can still be made from dried or pickled ingredients, though they do not work as effectively.

Most wizards look down on apothecaries, as their craft involves long hours bent over cauldrons and alembics in order to produce spells that are less powerful than those produced by sorcery. More enlightened wizards, however, have some respect for the craft of potion making, noting that it is a relatively low-risk form of working magic.

As a maneuver, a character can throw a smokebomb vial at a point within short range. Upon impact, the vial shatters to create a thick smoke screen large enough to conceal a single character and other characters engaged with the target. The smoke screen provides concealment worth +2 dice (see the **Concealment** section on page 110 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).

SPEED POTION



Speed potions affect the muscles of the drinker, especially those used for running and other forms of movement. Once a speed potion is taken, the imbiber is better able to sprint for a short period. Speed potions allow for short and immediate bursts of top performance. Some people have been known to combine stamina elixirs and speed potions for longer periods of high performance. The morning after can only be described as truly nightmarish.

When your character imbibes a speed potion they gain one additional maneuver during their turn. While under the effects of a speed potion, your character can perform a maximum of three maneuvers in a turn, rather than two. A speed potion lasts for your character's next three turns, after which your character suffers 6 strain.

STAMINA ELIXIR

Stamina elixirs can be taken to provide the patient with a feeling of improved vitality. When a stamina elixir is drunk, the imbiber benefits from increased reserves of energy over a lengthy period. It ought to be mentioned that hangovers from stamina elixirs can be particularly dire.

When your character uses a stamina elixir they immediately heal 5 strain. Each subsequent elixir used in the same day heals 1 less strain, so that the sixth elixir (and further) has no effect. After one day, the lingering effects of the stamina elixir wear off, and your character may again use a stamina elixir to full effect.

ANIMALS AND RELATED GEAR

For most adventurers, riding mounts are the preferred method for traveling over long distances.

BARDING

Barding is metal armor or similar protection for a horse or other mount. The destriers ridden by the knights of the baronies tend to sport steel plates reinforced with patches of chain, while the fierce Leonx of the Latari wear the same leathers as their riders. Generally, only war mounts can tolerate the weight and discomfort of barding.

Barding counts as armor for a mount and provides defense 1 and soak 2.

BEAST OF BURDEN (MINION)

Mules, oxen, draft horses, and other strong, hearty animals are put to many working uses, such as pulling wagons and carts.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	1	1	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	7	0 | 0

Skills (group only): Athletics, Resilience.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Encumbrance Capacity 18, Silhouette 2.
Equipment: Harness.

FLYING MOUNT (RIVAL)

Throughout history, a number of flying creatures have been bred and trained as mounts, including the rocs of Baron Hadrian and the Yeron of the Latari Elves. Such animals are always rarer than more typical riding beasts, and those trained for war are rarer still. Due to the obvious dangers involved, only the most skilled and courageous riders seek out flying mounts.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	4	1	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	12	1 | 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Coordination 3, Discipline 2, Resilience 2, Survival 2.
Talents: Dodge 2.
Abilities: Encumbrance Capacity 12, Flyer (can fly; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Silhouette 2.
Equipment: Hooves or talons (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

RIDING BEAST (MINION)

Although they can carry riders over great distances, most horses, ponies, and other such steeds are neither bred nor trained for the violence of battlefield conditions. A Riding check is required to maintain control of a riding beast in combat or a similarly stressful situation.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	1	1	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	5	0 | 0

Skills (group only): Athletics, Resilience.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Encumbrance Capacity 12, Silhouette 2.
Equipment: Riding tack.

TABLE 2-11: ANIMALS AND GEAR

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Barding	5	900	4
Beast of Burden	–	200	1
Flying Mount	–	2,000	8
Riding Beast	–	400	2
Saddlebags	+4	75	3
War Mount	–	1,500	6

SADDLEBAGS

Just as the mounts of Mennara come in a variety of forms, so do the saddlebags. Saddlebags allow creatures to carry more gear and traveling supplies then usual, and thus provide their riders a wider range of operation.

Saddlebags increase a mount's encumbrance threshold by four.

WAR MOUNT (RIVAL)

War mounts are those steeds bred and trained for war, such as the destriers of the Daqan Baronies. Just like their riders, such mounts do not shy away when facing combat and can use their stomping feet, grasping talons, or other natural weapons to aid in battle.



Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Discipline 2, Resilience 3, Survival 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Encumbrance Capacity 13, Silhouette 2.
Equipment: Hooves or claws (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown), riding tack.

SERVICES

This section presents a number of services that characters might procure in the course of their adventures across Mennara, from rare bottles of wine fit for a Baron to a simple meal and lodgings for the night.

ALE

The brewers of the southern baronies insist that they craft as fine an ale from sun-kissed wheat and barley as any Dwarf could ever manage. The Dwarves of Forge and Dunwarr don't deign to argue this; they just pour a mug of their own beer and suggest the brewers see for themselves which is better.

LODGINGS

Only the very desperate press on once darkness falls, and for most the setting sun brings thoughts of where to rest for the night. Travelers can find such lodgings even in the Borderlands, ranging from proper establishments to tavern rooms to rough tents behind a building. Stables for riding beasts are an assumed part of the deal unless unusual or dangerous animals are involved.

MEALS

For many adventurers, the thought of a proper meal not involving trail rations may be all that keeps them going during a long ride. Several small villages strewn between the Free Cities host well-kept secrets concerning the culinary delights to be found within, and those in the know ensure they stay that way lest any widespread success spoil things.

PORTERS AND TORCHBEARERS

Able-bodied helpers can be essential in many questing adventures, especially in carrying extra supplies across rough terrain, or aiding in establishing camps in the wilderness. Sometimes just a few extra people to offer additional light for nighttime travel can ensure a group doesn't become yet another "but they never returned" tavern tale.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Adventurers traveling in groups often rely on hired wagons, especially when they are extracting weighty treasures from some forgotten ruin. Boats can also be arranged for passage throughout Terrinoth's rivers, though this becomes more treacherous the farther one goes into unexplored regions.

WINE

The Latari Elves claim to craft the finest wines in all the world. Though this is likely true for Terrinoth, the title of finest vintner may actually go to Al Aluaham Najad, whose vineyards are in the Sunderlands. The wines these vineyards produce are said to have such potency that they glow faintly in the light of the moon, and are highly valued when bottles make their way to the baronies.

TABLE 2-12: SERVICES

ITEM	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY
Ale (Flagon)	–	1	0
Lodging (Common Room, 1 night)	–	1	0
Lodging (Private Room, 1 night)	–	5	1
Meal (Tavern)	–	2	0
Porter (Per day)	–	1	1
Torchbearer (Per day)	–	1	1
Travel, Riverboat (1 day)	–	5	2
Travel, Wagon (1 day)	–	2	1
Wine (Bottle)	–	2	1

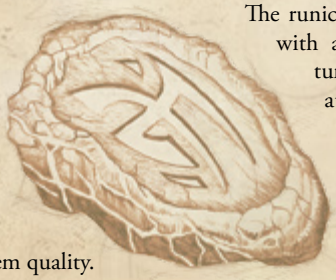
ITEM ATTACHMENTS AND ENCHANTMENTS

Item attachments follow the rules on page 206 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. Enchantments are attachments that are magical in nature. Enchantments follow the normal rules for attachments but are generally much harder to obtain, as they can only be "installed" by someone with magic ability. Additionally, characters with magic skills may be able to detect the presence of enchanted items.

WEAPON ATTACHMENTS

The following new weapon attachments are available to characters in the Runebound setting. Appropriate attachments from the GENESYS Core Rulebook are available as well. Recommended attachments are listed in **Table 2–6: Weapon Attachments**. For details on the attachments from the GENESYS Core Rulebook, see **Weapon Attachments** on pages 207 through 209 of that book.

EXPLOSIVE MISSILE



Whether through means of runic inscription on the weapon or by alchemical agents applied to each arrow or bolt, a weapon with this attachment launches projectiles that explode on impact.
Use With: Any Ranged weapon.
Modifiers: The weapon gains the Blast 5 item quality.
Hard Points Required: 1.

RUNE OF BLADES

A rune of blades is almost always found with a specially made sword or knife. It is a simple and effective runebound shard that increases the potency of a bladed weapon by magically honing the edge. Like sunburst runes, runes of blades are in high demand among members of the military and can be commandeered from private individuals for war efforts and related campaigns. Some Dragonkin and other intelligent creatures have made use of the runes to retain the sharpness of their claws, though wooden edges and points are not affected by the runes.
Use With: This attachment can be applied to any bladed weapon.
Modifiers: When this weapon inflicts a Critical Injury, it inflicts the Bleeding Out Critical Injury instead of one determined through rolling for the result.
Hard Points Required: 1.

RUNIC FLAME

The runic flame is designed to be used in conjunction with a close combat weapon. Swords with apertures in the pommel or the guard for such runic attachments are not uncommon in the armories of wealthy members of the military.
Use With: This attachment can be applied to any melee weapon.
Modifiers: The weapon gains the Burn 1 item quality.
Hard Points Required: 1.

TABLE 2–13: WEAPON ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT	HP REQUIRED	PRICE	RARITY	SOURCE
Balanced Hilt	1	1,000	6	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 207)
Duelist Cross Guard	1	800	5	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 207)
Explosive Missile	1	1,250	7	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Razor Edge	1	1,250	6	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 208)
Recurve Limbs	1	300	4	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 208)
Rune of Blades	1	–	10	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Runic Flame	1	2,000	8	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Runic Frost	1	1,750	8	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Runic Thunder	2	2,000	8	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Rune of Severing	2	–	10	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Serrated Edge	1	75	2	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 208)
Superior Weapon Customization	1	750	7	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 208)
Weighted Head	1	250	2	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 209)
Ynfernael Corruption	1	–	8	REALMS OF TERRINOTH

RUNIC FROST

This runic inscription coats the weapon with icy chill that saps strength from those it strikes.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any melee weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon gains the Ensnare 1 and Stun 4 item qualities.

Hard Points Required: 1.

RUNIC THUNDER

When its weapon strikes a foe, this rune carving flashes white like a bolt of lightning. The deafening boom of thunder comes a half-second later, staggering the foe with concussive force.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon gains the Concussive 1 item quality.

Hard Points Required: 2.

RUNE OF SEVERING

A sword or knife with this rune inscription unerringly seeks out a foe's vitals for a killing blow. When an enemy falls gasping to the floor, the rune glows faintly with a deep crimson hue.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any bladed melee weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon gains the Vicious 5 item quality.

Hard Points Required: 2.

YNFERNAEL CORRUPTION

Pacts with dark powers may confer baleful powers unto otherwise mundane weaponry. Ynfernael daemons can infuse nearly any weapon with a measure of their unnatural strength… for a price.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon increases its base damage by 2; whenever your character suffers strain while wielding or wearing this weapon, they increase the strain suffered by 1.

Hard Points Required: 1.

ARMOR ATTACHMENTS

The following new armor attachments are available to characters in Mennara. Appropriate attachments from the GENESYS Core Rulebook are available as well. Recommended attachments are listed in **Table 2–14: Armor Attachments** on page 108. For details on the attachments from the GENESYS Core Rulebook, see **Armor Attachments** on page 209 of that book.

GILDED

Though it serves no practical purpose, many nobles like to adorn their armor with gold leaf. It certainly makes the wearer seem impressive, but acts as a lure for every bandit within eyesight.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor.

Modifiers: While wearing this armor, your character adds ▯ to Charm, Negotiation, and Leadership checks.

Hard Points Required: 0.

ARTISANS AND CRAFTS

For most, a life in the crafts is a worthy cause, and one critical to defending day-to-day existence against the encroaching darkness. Common artisans are responsible for many of the mundane, everyday items that make life in Terrinoth possible. Most blacksmiths spend their time forging and repairing horseshoes, plows, and the like, only occasionally crafting a weapon to have on hand to sell to a passing adventurer. Similarly, clothiers, cobblers, hatters, stonemasons, fletchers, and alchemists who ply their trades in cities and hamlets across the continent work to supply their regions with daily necessities and the occasional luxury item.

The crafts are largely familial in origin, with parents passing down knowledge to their children in the hope that their progeny will continue the practice once the parents are too old to do so. It's not uncommon to see entire generations working within a single craft to produce goods for the great markets of Terrinoth's cities. Schooling is limited to the nobility and those lucky and enough to be blessed with an affinity for magic. As such, these families are the keepers of vital knowledge and skills in places where they may be the only artisans of their craft for miles. In Tamalir and Thelgrim Pass, powerful guilds control the caliber and quantity of goods produced, as well as the transmission of specialized skills from one generation to another. Guilds are often major political players in major cities like these, their voices carrying as much weight as a count's in matters of city craft.

Beyond the guild houses of the great cities, however, independent artisans and craftspeople are free to wander to their heart's content in search of work and customers. In Torue Albes, carpenters arrive from across the world to advance their skills under the famed shipwrights of Tarianor, while architects and masons flock to Lorimor to unlock the secrets of its astonishing civic constructions. The craftspeople of Terrinoth tend to be a variegated bunch, hailing from all walks of life and with all manner of origins. Some may be former adventurers who have traded swordplay to become sword-makers, adopting new techniques discovered in their travels; others may travel throughout the baronies, adopting and training apprentices as they go.

TABLE 2-14: ARMOR ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT	HP REQUIRED	PRICE	RARITY	SOURCE
Deflective Plating	1	450	4	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 209)
Gilded	0	1,500	5	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Intimidating Visage	0	236	3	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 209)
Ironbound Rune	2	–	10	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Reinforced Plating	2	8,000	7	GENESYS Core Rulebook (page 209)
Spikes	2	600	4	REALMS OF TERRINOTH
Twilight Rune	1	–	10	REALMS OF TERRINOTH

IRONBOUND RUNE

Ironbound runebound shards are highly desirable for military efforts. These shards work only with metal armor, though, and have no effect on padded armor made from leather or textiles.
Use With: This attachment can be applied to any metal armor.
Modifiers: The armor increases its defense by 1 and soak by 1.
Hard Points Required: 2.

SPIKES

Particularly unscrupulous warriors sometimes add sharp spikes or barbs to their armor, especially to gauntlets, vambraces, and pauldrons. In the press of a melee, they can use a shoulder check or a wild swing to slash or even impale an opponent.
Use With: This attachment can be applied to plate armor.
Modifiers: If your character is targeted by a melee combat check while wearing this armor, you may spend ♻ ♻ ♻ or ⊗ to cause the attacker to suffer 3 wounds.
Hard Points Required: 1.

TWILIGHT RUNE

Armor with this rune always seems to be tucked into a dark corner, along with its wearer, even when worn in the brightest sunlight. In actual darkness, the wearer becomes a akin to a wraith, able to slip past the most alert sentries.
Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor.
Modifiers: While wearing this armor your character adds ■■ to Stealth checks they make and gains +2 ranged defense.
Hard Points Required: 1.

MAGIC ITEMS

A magic item is one of those rare objects that possess magical properties, whether as the result of a runebound shard worked into the item, a runic inscription, or some other form of enchantment. Some magic items are the intentional creation of a wizard or other crafter, while others might have developed their power through exposure to arcane energies, proximity to great events, or even stranger ways. No matter their origins, magic items—even those that produce similar effects—are each a unique wonder of Mennara. Magic items are almost never offered for sale and cannot be crafted.

BLOODSCRIPT RING

Although the priests of Pollox deny any involvement, they are said to have smithed the Bloodscript Rings during the chaos following Timmorran Lokander's death. Rumor has it that the priesthood was concerned about wizards' vulnerability at that time and crafted items to protect them. The rings are made of a dark precious-metal alloy. On their inside edges are a series of complex sigils and wards scribed in crimson lettering. The rings are said to fill those who would harm the wearer with a sense of unnerving dread when magic is worked; even the wearer themself feels an internal weariness within.



When your character casts a spell while wearing a Bloodscript Ring, all other characters within short range must immediately make a fear check as an out-of-turn incidental. The difficulty of the check is equal to your character's ranks in Knowledge (Forbidden). While wearing a bloodscript ring, your character reduces their strain threshold by one.

CLOAK OF MISTS

An enveloping black cloak with a stole of white feathers, this mysterious artifact is a source of much controversy amongst Terrinoth's wizards. They claim it employs Ynfernael energies, could be used for all manner of criminal mischief, and that thus it ought to be destroyed. The cloak is enchanted in such a way that the wearer can dissipate into a cloud of mist for a time. However, the magic has a vampiric quality, and the longer a wearer makes use of the cloak's power, the weaker they become.

While wearing the Cloak of Mists, as an out-of-turn incidental after suffering any amount of damage, your character can spend one Story Point and choose to suffer any amount of strain up to the amount of damage suffered but not exceeding their strain threshold. They then reduce their damage total by the amount of strain suffered. The Cloak of Mists' encumbrance is 0 when worn.

DEAD MAN'S COMPASS



This artifact is rumored to be the work of necromancers, though its origins are unknown, and arcanists have been known to use it. Set within a gilded frame is a glass dome, beneath which swirls a dark, viscous liquid. The bones of a Human hand float upon the liquid. They are bleached white, save for the final joint of the first finger, which is dyed scarlet. Should someone succeed in activating the device, they may ask it to indicate a desired destination, or where something or someone may be found. The bones will then slowly form a hand that points in the right direction.

When your character makes a Knowledge (Geography), Perception, or Vigilance check to chart a course, find a location, avoid becoming lost, or otherwise navigate, they may choose to use the Dead Man's Compass as an incidental after rolling the check but before determining the results; your character suffers a number of wounds and adds an equal number of ✲ to the check. If these wounds cause the character to exceed their wound threshold, add +50 to the resulting Critical Injury roll.

DEEPWOOD LONGBOW

The longbows of the Latari Deepwood Archers are of little use to an amateur archer, for they take a great deal of strength and skill to use. However, in the hands of a strong and experienced archer, they are deadly weapons indeed. Their range and hitting power is greater than that of mundane bows, and their construction is so solid that warping and breaking is unheard of.

While in a natural, open-air environment above ground, the Deepwood Longbow gains the Accurate 3 item quality.

ELVEN BOOTS

Whether due to enchantments cast upon them during their construction or merely because of the superlative skill of Elven cobblers, these boots are renowned for providing their wearers with surefootedness, superior ankle support, and extreme comfort. An adventurer wearing Elven Boots will find themselves able to hike tirelessly through difficult terrain and outpace companions in mundane footwear.

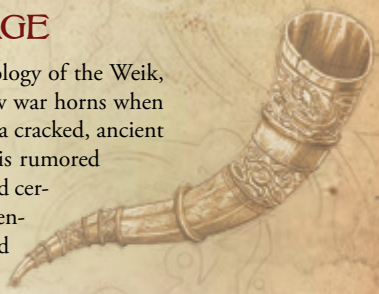
While wearing Elven Boots your character reduces the number of maneuvers required to change range bands by one, to a minimum of 1. Elven boots have an encumbrance of 0 when worn.

GAUNTLETS OF POWER

These magical gauntlets resemble mundane armored gauntlets save for the fact that they are forged from thick slabs of black iron rather than thin sheets of bright steel. The origin of such gauntlets is unknown, though the brutal aesthetics suggest Orcish work. There is a practical frugality to the enchantment cast on the gauntlets. They store energy from the blows that strike them, and then release it when striking back. An adventurer in melee combat is able to inflict stunning blows with the gauntlets.

When worn, Gauntlets of Power add ✲ ⮝ to all Brawn-based skill checks your character makes. Gauntlets of Power have an encumbrance of 0 when worn.

HORN OF COURAGE



Horns play an important role in the mythology of the Weik, for they state that the gods themselves blow war horns when preparing for battle. This horn, made from a cracked, ancient cattle horn and banded with bright silver, is rumored to have been made by priests of Nordros, and certainly attests to their myths. When an adventurer blows the horn, their allies are filled with encouragement and inspiration.

As an out-of-turn incidental, your character may blow the Horn of Courage; until the end of the following round, your character and their allies within medium range reduce the difficulty of fear checks by one, to a minimum of **Simple (–)**. Obviously, the horn is very loud; under most circumstances, it can be easily heard by all characters and creatures out to extreme range, and likely farther.

MACE OF KELLOS

Priests of Kellos once ordered the forging of a flanged mace. They performed a series of warlike rituals on the weapon and imbued it with the spirit of their god's wrathful aspect. When the mace is hefted in anger, the head of the weapon bursts into flames that scorch the foe.

The Mace of Kellos is a magic implement as per page 218 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook, and allows your character to use it to cast spells using the Divine skill. When casting a spell using the Mace of Kellos, your character adds ■■ to the check. In addition, when the spellcaster casts an Attack spell, adding the Fire, Close Combat, and Holy effects do not increase its difficulty.

PRISMATIC STAFF

Prismatic Staffs were crafted by the students of Timmorran under his guidance. Their purpose was to provide the wizards with badges of office as well as a degree of personal protection. They are impressive artifacts: long shafts of silver topped with crystal orbs that display a shifting kaleidoscope of rainbow colors. A bewildering lightshow can be projected from the orbs, the intensity of which dazzles unwary opponents.

A Prismatic Staff is a magic implement, as described on page 218 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. When your character casts a spell while using a Prismatic Staff, the first Range effect added to the spell does not increase the spell's difficulty. In addition, Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by three and gain the Disorient and Concussive 2 item qualities.

SERPENT DAGGER

This dagger has a sweeping blade and a hilt formed in the shape of a striking viper. Bold adventurers recovered it from the Labyrinth of Ruin, but scholars imagine that its origin was in Al-Kalim or even the Ru. Through sorcerous means, the blade constantly sweats a deadly poison, so that a mere scratch can lead to a painful death.

If your character successfully hits a target with the Serpent Dagger you may spend ⮝ to poison the target, who must immediately make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Resilience check** as an out-of-turn incidental or suffer 8 wounds and 8 strain. You can spend ⟲ ⟲ ⟲ or ⊗ on the target's check to force the target to repeat the check at the beginning of their next turn, as the poison continues to work itself through their blood.

SHADOW BRACERS

These black bracers are embossed with curved fluting and polished with an iridescent lacquer. They steadily emit a fine black mist that is odorless and safe to breathe but capable of obscuring vision. In combat, the unnatural mist given off by the bracers envelops the wearer, obscuring them and making them harder to hit. The effect of the bracers is unnerving, and leaves opponents with a sense of doom.

While wearing Shadow Bracers your character benefits from concealment worth +2 dice (see the **Concealment** section on page 110 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). In addition, your character's melee attacks gain the Disorient 3 item quality.

SHIELD OF LIGHT

The Shield of Light is a blessed item that is holy to the priesthood of Kellos. It is a large heater shield decorated with a bold sunburst design in red and gold. When it is wielded in battle, rays of golden light stream from the boss that become impossibly brilliant when struck.

While wielding the Shield of Light, if your character suffers a hit from a melee combat check, after the attack is resolved you may spend ⟲ ⟲ or ⊗ from the attacker's check to inflict the Blinded Critical Injury result on the attacker.

SOULBOUND SWORD

Necromancers can bind the spirits of fearsome warriors within cursed blades. These soulbound swords have a sinister appearance, with morbid detailing such as skull-shaped pommels and guards made from carved bone. The black blades are slightly iridescent, and if an observer watches closely, they may be able to discern the shifting ghost trapped within. Bearers of these swords are said to benefit from some of the skill of the warrior spirit they carry, and the blades' merest touch often proves fatal. The grim reputation and appearance of Soulbound Swords also serves to inspire dread in their bearers' foes.

While wielding or wearing a Soulbound Sword your character reduces their strain threshold by two. As an incidental, while wielding a Soulbound Sword your character can allow it to assist them; they make an immediate **Hard (◆◆◆) fear check**, and all engaged characters make an identical fear check as an out-of-turn incidental. Assuming your character doesn't drop the sword in terror, they count as having four ranks in Melee (Heavy) for attacks using the Soulbound Sword for the duration of the encounter. If your character already has four ranks or more in Melee (Heavy), they instead add ■■ to attacks using the sword.

If your fails the fear check with ⊗, the spirit within the blade possesses them entirely for the rest of the encounter, or longer at your GM's discretion. Your and your GM should work together to determine your character's actions while possessed.

STAFF OF LIGHT

Priests of Pollux developed Staffs of Light as an alternative to the messy business of using torches and lamps for illumination. They are short and sturdy lengths of twisted wrought iron topped with a pearlescent jewel that glows with intense white light when a word of command is spoken. Usually the staffs are simply used in place of torches, but adventurers have been known to brandish these magical staffs at foes in order to dazzle them. Those with true magical skills, though, can use them for even greater tasks.

A Staff of Light provides illumination out to short range. It is also a magic implement, as described on page 218 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook, While using the Staff of Light as their implement, your character can use the Arcana skill to cast Heal spells. In addition, while your character casts a spell adding the Blast effect does not increase the spell's difficulty. Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by five.

TABLE 2-15: MAGIC ITEMS

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY	SPECIAL
Bloodscript Ring	–	–	–	–	0	–	9	
Cloak of Mists	–	–	–	–	1	–	10	
Dead Man's Compass	–	–	–	–	0	–	10	
Deepwood Longbow	Ranged	8	2	Extreme	4	–	6	Accurate 1, Cumbersome 3, Superior, Unwieldy 3
Elven Boots	–	–	–	–	1	–	6	
Gauntlets of Power	–	–	–	–	1	–	8	
Horn of Courage	–	–	–	–	1	–	7	
Mace of Kellos	Melee (Light)	+4	3	Engaged	2	–	10	Burn 2, Reinforced, Superior
Prismatic Staff	Melee (Heavy)	+2	4	Engaged	2	–	8	Defensive 1
Serpent Dagger	Melee (Light)	+2	2	Engaged	1	–	8	Pierce 1, Reinforced, Superior, Unwieldy 4
Shadow Bracers	–	–	–	–	0		10	
Shield of Light	Melee (Light)	+0	6	Engaged	2	–	9	Defensive 3, Deflection 3, Inaccurate 2, Reinforced, Knockdown
Soulbound Sword	Melee (Heavy)	+6	2	Engaged	3	–	10	Defensive 1, Pierce 1, Reinforced, Superior, Unwieldy 3
Staff of Light	Melee (Heavy)	+2	4	Engaged	0	–	9	Defensive 2
Truelight Lantern	–	–	–	–	1	–	8	
Warding Talisman	–	–	–	–	0	–	6	
Winged Boots	–	–	–	–	1	–	9	

TRUELIGHT LANTERN

The Truelight Lanterns are wrought by the magic of the Latari Elves. They look more like large, multifaceted jewels than the glass-and-iron lanterns associated with craftspeople of the Free Cities. When activated, the lantern gives off a soft green glow that somehow illuminates the surrounding area as effectively as a flaming torch. The light cast by the lantern also pierces illusions, allowing the bearer to see things like magically concealed doors and traps.

A Truelight Lantern provides illumination out to short range. Within the area of illumination, all characters upgrade their Perception checks to notice concealed doors, illusions, hidden objects, and similar details twice.

WARDING TALISMAN

Warding Talismans have a form and appearance similar to beautifully crafted silver ailettes: small badges in the shape of shields worn on the upper chest or shoulder. They don't offer much physical protection, but they carry enchantments that can cause an opponent's strike to falter or go awry.

While wearing a Warding Talisman, your character increases their defense by one.

WINGED BOOTS

The Priesthood of Pollux sponsors all manner of magical research into artifacts that might allow their wearer to fly. Winged Boots are an example of such endeavors, but even so, they do not enable soaring flight. An adventurer equipped with winged boots can hover a few dozen yards above the ground or use the boots to safely slow a descent from a height.

While wearing Winged Boots your character can fly (see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). Your character does not need to use a maneuver in order to remain aloft (the boots do all the work and allow the wearer to hover in place) but cannot go above medium range from the ground.

Winged boots have an encumbrance of 0 when worn. When not worn, Winged Boots have a tendency to spring upwards and fly away on their own.

CRAFTING

Characters may craft almost anything, from swords and crossbows to ships and clockwork devices, given sufficient time, resources, and skill. Although fletching, blacksmithing, and tannery are very different trades, for simplicity, most crafting uses the Mechanics skill. The use of Alchemy to create potions is a kind of crafting, but is distinct enough for its own skill and so it has additional rules on page 113. Regardless of the skill used, we also call a skill check to craft an item a crafting check.

All crafting follows the same basic guidelines, although the process your character undertakes within the narrative of the game may vary greatly. Of course, your GM might modify these rules based on the situation and the specific item, and might impose additional requirements.

THE CRAFTING PROCESS

To craft an item, your character must have appropriate tools and components. For instance, to craft a sword, your character must have access to a forge, smiths' tools, and a supply of iron or steel. Typically, the cost of raw materials to craft an item is equal to half of the cost of the item. These materials are consumed in the process, whether the crafting check succeeds or fails. Tools can generally be used multiple times before wearing out, but are often quite expensive.

The process of crafting an item takes one day, plus a number of days equal to the rarity of the item. This does not include any time spent gathering tools or supplies. Your GM may decide that some items take significantly more or less time, depending on the nature of the item and its construction.



GM GUIDANCE: CRAFTING MAGIC ITEMS

The creation of a magical item is beyond all but the most powerful practitioners of magic. Each magic item is as unique as the undertaking to create it. It is because of this unique nature that detailed rules for the creation of magic items are not included in this book. However, in certain rare cases, it may be possible for a Player Character to enchant a magic item.

As the GM, you decide if it's possible for a character to create a particular magic item. Before the character can enchant an item, they must either craft or purchase a suitable item with the Superior quality—only the most masterfully crafted items have the potential to hold the magic required. The process of enchanting a magic item follows the normal guidelines for crafting, with you determining what additional tools and components are required, as well as the time needed and the magic skill to use for the crafting check—not all magic skills are appropriate for all magic items, just as they can't be used for all magic actions. We suggest a minimum difficulty of **Hard** (◆◆◆) for even the most trifling magic item, with **Formidable** (◆◆◆◆◆) appropriate for most.

If the check is successful, the item gains the intended magical abilities. Of course, you and the player can spend A, ⊛, ⌂, and ⊗ for additional effects.

To undertake the actual process crafting the item, your character makes a Mechanics check with a difficulty based on the rarity of the item; to determine the number of ◆ in the pool, divide the rarity of the item by 2 and round up. For instance, a Mechanics check to craft a steel sword (rarity 2) is **Easy** (◆). Your GM might further modify this difficulty or add ■ or ■ to represent the particular circumstances.

TABLE 2-16: SPENDING △, ⚙, ⏱, AND ⊗ ON CRAFTING CHECKS

COST	EFFECT
△ or ⚙	Reduce the time to craft the item by one day, to a minimum of one. (You may select this option multiple times.) Your character adds ■ to their next check using the same skill.
△ △ or ⚙	Your character saves enough materials to reduce the cost of the next similar item they craft by half. Decrease the item's encumbrance by one, to a minimum of 0. If the item has the Limited Ammo 1 quality or is otherwise limited to a single use, craft one additional identical item. (You may select this option multiple times.)
△ △ △ or ⚙	Increase the item's hard points by one. Reduce the difficulty of future checks to craft the item by one (to a minimum of **Simple (–)**.
⚙	The item gains the Superior quality. Increase the value of one numerical benefit of the item by one or increase the rating of one quality the item possesses by one, excluding damage, critical rating, soak, and defense (e.g., the extra encumbrance capacity a backpack adds). Increase the narrative benefit of the item, or add a new narrative effect, as approved by your GM.
⚙ ⚙	The item gains one other item quality, subject to your GM's approval. (You may only select this option once.)
⏱ or ⊗	Increase the time to craft the item by one day. (You may select this option multiple times.) Add ■ to the next crafting check the character makes.
⏱ ⏱ or ⊗	Increase the item's encumbrance by one. Your character must purchase additional materials worth half of the original component cost.
⏱ ⏱ ⏱ or ⊗	If the item is a weapon, it gains the Inaccurate 1 quality. Decrease the item's hard points by one, to a minimum of 0. Your character's tools are ruined in the process and must be replaced.
⊗	The item gains the Inferior quality. Whenever the item is damaged, it is damaged one additional step.
⊗ ⊗	There is a terrible accident, and your character suffers a Critical Injury or, at the GM's discretion, some related narrative event can occur of equal distress (your character's anvil explodes, the smithy catches on fire, poison gases spread into village, etc.).

If the crafting check is successful, your character creates the item. Additionally, you and the GM may spend dice symbols for additional effects, as shown in **Table 2–16: Spending △, ⚙, ⏱, and ⊗ on Crafting Checks**. Of course, these effects are only examples, and you and the GM might come up with additional results.

ROUGHING IT

Your Game Master may allow characters to use the Survival skill to craft certain simple items, such as crude spears and traps. This follows the normal rules for crafting, but such items are not made to last, and generally wear out quickly. The GM may spend ⊗ on any check involving an item crafted using Survival to cause the item to break and become unusable.

ALCHEMY

Characters can use the Alchemy skill to prepare elixirs, poisons, salves, unguents, and other concoctions, including those listed on page 102 to 104. For simplicity, these various concoctions are referred to as potions. Preparing a potion follows the normal rules for crafting, with the exceptions noted in this section.

The process of brewing a potion takes one hour, plus a number of hours equal to the rarity of the potion. If the check is successful, the character creates enough of the potion for a single dose or application. The player and GM may spend dice symbols for additional effects, as per the examples in **Table 2–17: Spending △, ⚙, ⏱, and ⊗ on Alchemy Checks** (see page 114).

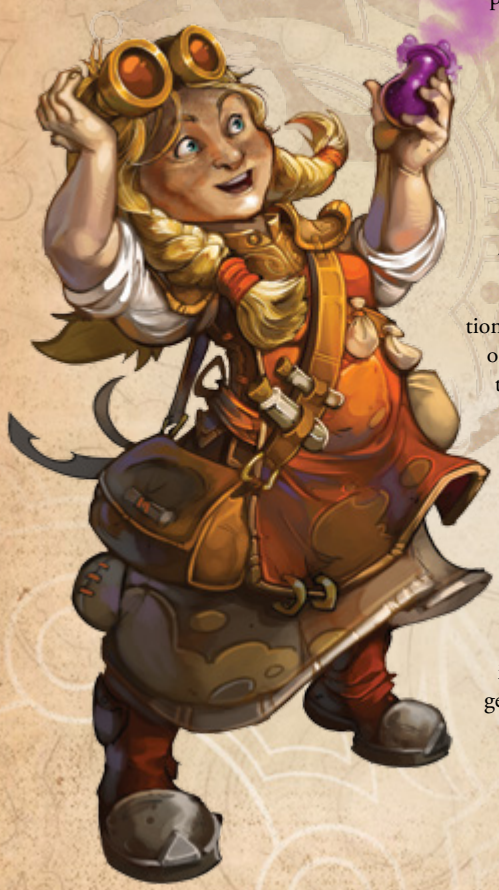
Normally, an alchemist's lab or kit (see page 100) is required in order to prepare a potion. In some cases, your GM might allow a character to make a check at an increased difficulty to prepare certain concoctions without access to the proper tools. Likewise, your character needs access to suitable ingredients (see page 114).

TABLE 2-17: SPENDING ⮝, ⊛, ♺, AND ⊗ ON ALCHEMY CHECKS

COST	EFFECT
⮝ or ⊛	A character who uses the potion heals 1 strain or 1 wound (as determined by your character) in addition to its normal effects. Your character adds ▢ to their next Alchemy check.
⮝ ⮝ or ⊛	Your character prepares one additional dose of the potion. (You may select this option multiple times.) Reduce the time to prepare the potion by half.
⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⊛	Your character has enough ingredients left to craft another batch of the potion. Increase the duration of the potion's effects by one round (if applicable).
⊛	Upgrade the difficulty of checks to resist the poison's effects once (poison only.) The potion is more effective than normal, as determined by your GM, when a character uses the potion.
⊛ ⊛	Choose one other potion of lower rarity and add its effects to this potion.
♺ or ⊗	If the potion is beneficial, a character suffers 2 strain after using the potion and benefiting from its effects. The potion (or poison) has a strong smell that adds ▢ to all checks made to detect its presence, including in food or drink.
♺ ♺ or ⊗	When used, the potion doesn't take effect for one minute, or one round in structured time. Your character must purchase additional ingredients worth half of the original component cost.
♺ ♺ ♺ or ⊗	If the potion is beneficial, a character suffers 1 wound after using the potion and benefiting from its effects. Reduce the duration of the potion's effects by one round, to a minimum of one round (if applicable). If the effects would last until the end of the encounter, they last for two rounds instead.
⊗	A character who uses the potion is disoriented for two rounds. A character who uses the potion must succeed on an **Average (◆◆) Resilience check**; if they fail, their body rejects the potion and it doesn't take effect.
⊗ ⊗	If the potion is beneficial, the user also suffers the effects of poison (see page 102) after resolving the normal effects of the potion.

OTHER POTIONS AND ELIXIRS

Your character is not restricted to those potions listed on page 102 to 104. If you wish to craft a new potion, talk to your GM about your idea and work with them to determine the potion's effects. The potions in this book are a good guideline for the kinds of effects a potion might have, as well as an appropriate rarity (and therefore crafting difficulty). Your GM has the final say on the effects of the potion and the difficulty of the check to prepare it.



Most poisons should function similarly to the basic poison on page 102, requiring the target to make a Resilience check, with the result of the check determining the severity of the poison's effects. For instance, a poison intended to render the target unconscious might function just like the basic poison, except that it inflicts strain instead of wounds if the target fails their check.

ALCHEMY INGREDIENTS

Before your character can brew a potion or prepare another alchemical concoction, they must, of course, have suitable ingredients. For most potions, your character can either simply purchase the ingredients, or gather them personally.

As a guideline, the ingredients for a potion cost half the price of the final product, with a rarity half that of the desired potion or elixir (rounded up). Of course, things aren't always so simple, and your GM may determine that certain key ingredients are not available for purchase, and require your character to track them down by other means. This is particularly appropriate for rare and fantastical potions, such as invisibility potions.

Most ingredients, whether available for purchase or not, can be gathered in the wilderness. To gather the necessary ingredients for a potion, your character (or perhaps an ally) must travel to an appropriate location and spend some time—probably at least the better part of a day—finding and obtaining the ingredients. The character makes a Survival check, with a difficulty equal to half the rarity of the potion, rounded up. If the check is successful, the character gathers enough ingredients to prepare one batch of the potion.

Rare or singular ingredients, or those that by necessity are dangerous to acquire, may require more than a single Survival check to obtain. The acquisition of such components could become the basis of an encounter or even an entire adventure.

THE MAGIC OF MENNARA

Magic in REALMS OF TERRINOTH follows the magic alternate rules in the GENESYS Core Rulebook, with a few changes that are explained in this section. In some cases, the Runebound setting simply uses one of the optional rules or suggestions presented in the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

MAGIC SKILLS

In the Runebound setting, a character may purchase ranks in a magic skill only if it is a career skill (as described in the **Different Disciplines, Different Approaches** sidebar on page 212 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). In other words, a character cannot purchase any magic skill as a non-career skill.

The GENESYS Core Rulebook lists the magic skills that can be used with each magic action. The Runes skill can be used with the following magic actions: attack, augment, barrier, curse, and utility. The Verse skill can be used for augment, curse, dispel, heal, and utility. For a complete list of magic actions and applicable skills, see **Table 2–18: Magic Skills and Actions**. It is important to remember that, as explained in the GENESYS Core Rulebook, a character must have at least one rank in a magic skill required by a magic action in order to perform that action.

SPELL EFFECTS

As listed in the GENESYS Core Rulebook, some of the spell effects characters can apply to magic actions depend on a character's ranks in Knowledge. Because REALMS OF TERRINOTH introduces multiple Knowledge skills, this rule needs additional clarification. In the Runebound setting, any spell effect that refers to the spellcaster's ranks in Knowledge uses Knowledge (Lore). A character cannot use other Knowledge skills as the basis for these effects, unless they have a talent or special rule that allows it.

USING THE RUNES SKILL

Rune magic is an important part of the Runebound setting, and its rules include some small but important changes to the normal magic rules. The use of runebound shards is fundamentally different from other magic practices, which these rules represent.

To cast a spell using the Runes skill, a character must use a runebound shard as their implement. This is an important difference from other magic skills, for which the use of an implement is optional. Of course, this also means that characters cannot use any other kind of implement with the Runes skill, since only a single implement can be used to cast a spell.

TABLE 2–18: MAGIC SKILLS AND ACTIONS

	ARCANA	DIVINE	PRIMAL	RUNES	VERSE
ATTACK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
AUGMENT	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BARRIER	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
CONJURE	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
CURSE	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
DISPEL	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
HEAL	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
UTILITY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Although any runebound shard can be used with a wide variety of spells, GMs and players should keep the nature of the runebound shard in mind when narrating spells. An Immolation Rune and a Stasis Rune can both manifest a magic barrier, but the narrative effect is sure to be very different! In this case, the Immolation Rune might manifest a sphere of protective flames around the target, while the latter could slow down arrows and blades to the point that the target can easily evade them.



THE ARCANE ARTS

Magic is both the saving grace of Mennara and its greatest curse. The First and the Yrthwrights used magic to speak creation into existence, and the wizards of civilized realms have attempted to tap into that magic ever since, for deeds of great heroism and great evil. Wizards could imbue weapons and armor with incredible enchantments or raise massive castle walls to defend the bastions of civilization. The very same power could call down the wrath of the skies and tear civilization asunder, killing untold innocents in the process. Luckily, such power to work wonders or wreak havoc is rare in Mennara, but those who have the gift of sorcery must be taught how to harness it and use it in the interests of all.

In the days of the Penacor Kings, humankind finally settled down and turned their efforts to more scholastic pursuits. For the first time, magical theory was codified in parchment, and mighty wizards from the sands of Al-Kalim to the fledgling Lorimor Empire began to unlock the secrets of the Turning—of the Verto Magica. In the current days, institutions such as the University of Greyhaven preserve these ancient practices, although admission to such prestigious colleges is the province primarily of the upper classes. Magical tutelage is a painstakingly long process and the number of faculty is few and far between, and therefore the schools of magic can charge exorbitant fees. The noble houses of the Fair Realms are happy to pay for this extravagance as the wizards within their ranks greatly add to their own power and prestige.

While talented sorcerers can easily find a role for themselves in the Free Cities or the baronies, many of them still take up a life of adventure. Hedge wizards, or "magicians" as they are sometimes known, tend to be treated with suspicion, which is not altogether unwarranted. Many such vagabonds took to the life because it was easier than the stringent standards expected of the magical schools. Others may have been expelled due to carrying out their own unsupervised investigations into magic, including occult practices. The magic of such wizards is therefore wilder and more inclined to dangerous side effects than that of their more disciplined classmates. More scrupulous wizards may also take up adventuring, usually on their own personal quests to uncover strange magical practices or lost magical artifacts in the wild places of Mennara.

THE SOURCE OF SORCERY

It was rare for one to be born with the gift to harness the Verto Magica, also called "the Turning," in the days of the Steel Age, but it is rarer still in this current age of uncertainty. What scholarship remains on these "true sorcerers" suggests that the Verto Magica is the source of their incredible powers, and the energy behind life itself. According to texts supposedly penned by Timmorran himself, after the Empyrean and Ynfernael were created, their constant vying with one another for supremacy led to each realm's influence to rise and fall in a cyclical manner. In some ages, the dark forces of the Ynfernael were ascendent, and sorrow and madness reigned supreme. In other ages, the influence of the Emperyean was dominant, and peace and tranquility prevailed. The eternal transit of reality between opposing forces created a spinning wheel, and that motion has been termed the Turning. Theory holds that the Turning is the force behind the movement of the sun, moon, and stars and all heavenly bodies,



as well as the turning of the seasons and the processes behind the weather. In short, the Verto Magica is the force of all change in the world—the relentless march of time.

This force or motion can be touched by one with the gift, akin to dipping one's fingers in a rushing stream, and doing so allows the wizard to draw power from the wellspring or even, in the most astounding cases, redirect the flow of the energy itself. To hear the masters at Greyhaven teach it, these true sorcerers have the incredible capability of reaching out and borrowing a fraction of the energy from the interplay of light and dark, of good and evil.

For all the wonder and amazement that such a feat should inspire, the Elves nevertheless consider this to be "lower magic" compared to their Empyrean arts. Not only is the Verto Magica tainted by the influence of the Ynfernael, but its effects can be more destructive and chaotic. Nonetheless, there are more Elven true sorcerers than there are mortal ones, as Elves alone have the long life spans necessary to dedicate themselves to learning how to manipulate this force and become powerful storm sorceresses or frost mages even without the use of runebound or unbound shards.



THE RIDDLES OF THE RUNES

Since the end of the Third Darkness, a new form of magic has come to dominate the esteemed halls of Greyhaven. Runemasters dispense with many of the risks taken by true sorcerers, as they do not tap into the Verto Magica in such a direct fashion. In fact, most Runemasters are not born with the gift of sorcery, and are thus are unable to cast magic on their own. Instead of working their own feats of magic, Runemasters activate the latent energies of runebound shards or manipulate the runes graven onto their surface to shift or focus the intended effect into one closer to the desires of the Runemaster.

Although anyone can activate a runebound shard, to become a Runemaster, a person must learn the meanings of the runes and manner in which the dragons originally inscribed them, a study that takes years, if not decades, to master. By tracing the runes in a subtly different pattern to the intended design, or by focusing on specific claw strokes that comprise the whole, the Runemaster is able to direct the energies of the shard, omit certain effects, and sometimes change the very nature of their expression. The enhancements typically involve increasing the duration or degree of the effect, but other enhancements include the range or targets affected.

In extremely rare cases, however, Runemasters may make modifications to the runebound shard itself, erasing or adding certain claw strokes to change the base effect of the rune. No matter their skill, however, the most fundamental elements of the rune are irrevocably branded onto the shard, meaning that the rune cannot be erased and an unbound shard reclaimed, nor can the master change the element or affinity of the shard to a wholly different sphere. A rune of immolation might be manipulated by a Runemaster to become a rune of blasting or a rune of flame, but it can never be transformed into a rune of ice storm of a rune of teleportation.

The University of Greyhaven is the official home of the Rune-masters. There, tutors of this ancient craft carefully instruct their apprentices and research new methods of rune manipulation. It is deemed every bit as important not only to instill the correct methods by which the Shards are manipulated, but also an unstinting loyalty to other Runemasters. The senior Runemasters are careful to ensure they maintain good relations with the Daqan Lords and other powerful establishments within Terrinoth. Some critics accuse them of taking part of a long and cynical game in which they aim to oust the practitioners of true sorcery in favor of their own limited but safer practices.

These scholars of the runic magics are among the sole persons capable of awakening the rune golems to protect the realms of Terrinoth in times of great need, and some are even rumored to be artificing new creatures empowered by the runebound shards. Rune steeds, similar to that of Baron Zachareth's "Backbreaker," might one day join the ranks of the rune golems and Nerekhall's Ironbound as magically imbued soldiers fighting alongside the troops of the Baronies of Daqan.

Other communities of Runemasters do exist besides those of the Greyhaven University. The Lorimor Empire has its own Runemasters, although they appear to closely follow the model of Greyhaven. As the Dragon Wars were primarily confined to Terrinoth, only a handful of runebound shards are known to have crossed the great sea and made their way to the spires of Al-Kalim.

RUNEBOUND SHARDS

A runebound shard can be used in either of two ways. Any character can activate a runebound shard to cause the effect described in the Activation section of the entry for that shard. If a character has Runes as a career skill and at least one rank in the Runes skill, they can also use a runebound shard as an implement and gain the benefits listed in the Implement section of the entry.

A runebound shard functions as an implement only for a character using the Runes skill. A character attempting a check using any other magic skill cannot use a runebound shard as an implement.

Runebound shards are typically small, and so all have an encumbrance of 0. They are also too rare and valuable to be offered for sale like lesser items. When nobles and wizards strike bargains to trade in these rare artifacts, the cost is always far beyond mere gold. Hence, no prices are included in **Table 2–19: Runebound Shards** (see page 119).

Unless stated otherwise, activating a runebound shard is a maneuver. Some runebound shards function as a weapon when activated, in which case the listed weapon profile specifies the skill a character uses to make the combat check. A runebound shard's weapon profile might specify a skill that is not normally a combat skill, such as Discipline. In this case, the skill should be treated as a combat skill in all regards for the purposes of the combat check.

ARCANE BOLT RUNE



Many different runebound shards produce a powerful blast of magical energy when activated. While these runes vary wildly in the appearance and exact manner of their effect, the results are similar in dealing harm to living targets. Some arcane bolts manifest as diffuse showers of light that deal limited amounts of damage over a wide area. Others are focused beams that deliver all their energy in a powerful lance that makes a mockery of armor.

Activation: Until the end of your character's turn, the arcane bolt rune counts as a Ranged weapon with the following profile: (Ranged; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire).

Implement: When your character casts an Attack spell, the first Range effect added does not increase the check's difficulty. In addition, they must add the Impact effect with no increase in difficulty. Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by four.

BLASTING RUNE

A blasting rune works by imbuing a piece of stone within line of sight of the caster with such energy that it shatters apart in a small but powerful explosion. These runes are greatly prized by the Dwarves, who use them not only in defense, but also to break apart inaccessible bits of stone during their mining operations. The Orcs of the Broken Plains also make good use of this shard when they can manage to obtain one, because the craggy terrain of their homeland ensures that the bearer of such a rune is never far from a suitable weapon.

Activation: Until the end of your character's turn, the blasting rune counts as a Ranged weapon with the following profile: (Discipline; Damage 9; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 7, Knockdown).

Implement: When your character casts an Attack spell, they must add the Blast effect and may add the Impact effect with no increase in difficulty to either. Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by five.



ICE STORM RUNE

Ice storm runes can be used to create a localized, but very intense, blizzard. These runes do not require moisture, and they even function in arid environments. A bearer who activates such a rune quickly becomes the epicenter of a swirling vortex of snow-blown wind. This vortex can be directed to move independently of the wielder, and anyone caught within it soon suffers the effects of the freezing cold. As a weapon, this is particularly effective against Dragonkin, many of whom regard the bearers of such runes with fear and hatred.

Activation: Until the end of your character's turn, the ice storm rune counts as a Ranged weapon with the following profile: (Discipline; Damage 7; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Blast 4, Ensnare 3).

Implement: When your character casts an Attack spell, they must add the Ice and Blast effects with no increase in difficulty. Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by four.

IMMOLATION RUNE



Immolation runes are weapons in and of themselves. When one of these shards is activated, a burst of flame projects forward from the rune. These runes have their own source of power, of course, but a user can concentrate some of their own energies into increasing the size and intensity of the flames. This is injurious to the user, but not nearly so much as it is to their target. The burst only lasts for a few seconds, so the shards are useless for illumination, but they are effective for personal protection and starting fires.

TABLE 2-19: RUNEBOUND SHARDS

RUNEBOUND SHARD	DAMAGE (IMPLEMENT ONLY)
Arcane Bolt Rune	+4
Blasting Rune	+5
Ice Storm Rune	+4
Immolation Rune	Special
Lesser Rune	+3
Lightning Strike Rune	+5
Rune of Collection	+0
Rune of Fate	+0
Rune of Misery	+0
Soulstone Rune	+0
Stasis Rune	+0
Sunburst Rune	+0
Teleportation Rune	+0
Terror Rune	+0
Vision Rune	+0
Wanderer's Stone	+0
Ynfernael Rune	+3

Activation: Until the end of your character's turn, the immolation rune counts as a Ranged weapon with the following profile: (Discipline; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Burn 2).
Implement: When your character casts an Attack spell, they must add the Fire and Deadly effects with no increase in difficulty. In addition, after rolling the magic combat check but before applying damage, your character may choose to suffer any number of wounds no greater than half their wound threshold in order to add an equal amount of damage to all hits of the attack.

LESSER RUNE

Some runes are capable of legendary feats of magic. Some are, well, not, and of little interest to anyone but a Runemaster, who is capable of bending their capabilities beyond their design. Though lacking the fame of other runebound shards, these items are still priceless and the subject of many a quest.
Activation: This rune can be used for a small beneficial effect that varies by rune, such as casting light as a torch, conjuring a small illusionary creature, throwing your voice, or starting small fires as a tinderbox. Your GM chooses the minor effect associated with the rune when the shard is discovered or obtained.
Implement: When your character obtains a lesser rune, the GM determines one effect that the rune lets the character add to any appropriate spell without increasing the spell's difficulty. This effect should ideally be thematically linked to the minor effect determined earlier. The effect the GM chooses should only increase the difficulty of a spell by one. Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by three.



LIGHTNING STRIKE RUNE

A lightning strike rune is used to call down a bolt of lightning. It is a powerful weapon; most foes struck with a bolt of lightning are either killed outright or stunned senseless. Certain creatures, constructs, and undead beings, though, are resistant to this magic to some degree, as they would be to natural lightning.
Activation: Until the end of your character's turn, the lightning strike rune counts as a Ranged weapon with the following profile: (Discipline; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Auto-fire, Disorient 3).
Implement: When your character casts an Attack spell, the first Range effect they add does not increase the check's difficulty. In addition, they must add the Lightning effect with no increase in difficulty. Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by five.

RUNE OF COLLECTION



While runebound shards operate in such a simple fashion that they can be used by those without magical training, some can only be used properly by practicing wizards. Runes of collection act as fonts of magical power by slowly drawing upon the ambient magic of the Verto Magica. These shards each provide a safe and reliable well of magic, although their capacity is limited and wizards who rely on them may falter when the shard is lost.
Activation: The runebound shard glows slightly with untapped power, but nothing seems to happen.
Implement: When casting any spell, your character reduces the difficulty of the check by one. In addition, your character suffers 1 less strain when casting a spell.

RUNE OF FATE

Among the most subtle of runebound shards, the rune of fate directs the powerful magic held within the shard to influence the very skein of destiny. Even an untrained user who clutches the shard in their hand finds the luck of themselves and their allies improving in subtle but undeniable ways. A Runemaster can coax myriad effects forth from the shard, consigning their enemies to fumble their weapons or helping allies to fortuitously slip their blades through impossibly narrow chinks in the foe's armor.
Activation: As an action, your character may activate this runebound shard to move one Story Point from the player pool to the GM pool; add ⊗ to the next check that targets your character.
Implement: When your character casts an Augment or Curse spell, you may add the Additional Target effect with no increase in difficulty. In addition, when your character casts a Curse spell you must add the Doom effect with no increase in difficulty.

THE LEGACY OF THE ORB

When Timmorran Lokander sought to create the Orb of the Sky, he had no idea that his actions would not only change the face of magic but of Mennara itself. His intent was laudable, but would set off events that would launch not one but two of the most terrible wars Mennara has ever faced.

It took years to fashion the Orb, the most powerful magical artifact that Greyhaven scholars believe ever existed. The Orb stored a frightening amount of magic, and would have allowed later wizards to cast billions upon billions of potent spells without needing to tap into the Verto Magica. Terrinoth would never fear invasion again.

This would not to be. The Orb was destroyed, leaving many thousands of fragments. These Stars of Timmorran are so powerful that one was associated with the birth the Undying One. This was the first horrific repercussion of Timmorran's actions.

For generations, the Stars were kept secured and secret. They became widespread and conspicuous in the time of the Elder Kings, however, and the dragons took note. For reasons still unknown, these ancient beings emerged from the Molten Heath and raged across Mennara in search of Stars. Thus did Timmoran's Orb bring about a second, even more devastating war.

The dragons fractured their captured Stars and inscribed them with runes, creating runebound shards. The Stars could power all manner of spells, but could only be used by those with magical gifts. Runebound shards could only produce a single effect, but are much easier to operate (and thus more useful for the dragons and their hybrid minions).

The use of runebound shards spread across Mennara after the war ended, even though most were never found. The dragons are believed to have had an enormous hoard, but no one knows of its eventual fate. Nevertheless, so many were created that untold numbers remained. Some fell into the hands of the defenders during the Third Darkness; small caches of others have been found in the wilderness in the centuries since. Powerful barons, military armories, and wealthy collectors possess most of them. Greyhaven University and the cult of Kellos have their own private reserves.

A few Stars are thought to have escaped the dragons, though. Even the slightest hint of their existence is enough to launch legends, such as the Sunderlander's Stone, the Vault of Jade Twilight, and the Chasm of Stars.

RUNE OF MISERY

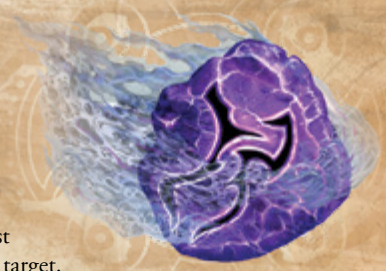
This runebound shard imparts painful afflictions upon the target, rarely enough to seriously injure but more than enough to weaken. Elite bounty hunters in the Free Cities fight viciously for them, as such shards can allow them to take in their quarries with less chance of bothersome bloodshed.

Activation: As an action, the bearer suffers 3 strain and selects one target within short range. The target becomes disoriented for three rounds. While the target is disoriented due to the rune of misery, the bearer may spend ♻ ♻ generated on any check the target makes to inflict 1 wound on the target.

Implement: When casting a Curse spell, your character reduces the difficulty of the skill check by two. In addition, your GM can spend ♻ ♻ on the check to inflict 1 wound on your character.

SOULSTONE RUNE

A soulstone rune is an object of dread, for it has within it the power to leech away life-energies. A bearer of such a shard soon acquires a dark reputation, though Lord Roland of Kell is still remembered for his brave use of one in the Dragon Wars. When the shard is active, the bearer can focus their will on a visible target. That foe grows increasingly weak, while any aches and injuries suffered by the bearer are assuaged. These runes work too gradually to make for effective weapons, but in time, a bearer could even be brought from near death to full wellness, at the likely cost of the life of their chosen target.



Activation: When your character activates a soulstone rune, it affects all other characters (including allies) within short range. Affected targets must each make an **Average (◆◆) Discipline check** as an out-of-turn incidental. If they fail the check, they suffer 3 strain and become staggered for one round. The bearer then heals 1 wound they are currently suffering for each target that failed the check. At the GM's discretion, minions affected by this runebound shard are simply defeated.

Implement: When your character casts a Curse spell, in addition to the spell's normal effects, it also inflicts a number of wounds equal to your character's ranks in Knowledge (Forbidden) on all affected targets. Additionally, your character heals 1 wound each time a target under the effects of the Curse suffers wounds (including when the Curse is cast).

STASIS RUNE

A character who activates a stasis rune focuses on a single target. For a brief period, the target feels as if they are frozen in time and space. Even if left unassailed, the target finds the experience of catching up with time highly upsetting in the short term.

Activation: As an action, your character suffers 2 strain and chooses one character within short range. That character is staggered and immobilized until the end of their next turn.

Implement: When your character casts a Curse spell, they must add the Paralyzed effect with no increase in difficulty.



SUNBURST RUNE

When activated, a sunburst rune emits a powerful burst of intense light that disorients the foe and inflicts scorching-hot wounds.

Activation: Until the end of your character's turn, the sunburst rune counts as a Ranged weapon with the following profile: (Ranged; Damage 4; Critical 1; Range [Medium]; Breach 1).

Implement: When your character casts an Attack spell, they must add the Holy effect with no increase in difficulty and gains the Breach 1 quality. This is an exception to the normal restriction limiting Holy to spells using the Divine skill.

TELEPORTATION RUNE

A user of one of these shards can teleport either themself or a small object they concentrate on a short distance. It is safest to teleport to a location within line of sight; while users may have the ability to teleport through walls, if they materialize in the same space as a solid object, it can lead to terrible injury. Teleportation runes especially rare to find as they are highly sought after by all manner of assassin, criminal, and adventurer.

Activation: As an action, the user can teleport themself or a single silhouette 0 item in their possession to any location within extreme range that they can currently see. Alternatively, the user may attempt to teleport to a location they have previously experienced in person, but this requires a successful **Average (◆◆) Vigilance check**. The GM should modify the check based on the circumstances, including how long it has been since the character visited the target location, the length of time spent there, and so on. The GM may spend ⊗ or multiple ♲ to have the character end up far from their intended location, inside a monster's lair, or in an even worse situation.

Implement: When your character casts any spell, the first three Range effects added to it do not increase its difficulty.



TERROR RUNE

None can fathom why the dragons crafted terror runes, given their own innate baleful nature. Some Greyhaven scholars wonder if they know more of the Ynfernael and its growing threat to Mennara, or if there are creatures beyond the Molten Heath that are to dragons as dragons are to mortal beings and thus needed a way to ignore their fearsome effects. Adventurers fortunate enough to possess these runes, though, find them invaluable when exploring the dark catacombs within the Mistlands or facing down the creatures of the Ru.

Activation: While possessing a terror runebound shard, your character can ignore the effects of fear, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

Implement: When your character is casting a spell, any friendly affected targets are immune to the effects of fear for the spell's duration. Any enemy affected targets must immediately make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) fear check** as an out-of turn-incidental.

VISION RUNE

A vision rune allow a character to expand their eyesight to extraordinary lengths. They can see over the horizon and even through sealed containers or behind walls, abilities any thief or spy would pay anything to do. Wizards can also use them to hurl spells at hidden foes or in darkness, and have allowed the sightless Jenti the Just to recover from unhealable injuries and become a famed sorcerer in the Lorimor Imperial Court.

Activation: As an action, a character can make an **Average (◆◆) Perception check** to cast their gaze upon a land anywhere within three day's travel as if they were standing there themselves, or to see through a solid object within medium range as if the intervening material was as clear as glass.

Implement: When casting a spell, your character can choose any target in range, even if they cannot see it (such as if the target was in darkness or behind a wall).

WANDERER'S STONE

Wanderer's stones are worn on the chest and direct an emanation of healing energy to the heart and lungs. While this energy is too subtle to help heal injuries or disease, it does effectively stave off the effects of fatigue. Characters who bear one of these shards are able to walk, run, swim, row, fly, and fight with significantly improved stamina. Often, instead of using their shards themselves, bearers attach them to the harness of a mount or draft animal in their possession.

Activation: Once per encounter, as an action your character can use a wanderer's stone to heal 5 strain.

Implement: When your character casts an Augment spell, they may add the Haste and Swift effects with no increase in difficulty.

YNFERNAEL RUNE

Unlike most runebound shards, Ynfernael runes were not carved by the Dragonlords of the Third Darkness. Instead, Ynfernael runes are shards that have been captured and corrupted through the malicious actions of those who seek the regard of demons. An Ynfernael rune has one purpose: to inflict pain on others. The bearer of an Ynfernael rune must spill some of their own blood to activate the shard, but once they have done so, the unholy power unleashed ensures their foes will spill an even greater amount.

Activation: As an action, your character can activate the Ynfernael rune, choosing to suffer a number of wounds not exceeding their wound threshold. For each wound suffered this way, all characters within short range suffer 1 wound.

Implement: When casting an Attack spell, your character must add the Empowered and Deadly effects with no increase in difficulty. When the spell's effects are resolved, the spellcaster suffers 1 wound. If the magic check fails, the spellcaster suffers an additional 4 wounds. Attack spells cast by your character increase their base damage by three.



THE STRENGTH OF DEVOTION

Across Mennara, rune magic has become one of the most easily accessible sources of power. However, there are many other traditions that can produce miraculous effects beyond those taught at Greyhaven. Instead of drawing upon the Turning, some individuals rely on their devotion to and faith in figures of legend and their disciples.

Throughout history, heroes and villains with strange and wondrous powers have arisen when Mennara needed them most. None can identify the source of their miraculous abilities for certain. However, a notable few seemed able to grant their gifts to loyal acolytes. Even as those famous (or infamous) figures passed into legend, devoted followers of their examples continued to work miracles in their names.

SPIRITS OF POWER

The lands of Mennara revere hundreds of divinities, deities, spirits of power, and immortal champions; and thus the varieties of what one might call "religions" are as varied as the cultures that populate this world. Indeed, many entities venerated and celebrated as having divine abilities are endemic to a particular region or even village. Creatures of power, mighty spirits, and exceptional heroes alike defy explanation, but the abilities and blessings they grant to their followers are undeniably real.

Although some believe their gods had a part in their civilization's creation, such as A'Tar and the Caliphate of Al-Kalim, the religions of Terrinoth rarely tie their deities to the creation of the world. Stories of the First and the Yrthwrights are not widely known beyond the bounds of Elven society. Most other civilizations have some vague notion that the dragons created Mennara, and are probably to blame for the world being a imperfect and sometimes cruel place. Instead, most think of their personal divinity as a protector of a particular aspect of the world, not its creator. When a devotee of a particular deity acts in a way that supports that deity's mission, the devotee can harness some measure of divine essence and work miracles on their behalf.

Some Greyhaven scholars hold that the magics of the Priests of Kellos and other clerics are not divinely sourced, but are instead mislabeled applications of the Turning or accidental invocations of the Empyrean. Perhaps the latter theory is true, and what the common people think of as "gods" are no more than exceptional mortals who tapped into the Empyrean due to the purity of their heart, the intensity of their will, or the benevolence of their intentions. Perhaps every person has the spark of godhood within them, even if only a few have the strength to unleash it.

Whatever the source of their power, numerous priests, clerics, monks, and templars travel Mennara to do their deity's work. What follows is but a small sampling of the beings they follow, for there are undoubtably many more divine entities that are sure to have escaped chronicling, or whose presence has been jealously kept a local secret from outsiders.

KELLOS, THE BLAZING LIGHT OF LIFE AND JUSTICE

According to legend, Kellos is said to have walked the face of Mennara during the most desperate days of the Second Darkness, when Waiqar's Deathborn Legion laid waste to Terrinoth and the Death Cults he had sponsored spread fear and disorder in the nation's cities like an evil plague. Kellos took up his mace and swore to see an end to the vile undead, and with his holy fire he burned the flesh and bone of Waiqar's foul creations. He called to his side many other brave adventurers. When they fell in defense of the realm, Kellos saved them from death with his powers of healing, bidding them rise again from the flame. Kellos the Hero was soon lauded as Kellos the Bright and Kellos the Savior, for he was one of the brightest lights of humankind amid the darkness that had washed over the land.

At the final battle, when Waiqar's armies were driven back to the Mistlands, Kellos disappeared. Perhaps he was slain in combat, at last making the final sacrifice for the people and lands he loved. Perhaps he emerged from the battle unscathed and resolved to settle down in some far-off hamlet, enjoying the peace that he had been denied for so many years. His followers believe he ascended to godhood that day, so that he might forever empower those who would fight death with the light and life of fire. His disciples returned to Vynelvale, now a Free City, and lit the Eternal Fire in his name.

As they built a cathedral to their founder in Vynelvale, Kellos's followers taught that heat and life were inextricably intertwined, and that magic which utilized heat and fire could also be used to heal. While their acts of healing were often painful, they were also highly effective. Soon, many citizens of Vynelvale and the surrounding lands had been blessed with Kellos's healing gifts, and tales of these wondrous miracles spread across Terrinoth. The most pious and powerful priests were even said to be able to bring the dead back to life through the miracle of resurrection. Pilgrims traveled to Vynelvale to witness these wonders or receive healing in turn, and many who did dedicated themselves to spreading Kellos's legacy far and wide. The Church of Kellos had been born.

Those who join this church are called Acolytes, and these low-ranking clergy serve to tend his flames and flocks in shrines across Terrinoth. Those Acolytes who have the ability to perform divine feats in Kellos's name are initiated through the rite of the Fire's Embrace and become Priests or Knights of Kellos. They bring healing to towns and villages, or travel the roads to smite evil wherever it arises. The most powerful of Kellos's followers are his High Priests, and it is they who preside over the cathedral at Vynelvale. High Priests called Justicars lead contingents of the priesthood into battle in the most dire times.

Now, the brilliant red robes of the Priests of Kellos are a welcome sight across Terrinoth, promising wrath for the wicked and mercy for the meek. While many can be found tending the sick and injured in cities, it is not uncommon to see a priest joining bands of adventurers to pursue their crusade against Kellos's eternal enemy: the forces of undeath.

SPIRITS OF PLACE

Besides the powers who are known to stand apart from the natural order, many communities show reverence to local spirits they consider protective or benevolent. Other regions try to appease or deflect attentions from malevolent spirits that haunt bloody historical battlegrounds or primeval forests.

One such example is the Tree of Tales, a large oak tree that stands in a clearing close to the eastern edge of the Eventide Forest. According to local legend, the tree is host to a powerful spirit; both the residents of Dragonholt and the Hyrrinx who live within Eventide regard it as sacred or special. Many residents visit the tree to tell it their stories, and they leave behind charms, offerings, even pages of written stories and text. The Tree of Tales is hung with many such offerings, and others are nailed or lacquered to the trunk or tucked into its branches.

NORDROS, MASTER OF COLD AND DEATH

Some temples of Kellos teach that the undead are the agents of Nordros the Cold, the ruler of winter who is antithetical to the primary aspects of Kellos. According to their accounts, Kellos had a twin brother named Nordros, whose jealousy of Kellos led him to fall to Waiqar's dark promises. When Nordros joined the Betrayer, he unlocked a terrible power within himself: a mastery over the chill of death. As the twin flames of justice and hope flicker and dim, Nordros's power grows. Only when Nordros is defeated, the temple faithful hold, will Kellos return and winter will be forever banished from the realms.

The Weik of Isheim say that Nordros long predates Waiqar, and came down from the north at the dawn of the world, blizzards roaring at his heels. They say that the doughty warriors of Isheim kept him at bay, but each year when the sun grows weak, he returns. The Weik and the cult of Kellos both believe that if Nordros is not kept in check, he will finally gain dominion over the realms and see the entire world encased in ice.

The worship of Nordros is almost unheard of in Terrinoth, with only a few pockets in the Howling Giant Hills and Blind Muir Forest. In these areas, some still bring sacrifices to Nordros to keep him appeased and beseech him to spare them from his wrath. A few ambitious individuals in Strangehaven pledge themselves to Nordros and gain dominion over cold and death. Some even count on their resolve to use the magic of ice and death without succumbing to the god's will. The inhabitants of cities like Vynelvale and Dawnsmoor actively persecute any who openly follow Nordros, and the cult of Kellos continues to petition the Citadel to ban the worship of Nordros outright.

ARIS, PATRON OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY

In the cold grey years following the Third Darkness, when Terrinoth lay in ruins and hope was in short supply, a traveler arrived at a small, half-burnt hamlet one midwinter's eve. Those who had not succumbed to war, plague, or starvation welcomed her as best they could. But they warned her that they had little food left for themselves or guests.

The woman, who called herself Aris, told them not to worry. Since they had given her shelter, she would provide a meal in turn. She went to the hearth and stoked the fire, then pulled grain and meats and hearty roots from her pack. Somehow, the stew from her supplies fed the whole village, with enough for the next morning as well.

In the weeks that followed, Aris took the villagers out into the woods and showed them where to find stores of nuts and berries. She helped rebuild their homes and make them snug against the cold. When bandits attacked, she even convinced them to settle and give up their marauding ways. Then, she left, stomping off into the snow with her pack on her back.

Many areas in Terrinoth have similar tales, though if even a fraction are true she must have wandered for a hundred years. Those she aided built humble shrines to her in their villages and began leaving gifts in the hopes of gaining her blessing and protection. Even rogues soon learned to leave those offerings alone, for any who stole them suffered a multitude of misfortunes for the rest of their lives. Only those with generous hearts could take and redistribute the gifts to those in greatest need. In time, these few began to call themselves her priests.

These priests work tirelessly to help the poor and continue Aris's works and convictions. Her devotees also work to mediate disputes, from arguments between neighbors to wars between barons. While priests of Aris may take up arms to defend the helpless, they always see violence as the last resort (and a personal failing on their part).

Aris's largest shine can be found near the Weeping Basin, in Terrinoth, where the body of the Dragonlord Margeth fell to earth after being slain by Baron Rolan. Whispers speak of a special order within the priests of Aris called the Watchers, who guard the lake to ensure Margath never rises again. Some say those who visit the crater lake and drink of its waters receive the strength and vigor of Aris herself, but only if they truly need it.

FORTUNA, LADY OF LUCK AND TRICKERY

Fortuna is, unsurprisingly, a favorite deity of adventurers. Whether she smiles on them or not, after all, tends to determine whether they emerge from a dungeon alive and treasure-laden, or end up in some ogre's larder.

Fortuna's devotees say that she once wandered the realms of Lorimor as one of the most infamous connivers and rogues of the age. The stories say she once tricked an entire duchy into believing she was its long lost ruler. She ruled for a year and a day, before vanishing along with the treasuries of the once-smug nobles who had praised her heritage and manners.

This exploit and hundreds more earned Fortuna countless toasts in countless taverns, and in time people began speaking a prayer to her before throwing dice, deceiving marks, or taking the stage. Perhaps her ascension to divinity was her finest performance and greatest trick of all?

There is not so much a clergy of Fortuna as there are supplicants seeking her blessing. There are no known shrines or churches erected in her name; instead, gambling dens set out offering bowls to lure her favor. As soon as eyes turn away, the proffered coins seem to vanish, as Fortuna is always quick to accept her due. The arrival of the desired blessings are, appropriately enough, more a matter of luck.

KURNOS, LORD OF THE HUNT

During the Years of Hunger, the primitive people who lived in the lands which would become Terrinoth turned to Kurnos to provide them with the bounty of the forest, and in turn the Lord of the Hunt taught them to take only what they need from the land and honor the animals whose deaths brought them life. Some claim Kurnos was an Elf who, upon exile to Mennara, soon grew enchanted with the trackless forests and abandoned his fellow Latari. Such was his love of the wild that when he encountered one of the mortal races, he taught them to live as one with nature. Given the endless nature of the Elves, he may wander the world still, but such musings hold little interest for his followers. To them, Kurnos is simply their patron, and every hunt is an act of worship.

These days, the farms and cities of Terrinoth rely on farming for sustenance, and often only rangers, nomads, and isolated villages remember Kurnos. Although shrines to Kurnos are scattered throughout the countryside, his devotees claim that everything beneath the canopy is his sacred domain. When a hunter wants to honor Kurnos, they often hide a portion of their kill as cleverly as they can. The Lord of the Hunt always tracks down these offerings, but the more challenging the hunt, the greater the reward he may grant in return.

The druids of Kurnos are known to also work miracles of healing, and they are capable of controlling the behavior of wild beasts and can find shelter even in the most hostile of environments. They roam the wilds and tend to the needs of the land, ensuring that harmony between peoples, plant, and beast is preserved. The most devout of Kurnos's followers sometimes also gather to celebrate the full moons at Hunter's Circle by Kurnan Lake, where they howl at the moon beside their animal companions.

POLLUX THE ARTIFICER

The Artificers of Pollux do not seem to work miracles in the same way as the disciples of Kellos. They are not famed for praying and performing miracles. Instead, they work their magic through feats of engineering, studying enchantments alongside more mundane skills such as carpentry or blacksmithing. The holy sites of Pollux are workshops and forges, where artifacts with powerful magical properties are researched and constructed. The sacred writings of Pollux are treatises on natural elements and recipes for rare reagents. A prayer to Pollux is a call for inspiration and ingenuity to craft the seemingly impossible.

No one knows who Pollux was, or what they did in life. There are no stories of great deeds or heroic adventures that accompany the name. Instead, Pollux comes from a series of treatises and diagrams discovered by artificers during the time of the Elder Kings. Each described some wondrous construction or artifact, or provided the formula for some alchemical creation or magical reagent. Each was written on thin sheets of steel, and signed with the name "Pollux." Those artificers who followed Pollux's instructions claimed the designs must have been inspired by the divine, and each treatise quickly came to be treated as a holy relic.

Artificers are regarded with both affection and suspicion by the people of Terrinoth. On one hand, the followers of Pollux have produced a number of revered artifacts used in civic works and military operations. They created the stalwart Ironforged to combat the evil magic-users stalking the underbelly of Nerekhall. Through these deeds and more, the Artificers of Pollux show their devotion and demonstrate the power that belief in their god can offer.

Yet the devout keep their formulae close, and they share their knowledge only with those who swear themselves to secrecy. Those jealous of their achievements, especially some of the Runemasters of Greyhaven, have spread unsavory rumors about the source of the artificers' wonders. The Artificers of Pollux are quick to decry such claims as unfounded slander; they insist that they have a responsibility to ensure Pollux's legacy doesn't end up in the wrong hands.

SYRASKIL, MARNN, AND THE STORMLORDS

When the skies alight with black lightning, the world trembles. On the western horizon of the Great Sea, a dark storm churns. Those who would venture beyond those clouds and explore the great unknown are never heard from again. The Stormlords have claimed yet another prize.

Sailors who ply the seas between Al-Kalim and the Torue Albes, or along Lorimor, the Kingless Coast, and distant Zanaga, make sure to placate Syraskil, the chaos serpent who guards the edges of the world, with sufficient offerings lest they incur his wrath. They make signs to ward away the great nimbus giant, Marnn, who would smash their ships to smithereens with his great hammer. These and other Stormlords cast their greedy eyes on the wonders of Mennara and would see it destroyed if they had the chance. Legend has it that they were weakened by the legendary seven scions, but it is only a matter of time before the tempest returns to its full strength.

Some believe they can harness this power, calling forth the might of angry seas and violent winds to wreak havoc against their enemies. These dark clerics strengthen the Stormlords and bring the day of their return ever closer.

THE VIRTUES OF VERSE

Music has been a part of Mennara's history from its origins; many of the oldest of records exist only as songs passed on from one generation to the next. Even in its darkest times, music and song have been used to strengthen wills and lead troops, as well as to woo and share fellowship. Music, though, can be much more than this in Mennara. When the most talented or earnest pour their hearts into their music, it is as though they can truly cast a spell upon their listeners.

The Elves have long sensed the link between magic and music, as they know so many things of the deeper nature of this world. They learned early on that even mundane music echoes in its art the Lays of the First, which flow through and nourish all of creation. Perhaps it is for this reason that song, dance, and music are fundamental elements of all cultures, from the earliest tribes of the Ru to the highest circles of Elven society. Some primal part of them remembers the songs of creation, and they unknowingly reprise that power when they are moved by or seek to inspire powerful emotions.

Each culture has its own traditions of song and music, with different roles for music and musicians depending on their needs. The Elven Loremasters sing the histories of their people, relying on tempo and key to convey what words alone cannot. The Dwarves sing their ancient rhythmic work songs to work their crafts at a steady pace. Gnomes use music to lighten the load and lift their spirits while traveling from town to town. Catfolk use song to call the tribes together when needed and communicate while hunting their prey. The Orcish peoples sing to celebrate their ancestors and the spirits of the land that nourish them. Humans, of course, use music to impress and woo one another, or simply to pass the time.

Singers, musicians, dancers, and poets of sufficient skill and sincerity are able to produce magical effects from their melodies, lyrics, and movements. Their rhyming structures, vocal ranges, or instrument techniques either evokes the magic of those original lays, or they inspire a near-magical response in the listener. As a result, bards need not be trained magicians in order to accomplish these effects, and indeed most bards are magically naïve (or boastful) individuals who would credit the effect of their music on their own virtuosity.

Sorcerers and Runemasters would say that bardic magic is much more limited and subtle in its effects compared to their own arts, but the troubadour knows the potency of their craft. They can imbue themselves and their companions with improved morale, revitalizing energy, increased determination, feelings of concentration, or speed and stamina when on the march. Certain performers are even able to produce unnerving dissonances which cause fear or resentment in their targets. For these reasons, despite the mystery surrounding their art, bards are valued members of adventuring parties and communities alike.



INSTRUMENTS OF MENNARA

The musical instruments of bards are as varied as the lands of Mennara itself. Stringed instruments are common in all regions, though, such as lutes, zithers, and lyres—some renowned Tamalir bards often use small dragon scales as picks. Instruments that use bows such as viols and the cranked lyres of Al-Kalim offer richer sounds but require greater skill or complicated mechanisms. A few bards employ drums, chimes, and even bell lyres, especially to produce percussive martial tones before battles.

Bards who don't rely on their voices favor pipes, flutes, and the like. Horns are also popular; the Elves employ ones made using materials gifted from sentient creatures of the Aymhelin. Most notorious, though, are Dunwarr bagpipes made from preserved dragonskin, which fables say can turn entire armies away.

SPIRITSPEAKING

No one knows for certain from whence the spirits came, or how they relate to the dragons that created Mennara. When asked how old they are, or how they came to be, most spirits cannot comprehend such concepts as time, or existence and nonexistence. Some scholars theorize that spirits are the collection of magical energies from the Turning in specific locations, which eventually coalesce into intelligent beings. Others postulate that spirits were beings who spilled over from the Aenlong and made their residence in the Firma Dracem. Others believe the spirits are accidental side effects from the moment when the Yrthwright Mennara created the world.

All that is known with certainty is that spirits dwell in beautiful and wondrous places all across Mennara, although they seem to congregate most strongly in wild areas far from cities and towns. Perhaps this is because spirits are most likely to inhabit ancient trees and misty caves, which are just the types of things that are cleared or avoided when creating settlements. Perhaps it is simply that spirits do not like the mortal races very much, and so they keep their distance.

Confusion also exists over the distinction between the spirits of the land and those wraiths which haunt places stained by anger, despair, or violence. The spirits found in the wilds are seen more as avatars or emissaries of the natural world, whether they are the spirit of a particular place or a particular object or organism, as is the case with tree spirits. Spiritspeakers are believed to be able to commune with restless ghosts as well, but no one has tried to speak with the specters that plague the Mistlands.

Spiritspeakers are those with the gift—or perhaps simply the patience—to communicate with these spirits. Spiritspeakers are taught to awaken or seek the attention of the spirits by use of chanting, drums, dance, and offerings of gifts or service. Once they have gained the ear of the spirits, they may ask for boons such as healing or luck in a particular endeavor. It is not uncommon for spiritspeakers to ask a spirit to visit harm upon an enemy, particularly when that enemy has aggrieved the spirit as well. Spirits can also empower those who speak with them with a portion of their magic, enabling the spiritspeaker to fight with the power of flame, wind, stone, or water.

In some ways, spiritspeaking is similar to dreamwalking, in that the spirits can share their knowledge with those who communicate with them. Spirits tend to be a little more reliable than dreams in this regard, but also more limited. A spirit who is impressed by a spiritspeaker will tend to be more inclined to reveal the truth, but it is limited to the information it has itself learned or has heard about from other spirits. In this regard, the answers given to spiritspeakers are much more likely to be more straightforward and true than those gleaned from dreams, but they are also much more likely to consist of little more information than "I do not know."

Spiritspeaking remains one of the oldest forms of magic, having arisen from the need for the earliest peoples to coexist alongside the tumultuous landscape and the spirits that dwelled there. As the ages passed by, the arcane arts eventually supplanted spiritspeaking in many cultures due to their more pronounced and convenient effects—wizards didn't have to cajole or appease another entity to create the desired effects. However, in cultures that still live in close connection with the land and nature, such as the Orc tribes of the Broken Plains, the Singhara prides of Zanaga, the Onoit Gnomes of Isheim, as well as many far-flung human settlements in Terrinoth and beyond, spiritspeaking is still a tremendously important part of daily life and survival.

Most spiritspeakers seem to be rather eccentric and strange characters, with a touch of the wild about them. This may have something to do with the fact that many of them live in seclusion in wilderness areas to be closer to the spirits. Another possibility is that the eccentricities and strange concerns of the spirits themselves may influence the spiritspeaker's manner of thinking and speaking. Or perhaps it is simply that, through learning more about the nature of the world around them, the spiritspeakers have gained some measure of wisdom that escapes those who look down on them.



ELVEN MAGIC

While human sorcerers pull magical energies from the Verto Magica, the Elves have other sources of power available to draw upon. According to the mythology of the Elves, they once inhabited the Empyrean, a perfect realm that is found on plane above the Mortal Realm. The Elves were sorely grieved to have lost their Empyrean abode, but as a result of her repentance and sacrifice, Latariana brought into existence the stars in the night sky, the first of which, according to Elven tradition, provides a tiny but open window into the Empyrean.

THE TEARS OF LATARIANA

According to the Elven songs, when Latariana was banished for her part in the fall of the Elves, she cried for her fate and her people. These tears crystallized on the hands of her consort Emorial, who in turn passed them down to the leaders of each of the eleven Elven tribes.

The Tears, at least in their original form, were crystallized Empyrean energy. It is believed they are artifacts that anticipated the form and function of the Stars of Timmorran in many ways. Someone in possession of a Tear of Latariana can make use of it in much the same way that someone in possession of a Star of Timmorran can use the shard. They are great batteries of Empyrean energy that could conceivably provide the energy for hugely powerful spells.

However, being only eleven in number, the Tears of Latariana are even rarer than those few Stars of Timmorran that remain in the world, unbound by the runecraft of the dragons. Each one is in the possession of the leader of a tribe, and as both potent magical artefacts and revered badges of office they are kept carefully guarded. On occasion, an Elven lord might allow a Tear of Latariana to be used in some great magical working to benefit the whole of Mennara, but never would they trust its use to someone from outside the tribes.

Since the time of their creation, one of the tears has been lost. The Shadow Tear used to be carried by Malcorne, Lord of the Daewyl Tribe. He is said to have infused the tear with energies from the Ynfernael, and then used it to open up rents between the Mortal Realms and the Ynfernael plane. The Shadow Tear went missing during the events of the Shadow War, and if it remains unbroken then a powerful artefact combining both Empyrean and Ynfernael magic is waiting for someone to find it.

A steady stream of Empyrean energy filters through this window, and this flow helps to nourish the mortal realms. The Elves are uniquely attuned to such energies, which their priests can access and work into miraculous feats by following the traditions of the Path to the Stars.

THE EMPYREAN ARTS

There are four known spheres of the Empyrean: light, air, dreams, and life. All four spheres are believed to have been utilized by the Yrthwrights in the creation of Mennara. In channeling the energies of the Empyrean, an Elven priest may draw from a single sphere to work their magic, or devise a more complicated ritual to pull from two or more spheres. According to Elven myths, Emorial and Latariana were once granted dominion over light and air. Whether or not this is true, Elven priests find it much easier to access energies from these two spheres compared with those of life and dreams.

OF LIGHT AND AIR

Before their Fall, the original pair of Elves embodied light and air, and through Latariana's Door their descendents still have access to these spheres. Learning spells that affect light and air come very easily to the Elves, and even Elves who do not devote themselves completely to the Elven priesthood are able to create or extinguish small globes of light or conjure up a faint breeze.

Subtle differences exist between spells that manipulate existing light or air in the Firma Dracem and those that summon light or air from the Empyrean itself. Illuminating a darkened corner requires only that the Elf redirect light from one part of a room to another—a relatively minor fear. By contrast, casting a spell to conjure daylight in an otherwise pitch-black cavern would mean summoning light directly from the Empyrean, requiring much more strength of will and concentration.

OF LIFE AND DREAMS

The stuff of life and dreams were greatly coveted by the Elves in the time before their Fall. Latariana's desire for power over those two spheres of the Empyrean drove her husband to commit his great folly, ironically imprisoning their people in a world where light, air, life, and dreams could all take shape.

Although they do not have the same connection to life and air as they did their previous domains, Elves who join the priesthood of the Starlight Council are taught the mysteries of the remaining two spheres. With study and practice, their healers may tap into powerful life magic to perform feats of mending the likes of which is rarely seen outside the boughs of the Aymhelin. Flesh wounds knit closed effortlessly and painlessly, and broken bones come together once more as a solid whole. Illnesses of body and mind can be assuaged, and unsettled emotions may be calmed, all fear and anger taken away.

The dreamers spend most of their time in slumber, using their dreams as a portal to the Aenlong. There, they may walk between worlds and catch glimpses of that which was, is, and

may be. Through the Aenlong as a bridge, they may also cross to the far corners of Mennara itself to touch the minds of other dreamers and discover their hopes, fears, and desires. Armed with this knowledge, the Elves can work to prevent conflicts before they begin, or know the precise moment to strike. Once they have tasted of the dream, however, few dreamers can bring themselves to return to the waking world for long. Most spend their eternal lives slumbering under the glimmering white ceilings of the Temple to the Stars.

Since the War of the Shadow Tear, parts of the sphere of dreams became tainted with Ynfernael energies, and on occasion a dreamer will succumb to the nightmare, their minds disquieted by the sights they see there. The Elven high priestesses believe it is connected with the rifts between the Aenlong, the Ynfernael, and Mennara that were opened by Malcorne and his tribesmen.

The Elves are not the only people who have learned to walk in dreams, however. Long ago, the shamans of the Loth Caara were known for the realm of T'mara T'rusheen, or "walking in-between," which they may have learned from the Elves who mingled with them. The tribal shamans submitted themselves to a trance during the full moon in order to foresee the movement of prey animals to help the hunt or to catch glimpses of disasters that would come to pass, so that the tribe could avoid the disaster. It is believed that this in-between realm was the very same as that walked by the Elves in their dreams. Now, the nightseers of the Uthuk tribes stalk this realm with their own corrupted version of the T'mara T'rusheen, using the Aenlong as a place to cavort with demons before they can be summoned from the Ynfernael into this world.



THE PATH TO THE STARS

Latariana opened a path by which her descendents could atone for her and Emorial's ancient crime. The very first priests and priestesses were those who devoted themselves to finding and ascending Latariana's Stair through meditation, self-reflection, and prayer. In the intervening millennia, however, the priesthood has become divided as to the role of the Elves in greater Mennara and whether involvement or seclusion is the answer.

Much of the Elven priesthood are Eolam, as the priesthood is generally very old and made up of Elves who never ventured out of the city of Lithelin. The spires of the Temple to the Stars are nearly as tall as those of the Caelcira, the silver palace, and the high priestesses are common visitors to the throne in the hopes of swaying the King and his consort to their causes.

THE SPHERES COMBINED

A human sorcerer wishing to create a gust of wind would simply summon forth energy from the Verto Magica and use it to produce his spell, yet for an Elven wizard to do the same, they would need to summon forth a degree of air, and then a small degree of life in order to propel the gust. A more complex spell, equivalent in effect to a fireball created by a human sorcerer, would require input from three spheres. Air to fuel the spell, light to imbue it with fire, and life to propel the missile. The more complex the spell, the more spheres must be involved in its creation and the finer the balance between the different energies derived from the spheres needs to be.

Certain magical processes that true sorcerers can undertake are virtually impossible to produce using Empyrean magic, especially those spells which directly influence water and stone. For a sorcerer to create a landslide or flood is a fairly simple and direct magical working. Elven priests are only able to accomplish such feats through indirect means, such as summoning gusts of air to blow down rocks.

Illusionary magic does come easy to Elven wizards. Any vision can be conjured from the sphere of dreams. By combining such visions with energies from the spheres of light and life such illusions can even become animated and, in extreme cases, capable of interacting with the real world.

THE DARNATI ORDER

Like the sorrowful Emorial before them, the Darnati Warriors believe they can ascend Latariana's Stair only if they vanquish the darkness that plunged their people into this world. To that end, warriors adopt apprentices into their mysterious temples, away from the traditional teachings of the Daughters of the Empyrean. There, the would-be swordsmen learn the discipline, mysteries, and ritual that form the basis of the dance. All of this is done wordlessly, with a complex language of hand gestures and signs, for the fully fledged warriors of the Darnati have sworn a vow of silence save for their sacred prayers and scriptures, which they use as a rallying cry in battle or whisper to their swords as part of their sacred dance.



ELVEN SORCERY

Although the Elves tend to prefer their own more considered approach to working magic, calling upon the pure energy of the Empyrean, some Elves study the arcane arts and channel the energy of the Turning the same way that wizards do.

Harnessing the raw power of nature, Latari storm sorceresses are as honored among their soldiers as they are feared among their enemies. When the children of the Latari accepted stewardship of the majestic Aymhelin, they learned to use their gifts to tap into the power of weather, protecting fragile plant life or bringing rain to feed drying streams. Adopting the mantle of the forest's protectors, they learned to usher rain and gale to punish any who trespassed on sacred land. With the force of a mighty storm, these sorceresses can call forth bolts of lighting, assailing enemies at nearly impossible distances and electrocuting warriors inside their own metal armor. At the same time, the sorceresses can shield their allies from enemy arrow fire with torrents of wind and rain.

WEALDCALLERS

The ancient songs of the Latari comforted them when they first fell to Mennara, but they did not expect their lays to awaken the very forest itself. The voices of the Elves stirred some unknown joy in the mysterious hearts of the young forest, giving movement to the roots and boughs and trunks of the wood. The very first Finwalyn, or forest children, were awakened, and the Elves learned that they had perhaps been granted some sway over the sphere of life after all. These young saplings would grow taller and stronger, eventually becoming the mighty forest guardians that are sometimes seen marching to war alongside the Latari.

Since then, the Wealdcallers have learned to sing and speak to the plants and trees of the forest and bid them grow in specific directions, allowing the Elves to build their cities in relative harmony with the natural landscape. In rare occasions, the Elves will call up the very forest floor to aid them in their fight against the enemy, unleashing heather and thorn and vine and branch against those who would dare trespass in their emerald haven. In the aftermath of such battles, the powers of the Wealdcallers have also allowed the Elves to heal parts of the Aymhelin where fire or corruption have taken hold, returning the plant life their to its original verdant state.

To outsiders, the magic of the Wealdcallers is reminiscent of both spiritspeaking and the bardic magic of certain music. When asked about the similarities, and the true source of their power, the Elves answer with only a mysterious, plaintive melody.



igns of cultivation could be seen on the distant hills, but bordering the road there was nothing but tangles of thick forest and stretches of empty prairie. As always in this lost land, signs of ancient architecture poked up from the greenery. Vine-wrapped ruins and the blank gazes of weather-worn statues glared from the shadows beneath the trees on either side.

We rode through a landscape that, despite its apparent peace and tranquility, nevertheless radiated an exhausted aura of tragedy and defeat.

As we approached our next destination, there was nothing that might have set Greyhaven apart from any other large municipality I have known. The architecture is perhaps a little more grand than one might expect so far out in the countryside, with many large, ornate structures soaring up into the sky, defying gravity and civic planning alike.

There is no wall, leaving the city seemingly at the mercy of any ill-minded band that might wander past. Walking the streets, I could immediately discern many differences between the distant capital of Archaut and Greyhaven, however, and I began to feel that perhaps a wall might not be necessary to send even a strong band of miscreants on their way. This is a bustling center of learning and commerce, obviously. The streets were crowded with all manner of folk, from furtive peasants to haughty nobles; the full array of humanity was on display.

Everywhere I looked, I saw learned folks moving alone or in groups, clutching books, scrolls, or satchels with jealous fingers white with tension. Each street seemed to be lined with cantinas, taverns, and coffee houses, salons, academies, and institutes proclaiming themselves masters of every discipline under great A'tar's sun. There were shops that seemed to cater to everything from the mundane needs of the body to the most esoteric interests of most thought-sick minds.

I decided to begin my search by striding into the common room of the Broken Phial, an inn that looked like it might not wrest every last coin from the Caliph's purse. The innkeeper insisted I pay in advance for two nights' lodging and accommodations for Ibn in the stables, and after reluctantly pushing the money across the counter, I turned to survey the room. I was surprised to see that, even in the early afternoon, there were several clusters of what I took to be wizards and conjurers huddled around the tables, talking in low, hushed tones...

Translator's Note: several pages were missing here.

I left the Broken Phial without a backward glance, collecting Ibn and making my way down the street and around a corner without even a moment's thought or regret for the gold I was leaving behind.

I was completely innocent. I knew that. But a foreign stranger and a local walk into a room, a bed explodes, and one lies dead on the floor—there is nowhere in all the realms that situation ends well for the foreigner.

I spurred Ibn into a bumpy trot and made good time across the city, not looking back. The poor little pony was quite put out as I dragged him from the rich hay in his stall. But I promised him an apple when we settled down again, and I imagined, at any rate, that he forgave me.

Eventually I settled on a seedy little hostel in a darker, dirtier district that clung to the west side of the city. The faded sign over the thick, reinforced door said "The Mage's Hand," although I didn't think much of any mage who might frequent this neighborhood. The stable was dirty, its straw matted and foul smelling, but the farther I got us both from the body cooling in my little room at the Broken Phial, the better off we both would be.

The common room of the Mage's Hand was much smaller than that of my previous lodgings, but the people there seemed lighter, somehow, than the dour guests who had made up the bulk of the clientele at the Broken Phial. When I ordered a drink to take with me to my room, the hosteler didn't ask me what I wanted but instead pushed a drink across the bar with a slight smirk. I had once again paid in advance, not wanting to draw notice through haggling, and so he was, at the moment, kindly disposed toward me.

I didn't taste the drink until I was up in my little garret, but when I finally took a sip, I thought I might fall over from shock. It tasted sweet, not bitter, and although it would never compare favorably to the vintages of the Caliph's cellar or the Fields of Fertility, it was nevertheless pleasant on the tongue. I was so surprised I went back down to inquire what it might be and to procure another cup.

I do not know what "mead" is, my children yet to be, but I intend to find out as much about it as I can. And if it is readily available elsewhere in Terrinoth, my sojourn here has just become a modicum less unpleasant.

I drank the mead as I sat on the narrow bed, staring at the crooked, discolored wall. It has become apparent to me now that I dare not show the stone to anyone in Greyhaven.

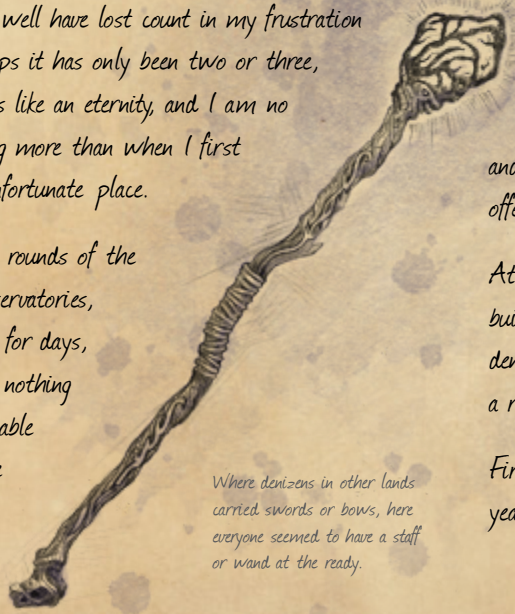
I finally understand the gravity of my situation. My very life is in danger. I need answers about the stone, but the very possession of it puts me in mortal peril.

My head is muzzy from drink. I fear, in my reaction to the day's events, I may have imbibed too much of the sweet brew. And so I will end this day's tale here, my sons and daughters. Let this be a double warning to you: always avoid becoming embroiled in the affairs of Caliphs and wizards. The rewards hardly outweigh the stress.

* * * * *

I have been in this cold, dry city for days. Five, I think, although I could well have lost count in my frustration and ennui. Perhaps it has only been two or three, for every day feels like an eternity, and I am no closer to knowing more than when I first rode into this unfortunate place.

I have made the rounds of the scholas, the conservatories, and the libraries for days, and I have taken nothing away but a passable knowledge of the twisting streets of this twisted city and the growing suspicion that I am being followed.



Where denizens in other lands carried swords or bows, here everyone seemed to have a staff or wand at the ready.

I know it's probably in my mind, a vague and unsettling, if entirely invalid, guilt over the death of the wizard, Cindar. But still, I keep catching movement from the corner of my eye, yet always gone before I turn.

My first full day in the city was spent wandering the wide boulevards of the eastern districts, where the grander, more ostentatious edifices were to be found. One particular street, called the Way of Light for no more reason I could find than the obvious, was lined with tall towers and soaring walls of many-colored stone. Members of the academies housed within these monuments to self-aggrandizement were obviously convinced of their own wisdom and puissance, but they were of little help to me.

I am now shy of even mentioning the stone, and thus severely hampered in my search for the history of such gems or for information on how one might unlock their power. However, even if I could parade up and down the Way of Light and cry out for such assistance, I doubt anyone on that street would be able to offer it. The Black House—residing, of course, in a gleaming edifice of white marble—is indicative of the types of schools located along the Way of Light. Clearly many coins flows into the Black House, and I cringe to think what kind of tuition gullible wealthy parents might be handing over to the greedy masters there. But I was unimpressed by all the denizens of the gorgeous building, to be honest.

The students of the Black House were dull-eyed and lethargic, while the sages and teachers were tight of lip and narrow of eye, and certainly did not have any guidance to offer a poor traveler with the dust of the road on his cloak.

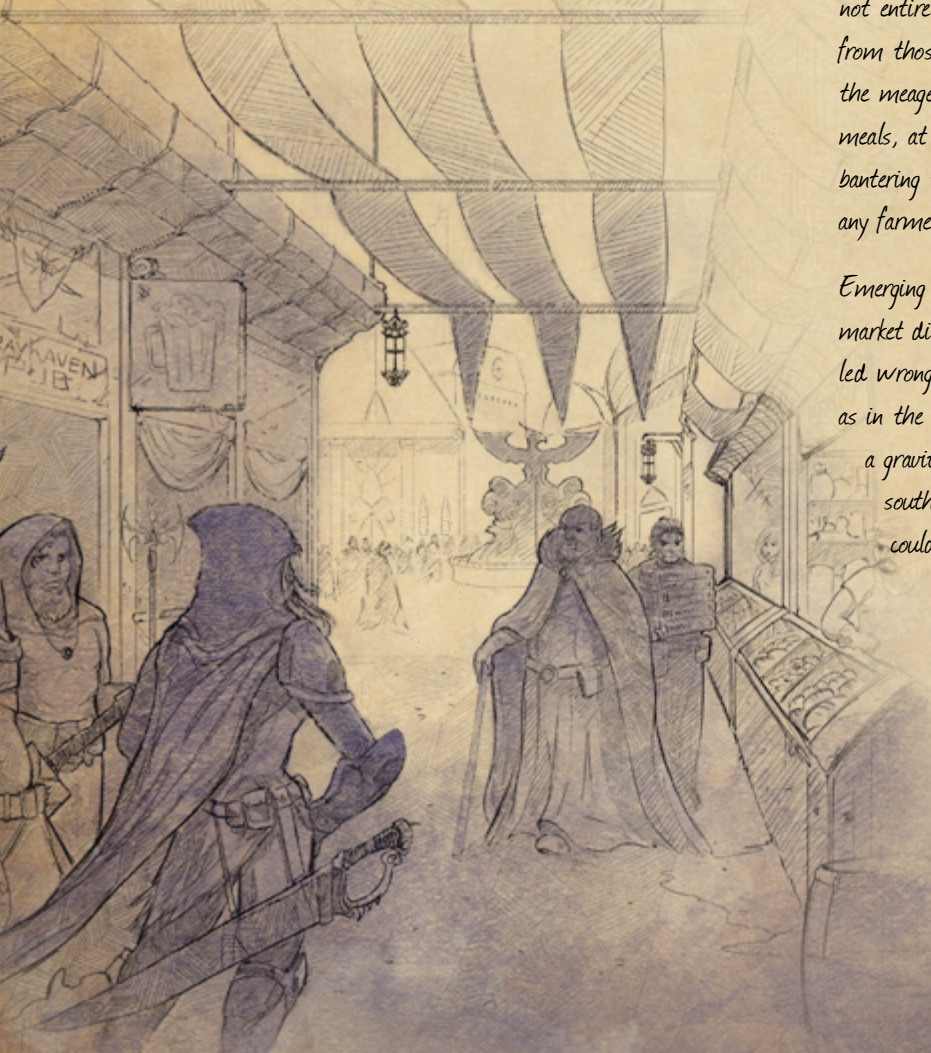
At the other end of the Way of Light, in a cluster of buildings no less grand than the Black House, I found the denizens of the King's Academy to be no more helpful, but for a raft of other reasons.

Firstly, in a land that has not seen a king, any king, in more years than I have been able to ascertain, I found the name

both confusing and off-putting. Aside from that, however, the scholars who call this academy their home were clearly convinced of their own importance. The appointments and decorations might not be quite so grand as those gracing the walls of the Black House, but even so, it is clear that far more of the academy's funds are going to the buildings, the grounds, and the clothing of the many scholars and sages than to study, books, or alchemical reagents.

And the looks they gave me as I entered, before I had so much as said a word? I turned right around, my daughters and sons, and knew I was right to do so straight down to my toes.

There is no wisdom to be found on the Way of Light, no matter how wise the people who walk that street consider themselves to be. The buildings are grand, the trees that line the street lush and tall, and the air heavy with the stench of expensive perfumes and incense, but the eyes of the wretches who haunt that stretch of cobbled road are as devoid of wisdom as the desert is of mercy.



I despaired, having spent the entire day moving from one such den of egotism and emptiness to the next, that Greyhaven would have anything to offer me. But in my despondency, I lowered my guard somewhat as I lunched, chewing on a thick hank of warm bread while leaning heavily against a graceful marble fountain, muttering quietly to myself about my adventures down the Way. A kind young woman, peering at me through thick spectacles that would have been too obvious for a mummer's show wizard, remarked that if I was truly seeking wisdom and enlightenment, I should be heading south, through the farmers' market and to the neighborhood beyond, referred to only as the blue district.

There was nothing to lose, and nothing that had happened to me recommended any other direction over the one the young lady had suggested. So, brushing crumbs from the front of my tunic, I headed south through the farmers' market (where the smells, although far less pleasant, were far more tolerable than the sickly stench of the Way of Light), and into the blue district. Although the ever-present tension and fear were not entirely absent from the people occupying the stalls, or from those wandering from one to the next, picking over the meager produce and meats and cheeses for their evening meals, at least there was a slight sense of relaxation, and a bantering tone in the air that would have been recognizable by any farmer of the Fields of Fertility back home.

Emerging from among the tall wooden structures of the market district, I knew almost at once that I had not been led wrong. Although the architecture is not nearly so grand as in the eastern sections of the city, there is a dignity and a gravitas to be felt in the cozy, twisting alleys of the southern streets that the cold pride of the Way of Light could never match.

The streets were filled with taverns, shops, and sellers displaying their wares. It made for a very eclectic variety of sights, sounds, and especially smells.

And it was there, among the mazelike narrow lanes, with tall walls and towers rising up on all sides, that I felt hope once again. There, I found scholas with less grandiose names, but far more serious scholarship. The Northstar Librarium and the Lorimor Conservatory were two such, where the serviceable grey stone of the buildings was given light and life by those discussing, debating, and demonstrating a variety of philosophies, theories, and magics. I saw feats that would have awed the courts of the Caliph, and heard arguments that might have swayed the wisest of my lord's sages.

The eyes of the people who strolled these streets were alive with curiosity, and although their robes might not have been so fine as those of their eastern compatriots, they were not dressed like paupers, either, and I quickly realized that magic, at least in Greyhaven, is not a poor person's precinct. These sages have power, of one sort or another, and it clearly brings them a level of respect and comfort that many a wild desert practitioner will never know.

Sadly, once again, there was little help for myself here. These people of wisdom were far less forthcoming than my bespectacled friend from the fountain. There was no reason for these wizards and sorcerers to pay me any more mind than they would a vagabond wandering in off the streets. And as I was still in shock, and gravely suspicious, after the unfortunate encounter with Cindar the Effulgent, I could offer them nothing to pique their interest.

Greyhaven is not a hospitable city for a mundane visitor with nothing to offer the wise and enlightened. I would imagine that even if one does not have the death of one of its inhabitants weighing unfairly on one's conscience, it is still not a warm or inviting city. The Mage's Hand is a refuge, thank A'tar for small comforts, but after days of chilly receptions in cold halls and echoing chambers, even the sweet taste of mead holds little comfort.

I think today I even saw one of the vaunted Marshals of the Citadel from a distance. The political situation in this realm is so chaotic I couldn't even begin to imagine what that might mean, but I found it even more unsettling than my current situation. Do the Marshals hold sway over the individual cities? Do they have any power here, or elsewhere? Do they investigate mysterious deaths?

I have been most careful and circumspect in my questioning of the august personages of Greyhaven. There is almost no way the folk I have encountered could know from whence my curiosity grows. Of course, because of this, even those few, rare answers I do receive are all but useless. I take some comfort in my confidence that no one knows what has brought me here, or what I carry around with me every step of every day, seeming to weigh more with each passing hour I spend in this cold, grey city.

And so, as I write these words, pausing to stare up at the splintered wood of the ceiling, I will admit to feeling even deeper stirrings of despair.

Does my trail end here? And if so, is it my fear and cowardice that ends it, or must I admit that all my hopes have been futile from the beginning?

I want to write the words "tomorrow will be my last day in this Djinn-accursed place," but I do not know if those words would be the reflections of a faint heart, or if it would be more fainthearted to simply admit defeat and throw myself upon the Caliph's mercy.

Knowing what I know now of the stone and its place in this land's lore, I despair of even being able to sell it, if that course recommended itself to me once again. Who would pay a price in gold for an object others are willing to kill to possess?

What is the value of my life in this strange place, so far from my home?





Chapter III: Lands of Magic

Mennara is a world born of magic, and though magic has become rare and diminished through the ages its traces can be found seemingly everywhere. Some of these lands are watchwords for valor and courage, while others have fallen to darkness, hate, and predation. All still have the spark of magic within, though, either from long-lost treasures or the powerful runebound shards that have brought magic everywhere.

This chapter explores the magical lands of Mennara, offering players a wide variety of settings for their adventures and campaigns. The central nation of Terrinoth has many civilized domains such as the baronies and the Free Cities, but also vast stretches of unexplored wilderness and ancient ruins with passages descending into forgotten catacombs. Courageous adventurers in this area might also venture into the forested Aymhelin and the dread Mistlands, for despite the threats therein are also rewards such as the wisdom of the ancient Elves or the necromantic secrets of death magic. They can also venture below the Dunwarr Mountains and the Dwarven Kingdoms for their master forges and dragon rune skills.

Maritime Lorimor and the islands of the Torue Albes can serve as launching points for adventures across the seas, especially to the deserts of distant Al-Kalim or the frozen lands of Isheim to the north. Wilder areas, such as the torn lands of the Broken Plains, the jungles of Zanaga, and the volcanic Molten Heath, also contain treasures for those who can survive the dangerous terrain—and even more dangerous inhabitants!

The dark regions of the Ru Steppes and the wastelands lie to the east, where cracks in reality itself allow demonic influences to seep into Mennara. Here the horrific Uthuk Y'llan thrive and call on the Ynfernael to power their spells—a practice that adventurers can also learn, if they dare.

Each of these regions includes geographical information and a map for Game Masters to use when plotting and running campaigns in that land. There is also a host of new Non-Player Characters to be found, from allies to antagonists to monstrous creatures. Adventurers can encounter kobold infestations, goblin tribes, aquatic merriods, and, of course, a wide variety of dragons!

TERRINOTH

The kingdom of Terrinoth has stood for more than thirteen centuries, surviving three Darknesses. It is a land of contradictions—beauty and horror, joy and tragedy, splendor and ruin. Since the time of King Daqan himself, Terrinoth has been largely ruled by a Council of Barons. In these times, only twelve barons attend the council, for the thirteenth barony was lost over a millennium ago in the treachery of Waiqar. Despite this, the gathering of the twelve Daqan Lords is still often called the "Council of Thirteen," whether out of respect for King Daqan or as a reminder of the cost of betrayal.

Although the barons rule their baronies, they do not hold such control over the renowned Free Cities of Terrinoth. Whether a Free City lies within the borders of a barony or in unclaimed land, it holds no fealty to any baron. Yet, the Free Cities are a part of Terrinoth, and are subject to the rule of the Council of Thirteen. This has led to no shortage of friction throughout the centuries, and many barons have tried to curb the independence of the Free Cities, particularly those barons whose lands encircle one.

In many ways, the Free Cities are the true lifeblood of Terrinoth. Many of the baronies stagnate, held back by generations of tradition, ancient treaties, and rigid laws subject only to the whims of the current baron. The Free Cities, though, possess a greater agility, the ability to adapt to changes in trade, to absorb the best influences of travelers. The Free Cities are generally governed by councils, boards, or other such magisterial bodies. Regardless of how these leaders are appointed, the need for compromise leads to gradual, stable changes in the cities. Conversely, an individual baron has the authority to paralyze their lands in old customs, or to plunge them into poverty with an ill-conceived declaration.

This is not to say that the Daqan Lords are tyrants; on the contrary, most are fair and just rulers, their worst impulses tempered by their fellow councilors. While there have been exceptions throughout history—some quite notable—most barons have been, and continue to be, capable leaders. Some excel in matters of military strategy, while others are consummate orators, and often they have secured the welfare of their lands through machinations and intrigues. A rare few have even undertaken study of the magical arts, whether to capitalize on runebound shards that come into their possession or to hone their personal magical talents. Regardless of the approach, the barons act in the best interests of their baronies and of Terrinoth as a whole—how else could a kingdom survive more than a thousand years without its king?

Somewhat contradictorily, it is the same barons who prioritize their own lands who must also govern the entire kingdom through their annual gathering at the Citadel. Unsurprisingly, these councils involve a great deal of politicking and compromise, but ultimately serve to protect Terrinoth. Each baron further takes up this responsibility in their own lands, through rangers, militias, knights, and a variety of other guardians and warriors. The Citadel strives to coordinates these efforts,



maintaining order and protecting against the monsters that roam the countryside during peacetime, and rallying armies fielded from the baronies in times of war.

Despite all this politicking—and despite the centuries of relative peace—Terrinoth is a largely wild place. No more than an arrow's flight from the castle turrets and town palisades lie ancient ruins, lost catacombs, mysterious caves, and countless more such monuments of a glorious past, and mystical places unseen by Human eyes.

SOUTHERN TERRINOTH

Southern Terrinoth is marked most notably by a great mountain chain aptly named the Mountains of Despair. Storms roll off these imposing peaks in roiling waves, often accompanied by creatures awoken during the turmoil. These natural and unnatural dangers have harried the residents of Southern Terrinoth for generations, molding a vigilant and resilient people. The inhabitants are always vigilant against the dangers of the wild places, yet they also admire the natural beauty of the Velvet Plains and the Gardens of Tarn.

Several Free Cities lie within the commonly accepted bounds of Southern Terrinoth, including Riverwatch, Tamalir, Vynelvale, and Dawnsmoor. Of course, strict cartography means little for the governance of those cities; alliances and cooperation between the cities and the baronies are not uncommon, but the citizens of the Free Cities are as proud of their independence as of their heritage as part of Terrinoth.

Despite the nearby military presence of Riverwatch and its famed riders, the Smokeblue Hills and Mountains of Despair have long served as a gathering place for sorcerous cults, dragon-worshippers, and other servants of darkness. In recent years, the disturbing accounts of strange happenings in the mountains have grown in frequency. Scouts report dragon hybrids lurking in the scattered ruins, in greater numbers than have been seen since the end of the Dragon Wars, while small villages in the foothills and shadow of the mountains suffer from strange maladies and disappearances.

Peace mostly reigns in the other areas of Southern Terrinoth, in large part due to its strong internal policing. Blackthorn Grove, though, stands out as a particularly lawless, dangerous place for Humans. Ostensibly a part of the Aymhelin, it is said to be haven for all manner of outcasts and fugitives. Witches and bandits often make their homes amongst the many knotty glades of Blackthorn, and strange, shambling monstrosities patrol the lower forest levels in search of easy prey. Some claim to have caught glimpses pair of mighty Elven towers breaking up the foliage, but attempts to study them further are always met with a warning volley of arrows.

Despite the threats lurking in the wilderness, the region has been a hub of trade for centuries, and this continues even in these increasingly troubled times—in no small part due to the presence of the Free Cities. These great settlements draw traders, nobles, artists, and travelers of all stripes from across Terrinoth and beyond, bringing with them a seemingly endless array of rare and exotic goods, and no shortage of coin. The people of Southern Terrinoth have long accepted coins of near any origin, so long as the metal is true. Far to the southeast, the grandest cathedral to Kellos in all of Mennara can be found in the Free City of Vynelvale. This great center of worship draws pilgrims from across Southern Terrinoth and beyond, and is the source of no little envy on the part of the neighboring barons.

Beyond the forest, multiple fortresses, from Skydown on to Sundergard, and even further down to Wreathcut provide a network of relatively well-kept roads that provide a degree of safety and security for travelers on their way to one of the other southern trade cities. Of course, the riders and watchmen of the Daqan Lords and the Free Cities are too few to safeguard the dozens of leagues of roadways and wilderness stretching between bastions of civilization; those nobles and merchants who can afford it generally provide their own protection.

To the West, Southern Terrinoth borders the empire of Lorimor. Migrants and traders from Lorimor or the Torue Albes arrive in Dawnsmoor by boat before traveling overland to their destination. The Lorim's Gate Mountains and the badlands of the Traitor's Wastes—perhaps in combination with some lasting memories of Lorimor's founders—prevent much in the way of overland trade. Scattered communities along the coast often fall prey to pirates and longboat raiders in search of slaves and supplies, while the interior is largely uninhabited badlands.

TRAST, THE GATEWAY TO TERRINOTH

The Barony of Trast is located east of the Lorim's Gate Mountains, and its lands extend to the borders of the Tanglewood. Its proximity to the Aymhelin, and to Summersong specifically, have resulted in greater interaction between its residents and the Latari Elves than most Humans of Terrinoth have experienced—not all of it friendly. Trast draws its wealth from silver and iron mines in the foothills of the mountains, and its people do some limited hunting and logging within the outskirts of the Tanglewood, although many claim the forest is haunted by werewolves.

As of late, the Latari Elves have been more active—or at least more visible to Humans. Their scouting parties have been spotted emerging from the northern edges of the forest with greater frequency. While fearful peasants blame the Elves for a number of attacks on isolated farmsteads, belligerent nobles rail against this encroachment on Trastian lands. Baron Rault can easily reject the fears of peasants, but cannot ignore aristocratic saber-rattling when it arises.

The baron rules from his seat at Castle Artrast. Rault is a just man, but quick to take offense at any perceived sleight to his honor. Visitors do well not to insult his hospitality, even when circumstances might better preclude proper etiquette. The barony's population (both commoner and nobility) is split between two distinct opinions on the Baron. One faction views Rault as a weak leader, too ready to acquiesce to the demands of Latari and Lorimor envoys. Others, however, criticize his heavy-handed approach to treating with the Elves, arguing that his unnecessary provocation risks war with the forest denizens.

Agitators on both sides seek to sway the baron. Some folk also whisper of a conspiracy to unseat Rault—although nobody knows for sure which side, if any, the plotters side with.

In the foothills of Lorim's Gate, ancient menhirs rise from the tops of a rough circle of earthen mounds. It is said that twice a year, adherents of forbidden beliefs gather in this spot to commune with unknowable entities, in a ceremony led by dark and twisted priests. Baron Rault has expressed some interest in discovering the truth of these rumors and halting the perpetrators if so, but the isolated nature of the location prevents any sort of routine patrol.

OTRIN, THE VIGILANT LAND

The Barony of Otrin begins just northwest of Riverwatch and extends to the Blackwing Swamp in the north, and as far east as Riverwatch. The people of Otrin cultivate rich farmland on the Velvet Plains and respectfully gather rare herbs from the Gardens of Tarn—under law of the barony, to fell a tree in that sacred forest is punishable by death.

Otrin's lands abut the Mountains of Despair, which cast a long shadow over the barony. Officially, Baron Trevalyan could lay claim to parts of that gloomy range and the mineral deposits that doubtless lie within, though his ancestors learned long ago that no good comes from those storm-wracked peaks. By tradition, the baron protects the people of Otrin and surrounding lands from the dangers of the mountains. Skydown, the ancestral home of Otrin's baron, is not situated at the foot of the mountains as a defensive position against other baronies, as one might suspect of such a fortified castle, but as a bulwark against the creatures of the foothills and heights. Trevalyan lives in constant vigilance for threats descending from the mountain, and hosts aspiring Knights of the Citadel, who hunt manticores or other monsters in the mountains to prove their worth.

In recent times, foul creatures and fierce beasts have descended from the mountain even more brazenly and regularly. To the chagrin of some Knights of the Citadel, Baron Trevalyan has begun to enlist the aid of traveling adventurers for expeditions to track down specific beasts or launch preemptive strikes against the mountain denizens more generally. Some believe the monsters may in fact be fleeing the near-constant storms of the mountains, which have grown in severity and even frequency in recent years. Despite this, knowledgable folk continue to dismiss tales of an ancient and powerful sorcerer who dwells in the mountains and commands the elements as just that—mere stories.

Across the plains is the unusual range known as Mennara's Teeth. Though the mountains cover a relatively small area, they pierce high into the sky, sharp and narrow, like the fangs of a great beast. It is said that dragons come to these mountains when they feel their life's end drawing close, and most people avoid the foothills for fear of encountering such a monster. Still, stories persist of the Cave of Wonders, said to lie somewhere amid the dagger-like slopes. Few who seek the cave ever return, and those who do come back changed—strangely serene, yet distant from their old lives, and unwilling to speak of their experience.

FREST, BARONY OF THE USURPED THRONE

Frest is unique among the baronies, in that it is ruled not by a hereditary noble, but by a first-generation baroness. Some decades ago, Baroness Harriet the Willful was a simple carpenter. When the baroness of that time abruptly abdicated, though, Frest was thrown into chaos that affected the peasantry most of all. Harriet ended this by uniting her fellow peasants against the bickering nobles and assuming leadership.

Since her appointment as baroness by the will of the people, Harriet has ruled magnanimously from Aerendor Keep. The farmers keep what they like and profit from the rest, and Frest has the lowest taxes in all Terrinoth. The people till the fields and hunt and gather from the serene Applewood Forest. All know to avoid the Bloodwood on the eastern edge of the barony, and very few people have fallen victim to the vengeful Elves of that forest in recent years.

The other barons did not take Harriet's rise to power well, and went to war with Frest. The war raged for years until she was finally accepted as a member of the Council of Thirteen—mostly due to the fact the war wasn't going well for the other barons. Even today, the barons fear that their own people might follow in the footsteps of Frest. As Harriet ages and there is talk of succession, the other barons discuss the matter once more. Some fear that should Harriet's daughter succeed her and establishes a line, legitimizing her rule and nobility, other commoners may follow this precedent and seek to ennoble themselves, or even remove the barons from power. Still, the barons know that to move openly against Harriet risks another war, or worse—inciting revolt among the peasants of other baronies. Instead, they seek other ways to remove the "interloper" and her family from power. Baroness Magrit of Dhernas and Baron Gillian of Cailn have begun to quietly seek out any information that might turn the people of Frest against their ruler.

EASTERN TERRINOTH

Eastern Terrinoth is a stoic land, in many ways out of necessity. Protected by a natural border of mountain ranges, eastern Terrinoth is divided between central lands and those closer to their eastern neighbor, the Charg'r Wastes. Although the jagged peaks of the Dunwarr Mountains' southern range provide reassurance of Terrinoth's safety, they can also be seen as one more wall closing in—a reminder that there can be no retreat from the struggle to maintain civilization.

Eastern Terrinoth's interior lands are characterized by rolling hills dominated by the extensive heights of the Broken Crags. The most populous area of the region is the valley that cuts through the center of the range, where numerous fishing villages dot the banks of the River of Sleep. Much of the remaining territory is heavily forested and remains unsettled, with the Hanging Woods to the west and Whispering Forest to the east. Many dark rumors surround the extensive wood known as the Whispering Forest, yet nearby communities have little choice but to rely on it for game and timber.


Labyrinth of Deurg
Hadranhold
The Frontier
Duldor Deeps
Feldrath Rift
Dunwarr Mountains
Last Berth
Thelgrim
Lakes of the Lost
Woods of Woe
Blind Muir Forest
The Karahesh
No Man's Land
Roth's Vale
The Mistlands
Frostgate
Strangehaven
Highmont
Rothfeld
Castle Talon
Korina's Tears
Plains of the Ruby Gate
River of Sleep
Howling Giant Hills
Lorhan River
Last Haven
Valdari Marsh
Castle Daerion
Karya's Cove
Arhynn
Carthmounts
Shadow Peaks
Kellar
Greyhaven
Dhernar Keep
The Greatwood
Nerekhall
Hanging Woods
Whispering Forest
Crimson Forest
Nornholt
Forge
Hermfar Isle
Sacred Bog of Bator
Kingless Coast
Starfall Forest
Tamalir
Red Bridge
Broken Crags
Jendra's Harbor
Grandor's Hold
Archaut
Calem's Peak
Blackwing Swamp
Ashen Hills
The Borderlands
Highcrest
The Hedge
Gardens of Tarn
Mounts of Morshan
Eventide Forest
Kuman Lake
Fort Redric
Sudanya
Dragonholt
Velvet Plains
Golohall
Flametail River
Dawnsmoor
Skydown
Haverford
Misty Plains
Moondow Marsh
Brightvale
Riverwatch
Applewood Forest
Aerendor Keep
Lorim's Gate Mountains
The Tanglewood
Mountains of Despair
Bitter Downs
The Bloodwood
Castle Artrast
Sern Genslyn
Vynelvale
Sundergard
Methras
Blackthorn Grove
Summersong
Madman Pass
Traitor's Wastes
Morshan River
Twelve Oaks
Thalian Glades
The Aymhelin
Lithelin
The Greywood
Therial
The Deepwood
Darnati Highlands
Firstfall
Terrinoth
Selenic Coast

Further east lie the Borderlands, a desolate stretch of land beginning at the southern edge of the Dunwarr Mountains. This unpalatable area serves as a woefully narrow boundary between Terrinoth and the Ru. Though the threat of the Uthuk Yllan is long since passed, the Ru remains an ill-omened and feared place, uninhabitable save for vicious and monstrous beasts. Several small keeps and outposts maintain a watch over the borderlands under order of the Citadel. This bleak landscape lies always on the horizon, and the people of Eastern Terrinoth prefer to instead turn their gaze to the placid waters of Echo Lake or the hills of the Jade Glen.

Not more than an hour's march from Castle Kellar is a strange landmark, known by the ancient name Orrush Khatak, but generally called the Gate of the Furnace. It is a great arch of blood red rock, large enough for more than four-hundred soldiers to march under shoulder to shoulder. Perhaps a natural formation once seen as a good luck charm for departing armies, or perhaps carved for a part in some ancient magical ritual, no one can now say; the arch is another mystery in a land already full of the same. When the wind blows, one need not strain to hear anguished cries, but few would admit them to be anything more than a trick of the breeze whipping against the stone.

Beyond the Orrush Khatak runs a long, wide river, the Lothan. Hernfar Isle rests at the point where the river is at its widest, the furthest eastern outpost of the Daqan Lords. Recruits to the Kell militia often joke that their commanders are the harshest in all Terrinoth, for insubordination is punished with an assignment to the garrison at Hernfar Keep.

Hernfar Isle is deceptively unremarkable. It has little to distinguish itself from any other common river island, save its proximity to the Ru Steppes. One walking through Hernfar offers little of interest—a few vermin, some light birdsong on the breeze—but it is this very semblance of calm that keeps the garrison on edge. Those posted on Hernfar soon find that shadows seem longer, or seem to flicker strangely in the light, and no few soldiers have tales of luminescent eyes staring from across the water. What these eyes belong to, none could say, and they seldom remain long. The knowledge that the river and the low foothills of the badlands are all that separate them from the Darklands does little to assuage the soldiers of the watch.

Some say that on nights when the moon is heavy and red, a cacophony of howls and screams rises across the water, and few can confidently say these are merely the calls of animals.

DHERNAS, THE SPEAR OF DAQAN

The lands of Dhernas stretch from the Hanging Woods in the west to the Whispering Forest in the east. The barony once derived great wealth from a gold mine at the base of the Shadow Peaks, deep within the Hanging Wood, but it is long since abandoned. Although most folk assume the mine ran dry, others hold that it is haunted, and the ghosts of long-dead miners eternally guard their glittering lode. These days, the people of Dhernas tend verdant farmland along the banks of the River of Sleep and harvest timber from the barony's woodlands. Havenshyr, the barony's largest town, not infrequently hosts merchants and traders thanks to its location several leagues upriver from Frostgate.

Baroness Magrit Kalrif resides at Dhernar Keep, in the shadow of the Broken Crags and overlooking the river. Kalrif is a militantly minded ruler, and the spearmen and knights of Dhernas are respected throughout Terrinoth for their discipline and fine arms and armor. The baroness' forces display a sword and open gauntlet on their banners, symbolizing the twinned virtues of justice and mercy. Dhernas' soldiers have already begun deploying in response to rumors of threats from the Ru, and Kalrif eagerly anticipates the opportunity to join them on the field.

Dhernas is known for the wardens who protect its roads and waterways, making them some of the safest in Terrinoth—although this is an entirely relative claim. The Hanging Woods themselves owe their name to a particularly zealous marshal, Tyrek Gorm, said to have hung a thousand brigands from the boughs of its trees. In these times, however, the marshals, few in number, find themselves hard-pressed to deal with growing incursions of goblins and zealous devotees of dark powers, on top of the ever-present bandits and thieves. The marshals and aldermen of the barony increasingly resort to bounties and turn to adventurers-for-hire in order to stem the threats.

KELL, THE SHIELD OF DAQAN

The Barony of Kell lies along the Dunwarr mountain range that shields Terrinoth from the foreboding Charg'r Wastes and the strange creatures that dwell within. At its southern end, the barony abuts the borderlands that separate Terrinoth from the Ru. Due to its position on Terrinoth's border, Kell maintains one of the largest and most heavily trained armies of all the baronies, fed by the fertile river valley and based out of numerous ancient keeps. In the depths of several of these keeps, magnificent rune golems await the time they are once again wakened and called to war. Of course, most outside of Kell take its protection for granted, if they even consider the Ru as a source of any potential threat—which few do.

The soldiers of Kell keep watch on the desolation of the Ru, as well as the fords that cross the Lothan River at Hernfar Isle, from the watchtowers of ancient fortresses, their builders long forgotten. Like so many edifices of the ancient kingdoms, these enduring structures have begun to crumble in the centuries since the last Darkness, the secrets of their construction beyond the ken of today's masons and wrights. Yet, for now, they stand. Whether they remain strong enough were they put to the test, only time can tell.

Behind these timeworn fortresses, the citizens of Kell prosper. Valley farms keep Kell fed while producing enough surplus to trade with the nearby Dunwarr and Joulnar Dwarves and the Barony of Dhernas. A rich trade in timber and iron keeps coin flowing into Baron Fredric's vaults. Seldom does the coin rest long, however, before the baron puts it to use for the betterment of his people and lands. It is said that Roland of Kell slew High Lord Margath at the culmination of the Dragon Wars, and many people see that nobility in his descendant.

Pelgate, the Faded Barony

The Barony of Pelgate lies along the southern range of the Broken Crags, in Terrinoth's eastern reaches. Pelgate derives most of its wealth from iron mines throughout the feet of the Broken Crags, and its southern lands extend into the bountiful Velvet Plains. Pelgate was the site of important battles during the Dragon Wars, and its lands still bear the scars to prove it. In the centuries of peace, however, Pelgate's travails have been largely forgotten, and other baronies' accomplishments eclipse its reputation.

Within the bounds of the barony, the Ashen Hills extend from the base of the Broken Crags. These jagged and rocky foothills are so named for their condition in the aftermath of the Dragon Wars. Useless for farming, the hills are notable for the strange, rune-marked obelisks that break forth from certain grassy mounds. Aside from these mysterious stones, the Ashen Hills are home to Fort Rodric, constructed following the Dragon Wars to honor the hero who is its namesake. Fort Rodric has never been taken by force, nor even attacked. After long years of peace, the garrison at Fort Rodric is severely undermanned. Yet, this fortress is of vital importance to guard the route past the Broken Crags against invasion from the east.

Baroness Pryor is the most aged of the Daqan Lords, and among both her fellow barons and subjects are those who fear she may no longer possess the strength to deal with the rising threat in the east. After Kell, Pelgate lies closest of the baronies to the Ru Steppes, and its position between two mountain chains provides a natural bottleneck and defensible position. Still, a greater number of subjects and peers fail to even recognize the looming danger, and so Pelgate takes few steps to prepare its defenses. Dame Corinne Varr, a captain of Pelgate's army, fears that her barony will soon be tested, and takes preparations she can to prepare her soldiers. In frustration, Varr has begun to enlist aid from sellswords and mercenary mages traveling through Pelgate's lands.

Western Terrinoth

The west is the birthplace of modern Terrinoth, the place from which civilization as its people know it flourished. This region is home to numerous ancient ruins and castles, the legacy of the Elder Kings and those who came before. It is here that the monument city of Archaut sits, the capital of the Daqan Lords and undisputed seat of power in Terrinoth. It is here the Council of Thirteen meets each year to discuss and deliberate matters of the realm. It is also here that the black chair of Waiqar the Betrayer rests, a constant reminder to the other barons of the insidious lure of darkness, and of the grief that awaits them down that path.

All around the countryside, ruins, temples, and piles of rubble stand as reminders of what was, and what might be. Few look upon these with sadness, however, for they have stood so long that they are practically a part of the natural scenery.

Eventide Forest

Eventide Forest lies close to the Kingless Coast, a large wood said to be the abode of spirits. Whether these spirits are beneficent or malicious depends on the tale and the teller. Still, many from nearby villages travel the forest to visit the Tree of Tales, an ancient oak many people throughout the region view as sacred, despite certain misgivings by the Church of Kellos.

Whether the tales of spirits are true or not, Eventide is home to flesh-and-blood residents. A small village of Hyrrinx nestles within the forest, mostly isolated from the surrounding barony. Although in the eyes of the Citadel's law, a baron has claim over all people living in their territory, the Sephone line has historically allowed the Catfolk community to govern itself independently, and has not collected taxes. Thus far, Baroness Katrin has maintained this status quo.

Children play amongst pillars that once held up marble ceilings, and the villagers make good use of the excellent stonework, sometimes building their own cottages and houses around it. Perhaps if not for superstitious aversion, all the ruins of Terrinoth would have been torn down to raise the walls of new farmsteads and hill forts. The Humans of Terrinoth are nothing if not resilient, and it shows in the fact that, at the very least, the crumbling foundations are still visible. One might stand in the center of such a foundation and imagine where the lord or lady might have sat when listening to their subjects, so long ago.

The west is a fertile, green place, full of low valleys and placid hills. Sweeping plains, like Kellos's Breath, give this part of Terrinoth a flat aspect, and it is relatively safe from the depredations of the undead to the north and the stranger, unnatural enemies to the east, and insulated even from the tensions with the Elves of the Aymhelin. Of all the regions in Terrinoth, the west has most grown content with the way of things, and lax in its vigilance and defense.

Western Terrinoth often has favorable weather, with clear skies almost year round, and a healthy, wholesome atmosphere. Only on rare occasions do sea storms, great swirling vortexes of shearing winds, come ashore as a threat. When they do, the effects are devastating—uprooting whole villages and depositing cattle herds hundreds of leagues away from their ranchers. The land of western Terrinoth is also much beloved by horsemen, who find the terrain excellent for coursers and the thrill of a swift gallop. Several notable rivers also provide for travel and trade from end of the continent to the other. Wealth still flows from the west into opulent Tamalir, drawn on gentle currents and across placid lakes.



Still, there is a wild side to this land. Small towns and farmsteads are welcome sights for weary hunters and traders alike, but much of the land is rugged and untamed. Outside the farms and fields, fierce beasts, strange creatures, vicious goblins, and worse lurk and wait for unwary travelers. With each passing year, unfortunately, these monsters grow more brazen, encroaching on the tilled fields and outposts of civilization.

ARCHAUT

Archaut: the Monument City, seat of the Council, home of the Citadel. Since the city sprang up around the burial site of King Falladir, Archaut has served as the capital of Terrinoth. The Citadel—onetime castle of Daqan—is the meeting place for the Council of Thirteen and the administrative and judicial center of Terrinoth. In the intervening years, the city has grown from a small mausoleum to a true city, driven largely by the annual presence of the Council of Barons.

Though Archaut is the capital of all Terrinoth, a visitor might not suspect so. For much of the year, Archaut is a solemn, quite place. True, the Citadel hums with activity year-round, but aside from a scarce few merchants and taverns that cater to the Marshals and soldiers of the Citadel, the city lies dormant until the Council of Barons gathers for its annual meeting. In expectation of the annual council, traders, entertainers, aspiring knights, and countless others of all kinds descend on the city. For a few weeks each year—arriving before the barons and departing after their last retainer—the city is abuzz with activity. Some come to prepare the city for the council, others to exploit the presence of the barons and others individuals of import, and still others to petition the barons for aid.

Still, even after the merchants and nobles depart, Archaut is an awe-inspiring sight. Among the many wonders of the city, colossal statues line avenues and hold ancient castles upon their shoulders. Greatest of all is the Statue of Daqan, an enduring monument to the lost king. More than a thousand years later, its regal likeness looks as unblemished as the day it was erected, as if the very elements defer to the lost monarch.

THE CITADEL

The Citadel is Terrinoth's center of government and law. After the Daqan Lords return to their baronies, the Warden of the Citadel executes their orders, overseeing the day-to-day matters of state until the next year's gathering. For the last two decades, this has been the responsibility of Warden Gravia Kein, who has served the Daqan Lords and the people of Terrinoth with honor and passion. The servants of the Citadel proudly wear the heraldry of a gold crown on a blue field—the ancient badge of King Daqan.

The Citadel itself is an imposing structure, the best-fortified keep in all of Terrinoth. Its towering alabaster walls loom over the city, a constant reminder of the power and glory of the kingdom. Although it is the responsibility of each baron to provide for the defense of the realm, the Citadel also maintains its own small standing army, under the leadership of the Warden. This force represents the last line of defense were the unthinkable to happen and Archaut to come under attack.

The Citadel also hosts the few knightly orders that swear their fealty to Terrinoth as a whole, rather than any single baron. Foremost among these are the Marshals of the Citadel. Each Marshal is both a skilled warrior and an expert scholar, well versed in the laws of Terrinoth. Marshals deliver justice across Terrinoth, dealing with threats ranging from traitorous nobles and highwaymen to goblin warbands and practitioners of forbidden magic. Marshals are empowered to serve as judge, jury, and executioner. Their loyalty is beyond dispute, and they administer justice swiftly—for there are always other malcontents to deal with.

In these times, even the Marshals are scarcely sufficient for the many threats emerging across Terrinoth. In recent years, Warden Kein and the officers under her command have seen fit to employ the services of itinerant adventurers and other mercenaries to deal with matters ranging from suspected dragon cults, to Ferrox swarms, to goblin raiders, to fugitive necromancers.

ALLERFELDT, THE BREADBASKET OF TERRINOTH

Large, powerful, and critical to the efforts of the other baronies, Allerfeldt benefits tremendously from its fertile soil and expansive, flat land that allows for easy travel and rapid communication. Goldhall is the traditional seat of the Sephone family, the castle from which Baroness Katrin rules over her lands. Goldhall is the result of several hundreds of years of construction, and represents the legacy of the Sephone family. High spires, grand halls, vast storehouses, and immense barracks all serve to make Goldhall one of the most impressive castles in all the baronies, a veritable fortress defending the whole of Allerfeldt from its enemies.

In recent times, Goldhall has taken on a more administrative than military role. Owing to its vast complexes, immense library, and facilities to host dignitaries and state functions, Goldhall often serves a first point of contact for many important diplomatic actions in the baronies. The High Seat of Goldhall has been the site of many a treaty and declaration of war, while the Weeping Causeway, built by a Sephone ancestor as a memorial to his slain father, has long served as a mustering ground for the combined armies of Allerfeldt.

Ruled by Count Oszric Cunningham, Haverford County has a poor reputation across Allerfeldt. Though the Cunninghams have strong relationships with the other counties and their rulers (with many intermarriages to aid in the stability of Allerfeldt), over the generations they have become notorious for the new obsession each Cunningham brings to their thrown. Half-finished buildings dot the landscape, each the site where one count or countess began a grand project only to perish before its completion. Others exist only as ruins, the remains of spectacularly unsuccessful attempts at duplicating Lorimor Fire or fashioning new alchemical potions. While some have been productive, such as Countess Ygraine Cunningham's reinforced training hall for battlemages, most only lost coin. The county's finances grew so poor that Oszric was forced to take the wealthy merchant Elene as his wife to bolster the treasury.

Fortunately, the two have acted to reclaim many of the ruins, mines, and other lost regions from past years, and have funded dozens of excavations and masonry work. Unfortunately, these have uncovered hordes of goblins and other creatures that have taken residence in them over the generations. Having been disturbed, these foul beings are now threatening local villages.

CAILN, THE SCARRED CROSSROADS

The Barony of Cailn is among Terrinoth's poorest lands, plagued by lingering troubles since the Third Darkness. Baron Gilliam Xarles resides at Castle Tagis, overlooking the verdant, yet abandoned Thelsvan Plains. The charred ruins of farmhouses dot the green and verdant plains, uninhabited since the Dragon Wars. The soil is rich and fertile—said to be fertilized by the blood and ash of those who once lived there—the plains are haunted by the dragons' victims and the soldiers who made their final stand. All who have attempted to resettle the Thelsvan Plains in the intervening centuries have met with disaster.

West of the plains is the beautiful and dangerous Starfall Forest. Named for the haunting blue-and-black stones that litter its grounds, said to have fallen from the heavens, the forest is the subject of many strange tales and legends. Many who enter the forest in search of the valuable and, some say, mystical stones never return. The ancient castle of Caer Loc stands just beyond the forest. Constructed of the same mysterious stones found in the forest, the keep's name dates to before the age of the Elder Kings. It is said that Caer Loc's marbled walls are proof against dark magic and the undead—though this claim has not been tested in living memory.

The city of Nornholt is perhaps Cailn's only lifeblood in this age. Owing to its location along multiple trade routes—being centrally located between the Free Cities of Nerekhall, Greyhaven, and Tamalir—the city brings in much of the barony's wealth, such that it is. This trade and travel has also led to a high Gnome population in the city. It has recently become evident that something is greatly frightening the Gnomes of Nornholt, who have largely ceased their customary (and frequent) celebrations, locking themselves away in the evenings. Even stranger, the normally loquacious Gnomes have been unwilling to talk to others about the problem.

TELOR, THE PORT OF TERRINOTH

The lands of Telor begin just beyond the walls of Archaut and extend to the Kingless Coast, encompassing both the northern edge of Eventide Forest and the southern portion of the Greatwood. Telor's greatest feature is its coast, the largest extent of civilized coast in Terrinoth. Unique among the baronies, Telor maintains a small naval fleet to deal with pirates and other seaborne threats.

Telor's most prosperous city is Jendra's Harbor, seated on the southern side of the Kingless Bay, where the river of Korina's Tears meets the sea. The port at Jendra's Harbor is one of the few reliable for ships arriving from across the sea, and the city hosts travelers from Lorimor and as far as Al Kalim. The port serves as a departure point for ships sailing to the Torue Albes and even the occasional explorer bound for Zanaga.

Though Baron Echard rules Telor, Countess Sela's stewardship of Jenda's Harbor has granted her greater influence throughout Terrinoth and beyond. This is of no small frustration to Echard, who grows bitter as he frets away his days in the crumbling halls of Grandor's Hold. Sela, meanwhile, continues to cultivate relationships with earls and barons from across Terrinoth, merchants and princes from across the sea, and even the Empress of Lorimor.

Although Telor benefits greatly from Jendra's Harbor, its position on the Kingless Coast invites no shortage of troubles as well. Even as wealth and trade flows through the port, so do cursed artifacts, mysterious priests, and wicked things that conceal their nature under long cloaks and deep hoods. While Jendra's Harbor remains as busy as ever, many of the smaller ports and villages along the coast lie abandoned and half-ruined. Some of these are the results of fierce storms, others the victims of ravening merriods and horrid creatures of the deep. Even the lighthouse of Calem's Peak is said to be haunted by the spirits of its mad keeper and his many victims.



NORTHERN TERRINOTH

In Northern Terrinoth, fertile lands give way to cold earth and long autumns, towns with thick, ice-frosted walls and forests with a hint of darkness. The North conjures up these visions as much as it does of the Mistlands invaders and the stalwart Dunwarr clans. The former remains one of Humanity's greatest enemies, while the latter still one of its greatest allies. The Dwarven holds lie beyond the ken of most Human settlements, though a reflection of their homes can be seen in the Free City of Forge. That city, once conquered by Dragonkin, is now populated by resilient Dwarves and the descendants of Human slaves who were brought to forge the weapons of the draconic hordes.

The North is also a place of stories, and the oral tradition is alive and well here, more so than in any other part of Terrinoth. It is not simply stories and poems that are sung, but practical knowledge as well, ways to survive in the cold, or the best times to sally forth on an expedition and so forth. Dwarves recount the heroics of their ancestors in verses and sagas, while Humans sing refrains praising the bandit heroes of the Hanging Woods and all the greedy lords they once turned into pincushions for arrows after refusing to pay the Robber's Tax. Whether it's the scenery or the weather, grim humor has always had a foothold in northern culture.

The fortress of Caer Loec marks the commonly accepted boundary between norther and souther Terrinoth, along with Exile Peak, a location that has played a part in the stories of many heroes. Wise men have come to the peak to dispense their wisdom to those heroes willing to complete their challenge. Further north lies the Free City of Greyhaven and its famed university, where the secrets of the runebound shards are kept hidden away deep behind magically sealed vaults.

Not far from Greyhaven lies the Pilgrim's Trail through the Shadow Peaks mountain range. The natural magic here is potent enough that the challenge for each pilgrim is different, and those who succeed are allowed to pluck a single fruit from the branches of Shika's Tree, said to bring fortune or glory to those who eat of its flesh. Those who survive the trail often travel onward to Frostgate, to find the inviting warmth of billowing chimneys, the scent of wild tundra boar roasting, and the welcome sound of pouring Dwarven ale.

CARTHRIDGE, THE SILVER BARONY

Abutting Rhynn, the barony of Carthridge extends across the river of Korina's Tears, encompassing the larger part of the Carthmounts. Taking advantage of both abundant farmland and the famed silver mines scattered throughout the mountains, Carthridge enjoys great wealth and influence. This abundance of food and coin attract wild creatures and bandits, respectively. The people seldom worry, however, as Baron Zachareth's knights and foot soldiers are some of the best-equipped and most trained in all Terrinoth. While no serious threat has challenged the troops in centuries, Zachareth requires that they drill ceaselessly and maintain a state of constant readiness.

Despite the unnatural threats lurking within the Mistlands, the people of Carthridge continue to farm the fertile soil that extends to the very edges of the shrouded bogs, as they have for centuries untold. Still, life at the doorstep of the Betrayer has taken its toll on these people, who bar their doors at night and mistrust strangers as a matter of course. Those few visitors to these isolated farms and hamlets often wonder if the residents know of some hidden danger or perhaps have their own secrets to hide.

As across Terrinoth, many ancient wonders can be found in the remote parts of Carthridge. The otherwise small and unremarkable Lake Falstar holds a single island at its center, home to the Temple of Four Storms. Seldom visited, this ancient temple is a monument to a long-forgotten religion. On some nights, amid howling winds blinding rain, flashes of lightning reveal mysterious figures assembled on the small island across the water.

Likely owing to Carthridge's ancient border with the Thirteenth Barony, of all the barons, Zachareth is the only one to speak regularly and emphatically of the threat posed by the Mistlands. While others fail to recognize the threat or choose to downplay its significance, Baron Zachareth agitates for a preemptive invasion of the Mistlands, one he bravely volunteers to lead. So far, the other barons have refused to support such an endeavor. Privately, Barons Xarles and Echard fear that such an action, successful or not, would make a hero of its general, upsetting the balance of power in the council.

RHYNN, THE ENVY OF TERRINOTH

Rhynn is a largely (by baronial standards) cosmopolitan land, possessing a large city, a sophisticated castle, a rapid messenger service to link the villages and keeps, and excellent control of the River Rhynn, giving it a quick means of moving goods and people out of the barony. Rhynn possesses a character that the people of other baronies often consider haughty. Rhynn has benefitted greatly from the Carthmount silver trade, and has grown wealthy as a result.

Baron Greigory rules Rhynn from his seat at Castle Arhynn. An older man with a thick white mustache, Greigory projects an air of leisurely sophistication, at odds with the militant persona of his close ally, Baron Zachareth of Carthridge. Rhynn's heraldry features a tree in honor of the Grandmother Tree in the Greatwood, a sacred symbol of the barony's prosperity. Rhynn's politics are split between Baron Greigory's inner circle and the many lesser nobles who have grown immensely wealthy from their lands' proximity to the Carthmount silver mines. In many ways, the Baron of Rhynn rules as the greatest among equals, his authority more precarious than most barons.

Centuries ago, immigrants from the Free Cities and Lorimor, as well as some from the Dunwarr Holds and Orcish Clans, came to Rhynn in large numbers. These new arrivals, lured by the promise of pay in raw silver, helped the citizens of Rhynn to fight back the goblins and lesser Dragonkin who plagued the Carthmounts. In addition to saving countless lives, they have also enlivened the local culture of Rhynn, and its openness to foreigners is something of an anomaly among the baronies. However, in recent years, more and more stories have emerged of goblins and worse plaguing miners, and the number of missing has reached frightful proportions. The attacks have begun to impact the mines' yield, and so the lords and ladies of Rhynn clamor for a solution, even if that means hiring traveling specialists.

STRANGEHAVEN

The city of Strangehaven rests in the far northern reaches of Terrinoth, a den of outcasts and eccentrics outside of any barony. Far from the reach of the law, Strangehaven is a community in the loosest sense of the word. It's a place where just about anything can be found if one has the gold to pay for it and doesn't care to ask too many questions. Without the protection of the Daqan Lords, or even an official militia or watch, the residents would seem vulnerable to the predations of the horrors of the Mistlands. Yet, despite the occasional Fog Runner who tracks an undead target to the town, Strangehaven has so far been unharmed.

FORTHYN, THE LAST CIVILIZED LAND

Forthyn marks the furthest north boundary of Terrinoth, stretching from the Broken Crags to the Blind Muir Forest. The people of this barony are hardy folk, toughened by the harsh northern winters. The Free City of Frostgate falls within the bounds of Forthyn, which leads to some tension. The barony can't officially issue commands to Frostgate and its fiercely independent ruling council, but the Free City relies on the barony's goodwill for its imports, both in trade with the barony and traders traveling through its lands.

From her home at Highmont, Baroness Adelynn personally oversees the raising and training of Forthyn's famed rocs, as her lineage has done for centuries. The rocs are massive eagles, domesticated long ago and bred for use as war mounts. Adelynn provides these trained rocs to certain other baronies in accordance with longstanding traditions and alliances. Great artificial eyries in the mountains are home to expert breeders and trainers, who have themselves adjusted to the thin, cold mountain air and perfected their arts over many generations.

Recently, however, these folk have faced a new challenge. Unknown thieves have made several attempts to steal rocs, including hatchlings and eggs. Thus far, the roc-masters and the baroness's men-at-arms have foiled these attempts. The persistence of the thieves and the very difficulty of absconding with such fearsome creatures in such perilous terrain speaks to the determination and resourcefulness of the culprits, and some Forthyners fear this indicates a darker power behind the rustlers. For the mighty rocs to fall into the hands of Terrinoth's enemies would bode ill for the Land of Steel.

THE FREE CITIES

The Free Cities of Terrinoth date from the ancient days of King Daqan, who established the first and still greatest of them: Tamalir. After the Dragon Wars, when much of Terrinoth lay in smoking ruins and the barons were unable to rebuild the land on their own, Tamalir and seven other cities recovered independently and gained a measure of self-rule. These eight city-states are required to tithe in support of the defense of the realm and follow the laws of the Council of Barons, but otherwise act as independent city-states. Though each has its own unique nature, together they form an indispensable part of Terrinoth's culture.

DAWNSMOOR

Founded by refugees during the Second Darkness, Dawnsmoor is a city of mixed groups including mercenary companies, nomadic tribes, traveling caravans, and most notably, a large Elven population. Despite its relatively small size, Dawnsmoor's location on the Flametail River gives it excellent access to trade and a water route to nearby Tamalir toward the east. Because of this, the river has become something of an extension of the city itself; many of the city's workers make their way to their riverside homes come nightfall. The rowers and fisherfolk on its rivers and creeks are some of the best in Terrinoth, and many a deepwater ship captain started off as a Dawnsmoor river rat.

Though a significant number of the city's peoples come and go, the Elves retain a steady presence. Elven culture has become embedded within Dawnsmoor, leading the city to develop a warm relationship with the Latari and contain some of the finest archers in Terrinoth. The relationship between Dawnsmoor's Elves and Humans is not always smooth, however; there are frequent trade disputes and jurisdiction conflicts, and also areas where the two cultures simply don't mix well. Many a traveler has unknowingly become ensnared in one of these clashes by simply entering a curiously empty tavern, purchasing a sword from a new weaponsmith, or even stating their love for a particular meat pie during a meal.

Lacking city walls, Dawnsmoor has also become a waypoint for less-than-savory characters looking to take some rest—or some coins. This, along with the largely itinerant nature of its populace, has helped give the city a reputation as a place where almost anything can be purchased or contracted, no matter the legality. Some folk have relocated to the smaller villages around the city, on the river, or on the moors of the Misty Plains to the south. Settlements like Brightvale spring up and consolidate, slowly becoming hamlets. Even in these areas, though, there is an undercurrent of the disreputable to be found, especially when deeds need to be done outside of official attention.

FORGE

Located at the base of the great mountain shrine of Yrthwright's Forge to the west of Tamalir, the city of Forge is one of many dedicated to the art of the smithy. Although Forge was once an ancient Dwarven stronghold, Humans became



part of it during the Third Darkness, when its conqueror, the Dragonlord Avox, demanded that it produce greater quantities of arms and armor with the metal from its mines.

That destructive occupation means that much of Forge is relatively new, as are many of the homesteads that were constructed to house the enslaved Humans. Many Humans reside in Burrow Town, a village clinging to the slopes of the mountain and even cutting into the rock itself, but others are scattered across the city, mixing with the Dwarven enclaves—something that has not always led to smooth relations.

Sadly, even though Humans and Dwarves fought as one to rebel against the dragons and now hold yearly celebrations to honor the event, tensions between them remain high to this day. Dwarves who were forcibly displaced during the war returned to find Humans seemingly everywhere, outsiders almost as unwanted as any other invader. The Humans in return see the Dwarves as callous about their former slavery and unappreciative of their own efforts to help end the draconic occupation. There are few open conflicts, but many fear it is only a matter of time before one poorly chosen word or perceived slight triggers rioting, or worse.

Despite the tensions, the city includes perhaps the finest smithies in Terrinoth. Deep in the mountain, primal flames burn, hot and pure enough to allow for the crafting of incredible weapons and works of art. Only a few aspiring apprentices eager to learn the secrets of forging metal are taken annually, and some must wait long years before openings appear. No small amount of smithy business comes from travelers who seek to have their broken blades or holy relics restored in the cleansing fire of the mountain. Due to its smiths' exceptional metalworking skills, Forge uniquely avoids sending tithes of labor, gold, or crops to the Daqan Lords and instead provides only arms and equipment.

Frostgate

Frostgate is the northernmost of the Free Cities and the entry to the wild, untamed lands of eternal winter. Barely a city for much of the year, Frostgate is more akin to a seasonal community, one whose fortunes rise and fall with coming of winter. Summers see the city almost emptied as its denizens leave to hunt and farm before the cold returns. As the summer comes to an end, however, Frostgate blooms, filling with those seeking to ride out the snow and ice in some semblance of comfort. The hunters and trappers, herders and farmers, tradespeople and their retinues, all return to the city to meet and conduct their necessary business. The natural riches of the Blind Muir Forest, the shipping lane of the River of Tears, and the abundant minerals of the nearby Shadow Peaks make Frostgate one of the only places in the region where raw materials can be easily procured and goods manufactured.

During the crowded winter months, fields of yurts press up against the very walls of Frostgate, while industry pushes on relentlessly into the night. In this season, Frostgate can rival Tamalir in size and scale, with temporary theater houses, courts, temples, and shops erected in a matter of days. So great is the constant revelry and cacophonous noise that one can hear the city long before ever seeing it. To ensure good harvests and successful hunts, the Northern Tribes perform a number of rituals at this time, the greatest of which are the Trials of Frostgate.



The trials use a variety of sacred elixirs and herbs to access ancestral spirits in a series of challenges. To prove themselves worthy, contestants enter spirit planes to face challenges of strength, cunning, and courage, often against aspects of mighty animals. Those who succeed gain the blessings of the spirits and are marked with tattoos proclaiming them Champions of Frostgate, a powerful reward in this Free City. Before venturing into the North, bands of travelers tend to assemble in Frostgate, as it is the sole community in the region outside of a small colony of Latari among the evergreens. To these groups of travelers, the tattoo can be a sign that its bearer possesses adequate prowess and is ready to face the dangers ahead.

GREYHAVEN

One cannot speak of Greyhaven without mentioning its hallowed university; indeed, few realize that it was the town that came first and not the other way around. Though the records of its founding are sketchy, most hold that it was Timmorran himself who founded the northern city, perhaps for refugees lost in the wilderness and those seeking to forget the horrors of the First Darkness. He may have had other reasons for picking this location, however.

The nearby confluence of two rivers as well as the town's accessibility made it a natural trading nexus, and it grew over the years into a cosmopolitan center of learning. Legends grew around it as well, such as that the Fae were repelled by the nearby waters, or the undead could not be raised within its gates. Though never proven, these tales did draw the attention of those of an arcane bent and, as a result, the greatest university in Terrinoth was constructed here solely to study magic. Great stone halls were erected and deep dungeons were excavated for dangerous experiments, while the wisest and most prominent wizards from every court and city were recruited to become instructors and masters.

Greyhaven now boasts the foremost magical colleges in all of Terrinoth, perhaps in all the world, and its wizards are famed for their wisdom and dedication to the magical arts. The Daqan Lords draw their battlemages from Greyhaven, and most of the current knowledge of rune magic originates from it. The university also possesses the largest number of known runebound shards of any city in Terrinoth, and its mages frequently use them in their more exotic and powerful experiments.

Greyhaven boasts colleges devoted to all the arts, from history to farming to rhetoric, but most specialize in different aspects of magical lore and practice. Attending means long days of study, long nights of reading, and frequent practice sessions that only rarely lead to catastrophic explosions. Graduation, though, means recognition that can ensure a long (if dangerous) career. Even those not attending often travel here just to observe lectures and practice with adepts to gain greater understanding of their own magical items or skills.

NEREKHALL

This is a city of paranoia, though some might say for good reason. Long ago, in a titanic fall from grace, a member of its Council of Wizards fell to the corrupting influence of the Ynfernael and opened a portal to that blighted realm. Otherworldly monsters poured forth in a massive tide, threatening the western regions of Terrinoth. Unwilling to allow the forces of darkness to gain a foothold, the Daqan Lords delivered a swift and brutal response. Whole families of sorcerers were eradicated in a brutal purge to force the portal closed. Those who were allowed to live did so under careful, unceasing watch.

Haunted by the fear of once again falling to the lure of the Ynfernael, the Priests of Pollux, who have a large cult in Nerekhall, created the Ironbound: living suits of armor beyond the corruption of mortal beings, immune to magic both malign and beneficial. Made from black iron, these constructs exceeded the expectations of the artificers involved in their creation and soon replaced most of Nerekhall's militia. Today, they are a common sight on the streets and safeguard the citizenry against flagrant acts of evil magic. Those who dare speak of witnessing malfunction or failure in the metal automatons are harshly punished for spreading malicious rumors.



Despite its dark past, Nerekhall has flourished, much to the suspicion of the inquisitors and templars of the baronies and the Church of Kellos. Its magistrates rule harshly, insisting that fear and control are the only protections against corruption. No stone goes unturned, no experiment unnoticed, no tome unmarked as they surveil nearly every aspect of life in Nerekhall and promote its image. Nevertheless, they are especially proud of their renowned school, known only as the Academy. This trusted wellspring of cultured learning is a place where society's elite can engage in exotic experiments and research rare tomes free of petty scrutiny due to their exalted rank. Its faculty members seem even more eager than their students to explore every aspect of magic and other arts in their quest to establish Nerekhall's great legacy.

RIVERWATCH

Standing proud over the harbor city of Riverwatch is a tremendous statue known as the Old Man. Looking over a high cliff, lantern in hand, this colossus is the perfect symbol for Riverwatch and its place in the greater history of Terrinoth. Initially founded as a military outpost of the Penacor Kings, Riverwatch has since risen to become one of the most self-sufficient of all the Free Cities, and one dedicated to the defense of the southern portion of the continent.

The arguable seat of power in Riverwatch is the Watch, which strategically overlooks southern Terrinoth. More than a castle, more than a garrison of soldiers, it is a cultural institution, a sign of the city's strength and martial history. It was the first building constructed on the site of what would become Riverwatch, and the soldiers who garrisoned it took its name as their duty. It is here where riders are trained in the arts of horsemanship and sword fighting. A special unit of riders acts in a vital role even in times of peace, for the city maintains a messenger service that reaches the far corners of Terrinoth. These Riverwatch Riders have proven the value of fast, reliable communication in ending many a threat before it becomes calamity.

To the south of Riverwatch lies the fortress of Sundergard, one of many such installations that dot the landscape. Due to the sheer number of troops and riders of Riverwatch's militia and permanent rangers, it often serves as their remote base of operations. From Sundergard, they serve as the first line of defense against dangers issuing from the Mountains of Despair to the south.

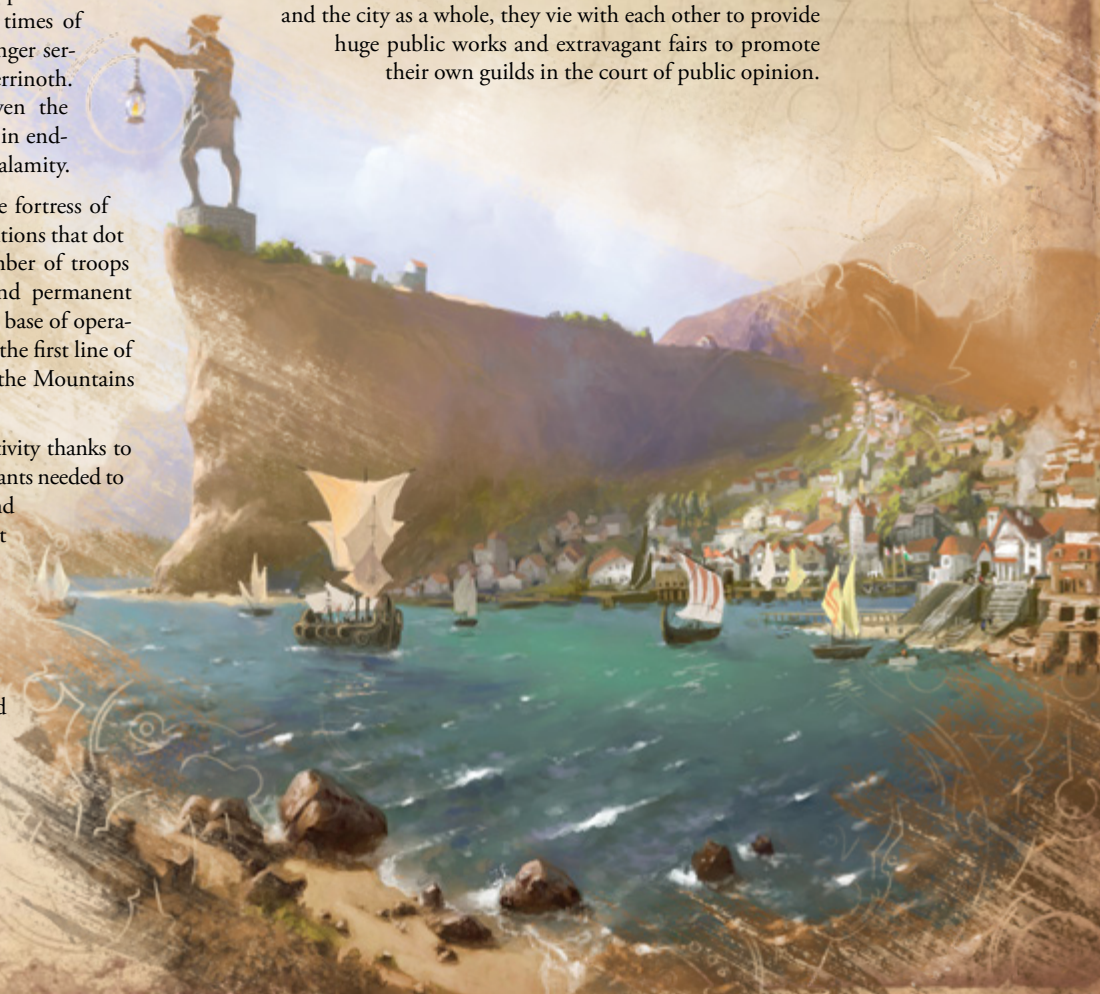
Riverwatch sees healthy business activity thanks to the intricate chain of traders and merchants needed to supply the city's thousands of horses and riders. A large contingent of Orcs call it home, and even more pass through it in their travels. Initially from the Broken Plains, their knowledge of taming wild beasts and animal husbandry has proven invaluable, and their knowledge of the hazards across Terrinoth and beyond perhaps even more so.

TAMALIR

More than one legendary adventure has started in one of the many taverns of Tamalir, the largest and wealthiest of the Free Cities. It is said that every inhabitant has a story to tell of seeing some warrior or mage before their name became enshrined in history. This is not by chance, for Tamalir has always had a special place in the history of Terrinoth. It was the first city to be granted independence—through a charter granted by King Daqan himself—as well as the seat of the Elder Kings during their reign. Its prime location along the Flametail River has long made it a locus of trade for all of Terrinoth as well as a destination for migrants. All roads lead to Tamalir, and its people are proud of their heritage and prominence.

Its dominion extends to encompass nearly the whole of Blackwing Swamp and Red Bridge, a famous crossing known for its gambling and rowdiness. The finest inns, the grandest playhouses, and the most skilled artisans of most every craft and art call Tamalir their home, and there is little that cannot be found in its seemingly endless shops and bazaars. Should the substantial militia not be enough for Tamalir's defense, its leaders can call upon the vast swaths of adventurers and sell-swords who frequent the city's back alleys and guild halls to have an army ready to fight in mere hours.

As Tamalir is the largest city in Terrinoth, trade dominates nearly every aspect of life there. The flow of coin is the lifeblood of the city and surrounding countryside, and as such, its leaders are intimately connected to its business interests. Rather than being led by a mayor or other easily swayed ruler, Tamalir is governed by a council of Guildmasters, each considered an equal to the others in every respect. Ruthless, cunning, and utterly dedicated to the well-being of their guilds and the city as a whole, they vie with each other to provide huge public works and extravagant fairs to promote their own guilds in the court of public opinion.



Today, Tamalir is still in a state of recovery. Devastated in both the Second and Third Darknesses, Tamalir is a city built upon bones, upon the ashes and headstones of generations past. Many of Tamalir's buildings are relatively new, constructed only within the last few centuries, and the city has yet to fully reach its previous majesty. Despite the destruction, though, it remains the preeminent location for making contacts, outfitting expeditions, and learning of events in faraway lands. For anyone claiming to be an adventurer, Tamalir is likely their home away from home, where they rest and recover before once again venturing into the lost ruins and forgotten catacombs of Terrinoth.

VYNELVALE

Of all the Free Cities, none are as holy as the monastery city of Vynelvale. Located to the southeast of Riverwatch at the juncture of the Guardian Hills and the Great Plains, Vynelvale is the administrative and educational center devoted to Kellos, God of Life, Flame, and Justice. It is a popular pilgrimage site and houses the greatest library in Terrinoth outside of Greyhaven University.

According to the current Grand Hierophants of Kellos, soon after the Second Darkness there was once a vile necromancer near Vynelvale who sought to create an undead empire for himself. A band of heroes assembled to defeat this evil, but were struck down. The last survivor, then moments from a sorcerous death, called out for aid and swore eternal service to any who would come. His eyes clouded, and his body became wreathed in flame. Raising his hand, which shone with a light bright enough to make the sun seem but a flickering candle, the invigorated survivor smote the necromancer with one wave and banished his undead army forever. As his sight returned, he saw what had been done, and knew that a divine power had interceded.

He kept the promise, and began preaching of the intercession and the god's power. Others who remembered tales of cleansing fire from the Second Darkness, and had lit an Eternal Fire here in remembrance, soon joined him. Together, they established a church to the being he believed had aided him: Kellos.

His followers named him the first Hierophant of Kellos and led the construction of what would become the Grand Cathedral of Kellos. Upon his death, he became canonized as the church's first saint. Later hierophants added wings, halls, bastions, and other constructions, turning the cathedral into a structure to rival the greatest castles of the Daqan Lords. Behind its towering walls, hundreds of initiates silently tend gardens and fields, while the innumerable scribes spend the years copying holy texts and other rare documents.

It is here where the Priests and Knights of Kellos are trained in the greatest secrets of their god. Able to banish the taint of darkness with little more than a touch, they are beloved by the people. From the cathedral, they go out into the world to smite the undead with cleansing flames. The many pilgrims traveling to Vynelvale for healing loudly cheer them as the Priests and Knights pass, easily recognizing their distinctive red and gold colors and the burning hand of Kellos each wears on their armor.

LIFE IN THE LAND OF STEEL

Perhaps due to its centralized location, Terrinoth has a wide variety of inhabitants. Humans are very common, having resided here for many centuries, and can be found everywhere from long-standing Free Cities to small settlements that might only last a few seasons. Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, and more also live in its villages and wilderness regions, living (mostly) in peace with Humankind. The wildlands between Terrinoth's civilized regions, though, also host innumerable goblin infestations and other dangerous creations, including dragons who remained or were hatched here after the end of the Third Darkness. Note that razorwings (see page 147 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook) often can be seen in the skies of Terrinoth, ready to attack unwary adventurers.

BARONIAL KNIGHT (RIVAL)

It is the dream of many a soldier to be elevated to the position of knight. Not only does it bring honor and pride to their family name, but having a baron's favor and a position in their retinue is most often the key to advancement later in life. Many seek further glory in a knightly order, such as the Knights of the Greatwood, or the legendary Citadel Guard. Tougher than the average swordsman, baronial knights are usually armed with either a long spear or a sword and a shield to ward off blows.



NPC PROFILES

The NPCs presented here have all modifications to derived attributes and characteristics from abilities, talents, and items added to their profile. If an NPC has multiple weapons, we assume they are using the optimal configuration.



Baronial knights begin their training to fight on foot before being accepted into one of the equestrian orders. From their sworn baron, these warriors receive a small stipend as well as their weapons, distinctive plate armor, and extensive martial training. As a result of that training, average baronial knights are stalwart and experienced enough to hold their own against far more powerful foes, at least until reinforcements can arrive.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	2	2	3	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	16	4 | 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Discipline 2, Leadership 1, Melee (Light) 3, Resilience 2, Riding 3, Vigilance 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: None.
Equipment: Sword (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1), lance (Melee [Light]; Damage 9; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown; a lance can only be used while mounted and can only be used to attack immediately after performing a maneuver to engage the target), large shield (Melee [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 2, Deflection 2, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown), plate armor (+2 soak, +1 defense), war mount (see page 105).

DRAGON HYBRID (RIVAL)

Dragon hybrids are cruel abominations, relics from the age of the Third Darkness. They are the result of depraved experiments of the most inventive draconic invaders, who required loyal servants with both the cunning of Humans and the resiliency and magic of dragon-kind.

The results of these experiments were largely deemed miserable failures, as dragon hybrids were neither as strong as dragons nor as intelligent as them (or even Humans). They served as foot soldiers and were discarded after the end of the Dragon Wars, left to fend for themselves in the wilds of Terrinoth.

Raised in the harshest life imaginable, dragon hybrids are vicious fighters, and time has only made them deadlier. Some possess wings, others deadly talons, and still others a hint of the fiery breath so commonly associated with their larger draconic ancestors. Like dragons, they have a hunger for magic in all its forms. As such, hybrids often delve into Terrinoth's many ruins, or sell their swords to sorcerers and wizards willing to pay their price in magical artifacts. In recent years, they have become more accepted in Dragonkin society, and fight alongside other Dragonkin as inheritors of Margath's legacy.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	1	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	15	1 | 0

Skills: Brawl 2, Coercion 2, Melee (Heavy) 1, Ranged 2, Resilience 2, Vigilance 1
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once).
Abilities: Draconic Heritage (dragon hybrids reduce the damage they take from fire and similar sources by 3), Flyer (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).
Equipment: Greatsword (Melee [Heavy]; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Pierce 1, Unwieldy 3), fiery breath (Ranged; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Blast 6, Burn 1, Prepare 1, Slow-Firing 2), talons (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), scale armor (+2 soak).

FERAL DRAGON (NEMESIS)

Dragons are perhaps most powerful beings in all of Mennara. No one knows where they come from or what their purpose is when they embark on their destructive flights. What is known is that all dragons possess an insatiable appetite for magical objects and can detect magic from hundreds of leagues away. During the Third Darkness, also known as the Dragon Wars, they plundered countless holdings for their magical artifacts, leaving their other treasures untouched or burning them to ash.

Feral dragons—uncultured, savage remnants of the Dragon Wars—occasionally appear and rampage across Terrinoth as little more than violent beasts. Suffused with magic, dragons are very nearly impossible for the average soldier to kill, and even mighty heroes must rely on the aid of runebound shards to have any hope of slaying the beasts.

As dragons have the power of flight and a mastery of magic great enough to level cities, a dragon sighting is a sure sign to flee. As everyone knows, rarely does anything but doom follow.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	4	2	4	4	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
8	41	20	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 4, Coercion 4, Cool 3, Discipline 4, Ranged 4, Resilience 4, Vigilance 3.
Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character twice), Swift (a dragon does not perform additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Flyer (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Silhouette 4, Sweep Attack (a dragon may spend ⩓ from a Brawl check to hit one additional engaged opponent that would be no more difficult to attack than the original target, dealing base damage +1 damage per ✲), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all opponents must make a **Daunting** [◆◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).
Equipment: Fiery breath (Ranged; Damage 12; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 12, Burn 3, Slow-Firing 2), claws (Brawl; Damage 11; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Vicious 3).

GOBLIN (MINION)

Goblins are smelly, small, and decidedly cunning when they wish to be. On average, goblins in Terrinoth stand shorter than a Dwarf and are usually possessed of a cowardly personality, a valuable instinct in a place where death is usually quick and painful. Lacking any real sense of courage or tactics, goblins usually attack in packs, raiding and stealing what they can before being chased off by the local guard or an angry farmer with a pitchfork. Though it seems they should be easy to exterminate, goblins are quite difficult to completely root out from their caves and homes. Breeding quickly in the dark, they can rebuild their numbers in a matter of months.

In their willingness to steal anything and everything they find valuable (mostly food and shiny things), goblins are more of a resilient, destructive pest than anything. Still, they must not be underestimated, for though they are cowardly, they can also be turned into a semi-coherent fighting force by a leader who offers the correct motivation…

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	1	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	4	1 | 0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Cool, Deception, Melee (Light), Ranged, Stealth.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Dark Vision (when making skill checks, goblins remove up to ■■ imposed due to darkness), Opportunistic (goblins inflict 1 additional damage with successful melee attacks on prone or immobilized targets).
Equipment: Jagged blade (Melee [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]) or crude bow (Ranged; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Unwieldy 2), wooden buckler (Melee [Light]; Damage 2; Critical 6; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Inaccurate 2), pointy teeth (Brawl; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), grimy patchwork armor (+1 soak).

GOBLIN WITCHER (RIVAL)

Few would consider goblins intelligent enough to utilize magic. However, there are indeed some of exceptional cleverness who have managed to not only discover their sorcerous abilities, but also harness them to a degree. Adventurers who come across witchers often take them for mere goblin leaders, but soon learn better when bolts of energy are hurled their way. Like all goblins, witchers are cowardly and avaricious, but with their access to dark magics they are able to brutally slay foes from which most of their kin would flee in terror.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	16	1 | 1

Skills: Cool 2, Deception, Arcana 3, Knowledge (Forbidden) 2, Stealth 1.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once), Dark Insight (use Knowledge [Forbidden] to determine spell effects).
Abilities: Dark Vision (when making skill checks, goblins remove up to ■■ imposed due to darkness), Spiteful Curse (add ▢▢ to magic actions that target a character who has previously inflicted wounds on the goblin witcher during this encounter).
Spells: Goblin witchers can choose any magic action allowed for the Arcana skill, and may select additional spell effects as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Agonizing Hex (choose a target at short or medium range for this attack and make an **Average** [◆◆] **Arcana check**. If successful, this magic attack inflicts 6 damage +1 damage per ✲, with the Disorient 2 and Knockdown qualities).

Bad Luck (choose a target at short or medium range and make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Arcana check**. If successful, the target decreases the ability of any skill checks they make by 1 until the end of the goblin witcher's next turn, and when the target makes a check, may change one ■ to a face displaying ✕. The goblin witcher may maintain these effects by performing the concentrate maneuver).

Equipment: Bone staff (+4 damage to magic attacks; the first Range effect added does not increase difficulty; when used to cast a spell that inflicts 1 or more wounds, caster heals 1 wound), pointy teeth (Brawl; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), robed bone armor (+1 soak, +1 defense).

GREYHAVEN WIZARD (NEMESIS)

To the outside world, the wizards of Greyhaven are a reclusive bunch, hiding away in their towers to augur the arcane truths of rune magic away from prying eyes. To those who have fought beside them, they are some of the mightiest allies one could ask for.

Those wizards with the aptitude and dedication to see combat are known as battlemages, and they are often deployed to support battalions of infantry and knights. Most are more than capable of defending themselves, however, with runic bolts of fire or lightning. Some can even channel rune magic into the ground, causing limbs of soil and stone to rise up and smash their enemies. For many adventurers, though, it is their knowledge that is most desired. Scholars of Greyhaven are privy to the mysteries concerning the runebound shards and how they came into the world, and they can offer much to those desiring to know more of the arcane.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	4	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	12	18	1 | 1

Skills: Arcana 3, Cool 2, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Lore) 4, Runes 3.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once).

Abilities: None.

Spells: A wizard can choose any magic action allowed for the Arcana skill, and may select additional spell effects, as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Fireball (choose one target at short or medium range and make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Arcana check**; if successful, this magic attack inflicts 8 damage +1 damage per ✲, with the Blast 4 and Burn 4 qualities).

Magic Shield (make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Arcana check**; if successful, until the end of the wizard's next turn, reduce the damage of all hits against them by one, plus one for every ✲ ✲, and the wizard gains +3 defense. The wizard can maintain these effects with the concentrate maneuver).

Equipment: Magic staff (add +4 damage to magic attacks; the first Range effect added does not increase difficulty), heavy robes (+1 defense).

IRONBOUND (RIVAL)

The ironbound are the unfeeling, ever-watching eyes of the sorcerers of Nerekhall. Mechanical soldiers originally created to police against necromantic and other dark acts, they have far surpassed the expectations of their creators, and they now form the majority of Nerekhall's military forces.

Armed with long spears and heavy shields, and covered in armor plates with special runic wards that give them further immunity to destructive magic, the ironbound are also Terrinoth's strongest response to its magic-wielding enemies. The ironbound lack initiative and drive, though, and can often be defeated through cunning and ingenuity. This can prove useful for travelers who run afoul of Nerekhall's many laws against uncivil behavior or its antimagic ordinances (or who merely cross the wrong noble) and face the wrath of these metal guardians.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	1	1	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	15	3 | 2

Skills: Discipline 3, Melee (Heavy) 3, Melee (Light) 3, Resilience 3, Vigilance 3.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Graven Wards (increase the difficulty of all spells that target an ironbound twice), Strength of Iron (an ironbound can wield a Melee [Heavy] weapon in one hand), Watchful (ironbound add ■ ■ to Perception and Vigilance checks to detect the use or effects of Magic skills).

Equipment: Halberd (Melee [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Pierce 3), large shield (Melee [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 2, Deflection 2, Inaccurate 2, Knockdown).



PRIEST OF KELLOS (RIVAL)

Kellos is the Red-Handed God, a fiery deity whose presence is anathema to anything tainted by the foul magic of undeath or other dark sorceries. Though there is much debate on whether Kellos was just a hero or truly a god, none will deny that his priests are worthy allies in the fight to keep Terrinoth safe from the terrors that lurk in the dark.

In battle, Kellos's priests most often use the power of flame, the symbol of their deity, to smite evil. This can be as simple as conjuring mystical flame around their hand or weapon, or casting out gouts of living flame to consume their foes. Their flames can also heal, and some have claimed they can even resurrect the dead, though this must surely be myth. Encountering these priests is often a double-edged sword; they can offer aid to the sick and dying but may also serve as an indication that the undead or other dangers are nearby.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	2	3	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	16	1 | 1

Skills: Charm 2, Discipline 2, Divine 2, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Melee (Light) 2, Vigilance 1.
Talents: Flames of Kellos (when casting an Attack spell, this character can add the Fire effect with no increase in difficulty, but can never add the Ice effect).
Abilities: None.



Spells: Priests of Kellos can choose any magic action allowed for the Divine skill, and may select additional spell effects, as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Healing Spark (choose a target within short range and make an **Average (◆◆) Divine check**. If the check succeeds, the target heals 1 wound per ✲ and 1 strain per ⩓).

Righteous Blaze (choose one target within short range and make an **Average (◆◆) Divine check**. If successful, this magic attack inflicts 3 damage +1 damage per uncanceled ✲, with the Burn 3 quality. Against an undead target, the attack inflicts +2 damage per ✲ instead).
Equipment: Mace (Melee [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]), heavy robes (+1 defense).

RUNE GOLEM (NEMESIS)

Considered by many to be Terrinoth's mightiest living weapons, the rune golems are hulking engines of destruction and the apex of runic magic and wizardry. They are impervious to all but the mightiest blows and highly resistant to the ravages of time.

Unlike the Ironbound, rune golems are not automata, but appear to be semi-sentient beings with memories and the potential to develop personalities. As their name implies, all rune golems are kept alive with one or more runebound shards. It is the shard that seems to determine their attributes; shards marked with a rune of fire, it is said, make for golems that are quick to leap into combat and can project flame.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	3	2	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
7	25	22	0 | 0

Skills: Cool 2, Discipline 2, Brawl 3, Melee (Light) 3, Resilience 3.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of checks targeting this enemy once).
Abilities: Four-armed (a rune golem may make a combined combat check with its massive swords and stone fists without increasing the difficulty), Elemental Runes (each rune golem takes on different traits depending on its animating rune. Select one rune for each individual golem. Fire: add ✲ ✲ to checks the rune golem makes to determine initiative. Ice: upgrade the difficulty of social skill checks targeting the golem once. Lightning: the rune golem may perform a second maneuver without suffering strain. Stone: the rune golem's soak increases to 8) other runes can be used at the GM's discretion), Silhouette 2.
Equipment: Massive swords (Melee [Light]; Damage 9; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Linked 1, Pierce 1), stone fists (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Concussive 1, Disorient 3, Linked 1).

SPLIG, KING OF ALL GOLBINS (NEMESIS)

Goblin hierarchy is a simple thing: the biggest goblin is the leader. Though the title of "King," "Queen," or "Monarch" might be a stretch, there can be no doubt that these larger goblins can pose a serious threat to even seasoned adventurers.

Splig, the self-styled "King of All Goblins," is one such goblin. Taller than his minions by several heads, and several hundred pounds heavier, Splig embodies the two major virtues of goblin-kind: cowardice and avarice. Using his large size and brutal demeanor, he intimidates his goblin lackeys into running headlong into readied enemy weapons, and he has even been known to grab one to use as a living shield when an adventurer's blade comes too close. Should things even hint at going badly, he quickly retreats—all the while calling for his minions to keep fighting to the end.

Like many goblins, Splig harbors grand ambitions that far surpass his worldly ability. Forever wandering from county to county and from cave hideout to cave hideout, he has never wanted for absurd schemes to gain gold and power. Splig often serves as discreet muscle for necromancers and dark wizards who do not wish to draw the attention of the holy warriors of Kellos; he usually accepts such jobs in hopes of stealing whatever he can and quietly slipping out the back when adventurers inevitably show up.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	2	3	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	20	11	0 | 0

Skills: Coercion 2, Cool 2, Melee (Heavy) 3, Leadership 2, Resilience 2.
Talents: Whirlwind (Splig may take the Whirlwind action; suffering 4 strain and making a Brawl or Melee attack against the engaged adversary with the highest difficulty and defense. Increase the difficulty of the check once. If the combat check succeeds, each adversary engaged with Splig suffers one hit, dealing damage equal to the attack's base damage +1 per uncanceled ✲).
Abilities: King of the Goblins! (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting Splig once for each minion group of goblins within short range of him. If the check fails, one individual minion is defeated), Lucky Escape (when Splig would be defeated due to exceeding his wound threshold or strain threshold, or for any reason, he may spend 1 Story Point to instead escape in a suitably fortunate and cowardly fashion. All other goblins in the encounter are immediately defeated).
Equipment: The Club of All Goblins (Melee [Heavy]; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Inaccurate 1, Knockdown, Vicious 2), stolen patchwork armor (+1 soak).

TAMALIR GUILDMASTER (RIVAL)

The guilds of Tamalir wield a tremendous amount of power; a council of Guildmasters governs the city and its surrounding territories. Guildmasters are tasked with overseeing some part of their guild's business or their guild in its entirety. In either case, they jealously guard their power and make life very difficult for any who cross them.

Drawing the ire of any of Tamalir's Guildmasters can make one's life suddenly difficult, often without the source being apparent. All a traveler might know is that prices are raised unexpectedly, porters become unruly, or meals acquire an upsetting flavor. Bloodshed is bad for business, so nonviolent methods are the first course of action when Guildmasters wish to remove a troublesome opponent. This can be anything from a complete denial of a guild's services to a decree of outright banishment beyond the city limits.

While Guildmasters may not seem the most intimidating of opponents, they rarely travel (or fight) alone, keeping several burly apprentices around to deal with dustups. Thanks to the extensive treasuries and personal armories of the individual guildhalls, Guildmasters are usually well equipped and thus fear little within their city.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	3	3	2	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	13	0 | 0

Skills: Charm 3, Cool 2, Deception 2, Discipline 2, Negotiation 3.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Certain You Want To Do This? (when targeting a Guildmaster with a check, a character suffers 1 strain).
Equipment: Dagger (Melee [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]), fine clothing.



As we rode west, I noticed a marked increase in the strange, hooded gazes I have been receiving from occasional fellow travelers on the western road. My style of dress marks me as foreign, I know, and my accent as well. But this strange hostility, so different from my reception among the Dwarves, was an unwelcome turn.

I had, almost immediately upon riding out into the sunny morning, begun to have doubts about my new destination. So many of my friends and companions have shared a dark and foreboding sense of fear concerning that mysterious realm. Yet one person's story had convinced me to toss all of that advice aside and ride pell-mell into the fog?

But the idea was there, and it was a certainty that I had been able to find what I seek nowhere else.

And the stories couldn't possibly be true, could they?

There are revenants in Al-Kalim, of course. But an ancient evil lich lord threatening an entire continent hundreds and hundreds of years after his probable death? And with a veritable army of the undead marching in his wake?

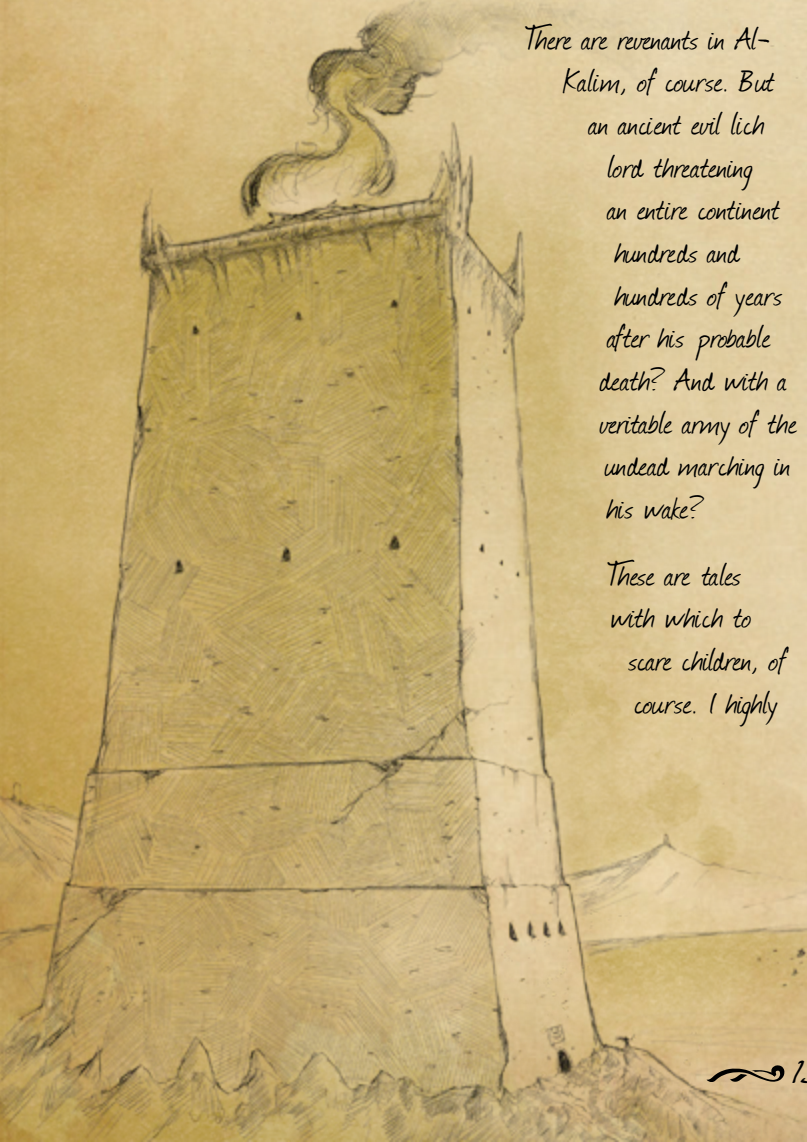
These are tales with which to scare children, of course. I highly doubt there is more than a grain of truth to them under the bright light of A'tar's sun.

However, as I moved west, there was no doubt but that the few folk I saw were among the most reticent, suspicious, and downright terrified of all the people I had so far met in Terrinoth. On those nights when I was lucky enough to have encountered an inn under whose roof I might find rest, what little talk there was in the common rooms was done in hushed tones and, more often than not, turned upon what might be happening within the Mistlands. Tales of supposed raids by fell creatures that came sweeping down out of the fog at night to burn, kill, and terrorize innocent villagers were common.

To the best of my ability to discern, all of these stories were being told second- and thirdhand. None of the people I encountered had seen any of these terrors themselves. The awful events always seemed to have struck someone's great-aunt several townships over, or "an old gaffer from back home-away." Regardless, it was clear to these people that the events they described were very real indeed.

There was such terror in their eyes as they spoke, I had no doubt that something was happening ahead of me. I discredited the claim that the restless dead were to blame, but it did make me fear that perhaps breaching the border and finding this Karkadahn is going to be more difficult than I had at first thought. If the Mistlands truly are haunted by the dead, and I am riding into an accursed place, I find my journey does not appeal to me at all.

The road was fairly well maintained compared to most of the other stretches that have passed beneath poor Ibn's abused hooves, although still nothing compared to the excellent civil engineering of the Dwarves. The land to the north of the road was mostly rolling hills, with high mountains visible in the distance. To the south was more of the same, without the looming peaks, until, on the fourth or fifth day out of Thelgrim, I saw the first watchtower standing proud on a distant hill.



One of the many watch towers I encountered in this region. Most were in a much poorer state of repair than this one, though.

It was impossible to tell, of course, but something about the architecture made me feel like the tower had been oriented to stare directly at me, or at least northward, to what lay behind me on the far side of the road.

I turned to peer into the distance and could discern no threat there, nor any clear difference in the terrain in that direction compared to that of the land to the south. But not long after I rode past that first tower, I came swiftly to another, with the same squat construction, the same northward orientation, and I felt a shiver sweep down my back. Superstition was all well and good, but I had never met a lord who would spend the kind of coin these watch houses must have cost for the sake of a simpleminded fantasy.

Then, several days later, we rode up to the sight of yet another tower, except there wasn't one. There was a scorched stain upon the top of a distant hill crowned with tumbled stones, and I thought, as I peered nervously at the far-off ruin, that there were tatters of blue and white fabric scattered across the hill. Flags? Or, maybe, uniforms?

I rode on, not really wishing to know, and encountered no further towers to the south, save an occasional ruin that looked far more ancient than that first, fresh wreck had been.

The western road out of Thelgrim runs, eventually, to the city of Strangehaven, my next destination. It lies hard by the border of the Mistlands, and I knew it would make the perfect launching point for my foray into that mysterious land, if I can gather the nerve to follow through with my intention.

For more than a day before our arrival, I couldn't help but notice how rich and lush the farmlands around us were. Fields were bursting with crops of all colors and descriptions, and I was reminded wistfully of the Fields of Fertility, or maybe even the distant Aymhelin.

And yet, for every tended field, there were two lying fallow, as if there were not enough workers to till the soil. This, more than the direst, most dramatic warnings I had yet received, filled me with a sense of grave misgiving. If the dark threat is so imminent in this region as to drive the peasants from farmland this productive, then the danger is most probably very real.

Strangehaven is a stark contrast to the verdant fields stretching away into the distance all around. The structures of the town are a mix of squat, dark-grey stone and tarred wood, functional and ugly. I marveled, for a moment, at how different the same material can look depending upon the culture using it. The Dwarves have wrought intricate and artistic wonders with their granites and marbles. Al-Kalim gleams with polished sandstone and glittering mosaics. And then, there is the artless, ugly complexity of Archaut and the cold functionality of Greyhaven.

Of them all, however, Strangehaven was by far the least welcoming.

There seemed to be an invisible, oppressive cloud hanging over the city that cast everything that happened there into a dim, unpleasant shade. The streets smelled of sickly sweet incense and ancient dust: a markedly unpleasant combination. What inns and taverns there were did little to alleviate the nagging stench, as the smells of food and drink, both past prime and long since ready for the midden, only gave the overall aroma a robust aftertaste that scratched at the back of the throat and caught unpleasantly in the nose.

The people of the town kept their own counsel, moving brusquely from one piece of business to another. Whatever it was they were doing, they were taking it very seriously. They cast glances of suspicion and hooded anger at me when they took any notice at all. There was, of course, a sense of stress and fear that made perfect sense given the dread reputation of the land across the border so near to hand, but at the same time, there seemed a more personal flavor to the emotions.

Great A'tar knows that I try to give all the creatures wandering this world the benefit of the doubt, but it became clear to me almost immediately that Strangehaven was a den of outcasts, exiles, and rogues.

I spent some time in a tavern or two, trying to subtly ascertain the best way to enter the Mistlands, but I was met at every instance with hostile glares and disparaging silence. My conviction grew that many of these people know more concerning the stone in my pouch and its mysterious heritage than others I have met along my travels. However, I also realized that none of them would ever tell me, a stranger, a single thing about any mysterious secrets they had paid the-gods-alone-know-what prices to learn themselves.

And on top of everything else, what mead there was to be had was sour, not the clear, sweet drink I had come to expect.

A horrifying thought had been slowly working its way into my mind over the last several days as I journeyed westward, seeing far more recent ruins slowly replace the ancient bones of the past all around me. It was clear that this land was plagued with evil—and had been plagued by evil for many ages now.

What if the powers that had laid Terrinoth low, whatever evil that might be, now so pervasive throughout the many realms of the north, were somehow to reach down into Al-Kalim?

This thought, now looming larger and larger in my mind, added new impetus to my quest. If these dark forces were to ever turn their eyes southward, the Caliph's warriors, assassins, and mages would be hard-pressed to defend the realm. An artifact as powerful as my stone seemed to be might well prove the difference between victory and defeat for my homeland.

Sadly, this newfound resolve was met with an equally newfound fear of the Land of Mists looming just north of Strangehaven. It was clear that the people of Strangehaven are terrified of what might be lurking within the fog-shrouded, blasted lands of the place they call the Thirteenth Barony. The lack of honest farmers, most having fled days, weeks, or even months prior to my arrival, was a mute testament to the fact that good people think the threat from the north is very real indeed.

The idea of ancient revenants and ghouls rising to claw at the living is laughable, but what if that childish fear hides a very real, more mundane danger?

What if the Barons, the Free Cities, the Elves, the Dwarves, and other denizens of the northlands, remembering in their collective unconscious the terrible might of Waigar the Great, have given his name to some other being of great power and dreadful purpose, stretching a clawed hand out to threaten all of Terrinoth?

It was easier for me to believe that some bandit king had invaded the baronies, taken up residence in the Mistlands, and was now using these people's superstitions against them, than believe that an ancient evil is even now contemplating the destruction of all that is light and good.

I left Strangehaven behind me with a sense of relief nearly equal to the rising dread I felt at the idea that I would soon be heading into the Mistlands. I had to believe that aid was to be found in the Mistlands, as every other avenue had been closed to me. The words of my Human friend from Thelgrim offered me at least a fig leaf of reassurance, that the lurkers in the mist are no monsters but are as Human as I. If we do share a common heritage, is it not possible that, whereas the native people of the north might have much to fear from them, I, myself, might be exempt from their enmity?

I made for a small settlement just north of Strangehaven I had been told to seek out: Durling, right on the border of the last barony. It was a quiet little town, reminiscent of many others I had seen throughout the north. The houses, little better than huts, really, might have known a haphazard coat of paint in the distant past, but wind and sun have since scoured any such color away, leaving all the buildings the same, uniform bleached grey. There was hardly a soul on the rutted dirt of the central street, and when I stepped into the only inn the town could boast, having left Ibn with a strange, silent youth as bald as an egg and wearing an eye patch, I was unsurprised to see the common room was empty.

Being the only guest in the Baron's Head, and trying not to think overmuch on the establishment's name, gave my entire endeavor an even stranger, more nightmarish cast than before. The landlord, a greasy-skinned man with a sour eye and a bitter twist to his mouth, only grunted at my questions until

he saw the color of the Caliph's gold, and then was only too happy to talk about the possible horrors that lay on the other side of the border. He spoke of blood drinkers and wandering spirits, of animals slaughtered in the night and children who disappeared from their beds, never to be seen again.

It was a bleak tale the innkeeper spun, and did nothing to settle my thoughts or my stomach. Eventually I tired of his incessant, maudlin gossip, and so turned away with as polite a nod as I could muster and spent a few moments looking out the window at the darkening sky to the north. It was too odd to sit in the common room alone, and they served only the bitter droughts I had first experienced in Trelton, so I repaired early to my room, despite the fact that my mind spun endlessly in frightened circles and defied me to even try to sleep.

I sat on the thin, hard bed and stared out the window at the mists churning into the darkness outside. I took out the Caliph's stone, something I seldom did anymore, and stared into its azure depths, begging it to open up to me, grant me its secrets, and alleviate the need for me to head into the dread land that kept dragging my eye northward.

Al-Kalim may need this stone, but it will be useless if I cannot unlock its power. If I prove unequal to that task, what will be my fate? To wander this cold, remote realm, waiting for the multifarious evils that lurk here to claim me as just another nameless victim?

I do not like my chances. I will assume it is the prevailing gloom of the people of this land that has affected me so, and not a rational assessment of my situation.

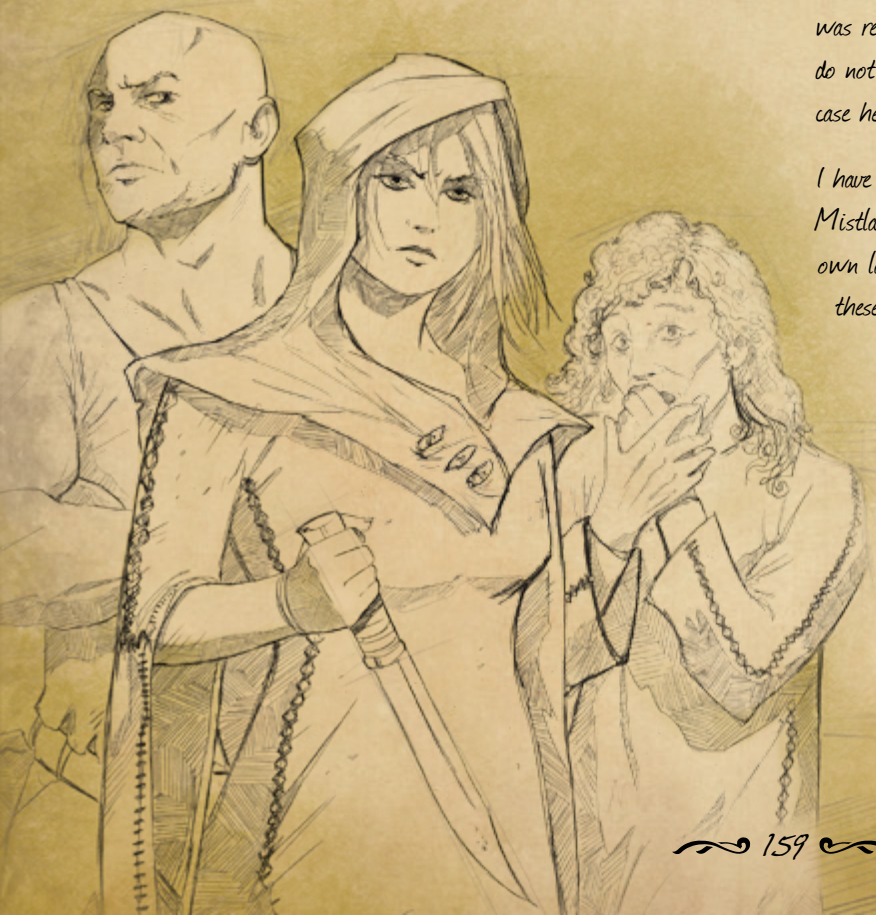
Either way, I sense the imminent end of my journey. I do not know whether to be relieved, or to flee in terror and hide in the deepest tunnel I can find.

* * * * *

My sleep in Durling was restless, and not merely because of the sense of doom that hung over my head like a lowering storm cloud. There was a strange sound in the night, a distant, deep banging, clanging, and grinding as if some strange, massive engine were churning away in the mists. The sound seemed to pass through walls and doors without pause, right into my very heart.

I awoke, if such is the right term considering the shallow haze of my sleep, and the sound faded at once. Whether it was real or just a figment of my overwrought imagination, I do not know, and I was loath to speak to the landlord and in case he might confirm my fears.

I have little excuse, now, to further delay my journey into the Mistlands. I must find comfort in the rational world of my own land, and not surrender to the terrible, oppressive tales these benighted wretches have spun around themselves.



A sampling of some of the peoples of this area. Distrust, fear, and suspicion dominated their faces. I drew these from memory, as none would allow me to capture them in ink, lest harmful spirits lift their souls from the parchment like so many fruits from a tree.

THE MISTLANDS

Those who dare travel beyond Greyhaven find themselves in a shrouded, ever-shifting landscape where warming light seldom reaches the ground. Bounded by fetid marshes on the west and the Dunwarr Mountains to the north, these are the cursed lands of the thirteenth baron of Terrinoth, he whose seat at Archaut has remained empty for hundreds of generations. This region is filled with volcanic crags and sprawling marshlands that bubble and boil, expelling murderous gases and trapping foolish adventurers in their black muck for eternity. This is the Mistlands, the domain of Waiqar the Undying, nearly impassable since his betrayal so many hundreds of years ago. From the Mistlands, he launches his dark campaigns to raze Terrinoth and gain control over the runebound shards. As his power has grown over the centuries, the Mistlands has spread beyond the original bounds of the Thirteenth Barony. Inexorably, it continues to extend ever farther into the lands of the living.

ZORGAS

Legend has it that Waiqar's grand holdfast was built in the image of Llovar's Black Citadel, but there are few who dare speak of it, for most know that the Undying One's deadly gaze reaches deep into Terrinoth. Zorgas lies at the center of a nigh-impassable bog with constantly shifting terrain that only clears a path when Waiqar wishes to ride out with his host. It is here where the most terrible of Waiqar's forces are said to ready themselves for conquest.

Tales whisper of armies of Reanimates whose soldiers crew the parapets without rest while the most favored of Waiqar's Deathborn sit at his Black Table, a grim mockery of the Council of Barons in Archaut. Warrens bored into the cliffsides around the black fortress house barrow wyrms, while the fortress's expansive dungeons hold wraiths, banshees, and frenzied bone constructs too destructive to be allowed loose except when the utter annihilation of entire battlefields is desired.

Such tales also tell of the treasures that can be found here: magical items and weapons of rarity and power that date from the First Darkness. Many of Greyhaven's scholars suspect untold numbers of runebound shards are locked away here as well, in partial fulfillment of Waiqar's vow to claim them all for himself. Some venture here for other reasons, though, such as to scout out the forces of undeath for worried Daqan Lords. That almost none return has only increased their concern.



BILEHALL

Not all of Waiqar's conquests have been by force; many beings have willingly sworn fealty over the years for wealth and power, no matter the cost to their souls. One of the most infamous was Naythen Torvic of Bilehall, who betrayed his fellow lords one terrible night. Torvic and his lesser nobles became something horrid as the mists claimed their lands: vampiric creatures as undying as their new master.

Perhaps, as they did in life, the undead of Bilehall still scheme and maneuver for greater favor and power, engaging in plots that draw in the living as pawns. Most vie to grow their armies to prepare for the coming wars against the other baronies, or strive to gain mastery of the arcane items buried deep within the many castles and keeps that litter Bilehall. Many cling to echoes of noble and knightly behavior, berating poor manners as they strangle the life from their foes. Some survivors of encounters with Bilehall royalty even claim that a few seek to escape their unending existence and turn to adventurers to break their curses and gain eternal rest. These accounts may be lures to ensnare the foolish, but tales from local villagers (and gold coins bearing images of what appear to be Penacor Kings) lend them credence.

The mists of Bilehall also shroud other beings, who have their own agendas. One such is Zarihell, an ancient Elf who was released, either mistakenly or unknowingly, when Timmorran rescued Waiqar from his imprisonment at Llovar's Black Citadel at the end of the First Darkness. She roams the Mistlands at will and seems able to command the spirits of the living and dead alike with such power that she appears more bemused with Waiqar's efforts than fearful of them. Another is a cloaked figure, furtive and of unknown heritage, who endlessly explores the depths of collapsed fortresses along the mountains of the north in search of an unnamed item. Whether the item is for Waiqar's use or his destruction is unknown, but the figure speaks with an accent not heard since the Dragon Wars.

CASTLE DALIBOR

Despite the fear and awe that any tyrant inspires, there always seems to be one general, one advisor, to whom the offer of power means nothing. They serve not because they wish to, but because they have been forced to. Kyndrithul is one such figure, a powerful vampire and current leader of House Dalibor. Though Castle Dalibor is somewhat less powerful than Bilehall, the apparent subservience it displays belies its strength. Kyndrithul is at heart an experimenter, a genius who has spent centuries mastering the various magical disciplines needed to create the perfect Reanimated servant.



As such, his estate is filled with all manner of unnatural creatures. The forests around Castle Dalibor are choked with roving packs of barghests, while bone horrors and flesh constructs shamble aimlessly in search of prey. The favorite saying of Kyndrithul, ever the pragmatist, is that all things have their use. Any heroes unfortunate enough to be taken prisoner in Castle Dalibor soon find themselves in Kyndrithul's laboratory, and the vampire exults in figuring out new ways to mold living flesh with necromancy. His most recent experiments might be his boldest yet, infusing living flesh with the dust of Waiqar's own Deathborn Legion. Such a crime is punishable with a fate beyond death, something terrible enough to make even Kyndrithul tremble at the thought of discovery.

Despite the immense risk associated with these experiments, he nonetheless offers Waiqar aided passage through his lands and space to establish staging points for raids into Terrinoth. While Waiqar's Deathborn generals look upon the vampire with disgust and suspicion, Kyndrithul knows that as long as he plays the part of a humble servant, he may yet reap the rewards of his secret work.

THE EVERLIVING ENGINE

Waiqar's most heinous vehicle of destruction, the Everliving Engine, is a machine most foul. Deep below the volcanic caves under the ruins of Kelipa, its bone gears grind endlessly with a sound that reverberates across the Mistlands. So great is its mechanical noise that, on still nights, the sound can be heard dozens of leagues away, as far as the border of the Barony of Carthridge. Its true purpose is known only to Waiqar and the archlich Revik, who oversees its operation, but with every tick, the barrier between the world of the living and the dead weakens. The undead everywhere feel themselves empowered, if only by the faintest margin, and new, unimagined horrors manifest to plague the world of the living.

Those who displease Waiqar are fed to this terrible machine, and their screams mingle with each tick until they are subsumed entirely. No mortal can say exactly what it means to be consumed by the Everliving Engine, but it is a fate dire enough to strike fear into the hearts of those who serve the Undying One.

THE MISTY HILLS

The Misty Hills have been steeped in evil since the time a sadistic Penacor Prince and his followers were executed for unspeakable crimes. Death was not the end of them, for the dark oaths they had sworn the night before their hangings allowed them to rise again.

Taking the name Farrenghast, the prince moved to a towering, abandoned keep in the Misty Hills with his fellow revenants. While Mennara always had undead spirits, this was perhaps the first time such fell creatures had banded together in a mass of evil. Over time, their foul essence seeped into the earth itself, and made it as vile as they. It was perhaps this darkness that called to the Mistlands, which absorbed the region into itself.

Despite the horrific nature of the Misty Hills, some still travel here in search of ancient relics and older knowledge. Like their undead inhabitants, the Misty Hills have changed little since the time Farrenghast took the keep and the surrounding lands for his own. The opportunities there are many for the brave and clever.

Within the keep, necromantic tomes of tremendous power rest on shelves of decaying wood, their leather bindings and blood-marked pages still fresh despite the centuries. Weapon stores from Farrenghast's many campaigns are said to lie inside the lesser fastnesses within the Hills. These include items from across Mennara—for his foes have come from far and wide to thwart him, and after failing left their possessions along with their corpses. Rumors have spread that unbound Stars of Timmorran seeded away within unmarked chests, drawing the attention of those mages hungry for power or eager to study such priceless rarities.

ROTH'S VALE

Having no true borders itself, Roth's Vale is the nebulous border territory between the rest of the baronies and the Mistlands. Though it is in many ways a cursed land, it was not always so. Before Waiqar's betrayal, Roth's Vale was a flourishing territory, protected by great magics and glorious treasures from the golden age of the Elder Kings. When the last baron of Roth's Vale died without an heir, it became a no-man's land, and the debate over who shall become its warden has only intensified in recent years.

Young Gaspard Bay, a rising hero ennobled for his efforts fighting with the eastern Hernfar garrison, desperately wishes to be given lordship over this territory, not just for himself, but to fulfill a promise made to his ancestors. Baron Zachareth of Carthridge—a capable and intense lord who, it is whispered, has fallen to the lure of sorcerous power—covets the hundreds of artifacts lost in the land's abandoned temples and castles. Such items could be used to defeat the undead—or to raise and command them.

Many more structures are in ruins, some of which date from the defeat of Waiqar in the Second Darkness. The histories of most are lost to time. The collapsed Halls of Phetra lie in the south, and were once a temple to a god. No beings now living remember which one, but the Halls of Phetra are still filled with a light that can banish fell shadows. One nameless citadel to the west is said to hold purifying flames deep within its mountain location, enough to painfully remove even the greatest darkness from a soul. Though the undead hungrily thrive along the vale's outskirts and in its graveyards, many beings still travel here in search of deserted keeps with forgotten vaults and underground lairs with bejeweled crypts.

ROTHFELD

Rothfeld, the largest village within Roth's Vale, is the area most frequently plagued by the incursions of Waiqar's warbands. Years of desolation and the slow encroachment of the mists have led to a drained, depleted land, its state of being reflected in the poor souls who live here. Having abandoned hope of divine aid, the inhabitants have allowed their homes, fields, and temples to fall into disrepair, their will to fight utterly drained. Slowly becoming brutish and destructive, Rothfelders seek succor and protection from anyone who might promise salvation from the undead threat.

Some of the Daqan Lords believe that Rothfeld is where Waiqar's forces are likely to first attack in numbers. Defending this village and restoring hope to its inhabitants may mean slowing the legions of the undead long enough to rally other forces from the south to prevent the dead from overrunning this area and pouring into Terrinoth. As the village has many old temples nearby, a number of which contain the holy relics of saints or were built on sites of powerful magics, some also view Rothfeld as a natural bulwark against the undead that is better fortified than forgotten and abandoned.

UNLIFE IN THE MISTS

The dank, cold lands of the Thirteenth Barony contain terrible monsters, all the worse as many of them were once Human. Thirst for power, jealousy over status, desire for revenge, and other vices have corrupted once-noble leaders into deathless things that exist only to consume all that lives. Note that bane spiders (see page 147 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook) are also often found in the decaying keeps and castle ruins of the Mistlands.

BARGHEST (RIVAL)

Some necromancers specialize in commanding barghests, ghastly canines of immense size and strength, rather than raising simple Reanimates. The origins of these bestial creatures is the subject of dark myths, and most firmly hold that they have existed in Mennara long before Waiqar was born. All tales agree, though, that their vicious, undead form has no resemblance to any living creature, and that they appear more the work of some twisted mentality than any natural evolution.



Barghests often travel in scouting packs, attacking from out of woodlands and misted fields to harass and drive prey. They prefer to strike when the night is darkest, relying on their keen senses of smell and taste to detect the signs of life. Those that prove their worth are elevated to become barghest alphas; these share a special mystical bond with their undead master. By meditating, the necromancer can extend their grasp over the barghest alpha, seeing through its eyes and directing the others in its pack with even greater control.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	1	2	3	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	13	0 | 0

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Perception 3, Resilience 3, Vigilance 2.
Talents: Swift (a barghest does not spend additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).

Abilities: Maul (a barghest adds ■■ to Brawl checks against prone or immobilized targets), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of its opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Undead (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink, and can survive underwater; immune to poisons and toxins).
Equipment: Claws and fangs (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Vicious 1).

DEATH KNIGHT (NEMESIS)

Leagues above mere Reanimates, death knights are the very hammer of Waiqar, his hatred and will to dominate all life made manifest. Made from the dust of the most infamous and loyal of his original soldiers, they possess a degree of autonomy unknown in lesser undead, even retaining and developing personalities to a degree.

Like Waiqar's elites who fought with him in the Second Darkness, death knights wear heavy armor that has been consecrated in unholy rituals of blood. Their blades are powerful relics of the events of Waiqar's betrayal, artifacts that have only become more potent after centuries of war. Riding vampiric steeds that feast upon the flesh of the living, death knights can spring suddenly out of the mists before their foes are aware of them.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	3	3	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	20	14	1 | 0

Skills: Cool 2, Discipline 3, Melee (Heavy) 3, Melee (Light) 3, Resilience 2, Riding 3.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once), Parry 3 (When a death knight suffers a hit from a melee combat check, after damage is calculated [but before soak is applied, so immediately after Step 3 of Perform a Combat check on page 102 of **GENESYS** Core Rulebook], they may take a Parry incidental. They suffer 3 strain and reduce the damage dealt by that hit by five. This talent may only be used once per hit and when the death knight is wielding a Melee weapon), Improved Parry (When a death knight suffers a hit from a melee combat check and uses Parry to reduce the damage from that hit, after the attack is resolved, they may spend ⟳ ⟳ ⟳ or ⊗ from the attacker's check to use this talent. Then, the death knight automatically hits the attacker once with a Brawl or Melee weapon they are wielding. The hit deals the weapon's base damage, plus any damage from applicable talents or abilities. The death knight can't use this talent if the original attack incapacitates them).
Abilities: Mounted Charge (a mounted death knight adds ■■ to its first melee attack after performing a maneuver to



engage the target in the same turn), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents must make a **Daunting** [◆◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Undead (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink, and can survive underwater; immune to poisons and toxins).
Equipment: Sword (Melee [Light]; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1) or flail (Melee [Heavy]; Damage 9; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Cumbersome 3, Linked 1, Unwieldy 3), battered armor (+2 soak, +1 defense), war mount (see page 105).

FERROX (RIVAL)

Ferrox are humanoid creatures with pale green skin over powerful muscles. Membranous skin stretched between their arms and torsos allows ferrox to glide, and gives a very bat-like appearance when extended. Their arms terminate in wicked, hook-like claws, and their mouths are filled with razor-like teeth. Vicious and savage, these creatures are only dimly intelligent, and easily dominated by certain dark magics.

Those unfortunate enough to encounter ferrox whilst in the Mistlands rarely live to tell the tale. There are even rumors that those who survive their bite slowly transform into one of these foul creatures.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	1	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	13	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 2, Cool 2, Coordination 1, Resilience 1.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Bloodthirst (when a ferrox inflicts wounds with its fangs, it heals an equal number of wounds), Glider (ferrox can fly, but cannot increase their altitude while doing so; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Savage (a ferrox increases the damage of its attacks by 2 when targeting an immobilized foe).
Equipment: Hooked claws (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 1), fangs (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1).

LORD OF BILEHALL (NEMESIS)

When the Lords of Bilehall discarded their humanity to join Waiqar, they tied their fates to that of his. They became immensely more powerful as the corrupting mists covered their lands and they rose in undeath. Today, they are an arrogant line, besotted from centuries of indulging in their every desire, exulting in the pleasures of immortality. Each has become a ruler in their own right, and even the lowest vampire of the line of Bilehall can claim a crypt-fortress as their own.

The ages have made the Lords of Bilehall both shrewd and knowledgeable. Some have dedicated themselves to necromancy, even gaining enough power to raise lesser Reanimates. Still others have become masters of warfare and lead raids on the baronies to the south or even into Dunwarr and other realms. It is rare to encounter such creatures without powerful minions to defend them, but such is their hubris that they fear little except Waiqar himself and may step forth alone to toy with those who dare venture into their domains. For an adventurer to survive such an occurrence is even rarer, for Lords such as Kyndrithul and Vorun'thul have had hundreds of years to set traps, arrange countermeasures, and prepare themselves for almost any enemy.



BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	5	4	4	4	4

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	18	20	0 | 0

Skills: Arcana 3, Brawl 2, Charm 3, Cool 3, Discipline 3, Knowledge (Forbidden) 5, Negotiation 3, Ranged 3, Vigilance 2.
Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character twice), Dark Insight (use Knowledge [Forbidden] to determine spell effects).
Abilities: Blood Call (when a Lord of Bilehall damages a target using their fangs or a magic attack, they heal wounds equal to the wounds inflicted), Sunlight Sensitivity (while exposed to sunlight, a Lord of Bilehall reduces all their characteristics by 2 and halves their Wound Threshold and Strain Threshold), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents must make a **Daunting** [◆◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Undead (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink [except blood], and can survive underwater; immune to poisons and toxins), Vampiric Magic (a Lord of Bilehall reduces the difficulty of all magic skill checks one step).

Spells: A Lord of Bilehall can choose any magic action allowed for the Arcana skill, and may select additional spell effects, as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Blood Funnel (choose one target at short or medium range for this attack and make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Arcana check**. If successful, this magic attack inflicts 8 damage + 1 additional damage per uncanceled ✲, with Critical Rating 2 and the Blast 5 and Vicious 5 qualities).

Curse of the Night (choose one target within short range and make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Arcana check**. If successful, the target decreases the ability of any skill checks they make by one and reduces their strain and wound thresholds by 4 until the end of the Lord of Bilehall's next turn. The Lord of Bilehall may maintain these effects by performing the concentrate maneuver).

Equipment: Bloodstained fangs (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 1, Vicious 2), magic staff (add +4 damage to magic attacks; the first Range effect added does not increase difficulty).

NECROMANCER (NEMESIS)

Necromancy is forbidden as the darkest of all possible magical arts, one that corrupts the wielder and brings ruin to those who allow it to fester. Though they may try to hide their acts, necromancers are usually found out as they are spurred on to greater acts of desecration or as their bodies become more noticeably twisted by the demands necromancy places upon living flesh. Those who survive discovery invariably find themselves in the Mistlands, wandering from crypt to crypt in search of either a patron or enough untouched dead to raise into protective retinues.

Necromancers who wander long enough eventually arrive at Zorgas, their own magic drawing them to the foul power within it. Here, they can become servants to Waiqar and possibly go on to operate his Engines of Entropy. Those who refuse service are usually fed into the engines instead, unless they successfully flee to continue their unholy work elsewhere. Some make their way to villages across Terrinoth or even farther away, looking for corpses to awaken or simply creating new ones to ensure fresh supplies. From their new lairs, they can grow networks of minions (living as well as undead) to further their unholy goals.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	3	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	12	18	1 | 1

Skills: Arcana 3, Cool 2, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Forbidden) 3, Melee (Light) 1, Vigilance 1.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once), Chill of Nordros (magic attacks gain the Ice effect with no increase in difficulty), Dark Insight (use Knowledge [Forbidden] to determine spell effects), Necromancy (when this character uses the conjure magic action, it gains the Summon Ally effect with no increase in difficulty. All creatures the character summons must be undead).

Abilities: None.

Spells: Necromancers can choose any magic action allowed for the Arcana skill, and may select additional spell effects, as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Death Knell (choose one target at short or medium range and make an **Average (◆◆) Arcana check**. If successful, this magic attack inflicts 8 damage +1 damage per uncanceled ✲, with Critical Rating 2 and the Ensnare 3 and Vicious 3 qualities).

Wilt (choose two targets within short range and make an **Average (◆◆) Arcana check**. If successful, the Necromancer can choose one additional target for each ⩓ and all targets reduce the ability of any skill checks they make by one until the end of the necromancer's next turn. If an affected character suffers strain for any reason, they suffer 1 additional strain. The necromancer can perform the concentrate maneuver to maintain all effects of this curse).

Wall of Bones (make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Arcana check**. If successful, the necromancer reduces the damage of all hits they suffer by 1 plus 1 for every ✲ ✲ beyond the first until the end of his next turn; in addition, if an attack targeting the necromancer generates ♺ ♺ ♺ or ⊗, the attacker suffers a hit inflicting damage equal to the total damage of the attack; the necromancer may perform the concentrate maneuver to maintain the effects of this barrier).

Equipment: Bone staff (+4 damage to magic attacks; the first Range effect added does not increase difficulty; when used to cast a spell that inflicts 1 or more wounds, caster heals 1 wound), ceremonial dagger (Melee [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1, Vicious 1); heavy robes (+1 defense), forbidden grimoire (a user with the Dark Insight talent can add the Additional Target and Enervate effects to Curse spells with no increase in difficulty).

REANIMATE (MINION)

Reanimates form the backbone of most undead forces, from the smallest raiding warband of one of the lesser vampires of Bilehall to Waiqar's Deathborn Legions themselves. Reanimates feel neither pain nor fear, and when struck down, they simply pick themselves back up again and continue fighting. Perhaps most chilling is their utter silence. Though they open their mouths as if to utter a war cry, the only sound from their ranks is the rattling of bone against rusted armor. Despite their terrifying presence, though, they are not invincible. Separated from their master, for example, they lose much of their will to fight.

These creatures can be found deep within the many underground catacombs in the Mistlands, patrolling against intruders to ensure that rituals are undisturbed and treasures stay intact. They can remain motionless and silent seemingly forever; many an adventurer has discovered that what appeared to be a gold-laden vault strewn with assorted skeletons is in fact filled with deathless guardians eager to add to their ranks.



BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	1	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	4	1 | 1

Skills (group only): Melee (Light), Perception, Ranged, Resilience, Vigilance.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Undead (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink, and can survive underwater; immune to poisons and toxins), Undying (may spend ♻ ♻ ♻ from any check made by a PC to return one previously defeated Reanimate to an existing minion group, removing damage from the group accordingly. Spend ⊗ to return two Reanimates to a minion group).
Equipment: Rusted blade (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]), worn bow (Ranged; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Medium]), antique mail (+1 soak).

WRAITH (RIVAL)

Despite the fearsome nature of Waiqar's forces, none of them are as dreaded as wraiths. Whether they existed before the Undying One claimed the Mistlands, or are beings he created with his own arcane powers, is a matter of much debate with both peasants and wizards alike. Perhaps only who do know with certainty are those who serve the Thirteenth Baron.

Several Greyhaven scholars who dare study such matters believe wraiths are the manifestations of tragic or violent deaths involving dark emotions, ones so powerful that death itself could not still the intense hate, passion, or jealousy involved. And so, they say, such spirits rise after the corpse falls, ghastly flowing forms far more destructive than mere shades. They especially turn their ire towards any who would disturb them as they haunt decaying deathbeds, ancient battlefields, crumbing treasure vaults, and other places that perhaps had special meaning to their lives (or deaths).

These horrific spectral creatures conjure fear in even the most stouthearted of Daqan knights as they eerily glide over marshes and through bulwarks, bringing the icy cold touch of the grave to whomever they encounter. Often just the sight of a single wraith is enough to send disciplined units screaming in retreat, and many an adventuring band has been reduced to a single gibbering survivor who barely returns to tell their tale.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	3	2	3	3	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
0	19	3 | 3

Skills: Brawl 3, Cool 2, Discipline 2, Ranged 1.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Ghostly (may move over or through terrain [including doors and walls] without penalty. Halve the damage dealt to the wraith before applying soak, unless the attack came from a magical source such as a spell or magical weapon), Silhouette 2, Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of its opponents must make a **Daunting [◆◆◆◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the Genesys Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Undead (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink, and can survive underwater; immune to poisons and toxins).
Equipment: Spectral claws (Brawl; Damage 2; Critical 1; Range [Engaged]; Breach 1, Stun Damage), wailing cry (Ranged; Damage 2; Critical 5; Range [medium]; Breach 1, Stun Damage).

SECRETS OF THE GRAVE

Of all the myriad ways magical energies have been wielded across the millennia, none are as terrifying and unnatural as necromancy. While all magic is intrinsically incredible, the power over death itself has a reaction in most that evokes raw fear. To witness the dead rising as nearly unstoppable hordes of shambling monstrosities is enough to unnerve even the most seasoned of adventurers.

Such horrors have been a part of history for untold ages. Even before the Second Darkness, when an entire barony fell to corruption and sought to spread the plague of undeath across Mennara, corpses have shambled out of their tombs and revenants have stalked wilderness regions. Each season sees cults who worship death itself hidden within Terrinoth sink their insidious talons further into society. Necromantic magic, practiced by both the living and the dead, spreads like a funeral shroud over the land that, if unchecked, will surely result in the end of all life.

NECROMANCY IN MENNARA

There have seemingly always been undead. Tales of spectral beings such as wraiths and ghosts are some of the oldest in many cultures, as do those of. Vampires and barghests have existed for untold ages, although few but the heavily inebriated dare speak of creatures such as Lord Farrenghast or the Lords of Bilehall. It took a great general and leader, though, to truly establish the necromantic arts as a powerful force that could threaten all of Mennara.

When Waiqar Sumarion roared his fury and hate upon all existence and vowed to never rest until his quest was complete, something answered his cry and true necromancy was unleashed upon the world. He and his forces died only to be reborn in death, and he later discovered how to fashion new undead such as Reanimates from fallen Deathborn. Across the centuries, his followers spread his gospel of death and reanimation across Mennara. They weave new spells and adopt new ritualist techniques, though none can ever hope to match the Undying One in power and skill. Some uncover ancient relics from the elder times, though, powerful enough to perform feats none can hope to replicate or even understand.

THE DARK ARTS OF DEATH

Necromancy is relatively misunderstood art, despite the centuries of study its ageless practitioners conduct. Some scholars of the forbidden believe it to be of an arcane nature, its energy coming from the Turning, or Verto Magica. Though most mages hold it to be a lower form of magic, it is still quite powerful. More scholars of magical arts firmly believe it is too dangerous for any study, however, and actively work to suppress such activities. Despite this, there are always those thirsty for knowledge and power who advance its practice.

PCS AND DEATH MAGIC

Despite its horrific nature, some PCs might wish to learn and even use death magic. Note there is no formal "death magic" as a type of talent or spell type, though—this is accomplished through the Dark Insight talent, and creative uses of Arcana spells and the Knowledge (Forbidden) skill. The GM and players should determine which uses of existing talents, skills, and spells constitute engaging in necromantic arts in their campaign.

Studying this forbidden practice could be tempting for many mages and scholars, for example, as a way to become more versed in how their foes operate and better counter their necromantic actions. There are many fell grimoires and relics in the Mistlands where they can discover more of death magic. PCs might also uncover lost scrolls in Tamalir shops or dread relics buried in the sands of Al-Kalim that can put them on the path that Waiqar paved.

PCs who delve too deeply into the necromantic arts, though, should face some consequences. The most obvious is that such study is quite forbidden across most of Mennara. Even in Greyhaven, tomes concerning death magic are carefully secured away and only the most trusted and respected of mages are allowed access to them. Should word get around that they are interested in these topics, or are discovered using death magic, the city watch or peasants with torches should appear soon!

Studying (and worse, practicing) death magic should affect their very souls as well. With every crumbling parchment page memorized, dark spell used, and undead creature commanded, their spirit should shrivel a bit and their actions become more cruel. These alterations are mostly internal, with little if any external representation, and so they allow great opportunities for roleplaying them. Players and GM should discuss these changes to make them part of character development, and could make for new subplots in an ongoing campaign where the other characters slowly realize their comrade is falling to darkness.

DEATH MAGIC IN GAMES

Death magic should be a powerful occurrence in games set in Mennara, often as the capstone of an adventure where the PCs struggle against a necromancer raising undead forces or thwart a planned invasion emerging from the Mistlands. As such, GMs should strive to make any appearances of death magic especially memorable.

Rites employing death magic can generate fear checks, for example, to represent their horrific nature. The PCs might witness fallen allies raised to become fresh Reanimates, or a slain dragon emerge from collapsed dungeons. Worse yet, one of their own, formerly a valiant hero who perished in a noble cause, could become the catspaw of their archnemesis. All of this makes applying the Horror tone (see page 242 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook) very applicable when death magic is part of an adventure or campaign so that the PCs can fully experience the nature of death magic.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of death magic for the PCs, however, is that those who use it can easily conceal their true nature. Anyone, from respected noble to disgraced scholar to back alley healer, could secretly be a necromancer. The reveal of the true villain in adventures involving death magic can thus be a major moment and ideally catch the PCs by surprise (unless they have already uncovered this through superior detective work, which is even better!).

This also means that death magic can appear everywhere in Mennara, not just the Mistlands. Each region might even have unique differences in how it is used, depending on local culture, and perhaps throw the PCs off when investigating things. Thus the dead can rise to threaten civilization no matter where the PCs might be, and thus can act as a great part of any adventure.

Broadly speaking, the dark arts come in three major forms: raising the dead using remnants of previously raised undead, leeching life from the living to empower other beings (most notably, to empower the user themself), and twisting flesh into new forms.

While most who claim knowledge of such things believe necromancers raise the dead, the truth is instead more disturbing. Waiqar discovered that the ground skeletal remains of any of his fallen creations, once properly desecrated using profane rituals of his design, could be used to animate other corpses. Only a small amount of the bone dust was needed; a single Deathborn Legionnaire could be used to raise thousands of lesser Reanimates. His forces thus grew even greater even when one of his own were laid low, even though none were as powerful as his original lieutenants. It is an especially necessary duty, then, for his followers to collect the remains of his creatures to be used to fashion additional undead.

Even without their undead minions, necromancers are puissant forces. They can wield death magic to accelerate necrosis and decay, causing wounds to grow festering and pustules to burst forth in their enemies. As foes fall closer to death, these foul spell casters become gorged with life and energy. Fleshwrights also affect dead tissue as well, but in even more horrific ways. Also known as Flesh Moulders, they can alter raw tissue into twisted new shapes through their fell arts. Additional limbs, insectoid eyes, and elongated fingers with venomous nails are only some of the less horrid transmutations they can achieve. Some even use their powers on themselves, constructing bizarre but deadly forms to better serve the Undying One.



I thought I understood misery. In my younger years, before earning my place at the Court of Wisdom, I would often be forced to sleep on the streets of the great Caliph's city. I have slept beneath palm trees; I have sheltered in caves during ferocious sandstorms. I once crouched in the lee of an old well as a terrible lightning storm flashed and boomed all around me.

None of those experiences prepared me for the cold, green nightmare of the Aymhelin.

My first foray into the forest was hardly auspicious, and was very nearly enough to convince me that my task here is hopeless. In truth, my sons and daughters, I have found myself once again entertaining the notion of returning empty-handed to the Caliph many times over these last few interminable days.

Truly, if I return bearing the stone, handing it back to the Caliph myself, how then could such a great and wise man believe that I ever stole it in the first place? What right-thinking man would return to the Court of Wisdom having stolen such an object?

But these paths are now well-worn in my mind. Why would a right-thinking man return under such circumstances as those in which I find myself? What punishment might the Caliph inflict upon such a man, as a deterrence to anyone who might feel inclined to steal from his coffers in the future?

Even here, huddled beneath the eaves of this dark, foreboding wood, so far from my dry, dusty home, I shudder to think of the possibilities.

And so I return here, to this familiar thought: there is no returning for me without first unlocking the mysteries of the jewel.

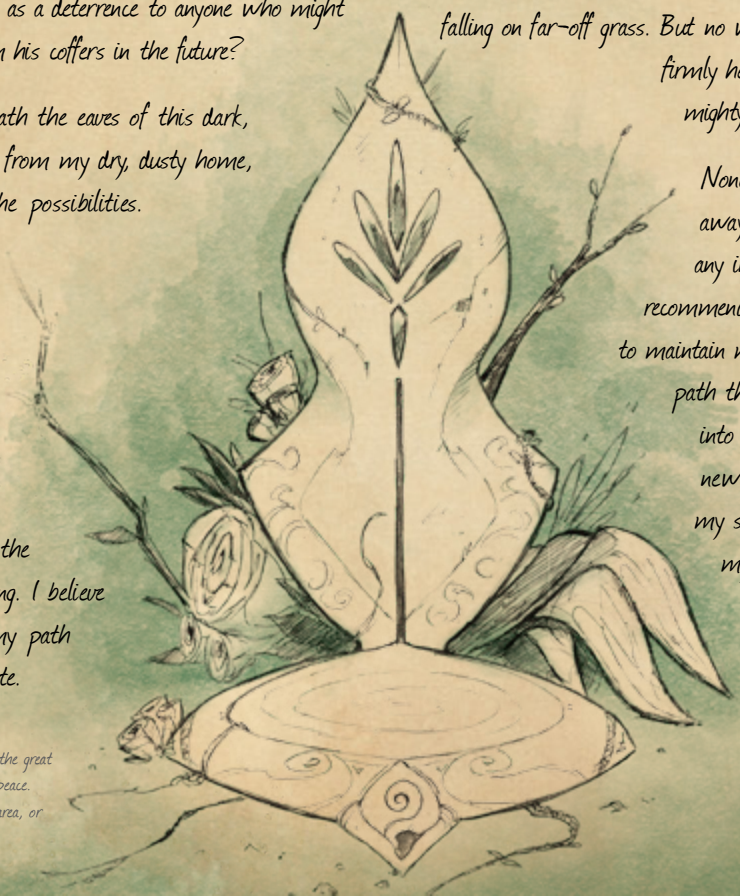
And the Latari Elves of the Aymhelin know something. I believe they know where next my path must take me, at any rate. If I can only get them to speak.

As I have already said, the first day has hardly been auspicious. Having taken a room in a nearby inn, I left most of my belongings behind and approached the green shadows of the forest with great trepidation. Even having seen the panoramic view from my room in the Green Gate, no newcomer could entirely understand the true weight and majesty of this massive wall of trees. As each step took me deeper into that emerald darkness, the titanic trunks looming over me, higher and higher, I came to fully appreciate the insignificance of my existence from the perspective of these ancient giants.

The path was initially wide and clear. Two laden carts could have passed each other with room to spare, even a hundred paces or more into the wood. But soon, that path led into a large and empty clearing, worn down by years of activity. I had the distinct impression that carts from the outside world might be brought there and unloaded, their burdens then scattered deeper into the forest by some other means.

Several paths led away from that clearing, much more narrow and confined. As I looked back the way I had come, the path seemed to me a tunnel, with dark shadows gathering all around. In the distance, shafts of warm southern sunlight could be seen falling on far-off grass. But no warmth or light reached me, firmly held within the shelter of the mighty behemoths of the forest.

None of the paths leading away from the clearing bore any indications that would recommend one above the others. Trying to maintain my bearings, I chose the path that seemed to lead deeper into the darkness. I pulled a newly acquired cloak closer around my shoulders and moved on, my head bowed and my eyes scanning the surrounding shadows from beneath my lowered brows.



I came upon several small shrines like this one inside the great wooded area, always in areas of great tranquility and peace. I know not if they were placed to celebrate such an area, or cause them to come into being.

Massive ferns overhung the trail, pressing in from every side. They were laden with dew, and soon I was drenched from pushing their soft, leafy weight out of my way. Often the trail before me would disappear beneath the waving fronds, my feet shuffling through the greenery, invisible to my peering eyes.

I would never be able to tell you how long that miserable journey took. My stomach roiled the entire time, but not with hunger. I saw no one, Elves or others, for what felt like hours. The fear that grew within my chest was different from the dread that has dogged my steps since Greyhaven. This tightening sense of danger was far more direct, with the full weight of the ancient forest pressing down upon me, blotting out the sun. I felt, perhaps for the first time, that I was coming to realize the true meaning of fear.

And when I finally did see my first Aymhelin Elf, it was not a pleasant experience.

I had stopped, sipping warily from my waterskin, scanning the forest around me, and I would have sworn to you, my daughters and sons, that I was entirely alone.

When the Elf stepped out of the green shadows at my elbow, I was so startled I dropped the skin, losing several mouthfuls of precious water into the damp loam before I could snatch it back up and push the stopper home.

The Elf was typical of their kind, I have since learned. Tall, thin, elegant and poised, dressed in a dizzying array of greens and browns that blended with a nearly magical efficiency into the forest behind him.

As I stared, hoping he would speak first, several others seemed to appear miraculously behind him, affixing me with blank, enigmatic glares.

The silence between us stretched on, punctuated rather than broken by the myriad sounds of the living forest around us.

"Hello?" As a first conversational sally with a strange new culture, it might have gone better with a little more planning.

The response of the Elf, however, was no more scintillating.

"Leave."

He spoke the common tongue of Terrinoth with an accent that would have made a more involved response difficult to understand. This single syllable, however, was clear enough.

"Very well." I would like to think I could have done better in my native language, but as it stood, with these frightening specters staring at me as if I were nothing more than a minor nuisance, easily dispatched with a single arrow, I'm not entirely certain.

But, regardless of what I had said, I didn't move. Whether it was from courage, fear, or a general sense of stubborn bloody-mindedness, I don't think I will ever know.

Nevertheless, it seemed to confuse the Elves as much as it confused me, and that, I judged, was all to the good as I tried to formulate a more eloquent response.

"I would very much like to speak with someone before I leave." And once I began, as I have often found in tense situations, it became very hard to stop talking. "I have come a long way. A very long way. You wouldn't believe me if I told you how very far I have come. And I only wanted to ask someone a few questions. I'm researching stones. Magic stones. Well, maybe not magical; I don't know. That's why I would like to talk to someone. I'm just curious, mind you. I have no direct interest in such stones, per se. I'm just an itinerant scholar, looking for information. About magical stones. Or nonmagical stones, you know, as it might turn out."

Eventually, more from lack of breath than anything else, my voice faded away.

The first Elf to have appeared tilted his head to one side, a very fine crease forming between his bright-green eyes. Other than that, however, there was no sign that they had even heard me.

It suddenly occurred to me that I had displayed a terrible lapse in manners.

"I'm sorry, let me introduce myself. I am Tarik Al Farabi, of the Caliph's court in far Al-Kalim. Please, all I wish–"

"Leave now." The words seemed harsher this time around, but that might have been my growing sensitivity to the situation.

A desperation began to build, as I felt, once more, walls rising up before me, cutting me off from the object of my quest.

"Please, if I could just speak to someone…anyone–"

There was no sense of movement at all, but suddenly I was staring at the glittering points of three arrows aimed directly into my eyes.

Only the first Elf was still unarmed, his empty hands hanging carelessly at his sides.

"You will leave, or you will die." The words were flat, clear, and slow. The weight of their offered choice belied their tone.

I found that my hands had risen up over my head of their own accord, and I forced them back down. I stared into the cold eyes of this stranger, and I was suddenly overcome with a strange certainty.

The Elves knew why I was there, and this, more than any kind of xenophobic paranoia or overprotective arboreal instinct, was spurring my frigid welcome.

"I will not leave until I have my answers!"

At least, that was what I meant to say. Sadly, as I began, an arrow flashed past my ear with an evil hiss and smacked into a tree behind me, plucking at my hair as it passed. My words sank into a strangled gargle as I flinched away from the ephemeral contact.

"We will not warn you again. There is nothing for you here, Tarik Al Farabi." Now the first Elf moved, raising a single hand to point back the way I had come. "You will leave now, without uttering another sound, or you will never leave at all."

* * * * *

The return journey to Summersong seemed to take even longer than my morning's trek, but when I emerged back into the warm sunlight, there were still several hours left before dusk, so I have to assume that my initial journey into the Aymhelin did not take nearly as long as it felt.

I stalked into the Green Gate, ignoring the curious glances of the other patrons, and made my way quickly up to my room with its gorgeous view of the terrible forest. My mood, an uncomfortable combination of fear and anger, so darkened my vision that I sat down on my bed, back to the wide windows, and sulked for several minutes, not intending to leave the room until I made my way down in the morning. I fully meant to leave the looming green darkness and its cold-eyed denizens far behind me.

But in the end, my resolve was no match for my hunger. I had not eaten since breaking my fast on the road, and with the suddenness of a flash of desert lightning, the memory of the savory smells wafting through the common room as I marched through came back to me full force. I had seen several cups and mugs as well, and felt certain that there was some mead to be had, if I would only venture forth and ask.

The folks in the common room looked up as I came back down, and judging from their reactions, the smile I had plastered over my disgruntled scowl was only imperfectly affixed. However, several of the folk there nodded to me before turning back to their own business, and soon I was able to get the innkeeper's attention, order up some of the delicious-smelling stew, and settle into a large corner table to survey the room around me.

The meal was almost immediately delivered, with a cup of cool, particularly sweet mead, and I nodded my thanks. There was meat in the stew, I was almost certain, but it was overshadowed by a dizzying array of vegetables, many of which I could hardly identify. It was all fresh, and exploded with flavor and some light, earthy seasonings that reminded me, with a shiver, of the forest.

I had not quite completed my dinner when a large blonde man leaned closer from a nearby table with a grin not altogether friendly.

"They're not so easy to deal with, eh?"

The man's voice was gravelly and low, and he nodded as if sharing some unfortunate truism with a fellow traveler.

I shrugged, wiping my mouth politely with a napkin. Another minor nicety often overlooked here in the north. "I'm sorry?"

The man nodded west, where the forest loomed in the dark distance. "The Elves. They don't make it easy on folks like us."

My eyes narrowed. I had developed a particular sensitivity to phrases such as "folks like us," as I was seldom included in the group being delineated. But here, this stranger seemed to be combining the two of us into a group at odds with the Elves, and despite the day's events and my current frustration, something about that struck me as false.

For reasons I could not now explain to you, my children yet to be, I felt the need to defend the Elves.

"Folks like what? The Elves were no more or less easy than others have made it for me in the past."

The man found that amusing, for some reason, and turned back to his table. "Yeah, you've the right of it there, I expect." He took a deep draft of his own brew. "Folks like us, meaning Human folks. Unless they've got something the Court wants, or they've been summoned by their high and mighties, a person doesn't get deep into the Aymhelin without coming back with that selfsame look about their eyes that you're sporting tonight, friend."

That caught my attention. "The Court? What Court?"

I am embarrassed to admit that I had not learned even that much about the inner workings of the Latari and the Aymhelin, for all my foolish bravery that day. Perhaps a bit more judicious digging among the more forthcoming folk of Summersong would have helped, before I assayed the deep ways of the forest.

"Aye." He turned to me again, that insufferable smile still on his face. "The Court. There are said to be several, to be honest. Divided by geography, perhaps, or blood, or maybe what types of trees they live in. Who knows? Each is more or less autonomous from the rest, I gather, but they all meet, in the center of the wood, to discuss the truly weighty matters of the day. You can all but cut your ears on the capital C they throw onto the word. The Court. The be-all and the end-all of the outside world's interaction with the Latari Elves."

So, was it the Court that had turned me away that day? Or was it some local, minor group that had found me wanting? Might there be hope, if I approached from a different direction? Or perhaps took another path from the main clearing?

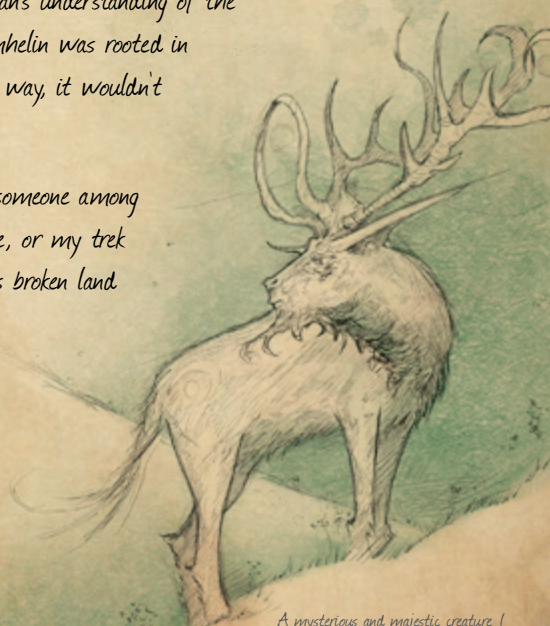
"Don't." His smile was gone now, and then big man was staring at me with cold eyes.

"Don't what?" My command of the northern tongue was nearly complete, but still the local dialects and habits could confound me when my mind was elsewhere.

"Don't get to thinking whatever happened to you out there today might have a different outcome tomorrow." His eyes darkened. "You're lucky you came out with your hide, stranger. Short of midsummer night, when they seem more relaxed around Humans, only merchants and factors come and go at will. All others come out like you do, all white around the eyes. Or they don't come out at all."

He turned away again, and this time I decided to let him. I wasn't certain if the man's understanding of the situation within the Aymhelin was rooted in fact or bigotry, but either way, it wouldn't help me anymore.

Somehow, I have to get someone among the Latari to speak to me, or my trek across the breadth of this broken land will be for naught.



A mysterious and majestic creature I espied upon the edges of the great forest. None have been able to identify it.

THE AYMHELIN

When looking down from the top of the eastern Darnati mountains, it would be easy to mistake the Aymhelin for an undeveloped, sparsely populated woodland region of the world. Although small clusters of white towers stretch skyward among the ancient forests, if the same wild and apparently uncontrolled vegetation were invading a Human territory, one would correctly assume its inhabitants were neither numerous nor prosperous enough to clear the land for expansion.

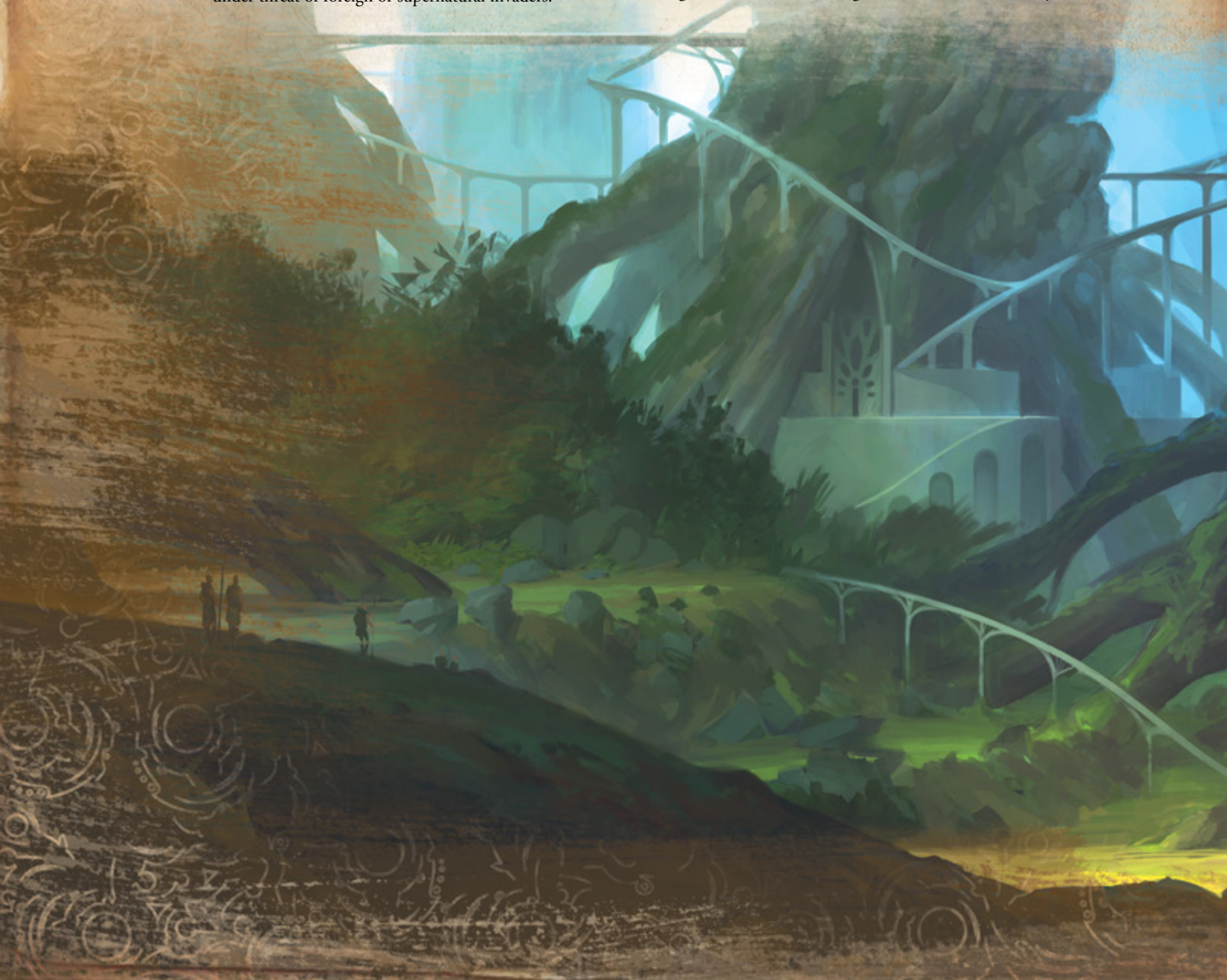
In the case of the Elves, however, the reverse is true.

Each gleaming spire, each brilliantly sparkling stone pathway, each dense copse of stately trees, each beautifully manicured acres of prairie, and each crystal-clear pond and lake has been carefully harmonized to bring nature and civilization into near-perfect accord. It allows the Elves who dwell in the cities to commune with nature, those who live in the verdant forest townships to easily partake in the myriad benefits of a modern civilization, and the entire nation to rally together under threat of foreign or supernatural invaders.

LITHELIN AND THE AILATAR

The heart of the Elven empire is Lithelin, a gleaming city of white towers rising proudly in the heart of an expansive and ancient forest. The Plain of Stars—the Ailatar—marks the place where the Elves descended to Mennara, a clearing from which her followers can see Latariana and the other glimmering lights in the night sky. The palace and the oldest rings of the city are isolated from the opulent, verdant bowl of vigorous forest green that surrounds Lithelin, but the city's outer districts have grown into, through, and among the forest in a graceful merging of Elven architecture and natural beauty.

In the center of Lithelin is Caelcira, or "First Gate"—the political and spiritual heart of the Aymhelin. It has watched over the city for over four thousand years, standing proud against the assaults of Dragonlord Baalesh and his fiery brood.



It is said Caelcira is built on the founding stone of the world itself and will never fall to evil, unless all of Mennara shall fall first. Here, the Tear of the Latari tribe and those of the lost nations are guarded carefully, lest they fall into the hands of evil. Although the Tears are officially named for Latariana, an old adage among the Eolam court holds that her tears actually fall again due to the innumerable intrigues, plots, and jealousies that plague the court.

This is not to say that all politicking that happens in High Court is guileful. At the head of the court sits King Aenoeth, an Elf with a centuries-long reputation as a fair and benevolent ruler. At his side is his trusted advisor and long-time consort, Maegan Cyndewin. Although she fought valiantly and was wounded repeatedly while defending the Elven nation, many in the Court still deeply distrust her and conspire against her whenever they can. Theirs is a rueful hatred fueled in part by the legacy of her father, a member of the Daewyl tribe, which allied with demons in its covetous pursuit of Latariana's Tears. It is also fueled by the legacy of her mother, a Loth Caara tribeswoman who lived to see Llovar corrupt her people. Her parentage serves as a perpetual blight to her honor despite how instrumental she was in defending Caelcira. Cyndewin is a source of continual suspicion, as many fear she has been corrupted by the same power that seduced her parents' tribes and is working to bring about the same downfall of the Latari.

Between the palace and the walls are swaths of verdant lands interspersed with pure, spring-fed ponds, wild-growing wheat, and panon-fruit trees delicately transplanted from the surrounding forests. Though originally created as groves for the Forest Guardians, who lend aid in defense of Caelcira, these vales have become the spiritual hub of Lithelin. They are now home to a dizzying array of shrines, prayer gardens, and temples dedicated to the Path of the Stars, which are maintained by High Priestess Ancela, and sanctums for the Wealdworkers and Dreamweavers. Beyond these vales, in towering spires, reside the powerful storm sorceresses.

Hidden far behind the borders of the green lands, obscured from the view of any travelers who may venture to or from the palace, are the jarring, uncharacteristically dilapidated homes of the Verdelam. Born of lower blood and often dozens of ignoble generations removed from the first Latari, these Elves are desperate to prove themselves worthy of social ascension. Each morning, these enterprising souls journey to the keep and surrounding temples to perform the mundane tasks and menial



labor that keep a kingdom functioning smoothly. This allows them—at a pace that would mortify any of the world's short-lived races of Mennara—to slowly earn the respect and prestige necessary to arise to meaningful posts within Elven society.

The ones who fail to ascend but are unwilling or unable to return to their former lives usually take one of two paths: they embrace the life of an adventurer and seek fame and fortune in the lands beyond Lithelin, or they join the ranks of the soldiers in the Latari army. While noble blood is, of course, required to become an officer standing in command, Captain Ilendar accepts into the rank and file all who can meet the physical requirements of soldiering.

THE BLOODWOOD

Formerly a barren, desolate plain, the land where the Bloodwood now stands was once a gruesome battlefield where a horribly outnumbered army of Elves met and repelled more than ten thousand barbaric invaders. When the Elves later returned to dispose of the legions of rotting warriors, they discovered that mysterious saplings, as red as blood, had sprouted among the dead.

The Bloodwood's gruesome history has become a source of pride for all the hunters, foresters, bowyers, fletchers, scouts, and hermits that call it home. Full of densely populated trees that run for leagues in every direction, the Bloodwood is an ideal place to learn tracking and forest combat, how to lathe arrows from its unique saplings, and methods for hunting the deer and boar that help feed all of the Elves in the Aymhelin.

The mystical woods are also home to a community of Elves who live in the hidden township of Methras. The core of Methras is an eclectic collection of dwellings, fashioned high in the trees and joined by suspension bridges and shared platforms. In the center of the interconnected sprawl sits Ledish Schall, the ancestral seat of the Etharyon champion Dareine, the governing magistrate of all Elves who choose to set foot within the Bloodwood. From this seat, Dareine provides counsel, resolves disputes, directs hunts in ways to best manage the animal populations, and ensures that Huntsmaster Cillian, the leader of the Latari's elite scouts, has whatever tools and resources the rangers may need.

Given its remote, often secretive nature, Methras is also a home for Elves who seek refuge from the traditional caste and political structures of Latari society—and a destination for those restless Elves who seek more adventure than Elven life typically offers. Living wild among the Bloodwood, they are free to indulge in more ignoble pursuits, and within isolated huts, one can find Elves engaged in a host of scandalous ventures.

BLACKTHORN GROVE

On the northernmost frontier of the Elven lands, as far from Lithelin as one can get and still remain in the Aymhelin, a stoic pair of keeps known as Sern Genslyn, "The Vigilant Twins," stand at the edge of the Aymhelin. These two towers guard the most trafficked Elven border against bandits, raiders, and the evils that are working to corrupt the Human lands of Terrinoth. The twin structures flank each side of a cobblestone road that parts a lush section of the Misty Plains known as Blackthorn Grove—and the archers, trebuchet crews, and cavalry of the Twins have protected the Aymhelin from corruption and invasions for centuries.

Nevertheless, most of the Elves in the southern provinces treat those protecting Blackthorn Grove with fear and suspicion. Dwelling so far from the spiritual heart of the Elven empire, and so close to barbarous Humans, has influenced the warriors of Sern Genslyn to an alarming degree. The denizens of the grove are more likely to trade with, socialize with, and even marry people from across the northern border, particularly the Free City of Dawnsmoor, than their own kind. Those in Lithelin see this as scandalous and disquieting, although it is condoned—and in fact encouraged—by the longtime commander of the keeps, Marshal Cennan Valareth.

Wise and farsighted enough to understand that supplies, companionship, and military aid are all far closer to the north than the south, Valareth will happily work with the Humans to care for his soldiers. However, there is an even more important and hidden purpose behind the cross-cultural mingling: it allows an elite group of spies to collect rumors and information that drift south from the Human lands. Spymasters operating out of Riverwatch hold that this is overseen by Aenara, a merchant who runs a startlingly impressive trading emporium in the village of Brightvale. These Elven spies glean everything from unfounded rumors to verified intelligence and shuttle that information back to the capital via go-betweens, messengers, and encrypted notes carried by ravens.

SELENIC COAST

Though most of the fearsome Selenic Sea, which dashes against the southern shores of the Aymhelin, is hazardous for novice crews to navigate, the sheltered port town of First Fall to the southwest of Lithelin acts as a welcome harbor and easy port for loading and unloading trade goods. Built around a natural lagoon and bulwarked by Elven masons and elemental sorcerers millennia ago, First Fall is almost immune to the battering winds, deep swells, and forceful riptides of the open ocean.

As such, almost all seaborne trade with the Elven empire in the Aymhelin comes through First Fall before being carried north and east by carts towed upon well-maintained cobblestone roads. North of the docks, outside the city proper, lies the commune village of Selonish, a large collection of huts built on stilts above the water of the bay. The spiritspeakers and elementalists of Selonish share resources and support each other as they seek mastery of the wind, water, and spirits of the bay. The village is overseen by Mannen, an ancient, wizened spiritspeaker with a level of power that is seen only a few times each century. Having long since given up the active pursuit of any additional mastery, Manaan now spends her days providing counsel to the village, guiding younger spiritspeakers, and helping to ensure that the ripples caused by the Whispering Forest don't spread beyond the borders.

THE GREYWOOD

Lying just to the northeast of the Selenic Sea, not far from where the Aymhelin empties into the Broken Plains, lies the Greywood. The forest is a taboo realm of unnerving legends, where realities unpredictably bleed together and the veil between Mennara and the Aenlong becomes thin enough for creatures to easily pass from one to the other. Within its shadowed trails wander creatures that were never meant to set foot upon this plane. Here, those who seek favors from the Fae may be able to bargain for whatever they seek.

The Elves hold a careful, perpetual vigil around the Greywood, doing their best to stop mortals from entering the dank, lightless forest, but also to prevent anything from leaving the trees as well. Much to their dismay, the Elves lack the power or ability to purge the forest of its mystical threat, so instead, they greet the unnatural creatures that try to emerge from these woods with maximum aggression.

THE DARNATI HIGHLANDS

Far to the west, close to the southernmost plains of Lorimor, the Aymhelin begins to thin, and hills and rocky outcroppings break up the swaths of immense trees. This rough terrain makes the Elves who live in the Darnati Highlands a particularly hardy stock. Marking boulders and cliff faces like pearlescent scars, treasured moonstone is found in relative abundance here, furnishing the material for some of the Elves' most wondrous armaments. Among the artisans who make their home here are miners and smiths who produce many of the Aymhelin Elves' razor-sharp weapons and intricately fitted sets of armor. These items are so extraordinary, effectual, and cherished that none dare insult or ostracize the smiths who forge them—making the Darnati the only Elves truly immune to the rigid caste politics and tangled intrigues that plague the Lithelin court.

Nestled among the highlands are the ancient stone temples of the Darnati warriors, a mysterious order of mystical adepts who channel their spiritual energies into amazing displays of grace, speed, balance, and power. Often referred to as the Swordsmasters, these monks are among the most feared warriors in all of Mennara—and from their modest monastery, they hold perpetual vigil over the highlands.

THE DEEPWOOD

There are few places in all of the Aymhelin that are as mysterious, magical, or vital to the Elves as the Deepwood. A miracle of both enchantment and nature, the heart of the dense forest is the collection of towering, powerful trees whose fibers are as strong as steel and bend but never seem to break. These trees grow agelessly, stretching ever taller and spreading their limbs ever wider, until the canopy of the forest obscures almost all light from its floor.



If the trees are the heart of the forest, then its soul is the collection of gently glowing ferns and fungi that dimly light the darkness like hundreds of small candles. Despite millennia of study, the apothecaries and sorcerers of the Aymhelin are still trying to truly understand this unique flora, as beautiful as it is mysterious, that occurs nowhere else in the world.

The Deepwood's magical nature also draws the attention of non-Elves. Foreign forces are constantly sending emissaries, spies, or raiding parties, or offering lucrative contracts for samples of the life that grows uniquely here. Few few survive long enough to actually catch a glimpse of its dark beauty.

To spare the lives of those foolhardy enough to attempt the journey, but also to fend off greater threats, the Deepwood Archers were established to catch or repel any who dare try to infiltrate the forest. These elite warriors camouflage themselves in hues of deep purple and blue to blend in with the perpetual shadows beneath the Deepwood canopy. Masters of stealth tactics and capable of hunting in total darkness, the Deepwood Archers epitomize the silence of death. Yet, incredibly lucrative contracts lure an increasing number of adventurers to accept foolhardy quests to the Deepwood each year.

THE THALIAN GLADES

To the west of the Deepwood, where the dense trees slowly begin to give way to patches of lush grasses, are the Thalian Glades. A miracle of nature, the glades are located at the perfect confluence of rain, sun, shadow, and soil. If left unattended, the glades grow wild with their own native foliage, or if tended by creatures who have deep, passionate respect and love of the land the way Elves do, they can support a kingdom.

The Elves have worked these lands for untold centuries, developing both physical and mystical connections that allow them to produce an unimaginable bounty from the relatively small open spaces between the trees. They mix golden fields of grain with long rows of vineyards and clusters of orchards with carefully placed apiaries—enough to feed all of the Aymhelin and still have trade stock left over.

To protect against raids and incursions, the Elves of the Aymhelin turned the glades into the base of operations for the Yeron Riders, a legendary flying cavalry unit that is among the most elite group of warriors to be found anywhere in Mennara. Saddled upon incredibly rare flying horses known as the Yeron and overseen by Aishalan Finnan, they keep watch for threats near and far. When not patrolling, the Yeron and their riders are able to live in relative peace and prosperity, enjoying the beauty of their environs.

LIFE IN THE FOREST

The woods of the Aymhelin are deep, seeming to range even wider than mere maps would suggest, and there are beings within far older than Humanity itself. All fiercely guard the forests from outside intrusion, lest contaminations disrupt the Elves' eternal quest to return to the Empyrean.

THE FOUNTAIN OF PURITY

A natural spring in a rich, life-filled forest near the Thalian Glades, the Fountain of Purity is, so the legend goes, the spring that the Latari used to purify the Aymhelin after the Third Darkness. It is said that while its water nourishes the pure of heart, it devours the wicked from within, rejuvenating old beauty and cleansing the forests of the shadow-touched. The cults of the Wealdweavers tend these waters and the Aymhelin saplings that are nourished by them.

The Fountain of Purity is forbidden to all but the Elves, though nobles from lands all over Mennara have sent messengers to Caelcira begging King Aenoeth for draughts from one of the many streams that run down into the glades. Over the centuries, various desperate—and greedy—beings have attempted to take control of the mystical waters by force, only to face the combined fury of the Wealdweavers and the Forest Guardians sworn to protect nature.

AYMHELIN SCION (RIVAL)

Some say the Elves use arcane, ritualistic magic to animate huge Deepwood trees. Others claim that the trees achieved mobility on their own, a byproduct from millennia of magic being cast across the Aymhelin. No matter their origin, the trees of the Aymhelin are potent allies. Scions are young, only a few centuries old perhaps, and often accompany the Elves when battle must be done outside the great forest. Though not as powerful as Forest Guardians, these trees can ensnare foes to make then easy targets for Elven archers.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	2	3	2	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	18	0 | 0

Skills: Cool 2, Discipline 2, Brawl 3, Resilience 4.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of checks targeting this enemy once), Swift (an Aymhelin Scion does not perform extra maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Cage of Roots (once per round after a character moves within medium range of the Aymhelin Scion, the Aymhelin Scion may perform an out-of-turn incidental to immobilize that character for the remainder of the encounter. As an action an immobilized character can attempt a **Hard** [◆ ◆ ◆] **Athletics check** on their turn to no longer be immobilized), Silhouette 2.
Equipment: Limbs (Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

DEEPWOOD ARCHER (MINION)

Almost every race in Mennara has developed its own legions of archers, but few—if any—can match the skill and power of the Deepwood Archers, who take their name from the Deepwood trees unique to the forests of the Aymhelin. Their nigh-magical longbows, formed of laminated layers of venerated wood from the cores of ancient branches, are unrivaled in strength and flexibility. They draw smoother, fire harder, and break less often than any other bow in the land.

However, it is more than simply these weapons that makes the Deepwood Archers feared adversaries. They are trained from childhood to draw and control their unrivaled bows, so by the time they are of fighting age, they are capable of firing at a rate and accuracy that few can match—even if using a bow one-third the strength.

The Deepwood Archers take exceptional pride in their abilities, a confidence that often drifts into high-handed arrogance—especially when dealing with bowmen in other lands. When they are not serving as guards within the ranks of the Starplain Archers, the Blythwth Arethyl, or the Deepwood Rangers, they seek to participate in bowyer contests, instruct other Elven archers, and locate more impressive game than can be found in the Thalian Glades.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	3	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	4	1 | 1

Skills (group only): Cool, Ranged, Perception, Vigilance.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Point Blank Shot (when making a Ranged combat check targeting an opponent the Deepwood Archer is engaged with, increase the difficulty once [instead of the twice]).
Equipment: Deepwood Longbow (Ranged; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Extreme]; Accurate 1, Cumbersome 3, Superior, Unwieldy 3), leather armor (+1 soak).

FOREST GUARDIAN (NEMESIS)

Forest Guardians are unnerving to behold at any time, but especially in combat. The largest of the animated trees of the Aymhel, they march forward with a fearless abandon, lashing out with their "legs" and using the dense gnarl of their branches and trunks to smash and crush anything that stands before them. Forest Guardians are preternaturally strong, have the inherent resilience of a dense hardwood tree, and act with an efficient brutality borne of beings who may be utterly divorced from the constraints of traditional mortality. They almost never stride beyond the great forest, however, though some have been seen in large battles against Broken Plains Orc invaders or Uthuk raiding parties.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	2	2	2	3	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	25	18	0 | 0

Skills: Cool 2, Discipline 2, Brawl 2, Resilience 3.
Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade the difficulty of checks targeting this enemy twice).
Abilities: Sweep Attack (a Forest Guardian may spend ⩓ from a Brawl check to hit an additional engaged opponent that would be no more difficult to attack than the original target, dealing base damage +1 damage per ✲), Silhouette 3.
Equipment: Huge limbs (Brawl; Damage 10; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Knockdown, Prepare 1).

LEONX RIDER (RIVAL)

None exemplify the primal, wild nature of the Verdelam Elves more than the Leonx Riders. Charging into battle atop the ferocious Leonx, large sentient felines native to the Aymhelin, these Elven warriors pierce through enemy lines with the force of a storm, using their lightning speed to evade counterblows and change their angles of attack with the swiftness of a gale.

Many Elves see the nomadic Leonx Riders as little more than feral barbarians who have lost their connection to the teachings of Latariana and the Path of the Stars. Far from unthinking savages, the Free Hunters (as they were called in ancient days) saw their wild nature as a way to better attune themselves with the wild lands around them.

In time, they learned to temper their tremendous skill for hunting and combat with a deeper wisdom gained from their animal family. The mightiest killed only to survive, and the pack went to war only in defense of their own. Over time, songs were sung in Caelcira of lost Latari children rescued from the wild by strange, feral Elves, or even whole villages saved by Elven nomads who could speak the tongues of animals. Nevertheless, some of the most prominent leaders of the Latari noble houses wished to exile these "barbarians" from their sacred forest. Still shunned by the rest of Latari society, the Leonx Riders now keep mostly to themselves and their pack, only making contact with outsiders to offer aid.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	3	3	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	15	2 | 1

Skills: Cool 2, Melee (Heavy) 2, Riding 2, Survival 2, Vigilance 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Leonx Bond (when a Leonx Rider directs its mount, the mount may perform an action and a maneuver and is not limited to using its maneuvers to move).
Equipment: Spear (Melee [Heavy]; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1, Defensive 1), leather armor (+1 soak), Leonx (see page 180).

LEONX (RIVAL)

Each half of a Leonx-Verdelam pair trusts the other with its life, and the bond a Leonx shares with its rider is akin to that of family. In battle, the Leonx and rider coordinate their movements as one, fusing Elven skill with the deadly instincts of one of Mennara's most fearsome predators.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	4	1	3	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	14	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 2, Survival 3, Vigilance 2.
Talents: Swift (a Leonx does not perform extra maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Maul (a Leonx adds ■ ■ to Brawl checks against prone or immobilized targets).
Equipment: Claws and fangs (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Pierce 2, Vicious 1).

STORM SORCERESS (NEMESIS)

Although the forms and functions of magic are as diverse as the natural world, there are few who can truly harness and control the potential of that magic. Most beings who work magic can do little more than parlor tricks. A comparative few can meaningfully form and direct that energy, and no more than a hundred of those practitioners in all of Mennara can match the abilities of a storm sorceress.

Drawn from Elves with centuries of training in elemental magic, the storm sorceresses have an awe-inspiring ability to take control of the air around them. They use that dominance to call blinding blizzards, scatter their foes with gale-force winds, and strike their enemies with brutally precise lightning.

Primarily concerned with helping to control the environments of the Aymhelin, the storm sorceresses are rarely encountered by anyone other than their fellow elementalists. However, there are times when the sorceresses must journey not only into the greater Aymhelin but throughout Mennara to hunt down certain exceptionally rare minerals needed to work their magics.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	4	3	4	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	15	18	2 | 2

Skills: Arcana 3, Cool 2, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Lore) 4.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of checks targeting this enemy once).
Abilities: Elemental Mastery (the first effect that a storm sorceress adds to a spell does not increase the difficulty of the Arcana check).
Spells: Storm sorceresses can choose any magic action allowed for the Arcana skill, and may select additional spell effects, as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Blizzard (the storm sorceress chooses a target within long range and makes a **Daunting** (◆◆◆◆) **Arcana check**. If the check is successful, this magic attack inflicts 8 damage +1 damage per ✲ with the Blast 4, Disorient 4, Ensnare 4, and Knockdown qualities).

Stormbolt (the storm sorceress chooses a target within medium range and makes an **Easy** (◆) **Arcana check**. If the check is successful, this magic attack inflicts 8 damage +1 damage per ✲, with the Auto-fire and Stun 4 qualities).

Squall (the storm sorceress chooses a target within medium range and makes an **Easy** (◆) **Arcana check**. If the check is successful, this magic attack inflicts 8 damage +1 damage per ✲. The storm sorceress may spend ⩓ on the check to move the target or a character engaged with the target up to one range band in any direction).
Equipment: Magic staff (the first Range effect added to a spell does not increase its difficulty; increase damage of Attack spells by +4), robes (+1 defense).



TRUE FAE (NEMESIS)

Although there are countless stories and legends that attempt to explain the "fair folk," if anyone knows the true origins of the Fae, they are unwilling—or unable—to say so. From a distance, one might mistakenly believes that their form and proportions make them similar to the Humanoid races in Mennara. This is purely a trick, however, of a mind unable to process what, exactly, it is seeing.

The Fae are utterly terrifying. Their appearance varies wildly, but tales are told of distorted nostrils that lead to wide maws filled with razor-sharp teeth. Their horns and antlers are said to jut at unpredictable angles from their skull in ways none of the many monsters that wander the countryside can match. Most disturbing are the sightless visages some are claimed to posses; how they see without eyes is a mystery.

But the thing that makes the Fae truly unique, and utterly terrifying, is the chaotic magical energy that burns inside them. Although there is no shortage of reasons to stay away from the Fae whenever possible, it's ultimately their unpredictable, chaotic power that sends shivers up a being's spine and warns the primitive, instinctive part of their brain to run whenever they are near.

Nevertheless, foolhardy mortals often seek out the Fae in places where the veil between worlds grows thin, such as the Greywood. Some beings are attracted by the promise of power that the Fae represent. Others seek to slay the Fae for their valuable organs, used to make rare tinctures and potions. Still more believe that the Fae are simply misunderstood: that the right person could become the foundation of a new relationship between the Fae and Mennara.

All are foolishly wrong, although it is those in the latter group who tend to suffer the most before their deaths.



BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	4	4	3	4

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	17	19	1 | 1

Skills: Arcana 3, Brawl 2, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Melee (Light) 2, Stealth 3, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Quick Strike 2 (a Fae adds ■ ■ to combat checks targeting characters that have not acted yet in the current encounter).

Abilities: Creature of the Aenlong (a Fae reduces the difficulty of Arcana checks by one, to a minimum of **Easy** (◆), and the base damage of their Attack spells is increased by three), Flyer (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).

Spells: The Fae can choose any magic action allowed for the Arcana skill, and may select additional spell effects, as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Blinding Curse (the Fae chooses one target within short range and makes an **Average** (◆◆) **Arcana check**. If the check is successful, the target decreases the ability of all checks they make and adds ■ ■ to all checks involving sight until the end of the Fae's next turn. The Fae can sustain these effects by performing the concentrate maneuver).

Shuddering Paralysis (the Fae chooses one target at short range and makes an **Easy** (◆) **Arcana check**. If the check is successful, this magic attack inflicts 7 damage, +1 damage per ✲, with the Ensnare 3 quality).

Equipment: Eldritch blade (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2, Pierce 4), claws and teeth (Brawl; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1).

Well, my sons and daughters, it is about time something in this benighted land impressed me with more than dread and distaste! Truly, Thelgrim is a wonder to behold! It is the first city I have encountered in these northern realms worthy of the name.

The first indication that my fortunes had changed was, strangely enough, the road. With a demarcation as straight as if it had been drawn with a ruler, the pitted, rutted mess I had grown accustomed to during my time in the north became a hard, straight surface of tightly fitted cobbles with well-designed drainage ditches to either side.

I have since learned, of course, that I had entered the vast valley that houses Thelgrim, and thus passed from the dubious aegis of the Dagan Baronies and into the realm of the Dunwarr Mountains. As we rode down the level thoroughfare, I saw several well-built stone structures in the distance. Although constructed of great dark-grey blocks rather than the sandstone of home, the buildings nevertheless warmed my heart. Standing proud at the head of the valley were thick towers and defensive ramparts, surrounding a gate of gleaming steel that stretched to the sky I believed we had arrived in Thelgrim, until a merchant chance-met upon the road disabused me of that notion.

For this was merely the entrance of Thelgrim. Here, many of the Humans live, as well as Dwarves of a more adventurous nature. Here, too, are many businesses, markets, and warehouses serving the Humans of the surrounding territories and facilitating Thelgrim's trade with the baronies and other polities across the north. I later learned that most Dwarves regard the entrance with distaste, if not outright anger. These folk see the proud structures as nothing more than signposts directing their many enemies, real or imagined, toward their real home. But everything I saw of the surface construction seemed to be many, many years old, so how long the Dwarves have held these fears without suffering attack, I could not begin to guess.

At the center of the fortifications is the grand gate that led the way to the passages into Thelgrim itself. At first, having entered under the watchful eyes of Dwarven warriors in heavy armor, I thought I had misunderstood the directions I had been given. The broad tunnels, more akin to wide streets, were filled with other travelers and all manner of shops, taverns, and inns. Well-carved side corridors branching off occasionally, all as dark as the main thoroughfare down which Ibn and I traveled. It took several long days, while we seemed to descend forever, until the city of the Dwarves opened up around us. And there, my children yet to be, I truly felt awe in this strange, distant land for the first time.

Most of Thelgrim was one, gigantic cavern seemingly larger than the mountains above it. The fronts of businesses, shops, and homes have been carved into the walls, each in a different style, with stones of various colors and textures lending each its own unique aspect amidst the whole. Illumination is provided by large pots that hang overhead, filled with a substance that glows golden in the darkness, reflecting off the crystals in the vaulted ceiling to bathe the streets below in a soft yellow light.

Broad tunnels extend outwards in all directions like wide avenues, lined with parks of such alien beauty that words fail me. Where trees and other plants would be situated in a park beneath the sun, here there are graceful, delicate formations of stone in a dizzying array of colors, each glowing softly with its own otherworldly radiance, and each housing countless carven images, set upon shelves chiseled into the glowing stones.

And wandering amidst this fantastical landscape was a bustling crowd of Dwarves and Humans, each standing taller than those I had met to the south, no matter their respective heights. Here, at last, I saw folk free of the pervasive fear that seems to have poisoned the Humans who live above the ground. I do not mean to imply to you, my daughters and sons, that this realm was impervious to the gloom and threat that seems to hang over all the north, but rather that, while the Humans above appear often to cringe beneath that weight, these folk face it with hardened resolve.

I began to wonder if the Humans in other lands shared the enthusiasm and energy of Thelgrim proper.

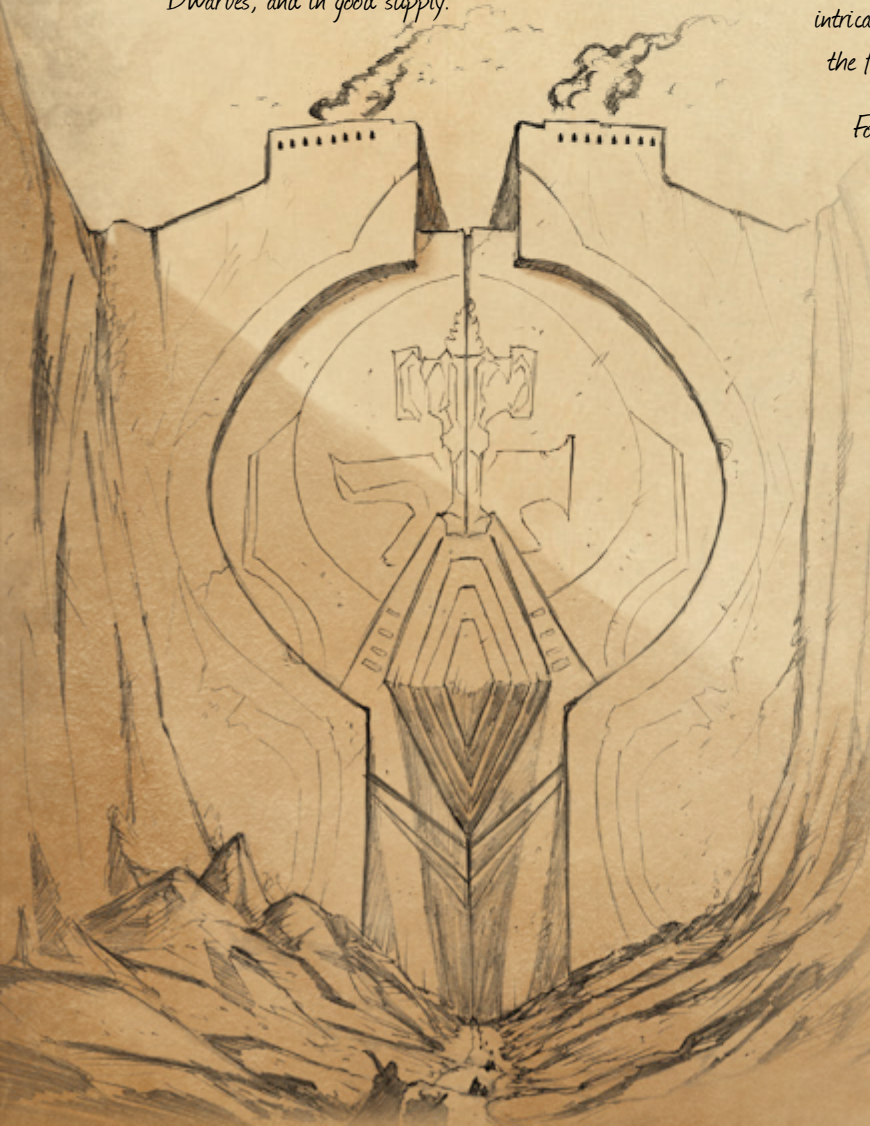
And I further wondered what that said about my kind in general.

When I first beheld the glowing stones of the public parks, a surge of hope leapt up within me, but it was quickly quashed as I was told, by a very young Dwarf, that such stone is common in Dwarven cities. It has no relation at all to any kind of "magic rocks," the youth told me, a smile on her smooth face.

But still, several people I encountered in taverns outside of Aymhelin all had said the Dwarves were adept at the use of runes, and well versed in ancient lore. I would not give up yet.

One area of specialty I soon learned all Dwarves share is brewing, vintnery, and the drinking—or quaffing, to use the proper term—of the products of those pastimes. It seemed I could not walk ten paces down the main passage of Thelgrim without seeing two taverns and a grog shop.

I was most heartened to find, upon entering a particularly busy establishment, that mead is a favored drink among the Dwarves, and in good supply.



I installed Ibn in a small, neatly maintained livery stable before entering a shop whose intricate stonework sign declared it to be the Earthen Cup. As I pushed open the door and glanced around the dim, smoky interior, I was surprised to see that there were several Humans among the shorter, mostly bearded clientele.

At the long stone counter along the back, I ordered myself a large cup of mead and then turned to look for likely sources of information while I waited for the publican to bring me my drink. Three grizzled old campaigners looked promising, sitting at a battered round table nearby, where they could keep an eye on the door and yet have easy access to the long counter.

Their table nearly groaned beneath the weight of a feast that might have been the match of the Caliph's own A'tar-Day dinner, and my mouth began to water despite the hearty meal I had already eaten. There were platters of juicy meats, piles of small vegetables and roots, and long, steaming loaves of rich brown bread. Towering over everything were several goblets of intricate design and beautiful craftsmanship overflowing with the frothy bitter brew of the north.

Fortified with a heavy cup of mead, I approached. One of the Dwarves, jolly and old with a luxuriant white beard plaited into two long braids, rose before I could even introduce myself, reached up to slap me painfully on the back, and pushed me into a seat with such force I spilled some of my precious mead onto the stone floor.

"Greetings, Sunderman! Join us!" The Dwarf's smile was wide and shining in the snowy beard as he dropped back into his own seat. "We don't often see your kind this far north! Let me introduce you to these reprobates." The words were good-natured, and the other two Dwarves gave mock scowls, but they rolled their eyes toward me with humorous tolerance for their old friend.

"This," and the Dwarf pounded on the back of a younger Dwarf whose brown beard was clipped

The gates of Thelgrim! I could have stayed here gazing in wonder for hours longer. The scale of it all was quite impressive, especially given the relative scale of its makers.



A minor snack I saw many of the Dwarves here quickly down between proper meals.

short in a fashion much like those of my homeland," is Corbin, of the Miners' Guild."

The Dwarf, who was dressed in plated armor nodded beneath his horn-spiked metal cap.

"And this," my host reached over to tap the Dwarf sitting across from me on the shoulder, "is Glyr, a healer and fellow guild brother of the Warriors."

Glyr had a round, bulbous nose discolored from much drink. His red hair was gathered at the back of his head in a short topknot, while his ruddy beard spread across his broad chest in an unruly spill. He nodded as well, while knocking aside the old Dwarf's hand.

"And I," my new friend said with an expansive wave of a hand, ignoring Glyr's dismissal, "am Grisban. But I also answer to my guild-given name: the Thirsty!" He reached out to the cup in front of Glyr and snatched it before the other Dwarf could stop him, throwing it back with such a careless maneuver that at least half the liquid splashed into his beard.

This, I was later to learn, was a proper quaff.

The three Dwarves pressed me then for news of my homeland, my own life story, and any news I might bring them from the wider world. Corbin, the dark-haired Dwarf, seemed the most knowledgeable of my distant homeland, but all three were genuinely curious. I smiled broadly, feeling the warmth of the mead join with the sense of well-being from these fine Dwarves, and began to regale them with tales of Al-Kalim and my journeys throughout the northern realms.

I was careful, despite their friendly demeanor and the open conversation, to give nothing away about my true intentions. Rather, I explained at length the traditional Rite of Passage scholars must perform to earn a place in one of the Collegiates Arcane, and described in loving detail the streets and structures of ancient Haruun-a city I had never visited in my life.

I learned much that night of the Dwarves and their histories, myths, and legends. For three hoary veterans, they seemed overly concerned with children's tales. Dragons featured most prominently in their talk of the past, despite what I assume is common knowledge concerning the rarity of those immense creatures, and their solitary nature.

In passing, I mentioned my growing disdain for the stewardship of the Dagan Barons, and my new friends were quick to join me in disparaging their Human neighbors and the chaos that passes for a tradition of rulership and guidance among them. The Dwarves of the Dunwarr Mountains, it would appear, are far more traditional, following a monarch who provides central guidance and vision for their work. How this paragon of Dwarven virtue is chosen, however, remains quite confusing to me. All I was truly able to ascertain was that, before the ruler is selected, they must serve in one of the many guilds that form the center of Dwarven society in the mountains.

The concept of choosing a monarch, however, was strange enough that I paused my friends in their long, quarrelsome dissertation to ask how it is that a Dwarven ruler is not born to their station, chosen by the gods themselves for such a lofty responsibility. It was Grisban, the grizzled old warrior, looking owlishly at me over the rim of his mug, who responded.

"You would have us put ourselves at the mercy of some random fool who might have no more aptitude than your average herd of sheep?" He seemed genuinely disgusted at the concept of hereditary power, and I put one hand up to stave off further argument.

"Ever since the time of Helka the Bold, we have trusted more in ability and nerve than in bloodlines." Corbin shrugged. "We know you tall folk put much stock in such things, but Dwarves have ever been a more practical people."

Glyr nodded. "You tall folk put too much faith in blood, and not enough faith in capability."

What they said made some sense, but the idea that a Caliph might be chosen, by the common people no less, was too foreign to my addled mind.

"To be chosen ruler of the Dwarves, you must prove yourself through years of service in the guilds." Grisban leaned back in his carved chair. "One does not merely wander into the throne room and assume unquestioned authority over all of Dwarvenkind. It takes years of dedication and learning to accrue the necessary wisdom to lead the folk of Dunwarr through the treacheries of the world. Should we let young Corbin, here, guide us into the future, the drops from his last bath still wet on his head?"

Grisban and Glyr laughed at that, long and hearty, and a tragic amount of drink found itself splashing across the stones. I could see Corbin's temper begin to rise, but then he relaxed a bit and took another deep quaff of his bitter brew.

My companions then explained to me in more detail about the guilds, and the differences that separated Corbin's Miners' Guild from the two older Dwarves' more traditional Warriors' Guild. Among the Dwarves, the miners, it appears, delves most deeply into unexplored rock in search of valuable ores. They also fashion new tunnels as they go, thus aiding in the development of new homesteads under the mountains. Members of the Warriors' Guild, on the other hand, are more traditional fighters, like the White Guard of the Caliph, or perhaps even the Marshals of the Citadel.

There are several other guilds, I am certain, but the rambling nature of our discourse, and the liberal flow of drink, conspired to work against my usually excellent memory in such regards. I recall something about a Merchants' Guild, and as these were Dwarves, I am certain there must be guilds of masons, and smiths, of course. And, without doubt, we discussed the Guild of Brewers at some appreciable length, as well.

Eventually, after the Dwarves had stood the table to several rounds of drink and what seemed like hours of friendly conversation and bantering about our many differences, I managed to bring us around to the topic of magical artifacts, which seemed to spark my companions' interest anew.

The fine Dwarves, adventurers all, knew a great deal about the runebound shards of which I had already heard tell in other places. They knew of many fantastical items powered with such stones. They were warriors, however, and knew little of how such things functioned.

But when, at long last, I brought the conversation around to the provenance of these relics, and what the source of their power might be, the three Dwarves resorted to a round of grumbling, good-natured grousing, as each challenged the others' knowledge, or lack thereof.

And I knew, after only a moment, that they could tell me nothing of my own stone, the Caliph's jewel, unbound as it was by the runic chains of the Dwarves' most bitter enemies, the dragons.

I did not want to be obvious, and so it took me another circuitous route, and several more drinks on the Caliph's account, to inquire whether the lack of this knowledge applied only to my new friends, or if Dwarvenkind in general shared their ignorance on the topic.

That was when I learned about the irritability of Dwarves. They did not take kindly to my intimating that there was any such blanket ignorance among their kind, and they declared they would put the knowledge of the Dwarven Runescribes' Guild against that of any two-bit scholar from Greyhaven or Nerekhall or effete scholar of the southern forests.

My companions could see that I was affected by this turn in the conversation, and to their credit, they were quick to offer comfort. All I need do, they assured me, was find the right target for my inquiries.

But if neither the Human mages of Greyhaven, nor the Elven sages of the Aymhelin, nor the Dwarven runescribes of the Dunwarr Mountains could assist me, where then can I go to inquire next?

THE DUNWARR MOUNTAINS

Bleak and foreboding, the Dunwarr Mountains are a collection of blizzard-pounded peaks, sharp ridges of gray slate, and gnarled clusters of twisted evergreen trees. Between the snowy crags lie high meadows of heather and gorse, fed by swift-flowing, icy brooks. Apparently home to nothing beyond the occasional goat and jackrabbit, the Dunwarr are the last place one would expect to find an empire.

However, as travelers venture through the tumbled rocks of the foothills and follow the twisting trails up into the high valleys, signs of a long-lost civilization begin to appear. On close inspection, cliffs appear too straight and sharp edged to have been cut by wind and rain. What first look like sheep trails turn out to be paved with tightly-fitted cobblestones. And some of the craggy outcroppings start to eerily resemble grim, weatherworn faces.

Eventually, if one follows a particularly well-worn track east of the Howling Giant Hills, they will enter a narrow vale leading up into the Dunwarr. At its head, bracketed by the roaring foam from twin towering waterfalls, stand the Gates of Thelgrim, heart of the Dwarven kingdoms in the Dunwarr Deeps.

THE MOUNTAIN GATES

Shaped in the silhouettes of two mighty Dwarven warriors standing back to back to repel surrounding enemies, the banded and reinforced steel doors rise nearly two hundred hands high. Crafted from bands of hardened steel joined by hundreds of rivets and stamped with runes of endurance, the Gates of Thelgrim clearly bear the dents and scars of dozens of assaults as testament to their indestructibility.

What cannot be seen are the other, hidden defenses wrought into the gates and the surrounding cliff faces. Murder holes and disguised firing ports allow the unseen Dwarven guardians to reap a bloody tally from any attacking force with crossbows, ballistae, and Dwarven firebombs. Hidden sally ports allow the garrison to launch devastating counterassaults and raids, and—at the last—the water from the falls can be redirected to flood the entire valley.



The Dunwarr Dwarves maintain a light garrison at the Gates, for even a few score soldiers can hold the gates for weeks, and Thelgrim is merely a day's march away. Bradha the Shield commands the garrison, and also inspects the caravans journeying up from Frostgate to barter with Thelgrim's merchants. A grim and experienced veteran of several conflicts, she holds that her first and foremost duty is to the safety of her kingdom. Thus, she is more than willing to bar entry to any suspicious characters, but she also pays well for any news of nearby threats.

THELGRIM

Once through the Gates, travelers find themselves in a vast stone receiving hall, lit by cunningly wrought shafts that bring light from the surface and are protected by even more hidden defenses. Besides the doors to the garrison quarters and storerooms, the only exit is a second pair of massive doors at the far end of the hall. These lead to the Hearth Road; the underground passage that stretches seven leagues to the heart of Thelgrim.

The Hearth Road is wide enough for five wagons to travel abreast and intricate runework runs the length of the walls; a history of the Dwarven people for those with the ken to read it. Every inch is smooth and polished, more reminiscent of expertly-worked metal than rough stonework. This is the gift of the Dunwarr Dwarves, the ability to not only work a material, but hear it. They know the temperature of molten iron from just a glance at it, understand the size and shape of an obsidian vein by laying a hand on it, and can feel exactly where to lay a chisel to leave a perfectly flat stone face. They are masters of the forge and quarry, and nowhere is this mastery on display more than in Thelgrim.

Thelgrim is where one can start to truly understand the scale of the Dunwarr Deeps—the network of caverns that run through the bones of the Dunwarr Mountains, and domain of the Dunwarr Dwarves. The Hearth Road opens into a vast cavern filled with towering stalagmites and outcroppings of living rock. Once the road ran into the cavern without interruption, but that was before the Third Darkness, when Gehennor sent his dragon hybrids along the Hearth Road and into Thelgrim's heart. Since then, the dwarves have sunk a deep chasm across that side of the cavern, and only a single arching bridge links the Hearth Road to the city. At the far side of the bridge stand more gates, and bulwarks topped by a strategic collection of crenelles and parapets. Only when one passes this final portal have they entered the city of Thelgrim.

The gates are matched by similar defenses on the north end of the city that lead out into the Deeps, and each is abutted by one of the two barracks of the Warriors' Guild. The southern barracks are commanded by Skirmisher Captain Lyssa Svensdottir, the soldier who oversees all military action outside of the mountains. The northern barracks are commanded by her brother, Guard Captain Einalf Svensson, who oversees the defenses within the Deeps and the Palace Guard, which defends King Geirmund Ragnarson.

THE HEART OF THE CITY

Originating as a simple intersection of tunnels in one of the Deeps' larger caverns, the Dunwarr capital of Thelgrim started as a series of camps full of weary refugees during the Years of Exile. Eventually, cloth tents gave way to stone walls and the camps began to transform into a fragile new civilization. Millennia later, it still stands as a stony, ever-growing testament to Dwarven resilience.

Thelgrim exists within a massive underground cavern, eternally lit by hundreds of crystal starglobes laboriously crafted by the Runescribes' Guild. From afar, their sparkling radiance makes the city look like a gigantic geode. Within the city's walls, the starglobes light the streets with a dim, gentle glow. Human visitors find the low light bothersome, which tends to amuse the locals to no end.

In Thelgrim, the buildings tend to be dug into the rock of the cavern walls and stalagmites as often as built freestanding on the cavern floor. The buildings are organized in rings, running outwards from the city center. At Thelgrim's heart, a towering aqueduct redirects the flow of an underground river into a Dwarf-crafted lake—as well as providing fresh water for the inhabitants.

At the far end of the lake stands Dunwol Kenn Karnin, "The Fortress inside the Mountain." From within the thick walls and defensive battlements of this fortress within a fortress, King Ragnarson rules from Tanngnoster's Throne. The Throne and the throne room it occupies sit at the very depths of Dunwol Kenn Karnin; a final fastness for the dwarven people in their darkest hours.

On the opposite side of the lake from Dunwol Kenn Karnin sits the Guild Hall, its imposing facade displaying one ornately decorated pillar for each of the ten guilds that make up the heart and soul of Dwarven society. Unlike the sober quiet of the King's fortress, the Guild Hall is a raucous and lively place. The heads, sub-heads, and representatives of each of the guilds spend hours in spirited debate; each trying to further their own guilds' interests and expand their authority. More than once these debates have devolved into angry brawls that force the king's own representatives to haul the guild members outside and toss them into the lake to cool off.

THE RUNEFORGE

Home to the venerable Runescribes' Guild, the Runeforge houses the Dwarves' collection of known dragon runes. These guilders built their massive, cruciform hall partially into the cavern walls at the edge of Thelgrim. Here, the runescribes can gaze out over the entire city—a not so subtle reminder that they, more than anyone, are responsible for the preservation of the soul of Dunwarr's culture.

Each of the four immense wings of the hall serves a separate purpose. The south wing, where the entrances are located, hold their offices and meeting chambers. The west wing contains the forges, casting molds, and foundries where new runic items are cast and created. The north wing houses two copies of each known dragon rune, cast from an appropriate metal

and hammered into rock slabs. And the west wing, buried in the stone of the cavern wall and pointing towards the molten heath, protects the complete records of dwarven history, etched onto beaten copper sheets.

Beyond the maintaining of Dunwarr history and etching dragon runes into arms and armor, the runescribes are also charged with attempting to discover new runes or rediscover those lost with the destruction of the Karok Doum. None take this charge more seriously than Dorgan Hammerfist, the Master Scribe. In fact, it is said that he is seriously considering hiring a band of adventurers to travel to the Molten Heath and explore the ruins of the Dwarves' ancestral cities in the hopes of finding some ancient runecraft.

HALL OF THE ANCESTORS

Located even deeper beneath the heart of Thelgrim, the Hall of the Ancestors is the repository for the Dwarven dead. Within the hall are seven hundred and thirty-four unsealed sarcophagi, the temporary burial grounds of the newly deceased. The corpses are left to decompose in those temporary tombs for seven hundred and thirty-four days; then, the bones are transferred into the miles-long collection of antechambers that are used—in the loosest possible sense—to join the dead with their families or guilds.

The only Dwarves who are given prestigious, individual burials are the monarchs of Dunwarr. They are interred in large, elaborate, and elegant tombs of sealed metal and stone. These miniature mausoleums not only house the royal remains, but relate the legends of the leaders through artistically rendered tableaus and intricately engraved poetry.



HADRANHOLD

Deep in the heart of the Dunwarr, Hadranhold started out as a lonely watchpost built into the towering Mount Valborne. Over the centuries it has grown into a fortress, and then a city.

From the surface, all one can see is the original stone tower and battlements built into the mountain's peak. The Rangers' Guild maintains the tower, which also serves as their unofficial headquarters. The rest of Hadranhold lies deep below the surface, linked to the watchtower by a single stone staircase of thousands of steps.

The city proper has been carved into the caverns of the Deeps in much the same manner as Thelgrim. Hadranhold, however, lies close to the molten heart of Mennara. Members of the Smiths' and Artificers' Guilds have moved here in numbers to take advantage of the abundant heat for smelting and forging, and the lower Hadranhold, unlike the cold and lonely upper fortress, has become a bustling city of skilled artisans.

FIRESTONE FURNACE

Deep below Hadranhold sits an immense, ancient kiln forged of an unnamed alloy. The kiln stands in the center of a lake of boiling magma, and only the wondrous nature of its construction keeps the so-called Firestone Furnace from melting into slag.

The Dwarves of the Smiths' Guild reach this marvel of preternatural steel across obsidian bridges reinforced with inlaid runes that ward off the ferocious heat. The Furnace allows the Smiths' Guild to forge ores into wondrously pure ingots, and even craft the hardened steel that can resist dragonfire and makes up the Gates of Thelgrim.

The Furnace is kept running night and day, year-round, overseen by The Greathammer Hafnir Irontamer. Horrifically scarred and hairless, Hafnir has had almost every inch of his stout body seared or burned in his labors. His level of ceaseless dedication is about more than just pride, however. Should the Furnace be left empty for too long, it could heat beyond its own melting point and collapse into the fiery magma below. Such a tragedy would have horrible ramifications for the Smiths' guild, and for the entire Dunwarr kingdom.

DULDOR DEEPS

Far from the halls of Thelgrim, deep in the solid granite of the mountains, lies the Duldor Deeps: the home of many members of the Artificers' Guild and the unofficial Alchemists' League. Within its stone halls, the Artificers' Guild tests new and inventive machineries, their constantly evolving collection of traps and locks, and deadly siege weapons. They also suffer the presence and (at times unwelcome) collaboration of the upstart Alchemists' League members, who are forever experimenting with new alchemical mixtures, developing new acids and toxic gasses, and manufacturing their infamous fire mugs and firebombs. Though these developments are for the benefit of the entire Dunwarr kingdom, they have also forced the Duldor Deeps to be far removed from other Dwarven cities.

THE DUNWAR GUILDS

Dwarven society in the Dunwarr Deeps is primarily organized around ten civic guilds. Each guild oversees a different aspect of Dwarven life, and they have become the Dunwarr Dwarves' primary civic institutions for countless generations.

The Masons' Guild constructs new buildings and maintains venerated structures within the mountains. Concurrently, the Miners' Guild digs ores and precious gems, and excavates new tunnels and chambers for the Masons.

The Smiths' Guild forges tools, weapons, and other useful items, while the Artificers' Guild crafts toys, clever mechanisms, and beautiful jewelry. The Brewers' Guild makes stouts and ales, and also oversees the growing of grain aboveground (and sometimes grudgingly mills it into bread instead of beer). The Merchants' Guild oversees the selling of these goods both to Dunwarr communities and the outside world.

The Warriors' Guild stands ready to protect all the Deeps against any threat, while the Rangers' Guild patrol the mountainsides and hunt dangerous beasts and bands of marauders in Dunwarr lands. Meanwhile, the Explorers' Guild sends scouts and emissaries (and sometimes spies) into other lands to know what the rest of Mennara is about. Finally, the Runescribes' Guild maintains the knowledge of inscribing runes of power.

Not all Dwarves belong to one of the Guilds, though nearly every Dwarf aspires to join their ranks. Even the king or queen is linked to the guilds, as each is a former guild leader elected by the vote of their fellow Guildmasters. Though they swear to renounce their former loyalties upon their ascension, no Dunwarr ruler can avoid a little favoritism.

There are, however, numerous other groups in Dunwarr society that strive for a Guild's power and prestige. By ancient law there can only be ten Guilds at any one time, but nothing stops a Guild from being broken and a new one rising in its place. Groups like the Alchemists' League, the Fireforgers, and the Vengeance Seekers constantly scheme to supplant one of the existing Guilds, who in turn work tirelessly to maintain their authority.

Chief Alchemist Freja Bjornhart and her husband, Master Artificer Stron, oversee the Duldor Deeps. They fell in love after decades of working closely together, though their relationship was taboo from the very beginning. The Artificers' Guild feared that Stron's loyalty to his wife would weaken their dominant position, and the Alchemists' League saw Freja's love for her husband as essentially fraternizing with the enemy. Both received stern admonishments to avoid the other, which the Bjornharts dutifully acknowledged and immediately ignored. In the years since, neither organization has been willing to acknowledge that Freja and Stron's marriage is what has kept the Duldor Deeps running relatively smoothly. Instead, the Guild and League have taken to vehemently arguing over which organization the couple's eventual children will join.

LABYRINTH OF DEURG

Many centuries ago, during the Dwarves' initial explorations into the Dunwarr Mountains, a team from the Miners' Guild made the fateful decision to follow an unusual seam of ore toward the surface of the mountain. The seam ran through a mass of black, obsidian-like stone, and the Smiths' Guild determined that the ore, when smelted, created a shining metal of unparalleled strength and resilience. After meeting with the guild elders, Master Miner Deurg redoubled the miners' efforts.

It wasn't long into the excavation that the miners began to question the dig. They were having trouble tracking their progress within the mountain—an entirely new phenomena for the Dwarves and their abilities to determine their location underground. They would dig for days but feel as if they hadn't moved. They would turn to follow the seam but swear they were still pointed in the same direction. They would feel as if the seam were about to thin or end, but instead find the largest deposits to date. Eventually they started breaking into unexpected caves and chambers, all covered with razor-sharp outcroppings of the black stone, and shot through with strands of the strange metal.

Then, the whispering started.

The miners had been hearing it for weeks before they realized that it was more than just the building excitement in their own heads. "Dig," the voices urged them. "The most valuable lodes lie just ahead. Dig up toward me…"

Reports of the whispers were the last things to leave these mines. Search parties sent from Thelgrim found the entrances to the tunnels caved in. The dwarves dug through the cave in, only to find no trace of the miners inside. When word reached the Deeplord, she ruled that all ingots of the strange metal be returned to the mine, which was to be sealed forever behind runes of warding and binding. All exploration of the workings the Dwarves now refer to as the Labyrinth of Deurg was forbidden on pain of death.

THE PACT OF STONESENSE

The Dwarves have always had a singular affinity with the Dimora, even as they have a seemingly innate distrust (and even hatred) of the Fae. The history carved into the walls of the Hearth Road claims that this relationship began when the first Dwarves fled into the Dunwarr mountains. The tales say that as the Dwarves dug deeper and deeper to escape the predations of the dragons, they came across the Dimora in the mountains' very roots.

Perhaps recognizing fellow refugees from the world of light and sunlight, the Dimora are said to have given the Dunwarr Dwarves their ability to know stone or metal by laying hands on it. To this day, should a Dwarf come across one of these elusive elementals, they almost inevitably treat them with the utmost respect. Likewise, should an unwise adventurer attempt to slay a Dimora with a Dwarf present, they're likely to get an axe-blade between the eyes for their impertinence.

Though the proclamation has remained in place for hundreds of years, occasionally a band of foolhardy adventurers becomes seduced by the promise of the mythical ore discovered there. So far, all who have managed to discover a new entrance into the Labyrinth have vanished within its depths forever. More concerning are the rumors that persist that a young blacksmith spirited away a portion of the metal before it could be returned to the Labyrinth. The stories say that he forged a deadly blade and went adventuring, only to be lost in the Woods of Woe.

THE FRONTIER

The name given to the north and west stretches of the Dunwarr mountains, the Frontier is where the caverns of the Deeps narrow and shrink, and the land begins to slope down to the frozen, ice-locked coast. Here, many of the Dwarves still live above ground, making their living as farmers, hunters, and foresters. Though their kin describe them as foolhardy and a little odd for wanting to live on Mennara's surface, these Frontier Dwarves tend to enjoy the thin, clear light of the sun and the touch of frosty air on their cheeks.

To the west, the alpine valleys are warm enough in summer that the Dwarves can grow oats, wheat, barley, and other cereal crops. Members of the Brewers' Guild construct terraced fields and study granaries alongside fortified manor houses built into the rocky cliffs. Though the Dunwarr Dwarves do a brisk trade with the baronies for food, the farms of the Frontier would be enough to feed the nation if the Brewers' Guild stopped using the best grains for beer.

THE NORTHERN COAST

As one ventures into the northern parts of the Frontier, even the sparse Dwarven farms and outposts dwindle away. The rare inhabitants—most often herders or hunters—make their living as best they can by tending to flocks of bighorn sheep or herds of mountain goats, or bringing down the deer, mountain Leonx, and burlback bears that hunt in the high crags.

Nearly every one of these Dwarves belongs to the Rangers' Guild. Unlike most other Guilds, the Rangers feel that if a Dwarf is brave enough to live beyond the safety of rock and stone, then they'd best join the Guild and learn how to protect themselves. Most of them go for months or more without seeing another Dwarf. However, in the deepest depths of winter during the solstice, most try to make the trek to Hadranhold for the Guild's traditional week of feasting and fellowship known as Wintersmeet.

LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS

Dunwarr can appear lifeless on the surface, but within the ageless mountains are deep caverns, tunnels, and entire underground cities. Here life can be found abundantly, from the Dwarves guarding against future invasions to low creatures who teem in the dark and ancient Elven demon-hunters still fighting a war almost as old as the mountains themselves.

DEEP ELF (RIVAL)

Though most Elves live in relative harmony with the world and the races around them, some members of the Elven race have turned their back on their cousins. The goals of these Elves are to more fully embrace Emorial's mission against the forces of the Ynfernael and to redeem their name from its sullying by Malcorne, the Corrupted One.

Called Deep Elves for the elaborate networks of tunnels they inhabit, they were drawn underground because of the proliferation of Ynfernael gates beneath the surface. Now these Elves generally only emerge aboveground to hunt for new sources of Ynfernael power or when their crusade against the otherworldly demons forces them to do so. Their endless crusade has drained them of any dregs of mercy or compassion, however, as the dark powers they use to fight the Ynfernael slowly poisons their souls. Many adventurers who stray into these underground lairs are lucky to escape with their lives, for the Deep Elves do not suffer trespassers or the inquisitive.



Skills: Discipline 2, Knowledge (Forbidden) 3, Melee (Light) 3, Skulduggery 2, Stealth 3.
Talents: Dual Wielder (may perform a maneuver to reduce the difficulty of the Deep Elf's next combined check to attack with two weapons during their turn by one).
Abilities: Shadow Training (enemies add ■ to magic checks targeting a Deep Elf).
Equipment: Two freezing blades (Melee [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1, Sunder).

DIMORA (NEMESIS)

Creatures born of the Aelong, the Dimora are believed to cross into the world as formless elementals. They then build themselves out of the earth, taking on the form of stony, vaguely mole-like creatures. They are constantly shifting in density and composition, perpetually shedding the soil of their bodies and replacing what's lost with fresh loam from the ground beneath them.

The motivations for the Dimora to cross into this realm are generally unknown, as they rarely stray far from the rifts that allowed them entry, they refuse to communicate with any creatures except the Dwarves, and they seek no contact with the outside world. They aggressively defend the land around their rifts, however; pubs and taverns all across the world are filled with stories of travelers destroyed without warning for accidentally trespassing on land the Dimora have claimed as their own.



Skills: Arcana 3, Brawl 2, Cool 3, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Melee (Light) 2, Stealth 2.
Talents: Durable 2 (a Dimora reduces any Critical Injury result it suffers by 20, to a minimum of 01).
Abilities: Creature of the Aenlong (a Dimora reduces the difficulty of Arcana checks by one, to a minimum of **Easy** (◆), and increases the base damage of their Attack spells by three), Stonewalker (a Dimora moves normally through difficult or impassable terrain of stone, soil, or similar materials), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents must make a **Average** [◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).
Spells: The Dimora can choose any magic action allowed for the Arcana skill, and may select additional spell effects, as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Tremor (the Dimora chooses one target at short range and makes an **Average** (◆◆) **Arcana check**. If the check is successful, this magic attack inflicts 7 damage, +1 damage per ✡ and the target and all characters engaged with the target are knocked prone. The Dimora can spend ⮝ on the check to move the target up to one range band in any direction).

Prison of Stone (the Dimora chooses one target at short range and makes an **Average** (◆◆) **Arcana check**. If the check is successful, this magic attack inflicts 7 damage, +1 damage per ✡, with the Blast 3 and Ensnare 3 qualities).
Equipment: Stone blades (Melee; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2); stone fists (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2, Knockdown).

DWARF GUILDER (RIVAL)

Dwarf guilds dominate society in the Dunwarr Mountains, and guild members are everywhere in the tunnels under the mountains here. The ten guilds cover a wide range of knowledge, abilities, and traditions, and so guild members are ideal sources of information for visitors. Depending on the guild, they can be excellent weapon forgers and repairers, decipherers of mysterious runes, and even scouts and fighters. For tired adventurers, though, members of the Brewers' Guild may be the most welcome to locate.



Skills: Melee (Light) 2, Ranged 2, Resilience 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Dark Vision (when making skill checks, Dwarves remove up to ■ ■ imposed due to darkness), Guild Member (when performing a check related to their specific guild, Dwarf Guilders upgrade the ability of the check twice).
Equipment: Guild tools and scrolls.

DWARVEN DRAGON HUNTER (NEMESIS)

The Dwarven Dragon Hunters are hostile, rage-filled, proselytizing zealots who give every aspect of their lives to the hunt of their ancestral foes. They train endlessly in a specialized style of combat most effectively suited to ending the lives of dragons wherever they can be found, then make pilgrimages to places that report sightings of the beasts. Typically, when Dragon Hunters leave the Dunwarr Mountains, they aggressively try to enlist anyone whom they see as having the makings of an adventurer to join their quest. Refusal results in a barrage of harsh and belittling insults at best, for Dragon Hunters tend to take a dim view of anyone who doesn't hate dragons as enthusiastically as they do. In some cases, they have even taken their blade to anyone seen as "Dargeth Moni," or "friend of filth-lizards."

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	2	3	4	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	17	15	1 | 1

Skills: Discipline 4, Melee (Light) 3, Ranged 4, Resilience 3, Survival 3.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of checks targeting this enemy once).
Abilities: Dauntless (Dwarven Dragon Hunters upgrade the ability of Discipline checks they make to resist fear or intimidation once), Dark Vision (when making skill checks, Dwarves remove up to ■■ imposed due to darkness).
Equipment: Axe (Melee [Light]; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), portable bolt thrower (Ranged; Damage 9; Critical 2; Range [Extreme]; Cumbersome 3, Pierce 2, Prepare 1), Dwarven firebombs (Ranged; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Blast 6, Burn 2, Limited Ammo 1).

KENNSIR DWARF (RIVAL)

Though Dunwarr Dwarves live, fight, and often die in the tunnels beneath the mountains, the Kennsir Dwarves take fighting to horrifying levels of strategic brutality. They live for battle in the claustrophobic, fortified tunnels under the mountains—employing the unconventional, unpredictable strategies of guerrilla warriors. Whether they are tunneling deep behind invaders' flanks, collapsing mine shafts, or choking their foes in noxious gasses from the Alchemists' League, there are none better at tunnel fighting in all the world.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	1	2	3	3	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	15	1 | 0

Skills: Melee (Light) 3, Resilience 3, Skulduggery 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Dark Vision (when making skill checks, Dwarves remove up to ■■ imposed due to darkness), Tunnel Fighter (add ■■ to combat checks Kennsir Dwarves make in enclosed spaces).
Equipment: Brace of Dwarven pickaxes (Melee [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2), smokebombs, vials of poison gas.

KOBOLD (MINION)

Centuries ago, a sorcerer desperately in need of minions used magic to twist a race of beastmen to suit his own depraved purposes. He made them smaller so they could better work in tight spaces, slashed their intelligence so they would never revolt against him, made them genderless so they wouldn't be distracted by mating instincts, and gave them the ability to reproduce asexually so they would always have large enough numbers for their tasks. He was an exceptionally powerful magician whose intellect was matched only by his lack of foresight.

The kobolds reproduced at an astonishing rate, and they soon overwhelmed the wizard, his stronghold, and the surrounding lands. Luckily, being small and about as bright a particularly dim dog, they tend to fall prey to anything higher up on the food chain (which includes just about everything). Even so, they remain a blight on every corner of Mennara. Occasionally, a kobold may figure out how to construct simple traps, make rudimentary weapons, or even lead a group of their fellows in some semblance of tactics, at which point a pack of kobolds can go from nuisance to menace. They carry out raids on isolated villages or farms, hunting for fresh(ish) meat, shiny baubles, and small domesticated animals.

Packs of kobolds infest the Dunwarr Mountains, and the Dwarves view them as the rest of the world does—annoying, predatory vermin. One of the Rangers' and Warriors' Guilds' more onerous duties is kobold extermination, which usually falls on the newest members.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	1	1	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	3	0 | 0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Melee (Light), Skulduggery.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Not Another! (in an encounter with any number of kobolds, the GM may spend ♻♻ from any check made by a PC to add one kobold to an existing minion group, or spend ⊗ to add a new minion group of three kobolds to the encounter), Silhouette 0.
Equipment: Claws and teeth (Brawl; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), crude blade (Melee [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]).



THE MOLTEN HEATH

Far to the northeast of the Daqan Baronies, the sturdy rock that shields Mennara's raging heart grows thin. Great gouts of tempestuous fire and molten stone erupt from the ground. Sharp-toothed obsidian crags, black rock ridges, and smoldering rivers of lava radiate out from the center of the heath, but surrounding it is some of the most picturesque lands in all of Mennara. Crystal-clear streams, wildflower-dotted plains, and mighty evergreens shelter this primordial landscape, where rich volcanic soil and mountain snowmelt combine to foster a lush and verdant paradise. This impossible land of life and death is known to mortals as the Molten Heath.

THE DOMAIN OF DRAGONS

At the center of Molten Heath lies its Heart, an isolated collection of volcanoes. Lava rivers flow from their flanks, inundating the surrounding lands in a constantly changing morass of molten and cooling rock. A maze of lava flows and molten streams cuts through a nightmare landscape of razor-edged obsidian outcroppings and drifting dunes of rock ash. Higher up, among the volcanoes' calderas, the dragons make their roosts. Younger drakes live in the cooling lava tubes and caves along the flanks of the mountains, while the elder wyrms haunt the burning craters at the very summits.

The Heart and its immediate vicinity is hellish landscape of fire and smoke that only a dragon could withstand. The constant eruptions unleash vast lava flows that never truly cool. Instead, they fill in canyons and gorges with vast lakes of searing liquid stone. Dragons wing across the surface, hunting the salamanders and perching upon the charred islands to rest and converse with others of their kind.

Little is known of dragon society, mostly because few outsiders have managed to travel to the Molten Heath, observe them, and survive the experience. Scholars do know that the dragons of the Molten Heath—unlike the feral beasts found





in much of Terrinoth—are fiendishly intelligent, and they dominate the scattered tribes of dragon hybrids that roam the ash dunes and basalt slopes. The histories even tell of a Dragon Rex, the most powerful of her kind, who rules over the entirety of the Molten Heath.

Millennia of eruptions have pushed the Heart above the Verdant Ring. Slopes of shattered basalt and chunks of scoria edge the Heart, punctuated by the occasional smoke-belching crevasse and bubbling hot springs. But as one descends further into the valley, the hellscape gives way into a plain of heather and gorse, with shrubs and even conifer trees fanning outward from the Heart. Wild berries and grains sprawl across the landscape, while fantastical fruits and nuts hang heavy from the branches of trees. The Dwarves have long strove to reclaim the bounty of the Verdant Ring, and now other peoples of Terrinoth look north and see a potential sanctuary from the scourges of war—if only they can keep the dragons at bay.

THE KAROK DOUM

At the far edge of the Molten Heath, long-slumbering mountains brood over the scattered ruins of Dwarven civilization. Shattered and seared by dragon fire, the fallen walls and crumbling towers of Karok Zon, Dorgol Visoth, and Morath az Moran—the great capital of the lost kingdom—yet stand. Their empty windows keep a watch upon their abandoned nation, known as the Karok Doum.

Although much of the cities have been reduced to fire-scarred rubble, the dragons could not destroy Dwarven craft completely. Each Dwarven settlement was encircled by a wall of obsidian, stamped with runes of fire so that it would never melt. These walls stand as ever, even if their iron gates have fallen, and they are tall enough to be visible for miles across the blasted expanse of the Heath.

Once inside, any would-be adventurers find broad streets radiating out from the center of the city, lined with the shattered basalt remains of the low, broad Dwarven houses, inns, smithies, and granaries. Forges and smithies took advantage of the more gentle volcanic activity that lingered at the edges of the Heath. In the center of each city, the brass and gold towers have been seared down to slag-tipped stumps by dragonfire. One can even find the hardened puddles of molten gold in the streets; a kings' fortune forgotten under a coat of drifting ash.

And it is possible that beneath the ruined towers, a greater treasure could be found. During the Years of Fire, the Dwarves were forced to leave many wonders behind as they fled their kingdom. Rumors abound of secret vaults full of gold and jewels, or weapons and armor made powerful by the earliest rune-craft. Some Dwarves even believe that one of the cities still contains the hidden workshop of Helka the Bold, mother of the Dwarves and first of the runescribes. If any dragon runes lie forgotten within those chambers, they could contain power far beyond the ken of today's Dwarven kingdoms.

But setting foot in the remains of the Karok Doum is not for the faint of heart. The ruins of its cities are infested with all manner of foul creatures. Great salamanders nest within the walls. Smaller char-worms and ripper spiders keep to the shadows, waiting for their unsuspecting prey to let down their guard before striking. Some of the smaller drakes also prefer to live among these ruins instead of the center of the Molten Heath, where they can avoid the domination of their elders.

BLACK EMBER GORGE

Once one of the straightest routes out of the Molten Heath and into the surrounding mountains, Black Ember Gorge is now a deep cleft running between the shattered cliff walls. This was the sight of the last stand of Helka and the Dwarven armies against the dragons, and where, it is said, she unleashed her most fearsome runecraft.

Whatever Helka did split the earth asunder so deeply that the fires of Mennara still smolder within its base. Noxious fumes billow forth from the crack, overwhelming those foolhardy enough to stray too near. In fact, those few who travel to the Molten Heath tend to avoid the Gorge entirely, preferring the narrow goat-trails through the mountains that lead around it.

Little evidence remains of the great battle fought there. However, at the far end of the gorge, the skeleton of a great wyrm still lies. It appears to have been skewered by a towering basalt spear that erupted from the earth and still holds the bones transfixed to this very day.

LIFE ON THE HEATH

The dragons dominate the heath, lording over the other creatures that dwell in the foothills of the draconic demense. The dragons' civilization is a rich as any to be found elsewhere, but their motivations are utterly enigmatic to the other races of Mennara. The dragons do not tolerate intruders, but many come nevertheless to seek out ancestral lands and the hoards of magical items the dragons claimed in the Third Darkness.

ANCIENT DRAGON (NEMESIS)

The feral beasts that terrorize the people of Terrinoth are only pale echoes of the dragons to be found in the Molten Heath. Here, the oldest, wisest, and most powerful dragons make their kingdom, under the guidance of the Dragon Rex. Ancient dragons have all the physical power of their southern kin, matched to an intellect and mastery of magic beyond any mortal. Seldom have the dragons seen fit to meddle in the affairs of mortals, and since the time of the Dragon Wars, these godlike beings have largely passed into legend.

The vast minds of dragons are alien to those of Humans and their kin, and even the Elves can only barely grasp the desires and plots of these ancient wyrms. Scholars still puzzle over the reasons for the Dragon Wars and for the dragons' abrupt departure. In the vanishingly rare event that a dragon's activities are known to mortals, they are likely to seem cruel or even senseless. Dragons measure time in spans that mortals can scarcely comprehend; without this context, the lesser races cannot hope to grasp the true cause or goal of a dragon's action. Compounding matters, dragons have little regard for the lives of Humans or the other peoples of Mennara, with the notable exception of the Elves.

Dragons do sometimes make use of Humans, Orcs, and the other peoples of Mennara in their continued guardianship. More often than not, such individuals never realize they serve the interests of a dragon—particularly in the case of Dwarves, who harbor an abiding hatred for the Dragonkin. Despite the risks of relying on such inferior creatures, throughout history, a number of dragons have seen the mortals of Mennara as potentially useful tools in the battle to protect the Yrthwrights' creation from the depredations of the Ynfernael and the abyssal entities that dwell within.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	4	5	4	5	4

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
8	45	34	0 | 0

Skills: Arcana 4, Brawl 4, Charm 3, Coercion 4, Cool 3, Discipline 4, Ranged 4, Resilience 4, Runes 4, Vigilance 3.
Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character twice), Swift (a dragon does not spend additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Claw Sweep (a dragon may spend ⮝ from a Brawl check to hit an additional engaged opponent that would be no more difficult to attack than the original target, dealing base damage +1 damage per ✲), Flyer (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Silhouette 4, Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents must make a **Daunting [◆◆◆◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).
Spells: Ancient dragons can use any magic actions allowed for the Arcana and Runes skills, and may select additional effects as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Unbind Spell (the dragon chooses a target within short range that is under the effects of a spell and makes a **Hard (◆◆◆) Arcana check**. If the check is successful, the spell effects on the target end).

Words of Unmaking (the dragon chooses one magic item [including a magic weapon and armor] or runebound shard within medium range and make an **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Arcana check**. If successful, until the beginning of the dragon's next turn that item loses its magical ability and becomes a mundane gem, suit of armor, sword, rock, etc. The dragon may maintain this spell by performing the concentrate maneuver).
Equipment: Fiery breath (Ranged; Damage 16; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 16, Burn 3, Prepare 1), claws (Brawl; Damage 17; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Sunder, Vicious 5).

DWARF ANCESTRAL SPECTER (RIVAL)

The Dwarves of Dunwarr hold that the valiant Dwarves who bravely gave their lives defending their ancestral homes against the dragons have never ended their battle, even in death. Many ballads tell of the brave spirits who still roam the Molten Heath, seeking vengeance against the dragons and others who stole their lands. One day, the Dwarves know, they will reclaim their ancestral home, and perhaps only then will these spirits allow themselves to rest.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	3	4	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	14	3 | 2

Skills: Discipline 3, Melee (Light) 3.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Ancestral Gaze (while within short range of a Dwarf Ancestral Specter, living Dwarves add ✲ to their combat checks and ❂ if the opponent is a dragon), Ghostly (Dwarf Ancestral Specters ignore the effects of terrain and darkness), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents who are not Dwarves must make a **Hard [◆◆◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Undead (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink, and can survive underwater; immune to poisons and toxins).
Equipment: Ethereal hammer (Melee [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Stun Damage).

LAVA ELEMENTAL (RIVAL)

While most elementals reside in the distant lands of Al-Kalim, a few also live in the even hotter lairs within the Heart. The volcanoes in this land are an ideal environment for these magical creatures, though it is uncertain if the elementals are the cause of the deadly heat or if the volcanoes attracted their attention.

This matters little to those unfortunate adventurers who might encounter them, though. Lava elementals jealously guard their lairs and are always seeking to expand any area where rock is still stubbornly solid—which is usually a place where mortals are to be found.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	1	2	3	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	13	4 | 4

Skills: Brawl 2, Cool 2, Vigilance 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Amorphous (as an incidental, a lava elemental may increase or decrease its silhouette by 1), Inconspicuous (a lava elemental in a natural pool of molten rock appears indistinguishable from ordinary lava; a character can make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Perception** or **Vigilance check** to identify a lava elemental).
Equipment: Pseudopods (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Burn 2, Sunder), lava projectile (Ranged; Damage 9; Critical 3; Range (Short); Blast 4, Burn 2, Concussive 1).

SALAMANDER (RIVAL)

The Dragonkin known as salamanders lack the intelligence and arcane power of true dragons, but are nonetheless fearsome creatures and the foundation for countless legends. Salamanders are creatures of magic, although they lack the requisite intelligence to consciously master this power. Heat radiates from their smooth reptilian bodies and the creatures seem particularly suited for life in the Heath—few other environments could tolerate their inflammatory presence.

Salamanders live extraordinarily long and sedentary lives. Every few decades, a salamander seeks out a rift or vent in the broken terrain, rejuvenating itself in the magma below the surface. While largely peaceable, they blaze with violence if threatened, especially if any dare disturb their fiery nests. Salamander eggs (and skins) are highly desirable to mages and scholars for their magical properties, and can fetch staggering prices in Tamalir markets.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	1	3	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	18	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 3, Resilience 3, Survival 2, Vigilance 1.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Flameborn (a salamander does not suffer damage from natural heat or flame, and doubles its soak for purposes of reducing damage from magical fire).
Equipment: Burning fangs (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Burn 2, Sunder, Vicious 2).

YOUNG DRAGON (RIVAL)

Dragons take decades, even centuries, to fully mature. Unlike the wild dragons of the southern lands, the dragons of the Molten Heath are highly protective of their dragonlings, shielding them from the worst dangers of their homeland until they come of age. During this time, the elder dragons instruct the young in the history of their race, which is the history of all creation.

From a young age, dragons learn of their unique place in the cosmos, as the inheritors of the Yrthwrights' legacy. By the time they reach adulthood, dragons understand the weight of their role as stewards of Mennara and guardians of its inhabitants—at least, most of them do.

Although weak and fragile compared to fully grown dragons, the youngest wyrmling is far from defenseless. A newly hatched dragon might be the size of a small stag, with talons strong and sharp enough to split a warrior open. Within a few years at most, the dragonling stands larger and stronger than an ox. Similarly, although they lack the intense depth of insight and centuries of wisdom of their elders, even the youngest dragons are at least the intellectual equals of the finest minds of Human civilization.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	3	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	23	0 | 0

Skills: Arcana 1, Brawl 2, Cool 3, Ranged 2, Resilience 2, Runes 1, Vigilance 3.
Talents: Swift (a dragon does not spend additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Flyer (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Silhouette 2, Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).
Spells: A young dragon can use any magic actions allowed for the Arcana and Runes skills, and may select additional effects as normal. A young dragon is still learning the magical crafts of its race, and might experiment with any manner of spell.
Equipment: Fiery breath (Ranged; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Blast 8, Burn 2, Prepare 1), claws (Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2).

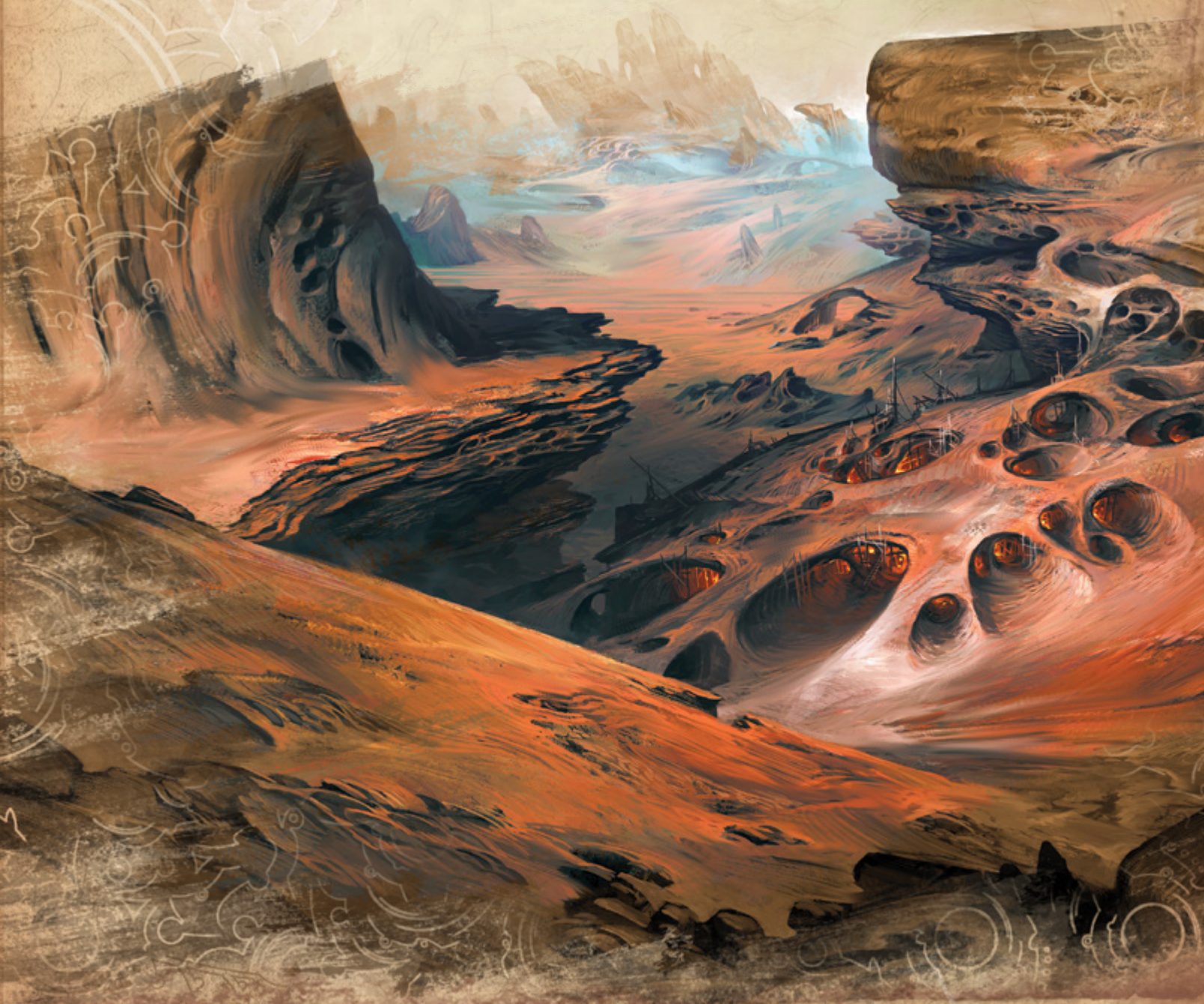
THE BROKEN PLAINS

Once a vast, rolling prairie, many ages ago earthquakes and volcanic eruptions shattered the flatlands of the east into a chaotic collection of razor-sharp crags jutting skyward, bottomless ravines cutting into the ground, and landslides that rain down from the huge, unstable mountain ranges. Although much of the original the fertile grasslands and roaming herds of animals were spared the worst of the devastation, the cracked valleys and rockslides have exposed some of the richest, and most easily accessible, deposits of precious gemstones found anywhere in Mennara.

This land became known as the Broken Plains, though the quakes that ripped the surface apart are rare in these days. The combination of wide flatlands and rough, torn landscapes makes it the perfect home for Orcs, for in it they have a land that mirrors their own tough nature.

THE ORCS OF THE PLAINS

Within the Broken Plains, Orcs trade the easily gathered minerals, hunt the open ranges, ambush prey among the rocky hills, and use the deep ravines as natural protection from attacks. The Elves even hold that the Orcs were birthed there, themselves a product of the same primordial cataclysms that gave the land its name. The wealth and bounty of the Plains allowed the Orc clans to thrive, while the terrain helped them defend against the near constant siege from treasure-hunting dragons, invaders from the Ru Steppes to the north, mercenary armies of Humans, creatures emerging from the jungles of Zanaga, and other threats.



The Orcs are divided into large tribes, each claiming a swath of land and the landmarks and hunting grounds within for themselves. Yet, the borders between the tribes shift frequently with inter-tribe conflicts, adding even more uncertainty and peril for adventurers traveling across the Broken Plains. Eschewing organized cities and other fixed locations, the tribes carry their villages with them as they travel their lands. Once finding a suitable location, they plant stakes and settle until there is a communal urge to pack up and move again. This tradition ensures no tribe devours too much local game or vegetation, and also helps them protect their domains against predators both native and foreign.

THE LANDS OF THE PLAINS

The Broken Plains are quite literally broken into a variety of terrains, often from the deep cracks left from ancient earthquakes, and the region appears more like a badly fitted set of puzzle pieces than an continuous landscape. Ruptures have widened through the centuries from flash floods and landslides to become entirely new terrain with valleys become large enough to sustain wildlife. Some cracks, still sharp and rocky despite the years, reveal treasures buried far below the surface, and huge mountain ranges offer breathtaking vistas of the western rivers flowing into the Selenic Sea. No matter the environment, however, one or more tribes of Orcs inevitably reside within, and woe unto any would-be invader who dares enter their lands.

THE BARUK RANGE

The southern region of the Broken Plains contains a wide spread of mountains and dormant volcanos as well as smaller flatlands that extend to the rocky edge of Zanaga. Several rushing rivers flow from the mountains into the Zanagan jungles, nurturing the lush greenery that exists there. These waters are quite favorable to mining efforts; even simple panning can produce nuggets of exceptional purity and size. Tracing them upriver, though, only ends in mystery, for they emerge from the mountains as if holes had been poked in the bare rock. Some Orcs revere the waters as the Blood of the Baruk, and claim they have powerful abilities over life and death. The rivers do seem to be part of a lively battle along the southern lands, a battle that likely will never have a victor.

The jungles and mountains themselves seem to be caught in an ongoing battle for dominance, with vegetation extending into the Plains on thick branches and vines while the rock pushes back with frequent landslides. The rivers carry detritus and debris from the peaks into the jungles but also allow new growth to dive northward and spread along the banks, as if aiding both sides. As the war goes on, the settlements and hunting grounds of the Orcs and the varied inhabitants of Zanaga move as their lands wax and wane, and clashes between them are as ancient as their oral histories. Remains of these battles can be found everywhere along the fluid border, along with magical relics and other valuables. Even without this war, though, the Baruk is dangerous for other reasons.

Though it is as rough as any other region in the Plains, there is something that instills brutality and savagery in all who live here. Even non-Orc settlers grow bloodthirsty within a season, though this diminishes somewhat after leaving the area. Even other Orcs rarely speak of the tribe that resides here, only to say its members are to be avoided and not trusted.

BARUK GRO URAK

Although most of Mennara's Orcs abide by the Pillars and the peace treaties with the Humans, the "Red Hand Tribe" often defies those laws and conducts bloody raids on their unsuspecting victims. Their culture is a horrifying mix of ritualistic, blood-shedding mysticism, and unrepentant violence, and their leadership is firmly based purely on strength and fighting prowess. They have no economy or agriculture, and rely entirely on hunting and raids they conduct from the natural, barren caves they use as shelter. They are bound more by a shared cultural identity than any interpersonal relationships and, with the exception of their mates, most Red Hands will make no meaningful effort to assist another enfeebled or wounded Orc.

It is a culture so merciless and brutal that Baruk Gro Urak Orcs are only considered adults once their hands are permanently dyed by the blood of their enemies. The ritual requires that their skin be abrasively scrubbed with a curak cactus while submerged in the Rakbo River, then emerge still stained a dark, rust-colored crimson. If judged successful by Chieftan Barka, the Orc earns the revered status of Red Hand and the ability to participate in tribal councils. Failure means those witnessing the rite beat the Orc viciously and then socially shun the applicant for a full cycle of the moon.

THE ERD RIVERLANDS

In a land filled with rock and mountains, the Erd Riverlands are uniquely covered in marshes and waterways. The relative higher ground of most of the Plains allows for hundreds of rivers to drain along here into the western sea, and Orcs elsewhere say the Erd is where the Broken Plains weeps as its peoples grow more and more tame from dealing peacefully with other races. Other Orcs instead say it is where the land bleeds, and that the land and its peoples are slowly dying as the old ways are lost and forgotten—though this latter saying does have something to support it.

The waters here range from rushing rapids to slow, almost-sedate streams, but they are all flaked with glimmering crimson strands from sources none can detect. There are no known mineral sources upriver that could allow for this, and many assume there is something below the waterways that is being gradually stripped away. Grains caught in thinly woven nets grow dim and grey soon after removal from the Erd, and then dissolve to dust. Many Greyhaven scholars believe something magical exists—or lives—under the Erd, and that as the rivers flow the process is eroding and removing something precious from the Broken Plains. They cannot agree, however, on whether this is a good or bad thing for these lands.



ERD'LANTIR URAK

The Orcs of the Erd'Lantir tribe, or Water Passage, often deal with Humans and other races. Despite its location on the Selenic Sea, their homeland is the most hospitable area of contact given that the Aymhelin, the Ru, and Zanaga border the other areas of the Broken Plains. These Orcs travel along the ever-present rivers in rough boats designed to be easily broken apart when they need to march from one waterway to the next. They are all excellent sailors, and have an instinctual ability to avoid submerged threats and pull fish from the water with their bare fists. Some travel into the deeper seas beyond, and even to the Torue Albes to join exploration voyages into unknown lands.

The Riverland Orcs trade with almost every other tribe and so have much to offer others coming from the sea or inland. This in turn drives many of the Orcs to visit other lands, and many go on to make new lives in the Free Cities of Terrinoth. Tales say it was an offshoot of this tribe (along with some from the Jer'Kul) that many ages ago returned with a merchant ship from Al-Kalim to become the Sunderland Orcs, where their alchemical studies of quicksilver and other rare materials have produced wonders found nowhere else in Mennara.

THE GHUR HIGHLANDS

A series of tall peaks known as the Ghur Highlands sits in the northern reaches of the Broken Plains. Below the heights, staggered mesas fall to lower levels in a series of sheer drops, some of which have winding trails that allow for somewhat easier passage into the Highlands. The Ghur also extends north into the Ru, but what name the Uthuk use for it in their own foul language is best left unknown.

This area includes some of the coldest points of the Plains, with snow-topped mountains that often provide huge avalanches. Some of these are so powerful as to drop snow to the edges of the Kul Valleys, but also draw along chunks of rare metals torn from the cliffsides far above. Those seeking out these riches must contend with several tribes of Orcs, though many valuables lay just underneath piles of broken trees and loose soil awaiting discovery. Rumors abound that other treasures can be found in the thick runoffs, such as lost artifacts of Elven creation or ancient weapons still as sharp as the day they were forged, but none have been presented properly to verify the claims.

Nearly every season new peaks here are uncovered, so maps in the Ghur are even less accurate than usual compared with the rest of the Broken Plains. Those seeking to explore this region have to rely more on examining current conditions, such as fresh trails, as opposed to planning their journey in advance. Hiring a local Orc guide is not only encouraged but mandatory, for if the Orcs do not welcome such "guests" into the mountains, the visit may wind up quite short and unpleasant.

GHUR'ZHUN URAK

The Ghur'zhun Urak are a clan of pathfinders, rangers, and mountain dwellers whose name means "Lightfoot Tribe." The clan claimed the Highlands as its own many centuries ago, and its members secretly roam down from the mountains to harass anyone near the edges of the Plains—all in defense of their own lands, if challenged. They ambush Elven and Uthuk scouts alike, lay traps along the well-worn paths, and sneak into any nearby villages to steal horses, supplies, weapons, and especially casks of Elven wine.

For their part, the Elves answer by sending rangers to hunt for the Ghur'zhun Urak, but the Orcs are generally gone long before they arrive. Repercussions from the denizens of the Ru, however, can be savage. The Orcs still view these battles as necessary to judge the growing threat of the Darklands, for it as the watchmen of the Plains that the Ghur'zhun Urak are most valuable to the Broken Plains.

Their tall homelands allow the Ghur'zhun Urak to act as a kind of early warning of impending attack from outsiders. From their mountain perch of Urakuhl, the Lightfoot Tribe has an eagle's eye view of the vast terrain surrounding the Plains. On the occasions that the Ghur'zhun Urak ride down from the mountain and call their rival tribesmen to arms, petty squabbles are quickly put aside so that the Plains can be defended against any attackers.

THE KUL VALLEYS

As the Broken Plains was rent asunder in ancient upheavals, the land itself became cracked as if immense, taloned claws had gripped the surface and pulled it apart. Many believe the Kul gave the Plains its name, for indeed it is a land broken apart and apparently never to be healed. Most of these cracks are hundreds of hands deep, sometimes even a league or more in rare places. Some of the valleys are many leagues wide as well, enough to support the Orcs who live within as if they were flatlands.

The land within the Kul is largely barren, and so game and useful vegetation is limited and must be carefully cultivated for the Orcs within to survive. Few Orcs who live within the Kul ever leave, and most live out their entire lives below the surface. There is trading with surface Orcs and other travelers, mostly through rope-drawn planks to carry goods up and down, but there are some areas where the valleys have paths allowing for easier walking to the land above. The cracks lining valley walls sometimes lead to thick veins of silver and even liquid pools of quicksilver, allowing the Kul Orcs to successfully trade for any essentials they lack.

JER-KUL URAK

The Jer'Kul, or Lower-Dwellers, live most of their lives within the wide valleys formed when earthquakes split the Plains apart across hundreds of leagues. Unlike most of the other Orc tribes, this tribe relies on agriculture and animal husbandry to survive. Its members grow crops on small plots of valley land, which they tend and harvest as they roam across the Kul with herds of small elk, jarn deer, and other wildlife that long ago fell into the valleys and evolved to exist here.

Most other Orc tribes look down on the Jer'Kul (literally), but the valley-dwellers make intricate metalworks of silver that many view as blessed by the spirits of the underworld. It is possible their beliefs could be true, but not as they imagine. There are vents in some of the valleys where some hear dark whispers and can make out terrible visages floating in the choking smoke that emerges from the ground.

THE LOK CLIFFS

The Lok is little-known outside of Orcish society, as it is far from the so-called "civilized" lands studied by the scholars of Terrinoth and Al-Kalim. The range emerges out of the Ugluk Badlands like a wave of jagged, cyclopean rocks, as if a gigantic castle collapsed into rubble and its remains scattered along hundreds of leagues. Few dare eke out an existence here, with most Orcs living along the western edges where the land flattens and game is more plentiful. Those who do live in the peaks are solitary; as though they are guarding secrets they dare not reveal to the rest of Mennara.

What might be found to the east of the Lok is a matter of speculation and argument. Greyhaven historians point to decaying parchments that tell of glorious kingdoms and powerful mages, but this is based on oddly dressed visitors many ages ago and their unsubstantiated claims. Some stone carvings discovered in Zanaga seem to indicate there is nothing but death and danger beyond the range, but that is a wise statement concerning much of Mennara for the foolish and unprepared. One day adventurers will travel over the Lok, perhaps with the aid of the Orcs living there, and the truth may be known.

LOK URAK

Legend says that the Lok Urak, the "Bow Tribe" that inhabits the eastern edges of the Broken Plains, were the first Orcs to craft bows of bone, horn, and sinew. Regardless of the truth, the Lok Urak are amazing hunters whose precision with their powerful U'Rek bows not only provides them with a near limitless supply of elk along the mountain edges, but also makes them an exceptionally dangerous tribe to war with. Like most Orcs in the Plains, they are nomadic, though they do stay longer in one spot than others as their land is often more bountiful and forgiving than many other places.

Under the watchful eye of Chieftain Mogro the Swift, these Orcs begin training with their bows from the day they can first hold an U'Rek—and there is not a day of a Lok Urak's life that they are spared from weapons training. Assisting Mogro is the council leader Scurr the Huntress, the Orc most directly responsible for keeping the tribe fed. She must not only monitor prey populations, but also oversees scouting, tracking, survival, trap construction, and ambush tactics.



THE MOK PLATEAU

Straddling the area between the Riverlands and the Kul Valleys, the Mok Plateau is perhaps the most well-known area of the Plains. Orcs from almost all of the other tribes come here for spiritual guidance, and so the tribe of the Mok rarely are attacked and even gain the protection of other tribes against external threats. Travelers from Terrinoth and other lands come to visit the Orcs here for guidance as well. They pass along tales of the area to others as if the Mok Plateau represented the entirety of the Broken Plains, not knowing the true nature of this many-faceted land.

MOK'THUL URAK

Less of a clan and more of a religious movement, the Mok'Thul Urak (which roughly translates as "Grey Moon Tribe") are a wandering band of spiritspeakers and bone-reading mystics. Considered under Pillar of Gharmuth law to be composed entirely of neutral Phantom Walkers, the Grey Moon Tribe is a universally welcoming source of counsel and aid for any sentient beings who seek their guidance. And on the rare occasions that something has dared approach the Mok'thul Urak with ill intent, then those creatures—be they Orcs or otherwise—quickly discover that the spirits also believe that the Grey Moon Tribe should be protected from harm.

Typically, the most difficult challenges for the Mok'thul Urak are simple logistical ones; providing enough food for themselves and the pilgrims who seek their wisdom, ensuring that each soul is heard and helped, and resolving any disputes that arise among them. Governing these mortal concerns is a wise council lead by Spiritspeaker Anka and Elder Jutta, supernaturally ancient sisters who have seen several normal Orc lifetimes come and go. Almost certainly sustained by the phantasms they commune with, the sisters are a benevolent force who offer kindness and clarity to all they touch.

THE UGLUK BADLANDS

In a region filled with inhospitable terrain, the Ugluk Badlands are perhaps the worst. With rocky peaks and flash floods that produce new ravines, the area is rough and unforgiving. Game is scarce and successful hunts are hard won. The air is dusty and has a thick, earthy odor that few find appealing (or even tolerable). The vegetation is as harsh as the land, but often can be rendered and treated to produce effective—if extremely foul tasting and painful in application—medicines and poultices that some claim to be able to defeat death itself with the correct preparation. Many Orcs who travel to Terrinoth claim to be from the area, if for no other reason than to impress the terrible nature of the Broken Plains onto others.

The Badlands, being in the interior of the Broken Plains, sees few visitors. Some travelers pass through here on their way to the narrow passage into the Ru to the north, in quests that later few speak of (as there are few survivors). Some come for the unique medicinal ingredients to be harvested, which can fetch more gold than lesser runebound shards in some cases. For those expert in the saddle, though, it is a place to find the Mag Ugluk riders and their famed reptilian steeds.

MAG UGLUK URAK

The Mag Ugluk Urak, which loosely translates into the “Great Beast Tribe,” remain the most nomadic of the modern Orcs. Conflicts with other Orc tribes are simultaneously inevitable and unpredictable. It is a life almost completely lacking in comfort or security.

For most people, even for most Orcs, the challenges of that ever-moving existence would simply be too much—but not for the Mag Ugluk Urak. Because the Mag Ugluk Urak have the Gurak Tol. These huge, six-legged lizards are legendarily vicious, and young Orcs are sent to steal the eggs from the clutches of watchful brood mothers and raise them on their own. Having raised them since hatching, Beast Riders form a emotional connection with their mounts that gives the pair unrivaled skills and adaptability when compared with mundane cavalry, and they are unquestionably among the most feared mounted warriors in the world.

Leading the Great Beast Tribe, and coordinating their efforts both for and against the surrounding Orc tribes, is the legendary rider Skorn; a one-armed, grey-haired Orc of few words that has the unnerving demeanor of an ambush predator. He is thoughtful, patient, and ruthless, though he is well known for believing that an Orc's word should carry the same weight as the bond with his Gurak Tol—so Skorn is considered one of the most honest and honorable mortals anyone could meet in the Broken Plains.

At Skorn's right hand stands Gorhta Tamer Uglar, the leader of the tribal council and Master of Obedience that oversees all of the various forms of beast training. Terse, humorless, and abusively insulting, Uglar is almost universally despised by the rest of the tribe—and if not for his amazing abilities in beast-taming he would have been murdered by his brethren decades ago.

LIFE ON THE PLAINS

The Broken Plains breeds toughness and strength to withstand the unforgiving nature of this land. Orcs thrive here, but so do other, even fiercer, beings and creatures.

BEASTMAN (MINION)

Beastmen are perhaps the most numerous of the many dangerous beings that can be found in the Broken Plains. While some Orcs may be unfriendly, they are intelligent beings who can be reasoned with. Beastmen, though, are always ready for combat—and even worse, are always hungry.

As the name suggests, beastmen are hybrids of human and animal. Most are carnivorous predators, with claws and fangs so powerful that they rarely need other weapons. Legends vary as to how they came to be, but most scholars agree they are not related to Catfolk, who are far more intelligent and sociable.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	1	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	6	0 | 0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Perception, Vigilance.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Bestial Rage (a beastman or beastman minion group that has taken damage reduces the Critical rating of its attacks to 1.)
Equipment: Fangs and claws (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]).

GURAK TOL (RIVAL)

Gurak Tols are territorial, six-legged lizards that jealously guard their homes; whether that be a warren, isolated cave, or valley. That instinctive behavior has made the creatures invaluable allies for the Orcs.

Swift, sure-footed, and incredibly aggressive by nature, Gurak Tols do battle and defend themselves with vicious attacks from strong tails that are tipped with a bone club or spikes. Generally, they tend to rely on their teeth and the claws on their lead fore-legs at the start of combat. Once their prey is wounded and the Gurak feels bold enough to take its eyes off their enemy, though, they swing their massive tails with the force of a trebuchet's ball upon the target's skull or spine. Their tails also allow them to perform a ranged attack when an Orc outrider provides suitable ammunition.

Gurak Tols have been captured and "domesticated" into becoming Orc steeds, but there are still many wild herds that occupy the Broken Plains. While the Orcs actively seek out Gurak Tols for new mounts, they also protect the great lizards from outsiders lest their numbers diminish.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	1	2	3	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	18	0 | 0

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Resilience 2.
Talents: Swift (a Gurak Tol does not spend extra maneuvers to move across difficult terrain).
Abilities: Tail catapult (when engaged with a Gurak Tol that the Orc outider is bonded with, the Orc outrider may use the steed to perform a Ranged attack with the following profile: (Ranged; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Concussive 1, Inaccurate 1, Knockdown).
Equipment: Claws and fangs (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), tail (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 3, Knockdown). When bonded with an Orc outrider, a Gurak Tol gains armor that adds +2 to its soak).

OGRE (NEMESIS)

Ogres are found frequently in caves throughout the Plains, but also pop up in abandoned fortresses and settlements (often being the cause such locations became emptied). Large, powerful, and unpleasant, they can be tremendous challenges to adventurers seeking to explore these regions. Their ability to recover from damage that would fell other creatures makes them especially tricky, for just when a group might think an ogre is defeated it can spring back to its feet and attack again.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	2	2	3	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
7	20	12	0 | 0

Skills: Athletics 2, Melee (Heavy) 2, Perception 1, Ranged 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Regeneration (at the beginning of its turn, this creature automatically heals 3 wounds), Sweep Attack (may spend ⚙ on a successful melee combat check to inflict one hit dealing the weapon's base damage on everyone [except the ogre!] engaged with the target).
Equipment: Cudgel (Melee; Damage 10; Critical 4; Range [Engaged], Disorient 2, Knockdown), spiked chain (Ranged; Damage 7; Critical 5; Range [Short]; Ensnare 2, Knockdown), scavenged armor (+2 soak).

ORC SPIRITSPEAKER (NEMESIS)

Magic users unique to the Orcish race, spiritspeakers use a shamanistic connection through the earth to communicate with the hidden, ethereal creatures of Mennara. This not only allows them to speak as mediums for The Unseen, but also to act as conduits for the spirits to act on the mundane world.

Whether attached to objects or locations, minor spirits are normally unable to summon the energy or focus it takes to act on the physical world. However, through a combination of natural ability and rigorous training, spiritspeakers can thin the barriers that surround Mennara enough to allow apparitions to manifest. That lets benevolent sprites openly share their wisdom, guardian spirits to physically defend their territories, and wraiths to directly attack whoever holds their cursed object.

That connection also gives spiritspeakers a supernatural edge in combat and adventuring, as many will have gathered a modest assortment of objects with useful entities attached which can be summoned for aid or protection.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	2	3	3	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	15	17	1 | 1

Skills: Cool 2, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Primal 4.
Talents: Second Wind 5 (once per encounter, the spiritspeaker may heal 5 strain as an incidental).

Abilities: Spiritual Focus (a spiritspeaker adds ■ to Primal checks they make for each Orc ally within short range).
Spells: Spiritspeakers can choose any magic action allowed for the Primal skill, and may select additional spell effects as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Fury of the Spirits (the spiritspeaker chooses one target at short or medium range and makes a **Hard (◆◆◆) Primal check**. If the check is successful, this magic attack inflicts 7 damage, +1 damage per ✹, with the Pierce 3 and Sunder qualities).

Ancestral Strength (the spiritspeaker chooses two allies within short range and makes a **Hard (◆◆◆) Primal check**. If the check is successful, the spiritspeaker may affect additional targets in range by spending ⩓ for each additional target. Targets affected by this spell increase the ability of skill checks they make until the end of the spiritspeaker's next turn by one. The spiritspeaker may sustain the effects of this spell by performing the concentrate maneuver).
Equipment: Magic staff (add +4 damage to magic attacks; the first Range effect added to a spell does not increase its difficulty), beast-hide robes (+1 defense).

ORC OUTRIDER (RIVAL)

Lizard riders from the Great Beast Clan, the Mag Ugluk Urak are mounted warriors who are as dangerous as any cavalry in Mennara. Nomadic Orcs who follow elk and other wild game across the Broken Plains, they tend to lead fairly simple lives as hunters and gatherers. Following their chieftain's noble example, the Mag Ugluk Urak are brutally honest and always good to their word. They will never cheat during a trade, stab an ally in the back, or abandon a pledge. If that pledge is to kill an adversary or slaughter an enemy, then one of the two are absolutely going to die.

Typically armed with axes and throwing spears, and trained to make hit and run attacks at high speeds, outriders are at their best when mounted on their Gurak Tol steeds. These Orcs make life-bonds with their mounts, something that forms as an outrider personally captures one of the huge lizards. Gurak Tols are never fully tamed though, and outriders take care to avoid getting too close to their always hungry mouths.

Outriders eventually discovered that their steeds could also provide ranged support, via their powerful tails. Thus the opening minutes of any large-scale battle finds outriders dismounted next to their Gurak Tol, nudging the beasts in the proper direction, placing a skull-sized rock into brackets mounted onto those bony tails, and then having the beast hurl the stone overhead. Depending on the age and strength of the Gurak Tol, these improvised projectiles can be thrown at incredible speeds up to a hundred paces, and at a rate of fire that can wreak havoc on enemy formations and often causes undisciplined units to break and flee.

Then, as the battle shifts or the Orcs run out of ammunition, the Outriders mount their giant lizards and execute intricately choreographed strafing runs across the enemy's front lines; carefully maintaining an ideal distance that brings the deadly throwing spears into range but carefully keeps the duo beyond the reach of the enemy's own hurled projectiles.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	2	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	14	0 | 0

Skills: Melee (Light) 2, Ranged 2, Riding 3.
Talents: Quick Draw (once per round on their turn, an Orc outrider may draw or stow an easily accessible weapon as an incidental instead of a maneuver).
Abilities: Brutal Training (when an Orc outrider directs its mount, the mount may perform an action and a maneuver and is not limited to using its maneuvers to move)
Equipment: Orc throwing spear (Ranged; Damage 7; Critical 3; Accurate 1, Limited Ammo 1), axe (Melee [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), extra spears, leather armor (+1 soak), armored Gurak Tol mount.





h my daughters and sons to be, I have long debated over telling you this tale.

Now that I am far away from the Borderlands, it all seems too unreal to be true. More a fable, surely, than fact, and easier to laugh at in the brightness of the day. But when the sun goes down and darkness falls, I remember the so-aptly named village of Sunset.

I hear her words strongly then—when the night grows silent, so silent that all I can hear is the beating of my heart, the blood moving through my body. When I can hear the blood as she described it, and the land of blood and terror.

* * * * *

I had been traveling along the edges of the Barony of Kell, yet another of the odd segmentations in these lands. There was an ancient road I had been told would take me to a settlement of wise people, who were rumored to be learned in the ways of the magic of the stones. This region seemed very tense, as if its people were expecting some calamity to rise from over the horizon and devour them if they dropped their vigilance.

I passed over a wide river, leaving behind farmlands and entering unkept lands of wild foliage. The passage grew more uncertain, and my spirits began to match the terrain.

Truly, I was despairing and growing desperate in my quest to have followed such direction. I had become as thirsty for hope as a traveler lost for ages in the endless sands that surround our cities would be for precious water.

My attention was soon lost in dark contemplations, and I was again tempted to simply take my remaining coins and the cerulean stone and abandon my Caliph, may his cleverness always outwit the machinations of the Djinn, may they forever be thwarted.

Thus I did not notice as the once-paved road became trampled, barren dirt through the rough grasslands. On it went, and I have no idea if I was still on the road or not after only a short time. The land was untamed and lost, and I stumbled past tall forts, crumbling ruins that hinted of former majesty.

Finally, as the sky grew dark, I saw in the distance a small settlement, barely a village. Still, it would offer shelter for the night, and I gave thanks for such aid for such a foolish one as I.

I entered the first establishment that seemed open, the flickering lights guiding my sandals across the rough ground. There was derisive laughter as I searched about for wise people who might know of the stones, or at least of magic. Though the place was full of patrons, some of such hirsute appearance that I had never seen the like, none would speak to me, even when I offered to refill their mugs. Finally, the woman behind the bar caught my eye, and beckoned me over.

She had an appearance that matched the tavern, the village it was within, and even the lands around it: tough and uncompromising. I had the feeling that she had heard much from travelers, and hoped I might learn things to aid my journey.

"Ho, Sunderlander. You look lost," she said with only mild amusement. She continued to work a thick rag through a row of leather mugs with her stiff, heavy gloves. "We don't get many through here. But you remind me of someone else who wandered in years ago, actually."

I replied that it was quite possible I was not where I had planned, and I told her of my quest to learn of the magics of this land. Had this other traveler known of the magic? Of—I whispered—the stones of power?

"She learned of magic, yes," Garda replied (for that was indeed her name, something she would only reveal later as the night passed its peak and edged back into day). "Perhaps too much of it, though you be the judge. I have a tale that may interest you, Sunderlander."

I passed a coin over in exchange for a mug of something thin and warm, then another. Garda leaned back against a stool and then began a tale, one I later wished I'd never heard.

* * * * *

She never said where she came from, or why she was out along the far edges of the Borderlands. Nearly in the Ru, she was. Could be she was searching for corpses to loot, for there

are always plenty of them. Maybe she was on the trail of the Hollow Kingdom, or some forgotten Elvish temple, or even a lost horde of dragon treasure stolen when they nearly burnt the world so many years ago. Treasures like that pretty blue stone you have. Yes, I saw it. Don't worry, I don't have plans for it.

Me, I suspect she was on the run from something. Deserter from the Dagan blues mayhaps, or a runaway from that fool Edlund. Pickpocket escaped from one of the barony cities, a step ahead of the guard and not wanting to spend a few years in a gaol. She may have been lucky, but luck runs out quick in the Borderlands. So long as her coins were solid silver (or soft gold), I never asked. More fun to guess about it, for truths are always worse than imaginations, right Sunderlander?

It was a patrol from some nameless keep that ran her down one day. Roped her up with a sack over her head, and off to a short drop at the gallows. She must have thought it was the worst day of her wretched life. That thought didn't last long.

The cries came suddenly, the members of the patrol shouting orders to each other. Then there were screams coming from all around her, then from her captors, all mixed with the sounds of metal on armor, and the dreadful sounds of metal through flesh.

Then it was quiet. Her own screams started when the sack was removed, and she saw the horrors around her.

Creatures that might once have been Human, their flesh the grey of stone, ripped open with jagged shards of bone. The spikes lanced outward from their hairless skulls, from their arms, even their backs. They wore strips of torn cloth, perhaps red originally but forever crimson from the blood splashed on them. The stench was unbearable, and the harsh, rasping sounds they made hurt her ears.

She remembered the whispered legends. The locusts. The First Darkness. Uthuk.

There were bodies all about, a few of the creatures but mostly the patrol. What was left of them.

Those still alive were trussed up like she was, carried along like oxen to the pits.

She was terrified, but still had to wonder: why weren't they all dead? She could see something in the eyes of the patrol, though. They knew why. And were utterly terrified. Some were trying to cut their necks on the barbed vines used to bind them, seeking an easier death. None were so fortunate, managing only shallow cuts as the Uthuk laughed with barking, mocking chants.

The Uthuk took them across the Borderlands and north into the Charg'r Wastes, she later discovered. At the time, she had no sense of distance or how many days were passing. They never stopped. She and her fellow unfortunates somehow would fall asleep, day or night, despite the shrieks and howls, their exhausted minds collapsing like chopped trees. There was no food or water, only the relentless march deeper into a land accursed.

After the sun went down over dark-red rock, terrible shadows blacker than the night sky towered above the twisted landscape. Lightning flashed, offering quick glimpses of unnatural shapes, never the same visage twice.

Loud shrieking sounds erupted in the distance, and the roars of hundreds—thousands?—of the Uthuk howled in response. This repeated forever, it seemed, as if the screams were raising the bloodlust to even greater levels. She never encountered the creatures who made these cries, and given the many horrors she witnessed, she said she was happy she never did.



My imagining of one of the horrors within the Darklands, based on Garda's tale. It has haunted my dreams every since.

Along the way, shafts of wood and rusted metal were planted into the ground, each adorned with skulls and carved icons. Designs of fresh blood and bone shards covered them. She wasn't sure if they were to warn others away, mark territories, or serve as remembrances of prior conquests. Would she and her fellow prisoners become part of a new display? At last, they passed around one of the many jagged rock peaks and entered the village.

It was as twisted and terrible as her captors, filled with sharp angles and spikes. There were simple huts of wooden pikes and the hides of skinned animals all around, the horns and rib cages of gigantic animals supporting the largest structures. Deep pits were filled with fire, the flames leaping into the sky like predator birds. Shafts there had fresher skulls impaled on them.

She could see other Uthuk there, each a fresh assault to her senses. Some had bones spiking from their backs that doubled their height, pennants and other bones tied to them to celebrate her captors' arrival. Huge monstrosities with misshapen limbs lumbered about, casually knocking lesser Uthuk to the ground. The prisoners were paraded inward, the howls of her captors and their kin an unending din, her every glance revealing a new horror—but that wasn't the worst.



I hope to never see one of these horrors, for it surely means I have strayed into Uthuk territory.

Yes, Sunderlander, she claimed there was something even more terrible. There was a wrongness there, she said, beyond the horrors that surrounded her. She told me it was as if the stench in the air grew thicker, the rocky ground more biting, the sounds more piercing. Sometimes the smoky air above the pit fires twisted as if things were flying through it, even though nothing could be seen. It's possible this was her exhaustion becoming more pronounced, but she seemed very insistent about this, as if it was even more important than the Uthuk raid itself. Make of it what you will, Sunderlander.

Their journey finally ended near a flat stone, the surface stained dark brown. There, they were dropped into a ragged cage made of curved bones woven together with more of the thorned vines. Crude chains bound their wrists.

The weapons of the patrol and her own meager possessions were thrown into a large pile of sparkling jewels and silvered blades that gleamed in the firelight. She recognized a few Dwarven runes on some of them, and from her descriptions, I have learned they were very old, and very powerful. There was also a glowing stone that had a rune she would never describe to me, but I can imagine you know something similar to it, eh?

She didn't speak much of what happened next. One by one, they were selected and taken away to the flat stone. There was blood, and chanting, and the wrongness in the air grew stronger. Until it didn't, until fire and smoke flew down from the skies.

Something must have gone wrong, though, some chant misspoken or some icon not carved properly. Something wasn't appeased, even with the sacrifices offered to it. All she knew was that no one was watching her through the thick, black clouds that were now everywhere, and she was able to grab a bone dagger on the ground outside the cage. There was sharp pain on one hand, even worse than what she still felt in her leg, and then she was free. It took her many leagues before the screaming faded, but some screams never really go away, do they?

* * * * *

And then she came in here one day, Sunderlander, and not that many years ago. She leaned on a rough, icon-covered shaft of blackened wood, one leg off at the knee and bound with crusted, crimson rags. Thin and wretched she was, but still able to carry a heavy pouch.

Only one small item, clearly the least worthy, from within her bag was enough to buy food and drink for the night, and lodgings for longer. She claimed there were even greater treasures she had hidden elsewhere, out beyond the Borderlands. A few tried to follow her when she ventured to retrieve her prizes, but none have ever returned. Mayhaps all of her treasures are hidden here, and she draws them out and deals with them as a way of eliminating any threats that could grow here?

All I know is that she has provided me with enough to ensure her a life of few wants. She keeps to herself, and has bought enough sellswords to ensure privacy. Once a moon, a visitor comes to see her. Sometimes it's someone I recognize from a previous visit, sometimes a fresh face. Always eager, though, and that eagerness replaced with wonder and fulfillment as they depart. Who knows what treasure they leave with, what item of power they gained, what ancient relic is now theirs to possess? What they themselves leave behind is of more importance to me, for those coins wind up in my pocket in good time.

As for the woman, the single survivor of the raid, one raid out of Kellos knows how many? She keeps to herself, lives out her days, and tries to forget. She never even wanted to get an apothecary or wizard to tend to her leg, saying the missing part belonged to something else now and she didn't trust magic not to "wake it up." Her words, Sunderlander, her words.

One time I did ask why she didn't leave this hovel, get far away from here. She kept staring into her mug, and muttered that she knows there is no place to hide when they come. When the locusts return, the entire world will be burned and sacrificed for blood and bone.

* * * * *

"So, Sunderlander," Garda said, "there it is. A tale of the Darklands, of horrors and treasures alike. A tale worth telling to others as you journey across Terrinoth, wouldn't you agree?"

I replied it was indeed an impressive tale, one worthy of repeating. I passed a thicker coin, and arranged a room for the night.

Privately, my children, I must have the honesty deserving of one who serves the Caliph, may his reign extend longer than the sands have number, to admit it was a tale I would rather leave behind. To imagine such things exist, despite what other terrors I have seen in these lands beyond the sands of your birth, is a terrible thing to dwell upon. And this was the tale of one raid, only told as one who lived through it. How many other raids have left no tales behind? How many are lost to the call for blood?

Still, it is a tale I have told others. It begs to be told, to be spread across these lands, as both warning and lure. Perhaps that was her goal in telling it to me. Perhaps a few others tell it as well, or are brave enough to dare the wastes for treasures of their own. Many will fear such tales and any truths behind them, but there will always be those drawn in for gold, for adventure, for righting wrongs. And the more who know, the more there will be who might take action, futile though it may be, against such horrors.

I never asked Garda how the unfortunate person of her tale made her way back across the Wastes. But I remember how the thick glove on one hand never flexed its fingers, and the stiffness of her movement behind the bar. I also remember the thick glass globe with jagged bone and teeth inside resting on the counter.

And so I am glad I did not ask. She has a story to tell, but the person who tells it is not the same person who underwent it, and I can understand the difference all too well.

THE RU STEPPES AND BEYOND

The wide Plains of Ru, and the dread realm that extends even farther, mark the easternmost reaches of Terrinoth. To the uninitiated, they seem little more than a wasteland, the point where the outer reaches of the civilized world crumble away into nothing. And yet, the howling plains and dust-cloaked badlands hide secrets as ancient as Terrinoth itself, some buried beneath the surface waiting to be uncovered, like the bones of Llovar's lost kingdom, others lurking in the shadows waiting to strike, like the teeming tribes of the Uthuk. Some say the next great darkness to engulf the world is even now brewing out among this forsaken expanse, and each day the Ru's skies grow blacker with the coming storm.

Of all the wilds of Terrinoth, few are as forbidding or as deadly as the Darklands, yet there are still many reasons why bold-hearted heroes might journey into them. Those in search of plunder and the wealth of ages lost might seek out the ruins of Cradle Fort, Lamenters Rest, or the Hollow Kingdom, places that tried to plant the root of law upon this land and failed. The need to defend Terrinoth's borders also draws the virtuous and brave to the Darklands; adventurers may find themselves throwing in with Daqan patrols, hunting Uthuk raiders deep into their own territories, or even seeking out the source of the ever-spreading Tangle. For the greatest of heroes, the Ru Darklands offer a chance to uncover and perhaps even stem the coming darkness by taking the fight to the gathering Uthuk tribes, seeking out the Black Citadel and Llovar's lost power, or facing the Ynfernael Lords themselves and trying to close the gateways they use to cross the veil.



THE BORDERLANDS

Bounded by the Daqan Baronies, the Aymhelin—the Latari Elves' sacred forest—and the Orc tribes of the Broken Plains, the Borderlands mark the edge of civilized Terrinoth. Here, lush farmland, thick forests, and green hills give way to seemingly endless grasslands that stretch to the dark horizon in all directions. Those settlements stubborn enough to survive here are pale reflections of the towns and bulwarks to the west, and the people who inhabit them spend their days forever fearful of what might march forth from the eastern expanses. Ancient watch forts still stand sentinel along the edge of the Borderlands, their true purpose all but forgotten.

Halfland Keep, the largest of Daqan's border keeps, stands at the crossroads between west and east, and it is here where many heroes gain their first taste of what the Ru has to offer. It is a thriving fortress, and villages cluster close to its walls for protection despite the keep's dark reputation. A posting here is a common punishment among the armies of Daqan, and lords who wish to rid themselves of troublesome adventurers or rivals might write them a letter of introduction to the keep's commander, Edlund, or grant them a commission to become defenders of the eastern realm. Edlund, known by his soldiers as "the Mad General," is a symptom of the faded strength so apparent in the eastern defense of Daqan. Years ago, after gaining glory in wars against the southern Orc clans, Edlund was posted to the Halfland, sure he alone could tame the Borderlands. However, during one of his first battles, a poisoned Uthuk blade pierced his side, and its Ynfernael venom caused him to become delusional. Now, he is obsessed with finding the fabled Uthuk City of Blood, its existence having been revealed to him in fever dreams, and he routinely sends soldiers into the wastes, guided by his most recent vision.

The Borderlands is also a center for bounty hunters. Despite the presence of the watch forts, monsters stalk out of the wilds to invade the west; towns and lords are always offering up coin for their extermination. Adventurers who accept such an offer might hunt down packs of ravenous flesh rippers, diminutive but savage night carrion, or hulking ynferoc wyrmkin, often following the trail of slaughter such things leave in their wake. Some more enterprising individuals pay for capture rather than destruction; Calivar's Traveling Carnival of Horrors has made good business trading in the exotic creatures of the wastes.



Some dangers are not so easily defined or dealt with, like the blight known only as the Tangle. A living thorn wood, the Tangle spreads out from the ruins of Athealwel, a forsaken Elven fortress deep in the steppe and rumored lair of an Elven Ynfernael cult. It has extended its briars for leagues to engulf surrounding settlements and camps like a malevolent creature, and the thickets on its fringe encroach into the Aymhelin and Kell's eastern shires. When the moon is dark, the Tangle grows fastest; in such times, defending a town from its tendrils, and from the shadow beasts that lurk within its briars, can make for a long and bloody night of battle. Edlund, among other lords, is continually on the lookout for those brave enough to venture deep into the Ru to Athealwel itself to locate and destroy the source of the Tangle—possibly a demonic tree god, if whispered tales are to be believed. So far, none have returned from such quests, and each year, the Tangle pushes its thorns farther west.

THE RU AND THE DARKNESS

Beyond the reach of the watch forts, where the steppes become broken and scoured by constant winds, the true Ru begins. Here, jagged ridges and gullies, desert plateaus, and dry lake beds bake under a blood-red sky. These are the hunting grounds of the Uthuk, where their tribes come to shed blood and await a great leader to unite them for their long-awaited revenge. Though the savage Uthuk raiders and their merciless witches and warlocks are a constant peril, the Ru has seen wars and death more than most lands, and many secrets hide beneath its soil.

Long before the rise of the Locust Horde, a tribe of Dwarves built an empire in the Ru. The remains of their realm, which preceded the First Darkness, are known only as the Hollow Kingdom; the empire's true name is lost to history. Here and there, way markers bearing angular Dwarven runes point the way to cities that no longer exist, bridges spanning empty rivers, or forests of pillars that once supported mighty temples. Merchants and scholars pay well for artifacts from the Hollow Kingdom, for they are often wondrous in their design. The true wealth of the lost empire remains hidden, however, waiting for those who can solve the riddle of its ruins and find the Hollow Kingdom's clockwork capital, rumored to have burrowed into the earth in the last days of the Dwarves' empire.

The Dwarves are not the only ones to have left their mark upon the Ru. It has been the refuge of cabals of sorcerers and dens of criminals. The Haunters' Wood, a petrified forest cloaked in eternal shadow, marks the resting place of the Seven Sinners, wizards of singular and cruel power driven from Daqan by righteous citizens. Slain by their servants and buried in shallow graves, the wizards defied death, rising up as great and evil oaks. These sentient trees exude darkness, making the wood an ideal hunting ground for the Ru's predators. Illusions of safe haven conjured by the Seven lure prey, including travelers, into the wood, where their spilled blood can feed the trees. The wealth of the Seven remains, too, tangled about their roots—just waiting for those skilled enough to traverse the midnight forest and battle its many monsters, and then the trees themselves.

Forests are not the only places where evil lairs in the Ru. Countless caves and warrens hold beasts and horrors that have been driven out of other lands. The Caves of Shiverfang, perhaps the most well-known of these caverns, have a fell reputation that even the Uthuk have learned to respect. They are the abode of a mutilated dragon left behind during the Third Darkness. The dragon lost its wings and now crawls amid the gloom of its vast lair, bursting forth from the ground to feast on prey or drag it back into its den for later. Countless treasures are scattered about the dragon's corpse-filled caves, mired among the remains of great heroes and strewn atop the moldering bodies of blood witches and Ynfernael creatures.



THE CHARG'R WASTES

North of Ru, the steppe gives way to stony ground, shale dunes, and saw-toothed hills. Storms constantly tear at the earth, and lightning rips open the sky as the mournful keening of the wind rends the air. The Borderlands are a verdant land of plenty compared to this desolate desert of stone and storm. Known to the people of Terrinoth as the Charg'r Wastes, it is a region where few settlements have ever taken root. On the edges of the wastes, foundry cities of the Dunwarr Dwarves gnaw away at deposits of lightning quartz, the charged stone useful for weapons and tools alike, common only in the storm-lashed Charg'r. Beyond these few sparks of civilization, only the hardiest monsters and most eccentric hermits make their home, sheltering underground to protect themselves from the endless bitter weather.

One of the few features to endure among the desolation is the winding trail known as the Road of Skulls. Waiqar's lost legion walked this path during its ill-fated incursion into the Ru Darklands. For every pace marched, Waiqar left a soldier's grave in his wake. Those damned souls are said to remain here still, their grinning skulls and bleached bones marking the way to the Black Citadel—the lost stronghold of Llovar and his Ynfernael hosts. The trail hides treasures, too. Following the whispers of the dead warriors can bring an adventurer to ancient artifacts from Al-Kalim and other far-off lands or, if a spirit is spiteful, to the jaws of hungry beasts.

TRIBES OF THE UTHUK Y'LLAN

To traverse the Darklands is to enter the world of the Uthuk Y'llan and their Ynfernael allies. Here, the tribes rule the cursed earth beneath the baleful light cast from The Spire of Ruin—the midnight heart of the Darklands themselves. There are many Uthuk tribes, each grown from splinters of Llovar's host, yet a few stand above the rest in their size and ferocity.

The Gore Claws are the largest and most aggressive of the Uthuk, their filed nails and crimson-stained hands marking them out among their kin. Descendants of the prophet Golreth, they keep the legends of Llovar and the Ynfernael masters alive. Centuries of secrets have been recorded by Gore Claw witches on piles of flayed skin. As the self-proclaimed inheritors of the Locust Swarm, the Gore Claw witches and warlocks strive to unite the tribes and use their mastery of demon magic to build armies, forge alliances, and further the revenge of their people.

The Flayed Kindred do not covet rulership of the Ru like the Gore Claws. Instead, they seek only to make themselves closer to the power of the Ynfernael realm. Their warriors purposely maim themselves, pouring demon blood into the wounds, so that they might be remade as more than mortal. Descended from Llovar's inner circle, the witches and warlocks of the Flayed Kindred hold many of the keys left in the wake of their master's demise, including those believed to open the gates to the Black Citadel. The quest for the Black Citadel remains a constant among the tribe; many of its witches and warlocks believe that if it can be found, Llovar himself might be returned to the world.

The Night Howlers hold territories close to the borderlands and are among the Uthuk's most skilled raiders. From the depths of Nyak Sutchra'aa, the Chasm of Eternal Night, they have perfected the art of night fighting—waging war in complete darkness—their skin and weapons coated with stygian dust. The Night Howlers attack with a chorus of war cries, and for their foes, it is as though the night itself has come alive to attack them. Prisoners taken back to the Chasm of Eternal Night can look forward to taking part in the tribe's "training": let loose in lightless dungeons, they must attempt to escape while the Uthuk hunt them down.



Beyond these three largest tribes, scores of others roam the Ru Darklands. Blighted caves with walls scrawled in twisting script, crumbling temples made from the bones of countless blood sacrifices, and profane ruins marking places of massacre are all home to the Uthuk. The Tower of Hands, the Ynargal Cathedral, and the Spinespirit Caves are among the fell places whispered of in the drinking halls of Halfland Keep and Last Haven. Without exception, these are baleful places where the air hangs heavy with the scent of blood and corruption seems to spill from the very earth. Only the barest information on the major Uthuk settlements exists, for few outsiders ever see them and live. Captives taken to the Breeding Pits of Yyrg are hurled into bone cages to be possessed by Ynfernael spirits and transformed into beasts of war. That the process is painful and messy can be attested to by the mounds of rotting corpses that ring the pits—each one ripped apart from the inside.

Only slightly less harrowing than the pits is the Well of Sins, a tangle of fallen bridges deep within the Gyrar Abyss. Here, in a great crack in the Darklands, hidden in the cool shadows of their chasm cities, the Uthuk come to trade slaves and souls. The greatest Uthuk settlement is the circle of war camps around the Kaylor Morbis. Here, long ago at the lake's edge, the plains elders met to settle their disputes and trade both goods and promises. Now, it is the bloodsisters who hold court, settling disputes via ritual combat, gathering their forces, and planning invasions of other lands.

LAST HAVEN

The Borderlands have always been a refuge for those who have been cast out by their own peoples. Criminals escaping the justice of the Citadel, disgraced knights, wizards seeking to conduct their experiments far from prying eyes, and countless other miscreants hole up in this dangerous land. Many end up in Last Haven, a bandit city built upon the ancient foundations of a Dwarven mining fortress. No records of why the fortress was abandoned exist, but huge claw marks and deep gouges in the thick rock of the lower levels lead many to believe that the miners woke something terrible in the depths: something ancient and hungry.

Now a mire of crude stone buildings and twisting streets, Last Haven has become a retreat for the disenfranchised and the despised. Travelers seeking to push deeper into the Ru often pass through Last Haven to stock up on supplies and information, although wise travelers keep one hand on their purse and the other on the hilt of their weapon as they do so. There is no law in Last Haven, and each city block or large building is almost a realm unto itself. In the heart of the city, a former guild upright named Diggor maintains the pretense of legitimate commerce, buying and selling what plundered wealth the Borderlands have to offer, while the Orc Xor's fighting pits offer a chance to win or lose coin, as well as perhaps some teeth.

Possibly the most interesting part of Last Haven, however, is the Silent Chantry. Here, the Silent Ones, an order of exiled sorcerers, gather lost and forbidden knowledge and pay well for artifacts both ancient and deadly. Rumors persist that the Silent Ones serve an Ynfernael master, and that with the artifacts they acquire, they intend to open a tear in the veil beneath the city and coax their dark lord forth into the world.

A TEAR IN THE VEIL

Near the place where Llovar began his fateful journey into the T'mara T'rusheen, early Uthuk Y'llan warlocks raised The Spire of Ruin to commemorate the birth of Uthuk demonic powers. The Spire was said to bless visions of greatness upon those who flayed themselves with its sharp stones. It was never found or destroyed during the scourging of the wastes, and its location is now a mystery. As the Uthuk reclaim their home, they search for the Spire, for the Sisters of Q'aro Fenn have pronounced its rediscovery a portent of their hoped-for revenge. Also seeking this gateway between worlds are powerful groups and individuals including warlock covens from the shadows of Daqan, necromancers searching for the secrets of true undeath, and even Djinni and dragons who see it as a way to restore their kind to glory.

Though many covet the power that this rift offers, reaching the Spire is an almost impossible task. Even the Uthuk tread with care, relying on the guidance of their strongest witches and warlocks when they travel in search of the cursed place. Demon winds bellow forth from the hole in reality, gusting out across the Darklands, and as travelers get closer, the land itself becomes tormented and twisted by its power. Valleys with teeth that tear at the earth, clouds that scream their hatred at the ground, and rivers that swerve from their beds to drown those on their banks are all possible. Monsters this close to the Spire are almost always possessed by demons, their bestial minds overwhelmed and consumed, leaving only the drive to hunt and kill. Creatures natural and unnatural mewl out their hunger as they rip themselves apart or tear at each other in an endless cycle of predatory violence.

The Spire of Ruin rises up from the ground like a spear thrust into the sky. At its tip, the rift into the T'mara T'rusheen—the spirit realm and the Ynfernael beyond—glimmers like a red star, hungrily sucking the surrounding air and the earth below into its gaping maw. From the gateway, it might be possible to travel between worlds—if one can fight one's way past the hundreds of foes and horrors that nest in the Spire's warren of tunnels and then climb to the great altar just beneath the rent. Legend has it that if one can cross the threshold and find an Ynfernael Lord, one can either offer it one's oath, or kill it and gain power unimagined in return. Of course, these same legends warn that the rift is not just a door, but the first step on a path that can lead to any number of places, whether the twisting mirror worlds of the Ynfernael Lords and their burning keeps, the umbral depths where secrets forgotten by the living come to hide, or the sorcerous planes from which all magic springs and reality can be shaped with but a word.

LIFE IN THE RU

The Ru Darklands are home to myriad monsters, each more twisted and horrifying than most can comfortably imagine. Some have hauled themselves out of the Ynfernael and still bask in its demonic light, while others are exiles from Terrinoth or beyond, warped and corrupted by the dark energies that rain from the skies. This section details some of the creatures heroes might encounter during their adventures in the Darklands.

BERSERKER (MINION)

Frothing with bloody frenzy, Uthuk berserkers hurl themselves into the press of combat, craving only to hack apart their foes. Touched by the demonic darkness of the Ru, these Uthuk warriors have given themselves over completely to mindless savagery. Forsaking the discipline of drill and formation, as well as armor and shield, scorning anything that might slow their headlong charge into the fray, they become depraved murderers in combat.

Berserkers all bear the distinctive Uthuk bone spurs that jut from their flesh, each horrid spike the result of Ynfernael corruption. These fearsome spurs can be deadly in the embrace of melee, where opponents are shredded simply by getting too close to a berserker's thrashing form. For their actual weaponry, berserkers tend to favor the largest and most vicious items they can find, such as crude hook axes, sawtooth blades, or spiked hammers. In battle, these tools of war create a crimson mist around berserkers as they dispatch their adversaries as messily as possible.

Even when not in battle, berserkers carry an air of violence. Once Uthuk warriors become berserkers, they have embraced a destiny that can only end in their own bloody demise. Berserkers' only desire is to charge screaming into the midst of the enemy and murder everything within reach until at last they themselves are cut down, to join their victims in a sea of gore.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	1	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	5	0 | 0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Melee (Light), Resilience, Survival.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Bone Spurs (a berserker who is targeted by a melee combat check may spend ⟳ ⟳ ⟳ or ⊗ to cause the attacker to suffer 3 wounds), A Good Death (as an incidental, at the start of its turn a minion group of berserkers that is engaged with an enemy may remove a member of its group as a casualty to add +6 damage to the minion group's attack in that turn).
Equipment: Two bone blades (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]).

SHRIEKERS

The Uthuk Witches utilize countless horrific punishments for those who fail them. In one popular punishment for berserkers, the Witch slashes open the offender's back and cruelly wrenches out their lungs, warping them into huge, overgrown mockeries of life. These so-called "shriekers" constantly scream their resulting rage and pain, and the grotesquely enlarged lungs amplify the sound so greatly as to debilitate foes.

To represent a shrieker, add the following ability to the berserker profile: Shrieker (enemies within medium range add ■ to all checks and suffer one additional strain whenever they suffer any amount of strain).

BLOODSISTER AND NIGHTSEER (NEMESIS)

The most powerful of the Uthuk witches and warlocks are known as bloodsisters and nightseers, respectively. Though not part of the Blood Coven, these immensely skilled sorcerers are the true leaders of the Uthuk tribes. Their influence stretches out across the Ru Darklands, reaching wherever the blades of the Uthuk draw blood. Nightseers in particular are skilled in dreamwalking, a discipline of the original Loth K'har peoples, and have preserved this ancient tradition across the centuries. Adept in battle, gifted with supernatural longevity and resilience, and able to control the minds of those around them, few dare stand against them.

Hierarchy among the bloodsisters and nightseers is based upon the favor of the Ynfernael Lords; these witches and warlocks must constantly prove their right to lead, often through torture and murder. The greatest of their number become the mortal representatives of Ynfernael Lords such as Vel'tar Demonblood or Eurth Kel'yr, the Mistress of Bones, and the interests of their masters often become their own.

While all seek vengeance against Terrinoth and its allies, some bloodsisters and nightseers have their own goals, such as dispatching their rivals or bringing the tribes together under a single leader. The nightseer Quin'tar Shymaex, who dreams of larger things than mere conquest of the Land of Steel, is perhaps one of the most infamous of these. Shymaex seeks to take his place among the Ynfernael Lords himself and transform all Uthuk into true demons, a goal that eluded even Llovar.

THE BLACK CITADEL

During the First Darkness, the Black Citadel watched over the Darklands like a towering shadow. Its high, black basalt walls were covered in glowing Ynfernael script that constantly writhed and shifted before the eyes, while its towers burned with demon fires that could be seen for leagues around. This was the fortress of Llovar, an unassailable keep that held his plunder from the west as well as the more prominent prisoners he captured. It was also rumored to hold the secret of his demonic pacts—vaults filled with the scrawled names of hundreds of Ynfernael creatures, along with artifacts of power brought over from that other realm.

When Llovar was slain, his lieutenants slaughtered every last Uthuk who knew of the citadel's location, before sacrificing themselves in one last act of loyalty to their master. So it was that the Black Citadel disappeared from history, its wealth and secrets hidden by sorcery somewhere deep in the Darklands. Only a handful of bloodsisters and nightseers claim to know of its location. Yet, whether these witches have found the citadel in the mortal realm—or whether it has since been devoured by some hidden enclave of darkness in the Aenlong—is a mystery.

What may lie within the Black Citadel is a topic of many conflicting tales, including talk of dungeon levels filled with roving mechanical traps, undead nightmares captured and infused with Ynfernael energies, and mazes so aberrant in their profane architecture that to even walk their halls is to invite unceasing nightmares. Of the treasures left behind, these same yarns paint a picture of Llovar's spoils of war stolen from Daqan: rooms heaped with ancient artifacts thought long lost to history and perhaps even cells, magically sealed and holding prisoners forever crying for release.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	4	3	4	4

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	17	17	0 | 0

Skills: Divine 3, Coercion 3, Cool 2, Knowledge (Forbidden) 4, Melee (Light) 1.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once), Dark Insight (use Knowledge [Forbidden] to determine spell effects).
Abilities: Telepathic Bond (a bloodsister can perform an incidental once per round to add ■ to the next check made by all other Uthuk Y'llan in the encounter), Telepathic Domination (a bloodsister or nightseer may attempt to telepathically dominate a foe once per encounter as an action, making an **opposed Coercion vs. Discipline check** targeting one character in short range; if successful, the target is immobilized for 1 round per ✲, and the bloodsister may spend ❁ to stagger the target for 1 round), Dreamwalker (once per session, a nightseer can spend a Story Point to either re-roll the dice pool after making a check, or to force a PC to re-roll the dice pool after the PC makes a check).
Spells: Bloodsisters and nightseers can choose any magic action allowed for the Divine skill, and may select additional spell effects as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Bone Eruption (select one target at short or medium range make a **Hard [◆◆◆] Divine check**. If the check is successful, this magic attack inflicts 8 damage, +1 damage per ✲, with the Pierce 4, Sunder, and Vicious 4 qualities, and with a Critical Rating of 2).

Exsanguinate (select one target at short or medium range for this curse and make a **Hard [◆◆◆] Divine check**. If the check is successful, until the end of the witch's next turn, the target deceases the ability of any skill checks they make by one and suffers one additional wound each time they suffer wounds. The witch can maintain these effects with the concentrate maneuver).

Equipment: Bone staff (+4 damage to magic attacks; the first Range effect added does not increase difficulty; when used to cast a spell that inflicts 1 or more wounds, caster heals 1 wound), leather armor (+1 soak).

FLESH RIPPER (MINION)

Flesh rippers are the heralds of the Uthuk armies: packs of these slavering beasts lead the charge into battle with savage roars and screams. There can be little doubt as to the demonic ancestry of these twisted creatures given their blood-red sinew, bulging muscles, and bony, armored hides. As large as full-grown lions, flesh rippers tower over most prey. Their size, however, belies their speed. Racing across the ground on all fours, these vicious beasts can easily catch a knight on horseback, while soldiers on foot have no hope of outrunning them. When flesh rippers catch their foes, they truly live up to their name; even a single such monster will paint the earth red as it rends apart its prize. Of course, when one sees a single flesh ripper, others are never far behind.



The wrangling of flesh rippers is no easy task, as Uthuk beastmasters' countless old scars and missing limbs can prove. Witches and warlocks use blood sacrifice to lure the flesh rippers from the tempestuous heart of the Ru and cage them with sorcerous power. The demons are then branded with the N'klashth, or bloodmark, making the covenant of ownership complete. Once the creatures are broken to the will of the Blood Coven, beastmasters use barbed whips to corral them. Then, when the horns of war sound and the beasts are let loose, their instincts takes over, and their masters need only prod them toward the foe and watch the carnage they unleash.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	1	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	6	1 | 1

Skills (group only): Brawl, Cool, Resilience, Vigilance.
Talents: Swift (a flesh ripper does not spend additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of its opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).
Equipment: Claws and fangs (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [engaged]; Vicious 1), spiked tail (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 1).

GROTESQUE (RIVAL)

The power of the Blood Coven can twist and torment Uthuk warriors, but it can also grant them great power, should they be strong enough to bear its blessing. Grotesques are monstrosities, each a uniquely horrid form that only vaguely resembles the Uthuk they once were. Having offered themselves up for sacrifice to the Blood Coven, they have hacked off limbs, given over eyes, or even torn out their own beating heart in hopes of receiving the witches' Ynfernael blessing.

If the Blood Coven approves of a warrior's offering, they might be rewarded and their mangled body remade anew. Bone ridges begin to cover their body, their hunched back becoming a forest of razor-sharp spines while their muscles swell and distort under their pale flesh. Gone are the vestiges of mortality from their face, elongated fangs and glowing red eyes marking them as the beast they have become.

In battle, the grotesques are the lumbering elite of the Uthuk tribes, many rising to become warlords of their own raiding armies or wasteland fortresses. Horrendously strong in combat, grotesques can rip a person apart with their bare hands, carve them up with their bone spines, and even fling bone shards from their fists to fell enemies at a distance. Few bother to carry weapons or wear armor, as their demonically transformed bodies are able to take and dish out enormous amounts of punishment.

More monstrous than mortal, the mutated blood that fills grotesques and grants them their strength and resilience often comes with other gifts. A supernatural terror clings to them, making combatants who wouldn't normally flee before their grotesque size and appearance find their nerve undone. This panic can become infectious: just one of these towering horrors can send a disciplined force into a rout. Grotesques grow intoxicated upon the outpouring of fear, rising to a killing frenzy as they fall upon their fleeing foes.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	1	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	14	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 2, Melee (Light) 3, Ranged 2, Resilience 2, Vigilance 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Bone Spurs (a grotesque may spend ⟲ ⟲ ⟲ or ⊗ on a melee combat check targeting them to inflict 6 damage on the attacker), Killing Frenzy (a grotesque adds □ □ to all melee combat checks, but attackers add □ to all combat checks targeting the grotesque).
Equipment: Massive claw (Melee [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 1, Knockdown), hurled bone shards (Ranged; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Vicious 2).

SPINED THRESHER (NEMESIS)

Known to the Uthuk as the Gw'reth Chuik, or "that which feeds," these mighty demons are simply "spined threshers" to the defenders of the Land of Steel. When the enemies of the Uthuk cower behind the stone walls of their cities and keeps, the witches call out into the Ynfernael for the Gw'reth Chuik. If their sacrifices are sufficient, a huge demon hauls its chitinous form from the beyond to do battle for the Locust Swarm.

A nightmare mixture of insect and beast, the demon looms over Humans and horses. These monsters range from the size of a laden wagon to that of a small house. Despite their bulk, spined threshers move swiftly across the battlefield, their many legs propelling them along. They rip apart their foes with serrated mandibles or even devour them whole, while walls and other fortifications crack and crumble under their sustained assaults.

The mere sight of a spined thresher is frequently enough to infect mortal minds with unreasoning fear. As the beast chitters and lifts its bulbous head above the enemy's parapet, soldiers scatter before it, dropping weapons and shields as they try desperately to flee. The demon seems to revel in the terror is causes, displaying a dark intelligence as it drives prey before it. Often it will trap them against their own defenses before taking its time to crush them underfoot or snip the limbs from their bodies.

In great battles, a favored bloodsister might be blessed with the arrival of more than one spined thresher with which to destroy her enemies. In these instances, the great demons level everything in their path, competing to sow the most destruction until naught remains of a city or town but piles of rubble and twisted corpses.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	2	1	2	3	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
7	25	18	0 | 0

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Resilience 4.
Talents: Swift (a spined thresher does not spend additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Silhouette 3, Spine-tow (a spined thresher can use a maneuver to move a target affected by its tail's Ensnare quality up to one range band), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of its opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Too Many Mouths (a spined thresher can make a combined check to attack with any number of its weapons, and only needs to spend ⮝ to hit with each additional weapon).
Equipment: Two fanged claws (Brawl; Damage 9; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Vicious 2); slavering maw (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2, Sunder), spiny tail (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Ensnare 2, Vicious 1).



VIPER LEGION ARCHER (RIVAL)

Uthuk warriors are natural raiders, and none more so than the viper legion archers. As befits the vile ways in which the Uthuk wage war, members of the viper legion make extensive use of sorcerous poisons to tip their arrows. Brewed by the viper war leaders and blessed by the Blood Coven, these toxic elixirs are often tailored to the enemy's weaknesses. Heroes' Bane works against a foe's courage so as to kill the brave faster than the cowardly, while Nightshood is made from the powdered remains of powerful undead and can steal an enemy's sight. Perhaps the deadliest of all is the Kiss of Set, crafted from the distilled blood of a naga, which turns the target's heart into a bomb, bursting from their body and leaving a toxic cloud in their wake.

For their arrows to do their work, viper legion archers train constantly amid the storm-lashed wastes of the Darklands, testing their hunting skills on vicious beasts and hapless travelers. In this manner, each legion archer becomes a master of ambush and mobile warfare, striking swiftly with surprise and then vanishing again before their foes can retaliate.

For full-scale battles, the Uthuk mass their viper legion archers, favoring overwhelming force against the benefits of lone hunters. When the archers loose their arrows, the skies darken with writhing forms, and the din of battle is momentarily drowned out by the long hiss of a hundred serpentine arrows hungry for blood.



Skills: Cool 2, Ranged 3, Stealth 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Tailored Poison (once per encounter before making a Ranged check, as a maneuver a viper legion archer can apply a tailored poison to an arrow; if the check succeeds, the attack inflicts additional damage equal to the target's highest characteristic and gains the Disorient 3 quality).
Equipment: Viper bow (Ranged; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Unwieldy 3; a character wounded by this weapon must make a **Hard [◆◆◆] Resilience check** or suffer 3 additional wounds plus 1 strain per ♻, and must check again on their next turn if the check generates ⊗), leather armor (+1 soak).

WITCH AND WARLOCK (RIVAL)

Witches and warlocks are the spiritual slave masters of the Uthuk tribes and the keepers of their dark Ynfernael magic. Only a handful of Uthuk are born with such gifts. These children often arrive into the world amid a portentous rain of blood or storm of crimson lightning. A long and torturous road follows; not all of them live to master their magic, as the brutality of Uthuk society ruthlessly weeds out the weak. Those who survive are cruel and skilled sorcerers and priestesses, utterly dedicated to the Uthuk and without a shred of mercy for their enemies.

Most common among their kind are the bloodwitches, for whom the cardinal fluids of the body are theirs to command. A bloodwitch can hear the blood of her enemies as it pumps through their veins and read the future by gazing into the crimson torrent of a fresh-made wound. With a gesture, she can spark a person's heart aflame, setting their blood to boiling until it bursts forth from their screaming mouth. In contrast, warlocks of the Uthuk are masters of dark dreams. They travel the Aenlong as they sleep, hunting foes, speaking with demons, and summoning horrors into the world.

Kin to bloodwitches, bonewitches manipulate skeletons, often while they are encased in living flesh. Foes can find their limbs snapped like twigs, while allies can be hardened against harm, the witch thickening ribs and skulls to ward away blows.

Revered leaders among their kind, both witches and warlocks are able to communicate telepathically with other Uthuk across vast distances. These links bind the Uthuk tribes together and are used to call their armies to battle, bringing both berserkers and warlords alike to heel with but a hateful glance.



Skills: Divine 3, Cool 1, Knowledge (Forbidden) 3, Melee (Light) 1.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once), Dark Insight (use Knowledge [Forbidden] to determine spell effects).
Abilities: Telepathic Coordination (a witch or warlock can perform a maneuver to add □ to the next check made by all other Uthuk Y'llan in the encounter), Sacrifice (after inflicting wounds on a living creature [whether an enemy or ally], a witch or warlock adds □ to their next magic skill check; after killing a living creature, a witch or warlock instead upgrades the ability of their next magic skill check once).
Spells: Witches and warlocks can choose any magic action allowed for the Divine skill, and may select additional spell effects as normal. The spells they use most often are:

Boneshatter (select one target at short range for this magic attack and make a **Hard [◆◆◆] Divine check**. If the check is successful, the magic attack inflicts 5 damage, +1 damage per ✲, with the Pierce 3, Sunder, and Vicious 3 qualities, and with a Critical Rating of 2).

Boil Blood (select one target at short range for this curse and make an **Average [◆◆] Divine check**. If the check is successful, until the end of the witch or warlock's next turn, the target decreases the ability of any skill checks they make by one and suffers one additional strain each time they suffer strain for any reason. The witch or warlock can maintain these effects with the concentrate maneuver).
Equipment: Sacrificial blade (Melee [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1); bone armor (+1 soak).

WHISPERS OF THE YNFERNAEL

Mennara is a world facing many threats, but few know of the threat both outside of the world, yet also parallel to it like a warped mirror upon the mortal world. This is the Ynfernael—a separate plane of reality made of vile, negative energy and boundless evil. Awash with unfathomable darkness, it is the home of unnatural creatures that emerge out of its all-encompassing rage and despair like hungry sharks leaping from roiling oceans.

This is a unknowable plane of existence that is drawn to the most horrid acts of mortals, taking their offerings of blood and murder gifting them with strength and rage. None can comprehend the motives of the unholy creatures of the Ynfernael, only that their actions echo the abhorrent plane of their existence. Their dread effects on Mennara are many across the centuries, though, are fully evident. Even the Tears of Latariana were not immune to the corruption of the Ynfernael, and mere mortals and their works even less so. The power of the Ynfernael grows everywhere, defiling all it touches, until one day it will transform all of Mennara into an unending, bloodsoaked cauldron of evil.

YNFERNAEL MAGIC IN MENNARA

Scholars in Greyhaven and elsewhere hold that despite its vile nature, the Ynfernael is a primordial part of all existence. Some others simply believe it is the source of all evil in Mennara, and can trace every terrible act and betrayal back to its influence on the desperate and weak willed. They even hold that the rifts where the boundary between Mennara and the Aenlong are thin and tenuous, the Ynfernael's baneful energies can spill through and befoul the land and taint those who reside there, no matter their intentions or will. In their view, accessing the plane of demons is extraordinarily dangerous and not worth the vast power it can bestow. For others, however, the power of the Ynfernael is everything.

The Uthuk fully embrace the Ynfernael, and its foul energy pulses in each beat of their hearts and each drop of blood they spill. It has been the source of their furious power ever since Llovar fell prey to the demons and transformed the peaceful plains-dwellers into a hungry horde of locusts. As the power corrupted and transformed their flesh, the Ynfernael twisted the magics of the Loth K'har as well. The nightseers of the dreamwalking tradition now used their abilities to travel to and commune with demons from beyond. Their ancient ability to link minds into harmonious discussion grew darker until it became their method to command and dominate the Locust armies. Those who spoke out against the corruption of their ancient ways were destroyed, leaving only rage and hate in their place.

Since then, the Uthuk have honed their ability to travel the Aenlong to gain glimpses of the Ynfernael plane and its inhabitants. The unnatural creatures dwelling there can directly draw upon the dark powers of that plane. The most powerful of these demons call on Ynfernael magic with ease, as it flows from the plane of evil and through them like blood coursing through veins.

PCS AND YNFERNAEL MAGIC

Some PCs might wish to learn about and even gain power from the Ynfernael, even though the denizens of the Ru clearly display the unnatural forms it can take. Note there is no formal "Ynfernael magic" as a type of talent or spell type, though—this is accomplished through the Dark Insight talent and creative uses of Divine spells and the Knowledge (Forbidden) skill, just like PCs can employ death magic. The GM and players should determine which uses of existing talents, skills, and spells constitute engaging in deals with demons in their campaign.

Characters who wish to employ Ynfernael magic might do it for noble reasons. Yet this can never end well, for the Ynfernael is simply too powerful to withstand. It is the antithesis to the creative force of life—destructive and utterly corrupting.

The rites associated with the magic of demons is as horrifying as the creatures themselves. They normally involve sacrifices of flesh and blood, of bone and tissue. No rite is every identical, for they draw on the unique hate, passion, and rage of the spellcaster to summon beings from the Ynfernael or commune with them. At the GM's discretion, such rites can call for fear checks to withstand the terrifying sights, sounds, and smells involved.

PCs dealing with Ynfernael magic can rarely hide the effects of their practices for long. Its corrupting nature makes foul changes to flesh, reflecting the corruption of the soul. Those who draw on its power, or even delve too deeply into its secrets, can find themselves growing horns, fangs, taloned nails, and even leathery wings. As their visages become more and more twisted, it will become harder to disguise their corruption. Even exposure to regions heavy with Ynfernael corruption can effect characters in these ways, though not to as large an extent. The GM and player should discuss such matters before things get too obvious to other PCs, but it could lead to the PC "retiring" the character for it to become a new nemesis for the group.

The Uthuk are not the only ones in Mennara who use Ynfernael magic, for the Daewyl Elves also appear to draw on this unholy power. These Elves had dared to travel to blighted planes of the Aenlong to slay the many corrupted creatures there, but were themselves corrupted by the Ynfernael taint there. Many of the Daewyl now call upon that dark source of magic as they single-mindedly fight against evil, no matter the consequences to themselves or those around them.

CORRUPTED LANDS

The Ynfernael corrupts not only its users, but even the very ground in some areas. These are thought to be regions where reality itself is thin and the Ynfernael can bleed into Mennara. Such rifts not only allow demons in the Ynfernael to whisper and taunt mortals, but also to debase the surrounding area. Trees become stunted and twisted into unnerving shapes, plants grow hungry for flesh, and even the most timid of creatures become feral and thirsty for blood.

The Darklands are infamous for such lands and areas of weak boundaries, the most infamous being where Llovar first dreamwalked into the Ynfernael. There can also be other areas in Mennara equally porous, perhaps dating back to the calamities of the War of the Shadow Tear or as the sites of horrid rituals. Ynfernael magic flows stronger in these areas, increasing the chances for demons to be a factor in adventures outside of the Ru.

THE SIGNS OF THE YNFERNAEL

Although there are dark hints that Ynfernael magic bled into Mennara in earlier times, it was not until Llovar Rutonu that this foul practice gained a powerful foothold. Though study of such magic is utterly forbidden, some mages believe this to be a dark counterpart to Divine magic, and so as the Empyrean blesses all that is good and pure in magic, so the Ynfernael empowers that which is horrid and dark.

From a forgotten rift, its influence spread across the Ru, infesting both the peoples of this land and the land itself. Bodies deform as protruding talons and bonespurs grow and spurt out of coarsened skin. In some of the corrupting energy became the fuel for fearsome magic, especially for those who became the first witches of bone and blood, their veins rich with demonic blood.

Such magic is powerful but difficult to control, and many who are born with the talent to wield them destroy themselves as they seek to master the power of demons. The witches of the Blood Coven carefully oversees their progress, and weed out the weak through tortuous rites and fierce competitions. The survivors join the coven as apprentices; once fully proven as loyal and worthy of the full blessings of the Ynfernael, they use their sorceries to both terrify and inspire the disparate tribes into a unified, unstoppable horde.

Uthuk warlocks operate in even darker manners. In their sleep, they roam across the Aenlong, hunting down their enemies like deer and conversing with the fell beings of the Ynfernael. It is their dealings that reveal their true dangers, for they are the masters of the dark rituals and fell ceremonies of blood and screams.

Through these sacrifices warlocks implore the Ynfernael to summon forth demons into Mennara. Such conjurations can involve many weeks of vile consecrations and horrid, unceasing chants, all to allow the summoned creatures a strong presence in the mortal plane that is not easily severed. To witness one such rite is a terrifying experience, made even more so should it be conducted successfully. In comparison, the horrid murder ceremonies the Uthuk commonly conduct before battles are more swift but allow for demons only a fleeting foothold—though it is usually long enough for them to thoroughly petrify and devour enemy forces.

Warlocks eschew direct roles to wield their power secretly as well, growing cults of followers in western lands like Terrinoth, Lorimor, and even Al-Kalim. From within these civilized nations, they burrow deeply into the soft, exposed underbelly of their foes and poison it with the taint of Ynfernael magic. Through their blood rituals, often involving kidnapped inhabitants for the freshest and most powerful effect, they not only grow the power of the Uthuk but strengthen the presence of the Ynfernael.



LORIMOR AND THE TORUE ALBES

To the west of Terrinoth lies a huge peninsula and associated islands that project into the vast deep waters that stretch on seemingly forever. Settled long ago in a tale of tragedy and betrayal, these lands have since become bastion of civilization and exploration. The Empire of Lorimor, which occupies the peninsula, hosts what many claim to be the greatest Human nation in Mennara's history. None would confuse the Torue Albes with the heights of civilization, but the many pirates, ruffians, and eccentrics that make the islands their home port have made the archipelago the start of many adventures into the unknown, both out to sea and in the still-uncharted wilds inland.

LORIMOR

Lorimor is a gleaming spear upon which humanity has flourished, a temperate land that juts out into the sea. Many historians cite its founding as one of the critical moments in the early history of the Penacor Kings, a singular event that defined the course of Terrinoth for millennia. But to focus on this alone would be to ignore the greater history of Lorimor. A proud, noble nation in its own right, it is a land of romantics, poets, builders, philosophers, sailors, and soldiers.



Lorimor was founded near the beginning of the Age of Steel, late in the third century of the Human calendar, when Rusticar Lorimor and Riya Penacor were banished from Terrinoth for betraying their king—who was his closest friend and her husband.

Their travels led them to a huge, unexplored peninsula extending to the north, running between the Teallin Sea and the Kingless Coast to the east, and dark blue waters on the west that seemed to go on forever. As they entered the region, there appeared to be no hope for settlement. The lands were pleasant enough, but edible game was scarce and their imported crops struggled in the rockier soil. Worse yet, the lands seemed utterly indefensible should the king decide his judgment had been too lenient, or should the inscrutable Elves of the Aymhelin wish to extend their domain.

After many months, the exiles and their followers finally reached a more suitable location, forested and thick with sustenance. This became their new home, and in time, the city of Lorim would become the capital of the new Lorimor Empire. From here, scouts would explore outward to found new cities, such as Orris along the coast, and go on to establish new colonies in the islands to the north.

THE INLANDS

The interior of Lorimor was the first to be occupied, and its peoples still dominates the nation via the political power of the capital and the surrounding cities to which it has close ties. Huge areas of the peninsula are unexplored and wild to this day, however, and small settlements exist in these areas in relative isolation. In such settlements, those seeking shelter from prying eyes can undertake rituals and experiments that would lead to banishment or worse in civilized regions.

LORIM

Lorim is one of the most scenic cities to be found anywhere, a setting of vibrant markets and spectacular public works. Its architects and stonemasons have crafted breathtaking coliseums and enormous legendary statues and monuments, many dedicated to its dual founders. Lorimor grew around this city, establishing powerful armies and the greatest navy in the world.

Lorimor is recognized as a power in Mennara, but its time as the dominant nation has long since vanished. Lorim has become filled with conspiracies and plots. As the empire has weakened, its chancellors, princes, merchant lords, spymasters, and other principals have grown ever more desperate to hold onto whatever power remains. Visitors from abroad often make for excellent cats' paws in their intrigues. Travelers here may be able to gain royal audiences, and perhaps agree to take on quests against raiding monsters or troublesome bandits. Even local authorities may call on outsiders to deal with matters they would rather not become public, from villages suffering under curses to suspicious wizards spending too much time in graveyards.

Still, the city can offer much to travelers and traders. The long continuity of the Lorimor Empire means there are troves of scholarship here, and opportunities to learn about anything from architecture and shipbuilding to the latest exotic discoveries from other realms. Its centuries of trade also ensure that goods of almost any nature can be bought here, and beings who still have the fire for adventure and exploration can be found in Lorim as well.

MOUNTS ARRIK AND ORRIK

These two peaks are set on either side of the River of Sighs, not far from Orris. There are small watchtowers along each, where sharp eyes look for signs of invasion. Monitors also look for indications that the powerful river is cresting to once again spill into the Queldan floodlands.

Few remember the initial reports from when Arrik and Orrik were first explored, and fewer still have followed up on them, particularly the indications in the mountains of winding tunnels that appear artificial. Nevertheless, tales have spread from Orris and into the Torue Albes of vaulted caverns, crumbling but still intact, dug far into the mountainsides. Dungeons and catacombs are also said to be within, deeper underground, the weight of the peaks groaning above them. Some tales even claim that passages connect the two mountains, twisting deep under the rushing river and out across the Narrows of Gracor. It is rumored that some of the caves contain inhumanly tall stone figures reaching out in terror and rage, leaving tavern patrons to wonder over their ale why they were carved and then left so far below the surface.

The varied scholars of the city of Lorim have refrained from any comment, as official history states these lands were entirely unoccupied when the empire was birthed. Secretly, through magical inspections, scholars have gathered some evidence that Arrik and Orrik were one gigantic mountain many thousands of years ago, but were sundered atwain through agencies unimaginable. What could have done this, and what sins the mountains' former denizens could have committed to deserve it, are things the empire's scholars believe are better left undiscussed.

THE LOST KEEPS

Long ago, a ruler of the Lorimor Empire decreed that a series of fortresses and watchtowers be constructed in the southern regions of Lorimor, where the exiled lovers Riya and Rusticar had traveled in search of a new home. The task was difficult, but this was when Lorimor was at its height, and nothing seemed beyond its reach. Long wagon trains transported tons of granite to the construction sites, along with soldiers, masons, and smiths. The effort took years, but finally, dozens of outposts had been erected along the peninsula's thinnest width. They served the empire well for ages, and such was the reputation of Lorimor's forces that none dared attack it.

Some believe the hubris of the emperor in a later era was to blame for assuming the keeps were impregnable; others suspect clerical errors in the recording of messages from the keeps. All that is known is that when a fresh contingent of recruits who had traveled to a southern outpost to replace the watch arrived at their destination, the keep was empty. There were no bodies or signs of struggle, and the armories seemed complete. Every other keep proved the same. Entire armies marched south, fearing attack, but none came.

From that day, the outposts were left empty, the empire's finest augurs and divinators having proclaimed the sites were cursed. Currently, the keeps are mostly ruins that serve as welcome resting places for travelers. Winds blow colder through them, however, and wines seem to become sour overnight. Sleep is difficult and filled with terrible dreams of past ages and terrible betrayals. Few visitors stay a second night, as most sense that whatever now resides in the keeps does not desire company.



Lorimor and the Torue Albes

THE COASTLANDS

Though the inlands dominate Lorimor politically, the coastal cities dominate it monetarily. Trade is their watchword, and mercantile ships travel across the known world and beyond from Lorimor's many harbors. Such trade extends to Terrinoth and the fabled markets of Tamalir, as the empire and the land of its origin reconciled when they fought together against the darkness. Lorim struggles to maintain control over the coasts, but there are always factions more concerned with gold than with supporting the capital.

ORRIS

Orris lies on the northern coast of Lorimor, where the turbulent River of Sighs empties into the Cerridor Sea. It is a thriving destination point, its docks busy day and night as heavy ships fight for space to offload their treasures from distant lands. Its success has made it feel detached from the rest of Lorimor, though, and the city has an unseemly reputation. Its bars and taverns became havens for captains with a piratical bent, and many an eye is averted so long as gold and other riches continue to pour into Lorimor. The colonization of the Torue Albes was launched from Orris, and the city controlled much of the trade with the islands as the settlements prospered and grew.

Many call it a city of pirates. This is not an entirely untrue statement, but Orris is also a city of opportunity. Its ships are ready for any action, as long as the promise of reward is high. For those looking for transportation without wishing to answer any bothersome questions, seafaring mercenaries skilled in the cutlass, or any seeking the latest tales of oceanic monsters and undiscovered seas, all flock to Orris, and they are seldom disappointed.

REDWATER

The principal port along Lorimor's western seacoast, Redwater features a wide bay lined with long, sturdy docks of rock cut and transported from far inland. From here, ships sail to the south though the Selenic Sea and on to Zanaga and the Broken Plains. Most hug the land for protection from pirates if they lack proper naval protection—sadly, a situation that has grown more frequent in recent years. Trading ships also sail south across the wide reach of the Great Sea, the largest body of water known to have been traversed, to distant Al-Kalim to import treasures and delicacies from the land of deserts. Those who do, though, must placate or ward away the terrible gods that rule these waters, lest their ships join the countless others broken and rotting many leagues under the surface.



Directly to the west of Redwater is the Endless Ocean, from which no ship has returned with tales of landfall. There are many other tales, though, of monstrous creatures emerging from the deeps, alluring songs heard in the black of night, spectral vessels glowing with blue fire whose sailors cry out to turn around before it becomes too late, and more. Perhaps even more terrible gods exist here, awaiting the foolish and daring to enter their domains. To look to the west is to see the great unknown, where blue waters turn dark and crimson in the setting sun, and to wonder which daring crew will discover what is on the other side.

THE TORUE ALBES

The Torue Albes are a loose association of islands not dissimilar to the Free Cities on mainland Terrinoth, consisting of four major lands and countless lesser islands, many uninhabited or used as secretive smuggling ports. As former colonies of Lorimor freed of the empire's rule, they form an ecosystem, helping one another in what ways they can and creating a system of reliance born more from necessity than family bonds or honor. While relatively independent from each other, they do recognize the authority of a single queen, whose court is held in the city of Dallak on the main island of Alben.

ALBEN

Alben is the largest of the islands making up the Torue Albes (which in a nearly forgotten tongue means "the Islands of Alben"). It stretches along to the west of the other islands, and was the first to be settled by explorers from Lorimor who dared to venture across the Narrows of Gracor many ages ago. The cities of Alben dominate much of the trade throughout the archipelago, and thus visitors to the Torue Albes are almost certain to arrive here at some point in their journeys.

DALLAK

The capital of the Torue Albes (if such a thing could be claimed), this city lies between the Firecloud Range and the Mountains of Ash along the main inland trade route across Alben. Calling it a capital might be a stretch, though. The Queen of Dallak is ostensibly the supreme authority in the Torue Albes, her title passed down from when the islands broke from Lorimor during the empire's great civil war. What this means in practice is essentially the authority to levy taxes and collect tolls at major trade crossings, including Dallak itself. The Bog of Vipers also flanks the city, making travel a perilous proposition for any who would avoid paying the Queen's Toll on their way north to Trelton or south to Garnott.

While not the most dependable means of making money, these privileges have nonetheless made Dallak the wealthiest city in the area. The Queen's Guard in particular is capable of levying special taxes to bludgeon opponents of the queen into submission with economic penalties. In the rough world of the Torue Albes, money is well worth killing over, and the members of the Queen's Guard rank as some of the most elite infantry in the region.

The queen's influence extends to every aspect of Dallak, so much so that it is as much an organ of royalty as the monarch herself. When the drums of war begin to beat, the queen may issue a decree of privateering and grant clemency to any pirate crew (or anyone else interested) willing to fight and plunder under the flag of the Albesian Royal Navy.

GARNOTT

This coastal city borders the Burning Bay, far to the south of Dallak. Life in Garnott is martial and rigidly controlled, making it the perfect home for the premier military training school in the islands: the Torue Albes War Academy. Its graduates invariably become heroes in the Albesian or Lorimor Imperial Navy, having trained for years in every aspect of seamanship and deck fighting. Eschewing armor for the stark uniform of the officers' corps, they are a striking sight in any sea battle, and more than a match for any upstart privateer.

Garnott is much more defensible than most locations in the Torue Albes. To the north of it lie the Azure Peaks, and would-be seagoing invaders need to get past the Narrows of Gracor, where many a ship ends up smashed against the rocks. Watching over the city are all manner of magical charms, said to be the last gift of a Lorimor emperor whose son perished when his ship was dashed upon the banks.

TRELTON

Trelton is a small coastal city to the north of Dallak and just south of Ulthik Isle, renowned even in Terrinoth for the greatness of its metalsmiths and artificers. The proximity to high-grade materials in Moonraven Heights, Stagwood Forest, and Mount Ulthik—in addition to the patronage of the queen—means that, while it is not a tremendous city in its own right, its place of honor is secured by the sheer number of its weapons that have hacked their way into legend.

Trelton also contains a monastery of sorts—the Fraternity of the Mountain. When smiths and metalworkers first approach the city seeking entrance to learn from its masters, the Fraternity examines them as to the truthfulness of their statements. If their hands are calloused, if they do not flinch in the face of a roaring furnace, if they find nothing wrong with soot and ash, then they are accepted into Trelton and given access to its forges. Food, bed, shelter, and companionship are made available to anyone who stokes fire and counts the moments of their life to the pounding rhythm of the hammer on the anvil, regardless of their origin. Many have journeyed countless leagues to gain entry, practice their craft, repair priceless relics, and create their own masterworks.

GARNET ISLAND

Resting to the west of Alben, this wide island is bounded by the Cerridor Sea to the south and the Bright Sea to the north. It offers a natural break for travel through the Torue Albes. Among its verdant forests are several small settlements—which mostly conduct illicit smuggling—and only one city. Most visitors, however, would consider Gafford more an explosive testing ground than a proper city.

GAFFORD

From a distance, travelers might think there is a violent war underway within Gafford, due to the clouds of smoke and rising flames. Yet, upon entering it, they soon realize that these are simply the product of the locals going about their daily business. Gafford is a city of magical alchemists and base chemists; there is no potion or concoction that cannot be found here in abundance (indeed, many were first developed in one of its heavily fortified mixing dens). The Hollow Woods bordering the city to the north is one of the only places where certain ingredients can be procured, making it the principal destination for students of botany (and, unsurprisingly, poisons). What the residents cannot cultivate locally, they send their ships to procure, making Gafford one of the primary importers of rare minerals and other ingredients from the icy wastes of Isheim and elsewhere.

Gafford's production, of course, is not limited solely to potions of strength or vigor, but also includes flash bombs, grenades, smoke bombs, shells, and all manner of bizarre reagents. The infamous concoction known in Terrinoth as "Lorimor Fire" is a major export, though the locals keep a much more highly refined and powerful version for special buyers. Explosions are the most common occurrence on the island, requiring a dedicated water brigade to handle the innumerable blazes. If not for the world's unending desire for its munitions and other compounds, it's almost certain that Gafford would now be little more than a smoking crater.

For those more inclined toward the pleasurable things in life, Gafford is also renowned for its taverns, masters of alchemy often being masters of the cask and keg as well. Many of its more legendary spirits are the result of accidental mixtures of alchemical and alcoholic brews, some never having been successfully replicated despite years of efforts. A magnum of the legendary Crimson Gaff, in particular, can fetch an ogre's weight in gold, and there are frequent expeditions to locate the crate of Queen's Kiss that went missing somewhere on the way to Tamalir.

TARIANOR

The fabled Floating City of Tarianor is the greatest shipyard in the whole of the Torue Albes, if not the world. It is more akin to an island than a city, however. This marvel of engineering was the fevered dream of Captain Eddy Bloodkelp, a Gnome pirate who never had much luck due to her greater interest in nautical engineering than combat and pillaging. After her prey escaped when her ship ran aground on a huge stretch of coral reef, she had a wild vision of a seaport built upon that very reef. It would be a floating island, one that could raise anchor and drift wherever it pleased, or to wherever the most ships happened to be going.

She gathered what was left of her desperate crew and managed to inflame them with her vision. With their combined skills at shipbuilding and engineering, and perhaps a little help from magic, they started work. It took five long years—and the coffers of dozens of equally fevered investors—but finally, the Floating City was open for business.

It was a runaway success. The Queen of Dallak made an offer to turn the Floating City into a proper city of the Torue Albes and declare it the royal shipyard. Eddy would become richer than any pirate and, after leaving much of the daily operations to her first mate, spent her days experimenting on new engineering projects.

Tarianor is now the most valuable shipyard in all the world. The war galleons of Lorimor and the Albesian Royal Navy are produced here, along with vessels for other commercial interests (the Gnome crew still retain a piratical bent, and are generally open to special contracts with no questions asked). It can even act as transportation, ferrying groups with only small riverboats across dangerous open waters to destinations along the western coasts of the continent.

TIGH HIGARD

To the north of Garnet Island is rocky Tigh Higard, an irregularly shaped island anchored at the north and south by the Crystal Crags and the Nodan Mountains. A wide river splits these formations, flowing eastward through Shellport, Tigh Higard's largest city, before emptying into the ocean. It is a rough island with rough climates. Ice and snow cover the tall peaks to the north and south, which are home to terrible creatures that all too often venture downward for food. The plains below are also dangerous, with tall grasses hiding silent reptilian predators and, worse, press-gangs on the coasts ready to kidnap anyone they find into their crews.

Some even whisper that on nights when the moon is blood red, the barriers between worlds begin to warp, and strange things emerge from the undergrowth. Long-dead sailors are said to rise from their graves in search of their lost treasure, and werewolf tribes prowl the beaches for sacrifices to their dark gods. Out beyond Tigh Higard to the west is the Sea of Smoke and deep waters; tales in the Shellport taverns speak of the gigantic aquatic creatures there, some so large as to be mistaken for islands themselves.

SHELLPORT

In contrast to the rest of Tigh Higard, Shellport is devoted to pleasure, a port city that gives hard-worn sailors and traveling adventurers rest and fun before going off to their next destination. Taverns abound, along with plentiful distractions to separate visitors from their coins. Shellport is a place to make merry, but also a place of opportunity.

The constant flux of sailors passing through means there is always word of new treasures to be found, and maps to them to be purchased. A few are accurate, while some may lead to even richer (though more perilous) rewards. New expeditions seem to form in the taverns each night, their members sailing off to unexplored lands or venturing to the north in the hope of finding new trade passages. Armed groups assemble regularly in here to march against the terrors in the mountains and tame their numbers, a never-ending quest that sometimes reaps benefits when they discover forgotten hoards of magical items or the frozen bodies of dragons and other valuable creatures.

ULTHIK ISLE

The northernmost island of the Torue Albes, Ulthik Isle is an inhospitable marshland barely above sea level. A small volcanic mountain chain rises from the mire, but the rest of the terrain is thoroughly wet and unpleasant, as though the surrounding waters were winning the battle to reclaim the land. Were it not for the purity of the many ores to be found here, it is likely it would have remained uninhabited. Those ores, from rich iron deposits to thick veins of magical minerals, have transformed the island into a hotbed of industry. Furnaces and soot-stained workshops stud the face of Hardell, its primary city, which competes with the volcanoes and their constant fumes to see which can produce more noxious gases.

HARDELL

The city of Hardell saw its beginnings when a wizard tinkerer was banished from his home in Terrinoth for the excessive destruction caused by his inventions. The exiled mage made his lonely way here, expecting nothing but an uneventful life. That was, until he accidentally discovered the plentiful raw materials under his feet. Soon he was smelting and forging items of metal and magic never before imagined. Word spread of his creations, especially to nearby Trelton, and similarly eccentric and outcast inventors eagerly crossed the Winnowing Straits to join him.

Soon, a series of forges and smelters rose up, and the city of Hardell (named to honor the wizard) was born. It is a place of destructive wonders, where the wizard's genius is now recognized in full. His masterpiece is perhaps the Rune Cannon, an arcane weapon that magnified the strength of runic bolts a hundredfold, capable of blasting apart rock and heavy fortifications with ease. In addition to the Rune Cannon, an endless number of devices and mechanical contraptions can be found here, many singular creations awaiting someone to fully appreciate their potential (or figure out how to use them). Adventurers seeking specific items or modifications to existing ones for their latest quest are always welcome in Hardell, for its inhabitants always appreciate a good challenge.

LIFE IN THE WEST

The Lorimor Empire has thrived for ages through the courage and skill of its citizenry, especially its maritime forces. Its power scoured threats throughout the peninsula (or so it is believed), and centuries of stability has resulted in cultural richness rarely seen anywhere else in Mennara.



Beyond Lorimor the archipelago is rich with life of a wilder kind. While not all life in the Torue Albes revolves around piratical occupations, enough of it is for outsiders to assume this to be true. The islands are filled with more oddities and dangers, though, than mere pirates. Much of the inlands are still unexplored, and are filled with creatures and wonders not to be found anywhere else.

GIANT (NEMESIS)

Few have seen these huge, lumbering creatures and lived to speak of it, for their raw strength is enough to crush entire bands of soldiers like lesser beings would swat away flies. Many are as old as the hills, with reclusive natures, and immediately see outsiders as enemies. Despite the relatively small sizes of its islands, much of the Torue Albes is still unexplored, and giants can still be discovered within enormous underground caverns or wading through deep marshes and lakes in search of prey.

Luckily, giants are relatively slow, though their long strides more than compensate. Cunning or magic are the weapons of choice when facing these immense foes, for attempting to match them in brute strength or common weaponry likely ends with a fresh gravestone to mark yet another adventurer's death.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
6	2	1	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
8	33	29	0 | 0

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once).
Abilities: Giant Stomp! (Brawl attacks that giants make have a Critical rating of 3, and if they inflict Critical Injuries +40 is added to the resulting Critical Injury result), Silhouette 3, Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents must make a **Hard [◆◆◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).
Equipment: Huge club (Melee; Damage 12; Critical 2; Range [Short]; Inaccurate 1, Knockdown, Prepare 1).



GNOME MINSTREL (NEMESIS)

For reasons still unknown, a large number of Gnomes from across Mennara make their way to the Torue Albes each year, often in the early days of summer. They spend months traveling from island to island surviving on their wits and their skills with the lute, pipes, small drums, and their own musical voices to pay for lodgings and meals. Some of these bards display arcane abilities, leading scholars to believe their could be something in the Albes that calls to their magical nature.

Whatever the reasons, these entertainers can be found playing in almost every tavern, inn, and other gathering place in the area. They tend to pick up all of the local gossip as well, and can be excellent sources of the latest word on the streets—for a price, of course.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	2	4	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	7	11	1 | 1

Skills: Charm 3, Coordination 1, Knowledge (Geography) 2, Stealth 1, Verse 2.
Talents: Encouraging Song (while using a musical instrument, select one target within medium range and make a **Hard [◆◆◆] Verse check**. If the check is successful, for each ✹ the target adds □ to their next skill check. For each ⩓, the target heals 1 strain).
Abilities: Haunting melodies (Gnome minstrels may spend ⩓ in a successful Charm check to inflict 1 strain on their target, and may do this multiple times), Silhouette 0.
Spells: Gnome minstrels can choose any magic action allowed for the Verse skill, and may select additional spell effects as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Addling Tune (make an **Average [◆◆] Verse check**. If the check is successful, until the end of the minstrel's next turn, all other characters within medium range must first suffer one strain before using the concentrate maneuver. The minstrel can sustain this effect with the concentrate maneuver).

Demoralizing Stanza (select one target within short range and make an **Average [◆◆] Verse check**. If the check is successful, until the end of the minstrel's next turn, the target decreases the ability of any skill checks they make by one. The minstrel can sustain this effect with the concentrate maneuver).

Equipment: Lute, pipes, and other musical instruments, colorful garb.

LORIMOR MARINE (MINION)

Lorimor is known for its fleets, but while its ships are among the finest on the seas, it is the quality of the crews that really make them shine. As not all seafaring ventures are peaceful ones, the crews always include a contingent of marines ready to both repel boarders and lead assaults against enemy vessels.

Each marine is a skilled fighter, even on uncertain decks awash with saltwater and blood. The sight of them high in the riggings, ready to cross with a boarding rope in one hand and shortsword in the other, has made many an enemy captain quickly offer surrender.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	2	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	5	1 | 0

Skills (group only): Athletics, Cool, Melee (Light).
Talents: None.
Abilities: Sea Legs (a Lorimor marine does not add ■ to checks due to unstable footing on a ship or boat, or in a similar environment).
Equipment: Saber (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1), scale breastplate (+1 soak).



LOST KNIGHT (RIVAL)

One of the mysteries of the Lorimor peninsula are the lost knights sometime seen in the hinterlands and rougher inland areas. Descriptions range from proud wanderers in gleaming plate armor to wizened ancients with rusted swords and long, grey beards, but they all seem to share weary expressions that speak of far too many years, if not centuries, of endless and hopeless existence.

These mysterious knights rarely, if ever, speak of their pasts or origins, leading some to wonder if they are members of Rusticar Lorimor's bonded knights who followed he and Riya Penacor into exile. Records indicate not all of the company made it to what would become the city of Lorim, as some gave up on the trek and their new lord. Tavern tales in the Albes speculate these figures may still be questing across Lorimor in search of rights to wrong, hoping one day to one day be allowed to achieve a final rest.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	2	4	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	15	1 | 1

Skills: Athletics 2, Discipline 2, Melee (Light) 3, Resilience 2, Survival 1.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Fatalistic Ferocity (a lost knight adds ✲ ✪ to any combat checks they make).
Equipment: Ancient sword (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1), heraldic plate armor (+2 soak, +1 defense).

MANTICORE (NEMESIS)

There are many theories about how manticores came to be, most assuming an artificial origin, as no natural process can readily be imagined for how lion bodies, bat-like wings, and scorpion tails could come to exist in a single entity. Such theories tend to involve drunken mages and spells gone horribly wrong. Unfortunately, the fierce nature of these creatures means there are very few opportunities to study them.

Manticores appear to be not only perpetually hungry but vicious as well, especially those that fly across the western islands. They take delight in each raking claw that draws blood and each stinging stab of their insectoid tail. Many foes learn far too late that the creatures can also hurl volleys of spikes from their tails, which can puncture armor to deliver deadly venoms. Some alchemists who have studied the venoms claim they have traces of magical properties, but proof of this has not yet been established. Sadly, no reliable antivenom has been developed, either.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	1	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	21	19	1 | 0

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Ranged 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Flyer (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), poisonous stinger (a character wounded by a manticore's tail stinger must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Resilience check** as an out-of-turn incidental or suffer 4 additional wounds, and must check again on their next turn if the check generates ⊗), Silhouette 2.
Equipment: Claws and fangs (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]), tail stinger (Ranged; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Slow-Firing 1, Pierce 2),

MERRIOD (NEMESIS)

Among Mennara's aquatic beasts, few elicit as much terror and dread as the merriod. Sailors and pirates in Shellport taverns swear it is the last vengeance of a dead sea god, one who cursed the world with an avatar borne of its own unfathomable malice. Combining the jaws of the shark, the grasping tentacles of the kraken, and the cleverness of the octopus, the god unleashed the merriod into the waters.

Thankfully, these amphibious beasts are relatively rare, slow to reproduce, and often simply slumber in their dark, damp lairs. When stirred by hunger or some darker motivation, however, merriods become one of the most dangerous predators adventurers can face. They are especially adept at luring or driving their targets places where they can entrap or encircle them, such as a dank cavern or flooded dungeon.

Merriods often use their mawed tentacles to stealthily grasp an adventurer and pull them down to a watery grave, but the creatures are also formidable when confronted in open battle. They move with a speed that belies their bulk, their great jaws allow them to bite clean through armor, and their thick hide can ward off the mightiest blows.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	4	1	3	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	22	18	0 | 0

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Vigilance 3.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once).
Abilities: Aquatic (a merriod never treats water as difficult terrain and can breathe underwater), Monstrous Limbs (a merriod does not increase the difficulty of combined checks to attack with



its claws, tentacles, and jaws, and may spend [A] [A] or [Triumph] to hit with each additional weapon), Silhouette 2, Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of its opponents must make a **Hard [◆◆◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).
Equipment: Claws (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), mawed tentacles (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Ensnare 3, Linked 1), jaws (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2, Vicious 2).

PIRATE (MINION)

Pirates have a dual identity. On one hand, they are reviled as despoilers and scourges who prowl the waterways, little better than thieves and murderers. On the other hand, on their voyages, they often discover new lands to be exploited and rising threats to be repelled. Despite their wicked deeds, most also operate in an honorable fashion and offer better payments and a more democratic operation than official navies. Many pirates are consummate businesspeople, inking deals to privateer or act as smugglers in exchange for amnesty. It's a difficult balancing act, and those who cannot master it rarely remain alive for long.

In combat, pirates tend to favor flashy, quick styles learned in seaside taverns and outlaw towns rather than the formalized martial arts of mainland knights and soldiers. On a ship's deck, one tumble over the side can turn even the lightest armor into a death sentence, so most go without. Trickery is also a staple of the pirate fighting style, and anything from smoke bombs to feigning wounds will be employed if it means an edge in a fight.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	2	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	5	1 | 0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Cool, Coordination, Melee (Light).
Talents: Quick Draw (once per round on their turn, pirates may use this talent to draw or holster an easily accessible weapon or item as an incidental. Quick Draw also reduces a weapon's Prepare rating by one, to a minimum of one).
Abilities: None.
Equipment: Cutlass (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1).

SHADE (MINION)

None are sure why these spirits are so common in Tigh Higard. They can certainly be found in other lands, but on this island there are few cemeteries or other resting places from which scholars of such things would expect shades to rise. To walk about on certain nights is to watch echoes of the dead float across the grasses, ghastly blue-white forms that undulate despite the stillness of the air.



Their touch is as cold as the grave, and should they find magical aid or be invigorated with sorcerous magics, they can become powerful enough to overrun settlements and fully crewed ships alike. Longtime residents of Shellport claim they are searching for the pirates who betrayed them and offer rewards in barnacle-encrusted gold coins to those who offer assistance, but if any have done so, they have not lived to speak of such deeds.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	2	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
0	6	2 | 2

Skills (group only): Brawl, Cool, Discipline
Talents: None.
Abilities: Ghostly (may move over or through terrain [including doors and walls] without penalty. Halve the damage dealt to the wraith before applying soak, unless the attack came from a magical source such as a spell or magical weapon), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of their opponents must make a **Hard [◆◆◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Undead (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink, and can survive underwater; immune to poisons and toxins).
Equipment: Spectral hands (Brawl; Damage 1; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Breach 1, Stun Damage).

SIREN (RIVAL)

On certain remote coasts and islets of Lorimor, haunting songs draw sailors to their doom, their boats and ships dashed on the rocks. The men and women who perish in the impact or drown swiftly are the fortunate ones, for those survivors who wash ashore or climb upon the rocks become living prey for the sirens—twisted creatures combining the features of humans and birds. The hypnotic song of these creatures is unique, with qualities of both birdsong and the most beautiful human voices. Few can resist the lure of the sirens' song, and those who succumb find themselves compelled to seek its source, and helpless to defend themselves against the sirens' attack.

Sirens are intelligent, but are completely without mercy or culture. These cannibalistic monsters see humans and other intelligent races as nothing more than food, yet they prefer to inflict as much misery as possible on their prey. Sirens are as spiteful as they are craven, quick to flee should their victims fight back, but equally quick to return when they believe their prey to be vulnerable once more. In some rare cases, sirens have been known to pursue victims who escape back to outposts of civilization.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	3	2	4

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	12	1 | 1

Skills: Charm 3, Cool 2, Brawl 2, Perception 3.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Deadly Distraction (a siren decreases the difficulty of combat checks it makes that target a character immobilized or staggered by its Irresistible Song by one), Flyer (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Irresistible Song (as an action, a siren may make an **Average (◆◆) Charm check**. If the check is successful, all characters within long range who can hear the siren's song suffer 1 strain per ✲. The siren may spend ⮝⮝ to immobilize one affected character until the end of the following round, and spend ❂ to stagger one affected character until the end of the following round. While a character is staggered by Irresistible Song must spend all of their maneuvers to move closer to the siren).
Equipment: Talons (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1).

SWORD POET (NEMESIS)

Lorimor has a long tradition of warrior-bards, the finest of whom begin as students in one of its rare philosophic schools. They are not given a sword, though, until they have learned to also compose and sing while fighting. They are reflective and observant, seeking meaning in every duel. If two sword poets are in set to duel each other, they may spend hours in combative verse until the moment is right to draw blades—lighting, ambient sounds, and mood must all be perfect. For them, a fight without art is one not worth having.

Once their blade is drawn, however, each sword poet becomes a flurry of slashes. Their techniques may seem flamboyant, but the results speak for themselves. Few actually strike to kill, though; most prefer to disarm or otherwise avoid the unseemliness of spilling blood, often likened to carelessly spilling ink upon a blank page. Only if they know the blow will be absolutely perfect will they consider striking to kill. These deadly codas are renowned and often recorded for posterity, the most famous compilation being blade-laureate Zaff Darba's masterwork *Contemplations upon the Flametail.*

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	2	2	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	18	16	1 | 0

Skills: Charm 3, Cool 2, Deception 2, Melee (Light) 3.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once), Duelist (a sword poet adds ■ to melee combat checks while engaged with a single opponent, but adds ■ while engaged with three or more opponents), Parry 3 (When a sword poet suffers a hit from a melee combat check, after damage is calculated [but before soak is applied, so immediately after Step 3 of Perform a Combat check on page 102 of GENESYS Core Rulebook], they may take a Parry incidental. They suffer 3 strain and reduce the damage dealt by that hit by five. This talent may only be used once per hit and when the sword poet is wielding a Melee weapon), Improved

THE CIRCUS OF BLADES

The vast majority of sword poets conduct themselves according to highly formal ritual, as do the members of many artistic and martial organizations in Lorimor. There are exceptions, though, the most notable being the people of the Circus of Blades. The Circus of Blades is a wandering collection of outcast and eccentric sword poets, fire breathers claiming lineage from the dragons of old, preachers proclaiming coming the apocalyptic times, wizards expelled from the halls of Greyhaven, and others who don't fit into proper Lorimor society.

The Circus roams among the cities and villages of the peninsula, traveling in apparently random directions more to stir up the restless and discontented than to earn coins. Wherever it goes, there are epic gladiatorial duels of razored wit between troubadours, astonishing demonstrations of illicit spells, and exotic food and drink, all to dazzle and amaze. Its departure frequently is accompanied by the loss of apprentices and menials eager for excitement, but there are rumors that the Circus has a darker purpose and that fell magics guide its actions.

Parry (When a sword poet suffers a hit from a melee combat check and uses Parry to reduce the damage from that hit, after the attack is resolved, they may spend [triumph] [triumph] [triumph] or [advantage] from the attacker's check to use this talent. Then, the sword poet automatically hits the attacker once with a Brawl or Melee weapon they are wielding. The hit deals the weapon's base damage, plus any damage from applicable talents or abilities. The sword poet can't use this talent if the original attack incapacitates them).

Abilities: Show Off (a sword poet may choose to inflict stun damage when resolving a successful melee combat check or using the Improved Parry ability).

Equipment: Dueling rapier (Melee [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Pierce 3), fancy clothes.

WYRM OF THE DEEP (NEMESIS)

Mennara is known for its many dragonkin that roam over its varied terrain. While most possess deep and ancient wisdoms, some have seemingly devolved into little more than beasts of hunger and fury. The fathomless seas that lay beyond the shores of Lorimor and the Torue Albes are home to one such strain, gigantic creatures that prey on seagoing vessels all along the western coast. Many sightings are reported even in the well-traveled southern waters separating Al-Kalim and Zanaga, a truly frightening occurrence for passengers. Experienced sailors, though, know that the true terrors are the gods that also live in the seas, and would rather face a wyrm any day.

While most vessels desperately seek to put as much distance as possible between a deepwyrm sighting and their own fragile vessels, others actually seek them out these creatures. Wyrm hunters are a breed apart, traveling in packs aboard chartered ships or accompanying merchant ships to offer defence in case of unexpected attacks. These brave individuals have a near ancestral hatred of the wyrms, and will even leap onto the backs of the creatures to ensure they are slain (even though it invariably means their own death). The scales and organs fetch high prices in Tamalir and Al-Medena, where alchemists use them for especially potent potions.

Some scholars (and pirates) firmly believe these creatures are not Dragonkin at all, but some other form of reptilian being perhaps utterly unique to the ocean depths. Those who have dared to venture into the Molten Heath or Isheim to ask the dragons directly have never returned, however.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	4	2	3	2	4

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
9	28	24	1 | 1

Skills: Brawl 4, Discipline 3, Resilience 4, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once).

Abilities: Aquatic (a wyrm of the deep never treats water as difficult terrain and can breathe underwater), Silhouette 4, Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of its opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).

Equipment: Massive jaws (Brawl; Damage 12; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Vicious 4), tail and fins (Brawl; Damage 10; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).



ISHEIM

Across the roiling northern seas, the world turns white. Here, cold skies heavy with snow and sleet press down upon the land, and a keening wind howls forth from ice-clad peaks. This is the land of Isheim, a frozen wilderness perched on the edge of the world.

Isheim is the lost land of the Salishwyrd, ancient Elves who ruled this continent before years of hunger and darkness turned their paradise into a frozen nightmare. Beneath the snow and ice, the glories of their northern empire still hide, hunted by heroes and fought over by scheming ice wyrms and savage Hearthlords. Heroes traveling to this remote land might find themselves caught up in the Weik lords' trade wars, delve into the secret depths of the volcanic city of Vrede, or join an expedition of ice-blood hunters as they seek out frozen beasts. The paths of the most daring could even take them far beyond the coastal cities and settlements, past the lands of the Onoit and the lairs of the ice wyrms, to discover the ruins of the Elven empire and perhaps even the Green Vale, last city of the Salishwyrd.

THE FROZEN NORTH

Frigid seas, oceanic monsters, and pitiless raiders divide Isheim from Terrinoth and the southern continents. To even glimpse the forbidden cliffs of this northern land, travelers must first brave the ocean wilds. Should they survive, they may find the shores of Isheim equally uninviting.

The broken coast of Isheim is the first great barrier between the land and outsiders. Known as the Raider's Coast, it is the home of the Weik peoples—hardy raiders and pirates. The coast is also the gateway to the continent's interior and its many secrets and treasures.

THE RAIDER'S COAST

The coasts of Isheim are ruled by the Hearthlords, jarls of the Weik. Each lord controls a city or town and has a fleet to prowl the waters beyond the cliff tops and sheltered bays. Adventurers and merchants wishing to make landfall on Isheim must strike a deal with a Hearthlord, for only the Weik and their longships can navigate the coast of Isheim with any degree of



certainty. Even with the help of a Weik storm guide, travelers face many dangers that can send a vessel to the icy depths, such as labyrinths of gigantic icebergs, undersea volcanos that vent geysers of burning steam, and enormous riftwhales that can tear a hole in the hull of a ship to devour those within.

Despite the dangers of the frozen sea, the cities and towns of the Weik dot the cliffs and coves of the Raider's Coast. Largest of these is Lagart, home to the High Hall. It is a high-walled city of frozen, winding streets, its halls built from the hulls of ancient ships. The High Hall itself overlooks the cliff edge; its roof is the upturned Axe of Isheim, a mighty vessel said to have carried the first Weik to their frozen home. Lagart is also home of the great ship hoists above the Steaming River. In the summer months when the river thaws, the hoists can lift ships from the sea below and allow them passage into Isheim's interior.

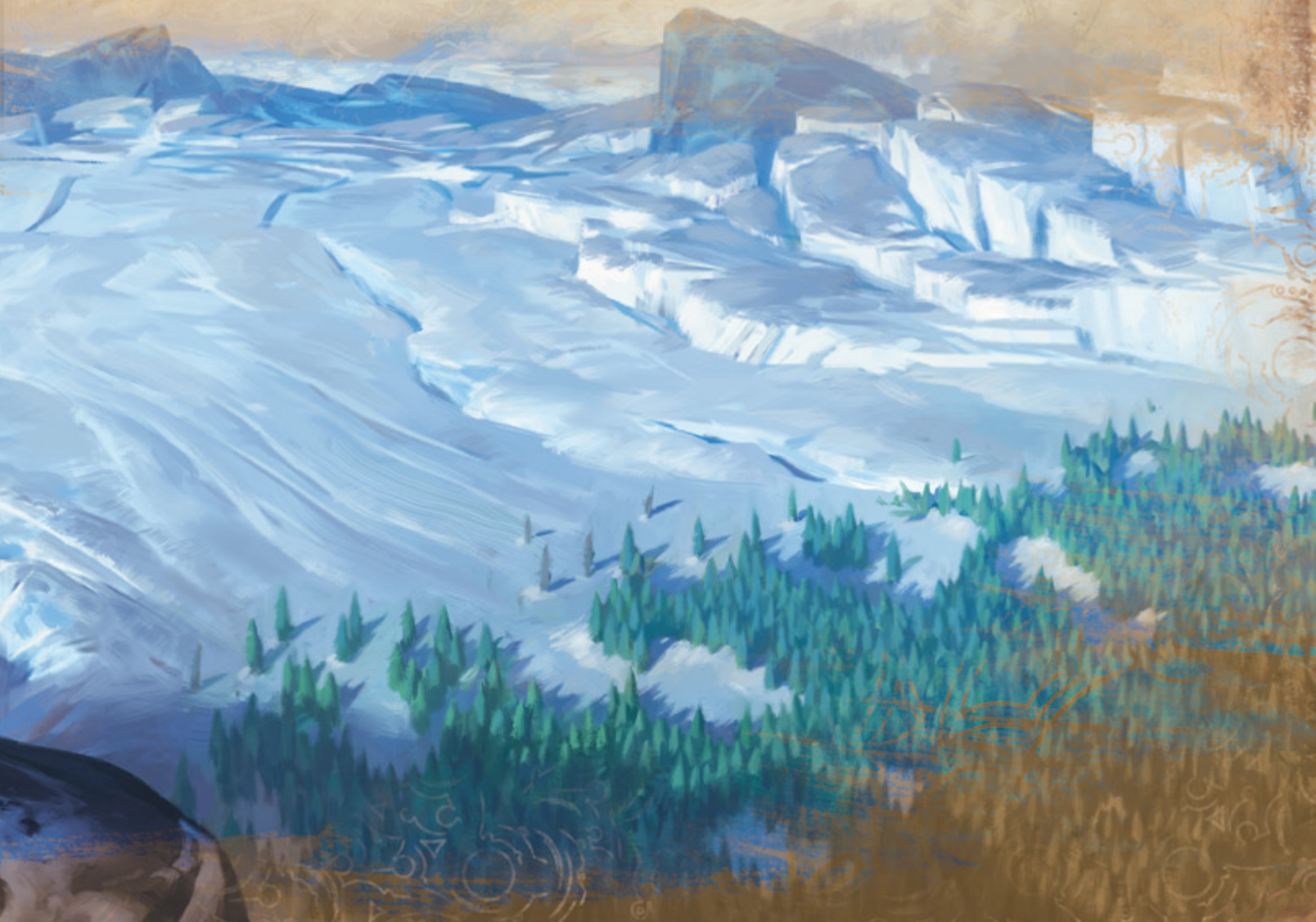
Perhaps most importantly, Lagart is the meeting place of the Reaver Council, the alliance of the twelve Weik Hearthlords. Each year upon the longest day, it is to Lagart that the Hearthlords come to spit upon the broken statue of Nordros the Ice God and reaffirm their mastery over their land. The venerable Ulfred Varl is the Hearthlord of Lagart, and ostensibly first among equals as ruler of the Weik's largest city. In truth, however, his power has long been waning, and as though he were an old alpha wolf, his rivals nip and snap around his heels, continually seeking weakness.

Seragart is the second city of the Weik, and the heart of its shipbuilding. The shipyards spread out into a nearby bay, where residents work upon the fleets night and day. It is also home to the frost mages, the weathermancers of their people, who imbue the vessels with magic and ensure Seragart remains sheltered from the storms and snows from the north.

Many travelers from far-off lands settle here, some with powerful lineages of blood and marriage. Olief Hawthorne, for example, was born in Seragart only to discover his true heritage when his uncle, Lord Hawthorne of Terrinoth, died and left the young defender his title and castle.

Seragart's Hearthlord is Baergul Rus the Betrayer, so named for his infamous deeds as a pirate and his loose notion of the word "alliance." Baergul hopes for the ascendancy of Seragart, and a weak Hearthlord to replace Ulfred. To this end, adventurers can become caught up in his schemes, either fighting in the trade wars or seeking out Salishwyrd artifacts for the frost mage conclaves.

Beyond Lagart and Seragart, there are dozens of smaller towns and cities, like the trapper settlement of Weikgart upon the Cracked Lake, or Holmgart and its pirate markets that occupy the Berserker Fjords. Some of these places are inhabited by but a single raider clan, which might comprise a longship and a dozen families, while the larger ones are ruled by a Hearthlord. All are fiercely proud and independent, often fighting with their neighbors. Outsiders can easily become embroiled in these conflicts if they wish to win the support of a Hearthlord.



LORDS OF THE HEARTH

The history of the Hearthlords reaches back to that time when the first Weik dragged their longships onto Isheim's shores. In those days, the people of the Weik's twelve pirate fleets were nomads and hunters on the open seas, and they had grown too numerous for their island hideaways and open-ocean flotilla towns. When Lagrul the Red spied the snowcapped Isheim coast, he proclaimed the spot the last port, and he turned his fleet for its cliffs. Several hundred years later, cities and towns mark the Weik's landing sites, and the Hearthlords hold the title of jarl, handed down from the first captains. More importantly than acting as rulers, the Hearthlords also serve as the embodiment of the Weik's endless struggle against the brutal environment of Isheim and their war against Nordros, the icy God of Cold and Death. The Weik believe Nordros is continually trying to blow them back into the sea with his icy breath. They say that he embodies the harsh elements that seek their deaths at every turn; he is their eternal enemy, and his worship is banned. There is even a legend that tells of a mighty warrior who will one day vanquish Nordros. The Weik who train within the heroes' halls dream that this glory might be theirs.

While warriors train to battle the minions of Nordros, it is each Hearthlord's duty to dig the roots of their city deeper into the soil of Isheim than their predecessor, clearing its forests, harvesting its wildlife, and raising new settlements. The success of these cities and their Hearthlords has led to a new problem for the Weik: trade wars. While the first Weik lived off the land, felling trees and gathering furs, they soon learned that Isheim holds many exotic goods coveted by southern lands. Some of these, like whale oil, seawyrm blubber, and hardy frostholm timber, fetched a decent price and commanded their fair share of merchant trade. However, it was the discovery of ice-blood, the vital fluids of rare northern creatures like the wendigo and the ice wyrms, that made fortunes for Weik hunters.

The blood of these monsters remains perpetually cold, and so has many uses in the south, from elixirs to quell fevers to weapons that can slay with a touch. The Hearthlords now vie among themselves for control of these resources, sometimes using manipulation and politics, at other times raids and open warfare, to secure goods and trade lanes. It is a conflict that sees little sign of abating, and one in which adventurers could easily find themselves the instruments of a Hearthlord's rise or fall.

AN UNCHARTED WILDERNESS

As travelers press inland from the Raider's Coast, they find themselves in a wilderness of jagged mountain ranges, vast tundra, and shivering forests, all held tight in Isheim's icy grip. Only Weik ice-blood hunters tend to travel far from the coast, for inland is an unforgiving place that offers only freezing death. Here, the land passes from the seaborne raiders into the hands of the Onoit, diminutive nomads who have lived in Isheim as long as history records. Even so, there are places where the two races coexist, such as the ancient city of Vrede, one of the great wonders of the north.





VREDE, CITY OF FLAME AND FROST

From a distance, Vrede cleaves the sky in two with the constant coiling smoke that emerges from its peak. As travelers approach, an active volcano stands out in stark relief against a backdrop of mountains, its sides free of snow as its black rocks shimmer with caged heat. The city of Vrede stands at the head of a partially frozen river, which provides seasonal access to the sea but also a path deeper into the lands of the Onoit. Vrede has become a meeting place for the races of Isheim as well as an important trade nexus.

Vrede's inhabitants have built their settlements, joined by bridges and platforms, around the volcano's hissing caldera. It is never cold in Vrede, as a series of hot springs forces heat and water up from below. Adventurers stopping here might find the wonders of the north and southern goods for trade, and rub shoulders with Weik pirates, Onoit trackers, and merchants from Terrinoth to Al-Kalim. There is adventure to be had in the city of steam, for none know with any certainty how deep the hot springs go, or what may hide within their mist-shrouded depths. Some believe an ancient dragon slumbers beneath the city, coiled fitfully upon a pile of plunder, while others whisper of a fire cult chanting in the dark to bring about the end of the world.

PATHS OF THE ONOIT

Secret trails weave their way across the ice plains and woodlands of Isheim. These are the paths of the Gnome Onoit peoples and the canine Ulfen who act as their mounts. From the cursed shadows of the Witchwood in southern Isheim, across the Crystal Plains, and up into the Howling Mountains, the Onoit live in the middle lands of their frozen continent, never straying too close to the coastal realm of the Weik but also avoiding the extremes of the far north. The Onoit can become invaluable allies to travelers delving deeper into the wilds, offering food, shelter, and guidance in a place that can seem anathema to outsiders. Often the first contact adventurers have with the Onoit nomads occurs when one of the Ulfen hounds bounds out of the snow. These intelligent canines are said to be able to judge a person's worth by their scent; if the newcomers are worthy, the Ulfen lead them back to the gnome camps, where kindly shamans may tend to their wounds.

The Onoit live at one with their surroundings, their shamans able to listen to the voice of the land and translate its wisdom for their people. Onoit settlements are constructed with the landscape in mind, the ice-hewn shelters and huts worked into the plains or forests so that they are practically invisible until one walks among them. The largest Onoit holdfast, Ukirlu, nestles in the heart of the Greenwood and is one of the few true havens in all of Isheim.

SACRED PLACES

Onoit shamans have a deep connection to the spirit of the land, and travelers sometimes encounter their way markers. These rune-carved menhir stand tall among the wastes, impossibly so for a people so small. On peaks and from the beds of rivers, they rise up as if the gnomes had called forth the stones from the ground rather than erected them with rope and muscle. Each of these standing stones points the way to a wonder of the Onoit people—like Mirror Lake, where it is said one might see one's future in the sky's reflection upon its surface, or the Ulur Deep, a cavern of weeping ice reputed to hold generations of buried shamans.

RIME STORM

Isheim's weather is unpredictable and treacherous, changing between one heartbeat and the next. Clear skies can suddenly fill with snow-laden clouds, winds can rise up out of nowhere, and the temperature can drop away so fast that rivers freeze solid before one's eyes. While the north's weather was never kind, it has been made all the worse by the Rime Storm. This magical maelstrom was the doom of the Salishwyrd when, many centuries ago, it descended upon their empire.

For years, the Elves sought to find and defeat the mysterious force behind the storm, but in the end, they were driven to create a single sanctuary they could protect from its howling winds. While the Green Vale remains as Isheim once was, beyond the land of the Elves, the Rime Storm runs rampant. Few among the people of Isheim can predict the weather from day to day. Only Onoit shamans and Weik frost mages have any degree of success; their magical senses allow them to read something of the Rime Storm, and to tell travelers when they might expect clear skies or when it might be best to swiftly find shelter.

The stones also act as a warning, for the Onoit do not take well to outsiders trespassing upon their sacred places. In cases of burial sites and magical cairns, shamans and Ulfen war dogs are seldom far away, ready to see off intruders. At other sites, the stones themselves are the only barrier between the foolish and their own demise. Even the Weik caution travelers not to take the way stones of the Onoit lightly, for although some exist to protect the Gnome peoples, many others are the only warning of impending peril an adventurer will receive in a land that hides its many dangers. Nevertheless, heroes might seek out such markers, for they often point to the lairs of powerful ice wyrms, or to the Salishwyrd ruins, still guarded by fiendish Elven traps but also filled with secrets.

REALM OF THE WHITE DEATH

Beyond the Crystal Plains, where only the Onoit dare tread, the true north begins. The harsh weather turns deadly, and the cold descends to wrap the land in its unforgiving, icy grasp. Here, the tundra stretches out in all directions like a blinding white sheet of glass, broken only by twisted icy woods and, eventually, the monstrous peaks of the World's End Mountains. This is the land of the White Death.

HAUNTS OF THE ICY DEAD

Monsters and dead things infest the far north, fighting among themselves and preying upon those foolish enough to enter their realm. Snow falls in an almost constant curtain here, and mists roll down from the World's End Mountains like steam off a cooling corpse. In this baleful white expanse are the remains of the Salishwyrd empire, which was wiped out long ago by the Rime Storm's sorcerous weather. Born of that storm, or perhaps a result of the cursed cold itself, the White Death thrives here. A frozen wasting, it consumes anything not native to the far north, turning Humans into glistening statues or driving them delusional with rime-mania. There are many places where the power of the White Death waxes strong. At the Lake of Silence, a haunt so cold that the air steals one's very breath, a visitor can't even scream as ice shades tear them asunder. In the Thorn Vales, valleys deep within the forest known as the Needles, beings of iced blood worship wendigo as gods and drive their prey into spike-covered trees to feed their monstrous masters.

Excepting the Green Vale and the scattered, ice-locked ruins of former cities, there is little left of the Salishwyrd realm. One of the few structures to remain above the snow is Icegate Prison, a frozen tomb high in World's End Mountains. Once the place where the Elves incarcerated the worst of their kind and the most dangerous of their foes, it has become a lair for tormented souls and coiling horrors. Here, the queen of the ice wyrms, Scarsha, rules. The prison is a lair for her many offspring, and from it, she wages her war against the last of the Salishwyrd.

THE GREEN VALE

Amid the ice and snow of the far north is a hidden realm. In stark contrast to the surrounding lands sits the Green Vale, home of the last Salishwyrd city. It is perhaps Isheim's greatest secret, and rightly so, for the Elves who built it millennia ago did so to escape the Rime Storm that had destroyed their empire and to protect themselves from all outside dangers. Few have ever managed to reach the Green Vale, for one must first brave the horrors of the Frozen Wastes and then pierce the magical blizzards that surround it. Among the conflicting tales that have reached the southern lands, it is said the Green Vale is a place of potent magic, ruled over by an immortal king—a lost exile of a forgotten age who awaits the time when the Rime Storm might be defeated and the Salishwyrd rise again from the frozen ashes of their empire.

In preparation for this day, the Salishwyrd Elves have become masters of healing and life magics, hoarding artifacts of sorcery from the dawn of Mennara, and there is little they cannot mend of flesh or mind. The tales also tell of a bitter war fought between the Salishwyrd and the ice wyrms—creatures some believe to be the feral offspring of dragons twisted by the Rime Storm. The ice wyrms seek to devour the Green Vale, as if they were the living embodiment of the Rime Storm, and they constantly seek its location. Heroes bold enough to travel into this wilderness might find themselves caught between the cold ambitions of Scarsha the ice wyrm queen and the immortal Salishwyrd, who seek only the return of summer to their people.

LIFE IN THE COLD

Ice and snow are not the only dangers of Isheim's wilds; the same cold that can kill a person in moments makes a perfect home for some of the world's most terrifying beasts. These creatures are often changed by their environment, whether they are filled with the sorcerous venom of the White Death or shaped by the land's hardships as they try to stay alive. This section details some of the creatures that heroes might encounter during their adventures in the icy lands of Isheim.

ICE WYRM (NEMESIS)

As cold as the lands in which they crawl, ice wyrms are truly beings of ice and snow. Dimly related to the great dragons of ancient times, they are creations of the Rime Storm, their blood cold enough to freeze flesh. Covered in glittering diamond scales, each like a huge icy mirror, ice wyrms move across the snow, dazzling enemies just before they strike. Long, icicle-like fangs and wickedly sharp claws make swift work of their victims, while the wyrms' spines are sharp enough to slice a Human in two.

Ice wyrms, like their dragon ancestors, are deeply dangerous foes. Conversant in many dark tongues, these beings have enslaved or bargained with most of the monstrous races of the north, enlisting them in their unending war against the remnants of the Salishwyrd. Many grow great wings of cold leather, and silently glide over the glaciers in search of prey. Some ice wyrms even practice sorcery and are able to spit spells as well as streams of freezing blood. Scarsha the Vile, Queen of the ice wyrms, is perhaps the most deadly of her kind. Heroes who wander into the far north are likely to find themselves drawing her gaze, whether as potential adversaries, prey, or tools in her hunt for the Green Vale.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	4	3	3	3	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
8	31	20	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 4, Coercion 4, Cool 3, Discipline 3, Ranged 4, Resilience 4, Stealth 3, Vigilance 3.
Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character twice), Swift (an ice wyrm does not spend additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Flyer (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Camouflaged Scales (an ice wyrm adds ■■ to Stealth checks in icy or snowy surroundings), Silhouette 4.
Equipment: Freezing blood torrent (Ranged; Damage 10; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 8, Concussive 1, Ensnare 4), claws and fangs (Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Vicious 3).

ICE-BLOOD WARRIOR (MINION)

The White Death is an insidious effect of the Rime Storm that can claim those unfortunates who traverse Isheim's northern wilds. For some, the White Death merely kills, leaving their frozen corpses contorted in their final moments of death. For others, it can be even worse, transmuting their once-warm blood into icy fluid. Their veins filled with sorcerous cold, they become sadistic killers, preying upon any being or creature that crosses their path. Raging and cursing, these frozen beings are drawn to the warmth of hot-blooded creatures so they might quench the heat with their eternal cold. Fighting off such adversaries is a terrible struggle; even their touch can blacken flesh with frostbite.



As the cold does not affect them anymore, wild clans of ice-blood warriors plague the silent forests and endless tundra of the north, their white eyes unblinking as they search for warm prey. While the ice-blood warriors are perils of the north, heroes might seek them out regardless. Like that of ice wyrms and wendigo, their blood has value. Further, rumor has it that there is magic that can bring an individual back from this icy fate, giving hope to those who have lost loved ones to the White Death.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	1	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	5	0 | 0

Skills (group only): Cool, Brawl, Melee (Light), Resilience.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Ice Madness (upgrade the difficulty of social skill checks targeting an ice-blood warrior once).
Equipment: Brittle axe (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), freezing touch (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Stun 3).

WENDIGO (RIVAL)

Wendigo are also creations of the Rime Storm. According to the tales, they were once the feline mounts of the Salish-wyrd, back when the north encompassed green forests and open plains. Then, the Rime Storm infected them with icy magic. Their eyes shrank away to nothing, and a hunger as keen as the howling tundra wind filled their bellies. It was not long before they became a terror of the north, their chilling cries sending sensible creatures scurrying for their dens and wise individuals reaching for their weapons. Eyeless, these creatures bite the air to gain a sense of their prey; they can pinpoint a target's location far swifter than the keenest of hunters.

Many wendigo are servants of the ice wyrms, as a frigid arcane link binds each together. The wyrms use these terrible beasts as trackers and assassins that seek out intruders into their realm. Skulking among the shadows, ready to pounce upon their prey, wendigo also serve as guard dogs for ice wyrm lairs. Ice-blood warrior clans might fight alongside wendigo, though the warriors have little control over their savage allies. Many wild wendigo inhabit the north, too, and these creatures are usually fiercely territorial. An expedition might wander into their hunting grounds without realizing it—at least until the beasts start stalking them and picking off their members one by one.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	1	3	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	18	0 | 0

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Coercion 4, Resilience 4, Stealth 3, Vigilance 3.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once).
Abilities: Blood Frenzy (while at least one opponent in an encounter is suffering a Critical Injury, a Wendigo increases the base damage of its attacks by 2), Eyeless Sight (Wendigo do not add ■ to checks due to darkness or concealment, and are immune to abilities or Critical Injuries that affect a creature's sight), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of its opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆]



fear check as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).
Equipment: Fangs (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2), claws (Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

ONOIT SHAMAN (RIVAL)

The diminutive Onoit shamans are one of Isheim's many mysteries. Ostensibly, they are part of the nomadic Gnomish tribes. Clad in cloaks of bark and moss, they are frequently seen moving among their people, healing and dispensing wisdom. Yet, they often travel alone in their sled-tents, drawn across the tundra by packs of trusty Ulfen. A society unto themselves, the Onoit shamans serve as guardians of the lost Salishwyrd empire. When the Elves retreated to the Green Vale, they entrusted the keeping of their abandoned cities and tombs to the Onoit shamans, granting each one a spark of elemental magic to light their way. Since that time, those sparks have been passed from shaman to shaman.

Onoit shamans are enemies of the Rime Storm and the White Death it brings. Heroes traversing their lands might be recruited by these traveling Gnome mystics in their war against winter's soldiers—ice wyrms, wendigo, and ice-blood warriors. Equally, those who seek to plunder the lost realm of the Salishwyrd will find the land and sky set against them, as the shamans bend the elements to their will to make an icy tomb for any would-be looters.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	3	3	3

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	8	1 | 1

Skills: Leadership 2, Melee 2, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Primal 3, Survival 3, Vigilance 2.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once).
Abilities: Silhouette 0.
Spells: Onoit shamans can choose any magic action allowed for the Primal skill, and may select additional spell effects, as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Winter Gale (choose one target at short or medium range and make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Primal check**. If successful, this magic attack inflicts 7 damage +1 damage per ✡, with the Blast 3 and Ensnare 3 item qualities).

Healing Gust (choose two targets at up to short range and make an **Average (◆◆) Primal check**. If successful, the targets heal 1 wound per ✡ and 1 strain per ⩓; the shaman may affect additional targets by spending ⩓ per target).
Equipment: Oaken staff (add +4 damage to magic attacks; the first Range effect added to a spell does not increase its difficulty), hatchet (Melee [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), bark cloak (+1 defense).

WEIK WARRIOR (MINION)

The rugged peoples of the north are as fearsome as the land they call home. Known as the Weik, they have carved out a civilization on the shores of Isheim and won a reputation as daring seafarers, skilled game hunters, and deadly raiders. Their warriors stride into battle with a blade or axe in each hand, wild grins upon their faces—for in the culture of the Weik, there can be no greater honor than to die by the sword. Cold and hardship mean little to them, and they look upon the Human knights and soldiers of Terrinoth as weakling southerners. Some Weik even travel to these warmer lands in search of greater adventure or to hunt a foe who dares think they can escape the wrath of a Weik who has been wronged.

Heroes dealing with the Hearthlords will almost certainly find themselves interacting with Weik warriors as well, either to earn their trust with shows of martial skill, or to join their hunting parties as they seek out the ice-blood creatures of Isheim.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	1	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	6	1 | 0

Skills (group only): Cool, Brawl, Melee (Light), Resilience.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Aggressive Fighter (Weik warriors add ⩓ to combined checks they make to attack with two melee weapons).
Equipment: Axe (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1), sword (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1), bow (Ranged; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Unwieldy 2).



The desert road was flat and well maintained, and I made good time. By the time mighty A'tar had risen, bathing the Great Sand Sea in his warmth, I was moving into the lush valleys of the Fields of Fertility. My journeys to this point had never taken me so far north, and the sight of so much water, flowing between the verdant riverbanks, was almost too much for my heart to bear. To have left everything I knew behind, only now to enter into a beautiful realm of fecund fields and cool water, nearly overwhelmed me.

For a moment, I contemplated staying in those fields forever. Perhaps I could disappear into one of the small villages that dot the region, find a good woman, and submerge myself in the productive life of a peasant farmer?

I stopped in just such a village to break my fast, and reflected upon the fare these people enjoyed. It was Alarabiea, the fifth day of harvest, and the villagers had laid out a feast they were quick to share with a mysterious stranger. There were skewers of juicy meats, dainty morsels of fluffy pastry, and dishes of tasty pastes paired with shards of unleavened bread. Bowls of brightly colored fruits sat at either end of each table, along with small stoneware cups of sherbet.

It might not have been nearly as extravagant as the meals the Caliph would be consuming that day, lacking as it did many of the foreign delicacies the larger trade routes brought in from all over the world, but it was a delectable feast, all the same.

Alas, even in that moment of weakness, I knew it was not to be. The Caliph would never allow his bag of coins to disappear, never mind his precious northern gem. And so with a deep, heart-wrenching sigh of regret, I took my leave of the gracious farmers and continued on my way.

I gave the city of Siryasa a wide berth, of course. The warriors of the martial matriarchy might seem enticing from afar, but they prove much more daunting when you share the road with them. I had seen no soldiers since leaving the Court of Wisdom, which had given me a confusing sense of relief. But as the spires and minarets of Siryasa peeked up over the treetops off to the left of my road, I began to see pairs of warriors moving on patrol. They wore light armor wrapped in crimson cloths, and their eyes were as dead as any desert stone. I had no interest in venturing into a city full of such women. And their questionable fealty to the Caliph gave them an even more sinister aspect, considering what I was carrying in the small pouch at my waist.

As I rode north, avoiding the small towns and villages and the temptation they represented, I camped at night beneath the spreading limbs of lush, green trees, settling into the soft, cool grass as my bed. My leisurely pace gave me plenty of time to contemplate my situation. The stone, which I had not yet removed from its small bag, pulled heavily on my belt. Was it luck that had brought the treasure to me, or a cursed, ill fortune? A feeling that had begun in my chamber nights before had only continued to grow, and I suspected that I had stumbled into one of the Court of Wisdom's infamous intrigues. What if the Caliph had not sanctioned my leaving with the stone? What if some rival had stolen it from his chambers and put it into my hand?

The fear and paranoia grew with each passing day. Eventually, I came to the small city of Thaj, on the very northern edge of the Fields of Fertility. Although clearly a city of Al-Kalim, Thaj is as far removed from the Court of Wisdom as you can imagine, and its architecture and fashions reflect this. The stone of the central buildings is darker than the soft sandstone of the deep desert, and the people seem colder as well, less willing to offer a weary stranger assistance as he passes through.

The foods of Thaj, they say, are more reflective of the cultures of the north, as well, and I eagerly awaited my first tastes of the north. If the pasty, gritty fare offered to me in that northern city is any indication, however, I will not find much of culinary value on my journey.

From Thaj, I used a small contribution from the Caliph's purse to purchase passage north on one of the long, colorfully painted river boats that ply the wide waters at the north of the Fields of Fertility. I had been warned of the river people, but found that as long as you keep a close eye on your



One of the sumptuous meals I saw in the Caliph's most splendid rooms before leaving my homelands. I never saw anything so glorious in all my future travels, though some less expansive meals were more welcome given my hunger at the end of many days.

possessions, they can be quite pleasant. Their music is more wild and unrestrained than the dulcet tones you might hear at the Court of Wisdom, and truth be told, I enjoyed their zest for life more than the attitudes of any other peoples I had yet encountered. The riverboat, the Mawja, took me north to Al Qursanuq, one of the infamous pirate cities of Cutpurse Bay.

As you can probably imagine, other than the boat people, who call themselves the ghajir, the people sharing a journey to such an infamous locale were not the most upright examples of the Caliph's subjects. Indeed, I was alarmed to see how low-regarded the Son of the Sun became the farther I ventured from the Court of Wisdom.

Al Qursanuq was, indeed, a haven of pirates, thieves, and rogues of every description. I would almost hesitate to call it civilization at all, considering the constant danger that seemed to loom over me as I walked the streets, trying to decide my next course of action. There were many sleek ships in the harbor, many of them black, with black sails and lacking any sort of flags or pennons from their highest masts. I saw no sign of the naval might of the Caliph, and nowhere did I see the banner of the Caliph or of Al-Kalim rippling in the fitful, onshore breeze. The people had a desperate cast to their eyes, and even their mirth and jollity seemed of a forced, desperate nature.

Almost anything you might wish could be found somewhere on the streets of Al-Qursanuq, in the glowing shops and loud, chaotic bazaars, or skittering furtively through the shadows of the dark alleys. The quality of the goods one might find, however, varied wildly. The prices were exorbitant for even basic items, and although I saw jewelry and accoutrements fit for the Court of Wisdom, they were few and far between. Most folks of Cutpurse Bay dressed like vagabonds, any sense of style or fashion lost to the necessities of their hardscrabble lives.

Finding a ship of even slightly legitimate origins proved very difficult indeed. Eventually, I was able to book passage upon the ship Wolf's Gaze, whose representative claimed it to be a merchant ship out of Lorimor, a fallen, decadent empire of the north.

My circumstances made it obvious to Captain Nazrat that I was not a casual traveler, putting me in a weak position for the negotiation of my fee. However, his rapacious nature alleviated my feelings of guilt when I was able to remove several of the Caliph's coins from his price with a quick, well-concealed twist of my palms.

One should never feel guilty for stealing from a thief, after all.

And so I find myself aboard this ill-fated pirate ship, leaving the comforting warmth of my home far behind. With each day, the temperature is colder and the air more laden with the clammy moisture of the sea. After some discussion with other travelers, I have decided that I will disembark in Trelton, a city on a island within something called the Torue Albes, and from there journey to Terrinoth to begin my quest.

AL-KALIM

South of Terrinoth, across the glittering expanse of the shining sea, lies a vast, arid continent. Here, when the grand baronies and kingdoms of the north were but fledgling tribes, the seeds of civilization took root and flourished. Long ago, Al-Kalim was said to the domain of the Djinni, petty demigods who ruled over tribes of Humans from their floating castles and glass citadels.

When A'tar, the God of Fire and Light, descended upon the world, he swept away the corrupt and vile Djinni, freeing Humans from their magical yokes. In the place of these capricious creatures, he sired the first Caliph and gave rise to perhaps the greatest Human civilization the world has ever seen. For centuries, this grand empire has endured as a shining beacon of A'tar's light, but its time might well be coming to an end as old enemies gather out in the desert night.

Heroes setting foot upon this vast desert continent are likely to find wonder and peril in equal measure, from the pirate dens of the Thieves' Coast and their lawless cities to the grand city-states of the viziers, where powerful lords plot and scheme. Those who seek advancement and opportunity might journey to Al-Madena itself, seat of the Caliph and beating heart of the Caliphate. Beyond the politics and social warfare of the capital, the mysteries of the deserts beckon, their rolling sands filled with the ruins of Djinn cities, the lairs of mythical beasts, and the Djinni themselves, who even now meddle in the affairs of mortals and plan their return to power.

CALIPHATE OF THE DESERT KING

Al-Kalim is ruled by the mighty Caliph, a divine descendant of the Sun God, A'tar, and ruler of an empire that stretches for hundreds of leagues across broken coastlines, snowcapped peaks, and vast deserts. Under their command are the tribes and races of the desert, from the proud Bedorri Clans to the Jiafar vassals and the citizens of the lordly viziers' city-states. Their land is ancient indeed, having survived for centuries shielded from the wars and mayhem of Terrinoth by the strength of its grand armies and fleets and the protection of the Sun God. It was, however, not always so. Before the arrival of A'tar, the Sayr-Savim, as the tribes of the desert are collectively known,



were slaves to the will of the Djinni. In great cities wrought of magic, mortals served the whims of these sorcerous creatures and lived for their amusement. Kajir, the City of Dark Dreams, traded in nightmares, its obsidian mines filled with the screams of sleeping captives, which fueled the depraved thirsts of its master, the Djinn Darmarr. Meanwhile, Asolerr, the City of Fire, consumed a hundred Humans a day in its infernos so that the fire Djinn Erfrart might bathe in molten glory. To live in such a corrupted time as a Human was to bear the mark of one's Djinn master, serve their city and their will, and wage war upon the servants of the other Djinni.

It was only the efforts of the Cult of A'tar that saved the people of Al-Kalim. Meeting in secret, they worshipped the only object more powerful than the Djinni: the sun. When their prayers were at last answered, a season of flame came upon the land, and there was a great uprising against the Djinni. When at last the final fires died away, the Djinni had been banished to the desert, the mountains, and the sky, and in their place, the foundation of the Caliphate was laid.

Now, centuries later, the city of Al-Madena stands at the heart of this empire. It was here in the Blessed Valley that A'tar descended to the world's surface, and it was here where the first Caliph was born. Upon this sacred ground, one of the largest cities in the world sprawls, its towers reaching up to the sun, their golden spires gleaming like fire. For a hundred leagues and more in all directions, the Caliph rules, their power extending into the mountains and their arcane observatories, across the desert plains, to the mighty vizier cities of Haruun, Siryasa, and Irram, and all the way to the shining sea and the Thieves' Coast, with its countless trade cities and towns.

COURT OF THE CALIPH

Al-Madena, the capital of the Caliphate, covers the cliffs of the Blessed Valley, where the waters of the shimmering river cascade down baked, red rock. The wealth of all of Al-Kalim is concentrated along the streets and in the bazaars of this grandest of Caliphate cities. There is little that cannot be bought, bartered for, or sold here, and every corner holds wonders that might dazzle or confound travelers from other lands. Beneath the wealth, however, lurks a lingering darkness, one that was never truly extinguished by the light of A'tar. As is often said among the Sayr-Savim, the giant's shadow is darkest at its feet, and this is surely true of Al-Madena.

Though A'tar's radiance can be seen in such glorious places as the Library of Adrashi's vaults of knowledge and the Merciful Tower, the oldest of all the Caliph's hospitals, many of the city's districts are dangerous to the unwary. Decadence and vice can be found everywhere from the Kaliffar drug dens of the Nomad's Maze to the Sand Arenas and Scar Pits, where people, beasts, and monsters fight for the amusement of the crowds.



Of course, for bold-hearted adventurers, this can mean the best of both worlds: the chance to visit with the finest healers and scholars and assist them in their quests for enlightenment, and the opportunity to tangle with shady merchants and criminals who eagerly prey on outsiders.

Shielded from the city and perched upon the very edge of the great falls is the palace, a city within a city. This is the domain of the Caliph, who seldom ventures beyond its bejeweled walls and perfumed halls. As a divine descendant of A'tar, the Caliph is not expected to concern themself with most mortal matters, and in their stead, an army of advisors and bureaucrats control the running of the Caliphate.

Hiresh, the Prince of Coin, is perhaps the most influential of these, although Jorgul, the Spear of the Desert and general of the grand army, often challenges this claim. Hiresh often speaks in the Caliph's stead, and it is to this wizened penny-pincher that the viziers and collegiate deans must bend a knee if they wish to petition for the capital's aid. Intensely paranoid, Hiresh is never without a cloud of bodyguards. He even employs numerous body doubles for his protection, which has given him a reputation for being everywhere at once. Heroes who involve themselves in the goings-on of the palace are as likely to encounter Hiresh as either an ally or an enemy. The Prince of Coin is always interested in individuals willing to spread his influence or enact his will beyond the city walls. Such individuals should be wary, however, for Hiresh can turn from friend to foe as swiftly as a desert wind might rise from the sands, especially if it serves his purpose to have others take the blame for his misdeeds.

COLLEGIATE ARCANE

Glimmering spires and shadowy chantries nestle within all the cities of Al-Kalim. These are sanctuaries for the wizards who make up the sorcerous colleges, conducting research on the many magical disciplines of Al-Kalim. The first collegiates were formed by spellcasters who dealt in the stolen secrets of the Djinni. These hedge wizards crafted jewelry, tapestries, and lamps to trap a measure of the magical beings' power and eventually turn it against their former masters. After A'tar descended from the sun and cleansed the land, they constructed vaults in which to keep these arcane objects and formed orders to study them. Even today, each college takes its name from one of these potent relics, like the Citadel of Lamps in Al-Madena and the Looking Glass Spire, which guards the gates of Siryasa.

Ostensibly, the conclaves of the Collegiate Arcane are all part of a single organization dedicated to the study and advancement of magic as well as to the protection of the Caliphate. In reality, the deans of the colleges each have their own alliances. Many have sworn secret pacts with the vizier of their city or warlord of the land in which they reside. Some, like the descendants of Ashan the Elder, adhere to strict traditions. Occasionally, these esteemed leaders travel to the capital to share their wisdom and hold council with their peers, as it is written in the laws of Al-Kalim that only a sorcerer can hold one of their own to account. Usually, however, they keep to themselves, guarding the secrets of elemental Djinn magics behind the walls of their towers.

Heroes requesting aid from the Collegiate Arcane might find themselves scouring the desert, seeking the lost cities of the Djinni and their hidden secrets, or working against one of the other colleges. Some deans are not above kidnapping prominent wizards in order to increase the power of their own ranks. Then, there are those who have heard of the ancient Djinn artifacts held within college vaults, though only the foolish or desperate would think to cross both the Collegiate Arcane and the Djinni at the same time.



VIZIER CITIES



The city-states of Haruun, Trader's Fort, Siryasa, and Irram all rival the capital in size and wealth, and each is equal in might to any of the Baronies of Terrinoth. Collectively, these are known as the vizier cities, for each one is governed by a powerful lord granted the right to rule by the blessing of the Caliph. Of course, the true power of each city comes from its wealth, which, combined with its distance from Al-Madena, gives it extensive freedoms. The same coin that grants this power also leads to conflict; where the trade routes and territories of each city overlap, battlefields both political and physical are common.

Perched on the edge of the Desert of Eternity, Irram is the oldest of Al-Kalim's cities aside from the capital. Its master, the Sun Priestess Sharish, is both leader of her people and custodian of the Grand Temple of A'tar. Irram is a center of religion and worship, and pilgrims travel from across the Caliphate to pray in its many shrines. In the middle of its sprawling tangle of ancient sandstone buildings stands the tomb of the first Caliph. Once each Caliph's reign is over, their body is brought here baked in clay, so it might be entombed within their likeness forever. Irram is often in conflict with the Collegiate Arcane, and its own conclave of wizards has little power within the city walls. Sharish believes that the fruits of Djinn magic are intrinsically tainted, and she would see the Caliphate's reliance upon them ended. This also brings her into opposition with other viziers who see only the wealth ancient Djinn artifacts can bring.

Trader's Fort, in contrast, is a young and vibrant settlement strung out along the edges of the Vale of the Shepherds. Ruled by the vizier Temoth, Keeper of the Bazaar, it is a gateway to the Thieves' Coast and the first port of call for travelers entering the Caliphate proper. Its more common name, the City of Foreigners, is well deserved; within its walls are districts dedicated to most of the world's major peoples and races. Trader's Fort is a good place to find both adventure and work as many prominent merchants, warlords, and wizards have agents here on the lookout for recruits. Some of these are more than willing to spill the blood of their rivals if it means securing the services of a talented hero.

Then there is Siryasa, the City of the Warrior Women. Kayree Sandspear, Maiden of the Wastes, commands an army here in the name of the Caliph, and it is from her fighting schools and training lodges that many of Al-Kalim's greatest warriors emerge. Once a year, Sandspear herself steps into the Arena of Blades at Siryasa's summit and dares any to challenge her for the right to govern the city. Many have tried, but all have met their end upon her paired viper blades. Heroes often come to the city to test their skill, both in the fighting pits and in the grueling competition at the Path of Daggers, a trap-filled dungeon carved into the side of Siryasa's Shame. The competition offers prizes not just for those who complete the trial, but also for those who do so in the swiftest time, or without spilling any blood.

The last of the vizier cities is Haruun, the City of Pillars. Much of this great city lies beneath the Celestial Mountains. A vast stone bridge leads visitors into a gaping hole in the cliffs and down deep into the cool ground. Carved by captive sand crawlers, Haruun is a warren of quarters and districts beneath cavernous stone vaults, dotted with shafts of light and fields of glowing moss. Haruun is often called the City of Outcasts, for it is here where many of Al-Kalim's unwanted come to make their way. The vizier Eyrat Five Fingers does little to counteract this reputation, and it is rumored that the one-handed lord is master of more than just his city. That the thieves' guild enjoys a prosperous position in this shadowy place has done little to dispel this talk.

THE THIEVES' COAST

Once, the Thieves' Coast was a shining jewel in the Caliph's crown. Its ports were beacons of the Caliph's law and might, their soldiers and viziers ensuring steady trade between Al-Kalim, Terrinoth, Lorimor, and a dozen other lands. While it remains true that trade still flows like wine and coin fills the coffers of the Caliphate, a slow rot has given the coastline a much darker reputation. These days, the many coves and harbors are as much the home of pirates and thieves as of merchants, and the direct control of the Caliph has slipped away in most of the great sea cities. From Trader's Fort, the vizier Temoth ostensibly controls the port lords of the Thieves' Coast, sending huge trade caravans piled with their goods farther into the Caliphate. In reality, Eyrat Five Fingers and the thieves' guild have as much say as Temoth does regarding what transpires along the coastline; it is said that for every two coins that line Temoth's purse, one goes to Eyrat.

A'TAR, THE SUN GOD

Each of the many gods of Terrinoth and beyond have found a place in Al-Kalim. Of the myriad powers here, the greatest has always been A'tar, the Sun God. It was A'tar who saved the people of Al-Kalim from the Djinni, and it was A'tar who founded the Caliphate. It is said that the Caliph is a direct descendant of A'tar, and that the burning blood that runs in his veins grants him the right to rule. Many believe that, should the Caliph be cut, flames will issue forth from the wound, and A'tar will descend to save his son from harm—though in living memory, none have ever raised a hand against the ruler.

As the high priest of A'tar, the Caliph dictates the one true form of worship of the Sun God and ensures that those who blaspheme against A'tar or subvert his message are swiftly dealt with. The Sun God's influence, however, is diverse, and despite the Caliph's edict, many cults dedicate themselves to worshipping A'tar in other ways. The Daughters of Cinders burn themselves and see the divine in fire, while the Cabal of the Desert Wind teaches that worshipping the sandstorm is to witness a manifestation of A'tar. The Sun Blessed instruct the devout to go blind staring into A'tar's brilliance so that they might truly see.

While scores of townships and villages dot the coast, there are two areas where travelers are most likely to make port. Cutpurse Bay hosts the Cities of Coin, three crumbling ports that stare at each other across the bay like wary gamblers. Lawless places, they are ruled mostly by greed and the merchant guilds' private armies. Then, there is the Rothulk Seafort. Made from the hulls of a hundred captured ships, it rides the sea just off the Thieves' Coast. From its creaking decks, both pirate fleets and the Caliphate navy set sail, later to haul their prizes home and add to the Seafort's ever-growing bulk.

Heroes traveling the Thieves' Coast will not want for adventure. In Rothulk, the price of passage is often paid for with wagers, and pirates bet their vessels that they can slay the Dunnweir Kraken or find Jarl Voskol's sunken fleet. The Cities of Coin are sprawling mazes of sin and vice, where adept criminals might make their fortune stealing from the crooked harbor lords, or accept a contract to find individuals taken by slavers before they vanish into the desert or across the sea. Old sea forts can also provide their share of peril and glory, each one a jagged broken tooth guarding the entrance to one of the coast's many harbors. Though many are still garrisoned, many more have fallen into ruin, becoming haunts of monsters or worse. Should adventurers make enough of a name for themselves, Temoth or Eyrat himself might take an interest in them, drawing them into the war of coin waged between the two viziers.

THE GREAT SAND SEA

Beyond the walls of the city-states, the shelter of the Blessed Valley, and the windswept Thieves' Coast, the desert stretches out toward arid mountains and shadowy canyons. This is the parched wilderness that makes up the majority of the Caliphate, where water is more precious than gold and wasteland predators prey upon the unwary. Villages and towns hide among this expanse, their people seldom venturing far from the safety of their walls and their wells, always keeping a keen eye on the horizons.

PERILS OF THE DESERT

Away from the cities, Al-Kalim is a land endlessly dying of thirst. Water is greedily stolen by the bone-dry air and hot sands, and travelers must guard their supplies against bandits if they are to have any hope of crossing the parched distances between settlements. The sun itself can also be an enemy, as it hammers endlessly down upon the landscape. Many travelers have lost both their sight and their reason simply for lack of shade, a malady known as light blindness that affects both body and soul. Then, there are the desert winds, and the maelstroms they bring. Sandstorms lash the deserts, cities, and mountains of Al-Kalim, so vast and terrible they can eclipse the sun for days or even months on end. To be caught outside in such an event is to be robbed of all senses, lost in a nightmare realm of swirling dust and muted sound.

THE DJINNI

Of all the creatures of Al-Kalim, the most enigmatic and deadly are the Djinni. From hidden cities and shadowy corners of the land, they weave their schemes and machinations against the Caliphate. There are many kinds of Djinni: fiery-tempered A'tari, cool and considering Maani, and flighty and fickle Falkhi, to name but a few. Djinni, like mortals, vary in power, some being ancient survivors of A'tar's destruction of their empire, others but a few centuries old, reared upon tales of when their kind once ruled the sands.

Mortals know little of the Djinni themselves, though it is widely believed that once conjured into existence, they are immortal, and stories abound of the godlike powers they can wield. It is also well-known that striking a deal with a Djinn is a risky proposition. This is illustrated by tales like that of Urnas the Unmarked, who slew a thousand mortals for the A'tari Djinn Jyrrii, for the promise that no blade might ever cut his flesh again. His stone form still stands unmoving in the ruins of Jyrrii's city on the spot where the Djinn granted his wish. Even so, many mortals do not hear the warning in these stories, only the promise of power. Even in an age when the worship of A'tar keeps the Djinni at bay, there is no shortage of those who seek them out to make their wishes come true.

All of these perils are constants that travelers must accept, but even if they survive them, a multitude of more nefarious dangers lurk in the cursed and haunted corners of the Caliphate. The Shadowsgate Rift is reputed to be a haunt of lost souls, spirits cast away from the Sun God's blessed gaze. Denied the glory of A'tar, they skulk in the depths of the Rift, pining for the light. They hatefully descend upon trespassers, eagerly devouring the warmth of the sun they might still wear upon their flesh. In the Valley of Sandstorms, the winds can flay a traveler to the bone, and in the Desert of Eternity, a maze of mirages can lead adventurers in circles until they perish.

LOST CITIES

After the coming of A'tar, many cities ruled by the Djinni were abandoned and consumed by the desert sands. These lost places are now haunts of monsters, brigands, and worse. Yet, a measure of the magic of the Djinni still resides within them, and there are those who seek them out for the secrets they hold. In the depths of the White Dunes, the Beggar's Maze is all that remains of the trade city of Ajiran, a crossroads of merchant routes that once held the great counting houses of the Djinn Rashat. Its sprawl of sand-choked buildings has become a haunt for the Kalishar Nomads, a collection of dozens of clans who raise their banners in defiance of the Caliph. Even the nomads, though, do not wander too deep into the city's ruined heart.

By contrast, the Spire of the Phoenix is a place where few mortals dare to tread. This golden tower rises up in the Grey Wastes, its shining peak warning travelers away for leagues in all directions. When A'tar's magical fires gutted the Djinn cities, one of their number transformed his palace into molten gold and chose a glittering tomb rather than banishment. The Djinn resides there still, waiting for the greed of mortals to break open his golden crypt.

Some of Al-Kalim's Djinn cities are stranger still, transformed by magic into mirages or lifted up into the sky to escape the holy fires that consumed their brethren. Among the greatest of these mythical places stand the City of Faith, the City of Dreams, and the City of Clouds. These gleaming bastions can appear as if from nowhere like a desert mirage, one minute little but a haze of light, the next as real as the ground beneath one's feet. Djinni still rule in these places, and to enter them is to enter a perilous realm where reality itself cannot be trusted, the Djinni being always eager for new playthings. The rewards, however, can be great, for these mythical cities offer knowledge and magical secrets lost to the world of mortals, secrets for which many in Al-Kalim and beyond will pay handsomely.

LIFE IN THE SANDS

Mortals and monsters abound in Al-Kalim, though many hide their true nature like the shimmering of a desert mirage. Canny adventurers must be always on their guard, for it is in the midst of a grand civilization such as the Caliphate that the deadliest of enemies lurk. This section details some of the creatures heroes might encounter during their travels in the land of the Djinni.

ASSASSIN (NEMESIS)

The assassins of the Hysshari Brotherhoods are as deadly shadows that stalk the courts of Al-Kalim. These cults of murder serve the Caliph and their viziers and train their assassins in hidden mountain temples and oasis fortresses. At the Tower of Knives, which hangs like a dagger from the cavern roof of Haruun, acrobatic killers master the arts of wall walking. In the Valley of Ash, Brotherhood members train with mysterious bladewomen to learn the secrets of silent killing and night fighting.

Once an assassin has accepted a contract to kill, they are unwavering in pursuit of their prey, taking an oath to the masters of their order that the sands will drink either the blood of their victim or their own. The true talent of an assassin, however, lies in their ability to blend in with their surroundings. They are also well trained in disguise, and no matter their own gender or form can take on new personas to move among any echelon of Al-Kalim's society.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	4	3	4	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	12	14	4 | 3

Skills: Cool 2, Coordination 3, Deception 3, Medicine 2, Melee (Light) 2, Perception 2, Ranged 2, Skulduggery 3, Stealth 4, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of checks targeting this enemy once), Backstab (may target an unaware target with a combat check using a Melee [Light] weapon and the Skulduggery skill instead of the Melee [Light] skill. If successful, the attack deals +2 damage per ✲, instead of +1), Precision Strikes (use Cunning in place of Brawn for Brawl and Melee [Light] checks).

Abilities: Lightning Draw (may draw or sheathe a dagger or similar small weapon as an incidental; there is no limit to how many weapons an assassin can ready this way per turn), Poisoner (as an incidental, may apply poison to all weapons. A character wounded by a poisoned weapon must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Resilience check** as an out-of-turn incidental or suffer 4 additional wounds, and must check again on their next turn if the check generates ⊗), Vanish (after performing a check, may spend ⮝ ⮝ or ❁ to hide from all other characters in the encounter).

Equipment: Scimitar (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1), two katars (Melee [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1), three daggers (Ranged; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Accurate 1; Limited Ammo 3), bow (Ranged; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Unwieldy 2), a variety of concealing cloaks.

DJINN (NEMESIS)

Djinni love to meddle in the affairs of mortals, promising riches to those who do their bidding and pretending to be an agent of the Caliph or other lord to sow discord from afar. It is not without cause that many tales of Al-Kalim warn against treating with them. All are skilled sorcerers, but even should their magic fail them, Djinni can take on gigantic forms to dispatch foes with great falchions or daggerlike claws.

Many Djinni dream of reclaiming empires, and heroes might find themselves their unwitting pawns. Djinni also lurk behind many enemies heroes might face as they unravel the threads of plots against the Caliphs. Of particular interest to Djinni is the recovery of the secrets stolen from them by the Collegiate Arcane and as immortal beings they can spend years scheming and plotting, perhaps to recover a single artifact or to arrange the theft of a glowing blue stone.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	4	5	5	5

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	25	25	1 | 1

Skills: Arcana 5, Brawl 3, Charm 3, Cool 3, Deception 4, Discipline 4, Lore 4, Melee (Light) 3, Negotiation 4, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Adversary 3 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character three times), Ruinous Repartee (as an action, target a character within medium range and make an opposed Charm or Coercion check versus Discipline; if successful, target suffers 10 strain +1 strain per ✲, and the Djinn heals an equal amount of strain).

Abilities: Airborne (can fly; see page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Shapeshifter (once per round as an incidental, a Djinn may increase or decrease its silhouette by 1 and change its appearance to that of any character or creature of its current silhouette).

Spells: Djinni may use any magic action permitted for the Arcana skill, and may add spell effects as normal. The spells they use most often are the following:

Cyclone (the Djinn chooses one target at up to medium range and make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Arcana check**. If successful, this magic attack inflicts 4 damage +1 damage per ✲, with the Disorient 4 and Knockdown qualities. The Djinn can also spend ⮝ to move the target up to one range band in any direction).

Twisted Wish (the Djinn chooses one target within short range and make a **Daunting** [◆◆◆◆] **Arcana check**. If successful, until the end of the Djinn's next turn, each time the target makes a skill check, decrease the ability by one and the Djinn may choose to change any die in the pool not displaying ❁ or ⊗ to any other face. The Djinn may sustain these effects with the concentrate maneuver).

Equipment: Conjured scimitar (Melee [Light]; Damage 9; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]), illusionary claws (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2).

MINOR ELEMENTAL (RIVAL)

Elemental magic, a legacy of the Djinni, runs through the bedrock of Al-Kalim. These vestiges of trapped sorcery tend to draw together to manifest as living things, gathering together like droplets of water might form a shimmering pool or lake. The elemental beings thus created may roam as lone predators, but they are just as likely to group together to form entire regions where the laws of nature no longer apply. Either way, they exist to feed upon mortals, whether drinking the water from their flesh, burning their blood for fuel, or devouring the breath from their lungs.

There are many kinds of minor elementals in Al-Kalim. Quicksand elementals lie in wait upon trade routes and near wells to trap the unwary. Some regions are rife with these creatures. In the salt swamps of the Endless Desert, they move across the wastes in the night to surround caravans, whose travelers wake to find themselves lost in a new and deadly landscape. Then, there are flame elementals, which drift on the wind like flickering embers, drawn to the heat of the living. When they find their prey, they burst into blazing life and burn away the flesh of their victims. Spring elementals pose as pools, lakes, or streams of tempting water in the desert wastes, although it is the fluids of their quarry they seek. Should a creature or individual be foolish enough to try to drink from one, the elemental sucks them dry, leaving only a desiccated husk behind.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	1	2	3	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	13	4 | 4

Skills: Brawl 2, Cool 2, Stealth 2, Vigilance 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Amorphous (as an incidental, a minor elemental may increase or decrease its silhouette by 1), Inconspicuous (a minor elemental in a natural environment appears indistinguishable from an ordinary example of its element; a character can make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Perception** or **Vigilance check** to identify a minor elemental).
Equipment: Pseudopods (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Burn 1 [flame elemental only], Ensnare 1 [quicksand elemental only], Linked 1, Stun 5 [spring elemental only]).

SCORPION SWARM (RIVAL)

There are many dangers in the desert, but few will drive travelers to turn and run like the sight of a hundreds of scorpions rising out of a dune. The entire swarm acts as a single being, each creature attacking in perfect concert like a terrible wave of death. Those who unknowingly disturb a swarm all too often end up yet another pile of bones, buried in the blowing sands and forgotten by all.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	3	1	1	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	36	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 1, Coordination 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Silhouette 2, Swarm (halve the damage dealt to the swarm before applying soak, unless the weapon has the Blast or Burn quality [regardless of whether the quality is activated]), venomous (enemies who are wounded by a scorpion swarm must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Resilience check** as an out-of-turn incidental or suffer 4 additional wounds, and must check again on their next turn if the check generates ⊗).
Equipment: Claws and stingers (Brawl; Damage 1; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 3, may spend △ △ to inflict 3 strain).

THIEVES' GUILD CUTPURSE (RIVAL)

The thieves' guild holds great power in Al-Kalim, and its cutpurses are everywhere within the Caliphate. They come in many forms, from filthy street urchins and beggars feigning debilitating injuries to well-dressed merchants and offspring of the nobility, as the strength of a good thief is often the ability to get close to a target without raising suspicions. These nefarious robbers are most often found in taverns and markets where crowds are at their thickest, although daring individuals can operate wherever there is wealth for the taking. The guild takes a dim view of "freelancers" in its territory, so most cutpurses are accounted for. They are marked with the guild's tattoo and must tithe a measure of their take to the local den bosses.

Many cutpurses work in teams, one or more distracting the mark while the others relieve them of their money. A victim who turns on a cutpurse might be in for a nasty surprise when they are led on a chase into a blind alley containing a dozen or so of the cutpurse's companions. Guild thieves are not above using clubs, blades, and fists to obtain what deception and quick fingers could not.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	3	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	12	0 | 0

Skills: Cool 2, Coordination 2, Deception 2, Melee (Light) 2, Skulduggery 3, Stealth 3.
Talents: Finesse (may use Agility instead of Brawn for Brawl and Melee [Light] checks).
Abilities: None.
Equipment: Dagger (Melee [Light]; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1), blackjack (Melee [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2, Stun Damage).



I had been traveling back through the Torue Albes, staying for the most part in Trelton again as I quested for those who could share their knowledge of things magical or related to stones akin to the one that should have rightly stayed with the Caliph. Standing at one of the main docks, I stared to the west. Though I have been out to sea twice now, I am always amazed there is so much liquid in our world. Having spent my years knowing nothing but sand, to look out on the horizon and see nothing but water everywhere takes my breath away.

Still, there is only so much water one can look at, though I'm certain my opinion will change the next time I am lost in the golden dunes surrounding the Caliph's palace, may it stand for years longer than the number of grains in the sands. I was ready to move on when a loud voice behind me drew my attention.

A heavily tanned individual garbed in rough leathers was standing on a crate along the road, waving a feathered hat and calling out to passersby to tell of the riches and adventure that could soon be theirs. A crowd slowly gathered before him as he spoke of the land of Zanaga, where hordes of opulent treasures and wondrous creatures awaited them should they simply sign up for his voyage south. I drew closer to hear more, for it was the first I'd heard of this area, and the mention of treasure reminded me of my mysterious burden.

The fellow was a grand teller of tales, and he had the crowd spellbound (myself included) with stories of the bountiful opportunities to be found amid the lush jungles. He was leaving with the morning tide, and he had plenty of coin for those brave enough to sign up to voyage with him to make their fortunes. Attention rose with the mention of advance pay, and it rose even higher as he talked of how this would allow everyone a fresh start. That this could include abandoning onerous debts or family obligations was left unsaid, but all heard it quite clearly.

Singly, and sometimes in small groups, people from the crowd came to him to enthusiastically mark their names (or to simply make a mark, as far too many in these lands still know nothing of letters) on a long parchment. This would commit them to be on the ship and, once the voyage was complete, work a number of years far from here in that land. Once the parchment became full, he closed his speech and passed coins to them as he pointed toward a ship docked nearby. He also mentioned he'd make an easy wager for double or nothing on those coins in the morning before leaving, certainly an incentive for them to be on the docks and not run off.

He made for a tavern, and I offered to buy him a drink given that his throat must be dry. We found a table, I ordered a mug for my new friend Axdeen, and I asked him about Zanaga, and any ties to magical stones.

"No such stones I ever saw, but magic? Magic aplenty, I think, but not as splashy as hereabouts," he said. It turned out that he first sailed there years ago, recruited by another just as he himself recruited now. "You see those plow-pushers at the far table, drinking away the coins I just handed them? That was me. I even left from the same dock." He took another long pull from his tall mug.

"The trip was the worst part," he continued. "You round Lorimor, and then south between two badlands. Get too close to one, and giants of smoke and teeth emerge to play with your ship. Come too close to the other, and you can find out how hospitable the Elves are feeling that day." I refrained from commenting about my homeland and bought another round.

"You stay to the middle, but that's bad, too," he said. "No land or other ships in sight; you feel like you're all alone. Then, you discover you aren't." His voice grew low, perhaps to avoid frightening the newly signed at the other table.

"Tentacles taller than our mast battled gigantic fish with teeth bigger than broadswords." He looked into his mug. "At night, we'd see things—big things—passing below us, lit up with purple and yellow flames." I remembered my own times traveling by boat, and with a shudder realized I had not even begun to think about what might be lurking under the waters.

"Worst passage I've ever had, and I've had dozens since," he said. "We did finally pass into and through the Selenic Sea, and then landed at Zanaga in Herman's Gulch, back when it was still taking root."

I noticed as he reached for the next bottle that there was something unusual about his leather necklace. Unusual in that there was nothing on it, that is. Almost all of the locals of these islands had a coin dangling on their chest, to remember a won wager, successful trade, or some other less-than-legal effort. I asked him about it, but Axdeen seemed reluctant to say more. That didn't last long, though.

It turned out (after the bottle was emptied) that the young Axdeen had ventured into the jungle alone one morning, not long after arriving. After several days during which his group had explored the surroundings, uncovering ancient relics and defeating bizarre jungle creatures, he felt confident enough to go off on his own. Now was his chance for personal glory, he reasoned.

"Of course, I was a fool," he muttered. "I got lost fast enough, but I was too proud to call for help. I was gonna find treasure, make my own settlement!" He laughed a little at that.

His own story wasn't as heroic as the ones from earlier. The thick foliage obscured his way. Insects bit, birds shrieked, and he could hear movement all around him.

"I came across open ground, a welcome clearing. But it was dead." Axdeen looked at me, as if I had an explanation of it. "Brown grass, decayed stumps. Animals of all sorts on the ground, flesh bloated or burst. Quiet, but lots of buzzing flies. I was tired, and I had a strong urge to lie down and rest there. Maybe not get up for a while. If ever."

His eyes grew excited. "Suddenly, an arm grabbed me, thick and green, and pulled me back into the jungle! Bald, walked like a man, but it had three more arms! I was about to swing at it, when I saw something in the ground wasn't so dead after all." He grimaced. "It had a wide maw ready to take a big bite, and it made a loud 'snap!' as it missed me."

Barely had the two made it back into the jungle when something fell on his savior, something with even more limbs than the... Creature? Friend? I'll say friend, as it turns out they perhaps become so. Axdeen drew his blade, his energy returned, and he managed to dispatch the foe. "Turns out, it was pretty deadly and might have killed him and then me," he said. "We couldn't understand each other, but I gave him my first coin. He added it to his necklace of teeth, and gave me this."

Axdeen pulled out another necklace from underneath his shirt. On it was a thick, froglike figure of what could have been gold. "I think it's for luck," he said. "I haven't had a bad voyage since."

Axdeen's new friend pointed him in the direction to travel, and they parted. Soon, he could hear the thrashing of branches. Someone called "Annen" rescued him, cutting wide swaths in the foliage with every swing of a wide-bladed shortsword.

He said he'd seen his friend several times since then, but only when Axdeen went out alone. He's tried to find the dead region, but it isn't there anymore. "Maybe he healed it? Or it moved?" he asked, almost to himself. "There are other ones I've seen, though, and they seem to be larger each time." He keeps them, and his friend, out of any reports. "Three Skulls pays fine, but I've seen what it does with some things there, and I don't see things going well if they step in. You and me, we'll keep this a secret, right?"

I assured him it would be so, and once again passed on signing up myself. I had many more leagues to explore in the Torue Albes before venturing into Zanaga, but if there was magic there I would need to investigate it at some point. Certainly, there were treasures and dangers aplenty there for others in the meantime.



Axdeen's mysterious 'friend' as drawn from his description. I am torn if I wish to encounter him and his kin in Zanaga or not.

ZANAGA

Far to the southwest of Terrinoth lies the continent of Zanaga. Shadow-filled jungles hide ancient secrets from the sun, while forbidding mountain peaks rise up to brood over a landscape unchanged since time began. Here, savage creatures dwell within the expansive wilderness, and proud tribes revere or resist them. In recent years, expeditions from other realms have pierced the jungle heart of this land, and fresh-cut settlements have risen along its rough trails and waterways. Though the invading torch of civilization has burnt away much of Zanaga's seemingly primitive darkness, many shadows remain, and many more secrets and wonders are yet to be discovered by those from across the sea.

Heroes making the perilous ocean voyage to Zanaga will find a rich land of adventure and wealth before them, whether they wish to sign up with the Three Skulls Trading Company and forge trade routes into the interior, earn the respect of the Singhara and perhaps fight with them against the Plague God's minions, set out on their own to uncover the lost empire of the lizardmen, or battle the nagas that dwell in their ruins.

For those with the heart to overcome these challenges, Zanaga may even become home. More than one adventurer has carved out their piece of the jungle and create an enduring settlement that bears their name.

A NEW WORLD

Zanaga is a strange new land far from the shores of Terrinoth. In places, people from other continents have made precarious purchase upon its edges, eking out towns and ports from which to explore this captivating land. Explorers and adventurers from Terrinoth, Al-Kalim, and Torue Albes have all made the long and perilous sea voyage to Zanaga to make their fortunes. From their toil, the settlement of Herman's Gulch has taken root on the banks of the Weeping Scar River. This town marks the farthest inland location to which seagoing vessels can sail. The path to Herman's Gulch from the ocean is a long and winding one, but it is the only way through the leagues of swamps that shield Zanaga's shores.



Herman's Gulch, small by the standards of most towns of Terrinoth, remains the largest foreign settlement in Zanaga. It is from here that Humans and other daring visitors begin their journey into the unknown.

Lands of the Lion People

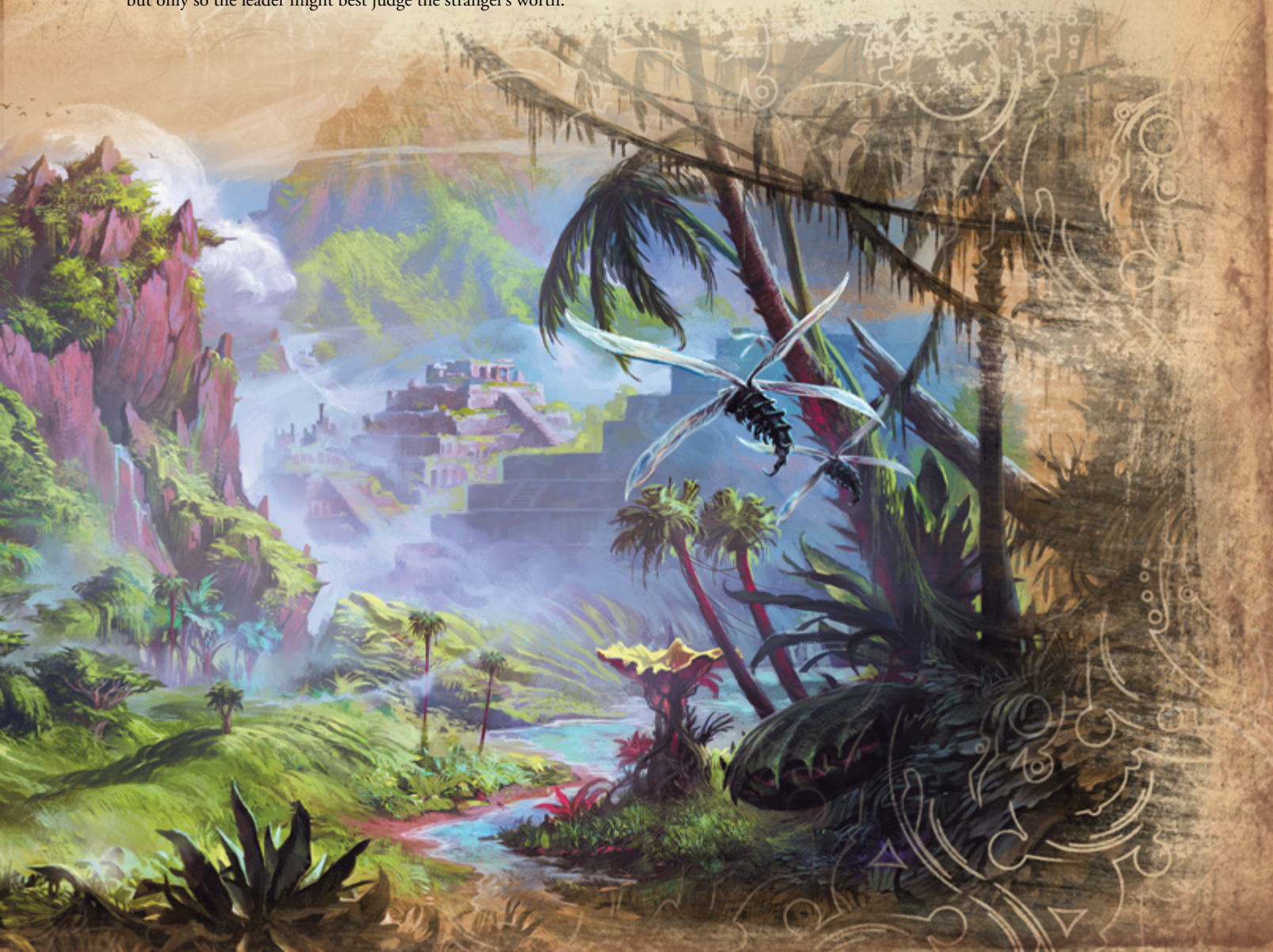
While the jungles, swamps, and mountains remain forbidding places stalked by monsters and saurians, the plains of Zanaga belong to the leonine Singhara. The Singhara are an ancient and strong feline people, lions given the shape of Humans, who stride across their grasslands in mighty prides. Each Singhara pride is an ancient tribe that holds dominance over a region. The reach of the prides stretches from the Road of Heroes to the Sunscathe Barrens and beyond.

With the arrival of the water-striders (as the Singhara call those who come from across the large expanses of water to the north), some prides have learned the newcomers' languages and begun to trade with Herman's Gulch and other settlements. Merchants from the other continents are wise to be wary of Singhara customs, however: the lion people respect only martial skill and shows of strength, and many of their deals are sealed with ritual combat and the spilling of blood. A pride leader is likely to challenge a traveler to combat upon first meeting them, not out of a desire to kill or from anger, but only so the leader might best judge the stranger's worth.

For every pride that has dealings with the water-striders, there are many that do not. Some keep their distance and watch travelers, acting only if they stray too close to the pride's villages, while others are openly hostile, seeing these newcomers as merely another evil assaulting their land.

Few foreign explorers know that the Singhara are among the most potent of Tarakhe's enemies and still fight against the influence of the dead god. Though the plague deity has been returned to his rotting tomb, much of his poison remains throughout Zanaga, corrupting and killing the land. It is against this remnant, and the creatures it spawns, that the lion people wage a constant war. In places like the Forest of Fangs, where the jungle grows thick and twisted with Tarakhe's power, Singhara hunting parties stalk the darkness, seeking out the god's followers. Where they clash, the roars of the leonine warriors and hisses of their serpentine enemies echo among the blister-covered trees.

A battle against Tarakhe's servants is one of the few events that might induce a Singhara pride to ally with other races, as the lion people tolerate explorers if they choose to take up arms against the god—and if they can prove their worth in battle. They might even give an outsider the chance to be inducted into a pride, although this has happened but a very few times. Only when an adventurer has proven their worth



to a pride leader, usually in battle, can they walk the Path of Bones to Singhavrem, home of the lion people. It is a long and dangerous journey, for once a person sets foot upon the path, they are an enemy of the Singhara until they can best the guardians of Singhavrem and lay a bloody palm upon the lion's temple. This, and this alone, earns them the ritual scars that mark them out as Singhara for all to see.

GODS OF THE PLAINS

The gods of the Singhara are, like most of the ancient deities of Zanaga, immensely powerful beasts to whom Zanagans offer their worship. Hamzah the Pridelord is the Singhara lion god of war, a megalithic cat who prowls the vast plains and lairs in the world cave beneath Singhavrem. The Singhara proudly roar out their devotion to him when they embark upon the hunt or charge to war, and legends tell of how, when he is needed, Hamzah bounds forth to join the fray.

Heroes who earn the respect of the elder Singhara might be honored with the chance to enter the great cat's lair and take a strand from his mane. When woven about weapons or armor, it is said to increase their strength tenfold. More nefarious individuals may instead try to slip past Singhavrem's temple guards and into the sleeping cat's lair, where it is said he rests upon a mountain of bones tangled with treasures.

Hamzah's vicious brother is Jararr, the great panther god of the Wild Hunt. Hunters offer this ferocious figure of blood and death prayers before the kill and raise gore-streaked obsidian statues in his honor. Whereas Hamzah the Pridelord stands for civilization and tribe, Jararr is a loner. Among the Singhara, the worship of Jararr is practiced by outcasts who choose to dye their manes black in deference to their brutal master.

Adventurers seek out Jararr that they might hunt at the great panther's side, for if they can keep pace with the giant beast and bring down his quarry, a measure of the kill can be theirs. Equally evil Singhara potionmasters have been known to place Jararr's prey mark upon their enemies; such desperate souls might seek out aid if they are to escape Zanaga alive.

The angry pounding of drums is the language of the ape god, Gor-Bor-Gor, largest of all Zanaga's primates. He is a creature of rage and strength, and reckless warriors give prayer to him before battle or mimic his war cries to frighten their foes. Legend has it that Gor-Bor-Gor resides within the Spire, a peak that looks like a great slumbering ape when the sun sets upon its slopes. It is said that he waits for a great champion who will break the stone chains that hold him, and thus loose him upon all of Zanaga.

Unsurprisingly, many of Zanaga's Orcs worship Gor-Bor-Gor and are constantly trying to wake the creature so he might begin his rampage against civilization. Some bring living sacrifices to the Spire, breaking their bones and spines with bare hands to rouse the ape, while others seek out special foods to feed him. According to the Orcs, there are groves of blood-red fruit that grow only in the deepest parts of the jungle, the flesh from which can stir rage in even the most placid soul. They hope that if enough of these blood fruit are harvested, it may tempt the great Gor-Bor-Gor down from his Spire.

Cousin to Gor-Bor-Gor is the Monkey God. Little is known of the Monkey God, the mysterious master of the blood apes. For a long time, explorers believed the crude idols the apes erected represented an alpha among their kind, some great creature who ruled over their brutal tribes. It became evident, however, that they worship the Monkey God as a divine being and bring it sacrifices and meat from their kills. The Monkey God's motivations and desires remain a troubling mystery.



GODS OF SHADOW AND MAGIC

Threads of dark magic run throughout the wilds of Zanaga, and at their heart rests Arachne, the spider goddess. In a cave beneath Herman's Gulch, the huge sentient spider controls her secret empire. While mortals try to carve out their hold upon Zanaga, Arachne has a hand in all their dealings. A legion of servants heed her call, their minds linked to hers after they drink from her venom sacs, and many of the Three Skulls guild captains serve her, a tiny spider tattoo hidden somewhere on their bodies.

Heroes from overseas who get in the way of Arachne's growing network might find former allies and strangers turning against them, or unfortunate events besetting their endeavors. For the truly bothersome, an "invitation" to drink the spider goddess's venom may be offered; after all, Arachne has a keen interest in foreigners and hopes one day to spread her webs across the sea.

Ally to Arachne is Harridan the Stalker, the patron of spies and assassins. A bird goddess, she has lived in Zanaga for generations beyond count, able to take the shape of a woman or a mighty mountain condor. Her followers include members of all races, though unlike those of Arachne, they serve her willingly, hoping to help protect Zanaga from evil gods and the greed of mortals. In this way, Harridan tempers Arachne's hunger for power, and she often uses the spider queen's network for her own.

Adventurers could find themselves called upon to aid the bird goddess's agents or even become agents themselves, traveling the land and fighting against those trying to destroy or exploit Zanaga. The reward for such service is often information, for Harridan knows many secrets indeed, including the paths to places long forgotten by mortals.

THE LOST EXPEDITION

Thick jungles and high mountain ranges jealously guard the interior of the Zanaga continent from explorers. There are few roads and tracks here in the wilderness. Travelers must find or make their own paths if they wish to reach the ancient treasure temples of the lost saurian empire that once dominated the land. And yet, hidden among the jungle are signs of something distinctly Terrinoth: way markers and abandoned settlements that speak to a much older attempt to settle this continent. These are the remnants of an expedition undertaken before the Second Darkness, when a fleet of Humans and Orcs in search of new lands to plunder sailed south and vanished without a word. Until recently, the fate of the expedition had been but the conjecture of scholars, but it seems that, for a time at least, Humans and Orcs made a home amid the jungle. What ended their brief ascendancy remains unknown, but the savage descendants of those first settlers still remain to plague the land.

The Orc ruin known only as the Spire stares down upon Sunscathe Barrens and the surrounding lands. It is the seat of the brigand lord Urgash the Pitiless and his bloodthirsty army of followers. For the most part, Urgash and his people do not leave the Spire, preying upon those foolish enough to enter their lair. Occasionally, they venture forth in search of fresh meat. Legend has it that Urgash is the degenerate descendant of the Orc spiritspeaker Hrgrun, and the terrible king still wears Hrgrun's glowing magical crystal around his blood-stained neck.



Urgash and his followers are not the only descendants of the lost expedition to survive. To the north, where the Skyscar Peaks plunge into the Forest of Fangs, lies the Chasm of Despair. The city that clings to its sheer walls marks the farthest point the expedition reached, and is perhaps the reason for its fall. Containing a maze of crumbling bridges and tunnels, the chasm is home to ragged people who skulk away from the light. Known as the Whispermen, they gouge out their own eyes so they might forever dwell in darkness, an offering to their midnight god. Stories tell of how the Whispermen have been building tunnels under all of Zanaga for long years now, awaiting the day when their master puts out the hated sun and they might rise up and slaughter all who are not natives of the night.

Closer to Herman's Gulch, tribes of the lost expedition still prey upon travelers. Some of these tribes have grown rich off the fresh trade flowing to and from the continent. Among these, the most feared are the Darkwater Privateers. Their captain, a descendant of one of the few Dwarves to travel with the expedition, commands a fearsome mechanical vessel built by his ancestors that can sail beneath the waves. Merchant barges and vessels often have but a moment's warning as the Dwarf pirates rise from the river bottom before launching their attack. There have even been reports of the Dwarf sea craft striking at merchant shipping along the Zanaga coast.

THE WHISPERING GOD

Var Ni is the mummified god of madness and terror. An object of horror among the people of Zanaga, Var Ni once spread his wings and blotted out the sun, or so the legend goes, before feasting upon tribes under a veil of eternal night. Only the rise of great heroes brought the mighty beast low, but they were not able to truly destroy Var Ni before his servants dragged away his corpse and embalmed it beneath the ground.

In the Chasm of Despair, it was the Whispermen who unearthed Var Ni's vast remains, and it is they who pour the blood of their sacrifices into his fanged maw. Even in his inert state, the bat god sends out vile dreams and squalls of darkness across the land, causing shamans to mumble of the coming night and whole regions to suddenly plunge into darkness. It is within this supernatural darkness that the Whispermen do their work, slowly paving the way for Var Ni's return.

TRIBES OF THE SERPENT GODS

Zanaga is the domain of three major species linked to the Serpent Gods. Though the Mahkim, lizardmen, and nagas all share a reptilian appearance, they are in constant conflict wherever they encounter each other. Many venture inland from the coasts or Herman's Gulch to seek out the wondrous treasures these species guard, but all too often only become part of the legends surrounding Zanaga.

THE THREE SKULLS TRADING COMPANY

Of all the merchant concerns that plunder the wealth of Zanaga, none are as large and powerful as the Three Skulls Trading Company. A veritable army unto itself, the company is controlled by the pirate lords of Orris in the Torue Albes, and it is peopled by every race imaginable. In many ways, Three Skulls is all that passes for a non-native government in Zanaga. Its distinctive triple-skull emblem can be seen on most exported goods as well as flying above settlements as far inland as Terr's Crossing.

Motivated solely by a chance to make more coin, the local guild captains of Three Skulls are more than happy to help out travelers and adventurers, often funding their expeditions and even offering them guides, mercenaries, and discounts on goods. Such deals, though, always come at a price; canny guild captains will never strike a bargain if it is not in their best interests. Adventurers who are careless when it comes to reading the fine print may find themselves returning from an expedition owing the captain more treasure than they recovered. This, of course, puts them in debt to Three Skulls—and once a person is in debt, a guild captain will do their best to keep them there.

MAHKIM

The Mahkim are a four-armed reptilian race, and the inheritors of the lizardman empire. Once they were the martial scions of the lizardmen, and the legacy of those glorious days remains in their advanced tactics, unique weapons, and jungle combat skills. While those lizardmen who remain are primitive descendants who remember little of their ancestors' glory, the Mahkim have lost little of their culture. Many tribes of Mahkim dwell upon ancient roads or in the shadow of an old lizardman temple, protecting these structures from the agents and war parties of the nagas, who are eager to steal their secrets.

Adventurers may find themselves allies or enemies of the Mahkim, depending on whether they come seeking their guidance or to plunder their eggs. Clutches of these milky-green orbs fetch a high price in the ports of Terrinoth and Al-Kalim, where their healing properties are well known. Mahkim are the masters of the inland waterways and guides without peer, which can come in handy when trying to avoid naga hunters in the depths of the old lizardman empire. Explorers sometimes recruit Mahkim warriors or hunters, the race's young having a reputation for striking out on their own to make their fortune.

The largest Mahkim village, and the spiritual center of their people, rides on the back of the huge crocodile Ravin. This vast beast is worshipped as a god by the Mahkim, and it bears them throughout Zanaga across rivers and lakes, though they must constantly feed its massive appetite. When challenged or wronged, Mahkim warriors paint the god's likeness on their hides and cry out his name as they charge into battle. These same devotees then devour their fallen enemies, each gulp of meat another prayer to their god.

LIZARDMEN

The lizardmen are a fallen race, broken by the wheel of history and little recovered after their grand empire vanished centuries ago. Taller and thinner than the Mahkim, and more similar in appearance to a scaled Human, they dwell in the ruins of their once-magnificent cities. In the sacred moon city of Xitotl, the upper levels house Humans and Mahkim, while the lizardmen live in the shadows below. The living ziggurat of Teno'tek, whose location changes from season to season, remains a center for the lizardmen, although they have long forgotten how to open its great sun gates and venture inside. Often found alongside Mahkim, lizardmen wear trappings of ancient, broken technologies and wield strange tools with purposes that are a mystery even to their owners.

The lizard god, Moakileki, is an ancient figure of legend believed to have caused the downfall of the great lizardman empire. A beast of entropic glory, Moakileki is worshipped only by hateful and evil beings who seek the death of the world. Some say the last act of the lizardmen's potent spellcasters, the Crystal Seers, was to cage Moakileki, giving up their lives in the last days of their empire to entomb the god somewhere beneath the jungles of Zanaga. Heroes seeking out the fabled bejeweled skulls of the Crystal Council may find themselves on the path to Moakileki—and, if they are very unfortunate, perhaps even to the giant lizard's final resting place.

NAGAS

Ancient enemies of the lizardmen, nagas spent centuries hiding in the shadows from their hated cousins. On the day the old empire fell, they rose up, giving thanks to their snake god and seeking to claim what was theirs. Since that time, the half-snake, half-humanoid nagas have grown strong in Zanaga. Under the guidance of the Priestesses of Set, they constantly fight the remnants of the lizardmen, hoping to exterminate them once and for all. Even though the nagas are opposed by the Mahkim, many former lizardman temples are now nests of naga power.

Among these temples are Omaga the Obsidian Sunrise, whose gleaming corridors echo to the screams of Set's sacrifices, and Jatok, the Water Temple, a sunken tomb into which all of Zanaga's rivers eventually flow. Treacherous and cunning, nagas often manipulate explorers into finding ancient lizardman artifacts for them, or wiping out Mahkim villages that stand in their way. Some such pawns might be lucky enough to escape with their lives, but many others are coaxed into the jungle depths to fill the belly of the serpent god, Set.

A SLUMBERING EVIL

Tarakhe, the Plague God, has but recently been defeated and cast back into his sleep of decay beneath Zanaga. An ancient creature of entropy and corruption, he was a bitter enemy to the Mahkim, lizardmen, and Singhara alike. Long ago, Tarakhe grew from the decline and ruin of the lizardman empire, feasting upon its decay and destruction. The god's minions rampaged across all of Zanaga and its countless cities, scourging most of its peoples from history. Only through the efforts of the Mahkim and the few surviving lizardmen was Tarakhe's total victory averted; robbed of power, the plague god fell back into his slumber.

Though he was cast down, Tarakhe's influence upon the land remains. In the Noxious Glade, the god's power has given rise to fungus storms that can induce permanent frenzy and delusion in mortals, while the settlement of Onasan has been taken over by the touched of Tarakhe—twisted mutants only too eager to recruit new members into their family. Creatures, too, have become riddled with the plague god's influence, from the scar serpents of the Darkwater to the carrion eaters of the Umbral Forest that hang the rotting carcasses of their prey until they can slurp the putrid flesh from their bones.

It is through these servants and a shadowy cult of followers that Tarakhe's legacy remains and still infects the fabric of Zanaga. Only the Singhara and Mahkim continue to fight against the god's threat. Their greatest fear is that Tarakhe's miasma will spread to the Three Skulls Trading Company or the town of Herman's Gulch, and perhaps mark a new rise to power for the god.

Lies and mystery surround Set, the nagas' serpent god. Legend has it that Set is the first of the nagas, a huge snake man as tall as the highest jungle trees. A survivor of the catastrophe that brought down the lizardman empire, Set works from the shadows, helping his children reclaim their birthright and growing strong upon their offerings. The nagas believe Set will one day be strong enough to slither out into the world from his hiding place and, one by one, devour the other gods of Zanaga.



LIFE IN THE JUNGLE

Beyond the sunbaked plains and broken peaks lie the true mysteries of Zanaga, hidden in its jungle interior. Under the dappled light of the jungle canopy, the Mahkim, Singhara,and other species carry on as they have for centuries, largely unchanged by the efforts of explorers to tame their wild land.

CARNIVOROUS FLORA (RIVAL)

There are many kinds of carnivorous flora in Zanaga, like the violet talon, which glows in the dark to lure its prey into its clutches; the traveler's folly, which mimics cries for help; and the karko noose, which hangs down from trees to snatch up victims as they walk below. Those caught in the grip of these plants have but a short time to free themselves as paralytic toxins assail them.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	1	1	1	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	12	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 3, Resilience 2, Stealth 4.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Drag (a carnivorous flora can use a maneuver to move a target affected by its thorny vines' Ensnare quality to engaged range), Inconspicuous (a carnivorous flora in a natural environment appears indistinguishable from an ordinary plant; a character can make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Perception** or **Vigilance check** to identify a carnivorous flora), Rooted (a carnivorous flora cannot perform maneuvers to move), Silhouette 2, Unexpected Attack (a carnivorous flora that has not been yet been identified as a threat uses Stealth to determine initiative).
Equipment: Thorny vines (Brawl; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Auto-fire, Ensnare 3), snapping jaws (Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2).

GIANT SNAKE (RIVAL)

The jungles of Zanaga host a great many types of snakes, and the larger they are the more deadly they become. Some seem to have no upper limit on their size, and tales speak of entire groups of adventurers swallowed up in fanged, cavernous maws.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	1	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	14	1 | 0

Skills: Brawl 3, Resilience 2, Stealth 2.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Silhouette 3, Swallow (may make an opposed Brawl check to swallow an engaged target. If the check is successful, swallowed characters are immobilized and suffer 6 damage at the start of each round but can escape if the snake is killed or by making a successful **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Athletics check**).
Equipment: Jaws (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2), constricting coils (Brawl; Damage 10; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 4, Stun 4).

MAKHIM (MINION)

Makhim warriors are as fierce as any in Zanaga, and they have adapted to the environments they fight in. Most employ weapons that only a four-armed fighter could wield, like the dagger-like dolochs they wear a gauntlets. They also employ leather slings which they twist and swing to send a missile flying with tremendous momentum. Makhim are seldom encountered alone; they usually travel in great war parties, some scouting ahead, others staying to the shadows. At first glance, their opponents might believe they face but a few of the reptilian creatures, at least until the jungle comes alive with a cacophony of hissing war cries.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	6	0 | 0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Ranged, Survival, Stealth, Vigilance.
Talents: None.
Abilities: Four-armed (a Makhim does not increase the difficulty of combined checks to attack with both its dolochs and fists).
Equipment: Dolochs (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1, Linked 1), fists (Brawl; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Linked 1, Vicious 1), sling (Ranged; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Disorient 2, Prepare 1).

NAGA PRIESTESS (RIVAL)

Naga priestesses are the leaders of the naga serpent cults and blessed with the power of their Primal God, Set. The coils of their long, snakelike lower bodies constantly shift in pattern and color, while their slit eyes bore into the minds of any being foolish enough to meet their gaze. Even the sternest warrior might become hypnotized by a priestess and powerless as she moves to sink her venomous fangs into their throat. If the priestess chooses, she can even turn her enemies against each other, the weak-minded so enraptured by the naga that they throw themselves at anyone who might bring her harm.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	3	3	4

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	16	0 | 0

Skills: Brawl 2, Charm 3, Cool 3, Coordination 4, Leadership 3.
Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once).
Abilities: Hypnotic Gaze (a naga priestess may make an opposed Charm vs. Discipline check as an action targeting one character within short range. If successful, the target is immobilized for 1 round per ✲, and the naga may spend ❁ to stagger the target for 1 round), Opportunistic Predator (when making a combat check targeting an immobilized character, the naga deals +2 damage per ✲ instead of +1).
Equipment: Fangs (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 1, Vicious 2; a character wounded by this

weapon must make a **Hard [◆◆◆] Resilience check** or suffer 4 additional wounds, and must check again on their next turn if the check generates ⊗).

SINGHARA HUNTER (MINION)

The feline ancestry of the Singhara makes them excellent hunters. In the darkness of night, when their night sight gives them an edge over their prey, they move swiftly and silently across the plains and through the jungles. The favored weapon of these hunters is the lion spear, a shaft as long as a warrior is tall, tipped with a sharpened sabrecat tooth. In the hands of a Singhara hunter, such a spear can punch through toughened hide or shell and be launched into the air like a bolt of bone lightning to strike down targets hundreds of paces distant.

Singhara hunters often travel in packs, all the better to herd animals to their doom. Singhara can outdistance even a galloping horse, their tireless stamina carrying them on while their echoing roars coordinate the hunt. While some of the warriors form the pursuit, others pick out good spots for ambush or places to corral their prey. For all their swiftness, when Singhara choose to lie in wait—often from the branches of a tree or hidden in tall grass—they become almost invisible until they burst into a blinding sprint, then enjoy the bloody victory of the kill.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	1	3	2	2

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	5	0 | 0

Skills (group only): Cool, Brawl, Melee (Light), Ranged, Survival, Stealth.
Talents: Swift (a Singhara does not spend additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Pounce (may spend ⮝ ⮝ from an initiative check to perform a free maneuver before the first round of combat).
Equipment: Spear (Melee [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1) or (Ranged; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Accurate 1, Limited Ammo 1), claws and teeth (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1).

SINGHARA PRIDELORD (NEMESIS)

Pridelords are the largest and fiercest of the Singhara warriors. Powerfully muscled, they stand head and shoulders above even the tallest of Humans. Adding to their grandeur are their great manes, which hang like cloaks down their backs, the size and thickness a mark of a war chief's status among their people. Armed with spear, club, tooth, and claw, the Pridelord is always at the forefront of the hunt or where battle is at its thickest, for it is the Singhara way to lead by example. As a mark of this bravery, a Pridelord's body is often covered in scars, each one worn proudly to tell a tale of the chief's life as a warrior and veteran of war.

Swift hunters, Pridelords can race across the wilds of Zanaga, their long legs and mighty muscles allowing them to run down almost any kind of prey. Despite such speed, though, their deafening roars precede them into battle. So great is the growl of a Pridelord that the very ground shakes with its booming, and weak-hearted creatures are set to flight. By contrast, nearby Singhara warriors are stirred to greater acts of animalistic savagery, their own roars joining those of their leader as they tear into their prey.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	4	2	3	3	4

SOAK VALUE	W. THRESHOLD	S. THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	20	16	3 | 3

Skills: Cool 2, Brawl 4, Melee (Light) 3, Ranged 3, Survival 3, Stealth 3.
Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character twice), Swift (a Singhara does not spend additional maneuvers to move through difficult terrain).
Abilities: Prideful Roar (as a maneuver, a Pridelord can unleash a prideful roar. All other Singhara in the encounter remove ■ from checks until the end of the Pridelord's next turn. In addition, enemies within medium range of the Pridelord must make an **Average [◆◆] fear check** as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).
Equipment: Spear (Melee [Light]; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1) or (Ranged; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Accurate 1, Limited Ammo 1), claws and teeth (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1).



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Character Name:

Species:

Career:

Player:

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Soak Value	Wounds		Strain		Defense	
	Threshold	Current	Threshold	Current	Ranged	Melee

Characteristics

Brawn | Agility | Intellect | Cunning | Willpower | Presence

Skills

General Skills	Career?	Rank
Alchemy (Int)		
Athletics (Br)		
Cool (Pr)		
Coordination (PR)		
Discipline (Will)		
Mechanics (Int)		
Medicine (Int)		
Perception (Cun)		
Resilience (Br)		
Riding (Ag)		
Skulduggery (Cun)		
Stealth (Ag)		
Streetwise (Cun)		
Survival (Cun)		
Vigilance (Will)		

Combat Skills	Career?	Rank
Brawl (Br)		
Melee-Heavy (Br)		
Melee-Light (Br)		
Ranged (Ag)		

Social Skills	Career?	Rank
Charm (Pr)		
Coercion(Will)		
Deception (Cun)		
Leadership (Pr)		
Negotiation (Pr)		

Knowledge Skills	Career?	Rank
Adventuring (Int)		
Forbidden (Int)		
Lore (Int)		
Geography (Int)		

Magic Skills	Rank
Arcana (Int)	
Divine (Will)	
Primal (Cun)	
Runes (Int)	
Verse (Pr)	

Custom Skills	Rank

Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Crit	Range	Special

Total XP

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Available XP

Motivations

Strength:

Flaw:

Desire:

Fear:

Character Illustration

Equipment Log

Weapons & Armor:

Personal Gear:

Silver:

Character Description

Gender:	Age:
Height:	Build:
Hair:	Eyes:

Notable Features:

Heroic Ability

Name:

Origin:

Primary Effect:

Upgrades:

Total Ability Points:	Available Ability Points:

Critical Injuries

Severity	Result

Talents and Special Abilities

Name	Page #	Ability Summary

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Talents Pyramid

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Purchasing Talents

This sheet tracks the talents that you purchase for your character. When you purchase your character's first Tier 1 talent, record it in the upper leftmost box in the Tier 1 column.

When purchasing talents, your character must have more talents in a tier than they do in the next highest tier.



Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
5 XP	10 XP	15 XP	20 XP	25 XP

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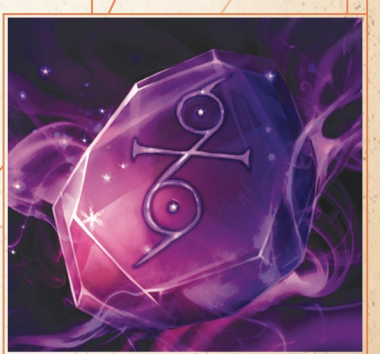
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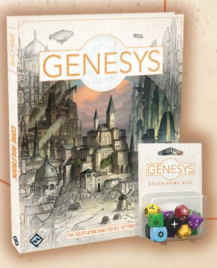
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